

The Gendered Peace Premium*

Christopher W. Blair[†] Joshua A. Schwartz[‡]

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Abstract

The adage that “only Nixon could go to China” suggests hawkish leaders face fewer domestic political barriers to pursuing conciliation with foreign adversaries. We explore how this conventional wisdom intersects with prominent gender stereotypes about women’s role in national security. Do gender stereotypes that women are inclined towards peace make it more difficult for women leaders to pursue conciliation? In a series of survey experiments, we find evidence of a gendered peace premium—a penalty women leaders face for pursuing peace. When women leaders propose peace with foreign adversaries, they are perceived as acting “according to type.” Consequently, women’s conciliatory policy proposals are viewed as less likely to be in the national interest than identical policies pursued by male leaders. Partisanship dynamics significantly moderate the gendered peace premium, and policy success can attenuate women leaders’ disadvantage. Overall, the results suggest that gender stereotypes may constrain women leaders from pursuing peace.

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[†]PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania; cwblair@sas.upenn.edu

[‡]Grand Strategy, Security, and Statecraft Fellow, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School; PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania; josha@sas.upenn.edu

Introduction

“Sec. [Hillary] Clinton was very reluctant to move on [peace with the Taliban]... If you want to be the first woman president you cannot leave any hint or doubt that you’re not the toughest person on national security.”

— Barnett Rubin, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan

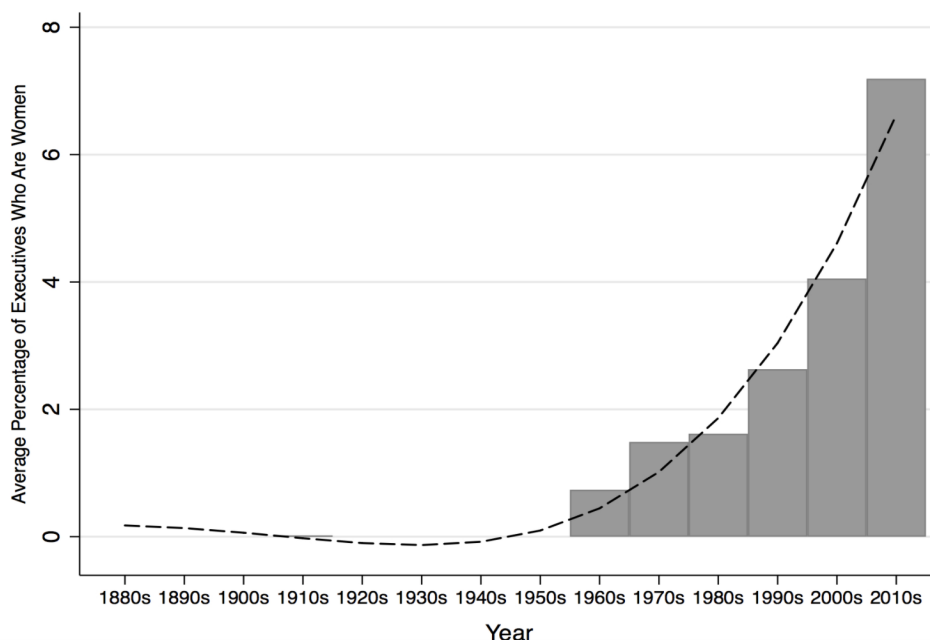
Many scholars argue that social norms and bioevolutionary factors incline women towards peace. A hopeful implication is that a world with more female leaders should be more peaceful (Fukuyama, 1998; Caprioli and Boyer, 2001; Pinker, 2011; Shair-Rosenfeld and Wood, 2017). This view is also shared by prominent policymakers, like President Barack Obama (Chappell, 2019). Unfortunately, a competing dynamic is also possible. In particular, the above quote about Hillary Clinton (Whitlock, 2019) suggests that gender stereotypes may also give female executives incentives to eschew—not pursue—peace. If women leaders must appear tough to combat gender-stereotypical expectations that they are weak on national security, these stereotypes may spur female executives to engage in displays of aggression and resolve (Enloe, 1990; Schramm and Stark, 2020).¹

Extending this logic, we evaluate the consequences of gender stereotypes for women leaders’ conciliatory efforts. Past research famously shows that foreign policy doves face greater domestic political barriers than hawks—like Richard Nixon—to pursuing peace with foreign enemies (Nincic, 1988; Cowen and Sutter, 1998; Cukierman and Tommasi, 1998; Kreps, Saunders and Schultz, 2018; Mattes and Weeks, 2019). Hence the old adage that “only Nixon could go to China.” The logic of the hawk’s advantage is simple. Conciliatory policies pursued by dovish leaders are perceived as dispositional and rooted in those leaders’ personal, ideological preferences. By contrast, conciliatory policies pursued by hawkish leaders are perceived as situational and rooted in prudent evaluations of the circumstances at hand. By engaging in “out-of-character” actions, leaders signal a policy is truly in the national interest rather than just in accordance with their ideological proclivities (Mattes and Weeks, 2019).

¹While recognizing the spectrum of gender identity, we presume a gender dichotomy in this article for analytical simplicity.

However, there is a gap in the literature about whether an analogous logic applies to leader gender. Metaphorically speaking, could a woman president “go to China?” Gender-stereotypical expectations that women are less belligerent and ill-suited for leadership in security crises may mean women executives face a similar disadvantage as doves. Using a series of survey experiments, we present evidence of such a gendered peace premium. Given the growing prevalence of women in high political office around the world (Figure 1), understanding how gender stereotypes affect foreign policymaking is an increasingly important question for scholars and policy practitioners.

Figure 1: Women’s Leadership is Becoming More Common Over Time



Note: This graph shows the average share of women executives worldwide by decade between 1880 and 2019, along with a fractional polynomial trend. Data on executives come from Archigos (Goemans, Gleditsch and Chiozza, 2009) and REIGN (Bell, Besaw and Frank, 2021).

Building on previous work that examines the effect of a negotiator’s gender on public evaluations of peace proposals (Maoz, 2009; Anisman-Razin et al., 2018), we argue that conciliatory policies initiated by women leaders will be judged more harshly than those proposed by male leaders. Members of the public hold a pervasive stereotype that women are predisposed to cooperation, opposed to using force, and ill-equipped for leadership in the realm of national security (Rosenwasser and Dean, 1989; Kahn, 1992; Alexander and Andersen, 1993; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993; Sanbonmatsu, 2002; Lawless, 2004;

Falk and Kenski, 2006; Holman, Merolla and Zechmeister, 2011). Because women are perceived as naturally inclined against war, we argue the public will view peace proposals they initiate as less prudent than identical proposals by men. By acting according to their gender-stereotypical type, women leaders who pursue conciliatory policies are viewed as less judicious and less likely to be pursuing policies in the national interest. Consequently, women pay a higher domestic political penalty for attempting to make peace. This argument accords with prior research that finds women leaders have political incentives to adopt more belligerent foreign policies and generally act “tough” in foreign affairs to counter gender stereotypes (Astin and Leland, 1991; Caprioli and Boyer, 2001; Post and Sen, 2020; Schramm and Stark, 2020; Schwartz and Blair, 2020).

To isolate the causal effects of a leader’s gender on public evaluations of peace proposals, we conduct a series of pre-registered survey experiments.² Experiments help overcome two related issues that limit the feasibility of inference from observational data. The first issue relates to sample size. Since female leadership and peace agreements are historically rare, there are simply not many cases to examine. The second and more important issue relates to selection (Jalalzai, 2013; Reiter, 2015). Women enter and behave in high political office non-randomly.³ In an experimental setting, we can vary a leader’s gender and crisis action, while holding other relevant factors constant.

We conduct two experiments on representative samples of US citizens. Both studies provide evidence for the existence of a gendered peace premium—that is, a penalty women leaders face for pursuing peace. In Study 1 we experimentally manipulate a leader’s gender and partisanship, in addition to whether they maintain a relatively hardline, status quo policy towards a distrusted adversary, or adopt a more conciliatory policy in an effort to achieve rapprochement. In accordance with our theoretical expectations, we find that women leaders are punished between 11.5-14.5 percentage points more than male leaders for pursuing peace. Per the main logic of the “Nixon goes to China” adage, the gendered peace premium is driven by the belief that conciliatory policies adopted by

²Our designs and hypotheses were pre-registered with OSF.

³For example, many female leaders come from political families or dynasties (Jalalzai, 2013).

women are less in the national interest than identical policies adopted by men (Cowen and Sutter, 1998; Cukierman and Tommasi, 1998; Moen and Riis, 2010).

Study 2 is a harder test of our argument because it directly manipulates a leader’s foreign policy disposition (i.e., hawk or dove), in addition to their gender, partisanship, and crisis action. Given that the hypothesized gendered peace premium operates because women are perceived as more inclined towards peace than men, directly telling respondents a leader’s foreign policy orientation and thus inclination towards peace—as in the hawk-dove treatment—makes gender a less informative heuristic.⁴ Even in this hard case, we find that women leaders face a 9-14 percentage point penalty, though this effect is specific to out-partisans. That is, Democratic (Republican) respondents punish Republican (Democratic) female presidents for pursuing peace. In Study 2 we also replicate Mattes and Weeks’ (2019) prominent experimental finding that hawks hold an advantage relative to doves when it comes to pursuing peace. We demonstrate that this effect holds even after accounting for a leader’s gender.⁵ Replicating this well-known result builds confidence in our design.

Overall, this project makes several important contributions. First, we extend the literature on “going against type” and the hawk’s advantage in pursuing peace by applying its logic to an important empirical trend: the growing number of women in executive office around the world. Extant research has examined whether hawks (Clare, 2014; Mattes and Weeks, 2019) or Republicans (Trager and Vavreck, 2011; Brutger, 2021) have an advantage in pursuing reconciliation with enemies, but has not analyzed the impact of other leader characteristics, such as gender. We wed this literature on crisis bargaining with related research on how gender shapes negotiation (Boyer et al., 2009; Anisman-Razin et al., 2018; Naurin, Naurin and Alexander, 2019). Doing so deepens our understanding of how gender stereotypes impact crisis diplomacy.

⁴Although public opinion is central to foreign policy decision-making in democracies (Tomz, Weeks and Yarhi-Milo, 2020), the mass public is often poorly informed about foreign policy issues in general. This means publics frequently lack a clear sense of leaders’ ex ante foreign policy reputations (Guisinger and Saunders, 2017; Kertzer, Brooks and Brooks, 2021). Furthermore, in the real world, leaders may adopt both hawkish and dovish policies, blurring the distinction between the hawk and dove categories.

⁵Mattes and Weeks (2019) hold leader gender constant (as male) in their experiment.

Second, this paper contributes to the large and growing literature on sex, gender, and political violence (Barnhart et al., 2020; Cohen and Karim, 2021). Much work in this vein adopts a macro-level approach, examining cross-national variation (e.g., Caprioli and Boyer, 2001; Post and Sen, 2020; Schramm and Stark, 2020). This research highlights important, generalizable correlations between leader gender and foreign policy outcomes. However, extant macro-level research faces challenges in making causal inferences since neither sex nor gender can be randomly assigned cross-nationally (Reiter, 2015). The strength of our micro-level empirical approach is thus enhanced internal validity since we can randomize leader gender in the context of our experiments. As discussed by Cohen and Karim (2021), this strategy is an important way forward for scholarship on sex and gender in politics. This paper therefore contributes to the emerging experimental literature on gender in political science (e.g., Bauer, 2017; Teele, Kalla and Rosenbluth, 2018; Clayton, O'Brien and Piscopo, 2019; Schwartz and Blair, 2020). Our findings echo work in American and comparative politics (e.g., Barnes and O'Brien, 2018), which also highlights the political barriers women leaders face as a result of gender stereotypes.

Third, this study has important implications for debates about whether increasing gender equality in executive officeholding will lead to less belligerent foreign policies and more peace, or the reverse. Supporters of the “women-as-peacemakers” view argue that bioevolutionary factors (Pinker, 2011) and socialization processes (Goldstein, 2001) incline women toward peace. Alternatively, supporters of the “iron ladies” view contend that more belligerent female leaders are selected into office (Enloe, 1990), and that once in office, female executives face incentives to combat gender stereotypes by adopting hawkish policies (Tickner, 1992; Bashevkin, 2018). Since women face greater domestic political barriers to adopting conciliatory policies, women executives may have political incentives to avoid pursuing peace. This finding accords with the “iron ladies” view and Hillary Clinton’s alleged reluctance to pursue peace with the Taliban. While this dynamic does not make it impossible for women to seek and achieve peace, it does make it more difficult and politically costly (Kreps, Saunders and Schultz, 2018) than the “women-as-peacemakers” perspective assumes. Compared to male leaders, women leaders may have

to pay a premium in terms of domestic political support in order to make peace.

Theory

Numerous historical examples illustrate the paradoxical fact that substantial policy shifts are often taken by leaders and parties whose traditional issue positions would oppose the policy in question. For instance, it took the Hungarian Socialist Party to initiate neoliberal market reforms in the immediate post-Cold War period (Cho, 2014). More famously, US rapprochement with China during the Cold War was initiated by President Nixon, who held a well-known reputation for hawkishness and bellicosity (Cowen and Sutter, 1998; Cukierman and Tommasi, 1998). This peculiar pattern led researchers to hypothesize about the domestic political advantages leaders and political parties can gain by “going against type.” Our theoretical point of departure is to also consider how gender stereotypes, like perceptions of leaders’ foreign policy dispositions, impact the mass public’s evaluation of policy proposals.

The Dispositional Peace Premium

Intuitively, leaders that want peace the most should be the most likely to achieve it. However, counter to this intuition, much existing research finds that leaders who want peace the most—or are perceived as wanting it the most—face the greatest domestic political barriers to achieving it (Nincic, 1988; Cowen and Sutter, 1998; Cukierman and Tommasi, 1998; Schultz, 2005; Kreps, Saunders and Schultz, 2018; Saunders, 2018; Mattes and Weeks, 2019). For example, compared to foreign policy hawks, foreign policy doves face a relative disadvantage in pursuing reconciliation with foreign enemies because they are perceived as more inclined towards peace. We call this dynamic the “dispositional peace premium” because it relates to a leader’s foreign policy disposition (Brutger and Kertzer, 2018).

Foreign policy dispositions are the core set of values and beliefs people hold about the world. Scholarship identifies a variety of these orientations, including international-

ism, isolationism, and militant assertiveness (Herrmann, Tetlock and Visser, 1999). We focus on militant assertiveness, which distinguishes hawks from doves. Hawks are concerned about deterrence and prioritize aggressive foreign policies to dissuade adversaries from taking expansionist actions. By contrast, doves view conflict as rooted in misperceptions, and eschew interventionism in favor of cooperation (Brutger and Kertzer, 2018). These divergent preferences explain why hawks are better able to pursue reconciliation with adversaries.

Policy choices are an informative signal about external circumstances. This is particularly so in the realm of foreign policy, where incumbents hold vast information, while publics are relatively uninformed (Cukierman and Tommasi, 1998; Moen and Riis, 2010). To implement proposed foreign policies, political elites have to garner public support (Tomz, Weeks and Yarhi-Milo, 2020). This requires providing private information to the public about the desirability of the proposed policy (Cowen and Sutter, 1998). When evaluating the wisdom of a policy proposal, citizens take stock of leaders' personal, ideological proclivities and the external circumstances guiding leaders' actions (Sigelman and Sigelman, 1986; Nincic, 1988). If leaders propose policies at odds with their ideological predispositions, publics receive stronger signals that external circumstances, rather than personal preferences, are motivating the proposed policies (Schultz, 2005).

A principal mechanism explaining this dynamic is perceptions about whether a policy is in the national interest (Mattes and Weeks, 2019). The idea that "only Nixon could go to China" rests on the fact that Nixon was a hawk and thus not ideologically predisposed to reconciliation. If a leader as hawkish as Nixon was willing to buck his natural instinct and attempt rapprochement with China, then the policy must truly be in the national interest. Alternatively, the same deal proposed by a dove could be motivated either by the leader's idiosyncratic ideological tendencies, or because the policy is genuinely wise. Consequently, conciliatory efforts by hawks should have greater perceived policy credibility and be viewed with less skepticism than similar efforts by doves. This is not to say that doves cannot make peace, but it is more costly for them to do so. For instance, Kreps, Saunders and Schultz (2018) show that doves may need to pay a "ratifi-

cation premium” in order to ratify arms control agreements. The opposite is also true: an aggressive policy stance advocated by a dove will be seen as more clearly in the national interest. For example, Colin Powell’s hawkish speech on Iraq to the United Nations in 2003 was credible precisely because he was a relative dove, at least when it came to Iraq policy (Saunders, 2018). This conventional wisdom yields the following pre-registered hypothesis:

H_1 (Dispositional Peace Premium): Dovish leaders will face a greater penalty than hawkish leaders for pursuing a conciliatory policy towards a distrusted adversary.

This hypothesis can be formally expressed as:

$$\begin{aligned} & (\text{Disapproval}_{\text{Conciliatory}|\text{Dove}} - \text{Disapproval}_{\text{Status Quo}|\text{Dove}}) \\ & > \\ & (\text{Disapproval}_{\text{Conciliatory}|\text{Hawk}} - \text{Disapproval}_{\text{Status Quo}|\text{Hawk}}) \end{aligned}$$

The Gendered Peace Premium

Much polling indicates that women are less likely to support the use of force internationally than men. From this perspective, enfranchisement of women *voters* may lead to more peaceful outcomes and help explain phenomena like the democratic peace (Eichenberg, 2019; Barnhart et al., 2020). This contrast between men and women, whether due to socialization processes (Enloe, 1990; Goldstein, 2001), bioevolutionary factors (Fukuyama, 1998; Pinker, 2011), or both, is one reason why many scholars and policy-makers also believe a world with more women *leaders* would be more pacific. Since women are more likely to want peace, a greater number of women executives should translate into more peaceful outcomes.

Nevertheless, “going against type” logic and evidence of a dispositional peace premium discussed above suggests that this may not be the case. We therefore posit a “gendered peace premium,” whereby women leaders face a relative disadvantage in pursuing reconciliation with foreign adversaries compared to male leaders. Specifically, we argue that because of gender-stereotypical expectations that women are nonviolent and

prefer cooperation to the use of force (Goldstein, 2001; Sjoberg and Tickner, 2011; Eichenberg, 2019), women leaders are perceived of as more inclined towards conciliation and hence face greater domestic political barriers to peacemaking.

Stereotypes are shared beliefs held about groups on the basis of certain (often ascriptive) characteristics. These biases describe how group members are perceived, and prescribe how they are expected to behave. When people make judgments and form beliefs, they rely on stereotypes as a heuristic (McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears, 2002). Social psychological research shows gender stereotypes are especially relevant in guiding expectations of leader performance (Heilman, 2001).

A pervasive gender stereotype holds that women are ill-suited for national security leadership. In particular, a wealth of evidence shows men are viewed as tougher and better able to handle military crises than women (Rosenwasser and Dean, 1989; Alexander and Andersen, 1993; Kahn, 1992; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993; Sanbonmatsu, 2002; Lawless, 2004; Holman, Merolla and Zechmeister, 2011). Across more than 80 countries, polling reveals a preference for male leadership in times of threat (Kim and Kang, 2021). At the same time, women are perceived as more supportive of cooperation and more opposed to using force (Goldstein, 2001). These perceptions are rooted in gender-stereotypical beliefs that men are innately aggressive and protective, whereas women are defenseless and require protection (Sjoberg and Tickner, 2011).

Gaps between their perceived characteristics and the qualities demanded of leaders in crises impose significant constraints on women leaders. For one, men's failures are often attributed to situational factors outside of their control, while women's failures are more likely to be attributed to dispositional factors, such as their "temperament" (Swim and Sanna, 1996). This means that women leaders are typically held to higher standards, and must outperform men to be evaluated equally highly (Heilman, 2001; Bauer, 2017).

Gender-stereotypical expectations of weakness give women leaders incentives to "act tough" in the realm of foreign policy (Tickner, 1992). For example, Schwartz and Blair (2020) find that the public punishes female leaders less than male leaders for belligerence (i.e., threatening force against an aggressive state), and punishes them more for

inconsistency (i.e., making a threat against an aggressive state and then failing to follow through). Likewise, [Koch and Fulton \(2011\)](#) find that female executives are more likely to engage in conflict and increase defense spending than male executives, and [Schramm and Stark \(2020\)](#) find that female leaders in democracies are more likely to initiate disputes. Qualitative evidence shows women diplomats often propose the most belligerent policies ([McGlen and Sarkees, 1993](#); [Bashevkin, 2018](#)). Even in the medieval period, married queens were more likely than kings to be aggressors in interstate conflicts ([Dube and Harish, 2020](#)).

Crucially, because gender stereotypes are pervasive, they may also operate as second-order beliefs ([Mildenberger and Tingley, 2019](#)). This means that individuals may behave in accordance with gender stereotypes even if they do not subscribe to them personally. For instance, an unbiased citizen might hold women leaders to higher standards simply because they believe foreign politicians view women as ill-suited for national security. In this case, fears that women executives' missteps could cause biased foreign leaders to view them as irresolute could induce unbiased citizens to nevertheless punish women disproportionately for adopting "soft" foreign policies.

Recent work provides preliminary evidence for this dynamic in the context of Israel. In an experimental study of 80 university students, [Maoz \(2009\)](#) finds that the gender of negotiators impacts the perceived value of a peace plan. Policies proposed by men are viewed as more beneficial to the national security of Israel than identical policies proposed by women. In another small student sample, [Anisman-Razin et al. \(2018\)](#) show that the Israeli public prefers foreign policy proposals initiated by men, and particularly by men with military experience.⁶ Women's proposals are less supported, and this gap remains even when women hold relevant military experience. Our analyses generalize from these initial studies to explore how gender stereotypes impact leaders' abilities to make peace.

In sum, there exists a pervasive gender-stereotypical belief that women harbor a natural predisposition favoring nonviolence. This belief is widely held among members

⁶Note that [Maoz \(2009\)](#) and [Anisman-Razin et al. \(2018\)](#) analyze the impact of a *negotiator's* gender, while we analyze the impact of an *executive's* gender.

of the American public, and can wield influence on individuals' evaluations of foreign policy behavior, even when people do not themselves subscribe to gender-stereotypical beliefs. To the extent women are perceived as holding a deep-seated or innate preference against the use of force, women leaders should face barriers to conciliation for precisely the same reason as doves. According to this logic, if a woman leader acts according to her (gender-stereotypical) type and proposes a conciliatory policy, then the public may assume she is doing so because she is naturally inclined toward peace, not because the policy is optimal. We call this dynamic the "gendered peace premium." This logic suggests the following pre-registered hypothesis:

H_2 (Gendered Peace Premium): Women leaders will face a greater penalty than male leaders for pursuing a conciliatory policy toward a distrusted adversary.

This hypothesis can be formally expressed as:

$$\begin{aligned} & (\text{Disapproval}_{\text{Conciliatory}|\text{Woman}} - \text{Disapproval}_{\text{Status Quo}|\text{Woman}}) \\ & > \\ & (\text{Disapproval}_{\text{Conciliatory}|\text{Male}} - \text{Disapproval}_{\text{Status Quo}|\text{Male}}) \end{aligned}$$

The Partisan Peace Premium

Building on the logic of the dispositional peace premium, some scholars also posit that Republicans are better able to pursue peace than Democrats (Trager and Vavreck, 2011; Brutger, 2021). Since 1945, Republicans have developed a reputation for favoring more belligerent and assertive foreign policies, while Democrats are perceived as the party of cooperation, internationalism, and dovishness (Saunders, 2018). Although these partisan types are relatively weaker for foreign policy than domestic policy issues, there remains an important mass perception that Republicans favor hawkish policies like increased defense spending, while Democrats favor dovish policies like arms control (Kertzer, Brooks and Brooks, 2021). To the extent Republicans are viewed as less inclined towards peace than Democrats, Republicans should hold an advantage in pursuing peace for precisely the same reason hawks are advantaged. Republicans' efforts at conciliation

should be interpreted as a stronger signal that the policy is in the national interest than Democrats' peacemaking efforts. This logic implies the following exploratory hypothesis:⁷

H_3 (Partisan Peace Premium): Democratic leaders will face a greater penalty than Republican leaders for pursuing a conciliatory policy towards a distrusted adversary.

This hypothesis can be formally expressed as:

$$\begin{aligned} & (\text{Disapproval}_{\text{Conciliatory}|\text{Democrat}} - \text{Disapproval}_{\text{Status Quo}|\text{Democrat}}) \\ & > \\ & (\text{Disapproval}_{\text{Conciliatory}|\text{Republican}} - \text{Disapproval}_{\text{Status Quo}|\text{Republican}}) \end{aligned}$$

Study 1 Design

In order to test our hypotheses, we designed a 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial experiment. To maximize comparability, the design and wording of the experiment closely follows that of [Mattes and Weeks' \(2019\)](#) seminal experiment on hawks, doves, and peace. The factors we vary are the US president's gender (male or female); partisan affiliation (Republican or Democrat); and policy choice (status quo or conciliatory). We block on respondent partisan identification and gender to ensure approximately equal numbers of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, as well as men and women, in each experimental cell.

Every respondent is presented with the following introduction, which is identical to the introduction [Mattes and Weeks \(2019\)](#) utilize:

We are going to describe a situation the US could face in the future, in 2027. Some parts of the description may seem important to you; other parts may seem unimportant.

We set our scenario in the near future so that subjects will be less likely to make assumptions about the identity of the president. 2027 is after President Biden's first term, and

⁷We did not pre-register a hypothesis on the partisan peace premium because our primary theoretical focus is on gender, not partisanship.

would have been after President Trump’s hypothetical second term had he won the 2020 election.

After the introduction, we present respondents with information about the US president. While [Mattes and Weeks \(2019\)](#) hold leader gender constant (as male), our primary intervention is to experimentally manipulate the gender of the US president:⁸

The year is 2027. The US President is [Eric/Erica, Steven/Stephanie] Richards. President Richards took office in 2025 after serving in the US Congress for several years. [He/She] is a lifelong member of the [Republican/Democratic] party.

Following [Schwartz and Blair \(2020\)](#), we experimentally prime gender by manipulating the name and gender pronoun of the US president. The name combinations we utilize are similar, but clearly prime gender ([MacNell, Driscoll and Hunt, 2015](#)). They should not, however, prime any notable politicians since no former US presidents or vice presidents share any of the names we employ. We randomize name assignment within the president’s gender condition to mitigate any effects of name choice.

Although our experimental scenario takes place in the future, one potential concern with our design is that the US has never had a female president. However, we are sanguine that respondents will approach scenarios describing female presidents seriously. In the last four US presidential elections, female candidates have made serious primary bids, and in three of the last four elections, a woman has served as a major party presidential or vice presidential nominee.⁹ We believe concerns that respondents did not take our prompt seriously are mitigated by the realistic possibility of a female president. We also

⁸We make an additional change, which is to say the president took office after serving in the *Congress* for *several* years rather than in the *Senate* for *six* years. Given the additional background information we provide on the US president compared to [Mattes and Weeks \(2019\)](#), we were concerned that providing a specific number of years the president served in the Senate would cause respondents to make assumptions about the identity of the hypothetical leader. In particular, a number of prominent female Senators ran for the Democratic nomination for president in 2020: Elizabeth Warren, Amy Klobuchar, Kamala Harris, and Kirsten Gillibrand.

⁹In the 2008 election, Sarah Palin was the Republican vice presidential nominee and Hillary Clinton was a Democratic primary candidate. In the 2012 election, Michele Bachmann was a Republican primary candidate. In the 2016 election, Hillary Clinton was the Democratic presidential nominee and Carly Fiorina was a Republican primary candidate. In the 2020 election, Kamala Harris was the Democratic vice presidential nominee and a historic number of women ran for the Democratic nomination.

set the experiment in the near future to minimize the extent to which respondents think of any particular current woman leader in US politics.¹⁰

Apart from gender, we also vary whether the president is a Democrat or Republican. Manipulating partisanship allows us to explore whether a partisan peace premium exists, whereby Republicans hold an advantage in pursuing conciliation (Trager and Vavreck, 2011; Brutger, 2021). Accounting for a leader’s partisan identification is also important methodologically. The strength of experiments is internal validity, but they are not entirely immune from confounding. One important challenge is information leakage, where manipulating one factor (e.g., gender) leads respondents to update their beliefs about other relevant, but not experimentally manipulated or controlled, dimensions (Dafae, Zhang and Caughey, 2018). For example, since women are often perceived as more liberal than men, respondents might automatically assume that female leaders are more likely to be Democrats (Koch, 2000; Lawless, 2004). If this is the case, then it could be partisan identification that drives higher domestic barriers to peace for female leaders rather than leader gender.¹¹

After reading background about the US president, subjects are then told about conflict between the US and China in the Arctic, as well as each country’s relative military capabilities:

A major security concern for the US in 2027 is its very tense relationship with China. China remains a non-democracy. In 2027, the Chinese military is equally strong as the US military. The US and China disagree over many important foreign policy issues.

One very tense issue is access to the Arctic. The Arctic contains up to 40% of the world’s oil and gas resources and provides vital shipping routes between continents. In 2027, the US and China both have a major military presence in the Arctic. Each country has thousands of troops in the area and holds frequent military exercises in the region.

¹⁰Nevertheless, even if our treatment primes a real female politician, it is unlikely that this would significantly bias our results. Kromer and Parry (2019) show that priming exemplary or high-profile female politicians has no effect on gender stereotypes.

¹¹Lack of information equivalence is an important limitation of existing experimental studies of how gender shapes peace negotiations. For example, the studies by Maoz (2009) and Anisman-Razin et al. (2018) do not control for party identification. As a result, respondents may believe that the women referenced in their study are more likely to belong to the Israeli Labor party, while the men are more likely to belong to the Likud party. These studies also utilize small, unrepresentative samples.

For over a decade, the US public has rated China one of America’s “greatest enemies,”¹² and the US government considers China a strategic competitor and possibly a revisionist power (Cunningham and Fravel, 2019). A crisis with China in 2027 is therefore quite plausible. Following Mattes and Weeks (2019), conflict in the Arctic was chosen over other alternatives like a maritime clash in the South China Sea or Taiwan because it should not prime unrelated concerns about ally abandonment. Next, respondents are informed that:

In [his/her] 2027 State of the Union speech, President Richards declares that getting China to cooperate is important for achieving US foreign policy goals.

We then experimentally vary whether the president adopts a conciliatory policy or maintains the status quo. It is necessary to include the status quo condition in order to determine whether public disapproval for a leader is conditional on the policy chosen. Without including this factor, it would be impossible to distinguish between two possibilities: (1) women leaders are punished more than male leaders for pursuing conciliatory policies compared to more hardline policies, as we hypothesize; or (2) the public prefers male foreign policy leadership during crises (Kim and Kang, 2021), and so support for male leaders’ policies is higher irrespective of policy choice.¹³ The conciliatory and status quo policy treatments are the following:

Conciliatory: The president announces that [he/she] is sharply reducing the US military presence in the Arctic. [He/She] is withdrawing a third of the US forces currently in the Arctic and is calling off planned military exercises in the region.

Status Quo: The president announces that [he/she] is maintaining the current US military presence in the Arctic. [He/She] will continue to keep US forces in the Arctic and will carry through with planned military exercises in the region.

Our outcome measure is a 7-point Likert scale that measures how much respondents disapprove of how President Richards is doing his or her job. Following Mattes

¹²See Gallup [polling](#).

¹³This is another important limitation of the studies by Maoz (2009) and Anisman-Razin et al. (2018), which do not compare conciliatory policies by Israeli leaders to the status quo.

and Weeks (2019), we then ask questions designed to test causal mechanisms. A central logic of the going against type phenomena regards credibility. To test the policy credibility mechanism, we ask respondents to what extent they agree with the statement that “President Richards chose the best strategy for dealing with China.” Stronger agreement indicates greater policy credibility. Per our pre-analysis plan, we also ask respondents about their perceptions of the president’s competence, moderation, trustworthiness, and toughness (Nincic, 1988; Schultz, 2005).

As one last test, we control for the outcome of the conciliation attempt.¹⁴ Specifically, after recording respondents’ assessments of President Richards’s performance, we inform survey subjects that the conciliation attempt was successful:

Outcome (Success): Soon after President Richards’s announcement, the Chinese leader pulls Chinese military forces out of the Arctic and says that he will cooperate with the US in sharing natural resources in that region. He also cancels all military exercises.

This is an important test, as one possibility is that female leaders are punished more than male leaders for *proposing* conciliatory policies, but this disparity evaporates if the conciliatory policy is successful (Clare, 2014). After reading about the crisis outcome, respondents are again asked about their views on President Richards.

Why Not Manipulate Foreign Policy Orientation in Study 1?

Before moving on, it is important to note that unlike Mattes and Weeks (2019), we do not directly manipulate a leader’s foreign policy orientation (hawk or dove) in Study 1. Although we explore the addition of this factor in Study 2, we exclude it in Study 1 for both theoretical and methodological reasons. Theoretically, we expect gender stereotypes to operate as heuristics guiding audience assessments in low-information environments (McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears, 2002). Foreign policy crises represent one such scenario where mass stereotypes can confer information. The public is relatively uninformed about foreign policy decisionmaking, and so falls back on partisan (Trager and Vavreck, 2011;

¹⁴Mattes and Weeks (2019) go a step beyond this and experimentally manipulate whether the conciliatory attempt leads to success or failure. We keep this factor constant to maximize experimental power.

Kertzer, Brooks and Brooks, 2021), gender-based (Enloe, 1990; Schwartz and Blair, 2020), and dispositional cues (Herrmann, Tetlock and Visser, 1999; Brutger and Kertzer, 2018). The specific logic of the gendered peace premium suggests that members of the public rely on a leader’s gender to make judgments about their ideological proclivities with respect to belligerence and peace. Women are perceived as more dovish than men, and consequently face a similar penalty as doves for initiating conciliation.

Study 1 hence represents the most straightforward case to test this theoretical argument because it does not manipulate a leader’s gender and foreign policy type. By varying gender, but not disposition, we can study a scenario where the heuristic value of gender stereotypes is greater. The potential pitfall of including a strong foreign policy orientation treatment, in addition to a gender prime, is that a direct dispositional treatment may swamp any independent effect of gender (or partisanship). The value of gender stereotypes as a decisionmaking heuristic declines in the presence of comparable information from a dispositional prime. Study 1 therefore tests the impact of leader gender and partisanship in a situation where foreign policy disposition is ambiguous or less salient in the minds of respondents. This is an important scope condition of our results in Study 1. We pre-registered an expectation that the gendered peace premium is stronger in Study 1 than Study 2—where we also manipulate foreign policy orientation—for this reason.

There are also practical, methodological reasons for not manipulating leader disposition in Study 1. Namely, a strong hawk-dove treatment may be unrealistic, reducing the potential generalizability of a scenario in which it is varied.¹⁵ For one, a strong dispositional prime implies that foreign policy reputation is objective and that leaders clearly fall into either the hawk or dove category. In the real world, foreign policy reputation is inherently subjective and ambiguous. After all, real-world leaders often adopt both hawkish *and* dovish positions on comparable foreign policy issues, if they adopt substantive positions at all. This fact blurs the distinction between the hawk and dove categories, making it more difficult for leaders to establish consistent dispositional rep-

¹⁵The inclusion of foreign policy orientation in Mattes and Weeks’ (2019) experiment (and in Study 2) is undoubtedly a useful test of how foreign policy ideal types affect evaluations of peace proposals. These design choices mean we can test H_1 in Study 2, but not Study 1.

utations (Renshon, Dafoe and Huth, 2018). Second, and relatedly, a strong hawk-dove treatment assumes the public pays close attention to a leader’s past foreign policy positions and actions. Although public opinion is central to foreign policy decisionmaking in democracies (Tomz, Weeks and Yarhi-Milo, 2020), the mass public is often poorly informed about foreign policy issues in general. This means members of the general public frequently lack a clear sense of leaders’ past foreign policy positions and any reputations they have established among elites (Guisinger and Saunders, 2017; Kertzer, Brooks and Brooks, 2021). By contrast, there is broad awareness of and typically little to no uncertainty about a leader’s sex and stated gender identity.

The issue of dispositional ambiguity is emblemized by debates over Hillary Clinton’s foreign policy orientation. Although some journalists and former policymakers argued she was a clear hawk, others argued she was actually quite dovish and preferred diplomatic over military solutions.¹⁶ Even more “objective” measures of foreign policy orientation often suggest that differences between politicians are relatively small. Bendix and Jeong (2019) calculate foreign policy scores for each member of Congress from 1993 to 2016, with higher scores indicating greater hawkishness. Hillary Clinton’s average score during her time in the Senate was -1.502, Barack Obama’s was -1.535, and John Kerry’s was -1.419. Therefore, despite arguments from some that Clinton was significantly more hawkish than Obama or Kerry, this measure shows little difference. Similarly, a YouGov poll conducted in 2014 found about a third of Americans believed Clinton was a hawk, a third believed she was a dove, and a third were not sure.¹⁷ The fact that a leader as prominent as Clinton failed to establish a clear dispositional reputation in the public’s eye suggests that gender, partisanship, and other cues may be more salient heuristics for the public in complex real-world scenarios (Trager and Vavreck, 2011; Guisinger and Saunders, 2017; Kertzer, Brooks and Brooks, 2021).

Our decision not to vary foreign policy type in Study 1 is not without drawbacks. One methodological concern with this design choice is that it could lead to a lack of infor-

¹⁶For instance, see articles in CNN, NPR, the Wall Street Journal, and Vox.

¹⁷A Pew poll in 2008 found similar diversity in opinion.

mation equivalence across experimental conditions (Dafoe, Zhang and Caughey, 2018). Specifically, if respondents assume that women leaders are strong doves and male leaders are strong hawks—irrespective of their policy choice—then it could be foreign policy orientation rather than leader gender driving the results. To assess this possibility, we asked respondents a placebo question at the end of Study 1 to gauge their perceptions about the US president’s foreign policy orientation.¹⁸ By controlling for this factor in a regression, we can rule out the possibility of confounding due to this factor.

More generally, Brutger et al. (2021) outline the tradeoffs involved in experimental design. As they note, “if the purpose is to demonstrate that an effect exists, a sparser experimental design better enables researchers to identify the mechanism... .” This is precisely the purpose we envision for Study 1, which demonstrates that there is a gendered peace premium. Study 2, which provides additional details about the president’s foreign policy orientation, highlights the relative importance of gender stereotypes versus dispositional cues. Greater detail in this latter study is likely to yield more conservative treatment effects.

Study 1 Results

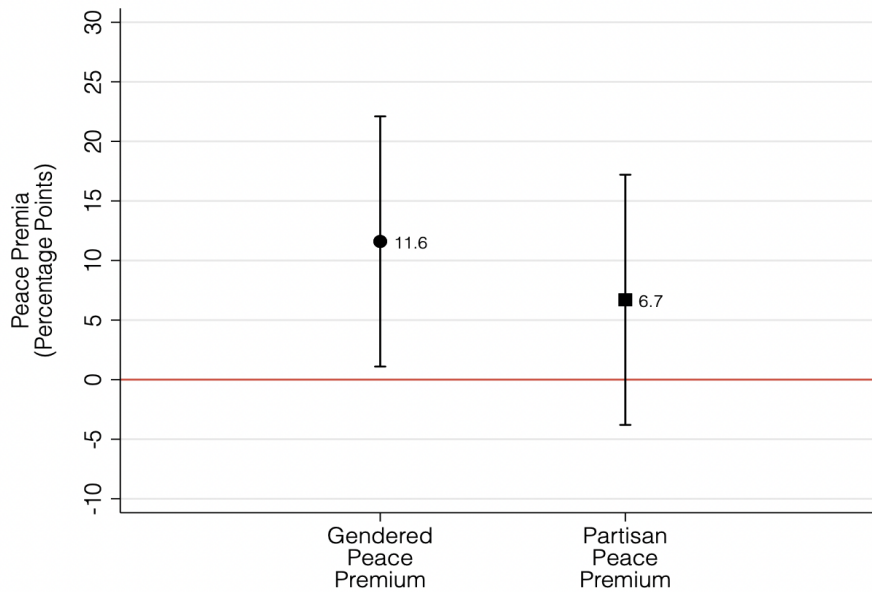
Study 1 was carried out on a representative sample of 892 US citizens recruited through Lucid in August 2021.¹⁹ Lucid offers nationally representative samples based on age, gender, race/ethnicity, and region. Recent work shows experiments fielded on Lucid are high-quality and do well replicating previous findings (Coppock and McClellan, 2019), even during the COVID-19 pandemic (Peyton, Huber and Coppock, 2021).

We turn directly to our main results in Figure 2, which depicts the magnitudes of the gendered and partisan peace premia. Following previous literature, we collapse

¹⁸In both Studies 1 and 2, we also ask about perceptions of the president’s race to ensure that it is not racial stereotypes driving our results. This would be a potential concern if respondents believed female presidents are more likely to be non-white than male presidents.

¹⁹Although Study 1 was carried out chronologically after Study 2, we present them in this order for clarity. See our pre-analysis plan for more details on the research process. Both studies were pre-registered in advance of fielding.

Figure 2: Gendered and Partisan Peace Premia in Study 1



Note: Bars are 95% confidence intervals. The gendered peace premium is the gap in disapproval for women versus men pursuing conciliation versus the status quo. The partisan peace premium is the gap in disapproval for Democrats versus Republicans pursuing conciliation versus the status quo. These quantities of interest are formalized above.

the seven-point measure into a binary measure of disapproval to illustrate substantive effects. Per H_2 , we find significant evidence for the gendered peace premium: women leaders are punished 11.6 percentage points more for pursuing peace than male leaders. In the appendix, we show that this result is robust to employing the full 7-point scale of disapproval (Table A.1), excluding respondents that failed a factual manipulation check measuring attention to our treatments (Table A.2), and controlling for covariates, including the president’s perceived foreign policy orientation as measured in the placebo discussed above (Table A.3).²⁰ Evidence of a gendered peace premium suggests women leaders may face disincentives to pursuing peace, as Barnett Rubin’s quote about Hillary Clinton suggests.

While we find Democratic leaders are generally punished more for pursuing peace than Republican leaders—in accordance with the logic of the partisan peace premium—the effect is not statistically distinguishable. This result implies that gender stereotypes exert a greater impact on evaluations of peace proposals than partisan stereotypes. The

²⁰The effect size increases to 14.5 percentage points when we exclude inattentive respondents.

limited impact of partisan reputations is also consistent with [Kertzer, Brooks and Brooks’ \(2021\)](#) finding that the public holds weaker expectations about political parties’ orientations on foreign policy issues.

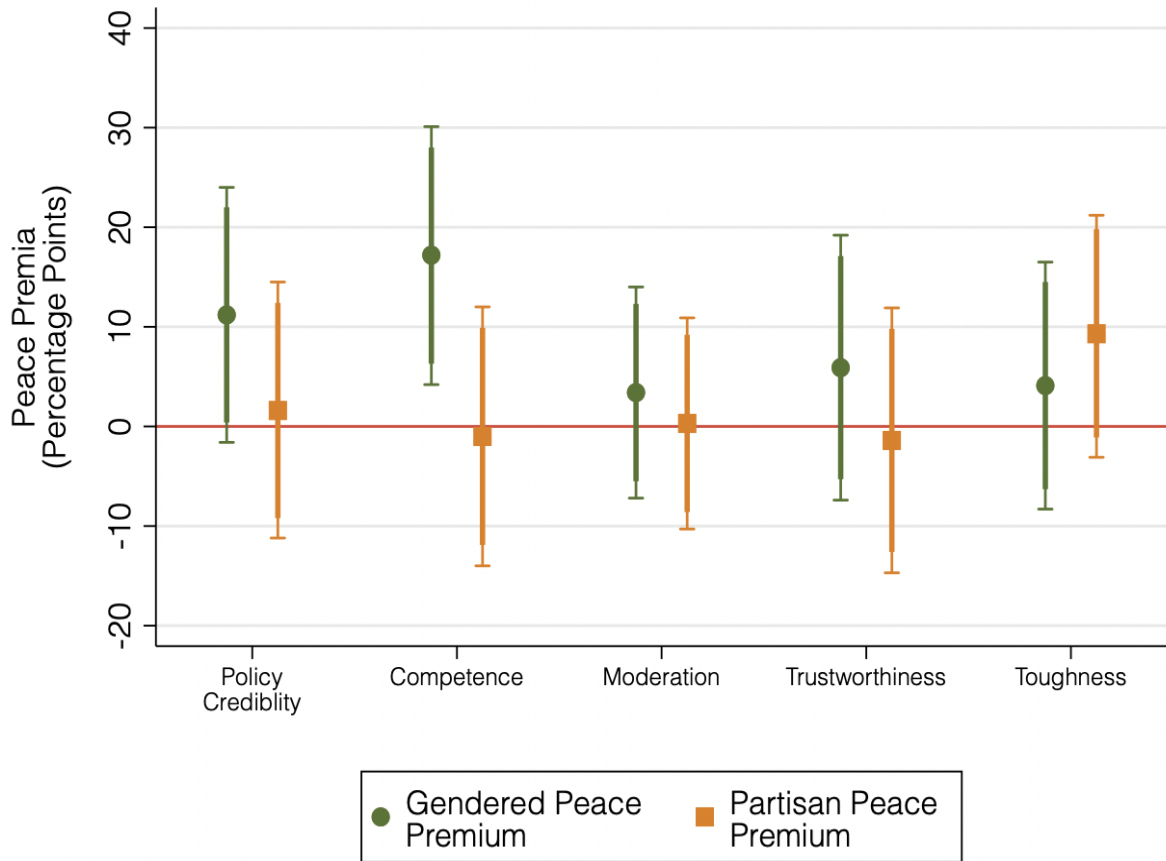
Mechanisms

Why are women leaders punished more for conciliation? Supplementary outcomes we measured in Study 1 allow us to explore the mechanisms underpinning the overall gendered peace premium. As explained above, policy credibility is a central mechanism elaborated in extant work on the hawk’s advantage ([Cukierman and Tommasi, 1998](#); [Cowen and Sutter, 1998](#); [Moen and Riis, 2010](#)). “Out-of-character” actions, like hawk-initiated conciliation, are interpreted as a signal that the proposed policy is prudent and in the country’s national interest. Another possibility is that “out-of-character” proposals signal a leader’s moderation. Politicians have incentives to prove to their constituents that they do not have extreme foreign policy preferences ([Nincic, 1988](#); [Schultz, 2005](#)). Consequently, hawks can demonstrate moderation and elicit public approval by making peace with enemies. Conversely, doves that pursue peace may be perceived as extremists (i.e., extreme pacifists) and lose support. Empirically, [Mattes and Weeks \(2019\)](#) demonstrate that these mechanisms can operate in parallel.

In [Figure 3](#) we plot the gendered and partisan peace premia in relation to supplementary outcomes in Study 1. Formal casual mediation analyses in the appendix ([Tables A.4 and A.5](#)) yield similar results ([Imai, Keele and Tingley, 2010](#)). Perceived policy credibility and competence are the key mechanisms underpinning the gendered peace premium.²¹ The gap in perceptions that the president chose the best strategy for dealing with China (policy credibility) is 11 percentage points greater for conciliatory women leaders than comparable male leaders. Similarly, women leaders are viewed as 17 percentage points less competent than male leaders for pursuing peace. We find no evidence that perceived moderation explains the gendered peace premium.

²¹Note that the impact of policy credibility is significant at the 0.05 level when utilizing the full 7-point measure of policy credibility, and at the 0.1 level using the binary measure of approval.

Figure 3: Mechanisms Underpinning the Gendered Peace Premium in Study 1



Note: Bars reflect 90% and 95% confidence intervals. The gendered peace premium is the gap in outcomes for women versus men pursuing conciliation versus the status quo. The partisan peace premium is the gap in outcomes for Democrats versus Republicans pursuing conciliation versus the status quo.

Does Policy Success Attenuate the Gendered Peace Premium?

Although we find evidence for an aggregate gendered peace premium in Study 1, this analysis focuses on the public's *initial* view of a policy before the adversary has a chance to respond, and therefore before it is clear whether the policy will achieve its objective or not. If citizens care most about policy success, then they might actually reward women for successful rapprochement and penalize men for failed efforts to make peace (Clare, 2014; Bauer, 2017). To evaluate this possibility, we study whether the gendered peace premium attenuates after respondents are informed of policy success.

Table 1 shows that the gendered peace premium attenuates significantly if the conciliatory attempt is successful. In line with much extant work (e.g., Heilman, 2001; Teele,

Table 1: The Gendered Peace Premium After a Successful Policy Outcome

	All Respondents (% Points)	Passed Manip. Check (% Points)	All Respondents (7-Point Scale)
Gendered Peace Premium	1.7	0.9	0.23

Note: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Kalla and Rosenbluth, 2018), this finding suggests women leaders must out-perform men to surmount political barriers rooted in gender stereotypes. Optimistically, this means that women leaders' disadvantage in proposing peace is not unavoidable. Nevertheless, women leaders will face greater pressure to achieve success if they do initiate conciliation. Future work should also examine whether the gendered peace premium becomes *larger* if conciliation attempts fail to achieve their objectives.

Heterogeneous Effects

To further probe the robustness of the gendered peace premium, we conduct a range of additional analyses for heterogeneous effects. In our pre-analysis plan we declared expectations that the gendered peace premium would be greater among Republicans, foreign policy hawks, hostile sexists, and second-order sexists. Results in Table 2 and Table A.6 in the appendix probe these hypotheses. We find no evidence in Study 1 that the gendered peace premium differs based on a respondent's level of militant assertiveness (Herrmann, Tetlock and Visser, 1999), sexism (Glick and Fiske, 1996), or second-order beliefs about sexism (Mildenberger and Tingley, 2019). While hawks are more likely to disapprove of conciliation in general, they impose similar penalties on conciliatory men and women leaders.

Perhaps the most important possibility is that gender and partisan dynamics intersect in evaluations of leader behavior. Republicans tend to care more about wielding force to uphold reputation, and tend to espouse more traditional gender roles (Bauer, 2017; Brutger and Kertzer, 2018; Teele, Kalla and Rosenbluth, 2018). Hence, we anticipated

that Republican respondents would impose the largest gendered peace premium. In line with this logic, in Table 2 we find robust evidence that the gendered peace premium is stronger among Republican respondents. This suggests that in a situation where a leader’s foreign policy orientation is unclear or mixed—as in Study 1—female presidents will face the strongest barriers to pursuing peace among Republican citizens.

Table 2: Republican vs. Non-Republican Respondents

	Gendered Peace Premium (% Points)
Republican Respondents	23.6***
Non-Republican Respondents	6.2
Difference	17.4**

Note: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

In Table A.7 of the appendix we investigate partisan heterogeneity in the gendered peace premium further. Specifically, we examine whether the main effect we observe is driven by an especially severe penalty imposed on out-partisan women presidents. Although the gendered peace premium is slightly larger in magnitude for out-partisans, the difference compared to in-partisan women leaders is not statistically distinguishable. This result suggests that the gendered peace premium is a relatively general cost women leaders face, and is not merely a penalty Republican voters impose on prospective Democratic women presidents.

Study 2 Design

To assess the robustness of Study 1, we also conducted a second experiment. Study 2 is identical to Study 1 *except* for a single key difference: in Study 2 we also experimentally manipulate the president’s foreign policy orientation, in addition to their gender, partisan affiliation, and policy choice. This design enables us to address two significant

questions. First, does the dispositional peace premium hold even when accounting for leader gender? Second, how does the gendered peace premium vary when leaders have a strong and unambiguous dispositional reputation (Study 2) compared to when their foreign policy disposition is ambiguous and less salient in the eyes of the public (Study 1)? As discussed previously, we believe this is a harder test for the impact of leader gender. When respondents are directly told whether leaders are inclined towards peace or not—as in the hawk-dove treatment—gender stereotypes are likely to be a less informative heuristic for evaluating leaders’ actions. Nevertheless, given the pervasive influence of gender stereotypes, we pre-registered an expectation that even in this hard case we would find evidence for a gendered peace premium.

To manipulate the president’s foreign policy orientation, we add the following text after informing respondents about the president’s partisan affiliation: “President Richards has a reputation for...”

Hawk: ...favoring military solutions over diplomatic ones. [He/She] has repeatedly emphasized that military force is essential to protecting American national security. President Richards says that [he/she] will not shy away from using force where necessary. [He/She] has long said that “the only way to achieve peace is to be ready for war.”

Dove: ...favoring diplomatic solutions over military ones. [He/She] has repeatedly emphasized that military force is not the answer to protecting American national security. President Richards says that [he/she] believes in diplomacy and negotiations and will use military force only as a last resort. [He/She] has long said that “the only way to achieve peace is to act peacefully.”

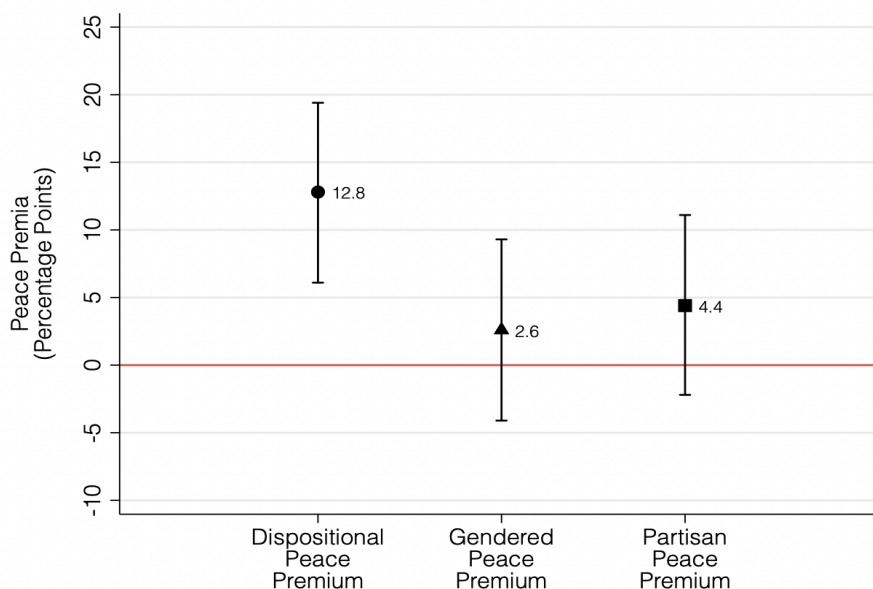
Overall, this yields a fully-crossed 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial design for Study 2.

Study 2 Results

Study 2 was carried out in two waves on a representative sample of 2,141 American adults, again in partnership with Lucid. The first wave was fielded in October 2020 and the second was fielded in July 2021. Figure 4 depicts the magnitudes of the dispositional,

gendered, and partisan peace premia. Per H_1 , we find significant evidence for the dispositional peace premium: dovish US presidents face a 12.8 percentage point disadvantage in pursuing peace relative to hawkish US presidents. Replicating this core result from [Mattes and Weeks \(2019\)](#) builds confidence in our design and speaks to the robustness of the hawk’s advantage, even when accounting for leader gender. On the other hand, we do not find distinguishable evidence of aggregate gendered or partisan peace premia. Although both women and Democrats face greater costs for conciliation than men or Republicans respectively, these costs are not statistically significant overall.

Figure 4: Peace Premia in Study 2



Note: Bars are 95% confidence intervals. The dispositional peace premium is the gap in disapproval for doves versus hawks pursuing conciliation versus the status quo. The gendered peace premium is the gap in disapproval for women versus men pursuing conciliation versus the status quo. The partisan peace premium is the gap in disapproval for Democrats versus Republicans pursuing conciliation versus the status quo.

As we discuss in our pre-analysis plan, null aggregate effects for the gendered and partisan peace premia in this study accord with [Mattes and Weeks’ \(2019\)](#) null finding for the partisan premium in their original experiment. This null suggests that the strong hawk-dove treatment in the experiment swamps any independent, main effect of gender. The stronger aggregate evidence for the gendered peace premium in Study 1 versus Study 2 suggests that women leaders face a larger overall disadvantage in situations where their hawk-dove orientation is ambiguous or less salient in the minds of the public. The finding

that strong dispositional reputations can outweigh gendered penalties lends nuance to the extant literature on women leaders’ incentives to “act tough” (Enloe, 1990; Schramm and Stark, 2020; Schwartz and Blair, 2020). In particular, our findings in Study 2 highlight a key benefit of this strategy. If women leaders are able to generate sufficiently clear hawkish reputations *ex ante*, they may be better able to overcome the negative consequences of gender stereotypes.

Additional tests in the appendix confirm the robustness of our core results from Study 2. We observe a significant dispositional peace premium when we use the full seven-point measure of disapproval (Table A.8), drop respondents who failed a factual attention check (Table A.9), and estimate the premium in a regression context (Table A.10). The gendered and partisan peace premia remain indistinguishable in these additional tests, although our estimate of the partisan peace premium becomes marginally more precise in Table A.9.

Do Gender and Partisan Dynamics Intersect?

We do not uncover an aggregate gendered peace premium in Study 2. However, it is possible that gender and partisan dynamics intersect to structure respondents’ beliefs in a more nuanced way. For instance, Mattes and Weeks (2019, 61) find that while both Republican and Democratic presidents face a dispositional premium, this cost is larger for Democrats. Similarly, it may be that in the current US context, which is characterized by substantial partisan polarization and hostility, women leaders are only punished by out-partisans when they have strong foreign policy reputations.²² To assess this possibility, we conducted a series of additional, exploratory tests.

We find strong evidence of a gendered peace premium among out-partisan presidents.²³ As illustrated in Table 3 and Table A.11 of the appendix, out-partisan respondents punish female presidents significantly more than male presidents for pursuing

²²Partisan polarization and hostility were particularly high in the run-up to the 2020 election, when we fielded wave 1 of Study 1.

²³A similar relationship does not hold for the dispositional peace premium. That is, doves are not punished more for pursuing peace when they are out-partisans.

conciliation. The magnitude of this effect ranges from 9-14 percentage points. This disadvantage is 13-21 percentage points greater than the disadvantage faced by in-partisan female presidents. In the appendix, we show that these effects also hold in a regression setting while controlling for demographic covariates, which is important given that leaders' partisan identity is randomly assigned, but respondents' partisan identity is not. Although less of a political constraint than an aggregate gendered peace premium, a premium among out-partisans still means women leaders will face sizeable, gender-related barriers to pursuing peace, and will have an especially difficult time winning over Americans that (at least currently) identify with the other political party.

Table 3: The Gendered Peace Premium is Higher for Out-Partisan Presidents

	Gendered Peace Premium		
	All Respondents (% Points)	Passed Manip. Check (% Points)	All Respondents (7-Point Scale)
In-Partisan	-4.1	-7.1	-0.25
Out-Partisan	8.9*	14.2**	0.29*
Difference	-13.0**	-21.3**	-0.54**

Note: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Results are calculated from 2,000 bootstraps.

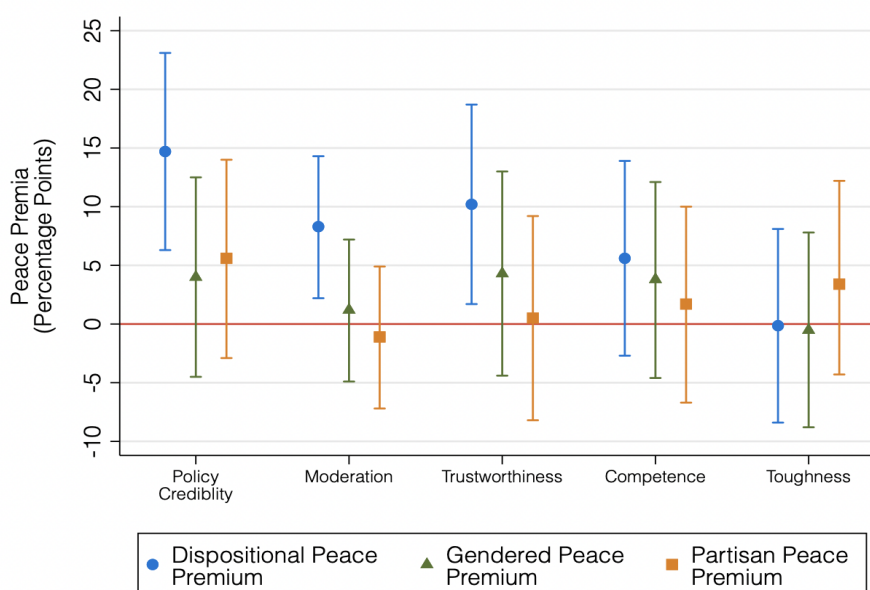
Interestingly and somewhat surprisingly, the gendered peace premium among out-partisans is actually driven by Democratic rather than Republican respondents. Democratic respondents penalize Republican women presidents 20 percentage points more for pursuing peace compared to Republican male presidents (p -value = 0.02). While Republican respondents also punish out-partisan women leaders for conciliation, the magnitude of this effect is substantially smaller (Gendered Peace Premium = 4.7 percentage points; p -value = 0.32). This finding implies that in a circumstance where a leader's foreign policy orientation is clear and salient (Study 2), female Republican presidents—such as Nikki Haley or Kristi Noem—may face especially significant barriers to pursuing peace

among Democratic-leaning Americans. By contrast, in a situation where a leader’s foreign policy orientation is ambiguous and less salient (Study 1), female presidents may face the strongest barriers to pursuing peace among Republican-leaning Americans. Exploring the reasons underlying this heterogeneity is a ripe avenue for future work.

Mechanisms

In Figure 5 we assess potential causal mechanisms. The overall dispositional peace premium is explained by perceptions of policy credibility, moderation, and trustworthiness. In line with the overall null effects for the gendered and partisan peace premia in Study 2, we find no distinguishable effects for any mechanism on these premia. Formal causal mediation analyses bolster these results (Tables A.12-A.14).

Figure 5: Mechanisms Underpinning Overall Peace Premia in Study 2



Note: Bars are 95% confidence intervals.

Turning to the heterogeneous effects identified in Table 3, we also explore the mechanisms underlying the gendered peace premium among out-partisans. As in Study 1, supplemental analyses (Table A.15) show that policy credibility is the primary mechanism explaining the (out-partisan) gendered peace premium. Perceived policy credibility is more than 11 percentage points less (p -value = 0.04) for out-partisan women presidents

compared to out-partisan male presidents. In line with our theoretical logic, this finding suggests that conciliatory policies implemented by women leaders are less likely to be perceived as prudent and in the national interest.

Does Policy Success Attenuate Peace Premia?

Table 4 shows that the overall dispositional peace premium attenuates significantly, but remains distinguishable, even after respondents are informed that conciliatory efforts were reciprocated by the Chinese military. Even if a conciliatory policy succeeds, doves are punished 3.9 percentage points more than hawks for initiating rapprochement (p-value = 0.086). This finding underscores the strength of the dispositional peace premium, and replicates another key result from [Mattes and Weeks' \(2019\)](#) work. We, like they, find doves continue to face a penalty for conciliation, even if the policy results in a favorable outcome.

Table 4: Peace Premia After a Successful Policy Outcome

	All Respondents (% Points)	Passed Manip. Check (% Points)	All Respondents (7-Point Scale)
Dispositional Peace Premium	3.9*	7.2***	0.34***
Gendered Peace Premium	-1.1	-4.2	0.004
Partisan Peace Premium	0.23	-0.9	0.15

Note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Similar to Study 1, we also find encouraging evidence that the gendered peace premium for out-partisan presidents disappears if conciliation efforts succeed. Although out-partisans punish women leaders for pursuing conciliation, this gendered peace premium is statistically indistinguishable from zero after respondents are informed of policy success.

Conclusion

As more women rise to high political office around the world, it is crucial to understand how gender dynamics affect international peace and security. To this end, this study provides the first causal test of whether women executives face greater domestic political barriers to pursuing peace than male leaders. In other words, does the “only Nixon could go to China” phenomenon, where dovish leaders face greater domestic political obstacles to pursuing peace than hawkish leaders, also hold for leader gender? To answer this question, we conduct two experimental studies, which yield three principal results. First, both studies provide evidence for the existence of a gendered peace premium. Compared to male leaders, women leaders may have to pay a “premium” in terms of domestic political support in order to make peace. Second, our studies suggest that the gendered peace premium is strongest when foreign policy orientation is ambiguous or less salient among members of the public. Third, we replicate [Mattes and Weeks’ \(2019\)](#) seminal experimental finding that hawks have an advantage relative to doves when it comes to pursuing peace. Moreover, we show that this effect holds even after accounting for a leader’s gender, and that strong dispositional reputations may outweigh gender and partisan stereotypes in citizens’ evaluations of conciliation.

These findings have critical implications for what greater gender equality in executive officeholding will mean for international politics. Although there is much hope that a world with more female leaders will be more peaceful, the continued relevance of gender stereotypes unfortunately means that women executives have political incentives to adopt relatively hawkish foreign policies ([Enloe, 1990](#); [Astin and Leland, 1991](#); [Koch and Fulton, 2011](#); [Bashevkin, 2018](#); [Schramm and Stark, 2020](#); [Schwartz and Blair, 2020](#)). Hillary Clinton’s alleged reluctance to pursue peace with the Taliban, as well as prominent examples of “iron ladies” around the world, speak to this dynamic. Consequently, even if women are more likely to *want* peace than male leaders—as the gender gap in support for the use of force implies ([Eichenberg, 2019](#); [Barnhart et al., 2020](#))—that may not translate into more peaceful outcomes. Nevertheless, the existence of a gendered peace premium does not make it impossible for female leaders to seek and achieve peace;

just more difficult and costly (Kreps, Saunders and Schultz, 2018). Furthermore, the fact that women pay greater costs for conciliation means that their attempts at rapprochement may be perceived as more credible by adversaries. If women leaders are willing to bear heightened costs to seek peace, then that suggests a greater commitment to peace, thereby reassuring adversaries and promoting settlement. This implication offers a potential new mechanism—enhanced commitment—for why women-led and gender-inclusive peace agreements are more durable (Tripp, 2015; Berry, 2018).

This study also suggests several avenues for future research. First, while we focused on the views of US citizens given America’s outsized role in foreign affairs, future work should analyze whether the gendered and dispositional peace premiums also hold in other countries. Second, future research should test whether elites also believe that female leaders and doves face a disadvantage in pursuing peace.²⁴ Third, our findings raise questions about whether other stereotypes—such as those surrounding race and sexual orientation—impact the evaluations of peace efforts. Finally, international negotiations are a two-level game where success depends on support at the domestic and international levels (Putnam, 1988). Though female political leaders may find it more difficult to win domestic support for conciliatory policies, they may find it *easier* to gain international support for rapprochement (Clare, 2014; Maoz, 2009; Mattes and Weeks, 2021). How the gender of *foreign* leaders impacts domestic evaluations of conciliatory policies is thus a natural avenue for future research. Women leaders may face greater domestic barriers to pursuing peace, but fewer international ones.

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²⁴See Naurin, Naurin and Alexander (2019) for an example of an elite study on gender.

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