

The Rally 'Round the Flag Effect vs. The Democratic Peace

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Abstract

Two of the most common findings in the international relations literature are the rally 'round the flag effect and the democratic peace. The first demonstrates that during times of international crisis, government leaders tend to get an increase in public approval, which can give them more leeway in pursuing military action. The later shows that democracies tend not to go to war with other democracies. Public opinion and executive constraint have been a common theoretical argument for explaining the democratic peace. In a recent paper, Tomz and Weeks (2013) use an experiment to demonstrate that when a hypothetical nation, pursuing nuclear weapons, is deemed a democracy, respondents were approximately 13 percent less likely to support military force. This paper replicates that study with an additional treatment that makes the hypothetical nation more aggressive and inserts an elite cue, potentially eliciting a rally round the flag effect. The question is whether the democratic peace effect diminishes in the face of a more robust threat. If it does then there are conditions under which the public opinion explanation for the democratic peace weakens. If the effect does not dissipate then the public opinion explanation gains significant traction. The results of the experiment demonstrate that the democratic peace effect is robust to a more dramatic scenario and elite consensus.

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1 Introduction

The foreign policy and international relations literatures have uncovered two interesting phenomenon that have the potential to conflict given the right circumstance. First, Mueller (1973) uncovered what has become know as the *rally 'round the flag effect*. Generally, when an outside crisis - such as a foreign attack or natural disaster - presents itself, the citizenry of the impacted nation unify around their leadership, giving presidents and other leaders observably high public approval ratings. While the theoretical explanations for this effect differ, support for leaders and a war effort increase after a direct attack. For example, according to Gallup (2014), shortly after the September 11, 2001 attacks George W. Bush had a public approval rating of 90%, up from 51% a few days earlier. High public approval also means that leaders have increased public support for a potential military response in retaliation for the initial attack.

Another interesting phenomenon is that of the *democratic peace*. Proponents of the democratic peace point to the statistical relationship between democratic dyads and war. It has consistently been shown that democracies tend not to go to war with other democracies (Oneal and Russett, 1997; Bueno de Mesquita et al., 1999; Huth and Allee, 2002; Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003a; Oneal, Russett and Berbaum, 2003; Bennet, 2006). There is a still a debate as to what causes this statistical finding, but generally international relations scholars agree that the probability of two democracies waring with each other is small. In a recent article, Tomz and Weeks (2013) use an experimental design to highlight the role of public opinion in the democratic peace. The public opinion explanation for the democratic peace is that leaders are beholden to voters, and voters oppose war because of human and financial costs. This logic would predict that democracies are more peaceful in the aggregate. However, research has generally found that democracies are only more peaceful in relation to other democracies. The most influential explanation for this was put forth by Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003a). They argue that because winning or losing a war impacts a democratic leader's ability to stay in power more than autocratic leaders,

increased resources will be spent on winning a war. When two democracies come head-to-head, they realize that the costs of fighting will be too large and prefer negotiation rather than war because of electoral backlash.¹

Tomz and Weeks (2013) find that individuals are substantially less supportive of military strikes against democracies than against otherwise identical autocracies. In the Tomz and Weeks (2013) experiment, subjects were given a scenario where a non-specific country is developing nuclear weapons that could potentially be a threat to either the U.S. or the UK and the country involved was varied depending on where the experiment was being conducted.² Respondents were asked if they would favor or oppose the use of their country's armed forces to attack the nuclear development sites. Changing the regime from an autocracy to a democracy decreased the support of the military option by more than 13 percentage points, reinforcing the public opinion explanation for why democracies are constrained when facing potential conflict with other democracies. An interesting extension of this finding is the question of how far a scenario can go before the democratic peace effect dissipates? How belligerent can a democratic challenger get before regime type is ignored? Also, what impact does elite consensus have on the support for the use of force against a democracy or autocracy?

This study pits the *rally 'round the flag effect* against the *democratic peace* by using a survey experiment similar to Tomz and Weeks (2013). Rather than only use the nuclear weapons scenario, the experimental vignette includes a militarized interstate dispute (MID) shy of war. A conflict is described as an MID if it causes fewer than 1000 deaths, and some military force is used. Low level MIDs include a military display of force with no deaths. For example, a possible MID scenario would be the "crossing of a recognized land, sea or air boundary for a period of less than twenty-four hours by

¹The nuance of this argument specifically has to do with the need for democracies to produce non-excludable and non-rival public goods that benefit large electorates, of which national security is a prime example. Autocracies can rely on private goods to stay in power because dictatorial leaders tend to be supported by a small group of selectors.

²The survey experiment was conducted in both the U.S. and the UK., but this study is relegated to the United States.

official forces of one state, without any force being used on the territory (or population) of the targeted state or any significant public demonstration of military force capability” (Jones, Bremer and Singer, 1996, p. 172). Thus, the level of threat in this study is much higher than “a country is a developing nuclear weapons and will have its first nuclear bomb within six months” (Tomz and Weeks, 2013, p. 853). The idea that a nation “could use its missiles to launch nuclear attacks against any country in the world” (Tomz and Weeks, 2013, p. 853) is different from a substantial MID type “threat by one state to use all or part of its nuclear arsenal against the territory or forces of another state” (Jones, Bremer and Singer, 1996, p. 171).³ In the experiment described below, an opposing state repeatedly violates U.S. airspace and has issued public threats. The experiment takes the basic Tomz and Weeks (2013) study and adds a layer of escalation which could elicit a rally effect. In addition to a more threatening scenario, a randomized treatment is added where subjects are told that the President and a majority of Congress support military action. Elite consensus without opposition criticism has been shown to result in public opinion mirroring that of elites (Zaller, 1992; Bennett, 2012). Elite consensus supporting military force combined with a substantial threat should elicit a rally effect and increase support for the use of force despite the opposing country’s regime.

The primary expectation for this study is that the democratic peace effect will be eroded when the immediate threat level is high and foreign policy leaders advocate a military option. The findings are interesting, regardless. If the democratic peace holds up to a more substantial threat, we would have more confidence in the theoretical explanations based on public opinion. If the democratic peace is weakened among the electorate it will demonstrate that there are conditions when such a peace could break down. To foreshadow the findings, the results demonstrate that democracy continues to significantly reduce the willingness of respondents to use force against the hypothetical coun-

³In this original study the authors do comment that they chose a high stakes scenario to produce “a hard test for the democratic peace”. They acknowledge that threat intensity matters and that the effect of democracy may be larger when the threat level is weaker. In this experiment the threat is just shy of war. In the end, the purpose is to see how far the scenario can go before the effect dissipates.

try. However, increasing the threat scenario does show that a majority of respondents are willing to use force regardless of regime type.

2 The Democratic Peace and Public Opinion

In the original experiment Tomz and Weeks (2013) outline the potential causal mechanisms behind the democratic peace. The three primary mechanisms analyzed are: (1) Threat Perception, (2) The Cost of Fighting, and (3) Morality. Threat perception refers to the idea that citizens of democracy are normatively opposed to violence. Democracies solve issues with peaceful mechanisms such as elections and then apply these internal norms to external relations - at least this is true when dealing with democracies where there is an expectation that the same norms exist for the opponent state (Doyle, 1986; Maoz and Russett, 1993; Dixon, 1994). Threat perception also plays a major role for institutional theories. Some scholars argue that democratic institutions reduce fear by constraining the executive, slowing down the mobilization process and lowering the likelihood of surprise attacks (Russett, 1993). Still others claim that the transparency of democratic institutions convey information about intentions and resolve increasing the ability for a peaceful bargain (Schultz, 1998, 2002; Fearon, 1994). Another causal mechanism is that of the costs of fighting. Fighting a war against a democracy can be higher because democracies have strong incentives to win and thus will mobilize more resources for war. Autocrats may be less likely to be removed from office if they lose a war and thus may spend fewer resources (Lake, 1992; Bueno de Mesquita et al., 1999, 2003b). Under this logic, citizens may be less willing to use force against democracies because they anticipate higher costs due to increased resource mobilization by the opponent. Finally, democracies may hesitate to attack other democracies if the public believes it to be morally wrong. Since the foreign policy of democracies reflect the will of the people, democratic publics will feel that it is morally wrong to overturn the policies freely chosen by other democ-

racies. In contrast, democratic publics may be more likely to use force against autocracies because their foreign policies are not derived from the will of the people (Tomz and Weeks, 2013).

3 Inducing a Rally Effect

The well-known rally 'round the flag effect occurs when presidents receive relatively short-lived boosts in their public approval ratings immediately following important and well-observed foreign policy events (Mueller, 1973; Brody, 1991; Jordan and Page, 1992; Norpoth and Sidman, 2007). The causal mechanism behind the rally effect has been debated since Mueller (1973) first introduced the term. The most common theoretical explanation for the rally effect is the lack of opposition from elites after one of these high profile events happen (Brody and Shapiro, 1989). A similar line of research argues that when foreign policy events first occur the president's administration is the only source of information for media coverage, thus reporting one line of information to the public (Brody, 1991; Bennett, 2012). The rally effect has also been attributed to bipartisan support for a president's foreign policy based on a more prudent policy evaluation (Oneal, Lian and Joyner, 1996). Along these lines Baum (2002) shows that the rally effect primarily comes from independents and ambivalent opposition members who are on the threshold of approval; these individuals cross the threshold after the foreign policy event occurs. Still others have argued that the effect comes from a surge of patriotism and a focus on what happens in foreign policy rather than domestic policy (Parker, 1995).

An important part of many of these theoretical explanations has to do with elite influence of public opinion. The elite-based opinion model argues that because political messages, elite cues, and political awareness play such an important role in attitude formation, the impact of event-based information is often marginalized as it gets filtered through political predispositions and political discourse (Zaller, 1992). For example, Lar-

son (1996) argues that public support for U.S. military operations and public tolerance for casualties are based upon a weighing of benefits and costs which is influenced heavily by consensus (or its absence) among political leaders. When such agreement is missing, even low costs can erode public support for the intervention. Americans generally do not want lives to be sacrificed and thus costs (casualties) matter, but the public relies on elites to tell them how promising and important the cause is. Consensus sends the signal that the cause is worth it, and discourse sends a signal that costs may be outweighing the benefits. Recent research by Berinsky (2009, 2007) has taken this argument a step further. Berinsky's (2009) "elite cue theory" argues that the content of elite messages may not be the only thing driving opinion on war. Building on research which theorized that citizens can utilize simplifying heuristics to come to informed conclusions in the absence of detailed information (Popkin, 1991; Lupia, 1994; Lupia and McCubbins, 1998), Berinsky (2009) argues that partisanship, even in the absence of elite divergence, can affect public opinion. In cases of unified support, public opinion will mirror that support. In cases of unified opposition, the public will mirror that opposition. However, when a prominent elite supports a policy, even if parties with opposing values stay silent (neither supports or opposes a policy), the prominent elite supporting the policy can act as a reference point and thus affect public opinion toward foreign policy actions.⁴ Arena (2008) also highlights that without opposition to an incumbent government's war, war outcomes are unlikely to affect election outcomes.

Given the role of elite consensus in public opinion, a rally 'round the flag effect could be induced through the combination of a high profile foreign policy event combined with the absence of elite criticism. This type of scenario should increase support for the use of force among respondents. The experimental condition in this study heightens the threat level of the original experiment, as the U.S. faces a belligerent hypothetical country on the path to a fully functional nuclear weapons program, that also publicly threatens the

⁴It has also been shown that citizen interpretations of "events" such as casualty counts can be interpreted differently based on partisanship (Gaines et al., 2007).

United States and violates U.S. airspace with long-range bomber aircraft. In addition to the heightened threat, a randomized treatment is given to half of the respondents indicating that the President and a majority of Congress have publicly advocated the use of military force against the hypothetical nation. This treatment is hypothesized to increase respondents' willingness to use force when they receive the elite cue, compared to those respondents that are told nothing about what foreign policy the President or Congress are advocating.

4 Experimental Design

The experiment is a replication of an experimental design in Tomz and Weeks (2013, p.853), where participants were told the following, "There is much concern these days about the spread of nuclear weapons. We are going to describe a situation the U.S. could face in the future. For scientific validity the situation is general, and is not about a specific country in the news today. Some parts of the description may strike you as important; other parts may seem unimportant. After describing the situation we will ask your opinion about a policy option." Respondents then received a series of bullet points with details regarding the vignette. All respondents received information about an opposing country which read "A country is developing nuclear weapons and will have its first nuclear bomb within six months. The country could then use its missiles to launch nuclear attacks against any country in the world" (Tomz and Weeks, 2013, p. 853). This section was slightly changed to a more threatening scenario. All respondents received the following information, "A country is developing nuclear weapons and will have its first nuclear bomb within six months. The country could then use its missiles to launch nuclear attacks against any country in the world. In the last few days the country's leader has issued public threats against the U.S. and on several instances has violated remote U.S. airspace with what appeared to be long-range bomber aircraft. The conventional (non-nuclear) military

strength of the country is half that of the U.S.”⁵ This version of the vignette increases the intensity of the crisis with both public threats and a public demonstration of military capability by the opposing country.

Following this statement the experiment randomly varies information about the country’s political regime, military alliance, and level of trade. Half of the respondents are told that the country “is a democracy and shows every sign that it will remain a democracy,” whereas the other half is informed that the country is “not a democracy and shows no sign of becoming a democracy.” For military alliance, the respondents are told that the U.S. had either signed a military alliance with the U.S. or had not. For levels of trade the respondents are told that the country had, or did not have, a high level of trade with the U.S. These treatments are directly derived from Tomz and Weeks’s (2013) design.

The final pieces of information given to the respondents in the original experiment were given to everyone. They were told that “the country’s motives remain unclear, but if it builds nuclear weapons it will have the power to blackmail or destroy other countries.” Respondents were also told that the country “had refused all requests to stop its nuclear program” and that “by attacking the country’s nuclear development sites now,” the U.S. could “prevent the country from making nuclear weapons.” This section of the experiment was altered in this study to give half the respondents an elite cue in regards to the use of force. An additional treatment was randomized which either gave the respondents the above information, or told them that “The U.S. President and a majority of members of Congress have made public statements advocating for military action against the country. The country’s motives remain unclear, but if it builds nuclear weapons, it will have the power to blackmail or destroy other countries. The country has refused all requests to stop its nuclear weapons program. By attacking the country’s nuclear devel-

⁵The original experiment was conducted in both the UK and the U.S. For the UK sample the authors had a treatment regarding military power where respondents were told that the country’s nonnuclear forces were either “as strong” or “half as strong” as Great Britain. For the U.S. version the country’s non-nuclear forces were held at “half as strong as the U.S.” because doing otherwise would have been an unrealistic portrayal of the hypothetical nation. Given that all respondents in this study were from the U.S., the experiment was relegated to the version of the experiment Tomz and Weeks (2013) use for their U.S. subjects.

opment sites now the U.S. could prevent the country from making any nuclear weapons.” This additional treatment is designed to indicate that government elites are advocating military action and that they are in agreement on this policy. The heightened scenario combined with elite consensus should increase support for military action on the hypothetical nation. The dependent variable is based on the respondent’s answer to the question of whether or not they favor or oppose using U.S. armed forces to attack the nuclear development sites.

Just as in the original survey experiment, each respondent’s perceptions of threat, cost, success, and morality were measured. Tomz and Weeks (2013) used these perceptions to understand causal mechanisms regarding the answer choices of the respondents. They argue that these perceptions are mediators in the sense that democracy changes these perceptions to facilitate resistance to the use of force. In other words, when told that the hypothetical country is a democracy, respondents may have a lower threat perception, a higher cost perception, or be morally resistant to the use of force. To measure perceptions of threat, subjects were asked which of the following events they thought had more than a 50% chance of happening if the United States *did not* attack: the country would build nuclear weapons, threaten to use them against another country, threaten to use them against the United States or a U.S. ally, launch a nuclear attack against another country, or launch a nuclear attack against the United States or a U.S. ally. Respondents could indicate as many events as they thought probable or indicate “none of the above”. A measure of threat perception is then created by adding the number of events the respondent thought probable. To assess cost and success perception respondents were asked which, if any, of the following events would have a more than 50% chance of happening if the United States *did attack*: the country would respond by attacking the United States or a U.S. ally, the U.S. military would suffer many casualties, the U.S. economy would suffer, U.S. relations with other countries would suffer, or the United States would prevent the country from making nuclear weapons in the short and/or long run. To measure morality respon-

dents were asked whether it would be “morally wrong for the U.S. military to attack the country’s nuclear development sites”. Each of these questions was taken directly from Tomz and Weeks (2013, p. 854).

There are also several differences in the design besides the additional treatments. The original authors were able to conduct between and within subject experimental designs, as they interviewed the exact same subjects in the United States twice, before and after the 2010 election, repeating the scenario while switching the political regime of the target. The results in this study are based on a between subjects/groups design, as respondents were not questioned twice. Moreover, while Tomz and Weeks (2013) use an internet sample administered by YouGov, this study uses a sample of approximately 521 student subjects. The student subjects were predominantly from Missouri Southern State University’s (MSSU) PSC 120: Government: United States, State, and Local course. The state of Missouri requires that all students take a government course before graduation and PSC 120 fills that role. Students are from a wide variety of majors and backgrounds. The remaining students are from courses in Sociology, History, and Political Science. The survey was conducted using the Qualtrics online survey software during the Spring 2014 semester.

5 Hypotheses

The alternative experimental design increases the threat level of the original scenario and should deteriorate the effect of the democratic peace. We should observe two things in this new experiment: (1) The proportion of the public that desires to use force, regardless of regime type, should be higher than in the original experiment and (2) The effect of regime type - specifically democracy - on the willingness to use force should deteriorate or disappear altogether. Tomz and Weeks (2013) find that democracy is important for a respondent’s willingness to use force because it reduces the perception of threat. Height-

ening the level of threat in the experimental vignette should increase threat perception in the aggregate. Moreover, the intentions of the hypothetical country are made relatively clear in the sense that they make public threats and violate U.S. airspace. The heightened threat should reduce the perception that a hypothetical democratic country is not a threat to the United States. In regards to the elite consensus treatment, it is expected that elite consensus should increase the willingness to support force. The experimental vignette will induce a rally effect via the combination of a high profile international incident combined with a statement of elite consensus. The interesting question is whether the democratic peace effect will remain constant given the more aggressive scenario. If the effect is significantly deteriorated then this study will show that there are conditions - specifically heightened threat levels - where democratic publics are more likely to support military actions against another democracy. However, even if there is large support for military action regardless of regime type, if the democratic peace effect remains statistically significant and substantially large, the results will lend support to the persistence of the effect.

6 Replication

Given that the sample in this study were undergraduate students rather than a representative YouGov sample, the original experiment was replicated with a small sample of 96 respondents from several general education introduction to government classes. Replicating the original experiment gives us confidence in the original finding and also demonstrates that the student sample in this study can be relied upon when adding the new treatments. Table 1 shows the results for the 96 students in the replication. It is clear that respondents were less likely to favor using force when the hypothetical country was a democracy rather than an autocracy. In this sample, approximately 58% of respondents favored using force when the country was not an autocracy, versus about 37% when it

was a democracy. Just as Tomz and Weeks (2013) found, democracy reduces the willingness to use force and in this case it decreased that willingness by about 20%, with a 95% confidence level of -40.30 to -1.69.⁶ The main effect of democracy on the willingness of respondents to use force holds in the student sample. The table gives the percentage of respondents who favored the use of force when the target was a democracy and when it was not. The difference is the estimated effect of democracy based on a between-subjects two sample test of proportions. In this case, there were 48 cases where the country was a democracy and 48 cases where it was not. The 95% confidence interval appears in parentheses.⁷

[Table 1, About Here]

7 Exposure to a More Threatening Scenario

Now that the original effect has been replicated, I turn to the results based on the new experiment with the additional treatments. Recall that the altered experiment has two major differences from the original. First, the hypothetical country developing nuclear weapons made public threats against the United States and violated U.S. air space with long-range bomber aircraft. This highlighted the intention and the ability of the opposition country. Moreover, violating U.S. airspace with long-range bomber aircraft would produce a substantial international incident. Second, an additional randomized treatment was added which told half the respondents that the President and a majority of Congress made statements advocating the use of force against the hypothetical nation, whereas the other half did not receive this information. This treatment should cue the public that a majority of

⁶Given the small sample size it is not surprising that the confidence interval is so wide. Nevertheless, the result was statistically significant based a two sample difference in proportion test, with a z-score of -2.04 and a p-value of 0.041.

⁷The findings regarding the casual mechanisms and mediators in the original article were also replicated with this smaller sample. The results were virtually identical to the Tomz and Weeks (2013) study, except that due to a smaller sample size, several tests of statistical significance did not reach the 95% level. However, democracy's ability to reduce the willingness to use force was consistent.

political elites agree on the use of force and thus increase the publics' willingness to use force. In other words, a rally point should be induced for those subjects receiving the elite cue where they are told that there is little opposition to force.

Table 2 shows the results of the new experiment for the main effect of democracy. In this case democracy still reduced the willingness to use force by over 11 percentage points even with the stronger threat scenario. It is important to note that in the new experiment the proportion of respondents willing to use force whether the country was a democracy or not reaches well over a majority (68% for autocracy and 56.8% for a democracy). In the original experiment, and in the replication of the original experiment, the proportion of respondents willing to use force when the hypothetical country was a democracy was fewer than a majority (37% in this article's replication). With the heightened threat scenario the desire to use force against a democracy or an autocracy remained high. Nevertheless, democracy still reduces the willingness to use force and the effect is distinguishable from zero. Table 3 shows the effect of receiving the elite cue on the willingness to use force. It is clear that under both conditions the willingness to use force is above a majority and that elite consensus does not have a statistically significant effect on the willingness to use force. There are two possible reasons for this finding. One reason is that elite consensus does not effect the willingness to use force, which would go against a substantial elite cue literature. Another more plausible explanation may be that the threat level of the scenario was sufficiently large to deteriorate the cuing effect of elite consensus. Over 62% (332 out of 532 respondents) of the sample favored the use of force in the aggregate. If elite consensus works by flipping those on the edge from opposing force to supporting it, there may not have been enough of these ambivalent respondents to flip.⁸

[Table 2, About Here]

[Table 3, About Here]

⁸Future versions of this paper will contain another experiment where the original vignette is maintained without the additional level of threat but the elite consensus treatment is added. This will allow the effect of elite consensus to be isolated based on a the original threat level.

In addition to democracy, the original experiment analyzed the effects of alliances and trade. Table 4 shows the effects of these treatments. High levels of trade and having an alliance with the hypothetical country both reduced the willingness to use force, but neither effect was distinguishable from zero - these results were also the same in the original experiment. From the standpoint of a public opinion explanation for the democratic peace it seems as if democracy can reduce the willingness of the public to use force, but the effect for alliances and trade is minimal.

[Table 4, About Here]

7.1 Causal Mechanisms

As mentioned earlier, Tomz and Weeks (2013) outline three causal mechanisms regarding public opinion and the democratic peace: (1) Threat Perception, (2) Costs of Conflict, and (3) Morality. The authors call these perceptions mediators because they can mediate the relationship between the treatment variable (democracy) and the final outcome (support for a military strike). The original experiment was designed as a panel study where respondents completed two waves of the analysis where the authors were able to observe the final outcome (use of force) and the mediators when the regime was both a democracy and an autocracy. This design allowed for a within subject design and eliminated problems of missing data because they were able to observe the same respondents under both conditions. It also allowed the authors to derive estimates of each causal mechanism.⁹ This study did not utilize a panel design and thus cannot estimate within-subject effects. However, a between-subjects design is conducted and compared with the results from the original findings. First, Table 5 estimates the effect of democracy on the perception of threat between the group of subjects that received the democracy treatment and the group of subjects that received the autocracy treatment. Table 5 demonstrates that the group that

⁹The authors found that about 34% of democracy's effect on the use of force worked through the reduction of threat perception.

received the democracy treatment was less likely to perceive the various threats, although not all the differences are statistically significant. Regardless, even with the heightened threat scenario and the hypothetical nation behaving in an overtly belligerent manner, the group that was told that the regime was a democracy had a lower perception of threat. The strongest effect was for whether the hypothetical country would threaten to use nuclear weapons against the U.S. or a U.S. ally. The group that was told that the nation was a democracy were over 8 percentage points less likely to believe that the nation would threaten to use nuclear weapons against the U.S. or an ally. It is also interesting to note that few respondents believed that a nuclear attack would occur if the U.S. did not attack but a large majority of respondents believed that weapons would be built and their use threatened. Nevertheless, it is clear that democracy was found to reduce the perception of threat.

[Table 5, About Here]

Table 6 shows the effect of democracy on perceptions of Cost, Success, and Morality. The biggest difference between these results and the original is with the morality finding. In the original study the authors found that democracy increased moral reluctance by 7 percentage points when shifting the regime from autocracy to democracy and the result was statistically significant. In the present study moral reluctance between groups was increased by 3.6 percentage points, but the p-value for the difference was 0.36. This may reflect that the effect of morality was weakened by the heightened threat scenario. However, inferences from this part of the replication must be carefully weighed because the original within-subjects design is more powerful at revealing causal mechanisms. The other differences include the effect of democracy on U.S. relations with other nations and the prevention of building nuclear weapons in the short and long term. In the original experiment, democracy increased the perception that the U.S. relations with other countries would suffer and decreased the ability of the U.S. to prevent the hypothetical nation from building nuclear weapons - these effects were statistically significant in the original study.

Again, it is possible that the heightened threat scenario reduced the perception that the U.S. would suffer rebuke from other nations. However, this explanation does not account for difference in belief for whether or not the U.S. could prevent the country from building nuclear weapons. In this study, it did not seem that democracy has any effect on the perception of success. In fact, the difference between groups was positive, indicating that the perception of preventing nuclear weapons increased when the hypothetical country was a democracy - but neither effect was statistically significant.

[Table 6, About Here]

This analysis demonstrated that democracy did reduce the perception of threat, but did not have much of an effect on the costs of military engagement, the perception of success, or morality. Some of these differences can be attributed to the heightened threat scenario. The morality of attacking another country, whether they are a democracy or not, becomes less important the more that the country is perceived as being increasingly belligerent.¹⁰

8 The Effect of the Mediators on the Willingness to Use Force

In the original experiment the authors estimated the effect of each mediator on the support for military strikes. Given that the mediators are observed and not randomized, a statistical model is used with control variables. Since the dependent variable is dichotomous, a logit regression is used. The key independent variables for this analysis are threat, cost, success, and immorality. To create the threat variable the number of events

¹⁰The same analysis was also conducted for the effect of elite consensus on each mediator. The only statistically significant effect was that of elite consensus on whether the U.S. would suffer many casualties. The effect of elite consensus was -9.4% and it was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Over 58% of the group that was not given the elite cue thought that the U.S. would suffer high casualties and that dropped to about 49% when elite consensus existed.

that the respondent marked as probable if the United States did not strike the country's nuclear facilities were added up to create a variable that ranged from 0 to 5. The perception of cost was created by counting the number of negative consequences - military retaliation, high casualties, economic damage, and deteriorating relations - that the respondent anticipated if the U.S. did not attack the hypothetical country. The measure ranged from 0 to 4. To measure the perception of success the questions about U.S. success at preventing the country from building nuclear weapons were used. The variable was coded 2 if the respondent believed that the mission would be a success in the short and long term. It was scored a 1 if the respondent believed that the U.S. would only be successful in the short term and 0 if the mission had less than a 50-50 chance of working in the near term. Finally, immorality was a dummy variable that took on the value of 1 if the respondent believed it would be immoral to attack and 0 if they didn't. A dummy variable was also included for each of the treatments - Democracy, Alliance, Trade, and Elite Consensus. Finally, the model controls for whether the respondent is a Republican, a Male, and the respondent's age.¹¹

Table 7 shows that the threat of the adversary is significantly related to respondents' desire to use force. When respondents perceive a significant threat from the hypothetical country they were more willing to use force. The fact that democracy reduces the perception of threat lends more evidence to the idea that democracy reduces threat perception which reduces the willingness to use force. Cost also worked in the hypothesized direction; when respondents perceived a high cost to the operation they were significantly less likely to desire force. However, as noted earlier, democracy did not impact the perception of cost in the original study or this replication. Success also mattered; when respondents perceived a higher level of success for the operation they were more likely to desire force.

¹¹The original experiment also controlled for militarism, internationalism, ethnocentrism, religiosity, race, and education. None of these variables were statistically significant in the original study and I have not included them in this analysis. In alternative models I also controlled for whether the respondent had a family member in the military, is/was a member of the armed forces, and ideology. None of these variables were statistically significant or changed the results of the other variables.

This is consistent with work by Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler (2009), who find that when respondents believe a military operation has been a success, they will be much more likely to support the continuation of a war in the face of increased casualties. Morality also has the hypothesized effect. Those that believed it was morally wrong to attack the hypothetical nation were less willing to advocate for force. However, in this study democracy has no effect on the perception of the morality of attacking the hypothetical nation. Thus, it appears that morality has an independent effect outside of democracy on the willingness to use force.

When analyzing the treatments, the only one that has a statistically significant effect on the willingness to use force was democracy. This is an important finding because the new experiment was specifically designed to reduce the size of this effect. Even under heightened threat conditions, when the adversary is a democracy, respondents were still less likely to advocate for the use of force. Interestingly, elite consensus seemed not to matter in the context of this experiment. This is possibly because the threat scenario was sufficiently heightened. However, the experiment never gave the respondents information about elite discord. In future extensions of this experiment, it would be beneficial to reduce the threat level and provide a randomized treatment where half the respondents are given information about elite discord and the other half given information about elite consensus. Nevertheless, the results are very important for the democratic peace and public opinion related causal mechanisms. The impact of democracy was persistent even though the adversarial nation was particularly belligerent.

[Table 7, About Here]

9 Did the Democratic Peace Survive?

In the face of a relatively severe international incident, where an opposing country publicly threatened the United States and violated its airspace with long-range bomber air-

craft, democracy reduced the likelihood that respondents advocated military action by over 11 percentage points. While it is true that a large majority of respondents still wanted to use military action against the opposing country, even when they were a democracy (56.8%), this is not all that surprising given the threat level of the scenario. What is surprising, however, is that the effect of democracy was able to survive such a scenario. It was also clear that democracy continued to have an effect on threat perception. The group of respondents that were told that the country was a democracy were significantly less likely to believe that, if the U.S. did not attack, there would be a 50% chance of the hypothetical country building nuclear weapons, threatening to use those weapons against the U.S. or a U.S. ally, or launching a nuclear attack on the U.S. or a U.S. ally. Thus, democracy worked to mediate the effect of threat perception between the groups in this experiment. Interestingly, democracy did not have an effect on morality in this study, but those respondents that believed it was morally wrong to attack the hypothetical nation were still significantly less likely to advocate for military action. This indicates that morality has an independent effect on the desire for the U.S. government to use force in the scenario independent of democracy. This conflicts with Tomz and Weeks's (2013) finding that democracy changed the perception of morality directly which led to the desire not to use force.

The results for the elite consensus treatment were also interesting. Elite consensus in this study had no effect on the willingness to use force. In fact, the elite consensus treatment had the wrong sign in the logit regression analysis. One potential issue with this treatment was that those respondents given the elite cue were compared to respondents that received no information about elite preferences. It may have been more effective to juxtapose the elite consensus treatment with an elite discord treatment and look at the difference between the two. Moreover, the elite consensus treatment may have been overshadowed by the level of threat in the scenario. Over 60% of the sample wanted to use force within the group that received the elite cue and the groups that didn't. The

results may have been different if the threat level was less overt and the elite consensus effect may have been able to push ambivalent respondents over the threshold. It may also have been beneficial to alter the partisanship of the elites to give the respondents a direct partisan cue when making a decision.

10 Conclusion

This study replicated an important experiment by Tomz and Weeks (2013). The authors used an experiment with a hypothetical threat scenario to understand the effect of regime on the willingness for democratic publics to use force. They found that democracy reduces the desire to advocate for military force by 13 percentage points. This study replicates the experiment, but uses a heightened threat scenario to identify how far the democratic peace effect among respondents can be pushed before it dissipates. The results demonstrate that, while a majority of respondents favored force when exposed to the new scenario, democracy still significantly reduced the likelihood that respondents would use force by more than 11 percentage points. This study also exposed respondents to an elite cue, where the President and Congress publicly advocated for the use of force. This treatment had no effect on the willingness to use force. However, this may have been because the threat level of the scenario was already so high that elite consensus did have the ability to tip respondents who were on the threshold between advocating force or pursuing restraint.

Tomz and Weeks (2013) have given researchers a model for future research. This article presents one version for how the experiment can be altered to test different hypotheses regarding the democratic peace. Avenues for future research include a deeper analysis into the causes of the rally effect and elite cues in general. The experiment can also be used to understand why respondents believe that democracies tend to be less threatening. Even in the heightened threat scenario presented here, respondents who were told that

the regime was a democracy were still less likely to believe that the opposition state was going to build nuclear weapons, threaten to use those weapons against the U.S. or an ally, and launch a nuclear attack compared to those that were told that the regime was an autocracy. The effect of democracy as a mediator on threat perception was diminished in this study, but did not disappear.

While the respondents were less likely to advocate for the use of force when the regime was a democracy, it was also true that a large majority of respondents in the study were willing to use force. This demonstrates that if a democracy were to behave in a belligerent fashion toward another democracy, the executive may not be constrained by the public enough to prevent conflict. Of course, this assumes that a democracy would behave aggressively to another democracy and act in a belligerent fashion. Nevertheless, the empirical findings on the democratic peace do not show that democracies are less aggressive in international politics, only that they tend not to go to war with other democracies (Reiter and Stam, 2002). Institutional theories for the democratic peace argue that because of executive constraint, peaceful bargains are more likely. The results of this experiment have shown that if a democracy is belligerent enough support for force can be elicited. That being said, it is important to note that democracy was still able to reduce the desire for force in the face of a significant threat. This indicates that the power of regime type is extremely significant when democratic publics decide whether or not to go to war.

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Appendix

A Tables and Figures

Table 1: Replication, The Effect of Democracy on Willingness to Use Force

Between Subjects	
Not a Democracy	58.3%
Democracy	37.5%
Effect of Democracy	-20.8%
95% Confidence Interval	(-40.38 to -1.29)

Note: The table gives the percentage of respondents who favored the use of force when the target was a democracy and when it was not. The difference is the estimated effect of democracy based on a between-subjects two sample test of proportions. In this case, there were 48 cases where the country was a democracy and 48 cases where it was not. The 95% confidence interval appears in parentheses.

Table 2: The Effect of Democracy on Willingness to Use Force

Between Subjects	
Not a Democracy	68%
Democracy	56.8%
Effect of Democracy	-11.28%
95% Confidence Interval	(-19.45 to -3.1)

Note: The table gives the percentage of respondents who favored the use of force when the target was a democracy and when it was not. The difference is the estimated effect of democracy based on a between-subjects two sample test of proportions. In this case, there were 266 cases where the country was a democracy and 266 cases where it was not. The 95% confidence interval appears in parentheses.

Table 3: The Effect of Elite Consensus on Willingness to Use Force

Between Subjects	
No Elite Cue	61.7%
Elite Cue	63.2%
Effect of Elite Consensus	-1.5%
95% Confidence Interval	(-9.7 to 6.7)

Note: The table gives the percentage of respondents who favored the use of force when given the elite cue or not. The difference is the estimated effect of democracy based on a between-subjects two sample test of proportions. In this case, there were 266 cases where the country was a democracy and 266 cases where it was not. The 95% confidence interval appears in parentheses.

Table 4: The Effect of Alliances and Trade

Between Subjects	
No Military Alliance	65.7%
Military Alliance	59.2%
Effect of Alliance	-6.5%
95% Confidence Interval	(-14.7 to 1.7)
No High Trade	64%
High Trade	60.8%
Effect of Trade	-3.3%
95% Confidence Interval	(-11.52 to 5)

Note: The table gives the percentage of respondents who favored the use of force when given the treatments of alliance and then trade. The difference is the estimated effect of democracy based on a between-subjects two sample test of proportions. In this case, there were 265 cases where the country where an alliance existed and 267 cases where it was not. The same was true for trade. There were The 95% confidence interval appears in parentheses.

Table 5: The Effect of Democracy on the Perception of Threat

If the U.S. did not attack, the country would...	Belief if Autocracy	Effect of Democracy
Build Nuclear Weapons	84.32%	-5.6%*
Threaten to use nukes vs. another country	72.8%	-4%
Threaten to use nukes against U.S. or ally	67.5%	-8.34%**
Launch a nuclear attack against another country	35.82%	-4.93%
Launch nuclear attack against U.S. or ally	36.6%	-7.15%*

Note: The first column gives the percentage of respondents who thought the event had a more than 50% change of happening when the treatment indicated the county was an autocracy. The second column shows the percentage change between groups for the respondents that were given the treatment indicating the country was a democracy. A ** indicates that the difference was statistically significant at the 95% level and a * indicates that the difference was statistically significant at the 90% level.

Table 6: The Effect of Democracy on Perceptions of Cost, Success, and Morality

If the U.S. did attack, the country would...	Belief if Autocracy	Effect of Democracy
Cost		
The country would attack U.S. or ally	72.76%	-1.44%
The U.S. military would suffer many casualties	53%	1.8%
The U.S. economy would suffer	49.62%	-1.1%
U.S. relations with other countries would suffer	48.13%	6.65%
Success		
It would prevent nukes in the near future	59.7%	2.8%
It would prevent nukes in the long run	32.5%	0.63%
Morality		
It would be immoral	29.43%	3.6%

Note: The first column gives the percentage of respondents who thought the event had a more than 50% change of happening when the treatment indicated the county was an autocracy. The second column shows the percentage change between groups for the respondents that were given the treatment indicating the country was a democracy. A ** indicates that the difference was statistically significant at the 95% level and a * indicates that the difference was statistically significant at the 90% level.

Table 7: The Effect of Mediators on Support for a Military Strike

Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Mediators		
Threat	0.750**	(0.105)
Cost	-0.654**	(0.107)
Success	0.398*	(0.165)
Morality	-1.577**	(0.249)
Treatments		
Democracy	-0.547*	(0.239)
Ally	-0.170	(0.237)
High Trade	0.314	(0.241)
Elite Cue	-0.216	(0.236)
Controls		
Republican	0.440 [†]	(0.253)
Male	0.216	(0.262)
Age	-0.014	(0.014)
Intercept	0.699	(0.583)
<hr/>		
N	521	
Log-likelihood	-226.963	
$\chi^2_{(11)}$	235.039	
<hr/>		
Significance levels : † : 10% * : 5% ** : 1%		