

MAKING MEANING AND MAKING MONSTERS:
DEMOCRACIES, PERSONALIST REGIMES AND INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

It is well established that while democracies don't fight other democracies, they frequently engage in conflict with autocratic regimes. This project demonstrates that democracies are particularly prone to engaging in conflict with countries ruled by personalist dictators, as opposed to autocracies with some form of collective leadership. I argue that this pattern cannot be explained only with reference to the autocracies themselves, but instead must be understood as stemming from psychological biases and the political and strategic culture of democratic elites. Identity, psychology, and culture work to exacerbate the (perceived) threat personalist regimes pose to democracies. Importantly, these dynamics can manifest when the autocratic regime in question is deeply institutionalized but perceived as being ruled by a strongman figure. I explore these issues using statistical analysis, archival research, and survey experiments in multiple countries.

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Introduction

The basic proposition of the democratic peace theory is that democracies do not fight wars with other democracies. Since the theory was first introduced in 1986, international relations scholars have sought to clarify the mechanism(s) responsible for the absence of war between democracies.^{1,2} The focus of such studies is almost exclusively on what makes inter-democratic relationships particularly peaceful, rather than what makes democracies' relationships with autocracies particularly belligerent.³ The recurrent wars between democracies and autocracies are assumed to be the natural state of things. War—or the potential for war—is, after all, a feature of the anarchical international system.⁴ In this project I argue that this assumption is problematic, and at the very least obscures important aspects of the relationship between regime type and international conflict. I argue that the relative frequency with which democracies find themselves at war with autocracies—and certain kinds of autocracies in particular—is not only a product of international anarchy or of the institutional features of autocracies⁵, but also of the interaction between psychological biases of leaders and modern democratic social identity. Combined, these factors work to substantially increase the chance that

¹ Doyle, Michael W. "Liberalism and world politics." *American Political Science Review* 80.4 (1986): 1151-1169.

² While the correlation was first discussed in Babst DV (1972) "A force for peace." *Industrial Research*, 14: 55–58, Doyle is credited with presenting the first rigorous quantitative study along with a theoretical explanation for the correlation.

³ Rosato, Sebastian. "The flawed logic of democratic peace theory." *American Political Science Review* 97.4 (2003): 585-602.

⁴ Waltz 1959, *Man State and War*, 1988 origins of war in neorealist theory

⁵ See, for example, De Mesquita, Bruce Bueno, and Randolph M. Siverson. "War and the Survival of Political Leaders: A Comparative Study of Regime Types and Political Accountability." *American Political Science Review* 89.04 (1995): 841-855 and Weeks, Jessica L. *Leaders, Accountability, and Foreign Policy in Non-Democracies*. Stanford University, 2009.

democracies will fight wars with autocracies ruled by *personalist dictators*—authoritarian leaders that enjoy undisputed executive power and prominence.⁶

In chapter 1, I propose a theoretical framework for understanding threat perception and the use of force that builds on a wealth of recent work exploring the role of individuals, psychology, and ideas in explaining international conflict.⁷ I propose that far from being a byproduct of structural conditions, purely rational calculations, or the bad behavior of dictators, democratic-personalist conflict is often driven or exacerbated by democratic elites' own predisposition to view personalist leaders as compelling and uncompromising threats. Democratic elites' socialization to narratives of conflict between democracy and personalism reinforce the effects of psychological biases like the vividness and attribution effects, increasing the likelihood democratic leaders will perceive personalists as particularly acute threats that need to be met with military force. In doing so, I contribute to the literatures on political psychology, a subfield that has witnessed somewhat of a renaissance in the past fifteen years,^{8,9} social identity theory, and comparative foreign policy, as well as add to our understanding of the causal

⁶ For a fuller definition see Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz. "Autocratic breakdown and regime transitions: A new data set." *Perspectives on Politics* 12.2 (2014): 313-331

⁷ See Elizabeth N. *Leaders at war: how presidents shape military interventions*. Cornell University Press, 2011; Horowitz, Michael C., Allan C. Stam, and Cali M. Ellis. *Why leaders fight*. Cambridge University Press, 2015; Croco, Sarah E. "The decider's dilemma: Leader culpability, war outcomes, and domestic punishment." *American Political Science Review* 105.3 (2011): 457-477; Byman, Daniel L., and Kenneth M. Pollack. "Let us now praise great men: Bringing the statesman back in." *International Security* 25.4 (2001): 107-146; Yarhi-Milo, Keren. *Knowing the adversary: Leaders, intelligence, and assessment of intentions in international relations*. Vol. 146. Princeton University Press, 2014; Holmes, Marcus. "The force of face-to-face diplomacy: mirror neurons and the problem of intentions." *International organization* 67.4 (2013): 829-861; Goemans, Henk E., Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Giacomo Chiozza. "Introducing Archigos: A dataset of political leaders." *Journal of Peace research* 46.2 (2009): 269-283;

⁸ Kertzer, Joshua D., and Dustin Tingley. "Political psychology in international relations: beyond the paradigms." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (2018): 319-339.

⁹ This project builds on the rich history of work in political psychology, such as Laswell's *Psychopathology in Politics* (1951) applying psychological principles to public figures, George and George's analysis of Woodrow Wilson (1964), George's *Operational Code* (1969), and Wohlstetter's exploration of information processing and intelligence failure in Pearl Harbor (1962) that provided the foundation for the field today.

mechanisms underpinning the statistical findings of the democratic peace.¹⁰

To test my theory, and to adjudicate between my explanation and the alternatives found in existing International Relations scholarship, I utilize a multi-method research design that involves large-N statistical analysis, survey experiments, and case studies. Each method has its own strengths and limitations, but collectively allow me to uncover more about the relationship between domestic political institutions, individual psychology, ideas, and foreign policy than I could hope to achieve by employing any one method alone.

In the second chapter, I present statistical evidence that democracies initiate more conflicts with personalist dictatorships than with institutionalized, impersonal regimes like military juntas or single-party dictatorships. I show that personalist dictatorships are targeted more often by democracies than by other autocracies, suggesting that personalism itself—the inclinations of personalists or the absence of constraints on executive power—does not fully explain the patterns identified.

Chapter 3 presents findings from two survey experiments conducted with elite proxies in the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as an online survey experiment through Mechanical Turk. Survey experiments are one of the methodological workhorses of contemporary IR and foreign policy analysis, and particularly useful tools

¹⁰ See Hayes, Jarrod. "Securitization, social identity, and democratic security: Nixon, India, and the ties that bind." *International Organization* 66.01 (2012): 63-93; Hunt, Michael H. *Ideology and US foreign policy*. Yale University Press, 2009; Liu, James H., and Denis J. Hilton. "How the past weighs on the present: Social representations of history and their role in identity politics." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 44.4 (2005); and Salter, Mark B. "Not Waiting for the Barbarians." *Civilizational Identity*. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2007. 82

when it comes to disentangling different factors that may account for support or opposition for particular policies or decisions. They allow for the construction of alternative scenarios in which the features of the situation and the characteristics of the actors involved are directly manipulated. The experiments tested how the *image* of a rival autocrat affected respondents' threat perception and willingness to support the use of force against other countries. I presented respondents with a hypothetical scenario wherein an autocratic regime engages in hostile action against an American/British ally in Central Asia. A variety of treatments allowed me to differentiate between how threat perception is affected by the tangibility of an adversary (personalization of the threat) and how the institutional structure of an opponent regime affects threat perception. The findings generally support my theory regarding the important role psychological biases play in threat perception, and specifically, that vividness and tangibility increase perceptions of threat. Furthermore, I found that the institutional characteristics of an adversary's regime alone are insufficient to produce an increase in threat perception, contradicting expectations from institutionalist scholarship on regime type and conflict.¹¹ This lends support to my claim that the frequency of conflict between democracies and personalist regimes cannot be explained by standard institutional-rationalist theories.

For a tougher test of my theory, I investigate whether the causal mechanisms I propose can help explain real-world democratic foreign policy behavior. In chapters 4 and 5, I examine American and British decision-making during the Suez (1960) and Gulf crises (1990-1991).¹² I conducted archival research at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland; the H. W. Bush Presidential Library in College Station, Texas; the

¹¹ Weeks, Jessica LP. *Dictators at war and peace*. Cornell University Press, 2014.

¹² The cases studies serve as a series of hoop and straw in the wind tests.

Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas; the Cadbury Research Library in Birmingham, UK; and the Kew National Archives in Richmond, UK. These cases are both important in their own right and provide significant leverage from a research design perspective. Both are tough cases for my theory, as they are usually presented as instances of fairly clearheaded strategic decision-making, driven by structural dynamics (the Cold War and sudden unipolarity, respectively), and the actions of autocratic troublemakers. The cases also offer useful variation on a number of fronts: the structure of the international system, the individual leaders at the helm in the United States and the United Kingdom, the level of financial and material interests at stake, and the autocratic opponents. I found substantial evidence, in both cases, that democratic leaders' emphasis on the identity and character of their rival autocrats exacerbated their threat perception and hostility, and that socialization to the post-WWII narratives deeply affected decisions to use force.

Together, this research provides substantial evidence that the interaction between psychological biases and democratic elites' social identity predisposes democracies to conflict with personalist regimes. However, the theory proposed in this project is *probabilistic*. I do not suggest that democracies and personalist regimes will always be at war, or cannot enjoy positive relations—in fact, in both case studies I explore bilateral relations were cooperative for a time. Nor do I claim that my theory *independently* explains conflict between democracies and personalist regimes. What the theory does suggest, however, is that when conflicts of interest arise, as they are wont to do in international politics, democratic leaders are substantially more likely to see them as the product of the opposing leader's character, to frame them in starker terms, and to favor

the use of force to resolve them.

The last chapter concludes with a review of the project, observations on some of its limitations, avenues for future research, and a discussion of policy implications. My research indicates that countries like the United States are more inclined to use force against states that are ruled—or perceived to be ruled—by personalist regimes. This has potentially ominous implications, as we witness a trend in the personalization of politics and emergence of strongman figures around the world. To the extent that threat perception is heightened by psychological and socio-cultural factors, rather than simply determined by policy disagreements, the balance of capabilities, and other more objective variables, attention and resources may be diverted from cases that might otherwise deserve higher priority, and produce military conflict when non-violent solutions may have otherwise been achieved.

Chapter I: The Psychological and Sociological Sources of Threat Perception

Introduction

This project identifies an important and previously understudied pattern in international conflict: the tendency for democracies to engage in hostilities with countries ruled by personalist dictators. In personalist regimes, the head of state makes decisions with little consultation from political parties, legislatures, courts, or civil society and derives power from patronage, intimidation, and/or real or manufactured charisma.¹³ It is tempting to explain conflict with personalist regimes with reference only to those regimes themselves, by identifying personalist dictators as particularly dangerous or unsavory. However, as I show in the next chapter, personalist regimes are not disproportionately targeted by other types of autocracies, suggesting that their institutional characteristics are insufficient to account for the relative frequency of democratic-personalist conflict. In this manuscript, I propose instead that there is something inherent in democratic societies that predispose their leaders to perceive personalism as more threatening than other forms of authoritarian rule and to react more severely to the actions of leaders they classify as personalist dictators.

In the pages that follow, I argue that threat perception is affected by both psychological biases and social identity.¹⁴ I explore how certain psychological biases and heuristics, such as the vividness effect and attribution, facilitate the attachment of threat to individuals rather than more abstract entities or collectives. Personalist leaders, by their

¹³ Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz. "Autocratic breakdown and regime transitions: A new data set." *Perspectives on Politics* 12.2 (2014): 313-331

¹⁴ While this project is interested in how social identity affects the behavior of policy elites, other variables such as individual motivation and behavioral genetics are outside the scope of this research.

nature, tend to be highly visible and prominently represented, providing a focal point for affective (emotional) imprinting. These psychological tendencies are reinforced by democratic elites' social identity, a self-conception that conceives of personalism as the very antithesis of democracy. This identity has conditioned the moral and political perspectives of democratic elites through narratives of autocratic hostility and has been reinforced by historical experiences in the 20th century. These events have been memorialized in narratives and symbols of conflict between democracy and personalism. These experiences and narratives inform the worldviews of political elites and augment the aforementioned psychological biases, predisposing democratic elites to view personalist dictators as suspect and hostile. Just as importantly, democratic leaders are more likely to classify autocrats who behave antagonistically as personalists.

Since the publication of Waltz's *Man, the State, and War*, the discipline has focused on the international system as the primary explanation of international political outcomes.¹⁵ Scholars have since given short shrift to first image analyses and as Horowitz et al. describe "[the] scholarship generally understates the importance of leadership in determining countries' foreign policy goals and strategies."¹⁶ In recent years, however, international relations scholars have returned to individual explanations to examine strategies in military interventions, war termination, conflict initiation, and threat assessments.¹⁷ This project pushes this research agenda forward by examining how the

¹⁵ Waltz, Kenneth Neal. *Man, the state, and war: A theoretical analysis*. Columbia University Press, 2001.

¹⁶ Horowitz, Michael C., Allan C. Stam, and Cali M. Ellis. *Why leaders fight*. Cambridge University Press, 2015, 25.

¹⁷ See Saunders, Elizabeth N. *Leaders at war: how presidents shape military interventions*. Cornell University Press, 2011; Croco, Sarah E. "The decider's dilemma: Leader culpability, war outcomes, and domestic punishment." *American Political Science Review* 105.3 (2011): 457-477; Horowitz, Michael C., Allan C. Stam, and Cali M. Ellis. *Why leaders fight*. Cambridge University Press, 2015; Yarhi-Milo, Keren. *Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations*. Princeton University Press, 2014.

interaction between democratic leaders' political psychology and social identity produces particular outcomes in threat perception and interstate conflict. In doing so, I provide a novel explanation regarding democratic foreign policy.

This chapter introduces the book's theoretical framework and proceeds in five parts. Part one discusses recent research on the conflict behavior of democracies, with a particular focus on democratic identity and foreign policy decision-making. Part two explores how cognitive biases and emotion predispose leaders to perceive individuals as more salient threats than abstract groups and how democratic leaders' social identity reinforces these biases. Part three examines democracy as an identity, emphasizing how the social identity of democratic elites predisposes them to conflict with personalist leaders. Part four introduces the project's hypotheses and provides a roadmap for the remainder of the manuscript.

Democracy and Conflict

In this section, I will review the existing literature on democracy and conflict, identifying the lacunae in literature regarding democratic-autocratic conflict.

There is a rich scholarship on the international behavior of democracies. While the roots of this scholarly interest date back to early illuminist thinkers such as Montesquieu and Kant, if not further back to Greece, much of the contemporary IR literature has grown directly out of the democratic peace thesis. In the years since the initial statistical discovery that democracies do not seem to fight wars with other democracies.¹⁸ scholars have diligently debated the validity of the finding and sought to clarify the mechanism(s)

¹⁸ Levy, Jack S. "Domestic politics and war." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18.4 (1988): 662.

responsible for this correlation.¹⁹ They have also looked beyond the onset of conflicts to illuminate other ways in which democratic institutions (or the lack thereof) affect the conflict behavior of states. Scholars have argued, among other things, that democracies are distinct from non-democracies in their effectiveness on the battlefield and their ability to select the right wars; their ability to make credible threats and commitments, and therefore to engage in coercive bargaining; and their aptitude for solving their disputes peacefully with other democracies.²⁰

Executive or institutional restraint, public opinion, and peaceful norms of dispute resolution are a few of the causal mechanisms most commonly attributed to the democratic peace.²¹ However, scholars such as Layne²² and Rosato²³ provide compelling qualitative evidence that these mechanisms are often not operating in interstate disputes.

As Rosato argues,

Democracies do not reliably externalize their domestic norms of conflict

¹⁹ See Moaz, Zeev, and Bruce Russett. "Normative and structural causes of democratic peace." *The American Political Science Review* 87.3 (1993): 624-638; Russett, Bruce. *Grasping the democratic peace: Principles for a post-Cold War world*. Princeton university press, 1994; Owen, John M. "How liberalism produces democratic peace." *International security* 19.2 (1994): 87-125; Risse-Kappen, Thomas. "Democratic peace—warlike democracies? A social constructivist interpretation of the liberal argument." *European Journal of International Relations* 1.4 (1995): 491-517; Gartzke, Erik. "Kant we all just get along? Opportunity, willingness, and the origins of the democratic peace." *American Journal of Political Science* 42 (1998): 1-27; De Mesquita, Bruce Bueno, et al. "An institutional explanation of the democratic peace." *American Political Science Review* 93.4 (1999): 791-807.

²⁰ See Fearon, James D. "Signaling foreign policy interests tying hands versus sinking costs." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41.1 (1997): 68-90; Reiter, Dan, and Allan C. Stam. "Democracy, war initiation, and victory." *American Political Science Review* 92.02 (1998): 377-389; Martin, Lisa L. *Democratic commitments: Legislatures and international cooperation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000; Schultz, Kenneth A. *Democracy and coercive diplomacy*. Vol. 76. Cambridge University Press, 2001; Hayes, Jarrod. "Securitization, social identity, and democratic security: Nixon, India, and the ties that bind." *International Organization* 66.01 (2012): 63-93; Dafoe, Allan, John R. Oneal, and Bruce Russett. "The democratic peace: Weighing the evidence and cautious inference." *International Studies Quarterly* 57.1 (2013): 201-214.

²¹ Brown, Michael Edward, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller. *Debating the democratic peace*. MIT Press, 1996.

²² Layne, Christopher. "Kant or cant: The myth of the democratic peace." *International security* 19.2 (1994): 5-49.

²³ Rosato, Sebastian. "The flawed logic of democratic peace theory." *American Political Science Review* 97.04 (2003): 585-602.

resolution and do not treat one another with trust and respect when their interests clash. Similarly, in the case of the institutional logic, democratic leaders are not especially accountable to peace-loving publics or pacific interest groups, democracies are not particularly slow to mobilize or incapable of surprise attack, and open political competition offers no guarantee that a democracy will reveal private information about its level of resolve (Rosato 2003, 588).²⁴

Some have suggested that socio-cultural similarity and political alignment, rather than regime type per se can account for some of the findings within the Democratic Peace.²⁵ Hayes²⁶, for example, finds that democratic social identity—arising out of domestic political structures and norms—conditions the policy options available to leaders. Tomz and Weeks find experimental evidence of democratic identification reducing threat perception among respondents in the US and UK.²⁷ While the myriad debates surrounding the democratic-peace thesis are far from settled, scholars agree that democracies are not more peaceful absent a democratic counterpart. We would still, however, expect democracies' social identity to meaningfully inform their behavior toward autocratic regimes. While this body of research usually focuses on how shared democratic identity mitigates the perception of threat,²⁸ in the following sections I show how social identity predisposes democratic elites to perceive threats from certain non-

²⁴ Ibid, 588

²⁵ See also Geva, Nehemia, and D. Christopher Hanson. "Cultural similarity, foreign policy actions, and regime perception: An experimental study of international cues and democratic peace." *Political Psychology* 20.4 (1999): 803-827; Johns, Robert, and Graeme AM Davies. "Democratic peace or clash of civilizations? Target states and support for war in Britain and the United States." *The Journal of Politics* 74.4 (2012): 1038-1052; and McDonald, Patrick J. "Great powers, hierarchy, and endogenous regimes: Rethinking the domestic causes of peace." *International Organization* 69.3 (2015): 557-588.

²⁶ Hayes 2012

²⁷ Tomz, Michael R., and Jessica LP Weeks. "Public opinion and the democratic peace." *American political science review* 107.4 (2013): 849-865.

²⁸ Wendt, Alexander. *Social theory of international politics*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

democratic regimes as especially acute. If the categories of democracy and autocracy are not merely academic constructs, but in fact correspond to social categories in the world, it stands to reason that threat perception operates differently across categories than it does within them.²⁹ As Risse-Kappen argued, “The proposition that authoritarian regimes are potential aggressors given their domestic structure of oppression and violence can be easier reconciled with the empirical data, if it is not taken as a quasi-objective finding, but as a *perception* by democratic systems.”³⁰

To carefully assess democratic leaders’ perceptions of authoritarian states, regime type needs to be disaggregated from its routinely dichotomous treatment. A wave of recent work has started to do just that, importing finer distinctions from comparative politics into the realm of international relations.³¹ Perhaps most prominently, Jessica Weeks disaggregated the category of non-democracy based on the key domestic institutions of states, focusing on how different institutional configurations shape the conflict propensity and bargaining prowess of different types of authoritarian regimes.³² These studies have advanced our understanding of authoritarian foreign policy and illuminated variation in behavior produced by different institutional dynamics and personal characteristics of leaders otherwise broadly construed as simply “non-democratic.” However, this literature has not, to date, dealt with how the behavior of

²⁹ See Owen, John M. *Liberal peace, liberal war: American politics and international security*. Cornell University Press, 2000 and Wendt, Alexander. *Social theory of international politics*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

³⁰ Risse-Kappen, Thomas. "Democratic peace—warlike democracies? A social constructivist interpretation of the liberal argument." *European Journal of International Relations* 1.4 (1995): 503, emphasis added

³¹ See for example Horowitz, Michael C., Allan C. Stam, and Cali M. Ellis. *Why leaders fight*. Cambridge University Press, 2015 and Parish, Randall, and Mark Peceny. "Kantian liberalism and the collective defense of democracy in Latin America." *Journal of Peace Research* 39.2 (2002): 229-250.

³² See Weeks, Jessica L. "Autocratic audience costs: Regime type and signaling resolve." *International Organization* 62.1 (2008): 35-64 and Weeks, Jessica L. "Strongmen and straw men: Authoritarian regimes and the initiation of international conflict." *American Political Science Review* 106.02 (2012): 326-347.

different types autocratic regimes is shaped by their relationship with democratic states. This project builds on these theoretical developments but shifts the focus from the domestic characteristics of regimes to how these relationships are shaped by the mutual construction of identities, and, more importantly, by the perceptions of key democratic great powers. In other words, just as the democratic peace phenomenon rests not just on the internal characteristics of democracies, but on how their shared identities shape their interaction, I propose that the especially conflictual relations between democracies and non-democracies can be better be explained with reference to their mutual understandings of one another. The way in which democratic states come to understand and relate to different types of autocratic regimes is in turn shaped by certain biases and heuristics common to how individuals process information, but is also deeply shaped by the socio-cultural environment, particular narratives about autocrats and conflict, and the history of democratic-autocratic interaction. The next two sections focus on these two elements, cognitive and social, that shape perceptions of threat and the inclination to resort to force.

Cognitive Processes

In this section, I will illustrate how psychological biases can augment threat. Specifically, I argue common biases predispose states to perceive threats from individual opponents as more acute.

The first step in understanding how democracies relate to different types of authoritarian states is to explore how states arrive at particular judgments regarding the threats different states pose. International Relations scholars have investigated how

relative capabilities,³³ technology and geography,³⁴ reputation and credibility,³⁵ aggressive intentions,³⁶ the offense/defense balance,³⁷ and the very structure of the international system affect threat.³⁸ I follow scholars in political psychology in emphasizing that distinct *perceptions* of opponents' intentions, character, and capabilities motivate threat. In *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* Robert Jervis introduced a framework to examine the effect of perception on foreign policy.³⁹ Jervis's text was perhaps the most influential in bringing political psychology into the mainstream of international relations theory. Following Jervis, I examine how psychological biases affect leaders' perceptions of threats in their international environment.

Rational-choice frameworks face significant limitations in explaining threat and are not sufficient to explain democratic leaders' predisposition to initiate conflict with personalist regimes. Leader behavior is inconsistent and cognitive limitations in processing lead people to take shortcuts.⁴⁰ While some scholars maintain that it is possible to usefully model conflict as the result of bargaining problems among purely rational actors,⁴¹ these models cannot account for the frequency of democratic-personalist

³³ Waltz, Kenneth N. *Theory of international politics*. Waveland Press, 2010.

³⁴ Van Evera, Stephen. "Offense, defense, and the causes of war." *International Security* 22.4 (1998): 5-43.

³⁵ Schelling Thomas, C. *The strategy of conflict*. Harvard University 1980 (1960): 13; Press, Daryl Grayson. *Calculating credibility: How leaders assess military threats*. Cornell University Press, 2005; and Snyder, Jack, and Erica D. Borghard. "The cost of empty threats: A penny, not a pound." *American Political Science Review* 105.3 (2011): 437-456.

³⁶ Walt, Stephen M. *The origins of alliance*. Cornell University Press, 1987.

³⁷ Glaser, Charles L., and C. Kaufmann. "What is the offense-defense balance and how can we measure it?." *International security* 22.4 (1998): 44-82 and Van Evera, Stephen. "Offense, defense, and the causes of war." *International Security* 22.4 (1998): 5-43.

³⁸ Waltz, Kenneth N. *Theory of international politics*. Waveland Press, 2010 and Mearsheimer, John J. *The tragedy of great power politics*. WW Norton & Company, 2001.

³⁹ Jervis, Robert. "Perception and Misperception in International Politics." *Princeton University Press* (1976).

⁴⁰ Goldgeier, James M., and Philip E. Tetlock. "Psychology and international relations theory." *Annual Review of Political Science* 4.1 (2001): 67-92

⁴¹ e.g. Schelling Thomas, C. *The strategy of conflict*. Harvard University 1980 (1960): 13; Fearon, James D. "Rationalist explanations for war." *International organization* 49.3 (1995): 379-414; Wagner, R. Harrison. *War and the state: The theory of international politics*. University of Michigan Press, 2007; Slantchev,

conflict.⁴² Rational choice theories assume that individuals' preferences are transitive and that individuals update their priors in accordance with new information. However, psychological studies have indicated that the evidence for the transitivity of preferences is at best mixed and that the limited capacity of short-term memory, long-term memory's reliance on initial information, cognitive biases in processing information, and human reliance on heuristics for dealing with complex problems all call into question the appropriateness of standard rationalist models of human behavior.⁴³

More to the point, some of these heuristics and particularities of human cognition may shape how leaders perceive threats stemming from different types of regimes. In particular, the vividness effect and attribution bias predispose democratic leaders to perceive *personalist* adversaries as more threatening. Heuristics operate as cognitive shortcuts, allowing individuals to synthesize large amounts of new information—the more challenging or complex the task at hand, the more likely the decision-maker will rely on heuristics.⁴⁴ For example, individuals will be more likely to weigh initial information more heavily (anchoring) than subsequent data and this initial reference point

Branislav L., and Ahmer Tarar. "Mutual optimism as a rationalist explanation of war." *American Journal of Political Science* 55.1 (2011): 135-148; and Debs, Alexandre, and Nuno P. Monteiro. "Known unknowns: Power shifts, uncertainty, and war." *International Organization* 68.1 (2014): 1-31.

⁴² Walt, Stephen M. "Rigor or rigor mortis? Rational choice and security studies." *International Security* 23.4 (1999): 5-48; Kirshner, Jonathan. "Rationalist explanations for war?" *Security Studies* 10.1 (2000): 143-150; Lake, David A. "Two cheers for bargaining theory: Assessing rationalist explanations of the Iraq War." *International Security* 35.3 (2010); Mitzen, Jennifer, and Randall L. Schweller. "Knowing the unknown unknowns: Misplaced certainty and the onset of war." *Security Studies* 20.1 (2011): 2-35; Lake, David A. "Theory is dead, long live theory: The end of the Great Debates and the rise of eclecticism in International Relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 19.3 (2013): 567-587

⁴³ Cavagnaro, Daniel R., and Clinton P. Davis-Stober. "Transitive in our preferences, but transitive in different ways: An analysis of choice variability." *Decision* 1.2 (2014): 102; Regenwetter, Michel, Jason Dana, and Clinton P. Davis-Stober. "Transitivity of preferences." *Psychological review* 118.1 (2011): 42; Tversky, Amos, and Daniel Kahneman. "Availability: A heuristic for judging frequency and probability." *Cognitive psychology* 5.2 (1973): 207-232; and Yarhi-Milo, Keren. *Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations*. Princeton University Press, 2014

⁴⁴ Redlawsk, David P., and Richard R. Lau. "Behavioral decision-making." *The Oxford handbook of political psychology* (2013), 145

will unduly inform expectations.⁴⁵ People are also inclined to interpret past experiences or behavior as being indicative of future trends (representative heuristic). As we know, lessons of the past shape how we conceptualize our opponents and organizationally and materially how states prepare for conflict.⁴⁶ One heuristic particularly relevant for threat assessments is the availability heuristic, “Judging frequency, probability and causality by how accessible or available concrete examples are in memory or how easy it is to generate a plausible scenario...”⁴⁷ Accordingly, individuals may predict an event to be more likely if they are able to come up with examples.⁴⁸ For example, when reading coverage about a recent crime wave in a neighboring city, one may be inclined to make the assumption that they are less safe in their neighborhood, or that crime is on the rise more broadly. This may in fact be correct or be in direct contradiction to recent trends, but it is the consistent exposure to news coverage regarding the crime wave that makes us more susceptible to believe it is on the rise. Framing can produce similar misperceptions.

Studies have illustrated that framing affects individual decision-making, altering the values associated with different options. As Chong argues, “[there’s] pervasive evidence that alternative (and sometimes logically equivalent) descriptions of the same policy can produce significantly different responses.”⁴⁹ This has been illustrated in the work on prospect theory, which holds that human beings are more sensitive to relative

⁴⁵ Furnham, Adrian, and Hua Chu Boo. "A literature review of the anchoring effect." *The journal of socio-economics* 40.1 (2011): 35-42.

⁴⁶ Khong, Yuen Foong. *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*. Princeton University Press, 1992 and Paul, Christopher. *Marines on the Beach: The Politics of US Military Intervention Decision Making*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008.

⁴⁷ Redlawsk, David P., and Richard R. Lau. "Behavioral decision-making." *The Oxford handbook of political psychology* (2013), 138

⁴⁸ Tversky, Amos, and Daniel Kahneman. "Availability: A heuristic for judging frequency and probability." *Cognitive psychology* 5.2 (1973): 207-232.

⁴⁹ Chong, Dennis. "Degrees of rationality in politics." *The Oxford handbook of political psychology*. 2013

losses than gains.⁵⁰ For example would expect policy-makers to be more dubious of a mission that is framed as having a twenty percent failure rate than the same mission framed as having an eighty percent success rate. Frames can also affect decision-making by employing tangible or salient the examples. The vividness effect, studied in economics, psychology, and political science, explores how the tangibility of information affects decision-making.⁵¹ In particular, information that is perceived as more concrete will likely be weighed more heavily.⁵² McGraw and Dolan, for example, found through a series of experiments that the *personification* of a state produces stronger attitudinal responses.⁵³ I argue, following this research, that information regarding an *individual* adversary, or an opponent regime that features a personalist leader, will be more salient and thus weighted more heavily than discussions about a de-personalized state.⁵⁴ Another bias that facilitates leaders' concentration on an individual opponent is the fundamental attribution error—disregarding structure or context and evoking the idea that an individual is personally responsible.⁵⁵ It is easier to disregard structural variables

⁵⁰ (Levy, Jack S. "An introduction to prospect theory." *Political Psychology* (1992): 171-186; Levy, Jack S. "Prospect theory, rational choice, and international relations." *International Studies Quarterly* 41.1 (1997): 87-112; and McDermott, Rose. *Political psychology in international relations*. University of Michigan Press, 2004.

⁵¹ Winterbottom, Anna, et al. "Does narrative information bias individual's decision making? A systematic review." *Social science & medicine* 67.12 (2008): 2079-2088; Chang, Chun-Tuan, and Yu-Kang Lee. "Effects of message framing, vividness congruency and statistical framing on responses to charity advertising." *International Journal of Advertising* 29.2 (2010): 195-220; De Wit, John BF, Enny Das, and Raymond Vet. "What works best: objective statistics or a personal testimonial? An assessment of the persuasive effects of different types of message evidence on risk perception." *Health Psychology* 27.1 (2008)

⁵² Yarhi-Milo, Keren. *Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations*. Princeton University Press, 2014.

⁵³ McGraw, Kathleen M., and Thomas M. Dolan. "Personifying the state: Consequences for attitude formation." *Political Psychology* 28.3 (2007): 299-327.

⁵⁴ While this project investigates how vividness can increase threat perception, other research has explored how vividness may increase empathy or support for a cause through mechanisms like the "identifiable victim effect" (Jenni and Loewenstein 1997; Kogut and Ritov 2005). Similar to the vividness effect, the identifiable victim effect argues that first person images and narratives affect people more acutely (Genevsky et al. 2013). I argue that these same biases can motivate anger toward personalist regimes.

⁵⁵ Levy, Jack S. "Applications of prospect theory to political science." *Synthese* 135.2 (2003): 226.

contributing to adversaries' bad behavior, and to blame it primarily or even solely on their inherent characteristics. The fundamental attribution error has also been shown to manifest more acutely across identity boundaries.⁵⁶ Leaders are therefore more likely to attribute fault to the personal characteristic of an adversary if they are identified as an "other" or an "outsider."⁵⁷ These biases have been shown to have their effect magnified by emotional experience.

While emotion is often discussed as independent from cognition, I follow recent scholarship in psychology arguing that emotion and cognition are interactive, constitutive parts of the same process, and separated temporally.⁵⁸ While some emotional responses seem to be hard-coded, the product of evolutionary processes over millennia, others are very much learned. What individuals fear, love, and hate is conditioned through personal and/or socio-cultural referents tied to memory. In fact, studies have found that it is often easier to recall events that carry strong emotional content.⁵⁹ According to Luo and Yu, "Overall, social distance changes our decision-making: the more self-relevant the situation is, the more emotions are involved when one makes decisions."⁶⁰ For example, as I will show in chapter four, Prime Minister Anthony Eden's personal experiences during World War II deeply affected his understanding of Gamal Abdel Nasser during the Suez Crisis of 1956. In a personal message to Indian Prime Minister Jawaharal Nehru,

⁵⁶ Mercer, Jonathan. "Emotional beliefs." *International organization* 64.1 (2010): 1-31.

⁵⁷ The compounding effects of social identity are further discussed below.

⁵⁸ Brader, Ted, and George E. Marcus. "Emotion and political psychology." *The Oxford handbook of political psychology*. 2013, 172; Luo, Jiayi, and Rongjun Yu. "Follow the heart or the head? The interactive influence model of emotion and cognition." *Frontiers in psychology* 6 (2015); and Pessoa, Luiz. "Précis on the cognitive-emotional brain." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 38 (2015).

⁵⁹ Dolcos, Florin, Alexandru D. Iordan, and Sanda Dolcos. "Neural correlates of emotion-cognition interactions: a review of evidence from brain imaging investigations." *Journal of Cognitive Psychology* 23.6 (2011): 669-694.

⁶⁰ Luo, Jiayi, and Rongjun Yu. "Follow the heart or the head? The interactive influence model of emotion and cognition." *Frontiers in psychology* 6 (2015), 678

Eden describes, “This and other high-handed actions have made the British people feel as I do that these are dictator methods reminiscent of Hitler and Mussolini. It would seem hardly surprising that we should be concerned at a man with this record having his thumb on our windpipe.”⁶¹ It would be a mistake, however, to describe Eden’s response to Nasser as simply denoting negative affect. Although affect is frequently conceptualized as simply positive or negative (good or bad emotions), neuropsychologists have identified a range of between three and eight distinct types of emotion.⁶²

Though scholarship on threat perception in International Relations usually eschews talking explicitly about emotions, it is often implicit that threat is associated closely with emotional responses such as fear (or, less often, anxiety).⁶³ Throughout Walt’s landmark study of threat perception and alliance behavior, fear is used as a synonym for perceived threat.⁶⁴ However, fear is not the only emotion involved in conflict dynamics between individuals and/or groups. Two other emotions, anger and disgust, are also commonly associated with interpersonal and intergroup aggression. I argue that democratic leaders’ decision to engage with personalist leaders is affected, in particular, by the emotions of anger and disgust. Fear, anger, and disgust can be situated under the larger class of aversion emotions, but they are associated with different effects on individual cognition and decision-making. Evolutionary psychologists have argued that disgust has evolved as a reaction to avoid toxic exposure, or dangers arising from

⁶¹ Outward Telegram from the Commonwealth Relations Office to the U.K. High Commissioner in India. Prime Minister Personal Telegram. August 12, 1956. Box APO/25/19. Prime Minister’s Personal and Political Files. Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham UK.

⁶² Crigler, Ann N. *The affect effect: Dynamics of emotion in political thinking and behavior*. University of Chicago Press, 2007.

⁶³ Buzan, Barry. *People, states & fear: an agenda for international security studies in the post-cold war era*. Ecpr Press, 2008; Tang, Shiping. "Fear in International Politics: Two Positions." *International Studies Review* 10.3 (2008): 451-471; and Weber, Cynthia. *International relations theory: a critical introduction*. Routledge, 2013

⁶⁴ Walt, Stephen M. *The origins of alliance*. Cornell University Press, 1987.

biological hazards. Most relevant for this line of inquiry, however, is disgust as a reaction to *perceived moral impurity*. Anger, on the other hand, can be thought of as a response to “rewards slipping away, but still within reach.”⁶⁵

The political and behavioral effects of fear, anger, and disgust also differ markedly. Fear tends to make individuals perceive threats as more acute, but engage in more risk-averse behavior. Although disgust and anger have been particularly difficult to disaggregate and are often identified together, they both tend to produce risk-acceptant behavior. As Brader and Marcus argue “... Anger...narrows searches to opinion-confirming sources, produce less thoughtful opinions, and inhibit accurate recall of information.”⁶⁶ Anger, therefore, affects both the depth and content of thought processes.⁶⁷ These emotions, particularly anger and disgust, affect decision-making by shaping risk propensity and broader cognitive biases. This leads me to my first hypothesis.

H₁: It is easier for democratic elites to attach antipathy to an individual leader than to a group or society.

Cognitive biases and affect make it easier to conceptualize an individual rather than an abstract group as a threat. Heuristics like anchoring, representativeness, and availability allow decision-makers to synthesize large amounts of information, but can exacerbate the true nature of the threat. Through the attribution error, decision-makers minimize structural constraints and overemphasize an opponent’s culpability.⁶⁸ In the context of a disagreement, these leaders will tend to blame adversary’s bad behavior on their internal

⁶⁵ Brader, Ted, and George E. Marcus. "Emotion and political psychology." *The Oxford handbook of political psychology*. 2013, 179

⁶⁶ *ibid* 185

⁶⁷ Lerner, Jennifer S., et al. "Emotion and decision making." *Annual Review of Psychology* 66 (2015)

⁶⁸ Levy, Jack S. "Applications of prospect theory to political science." *Synthese* 135.2 (2003): 236

character. This is additionally magnified by the vividness effect, wherein information that is more tangible will be weighed more heavily. Aversion emotions, particularly anger and disgust, reinforce these biases by affecting both the depth and content of thought processes.⁶⁹ I contend that psychological biases predispose leaders to perceive personalist leaders provide a focal point, a salient image, more evocative than abstract discussions of populations, institutional structures, or geo-strategic concerns. However, emotion and cognitive biases are not sufficient to explain why democracies engage in conflict disproportionately with personalist regimes. These cognitive processes, after all, affect the behavior of all leaders, not just those in democracies.

Social Identity of Democracies

In this section, I will illustrate that social identity is a significant variable in the construction of threat perception, and argue that the aforementioned cognitive biases are reinforced by democratic leaders' social identity.

Biases and emotions are strongly shaped by, or, more accurately, *constituted* by identity, creating variation in decision-making. Identity affects both preferences and the heuristics individuals use. Studying group identity and how it affects cognitive processes can therefore provide insight into the foreign policy decision-making of individuals socialized into particular groups.

The two lines of work informing this line of inquiry—social identity theory and political psychology—take different perspectives on how identities form and evolve. While psychological theories emphasize unconscious emulation and selection, sociological approaches focus on the internalization of rules and norms, which involve

⁶⁹ Lerner, Jennifer S., et al. "Emotion and decision making." *Annual Review of Psychology* 66 (2015)

both conscious and unconscious processes.⁷⁰ In this project, I do not take a strict position between these two explanations.⁷¹

Decision-making is conditioned by how individuals identify and situate themselves and others vis-à-vis social/structural context.⁷² Identity is "...a multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it...It is a process—identification—not a ‘thing.’”⁷³ The process of group identification occurs through socialization and is most salient during childhood and adolescence, the formative/*zeitgeist* years (17-25), and during critical or traumatic experiences. Group identities are cultivated through vehicles such as community and civic ties, family, education, religion, military and civic service and professional life. These identities are reified through discourse, but also monuments, museums, maps, textbooks, stories passed down from families, and public holidays.⁷⁴ The corresponding boundaries of a given group identity are reinforced as the group produces constitutive norms and rules that govern membership; i.e. shared goals and social purpose; and relational comparisons defining what it is and what it is not.⁷⁵ However through contestation and interpretation, individuals re-determine the corresponding group identity’s boundaries—a process that

⁷⁰ Deaux, Kay, et al. “Connecting the person to the social: The functions of social identification.” TR Tyler, RM Kramer, & OP John (Eds.), *The psychology of the social self*, 1999.

⁷¹ For example, while a collective trauma or experience can produce a strong emotional referent for a group, so too can the conscious adoption of religious rules and corresponding proscribed behavior closely tie individuals to a group.

⁷² Tajfel, Henri. "Social identity and intergroup behaviour." *Information (International Social Science Council)* 13.2 (1974): 65-93.

⁷³ Jenkins, Richard. *Social identity*. Routledge, 2014, 5

⁷⁴ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso Books, 2006.

⁷⁵ Abdelal, Rawi, ed. *Measuring identity: A guide for social scientists*. Cambridge University Press, 2009, 19

pushes and pulls it in different directions over time.⁷⁶ Although there is autonomy within the socialization process and identities are fuzzy, they are not infinitely malleable. As Kate McNamara has put it, “We are active agents, creative and causal, but we also navigate a world full of social institutions that structure what we see around us.”⁷⁷ Each person occupies numerous group identities such as American, White, Georgetown student, and/or Steelers fan and these identities can be conflictual, hierarchical, nested, or parallel. We would, however, expect different identities to be activated in different contexts. Leaders, similarly, occupy different identities, all of which inform their behavior to different degrees in different contexts. However, much like we would expect those elements of an individual’s identity as a Steelers fan to be particularly salient while attending a game, we would also expect leaders’ social identity as a foreign-policy decision-maker to be pertinent during an international crisis.

Central to identifying oneself is differentiating one’s person or group from others by acts of categorizing. This is foundational to cognition as immediately upon encountering new information, individuals attempt to classify it into familiar categories.⁷⁸ As Brewer explains, this functions in two ways: “First, when a group identity is engaged, the construal of self extends beyond the individual person to a more inclusive social unit. The boundaries between self and other group members are eclipsed by the greater salience of the boundaries between in-group and out-group.”⁷⁹ These relational elements

⁷⁶ Waldstreicher, David. *In the midst of perpetual fetes: The making of American nationalism, 1776-1820*. University of North Carolina Press, 1997 and Zelinsky, Wilbur. "Nation into state." *The Shifting Symbolic Foundations of American Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, NC, and London, 1988)

⁷⁷ McNamara, Kathleen R. *The Politics of Everyday Europe: Constructing Authority in the European Union*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2015, 26

⁷⁸ Redlawsk, David P., and Richard R. Lau. "Behavioral decision-making." *The Oxford handbook of political psychology* (2013), 137

⁷⁹ Brewer, Marilynn B. "The many faces of social identity: Implications for political psychology." *Political psychology* 22.1 (2001): 119

produce competitive behavior with and the devaluation of “out-groups.” If we accept democracy as an identity, we would expect it to condition how leaders interpret action from those outside the “in-group”. The contours of the “in” or “out” may change in different contexts and over time. However, even with these shifts, identity remains fundamentally relational. As Hogg puts it, “Because groups only exist in relation to other groups, they derive their descriptive and evaluative properties, and thus their social meaning, in relation to these other groups.”⁸⁰ Identity is fundamentally relational and membership within a particular group identity often produces a normative preference for one’s identity over others.⁸¹ A natural by-product of any group identity is the tendency toward in-group bias or a propensity to judge those within one’s own group as superior. As McDermott argues, “This identification with the group conveys to its members feelings of security, status, and affiliation... Even when explicit conflict with other groups does not exist objectively, feeling superior to another group (on whatever basis) can increase in-group members’ sense of self-esteem and belonging.”⁸² The shared goals of a group guide decisions in relation to the out-group and condition allocations of power and status.⁸³ In-group bias serves a natural, evolutionary purpose. However, those identified as the out-group are vulnerable to the understanding the in-group has of them.

If humans are cognitive misers, identity provides an emotional coherence—a roadmap for classification and categorization. Identity is therefore instructive, allowing

⁸⁰ Hogg, Michael A. "A social identity theory of leadership." *Personality and social psychology review* 5.3 (2001): 184-200.

⁸¹ Barnett, Michael. "Culture, strategy and foreign policy change: Israel's road to Oslo." *European Journal of International Relations* 5.1 (1999): 5-36 and Abdelal, Rawi, ed. *Measuring identity: A guide for social scientists*. Cambridge University Press, 2009

⁸² McDermott, Rose. *Political psychology in international relations*. University of Michigan Press, 2004, 108

⁸³ Abdelal, Rawi, ed. *Measuring identity: A guide for social scientists*. Cambridge University Press, 2009

us to make sense of both complex situations and our everyday lives.⁸⁴ As Jervis explains, “The process of drawing inferences in light of logic and past experiences that produces cognitive consistency also causes people to fit incoming information into pre-existing beliefs and to perceive what they expect to be there.”⁸⁵ Group social narratives give guidance in identifying and classifying new information by providing vivid examples of people and events. Liu and Hilton explain, “Historical representation can be used as a means for positioning the identity of another group in relation to one’s own.”⁸⁶ Individuals rely on historical examples that correspond to their group’s social narrative. In particular, historical narratives of wars and revolution that are either experienced first hand or have been passed down through collective memory are particularly salient resources. These analogies are used to define the situation, the scope of the challenge, and provide prescriptions. Liu and Hilton continue, “Social representations of history contain charters, buttressed by narratives that designate heroes and villains, create roles and confer legitimacy and prescribe policies, social representations thus include descriptive and prescriptive components that include but are richer than simple stereotypes and self-images.”⁸⁷ When leaders rely on these historical analogies, however, they do not recreate the minutiae of the previous event and, as Khong has illustrated, foreign policy decision-makers are not particularly good at picking analogies.⁸⁸ I argue

⁸⁴ Homer-Dixon, Thomas, et al. "The conceptual structure of social disputes: Cognitive-affective maps as a tool for conflict analysis and resolution." *SAGE Open* 4.1 (2014)

⁸⁵ Jervis, Robert. "Perception and Misperception in International Politics." *Princeton University Press* (1976), 143

⁸⁶ Liu, James H., and Denis J. Hilton. "How the past weighs on the present: Social representations of history and their role in identity politics." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 44.4 (2005): 545. See also Condor (1996) and Reicher and Hopkins (2001).

⁸⁷ Liu, James H., and Denis J. Hilton. "How the past weighs on the present: Social representations of history and their role in identity politics." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 44.4 (2005): 547

⁸⁸ Khong, Yuen Foong. *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*. Princeton University Press, 1992.

that the social narratives and memories of leaders in democracies compound psychological biases predisposing them to perceive personalist regimes as threats.

For most quantitative studies, a state's "Polity" score identifies it as a democracy. On an aggregate scale from -10 to 10, those with a score between 6 and 10 are considered democracies.⁸⁹ According to Marshall et al. "The operational indicator of Democracy is derived from codings of the competitiveness of political participation the openness and competitiveness of executive recruitment, and constraints on the chief executive."⁹⁰ Other attempts to operationalize democracy emphasize institutional or procedural qualities such as Cheibub et al., Boix et al., and Coppedge et al.⁹¹ While these data sets have attempted to standardize a threshold of democracy through aggregate indicators, significant questions regarding the conceptualization of "democracy" as an objective, measurable construct persist.⁹² Beyond calling into question the applicability of these measures across time and issues of measurement bias and endogeneity,⁹³ some scholars have emphasized the importance of how these categories are socially constructed. They note that democracy is a contested concept with broader currency in political discourse.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Here I reference Polity IV Codebook. There are, however, some substantive changes between Polity III and IV. See Marshall, Monty G., Keith Jagers, and Ted Robert Gurr. "Polity IV Data Series Version 2010." College Park, MD: University of Maryland (2010) and Jagers, Keith, and Ted Robert Gurr. "Tracking democracy's third wave with the Polity III data." *Journal of Peace Research* 32.4 (1995): 469-482.

⁹⁰ Marshall, Monty G., Keith Jagers, and Ted Robert Gurr. "Polity IV Data Series Version 2010." College Park, MD: University of Maryland. (2010), 13

⁹¹ Cheibub, José Antonio, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Raymond Vreeland. "Democracy and dictatorship revisited." *Public choice* 143.1-2 (2010): 67-101; Boix, Carles, Michael Miller, and Sebastian Rosato. "A complete data set of political regimes, 1800–2007." *Comparative Political Studies* 46.12 (2013): 1523-1554 and Coppedge, Michael, et al. "Varieties of Democracy: Codebook v4." *Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project* (2015)

⁹² Munck, Gerardo L., and Jay Verkuilen. "Conceptualizing and measuring democracy: Evaluating alternative indices." *Comparative political studies* 35.1 (2002): 5-34.

⁹³ Oren, Ido. "The subjectivity of the "democratic" peace: Changing US perceptions of imperial Germany." *International Security* (1995): 150.

⁹⁴ Dahl, Robert *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 1-32 and Schmitter Phillippe C. and Terry Lynn Karl, "What Democracy Is ... and Is Not," in *The Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 75-88

This project is focused on group identity rather than regime-type per se. While I do not deny that the unit-level, institutional features of regimes may have behavioral effects, democracy is more than an analytical category. It is an object of political, as well as scholarly, contestation, and a salient feature of social identity that takes different forms around the world. This manuscript will not define the exact parameters of democracy, but rather argues that it constitutes a particular group identity. As Owen explains with regard to Liberalism, it “is first a worldview, a set of fundamental categories through which individuals understand themselves and the world. It shapes individuals’ conceptions of their identities and interests by telling them of what human nature and the good life consists.”⁹⁵ If democracy constitutes an identity, who is the out-group that individuals within that group identify themselves in opposition to?

Democratic identity has often been deployed discursively as a standard of civilization.^{96,97} As one of the thinkers most commonly associated with the idea of the democratic peace and other optimistic or utopic views of international order, Kant offers justifications for a civilizing tutelage that is consonant with the thinking in his time. In his theory we can identify not only a hierarchical order but also a kind of missionary zeal consistent with other civilizing projects. He explains, “Reason itself does not work instinctively, but requires trial, practice, and *instruction* in order to gradually progress from one level of insight to another.”⁹⁸ As opposed to being inevitable, enlightenment is

⁹⁵ Owen, John M. *Liberal peace, liberal war: American politics and international security*. Cornell University Press, 2000, 19

⁹⁶ See Bowden, Brett. "In the name of progress and peace: the “standard of civilization” and the universalizing project." *Alternatives* 29.1 (2004): 43-68 and Hall, Martin, and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, eds. *Civilizational Identity: The Production and Reproduction of "civilizations" in International Relations*. Macmillan, 2007

⁹⁷ I am defining civilization as a weakly bounded concept that refers to material and social processes and outcomes.

⁹⁸ Kant, Immanuel. *Practical philosophy*. Cambridge University Press, 1999, 37

conditional. Kant argues, “Men work themselves gradually out of barbarity if only intentional artifices are not made to hold them in it.”⁹⁹ In Kant’s framework the natural state is one of war, and the political contract offers the unique possibility to progress the situation of men toward enlightenment and peace, “Purposeless savagery held back the development of the capacities of our race but finally, through the evil into which it plunged mankind, it forced the race to renounce this condition and to enter into a civic order.”¹⁰⁰ Kant argues that *republics* (though not, importantly, democracies) are systematically organized to better facilitate perpetual peace between nations than those states with a different political constitution. He describes in “Perpetual Peace” and the “Categorical Imperative” that this instruction or guidance is both a divine directive and a responsibility proscribed by reason. This hierarchical model depicts the unenlightened as synonymous with the populations of non-democracies. The unenlightened in this regard, are very similar to the barbarians discussed by Salter; he explains, “Barbarian, thus, is an identity-constructing, exclusive term that defines the basis of community on language and political participation, not on nation, race, or lineage.”¹⁰¹

This framework is deeply embedded in both Western European and US identity. As Suzuki explains, “European states had a moral duty to spread the blessings of European civilization, by force and outright colonization if necessary. This gave the mode of interaction which applied to ‘barbarous’ non-European polities a decidedly coercive, expansionist character.”^{102,103} This civilizational discourse is invariably

⁹⁹ *ibid* 313

¹⁰⁰ *ibid* 3

¹⁰¹ Salter, Mark B. "Not Waiting for the Barbarians." *Civilizational Identity*. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2007. 82

¹⁰² Suzuki, Shogo. *Civilization and empire: China and Japan's encounter with European international society*. Routledge, 2009, 2

¹⁰³ Monten, Jonathan. "The roots of the Bush doctrine: Power, nationalism, and democracy promotion in

teleological, with democracy representing the natural end for those now authoritarian states. Aho describes this reasoning, “Primitive societies—warlike, subsistence-based, grounded on magic and superstition, and ruled by tyrants—must and will evolve into scientific, peaceful, industrialized democracies, or they will disappear altogether.”¹⁰⁴ Rather than strictly describing institutions and procedures, democracy came to be identified as a moral or normative good. As Staerke et al. describe, “The ‘democracy as value’ research program has demonstrated that democracy is an ideological belief system that provides intrinsic value to democratic individuals, groups, and institutions, therefore granting legitimacy to their actions whatever the nature and moral justification of that action may actually be.”¹⁰⁵ Autocratic regimes, alternatively became connoted with immoral, and to represent the “other” that reaffirmed the democratic self. Image theory can clarify how this image of autocratic regimes affects democratic leader’s decision-making.

Image theory explores the particular images policy-makers use to identify their adversaries based on perceptions of relative power, intentions, and political culture. Herrmann explains; “The pictures people have of other countries become central building blocks in their identification of the threats and opportunities their country faces. These images of others can become assumptions that are so taken for granted that they produce routinized habits that define basic parameters of what is seen as in a country’s interest or contrary to it...”¹⁰⁶ The three images in Herrmann’s framework most relevant to how

US strategy." *International Security* 29.4 (2005): 112-156.

¹⁰⁴ Aho, James Alfred. *This thing of darkness: A sociology of the enemy*. University of Washington Press, 1994, 8

¹⁰⁵ Staerke, Christian, et al. "Global value perceptions: The legitimising functions of western representations of democracy." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 45.7 (2015), 897

¹⁰⁶ Herrmann, Richard K. "Perceptions and image theory in international relations." *The Oxford handbook of political psychology*. 2013, 337

democracies conceptualize their personalist counterparts are “colony”, “barbarian”, and “rogue.” Democracies’ image of their personalist allies follows the colony image, represented as inferior in culture and capabilities and possessing benign intentions. Alternatively, when democracies conceptualize personalist regimes as a threat their image is consistent with that of the barbarian or rogue. The *barbarian* is superior in capability, inferior in culture, and possessing aggressive intentions. Similarly, the rogue image is inferior in culture and possesses aggressive intentions, but is inferior in capability. It is relatively easy, however, for the regimes conceived of in a colony images to shift to a barbarian image. Herrmann continues,

The theory of motivated images predicts that imagery can change quite dramatically and quickly as a function of the other’s willingness to cooperate. This is different than the prediction of image persistence that is common in the cognitive theories...In the colony stereotype leaders featured as good or bad guys can also be flipped around quickly depending on their willingness to cooperate.¹⁰⁷

These images are not those of equals. The extractive, colony image is premised on a small group of leaders who are corrupt, but pliable. Cooperation with personalist regimes, rather than based on shared identity is often premised on goal interdependence. When, personalist leaders cease to be pliable or the goals are no longer attainable or of concern, democratic leader’s perception of their autocratic counterparts can shift from the colony to the barbarian image.

Over time, individual leaders rather than states or populations, have become emblematic of the barbarian image. Salter describes a similar phenomenon in the concept of strategic individuation. He defines strategic individualization as “the targeting of

¹⁰⁷ *ibid* 352

individuals by American statecraft. Individual bodies that stand in for the ideas they are taken to represent: terror, anti-Americanism, fundamentalism, and barbarism.”¹⁰⁸ This makes intuitive sense: the great “evils” of history are often personified—Genghis Khan, Attila the Hun, Napoleon, Hitler, Mao, Stalin, Pol Pot, Saddam, Bin Laden. However, while Salter argues that this tactic is strategic, I argue that it is the byproduct of leaders’ genuinely held beliefs. This focus on personalist leaders is not a “humanization” of threat, but rather indicative of the power of a salient focal point.

The identification of personalism as particularly anathema to democracy is a process that hardened in the aftermath of World War II. In the 1930’s, following the Great Depression, U.S. concerns were focused on the potential for authoritarianism to take hold domestically.¹⁰⁹ However, World War II set in motion a variety of shifts where-in democratic elites began to identify dictators in particular, rather than their societies or cultures more broadly, as their natural opponents. First, democratic leaders and societies began to shift the blame for authoritarian misconduct from the population to the leaders. As Alpers describes,

One meaningful trend in US understandings of totalitarianism had taken place during World War II, a trend that was reflected in Chamberlin’s growing acceptance of the goodness of the Russian people. Whereas the most important American views of totalitarianism before Pearl Harbor had tended to see masses themselves as responsible for these regimes, during the war blame shifted to smaller leadership groups, albeit with some vagueness about how best to

¹⁰⁸ Salter, Mark B. "Not Waiting for the Barbarians." *Civilizational Identity*. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2007. 89

¹⁰⁹ Alpers, Benjamin L. *Dictators, democracy, and American public culture: envisioning the totalitarian enemy, 1920s-1950s*. University of North Carolina Press, 2003

characterize them.¹¹⁰

While Alpers focuses specifically on totalitarianism, I argue that this trend characterizes democracies' perceptions of all autocratic regimes. The idea that populations are victims of dictators, and not just in need, but deserving of protection, is relatively new. Martha Finnemore describes the evolution in the norms of humanitarian intervention, and particularly how populations other than white Christian Western Europeans came to be seen as human and worthy of protection.¹¹¹ These norms became institutionalized—although by no means consistently enforced—in the post war period through the United Nations and later the International Criminal Court. This normative evolution supported the perception that individual dictators themselves were democracy's natural opponents.

Secondly, populations' unprecedented exposure to images and narratives surrounding the atrocities committed during the WWII increased the threat associated with dictators. As Michael Hunt describes, "The ghosts of Hitler lying in wait at Munich and Tojo plotting the attack on Pearl Harbor haunted the memory of cold warriors and were regularly conjured up to emphasize the dangers of unpreparedness and appeasement. Concessions to the ambitions of such aggressors would only inflame them to commit greater outrages."¹¹² Memories of WWII, and the genocide in particular, have been institutionalized in museums and statues in both the US and Western Europe.¹¹³ These narratives "reconstruct the autobiographical past and imagine the future in such a

¹¹⁰ *ibid* 252

¹¹¹ Finnemore, Martha. "Constructing norms of humanitarian intervention." *The culture of national security: Norms and identity in world politics* (1996)

¹¹² Hunt, Michael H. *Ideology and US foreign policy*. Yale University Press, 2009, 151

¹¹³ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso Books, 2006.

way as to provide a person's life with some degree of unity, purpose, and meaning."¹¹⁴ War is a particularly salient event affecting the cognitive processes and memories of leaders.¹¹⁵ Generations of leaders who served in WWII were deeply affected by both their combat and diplomatic experiences. As Khong argues, "The events of the 1930's were to have a profound effect on an entire generation of American policymakers. From Harry Truman to George Bush, American presidents have consistently thought of the 1930's as they contemplated military action against the nation's major adversaries."¹¹⁶ The horrors of WWII did not shrink from collective memory, but rather came to occupy a central role in the collective memory of these democratic states.¹¹⁷ World War II shaped those who experienced it directly, those who were in their formative years during the conflict, and generations after through the institutionalization of the conflict in public memory. In the 1950s and 1960s Hitler and Mussolini were more than abstract analogies for American and Western European decision-makers, but salient *emotional* memories of death and destruction.

The psychological biases discussed in the previous section, which all persons are predisposed to, have been shown to manifest more acutely across group boundaries. Individuals are therefore more likely to attribute fault to an adversary if they are identified as an "other" or an "outsider." Due to the augmenting affects of social identity

¹¹⁴ McAdams, Dan P., and Kate C. McLean. "Narrative identity." *Current directions in psychological science* 22.3 (2013): 233

¹¹⁵ Liu and Hilton found in their research that people identify wars as the most important events in history arguing, "World War II is the closest thing the human species has to a hegemonic representation of human history. See Liu, James H., and Denis J. Hilton. "How the past weighs on the present: Social representations of history and their role in identity politics." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 44.4 (2005):544

¹¹⁶ Khong, Yuen Foong. *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*. Princeton University Press, 1992, 175

¹¹⁷ Alpers, Benjamin L. *Dictators, democracy, and American public culture: envisioning the totalitarian enemy, 1920s-1950s*. University of North Carolina Press, 2003, 276

dynamics, I expect

H2: Leaders and other elites within democracies normatively identify themselves in opposition to personalist dictators. This leads to heightened threat perception enabling democratic elites to rationalize coercive action against personalist dictatorships

Democratic elites recognize personalist leaders as the “other” that affirms the democratic “self.” This compounds the aforementioned cognitive biases, predisposing democratic leaders to conflict with regimes perceived as personalist. Democratic identity has conditioned the moral and political perspectives of elites through narratives of autocratic hostility and historical experiences in the 20th century.

Research Design

In a given encounter between *State A*, a democracy, and *State B* an autocracy, the leadership of *State A* (*Leaders A*) perceive *State B* as *Threat Y*. *Leaders A* threat level is determined by their previous experience with and understanding of *State B*'s character, intentions, and capabilities. At the beginning of this encounter, *Leaders A* are presented with new information regarding *State B*. *Leaders A* process this new information, through the lens of their social identity. Identity provides *Leaders A* with referents to categorize and situate this new information, motivating particularly biases, heuristics, and emotional responses. This new information triggers referents that facilitate *Leaders A* new classification of *State B* as a personalist regime. This classification of *State B* as personalist causes *Leaders A* to recalibrate the associated threat of *State B*—again processed through the lens of *Leaders A* social identity, and reaffirmed by psychological

biases. This increases *Leaders A* threat of *State B* to *Threat Y+1*. Although this process is happening almost simultaneously, it can be further simplified into two steps. In the first step (Table 1.1), democratic leaders re-classify their opponent as personalist. In the second, (Table 1.2) democratic leaders re-classify the corresponding threat. Within this framework, it is not that the regime structure of *State B* has changed, or even that the leaders in *State A* did not acknowledge *State B* as an authoritarian regime prior to this interaction. Rather, it is the democratic leaders' (State A) shift in psychological and sociological frame regarding State B, that moves *State B* from the colony to the barbarian image. Therefore, *ceteris paribus*, when democratic elites classify an opponent as a personalist regime, their social identity will reinforce psychological biases producing an increase in threat perception.

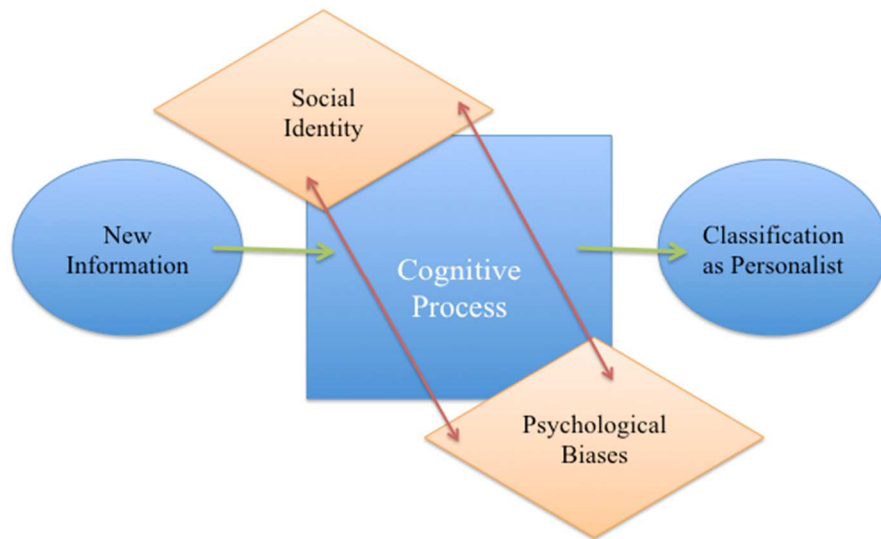


Figure 1.1. Reclassification of Adversary

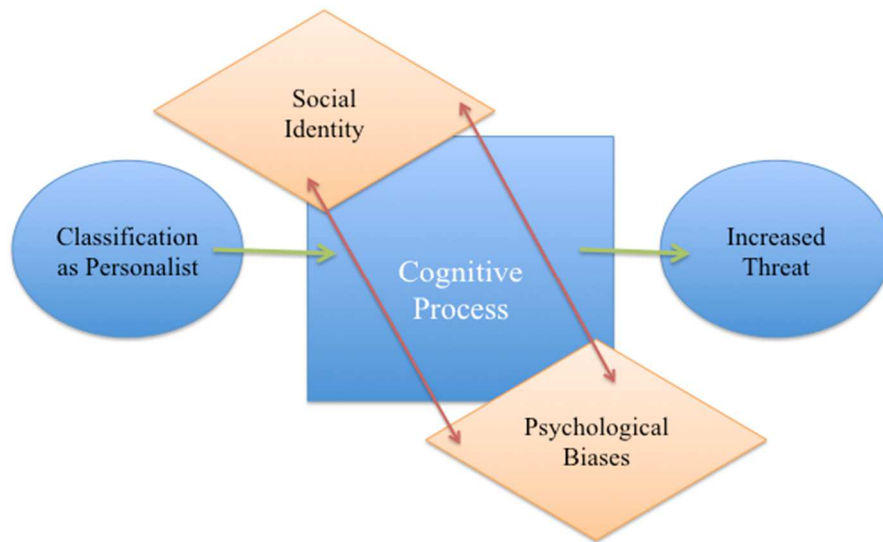


Figure 1.2. Reclassification of Threat

I expect

H₁: It is easier for democratic elites to attach antipathy to an individual leader than to a group or society.

H₂: Leaders and other elites within democracies normatively identify themselves in opposition to personalist dictators. This leads to heightened threat perception enabling democratic elites to rationalize coercive action against personalist dictatorships

However, there are several alternative hypotheses that could plausibly explain the frequency of conflict between democracies and personalist regimes. First,

H_{a1}: Democracies engage in conflict with personalist regimes more frequently because they are responding to aggression.

If democracies were responding to autocratic aggression, we would expect personalist regimes to be the initiators of these conflicts. However, personalist regimes are disproportionately the targets. Although democratic leaders may perceive their actions to be “defensive,” this conflict trend is not driven by personalist initiation. I use statistical analysis and examination of wars from 1945 to 2015 to confirm that these conflicts are disproportionately initiated by democracies. We also might expect that,

H_{a2}: Democracies engage in conflict with personalist autocracies so frequently because these regimes cannot make credible commitments as they lack the institutional mechanisms to tie their hands.

While countries ruled by personalist dictators are more likely to be targeted by democracies, they are no more likely to be targeted by other types of autocracies. If this trend were motivated by the inability of personalist regimes to make credible commitments, we would expect an increase in coercive action against personalist states from all regime types. Institutional capacity is therefore insufficient to explain the trend in democratic-personalist conflict. We might also expect that this trend in democratic-personalist conflict could be explained by conscience decision among leaders in democracies to build public support for coercive action:

H_{a3}: It is easier for elites within a democracy to garner support from the public for military action against personalist dictatorships.

Militarized interstate disputes are often unpublicized events and indicate more about elite decisions regarding uses of force than public opinion. Furthermore the case studies, exploring democratic elites’ threat perception in the Suez Crisis and First Gulf War, provide the opportunity to examine leaders’ private statements regarding personalist

adversaries. While it may ultimately be easier for democratic leaders to mobilize public support against a personalist leader, I contend this is not *why* democratic leaders initiate more conflict with personalist regimes.

To test the hypotheses and alternative explanations, I employ a multi-method design, including statistical analysis, survey experiments, and case studies. In the second chapter, I present statistical evidence that democracies are more inclined to engage in conflict with personalist regimes than other types of autocratic states. I examine militarized interstate disputes at different levels of intensity, as well as crisis and wars. Fundamentally, this project is about *democratic perceptions* of personalism and not countries' institutional arrangements. However, I expect perceptions of personalism and actual personalist institutional arrangements to be highly correlated. Chapter three presents findings from three survey experiments. To better assess the function of cognitive biases, survey experiments were used to differentiate between the effects of *the vividness of the leader* and *institutional arrangement*. Participants were given one of four versions of a scenario that varied along these two axes. Following a vignette, participants were asked to assess the threat to national security. The surveys were conducted with undergraduate students at the University of Birmingham (UK) and Georgetown University (U.S.) and with participants online through Mechanical Turk. Chapter four presents a case study of U.S. and British foreign policy decision-makers perceptions of Gamal Abdel Nasser from the nationalization of the Suez Canal to the British, French, and Israeli invasion of Egypt in the fall of 1956. Archival research was conducted at the Cadbury Research Library at the University of Birmingham, the National Archives at Kew in Richmond, UK, the National Archives in College Park, MD, and the Eisenhower

Presidential Library in Abilene, KS. Chapter five presents the case study of American and British foreign policy decision-makers' perceptions of Saddam Hussein from his invasion of Kuwait to the beginning of Operation Desert Storm. I conducted archival research at the National Archives at Kew in Richmond, UK, the National Archives in College Park, MD, and the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library in College Station, TX.¹¹⁸ The case studies focus on examining the social identity of democratic elites and investigating how the conceptualization of their opponents informed their threat perception and decision-making. The final chapter includes a discussion, future avenues for research, and policy implications. In particular, the conclusion explores how and why current U.S. President Trump deviates from the proposed model.

¹¹⁸ For both the Suez Crisis and First Gulf War cases, I also relied on secondary sources including biographies and memoirs of leaders.

Chapter II: Democratic-Personalist Conflict Trends

Introduction

I argue that democracies are more inclined to engage in conflict with personalist regimes because democratic elites' psychological biases are compounded by their socialization to a narrative that casts personalist leaders as the natural opponents of democracies. This chapter will build on and challenge previous scholarship by illustrating first, that democratic-personalist dyads are more conflict prone than other types of democratic-autocratic dyads, particularly at higher levels of conflict. Second, non-democratic regimes are not more inclined to initiate conflict with personalist regimes than with other types of autocratic states. Third democracies, not personalist regimes, are the disproportionately the initiators of democratic-personalist conflicts, particularly at higher levels of conflict (e.g. wars).

In 1976 Small and Singer identified the correlation that became the empirical foundation of the democratic peace.¹¹⁹ While the theoretical tenets of the theory have their origin in the 18th century, the empirical evidence was not broadly accepted until the 1990's.¹²⁰ Since then, political scientists have employed statistical analysis to examine variegated trends regarding the conflict behavior of democracies, including crisis bargaining¹²¹, signaling¹²², and battlefield effectiveness¹²³. Scholars have produced

¹¹⁹ Small, Melvin, and J. David Singer. "The war-proneness of democratic regimes, 1816-1965." *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 1.4 (1976): 50-69.

¹²⁰ See Russett, Bruce. *Grasping the democratic peace: Principles for a post-Cold War world*. Princeton university press, 1994; and Russett, Bruce, et al. "The democratic peace." *International Security* 19.4 (1995): 164-184; Rousseau, David L., et al. "Assessing the dyadic nature of the democratic peace, 1918-88." *American Political Science Review* 90.3 (1996): 512-533; and Brown, Michael Edward, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, eds. *Debating the democratic peace*. MIT Press, 1996.

¹²¹ Fearon, James D. "Domestic political audiences and the escalation of international disputes." *American Political Science Review* 88.3 (1994): 577-592.

numerous datasets to assess the relative institutional strengths of democracies including Polity IV Data¹²⁴, Varieties of Democracy,¹²⁵ and Freedom House¹²⁶. In more recent years, comparative political scientists have used statistical analysis to examine the conflict behavior of different subtypes of democratic and autocratic regimes¹²⁷ including the relationship between democracies and personalist regimes. For example, in the “Dictatorial Peace,” Peceny et al. identified that certain types of authoritarian regimes are less likely to engage in conflict with one another.¹²⁸ In 2003, Peceny and Butler found that democratic-personalist dyads are more likely to engage in conflict than other types of dyads. The authors attribute this behavior to personalist regimes ability to withstand losses—e.g. their smaller winning coalitions.¹²⁹ Reiter and Stam have argued that democratic-personalist conflicts are primarily initiated by personalist regimes.¹³⁰ While the aforementioned scholars have identified the conflict propensity of personalist-democratic correlation¹³¹, democracies are not understood to be the more likely aggressor. This chapter will expand on existing empirical work by utilizing updated and

¹²² See for example Gelpi, Christopher F. "Winners or losers? Democracies in international crisis, 1918–94." *American Political Science Review* 95.3 (2001): 633-647; Schultz, Kenneth A. "Domestic opposition and signaling in international crises." *American Political Science Review* 92.4 (1998): 829-844.

¹²³ See Reiter, Dan, and Allan C. Stam. *Democracies at War*. Princeton University Press, 2002.

¹²⁴ Marshall, Monty G., Keith Jagers, and Ted Robert Gurr. "Polity IV Data Series Version 2010." *College Park, MD: University of Maryland*. Retrieved from <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm> (2010).

¹²⁵ Coppedge, Michael, et al. "V-Dem Organization and Management V7 (2017)." (2017).

¹²⁶ House, Freedom. "Freedom in the World 2006. Selected Data from Freedom House's Annual Global Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties." (2006).

¹²⁷ See Weeks, Jessica LP. *Dictators at War and Peace*. Cornell University Press, 2014| Gandhi, Jennifer, Jane Lawrence Sumner, and Christina Parowczenko. *Measuring Personalism and its Effects in Non-Democracies*. Working Paper. Available at: http://gvpt.umd.edu/cpworkshop/Gandhi_personalism.pdf. (accessed: 30.07. 2015). (In English), 2014; and Cheibub, José Antonio, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Raymond Vreeland. "Democracy and dictatorship revisited." *Public Choice* 143.1-2 (2010): 67-101.

¹²⁸ Peceny, Mark, Caroline C. Beer, and Shannon Sanchez-Terry. "Dictatorial peace?." *American Political Science Review* 96.1 (2002): 15-26.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Reiter, Dan, and Allan C. Stam. "Identifying the culprit: Democracy, dictatorship, and dispute initiation." *American Political Science Review* 97.2 (2003): 333-337.

¹³¹ Peceny, Mark, and Caroline C. Beer. "Peaceful Parties and Puzzling Personalists." *American Political Science Review* 97.2 (2003): 339-342.

revised versions of both conflict and regime type data.

Time series panel data enables me to establish how conflict trends vary over time and between regions. Although the data is directed-dyad, identifying the initiator of conflicts is still a challenge as the Militarized Interstate Dispute data identifies the first state to issue much as a threat of use of force—which is often very difficult to discern—as the initiator.¹³² As a result, although it is clear that democratic-personalist dyads are more conflict prone compared to other types of dyads, it is not apparent that democracies are disproportionately the initiators. To address this, I use Reiter et al's new data on interstate wars¹³³ to illustrate that democracies are in fact more inclined to initiate wars against personalist regimes than vice versa. Most importantly, this analysis will establish the trend that I will use to investigate the causal mechanisms proposed in Chapter I.

Part one will discuss my methodology and introduce the data for analysis. Part two will provide an analysis of conflict between democracies and personalist regimes and the substantive interpretation of the results. Part three will include a series of robustness checks to further corroborate the findings. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the results.

Methodology and Data

This chapter tests my hypothesis that democracies are more likely to initiate conflict with personalistic regimes. To test this idea, I use Geddes, Frantz, and Wright's 2014

¹³² Gibler, Douglas M., Steven V. Miller, and Erin K. Little. "An Analysis of the Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) Dataset, 1816–2001." *International Studies Quarterly* 60.4 (2016): 719-730.

¹³³ Reiter, Dan, Allan C. Stam, and Michael C. Horowitz. "A revised look at interstate wars, 1816–2007." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60.5 (2016): 956-976.

“Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions” data¹³⁴, Gibler, Miller, and Little’s 2016 revised version of the directed dyad militarized interstate dispute data,¹³⁵ and the International Crisis Behavior data.¹³⁶ Since my theoretical interest is in which country initiates conflict, not simply the occurrence of conflict, I use a directed-dyad data structure.

The outcome of interests is military conflict, measured at several different levels. To measure conflict I use the Gibler et al. Militarized Interstate Dispute data. It is the appropriate data for this analysis because it is the most meticulously refined and comprehensive data set of interstate conflict available. Gibler et al drop over 200 cases from the original MID data set and made significant changes to another 200 cases. The dataset gauges four different levels of conflict: MIDs involving a show of force (*Significant MIDs*), MIDs involving a use of force (*Force MIDs*), *Crises*, and *Wars*.^{137,138} Militarized interstate disputes are “United historical cases of conflict in which the threat, display or use of military force short of war by one member state is explicitly directed towards the government, official representatives, official forces, property, or territory of another state. Disputes are composed of incidents that range in intensity from threats to use force to actual combat short of war.”¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz. "Autocratic breakdown and regime transitions: A new data set." *Perspectives on Politics* 12.2 (2014): 313-331.

¹³⁵ Gibler, Douglas M., Steven V. Miller, and Erin K. Little. "An Analysis of the Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) Dataset, 1816–2001." *International Studies Quarterly* 60.4 (2016): 719-730.

¹³⁶ Weeks, Jessica L. "Strongmen and straw men: Authoritarian regimes and the initiation of international conflict." *American Political Science Review* 106.2 (2012): 326-347.

¹³⁷ Maoz, Zeev. "Dyadic MID dataset (version 2.0)." (2005).

¹³⁸ The different levels of conflict correspond to the *Hostlev* variable from the Militarized Interstate Dispute data. All MIDs correspond to a *Hostlev* of 2 or greater; *Significant MIDs* correspond to a *Hostlev* of 3 or greater; *Force MIDs* correspond to a *Hostlev* of 4 or greater; and *Wars* correspond to a *Hostlev* of 5. See Ghosn, Faten, and Glenn Palmer. "Codebook for the militarized interstate dispute data, version 3.0." Online: <http://cow2.la.psu.edu> (2003).

¹³⁹ See “MIDs.” *MIDs*, Correlates of War Project, 3 Mar. 2015, cow.dss.ucdavis.edu/data-sets/MIDs/mids.

The second outcome of interest is trends in crises, measure using data from the International Crisis Behavior Codebook. The criteria for crisis are as follows “(1) both (states) are members of the interstate system, (2) at least one of the states satisfies all three of the ICB necessary conditions for crisis involvement, and (3) at least one of the states has directed a hostile action against the other.”^{140,141}

The primary independent variable of interest is whether State B in the conflict dyad is a personalist dictatorship (*State B Personalist*). Personalist regimes are identified using the Geddes Frantz and Wright’s criteria (2014, Geddes 2004). This corresponds following questions:

- 1.) Does the leader lack the support of a party? 2.) If there is a support party, was it created after the leader’s ascension to power? 3.) If there is a support party, does the leader choose most of the members of the politburo-equivalent? 4.) Does the country specialist literature describe the politburo-equivalent as a rubber stamp for the leader? 5.) If there is a support party, is it limited to a few urban areas? 6.) Was the success to the first leader, or is the heir apparent, a member of the same family, clan, tribe, or minority ethnic group as the first leader? 7.) Does the leader govern without routine elections? 8.) If there are elections, are they essentially plebiscites, that is without either internal or external competition? 9.) Does access to high office depend on the personal favor of the leader? 10.) Has normal military hierarchy been seriously disorganized or overturned? 11.) Have

¹⁴⁰ Brecher, Michael and Jonathan Wilkenfeld (2000). *A Study of Crisis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press and Brecher, Michael, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, Kyle Beardsley, Patrick James and David Quinn (2017). *International Crisis Behavior Data Codebook, Version 12*.

¹⁴¹ In the analysis of *Crises* below, State A (the initiator) is coded dichotomously as the “triggering entity” see Brecher, Michael, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, Kyle Beardsley, Patrick James and David Quinn (2017). *International Crisis Behavior Data Codebook, Version 12*

dissenting officers or officers from different regions, tribes, religions, or ethnic groups been murdered, imprisoned, or forced into exile? 12.) Has the officer corps been marginalized from most decision making? 13.) Does the leader personally control the security apparatus? ^{142,143}

To be considered a personalist regime, a state needs to have a higher number of “yes” responses to these questions. Personalist hybrid regimes are identified as those that receive, in equal measure, affirmative responses to the personalist questions *and* the single party *or* military rule Questions. The initiator, or state A in the models, was considered a democracy if it had both a. Polity Score greater than six and b. was coded as a democracy by Cheibub et al in the “Democracy and Dictatorship” dataset.¹⁴⁴

To account for potentially confounding factors, the analysis included a number of control variables. First, using the Correlates of War’s Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC),¹⁴⁵ I controlled for the military capabilities of states A and B in the conflict dyad (*Capabilities State A* and *Capabilities State B*). Second, proximity affects the cost and logistics of mobilization and the opportunities for conflict. Additionally, past research has shown that contiguous countries experience more disputes.¹⁴⁶ This is controlled for by *Contiguity*, a binary variable coded as “1” if state A and state B share a land border or if they are separated by a body of water by no more than twenty-four

¹⁴² See Geddes, Barbara. *Paradigms and sand castles: Theory building and research design in comparative politics*. University of Michigan Press, (2003) Appendix A, 227.

¹⁴³ In the analysis, I use personalist hybrid regimes. As a robustness check (Table 2.9), I remove hybrid regimes.

¹⁴⁴ Cheibub, José Antonio, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Raymond Vreeland. "Democracy and dictatorship revisited." *Public choice* 143.1-2 (2010): 67-101.

¹⁴⁵ Hensel, Paul R., and Sara McLaughlin Mitchell. "Issue Correlates of War Project User Manual for ICOW Data, Version 1.1." *University of North Texas and University of Iowa*. URL: <http://www.icow.org> (2007).

¹⁴⁶ Singer 1994

miles.¹⁴⁷ Third, many theorists argue that trade interdependence has a pacifying effect on international politics¹⁴⁸. To account for this, I control for trade dependence using data from.¹⁴⁹ *Trade Dependence* is measured as state A's total imports from and exports to state B as a percentage of GDP. Fourth, to account for the fact that dyads with major powers are more likely to experience conflict, the analysis controlled for the configuration of power in the dyad (major powers defined as Britain, China, France, Russia, and the United States and minor powers all other states) by including dummy variables *Major/Minor* and *Minor/Major* and *Major/Major*. Fifth, I control for similarity in alliances within the dyad using the following variables from the Formal Alliance Data from Correlates of War Dataset, *Non-aggression*, *Etente*, *Neutrality* and *Defense*. *Defense* is "coded as (1) if the ccode (state) signed terms that included defense of one or more states in the alliance"; *Neutrality* is "coded as (1) if the ccode (state) signed terms that included neutrality toward one or more states in the alliance"; *Nonaggression* is "coded as (1) if the ccode (state) signed terms that included a promise of non-aggression toward one or more states in the alliance; and *Entente* is coded as (1) if the ccode (state) signed terms that included an understanding that he state would consult with one or more states in the alliance if a crisis occurred."¹⁵⁰ Lastly, cubic polynomials were included to account

¹⁴⁷ Stinnett, Douglas M., et al. "The correlates of war (cow) project direct contiguity data, version 3.0." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 19.2 (2002): 59-67.

¹⁴⁸ See Angell, Norman. *The great illusion: A study of the relation of military power to national advantage*. GP Putnam's sons, 1913; Keohane, Robert O., and Joseph S. Nye. *Power and Interdependence*. 1977; and Oneal, John R., and Bruce M. Russett. "The classical liberals were right: Democracy, interdependence, and conflict, 1950–1985." *International Studies Quarterly* 41.2 (1997): 267-294.

¹⁴⁹ Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede. "Expanded trade and GDP data." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46.5 (2002): 712-724.

¹⁵⁰ D.M. Gibler. *International Military Alliances, 1648-2008*. Congressional Quarterly Press. 2009. ISBN: 978-1-56802-824-8

for potential temporal dependence (*Peace Years, Peace Years 2, Peace Years 3*).¹⁵¹

Throughout the analysis, statistical significance is indicated at the levels $p < .01$, $.05$, and $.1$. Substantive effects are reported for each relevant model using odds ratio. When the odds ratio is above one, the relationship described is positive and should be interpreted as the independent variable increases the odds of conflict (dependent variable) in the given model. For each relevant model, I also include the odds ratio range at the ninety five percent confidence interval.

Analysis

I begin the analysis with simple cross tabulations of conflict initiated by democracies against personalist regimes. Next, I employ multivariate regression analysis to examine the relationship between regime type and conflict after controlling for possible confounding factors.

Tables 2.1 through 2.5 below show how frequently democracies initiate conflict against personalist and non-personalist regimes. State A (the initiator) is limited to democracies while state B (the target) compares all personalist autocracies. Within the figures and the tables below, I include hybrid personalist regimes in the category of personalists. These tests provide initial support for my hypothesis that democracies are more inclined to initiate conflict with personalist regimes. Turning to Table 2.1, we see that democracies target personalist regimes in Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs) at a higher rate than other types of autocratic regimes. We see similar results in the other figures and the Pearson Chi Squared (reported below each figure) indicate that these

¹⁵¹ Carter, David B., and Curtis S. Signorino. "Back to the future: Modeling time dependence in binary data." *Political Analysis* 18.3 (2010): 271-292.

relationships are significant.

Table 2.1. Democracies' Initiation of Militarized Interstate Disputes Against Personalist and Non-Personalist Autocratic Regimes

	<i>Non-Personalist</i>	<i>Personalist</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>No Militarized Interstate Dispute</i>	132,117 (99.88%)	94,155 (99.81%)	226,272 (99.85%)
<i>Militarized Interstate Dispute</i>	164 (0.12%)	178 (0.19%)	342 (0.15%)
<i>Total</i>	132,281 (100%)	94,333 (100%)	226,614 (100%)

Pearson chi2(1) = 15.3037 Pr = 0.000

Table 2.2. Democracies' Initiation of Show of Force Militarized Interstate Disputes Against Personalist and Non-Personalist Autocratic Regimes

	<i>Non-Personalist</i>	<i>Personalist</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>No Show of Force Militarized Interstate Dispute</i>	132,121 (99.88%)	94,155 (99.81%)	226,276 (99.85%)
<i>Show of Force Militarized Interstate Dispute</i>	160 (0.12%)	178 (0.19%)	338 (0.15%)
<i>Total</i>	132,281 (100%)	94,333 (100%)	226,614 (100%)

Pearson chi2(1) = 16.9654 Pr = 0.000

Table 2.3. Democracies' Initiation of Use of Force Militarized Interstate Disputes Against Personalist and Non-Personalist Autocratic Regimes

	<i>Non-Personalist</i>	<i>Personalist</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>No Use of Force Militarized Interstate Dispute</i>	132,157 (99.91%)	94,198 (99.86%)	226,366 (99.89%)
<i>Use of Force Militarized Interstate Dispute</i>	124 (0.09%)	135 (0.14%)	259 (0.11%)
<i>Total</i>	132,281 (100%)	94,333 (100%)	226,614 (100%)

Pearson chi2(1) = 11.7568 Pr = 0.001

Table 2.4. Democracies' Initiation of Crises Against Personalist and Non-Personalist Autocratic Regimes

	<i>Non-Personalist</i>	<i>Personalist</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>No Crisis</i>	132,241 (99.97%)	94,284 (99.95%)	226,525 (99.96%)
<i>Crisis</i>	40 (0.03%)	49 (0.05%)	89 (0.04%)
<i>Total</i>	132,281 (100%)	94,333 (100%)	226,614 (100%)

Pearson chi2(1) = 6.6079 Pr = 0.010

Table 2.5. Democracies' Initiation of War Against Personalist and Non-Personalist Autocratic Regimes

	<i>Non-Personalist</i>	<i>Personalist</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>No War</i>	132,273 (99.99%)	94,301 99.97%	226,574 (99.98%)
<i>War</i>	8 (0.01%)	32 (0.03%)	40 (0.02%)
<i>Total</i>	132,281 (100%)	94,333 (100%)	226,614 (100%)

Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 24.2436$ Pr = 0.000

The cross tabulations are only the first step. Next, I turn to multivariate regression analysis. I employ logistic regression. This is the appropriate estimator because the dependent variable is dichotomous

Table 2.6 examines the likelihood of a democracy initiating MIDs, MIDs escalating to a show of force, MIDs escalating to a use of force, *Crises*, or *Wars* against a personalist regime (*State B Personalist* with the baseline is Non-personalist regimes). All models control for *Contiguity*, *Trade Dependency*, the Capabilities of both states (*Capabilities State A* and *Capabilities State B*), the power configuration of the dyad, *Defense Agreement*, *Neutrality Agreement*, *Non-aggression agreement*, *Entente*, and *Peace Years*.

Consistent with the central argument of the book, we find that democracies are more inclined to target personalist regimes than non-personalist autocracies. The coefficient of interest, *State B Personalist*, is positive and significant in all five models. The finding is substantively as well as statistically significant. In Model 1, the odds ratio *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval is 1.792029 with a range between

1.324373 and 2.424821. In model two, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* model for the 95% confidence interval is 1.848704 with a range between 1.36253 and 2.508354. The odds ratio for *State B Personalist* for Model 3 at the 95% confidence interval is 1.631854 with a range between 1.136711 and 2.342677. In Model 4, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* at the 95% confidence interval is 2.455742 with a range from 1.333138 to 4.523664. In Model 5, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* at the 95% confidence interval is 12.92578 with a range between 3.132694 and 53.33298. The substantive interpretation of these models is that democracies are approximately 1.7 times more likely to target personalist regimes in MIDs, 2.4 times more likely to target them in crises, and although the N is small, approximately 3 times more likely to target personalist regimes in wars.

**Table 2.6. Democracies' Initiation Against
Personalist Regimes at Different Levels of Conflict**

EQUATION	VARIABLES	(1) MIDS	(2) Significant MIDS	(3) Force MIDS	(4) Crises	(5) War
Conflict	State B Personalist	0.583** (0.242)	0.614** (0.240)	0.490* (0.290)	0.898** (0.404)	2.559*** (0.807)
	Contiguity	3.772*** (0.345)	3.772*** (0.349)	3.753*** (0.411)	3.885*** (0.488)	3.232*** (0.657)
	Trade Dependency	-123.4** (53.66)	-136.9** (60.97)	-166.0 (106.3)	-184.1 (112.8)	-299.8 (216.9)
	Capabilities State A	3.575* (2.150)	3.516 (2.192)	4.043 (2.567)	5.854*** (2.269)	-3.134 (9.646)
	Capabilities State B	35.64*** (7.219)	34.35*** (7.387)	31.44*** (10.05)	35.30*** (12.06)	29.54** (14.54)
	Power Configuration Maj-Maj	-0.124 (0.873)	0.0584 (0.884)	0.154 (1.188)	0.272 (1.230)	Omitted
	Power Configuration Maj-Min	2.521*** (0.357)	2.494*** (0.363)	2.368*** (0.433)	2.042*** (0.489)	3.558*** (0.940)
	Power Configuration Min-Maj	-2.788*** (0.974)	-2.658*** (0.964)	-2.643** (1.121)	-3.162 (2.032)	-1.493 (2.217)
	Defense Agreement	0.0581 (0.568)	0.0805 (0.569)	0.351 (0.682)	-1.538 (1.121)	1.231 (1.717)
	Neutrality Agreement	0.749 (0.565)	0.726 (0.563)	1.489** (0.639)	-0.863 (1.472)	Omitted
	Nonaggression Agreement	0.0650 (0.562)	0.0747 (0.558)	0.106 (0.673)	-0.988 (1.107)	Omitted
	Entente	0.362 (0.540)	0.372 (0.540)	-0.246 (0.697)	2.588*** (0.795)	Omitted
	Peace Years	-0.517*** (0.0508)	-0.510*** (0.0517)	-0.605*** (0.0693)	-0.432*** (0.0935)	-1.332** (0.550)
	Peace Years 2	0.0183*** (0.00219)	0.0178*** (0.00222)	0.0213*** (0.00299)	0.0161*** (0.00462)	0.0451** (0.0209)
	Peace Years 3	-0.0002*** (2.64e-05)	-0.000173*** (2.67e-05)	-0.000205*** (3.54e-05)	-0.000177*** (6.19e-05)	-0.000397** (0.000200)
	Constant	-5.572*** (0.285)	-5.592*** (0.285)	-5.594*** (0.300)	-7.203*** (0.446)	-8.074*** (0.750)
Observations		139,404	139,404	139,404	139,404	134,103

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0

Table 2.7 examines how likely non-personalist autocratic regimes are to target personalist regimes at different levels of conflict. State A in the below models is limited to non-personalist regimes, while State B compares personalist regimes to the baseline non-personalist regimes. If states were responding to personalist aggression, we would expect non-democracies to target personalist regimes more frequently as well. However, this is not borne out in the analysis. Non-personalist regimes are no more likely to target personalist regimes than non-personalists in *MIDs* (Model 1), *MIDs* escalating to a show of force (Model 2), *MIDs* escalating to a use of force (Model 3), *Crises* (Model 4), or *Wars* (Model 5). This again provides support for the central hypothesis of this book. If personalist regimes were fundamentally more threatening, we would expect that other autocracies, would target them more frequently in conflict as well. However, these tests bore no substantive results, indicating that other types of autocratic regimes are in fact no more inclined to target personalist regimes than other types of autocratic states.

**Table 2.7. Autocracies' Conflict Initiation
(MIDs, Crises, Wars) Against Personalist Regimes**

EQUATION	VARIABLES	(1) MIDS	(2) Significant MIDS	(3) Force MIDS	(4) Crises	(5) War
Conflict	State B Personalist	-0.0202 (0.143)	-0.0228 (0.146)	-0.195 (0.163)	0.139 (0.238)	-0.213 (0.684)
	Contiguity	2.995*** (0.199)	3.017*** (0.201)	2.938*** (0.218)	4.604*** (0.513)	0.622 (0.586)
	Trade Dependency	2.272 (2.357)	2.320 (2.385)	-2.706 (2.959)	-92.40* (53.22)	-7.978 (23.16)
	Capabilities State A	2.733 (11.85)	2.148 (11.80)	0.130 (10.27)	26.63 (23.48)	-13.02* (7.348)
	Capabilities State B	2.888 (7.762)	3.381 (7.827)	1.309 (11.64)	-20.24 (34.78)	11.24 (51.70)
	Power Configuration Maj-Maj	0.589 (1.643)	0.646 (1.642)	1.340 (1.592)	Omitted	Omitted
	Power Configuration Maj-Min	0.517 (1.597)	0.622 (1.584)	0.808 (1.297)	Omitted	3.816*** (1.003)
	Power Configuration Min-Maj	-0.682 (0.947)	-0.701 (0.964)	-0.870 (1.410)	Omitted	Omitted
	Defense Agreement	0.237 (0.149)	0.237 (0.150)	0.275 (0.171)	-0.0719 (0.227)	0.316 (0.463)
	Neutrality Agreement	0.633 (0.503)	0.649 (0.507)	0.768 (0.588)	-0.223 (1.233)	Omitted
	Nonaggression Agreement	0.120 (0.298)	0.140 (0.302)	-0.0121 (0.383)	0.539 (0.415)	1.919** (0.895)
	Entente	-0.250 (0.288)	-0.242 (0.292)	-0.232 (0.389)	0.0538 (0.462)	-1.096 (1.050)
	Peace Years	-0.436*** (0.0399)	-0.443*** (0.0414)	-0.496*** (0.0459)	-0.317*** (0.0751)	-0.692*** (0.175)
	Peace Years 2	0.0177*** (0.00245)	0.0181*** (0.00256)	0.0210*** (0.00280)	0.0172*** (0.00476)	0.0275** (0.0108)
	Peace Years 3	-0.00021*** (4.08e-05)	-0.000219*** (4.28e-05)	-0.000260*** (4.68e-05)	-0.0003*** (8.18e-05)	-0.0003* (0.000170)
	Constant	-4.483*** (0.270)	-4.521*** (0.269)	-4.431*** (0.275)	-7.954*** (0.607)	-5.559*** (0.682)
	Observations		129,372	129,372	129,372	122,365

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Although the previous tables indicate that democracies are more inclined to target personalists at different levels of conflict and other types of autocratic regimes are no more likely to target personalists, the below table illustrates that personalists are more inclined to target democracies than other types of autocratic regimes. In the below models, state B is limited to democracies and state A compares personalist regimes to the baseline non-personalist regimes. In Model 1, examining all *MIDs*, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval is 2.123373 with a range between 1.695138 and 2.659791. In Model 2 examining *MIDs* that escalate to a show of force, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* is 95% confidence interval is 2.086423 with a range between 1.664194 and 2.615778. In Model 3 examining *MIDs* that escalate to a use of force, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval is 1.850077 with a range between 1.447164 and 2.365167. In Model 4 examining *Crises*, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* with a 95% confidence interval is 1.949782 with a range between 1.075195 and 3.535776. In Model 5 examining *War*, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval of 5.963631 with a range between 2.686862 to 13.23659. I argue that this finding is primarily a byproduct issues with the directed dyad data. To address this, I examine interstate wars occurring between democracies and autocratic regimes between 1946 and 2007 using Reiter et al's 2007 "Revised Look at Interstate Wars 1816-2007" in the following section.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Reiter, Dan, Allan C. Stam, and Michael C. Horowitz. "A revised look at interstate wars, 1816–2007." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60.5 (2016): 956-976.

**Table 2.8. Personalists' Initiation of Conflict
(MIDS, Crises, and Wars) Against Democracies**

EQUATION	VARIABLES	(1) MIDS	(2) Significant MIDS	(3) Force MIDS	(4) Crises	(5) War
Conflict	State B Personalist	0.753*** (0.176)	0.735*** (0.176)	0.615*** (0.195)	0.668* (0.356)	1.786*** (0.404)
	Contiguity	2.473*** (0.282)	2.454*** (0.288)	2.180*** (0.363)	3.606*** (0.513)	-2.649** (1.150)
	Trade Dependency	-5.748 (7.924)	-4.592 (6.944)	-70.33** (30.36)	-103.2 (75.99)	-387.2*** (145.9)
	Capabilities State A	11.96*** (4.066)	11.76*** (3.999)	16.16*** (6.142)	33.03*** (12.38)	17.60*** (5.931)
	Capabilities State B	4.788*** (1.283)	4.661*** (1.314)	4.164*** (1.467)	1.981 (2.898)	-1.245 (3.255)
	Power Configuration Maj- Maj	2.272*** (0.600)	2.243*** (0.601)	1.263 (0.855)	-0.120 (1.478)	2.875*** (1.003)
	Power Configuration Maj- Min	1.074* (0.629)	1.079* (0.627)	0.286 (0.944)	-2.695 (2.059)	2.905*** (0.866)
	Power Configuration Min- Maj	1.251*** (0.254)	1.232*** (0.257)	1.252*** (0.296)	2.566*** (0.480)	0.807 (0.569)
	Defense Agreement	-0.732* (0.409)	-0.702* (0.403)	-0.519 (0.463)	-2.965*** (0.817)	Omitted
	Neutrality Agreement	-0.611 (0.537)	-0.569 (0.531)	-0.885 (0.651)	-1.598 (1.336)	0.710 (1.304)
	Nonaggression Agreement	0.170 (0.482)	0.116 (0.455)	-0.0273 (0.436)	0.415 (0.780)	-3.100** (1.523)
	Entente	0.972** (0.430)	1.014** (0.421)	1.146** (0.450)	2.819*** (0.706)	2.623*** (0.593)
	Peace Years	-0.493*** (0.0436)	-0.490*** (0.0433)	-0.549*** (0.0513)	-0.177** (0.0900)	-0.932*** (0.127)
	Peace Years 2	0.0182*** (0.00208)	0.0180*** (0.00206)	0.0213*** (0.00264)	0.00403 (0.00417)	0.0362*** (0.00578)
	Peace Years 3	-0.000195*** (2.76e-05)	-0.000192*** (2.73e-05)	-0.000241*** (3.77e-05)	-2.58e-05 (5.24e-05)	-0.00039*** (6.72e-05)
	Constant	-4.388*** (0.248)	-4.384*** (0.249)	-4.253*** (0.271)	-8.100*** (0.525)	-5.813*** (0.342)
	Observations		139,404	139,404	139,404	139,404

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

One potential objection to my theory presented here is that democracies are responding to autocratic aggression. If this were the case, then democracies would be merely responding to personalist regimes' aggressive behavior (Weeks 2012). Although there is something clearly more volatile about personalist-democratic dyads, personalist regimes appear more likely to target democracies as well. This presents a challenge to my theory, as the theory is not just that these dyads are particularly conflict-prone, but that democracies are more inclined to target personalist regimes. However, the Militarized Interstate Dispute data used above identifies the first country to issue to much as a threat of use of force as the initiator of conflict (even those that escalate to higher levels). This first action, as such, is often very difficult to discern and in the above analysis, I find the strongest evidence of the volatility of personalist-democratic dyads by examining war. So to better assess if democracies are more inclined to target personalist regimes or personalists regimes are more inclined to target democracies, I use Reiter et al's "Revised Look at Interstate Wars 1816-2007 at Interstate Wars 1816-2007" to confirm cases or wars, targets, and initiators.¹⁵³ Wars provide an especially clear case for adjudicating the conflict initiator. The number of observations is far smaller and the actions that constitute initiation are more clearly delineated than in lower-level MIDs. For example, while the Militarized Interstate Dispute Date codes the 1971 Bangladesh War as initiated by Pakistan, India should be listed as the initiator. As Stam, Reiter, and Horowitz describe, "Artillery and small arms fire exchanges across the India-East Pakistan border began as early as May, but these actions were of insufficient intensity to mark the beginning of the war. We mark the war as beginning in November, when India troops began to cross the

¹⁵³ Reiter, Dan, Allan C. Stam, and Michael C. Horowitz. "A revised look at interstate wars, 1816–2007." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60.5 (2016): 956-976.

border with East Pakistan in strength.”¹⁵⁴ The “Revised Look at Interstate Wars” data makes several significant improvements to the COW data. First, the authors provide criteria for better identifying individual participant in multilateral wars. Secondly, the authors rigorously apply—and where necessary revise—COW coding rule regarding initiation “to correspond with consensus of historians to classify the initiator as the actor whose battalions made the first attack in strength on their opponent’s armies or territories.”¹⁵⁵ Within the appendix, the authors’ provide detailed descriptions for the coding decisions.¹⁵⁶

Using the COW data, Reiter and Stam argue in 2002 that personalists target democracies in more wars. However, their new data indicates the inverse trend.¹⁵⁷ The table below identifies the seventeen cases of interstate wars between democracies and autocratic regimes since 1946. The six un-highlighted cases are instances of democracies engaging in wars with non-personalist autocratic regimes. The three cases highlighted in orange indicate instances of a personalist regime initiating war against a democracy. Those eleven cases highlighted in yellow indicate cases of democracies initiating war against personalist regimes. Although the N is small, democracies appear to be disproportionately the initiators of wars with personalist regimes.

¹⁵⁴ Reiter, Dan, et al. “Appendix: A Revised Look At Interstate Wars , 1816 - 2007.” 15 Oct. 2014, polisci.emory.edu/faculty/dreiter/JCRRSHappendix10-15-14.pdf: 23.

¹⁵⁵ Reiter, Dan, Allan C. Stam, and Michael C. Horowitz. "A revised look at interstate wars, 1816–2007." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60.5 (2016): 956-976.

¹⁵⁶ Sarkees, Meredith Reid, and Frank Whelon Wayman. *Resort to war: a data guide to inter-state, extra-state, intra-state, and non-state wars, 1816-2007*. Cq Pr, 2010. 58.

¹⁵⁷ Reiter, Dan, and Allan C. Stam. "Identifying the culprit: Democracy, dictatorship, and dispute initiation." *American Political Science Review* 97.2 (2003): 333-337.

Table 2.9. Wars Between Democracies and Autocratic Regimes, 1945-2010

	War Name	Year	Initiator	Target	Initiator(s) Regime Type	Target(s) Regime Type
1	Arab-Israeli 1948-49	1948	Iraq; Egypt; Syria; Lebanon; Jordan	Israel	Monarchy; Monarchy; Missing (NA); Missing (NA); Monarchy	Democracy
2	Korean 1950-53	1950	United States of America	North Korea	Democracy	Personalist
3	Sinai 1956	1956	United Kingdom; France; Israel	Egypt	Democracies	Personalist
4	Vietnam 1965-75 (coalition)	1965	United States of America	Vietnam	Democracy	Party
5	Second Kashmir 1965	1965	Pakistan	India	Military/ Personal	Democracy
6	Six Day 1967	1967	Israel	Egypt; Syria	Democracy	Party/Military/ Personal; Party/Military/ Personal
7	SixDay1967	1967	Jordan	Israel	Monarchy	Democracy
8	War of Attrition 1969-70	1969	Egypt	Israel	Personalist	Democracy
9	Bangladesh 1971	1971	India	Pakistan	Democracy	Party/Military/ Personal
10	Yom Kippur 1973	1973	Iraq; Egypt; Syria; Jordan; Saudi Arabia	Israel	Party/Personal; Party/Military/Personal; Party/Military/Personal; Monarchy; Monarchy	Democracy
11	Falklands 1982	1982	Argentina	United Kingdom	Military	Democracy
12	Lebanon 1982	1982	Israel	Syria	Democracy	Party/Military/ Personal
13	Gulf War 1991 (coalition)	1991	United States of America	Iraq	Democracy	Personal
14	Kosovo 1999	1999	United States of America	Yugoslavia	Democracy	Party/Personal
15	Kargil 1999	1999	Pakistan	India	Missing (NA)	Democracy
16	Afghanistan 2001 (coalition)	2001	United States of America	Afghanistan	Democracy	Party
17	Iraq 2003 (coalition)	2003	United States of America	Iraq	Democracy	Personal

Democracy initiated against personalist

Personalist initiated against democracy

This provides supports for the finding in the above statistical analysis—that democratic-personalist dyads are particularly conflict prone. Furthermore, this provides support for my theory that democracies are disproportionately the initiators of these conflicts. To better understand these dynamics, in chapters IV and V I will supplement the quantitative analysis with case studies of the 1956 Sinai War and the 1991 First Gulf War.

Robustness Tests

As a final set of tests, I run a series of robustness tests. Critics might challenge the above findings by arguing that these conflicts are primarily initiated by less institutionalized or developed democracies. To test this, I increase the threshold for the initiator to a Polity Score of 7. Additionally, to alleviate concern that this finding is the result of regional dynamics, I do a series of tests controlling for region. Furthermore, there may be a concern that the U.S. is driving these results. To address this I run a series of tests dropping the U.S. as the initiator. Also, I test the primary finding, democracies' predisposition to target personalist regimes in war, in a simple bivariate and trimmed model. I do this to illustrate that the control variables are not driving the main finding. Lastly, in the main analysis above, I include hybrid personalist regimes, which include those states which are identified as having significant characteristics of a list regimes and either a party or military regime. As Hybrid-Personalist regimes are included in the main analysis, I run a series of models isolating those states which are identified as personalists from those which are hybrid personalist. In all of these models the finding that democracies are more inclined initiate war against personalist regimes holds.

Table 2.10 limits democracies to those state with a Polity Score of 7 or higher. In

Model 1, including all *MIDs*, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval is 1.966819 with a range between 1.45056 and 2.666816. In Model 2 examining *MIDs* that escalate to a show of force the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* at the 95% confidence interval is 2.026581 with a range between 1.490063 and 2.75628. In Model 3 examining *MIDs* that escalate to a use of force the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* at the 95% confidence interval is 1.841059 with a range between 1.281042 and 2.645892. In Model 4 examining Crises, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* at the 95% confidence interval is 3.364222 with a range between 1.738153 and 6.511505. In Model 5 examining Wars the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* the 95% confidence interval is 13.09122 with a range between 3.212284 and 53.35148.

**Table 2.10 Democracies' Initiation of Conflict (MIDs, Crises, Wars)
Against Personalist—More Restrictive Definition of Democracy
(Polity Score of 7 or Higher)**

EQUATION	VARIABLES	(1) MIDS	(2) Significant MIDS	(3) Force MIDs	(4) Crises	(5) War	
Conflict	State B Personalist	0.676*** (0.244)	0.706*** (0.242)	0.610** (0.294)	1.213*** (0.429)	2.572*** (0.796)	
	Contiguity	3.623*** (0.353)	3.620*** (0.357)	3.547*** (0.425)	3.796*** (0.555)	3.271*** (0.654)	
	Trade Dependency	-108.8** (51.33)	-122.2** (57.57)	-154.7 (100.8)	-212.9* (122.2)	-305.7 (216.9)	
	Capabilities State A	3.588* (2.156)	3.522 (2.197)	3.810 (2.583)	6.270*** (2.411)	-3.172 (9.672)	
	Capabilities State B	29.77*** (6.998)	28.77*** (7.141)	25.41*** (9.620)	26.08* (14.72)	33.75*** (12.96)	
	Power Configuration Maj-Maj	0.0787 (0.893)	0.194 (0.914)	0.329 (1.022)	0.823 (1.414)	Omitted	
	Power Configuration Maj-Min	2.449*** (0.350)	2.423*** (0.356)	2.273*** (0.424)	2.264*** (0.500)	3.504*** (0.932)	
	Power Configuration Min-Maj	-1.707* (0.915)	-1.615* (0.904)	-1.465 (1.059)	-1.433 (2.125)	-2.108 (1.967)	
	Defense Agreement	0.270 (0.626)	0.294 (0.625)	0.674 (0.680)	-2.099 (1.319)	1.246 (1.755)	
	Neutrality Agreement	0.979 (0.626)	0.960 (0.624)	1.696** (0.671)	-0.974 (1.570)	Omitted	
	Nonaggression Agreement	0.213 (0.612)	0.220 (0.607)	0.359 (0.670)	-0.264 (1.266)	Omitted	
	Entente	-0.0127 (0.635)	-0.00123 (0.632)	-0.676 (0.735)	2.252** (0.992)	Omitted	
	Peace Years	-0.494*** (0.0514)	-0.487*** (0.0523)	-0.573*** (0.0686)	-0.415*** (0.106)	-1.328** (0.550)	
	Peace Years 2	0.0173*** (0.00218)	0.0168*** (0.00221)	0.0202*** (0.00291)	0.0160*** (0.00523)	0.0450** (0.0209)	
	Peace Years 3	-0.0002*** (2.57e-05)	-0.00016*** (2.59e-05)	-0.000196*** (3.39e-05)	-0.000181*** (7.03e-05)	-0.00039** (0.000200)	
	Constant	-5.602*** (0.278)	-5.622*** (0.278)	-5.616*** (0.289)	-7.420*** (0.401)	-8.055*** (0.736)	
	Observations		136,699	136,699	136,699	122,095	131,276

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

In Table 2.11, I introduce controls for region for both State A and State B, taken from the United Nations Data.¹⁵⁸ The models are otherwise identical to those run in the previous table. In all models with the exception of the Use of Force MIDs, the finding that democracies are more inclined to target personalist regimes at different levels of conflict holds. In Model 1, examining all *MIDs* the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval is 1.661683 with a range between 1.224127 and 2.25564. In Model 2 examining MIDs that escalated to a show of force, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval is 1.715064 with a range between 1.260169 and 2.334166. In Model 4 examining *Crises*, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval is 3.552028 with a range between 1.797618 and 7.01868. For Model 5 examining *Wars*, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval is 12.6550 with a range between 3.083553 and 51.93675.

¹⁵⁸ “Data Center.” *Data Center*, United Nations, 2018, publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data-Center. <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data-Center>

**Table 2.11. Democracies' Initiation of Conflict
(MIDs, Crises, Wars) Against Personalist Regimes: Controlling for Region**

EQUATION	VARIABLES	(1) MIDS	(2) Significant MIDS	(3) Force MIDS	(4) Crises	(5) War	
Conflict	State B Personalist	0.508** (0.231)	0.539** (0.229)	0.394 (0.282)	1.268*** (0.416)	2.538*** (0.827)	
	Contiguity	3.494*** (0.380)	3.490*** (0.386)	3.430*** (0.478)	3.926*** (0.665)	3.893*** (0.612)	
	Trade Dependency	-114.3*** (44.08)	-124.9** (51.64)	-142.9 (95.14)	-187.4* (107.3)	-282.6 (226.0)	
	Capabilities State A	1.514 (2.236)	1.466 (2.276)	1.907 (2.642)	5.306** (2.291)	1.377 (7.786)	
	Capabilities State B	30.61*** (8.071)	29.08*** (8.369)	23.20* (12.24)	29.23** (14.50)	21.95 (15.79)	
	Power Configuration Maj-Maj	0.528 (0.890)	0.736 (0.905)	1.114 (1.296)	0.990 (1.492)	Omitted	
	Power Configuration Maj-Min	2.772*** (0.324)	2.742*** (0.330)	2.619*** (0.396)	2.613*** (0.474)	3.352*** (0.905)	
	Power Configuration Min-Maj	-2.557** (1.071)	-2.394** (1.068)	-2.112 (1.314)	-2.998 (2.317)	-0.706 (2.016)	
	Region State A	-0.143*** (0.0517)	-0.143*** (0.0529)	-0.151** (0.0628)	-0.150 (0.0943)	0.228** (0.112)	
	Region State B	-0.107** (0.0487)	-0.104** (0.0480)	-0.150*** (0.0556)	-0.215** (0.0981)	-0.210*** (0.0665)	
	Defense Agreement	0.298 (0.550)	0.315 (0.552)	0.639 (0.633)	-2.306** (0.999)	0.958 (1.794)	
	Neutrality Agreement	0.737 (0.530)	0.716 (0.529)	1.416** (0.582)	-1.000 (1.662)	Omitted	
	Nonaggression Agreement	-0.0625 (0.493)	-0.0491 (0.492)	-0.0504 (0.591)	-0.921 (0.960)	Omitted	
	Entente	0.304 (0.529)	0.315 (0.531)	-0.306 (0.647)	2.474*** (0.738)	Omitted	
	Peace Years	-0.491*** (0.0489)	-0.484*** (0.0499)	-0.573*** (0.0677)	-0.383*** (0.103)	-1.372** (0.590)	
	Peace Years 2	0.0171*** (0.00214)	0.0166*** (0.00217)	0.0200*** (0.00296)	0.0149*** (0.00518)	0.0472** (0.0225)	
	Peace Years 3	-0.000168*** (2.60e-05)	-0.000161*** (2.62e-05)	-0.000192*** (3.50e-05)	-0.00017** (6.96e-05)	-0.00042* (0.000216)	
	Constant	-1.953* (1.005)	-2.000** (0.996)	-1.274 (1.047)	-2.610** (1.331)	-8.942*** (2.018)	
	Observations		139,404	139,404	139,404	125,962	134,103

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

To alleviate concern that this is just a US Foreign Policy story, Table 2.12 runs the full model specification, but drops the US as the initiator. Interestingly at lower levels, the finding does lose significance, however democracies excluding the US are still more inclined to target personalist regimes for wars. While the US may be driving the findings at lower levels of conflict, it is not responsible for the larger democracies targeting personalist regimes in wars (See also Table 4). In Model 5 examining *Wars*, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval is 8.174344 with a range between 1.883892 and 35.46907.

**Table 2.12. Democracies' Initiation of Conflict
(MIDs, Crises, Wars) Against Personalist Regimes: Dropping US as Initiator**

EQUATION	VARIABLES	(1) MIDS	(2) Significant MIDS	(3) Force MIDS	(4) Crises	(5) War
Conflict	State B Personalist	0.314 (0.252)	0.327 (0.254)	0.346 (0.331)	0.197 (0.415)	2.101** (0.835)
	Contiguity	3.996*** (0.398)	3.988*** (0.403)	3.986*** (0.493)	4.253*** (0.590)	3.113*** (0.697)
	Trade Dependency	-70.80* (37.62)	-81.20* (44.45)	-102.6 (96.30)	-48.29 (53.72)	-384.1 (338.2)
	Capabilities State A	17.89*** (6.118)	18.54*** (6.180)	14.48* (8.409)	37.35*** (11.12)	-31.87 (50.40)
	Capabilities State B	29.14*** (8.866)	27.73*** (9.215)	25.44* (14.29)	2.589 (10.01)	26.26 (16.76)
	Power Configuration Maj-Maj	0.0894 (1.020)	0.300 (1.029)	-0.192 (1.834)	Omitted	Omitted
	Power Configuration Maj-Min	2.214*** (0.433)	2.174*** (0.440)	2.078*** (0.545)	1.181* (0.639)	4.311** (1.928)
	Power Configuration Min-Maj	-2.176** (0.990)	-2.059** (0.997)	-2.121* (1.283)	-0.112 (1.244)	-1.012 (2.430)
	Defense Agreement	-0.0474 (0.458)	-0.0298 (0.461)	-0.456 (0.555)	-1.259 (1.006)	-1.564 (1.104)
	Neutrality Agreement	-0.214 (0.434)	-0.236 (0.436)	0.333 (0.471)	-2.147 (1.741)	Omitted
	Nonaggression Agreement	0.156 (0.456)	0.149 (0.454)	0.0545 (0.586)	-1.347 (0.883)	Omitted
	Entente Agreement	0.966** (0.474)	0.971** (0.476)	0.762 (0.514)	3.595*** (0.977)	Omitted
	Peace Years	-0.481*** (0.0613)	-0.475*** (0.0619)	-0.558*** (0.0857)	-0.270*** (0.0944)	-1.140** (0.519)
	Peace Years 2	0.0168*** (0.00268)	0.0165*** (0.00270)	0.0193*** (0.00371)	0.00734 (0.00462)	0.0376* (0.0195)
	Peace Years 3	-0.000164*** (3.23e-05)	-0.000159*** (3.24e-05)	-0.000183*** (4.40e-05)	-6.19e-05 (5.75e-05)	-0.000324* (0.000187)
	Constant	-5.944*** (0.350)	-5.951*** (0.353)	-5.868*** (0.421)	-7.95*** (0.556)	-7.740*** (0.670)
	Observations	135,445	135,445	135,445	135,271	130,879

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

To further assess the finding that democracies are more inclined to target personalist regimes in wars, I run simple versions of the models run in Table 2.6 and Table 2.12. All three models examine limit State B to autocracies comparing personalist regimes to the baseline non-personalist regimes. State A is limited to democracies. The coefficient of interest, *State B Personalist* is positive and significant in all three models. Model 1 includes all controls and the odds ratio model for *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval is 12.92578 with a range between 3.132694 and 53.33298. Model 2 includes only those controls significant in Model 1 and the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval is 7.336522 with a range between 3.283383 and 16.39301. Model 3 is bivariate and the odds for *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval is 5.61067 with a range between 2.585404 and 12.17591.

**Table 2.13. Democracies' Initiation of War Against Personalist Regimes:
Full, Trimmed, and Bivariate Models**

EQUATION	VARIABLES	(1) Full Model	(2) Trimmed Model	(3) Bivariate Model
War	State B Personalist	2.559*** (0.807)	1.993*** (0.668)	1.725*** (0.655)
	Contiguity	3.232*** (0.657)	4.518*** (0.551)	
	Trade Dependency	-299.8 (216.9)		
	Capabilities State A	-3.134 (9.646)		
	Capabilities State B	29.54** (14.54)	0.346 (9.361)	
	Power Configuration Maj-Maj	Omitted		
	Power Configuration Maj-Min	3.558*** (0.940)	2.931*** (0.722)	
	Power Configuration Min-Maj	-1.493 (2.217)		
	Defense Agreement	1.231 (1.717)		
	Neutrality Agreement	Omitted		
	Nonaggression Agreement	Omitted		
	Entente	Omitted		
	Peace Years	-1.332** (0.550)	-0.780*** (0.232)	
	Peace Years 2	0.0451** (0.0209)	0.0245*** (0.00882)	
	Peace Years 3	-0.000397** (0.000200)	-0.000200** (8.57e-05)	
	Constant	-8.074*** (0.750)	-8.521*** (0.646)	-9.713*** (0.559)
	Observations	134,103	226,614	226,614

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

In all previous tables both personalists and hybrid personalist regimes were included in the coefficient *State B Personalist*. To alleviate concern that other subtypes of

autocratic regimes are the target of democracies rather than personalists, Table 2.14 runs the models from Table 2.1 isolating personalists hybrid regimes from personalists. While the statistical significance drops out for all *MIDs* and those *MIDs* that escalate to a show of force, the finding that democracies are more inclined to target personalist regimes holds for militarized interstate disputes that escalate to a show of force, and higher-level conflicts (*Crises* and *Wars*). In Model 2 examining *MIDs* that escalated to show of force, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval is 1.632805 and the range is between 1.166143 and 2.286214. For Model 4 examining *Crises*, the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval is 3.159125 with a range between 1.628779 and 6.127329. For Model 5 examining *Wars* the odds ratio for *State B Personalist* for the 95% confidence interval is 48.85785 with a range between 7.188588 and 332.0665.

Table 2.14. Democracies' Initiation of Conflict (MIDs, Crises, Wars) Against Personalist Regimes: Differentiating Personalist and Hybrid Personalist Regimes

EQUATION	VARIABLES	(1) MIDS	(2) Significant MIDS	(3) Force MIDS	(4) Crises	(5) War
Conflict	State B Personalist	0.467 (0.287)	0.490* (0.288)	0.456 (0.346)	1.150*** (0.434)	3.889*** (0.920)
	Contiguity	3.563*** (0.367)	3.563*** (0.371)	3.570*** (0.444)	3.913*** (0.549)	3.530*** (0.724)
	Trade Dependency	-126.8** (55.78)	-140.5** (62.77)	-175.2 (110.9)	-208.1* (117.3)	-248.8 (170.2)
	Capabilities State A	3.554* (2.107)	3.476 (2.150)	3.915 (2.491)	7.094*** (2.163)	0.214 (6.303)
	Capabilities State B	33.20*** (7.608)	31.79*** (7.794)	28.66*** (10.69)	35.88*** (13.07)	38.57** (17.14)
	Power Configuration Maj- Maj	0.115 (0.893)	0.308 (0.903)	0.399 (1.274)	0.221 (1.376)	Omitted
	Power Configuration Maj- Min	2.647*** (0.356)	2.619*** (0.362)	2.454*** (0.423)	2.274*** (0.513)	3.410*** (0.775)
	Power Configuration Min- Maj	-2.480** (1.004)	-2.345** (0.996)	-2.324** (1.164)	-3.158 (2.252)	-2.850 (3.053)
	Defense Agreement	-0.174 (0.696)	-0.155 (0.699)	0.226 (0.792)	-2.524** (1.258)	Omitted
	Neutrality Agreement	0.727 (0.644)	0.697 (0.645)	1.429* (0.730)	-0.914 (1.553)	Omitted
	Nonaggression Agreement	0.505 (0.588)	0.528 (0.588)	0.288 (0.692)	-0.631 (1.235)	Omitted
	Entente	0.195 (0.593)	0.199 (0.598)	-0.194 (0.724)	2.567*** (0.772)	Omitted
	Peace Years	-0.535*** (0.0558)	-0.527*** (0.0568)	-0.635*** (0.0761)	-0.419*** (0.105)	-1.398** (0.597)
	Peace Years 2	0.0189*** (0.00238)	0.0184*** (0.00242)	0.0224*** (0.00325)	0.0161*** (0.00514)	0.0463** (0.0225)
	Peace Years 3	-0.00018*** (2.84e-05)	-0.000179*** (2.87e-05)	-0.00022*** (3.81e-05)	-0.00018*** (6.87e-05)	-0.000393* (0.000214)
	Constant	-5.335*** (0.291)	-5.347*** (0.291)	-5.321*** (0.306)	-7.526*** (0.397)	-8.831*** (0.883)
Observations		125,962	125,962	125,962	125,962	120,468

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.

Conclusion

This chapter provides evidence of the conflict propensity of democratic-personalist dyads. Furthermore, the analysis of Reiter et al's "A revised look at interstate wars, 1816–2007" indicates that democracies, not personalist regimes are disproportionately the initiators of these conflicts.

Large-N statistical analysis is a necessary component of this study, but it is not the end of the analysis. Next, we seek to explore foreign policy elites' perceptions of autocratic leaders and not how institutional arrangements, per se, affects decision-making. The data used measures variations in personalism, but it cannot account for how accurately that information was perceived—i.e. lack of institutional constraints on an authoritarian head of state does *not necessarily mean* that the image and corresponding threat were deemed more salient by policy-makers in democracies.

Secondly, statistical analysis does not provide insight into the causal mechanism. The evidence presented here confirms a correlation with regime type and military action, but it cannot show *why* democracies are more inclined to initiate conflict more frequently against personalist regimes. To get at these issues, the next chapter will use survey experiments to examine how the perception of personalism heightens threat.

Chapter III: Three Survey Experiments on the Vividness Effect and Threat Perception

Introduction

The statistical analysis in Chapter II established that democracies are more predisposed to initiate conflict with personalist regimes than with other types of autocracies. However, it is not possible to identify the causes of this trend through statistical analysis alone. To assess whether it is easier for democratic elites to attach antipathy to an individual leader, rather than to an abstract group or society,¹⁵⁹ I conducted survey experiments to examine how the image of a rival autocrat affects threat perception. The surveys were designed to identify how democratic elites' threat perception is affected by: the tangibility or vividness of an adversary, information regarding the institutional structure of an opponent's regime, and the vividness of an adversary conditional on the regime's structure. Survey experiments have previously been used to illustrate how vividness can increase empathy toward victims.¹⁶⁰ The survey experiments I conduct similarly explore how vividness can increase affect, but rather than empathy, I focus on how vividness can increase threat.

In the first section of the chapter, I describe the methodology and survey design. I then present the findings from the survey experiments conducted at Georgetown University, online through Mechanical Turk, and at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom. While individually neither vividness nor the structure of the regime

¹⁵⁹ H_{2a} Democracies engage in conflict with personalist autocracies so frequently because these regimes cannot make credible commitments as they lack the institutional mechanisms to tie their hands.

¹⁶⁰ See Slovic, Paul. "If I look at the mass I will never act: Psychic Numbing Psychic Numbing and Genocide." *Emotions and risky technologies*. Springer, Dordrecht, 2010. 37-59 and Västfjäll, Daniel, et al. "Compassion fade: Affect and charity are greatest for a single child in need." *PloS one* 9.6 (2014): e100115.

consistently increased respondent threat perception, I found support that vividness *conditional* on regime structure increased respondent threat perception two to three times from the baseline. This supports my theory that it is easier to attach antipathy to an individual rather than an abstract group or society and confirms that institutional explanations are insufficient to explain the frequency of conflict between democracies and personalist regimes.

Methodology

Survey participants were given one of four versions of a scenario that varied along two axes—the institutional arrangement of the initiating state and the vividness of the leader of the initiating state.¹⁶¹ There were three primary objectives: first, to discern if respondents were more inclined to consider the actions of autocratic regimes described institutionally as personalist as more threatening than those described as non-personalist. Second, to identify if respondents were predisposed to consider the actions of a state as threatening if the vividness of the leader was high rather than framed abstractly. As discussed in the theory chapter, the vividness effect is a cognitive bias that predisposes people to put more emphasis on information that seems more tangible or concrete.¹⁶² I argue that because of the vividness effect and adversary that is personified and portrayed more tangibly will correspond with heightened threat perception.¹⁶³ Below is a chart

¹⁶¹ See chapter 2.

¹⁶² Winterbottom, Anna, et al. "Does narrative information bias individual's decision making? A systematic review." *Social science & medicine* 67.12 (2008): 2079-2008; Chang, Chun-Tuan, and Yu-Kang Lee. "Effects of message framing, vividness congruency and statistical framing on responses to charity advertising." *International Journal of Advertising* 29.2 (2010): 195-220; and De Wit, John BF, Enny Das, and Raymond Vet. "What works best: objective statistics or a personal testimonial? An assessment of the persuasive effects of different types of message evidence on risk perception." *Health Psychology* 27.1 (2008)

¹⁶³ Yarhi-Milo, Keren. *Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in*

depicting the four versions of the experiment conducted at each site, *Not-Personalist Low Vividness*, *Personalist Low-Vividness*, *Not Personalist High-Vividness*, and *Personalist High-Vividness*, and the corresponding theoretical expectations for threat perception.

Table 3.1. Survey Conditions

	<i>Vividness of Leader Low</i>	<i>Vividness of Leader High</i>
<i>Regime not Personalist</i>	low	Medium
<i>Regime Personalist</i>	medium	high

Following a vignette regarding an attack on a strategic partner, participants were asked to assess the threat posed to the respondent’s country and indicate their support for coercive action against the initiating state. Additionally, respondents were asked if they found the attack on the strategic partner immoral and whom they blame for the attack. Each survey included an informed consent¹⁶⁴, the vignette and associated questions, and a demographic questionnaire. The surveys were set five years in the future, when Tajikistan has become a partner in the war on terror.¹⁶⁵ In the vignette, American/NATO military bases around Dushanbe, Tajikistan’s capital, have become the focal point for air operations in Central Asia. In each of the four versions of the survey, Uzbek troops advance across the border into the Tajik town Tursunzoda, killing a number of Tajik

International Relations. Princeton University Press, 2014.

¹⁶⁴ This language was recommended by the International Review Board.

¹⁶⁵ There are different schools of thought on the value of hypothetical versus real scenarios and the use of deception. Much of the differences stem from those between psychology and economics. See, for example McDermott, Rose. "The ten commandments of experiments." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46.3 (2013): 605-610.

civilians. US/British foreign policy-makers fear that Uzbekistan's actions may destabilize Tajikistan, a critical partner in the region.

In the two high vividness versions of the survey, the narrative included an image of Uzbekistan's fictional president, and repeated the leader's name four times. For example, the high vividness vignettes describe, "President Qobul Berdiyev claimed the attack was retaliation for increased violations of Uzbek airspace and territory.

Alternatively, the low-vividness versions utilized an image of an assembly hall and referred to actions taken by "the regime," or "the state." This included descriptions such as, "Uzbekistan claimed the attack was retaliation for increased violations of its airspace and territory." This created the two vividness conditions, *Vividness Low* and *Vividness High*.

Within the personalist regime versions of the survey, a prominent fictional professor of political science described Uzbekistan's political structure as "The President personally controls the instruments of state such as the military and all security agencies," functionally describing a personalist regime. This was the only information the respondent received about the actual *structure* of the regime. In the non-personalist regime versions, the same professor of political science described the regime as follows: "While Uzbekistan is far from democratic, such an action could only take place if all the important actors came to a consensus. The regime is fairly institutionalized, and both the military and party bureaucrats hold enormous sway over defense policy." In this version as well, this was the only information the respondent received about the regime structure (See Table 3.1).

After the vignette, respondents were asked to respond to questions along a Likert

scale (one to five). The first question was an attention check, confirming that respondents adequately read the vignette. The following three questions asked respondents to assess the threat these actions posed to their state's national security, indicate their support for use of coercive action, and report if they found the actions taken by Uzbekistan as immoral. The last question in the section was a manipulation check, to assess if those who received the *High Vividness-Not Personalist* form, the *Low Vividness-Personalist* form, or the *High Vividness-Personalist* form associated blame for the attack with the president. The manipulation check in all forms was a fill in the blank question that asked "Who is to blame for the attack?" I hand-coded the responses and those that responded with "the President," "the Leader," "President Qobul Berdiyev" (the name of Uzbekistan's fictional President in all forms), or some combination thereof were coded as a "one", or having passed the manipulation check. Those who responded otherwise, generally with some iteration of "Uzbekistan," or "the regime," were coded as a zero. This allowed me to decipher which of the respondents effectively received the treatment in the forms. The *n* from both Georgetown University and Mechanical Turk was large enough that I was able to examine the effect of those respondents that received the treatments.

The main section was followed by a series of questions on respondent demographic information. This was placed after the initial section so as to not be priming. Scales were taken from existing U.S. and British surveys and included questions on respondent political affiliation, gender, age, ethnicity, citizenship, education status, income, and interest in working for national government.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ I consulted electronically accessible Gallup Polls, Pew Surveys, and demographic information available from the UK Office for National Statistics.

The surveys were conducted at three sites: Georgetown University, online through Mechanical Turk, and at the University of Birmingham, UK.^{167,168} While there is an ongoing debate in the literature regarding how effectively students can proxy public opinion, I argue the students at these elite universities are a good, albeit, imperfect proxy for the type of socialization we would expect among foreign policy elites.¹⁶⁹ Georgetown University, for example, remains the largest feeder school into the U.S. foreign service. Additionally, by conducting the surveys in both the U.S. and the UK, I was able to confirm that the effects were not limited to one country. Unfortunately, the number of respondents available at the universities was quite small (322 at Georgetown and 156 at the University of Birmingham). To address this, I used Mechanical Turk to garner a larger sample. To standardize the samples between the three sites (to the extent possible), I limited Mechanical Turk respondents to those in the U.S. who had, at a minimum, a four-year degree and who, according to their IP address, were based in the US. Additionally, I embedded the following question in all forms at all three sites “Would you be interested in working with the U.S. government in the future?” In the regression analysis, I was able to include this as a control variable.

The versions conducted at Georgetown University and the University of Birmingham were administered to students in hard copy by my research assistant or myself. We were able to ensure that students did not communicate with each other or

¹⁶⁷ Professors Andrew Bennett and Matthew Kroenig allowed me to conduct the final version of the survey in their Introduction to International Relations courses at Georgetown University in March 2016.

¹⁶⁸ I coordinated with Professors Nicholas Wheeler and Tereza Capelos and received permission as a Visiting Fellow to conduct my survey experiment with students in the Department of Political Science and International Studies and the University of Birmingham. I hired a research assistant and current doctoral student Donatella Bonansinga on the recommendation of Professor Tereza Capelos to proctor the survey experiments remotely while for me.

¹⁶⁹ Druckman, James N., and Cindy D. Kam. "Students as experimental participants." *Cambridge handbook of experimental political science* 1 (2011): 41-57.

attempt to look up information related to the questions (although the vignette was fictional and set in the future). Students at these sites were given fifteen minutes to complete the survey.¹⁷⁰ Although the version conducted through Mechanical Turk did not include supervision, the survey was timed and included several additional attention checks.

The three survey versions were kept as similar as possible to minimize bias and endogeneity. However, minor alterations were required, particularly between the U.S. and the UK audiences. The full texts of the surveys can be found in the appendices.¹⁷¹ The vignette and relevant survey questions were almost identical between the version conducted at Georgetown and that conducted on Mechanical Turk as both were for U.S. audiences.¹⁷² However, there was one slight variation in the demographic battery. While the Georgetown survey was conducted in Introduction to International Relations courses and all respondents were undergraduates, the Mechanical Turk version required respondents to have, at a minimum, a four-year degree. Thus, an additional question was included to establish the respondents' highest degree obtained.¹⁷³

The version of the survey conducted with students at the University of Birmingham differed from the previous two versions in several ways. First, as the survey was attempting to gauge respondent threat perception through a short vignette, the accessibility of language was paramount. So, all relevant words were changed to UK spellings. Secondly, while in the U.S. versions, support for coercive action was framed

¹⁷⁰ The time frame given to complete the survey was determined from two small pilot versions.

¹⁷¹ The four versions of the survey experiment conducted at Georgetown are included below in Appendix B; those versions conducted through Mechanical Turk are included in Appendix C; and those used at the University of Birmingham can be found in Appendix D.

¹⁷² Citizenship data was tracked for both versions and through Mechanical Turk participation was limited to respondents with an IP address in the US.

¹⁷³ This was then used as a control variable in the regression analysis as "Degree"

unilaterally, in the UK version, Tajikistan was depicted as a NATO ally and questions regarding support for coercive action were framed as support for British troop contributions to a NATO intervention. Although the expectation was that this would dampen respondent threat perception, I determined that it would significantly increase the plausibility of the vignette.

Within the main text of the chapter, I focus the analysis on *Threat Perception*. I did not find significant results between sites that support for coercive action or the morality of Uzbekistan's actions were affected by the individual *Forms*.

I inputted the survey data from the University of Birmingham and Georgetown University into Excel and then imported them into STATA statistical software. I was able to download the results from Mechanical Turk directly into Excel and import them into STATA. Using a combination of descriptive statistics, logistic regressions, and marginal effects tables, I analyze the data.

Georgetown University Survey¹⁷⁴

Surveys were conducted at Georgetown University with undergraduate students in three sections of professors Andrew Bennett and Matthew Kroenig's Introduction to International Relations classes in the fall of 2016. This followed two small pilot versions conducted in Professor Kroenig's Introduction to International Relations class in the spring of 2016. I proctored the surveys in person, administering them to students in hard copy.¹⁷⁵ Although administering paper copies of the survey (as I did at the University of Birmingham) required transporting the fully executed surveys and coding them

¹⁷⁴ The surveys conducted at Georgetown University can be found in Appendix B.

¹⁷⁵ The surveys were disseminated after having been randomized using a random number generator.

individually, this enabled me to supervise students and ensure they did not communicate with one another, use their computers or phones to look up information, and filled out the surveys in their entirety.

Table 3.2 presents a simple crosstab of the responses for *Threat to National Security by Form (Low Vividness-Not Personalist; High Vividness-Not Personalist; Low Vividness-Personalist; and High Vividness Personalist)*. As discussed previously, respondents were asked if the actions described posed a threat to national security on a Likert scale, answering either “Strongly Agree,” “Somewhat Agree,” “Somewhat Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree.” The responses were treated dichotomously to maximize explanatory and statistical power. “Strongly Disagree” and “Somewhat Disagree” were coded as zero and “Strongly Agree” and “Somewhat Agree” were coded as one. The results from Table 3.2 indicate that respondents were more likely to characterize the actions taken as a threat to national security in the three forms where the regime was personalist, the vividness was high, or both.

Table 3.2. Georgetown Threat to National Security by Form

	Low Vividness Not Personalist	High Vividness Not Personalist	Low Vividness Personalist	High Vividness Personalist	Total
No Threat to National Security	36 (44.44%)	32 (38.55%)	32 (40.0%)	25 (32.05%)	125 (38.82%)
Threat to National Security	45 (55.56%)	51 (61.45%)	48 (60.0%)	53 (67.95%)	197 (61.18%)
Total	81 (100%)	83 (100%)	80 (100%)	78 (100%)	322 (100%)

Table 3.3 compares the responses for *Threat to National Security* by *Treated Form*— that is the responses from *High Vividness-Not Personalist*, *Low Vividness-Personalist*, and *High Vividness Personalist* conditional on the respondents passing the manipulation check. These forms are compared to the *Not-Personalist Low Vividness* form. Although there is no longer a difference between *Not-Personalist Low Vividness* and *High Vividness-Not Personalist* or *Not-Personalist Low Vividness* and *Low Vividness-Personalist*, respondents were significantly more likely to consider the actions a threat to national security when they received the *High Vividness Personalist* than when they received the *Not-Personalist Low Vividness* form.

Table 3.3. Georgetown Treated Threat to National Security by Form

	Low Vividness Not Personalist	High Vividness Not Personalist	Low Vividness Personalist	High Vividness Personalist	Total
No Threat to National Security	36 (44.44%)	4 (50.00%)	9 (45.00%)	9 (25.00%)	58 (40.00%)
Threat to National Security	45 (55.56%)	4 (50.00%)	11 (55.00%)	27 (75.00%)	87 (60.00%)
Total	81 (100%)	8 (100%)	20 (100%)	36 (100%)	145 (100%)

Table 3.4 uses logistic regressions to examine the effects of the individual *Forms* on responses to *Threat to National Security*. Respondents gauged their *Political Views* on a six point scale; identified if they were a *U.S. Citizen* (dichotomous variable); answered if they would be interested in working for the U.S. Government in the future (*Government Work* coded dichotomously); specified their *Income* measured on a six

point scale; identified their *Age*; identified their *Ethnicity* from six options , and identified their *Gender* (dichotomous). The first model compares *High Vividness-Not Personalist*; *Low Vividness-Personalist*; and *High Vividness Personalist* to the baseline *Not-Personalist Low Vividness*. Although the coefficients for *High Vividness-Not Personalist*; *Low Vividness-Personalist*; and *High Vividness Personalist* are all positive, indicating that personalism and vividness individually and in tandem increase threat perception, none of the three forms reach statistical significance. Model 2 includes the aforementioned controls and compares the *Treated Forms* (those who passed the manipulation check) to the untreated—the form *Not-Personalist Low Vividness* and those who failed the manipulation check. The form *High Vividness Personalist* substantively differs from the baseline and reaches statistical significance. Supporting my hypothesis, I found that respondents were more likely to perceive threats more acutely if the adversary is personified. The odds ratio for *High Vividness Personalist* is 2.17, indicating that those who received this form and passed the manipulation check were approximately two times more likely to consider that actions taken a threat to national security. Figure 3.1 illustrates the corresponding marginal effects.

Table 3.4. Georgetown Regression Analysis Threat to National Security by Form

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)
	Untreated	Treated
Personalist High Vividness	0.346 (0.371)	0.776* (0.448)
Non-Personalist High Vividness	0.0591 (0.375)	-0.133 (0.748)
Personalist Low Vividness	0.355 (0.361)	-0.422 (0.509)
Age	-0.0194 (0.113)	0.00473 (0.112)
Gender	0.249 (0.273)	0.253 (0.275)
US Citizen	0.735* (0.396)	0.782* (0.401)
Ethnicity	0.184 (0.134)	0.188 (0.137)
Government Work	0.317 (0.309)	0.297 (0.311)
Political Views	-0.318** (0.127)	-0.299** (0.127)
Income	0.0966 (0.0981)	0.112 (0.0988)
Constant	-0.0836 (2.359)	-0.583 (2.357)
Observations	259	259

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

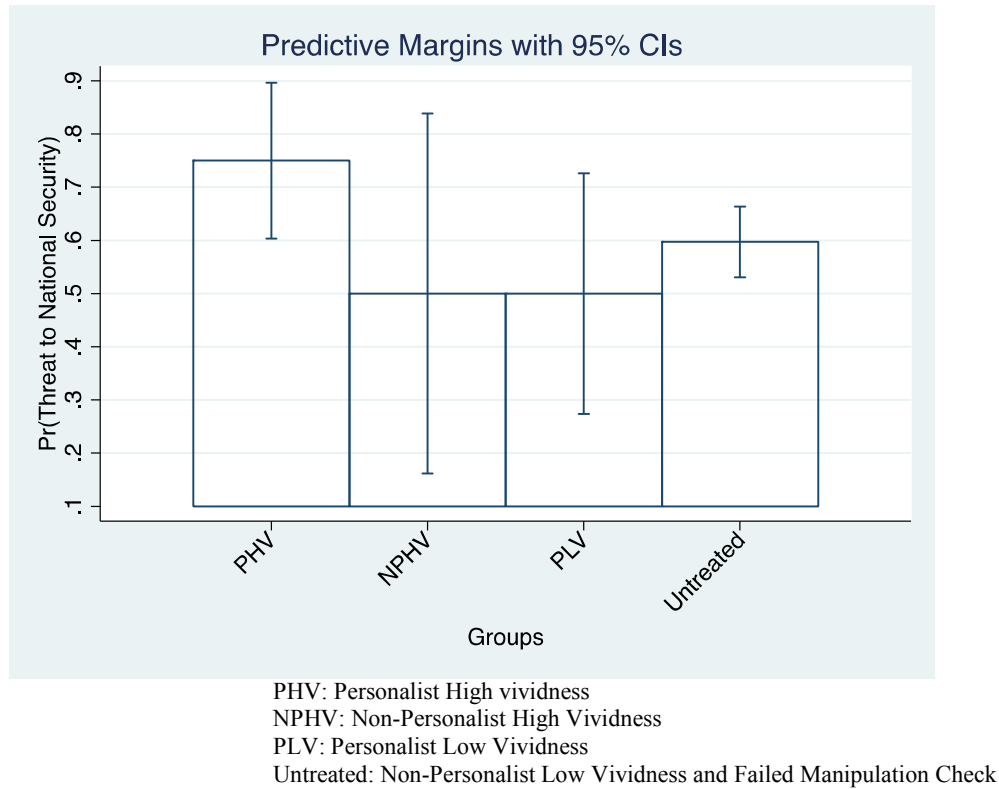


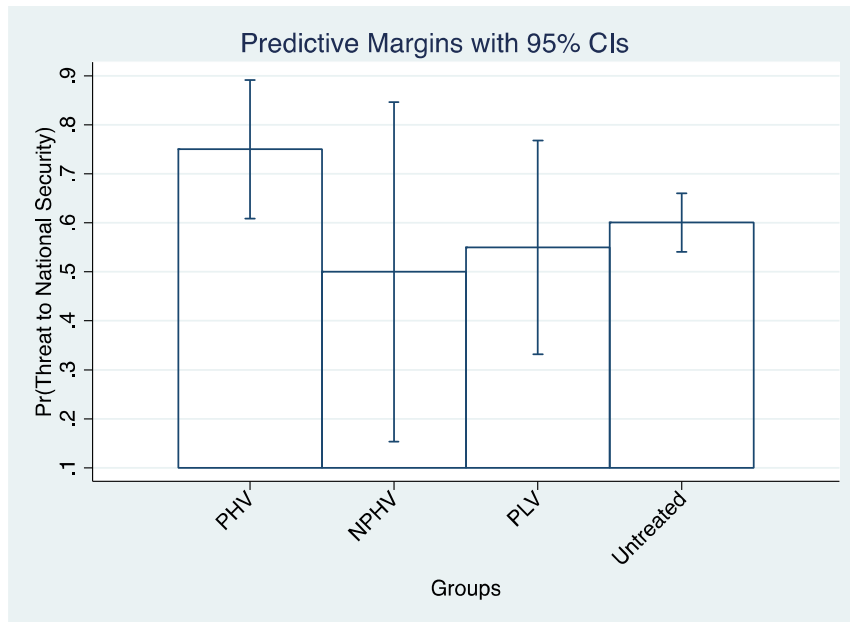
Figure 3.1. Georgetown Effects of Treated Forms on Threat to National Security

The control variables used in the above models were taken from the demographic battery. These include respondent age, gender, citizenship status, ethnicity, income, political views, and household income. To assure that the results above are not being driven by the control variables, Table 3.5 runs a simplified version of the Model 2 from Table 3.4, comparing the treated forms to the untreated respondents. Again, the form *High Vividness Personalist* substantively differs from the baseline and reaches statistical significance. The odds ratio for *High Vividness Personalist* is 1.99, indicating that those who received this form and passed the manipulation check were approximately two times more likely to consider the actions taken a threat to national security. Figure 3.2 illustrates the corresponding marginal effects.

**Table 3.5. Georgetown Regression Analysis
Threat to National Security by Treated Form**

VARIABLES	(1) Threat Perception
Personalist High Vividness Treated	0.690* (0.405)
Non-Personalist High Vividness Treated	-0.409 (0.718)
Personalist Low Vividness Treated	-0.208 (0.467)
Constant	0.409*** (0.127)
Observations	322

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1



PHV: Personalist High vividness
NPHV: Non-Personalist High Vividness
PLV: Personalist Low Vividness
Untreated: Non-Personalist Low Vividness and Failed Manipulation Check

**Figure 3.2. Georgetown Effects of Treated
Forms (No Controls) on Threat to National Security**

Results from the survey experiments conducted at Georgetown University indicate that respondents perceive threats more acutely when the vividness of the leader is high and the regime is personalist.

Mechanical Turk Survey¹⁷⁶

The surveys conducted through Mechanical Turk were built in Qualtrics. This enabled me to design the survey to mimic, as closely as possible, those versions conducted at the University of Birmingham and Georgetown University. Additionally, the Qualtrics interface provided a relatively simple option for designing and creating the randomization of the survey. Respondents were paid one dollar to complete the approximately twelve minute (timed) survey. Although I was not able to monitor respondent progress as I did at the other two sites, I included an attention check in the survey and in order to receive payment, respondents had to enter a seven-digit code appearing at the end of the survey. Additionally, after having proctored students and colleagues taking this survey, I found that it took an average of 9-12 minutes to complete. I thus discarded results where respondents took less than three minutes to complete the survey.

As previously discussed, an additional fee was paid to Amazon to limit respondents to those with a four-year degree and those with an IP address in the US.. While this population inevitably differed from the respondents at Georgetown University and the University of Birmingham, I limited the sample to those that possessed (at a minimum) a Bachelors degree and those residing. This helped to minimize the differences between the three samples. While respondents must have had at a minimum a four-year degree, there

¹⁷⁶ The surveys conducted through Mechanical Turk can be found in Appendix C.

was variation in respondents’ level of graduate education. To account for this, I included a question on the demographic battery asking about their educational history. *Degree* is a categorical variable that accounts for the highest degree the respondent obtained (BA, MA, JD, PhD). The controls variables—taken from the demographic questionnaire—are otherwise identical to those used at Georgetown University.

Table 3.6 presents a simple crosstab of the respondents’ *Threat to National Security* by *Form* (*Low Vividness-Not Personalist*; *High Vividness-Not Personalist*; *Low Vividness-Personalist*; and *High Vividness Personalist*). Like the other versions, responses were treated dichotomously to maximize statistical power. “Disagree” was coded as zero and “Agree” was coded as one. Respondents were no more likely to consider the actions taken a threat when, individually, the vividness of the leader was high or when the regime was described as personalist. However, when respondents were somewhat more likely to characterize the actions taken as a threat to national security when they received the *High Vividness Personalist* than those who received the baseline *Low Vividness-Not Personalist*.

Table 3.6. Mechanical Turk Threat to National Security by Form

	Low Vividness Not Personalist	High Vividness Not Personalist	Low Vividness Personalist	High Vividness Personalist	Total
No Threat to National Security	39 (18.49)	48 (20.52%)	43 (19.64%)	36 (15.72%)	166 (18.59%)
Threat to National Security	172 (81.51%)	186 (79.48%)	176 (80.37%)	193 (84.29%)	727 (81.41%)
Total	211 (100%)	234 (100%)	219 (100%)	229 (100%)	893 (100%)

Table 3.7 compares responses for *Threat to National Security by Treated Forms*. This includes *High Vividness-Not Personalist*, *Low Vividness-Personalist*, and *High Vividness Personalist* conditional on them receiving the treatment (successfully passing the manipulation check). These forms are compared to the untreated form, *Not-Personalist Low Vividness* form. In all three treated forms, respondents were more likely to characterize the actions as a threat to national security. Respondents were significantly more likely to consider the actions a threat to national security when they received the *High Vividness Personalist* than when they received the baseline *Not-Personalist Low Vividness* form.

Table 3.7. Mechanical Turk Threat to National Security by Treated Form

	Low Vividness Not Personalist	High Vividness Not Personalist Treated	Low Vividness Personalist Treated	High Vividness Personalist Treated	Total
No Threat to National Security	39 (18.49)	12 (15.38%)	3 (13.04%)	10 (11.76%)	64 (16.12%)
Threat to National Security	172 (81.51%)	66 (84.62%)	20 (86.96%)	75 (88.24%)	333 (83.88%)
Total	211 (100%)	78 (100%)	23 (100%)	85 (100%)	397 (100%)

Table 3.8 uses logistic regressions to examine the effects of the individual Forms on Threat to National Security. The first model compares High Vividness-Not Personalist, Low Vividness-Personalist, and High Vividness Personalist to the baseline Not-Personalist Low Vividness. The three forms included in the model do not substantively

differ from the baseline, Low Vividness Not Personalist. Model 2 includes the all controls and compares the treated (those who passed the manipulation check) forms High Vividness Not Personalist; Low Vividness-Personalist; and High Vividness Personalist to the untreated respondents—the form Not-Personalist Low Vividness and those who failed the manipulation check. Although the coefficients for High Vividness-Not Personalist, Low Vividness-Personalist, and High Vividness Personalist are all positive, only High Vividness Personalist reaches significance. The odds ratio for High Vividness Personalist is 2.21, indicating that those who received this forms and were successfully treated (passed the manipulation check) were approximately two times more likely to consider that actions taken to be a threat to national security. Figure 3.3 illustrates the corresponding marginal effects.

**Table 3.8. Mechanical Turk Regression Analysis
Threat to National Security by Form**

VARIABLES	Untreated Threat Perception	Threat Perception Treated
Personalist High Vividness	0.125 (0.278)	0.795** (0.379)
Personalist Low Vividness	-0.152 (0.274)	0.175 (0.356)
Non-Personalist High Vividness	-0.221 (0.266)	0.877 (0.766)
Gender	0.327* (0.191)	0.336* (0.192)
US Citizen	0.325 (0.818)	0.388 (0.822)
US Gov Work	0.0591 (0.197)	0.0997 (0.197)
Age	0.108** (0.0519)	0.111** (0.0523)
Income	0.367*** (0.101)	0.372*** (0.101)
Political Views	-0.0895* (0.0540)	-0.0807 (0.0544)
Ethnicity	-0.28*** (0.108)	-0.287*** (0.108)
Degree	0.0978 (0.170)	0.102 (0.171)
Constant	0.532 (0.984)	0.210 (0.982)
Observations	777	777

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Similar to the version conducted at Georgetown University, I used controls generated from the demographic battery. These include respondent age, gender, citizenship, ethnicity, political views, and interest in working with the US Government.

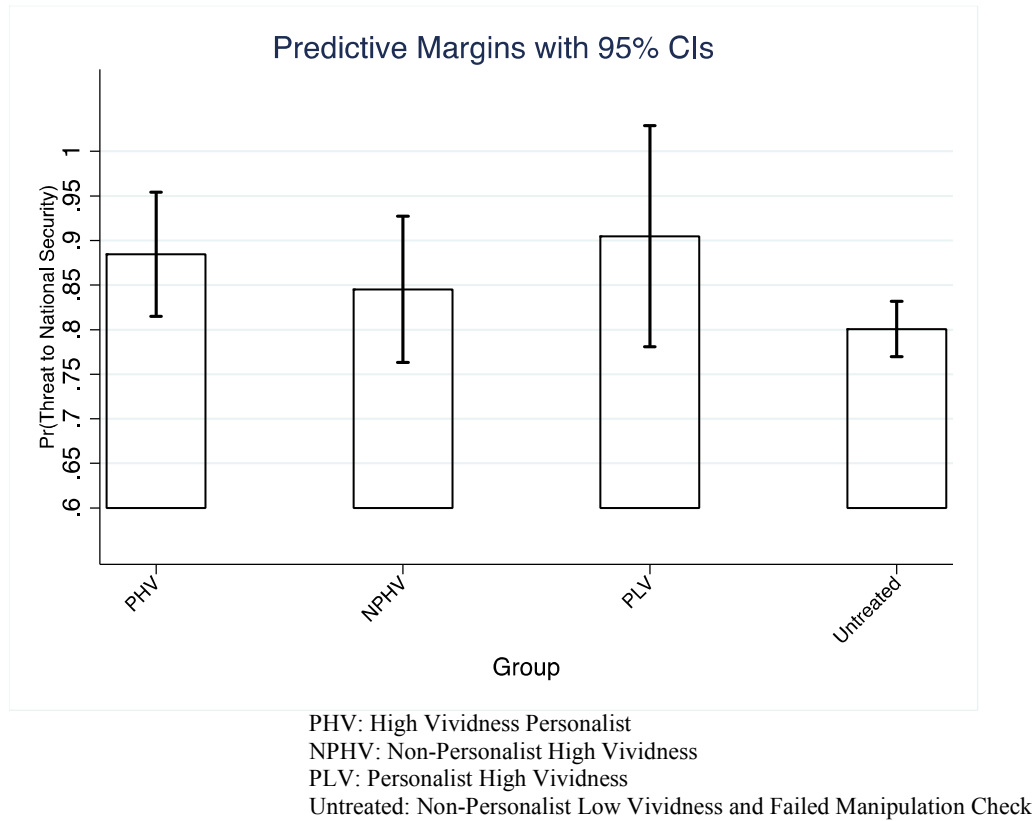


Figure 3.3. Mechanical Turk Effects of Treated Forms on Threat to National Security

Table 3.9 runs a simplified version of Model 2 from Table 3.8, to assure that the results are not being driven by the control variables. Again, while the coefficients for *High Vividness-Not Personalist*, *Low Vividness-Personalist*, and *High Vividness Personalist* are all positive, only *High Vividness Personalist* reaches statistical significance. The odds ratio for *High Vividness Personalist* is 1.863, indicating that respondents were slightly less than two times as likely to conceive of the actions taken as threatening if they received the treated form (passed the manipulation check) *High*

Vividness Personalist than if they did not receive any treatment. Figure 3.4 illustrates the corresponding marginal effects.

Table 3.9. Mechanical Turk Analysis Threat to National Security by Treated Form (No Controls)

VARIABLES	(1) Threat Perception
Personalist High Vividness Treated	0.625* (0.350)
Non-Personalist High Vividness Treated	0.315 (0.328)
Personalist Low Vividness Treated	0.507 (0.626)
Constant	1.390*** (0.0941)
Observations	893

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

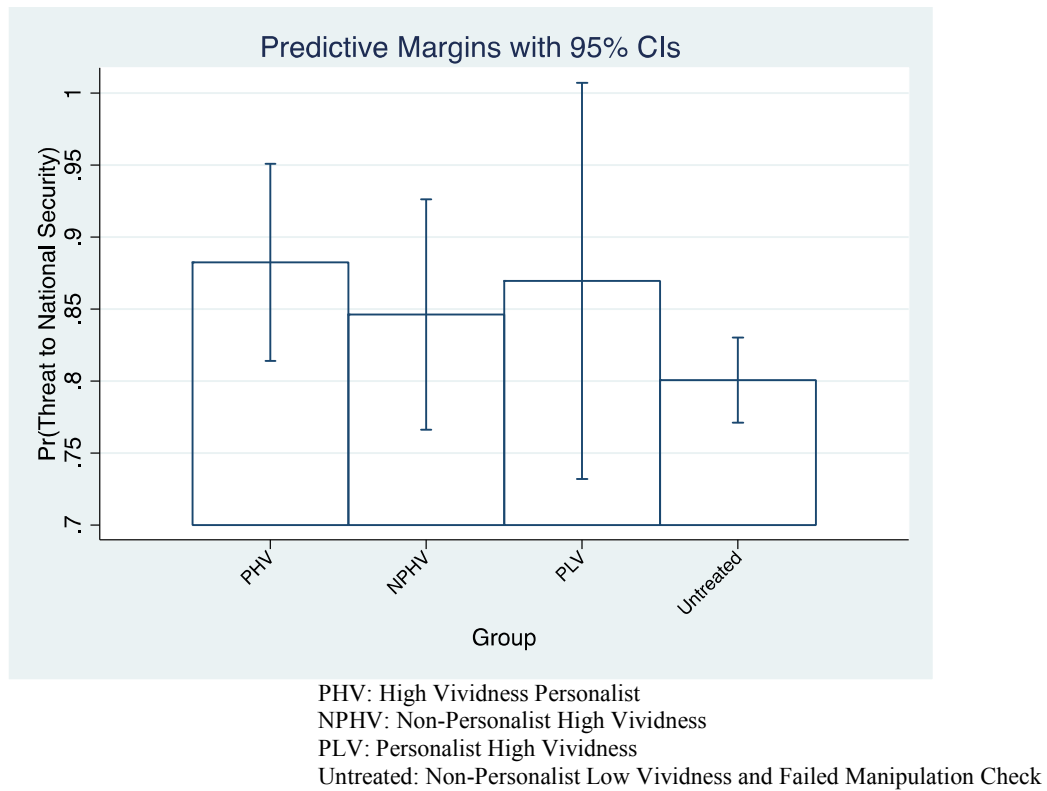


Figure 3.4. Mechanical Turk Effects of Treated Forms (No Controls) on National Security

The results from the surveys conducted through Mechanical Turk confirm similar findings from Georgetown University. Respondents perceive threats more acutely when the vividness of the leader is high and when the regime is personalist.

University of Birmingham Survey¹⁷⁷

I first ran the survey experiments at the University in March of 2017 while conducting archival research at the National Archives and the Cadbury Research Library ultimately received fifty respondents. I then worked with Birmingham University Professor Tereza

¹⁷⁷ The surveys conducted at the University of Birmingham can be found in Appendix D.

Capelos to identify a PhD student who could work as research assistant to help me proctor out the survey. I kept in close contact with the RA throughout the process—in particular on policies for proctoring and identifying appropriate courses to run the survey in. This fall, I was able to collect another 106 responses.

The surveys were conducted at the end of the following classes (with the permission of the professor/lecturer): Security in Europe: Actors, Crises and Threats, Analysing Political Worlds, Strategy and Decision-making, and Comparative Foreign Policy. Although participation was completely voluntary, as an incentive, students who participated were entered into a raffle to receive a \$250 Amazon gift card.

Table 3.10 presents a simple crosstab of the respondents' *Threat to National Security* by *Form*. As with the versions conducted at Georgetown University and through Mechanical Turk, *Threat to National Security* was treated dichotomously to maximize statistical power. Respondents were more likely to characterize the actions taken as a threat to national security in the three forms where the regime was personalist, high vividness, or both personalist and high vividness. However, the difference is most notably higher in the forms *Low Vividness Personalist* and *High Vividness Personalist*. While at the other two sites I was able to subset respondents within *Form* by whether or not they received the treatment (passed the manipulation check), the sample size at the University of Birmingham precluded me from doing so. While I had 322 respondents at Georgetown, I only had 156 at the University of Birmingham. If I were to limit this to those that passed the attention check, I would only have fifty observations.

Table 3.10. University of Birmingham Threat to National Security by Form

	Low Vividness Not Personalist	High Vividness Not Personalist	Low Vividness Personalist	High Vividness Personalist	Total
No Threat to National Security	17 (36.96%)	15 (35.71%)	5 (20%)	8 (18.60%)	45 (28.85%)
Threat to National Security	29 (63.04%)	27 (64.29%)	20 (80%)	35 (81.40%)	111 (71.15%)
Total	46 (100%)	42 (100%)	25 (100%)	43 (100%)	156 (100%)

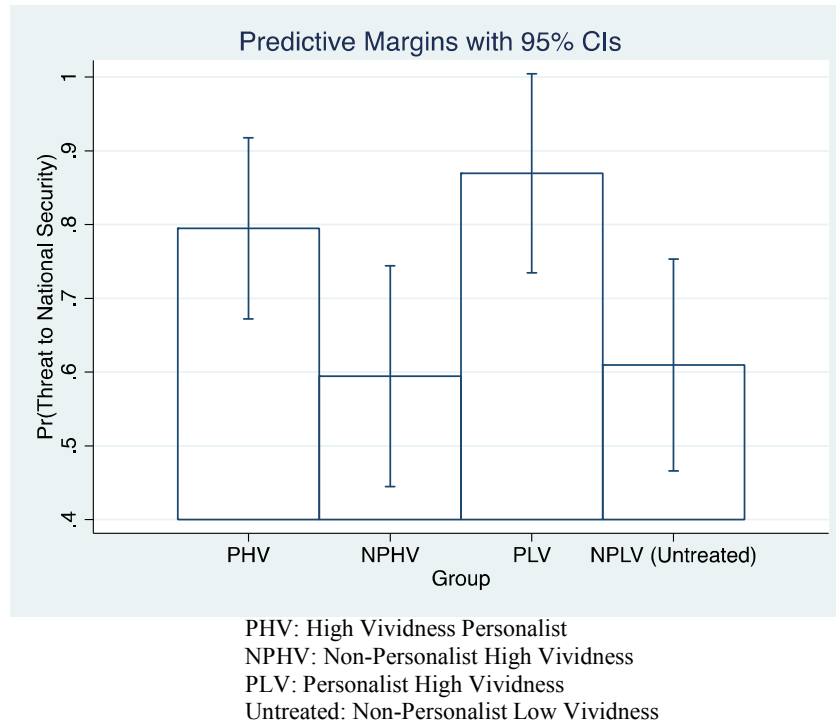
Table 3.11 uses logistic regressions to examine the effect of the individual *Forms* on respondent *Threat to National Security*. The controls are slightly modified versions of those used at Georgetown University. The model compares *High Vividness-Not Personalist*, *Low Vividness-Personalist*, and *High Vividness Personalist* to the baseline *Not-Personalist Low Vividness*. The coefficients for both *High Vividness Personalist* and *Low Vividness Personalist* are positive and reach significance, indicating that respondents who received these forms were more likely to perceive the actions taken as a threat to national security. The odds ratio for *Personalist High Vividness* is 2.95, indicating those that received this form were approximately three times more likely to perceive the actions as a threat to national security than those who received the *Not-Personalist Low Vividness form*. The odds ratio for *Personalist Low Vividness* is 3.83, indicating those that received this form were almost four times more likely to perceive the actions as a threat to national security than those who received the *Not-Personalist Low Vividness Form*. Figure 3.5 illustrates the corresponding marginal effects.

Table 3.11. University of Birmingham Regression Analysis Threat to National Security by Form

VARIABLES	(1) Threat Perception
Personalist High Vividness	1.081** (0.538)
Personalist Low Vividness	1.342* (0.724)
Non-Personalist High Vividness	-0.238 (0.503)
Age	-0.300* (0.155)
Gender	0.0532 (0.418)
UK Citizen	-0.495 (0.498)
Government Work	-0.346 (0.462)
Political Views	-0.172 (0.215)
Income	0.112 (0.168)
Ethnicity	-0.304* (0.166)
Constant	9.145** (3.683)
Observations	140

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1



**Figure 3.5. University of Birmingham
Effects of Treated Forms on Threat to National Security**

Table 3.12 runs a simplified version of the model in Table 3.11, to assure that the results are not being driven by the controls variables. Again, while the coefficients for *High Vividness-Not Personalist*, *Low Vividness-Personalist*, and *High Vividness Personalist* are all positive, in the simplified model only *High Vividness Personalist* reaches statistical significance. The odds ratio for *High Vividness Personalist* is 2.56, indicating that respondents were more than two and a half times as likely to conceive of the actions taken as a threat if they received the form *High Vividness Personalist* than if they received the form *Not-Personalist Low Vividness*. Figure 3.6 illustrates the corresponding marginal effect.

Table 3.12. University of Birmingham Regression Analysis Threat to National Security by Treated Form

		(1)
EQUATION	VARIABLES	Threat Perception No Controls
Threat	Personalist High Vividness	0.942* (0.497)
	Personalist Low Vividness	0.852 (0.586)
	Non-Personalist High Vividness	0.0537 (0.444)
	Constant	0.534* (0.305)
Observations		156

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

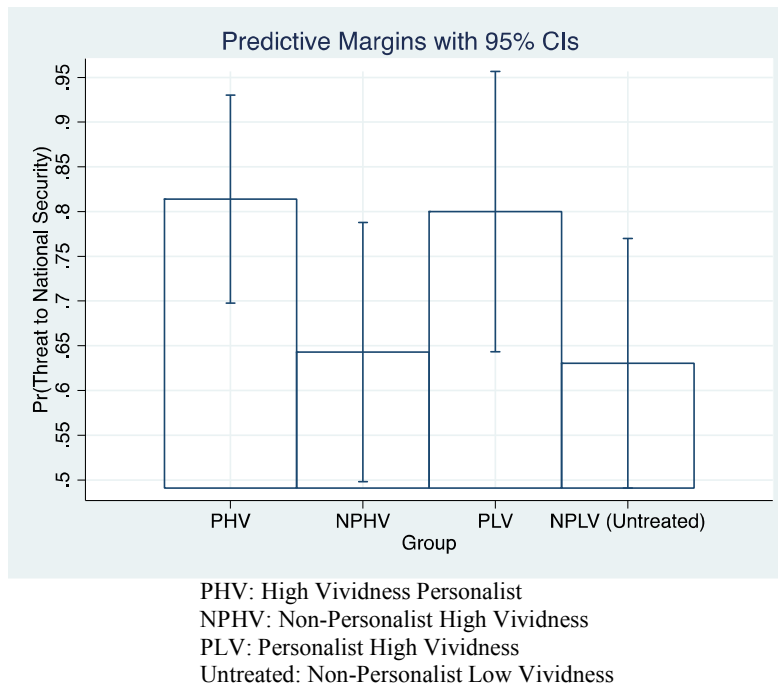


Figure 3.6. University of Birmingham Effects of Treated Forms (No Controls) on Threat to National Security

The results from the surveys conducted at the University of Birmingham confirm the same pattern from those fielded at Georgetown University and Mechanical Turk.

Respondents perceive threats more acutely when the vividness of the leader is high and when the regime is personalist.

Discussion and Conclusion

The substantive interpretation of the survey experiments at all three sites is that vividness conditional on regime structure increases threat perception. For the surveys conducted at Georgetown University and through Mechanical Turk, this was contingent on respondents effectively receiving treatment (passing the manipulation check).¹⁷⁸ While individually neither vividness nor personalist regime structure were consistently sufficient to increase threat, in tandem respondents were between two and three times more likely to consider the actions a threat to national security. These results provide significant support that vividness, or tangibility, play an important role in increasing threat perception and that institutional arrangement alone is insufficient to explain increased democratic-personalist conflict.

There were no significant results found between the sites that support for coercive action or the morality of these actions are affected by the individual *Forms*. The options respondents were provided for support for coercive action focused on troop contributions. However, a number of mediating variables could have affected the results and in the future including an option that specifically penalized the leader (decapitation technique) may be more appropriate. This would have more clearly correlated with the conception of

¹⁷⁸ The manipulation check that asked “Who is to blame for the attack?” allowed me to decipher which of the respondents effectively received the treatment in their forms.

the individual leader as the threat. Regarding the morality of the action taken, future iterations of the survey should incorporate existing research on personal values and moral scales, specifically including the moralization of everyday life.¹⁷⁹ This would allow me to more effectively examine how personal values may mediate how democratic elites conceptualize their personalist adversaries.

The next chapter will explore how increased vividness is exacerbated by democratic elites' deeply embedded narrative of authoritarian hostility. I explore how foreign policymakers in the U.S. and UK, particularly President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Eden, perceived the threat from Gamal Abdel Nasser and how this affected the Suez Crisis of 1956. I conducted archival research at The National Archives, US; Kew National Archives, UK; the Eisenhower Presidential Library; and the Cadbury Research Library in the UK.

¹⁷⁹ See Rathbun, B. C., Kertzer, J. D., Reifler, J., Goren, P., & Scotto, T. J. (2016). Taking foreign policy personally: Personal values and foreign policy attitudes. *International Studies Quarterly*, 60(1), 124-137. and Lovett, Benjamin J., Alexander H. Jordan, and Scott S. Wiltermuth. "Individual differences in the moralization of everyday life." *Ethics & Behavior* 22.4 (2012): 248-257.

Chapter IV: “Disgorging” the Dictator: US and British Threat Perception during the Suez Crisis of 1956

We like our adversaries wholly inhuman; all-powerful, omniscient, monstrously efficient, unhampered by any serious problems of their own, and bent only on schemes for our destruction. Whatever their real nature, we always persist in seeing them this way. It is the reflection of a philosophic weakness—of an inability to recognize any relativity in matters of friendship and enmity.
—George Kennan

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have argued that democracies are more inclined to initiate conflict against personalist regimes than against other types of autocratic governments. Using statistical analyses of democratic-autocratic conflict from 1945 to 2007, I showed that democracies are roughly twice as likely to target personalist regimes than other types of autocratic states. Exploring democratic-autocratic wars from 1945 to 2010, I found that democracies are disproportionately the *initiators* of these serious conflicts, rather than the unwitting victims of autocrats. The survey experiments in Chapter III indicate that the *vividness* of personalist leaders increases the perception of threat posed by rivals, and that institutional characteristics alone are insufficient to produce these effects. Together, the previous quantitative findings support my hypotheses that conflict between democracies and personalist regimes is a product of both cognitive biases and the cultural and ideological predispositions of democratic elites.

To better investigate and test these causal mechanisms, namely, that *perceptions of personalism lead* democratic decision-makers to lean toward coercive action, I present evidence from primary documents of American and British decision-making leading up to and during the Suez Crisis of 1956. My theory would expect British and American

foreign policy-makers to emphasize the personal traits and power of Gamal Abdel Nasser and deploy the post-war narrative, ultimately augmenting their threat perception, and predisposing them to coercive action.

Narratives of the Suez Crisis ordinarily start with Gamal Abdel Nasser acquiring weapons from the Soviet Union through the “Czech Arms Deal.” The transfer of weapons, the story goes, reaffirmed British suspicions of Nasser and caused grave concern among Americans that the Egyptian leader, like other Arab nationalists, would gravitate toward the Soviet Union. In response, the United States, United Kingdom, and World Bank pulled funding from the Aswan Dam project. The Aswan Dam project was designed to control flooding and provide increased water storage for irrigation on the Nile. Overall, Aswan Dam was estimated to increase arable land in Egypt by 25%. Two weeks later, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal to raise funds for the dam project. The British, concerned about their reliance on oil and as a partial owner of the Canal, began plotting with the French and Israelis to take it back. Operation Musketeer/Kadesh was executed on October 29—Israel attacked at Mitla Pass, and British and French troops intervened several days later under the auspices of keeping the peace.

Surprised by its allies’ recklessness and fearing a possible escalation of the conflict, Eisenhower not only withheld support for the misadventure, but actively opposed it. In a showing of diplomatic acumen, the Eisenhower administration first attempted to broker an agreement, and when that failed to persuade the offending parties, used financial pressure and support at the United Nations to obtain a cease-fire and a partial troop withdrawal.

This episode, arguably one of the low points in US-UK relations during the Cold

War and one of the first major cracks in the Western Alliance, is a good test of the theory introduced in previous chapters, that leaders perceive personalism as more threatening than other forms of authoritarian rule and to react more severely to the actions of leaders they classify as personalist dictators.

My theory would expect leaders in both the United States and the United Kingdom to support coercive action their personalist opponent. However, in this case, there is divergence regarding the actions of the two democracies. Two of the significant questions that emerge within this case are 1.) Did American and British assessments of Nasser differ dramatically? and 2.) What accounted for the divergence in US and UK action? I argue that while the means the Americans and British utilized to undermine Nasser were distinct, their perception of the Egyptian leader was largely similar. This project is focused on overt action, but one important finding from this case indicates that covert measures and operations may follow a similar formula to overt action. Another looming question is, how much focus on an individual opponent is necessary and how much is too much? I do not attempt to define what exactly the optimal focus on an individual opponent is, as of course this will vary significantly between cases. However, within this case study, I illustrate that both American and British decision-makers became fixated on Nasser to an extent that it augmented their risk acceptance and increased their threat perception.

To explore American and British threat perception, I used archival sources from the Personal and Political Files of Prime Minister Eden from Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham, UK; the National Archives at Kew, Richmond, UK; President Eisenhower's files from the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene TX; and the National Archives

in College Park, MD. Following Bennett and George's typology on process tracing (2005), this archival research constitutes a series of 'straw in the wind' and 'hoop tests'. Straw in the wind tests provide weak support against alternative hypothesis, but are not sufficient to disprove them. Hoop tests are more demanding, and while they cannot confirm a hypothesis, they can eliminate it. In the Suez Crises, I found both types of evidence of the democratic leaders' emphasis on their personalist adversary.

The usual disclaimers apply: my theory is probabilistic and conflict is always caused by a variety of factors—I do not claim that material interests or other ideological variables were unimportant. I argue, however, that existing explanations are insufficient and my theory can help explain important features of American and British policy toward Egypt and critical differences in how the two countries approached the crisis in 1956. This chapter will proceed in four parts. First with an overview of the context of the Suez Crisis. A section will follow this on British perceptions of Nasser leading up to the conflict. The third section will explore American perceptions of Nasser. The fourth section will include a discussion on the convergence and divergence between the American and British positions and an evaluation of competing explanations.

Background and Overview

There have been countless histories written on Suez Crisis of 1956.¹⁸⁰ When beginning a new account of particularly well-trod historical ground, one must determine where to

¹⁸⁰ Ashton, Nigel John. "The Suez Crisis." *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1996. 81-102; Deighton, Anne. "David M. Watry, Diplomacy at the Brink: Eisenhower, Churchill and Eden in the Cold War. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014; Kingseed, Cole Christian. *Eisenhower and the Suez Crisis of 1956*. LSU Press, 1995; Zelikow, Philip, and Ernest May. *Suez Deconstructed: An Interactive Study in Crisis, War, and Peacemaking*. Brookings Institution Press, 2018.

start. As my interest is in identifying American and British leaders' perceptions of their opponent, I focus on the broader context of the world in 1956 and Nasser's rise to power.

Although the Cold War was in full force by the mid-1950s, in February 1956 Khrushchev delivered a secret speech to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union regarding the crimes of Stalin, resulting in a temporary thaw in US-Soviet relations. American and British perspectives on the Middle East were very much animated by a belief that “Anglo-Americans were still on top, followed by the various European peoples”¹⁸¹ and that “Those of their leaders that developed ‘ambitious pretensions,’ such as Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt would have to be put back in their place.”¹⁸² While the British were largely concerned with their waning influence in the region, the US was preoccupied with preventing another Arab-Israeli conflict. To this end, in 1950, the US, French, and British signed the Tripartite Agreement to regulate the sale of arms to Middle East. The goal of the declaration was to maintain the Arab-Israeli Armistice agreement.

At this time, many Middle Eastern states were new and vulnerable. In 1955, leaders from twenty-nine Afro-Asian countries participated in the Indonesia Bandung conference, declaring their states neutral within the Cold War.¹⁸³ Among these was the new Egyptian state. A year before the conference, President Gamal Abdel Nasser came to power following the Free Officers' overthrow of the Egyptian monarchy. Immediately, the Free Officers reached out to renew contact with assistant air attaché Lieutenant Colonel David Evans and establish a relationship with the United States. The CIA in

¹⁸¹ Hunt, Michael H. *Ideology and US foreign policy*. Yale University Press, 2009, 162.

¹⁸² *ibid*, 165

¹⁸³ A number of international alliances were formed in the 1950s including SEATO among Southeast Asian Countries, CENTO among Middle Eastern countries, and the expansion of NATO.

Cairo made contact and cultivated ties with the Free Officers movement. As the United States developed new contacts, “Britain clung to the last vestiges of Egypt's collaborative pasha class.”¹⁸⁴ American diplomats, like William Lakeland, the embassy's second secretary, cultivated a close relationship with Nasser. Truman’s Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, praised the new regime, sharing his initial optimism about Nasser’s leadership of Egypt.¹⁸⁵ Although diplomats and intelligence sources did not always agree, policy-makers in the United States generally thought of Nasser as a pro-Western and anti-Communist. British decision-makers, alternatively, were much more skeptical, pointing to the new regime’s anti-Western and nationalist rhetoric as evidence of a looming threat.

Beginning in February 1955, a series of border skirmishes broke out between Egypt and Israel after Israeli forces raided Gaza killing thirty-seven Egyptians. This continued with tit-for-tat operations between the two countries. Later that spring, Anthony Eden was elected Prime Minister in the UK. Eden and his cabinet were focused on shoring up British influence in the broader Middle East, something they believed could be facilitated by the Baghdad Pact, a defensive organization designed to limit Soviet expansion in the region. While Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey signed on, Egypt refused, insisting on keeping their non-aligned position.¹⁸⁶ Although the US ostensibly supported the new defense organization, they refused to sign the pact, worried about the possibility of alienating Egypt.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Thornhill, Michael T. "Britain, the United States and the Rise of an Egyptian Leader: The Politics and Diplomacy of Nasser’s Consolidation of Power, 1952–4." *The English Historical Review* 119.483 (2004): 892-921.

¹⁸⁵ The United States and the Suez Crisis. Foreign Relations of the United States 1955-1957. Vol. XIII. Near East: Jordan/Yemen. Reviewed by Geoffery Warren. International Affairs. Vol 67, No. 2 pp 303-317.

¹⁸⁶ Eden had some success negotiating basing agreements with Nasser in 1955.

¹⁸⁷ Kingseed, Cole Christian. *Eisenhower and the Suez Crisis of 1956*. LSU Press, 1995, pg. 31

As the skirmishes between Israel and Egypt escalated, the United States and UK developed project codename ALPHA to bring President Nasser and Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Gurion together to find a solution. The goals of ALPHA were to push Israel to come to an agreement with the Arabs, to appeal to Nasser, and to offer arms to Egypt. With support from the CIA and State Department, Special Emissary for the President to the Middle East Robert Anderson led talks between Nasser and Ben-Gurion. However, the increasing insecurity between Egypt and Israel forced the states to seek increased military capabilities. The United States ultimately consented to the transfer of French arms to Israel¹⁸⁸, while Nasser would receive them from the Soviet Union, through Czechoslovakia.¹⁸⁹ The arms deal offered by the Soviets appealed to Nasser largely because it came with no pre-conditions.¹⁹⁰ Although this is often presented as a critical juncture in both American and British thinking, Egypt's receipt of arms from the Soviet Union increased American and British commitment to finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and reaffirmed their dedication to finance the Egyptian Aswan Dam project. The World Bank planned to lend Egypt \$200 million and the United States agreed to provide \$54 million, while the UK would contribute \$14 million.

The United States was convinced that the Arab-Israeli conflict was the largest impediment to realizing their goals in the region, and by the spring of 1956, it became clear that Nasser was not going to come to an agreement with Ben-Gurion. As Michael Cohen explains, "London and Washington were both convinced that the conflict was

¹⁸⁸ Takeyh, Ray. *The origins of the Eisenhower Doctrine: the US, Britain and Nasser's Egypt, 1953-57*. Springer, 2000, 114.

¹⁸⁹ Alterman, Jon B. "American Aid to Egypt in the 1950s: from Hope to Hostility." *The Middle East Journal* (1998): 59.

¹⁹⁰ Bobal, R. Thomas. "'A Puppet, Even Though He Probably Doesn't Know So': Racial Identity and the Eisenhower Administration's Encounter with Gamal Abdel Nasser and the Arab Nationalist Movement." *The International History Review* 35.5 (2013): 943-974. (954)

largely responsible for their failure to put together a pro-Western security bloc in the Middle East.”¹⁹¹ This was the critical juncture for the United States. As Eisenhower described in his diary, “... Egypt, under Nasser, is going to make no move whatsoever to meet the Israelites in an effort to settle outstanding differences.”¹⁹² The American government saw a potential Egyptian-Israeli agreement as the primary reason for supporting the Aswan Dam. This led the Eisenhower administration to abandon ALPHA and pursue a new line of action: Operation OMEGA. The goal of OMEGA was to erode Nasser’s power and the build up support for King Saud in Saudi Arabia as a new leader in the Middle East. An important component of OMEGA was to let the offer of financing for the Aswan Dam languish.

In the same period, the British also turned firmly against Nasser.¹⁹³ While the British were more immediately skeptical of Nasser, the final straw was the March 1956 summary firing of Commander of the Arab Legion in Jordan, John Glubb. Eden and others saw Nasser behind the move and this offense as emblematic of their declining position in the region. As Zelikow and May describe, “The sacking of Glubb crystallized Eden’s belief that Nasser was a sort of second Mussolini, an up-and-coming Arab dictator

¹⁹¹ Cohen, Michael. "Prologue to Suez: Anglo-American planning for military intervention in a Middle East war, 1955–1956." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 26.2 (2003):158

¹⁹² Zelikow, Philip, and Ernest May. *Suez Deconstructed: An Interactive Study in Crisis, War, and Peacemaking*. Brookings Institution Press, 2018, 101.

¹⁹³ Although many accounts of British decision-making during the Suez Crisis focus on Prime Minister Eden’s illness, this did not have a clear identifiable effect on his decision-making. In 1953, Eden had a botched gall bladder operation, which would affect his health for the remainder of his life. Although this is often blamed for his actions during Suez Crisis, it is unclear what, if any, affect this had on his decision-making (Thornhill 2004). From the archival sources, his language and perception of Nasser did not change significantly between the nationalization of the canal in July 1956 and Eden’s November 1956 respite in Jamaica. Furthermore, President Eisenhower was in the hospital with a heart attack from September 1955 and not fully back in work until January 1956 and Secretary of State Dulles was hospitalized in November 1956 following a stroke. These health issues however, did not have any discernable effect on the leaders’ perceptions.

in thrall to the Soviet Union.”¹⁹⁴ Two months later, Nasser recognized communist China, further provoking British and American opposition.

In July 1956, John Foster Dulles explicitly pulled out financing for the Aswan Dam. Two weeks later on July 26, Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal, wresting it from the multinational Universal Maritime Suez Canal Company. Both the British and the French owned large shares in the Company¹⁹⁵ and approximately 1.2 million barrels of Western European oil was transmitted through the canal annually, a substantial portion of the region’s oil supplies. The United States attempted to bring the stakeholders of the canal together to find a negotiated solution, but American and British documents indicate that neither side believed the conference would ultimately succeed in satisfying all interested parties. While the Americans sustained their commitment to eroding Nasser’s power through psychological, economic, and political tactics, the British began coordinating with the French and Israelis on what came to be named, Operation Musketeer/Kadesh, to forcefully take back the canal and oust Nasser from power. On October 29, the Operation was unleashed. The Eisenhower administration ultimately used economic pressure and the UN to force the British to withdraw.

The next section will examine the perspectives of Prime Minister Eden and British foreign policy-makers’ – namely cabinet ministers, Foreign Office personnel, and Members of Parliament – perceptions of Nasser and how this informed their decision-making.

¹⁹⁴ Zelikow, Philip, and Ernest May. *Suez Deconstructed: An Interactive Study in Crisis, War, and Peacemaking*. Brookings Institution Press, 2018, 83.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid*, 19.

The United Kingdom and Egypt, 1954-1956

This section uses primary documents to explore how the British government conceptualized the threat from President Nasser from the mid nineteen fifties through the beginning of Operation Musketeer. I argue that British leader's image of President Nasser was reinforced by their experiences in World War II and their socialization to the post war narrative, ultimately predisposing them to conflict with Egypt. This section explores the cabinet and the parliament's perceptions, in particular those of Prime Minister Eden.

Anthony Eden's premiership was relatively brief (1955-1957), but his service record was fairly extensive and focused almost exclusively on foreign affairs. Born into a wealthy family in Durham in 1897, he showed an interest in Britain's place in the world from an early age. During First World War, he volunteered with the British Army serving in the United Kingdom, Belgium and France. After the war, he studied Oriental Languages at Oxford University and was considered an expert on the Middle East by his peers. He first held office as Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs in 1931 and was promoted to Foreign Secretary in 1935. His first appointment as cabinet secretary was marked, and ultimately cut short, by the internecine fights over Britain's approach to German resurgence and, particularly, Italian adventurism. During the Italian-Ethiopian War, Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Eden met with Mussolini to try to convince the Italian dictator to submit the dispute to the League of Nations. A vocal proponent of tougher stances against the fascist states, Eden went so far as breaking with his party, resigning his post in 1938 over Chamberlain's appeasement of Mussolini.¹⁹⁶ During World War II, Eden returned to the Army and then to the Foreign Office on the

¹⁹⁶ Eden Personal and Political Files. May/June 1951. Draft "Political Portrait" The Rt. Hon. Anthony Eden, by John Amendall, Biographer's Files, AP/33/12, Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham UK.

Political Warfare Executive.¹⁹⁷ After the War, in 1951, he made a return as Foreign Secretary under Winston Churchill, his close friend and political ally.¹⁹⁸ In March 1955 he succeeded Churchill as leader of the Conservative Party and, weeks later, as Prime Minister.

Eden's academic and professional experience with the Middle East was conditioned by the indelible marks left by his experience negotiating with Mussolini. It is also fair to say that policy-makers' views on British foreign affairs were largely conditioned by the evolving situation in the Middle East. Even more so than the Cold War, in the mid-1950s British policy-makers were centrally preoccupied by their waning influence in the Middle East.

Image of Nasser

The British were immediately skeptical of Nasser's government. To the extent that one can identify a critical juncture at which British sentiment regarding Nasser becomes clearly and strongly negative, that moment was not the Czech Arms Deal but the Jordanian King's firing of the Commander of the British Legion John Glubb in March 1956. As Michael Cohen explains, "The move has been described as the 'deepest cut in the history of the Hashemite state between 1948 and 1967. It constituted a resounding insult to the British and portended the denouement of their long-standing hegemony in Jordan. Seeing Nasser's hand behind the move, the British were profoundly rattled."¹⁹⁹ Glubb's departure dealt a blow to British prestige and sparked such strong disapproval

¹⁹⁷ A rough equivalent to the US Office of War Information.

¹⁹⁸ A year later he would marry Churchill's niece, Clarissa Spencer-Churchill.

¹⁹⁹ Cohen, Michael. "Prologue to Suez: Anglo-American planning for military intervention in a Middle East war, 1955–1956." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 26.2 2003:170.

among the ministers that there were rumors Eden would be forced to resign. Eden and his cabinet saw Nasser as responsible for the removal of the General, and this convinced the government that Nasser could not be dealt with. Glubb's departure from Jordan, more than a minor humiliation or slight, became emblematic of British decline in regional prestige. Nasser, as its presumed articulator, came to personally embody waning British influence. As explained in previous chapters, this emphasis on Nasser's individual role intensified their perceived vulnerability.

When the United States pulled out financing of the Aswan Dam in July, the British happily followed suit. Nasser's nationalization announcement two weeks later made Eden flash back to his negotiations with Mussolini in 1938. As Yuen Foo Khong describes, "Eden, who was more prescient than most in sizing up Hitler in the 1930s was quick to apply the same schema to Nasser. This perception of the stakes, among other things, convinced him that a British-French response was imperative."²⁰⁰ Western European leaders' socialization to the post-war narrative reaffirmed the psychological biases of vividness and attribution. For British policymakers, Hitler and Mussolini were not abstract analogies, but salient emotional memories. That Eden and other British foreign policymakers associated the threat of Nasser to these notorious dictators further accentuated the threat they were thought to pose. In exchanges with Eisenhower, as in exchanges within his own government, Eden would often emphasize the parallels and recall the dangers of appeasement. The Prime Minister explained in a personal telegram to President Eisenhower in August 1956, "The parallel with Mussolini is close. Neither of us

²⁰⁰ Khong, Yuen Foong. *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*. Princeton University Press, 1992, 5.

can forget the lives and treasure he cost us before he was finally dealt with. The removal of Nasser and the installation in Egypt of a regime less hostile to the West, must therefore also rank high among our objectives.”²⁰¹ Eden not only evoked comparisons to Mussolini and Hitler, but also voiced concerns that without immediate action, the British Empire and Western world would be vulnerable to the fate that almost befall them in the 1940s. In a letter to Prime Minister of Australia Menzies in September, Eden describes,

Colonel Nasser, acting in a similar fashion to other dictators before him, has made no secret of his particular ambition to be acknowledged Head of the Arab World, to encourage confiscations of outside investments and installations, and to humiliate and drive out the foreigner. The canal seizure is, in plain English, the first shot in a campaign calculated, unless it is promptly and successfully resisted, to make the peoples and economies of Great Britain and Western Europe dependent literally from week to week on one man’s whim. In a literal sense, the Suez canal issue is for millions, one of survival.”²⁰²

While Eden and others had previously more strongly emphasized the dangers of Arab Nationalism as a socio-political force, after the firing of Glubb and the Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal, their focus turned squarely to the threat posed by Nasser himself. This focus on an individual opponent indicates a manifestation of both the vividness effect and attribution bias, predisposing the British leaders to conceptualize

²⁰¹ Prime Minister Eden Personal Telegram to President Eisenhower, Foreign Office Telegram 3568 to Washington, August 5, 1956, Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham, UK.

²⁰² JE14211/1857 South Asia & Middle East Dept. Statement for the Prime Minister of Australia, the Rt. Hon. R.G. Menzies C.H. Q.C. .M.F delivered in the House of Representatives. Canberra, September 25, 1956, Kew National Archives, Richmond, UK.

the threat from Nasser more acutely. This can be discerned through Eden and his cabinet's statements throughout the crisis. For example, in a draft note from September 1956, Eden revised a note to his Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, crossing out "one government" and replacing it with "a dictator" (see 4.1 below).

better to deal with Nasser. Of course we all hope that by ~~this~~ patience and diplomatic activity on our part a peaceful settlement will be reached. The point of principle however is this canal must not be left under the unrestricted control of ~~one~~ government. On this there can be no compromise. ~~Nor do we intend to compromise.~~

Figure 4.1. Eden's Note to Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd, September 24 1956.²⁰³

The salience of Hitler and Mussolini on the Prime Minister's thinking is further illustrated by a small picture he kept on his desk throughout his career, which seems to depict Chamberlain dotting over an infant Hitler, while he, Churchill, and Macmillan watched. (Figure 4.2 below).

²⁰³ Prime Minister Eden Personal Minute to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, JE14211/1890(A), September 24, 1956, Kew National Archives, Richmond UK.



Figure 4.2. Picture of PM Chamberlain Nursing Baby Hitler²⁰⁴

British leaders' fears were stoked by constant comparisons with the interwar emergence of fascism, and feared a domino effect—the whole Middle East coming under Nasser's control. Though Eden sometimes described the threat emanating from the Suez Crisis as economic, he more frequently described Nasser as imperiling Western civilization, NATO, and/or the world writ large. Eden explained in a note to his Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd on September 24, "His (Nasser's) seizure of the Canal was undoubtedly designed to impress opinion not

²⁰⁴ Anthony Eden Personal and Political Files. Biographers' Files. Cadbury Research Library.

only in Egypt but in the Arab World and in all Africa too. By this assertion of his power he seeks to further his ambitions from Morocco to the Persian Gulf.”²⁰⁵

While Eden’s perception was paramount in the UK’s decision-making, many in his cabinet and the House of Commons shared his emphasis on and reading of Nasser. These perspectives were repeated both publicly and privately by Secretary of the Treasury Harold Macmillan –who would succeed him as PM in 1957—, Foreign Secretary Lloyd, and members of the House of Commons. These leaders, like Eden, were deeply affected by their service during the Second World War and made similar allusions to Mussolini, Hitler, and appeasement.

In an August 1 meeting with Sir Harold Caccia, Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice, and Mt. ADM Ross, Foreign Secretary Lloyd described Nasser as “A paranoiac and had the same type of mind as Hitler. He was being inflated by going from one easy success to another, and ourselves. Western Europe and NATO were diminishing in power as a result”²⁰⁶ Lloyd expressed a similar sentiment in a letter to the Indian High Commissioner on August 6, “We had learned our lesson with Hitler in the Second World War and I thought Nasser’s ambitions also were limitless.”²⁰⁷ Similar allusions to the fascist dictators were made in discussions in the House of Commons. For example, Labour Party MP Stanley Evans describes in an August 2 discussion, “There seems to be a basic unity in the House in its approach to this problem. I think that the growing claims of Nasser to be both

²⁰⁵ Prime Minister Personal Telegram, From Foreign Office to Washington, August 5, 1956., Serial No. T3552/58, Kew National Archives, Richmond UK, Suez.

²⁰⁶Record of Meeting held in Foreign Secretary Room. Present--Foreign Secretary, Sir Harold Caccia, Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice, Mt. ADM Ross, August 1, 1956., Kew National Archives, Richmond UK.

²⁰⁷ From Foreign Office to Washington , Addressed to Washington telegram No. 3582. In discussion with Indian High Commissioner--Selwyn Lloyd, August 6, 1956, Kew National Archives, Richmond, UK.

Pope and Caesar to the entire Arab world is the poison in Middle Eastern affairs, and that this Suez issue is a test of Western diplomatic and military solidarity.”²⁰⁸

In the same meeting Mr. William Warbey (Ashfield) proclaimed, “I do not like dictatorships wherever they appear, whether they be in Egypt or Iraq. Guatemala or Czechoslovakia—and I particularly suspect dictatorships which rest upon military juntas, as in the case of Egypt.”²⁰⁹

The opinions articulated by the Cabinet and the House members regarding Nasser were remarkably similar to that of Prime Minister Eden. In fact, in the same August 2 House discussion, Labor MP Frank Tomney remarked, “I would say to Nasser at this stage that he has done something which has been done before in history by people who have assumed the role of dictator. He has succeeded in uniting the House of Commons, which is always dangerous for anybody who takes that risk.”^{210,211} Policy-makers consistently identified Nasser as the focal point, emphasizing his removal as a priority equivalent to control of the Suez Canal itself.

British leaders went so far as to identify themselves in opposition to Nasser and often framed his leadership as a deep, existential, threat. The Prime Minister described in a September speech to the House of Commons, “The consequences of this [allowing Nasser to run loose] would be that the standard of

²⁰⁸ House of Commons Discussion of Suez Canal, Captain Waterhouse. August 2, 1956 Suez Canal, Kew National Archives, Richmond, UK.

²⁰⁹ *ibid*

²¹⁰ *ibid*

²¹¹ In August 2 House of Commons Discussion, Minister Elliot argued “Exactly the same argument was put time and again in the case of Hitler: Do you object to Hitler taking over the Sudeten Deutsch population, who, after all, are his own blood and have voted in favour of him time and again? Are you in favour of withstanding him because of his annexation of Austria, which, after all, is a German Power and wished to come into the Reich?.. We have therefore a very complicated problem not only in connection with the Suez Canal. We cannot only solve the Suez Canal problem; whatever we do which is designed to solve this problem must also solve many other problems as well, or it will not solve the problem of the Suez Canal.” Kew National Archives, Richmond UK. Suez1.2 Oct8, 98-150. House of Commons Discussion of Suez Canal, Captain Waterhouse. August 2, 1956 Suez Canal

life of Western Europe would be at Col. Nasser's mercy."²¹² A draft speech for the Post Master General on September 27 explains,

If the seizure of Suez is allowed to prevail international order will go down before international anarchy. No one in this country would escape the effects of such a catastrophe. Any who pretend that it is just a technical hitch or merely a matter of a penny on the petrol are blurring the issue. They should read Nasser's own statement that his aim is to drive all Western influence and interests out of the Middle East to wipe out the state of Israel and to create an Arab Empire from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf."²¹³

In a speech to be delivered by the Secretary of State for Air at Durham Castle on September 22, the text reads, "During the weeks since Colonel Nasser started up the Suez crisis many efforts have been made to blur the central issue. It is simply this; if Colonel Nasser's illegal act is not resisted by those who stand for international order then international disorder will prevail."²¹⁴

The specific language British leaders used to describe Nasser can provide insight into their emotional state. Sentiment analysis enables researchers to identify the prevalence of particular emotions in written text. While I did not conduct a computerized analysis of the archival material, through a manual examination using a sentiment dictionary, I consistently found that British leaders

²¹² Foreign Office. Text of Prime Minister Eden's Speech in House of Common's taken from draft text, JE14211/1725, Sept. 11, 1956, Kew National Archives Richmond, UK.

²¹³ GOP Headquarters, ST Martins Le Grand Passages for Postmaster General for Upcoming Speeches, JE14211/1956 September 27, 2018, Kew National Archives, Richmond, UK.

²¹⁴ Air Ministry Whitehall Gardens, Letter to Bishop from KC Macdonald (Private Secretary), Extract from Speech to be delivered by the Secretary of State for Air at Durham Castle, JE14211/1836, September 21, 1956, Kew National Archives, Richmond,

used language connoting anger to describe Nasser such as “anarchy,” “seizure,” and “disorder.” As argued in the theory chapter, leaders’ decision to engage with personalist leaders is affected, in particular, by the emotions of anger and disgust. Fear, anger, and disgust can be situated under the larger class of aversion emotions, and are associated with more risk-acceptant behavior.²¹⁵

After the Crisis

In a 1957 Post Mortem of the Crisis, British officials seemed to understand that the conflation of the Suez Crisis with Nasser personally amplified their perception of the threat and predisposed them, perhaps unduly, to coercive military action, “Because Britain was not solely concerned with the safety of passage through the Canal, and because prestige played so large a part, HMG was unable to draw a clear-cut distinction between the question of the Canal and that of Nasser’s regime as a threat to Europe.”²¹⁶ In spite of this, British leaders continued to emphasize Nasser. In a letter to Eden in 1957, Churchill wrote, “I am getting older with every day that passes, but I still hope to see us get the better of Nasser. I am sure it would be a very good thing for you to write a book about the 30’s and you will find plenty of material. But there is no reason why this should be the end of the story you have to tell, and I am sure it will be good all through.”²¹⁷

While the British emphasis on Nasser is well recorded, I argue that US foreign-policy-makers were similarly affected by their emphasis on Nasser.

²¹⁵ Mohammad , Saif. “ Sentiment and Emotion Lexicons.” *NRC Emotion Lexicon*, National Research Council Canada , 2015, saifmohammad.com/WebPages/NRC-Emotion-Lexicon.htm.

²¹⁶ Eden’s Personal and Political Files. Memorandum on the relations between the UK, the US, and France in the months following Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal Company in 1956, October 21, 1975, Cabinet Office, Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham, UK.

²¹⁷ Eden’s Personal and Political Files. Personal Telegram to the PM from Winston Churchill From Secretary of State Aboard RSM Queen Elizabeth to Foreign Office, June 26, 1957, Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham, UK.

Egypt and the United States, 1954-1956

This section uses primary documents to investigate how leaders in the American government conceptualized President Nasser from the mid nineteen fifties through the end of the Gulf Crisis. Although the US administration did not support the tripartite action in Egypt and ultimately pushed British forces out of the Canal Zone, they conceptualized Nasser as a immediate threat and their conceptualization of Nasser predisposed them to pursue other tactics to “reduce” the Egyptian President.

US-Egypt Relations under Eisenhower

Eisenhower²¹⁸ was elected to the presidency in 1952, following a career as a decorated Army officer and a triumphant performance as Supreme Allied Commander in the European theatre of World War II. Naturally, Eisenhower and other American statesmen of his time were strongly affected by their experiences in the war and as many scholars have argued, the Munich Analogy was pervasive in US decision-making.²¹⁹

As late as 1954, American policy makers were still optimistic that they could work with Nasser to pursue their agenda in the Middle East.²²⁰ While largely positive in tone, US policy toward Egypt in this period was also largely framed around the figure of the Egyptian leader, with hopes pinned on Nasser being a willing collaborator. As such,

²¹⁸ Eisenhower differentiated himself as a talented logistician and although he did not serve overseas during the First World War, his deft decision-making at Camp Holt during the Spanish Flu epidemic won him the Distinguished Service Medal. Eisenhower developed a lifelong friendship with General Patton and served as MacArthur’s military secretary, and trained in tactics with General Pershing.

²¹⁹ See Jervis, Robert, and Jack Snyder, eds. *Dominoes and bandwagons: Strategic beliefs and great power competition in the Eurasian rimland*. Oxford University Press, 1991; Khong, Yuen Foong. *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*. Princeton University Press, 1992; Larson, Deborah Welch. *Origins of containment: A psychological explanation*. Princeton University Press, 1989; and May, Ernest R. "Lessons" of the past: the use and misuse of history in American foreign policy. Vol. 429. Oxford University Press, USA, 1973.

²²⁰ Alterman, Jon B. "American Aid to Egypt in the 1950s: from Hope to Hostility." *The Middle East Journal* (1998): 53 and Warner, Geoffrey. "The United States and the Suez Crisis." *International Affairs* 67.2 (1991): 303-317.

American policy toward Egypt closely follows a transition between contrasting subaltern images—from the ‘Colony’ to the ‘Barbarian’, as explicated in Chapter 1. Americans’ image of Nasser prior to the failure of Operation ALPHA fit nicely with the ‘Colony’ image, represented as inferior in culture and capabilities but possessing benign intentions. Following the failure of ALPHA, US decision-makers began conceptualizing Nasser as a threat, and the language used thereafter became consistent with the ‘Barbarian’ image: superior in capability (if not to oneself, to others in their station), inferior in culture, and possessing aggressive intentions. As previously discussed, the transition between ‘Colony’ and ‘Barbarian’ is a relatively easy one to execute, as cooperation with Nasser was based not on a shared identity or set of values, but instead was premised on a more utilitarian goal interdependence. When Nasser ceased to be pliable and therefore useful, American leaders’ perception of Nasser shifted from positive to negative in short order.

Unlike the UK, US interests in the Middle East at the time were largely driven by the broader context of the Cold War. As previously mentioned, Khrushchev’s February 1956 speech on the crimes of Stalin created a brief thaw in relations. This meant that the overarching concern in 1956 was primarily regional in scope. In particular, American officials feared the imminence of another Arab-Israeli war.²²¹ Indeed, this was the origin of operation ALPHA. Even after the Czech Arms Deal in 1955, Eisenhower was still hopeful they could work with Nasser to find a solution, and maintain stability in the region.²²² In a draft letter to Eden in March 1956, Eisenhower said, “It may be that we shall be driven to conclude that it is impossible to do business with Nasser. However, I do not think we should close the door yet on the possibility of working with him. For one

²²¹ Zelikow, Philip, and Ernest May. *Suez Deconstructed: An Interactive Study in Crisis, War, and Peacemaking*. Brookings Institution Press, 2018, 84.

²²² A similar approach would eventually succeed under Nixon/Kissinger.

thing, such a decision would cancel out any prospects of obtaining now an Arab-Israeli settlement”²²³ Special Emissary for the President to the Middle East Robert Anderson travelled to Cairo and Jerusalem in January 1956 to broker an agreement, but was unable to convince Nasser and Ben-Gurion to talk directly. When Anderson’s efforts had clearly faltered in April, US policy-makers swiftly turned against the Egyptian leader. American officials implicitly conditioned their commitment to provide financing of the Aswan Dam on Nasser reaching an agreement with Ben-Gurion, a condition they apparently failed to communicate to Nasser.^{224,225} Before ALPHA was scrapped, American officials seemed to recognize that Nasser, while slowly consolidating his power, was nonetheless constrained by domestic politics and more radical members of his Free Officer movement. As the Ambassador to Egypt said in 1955, “Nasser’s ideas of collaboration with the West on his own (very limited) terms are not appreciated by many Free Officers and some members of the RCC.”²²⁶ After abandoning ALPHA, discussions among US decision-makers tended to emphasize Nasser’s intransigence and sideline or ignore political and economic constraints that may be informing his decisions. This focus on dispositional, as opposed to situational, factors, of course, is widely recognized as the attribution bias common to rival pairs of states.²²⁷

²²³ Eisenhower, Dwight D. Papers as President, 1953-1961 (Ann Whitman File) International Series, Box 21 Eden 1/16/1956-6/26/1956(5) March 9, 1956, Redraft of Suggested Reply from the President to Sir Anthony Eden, Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene KS.

²²⁴ Alterman, Jon B. "American Aid to Egypt in the 1950s: from Hope to Hostility." *The Middle East Journal* (1998): 62

²²⁵ Kingseed, Cole Christian. *Eisenhower and the Suez Crisis of 1956*. LSU Press, 1995, 35.

²²⁶ NARA 774.00/4-2955 Foreign Service Despatch AmEmbassy, Cairo Stability of the Military Regime in Egypt--An Evaluation, April 29, 1955, National Archives, College Park, MD.

²²⁷ Mercer, Jonathan. "Rationality and psychology in international politics." *International organization* 59.1 (2005): 77-106.

A Shift in Perception

The failure to reach an agreement between Egypt and Israel permanently shifted American perceptions of Nasser. This was the birth of operation OMEGA.²²⁸ As Eisenhower wrote in his diary in the spring of 1956, “It would begin to appear that our efforts should be directed toward separating the Saudi Arabians from the Egyptians and concentrating, for the moment at least, in making the former see that their best interests lie with us, not with the Egyptians and with the Russians.”²²⁹ OMEGA was designed to erode Nasser’s power and pivot to bucking up Saudi Arabia and King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz.^{230,231} Although it is unclear how formally the operation was put into effect, components of the plan were very much in force by the spring of 1956.²³²

Intelligence agencies, the Eisenhower administration, and policymakers in Washington were all concerned that overt military intervention in Egypt would instigate a larger conflict in the Middle East, inviting Soviet intervention. Furthermore, they believed, from their discussions with other Middle Eastern leaders, that military intervention would predispose Arabs to rally behind Nasser. Unlike the British, the Americans were more cognizant of Nasser’s broad regional popularity and the challenges of attacking him directly.

Although the US was concerned about Soviet entreaties into the region, the majority of policymakers did not believe that Nasser himself was a communist. Rather,

²²⁸ Takeyh, Ray. *The origins of the Eisenhower Doctrine: the US, Britain and Nasser's Egypt, 1953-57*. Springer, 2000.

²²⁹ Zelikow, Philip, and Ernest May. *Suez Deconstructed: An Interactive Study in Crisis, War, and Peacemaking*. Brookings Institution Press, 2018, 102

²³⁰ Warner, Geoffrey. "The United States and the Suez Crisis." *International Affairs* 67.2 (1991): 303-317.)

²³¹ Borzutzky, Silvia, and David Berger. "Dammed If You Do, Dammed If You Don't: The Eisenhower Administration and the Aswan Dam." *The Middle East Journal* 64.1 (2010): 84-102.

²³² Alterman, Jon B. "American Aid to Egypt in the 1950s: from Hope to Hostility." *The Middle East Journal* (1998): 66.

they saw him as a nationalist seeking status and autonomy for his country. Even directly following the arms deal, an assessment from CIA Director Allen Dulles describes Nasser, “He is today no more anxious to come under Soviet domination than to join a Western alliance and is still convinced he can hold to a middle path. If he can maintain his independence and prestige through an arrangement with the West, he would prefer than to a close tie up with Soviets.”²³³ Similarly, in a letter to Washington in August 1955, the US Ambassador to Egypt explained, “There is still no evidence however that Nasser wishes to commit himself to Sov Bloc to any greater degree than nec obtain arms he is convinced he needs. Rather in order maintain his independent pol he can be expected seek maintain ties with West in sphere of econ dev including high dam”^{234,235}

Even after the failure of the talks with Ben-Gurion, the nationalization of the Suez Canal, and Egypt’s recognition of China, Francis Henry Russell, special assistant to John Foster Dulles wrote in August 1956 in a letter to the Secretary, “It would follow from this analysis that Nasser does not wish to become a stooge of the Kremlin. His role is a more ambitious one. He undoubtedly sees himself as a ‘third force’ able to do business on equal terms with both the West and East.”²³⁶ Although some American policy-makers did

²³³ Message to JF Dulles re Intelligence Background on Egyptian Situation, To Geneva From: Director Personal for Ray Cline from A W. Dulles, October 31, 1955, National Archives, College Park, MD.

²³⁴ The US Ambassador also wrote in a letter to Washington that he “Believe(d) Nasser was flattered by Soviet invitation by does not intend his acceptance be interpreted as more than manifestation of his ‘independent’ policy. If he should go (and this will depend on his internal posit and particularly developments leading up to an immediately following end of transition period). Emb. expects he will return no more pro-Commie than he did from Badung.” NARA 774.00(W)/8-1255, TO: TAG DEPTAR WASH DC FOR G2, August 13, 1955, FROM: USARMA CAIRO EGYPT from San SGD Byroade, National Archives, College Park MD.

²³⁵ NARA 774.00(W)/10-855 Department of State Staff Communications Office, From: USARMA CAIRO Egypt from SANA SGD Byroade To: Tag Depar Wash DC fro G2, Oct. 8, 1955, National Archives, College Park, MD.

²³⁶ NARA 204. FW 974.7301/8-1256 , Department of State--Special Assistant to the Secretary To: The Secretary From: F.H. Russell Subject: US Policies Toward Nasser (attached memo on policies toward Nasser-- Rountree, Hare, Bowie, and CIA reps involved), August 6, 1956, National Archives, College Park, MD

claim that Nasser was by then a tool of the Soviets, they overwhelmingly seemed to agree that he had not become an agent of communism in Egypt.

In May and June 1956, Eisenhower had fallen ill, leaving Dulles in charge of American foreign policy.²³⁷ After Congressional threats, Dulles announced the US decision to pull financing from the Aswan Dam project.²³⁸ The announcement was explicitly designed to humiliate and isolate Nasser.²³⁹ The move succeeded in antagonizing the Egyptian President, who, two weeks later, proceeded to nationalize the canal. Surprisingly, neither the United States nor the UK anticipated the nationalization. Although the administration was shocked, they quickly acknowledged that overt action was the wrong decision. The US public, they noted, had no appetite for a military intervention, and such action would likely invite interference from the Soviet Union and push other Arabs further into Nasser's arms.²⁴⁰ The nationalization did, however, reaffirm interest in eroding Nasser's power through economic, psychological, and political tactics. Secretary Dulles reported to Eisenhower his conversation with Eden on August 1, directly following the nationalization: "I agreed that Nasser should not get away with it, but the question was how his course should be reversed and he could be brought to disgorge."²⁴¹ In Eisenhower's letter to Eden at the beginning of August, the president further clarified the administration's position; namely that they shared the British assessment of the threat posed by Nasser, "We have a grave problem confronting us in

²³⁷ Kingseed, Cole Christian. *Eisenhower and the Suez Crisis of 1956*. LSU Press, 1995, pg. 13

²³⁸ Takeyh, Ray. *The origins of the Eisenhower Doctrine: the US, Britain and Nasser's Egypt, 1953-57*. Springer, 2000, 120.

²³⁹ Borzutzky, Silvia, and David Berger. "Dammed If You Do, Dammed If You Don't: The Eisenhower Administration and the Aswan Dam." *The Middle East Journal* 64.1 (2010): 84.

²⁴⁰ Zelikow, Philip, and Ernest May. *Suez Deconstructed: An Interactive Study in Crisis, War, and Peacemaking*. Brookings Institution Press, 2018, 135

²⁴¹ 1988 memorandum of a conversation between Prime minister Eden and Secretary of State Dulles, August 1 1956, Foreign Relations of the United States, document 25 pp.98-99

Nasser's reckless adventure with the Canal, and I do not differ from you in your estimate of his intentions and purposes. The place where we apparently do not agree is on the probable effects in the Arab world of the various possible reactions by the Western world"²⁴² (original emphasis).

Eisenhower repeated consistently that he did not differ from Eden or the British in their estimates of Nasser. The disagreement centered on how best to react, with American officials believing that they were more likely to succeed if they focused on other means of eroding Nasser. Eisenhower continued,

We want to stand firmly with you to deflate the ambitious pretensions of Nasser and to assure permanent free and effective use of the Suez waterway under the terms of the 1888 Treaty...Gradually, it seems to me we could isolate Nasser and gain a victory which would not only be bloodless, but would be more far-reaching in its ultimate consequences, than could be anything brought about by force of arms. In addition, it would be less costly both now and in the future."²⁴³

The Eisenhower administration was interested in exploiting Arab rivalries to "reduce" Nasser and argued they "should concentrate upon the task of deflating him through slower but sure processes."^{244,245}

²⁴² Eisenhower, Dwight D., Papers as President, 1953-1961 (Ann Whitman File), International Series, Box 21 Eden 7/18/1956-11/7/1956 (7), Letter from the President to PM Eden, Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

²⁴³ Eisenhower, Dwight D. Papers as President, 1953-1961 (Ann Whitman File), International Series, Box 21 Eden 7/18/1956-11/7/1956 (7), Letter from the President to PM Eden, Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

²⁴⁴ Eisenhower letter to PM Eden, September 9, 1956. PREM 11/1177, T381/56/, Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham, UK

²⁴⁵ Eden's Personal and Political Files. October 21, 1975, Memorandum on the relations between the UK, the US, and France in the months following Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal Company in 1956, Cabinet Office, Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham, UK.

Nasser and the Enemy Image

In the spring of 1956, even as the US was investing in OMEGA and planned to let the financing of the dam languish, they did not want to foreclose the possibility of future ties with Nasser—they wanted to leave him “a bridge back.”²⁴⁶ This suggests that even at this point the image of Nasser had not shifted decidedly to an enemy image, which would have precluded the possibility of his redemption. This changed following his nationalization of the canal. In a memo from to Dulles on August 6, Special Assistant Russell argues, “It must be concluded that Nasser is not a leader with whom it will be possible to enter into friendly arrangements of cooperation or with whom it would even be possible to make any feasible accommodations.”²⁴⁷ He continues, “It is in the US interest to take actions to reduce Nasser’s power and to hasten his elimination as a force in the Middle East and in Africa.”²⁴⁸

The US organized a series of international conferences in an ostensive attempt to broker an agreement on canal ownership and operation. Despite their outward intentions, neither the United States nor Britain anticipated they would reach a desirable outcome through the conferences. Nor did they seem to care. Eisenhower’s special assistant and expert propagandist, General Charles Douglas Jackson, described how the Secretary of State envisioned the conference as a delaying tactic, “Very interesting, with Dulles pretty much on the defensive, and admitting his User’s formula dreamed up at Duck Island as a

²⁴⁶ The US was also involved in a working group with the English developing Operation MASK to weaken Nasser’s prestige through political and economic methods.

²⁴⁷ US Policy toward Nasser OMEGA FW 974.7301/8-1256, August 6, 1956, Department of State--Special Assistant to the Secretary, To: The Secretary, From: F.H. Russell, Subject: US Policies Toward Nasser (attached memo on policies toward Nasser-- Roundtree, Hare, Bowie, and CIA reps involved), Aug. 6 1956, National Archives, College Park, MD

²⁴⁸ FW 974.7301/8-1256, Department of State--Special Assistant to the Secretary, To: The Secretary, From: F.H. Russell, Subject: US Policies Toward Nasser (attached memo on policies toward Nasser-- Roundtree, Hare, Bowie, and CIA reps involved), August 6, 1956, National Archives, College Park, MD.

delaying action.”²⁴⁹ American leaders were committed to eroding Nasser, independent of the conference outcome. In a report on US policies toward Nasser, Special Assistant F.H. Russell describes,

On the basis of the foregoing, and regardless of the outcome of the London conference on the Suez Canal, the US and the UK should lose no time in implementing policies designed to reduce and, if possible, eliminate Nasser as a force in the Middle East and Africa. To the extent possible, this should be done in such a way as to incur a minimum of resentment on the part of the Arab world and the uncommitted nations generally. Thus, the pressures should be administered as secretly as possible while informational activities, to a great extent covert in nature, should be carried on to create distrust of Nasser and his objectives.²⁵⁰

Secretary Dulles was dispatched to London to articulate the American position and begin planning for the conference.²⁵¹ Although Dulles was instructed to clarify US opposition to overt intervention, both Dulles and Eisenhower were clear that they shared the British position regarding the threat posed by Nasser. As May and Zelikow argue, “Dulles made it clear where he would stand if diplomacy failed. He would endorse the use of force if it came to that.”²⁵² A report from October 3 on the US-UK working group regarding Egypt describes “Advantage should therefore be taken at once of any occasion which may be given in the period ahead to inaugurate appropriate measures contributing to his

²⁴⁹ CD Jackson Files, LOG, October 5, 1956, Eisenhower Presidential Archives, Abilene, KS,

²⁵⁰., NARA FW 974.7301/8-1256, Department of State--Special Assistant to the Secretary, To: The Secretary, From: F.H. Russell, Subject: US Policies Toward Nasser (attached memo on policies toward Nasser-- Rountree, Hare, Bowie, and CIA reps involved, August 6, 1956, National Archives, College Park, MD

²⁵¹ Zelikow, Philip, and Ernest May. *Suez Deconstructed: An Interactive Study in Crisis, War, and Peacemaking*. Brookings Institution Press, 2018, 136

²⁵²ibid, 138

downfall...”²⁵³ The administration and State Department were confident that independent of the outcome of the Suez conferences they should focus on subverting Nasser. In an outgoing telegram from the Department of State from Eisenhower to PM Eden, the President said,

Seldom, I think have we been faced by so grave a problem. For the time being we must, I think, put our faith in the processes already at work to bring Nasser peacefully to accept the solution along the lines of the 18 nation proposal. I believe that even though this procedure may fail to give the setback to Nasser that he so much deserves, we can better retrieve our position subsequently than if military force was hastily invoked.”²⁵⁴

Americans and British differed on their policy toward Nasser in means, not ends—it was a question of how, not if, to take down Nasser. While Eisenhower said he did not want to get into CIA-type work and “that we should have nothing to do with any project for a covert operation against Nasser personally”²⁵⁵ his cabinet quickly took to develop operation OMEGA, pursued several of its objectives, and consistently emphasized their desire to ‘reduce’ Nasser. Eisenhower was interested in ousting Nasser, but believed this was not the right time or issue on which to bring about the leaders’ demise. In a September letter to Eden, Acting Secretary of State Herbert Hoover—Dulles was also frequently indisposed or hospitalized throughout this period—explained,

²⁵³ NARA 774.00/10-356 Report of the United States-United Kingdom Working Group on Egypt, October 3, 1956, National Archives, College Park, MD.

²⁵⁴ Eisenhower, Dwight D., Papers as President, 1953-1961 (Ann Whitman File), International Series, Box 21, Eden 7/18/1956-11/7/1956 (8), Outgoing Telegram Department of State, Sent to: AmEmbassy London 1593 Priority, Message to Eden from President, September 2, 1956, Eisenhower Presidential Archives, Abilene, KS.

²⁵⁵ Zelikow, Philip, and Ernest May. *Suez Deconstructed: An Interactive Study in Crisis, War, and Peacemaking*. Brookings Institution Press, 2018, 150

We have two problems, the first of which is the assurance of permanent and efficient operation of the Suez Canal with justice to all concerned. The second is to see that Nasser shall not grow as a menace to the peace and vital interests of the West. In my view, these two problems need not and possibly cannot be solved simultaneously and by the same methods, although we are exploring further means to this end.²⁵⁶

American leaders' focus on Nasser as the principle source of threat was further conditioned by their allusions to Hitler and Mussolini. Although previous research has primarily focused on British analogies to WWII, American decision-makers employed similar devices. For example, Admiral Radford repeatedly articulated a connection between Nasser and Hitler²⁵⁷ while Secretary Dulles' special assistant made similar connections,

While the hatreds, frustrations and resentments of the people of the Middle East and Africa certainly exist and there is no easy way of dealing with the problems which they create, it is to the interest of the west that they be dealt with as nearly separately as possible and that no leader of the Hitlerian type be permitted to merge the emotions and resources of the entire Middle East and Africa into a single onslaught against Western civilization.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Outgoing telegram from Herbert Hoover to London, Outgoing Telegram Department of State Sent to: Am Embassy London Priority, For Barbour from Acting Secretary--Message for Eden from the President, September 2, 1956, National Archives. College Park, MD.

²⁵⁷ Whitman File, NSC Records. Top Secret; Eyes Only. Prepared by Marion W. Boggs on August 10. The time of the meeting is from the record of the President's Daily Appointments, August 10, 1956. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

²⁵⁸ NARA FW 974.7301/8-1256 Department of State--Special Assistant to the Secretary. To: The Secretary, From: F.H. Russell Subject: US Policies Toward Nasser (attached memo on policies toward Nasser-- Rountree, Hare, Bowie, and CIA reps involved, August 6, 1956, National Archives, College Park, MD.

Even US Ambassador Byroade, who was ordinarily more measured, described Nasser in a September 1956 meeting, “At time he smiled in friendly cordial fashion. At other times his face took on a Mussolini-like mask.”²⁵⁹ American policy-makers, like the British, also made connections between Nasser’s “Philosophy of Revolution,” and Hitler’s “Mein Kampf.” Fraser Wilkins, Director of the Office for Near Eastern Affairs, wrote a letter to the Assistant Secretary of State describing, “You have probably already read Nasser’s little book. If not, I should like to call your attention to its concluding paragraphs. They give as much insight into Nasser’s thinking as Mein Kampf gave us into Hitler’s thinking.”²⁶⁰

Furthermore, like the British, American leaders conflated the threat of nationalization with Nasser himself and even portrayed Nasser as an existential threat, risking anarchy and chaos in the region. President Eisenhower articulated this sentiment in an August National Security Council Meeting,

The President said Egypt had gone too far. He asked how Europe could be expected to remain at the mercy of the whim of a dictator. Admiral Radford said Nasser was trying to be another Hitler. The president added that Nasser’s prestige would be so high, if he got away with the canal seizure, that all the Arabs would listen to him... The President said the Arabs did not wish a quick settlement. If Nasser is successful, there will be chaos in the Middle East for a long time.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ NARA 974.7301/9-356 , Outgoing telegram from Cairo to Sec State, Incoming Telegram Department of State, From: Cairo; To: Secretary of State, September 4, 1956 National Archives, College Park, MD.

²⁶⁰ NARA 774.13/7-256, Office Memorandum, TO NEA: Mr. Allen; From NE Mr. Wilkins, Subject: “The Philosophy of the Revolution” by Gamal And El-Nasser, National Archives, College Park, MD.

²⁶¹ 292 Meeting of NSC, Members of the NSC included Eisenhower, Vice President Nixon, Dulles, Wilson, Secretary of the Treasury George Humphrey, Radford, Director of the CIA Dulles, Lewis Strauss of the Atomic Energy Commission and Cutler, August 9, 1956, Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene KS.

Although ultimately the United States acted to restrain its European allies, it was the means rather than the cause they disagreed with. As Eisenhower wrote on November 2 to his childhood friend Swede Hazlett, “In short, I think the British and French seized upon a very poor vehicle to use to bring Nasser to terms.”²⁶²

At the same time that they criticized British and French adventurism, American leaders also expressed their disappointment that they had not succeeded in removing Nasser. In a Department of State memorandum from November 12, Secretary Dulles explained that he “thought that the British having gone in should have not stopped until they had toppled Nasser.”²⁶³ After the crisis, US policymakers continued to emphasize that Nasser needed to be brought down. In a November 30 NSC meeting, Secretary of Defense Wilson explained, “It seemed clear enough to him that the time was at hand when somebody would have to tell Nasser to quit throwing his weight around.”²⁶⁴ In a November 27 letter to Winston Churchill, Eisenhower described his view of Nasser,

I have tried to make it clear that we share the opinion of the British as well as of many others that Nasser has probably begun to see himself as an Egyptian Mussolini and that we would have to concert out actions in making certain that he did not grow to be a danger to our welfare. But for the reasons I have given

²⁶² Letters to Swede Hazlett From President Eisenhower The White House, Washington, November 2, 1956, Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene KS,

²⁶³ Meetings with the President Aug. thru Dec. 1956 (3), Department of State Memorandum of Conversation Participants: The President; The Secretary of State; also present Mr. Macomber, November 12, 1956 Eisenhower Presidential Archives, Abilene KS.

²⁶⁴ 305th Meeting of the NSC, Memorandum Subject: Discussion at the 305th Meeting of the National Security Council, Friday, November 30, 1956, Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

above, I urged that the nationalization of the Canal Company was not the vehicle to choose for bringing about correction in this matter.²⁶⁵

The US objective in ending the military campaign in Egypt was to resume OMEGA. Looking further, the events of 1956 and continued American animosity toward the Egyptian leader contributed to the development of what came to be known as the Eisenhower Doctrine pledging economic support to Middle Eastern countries threatened by communism.²⁶⁶

Discussion

This case study engaged primary material from four sites to explore American and British leaders' perceptions of Nasser from the mid nineteen fifties through the Suez Crisis. I found substantial evidence that Eden's cabinet and the Eisenhower administration conceptualized the Suez Crisis in terms of President Nasser and this augmented their threat perception. I contend that this can be understood as a byproduct of the interaction between American and British leaders' emphasis on Nasser, an *individual* adversary, and their experiences in World War II and socialization to the post-war narrative.

Divergence in Action

American and the British leaders emphasized Nasser as the focal threat and both countries pursued policies to undermine him. The turning point for the Americans was the failure of ALPHA, while it was the firing of General Glubb in the spring of 1956 that

²⁶⁵ Churchill, Winston April 8 1955 through December 31, 1957 (3) Outgoing Telegram, Department of State Sent to: Amembassy London Message from President to Sir Winston Churchill November 27, 1956, Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

²⁶⁶ Takeyh, Ray. *The origins of the Eisenhower Doctrine: the US, Britain and Nasser's Egypt, 1953-57*. Springer, 2000.

ultimately turned the British against Nasser. For both countries, Nasser's nationalization of the canal strengthened their commitment to seeing him removed from office. However, while the British pursued Operation Musketeer, the US wanted to rely on more covert economic, psychological, and political pressure. What accounted for the divergence? I argue this was primarily a function of a different preference over means, and to a lesser extent different perceptions about the *immediacy* of the threat. As US Ambassador to London wrote to Secretary Dulles in early October, "British confusion and US-UK divergence over the methods by which our joint policies in the Middle East and particularly with regard to Nasser should be accomplished result, it seems to me, from a fundamental disagreement as to the time available to us."²⁶⁷

The US believed that ousting Nasser in the fall of 1956 was too risky. Leaders in Washington wanted to rely on, "slower" methods.²⁶⁸ Eisenhower described the American position to Dulles after the tripartite invasion, "I am sure that they know that we regard Nasser as an evil influence. I think also we have made it abundantly clear that while we share in general the British and French opinions of Nasser, we insisted that they chose a bad time and incident on which to launch corrective measures."²⁶⁹ Part of the reason American officials were more reticent to use overt action was their intelligence assets and other leaders in the region emphasized to them that this could have adverse effects, including increasing Nasser's popularity. However, American leaders still identified the removal of Nasser as a priority. Eli Ginzber, of the Human Resources Project at

²⁶⁷ Dulles Foster Oct. '56 (2) Incoming Telegram Department of State, From: London. To: Secretary of State, October 9, 1956, Eisenhower Presidential 10, 406,

²⁶⁸ Eden's Personal and Political Files, Memorandum on the relations between the UK, the US, and France in the months following Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal Company in 1956, Cabinet Office, October 21, 1975, Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham, UK.

²⁶⁹ Dulles, Foster Dec. '56 Cablegram to the Secretary of State. From the President December 12, 1956, Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene KS.

Columbia University, argued in a note to the President in July 1956 that “Nasser represents the focal center for the undermining of Western influence, and a constructive American policy must be aimed at weakening, and if necessary toppling him. Like all dictators he must advance or retreat; he cannot stand still. He can advance only at the expense of the West. Hence, it is essential for the West to force his retreat.”²⁷⁰ American leaders’ language was somewhat more moderated than the British discourse surrounding Nasser, but they also frequently used words to describe the leader associated with anger, such as “distrust,” aggressive,” “illegal”, “chaos,” menace.” The difference in frequency and intensity of this language can also explain why the Americans did not see the threat emanating from Nasser as immediate as the British.

Another explanation for the divergent courses of action was that the British were not entirely clear on the US position. Dulles was primarily negotiating the crisis with the British and he consistently struck them as sympathetic to their challenges. Eisenhower and his administration also explicitly articulated their shared conception of Nasser. In a letter to Macmillan, Chancellor of the Exchequer, from Eden, he said “The American’s main contention is that we can bring Nasser down by degrees rather on the Mossadeq lines. Of course, if this is possible we should warmly welcome it and I am all for making every effort provided the results show themselves without delay.”²⁷¹ The Prime minister was referencing the 1953 joint Anglo-American action to oust Iranian PM Mohammad Mossadeq. Although the British were always forthright regarding their interest in military action, they did not disclose their coordination with the French and Israelis.

²⁷⁰ Foster, John Dulles July 1956, Notes from Eli Ginzberg to Pres Eisenhower, passed along to JF Dulles US Policy in the Middle East, Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

²⁷¹ From Washington to Foreign Office, PRISEC Prime Minister Personal Telegram, For Chancellor of the Exchequer from the Prime Minister, September 23, 1956, Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham, UK.

Furthermore, British intelligence regarding Egypt was somewhat unreliable in this period, primarily a legacy their reliance on the Wafd Party who dominated Egypt under the monarchy. Eden widely shared a particularly infamous MI6 Intelligence MI6 “Lucky Break,” which seemed to confirmed British fears. Although the Foreign Office, as we would expect, closely tracked coverage and public opinion on the crisis internationally, leaders tended to read in what they wanted to. As the UK High Commissioner described in a September 1956 letter, “The Arabs there had become suspicious of Nasser’s personal ambition to become a Napoleon of the Arabs. In addition, they were increasingly concerned at the possible effect on their economies of Nasser’s policy regarding Suez. These critical feelings were of course strongly shared by Turkey and Iran.”²⁷² Furthermore, the US was concerned about the legality of military action and did not want to delegitimize new international bodies, like the UN. And although he claimed this did not affect his thinking, Eisenhower was running for re-election in November 1956, likely making him and his cabinet more reluctant to push for overt action.

The US ultimately pushed the British out of Egypt for the aforementioned reasons—they feared a larger conflict with Soviet involvement, intelligence sources indicated this would strengthen Nasser, and they did not want to undermine the UN. Perhaps most importantly, Eisenhower and his cabinet were livid that the British had engaged in this action without their explicit approval. Although the British had always been direct regarding their interest in military action, they did not disclose their plans or actions to the US, presenting Eisenhower with a fait accompli instead.

²⁷² UK High Commissioner in India Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office, JE14211/1852, September 20, 1956, Kew National Archives, Richmond, UK.

Autocratic Aggression

The alternative explanations fail to account for American and British decision-making during the crisis. Although Nasser's nationalization did reaffirm British and American animosity, it is difficult to claim that the conflict was a byproduct of personalist aggression. First, operation OMEGA was thought up prior to nationalization and the goal was not to restore the status quo ante or ensure access to the canal, but to reduce Nasser's regional influence and ultimately remove him as a problem. On the British side, statements from both PM Eden and others within his cabinet indicated that they hoped Nasser would opt for more aggressive action—such as penalizing or attacking European canal workers—so they could better justify an invasion. This is part of the reason why the pretext of the Israeli invasion was ultimately used.

While the French articulated similar views on Nasser to those expressed by British and American leaders, other states challenged by Egypt did not emphasize Nasser to the same extent. Leaders within the Soviet Union, especially after the Bandung Conference in 1955, warmed to Nasser. Arab and Middle Eastern states identified the threat primarily with rising nationalism, seeing Nasser as exacerbating, but not individually responsible for the movement that threatened monarchical and religious rule. Both the Syrian and Jordanian governments feared the response of their populations if they were to make a move against Arab nationalism.²⁷³ Although Pakistan was interested in working with the US in order to cultivate support against India and Turkey was hoping to cement its relationship with the Western World neither was preoccupied with the threat of Nasser. We would expect the existing monarchies to be most suspect of Nasser's nationalization, but these leaders tended to emphasize the threat from Arab nationalism

²⁷³ *ibid*, 75.

rather than the Egyptian leader himself. In particular, the Hashemite's in Iraq and the Shah in Iran were quick to support US proposals for mediation, but also indicated domestic pressure would preclude them from taking an outward posture against Nasser and they would oppose the use of force. Saudi Arabia and Lebanon were far less committal, indicating they were more wary of the British plans than any threat Nasser posed.

Racketeering

Although it is likely easier for democratic leaders to galvanize support against a personalist dictator, this is not why American and British foreign policy-makers acted as they did. Initially, much of the news coverage in the UK was sympathetic to Eden's perspective. Furthermore plans for an attack started almost immediately after Nasser announced the nationalization, prior to any media blitz. In Washington, Eisenhower and his cabinet did not believe the public would ever get behind an intervention, and did not attempt to rally public support. While the analogies made to Hitler and Mussolini likely affected the broader public in both countries, there is no evidence that public fervor drove either government to action.

Material Interests

Material interests are also insufficient to account for the decision-making of leaders in Washington and London. While the British were reliant on the canal, foreign policy decision-makers were motivated more by the symbolism of Nasser's nationalization. In fact, a post-mortem conducted by the Foreign Office a year after the crisis determined

that British decision-makers were unable to decouple their perception of Nasser individually from the importance of the canal. Material arguments fare even worse in explaining US action as they had little material interests tied up in the Canal.

Concerns regarding material interests did of course contribute to American and British foreign policy decision-making. However, this explanation is incomplete and cannot independently explain the decision to use coercive action. My theory is probabilistic—conflict is always caused by a variety of factors. However, my theory can help explain important features of American and British policy during the Suez Crisis.

Conclusion

While the United States and the United Kingdom ultimately took different courses of action, their perception regarding Nasser was largely similar. I have argued that American and British leaders' threat perception was affected by their first-hand experiences in WWII and common psychological biases, ultimately predisposing them to perceive the Egyptian leader as an immediate threat.

This chapter introduced a new perspective on a well-known case, emphasizing how American and British focus on Nasser affected their decision-making, and how democratic elites' socialization to post-war narratives heightened perceptions of threat and willingness to use force.

Chapter V: “No Place in the World for his Aggression:” American and British Threat Perception in the 1990 Gulf Crisis²⁷⁴

“We were playing footsie with Saddam right up to the day he invaded Kuwait”²⁷⁵

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that American and British leaders’ socialization to the post-World War II narrative augmented their perception of Nasser, predisposing them to perceive the threat from the Egyptian leader more acutely. This chapter further prods the causal mechanism, that the interaction between cognitive biases and democratic leaders’ social identity inflates threat perception, increasing the chance of violent conflict when a democracy finds itself at odds with a personalist regime. To do so, I investigate American and British leaders’ decision-making from the nineteen eighties through the Gulf Crisis (1990-1991). I conducted archival research at the National Archives at Kew in Richmond, UK, the National Archives in College Park, MD, and the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library in College Station, TX.²⁷⁶

My theory would expect foreign policy decision-makers in the United States and United Kingdom to emphasize the character of Saddam Hussein throughout the crisis. I find substantial evidence that American and British leaders’ focus on the Iraqi President amplified their threat perception and predisposed them to favor coercive action in the Gulf. In both states, the Gulf War was framed around Saddam Hussein to such a

²⁷⁴ I received support from Graduate School of Arts and Sciences to conduct the associated archival research for this chapter. I would like to thank archivists at the Kew National Archives and George H W Bush Archives for their guidance and support in this research.

²⁷⁵ Sciolino, Elaine. “U.S. Gave Iraq Little Reason Not to Mount Kuwait Assault.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 23 Sept. 1990, www.nytimes.com/1990/09/23/world/confrontation-in-the-gulf-us-gave-iraq-little-reason-not-to-mount-kuwait-assault.html.

²⁷⁶ For both the Suez Crisis and First Gulf War cases, also I relied on secondary sources including biographies and memoirs of leaders.

significant extent that some did not conceptualize the war as a true victory because the Iraqi leader remained in power.²⁷⁷ Although neither the United States nor the UK invaded Baghdad, there is evidence that through the bombing campaign, and public and private statements there was hope—and debatably concerted attempts—to oust or kill Saddam.

This case establishes substantial variation in American and British perceptions of Iraq and Saddam Hussein *over time*. In both states, Saddam was understood as useful, as someone with whom they could do business. When British and American leaders they found themselves at odds with the Iraqi leader, however, their perception of Saddam Hussein shifted to that of an enemy. For the British cabinet, the change in disposition seems to correspond with Iraq's execution of *Observer* journalist Farzod Bazoft in March 1990. For the United States, perceptions of Saddam did not sour until August 2, several hours after the Bush administration learned Iraq had invaded Kuwait. Thereafter, the emphasis in both capitals was on Saddam individually as a civilizational, existential threat. The shift was significant enough that both countries weathered political fallout as a result of their previously close relationship with Iraq.²⁷⁸ The below case establishes that there was a radical change in both countries' conceptualization of the Iraqi regime, and this shift was followed by an increased emphasis on Saddam Hussein and a surge in threat assessment. As such, the focus of this chapter is not on the war itself, but on the leaders' perceptual shift and the subsequent decision to launch Operation Desert Storm/Granby.

²⁷⁷ See, for example, Rovner, Joshua. "Delusion of Defeat: The United States and Iraq, 1990–1998." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37.4 (2014): 482-507.

²⁷⁸ In the United States, the backlash was from the BNL Scandal where the Banco Nacional made over 4 billion in unauthorized loans to Iraq in the late 1980s. The UK, meanwhile, had the Matrix Churchill Affair, in which the British government was excoriated for turning a blind eye to the sales of dual-use technology to Iraq.

This case also provides additional analytic purchase as new dynamics animated the conflict. Hostage considerations, particularly in the Middle East, amplified between 1979 and 1990. Furthermore, the post-WWII narrative significantly informed leaders during the Gulf Crisis, but Prime Minister Thatcher and President George HW Bush would be the last heads of government in their countries to have direct experience of WWII. Leaders in both countries drew on experiences in Vietnam and the Falklands and this cases raises important questions regarding the salience of post-war narratives and how they may be modified by successive conflicts.

As explained in previous chapters, the theory offered here is *probabilistic*—it does not suggest that democracies and personalist regimes should always be at war, or cannot enjoy positive relations—and does not intend to *independently* explain conflict between democracies and personalist regimes. What the theory does suggest, is that when conflicts of interest arise, democratic leaders are substantially more likely to see them as the product of the opposing leader’s character, to frame them in starker terms, and to favor the use of force to resolve them.

In the lead-up to the Gulf War, leaders in both the United States and UK spoke to their concern for natural resources, regional stability, and the new international balance of power. I do not argue that these considerations were unimportant, but rather that they are insufficient to explain the courses of action taken, *and* the timing of intervention. Understanding how the interaction between cognitive biases and social identity increased the threat associated with Saddam provides a more thorough explanation of the American and British decision to use force.

The first section of the chapter will provide an overview of American and British relations with Iraq prior to and following the 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The second section examines the evolution of Prime Minister Thatcher and British leaders' conceptualization of Iraq and Saddam Hussein. The third section investigates how President Bush and US leaders conceptualized the Iraqi President in the same period. The fourth section includes a discussion of theoretical expectations, supporting evidence, and alternative explanations.

Background and Overview

In the early days of the Cold War, the United States and the United Kingdom saw the Iraqi monarchy as an important partner in the Middle East. In 1958, however, the monarchy was overthrown and shortly thereafter the new government withdrew from the Baghdad Pact and opened ties with the Soviet Union.²⁷⁹ A point that would continue to animate British and American relations with the new state was Iraq's "historical" claims to Kuwait and its animus toward Israel. Iraq wanted control of the Warbah and Bubiyan islands in the Kuwaiti coastal chain as they provided port access. When the UK recognized Kuwait in 1961, Iraq threatened to break diplomatic ties. In 1967, after the Six Day War, the Iraqi government broke ties with the United States because of their perceptions regarding American support for Israel.

The 1979 revolution in Iran changed both British and American calculus in the Middle East. Through the Iranian Revolution, they not only lost a close ally, but also gained an enemy. Later that year a coup brought Saddam Hussein to the presidency in

²⁷⁹ Hahn, Peter L. *Missions Accomplished?: The United States and Iraq Since World War I*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Iraq, cementing a power-grab initiated years earlier. When Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, launching the brutal eight-year Iran-Iraq War, the United States and UK had an opportunity to re-evaluate their positions. By 1982, Iraq began losing ground, and both the Americans and British (unofficially) tilted to support Baghdad. In 1982, Reagan removed Iraq from the list of state sponsored terrorism, and in 1984 restored diplomatic ties with Iraq. Both Reagan and Thatcher provided Iraq with intelligence and economic support through the end of the Iran-Iraq war.²⁸⁰

After the Iran-Iraq War ended and the Cold War came to a close, the United States and the UK continued to support an economically devastated Iraq.²⁸¹ This support continued despite the regimes' use of chemical weapons against Iranian forces, the 1988 chemical attacks against Iraqi Kurdish villages²⁸², evidence of Saddam's mysterious "Supergun" project,²⁸³ Iraqi connections to transnational terrorism,²⁸⁴ a substantial nuclear program,²⁸⁵ and long-range missile tests.²⁸⁶

By February 1990, Saddam became more vociferous in his rhetoric regarding Kuwait. The Iraqis claimed that the Kuwaitis had committed a variety of misdeeds, including inflating oil prices, demanding loan repayment, and slant drilling near the

²⁸⁰ Although the extent of support from both countries is still debated, see. See Gibson, Bryan R. *Covert Relationship: American Foreign Policy, Intelligence, and the Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988*. ABC-CLIO, 2010 and Keohane, Dan. "British policy in the conflict." *International Perspectives on the Gulf Conflict, 1990-91*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1994. 145-174.

²⁸¹ See, for example the discussion in El-Solh, Raghid. *Britain's 2 Wars with Iraq, 1941, 1991*. Reading: Ithaca Press, 1996, 167

²⁸² Approximately 20,000 killed, 15,000 displaced, and over 4000 villages destroyed
Hahn, Peter L. *Missions Accomplished?: The United States and Iraq Since World War I*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

²⁸³ Also known as Project Babylon, see discussion in Phythian, Mark. "Britain and the supergun." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 19.4 (1993): 353-377.

²⁸⁴ See Jentleson, Bruce W. *With Friends Like These: Reagan, Bush and Saddam, 1982-90*. Norton

²⁸⁵ Braut-Hegghammer, Målfrid. *Unclear Physics: Why Iraq and Libya failed to build nuclear weapons*. Cornell University Press, 2016.

²⁸⁶ *ibid.*

border to steal Iraqi oil. While the King of Jordan attempted to mediate between Iraqi and Kuwaiti leaders, they failed to broker an agreement.

On March 10, Saddam Hussein ordered the execution of Farzod Bazoft, a journalist for the *Observer* and British permanent resident. Although the UK recalled its ambassador, the United States took no formal action in response. In March and again in April, customs officials in the UK seized nuclear triggers en route to Baghdad.²⁸⁷ On April 2, Saddam gave an inflammatory speech threatening Israel, and continued to launch vitriolic attacks over the summer against Kuwait. This prompted denunciation from the Bush administration and members of Congress, but no change in policy. On July 24, the CIA reported to the White House that Iraqi troops had been mobilizing on the border with Kuwait. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and UN Secretary General Javier Pèrez de Cuèllar attempted to broker an agreement between Kuwait and Iraq, to no avail.²⁸⁸

On August 2, Iraq invaded Kuwait. The same day, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 660 calling for Iraq's withdrawal and the United States and UK began to coordinate sanctions. Between August 2 and 29, the Security Council passed twelve resolutions regarding the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The Arab League issued a statement condemning the Iraqi invasion, but warned against international intervention into Arab conflicts.

On August 7, the United States launched Operation Desert Shield, deploying 48 F-15 fighters on the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, USS Independence carrier battle

²⁸⁷ Gerth, Jeff. "ATOM BOMB PARTS SEIZED IN BRITAIN EN ROUTE TO IRAQ." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 29 Mar. 1990, www.nytimes.com/1990/03/29/world/atom-bomb-parts-seized-in-britain-en-route-to-iraq.html.

²⁸⁸ See Jentleson, Bruce W. *With Friends Like These: Reagan, Bush and Saddam, 1982-90*. Norton, 1995 and McDermott, Rose, and Jacek Kugler. "Comparing rational choice and prospect theory analyses: The US decision to launch operation 'Desert Storm', January 1991." *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 24.3 (2001): 49-85.

groups, and the Army's 82nd and 101st airborne divisions as the beginning of a larger mobilization of forces into region. Desert Shield was meant to both deter Iraq from attacking Saudi Arabia and demonstrate American resolve and help convince Saddam to back down. Iraq responded by closing diplomatic missions in Kuwait, threatening to retaliate against any foreign intervention, and holding Western nationals hostage.²⁸⁹ Tensions continued to rise through the fall, and on November 29 the UN Security Council passed Resolution 678, which "Authorizes Member States co-operating with the Government of Kuwait, unless Iraq on or before 15 January 1991 fully implements [...] the above-mentioned resolutions, to use all necessary means to uphold and implement resolution 660 and all subsequent relevant resolutions and to restore international peace and security in the area."²⁹⁰ On the same day, President Bush put forward a plan for diplomatic talks between US Secretary of State James Baker and Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz. In mid-December, the Algerian President similarly put forward a plan to resolve the escalating crisis.

Secretary Baker and Foreign Minister Aziz met on January 9 in Geneva to no avail. The British Parliament largely supported UN Resolution 678 and on January 11 US Congress authorized a military intervention to dislodge Iraqi forces from Kuwait. UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar made a last attempt at a diplomatic solution on January 13. However, by the following day the effort had clearly failed. Desert Storm/Operation Granby was launched on January 15. The Operations ended on February 28, after Iraq had been forced from Kuwait.

²⁸⁹ Although on August 28 Iraq announced the release of all foreign women and children and shortly thereafter Iraq said men could leave as well if the US promised not to attack.

²⁹⁰ See United States, Congress, Security Council Resolutions - 1990. "UN.org." *UN.org*. documents-dds-un.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/28/IMG/NR057528.pdf?OpenElement.

United Kingdom and Iraq, 1979-1991

This section uses recently declassified material (as of December 2017) from the National Archives at Kew to examine British leaders' decision-making regarding Iraq from the 1980s through the beginning of Operation Granby. The focus is on exploring the shift in British leaders' conceptualization on Saddam Hussein and leaders' use of the post-war narratives and analogies to conceptualize the Iraqi leader. Although John Major came to office as Prime Minister two months before the beginning of the operation, the course had already been set under the leadership of Prime Minister Thatcher.

Margaret Thatcher was born in 1925 to a middle-class family, showing an interest in politics from a young age. Although the future Prime Minister was only in high school when World War II began, she was in her "zeitgeist years" and was deeply affected by the conflict.²⁹¹ As Scot MacDonald argued, Thatcher "Remembered 'vividly' the Anschluss in March 1938. Churchill became her hero for his opposition to appeasement."²⁹² In 1943, Thatcher matriculated at Oxford University and became active in the conservative association. She focused her studies in chemistry and after college worked as a researcher. After several failed election bids, she returned to study law and was called to the bar in 1954. In 1959, she was elected to parliament and two years later, in 1961, was given her first ministerial position. After the 1970 Conservative win, she became Minister of Education and Science, and was promoted to head of the Conservative Party in 1975. Four years later, she won the position of prime minister, a position she would retain until 1990. When she came to 10 Downing Street, Thatcher had

²⁹¹ See Liu, James H., and Denis J. Hilton. "How the past weighs on the present: Social representations of history and their role in identity politics." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 44.4 (2005): 537-556.

²⁹² MacDonald, Scot. "Hitler's shadow: Historical analogies and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait." *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 13.4 (2002): 42

no foreign policy experience. However, she would lead her government through the Falklands/Malvinas War and the Gulf Crisis. Thatcher ultimately won three consecutive elections, and served as UK's Prime Minister for more than eleven years, longer than any other British leader in the 20th century.

Although personality analysis is outside the scope of this research, Thatcher may have been primed to be more susceptible to perceive personalist leaders as threats. Scholars and biographers have long emphasized Thatcher's cognitive rigidity and her tendency toward "black and white thinking."²⁹³ Thatcher, in fact, referred to herself as a conviction rather than a consensus politician, tending to see events and the world around her in moral absolutes—good versus evil.²⁹⁴

United Kingdom and Iraq, 1980-90

The British occupied modern Iraq following the fall of the Ottoman Empire until the establishment of the Kingdom of Iraq in 1938.²⁹⁵ The UK government maintained close ties with the Iraqi monarchy until its overthrow in the 1958 coup. Thereafter, bilateral relations were significantly strained until a series of events in 1979-1980—the rise of President Saddam Hussein, the Iranian Revolution, and the Iraqi Invasion of Iran—provided an opportunity to re-evaluate. The record of a 1979 meeting between the British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Lord Carrington, and Saddam Hussein, then Vice Chairman of the Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council, reports that “[Lord Carrington] had been anxious to come to Iraq as soon as possible to turn over a

²⁹³ Dyson, Stephen Benedict. "Cognitive style and foreign policy: Margaret Thatcher's black-and-white thinking." *International Political Science Review* 30.1 (2009): 38

²⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 39.

²⁹⁵ Hahn, Peter L. *Missions Accomplished?: The United States and Iraq Since World War I*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

new leaf in Anglo/Iraqi relations. From his conversations that morning, he had gained the impression that it would be quite possible to do so. Mr. Hussein agreed.”²⁹⁶ By the 1980s British interests in Iraq centered on the supply of oil, increasing exports, and the Arab-Israeli conflict.²⁹⁷

Thatcher’s government tilted toward Iraq during the eight-year Iran-Iraq War, providing economic support and dual-use technology, such as machines to manufacture components of medium range missiles. Much like the United States, the British envisioned Iraq as a friend against the hostile Islamic Republic. The prepared outline of points for a 1981 call between PM Thatcher and the Iraqi Trade Minister notes that,

We want in principle to reply positively to Iraqi requests. Prospects for long-term future co-operation are good. In short-term, certain constraints imposed by Iran/Iraq war. We welcome Saddam Hussein’s assurance that he would not expect delivery of lethal items (i.e. arms and ammunition) while hostilities continue at present level. But no objection, of course, to discussion now of lethal items for long-term delivery.²⁹⁸

Although the cabinet was interested in continuing to provide military technology to Iraq, Parliament passed the Howe Guideline in 1985 to regulate these exports to both Iraq and Iran. The language of the guidelines, however, was weak and rife with loopholes²⁹⁹ allowing the cabinet to mislead parliament and continue supplying Iraq with military

²⁹⁶ Record of Meeting Between the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Vice Chairman of the Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council, National Archives, 11 AM July 4, 1979, Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

²⁹⁷ Ashton, Nigel J. "Love's Labours Lost: Margaret Thatcher, King Hussein and Anglo-Jordanian Relations, 1979–1990." *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 22.4 (2011): 653

²⁹⁸ Iraqi Trade Minister’s Call on the Prime Minister, Arms Supplies to Iraq, Points to make: UK/Iraq relations, June 23, 1981, Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

²⁹⁹ Phythian, Mark, and Walter Little. "Parliament and arms sales: lessons of the Matrix Churchill affair." *Parliamentary Affairs* 46.3 (1993): 293-309

equipment.³⁰⁰ When the Iraqi Foreign Minister visited London that same year, he discussed his impression of a recent meeting with Iraqi officials on dual-use exports, “Iraq was well satisfied with the results of the recent visit to London by the Minister of Trade.”³⁰¹

Descriptions in this period focused less on Saddam Hussein than the state or “regime” in Iraq. However, when there were discussions of the leader they tended to be positive—while noting his brutality, they emphasized his “admirable” qualities. In a 1985 letter from Sir Geoffrey Howe, Chancellor of the Exchequer, “The boom years of President Saddam Hussein's rule from 1979 to 1982 have transformed Baghdad... (The regime has) constructed aesthetically pleasing public buildings, ultra-luxurious hotels, comfortable public housing and an efficient network of roads, which are moreover regularly swept.”³⁰² The British Ambassador to Baghdad described, “Strong and forceful government has always seemed necessary to inspire respect. Saddam has the final say but is sensitive to opinion in the Ba’th Party and more widely.”³⁰³

When the cabinet or ministers noted his cult of personality, they often presented this in a positive light. The British Ambassador to Iraq explained in 1985,

The character and personality of Saddam Hussein, like his omnipresent larger-than-life-sized portraits, dominate all aspects of life in Iraq today. He is forceful, highly intelligent and quick-witted, plausible and articulate in his exposition of his ideas. Moreover, despite a justified reputation for ruthlessness he is not without

³⁰⁰ *ibid*, 298.

³⁰¹ From the Private Secretary, Prime Minister’s Meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, December 4, 1985, Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

³⁰² The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe, First Impressions of Iraq, British Embassy Baghdad, June 27, 1985 Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

³⁰³ Iraq: Some Valedictory Thoughts, Her Majesty’s Ambassador at Baghdad to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Middle East Department, March 10 1985, NBR 014/1, DD 1985/148 Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

charm. He drives himself hard and expects others in high positions to live up to their responsibilities or face the consequences. In policy decisions he has shown himself to be flexible and pragmatic with his main consideration being his own staying in power, which he would equate with the Iraqi national interest, rather than strict adherence to Ba'athist ideology.³⁰⁴

Sir Howe argued that, "Saddam Hussein's protective system undoubtedly works and his position seems as secure as any dictator's ever is. And as a by-product common crime is held, at least in Baghdad, at a remarkably low level, which is more than can be said for most capital cities."³⁰⁵ Policymakers occasionally raised red flags regarding Saddam Hussein, but this was fairly rare and often described this as a necessary evil. Or as the British ambassador to Iraq put it:

Saddam may himself come to believe that he is a superman and grow careless. He may be cutting himself off from honest counsel since it is doubtful that any around him would now dare to give him unpalatable advice. Nevertheless to Saddam himself, to the Ba'th Party leadership and probably to many other Iraqis, this personality cult would be seen as a necessary and acceptable means of encouraging a common loyalty in this disparate country, particularly in wartime."³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ *ibid.*

³⁰⁵ The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe, *First Impressions of Iraq*, British Embassy Baghdad, June 27, 1985, National Archives Kew, United Kingdom

³⁰⁶ Iraq: Some Valedictory Thoughts, Her Majesty's Ambassador at Baghdad to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Middle East Department, March 10 1985, NBR 014/1, DD 1985/148 Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

Popular media coverage in this time also tended to emphasize Iraq's modernization, juxtaposing this with the fanaticism of Iran.³⁰⁷

The Thatcher cabinet also frequently noted their concern over British hostages being held in Iraq. In 1986, Ian Richter, manager of Paterson Candy International, was arrested in Baghdad and tried and sentenced to life in prison for paying illegal commissions. Previous hostage crises had left an indelible mark on the Prime Minister. Thatcher noted in her biography the political consequences of the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis: "I could not forget the way in which the earlier American attempt under President Jimmy Carter to rescue the Iranian hostages had failed because the helicopters used had been unable to cope with the desert conditions."³⁰⁸ However, these concerns would not significantly alter her thinking regarding Iraq until March of 1990.

Thatcher had been successful in appealing to Saddam personally to release hostages. The below edited note thanks Saddam for his clemency toward John Smith and indicates that such clemency for Ian Richter would earn her personal gratitude.

³⁰⁷ Seymour, Michael, et al. "Ancient Mesopotamia and modern Iraq in the British press, 1980–2003." *Current Anthropology* 45.3 (2004): 361.

³⁰⁸ Thatcher, Margaret. *Margaret Thatcher: the autobiography*. Vol. 623. Harper Press, 2013, 704

recent months.

(to find (attach great personal importance,

One continuing problem is the imprisonment of
Mr Ian Richter who was arrested in June 1986. As
I said in my last letter, I was ^{very} delighted by your
decision to release another prisoner, Mr John Smith,
during Mr David Mellor's visit to Iraq last
February. Mr Mellor also sought ^{of the time} your clemency for
Mr Richter, whose continuing detention causes the ^{us}
British Government much concern. His early release
would earn my further personal gratitude and that
of the British people. It would also ^{be} mark a major ^{important}
step forward in the relationship between our countries.

5.1. Draft Excerpt of Letter from Thatcher to Saddam, January 27, 1989

In 1988, after the Iran-Iraq War, the Thatcher cabinet endeavored to further strengthen ties with Iraq. William Waldegrave, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, described of a February 1989 visit to Iraq: "He [Saddam] is the only effective decision maker, and our views can be put more effectively to him than to any other senior political figure in hopes that these economic ties can now be----- development of a more constructive political relationship in the wake of the Iran/Iraq ceasefire."³⁰⁹ The cabinet sought to reduce existing regulations on defense exports. Between the end of the Iran/Iraq War in 1988 and August 2 1990 Iraq succeeded in purchasing GBP 380 million worth of British defense equipment.³¹⁰

³⁰⁹ Mr Waldegrave's Visit: to Iraq: 15/16 February 1989; January 25, 1989, National Archives Kew, United Kingdom

³¹⁰ Freedman, Lawrence. "British Foreign Policy to 1985. IV: Britain and the Arms Trade." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 54.3 (1978): 377-392.

The Execution of Farzod Bazoft, Spring 1990

In the spring of 1990, tensions over British hostages when the Iraqi government sentenced Farzod Bazoft, an Iranian citizen and British Permanent Resident working for the *Observer*, to death for espionage. Daphne Parish, a British nurse, who had driven him to investigate the site of an explosion in a military rocket factory near Baghdad in 1989, was given a life sentence. Although the British government had been previously successful in appealing to Saddam Hussein to have British hostages/prisoners released, the Bazoft case would prove different.

The British government tilted toward Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war, but they also provided some material support to Iran. Saddam was livid when he learned of the cabinet's support to the Islamic Republic, and the decision to execute Bazoft can be read in this context. Thatcher was surprised and dismayed by the sentencing and immediately flagged the gravity of the situation in a letter to the Iraqi President, "I was very taken aback, indeed horrified to learn of the severity of the sentences which have been passed today on Mrs. Parish and Mr. Bazoft. These are bound to be regarded as utterly disproportionate to the nature of the offences for which they have been tried. These sentences will not be understood in this country or elsewhere."³¹¹ A letter from Thatcher to the law clerk describes, "I was not expecting the death sentence on Bazoft ...Saddam Hussein ought to be able to recognize that such an outcome would inflict the heaviest damage on a relationship that has considerable value political and commercial for

³¹¹ Message from the Prime Minister to President Saddam Hussein, FR7AAI/1, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Compliments of the Middle East Department, Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

Iraq.”³¹² In a letter to her Secretary General on March 12, Thatcher continued “We must hope that the many appeals which are being made by governments and international organisations, and Iraq's recognition of the damage which these sentences will do to its standing in the world if they are carried out, will persuade President Saddam Hussein to exercise clemency.”³¹³ British leaders and members of the international community lobbied Iraq for relief for Bazoft.

Bazoft’s death sentence and ultimate execution marked a significant shift in the discourse used by the cabinet to describe Iraq, and Saddam Hussein in particular. Thatcher recalled her ambassador and cancelled all ministerial visits to Iraq, although she stopped short of severing diplomatic ties.³¹⁴ The Cabinet also decided against sanctions as they were concerned about the fates of Daphne Parish and Ian Richter.^{315,316} However, despite the seemingly muted response from the British government, Bazoft’s execution proved to be a critical juncture in shifting the Prime Minister’s perception of Saddam, from a brutal but useful dictator to an enemy of the British state.

After the execution of Bazoft in March 1990, Iraqi human rights abuses began to receive more media coverage, and the blame is laid squarely at Saddam’s feet.³¹⁷ Michael Seymour explains, “From 1990 we see Iraq re-created and reduced to the single identity of Saddam Hussein. With this change Iraq’s past becomes damning biblical allegory, its

³¹² For Resident Clerk, OF 111532Z MARCH 90, YRTELNO 136 : PARISH/BAZOFT, Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

³¹³ Thatcher to Sec General, March 12, 1990, Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

³¹⁴ UK/Iraq Contingency Matters, March 13, 1990, From the Private Secretary, Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

³¹⁵ *ibid.*

³¹⁶ Kettle, Louise. "Between Franks and Butler: British Intelligence Lessons from the Gulf War." *Intelligence and National Security* 31.2 (2016): 206

³¹⁷ Seymour, Michael, et al. "Ancient Mesopotamia and modern Iraq in the British press, 1980–2003."

surviving remains testimony to the greed and vanity of an Eastern depot.”³¹⁸ Also that spring, UK customs officers seized nuclear fuses and what they thought to be parts for the so-called “supergun.” Although these events reinforced the new enemy image of Iraq, they were not as important a juncture as the execution of Bazoft.

Iraq’s Invasion of Kuwait

On Wednesday August 1, 1990 Prime Minister Thatcher left London for the Aspen Institute Conference in Colorado.³¹⁹ When she learned of Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait later that evening, her immediate response was to reinforce naval assets in the Gulf—sending two ships, in addition to the HMS York already stationed near Dubai.³²⁰³²¹ Later that day the Prime Minister ordered a squadron of Tornado Air Defence Variant, Jaguar ground attack aircrafts, and tanker and maritime patrol aircraft to the Gulf.³²²,

According to her autobiography, Thatcher quickly decided that the UK would not let the invasion stand.³²³ The following afternoon, on August 3, Thatcher spoke with President Bush, arguing, “Aggressors must never be appeased.”³²⁴ Concerns were raised in particular over a possible invasion of Saudi Arabia and Saddam’s control of Middle Eastern oil, but these were framed as secondary issues within a narrative that depicted Saddam Hussein as an enemy who must be stopped at all cost. In a letter to Soviet

³¹⁸ *ibid*, 361.

³¹⁹ Thatcher, Margaret. *Margaret Thatcher: the autobiography*. Vol. 623. Harper Press, 2013, 697

³²⁰ *ibid*, 698.

³²¹ Prior to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, British intelligence was under-resourced in the region.³²¹ When they did discover that troops were building on the border with Kuwait, however, the cabinet assumed that it was more saber rattling. See Notes from CD Powell. Circa Fall 1990, Following note of Iraqi troops on border, Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

³²² Jones, Clive, and John Stone. "Britain and the Arabian Gulf: new perspectives on strategic influence." *International Relations* 13.4 (1997): 7

³²³ *ibid*.

³²⁴ *ibid*, 690.

President Mikhail Gorbachev on September 5, Thatcher insisted, “The Iraqis should not gain from their aggression.”³²⁵ From these early exchanges, it appears that Thatcher quickly decided that force would be necessary.³²⁶ In a letter to her Private Secretary the same day, she remarked that, “[n]o one can predict now what steps may ultimately be necessary to make Iraq comply with its international obligations. I am not prepared to give Saddam Hussein the comfort of excluding any legitimate options, including action in collective self-defence.”³²⁷

On August 7, Thatcher met with President Bush again, this time in Washington, to further discuss the crisis and the best way to establish a coalition against the invasion. Thatcher recalls the meeting extremely positively: “For all the friendship and co-operation I had had from President Reagan, I was never taken into the Americans’ confidence more than I was during the two hours or so I spent that afternoon at the White house.”³²⁸ To Thatcher, the central concern was that “Saddam Hussein was simply not predictable.”^{329,330}

Operation Granby

By early September, the Prime Minister seemed resolved that force would be needed in the Gulf. On September 3, in a meeting with the Crown Prince of Kuwait,

³²⁵ Prime Minister To: President Gorbachev, President of the USSR, September 5, 1990, Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

³²⁶ See also "Hitler's shadow: Historical analogies and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait." *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 13.4 (2002): 30

³²⁷ Private Secretary, Letter from the PM, September 5, 1990, Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

³²⁸ Thatcher, Margaret. *Margaret Thatcher: the autobiography*. Vol. 623. Harper Press, 2013, 700

³²⁹ *ibid*, 702

³³⁰ Throughout the crisis, Thatcher worked with a small subcommittee including Douglas Hurd, Foreign Secretary; Tom King, Defense Secretary; John Wakeham, Energy Secretary; Patrick Mayhew, Attorney General; William Waldgrave, Minister of State at the Foreign Office; Archie Hamilton, Minister of State for the Armed Forces; and the Chief of Defense Staff.

She (Thatcher) said if sanctions did not work within a reasonable time, we would all have to consider the next steps. We had not ruled out anything. She could assure the Crown Prince that Britain and the United States would not give in to Iraq. We would persevere until the objectives set out in the United Nations Resolutions had been achieved. There would be no compromise.³³¹

Similarly, in a September 6 note of record by her Private Secretary, Thatcher conveyed that “Saddam Hussein would not come out of Kuwait unless thrown out.”^{332,333} The Prime Minister articulated this time and again before British Operation Granby (US Desert Storm) was officially announced.³³⁴

The week of August 7 began Thatcher’s enduring disagreement with some US officials, and James Baker in particular, regarding the need for Security Council authorization to use force. Thatcher describes a later meeting with the US administration on September 30, “We discussed Jim Baker’s wish for another UN Security Council Resolution specifically to endorse the use of force to bring about Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait. As always, I was dubious. But what was clear to all of us was that the time for using force was now rapidly approaching.”³³⁵ With or without explicit UNSC authorization, the Prime Minister seemed determined to use force against Iraq. In fact, reports recently emerged that in a September meeting with President Bush, Thatcher

³³¹ Prime Minister’s Meeting with the Crown Prince of Kuwait, From the Private Secretary, September 3, 1990, Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

³³² Thatcher, Margaret. *Margaret Thatcher: the autobiography*. Vol. 623. Harper Press, 2013, 704

³³³ See also discussion in El-Solh, Raghid. *Britain’s 2 Wars with Iraq, 1941, 1991*. Reading: Ithaca Press, 1996, 225

³³⁴ See also Record of Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev and British Prime Minister M. Thatcher,” November 20, 1990, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, CWIHP Archives. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118977>

³³⁵ Thatcher, Margaret. *Margaret Thatcher: the autobiography*. Vol. 623. Harper Press, 2013, 705

proposed using chemical weapons in response to any potential chemical weapons attacks from Saddam Hussein.³³⁶

Other ministers similarly articulated skepticism regarding the efficacy of sanctions. In the parliamentary discussion of action in the Gulf in September, Dr. David Owen of Plymouth Davenport described, “This will be a bloody fight because there is little doubt that he [Saddam] will use gas. He used it at the start of hostilities, and frequently, against Iran and has used it against the Kurds. It will be difficult to combat.”³³⁷ Owen continued to describe why the UK could not rely on sanctions to deter Iraq, “This leader does not care about deprivation for his own people. His country had to put up with tremendous deprivation during the Iran-Iraq war. Given that, for humanitarian reasons, we cannot starve Iraq, it will be very difficult to make sanctions work.”³³⁸ The parliament supported the cabinet’s position, and, following debate on September 6, voted to support the leadership’s position, 437 to 35.³³⁹

The New Enemy Image

Throughout the crisis, British officials emphasized Saddam as the primary source of threat. As previously discussed in Chapter I, cognitive biases facilitate the attachment of antipathy to an individual and exacerbated the true nature of the threat. For example, in a September meeting with Shaikh Zayed the Secretary of State described “He [Saddam]

³³⁶ “Margaret Thatcher Suggested Threatening Saddam with Chemical Weapons.” *BBC News*, BBC, 20 July 2017, www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-40667031.

³³⁷ The Gulf, Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Davenport), September 6, 1990, Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

³³⁸ *ibid.*

³³⁹ Thatcher, Margaret. *Margaret Thatcher: the autobiography*. Vol. 623. Harper Press, 2013, 704

would only be budged by force. He would have to be humiliated. The Secretary of State said that it was clearly necessary for Saddam Hussein to be seen to be defeated.”^{340,341}

Analogies and narratives compounded the perceived threat and Iraq’s actions were framed in ways that privileged forceful responses. The British leadership explicitly connected the invasion of Kuwait to historical narratives of hostility between democracies and autocracies.³⁴² Thatcher in particular often used the Munich analogy to discuss the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.³⁴³ On September 18, in a speech to the Czech Federal Assembly, Thatcher described, “Czechoslovakia of all countries needs no reminding that nations have to stand up to bullies and do so at once. In contrast to 1938, the United States, Europe and indeed the wider world, have responded with an impressive display of unity to Saddam Hussein 's aggression.”³⁴⁴ In a speech to the House of Commons on November 7, the Prime Minister forcefully argued that the international community had “[...] given Saddam Hussein the opportunity to withdraw and to end these abominations. Democracies are always reluctant to use force or to threaten it. However, we also know what happens when dictators are allowed to get away with aggression.”³⁴⁵

³⁴⁰ From Secretary of State Meeting with Shaikh Zayed from Private Secretary, OF 012053Z SEP, Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

³⁴¹ The language used by leaders in the UK is connoted with anger more than fear. While fear tends to make individuals engage in more risk-averse behavior, anger produces more risk-acceptant behavior. Words indicating anger such as “meddle,” “scandalous,” “usurp,” and “condemn” appeared frequently in British leaders’ description of Saddam Hussein following his invasion of Kuwait. See Mohammad , Saif. “Sentiment and Emotion Lexicons.” *NRC Emotion Lexicon*, National Research Council Canada , 2015, saifmohammad.com/WebPages/NRC-Emotion-Lexicon.htm.

³⁴² See also Seymour, Michael, et al. "Ancient Mesopotamia and modern Iraq in the British press, 1980–2003." *Current Anthropology* 45.3 (2004): 325.

³⁴³ See MacDonald, Scot. "Hitler's shadow: Historical analogies and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait." *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 13.4 (2002): 55 and Yetiv, Steve A. *Explaining foreign policy: US decision-making in the gulf wars*. JHU Press, 2011, 65

³⁴⁴ “Speech to Czechoslovak Federal Assembly.” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 18 Sept. 1990, www.margaretthatcher.org/document/108194.

³⁴⁵ “House of Commons Statement: Debate on the Address.” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, Nov 7. 1990, www.margaretthatcher.org/document/108238.

Thatcher described her frustration with what she perceived as Americans' "confusion" regarding the need to use force, "The emergence of a successful bully and predator in this highly sensitive area of the world is not in our or the Western interest...The US Administration are confused and uncertain; they have moved ships, but their comments are distinctively more cautious."³⁴⁶ The Prime Minister emphasized this both internally and to the US cabinet. She said, "[i]t was necessary to get the Americans to accept that military action would in all likelihood have to be initiated before the end of the year."³⁴⁷ Thatcher was not a silent ally, but rather vociferously tried to shape US policy.³⁴⁸

Immediately after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the British cabinet spoke about their concern for their citizens in Iraq and Kuwait. This was unsurprising considering the recent execution of Bazoft and the Prime Minister's understanding of how Carter's failed mission to free the hostages in Iran affected his tenure. On August 23, Iraq televised a meeting of Saddam with British hostages evoking public outrage in the UK. Saddam, likely aware of the mounting hostility, on August 28, ordered the release of British women and children, and on August 29 announced he would release men as well if they promised not to invade. However, this overture proved too little, too late. In a meeting between Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd and Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh discussing the hostages, "Saleh said Saddam was doing no more than the Japanese had done in World War II. Yes, said the Secretary of State, and they had been tried and

³⁴⁶ Prime Minister, Notes from CD Powell. Circa Fall 1990, Following note of Iraqi troops on border, Kew National Archives, United Kingdom

³⁴⁷ Thatcher, Margaret. *Margaret Thatcher: the autobiography*. Vol. 623. Harper Press, 2013, 706

³⁴⁸ El-Solh, Raghid. *Britain's 2 Wars with Iraq, 1941, 1991*. Reading: Ithaca Press, 1996, 219

hanged as war criminals.”³⁴⁹ The Foreign Minister continued to describe why negotiations with Saddam on this issue were impossible, “If a man broke into your house, you did not bargain with him—you got rid of him.”^{350,351}

The British also seemed less motivated by the idea of a new world order than their American counterparts. In addition to opposing further Security Council action, the cabinet “Tried to stop, or at least impede, any independent initiative to solve the Gulf crisis diplomatically. During a visit to Helsinki in August 1990, Margaret Thatcher criticized European reactions to the occupation of Kuwait and described them as ‘disappointing.’”³⁵² Although the European Community was supportive of diplomatic initiatives and sanctions, they were generally less enthusiastic about military action in Kuwait.³⁵³

Like the cabinet, the British public broadly supported the use of force. A January 10 poll—taken 5 days prior to the invasion—found that 75 percent of British respondents supported the use of force in Kuwait while only 18 percent disagreed.³⁵⁴ The animus could also be seen in coverage of Iraq. As Michael Seymour notes, “[p]rior to 1988, all references to ‘Islamic tradition’ (a term almost exclusively invoked in the negative or

³⁴⁹ From Private Secretary, Secretary of State’s Visit to Yemen, September 90, FM Jeddah, Telno 123, 152102, Kew National Archives, United Kingdom.

³⁵⁰ *ibid.*

³⁵¹ Parliament also discussed the importance of hostages in Discussions at the House of Lords, September 6, 1990, The Gulf, The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (The Earl of Caithness), Kew National Archives, United Kingdom.

³⁵² El-Solh, Raghid. *Britain's 2 Wars with Iraq, 1941, 1991*. Reading: Ithaca Press, 1996, 224

³⁵³ Thatcher, Margaret. *Margaret Thatcher: the autobiography*. Vol. 623. Harper Press, 2013, 699

³⁵⁴ “Back to the bulldog stuff: Britain’s disproportionate contribution to the allied forces in the Gulf is a reminder of much that sets the country apart from its European neighbors.” *The Economist*, 19 Jan. 1991, p. 51+.

alienating contexts) and to ‘barbarism,’ and ‘savagery’ and ‘despotism’ refer to Iran..”³⁵⁵
However after 1988, these references were largely to Iraq.

Although the Cabinet stayed in power, and operation Granby was set in motion, Prime Minister Thatcher resigned from office in late November 1990. High interest rates and inflation, divisions over Europe policy, and a controversial poll tax laid the foundation for Thatcher’s departure. John Major, who would later win the national election, stood in her stead. Major took office two months before operation Granby. Although the plans for the invasion had already been established, Major further inflamed British passions in the lead up to the war.³⁵⁶

On January 16, British forces launched operation Granby. Ultimately, this contribution was the largest British military mobilization since World War II.^{357,358} The British contributed more than any other Western ally at 40,000 service personnel, fifteen ships and seventy-five warplanes. As Bennett et al. describe, “[i]n proportion to its size, Britain contributed roughly as much as the United States and just as early.”³⁵⁹

After Granby

The operation formally lasted from January 16 to February 28. Having achieved the main goal of liberating Kuwait from Iraqi forces, why didn’t the British insist on going to Baghdad to oust Saddam Hussein? Although the coalition did target Saddam and his

³⁵⁵ Seymour, Michael, et al. "Ancient Mesopotamia and modern Iraq in the British press, 1980–2003." *Current Anthropology* 45.3 (2004): 357

³⁵⁶ El-Solh, Raghid. *Britain's 2 Wars with Iraq, 1941, 1991*. Reading: Ithaca Press, 1996, 221

³⁵⁷ Phythian, Mark, and Walter Little. "Parliament and arms sales: lessons of the Matrix Churchill affair." *Parliamentary Affairs* 46.3 (1993): 293-309.

³⁵⁸ See also Jones, Clive, and John Stone. "Britain and the Arabian Gulf: new perspectives on strategic influence." *International Relations* 13.4 (1997): 9

³⁵⁹ Bennett, Andrew, Joseph Leppard, and Danny Unger. "Burden-sharing in the Persian Gulf War." *International Organization* 48.1 (1994): 54.

family through an air campaign that included “presidential residences and command-and-control bunkers known or suspected to be used by Saddam Hussein,”³⁶⁰, they did not March into Baghdad. Some argued that Saddam needed to be deposed to ameliorate or prevent future threats,³⁶¹ however, the United States was concerned the UN Resolution did not clearly support a ground operation on Iraqi soil and the British did not have the capacity to go at it alone. Margaret Thatcher clearly considers not going into Baghdad a mistake:

The failure to disarm Saddam Hussein and to follow through the victory so that he was publicly humiliated in the eyes of his subjects and Islamic neighbors was a mistake which stemmed from the excessive emphasis placed right from the start on international consensus [...] And so Saddam was left with the standing and the means to terrorize his people and foment more trouble. In war there is much to be said for magnanimity in victory. But not before victory.³⁶²

This analysis does not intend to minimize the gravity of the execution of Bazoft or the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. We would expect for the Thatcher administration to adjust its policy in light of these developments. However, the UK’s radical shift in discourse and action regarding Iraq was in part, a byproduct of their focus on the character of Saddam Hussein.

³⁶⁰Hosmer, Stephen T. “Chapter 2 Attacking Leaders Directly.” *Operations Against Enemy Leaders*, RAND, 2001, www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1385/MR1385.ch2.pdf.

³⁶¹ Hahn, Peter L. *Missions Accomplished?: The United States and Iraq Since World War I*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

³⁶² Thatcher, Margaret. *Margaret Thatcher: the autobiography*. Vol. 623. Harper Press, 2013, 707

United States and Iraq, 1980-1991

US relations with Iraq followed a very similar pattern to that of the British, though the personalities of the individual leaders and the specific commercial and diplomatic interests differed. As in the previous case, the below focuses on American leaders' discursive shift regarding Saddam Hussein and how this and their use of the post-war narrative augmented their threat perception of Saddam Hussein.

George H.W. Bush was born to a wealthy family in Massachusetts in 1924. During World War II, a young Bush served as a Navy lieutenant pilot, the youngest in the Navy. Steve Yetiv reports that, "Bush saw a fellow flyer ripped in two when his plane missed its landing on an aircraft carrier, a story that he would retell during the Persian Gulf crisis. Later, he himself would be shot down after flying fifty-eight missions [...]"³⁶³ Bush attended Yale University and following graduation worked in the oil industry in Texas. He joined the Republican Party and ran for office, ultimately winning a seat in the House of Representatives in 1966. Before coming to the Presidency, Bush would serve as congressman, ambassador, CIA director, and vice president. When he came to the White House he brought with him a wealth of personal experience in foreign policy and national security, as well as a veteran foreign policy team.³⁶⁴

³⁶³ Yetiv, Steve A. *Explaining foreign policy: US decision-making in the gulf wars*. JHU Press, 2011, 63

³⁶⁴ Like Thatcher, Bush tended to see the world in moral absolutes—good versus evil—and used this language to describe the threat Saddam posed during the Gulf crisis. The president may have also had a tendency toward moral punitiveness. While both social narratives and common psychological biases, as explained in Chapter 1, facilitated the personification of Iraq as Saddam Hussein, Bush, like Thatcher seems to have had a personality that made him even more susceptible to this tendency. See Liberman, Peter. "Punitiveness and US elite support for the 1991 Persian Gulf War." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51.1 (2007): 24

US-Iraq Bilateral Relations in the Reagan Administration

Much like the British, the United States looked to Iraq as an anti-communist stronghold until the late 1950s. Relations became strained following the ousting of the monarchy in 1958. Iraq ultimately severed diplomatic ties with the US in 1967 following the Six Day War, in retaliation to American support for Israel.

Three events in 1979-1980 changed US calculations with regard to Iraq. First, the Iranian Revolution and subsequent hostage crisis convinced the United States that Iran was the preeminent threat in the region. Second, the coup that brought Saddam Hussein to power the same year and the Iraqi invasion of Iran in 1980 signaled that Iraq could be a useful ally against Iran. Iran was no longer an ally, and after the plight of the fifty-two American hostages was broadcast nightly, Iran became America's most hated foe, perhaps only after the Soviet Union. This was prologue for the tilt toward Iraq. As early as 1982, when it appeared Iran may win the conflict, the Reagan administration, although officially neutral, began to favor Iraq.³⁶⁵ In 1982 the United States removed Iraq from list of states sponsoring terrorism, and by 1984 diplomatic relations were restored. As Zachary Karabell describes, "[i]n comparison with a malevolent Iran, Hussein did not look so bad..."³⁶⁶

The first line of support the US provided to Iraq manifested through trade and credit. Under the Reagan administration, Iraq became the 12th largest market for US agricultural exports and in 1983 Iraq was given more than 400 million in US Agriculture

³⁶⁵ Jentleson, Bruce W. *With Friends Like These: Reagan, Bush and Saddam, 1982-90*. Norton, 1995, pg. 36

³⁶⁶ Karabell, Zachary. "Backfire: US Policy Toward Iraq, 1988-2 August 1990." *Middle East Journal* 49.1 (1995): 32

Department Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) guarantees.³⁶⁷ In 1984, Vice President Bush personally lobbied the US EXIM Bank regarding Iraqi interests and within three years CCC guarantees were 23 percent of the entire CCC program.³⁶⁸ Although the British, particularly Matrix-Churchill, were more involved in supporting Iraq with military equipment, the US also provided support.³⁶⁹ During this period, the US also provided Iraq with intelligence, including satellite imagery, to aid in its fight against Iran.

This policy line was adopted under two National Security directives. The first, National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 114 of 1983, “delineating U.S. priorities: the ability to project military force in the Persian Gulf and to protect oil supplies, without reference to chemical weapons or human rights concerns.”³⁷⁰ The second, 1984 National Security Directive 139, which sought to defend against Iran. Although US objectives in the region were to retain access to oil, balance against the Soviet Union, and protect American allies both NSDs benefitted Iraq.

By the mid 1980s the Reagan Administration had knowledge of Iraq’s continued nuclear program, however they opted to not take a tougher line. As Jentleson describes, [t]here were those within the administration who wanted to look the other way for fear that the ‘budding relationship’ with Iraq could be ‘demolished by taking a tough position in opposition to nuclear weapons.’³⁷¹ Furthermore, the Defense Department and the White House knew well the Iraqi state’s connection with transnational terrorism and they had extensive intelligence detailing Iraq’s possession of long-range missiles and chemical

³⁶⁷ *ibid*, 29.

³⁶⁸ Jentleson, Bruce W. *With Friends Like These: Reagan, Bush and Saddam, 1982-90*. Norton, 1995, 55

³⁶⁹ Hartung, William D. "US conventional arms transfers: Promoting stability or fueling conflict?." *Arms Control Today* 25.9 (1995): 9.

³⁷⁰ “US Policy Toward the Iran-Iraq War .” *NSDD - National Security Decision Directives - Reagan Administration*, Federation of American Scientists , 4 Apr. 2018, fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/.

³⁷¹ Jentleson, Bruce W. *With Friends Like These: Reagan, Bush and Saddam, 1982-90*. Norton, 1995, 49

weapons.³⁷² Despite this, documents released by the National Security Archives in 2003 indicate that, even with this knowledge, the United States pursued deeper ties with Iraq.³⁷³

In the last year of the Iran-Iraq War, an Iraqi fighter pilot fired on the USS Stark, killing 37 and wounding 21 servicemen aboard. The Stark was on patrol in the Central Persian Gulf providing additional protection for oil supplies as Iran ratcheted up attacks in the Tanker War.³⁷⁴ Despite this, both the United States and Iraq framed this as a tragic accident and “moved quickly to minimize the impact of the Stark debacle.”³⁷⁵ As the eight-year Iran-Iraq War drew to a close, the United States continued to strengthen its relationship with Iraq.

In 1988, Saddam Hussein infamously ordered the use of poison gas on Kurdish villages in the north.³⁷⁶ Despite public and congressional outcry, the Reagan administration resisted pressures to penalize Iraq. The belief was still that Iraq could be brought into the fold and that sanctions would be antithetical to this end. Although Democrats and Republicans in the House and Senate attempted to pass bills forcing the Administration to impose punitive sanctions against Iraq, (H.R. 5337 “Sanctions Against Iraqi Chemical Weapons Use Act” and bill S.2763 “Prevention of Genocide Act of 1988”) both measures failed after intra-congressional disagreements about the right

³⁷² Evans, Michael. “U.S. DOCUMENTS SHOW EMBRACE OF SADDAM HUSSEIN IN EARLY 1980s DESPITE CHEMICAL WEAPONS, EXTERNAL AGGRESSION, HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES.” *Shaking Hands with Saddam Hussein - Press Release*, National Security Archives, 25 Feb. 2003, nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/press.htm.

³⁷³ *ibid.*

³⁷⁴ “The Tanker War.” *U.S. Naval Institute*, 1 May 1988, www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/1988/may/tanker-war

³⁷⁵ Hahn, Peter L. *Missions Accomplished?: The United States and Iraq Since World War I*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, 68

³⁷⁶ Karabell, Zachary. “Backfire: US Policy Toward Iraq, 1988-2 August 1990.” *Middle East Journal* 49.1 (1995): 29

course of action and active opposition from the White House. Those who supported the bills were accused of working on an agenda of “hidden emotions” and undermining the administration’s diplomatic efforts to end the war.³⁷⁷

Iraq and the Bush Administration, 1989-1991

When President HW Bush came to office, the United States was preoccupied with Tiananmen Square and Berlin. After eight years with the Reagan administration, the new president was contented to largely follow the Middle East policy he inherited from his predecessor.

In October 1989, Bush issued NSD26 which stated that “[n]ormal relations between the US and Iraq would serve out longer term interests and promote stability in both the Gulf and the Middle East. The United States should propose economic and political incentives for Iraq to moderate its behavior and increase out influence with Iraq.”³⁷⁸ In October 1989, Bush described in a meeting with Ambassador Mohammed al-Mahshat of Iraq:

Please give my respects to President Saddam Hussein. We have never met but I have heard many interesting things about him. Our relationship has made steady progress. I am pleased you will be taking on this task. From my perspective, I have seen two developments: 1) an improved relationship and 2) the potential for more improvement. I hope you will convey that to your President.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁷ Jentleson, Bruce W. *With Friends Like These: Reagan, Bush and Saddam, 1982-90*. Norton, 1995, 104

³⁷⁸ “National Security Directive 26.” *The White House*, Federation of American Scientists, 2 Oct. 1989, fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsd/nsd26.pdf.

³⁷⁹ Meeting with Ambassador Mohammed al-Mahshat of Iraq (U), October 24, 1989, George H W Bush Archives, College Station TX

The Bush administration further deepened ties with Iraq, in spite of the president's first-hand knowledge of the regime's connection with terrorism, chemical-weapons use, shooting of the USS Stark, and their nascent nuclear program. This policy was often referred to as one of constructive engagement. Brent Scowcroft, National Security Advisor, described this in a memorandum to the president that spring:

With the end of the fighting, the United States set out to institutionalize this somewhat improved relationship with Iraq. Toward this end, we continued to provide a line of \$200 million in Ex-Im loans and \$500 million in credits (CCC) to support Iraqi purchases of U.S. commercial and agricultural commodities. We maintained a political dialogue at the Foreign Minister/Secretary of State level.³⁸⁰

Secretary of State James Baker was a pillar of support for CCC Credit, hoping that this would assist in garnering Saddam Hussein's support for an Israeli-Palestinian peace process.³⁸¹ State and the cabinet advocated for an additional billion dollars to Iraq in credit guarantees for 1990. In turn, the United States started benefitting from a substantial per-barrel oil discount from Iraq.³⁸²

Relations started to deteriorate in the spring and summer of 1990. In March, as previously discussed, Iraq executed journalist and British resident Farzod Bazoft. This did not prove a major turning point for American perceptions of Saddam Hussein or his utility as a regional partner. In fact, American views of Saddam remained markedly consistent until August 2, the day of the invasion of Kuwait.

³⁸⁰ Memorandum from the President, from Brent Scowcroft, Subject: The United States and Iraq, April 10, 1990, George H W Bush Archives, College Station, TX.

³⁸¹ Karabell, Zachary. "Backfire: US Policy Toward Iraq, 1988-2 August 1990." *Middle East Journal* 49.1 (1995): 34

³⁸² Jentleson, Bruce W. *With Friends Like These: Reagan, Bush and Saddam, 1982-90*. Norton, 1995, 103

On April 2, Saddam gave a speech threatening, "fire would consume half of Israel" if they attacked Iraq.³⁸³ Less than two weeks later, US Senator Bob Dole and a small congressional delegation met with Saddam in Mosul. Although they did express concerns regarding Saddam's recent statements, they emphasized wanting to improve bilateral relations. As Peter Rodman, Assistant Secretary of Defense, remarked in a memorandum to Scowcroft: "I am not yet ready to forsake the Iraqi relationship, which was one of our strategic gains of the 80's"³⁸⁴. Brent Scowcroft similarly detailed in a memorandum to the President on April 10, "Iraq is a fact of life. Baghdad has always been one of the key power centers of the Arab world. In the future, it will remain one, thanks to its ambition, its population, and above all its technological dynamism. A policy of isolation and ostracism could well limit our options more than Iraq's."³⁸⁵ The cabinet determined there was no need and no space for a policy change.³⁸⁶

Although opinions among departments, the cabinet, and Congress did vary, particularly after a "spring of bad behavior," ultimately NSD 26 prevailed and the administration focused on sustaining and strengthening the bilateral relationship. On April 25, President Bush sent Saddam Hussein a new message of friendship. Saddam reciprocated in kind.

As congressional pressure mounted in late May, however, the cabinet decided to quietly suspend the latest tranche of CC Credit to Iraq. They still favored maintaining close relations with Saddam, but began to understand that friendly ties with Iraq would

³⁸³ As cited in Baram, Amatzia. "Baathi Iraq and Hashimite Jordan: From Hostility to Alignment." *Middle East Journal* 45.1 (1991): 65.

³⁸⁴ National Security Council, April 5, 1990 Memorandum for Brent Scowcroft from Peter W. Rodman, Subject: Iraq, George H W Bush Archives, College Station, TX

³⁸⁵ Memorandum for the President from Brent Scowcroft, Subject: The United States and Iraq April 10 1990, George HW Bush Archives SCOWCROFT, SUBJECT: The United States and Iraq;

³⁸⁶ Wilz, John Edward. "The Making of Mr. Bush's War: A Failure to Learn from History?." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 25.3 (1995): 536

come at a political cost. As Karbell describes, “Although NSD-26 remained the formal basis for Iraq policy, the Bush administration had clearly decided that any further public, overt manifestations of support at that time would have unpleasant repercussions both domestically and in foreign policy.”³⁸⁷

Over the summer, Saddam repeatedly discussed Iraq’s post-war financial straits, and charged Kuwait with inflating oil prices and slant drilling. Although April Glaspie, US Ambassador to Iraq, is often charged with not taking a hard enough line and even unwittingly giving Saddam the green light to invade Kuwait, the ambassador was only repeating the official line received from Washington. In fact, Pentagon spokesperson Pete Williams, on July 24, said the US would defend our friends in the Gulf, but declined to answer if the US would aid Kuwait if attacked. Similarly a Senior State Department Spokesperson on the same day said in response to a question of possible US defense of Kuwait: “We do not have any defense treaties with Kuwait and there are no special defense or security commitments to Kuwait.”³⁸⁸ As Karbell notes, “[g]iven the disinclination of the Bush White House to confront Hussein, there was little chance that Glaspie would have been instructed to take a hard line.”³⁸⁹ However, in the days immediately following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, we can detect a marked shift in the discourse of American officials.

³⁸⁷ Karbell, Zachary. "Backfire: US Policy Toward Iraq, 1988-2 August 1990." *Middle East Journal* 49.1 (1995): 45

³⁸⁸ Sciolino, Elaine. “U.S. Gave Iraq Little Reason Not to Mount Kuwait Assault.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 23 Sept. 1990, www.nytimes.com/1990/09/23/world/confrontation-in-the-gulf-us-gave-iraq-little-reason-not-to-mount-kuwait-assault.html.

³⁸⁹ Karbell, Zachary. "Backfire: US Policy Toward Iraq, 1988-2 August 1990." *Middle East Journal* 49.1 (1995): 45

Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait

Despite Saddam's warnings, the United States did not anticipate Iraq's invasion, and the cabinet's initial response appears muted. In the minutes from the August 2 morning National Security Council (NSC) meeting, *after* the cabinet had been informed of Iraq's invasion, there does not seem to be a commitment to action against Saddam Hussein.

Brands infers that "Bush was not ready for military action. He suggested asking congress to impose economic sanctions against Iraq and to support a UN resolution condemning the invasion. But he did not want to go further until he had a clear view of things on the ground and in the thinking of other governments."³⁹⁰ In a press conference that morning, Helen Thomas of the UPI asked Bush directly about military action and the president responded that he was not contemplating that option at the time.³⁹¹

Bush flew to Colorado that afternoon for the Aspen Institute Symposium where he was scheduled to give remarks. On the flight, he spoke with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and King Hussein of Jordan. Both encouraged Bush to allow for an inter-Arab resolution to the crisis. Shortly after arriving in Colorado, Bush met with Prime Minister Thatcher. Although there is no available primary US documentation from the meeting, a significant shift can be detected in the president's position in the press conference that followed. The President said "I find that Prime Minister Thatcher and I are looking at it on exactly the same wavelength: concerned about this naked aggression, condemning it, and hoping that a peaceful solution will be found that will result in the restoration of the

³⁹⁰ Brands, H. W. "George Bush and the Gulf War of 1991." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34.1 (2004): 116

³⁹¹ *ibid.*

Kuwaiti leaders to their rightful place and, prior to that, a withdrawal of Iraqi forces.”³⁹²

When asked directly if he was still *not* contemplating military action, the president replied “No. I mentioned at the time we were going to discuss different options, which I did after that first press conference this morning. And we're not ruling any options in, but we're not ruling any options out. And so, that is about where we are right now.”³⁹³

It may have been the meeting with Prime Minister Thatcher that ultimately shifted Bush’s perception regarding Iraq.³⁹⁴ While our understanding of what exactly changed the President’s mind with regard to Saddam is incomplete, what is clear is that it did change. It is this sharp shift that my theory would predict. The attachment to or emphasis on an individual can produce positive affect,³⁹⁵ but it also facilitates the opposite—a rapid shift and increased threat perception associated with an individual. Once the American leadership found itself at odds with Saddam Hussein, he was rapidly reconceptualized in the enemy image.

By the morning of August 3, President Bush’s focus was squarely on the Iraqi leader to whom he now referred to in hostile and increasingly derogatory terms. Bush noted in a telephone call with the Japanese Prime Minister, “Saddam Hussein simply cannot get away with this. If he gets away with this, there is no telling what he will do

³⁹² Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With Reporters in Aspen, Colorado, Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom, August 2, 1990, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/2124>

³⁹³ *ibid.*

³⁹⁴ See Mintz, Alex. "The decision to attack Iraq: A noncompensatory theory of decision making." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37.4 (1993): 613 and Renshon, Stanley Allen, ed. *The Political psychology of the Gulf War: leaders, publics, and the process of conflict*. University of Pittsburgh Pre, 1993, pg. 33

³⁹⁵ See Wheeler, Nicholas J. *Trusting Enemies: Interpersonal Relationships in International Conflict*. Oxford University Press, 2018; Genevsky, Alexander, et al. "Neural underpinnings of the identifiable victim effect: Affect shifts preferences for giving." *Journal of Neuroscience* 33.43 (2013): 17188-17196; and Holmes, Marcus. "The force of face-to-face diplomacy: mirror neurons and the problem of intentions." *International organization* 67.4 (2013): 829-861.

with his oil and with his newfound power. The status quo really has to be reversed.”³⁹⁶ Scowcroft similarly articulated that accommodating Iraq was not an option.³⁹⁷ The following day, President Bush said in a phone call with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, “I am determined that Saddam will not get away with this infamy [...] We will get our team of experts on the way immediately, and if necessary take the lead to show force to convince Saddam that he can't bully us.”³⁹⁸ Although the policy emphasis was on economic and intelligence options in the first few days,³⁹⁹ Bush had already argued “all will not be tranquil until Saddam Hussein is history.”⁴⁰⁰ By August 5, the administration’s line had become palatably more militaristic, following President Bush’s statement, “this aggression will not stand.”⁴⁰¹ In the August 5 National Security Council meeting, Bush referred to Saddam as a “madman.”⁴⁰² On August 7, Desert Shield was formally launched. Between August and October, the US deployed 200,000 US troops to Saudi Arabia.

Conversations regarding the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait now included references to Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction and terrorism,⁴⁰³ issues that had previously been

³⁹⁶ *Telecon* with Toshiki Kaifu, Prime Minister of Japan on August 3, 1990 (U), President telephoned Prime Minister Kaifu concerning Iraq and Kuwait, George HW Bush Archives, College Station, TX

³⁹⁷ Brands, H. W. "George Bush and the Gulf War of 1991." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34.1 (2004): 117

³⁹⁸ The White House, Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Telecon with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, August 4, 1990, 1:50 PM, George HW Bush Archives, College Station, TX

³⁹⁹ Meeting to Discuss Covert Action, National Security Council, August 5, 1990, George H W Bush Archives, College Station, TX

⁴⁰⁰ Minutes of NSC Meeting on Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait, August 6, 1990, 5:05 P.M.-6:00 P.M., Cabinet Room, George H W Bush Archives, College Station, TX

⁴⁰¹ Renshon, Stanley Allen, ed. *The Political psychology of the Gulf War: leaders, publics, and the process of conflict*. University of Pittsburgh Pre, 1993, pg. 35

⁴⁰² Cited in Liberman, Peter. "Punitiveness and US elite support for the 1991 Persian Gulf War." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51.1 (2007): 24

⁴⁰³ Proposed Remarks by William H Webster, Director of Central Intelligence at the Foreign Policy Association of New York, September 18, 1990, George H W Bush Archives, College Station, TX

dismissed or downplayed by the administration, as they had been under Reagan. On December 5, James Baker described,

He [Saddam] has invaded two neighbors, is harboring terrorists, and now is systematically exterminating Kuwait. Saddam uses poisonous gas — even against his own people; develops deadly toxins; and seeks relentlessly to acquire nuclear bombs. He has built the world's sixth largest army, has the world's fifth largest tank army, and has deployed ballistic missiles.⁴⁰⁴

As previously described, United States supported Iraq during the war with Iran and did not take and policy steps at the time the regime used chemical weapons. Furthermore, while the US emphasized its need for oil, its military contribution to the coalition was not commensurate with its needs,⁴⁰⁵ indicating that other considerations significantly informed decision-making.

Like the British, a concern for hostages animated the cabinet's thinking during the Gulf Crisis.⁴⁰⁶ On August 5, President Bush said in a meeting with the National Security Council, "Hostage-taking would be intolerable [...] We are dealing with a mad-man who has shown he will kill."⁴⁰⁷ On August 19, Saddam confirmed that foreigners would be held indefinitely, although he offered reprieve in exchange for guarantees from the US not to invade. Bush responded the following day during at the Veterans of Foreign Wars

⁴⁰⁴ America's Strategy in the Persian Gulf Crisis Statement by The Honorable James A. Baker, III Before, The Senate Foreign Relations Committee Wednesday, December 5, 1990, George H W Bush Archives, College Station, TX

⁴⁰⁵ Bennett, Andrew, Joseph Leggold, and Danny Unger. "Burden-sharing in the Persian Gulf War." *International Organization* 48.1 (1994): 55.

⁴⁰⁶ Brands, H. W. "George Bush and the Gulf War of 1991." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34.1 (2004): 118; See also America's Strategy in the Persian Gulf Crisis Statement by The Honorable James A. Baker, III Before, The Senate Foreign Relations Committee Wednesday, December 5, 1990, George H W Bush Archives, College Station, TX

⁴⁰⁷ Meeting to Discuss Covert Action, National Security Council--August 5, 1990, George H W Bush Archives, College Station TX

National Convention, "We've been reluctant to use the term 'hostage.' But when Saddam Hussein specifically offers to trade the freedom of those citizens of many nations he holds against their will in return for concessions, there can be little doubt that whatever these innocent people are called they are in fact hostages."⁴⁰⁸ Although by mid-October Saddam began to release sick and elderly Americans, it was again too little, too late.

Decision for War

Although it is unclear when a firm decision for Operation Desert Storm was made, the evidence suggests that it was made as early as October. The Office of the Historian indicates the decision was made by October 30⁴⁰⁹ as do several secondary sources.⁴¹⁰ General Norman Schwarzkopf, Commander of US Central Command, also presented his first battle plan for the operation in October. Steve Yetiv's work indicates that by early December the administration's mind was made up that war was inevitable, even as diplomatic maneuvering continued into the early days of January 1991.⁴¹¹

On November 29, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 678. The resolution provided if Iraq did not withdraw from Kuwait by January 15, all necessary force could be used. The following day, Bush put forward his plan for mediation between Secretary of State James Baker and Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz. However, by then US officials were consistently articulating their belief that sanctions alone would not work and that

⁴⁰⁸ Remarks by the President to Veterans of Foreign Wars 91st National Convention, August 20, 1990, George H W Bush Archives, College Station TX

⁴⁰⁹ Proposed Remarks by William H Webster Director of Central Intelligence at the Foreign Policy Association of New York City, September 18, 1990, George H W Bush Archives, College Station, TX

⁴¹⁰ Bennett, Andrew, Joseph Leggold, and Danny Unger. "Burden-sharing in the Persian Gulf War." *International Organization* 48.1 (1994): 50; Woodward 1992, Yetiv, Steve A. "Testing the Government Politics Model: US Decision Making in the 1990-91 Persian Gulf Crisis." *Security Studies* 11.2 (2001): 69

⁴¹¹ Yetiv, Steve A. "Testing the Government Politics Model: US Decision Making in the 1990-91 Persian Gulf Crisis." *Security Studies* 11.2 (2001): 70.

force would likely be necessary. In a memorandum for the Cabinet, Liaison Michael P. Jackson on December 17, argued that “[t]he sanctions are unlikely to help reduce Saddam's support among his own people. Saddam is a brutal, ruthless dictator who neither cares for nor responds to public opinion. He runs Iraq as a police state and mercilessly snuffs out any sign of discontent.”⁴¹² In talking points prepared by William Sittman, Executive Secretary for the NSC for James Cicconi, Staff Secretary,

For my part, I continue to have a sense of urgency. We cannot count on sanctions alone to solve this for us. Not only is there ultimate effect uncertain, but Saddam is using time to continue his brutal destruction of Kuwait, to upgrade his military forces, and to develop unconventional weapons. Waiting could result in higher US casualties should war come. And we already pay an economic price for every day that passes. Nothing we have seen leads us to change our view that Saddam responds best to pressure. As a result, and as you can see for yourself, our military preparations are on track.”⁴¹³

Tariq Aziz and James Baker met on January 9 in Geneva, although the talks quickly failed. On January 14, largely at Bush’s insistence, Congress passed House Joint Resolution 77, authorizing the use of force against Iraq in Kuwait.

⁴¹² National Security Council Meeting--SUBJECT: Minutes of Bilateral Meeting with King Fahd, December 17, 1990 Memorandum for Cabinet and Agency Contacts from Michael P. Jackson, Special Assistant to the President and Executive Secretary for Cabinet Liason; Subject” Persian Gulf Policy--Communications Package, George HW Bush Archives, College Station TX

⁴¹³ Talking Points for December 19 Meeting with Senators returning from the Gulf, December 19, 1990 Memorandum for James Cicconi, from William F Sittman, George H W Bush Archives, College Station TX

The New Image of Saddam Hussein

The conceptualization of Saddam as personally presenting a formidable threat to the United States made war seem a much more reasonable response than sanctions. In fact, the threat of Saddam was often depicted as spilling beyond the borders of the Gulf, and constituting an almost existential menace. Early in the crisis, on August 15, Bush said “Our jobs, our way of life, our own freedom and the freedom of friendly countries around the world would all suffer if control of the world's great oil reserves fell into the hands of that one man, Saddam Hussein.”⁴¹⁴ Senator Joe Lieberman articulated this even more vociferously during the Congressional Debate on the Persian Gulf Crisis on January 11,

A victory by Saddam Hussein is a victory of anarchy over order, of war over peace, of brutality over liberty of immorality over morality. Saddam will breathe new life into that discredited old notion of Machiavelli's that the power of the state is the supreme power. No peace-loving people or nation is safe once the terror of the state is loosed against the people around the world. Saddam victorious cannot be shunted to the sidelines of world affairs, ignored as a grotesque anomaly, a sideshow. Like a virus, he--Saddam the victor-- will infect the body of international order and we cannot let it happen.⁴¹⁵

White House staff also argued Saddam's actions would create a domino of aggression. Prepared remarks for Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney in late November reads, “If Saddam Hussein succeeds in his aggression, it is likely that his success will embolden other dictators to emulate his example. But if he fails--and believe me, he will fail--others

⁴¹⁴ Remarks by the President to Pentagon Employees, August 15, 1990 Office of the Press Secretary, George H W Bush Archives, College Station TX

⁴¹⁵ United States Senate Debate on the Persian Gulf Crisis and the Use of Force Excerpt of Remarks by Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) , Transcript ID: 670910, George HW Bush Presidential Library, College Station, TX

will draw the lesson that might does not make right and that aggression will not be allowed to succeed.”⁴¹⁶ President Bush expressed a similar sentiment on January 9, “The price of peace now on Saddam's terms will be paid many times over in greater sacrifice and suffering. Saddam's power will only grow, along with his appetite for more conquest. The next conflict will find him stronger still — perhaps in possession even of nuclear weapons and far more difficult to defeat.”⁴¹⁷ Implicit in these statements and explicit elsewhere was the perceived threat of Saddam to civilization. This civilizational frame/discourse can be identified in leaders statements throughout the fall of 1990 culminating in perhaps the clearest articulation of this perception by Bush on January 8 1991, “For the past five months, Saddam has held the world and the norms of civilized conduct in contempt. In the next few days, Iraq arrives at a deadline that spells the limit of the civilized world's patience.”⁴¹⁸ President Bush in particular tended to emphasize Saddam⁴¹⁹ and previous research found a substantial decline in the President’s integrative complexity following August 1.⁴²⁰ In a Presidential letter on January 4, Bush stated, “There is much in the modern world that is subject to doubts or questions--washed in shades of grey. But not the brutal aggression of Saddam Hussein. It’s black and white.

⁴¹⁶ Office of the Vice President--Prepared Text Remarks by the Vice President, Seton Hall University, NJ, Nov. 29, 1990, Friday, January 11, 1991, George H W Bush Archives, College Station, TX

⁴¹⁷ HW Archives Nov 8 Part 4 Pg. 102, The White House Office of the Press Secretary, Message by the President to the Community of Nations United Against Iraqi Aggression, January 8, 1991, George H W Bush Archives, College Station TX

⁴¹⁸ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, Message by the President to the Community of Nations United Against Iraqi Aggression, January 8, 1991, George HW Bush Archives, College Station, TX

⁴¹⁹ See discussion in Liberman, Peter. "Punitiveness and US elite support for the 1991 Persian Gulf War." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51.1 (2007): 24, Renshon, Stanley Allen, ed. *The Political psychology of the Gulf War: leaders, publics, and the process of conflict*. University of Pittsburgh Pre, 1993, 42, and Yetiv, Steve A. *Explaining foreign policy: US decision-making in the gulf wars*. JHU Press, 2011, 68

⁴²⁰ See, for example, Wallace, Michael D., Peter Suedfeld, and Kimberley Thachuk. "Political rhetoric of leaders under stress in the Gulf crisis." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37.1 (1993): 95.

The facts are clear. The choice unambiguous.”⁴²¹ The emphasis on Saddam as a symbol of aggression was not, however, limited to the president.

US leaders also relied heavily on analogies, particularly Munich 1938. James Baker, in a statement on August 10, argued, “All of us share a deep interest born of bitter experience in demonstrating that aggression does not pay. We know and remember the history of the 1930’s and we remember how appeasement whets the appetite of aggressors.”⁴²² By September 1, the president had already made 15 references to Munich.⁴²³ A draft statement for the President by Richard Haass on November 30 reads, “We are in the Gulf because the world must not and can not reward aggression. Appeasement does not work.”⁴²⁴ And on January 3 in a speech from the Vice President’s to the 48th tactical Fighter Wing, he argued, “A policy of appeasement would make Saddam the victor. This cannot and will not happen.”⁴²⁵ The reliance on the analogy was not limited to the president or the cabinet. As Voss et al. explain in an examination of Congressional statements in January prior to the invasion, both republicans and democrats referred to Saddam as Hitler.⁴²⁶ Voss describes “Virtually all speakers chose to use the name Saddam Hussein as a metonymic substitute for Iraq or for some contextually appropriate attribute of Iraq, such as its government or military forces.”⁴²⁷

⁴²¹ Presidential Letter to College Students, January 4, 1991 (Hinchliffe/Blymire), George HW Bush Archives, College Station, TX

⁴²² Secretary of State James A Baker, At the Special Session of the North Atlantic Council, August 10, 1990, Brussels, Belgium, George H W Bush Archives, College Station, TX

⁴²³ See Yetiv, Steve A. *Explaining foreign policy: US decision-making in the gulf wars*. JHU Press, 2011, 64

⁴²⁴ Draft 3/haass/Nov. 30, 1990 Presidential Statement on the Gulf, George H W Bush Archives, College Station TX

⁴²⁵ Excerpts from the Vice President’s speech to the 48th tactical Fighter Wing, US Air Force, Saudi Arabia, January 3, 1991, George H W Bush Archives, College Station TX

⁴²⁶ Voss, James F., et al. "Experts at debate: The use of metaphor in the US Senate debate on the Gulf Crisis." *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 7.3-4 (1992): 205.

⁴²⁷ Voss, James F., et al. "Experts at debate: The use of metaphor in the US Senate debate on the Gulf Crisis." *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 7.3-4 (1992): 204.

On January 5, the Rep. Stephen Solarz described Saddam Hussein “as inscrutable as the sphinx, but far more dangerous.”⁴²⁸ Leaders even made the occasional reference to Mussolini. In September 1990, Secretary of State Baker said before Congress “Possibly, he remembered the 1930s when the League of Nations failed to respond effectively to Mussolini's aggression against Abyssinia, what is today Ethiopia. Clearly, Saddam Hussein thought that his crime would pay, but the world, has decided otherwise.”⁴²⁹ In a House Republican Research Committee Task Force document from October 3, the Task Force report describes,

Saddam Hussein is a self-made, shrewd and ruthless leader. Although he identifies himself with the progressive secular Ba/ath [Rebirth] ideology, he is actually ruling through a classic despotic Arab power structure as practiced by the first Caliphs while conquering the Islamic Empire. Essentially, Saddam Hussein lives and functions on the basis of a self-perpetuating myth that he is the Great Arab Leader whose character is based on a mixture of the roles and qualities of several great Mesopotamian and Arab leaders.⁴³⁰

Although there was variation within congressional opinion and even within the cabinet⁴³¹ regarding the use of force, leaders were united in considering Saddam Hussein's intentions and character a key issue in determining the appropriate American response.

American leaders emphatically framed the impending conflict as one against Saddam Hussein and *not* against the people of Iraq. In the draft of a Presidential

⁴²⁸ White House News Summary, August 3, 1990 , Associated Press, George H W Archives, College Station TX HW

⁴²⁹ Iraq/Kuwait: Secretary Baker's Appearances Before House and Senate Committees, September 1990 (Text: Baker House Foreign Affairs remarks), George H W Bush Archives, College Station TX

⁴³⁰ Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, House Republican Research Committee, Saddam Hussein, October 3, 1990, George H W Bush Archives, College Station, TX

⁴³¹ Groupthink and cognitive perspective fare well according to Yetiv, Yetiv, Steve A. Explaining foreign policy: US decision-making in the gulf wars. JHU Press, 2011.

Statement for VOA on January 7, Bush made clear that “The United States — and the rest of the world — have no quarrel with the people of Iraq. Our quarrel — the world's quarrel — is with Saddam Hussein. His aggression will not stand...There is a harmony of purpose from which we will not flinch: Saddam Hussein's aggression must be reversed.”⁴³² The United States went into Kuwait on January 15, 1991 with the explicit goals of removing Iraqi forces from Kuwait, protect American hostages, and reinstate the monarchy.^{433 434}

After Desert Storm

Like the British, American leaders framed the conflict in terms of Saddam Hussein—so why did the US not follow the retreating troops into Iraq and depose Saddam? On January 9, a memorandum for Brent Scowcroft, written by Ronald Vonlembke details, “The first definition of a political victory would be, of course, the removal of Saddam Hussein. This may occur through the destruction of Iraq's command and control structure during the war.”⁴³⁵ On August 14, Bush said in a telephone call with Sheikh Sabah al-Sabah, “Frankly, I’d like to see the Iraqi people rise up against Saddam. But I don’t see it happening. But it would be the best way to get rid of him and get his troops out. But it’s

⁴³² Memorandum for David Demarest, National Security Council, Presidential Statement to be Broadcast on VOA in Arabic, Jan. 7, 1991, George H W Bush Archives, College Station, TX

⁴³³ Rovner, Joshua. "Delusion of Defeat: The United States and Iraq, 1990–1998." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37.4 (2014): 489

⁴³⁴ For a discussion of US Strategy see Mahnken, Thomas G., and Barry D. Watts. "What the Gulf War can (and cannot) tell us about the future of warfare." *International security* 22.2 (1997): 151-162 and Biddle, Stephen. "Victory misunderstood: What the Gulf War tells us about the future of conflict." *International Security* 21.2 (1996): 139-179.

⁴³⁵ Memorandum for Brent Scowcroft; Through Nicholas Rostow; From Ronald E. Vonlembke Subject: A Yardstick for Measuring Victory January 9, 1991, George H W Bush Archives, College Station, TX

wishful thinking.”⁴³⁶ As early as September, Secretary Baker, in front of Congress, had stated that “[i]f the Iraqi’s decided they wanted a new leader it would not make us terribly unhappy.”⁴³⁷ During the invasion, Senator Duncan proclaimed, “I hope the first target is Saddam Hussein himself. He has used chemical weapons against his own people. The sooner we knock him out or isolate him, the better off we will be.”⁴³⁸ After the conflict, President Bush said in a conversation with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, “While I have you on the phone your Majesty, may I ask you your up-to-date opinion on Iraq? This man Saddam is still there and we are very disappointed but wonder if you see any chance they will put him out?”⁴³⁹ That Saddam was still in power after the conflict, left leaders with a feeling that the mission of Operation Desert Storm was not fully achieved.^{440,441}

There seems to be two primary reasons the United States did not go into Iraq militarily and oppose Iraq—the limits of what international law proscribed and the cost in blood and treasure. Furthermore, evidence suggests that American leaders did not make Saddam a formal target because it would raise complex negotiations with international allies and could result in embarrassment if they failed.⁴⁴² However, this did not stop the administration from pursuing other tactics. American forces targeted Saddam’s palaces

⁴³⁶ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation: The President’s Meeting with Sheikh Sabah al-Sabah, August 14, 1990 , George H W Bush Archives, College Station, TX

⁴³⁷ Baker reported by UK; Gulf War National Archives Kew March 8 2017, pg. 278, Iraq/Kuwait: Secretary Baker’s Appearances Before House and Senate Committees, September 1990

⁴³⁸ Sen Duncan Remarks, Congressional Debate regarding options in the Gulf, January 17, 1991. George H W Bush Archives, College Station, TX

⁴³⁹ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, Subject: Telephone Conversation with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia on May 7, 1991, George H W Bush Archives, College Station TX

⁴⁴⁰ Rovner, Joshua. "Delusion of Defeat: The United States and Iraq, 1990–1998." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37.4 (2014)

⁴⁴¹ See also Salinger, Pierre. "The United States, the United Nations, and the Gulf War." *The Middle East Journal* (1995): 595.

⁴⁴² Hosmer, Stephen T. “Chapter 2 Attacking Leaders Directly.” *Operations Against Enemy Leaders*, RAND, 2001, www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1385/MR1385.ch2.pdf.

and residencies⁴⁴³ and according to research by Scot MacDonald, as early as August 3, Bush asked the CIA to investigate possible opportunities to overthrow Saddam.⁴⁴⁴ During and after the crisis, President Bush and Secretary Baker also gave statements encouraging Iraqi citizens to rise up against the Iraqi leader.

Considering American leaders' conceptualization of the crisis in such stark moral and personal terms, it is unsurprising that the United States ultimately intervened. The administration's emphasis on Saddam coalesced quickly and magnified the sense of threat stemming from the crisis. Although the perceptual shift appears to correspond with the invasion, Bush and his cabinet did not seem moved completely until the following days. It is possible there were other factors, such as the treatment of American hostages or the President's meeting with PM Thatcher that ultimately changed their perception. The shift, however, was radical and the corresponding policy disjuncture had profound consequences.

In 1992, hearings began with the hearing for the Italian Bank Banca Nazionale del Lavoro (BNL) scandal—the largest bank fraud in history. In the 1980s BNL's Atlanta branch had provided over 4.5 billion dollars in “unauthorized and largely unsecured loans to Iraq” of which between 600 and 800 was used by Iraq for military technology.⁴⁴⁵ When, in 1989, the Department of Agriculture suspected that Iraq was diverting agricultural credits to purchase arms, they looked into withdrawing the loans. However, under pressure from the State Department and a personal phone call from Baker to the Secretary of Agriculture, the issue was dropped.

⁴⁴³ Hahn, Peter L. *Missions Accomplished?: The United States and Iraq Since World War I*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, 100

⁴⁴⁴ MacDonald, Scot. "Hitler's shadow: Historical analogies and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait." *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 13.4 (2002): 37

⁴⁴⁵ Jentleson, Bruce W. *With Friends Like These: Reagan, Bush and Saddam, 1982-90*. Norton, 1995, 124

In a discussion of the BNL Scandal—or Iraqgate—in Washington, DC, James Rowe, former chief counsel of the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime and Criminal Justice and general counsel to the Senate Special Committee on Investigations, described “What’s driving this investigation is that fact that we fought a war against Iraq. I think that might constitute the “wire-crossing Sven mentioned. Information has come out that we were playing footsie with Saddam right up to the day he invaded Kuwait.”⁴⁴⁶

Discussion

By examining archival material on American and British leaders’ decision-making from the nineteen eighties through the beginning of the Gulf War, I found substantial support for my theory. American and British leaders’ discourse during Gulf Crisis was framed around Saddam Hussein individually and these leaders frequently utilized socio-historical references to wars between democracies and authoritarian leaders. The emphasis on this *individual* adversary resulted in information being weighted more heavily⁴⁴⁷ and was reinforced by the leaders’ socialization to the post WWII narrative.

My theory would also expect that the United States and the United Kingdom would make a concerted effort to depose Saddam. While neither country marched into Baghdad, leaders in Washington and London indicated through the bombing campaign, and public and private statements they wanted to oust Saddam Hussein.

⁴⁴⁶ “Iraqgate--the Making of an Investigation .” *Harpers Magazine*, Jan. 1993, harpers.org/blog/1993/01/?post_type=archive.

⁴⁴⁷ While this project investigates how vividness can increase threat perception, other research has explored how vividness may increase empathy or support for a cause through mechanisms like the “identifiable victim effect” (Jenni and Loewenstein 1997; Kogut and Ritov 2005). Similar to the vividness effect, the identifiable victim effect argues that first person images and narratives affect people more acutely (Genevsky et al. 2013). I argue that these same biases can motivate anger toward personalist regimes.

Alternative Explanations

I am not arguing that narratives and psychological biases alone explain the decision to forcefully reverse Iraq's annexation of Kuwait, but rather that these factors made the decision a lot more likely. It is certainly possible that in their absence, the decision would not have been made.

To understand why this is a real possibility, it is worth reflecting on alternative explanations for the war. In particular, two explanations are worth examining. One relates to the domestic political institutions in Iraq, or, in other words, the idea that the United States and United Kingdom *accurately* perceived the threat from Saddam to be more acute because of the lack of constraints on his leadership. The other relates to the purportedly "objective" threat posed by Iraqi actions, to the region, and to the post-Cold War world order and America's new unipolar moment. Put differently, the counter-argument that Iraqi behavior was sufficient to prompt a military response. While few have articulated these theses explicitly, they are implicit in most accounts of the conflict, and implied by existing theories linking regime type and conflict.⁴⁴⁸

Autocratic Perceptions of Saddam Hussein

If Iraq's actions posed an objective threat, or autocratic aggression was sufficient to explain American and British response, we would expect that all states, not only democracies, would have similar reactions to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. However, this was not the case.

⁴⁴⁸ See for example De Mesquita, Bruce Bueno, and Alastair Smith. *The dictator's handbook: why bad behavior is almost always good politics*. PublicAffairs, 2011 and Weeks, Jessica LP. *Dictators at war and peace*. Cornell University Press, 2014.

After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, British and American perceptions of Saddam tended to parallel each other but differed substantially from leaders and the publics in the Middle East. Saddam had significant support among Arab populations, and as the US described of Saudi Arabia in September, the “Public mood remains almost totally pro-Saddam.”⁴⁴⁹ North African, Jordanian and Palestinian publics in particular were likely to support the Iraqi leader, who despite his hostile rhetoric toward his Gulf neighbor, continued to frame his cause in pan-Arabist and anti-Zionist terms.⁴⁵⁰ The leaders in Jordan and Palestine supported many of Saddam’s actions. As George HW Bush described in a phone call with the King of Saudi Arabia,

I also want you to know that I am disappointed with some of our Arab friends. I am not going to mention any names on this call. I understand that there is some pressure from Saddam Hussein on these countries. But this disappointment is being felt in the US Congress and elsewhere. And that will make it difficult to do business as usual with countries being apologists for Saddam.⁴⁵¹

Sudan was close trading partners with Iraq, while Yemen was drawn to Saddam’s Arab Nationalism.⁴⁵² Jordan and Palestinian leaders supported Saddam’s statements against Israel.⁴⁵³

⁴⁴⁹ Jeddah: For Secretary of States Party, OF 040736z September 1990, George HW Bush Archives, College Station, TX

⁴⁵⁰ Lesch, Ann Mosely. "Contrasting Reactions to the Persian Gulf Crisis: Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and the Palestinians." *Middle East Journal* 45.1 (1991): 44 and Renshon, Stanley Allen, ed. *The Political psychology of the Gulf War: leaders, publics, and the process of conflict*. University of Pittsburgh Pre, 1993, 192

⁴⁵¹ The White House, Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Telecon with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, August 4, 1990, 1:50 PM, George HW Bush Archives, College Station , TX

⁴⁵² Lesch, Ann Mosely. "Contrasting Reactions to the Persian Gulf Crisis: Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and the Palestinians." *Middle East Journal* 45.1 (1991): 345

⁴⁵³ Renshon, Stanley Allen, ed. *The Political psychology of the Gulf War: leaders, publics, and the process of conflict*. University of Pittsburgh Pre, 1993, 192

Other Gulf States, particularly the gulf monarchies aligned with the west, were predisposed against Saddam Hussein. However, their concerns tended to be related to their regime stability and concerns regarding regional dominance, and they did not emphasize Saddam with the same vigor as their American and British counterparts. Renshon describes that these states did not believe that Iraq could win against the US and did not want to be on the losing side of a war. Furthermore, "Extensive US lobbying played an important role in shaping opinion."⁴⁵⁴ Moreover, the Gulf States, initially, opposed foreign intervention in the conflict.⁴⁵⁵

Unipolar Moment

The most compelling alternative explanation is that the war was a result of the "New World Order." Patrick Dobel describes, "President Bush saw the Iraq invasion of Kuwait as the first act of 'outright aggression' in the post-Cold War world...He wanted to set a precedent for a 'new era' that would encourage international cooperation to deter aggression."⁴⁵⁶ While this was a motivating factor for the Americans, it is alone insufficient. Chiefly because Iraq's violations of international law and norms prior to the 1990 invasion were also egregious. These continued to be ignored even after the Malta Summit. Furthermore, this explanation fails to explain British action. While in the case of the UK there was some rhetorical homage played to the idea of a new world order,

⁴⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁵⁵ Lesch, Ann Mosely. "Contrasting Reactions to the Persian Gulf Crisis: Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and the Palestinians." *Middle East Journal* 45.1 (1991): 36

⁴⁵⁶ Dobel, J. Patrick. "Prudence and Presidential Ethics: The Decisions on Iraq of the Two Presidents Bush." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 40.1 (2010): 68

ultimately the cabinet opposed any steps considered inconvenient on the road to confront Saddam. This included garnering UNSC resolutions.

I do not contend that these alternative explanations are incorrect, but rather they are incomplete—they cannot independently explain US and UK decisions during the Gulf Crisis. My theory is probabilistic and conflict can be caused by a variety of factors—material interests and other ideological forces significantly affected American and British decision-making. I argue, however, that existing explanations are insufficient and that my theory can help explain important features of American and British policy during the Gulf Crisis.

Conclusion

In previous chapters, I show that democracies are more likely to initiate conflict with personalist regimes than with autocracies with some form of collective leadership and that common psychological biases increase the threat associated with an individual opponent. The Suez case study in Chapter IV demonstrated that the post WWII narrative affected leaders in both the United States and UK, and that this augmented their perception of Nasser predisposing them to perceive the threat from the Egyptian leader more acutely. This case study examined American and British leaders' perceptions of Saddam Hussein in the years leading up to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in the summer of 1990. I have argued American and British leaders were predisposed to perceive the threat of Saddam as particularly acute because of the interaction between common psychological biases and their socialization to the post World War II narrative.

The shift in the international structure and conceptions of a “new world order” provides the best alternative explanation for the first Gulf War. While this discourse permeated the thinking of American leaders, it seems to have been a secondary (at best) consideration for the British cabinet. I am not claiming that material interests or other ideological forces were unimportant. However, these explanations are insufficient to explain the congruence in language and action between the US and UK regarding Saddam Hussein.

This chapter argued that in both the US and the UK common cognitive biases reinforced leaders’ socialization to the post-war narrative and increased their threat perception with regard to Saddam Hussein. The next chapter will review the empirical and theoretical contributions of this project, and outline avenues for future research.

Conclusion

This project introduced a novel theory to explain the frequency of democratic-personalist conflict. I have argued that psychological biases make it easier to attach antipathy to an individual leader rather than to a group or society. I also argued that these tendencies are exacerbated by narratives that permeate the fabric of modern democratic societies, narratives that cast personalist dictators as the consummate enemies of democracy. The interaction of these psychological biases and democratic leaders' social identity increases threat perception, predisposing democracies to pursue violent action against personalist dictatorships above all other states.

In chapter two, I presented statistical evidence that democracies initiate more conflicts with personalist dictatorships than with institutionalized, impersonal regimes like military juntas or single-party dictatorships. Examining militarized interstate disputes, crises, and wars, I also showed that personalist dictatorships are targeted more often by democracies than by other autocracies, suggesting that personalism itself does not fully explain the patterns identified. In chapter three, I introduced results from three survey experiments conducted in two advanced Western democracies, testing how the image of a rival autocracy affected respondents' threat perception and willingness to support violent action. The findings confirm my theory regarding the important role psychological biases. In particular, I found that vividness/tangibility, primed by the inclusion of images of and references to hypothetical dictators, increases perceptions of threat. I furthermore found that the institutional characteristics of an adversary regime are alone insufficient to produce increased threat perception. This lends further support to my

argument that the frequency of conflict between democracies and personalist regimes cannot be explained by standard institutional-rationalist theories.

In chapters four and five, I examined the extent to which high-ranking American and British officials emphasized the personal traits and individual authority of their opponents during the Suez Crisis and the First Gulf War. I conducted archival research at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland; the George H. W. Bush Library in College Station, Texas; the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas; the Cadbury Research Library in Birmingham, UK; and the Kew National Archives in Richmond, UK. In both cases, I found substantial evidence that democratic leaders' emphasis on their autocratic rival exacerbated their threat perception and affected their decisions to use force.

Together, these chapters provide compelling evidence that democracies' tendency to find themselves in military confrontations with personalist regimes is not just a function of the characteristics of the autocracies themselves, but a byproduct of the interaction between democratic elites' social identity and psychological biases and the effect these have on the propensity to use force. This project utilized a variety of methodological strategies to adjudicate explanations for complex phenomena. The statistical analyses confirmed the overall patterns regarding democratic-personalist conflicts; the survey experiments provide evidence on the proposed psychological mechanism; and the case studies offered a series of 'straw-in-the-wind' and tougher 'hoop' tests of both the psychological and social identity mechanisms, while helping contrast the explanatory power of my theory with other existing explanations.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁷ Bennett, Andrew, and Colin Elman. "Case study methods in the international relations subfield." *Comparative Political Studies* 40.2 (2007): 170-195.

As noted before, the theory presented here is firmly probabilistic, not deterministic. I am not arguing that democracies and personalist regimes will always be at war, or cannot enjoy positive relations. Indeed, non-conflictual relations are the rule rather than the exception, even among democratic-personalist dyads, and instances of close cooperation abound. Nor am I arguing that all individual leaders within democratic societies will share in their distaste for personalism or personalist leaders.

It is also important to note that decisions made during crises cannot be adequately explained with only one variable, and my proposed theory does not intend to *independently* explain conflict between democracies and personalist regimes in the absence of other factors that may produce relevant conflicts of interest. Nor is it meant to exonerate personalist dictators of responsibility for those conflicts or the wars that sometimes follow. What the theory does suggest is that when such conflicts of interest arise, democratic leaders are substantially more likely to see them as the product of the opposing leader's character, to frame them in starker—often absolutist or catastrophic—terms, and to favor the use of force to resolve them.

While I did find substantial support for the theory, the experiments and cases also highlight the potential for future work to further tease out the implications and limitations of these findings.

Future Research

This project indicates several other avenues for future researchers. First, the theoretical explanation proposed here, that the interaction between social identity and psychological biases affects crises decision making, can be used to explore other social identities and

other aspects of psychological biases. For example, how the interaction between stereotypical conceptions of gender and attribution inform perceptions of women political leaders.⁴⁵⁸

I have argued that when an individual classifies an adversary as the “other,” a social category identified in opposition to oneself, it substantially increases their associated threat perception. While the statistical analyses and survey experiments attempted to moderate the effects of race, religion, ethnicity and other demographic markers on the experiment, the racial and religious identities of Saddam and Nasser clearly affected democratic decision-makers’ assessments during the Suez Crisis during the Gulf War.⁴⁵⁹ Further research should investigate how dynamics regarding ethnicity, race, and religion may interact with other aspects of social identity and common cognitive biases.

Another interesting question that emerged through this research is how personality can reinforce or conflict with cognitive biases and broader social norms.⁴⁶⁰ As suggested in the previous chapter, some democratic leaders’ personalities may make them even more likely to perceive personalist leaders as threatening,⁴⁶¹ while others resist socialization into these norms and even exhibit personalist proclivities or affinities

⁴⁵⁸ See for example, Naurin, Daniel, Elin Naurin, and Amy Alexander. "Gender Stereotyping and Chivalry in International Negotiations: A Survey Experiment in the Council of the European Union." *International Organization* (2019): 1-20.

⁴⁵⁹ Said, Edward. "Latent and manifest orientalism." *Race and Racialization, 2E: Essential Readings* (2018): 64.

⁴⁶⁰ See Pfiffner, James P. "Presidential decision making: Rationality, advisory systems, and personality." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35.2 (2005): 217-228; Winter, David G. "Assessing leaders’ personalities: A historical survey of academic research studies." *The psychological assessment of political leaders* (2005): 11-38; Renshon, Jonathan, and Stanley A. Renshon. "The theory and practice of foreign policy decision making." *Political Psychology* 29.4 (2008): 509-536; Duckitt, John, and Chris G. Sibley. "Personality, ideology, prejudice, and politics: A dual-process motivational model." *Journal of personality* 78.6 (2010): 1861-1894.

⁴⁶¹ See for example Helbling, Marc, and Richard Traunmüller. "What is Islamophobia? Disentangling Citizens’ Feelings Toward Ethnicity, Religion and Religiosity Using a Survey Experiment." *British Journal of Political Science* (2018): 1-18.

themselves. Examining the interaction between social narratives/norms, personality, and psychological biases, although complex, may provide additional leverage when examining leaders and decision-making in a broader sample of cases.

An additional question that emerged in this project is how does the socialization process I describe, and the post-war narratives in particular, change over time? In the Gulf Crisis, American and British leaders often used references to other conflicts including Vietnam and the Falklands, and actively debated the appropriateness of these competing analogies. These did not seem to dampen the effects of the personification of Iraq or greatly diminish salience of illusions to WWII. However, Prime Minister Thatcher and President HW Bush would be the last heads of government in the US and UK with direct experience of WWII. References to this conflict and the belief in the nature of democratic-autocratic conflict will likely not disappear, but will likely be modified by experiences from successive conflicts. How will these narratives, and therefore democratic social identity, change over time? Will they be supplanted by new experiences or will they remain entrenched in public discourse through institutionalization, reification, and habit?

Policy Implications

This work is grounded in an empirical puzzle with special significance for U.S foreign policy and national security. My research indicates that countries like the United States may be more inclined to use force against states that are ruled—or perceived to be ruled—by personalist regimes.

We are currently witnessing a rise in the personalization of politics and emergence of strongman figures around the world. While this is most visible in autocratic and newly democratic societies, established democracies are not wholly immune to forms of personalized rule. i.e. the overt reliance on personal charisma, nepotism, and patrimonialism, accompanied by subversion or weakening of institutional checks on executive action. Strongman leaders in democracies may not have been socialized to hold views and preferences that are consistent with those other democratic elites/norms.⁴⁶² While Donald Trump has done plenty to antagonize traditional US allies, my theory indicates that it is plausible for other democratic leaders internationally to perceive Trump as an acute threat. This increases the likelihood of intra-democratic conflict, including trade disputes, militarized interstate threats, and breaks in traditionally strong bilateral relations.

Perhaps most immediately concerning are the implications of Xi Jinping's consolidation of power in China for the future of US-China relations.⁴⁶³ If Xi succeeds in creating a new cult of personality and reclaiming a position of unparalleled power not seen in the country since Mao Zedong, my theory would lead us to expect US elites to be more likely to perceive China, and the variety of economic and political challenges it already poses, as a major threat and to support military means to address it.⁴⁶⁴ This would make cooperation more difficult, even in areas of shared interest, and increase the

⁴⁶² Berezin, Mabel. "On the construction sites of history: Where did Donald Trump come from?." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 5.3 (2017): 322-337.

⁴⁶³ Myers, Steven Lee. "With Xi's Power Grab, China Joins New Era of Strongmen." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 26 Feb. 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/02/26/world/asia/china-xi-jinping-authoritarianism.html.

⁴⁶⁴ See Landler, Mark. "As Xi Tightens His Grip on China, U.S. Sees Conflict Ahead." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 28 Feb. 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/02/27/us/politics/trump-china-united-states.html.

probability of escalation and war in the event of a crisis.

More generally, if my theory is correct and threat perception is heightened by psychological and socio-cultural factors rather than simply determined by policy disagreements, the balance of capabilities, and other more objective variables, attention and resources may be diverted from cases that might otherwise deserve higher priority. Better understanding these dynamics will not in itself solve the very real challenges the United States and its democratic allies are bound to face in dealing with autocratic states, but being aware of them and guarding against their detrimental effects on decision-making can help avoid unnecessary and costly wars.

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