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Democracy as Justification for Waging War: The Role of Public Support

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Abstract

Democracy is positively valued. This positive evaluation extends to a democracy's actions, even if it is to wage war. The authors investigated whether the perceived legitimacy of military interventions depends on the political structure (democratic vs. nondemocratic) of the countries involved and on the aggressor country's popular support for the government's aggressive policy. Participants learned that an alleged country planned to attack another. The political structure of both countries was manipulated in the two experiments. The support of the aggressor's population toward military intervention was measured in Experiment 1 and manipulated in Experiment 2. Both experiments confirmed that military intervention was perceived as being less illegitimate when the population supported their democratic government's policy to attack a nondemocratic country.

Keywords

democracy, perceived legitimacy, military intervention, public opinion

Democracy is good! Few ideas seem to have achieved such a consensus. For example, between 1980 and 1990, 81 countries took significant steps toward democracy, with the result that 140 of the world's nearly 200 countries hold multiparty elections (United Nations, 2002). Authoritarian regimes even seek to justify their illegitimate exercise of power and misdeeds by paradoxically appealing to democratic principles and thereby claiming actions in the name of the common good. Even criticisms of democracy generally focus on the actual system itself as compared to what a democracy should actually be, thereby implicitly confirming the compelling nature of democracy. Accordingly, several scholars believe in the undeniable historical victory of democracy and consequently the idea of democracy as nonnegotiable in today's world (e.g., Dunn, 2005; Fukuyama, 1992; Shapiro, 2003).

Yet, as democracy has become a seemingly universal value (Sen, 1999; Shapiro & Hacker-Cordon, 1999), it may also constitute a legitimizing ideology that provides justification to even immoral and "un-democratic" means. History has shown that many political and religious ideologies have served to justify questionable belligerent attitudes; the question posed here is whether democracy may be one of them. The aim of the present research was to study democracy's righteousness by investigating whether the perceived legitimacy of intended military interventions depends upon the political structure (democratic vs. nondemocratic) of the countries in conflict, and whether this effect is moderated by the perceived support of the aggressor country's public opinion.

The Democracy-as-Value Hypothesis

The "Democracy-as-value" hypothesis contends that democracy is an ideological belief system that provides value to democratic individuals, groups, and institutions, therefore granting legitimacy to their actions, whatever that action may actually be (Falomir, Staerklé, Depuiset, & Butera, 2005, 2007). It is important to note that democracy as a social and political value is not to be confounded with democracy as a governmental system (e.g., Dunn, 2005; Sen, 1999). Indeed, from a social psychological point of view, democracy functions as a unit of interpretation, providing information concerning ideals, goals, expectations, and valued actions as to how groups and societies should function, as other ideologies do (e.g., Jost & Banaji, 1994; Lerner, 1977; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Weber, 1958). Of course, the legitimizing value attributed to democracy should occur more likely among citizens of democratic countries, even if the spread of democracy as a universal value would suggest that it may not necessarily be restricted to them (e.g., Sen, 1999). When a group is known to be democratic, as compared to nondemocratic ones, people infer specific

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characteristics of the group and its members that are associated with well-known democratic principles (e.g., equality, freedom, autonomy, popular sovereignty, collective decisions, representative leaders, separation of powers, preference for peaceful solutions to conflicts, tolerance of dissent and voice, and respect for the common good). Even more importantly, people also believe that these groups and their characteristics are intrinsically good, legitimate, and desirable. Consequently, actions emanating from democratic groups should be perceived as more legitimate than the same actions carried out by less democratic ones.

What is the rationale for democracy's value? Research in social psychology shows that democracy is perceived by individuals living in democratic countries as the best possible political system, referring to the (only) right way that national groups should be organized and take political decisions (Staerklé, 2005; Staerklé, Clémence, & Doise, 1998; see also Magioglou, 2008). Furthermore, members of democratic societies are perceived more positively than members of nondemocratic societies (Staerklé et al., 1998). Research on procedural justice has shown that egalitarian and democratic decision-making procedures (i.e., based on the right to voice opinions) make final decisions appear fairer than those obtained through authoritarian and nondemocratic procedures (Folger, 1977; see also Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler, 1997; Tyler & Lind, 1992). Many studies have also shown that individuals strongly support concepts and ideals that are historically associated with democracy such as human rights, peace, and prosperity (e.g., Cohrs, Maes, Moschner, & Kielmann, 2007; Doise, Spini, & Clémence, 1999) or freedom and individual autonomy (e.g. Beauvois, 2005; Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1998; Sampson, 1988; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997). Finally, experimental support comes from research by Falomir, Staerklé, Depuiset, and Butera (2005), showing that aggressions perpetrated by members of democratic groups were perceived as less illegitimate than aggressions perpetrated by members of nondemocratic groups, especially when the victims belonged to nondemocratic groups.

In sum, these considerations suggest that in Western societies at least democracy is recognized as a value, and therefore military interventions may be perceived as more legitimate when perpetrated by democratic countries especially against nondemocratic ones. Historical evidence in support of this hypothesis comes from the fact that recent military interventions by democratic countries against nondemocratic countries have been justified by the spread of democracy around the world (Geis, Brock, & Müller, 2006; Ish-Shalom, 2007; Meierhenrich, 2007; see also Henry, 2008). Empirical evidence comes from studies experimentally examining the effect of political regimes on attitudes toward war (Healy, Hoffman, Beer, & Bourne, 2002; Herrmann, Tetlock, & Visser, 1999; Mintz & Geva, 1993; see also Mann & Gaertner, 1991; Liu et al., 2009; Pratto, Glasford, & Hegarty, 2006). Overall, results showed that U.S. participants supported the use of force by their government to a greater extent within a hypothetical conflict when the fictional antagonistic country was described as

nondemocratic as opposed to democratic (Mintz & Geva, 1993; Geva & Hanson, 1999; see also Healy et al., 2002), and when the victim of the fictional antagonistic country was democratic rather than nondemocratic (Herrmann et al., 1999; Experiment 2).

Overall, these findings suggest that violence is considered more justifiable when the aggressor country is democratic and the victim country is nondemocratic. However, several aspects of the paradigms used in the above research preclude an interpretation in terms of our democracy-as-value hypothesis. First, the existence of utilitarian motivations cannot be excluded, given that participants were asked to decide about their own government's engagement in scenarios involving their nation's interests. Second, the fact that participants knew the countries involved makes it difficult to disentangle the effect of the political regime and the existence of implicit peace treaties, alliances, and similarities between the participants' own country and the other democratic countries. Third, the lack of a control makes it impossible to adequately test the democracy-as-value hypothesis: this requires knowing whether there is an increase in support for democratic military interventions against nondemocratic states.

The goal of the present research was to provide a clear-cut, empirical test of the democracy-as-value hypothesis with respect to the perceived legitimacy of military intervention. In order to achieve this, we adopted a third-party perspective in which participants evaluated military interventions between two allegedly existent, albeit unknown, countries. We reasoned that responses from uninvolved participants could not be driven by instrumental motives such as favoritism for their own or allied countries, as might have been the case in prior research. Instead, we want to show that people appeal to the concept of democracy in order to justify military action that is inconsequential to them. A third-party perspective is therefore the only way to examine the impact of democracy-as-value independently of other concerns that inevitably appear when one's own country is involved.

Democratic Legitimacy and Popular Support

A second way to provide a critical test of the democracy-as-value hypothesis is by linking the perceived legitimacy of democratic countries' controversial actions, such as waging war, to the necessary condition of receiving support from the national population. Indeed, democratic legitimacy is founded upon the tacit consent of public opinion (e.g., Dunn, 2005; Glasser & Salmon, 1995; Shapiro, 2003). Thus, popular support may constitute a proof of the legitimacy of governments' policies and actions, specifically in democratic countries. Accordingly, we suggest that public support may play a key role in the perception of legitimacy of policies and actions as a moderator of the effect of political government.

Social psychological research has traditionally shown that public opinion constitutes social proof of validity that influences observers' perceptions and attitudes (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Festinger, 1954; Kelley, 1952; see also Kruglanski &

Mayseless, 1987). Furthermore, public opinion not only appears to have a significant impact on governmental policies in general (e.g. Brooks & Manza, 2007; Burstein, 2003; Page & Shapiro, 1983) but also influences governments' decisions to initiate war (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson, & Smith, 1999; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Morgan & Campbell, 1991; Reiter & Stam, 2002) as well as the means engaged and the duration of the conflict (e.g., Allen, 2007). Leaders appear also to scrutinize public opinion within foreign countries in order to gauge the credibility of their governments and policies (Brandt, Colaresi, & Freeman, 2008). Consequently, it seems reasonable to expect that public opinion may provide third-party observers with the relevant information about the legitimacy of foreign governments' belligerent actions.

According to the democracy-as-value hypothesis, however, democratic and nondemocratic public opinions would differ in the extent to which they provide legitimacy for their governments' policies and actions. When compared to nondemocracies, first, the internal legitimacy of democracies is intrinsically linked to the population's consent, and therefore governmental policies depend upon citizen's consenting opinions. Second, given that leaders in democratic regimes are more accountable, public opinion is unlikely to be ignored and consequently becomes more diagnostic of the legitimacy of a given policy. Third, democratic populations are perceived as being freer and more independent from the government and are therefore less easily manipulated by them (Staerklé et al., 1998). Finally, democracies are expected, even if mistakenly (e.g., Reiter & Stam, 2002), to make use of military force only as a last resort. Accordingly, the overall perceived illegitimacy of violent foreign policies such as military interventions may decrease when they are supported by democratic rather than nondemocratic public opinion.

Overview and Hypothesis

Participants were informed about a conflict between two allegedly real countries, previously unknown to them, with no geographical or political relationship with their own country. The political structure of both countries was experimentally manipulated in the two studies, and a control condition was introduced in Experiment 1. The support of the aggressor's population toward military intervention was either measured (Experiment 1) or manipulated (Experiment 2). We predicted a three-way interaction between these factors: Military interventions should be perceived as less illegitimate when perpetrated by democratic countries against nondemocratic ones (as compared to the other conditions) and particularly when the population of the democratic aggressor country supports rather than opposes military action.

Experiment 1

Method

Participants and Design. Participants were 215 Swiss students from various faculties (95 women, 119 men, 1 missing value;

$M_{\text{age}} = 24.57$, $SD = 8.13$) who were retained for the study as they declared to know little or nothing about this alleged but inexistent conflict and believed the described risk of military escalation. They were randomly assigned to one of the five experimental conditions following a 2 (Victim Country: democratic, nondemocratic) \times 2 (Aggressor Country: democratic, nondemocratic) experimental design ($N = 175$), with a control condition ($N = 40$).

Political Structure of the Countries. Participants were told that two (allegedly real but actually fictitious) former Soviet republics were in conflict with the likelihood of serious military escalation. Allegedly, under the influence of the Soviet Union (USSR), one of these countries (Bachran) was annexed by the other country (Abazie). However, Bachran had asked for and obtained a de facto autonomy after the collapse of the USSR which was not acknowledged by Abazie. More recently, the Abazie government had announced its intention to reintegrate the Bachran territory through military intervention. Participants were provided with a short description of both of the countries in conflict, depicting Abazie (i.e., the aggressor) and Bachran (i.e., the victim) as historically either democratic or nondemocratic. In the control condition, no information was provided about the political structure of any of the two countries.

Perceived Popular Support for the Military Intervention. Participants were then asked to indicate to what extent the population of Abazie (i.e., the aggressor) supported the military intervention proclaimed by their government (0 = *not at all*; 10 = *absolutely*; $M = 4.53$, $SD = 2.99$). Two participants did not answer this question and were therefore not considered in the analyses. Given that perceived support was necessarily measured after the description of the conflict, a precautionary analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run to examine whether the countries' political structure influenced any perceived support. Results showed that perceived support ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 2.95$) did not vary as a function of the aggressor and victim main effects, $F(1, 169) = 0.16$, $p = .90$, $F(1, 169) = 0.39$, $p = .53$, or the interaction effect, $F(1, 169) = 0.22$, $p = .64$. Furthermore, t test comparisons with the control condition showed that the perception of popular support in this condition ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 3.22$) did not differ from that of the remaining experimental conditions, $t(208) < 0.90$, $p > .36$. Given that perceived popular support was shown to be independent of the countries' political structure, we used it as a third, continuous, independent variable.

Perceived Legitimacy of Military Intervention. Five items assessed the perceived legitimacy of military intervention. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which the intended military intervention of Abazie against Bachran was comprehensible, justified, legitimate, desirable, and a good solution (0 = *not at all*; 10 = *absolutely*; $\alpha = .86$; $M = 1.32$, $SD = 1.55$).

Manipulation checks. Two items assessed the extent to which each country was democratic or nondemocratic (0 = *nondemocratic* and 10 = *democratic*) and egalitarian or authoritarian

(0 = *egalitarian* and 10 = *authoritarian*). An average score was computed after reversing the scores for the second item, $M_{\text{aggressor}} = 3.29$, $SD = 2.04$, and $M_{\text{victim}} = 5.19$, $SD = 2.14$, $r(214) = -.38$, $p < .001$; $r(214) = -.31$, $p < .001$.

Results

The main analyses were performed using a 2 (Victim Country: democratic, nondemocratic) \times 2 (Aggressor Country: democratic, nondemocratic) \times Perceived Popular Support (standardized scores) design. Specific contrasts were planned in order to compare the relevant conditions with the control condition. Preliminary analyses have shown no main or interaction effects of sex with the independent variables. Sex was therefore dropped from the analyses.

Manipulation Checks

The aggressor country was overall perceived as less democratic than the victim country, $t(214) = 8.46$, $p < .0001$, suggesting that democracy is more associated with peaceful solutions. The aggressor country was perceived as more democratic in the democratic condition ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.78$) than in the nondemocratic condition ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.90$), $F(1, 165) = 46.35$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .21$. Additionally, the above two conditions significantly differed from the control condition ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.96$), $t(210) = 3.10$, $p = .002$, and $t(210) = 2.23$, $p = .027$, respectively, confirming the effectiveness of this manipulation.

Moreover, the victim country was perceived as more democratic in the democratic condition ($M = 6.48$, $SD = 1.63$) than in the nondemocratic condition ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.97$), $F(1, 165) = 109.07$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .39$. Both conditions differed significantly from the control condition ($M = 5.26$, $SD = 1.54$), $t(210) = 4.58$, $p < .001$, and $t(210) = 3.62$, $p < .001$, respectively, again confirming the effectiveness of this manipulation.

Perceived Legitimacy of Military Intervention

There was a significant main effect of the aggressor country's political structure, $F(1, 165) = 4.62$, $p = .033$, $\eta^2 = .02$, a significant main effect of perceived popular support, $F(1, 165) = 11.46$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$, and a significant aggressor country's political structure by perceived popular support interaction, $F(1, 165) = 6.05$, $p = .015$, $\eta^2 = .03$. All these effects were qualified by the predicted 3-way interaction, $F(1, 165) = 7.50$, $p = .007$, $\eta^2 = .04$ (cf. Figure 1).¹ In line with our hypothesis, perceived legitimacy was highest for high conditional levels of perceived popular support in the democratic aggressor/nondemocratic victim condition ($M = 3.11$); this condition was higher than the corresponding control condition ($M = 1.20$), $t(203) = 4.08$, $p < .001$, while no other mean differed from the corresponding control condition $t(203) < 1.30$, $p > .20$.

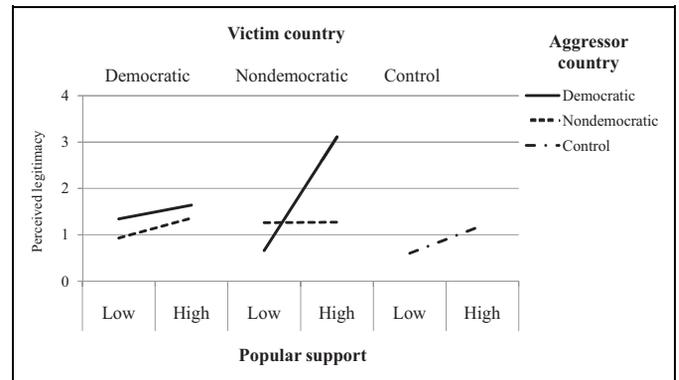


Figure 1. Perceived legitimacy of the military intervention as a function of the political structure of aggressor and victim countries and perceived popular support (± 1 SD; Experiment 1).

Discussion

As expected, military aggression was perceived as less illegitimate when the aggressor country was democratic and the victim country nondemocratic, but only when the democratic population was perceived as providing support for attacking a nondemocratic country. When the democratic population was perceived to be opposed to the aggressive policy of their government, military intervention was perceived as illegitimate as in the other conditions.

One could have expected the democracy-as-value hypothesis to predict a greater perceived popular support for democratic countries in general; however, we did not find evidence for such an effect. Indeed, such an understanding of the causal relationship between political structure and public opinion (which is open to debate in political science, e.g., Brooks & Manza, 2007; Page & Saphiro, 1983) is challenged by the fact that dissent and public disagreement with authorities not only is more tolerated in democracies than in nondemocracies but also constitutes the cornerstone of democracy.

In order to provide a more clear-cut test of the moderating role of popular support, in Experiment 2 we sought to replicate the above findings while experimentally manipulating popular support for the military intervention. We also sought a replication with a sample of army recruits which would supposedly be less prone to consider military interventions as illegitimate when compared to undergraduate students.

Experiment 2

Method

Participants and Procedure. Participants, all Swiss men, were recruited during their military service in training camps in Switzerland. Since military issues are a daily concern in the army, the question of the legitimacy of a military intervention should be of particular relevance for such a sample. A total of 179 participants, with ages ranging from 18 to 22 ($M = 19.57$,

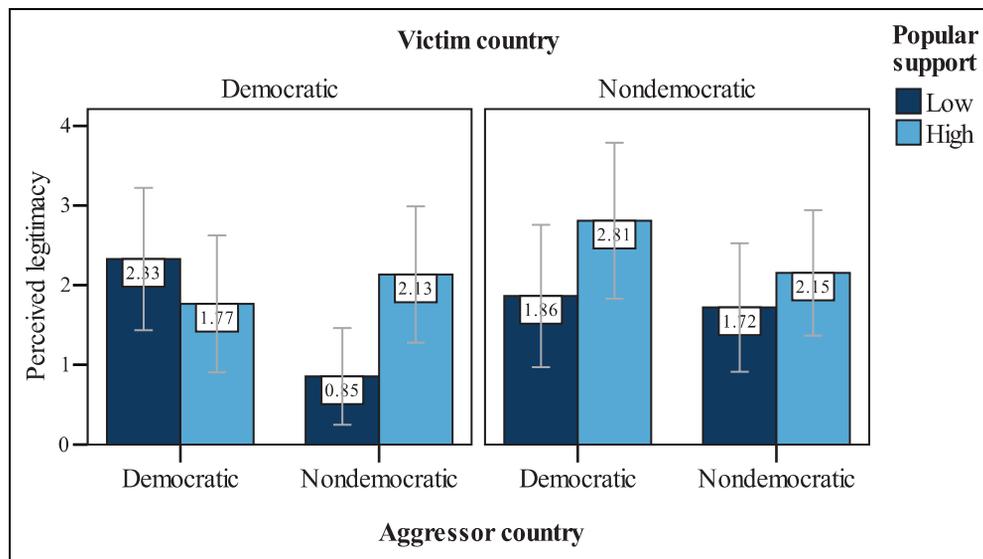


Figure 2. Means for perceived legitimacy of the military intervention as a function of the political structure of aggressor and victim countries and manipulated popular support (Experiment 2).

$SD = 0.93$), were again retained on the basis that they declared to know little or nothing about the conflict.

Procedure and materials were identical to those of Experiment 1. Participants were randomly assigned to one of eight experimental conditions following a 2 (Victim Country: democratic, nondemocratic) \times 2 (Aggressor Country: democratic, nondemocratic) \times 2 (Popular Support: low, high) design. The main dependent variable was again the perceived legitimacy of the military intervention ($\alpha = .86$; $M = 1.96$, $SD = 1.97$).

Popular Support for the Military Intervention. This time, participants were also informed that opinion polls indicated that 90% of Abazia's population were either in agreement with their aggressive government policy (high support condition) or in disagreement with it (low support condition). In order to check this manipulation, participants at the end of the study were asked the same question as in Experiment 1 ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 3.68$).

Results

All analyses were run using a 2 (Victim Country: democratic, nondemocratic) \times 2 (Aggressor Country: democratic, nondemocratic) \times 2 (Popular Support: low, high) ANOVA.

Manipulation Checks

Again, the aggressor country, $M = 3.81$, $SD = 2.83$; intercorrelations between the 2 constitutive items, $r(169) = -.29$, $p < .001$, was overall perceived as less democratic than the victim country, $M = 5.00$, $SD = 3.02$; $r(168) = -.54$, $p < .001$; $t(174) = 3.15$, $p = .002$. Again, the aggressor country was perceived as more democratic in the democratic condition ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 2.86$) than in the nondemocratic condition

($M = 2.61$, $SD = 2.24$), $F(1, 168) = 42.36$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .20$. And again, the victim country was perceived as more democratic in the democratic condition ($M = 6.75$, $SD = 2.40$) than in the nondemocratic condition ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 2.44$), $F(1, 168) = 101.91$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .37$. Furthermore, perceived support was higher in the high-support condition ($M = 6.56$, $SD = 3.10$) than in the low-support condition ($M = 2.02$, $SD = 2.69$), $F(1, 171) = 105.94$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .38$. It is worth noting that none of the popular support main and interaction effects influenced the perceived level of democracy of both victim and aggressor countries, $F(1, 171) < 2.17$. Finally, as in Experiment 1, political structure did not influence perceived popular support, $F(1, 171) < 1.92$.

Perceived Legitimacy of the Military Intervention

As in Experiment 1, the predicted 3-way interaction was significant, $F(1, 171) = 4.13$, $p = .044$, $\eta^2 = .024$ (see Figure 2). Perceived legitimacy was highest in the condition in which the aggressor country was democratic and the population supported the intervention against a nondemocratic victim country ($M = 2.81$). Planned comparisons confirmed that this condition differed significantly from the seven other combined conditions, $t(171) = 2.30$, $p = .022$. However, analyses of residuals showed that one other condition differed from the others; perceived legitimacy was lower when the victim country was democratic, the aggressor country nondemocratic, and the population did not support the military intervention ($M = 0.85$), $t(171) = 12.03$, $p < .001$.

Discussion

Again, results confirmed that the military intervention was perceived as less illegitimate when planned by a democratic country against a nondemocratic country and supported by the

population of the democratic aggressor country. The present experiment thus replicated the findings of Experiment 1 with a sample of male army recruits, while experimentally manipulating popular support for the country's intention to use military force.

The results of this experiment also revealed an unexpected finding. Military intervention was perceived as the most illegitimate when it was planned against a democratic country by a nondemocratic country that did not receive the support of its citizens toward its military policy. This unexpected finding can be explained by our theoretical argument, since it constitutes the corollary of our main hypothesis: this condition indeed cumulated the lowest level of legitimacy expected across the three experimental factors.

General Discussion

The present research provided evidence for the democracy-as-value hypothesis. Across two experiments and two different samples, with measured and manipulated popular support, participants considered military intervention as less illegitimate when a democratic country was supported by its citizenry for attacking a nondemocratic one. Of particular relevance, the present research introduced two important elements that allowed us to perform a direct test of the democracy-as-value hypothesis.

First, the fact that the participants' country was not involved in the conflict allowed us to examine the value associated with democracy independently of instrumental motives such as favoring one's own or allied countries. Accordingly, the use of such a third-party perspective provides a more powerful illustration of the ideological nature of the use of democracy in condoning armed interventions (see also Falomir et al., 2005). Second, the present research recognized the importance of public opinion as social proof of democratic legitimacy. On one hand, the present research showed that democracies are not associated with greater public support. This finding suggests that two conflicting perceptions may be working at the same time: Whereas popular support may constitute an inherent determinant of democracies, perceivers also associate them with tolerance for dissent and support toward peaceful solutions. However, on the other hand, this present research showed that once public support is granted, democratic public support provides more legitimacy to government policies than nondemocratic public support. Accordingly, democracy-as-value stems not only from the legitimacy provided by democratic governments but also from the legitimacy granted by a consenting public sphere.

Limitations and Future Research

The present two experiments, while providing converging evidence for the democracy-as-value hypothesis, also open up avenues for further research. First, in the present research we inferred the value of democracy from the perceived legitimacy of war intentions. However, further research may introduce measures of the perceived value of democracy in order to study

its mediating role in the effect of experimentally induced factors (e.g., country regimes and public opinion) on the perceived legitimacy of outcome variables. Second, future research should additionally explore whether the perceived legitimacy of military interventions actually mediates the effect of political regime and public opinion on the actual support for aggression. Finally, further research would be helpful in order to examine the effect of the participants' level of involvement in a conflict that may gradually increase as the enemy persists in their attacks (Healy et al., 2002).

Another important issue to consider is whether the present findings can be understood more simply as a consequence of in-group favoritism (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). We do not think that democracy-as-value hypothesis simply means that our participants protect democratic "in-groups" as compared to nondemocratic "out-groups," and at least three considerations support our reasoning. First, historical evidence on the spread of democratic institutions and the more recent events in North Africa and the Middle East suggest that democratic ideals of public participation are not necessarily restricted to Western countries, but that they may rather constitute universal reference values (e.g., Dunn, 2005; Sen, 1999; Shapiro, 2003). The second consideration refers to the fact that moral judgments and convictions are experienced as facts that transcend boundaries of people, groups, and cultures (Skitka, 2002; Wenzel, 2000). Third, the present results show that the effects of democracy-as-value emerged even though there was no way for the participants to self-identify with an unfamiliar country. However, this does not mean that the present pattern of findings would necessarily be replicated in any other country, since specific cultural, social, and political contexts may reduce or on the contrary enhance the perception of democracy as a value. Future research could examine whether democracy actually constitutes a universal reference value that may influence observers' perceptions even in allegedly nondemocratic contexts.

Finally, contributions to the present line of research may also come from articulations with theoretical alternative approaches that may appear at odds with the reported results. For example, the expectancy-violation theory (e.g., Jussim, Coleman, & Lerch, 1987) states that we evaluate people more extremely when their behavior violates the stereotyped expectancies derived from their in-group. Since the expectation of a peaceful behavior is higher for states of democratic countries than for nondemocratic countries (e.g., Rummel, 1997), one could have expected people to evaluate military interventions more unfavorably specially when a democratic country has the support of its population. Further research is therefore needed in order to model under what circumstances legitimacy judgments will follow principles of either expectancy-violation or democratic righteousness.

Relevance to Philosophy and Political Science

In conclusion, we think that the present findings may have implications for the democratic peace theory. This theory,

originally rooted in Kant's thesis about perpetual peace (Kant, 1795/1970), may be summarized by the hypothesis that democratic nation-states do not fight each other. Although this hypothesis has received substantial empirical support in international conflict analyses (e.g., Cederman, 2001; Doyle, 1996; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Reiter & Stam, 2002; Rummel, 1997), two major explanations for the democratic peace effect have been proposed (Maoz & Russett, 1993). The first is *structural* and posits that the complexity of democratic procedures and institutions (e.g., different powers, opposition parties, public opinion, elections) makes political leaders wary of any unreasonable and "costly" use of force. The second explanation is *normative* and emphasizes the influence of intrinsically peaceful ideologies and values that promote diplomatic and negotiated solutions over conflict. This does not mean that democracies are overall less war prone (since they are not, e.g., Kolb, 2003; Reiter & Stam, 2002) but rather suggests that democratic societies perceive each other as legitimate, and that fighting each other is therefore more illegitimate than fighting a nondemocratic country (see Friedman, 2008).

By providing experimental support for a normative-moral explanation of democratic peace theory, the present findings suggest that a lay version of this theory may also be found at the level of national populations and the ways they consider democracy. Beyond the overarching conviction that attacking another country is fundamentally un-democratic, the intrinsic value provided by democracy has the potential to moderate people's perceived legitimacy of military interventions. Indeed, the present results suggest that people subscribe to a lay version of the democratic peace theory, which may paradoxically lead them to condemn aggression among democratic nations, whilst condoning the aggressions of democratic nations against nondemocratic nations.

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Note

- Given that scores were not normally distributed in both Experiment 1 (Skewness ratio = 1.04, $SE = .18$, Kurtosis ratio = .70, $SE = .36$) and Experiment 2 (Skewness ratio = 1.48, $SE = .16$; Kurtosis ratio = 1.82, $SE = .33$), the same analyses were run on a logarithmic transformation of this measure. Results were similar, and the predicted 3-way interaction remained significant for both

experiments, $F(1, 165) = 9.13$, $p = .003$, $\eta^2 = .05$, and $F(1, 171) = 4.40$, $p = .037$, $\eta^2 = .02$, respectively.

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