Justifying Military Force: Racial Attitudes, Race, and Gender

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Abstract

The study of U.S. public opinion on foreign policy has begun to examine the different contexts in which citizens may endorse the use of military force abroad. However, what work has been done has generally focused on specific foreign conflicts, rather than broader, more generalizable scenarios in which the United States may find itself considering whether to intervene in the future. Furthermore, work in this area rarely pays specific attention to the racial dimensions of foreign policy public opinion – an important dimension to account for given both the military's disproportionate reliance on (low income) communities of color to staff the front lines and the racial constructions of foreign adversaries in recent conflicts. Using the 2016 CCES, merged with data indicating the counties that currently have active domestic military bases, I show that black and Latinx respondents – and particularly black and Latina women – are less likely to endorse many justifications for the use of military force than their white counterparts, but also that there are notable exceptions to this general rule. Additionally, of the predictors available in the CCES, racial attitudes are one of the strongest indicators of changes in the likelihood of endorsing most reasons for using military force in substantive terms.

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Introduction

Scholars of American foreign policy attitudes have generally agreed that, at least post-Vietnam, the United States' ability to use military force abroad is weakly constrained by its public. While U.S. citizens do not consistently monitor the military and give political leaders feedback based on its actions – leaving those leaders to be more responsive to their fellow political elites than to the mass public (Saunders 2015) – they have a veto that can be exercised when they sense overreach. Specifically, voters punish politicians when too many of their fellow citizens die (Karol and Miguel 2007), particularly when those deaths hit close to home (Kriner and Shen 2007; Grose and Oppenheimer 2007), and representatives are somewhat responsive to this threat of democratic accountability (Kriner and Shen 2013). When advocating for new, costly military actions abroad, US political leaders still feel the need to seek the public's endorsement, and research has shown that both domestic (Entman 2004) and foreign elites (Chapman and Reiter 2004; Greico et al. 2011; Guardino and Hayes 2017) are able to lead U.S. public opinion in this regard. In short, even for a superpower with a military presence in all corners of the globe, the exercise of military force is, in particularly salient cases, checked through democratic mechanisms (Mueller 1994, 2002; Fang 2008). Even if leaders face little difficulty in persuading the public to follow them into a foreign conflict, they will face an electoral consequences if they do not engage in these acts of persuasion, or if the foreign conflict in question later proves too costly to their constituents.

While the public's foreign policy attitudes may be, broadly speaking, easily-influenced and weakly responsive, there are exceptions to this general rule. Foreign policy attitudes are subject to elite cues in specific contexts, but are nevertheless constrained by general dispositions (Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; Herrmann, Tetlock, and Visser 1999). With respect to casualty sensitivity in particular, some democratic citizens, some of the time, are willing to tolerate high human costs of war if they feel the tradeoff is worth it (Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2009; Gelpi 2010). In this view, public opinion on the use of military force is more than a body count. The reasons for using military force matter, and different democratic

citizens will be differentially responsive to different reasons (Doherty and Smith 2015).

For Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler (2009), the main consideration that affects casualty sensitivity is whether the military operation is successful. Focusing specifically on U.S. involvements in Iraq and Afghanistan, they find that U.S. citizens are willing to tolerate higher casualties if they think the United States' missions related to these involvements have a high chance of succeeding. However, this only scratches the surface of possible considerations that could affect whether a given citizen endorses or opposes a proposed use of military force abroad. Findings showing that the public is more deliberative and reflective on the use of military force than a simple thumbs-up or thumbs-down, conditional on casualty count, invites inquiry into the nature of deliberation and reflection. Which reasons for using military force are the public more likely to endorse? And which members of the public are more likely to endorse which reasons?

It is well-established that attitudes toward the use of military force vary by gender (Nincic and Nincic 2002; Eichenberg 2003, 2016), but there is also a reasonable amount of evidence to suggest that endorsement of various justifications for the use of military force should differ across racial groups. Analyses measuring sensitivity to casualties in the context of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan up to 2004 (Reifler, Gelpi, and Feaver 2006; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2009) have generally found that non-white respondents were more sensitive to war casualties than their white counterparts. Similarly, studies of casualty sensitivity during the Vietnam War (Gartner and Segura 2000) have also found differences in attitudes between racial subgroups, with white respondents being less sensitive to wartime casualties than their non-white peers. However, these analyses typically treat race as a control variable, as opposed to a key independent variable. In one of the few studies conducted for the express purpose of examining racial dimensions of attitudes toward the use of military force, Leal (2005) used the the 1999 National Survey on Latinos in America to show that Latinx respondents were more likely to encourage young people close to them to enlist in the military, but were less supportive of increases in military spending. African-Americans exhibited

no significant differences on these questions. Nincic and Nincic (2002) compared white and black approval of various foreign conflicts using the ANES time series, finding that black respondents were significantly less likely to approve of the Vietnam War in 1972, Operation Desert Shield, and Operation Desert Storm (no significant racial gap emerged for approval of the Korean War or the Vietnam War in 1966), even when accounting for perceived political alienation. Lavariega Monforti and McGlynn (2012), using the 2006 Pew Hispanic Center Survey, identified religious dimensions to public opinion toward the Iraq War and Israel/Palestine conflict among Latinx respondents across different countries of origin, but did not make comparisons with the broader population.

Additionally, there is qualitative evidence that, among immigrant communities, military service is viewed as a way to demonstrate that one is deserving of citizenship – a view that has been reflected in U.S. policy at various points in history. In the context of our current foreign conflicts, President George W. Bush signed an executive order in 2002 granting "expedited naturalization" to non-citizen members of the Armed Forces who had been serving since September 11, 2001 (Lavariega Monforti 2009). It may be the case that proximity to immigration or immigrant communities could lead to more favorable views of the military, which could be extention lead to more endorsement of different reasons for its use.

Finally, there is some degree of evidence suggesting that racial attitudes, as well as race, should be associated with the endorsement of certain reasons for using military force – particularly reasons that are more closely associated with the ongoing War on Terror. Recent work at the intersection of political psychology and international relations (Kertzer and Tingley 2018) has found that foreign policy attitudes emerge from general attitudinal frameworks. This newer work builds on earlier theories of foreign policy public opinion (Hurwitz and Peffley 1987) that established a hierarchical model in which attitudes toward specific conflicts emerge from general orientations, but diverges from this earlier model in that the orientations identified are *even more* general. Rather than emerging from foreign policy-specific orientations such as "militarism" or "nationalism," this work argues that the bases

of foreign policy public opinion are rooted in deeper, more foundational dispositions, such as punitiveness (Liberman 2007); basic human values such as openness-to-change and social control (Cohrs et al. 2005); and the five main dimensions of Moral Foundations Theory (Kertzer et al. 2014; Gries 2014). Not only are these general value orientations all plausibly associated with racial attitudes – particularly comfort with racial hierarchies and systemic inequality – racial attitudes are becoming increasingly informative of U.S. public opinion across all manner of policy dimensions (Tesler 2013; Enders and Scott 2018). This relationship should be especially likely to emerge in association with foreign policy attitudes, as the targets of various foreign policy options are often racially constructed. As Ali Muscati (2002) argues, Western societies adopted a racist outlook toward Arab Muslims abroad long before the War on Terror began – as particularly demonstrated through media portrayals of Iraq and Iraqi citizens during the Gulf War – suggesting that it is impossible to fully account for current foreign policy attitudes in the United States without addressing racial attitudes. In this vein, Kam and Kinder (2007) find that early support for the War on Terror is strongly underpinned by ethnocentric attitudes, which are tied to views about racial out-groups. Sides and Gross (2013) also find that attitudes toward the War on Terror are associated with specific stereotypes toward Muslims.

This paper builds on the aforementioned scholarship in a number of ways. Perhaps most obviously, it examines attitudes toward the use of military force at a new point in time, since there are good reasons to suspect that these attitudes among racial sub-groups may have changed since the mid-to-late 2000s. Over that period of time, the United States has maintained troop deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq, conflicts that disproportionately affected minority populations and have become steadily less popular since George W. Bush's re-election. Moreover, the military has become increasingly reliant on (particularly low-income) communities of color to fill out the infantry (McGlynn and Lavareiga Monforti, n.d.). In 2015, 19 percent of US infantry was black, compared to 13 percent of the general population; the share of enlisted servicemen identifying as Hispanic or Latinx has

also steadily increased since the onset of those wars (Parker, Cilluffo, and Stepler 2017). It is reasonable to suspect that foreign policy attitudes among various racial groups have changed over the past decade as troops have remained in prolonged ground conflicts, and as US officials have proposed and debated new "boots on the ground" involvements elsewhere. Similar trends emerged in attitudes toward the war in Vietnam as that conflict became prolonged, as black and then Latino soldiers accounted for a disproportionately high share of casualties (Talbot, n.d.). Finally, it examines public opinion toward the use of military force in the immediate aftermath of a presidential campaign in which the use of military force was frequently discussed in explicitly racial terms.[1]

Furthermore, the dependent variables in studies of public opinion regarding the use of military force are either very general or very specific. Leal (2005) primarily reports findings on two questions: whether the respondent would encourage a young person close to them to enlist in the military, and whether they support increasing military spending. There are good theoretical reasons why these are two questions elected officials should be concerned with when considering whether to use military force – the United States has a volunteer army, and war is expensive – but these questions, asked during relative peacetime, may not be as useful in telling us, when actually called upon to support a specific war effort, what those respondents would say. Conversely, studies whose inquiries are based on specific conflicts, such as Nincic and Nincic (2002), are certainly important in helping understand the dynamics of public opinion as they played out at the time, but may be difficult to generalize to future conflicts. Moreover, in both cases, more attention is paid to the *what* of endorsing military force rather than the *why*. Most citizens are not uniformly pro- or anti-war; there

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[1] To illustrate this point by way of a limited set of examples, one of the central foreign policy debates of the 2016 contest – advanced by nearly all Republican primary candidates – was over whether the Obama (and Bush) administration's failure to use the words "radical Islamic terrorism" in official communications was in and of itself detrimental to U.S. national security. For his part as a major party nominee, Donald Trump made "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States" (Johnson 2015) a central component of his campaign's platform, citing the national security threat he claimed Muslims pose, with Hillary Clinton and her surrogates explicitly condemning this proposal as racist. In a less widely discussed but equally explicit example, Trump frequently told an (unsubstantiated) story of General Pershing dipping bullets in pig's blood before executing Muslim enemies on the campaign trail, suggesting it as a possible option for discouraging Islamic terror attacks (Nakamura 2017).

are some reasons an individual will accept for using military force, and some reasons that same individual will reject.

Data and Methods

The 2016 CCES post-election wave[2] includes a battery that provides leverage on precisely these questions. Not only is it large enough to draw meaningful samples of racial subgroups, but it also includes a battery of questions specifically asking respondents if they would "approve of the use of U.S. military troops in order to" do each of the six following things:

- Ensure the supply of oil
- Destroy a terrorist camp
- Intervene in a region where there is genocide or a civil war
- Assist the spread of democracy
- Protect American allies under attack by foreign nations
- Help the United Nations uphold international law

As shown in Figure 1, a simple crosstab of the proportions of adult respondents endorsing each of these reasons for using military force, broken down by race and gender, suggests that black and Latinx respondents – especially women – are less likely to endorse *particular justifications* for using military force. For instance, white men are nearly twice as likely to endorse using the military to destroy a terrorist camp as black women, but are slightly *less* likely than black women to endorse using military force to spread democracy.

When is Military Force Justified by Whom?

Each of the different justifications for using military force invites different possible reasons why a given citizen would endorse or reject them. I briefly consider each in turn.
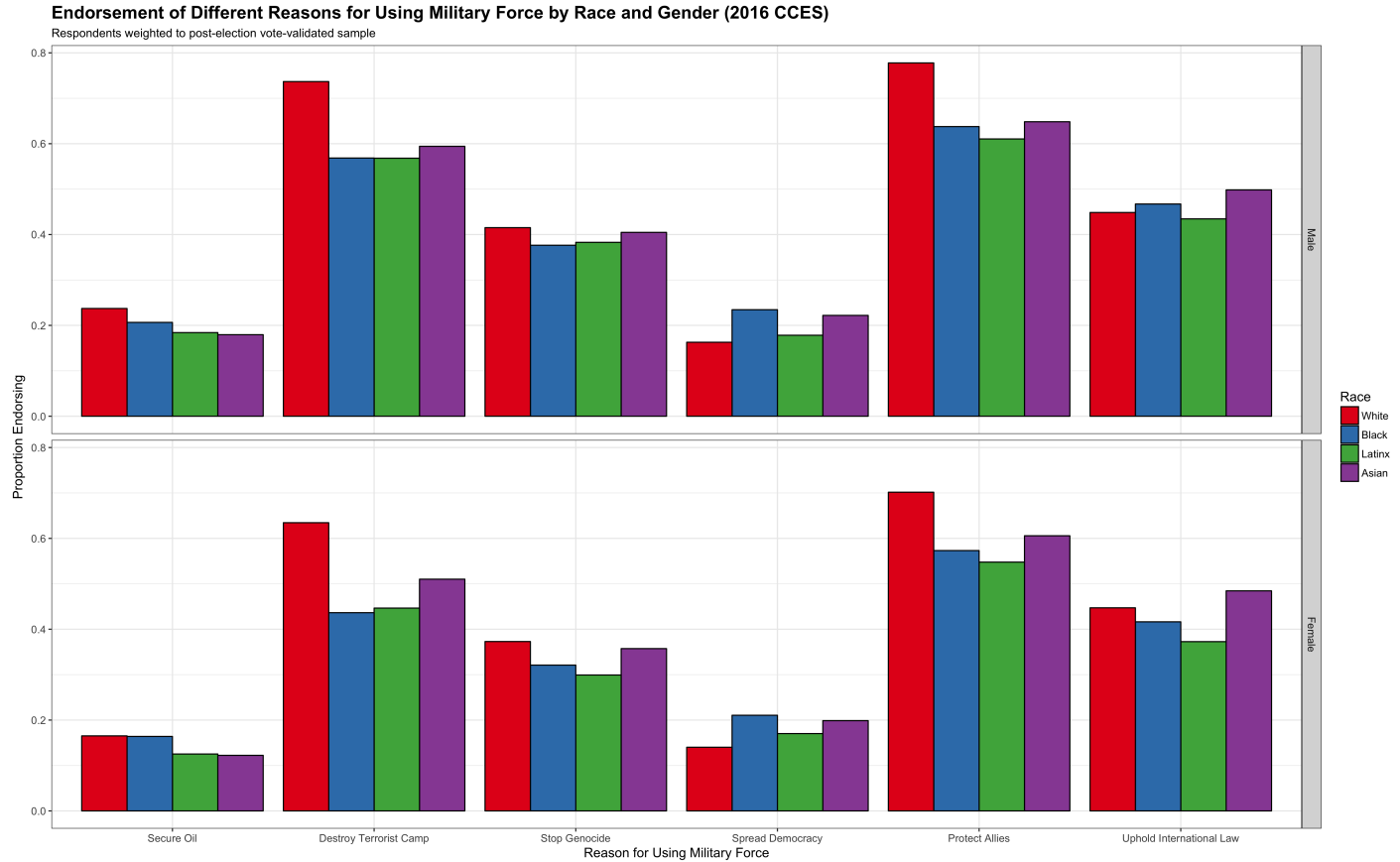

Figure 1: Descriptive Analysis

Ensure the Supply of Oil: Baseline support for this justification for using military force is very low generally – only 19% of all adults endorse this justification for using military force. And perhaps with good reason, as the plainest reading of this justification likely entails a war crime (Saadoun 2017). Securing the supply of oil is also arguably the most politically polarizing of the justifications in the battery among political elites, as Donald Trump frequently argued that the U.S. should "take the oil" from countries it currently occupies on the 2016 campaign trail.[3] However, while endorsement of this justification did polarize along political lines – 28% of validated voters who reported voting for Donald Trump agreeing with their presidential pick that securing the supply of oil is a good reason to use

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[3] To be clear, Donald Trump is far from being the only political elite in relatively recent memory to advocate for such a policy. During the run-up to the Iraq War, officials in the Bush administration publicly speculated that the country the United States was set to invade could pay for its own reconstruction out of its oil supply (Gerth 2003).

U.S. military force, while only 11% of validated voters who reported voting for Clinton said the same – the international norms and laws against "pillaging" occupied territories appears to be widely accepted across all types of political and demographic sub-groups.

Destroy a Terrorist Camp: Baseline support for this justification is more evenly split than securing the supply of oil, with a 64-36 majority of all adults endorsing this reason for using military force. However, as shown in Figure 1, this justification also presents the clearest racial divide, with roughly 15 percentage point differences between white and black/Latinx respondents across gender identification. Additionally, despite a relative lack of disagreement among elites in the two major parties over whether this is an acceptable reason to use military force, endorsement of this justification among the public is similarly polarized across political lines as securing the supply of oil. 83% of Trump voters and 59% of Clinton voters endorse this justification for using U.S. military force.

This justification sets itself apart from the other justifications listed in a few important respects. Perhaps most obviously, its wording – including the word "terrorist" – is likely to prime stereotypes about Arab Muslims (Sides and Gross 2013). Furthermore, this justification may also call to mind a specific subset of U.S. military interventions that are currently ongoing as part of the broader War on Terror, leading respondents to be more likely to endorse it as a continuation of the status quo. Finally, in line with the casualty sensitivity literature, respondents may reason that individual interventions of this sort are small-scale to the point at which they don't present a high risk of U.S. casualties, leading them to endorse the reason.

Intervene to Stop Genocide or Civil War: Baseline endorsement for this justification is also split, this time with a 62-38 majority opposing using military force for this reason. Moreover, endorsement of this justification is not as polarized along political lines, with 37% of Trump voters and 46% of Clinton voters endorsing the use of military force in this context. This could reflect a status quo bias in the public, as the United States – despite

being obligated by international law to intervene to stop genocides – did not do so in the highly publicized cases of Rwanda and Darfur.

Assist the Spread of Democracy: Baseline support for this justification is even lower than the baseline support for securing the supply of oil, with just under 17% of all adults endorsing this justification for the use of military force. Moreover, the margins of support for this justification are nearly identical for Clinton and Trump voters, at 84-16 and 85-15 opposition, respectively. This could be due at least in part to the term "spreading democracy" being most closely associated with the Iraq War, which remains highly unpopular in the public and was criticized by both major party candidates in 2016 – despite both candidates having been, to various degrees, in favor of the war at its onset. This combination of an association with a highly unpopular military intervention and a lack of elite cues pushing in the other direction leaves it unclear, at the outset, if there are any groups of citizens who are particularly likely to endorse this use of U.S. military force.

Protect Allies Under Attack: A 70-30 majority of all adults support using the U.S. military to aid our allies, with a relatively small gap emerging between Clinton and Trump voters (72% and 80% support, respectively). That endorsement of using U.S. military force for this reason is slightly higher among Trump voters may be surprising, given his reticence to commit to honoring U.S. commitments to NATO and Japan while on the campaign trail However, the likelihood of support for this justification being positively associated with age – with the oldest respondents having been alive during World War II and the youngest respondents having grown up in an era of unilaterial U.S. military intervention – combined with age's association with partisanship, could perhaps offset any elite cues sent during 2016 that pushed in the opposite direction.

Help the UN Uphold International Law: Of all of the reasons the CCES offered for using U.S. military force abroad, helping the UN uphold international law was the one on

which the public was most divided, with a 56-44 majority rejecting this justification. This overall split reflects an even starker political divide, with a 62-38 majority of Clinton voters supporting the use of U.S. military force for this reason and a 69-31 majority of Trump voters opposing it. Again, breaking this question down by 2016 voting behavior is important given the cues elites sent during the election campaign. Not only did Donald Trump advocate ignoring international law when he argued the U.S. should "take the oil," as mentioned above, he regularly called for other uses of military force that would violate international law, such as torturing suspected terrorists and bombing their families. Furthermore, the wording of this justification explicitly invokes the United Nations, which has been viewed less favorably by Republican elites since the early 1990s (Busby and Monten 2012) and by self-identified Republican citizens since the run-up to the Iraq War (Poushter 2016).

Model Specification

Of course, simple crosstabs and other descriptive analyses of these questions could be reflecting differences in attitudes toward the use of military force based on partisanship or ideology, both of which are associated with race and gender. To account for these associations, I specify logistic[4] regressions predicting respondents' endorsement of each individual reason for using military force. My initial hypotheses are simply that black and Latino respondents will be generally less likely to endorse the use of military force, and that there will in some cases be an interactive effect between the race and gender of the respondent.

As such, I model the likelihood of endorsing each (separate) reason for the use of military force as a function of racial attitudes and the interaction race and gender, controlling for other demographic factors that could plausibly be assumed to be associated with militaristic attitudes: partisanship, ideology, age, Evangelical identification, family income, and having

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[4] It would be inappropriate to sum the number of reasons a given respondent endorses for using military force to run one comprehensive count-based model, since the reasons don't cleary fall on one latent dimension of militarism. In fact, as suggested in the previous section, some of these justifications may be mutually exclusive: using military force to secure our country's oil supply could be in violation of international law, for example, in which case endorsing one may necessarily entail rejecting the other.

completed a bachelors degree. I operationalize racial attitudes using three of the four items on the FIRE scale (DeSante and Smith, n.d.), which is included in the 2016 CCES. Those three items are:

- White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.

- Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.

- I am angry that racism exists.

The fourth item, "I am fearful of people of other races," is dropped due to low correlation with the other three items. This is expected, as the authors of the FIRE scale argue that it taps into two dimensions of racial attitudes, and as such the four items are not meant to all be summed together into one scale. Following Schaffner, MacWilliams, and Nteta (n.d.), I refer to this three-item scale as "Acceptance of Racism," given the items' systemic rather than individual focus. The authors also note that their scale correlates with public opinion on a number of public policy issues, from overtly racial issues like affirmative action to issues that implicitly invoke race such as the Affordable Care Act, in keeping with findings elsewhere in the literature that public opinion in the United States is becoming increasingly polarized by racial attitudes (Tesler 2013). It seems reasonable to expect that the Acceptance of Racism scale will serve as a decent proxy for other measures of ethnocentrism or nationalism that would more directly implicate foreign policy but are not included in the CCES.

Additionally, I control for the salience of the military to the respondent, operationalized using three binary variables: whether the respondent or a member of their family is an active member of the armed forces, whether the respondent or a member of their family was formerly an active member of the armed forces, and whether the respondent lives in the same county as an active military base.[5] The first two of these flags control for the likely possibility that people with personal experience with the military have different attitudes toward its use. The the third controls for the plausible, though perhaps less obvious, possibility that

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[5] While I was unable to find a comprehensive list of domestic military bases by county, I was able to use the Federal Communication Commission's API to identify counties with active military bases using base latitudes and longitudes made publicly available by the Department of Defense.

people whose local economies are more reliant on military activity have different attitudes toward its use.

Results

Coefficients for each model specification are shown in Table 1. The controls for factorized party ID and ideology are not shown. As the numeric variables for age, family income, and Acceptance of Racism are centered at their means and represented in standard deviations, the intercept is interpretable as the coefficient for being a white, male, non-Evangelical, non-college educated liberal Democrat of average age, family income, and acceptance of racism with no military salience. The coefficients for each of these variables represents the change in log-odds of endorsing the given justification associated with a one standard deviation increase in the given independent variable.

The McFadden's R^2 and area under the ROC curve for each of these models indicate that they leave much additional variation unexplained, although some (destroy terrorist camp, help the UN uphold international law) fit better than others (stop genocide, assist the spread of democracy). This is in part due to inherent noise in measuring public opinion on foreign policy, and may also be in part due to the imbalance in many of the outcomes. However, test set/training set validation indicates that these models are not biased in any particular direction, with out-of-sample prediction recovering the observed distribution of endorsement within two percentage points for each outcome.

Consistent with Eichenberg (2003, 2016), the coefficient for female – in this case interpretable as Female*White, given the interaction terms included in the model – is negative and significant in all cases. Similarly, in all of the cases in which the three flags for military salience – active military, inactive military, and near base – are significant, their sign is positive, indicating that respondents who have a more direct stake in military activity are generally more favorable toward using military force across a range of justifications. However, it is worth noting that living in a county with an active military base is only significantly

Table 1: Predictors of Endorsing Each Reason for Using Military Force

	Oil	Ter. Camp	Genocide	Democracy	Allies	Int. Law
(Intercept)	-1.91*	0.18*	-0.28*	-1.68*	0.82*	0.32*
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Female	-0.42*	-0.47*	-0.21*	-0.17*	-0.51*	-0.09*
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Age	-0.04*	0.22*	-0.10*	-0.12*	0.14*	0.04*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Evangelical	0.19*	0.03	0.13*	0.36*	0.09*	-0.06*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Family Income	0.04*	0.14*	0.09*	-0.05*	0.13*	0.06*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
College	-0.15*	0.03	0.25*	-0.08*	0.12*	0.15*
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Active Military	0.03	0.06	0.11*	0.17*	0.09*	0.10*
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Inactive Military	-0.02	0.23*	0.11*	0.03	0.31*	0.12*
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Near Base	-0.05	0.01	0.02	-0.03	-0.01	0.05*
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Acceptance of Racism	0.23*	0.09*	-0.34*	-0.02	-0.17*	-0.45*
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Black	0.20*	-0.11	-0.20*	0.21*	-0.53*	-0.27*
	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Latino	-0.04	-0.17*	-0.13*	0.17*	-0.52*	-0.19*
	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Asian	-0.01	-0.19*	-0.21*	0.59*	-0.54*	-0.08
	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.08)
Other Race	-0.09	-0.12	-0.01	-0.10	-0.09	-0.29*
	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.07)
Female*Black	0.24*	-0.24*	-0.25*	0.11	0.13	-0.41*
	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Female*Latina	-0.02	-0.17*	-0.15*	0.11	0.09	-0.37*
	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Female*Asian	-0.05	-0.04	-0.16	-0.20	0.19	-0.16
	(0.15)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Female*Other Race	0.13	0.02	0.04	0.12	0.01	0.04
	(0.13)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.10)
McFadden's R^2	.05	.08	.02	.03	.05	.08
Area Under ROC Curve	.67	.69	.62	.61	.65	.70

Standard errors in parentheses; * indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

associated with the likelihood of endorsing one reason for using military force – upholding international law – and this effect is substantively small. Individual-level military service on the part of a respondent or family member in the past or present appears to be more strongly associated with foreign policy reasoning than geographic proximity to a military base.

There are a number of control variables that come up as significant in particular places that merit attention. As mentioned in the previous section, age is in fact associated with endorsing the use of military force in order to aid allies. Family income is positive and significant in all but one case, which could reflect the fact that the military is disproportionately reliant on low-income communities to fill its ranks (Lutz 2008). Having completed a college degree is significantly associated with endorsing the use of military force to stop genocide – to speculate, this could be in part attributable to previous movements on college campuses to raise awareness about past genocides, but at this point this is mere speculation.

Looking further down Table 1 to the key independent variables of interest, the justifications for the use of military force that respondents accept and endorse are strongly associated with racial attitudes, race, and the intersection of race and gender. Acceptance of racism is significantly associated with five of the six justifications for using military force – positively with securing the supply of oil and destroying a terrorist camp; negatively with stopping genocide, aiding allies, and upholding international law.

Visualizations of these relationships shown in Figures 2 and 3. As Figure 2 shows, the substantive effects of moving an otherwise-average respondent between racial groups is substantively small, albeit non-neglibile.[6] However, changing an otherwise-average white respondent's level of Acceptance of Racism produces marked changes in the sorts of reasons for using military force that they are willing to endorse.

As Figure 3 shows[7], a white, moderate independent at the 25th percentile of Acceptance

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[6] One likely reason for the substantively small effects shown in Figure 2 is that Acceptance of Racism is held constant across all hypothetical respondents when generating these predictions. Acceptance of Racism, which accounts for much of the variation in endorsement of these justifications for using military force, is not constant across racial groups.

[7] Predicted probability curves in Figure 3 are shown without uncertainty intervals in this draft for clarity.
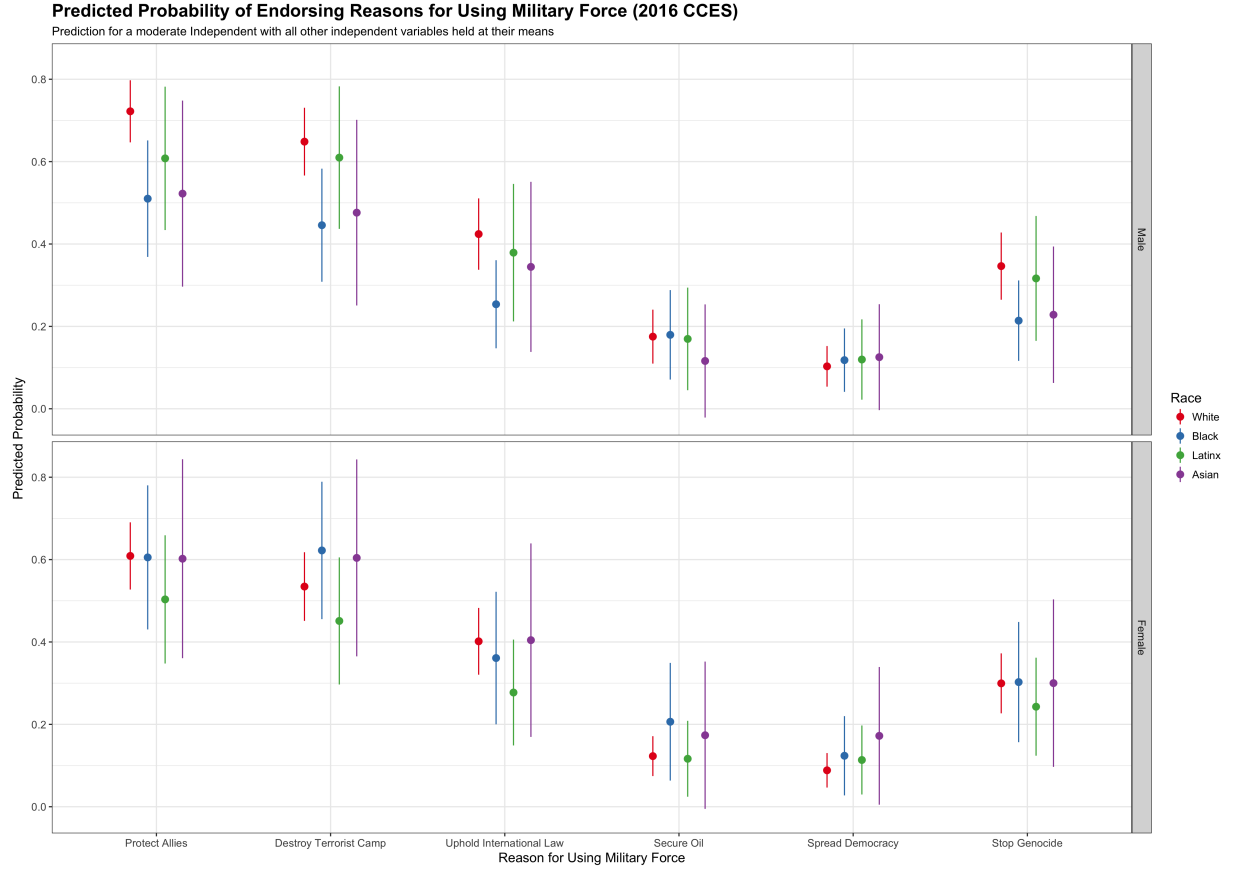
Figure 2: Predicted Probabilities by Race and Gender

of Racism (scoring an 8.3 out of 100 on the scale) who is otherwise average across all other

independent variables would likely endorse using military force to aid allies who were under

attack by foreign nations, would have slightly better-than-even odds of endorsing the use

of force to destroy a terrorist camp, would have slightly worse-than-even odds of endorsing

the use of force to help the UN uphold international law, would be unlikely to endorse the

use of force to stop a genocide or civil war, and would be very unlikely to endorse the use

of force to secure the supply of oil or assist in spreading democracy. However, an otherwise

identical repsondent at the 75th percentile of acceptance of racism (scoring a 50 out of 100

on the scale) would be roughly equally likely to endorse using force to aid allies and destroy a

terrorist camp, while being much less likely to endorse using force to stop genocide or uphold

international law and somewhat more likely to endorse using force to secure the supply of

Predicted Probability of Endorsing Reasons for Using Military Force (2016 CCES)
Prediction for a white moderate Independent with all other independent variables held at their means
Interquartile region for Acceptance of Racism denoted with vertical gray dashed lines; median denoted with a vertical black dashed line
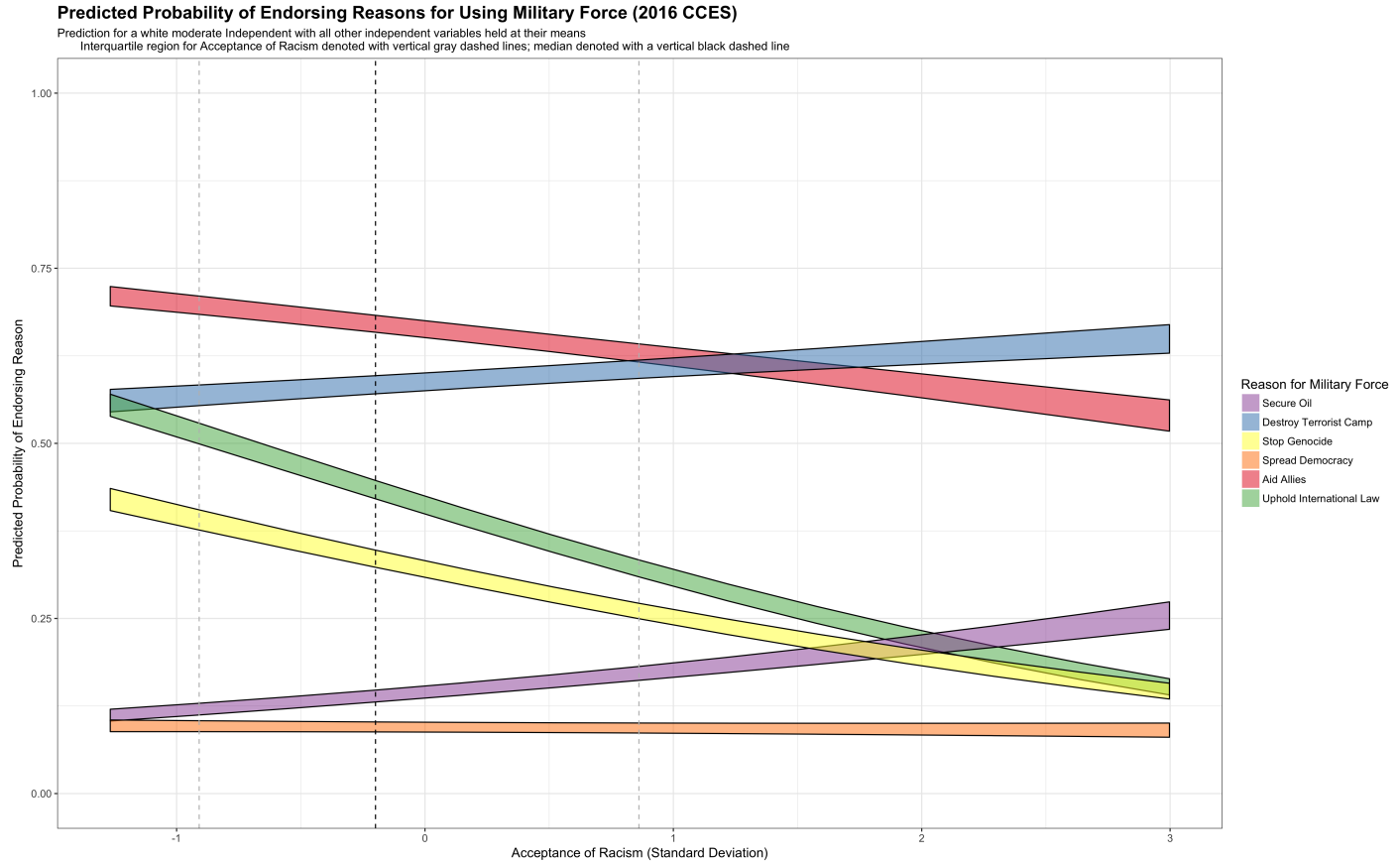
Figure 3: Predicted Probabilities by Acceptance of Racism

oil. An otherwise-identical respondent who maxes out the Acceptance of Racism scale is more likely to endorse the use of force to destroy a terrorist camp than they are to endorse any other use of military force, and are more likely to endorse the use of force to secure the supply of oil than they are to endorse the use of force to stop a genocide or uphold international law.

The association between Acceptance of Racism and endorsement of using U.S. troops to help the United Nations uphold international law warrants brief additional attention, as this finding may not seem obvious (or at least, did not seem obvious to me) at first glance. However, there are good reasons to believe that public opinion toward the United Nations and endorsement of international law in the United States are heavily intertwined with attitudes about systemic racism and white supremacy. As Elizabeth Gillespie McRae

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outlines in her recently published book, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy*, the United Nations emerged as a central figure in segregationist discourse during the immediate aftermath of World War II. Activists interested in the maintenance of Jim Crow merged concerns over state sovereignty – stoking fears over UNESCO-approved curricula and the imposition of human rights by a foreign entity – with broader anti-internationalist and anti-communist sentiments that were gaining traction at the time. To this day, the United Nations is a frequent target of conservative activists, media personalities, and politicians, who warn of violations of state and local sovereignty. These concerns can be traced in part to segregationist organizing, and I offer this historical link as a plausible mechanism by which Acceptance of Racism is negatively associated with support for using U.S. troops to help the United Nations uphold international law today.

Robustness Check: Is This Just Politics?

Given the increasing correlation between racial attitudes and political identifications such as partisanship and ideology (Enders and Scott 2018), it is possible that, even when controlling for them in a regression, the effects of Acceptance of Racism could be difficult to interpret as distinct phenomena. In order to begin to account for this possibility, I re-specified models on subsets of respondents on either side of various political divides: liberals and conservatives; Democrats and Republicans; and Clinton and Trump voters.[8] We should not necessarily expect the coefficients to be equal in these subsetted models when compared to the full model – there may be interactive effects such that Acceptance of Racism is *more strongly associated* with endorsing particular reasons for the use of U.S. force abroad among some politically-relevant subsets of voters. However, if the association between political identification and racial attitudes is what's driving the findings presented in the full models, we should expect the signs and/or significances of the relationship between Acceptance of Racism and en-

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[8] Model specifications are identical except the variable that is used to subset the data is excluded. So for the models that subset to liberals or conservatives, for example, ideology is excluded from the specification. Clinton and Trump voters are defined as respondents who both reported voting for the specified candidate and whose turnout was confirmed using a voter file.

dorsement of justifications for different uses of military force to be different when the model is specified on subsets of the data with different political identities.

Table 2: Acceptance of Racism's t-values in Full vs. Subsetted Models

Subset	Oil	Ter. Camp	Genocide	Democracy	Allies	Int. Law
None	15.35	6.45	-26.16	-1.01	-12.52	-34.70
Liberals	13.45	2.97	-16.96	**6.57**	-8.69	-15.31
Conservatives	4.90	6.22	-10.01	**-4.77**	-2.17	-18.52
Democrats	13.62	**-1.11**	-21.65	**4.48**	-14.66	-21.07
Republicans	5.42	6.57	-10.76	**-6.01**	-2.30	-19.36
Clinton Voters	8.18	**1.26**	-14.07	**2.63**	-7.84	-12.02
Trump Voters	3.01	3.21	-6.94	**-5.82**	-3.32	-14.58

Bold indicates that sign and/or significance in subsetted model does not match with full model.

Table 2 shows the t-values for Acceptance of Racism in the full models and each of the subsetted models. Instances in which the sign or significance for the predictor in a subset does not match that of the full model is bolded. As the comparisons show, the sign and significance of Acceptance of Racism in the subsetted models matches its sign and significance in the corresponding full model in nearly all cases in which the variable is significant in the full model. The only exception is that the relationship between Acceptance of Racism and endorsing using U.S. troops to destroy a terrorist camp is not significant for Democrats or Clinton voters. The only outcome for which subsetting by political identification consistently changes the sign and significance of Acceptance of Racism is assisting the spread of democracy. Acceptance of Racism is not significantly associated with endorsing this justification in the full model, but appears to be significant in opposite directions when respondents who are left or right of center are modeled specifically. For liberals, Democrats, and Clinton voters, Acceptance of Racism is associated with an increased likelihood of endorsing the use of U.S. troops to assist the spread of democracy; for conservatives, Republicans, and Trump voters, Acceptance of Racism is associated with a decreased likelihood of endorsing this justification for the use of U.S. troops abroad. In all other subsets, both the sign and significance of Acceptance of Racism match what is reported in the corresponding full model.

To be clear, there are substantive differences in the t-values shown in Table 2 that can be

taken as evidence of interactions between Acceptance of Racism and political identification. The magnitude and precision of the relationships is in fact different for different political subsets in different cases. However, this interaction only appears to change how we should interpret Acceptance of Racism's relationship with justifications for the use of military force in two of our observed cases. For one justification, destroying a terrorist camp, the main finding should likely be narrowed to note that the relationship seems to be driven in particular by respondents who are right-of-center in terms of political identification and behavior, as Acceptance of Racism is not significantly associated with endorsing this justification among Democrats or Clinton voters (although it remains positive and significant for self-identified liberals). And for one justification, assisting the spread of democracy, the null result in the full model appears to mask heterogeneous and significant associations between Acceptance of Racism and justification endorsement on different sides of the political and ideological spectrums. In four out of six cases, changing the subset of politically-identified repsondents does not change in how we answer the general questions of whether and in what direction Acceptance of Racism is associated with endorsement.

Discussion

When leaders in democratic countries such as the United States prepare to use military force, they seek to rally the public to their cause, as they can only continue to weild military power abroad if putting citizens in harms way remains popular at home. However, a generalized democratic mandate can mask important variations in the public's support for using military force, particularly among racial minorities who increasingly make up a disproportionate share of those who find themselves on the front lines. Extending past work on racial dimensions of public opinion regarding the use of military force, with a particular focus on the justifications for using force that different racial groups are likely to endorse, can help move toward a both generalized and contextualized understanding of public attitudes toward the use of military force.

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The analyses presented in this paper show two things: First, that U.S. foreign policy attitudes are noisy, complex, and difficult to fully account for on even a large-scale survey such as the CCES. Second, that race, and racial attitudes are nevertheless significantly associated with these attitudes, above and beyond what can be accounted for by partisanship, ideology, and demographic variables such as age, gender, and family income. In fact, in the one case in which racial attitudes were not found to be generally associated with endorsement of a justification for the use of U.S. troops abroad, assisting the spread of democracy, they were found to be significantly associated *in different directions* for respondents with different partisan and ideological identifications and voting behaviors. To be clear, additional work is needed to establish the causal mechanisms for these observational findings. Experimental analyses and text-based approaches analyzing how foreign policy is discussed among both elites and the mass public would both help augment this preliminary cross-sectional analysis.

Nevertheless, these findings are at least suggestive of implications for the study of public opinion on U.S. foreign policy, demonstrating the need to account for race and racial attitudes when attempting to explain variation in the uses of U.S. military force that the public is likely to accept or reject. As this paper shows, the ways in which U.S. citizens think about the use of military force – which reasons for using force they think are legitimate, and which they reject – are conditioned by race and racial attitudes. As the United States considers when and how to use its military force abroad, the arguments its leaders make to its citizens for why said force is justified will fall on differentially receptive ears, depending on the justifications deployed to articulate those arguments. Importantly, as is the case with domestic policy (Tesler 2013), it is impossible to escape race and racial attitudes when attempting to explain which foreign policy actions U.S. citizens will support and oppose.

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