

**Democracies, Autocracies, Liberal  
Norms and the use of Force.**  
*An Experimental Approach to the Democratic Peace Thesis*

*MPhil thesis*

Femke Avtalyon-Bakker (S0754935)  
femke.avtalyon@gmail.com

MPhil Political Science Research: Institutional Analysis  
Supervisors: Dr. Niels van Willigen  
Dr. Michael Meffert

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## **Abstract**

Why do democracies not go to war with other democracies? The idea that the internalized liberal-democratic norms of peaceful conflict resolution within a democratic society are responsible for the democratic peace, also referred to as the *normative* explanation, remains subject to a particular lack of empirical academic attention. The few studies into the normative explanation have not tested what should be tested: whether liberal democratic norms indeed affect the behavior of democratic citizens *in comparison to* the behavior of non-democratic citizens. This research performs an improved empirical test and studies (1) whether liberal norms exist in a democracy in comparison to a non-democracy and (2) whether these norms have an effect on the individuals of these societies concerning the wish to use force in International Relations. An experimental design showed that there was no significant difference between a group of Dutch students and a group of Chinese students when it comes to the use of force in IR. A marginal effect of the regime type for the democratic citizens was found. Remarkably, in a comparison with the autocratic experimental group, these democratic citizens turned out not to be specifically more *peaceful* towards other *democracies*, but rather more *war-prone* towards *autocracies*. The overall conclusion of this study is that for both experimental groups the perception of threat was the main indicator for a decision to attack. This research argues that, in contrast with earlier research, there is no support to the claim that the normative explanation can explain the empirically found peace between democracies.

## **Key words**

Democratic Peace thesis ~ Liberal-democratic norms ~ Experimental approach ~ Autocracies ~ Democracies ~ China ~ The Netherlands.



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## Introduction

“Democracies do not attack each other”. President Clinton was not simply expressing an ideological conviction, nor did he discuss a merely academic theory in his State of the Union address of 1994. On the contrary, the president of the United States referred to what has often been called ‘the closest thing Political Science has to an empirical law’ (Levy, 1988), namely the empirical finding that democracies do not go to war with other democracies (Babst, 1964). This finding, also called the ‘democratic peace’, is often interpreted by American and other Western policy makers as a prescription to promote democracy around the globe, willy-nilly, in an attempt to ‘cause’ peace (Walt, 1998, p. 39; Ish-Shalom, 2006; Burgos, 2008, pp. 222-223; Geis, Brock, & Müller, 2007). That interpretation, however, seems quite exaggerated when we consider that the democratic peace is nothing more than a correlation between dyads of democracies on the one hand and the absence of war on the other hand. Although this correlation has generally been acknowledged among most scholars, when it comes to a possible explanation for this democratic peace there is no consensus whatsoever. Put differently, the democratic peace is essentially an empirical finding without a clear and widely accepted explanation, and should therefore rather be referred to as the democratic peace *thesis*.

This does not imply that there is a shortage of possible explanations; an intense academic debate has been going on since the 1980s about *why* democracies do not fight each other. Critics, mainly rooted within the realist school of International Relations (IR), assert that power politics determine inter-state relations. States deal with each other within the anarchic international system and must be able to defy external threats in order to survive. Domestic politics are therefore irrelevant when it comes to issues of national security (see e.g. Morgenthau, 1948/1973; Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001; Gowa, 1999). As such, these critics argue that the relationship that is found between democracy and peace is a spurious one, and is due to a collinearity of democracy with other explanatory factors at the system-level that determine the power relations between states, such as common interests (e.g. Farber & Gowa, 1997), military alliances (Waltz, 2000; Farber & Gowa, 1995), or submittance to the US as a world power during and after the Cold War (Rosato, 2003). Most of these realist scholars claim that a war between democracies is not unlikely, if interests and/or national security are seriously at stake (Layne, 1994; Rosato, 2003; Morgenthau, 1948/1973; Waltz, 2000).

The discovery that democracies did not go to war with each other encouraged proponents of the Kantian idea that a world of democracies would determine a world peace to challenge this hitherto dominant realist perspective of IR by arguing that it is specifically the nature of the democracies that causes the democratic peace (see e.g. Doyle, 1983a; Doyle, 1983b; Doyle, 1986; Rummel, 1983; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999). After the fall of the Soviet Union, the victorious belief in the superiority of democracy of the Western world (see Fukuyama, 1989) created a strong increase of research into the Democratic Peace thesis in particular by proponents of this Kantian position (e.g. Maoz & Russett, 1993; Owen, 1994; Mousseau, 1997; Ray, 1998; Russett & O’Neal, 2001) that did not miss its effect on practical politics (Geis, Brock & Müller, 2007). These proponents, however, cannot conclusively agree either what specific feature of democracy causes this dyadic peace. Some of them argue it is all about the democratic institutions (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 1999), others claim that economic trading ties create peaceful relations (Doyle, 1997, pp. 230-248; Russett & O’Neal, 2001) and some of these proponents contend that it is the nature of the liberal norms of a democracy, which are created and nurtured by democracy itself, that causes the democratic peace (Doyle, 1986; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Dixon 1993).

Although the Democratic Peace thesis is considered to be one of the ‘most productive [...] research programs in IR’ (Dafoe, 2011, p. 247), the academic debate that underlies the research program is mainly theory-driven, and most empirical evidence was generated by research designs that were too limited to veritably provide support for a specific explanation. Empirical research into an explanation for the democratic peace covers an enormous area of different levels of analysis, different levels of measurement and not in the least different ontological and epistemological positions (see e.g. Ungerer, 2012), but provides only limited empirical proof for any of the possible explanations.

The idea that the internalized liberal democratic norms of peaceful conflict resolution within a democratic society are responsible for the democratic peace that is found, also referred to as the *normative* explanation, remains subject to a particular lack of empirical academic attention. As I will elaborate below, the underlying assumption of this explanation is that liberal democracies socialize their citizens<sup>1</sup> into being morally better people, in particular in comparison with citizens of non (liberal) democracies, who are assumed not to have been socialized into more tolerant, more peaceful and more trusting individuals. It is

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<sup>1</sup> The word citizens is used in this paper in its legal definition, which states that ‘someone is a citizens of a particular country when he is legally accepted as belonging to that country’ (Collins Cobuild, 2006)



striking that none of the few empirical studies into the normative explanation (Maoz & Russett, 1993; Dixon, 1993; Mousseau, 1997; Dixon & Senese, 2002; Rousseau, 2005; Mintz&Geva, 1993; Geva & Hanson, 1999; Tomz & Weeks, forthcoming) have tested what should be tested: whether liberal democratic norms indeed affect the behavior of democratic citizens *in comparison to* the behavior of non-democratic citizens. Considering the width of policies that promote liberal democratic norms throughout the non-democratic world (Walt, 1998, p. 39; Ish-Shalom, 2006; Burgos, 2008, pp. 222-223), the selection bias of neglecting the evidence from non-democracies seems to a cause for concern.

This research is motivated by a discomfort about this selection bias of these previous studies into the normative explanation and seeks to expand on these studies by arguing that the normative explanation of the democratic peace thesis has not yet been sufficiently tested for all its hypotheses, until non-democracies are also considered within the research design. This research therefore offers an experimental approach, in order to perform an improved empirical test for the normative explanation of the democratic peace thesis. Furthermore, it will consider the results of this research within the larger debate of the democratic peace thesis. Therefore, the overarching focus of this research is (1) To study whether liberal norms exist in a democracy in comparison to a non-democracy and (2) To study whether these norms have an effect on the individuals of these societies concerning the wish to use force in international relations.

### **The assumed causal mechanism of liberal democratic norms and peace**

Any explanation for the democratic peace thesis must seek to explain the two empirical phenomena that make this thesis so intriguing but complex at the same time: (1) Democracies hardly ever after go to war with each other, even when conflicts have reached the brink of war (Babst, 1964; Rummel, 1983; Layne, 1994) and (2) Democracies do go to war with non-democracies (Small & Singer, 1976; Maoz & Abdolali, 1989; Bremer, 1992; Mansfield & Snyder, 2005). Empirically, democracies seem to be as war-prone as non-democracies, except when their opponent is also a democracy. The pressing question that needs to be answered to further our understanding of the democratic peace thesis is whether this peculiar peaceful behavior that only seems to occur between dyads of democracies can indeed be attributed to a specific quality of democracy (as argued by the proponents however divided they are about the specifics) or that the international system structures of the power politics game are responsible and have simply a collinearity with democracy (as argued by the critics).

The normative explanation seeks to answer this question in favor of democracy by arguing that established liberal democratic societies are specifically different from all other societies because their citizens are socialized with liberal norms such as tolerance, respect for and trust in others. This theoretical idea is rooted in the work of Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant, who argued that liberalism would inevitably lead to a perpetual peace between republics<sup>2</sup> that endorsed, nurtured and enforced liberal norms. Although it does no justice to his systemic line of thought to briefly summarize his rationale: Kant argued that if individuals would be enabled by their self-established republic to be truly free and autonomous, they would not only be able to pursue their own interests in a rational manner, but also learn to listen to the ‘the moral law inside’: the categorical imperative<sup>3</sup>. That way their rational act would show reciprocity towards all other free and autonomous individuals<sup>4</sup>. Kant assumed that republican individuals would ‘morally learn’ to be better people, or in other words, the act of reciprocity would become a natural reaction (Kant, 1795/2004). It is this Kantian idea of moral learning<sup>5</sup> that underlies the normative explanation of the democratic peace thesis (e.g. Rawls, 1999; Doyle, 1983a; Doyle, 1983b; Doyle, 1986; Doyle, 1997; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Mousseau, 1997; Russett & O’Neal, 2001).

The normative explanation of the democratic peace thesis assumes that the individuals of liberal democracies are socialized with liberal democratic norms that have taught them to resolve political conflicts peacefully. The logic of appropriateness (March & Olsen, 1989, p.) within a liberal democratic society is to be tolerant and respectful of others and to expect others to reciprocate tolerance and trust. This logic is also assumed applicable if a conflict between two democratic states reaches the brink of war; even when the threat of the conflict is very severe these norms of peaceful conflict resolution are assumed to guide the behavior of these states and the two democracies will not go to war with each other (Maoz & Russett, 1993, p. 625; Rousseau, 2005, pp. 27-28; Dixon & Senese, 2002, p. 549; Weart, 1998). As long as these norms are internalized within the society, this “atmophere of ‘live and let live’

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<sup>2</sup> Kant specifically discussed the republic, which is not the same as our contemporary liberal democracy. Most Kantian thinkers that are discussed in this article, however, equate Kant’s republic with democracy. For the line of thought of the school of the normative explanation, that difference is not of great relevance, since the focus lies on the liberal norms which are assumed present in Kant’s republic as well as in liberal democracies of today.

<sup>3</sup> The categorical imperative is based on the maxim that one should never do something, unless he agrees that his deed will be allowed to be done by every other person too. This moral guideline Kant assumed to be present in every individual, whether they ignored it or not.

<sup>4</sup> Some thinkers refer to this concept of rationality with reciprocity as reasonability (Rawls, 1971/2009, pp. 51-94)

<sup>5</sup> A good example is Kantian John Rawls who wrote: ‘Stability for the right reasons means stability brought by citizens acting correctly according to the appropriate principles of their sense of justice, which they have acquired by growing up under and participating in just institutions’ (Rawls, 1999, p. 13)

that leads to peaceful conflict resolution will be present at the personal, communal and national level” (Maoz & Russett, 1993, p. 625). Or, in other words, not only the public but also the political leaders will follow the logic of the liberal democratic norms and not initiate a war against another democracy, even when the logic of consequences would dictate a preemptive or even a preventive strike (Rousseau, 2005, pp. 27-28).

An important aspect of this normative explanation is that it specifically distinguishes between citizens that live in a liberal democracy and citizens that live in a non-democracy. The latter group is assumed not to be socialized with the norms of the liberal democracy, but rather with the norms of zero-sum political competition. In these non-democratic societies opposition will often either be repressed or killed by the regime. Therefore the logic of appropriateness among citizens within these non-democratic societies is to use any means necessary in order to survive as a state within the anarchic international system. If this non-democratic country is entangled with another country in a conflict that reaches the brink of war, no matter what the regime of this second country is, then its citizens will want their country to use force, regardless of whether or not it is used preventively (Maoz & Russett, 1993, p. 625).

Based on these assumptions made about the non-democratic society, the normative explanation expects that if democratic citizens face a severe conflict with an non-democracy at the brink of war, they will be more likely to want to use force than in the case where the other country is democratic. In the former case the democratic citizens will feel that a preventive strike in self-defense is necessary, since they do not share their peaceful norms with these non-democracies and can therefore expect to be attacked (Maoz & Russett, 1993, p. 625). The logic of appropriateness is now, also for these democratic citizens, to adapt to the ‘violent norms’ of the non-democracy.

The normative explanation makes a specific distinction between a democracy and a non-democracy. It has high expectations for the effect of democracy on its citizens, in particular in comparison with a non-democracy. However, the democracy as described by the normative explanation is not just any democracy. The ‘peace-causing’ democracy is supposed to be a liberal society that enables its citizens to be free and autonomous, or in other words, a so called liberal democracy in which, next to the democratic institutions, the universal human rights and civic liberties are ensured (see e.g. Sartori, 1987, pp. 184; Merkel, 2010, pp. 38-42, Møller & Skaaning, 2010, p. 263). If we accept this specific definition of a democracy, then according to the theoretical framework of the normative explanation, any other regime can be categorized as a non-democracy. Many forms of non-democracy could be hypothesized: most

obvious is the autocracy, led by a dictator, a single-party, a religious leader(s) or a military junta. Also a hybrid regime, which combines democratic and autocratic features and is often quite stable in its prevailing powers (Bogaards, 2009; Morlino, 2009), seems a likely candidate to be conceptualized as a non-democracy. But also the new democracy that still needs time to socialize its citizens with liberal norms can then be considered a non-democracy (Gibson & Duch, 1993; Booth & Bayer Richard, 1996). The normative explanation, however, mentions explicitly the zero-sum political competition that leads to repression and even political deaths within a non-democracy (see e.g. Maoz & Russett, 1993, p.625), which indicates specifically a repressive autocratic country. No possible nuances or different conceptualizations are mentioned, apparently a society is either “enlightened” or not. The use of a container concept for non-democracies is a first indicator of the selection bias that is categorical for the normative explanation; it posits exaggerated expectations for the liberal democracy in comparison with the non-specified and unclear conceptualization of non-democracies. For the purpose of this research, nevertheless, the ‘black and white’ conceptualization of the normative explanation will be followed: a ‘democracy’ is a liberal democracy and a non-democracy is considered an ‘autocracy’. Citizens that are born and raised within a democracy are assumed to have the liberal democratic norms internalized and are therefore for this research referred to as ‘democratic citizens’. Conversely, citizens that are born and raised within an autocracy are assumed to lack internalized liberal norms and are therefore referred to as ‘autocratic citizens’.

### **An assessment of the normative explanation**

The first hypothesis of the normative explanation is that no matter how severe a threat of a conflict between two democracies is, its citizens will not want to go to war with another democracy (Maoz & Russett, 1993, p. 625; Mousseau, 1997, p. 74). Although empirically speaking there is no trackrecord of recent wars between democracies (Rousseau, 2005, p. 19), the question is whether a democratic war is indeed an impossibility? Several realist scholars have argued that a war between democracies is not unlikely. What if common interests of two democracies are seriously at stake (Farber & Gowa, 1995; Farber & Gowa, 1997)? What if Japan becomes a great power challenger of the United States (Layne, 1994, p. 48)? What if the current economic crisis breaks down the European Union? Will Germany and France then resume their old quarrels? What if a conflict about interests between two democracies gets seriously out of hand and the threat of this conflict is immense? Will the logic of

appropriateness lead the citizens of these countries into peaceful negotiations or will they want to defend their country and use force? The normative explanation expects that no matter how high the threat of the conflict is, democratic citizens will not want to go to war with another democracy.

Secondly, it is hypothesized that for non-democratic citizens knowledge about the regime does not matter at all. For these citizens, only the threat is of importance when deciding to go to war or not (Maoz & Russett, 1993, p. 625; Mousseau, 1997, p. 74). The question is whether the often used assumption that autocracies are war-prone towards other countries, no matter the regime, can be corroborated for the microlevel. Empirical evidence shows not only that autocratic countries are not always as war-prone as anticipated within the normative explanation, in particular when the other country is also an autocracy; autocracies show significant difference in conflict initiation (Peceny, Beer & Sanchez-Terry, 2002; Bennett & Stam, 2004; Weeks, 2012). A test of this hypothesis for the microlevel is therefore of great importance, since empirical evidence has also shown that autocratic audiences are of influence on foreign policy decisionmaking of the autocratic elite (Weeks, 2012).

The third hypothesis is that democratic citizens are willing to attack an autocracy, if the threat of the conflict is severe (Maoz & Russett, 1993, p. 625). The idea is that the democratic citizens will have to adapt to the nature of the more violent assumed autocracies, which are assumed to be more violent because they are assumed to lack liberal norms (Maoz & Russett, 1993, p. 625; Rousseau, 1996, pp. 526-527). When we consider these three hypotheses together, they are basically drawn from the same question: if a conflict is severe and of great threat, at the brink of war, does the factor 'regime' matter or not?

Fourthly, it is hypothesized that the democratic citizens have internalized liberal norms of tolerance and reciprocity, whereas the autocratic citizens lack these liberal norms. Fifthly, it is hypothesized that these liberal norms are of influence on the democratic citizens when it comes to their wish to attack a democracy or not. Subsequently, even if the autocratic citizens would have liberal norms, then these should not affect their decisionmaking in any case. The question underlying these hypotheses is whether social norms have been internalized or not and whether these norms are of any influence on the wish of citizens to attack or not (Maoz & Russett, 1993, p. 625; Mousseau, 1997, p.74). If liberal norms are indeed internalized by democratic citizens and if these liberal norms indeed affect the democratic citizens when it comes to their ideas about the use of force, then other possible micro-level explanatory factors would not be of any influence on democratic citizens, whereas these possible factors might still be able to affect the decision of autocratic citizens.

This design has been chosen to control for two possible micro-level explanatory factors that theoretically might influence decisions about the use of force. The first factor is the gender of the participant. Women are often considered to be less inclined to use force than men (Tessler & Warriner, 1997). Some feminist theorists argue that it is due to the maternal instincts of women that they are more inclined to peaceful conflict resolving. Others of the feminist school state that it is the male-dominated culture of politics, international relations and the use of force that has forced women to find other (more peaceful) means to come to conflict resolutions (Tessler, Nachtwey, & Grant, 1999). Contradicting evidence was found for specific populations, where women turned out to be more violent than men (Tessler, Nachtwey, & Grant, 1999), but even when the outcome is reverse, a gender difference is suggested to exist.

Smith has shown that although there is some evidence for differences between men and women when it comes to the use of force, the context of society is of importance: 'Gender differences on violence seem to decrease where a social norm exists and tend to increase in situations where society has not promulgated clear and established standards' (1984, p. 385). Relying on these insights, we can expect that any gender effect must be dissolved by the presence of liberal norms for the democratic citizens, but for the non-democratic citizens, whose norms are not shaped by liberal democracy, the gender effect might still in effect.

The second possible micro-level explanatory factor that is supposed to be dissolved by the liberal norms in a democracy is the position one takes on the hawk-dove dimension. This dimension is often used to indicate whether individuals are more inclined to use force (a hawk) or to cooperate (a dove) to solve conflict situations (Bar-Tal, Raviv, & Freund, 1994; D'Agostino, 1995). Given the expectation that the liberal norms in a democracy would dictate the logic of appropriateness, we should expect that this logic would also rule out individual tendencies of democratic citizens for hawkish behavior, in particular towards democracies. In a non-democratic country, however, the same logic would lead us to expect that hawks would not be restricted by any social norm to wish to decide like a hawk and therefore hawks would be more inclined to use force than doves. Braumoeller (1997) has shown that in the former Soviet countries liberal norms started to develop similar to the norms in the established democracies, but that these were not (yet) of influence on a moderation of hawkish behavior. This seems to be in line with the expectations posed by the normative explanation that liberal norms need some time to develop and internalize, but the moment this process is consolidated they should overrule other possible explanatory factors at the micro-level.

## Testing the arguments

There have been some empirical studies into the normative explanation (Dixon, 1993; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Mousseau 1997; Dixon & Senese, 2002; Rousseau, 2005; Mintz & Geva, 1993; Geva & Hanson, 1999; Tomz & Weeks, forthcoming). Strikingly, none of these studies have considered the full hypothetical implications of the normative explanation. Their research designs have all suffered from the same selection bias: no empirical tests have been conducted for the expectations of the autocracies. Of these studies, the work of Maoz & Russett is generally considered to have performed the most sophisticated test of the normative explanation (Rousseau, 2005, p. 202). Within the Democratic Peace thesis literature, their article has been cited most frequently (well over 500 times<sup>6</sup>) as a robust test of the normative explanation since they wrote it in 1993. Maoz & Russett have tested the hypotheses for the normative explanation with a correlational design in which firstly dyads of democracies are considered per year to see whether they were engaged in a military dispute and secondly whether explanatory factors are significantly related to these outcomes.

Maoz & Russett have used two measures for liberal norms: stability and political deaths. The first measure relies on the number of years a democracy exists Maoz & Russett have assumed that the longer a democratic regime exists, the more likely it is that the liberal norms belonging to the democracy will be internalized. The second measure is based on the number of political deaths within a year for each of the dyads. Thereby Maoz & Russett have assumed that the stronger liberal norms are internalized, the more likely it is that domestic political conflicts will be resolved peacefully. Their research design has controlled for other potentially confounding factors, such as wealth, military power, military alliances, contiguity, economic growth and institutional factors (Maoz & Russett, 1993, p. 630). Their results have indicated that the regime factor of a democratic dyad has a consistent effect on the use of force between states. The measure for liberal norms has shown to be a significant explanation for the absence of force between democracies and was considered robust. Maoz & Russett have concluded their famous article with the Kantian hope for the future that the more states will be democratic, the less it will be necessary for states to adapt to the rules of the Hobbesian anarchic international system and an enduring peace can be realized (1993, p. 637).

The results of Maoz & Russett have contributed substantively to the debate about the democratic peace thesis. However, they were not able to provide sufficient empirical support

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<sup>6</sup> Web of Science, June 2012.

for the normative explanation. Not all the assumptions of the normative explanation as hypothesized by Maoz & Russett have been tested and furthermore, their test was unable to isolate the causal mechanism. In other words, the correlational design of Maoz & Russett did not test what it should have tested: whether democratic norms indeed affect the behavior of individuals in a democracy *in comparison to* the behavior of individuals in non-democracies, in particular when they have information about the nature of the other regime. This selection bias is shown by pointing at three inaccuracies of the research design of Maoz & Russett, but these are categorical for most research into the normative explanation.

Firstly, Maoz & Russett have focused only on one part of its design: the peace between democracies. The analysis leaves out possible peaceful relations between other dyads, such as a dyad of a democracy and a non-democracy or of two non-democracies, which could test the assumptions of the whole model (Rousseau, 2005, p. 202), just like Dixon (1993) and Mousseau (1997) did.

Secondly, the research designs of the correlational studies into the normative explanation suffer from an ecological inference problem (Robinson, 1950), by assuming that the causal mechanism of the aggregated level proves the existence of the same causal mechanism at the individual level (e.g. Maoz & Russett, 1993; Dixon, 1993; Mousseau, 1997). This ecological inference problem has been acknowledged by a few scholars who have used an experimental approach to test the normative explanation for the individual level. Mintz and Geva (1993), for instance, have manipulated the explanatory factor regime type for three experimental groups of democratic citizens and have found evidence that these citizens were indeed less inclined to go to war with democracies than with autocracies. These citizens furthermore perceived a war with a democracy as a policy mistake of their political leaders.

Geva and Hanson (1999) conducted a somewhat similar experiment in which they manipulated the perception of regime type, in relation to the perception of cultural similarity between two countries. They have found that a perception of cultural similarity leads to citizens assigning their adversary a democratic status, similar to their own. On top of that, these democratic citizens were less likely to support an attack if they perceived the other country as a democracy. Rousseau (2005) and Tomz & Weeks (forthcoming) have also tested whether democratic citizens are more inclined to work out a severe conflict more peacefully with a democracy than with an autocracy, by using an experimental approach. Their findings offers a corroboration of the assumed behavior of democratic citizens: these citizens seemed to be less willing to go to war with a democracy than with an autocracy.



However, despite these corroborating results, the claim that democratic norms are indeed responsible for that peaceful behavior is not supported until we have tested all hypotheses, including the norms and behavior of autocratic citizens. The four experimental studies described above have, just like Maoz & Russett, selected only one part of the independent variable: their experiments lack a test of how autocratic citizens act within a similar situation and have therefore failed to test firstly whether these autocratic societies indeed lack liberal norms and secondly whether these autocratic citizens are more war-prone, regardless of the nature of the opposing regimes. Subsequently the third criticism on these studies is that the measure used for liberal norms is flawed: the proxy of regime years and political deaths, which was used by Maoz & Russett (1993, p. 630), is supposed to represent an assumed effect of the assumed presence of assumed liberal norms. Although in social sciences we cannot always escape the use of proxies, the proxy used by Maoz & Russett is in particularly problematic. It assumes already present what is supposed to be tested empirically: the actual presence of liberal norms and their possible influence on decisions about the use of force in International Relations.

### **Method and Data collection**

This research offers such an empirical test. It builds on these previous studies and uses an experimental approach to offer an improved test for the micro-level, by comparing the liberal norms and their consequences for willingness to agree to the use of force between democratic citizens on the one hand and autocratic citizens on the other. An experimental design is perfectly suited for this research to provide causal insights which could not have been derived from the existing and aggregated data (McDermott, 2011, p. 504). It offers methodological control of the independent and dependent variables, and the randomization of different decision-scenarios about war and peace provides a way to control alternative explanations as well. Recently, the experimental approach has been used more frequently in IR studies because it can ‘test theoretically derived models and generate data’ (Mintz, Yang, & McDermott, 2011, p. 493). Experiments are an excellent instrument to generate knowledge about the crucial foundations of the normative explanation of the democratic peace, in particular because these foundations rest on assumptions made about the micro-level for different societies. A systematic test of these foundations can facilitate the building of a stronger and possibly revised theory (McDermott, 2011, pp. 504-505).

### *Experimental design*

The experimental design for this research tests whether the information about regime, the perception of threat, liberal norms and individually-based attitudes affect the decision-making of democratic and autocratic citizens towards the use of force in IR. Therefore a quasi-experiment is used in which participants of two different societies are exposed to a thought-experiment. To ensure that a comparison can be made between democratic citizens and autocratic citizens, the participants have to be born and raised in either a democracy or an autocracy and were therefore non-randomly assigned to one of the two experimental groups.

In the winter of 2012 the experiment was conducted for two experimental groups, a democratic and an autocratic one. The democratic experimental group consisted of 167 freshmen students of Political Science at Leiden University in the Netherlands, of whom 87 are male and 80 are female. These 167 participants were all born and raised in the Netherlands or another established Western democracy<sup>7</sup>. The autocratic group consists of 187 undergraduate students of the Communication University of China (CUC) in Beijing, China. This group consisted of 65 males and 122 females, who were all born and raised in China<sup>8</sup>. The participants of both experimental groups are between the ages of 17 and 26 years old. These participants were asked at the end of their class whether they would like to volunteer to participate in a research. At the time, it was stressed that the survey was conducted completely anonymously, with no ways to connect the answers to individuals. For the students who decided to participate, a paper-and-pencil-experiment was conducted. Each experimental group was exposed to exactly the same scenario<sup>9</sup>, but in their own language: Dutch and Mandarin Chinese, respectively. After the experiment, the students were debriefed about the aim of this research.

In the abstract scenario that was offered to the experimental groups, two fictitious countries are entangled in a territorial clash that, after several diplomatic attempts, gets seriously out of hand and is at the brink of war. The participants are asked to advise their government about the next step towards the other country: to attack in a pre-emptive strike or to make another attempt to negotiate. The scenario<sup>10</sup> varies the regime type for four groups, to which the participants of each experimental group are randomly assigned within their experimental group. Groups I and II receive information about the democratic nature of the

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<sup>7</sup> Of the total sample of the group of 172 participant, 5 were not born and raised in an established liberal democracy, and were therefore excluded from the sample.

<sup>8</sup> Of the total sample of the group of 189 participant, 2 were not born and raised in China, and were therefore excluded from the sample.

<sup>9</sup> Inspired by Geva & Hanson, 1999.

<sup>10</sup> See appendix 1 for the scenario and questionnaire of the post-test.

government of the other country and its civil liberties and rights for the opposing country. Only group II is also given the expectations of the democratic regime (based on the expectations of the normative explanation). Group III and IV receive information about the autocratic nature of the government of the other country, with limited and uncertain civil rights. Only group IV also receives the expectations for the behavior of the autocracy (based on the expectations of the normative explanation).

The use of the extra groups II and IV is to provide an extra manipulation check, to ensure that the manipulation of regime has been effective. For the democratic experimental group no significant difference is found between the outcomes of the participants of group I and II, which means that the regime manipulation of 'democracy' is received as anticipated by the research design. The same goes for the autocratic experimental group, in which no significant difference was found between group III and IV. Thus, the manipulation of the factor 'regime' can be assumed to be perceived as anticipated by the experimental design. For the remainder of this research, a new manipulation variable for regime is created: groups I and II are brought together into the manipulation-factor 'democracy' and groups III and IV are brought together into the manipulation-factor 'autocracy'. This way a 2x2 factorial design could be used for analyses. For the Dutch experimental group 86 participants have been exposed to a scenario where the opposing country is described as a democracy, and 81 have been exposed to the description of an autocracy. In the Chinese group 95 participants were exposed to the democracy-scenario and 94 to the autocracy-scenario.

The two hypothetical countries of the scenario are described in such a way that system level explanatory factors are kept as constant as possible: the military power, the economic development and thriving economic situation, the available natural resources, the population size and the geographical positioning are described similar to each other. Besides that, it is specifically noted that both countries are very similar in many respects. The choice for hypothetical countries in combination with a similar description of system level factors is specifically meant to reduce the chance that a participant will consider the system level factors of his own country as guiding his decision-making. By describing the system level factors similarly for both hypothetical countries, the participants must be able to focus solely on the direct manipulations of the regime of the other country and perceive the direct threat of the conflict, without assuming other explanatory factors to be relevant for the hypothetical conflict at hand.

In order to understand the decision the participants have in connection to the hypothesis, it is of great importance to understand whether the participants have perceived the

conflict described in the scenario as severe, at the brink of war. The perception of the threat of the conflict is measured in a post-test, by asking the participants to assess the likeliness of the other country's attack on a 4-point Likert scale. Participants that indicated that a possible attack of the other country to be '(very) unlikely' are coded as having a low threat perception and the participants that indicated to have expected the other country to attack to be '(very) likely' are coded to have a high threat perception. The Dutch group has now 73 participants that have perceive the threat as non-severe, and 94 with a severe threat perception. From the Chinese group 61 participants have perceived the threat as non-severe, and 126 have perceived it as severe. This backward-deducted test of the threat perception is used further on as an additional manipulation for the perception of threat of the participants. Furthermore, the post-test conducts background checks for gender, country of birth and lifelong citizenship. The latter two are both necessary checks for the assessment whether these individuals are indeed democratic or autocratic, respectively, according to the definitions used in this research.

#### *Liberal norms and hawks & doves*

The post-test concludes with a survey-based questionnaire that measures the personal attitudes of the participants, which are used to assess the level of endorsement of liberal norms and a position on the hawk-dove dimension for every participant. The measure for liberal norms for this research is based on the expected effect of living within a liberal society, in which its citizens are hypothesized to become more tolerant towards other democratic citizens, to feel more interpersonal trust with democratic citizens and experience a higher feeling of stability in their lives, in contrast with the expected effect of living in an autocratic country, which is hypothesized to create a lack of tolerance and interpersonal trust with any other person and a low level of stability as a consequence (Maoz & Russett, 1993, p. 625). These three items together form the measure for liberal norms.

The items used to construct this measure of liberal norms rely on the literature of liberal-democratic values within the former Soviet Union and Latin-America. Schedler & Sarsfield (2007) have shown that support for democratic values cannot be measured by directly asking participants: more often than not this way of measuring has led to non-attitudes, namely 'paying lipservice to democracy' (Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007, p. 638). For this research, in particular the experiment that is conducted within an autocratic country, it is of great importance to measure the endorsement of the practice of norms. Besides, asking respondents afre their personal attitudes seems more likely to be answered truthfully than

questions about the support for institutions and political elites. Schedler & Sarsfield argue that indirect questions at the personal level can measure an endorsement for the practical reality of liberal values, and can therefore offer a better measure for democratic values. This argument is supported by an investigation of the liberal values of Mexican individuals (pp. 654-655). The rationale of Schedler & Sarsfield's measure is in line with the work of Gibson and Duch (1993) who have assessed the support for the liberal-democracy in the former Soviet Union during the democratization process in the 1990s by measuring the 'applied liberal-democratic value' of political tolerance (1993). Following this line of thought, the items used to measure the level of liberal norms for every participant rely on the endorsement of several liberal items<sup>11</sup>.

To operationalize the liberal norms measure<sup>12</sup>, a principal component analysis (PCA) was used to perform an initial exploration into the items that could form components. Secondly, the items that form a component together were tested for reliability with a Mokken Scale analysis<sup>13</sup>. To come to a construct of liberal norms three scales were developed; tolerance, trust and stability. The tolerance scale was formed of five items that delivered, when combined, a good reliability score of .33 on the Mokken Scale. For the measure of trust, three items were used to form a scale. Although the PCA loadings were sufficient, the Mokken Scale reliability score of .22 was somewhat low. Nevertheless, the measure was used, since the items were theoretically relevant and with the available data these three items together showed the highest reliability for this measurement. For the measure of stability, three items with a reliability score of .43 in the Mokken scale analysis were used to build the scale. To create one measure for liberal norms, a PCA showed sufficient support to combine the scales of tolerance, trust and stability into a new variable.

For every participant a score for liberal norms was calculated, with a range from 1 (very low level of liberal norms) to 5 (very high level of liberal norms). For analytical purposes, the variable liberal norms is transformed into a dichotomous variable with a median cutoff point (3.67) to separate between participants who have a low score of liberal norms and those that have a high score of liberal norms.

A similar line of procedure is followed to measure the position on the hawk-dove dimension. The endorsement of the practical reality of a hawkish attitude is measured: a hawk

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<sup>11</sup> To give one example, the participants are asked to indicate on a 5 point Likert scale whether they would allow gay individual to participate politically.

<sup>12</sup> See appendix 2 for an overview of the measurement of liberal norms and the hawk/dove dimension.

<sup>13</sup> Mokken scale analysis is a nonprobabilistic measurement to reduce data to a single dimension. The Mokken scale analysis is particularly well suited to test the reliability of scales of items that are designed to measure attitudes of latent variables (Van Schuur, 2003)

is more inclined to use force when it comes to conflict resolution, a dove is less willing to use force when it comes to conflict resolution (Klugman, 1985; Maoz I., 2003). Earlier research of hawkish positions was often related to the position a participant could take in an actual conflict<sup>14</sup>. For this research that approach is not applicable, so the items have to be measured in a more general way. Several questions have therefore measured the willingness of the participants to use force for conflict management on the personal and state level, but not specifically connected to actual conflicts. The hawk-dove-measure is subsequently operationalized following the same procedure described above. Three items formed a reliable scale together (.34 using Mokken scale analysis).

For every participant a score for the hawk-dove-dimension was calculated with a range of 1 (very dovish) to 5 (very hawkish). The variable hawk-dove is transformed to a dichotomous variable for analytical purposes. A median cutoff point (3.33) is used and the participants are thereby separated into doves and hawks.

## **Data Analysis**

### *Threat, Regime and Country*

The core of the normative explanation expects to see a difference between democratic citizens and autocratic citizens, when it comes to the use of force under severe threat, in particular when a distinction is made in the regime type of the ‘other country’. Democratic citizens, knowing their country to be under severe threat, are expected to be unlikely to argue for attacking democracy, but likely to agree to an attack on an autocracy under the same circumstances. Autocratic citizens, on the other hand, are expected to be very likely to promote the attack strategy against any regime, if their country is under severe threat. Which subsequently means that if their country is at the brink of war, these autocratic citizens will be more likely to support an attack on a democracy than democratic citizens under severe threat. Following this logic, democratic citizens at the brink of war will be just as likely as autocratic citizens to support attacking an autocracy.

To test these assumptions, the results of the experiment are brought together in figure 1, which shows the frequencies (in percentages) of participants who decided to attack. A distinction is made between the Dutch experimental group and the Chinese experimental group, between the groups that were exposed to the regime type manipulation of democracy and autocracy, and between the different levels of threat perception. At first glance, figure 1

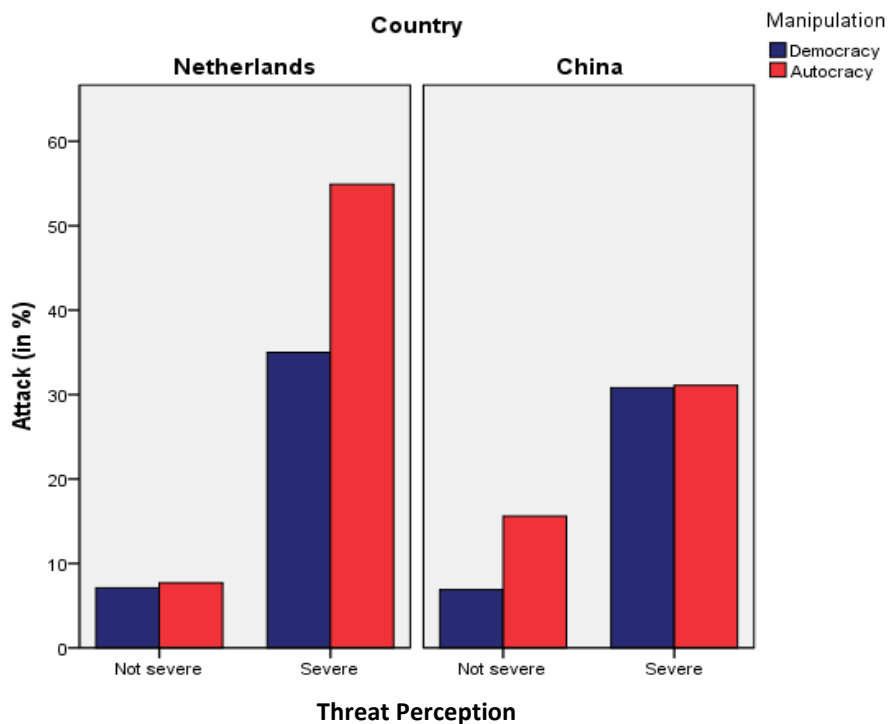
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<sup>14</sup> E.g. the position in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (Maoz I., 2003)

suggests that the expectation that democratic citizens are unlikely to support an attack on a democracy can be refuted. If the threat is perceived as severe, the Dutch group is about 7 times more likely to attack a democracy than when the threat is not perceived as severe, which is supported by a Chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 9.675$ ,  $p < .01$ , Cramer's  $V = .343$ , Odds Ratio = 6.99). However, if the other country is an autocracy, then the Dutch group is about 14.7 times more likely to support an attack ( $\chi^2 = 16.139$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .458$ , Odds Ratio = 14.67), which seems to indicate that regime does matter for this democratic experimental group.

However, when the difference in the frequency of attack (when the threat is perceived as severe) is compared between the wish to attack an autocracy over a democracy with a Chi-square test, no significant difference is found ( $\chi^2 = 3.573$ , n/s). Concluding for the democratic experimental group it seems that although the regime type seems to have some (but non-significant) influence, the threat perception of the conflict offers a very good explanation for the decision to attack any regime; under high threat, the Dutch group is almost 11 times more likely to support an attack, no matter the regime of the opposing country ( $\chi^2 = 28.139$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .42$ , Odds Ratio = 10.85).

**Figure 1**  
**Frequencies of decision to attack in relation to threat**



Considering the autocratic citizens, first of all, the normative explanation expects them not to be socialized with liberal norms of peaceful conflict resolution and therefore to be more

war-prone. However, considering that even when their country is at the brink of war, only about a quarter of the autocratic experimental group is willing to attack the aggressor, whereas about three quarters of this group want to attempt to resume negotiations. Secondly, when the results of the participants of the Chinese group that did decide to support an attack are analyzed, the threat perception seems to be the main explanatory factor. The Chinese group is about 3.5 times more likely to support an attack on any regime when the threat is severe ( $\chi^2 = 8.406$ ,  $p < .01$ , Cramer's  $V = .21$ , Odds Ratio = 3.45). Furthermore, regime type does not seem to matter much. Although visually a slight difference seems to indicate that the Chinese group is more likely to support attacking an autocracy over a democracy when severity of the threat is perceived to be low, a Chi-square does not support this notion ( $\chi^2 = 1.141$ , n/s).

The first conclusion is that for both experimental groups, within their groups, threat is the main explanatory factor to support an attack. The normative explanation also expects to see a difference between groups in the decision to attack between the democratic citizens and the autocratic citizens, but only in the case of the other country being a democracy. The results suggest that this expectation can be refuted. First of all, the results show that the democratic experimental group, when under severe threat, is also willing to attack no matter the regime, just as the autocratic experimental group is. Moreover, the democratic experimental group is just as likely to support an attack on a democracy if it is under severe threat as the autocratic experimental group is. However, when we compare the frequency with the Dutch group wants to attack with the frequency of the Chinese group, we see that the Dutch group is almost 2 times more likely to attack, when under threat than the Chinese group ( $\chi^2 = 5.219$ ,  $p < .05$ , Cramer's  $V = .16$ , Odds Ratio = 1.92). Furthermore, when we consider the knowledge about the regime type (when under severe threat), we can see that the factor democracy does indeed not account for any difference, but autocracy does. The democratic experimental group is almost 3 times more likely to support an attack on an autocracy, when under severe threat, than the autocratic experimental group ( $\chi^2 = 6.436$ ,  $p < .05$ , Cramer's  $V = .21$ , Odds Ratio = 2.70).

Concluding for now, it seems that the expected peacefulness of the democratic experimental group towards democracies does not find any support. This democratic group turned out to be just as likely to attack, if not more so, as the autocratic group. Moreover, regime type as explanatory factor did have some influence and indeed only for the democratic experimental group, but the effect was marginal and, more importantly, it was not the knowledge about the democratic nature that made the democratic experimental group more



peaceful, it was the knowledge about the autocratic nature of the opponent that made this democratic group more war-prone.

### *Liberal norms*

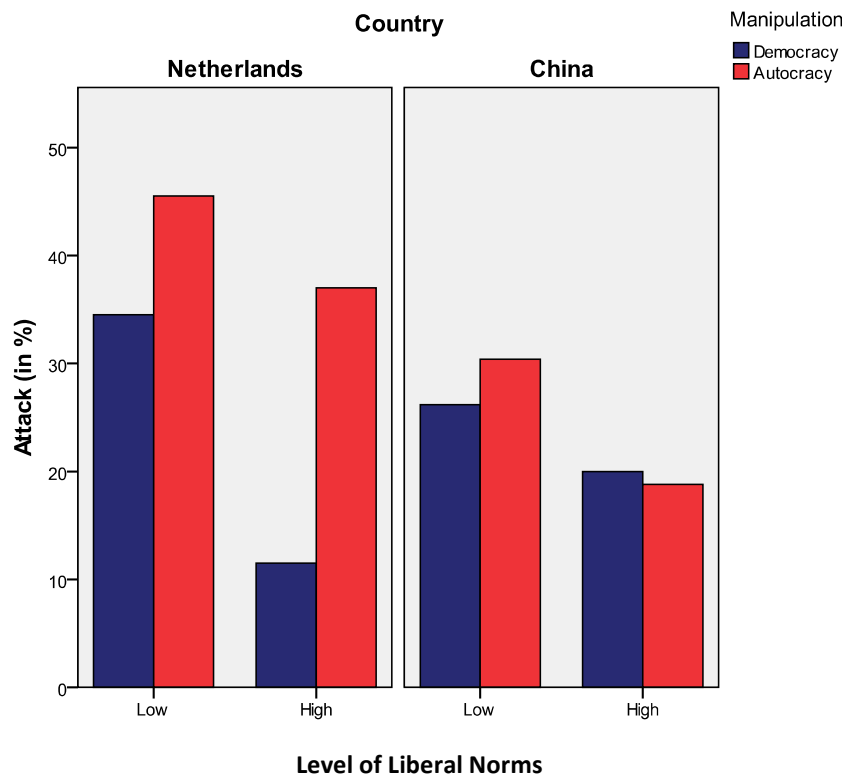
The normative explanation expects democratic citizens to have internalized liberal norms, in comparison with autocratic citizens who lack these norms. Furthermore, it is expected that the democratic citizens' decision to not attack a democracy, even when the threat is high, is a causal effect of the internalized liberal norms. Conversely, it is expected that even when the autocratic citizens do endorse liberal norms, these will be of no consequence for their decision to attack or not.

To test these assumptions, first of all, the mean level of liberal norms is measured for each experimental group. The Chinese group has a mean of 3.47, which does not seem as low as expected by the normative explanation, considering it is only just below the overall median of 3.67. Apparently these autocratic citizens do endorse liberal norms to a certain extent. The mean of the Dutch group is 3.84, which seems to be somewhat low, according to expectations. It furthermore seems only marginally higher than the mean of the Chinese group. However, a t-test shows a significant difference for the means of both groups ( $F = .681$ ,  $n/s$ ,  $t(341.9) = 2.292$ ,  $p < .001$ , lower CI = .293, upper CI = .450,  $r = .20$ ). This indicates that liberal norms are endorsed differently within each experimental group. Nevertheless, the small to medium effect indicates that the difference is not as large as was previously assumed.

Knowing that, to a certain extent, both experimental groups have shown to endorse liberal norms, the question is whether these norms had any relation to their decision to attack or not, in particular for the democratic experimental group towards another democracy. Figure 2 shows the frequencies with which the participants decided to support an attack, distinguished by the experimental group, the manipulation of regime type, and the level of liberal norms. At first glance, the liberal norms only seem to be of relevance within the democratic experimental group. The variance of the level of democratic norms within the democratic experimental group shows a relationship with the decision to support an attack on a specific regime type. The participants of the Dutch group who endorsed a high level of liberal norms were about 4.5 times more likely to attack an autocracy over a democracy ( $\chi^2 = 9.304$ ,  $p < .01$ , Cramer's  $V = .296$ , Odds ratio = 4.53). This finding supports the notion discussed above, that the democratic experimental group would be more war-prone towards autocracies than peaceful towards democracies. An additional test to see whether there is an association between threat perception of a specific regime and the level of liberal norms,

shows that the Dutch participants with a high level of liberal norms indeed perceive an autocracy about 2.5 times more threatening than a democracy ( $\chi^2 = 5.763$ ,  $p < .05$ , Cramer's  $V = .228$ , Odds ratio = 2.55). Moreover, the democratic participants who endorsed a high level of liberal norms were 4 times less likely to support an attack on a democracy than the democratic participants who endorsed a low level of liberal norms ( $\chi^2 = 6.183$ ,  $p < .05$ , Cramer's  $V = .276$ , Odds ratio = 4). The autocratic experimental group, however, does not seem to have any relationship between the level of liberal norms, decision to support an attack, and one of the explanatory factors (threat and/or regime type).

**Figure 2**  
**Frequencies of decision to attack in relation to liberal norms**



Concluding for now, the democratic experimental group indeed endorsed on average a higher level of liberal norms in comparison with the autocratic experimental group. This democratic group also showed that variance of the liberal norms within the group had an effect. However, the finding that a variance of the liberal norms within the democratic group has such a strong effect seems contradictory of the normative explanation, which expects democratic citizens to always be of a peaceful nature towards other democracies, which seems

to be significantly not the case. These results can offer a rationale for the finding earlier, that the Dutch group was more inclined to attack an autocracy than autocratic citizens were. The mean of the level of liberal norms of the Chinese group lies well over the neutral value of 3. The weak effect size of the t-test has supported this notion. To understand what the role of liberal norms is within the context of this experiment, its influence must be considered within a multivariate model that considers all explanatory factors similarly.

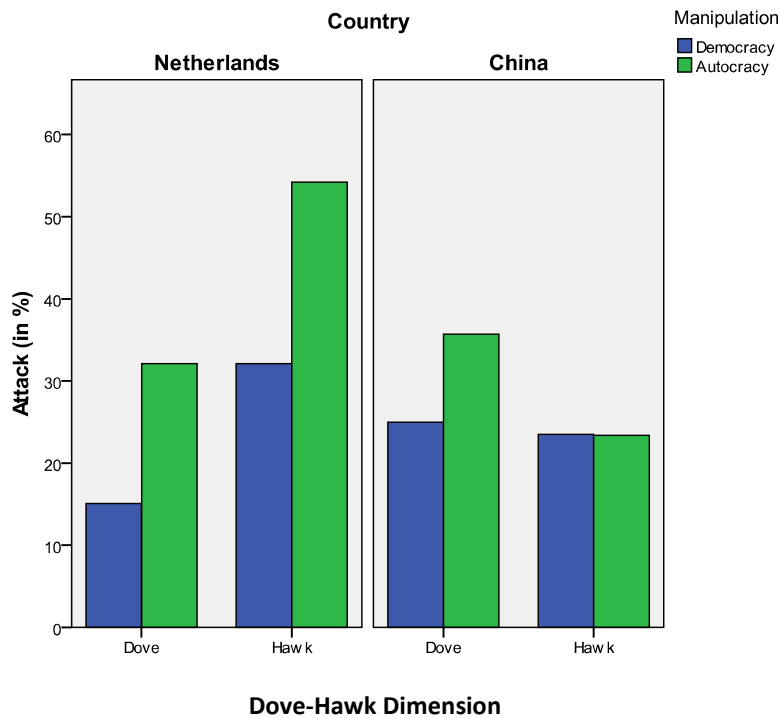
#### *Other explanatory factors at the micro-level*

The normative explanation expects internalized liberal norms of democratic citizens to overrule any other possible explanatory factor at the individual level, which means, as discussed above, that for instance gender or hawkishness would not be expected to be of influence for the democratic citizens. For the autocratic citizens, who are supposed to lack these norms, these individual factors might influence their behavior when it comes to the use of force. To estimate the possible influence of hawkishness, the mean level of hawkishness is calculated. The Chinese participants turned out to be more hawkish ( $\mu = 3.80$ ) while the Dutch participants seemed to be much more dovish ( $\mu = 2.83$ ). These means are significantly different from each other, as is supported by an independent t-test with a strong effect size ( $F = .131$ , n/s,  $t(346.6) = -13.408$ ,  $p < .001$ , lower CI = -1.003, upper CI = -.747,  $r = .58$ ). When the relationship between hawks' and doves' decision to attack, the regime type of the other country, and the experimental group, are considered, the results in figure 3 show that it is only within the democratic experimental group that hawkishness seems to have an effect. Dutch hawks are about 2.4 times more likely to attack than Dutch doves ( $\chi^2 = 5.852$ ,  $p < .05$ , Cramer's  $V = .192$ , Odds ratio = 2.39). Within the autocratic experimental group there is no effect of the hawkishness. A comparison between the experimental groups shows that the Dutch hawks are almost 4 times more likely than Chinese hawks to attack an autocracy ( $\chi^2 = 8.154$ ,  $p < .01$ , Cramer's  $V = .284$ , Odds ratio = 3.88). These results contradict the expectations.

The expectation concerning gender, is also refuted. The Dutch participants show a clear difference between men and women: the Dutch male participants are about 3.7 times more likely to decide to attack than the Dutch female participants ( $\chi^2 = 11.837$ ,  $p \leq .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .273$ , Odds ratio = 3.68). For the Chinese group, no significant difference is found ( $\chi^2 = 3.192$ , n/s). These results show that the individual level factor gender is of influence, but only for the democratic experimental group. Concluding, to the contrary of what was expected, the individual level factors gender and hawkishness seem to be of

influence on the decision to attack for the democratic experimental group. Within the autocratic experimental group these factors did not seem to be of any influence.

**Figure 3**  
**Frequencies of decision to attack in relation to the dove-hawk dimension**



Concluding, for both experimental groups the perception of threat is overwhelmingly the main explanatory factor. Regime type does seem to have a marginal effect only within the democratic experimental group but also seems to be conditional on the perception of threat. Also the variance of the endorsement of liberal norms seems to have an effect, but only within the democratic experimental group, similar to the way in which the other individually based explanatory factors of hawkishness and gender only show variance within this group. For the autocratic experimental group variance of these factors is indeed found, but these factors did not show any significant relation with the decision to attack or not.

*Multivariate test*

These findings are corroborated within a multivariate logistic regression. The explanatory factors experimental group, threat, regime type, liberal norms, gender and hawkishness, and all theorized interaction effects (which allow for comparison between

experimental groups) are considered within the model. Diagnostics show some concerns about multi-collinearity, which was to be expected due to the interaction effects taken into the model. A residual analysis shows that there are few more outliers than would be desirable, but an inspection of the cases shows that these outliers are substantial, and not due to data errors. Considering the nature of the samples and the many explanatory factors, it is to be expected to have a few outliers. Therefore these cases were retained within this model. Table 1 shows the results of the logistic regression.

**Table 1**  
**Logistic Regression analysis for the decision to attack**

	B (SE)	95% CI for Odds Ratio		
		Lower	Odds Ratio	Upper
<b>Country</b> ( <i>China</i> )	.810 (1.200)	.214	2.247	23.593
<b>Regime</b> ( <i>Autocracy</i> )	.018 (1.105)	.117	1.018	8.883
<b>Threat</b>	2.294** (.750)	2.277	9.912	43.148
<b>Liberal Norms</b>	-1.038 (.675)	.094	.354	1.330
<b>Country*Regime</b>	.828 (1.444)	.135	2.289	38.814
<b>Country*Threat</b>	-.569 (1.091)	.067	.566	4.806
<b>Country* Liberal Norms</b>	.897 (.890)	.429	2.452	14.026
<b>Regime*Threat</b>	.509 (1.098)	.194	1.663	14.296
<b>Regime*Liberal Norms</b>	.666 (.929)	.315	1.947	12.015
<b>Country*Regime*Threat</b>	-1.210 (1.473)	.017	.298	5.347
<b>Country*Regime*Liberal Norms</b>	-1.034 (1.224)	.032	.355	3.915
<b>Hawk</b>	.933 (.475)	1.002	2.542	6.447
<b>Gender</b> ( <i>Male</i> )	-.922*** (.290)	.225	.398	.702
<b>Country*Hawk</b>	-1.452* (.716)	.057	.234	.953
<b>Constant</b>	-2.233** (.763)		.107	

N = 334

R<sup>2</sup> = .190 (Cox & Snell),

R<sup>2</sup> = .275 (Nagelkerke).

Model  $\chi^2(14) = 70.262$ ,  $p < .001$

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The logistic model provides a better fit to the data than the intercept-only model with 5.3%, which does not seem very much, but considering the skewed nature of the dependent variable, this does not come as a surprise. Most importantly, the findings of the earlier descriptive analyses are supported by the regression model. The explanatory factor ‘threat’ is highly

significant with an odds ratio of 9.91, and is therefore the strongest explanatory factor for the whole sample of democratic and autocratic citizens together. The interaction effect of country and threat is not significant which indicates that there is no difference between the democratic experimental group and the autocratic experimental group for the perception of threat. The knowledge about the regime type, the endorsement of liberal norms and being socialized within a specific society does not show to be a significant indicator for a decision to use force. Neither within the experimental groups, nor when we compare between the experimental groups.

Like the finding described above, the individual level explanatory factors gender and being a Dutch hawk show to be significant indicators. The men from both experimental groups are significantly more likely to attack than the women. And also the Dutch hawks are significantly more likely to attack than the Dutch doves, but also than Chinese doves *and* hawks. None of the other factors are significant. Considering the whole logistic model, the explanatory factors for the decision to use force within IR turn out to be threat and gender for both experimental groups, and a hawkish position for the Dutch experimental group.

## **Discussion**

The causal argument of the normative explanation of the democratic peace thesis is built on an assumed difference in behavior between democratic citizens and autocratic citizens. In this research I have performed, to the best of my knowledge, the first empirical test that compared the effects of liberal norms on decision-making about the use of force between democratic citizens on the one hand and autocratic citizens on the other. An experimental design showed that there was no significant difference between a group of Dutch students and a group of Chinese students when it comes to the use of force in IR. Even more, for both experimental groups the perception of threat explained their decision.

The results of this research did seem to partly support the results of previous studies that have claimed that democratic citizens are less likely to attack a democracy than an autocracy because of their internalized liberal norms (e.g. Maoz & Russett, 1993; Geva & Hanson, 1999; Mintz & Geva, 1993; Rousseau, 2005; Tomz & Weeks, forthcoming). However, these previous studies did not compare the likeliness to attack of democratic citizens with the likeliness to support an attack of autocratic citizens. This research did make this comparison that is theoretically necessary to find support for the normative explanation for the micro-level.

The conclusion of that comparison is firstly that for both experimental groups the perception of threat is the main indicator for a decision to attack. Secondly, there is a marginal effect of the regime type for the democratic citizens. Remarkably, in a comparison with the autocratic experimental group, these democratic citizens turn out not to be specifically more *peaceful* towards other *democracies*, but rather more *war-prone* towards *autocracies*. This effect of regime type, however, is faded out within a multivariate test that convincingly shows that the perception of threat is dominant as the explanation why these democratic and these autocratic citizens decided to support an attack. Also the endorsement of liberal norms, which seemed to be of marginal influence within the democratic experimental group, is faded out within the multivariate test. It therefore seems that the idea that democratic citizens are socialized with norms of peaceful conflict resolution which have an effect on the decision of whether or not to use force towards other democracies, is at least a bit exaggerated.

Thus, this research argues that, in contrast with earlier research, there is no support to the claim that the normative explanation can explain the empirically found peace between democracies. This empirical test has provided us with new information about the effect of political systems on their citizens when it comes to their ideas about war and peace in IR. Although a prudent approach towards the generalizability of these results is in order, after all the experiment was conducted on two homogenous groups of students, a concern about the external validity is not completely justified. Methodologically speaking, the aim of the experiment is to detect an existence result: whether internalized liberal-democratic norms affect decision-making about war and peace. Therefore internal validity is initially of greater importance than external validity (Morton & Williams, 2010, pp. 331-347) However, due to the complexity of the testing of the liberal norms, the results from these homogeneous samples of students cannot be generalized. But if we consider this empirical test as an initial test, it provides us with new and important insights that can be replicated for external validity later on. The most important contribution of this research is that it offers important evidence to argue that the assumed causal mechanism of the normative explanation does not function as was corroborated for similar homogeneous samples of *democratic students*<sup>15</sup> before. The novelty of this research is that autocratic citizens were also considered within its design. This is something that should have already been considered about two decades ago. In particular when the results of this research are taken into account. This research can therefore be understood as a pilot study for improved and extended research in the near future that.

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<sup>15</sup> With the exception of Tomz & Weeks (forthcoming), who used a survey experiment among democratic citizens to come to a representative sample of a democratic population.

Recommendations for new research that builds on these results would be (1) to take the perception of system-level factors into consideration, (2) to inquire whether the effect of regime type might trigger more war proneness among democratic citizens, and (3) to find out what role individually based explanatory factors play within the context of war and peace for citizens of different political systems. That threat perception turns out to be the main explanatory factor seems to indicate that the realist perspective, which claims that states have to use power politics in order to survive within the anarchic international system, has some influence on the micro level as well. These results suggest a new research avenue, in which the perception of system-level factors is studied for the micro-level. What is exactly the role of threat when citizens wish to attack? When is a threat perceived? Is that connected with system-level factors such as military and/or economic power, or can individual level factors influence decisions as well?

Considering these system-level factors, it would be also recommended to select a different country for the democratic population. Netherlands, being a tiny country, does not seem very likely to start wars just like that, whereas China with all its power in the world, not to mention the size and human resources, could easily go to war. Even though the countries in the scenario are hypothetical, it is impossible to conclusively rule out that the participants did not think of their own countries. This could be a valid point for concern; a replication of this research would preferably have to deal with representative population samples of countries that show variance of the independent variable liberal democratic norms, but are most similar when it comes to system level factors such as size, world power, military power, economic power, etc. On the other hand, however, if we consider that even democratic citizens of a tiny country such as the Netherlands are already willing to go to war when the treat is perceived to be high, then this may be the telling for the way in which citizens of a larger country might respond.

New research should also consider again the manipulation of regime type. Although the factor democracy did not rule out the perception of threat and/or the wish to attack as anticipated by the normative explanation, the regime type democracy did had a marginal influence for the democratic experimental group. In the worst case that insignificant finding was due to the size and/or nature of this particular experiment, but a more plausible argument might be that regime type is a mediating factor for the threat perception of democratic citizens. Most importantly, the results of this research indicate that when we consider the effect of regime type on democratic citizens, we should not get stuck on attempts to simply corroborate the democratic peace thesis, but look further than that and rather inquire the effect



of regime type more thoroughly for individuals of different political societies and comparative between them.

An additional finding that calls for further investigation is that individual features of the democratic experimental group are of significant influence on the decision to use force. In addition to that, these same features do not have the same importance for the autocratic experimental group. If a difference is to be found between the two experimental groups, it would be an indication that for the democratic participants their individual attitudes, features and ideas might be of some influence when they have to decide to use force, whereas the nondemocratic citizens of the Chinese experimental group seem to rely more on a system level factor such as threat to decide. Intuitively, it could be suggested that the nature of Chinese society, with its focus on the community rather than the individual, might have been of influence. Conversely, the individualistic nature of Dutch society might have been of influence as well. This cultural difference might tell us also more about the marginal effect that the presence of liberal norms seemed to have had for the democratic participants and not for the autocratic participants. The autocratic experimental group did not completely lack liberal norms, moreover and just like the democratic group, it showed variance for the level of liberal norms and for hawkishness. It only did not have any effect on their decision to use force, as was the case for the democratic experimental group. The question remains why that difference is found, which opens up new research perspectives in which the cultural and historical context of the countries are considered and not solely the nature of the political systems.

Why do democracies do not go to war with each other? This question will remain cause for an academic debate for the years to come. This study contributes to that debate by arguing that there is little empirical ground for the normative explanation of the liberal school of IR. The results of this study indicate that previous studies into the normative explanation wrongly ignored the assumed variance of the independent variable of liberal-democratic norms. The findings of this study suggest that the perception of threat, a typical realist school argument, might be a better explanatory factor for the empirically found democratic peace. However, that suggestion is not simply a plea for the realist school arguments whereas the role of (international) institutions might also play an important role in dealing with that threat. Finding support for an attack on the micro-level, but facing a empirical reality of a lack of wars between democracies might indicate that the (international) institutions have been of influence. A research avenue into that direction, however, should not step in the same old pitfall to be focused merely on democracies, but should consider also variance of regime type.

After all, the 'democratic peace' might be simply a 'peace'. How much we, in the West, like to think of liberal democracy as the best form of government possible, we also seem to expect too much from its assumed moral superiority. Rather than promoting liberal-democracy willy-nilly around the globe, we should show a bit more prudence.

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## **Appendices**

### ***Appendix 1***

### ***Scenario***

*(Number of experimental group written here)*

### **Survey**

In this survey some questions will be asked about your personal opinions. We are interested what you feel personally about a few topics. We want to stress that all your answers will be treated anonymously. No one will be able to connect your name to your answers; also the scholars that work with the data do not know these details. The names of the participants will also not be listed nowhere. The use of this survey is only for academic purposes and will be accessed only by the three people working on the research. We guarantee that no one will be able to connect your answers to your person.

### **What do you have to do?**

On the next pages you will read a story about two countries that do not exist in real life. We want you to imagine that you are an advisor of the government of one of these countries. After reading the story, we will ask you to make a decision about what you read and then answer a few questions about your personal opinions.

Please read the text carefully, before you answer the questions.

For the purpose of this research, please do not discuss the survey with anybody.

**(Vignette for thought experiment)**

**(Randomly assigned:)**

**(Group I & II will be exposed to the manipulation democracy)**

**(Group II will be extra exposed to the expected behavior of the democracy)**

**(Group III & IV will be exposed to the manipulation non-democracy)**

**(Group IV will be extra exposed to the expected behavior of the non-democracy)**

NB: For the Chinese sample, Moerland will be called Country A, Rand's Island will be called Country B.

**(General Text A (Manipulation of Regime))**

A new conflict has occurred in the Dows Island region of the Atlantic Ocean. Since the discovery of a very large concentration of uranium (which forms the basis for nuclear power) near the coast of the island-state of Rand's Island, the area has become very important to the world.

Assume that you were living your whole life on Moerland, a neighboring island-state of Rand's Island. Moerland is, just like Rand's Island, one of the greater Islands of the Dows Island region and its population was counted at 19.102.307 heads at the beginning of this year. The country is economically well developed: It has several oilfields in the Atlantic ocean and a flourishing high tech industry. Besides that it has a thriving tourist sector (about 3.5 million tourists visit the country every year). The last decades the economy of Moerland has been growing steadily. Moerland has a well developed military force, there is a two year draft for every citizen when they reach the age of 18 years.

Rand's Island resembles Moerland in many respects. Rand's Island is about the same size and its population was counted at the beginning of this year at 19.987.432 heads. Its high-tech industry is developed well, which have kept the economy growing steadily last decades. Besides that does Rand's Island quite well in the tourist sector: every year it welcomes about 3 million tourists. Also Rand's Island possesses several oilfields in the Atlantic. Rand's Island has a two year draft for all citizens at the age of 18 and their military forces are developed well therefore.

Both countries have uranium-fields from which they are winning uranium for peaceful purposes, such as nuclear energy.

**The following text will be added to text A, only for group I & II:**

*The regime of Rand's Island is democratically elected since its independence in 1919. All citizens from 18 year and older can elect every four years their representatives for the parliament, from which the government is formed as well. Elections are considered by the citizens of Rand's island to be fair and honest, they feels that they can hold its government responsible. As a result there are often changes in the legislative and executive powers over the decades. Freedom of speech and freedom of press are guaranteed in Rand's Island on the basis of the constitution. Opposing voices within the political system as well as within society are not suppressed, unless the protests are violent of nature.*

---

**The following text will be added only for group III & IV:**

*The regime of Rand's Island has a government that has been run since the independence of the country in 1919 by the same (and sole existing) party that governs the country. Elections therefore seem to make little difference for the inhabitants of Rand's Island. There is only one newspaper in the country, which is controlled by the government. If there are any protests of opposition, these are mostly, although not always, suppressed by arresting many of the protesting individuals who are brought to prison. It is not clear what happens to them or when they will be released, which creates uncertainty for the inhabitants of Rand's Island. There are strict restrictions for groups to come together in meetings, and they will have to be reported to the National Security Offices before permission is granted or not.*

---

**General text B (conflict):**

At the moment Moerland is caught up in a severe conflict with Rand's Island. The conflict is about these issues:

1. In secret, Rand's Island started to win oil from an area which was in the territorial waters of Moerland.
2. In addition, Rand's Island decided unilaterally to stop all its trade payments to Moerland. Rand's Island also nationalized all assets of Moerland on Rand's Island. The ambassador of Moerland was expelled by the government of Rand's Island.
3. There is intelligence evidence that Rand's Island has started to mobilize her military troupes and has started a nuclear missiles program. Although Rand's island maintains that their uranium is only used for nuclear energy, the intelligence service showed conclusive evidence that nuclear warheads are built.

Rand's Island and Moereland held negotiations for more than one week to solve these issues. But Moereland's negotiators left last negotiations with the strong impression that Rand's Island is not going to alter its position and informed the government of Moereland that there is a serious danger to be expected from Rand's Island.

The government from Moereland has been discussing the matter over the last 24 hours and has called you in for your advice. The government sees two possible reactions:

1. To return to continue the negotiations with Rand's Island in try to resolve these problems together with them, and get them to dismantle the missile program.

OR

2. To attack Rand's Island with a pre-emptive strike by seizing the Capital city and its main seaport of Rand's Island, in order to dismantle the missile program.

*\*\*(see below for text)*

The Moereland government wants to know from you what the best solution is.

**\*\* The following text will be added only for group II:**

One of the factors the Moereland government takes into consideration is that Rand's Island has a democratic regime. They expect for that reason that the people and government of Rand's Island share a culture of peaceful resolution of political conflicts with Moereland.

**\*\* The following text will be added only for group IV:**

One of the factors the Moereland government takes into consideration is that Rand's Island has an authoritarian regime. They expect for that reason that the government of Rand's Island is used to resolve political conflicts with military force whenever they see necessary.

## Questionnaire

**1.**

**Based on this information about the case of Moerland and Rand's Island, what is the action you advise your government of Moerland to take:**

**a.  Attack Rand's Island**

**b.  Negotiate with Rand's Island**



**The following questions 12-35 are about your personal opinions.**

**For every statement we would like to know whether you strongly disagree, agree, are neutral, agree or strongly agree. Please check only 1 box for every statement.**

<b>Please check only 1 box for every statement.</b>		<b>a. Strongly disagree</b>	<b>b. Disagree</b>	<b>c. Neutral</b>	<b>d. Agree</b>	<b>e. Strongly agree</b>
<b>11</b>	I expect my life in 5 years to be improved strongly.					
<b>12</b>	I do not feel safe if I go out alone after dark.					
<b>13</b>	In general, I trust other people till they prove me wrong.					
<b>14</b>	I feel satisfied with my life.					
<b>15</b>	If someone starts a fight with me, I try to calm everything down by reasoning rather than hitting back.					
<b>16</b>	I would permit a person to say things on television that contradict my way of thinking.					
<b>17</b>	It is important to teach children tolerance and respect for others.					
<b>18</b>	People who are different from me, I consider to be a threat					
<b>19</b>	Gay people should be able to participate openly in a society.					
<b>20</b>	It is important to teach children to defend themselves physically if necessary.					
<b>21</b>	I do not like to be around people who think differently from me.					
<b>22</b>	People from a minority group should have the same rights as I have, even if I do not like them.					
<b>23</b>	If my neighbor is very different from me, I do my best to get to know him so I can understand him better.					
<b>24</b>	It is necessary that everyone, regardless of their views can express themselves freely.					
<b>25</b>	I feel completely in control over my life.					
<b>26</b>	Everybody thinks of themselves first, so I will have to protect myself and my family before I consider others.					
<b>27</b>	Problems in my life I prefer to solve myself, other people are only interested in their own interests.					
<b>28</b>	If I have a problem with my neighbors that is getting out of hand, I prefer to solve this with the help of the authorities rather than trying to speak with them myself.					
<b>29</b>	It is better to live in an orderly society than to allow people so much freedom that they can become disruptive.					
<b>30</b>	A society should not have to put up with political views that are different for the majority view.					
<b>31</b>	States are generally not trustworthy: they will attempt to expand their territory if they have the chance.					

<b>32</b>	The use or threat of nuclear weapons is a necessary instrument for states in order to survive as a state.					
<b>33</b>	In general, international organizations are ineffective because they lack the power necessary to change the behavior of powerful states.					
<b>34</b>	It is in the best interests of states to cooperate rather than to fight.					



**Appendix 2                      How to measure Liberal Norms?**

All measures for the scales exist of questions of the survey performed after the experiment, to which the participants could respond by indicating their opinion about this issue on a Likert scale from [1] Strongly disagree – [5] Strongly agree.

With a PCA was explored which could fall together in a single dimension. A Mokken Scale analysis had to confirm this and the scale was formed. The measure of Tolerance exists of 5 items: 5 questions asked, These five items found a reliable scale together based on a Mokken Scale Analysis. The measure of Trust and Stability are created in the same way.

***Tolerance***

- DN6    I would permit a person to say things on television that contradicts my way of thinking.
- DN7    It is important to teach children tolerance and respect for others.
- DN9    Gay people should be able to participate openly in a society
- DN12   People from a minority group should have the same rights as I have, even if I do not like them.
- DN14   It is necessary that everyone, regardless of their views can express themselves freely.

*Reliability test*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mokken scale Item H</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>PCA loadings</b>
<b>DN6</b>	.34	10.90	.651
<b>DN7</b>	.34	10.11	.546
<b>DN9</b>	.29	9.59	.606
<b>DN12</b>	.35	11.74	.602
<b>DN14</b>	.32	10.76	.535
	<b>H = .33</b>	<b>Z = 16.68</b>	

***Trust***

- DN17 Problems in my life I prefer to solve myself, other people are only interested in their own interests. RECODED (*direction*)
- DN21 States are generally not trustworthy: they will attempt to expand their territory if they have the chance. RECODED (*direction*)
- DN23 In general, international organizations are ineffective because they lack the power necessary to change the behavior of powerful states. RECODED (*direction*)

*Reliability test*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mokken scale Item H</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>PCA loadings</b>
<b>DN17</b>	.24	5.72	.589
<b>DN21</b>	.21	4.97	.672
<b>DN23</b>	.22	5.23	.620
	<b>H = .22</b>	<b>Z = 6.50</b>	

**Stability**

DN2 If I go out after dark, I do not feel safe RECODED (*direction*)

DN4 I feel satisfied with my life.

DN15 I feel completely in control over my life.

*Reliability test*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mokken scale Item H</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>PCA loadings</b>
<b>DN2</b>	.36	8.65	.516
<b>DN4</b>	.47	10.95	.607
<b>DN15</b>	.48	11.14	.666
	<b>H = .43</b>	<b>Z = 12.47</b>	

The scales Tolerance, Trust and Stability were computed together into one scale for democratic norms. A PCA supported the construct. Although details will be lost by considering these three important factors together in an analysis, however, taking all three scales into a multivariate logistic regression model with interaction effects would make the analysis too complicated.

**Appendix 3**

**Hawk-Dove dimension**

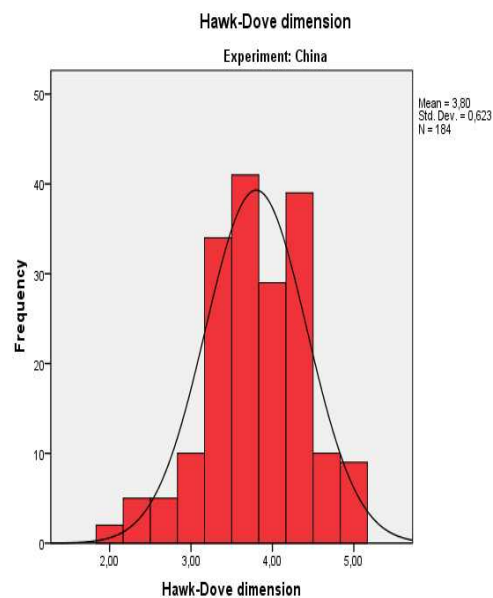
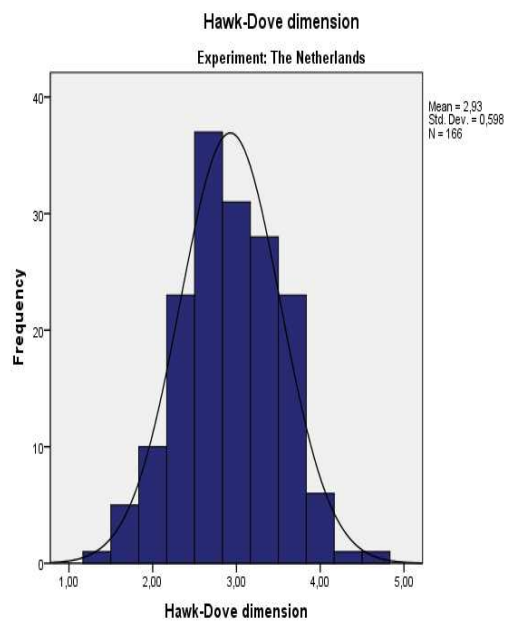
DN10 It is important to teach children to defend themselves physically if necessary.

DN16 Everybody thinks of themselves first, so I will have to protect myself and my family before I consider others.

DN22 The use or threat of nuclear weapons is a necessary instrument for states in order to survive as a state.

*Reliability test*

Item	Mokken scale Item H	Z	PCA loadings
DN10	.36	7.97	.747
DN16	.32	7.53	.708
DN22	.34	8.20	.734
	<b>H = .34</b>	<b>Z =</b>	



**F = .131, p > .05, t (346.6) = - 13.408, p < .001, r = .58**