



# The Gendered Peace Premium

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The adage that “only Nixon could go to China” suggests hawkish leaders face fewer domestic political barriers to pursuing conciliation with foreign adversaries. Since hawks are viewed as less ideologically predisposed to peace than doves, their efforts at rapprochement are more likely to be perceived as in the national interest. We explore how this conventional wisdom intersects with prominent gender stereotypes about women’s role in national security. Do gender stereotypes that women are inclined toward peace make it more difficult for women leaders to pursue conciliation? In a series of survey experiments, we find evidence of a gendered peace premium—a penalty women leaders face for pursuing peace. When women leaders seek rapprochement with foreign adversaries, they are perceived as acting “according to type.” Consequently, women’s conciliatory policy proposals are viewed as less likely to be in the national interest than identical policies pursued by male leaders. Partisanship dynamics significantly moderate the gendered peace premium, and policy success can attenuate women leaders’ disadvantage. While this discriminatory dynamic does not make it impossible for women leaders to seek and achieve peace, it does make it more difficult and politically costly than some perspectives assume.

El proverbio de que «solo Nixon podría ir a China» sugiere que los líderes de línea dura se enfrentan a menos barreras políticas internas para buscar la conciliación con adversarios extranjeros. Dado que los líderes de línea dura (halcones) son vistos como menos predispuestos ideológicamente a la paz que los líderes de línea moderada (palomas), resulta más probable que sus esfuerzos de acercamiento se perciban como de interés nacional. Estudiamos cómo esta sabiduría convencional se cruza con los estereotipos de género prominentes sobre el papel de las mujeres en la seguridad nacional. ¿Provocan los estereotipos de género, que sugieren que las mujeres se inclinan más hacia la paz, que resulte más difícil para las mujeres líderes buscar la conciliación? Encontramos evidencias, a través de una serie de experimentos de encuesta, de una «prima» de género en materia de paz, es decir, una penalización a la que se enfrentan las mujeres líderes por buscar la paz. Cuando las mujeres líderes buscan un acercamiento con adversarios extranjeros, se percibe que actúan «de acuerdo con el tipo». En consecuencia, se considera que las propuestas de política conciliatoria por parte de las mujeres tienen menos probabilidades de ser de interés nacional que aquellas políticas idénticas aplicadas por los líderes masculinos. La dinámica del partidismo modera significativamente la «prima» de género en materia de paz, y el éxito de las políticas puede atenuar las desventajas que tienen las mujeres líderes. Si bien esta dinámica discriminatoria no provoca que sea imposible que las mujeres líderes busquen y logren la paz, sí la hace más difícil y políticamente costosa de lo que algunas perspectivas suponen.

L’adage «only Nixon could go to China» (seul Nixon pouvait aller en Chine) suggère que les dirigeants belliqueux sont confrontés à moins d’obstacles politiques dans leur pays quand il s’agit de poursuivre la conciliation avec des adversaires étrangers. Les acteurs belliqueux étant perçus comme possédant moins de prédispositions idéologiques pour la paix que les acteurs pacifistes, leurs efforts de rapprochement seront plus facilement perçus comme correspondant à l’intérêt national. Nous analysons la relation de cette pensée conventionnelle avec les stéréotypes genrés prédominants quant au rôle de la femme en sécurité nationale. Les stéréotypes genrés selon lesquels les femmes seraient plus enclines à la paix compliquent-ils la tâche des femmes qui tentent d’obtenir la conciliation ? Dans une série d’expériences de sondage, nous trouvons des preuves d’une prime de paix genrée, c’est-à-dire une pénalité que les dirigeantes risquent lorsqu’elles poursuivent la paix. Quand les dirigeantes tentent d’obtenir un rapprochement avec des adversaires étrangers, on estime qu’elles agissent «conformément à leur type». Par conséquent, les propositions de conciliation des femmes sont moins souvent considérées comme étant dans l’intérêt national que des politiques identiques soutenues par des dirigeants. La dynamique partisane pondère de façon conséquente la prime de paix genrée, et la réussite politique est susceptible d’atténuer le désavantage des dirigeantes. Bien que cette dynamique discriminatoire ne signifie pas qu’il est impossible pour des dirigeantes de souhaiter et d’obtenir la paix, elle rend les choses bien plus difficiles et coûteuses sur le plan politique que certaines perspectives le pensent.

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## Introduction

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

—Barnett Rubin, Special Rep. for Afghanistan (Whitlock 2019)

Women increasingly occupy executive offices around the world (figure 1) and hence play a growing role in foreign policy decision-making. Understanding how gender stereotypes affect foreign policymaking and how women leaders can overcome discrimination is therefore a key question for scholars and policymakers. Some existing work contends that social norms and bioevolutionary factors incline women toward peace. An implication is that a world with more female leaders should be more pacific (Fukuyama 1998; Caprioli and Boyer 2001; Pinker 2011). This view is shared by prominent politicians like President Barack Obama. Yet this essentialized perspective neglects the role of gender stereotypes, which characterize women leaders as weak on national security.<sup>1</sup> If women leaders must appear tough to combat discriminatory expectations, gender stereotypes may spur female executives to engage in displays of aggression and resolve (Enloe 1990; Schramm and Stark 2020; Schwartz and Blair 2020). As the above quote suggests, gender stereotypes may give women leaders domestic political incentives to eschew—not pursue—peace, thereby limiting the degree to which women leaders can effectively carry out their preferred policy agendas.

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

We consider whether an analogous logic applies to leader sex. Metaphorically speaking, could a woman president “go to China?” Gender-stereotypical expectations that women are less belligerent and ill-suited for leadership in security crises (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Lawless 2004) may mean women executives face a similar disadvantage as doves. Extending research on negotiators' sex and public evaluations of peace proposals (Maoz 2009; Anisman-Razin et al. 2018; Gillespie 2020), we argue that conciliatory policies initiated by women leaders will be judged more harshly than those proposed by male leaders. Because women are perceived as naturally more inclined toward peace, we expect the public will view peace proposals they initiate as less prudent than identical proposals by men. By acting according to their gender-stereotypical type, women leaders who pursue conciliatory policies are viewed

as less judicious, less competent, and less likely to be pursuing policies in the national interest. Consequently, women pay a higher domestic political penalty for attempting to make peace. Policy success attenuates this penalty, meaning women can overcome discriminatory constraints. Nevertheless, women still face higher political risks when proposing peace compared to their male counterparts. These arguments accord with evidence that women leaders have political incentives to adopt more belligerent foreign policies to counter gender stereotypes (Post and Sen 2020; Schramm and Stark 2020; Schwartz and Blair 2020), and cut against the essentialized view that women will always adopt dovish policies.

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

We conduct two experiments on representative samples of US citizens. The experiments involve a conflict between the United States and China. We choose to study the views of the American public given the United States' outsized influence in global affairs and the particular importance of the United States–China relationship.<sup>4</sup> Overall, we find evidence for the existence of a gendered peace premium—that is, a penalty women leaders face for pursuing peace. More optimistically, we also find that this penalty disappears when rapprochement is successful. In line with much extant work (e.g., Jamieson 1995; Heilman 2001), this finding suggests women leaders must prove they can achieve desirable outcomes in order to avoid gender-based penalties.

In Study 1, we experimentally manipulate the US president's sex and partisanship, in addition to whether they maintain a relatively hardline, status quo policy toward China, or adopt a more conciliatory policy in an effort to achieve rapprochement. In accordance with our theoretical expectations, we find that women leaders are punished 11.5 to 14.5 percentage points more than male leaders for pursuing peace. Successful efforts at rapprochement attenuate this penalty, implying women leaders can make peace without backlash in the long term, though they may still face a short-term penalty before the outcome of conciliatory efforts is clear. Per the main logic of the “only Nixon could go to China” adage, the gendered peace premium is driven by the belief that conciliatory policies adopted by women are less in the national interest than identical policies adopted by men (Cowen and Sutter 1998; Cukierman and Tommasi 1998).

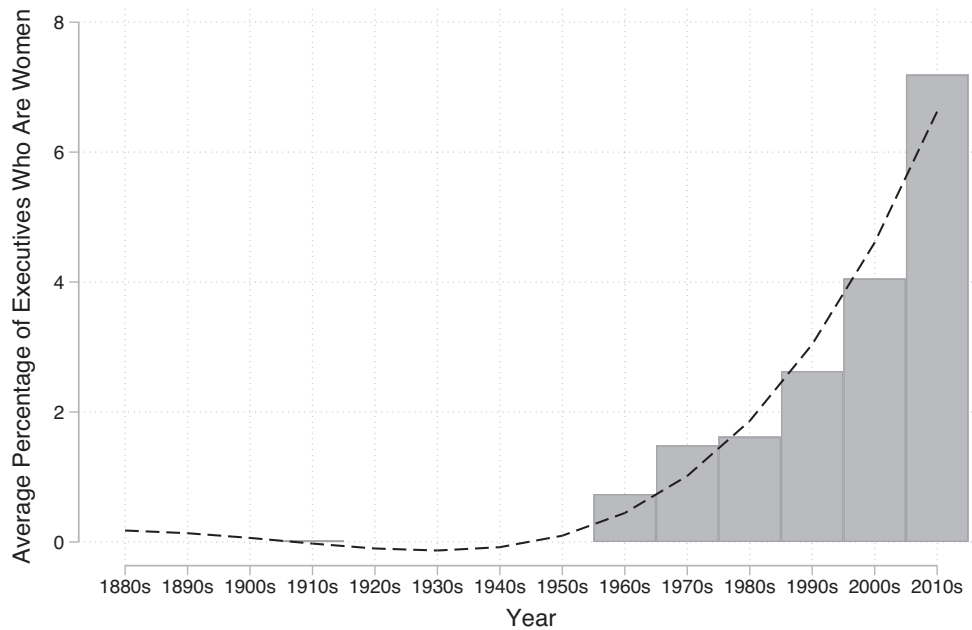
Study 2 differs from Study 1 in that it directly manipulates the US president's foreign policy disposition (i.e., hawk or dove), in addition to their sex, partisanship, and crisis action. Given that the hypothesized gendered peace pre-

<sup>2</sup>Our designs and hypotheses were pre-registered at OSF.

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

<sup>4</sup>Prior research also establishes that the views of the public can impact policymakers (Tomz, Weeks, and Yarhi-Milo 2020), and foreign policy issues can have a significant effect on elections (e.g., Karol and Miguel 2007).

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



**Figure 1.** Women’s leadership is becoming more common over time. This graph shows the average share of women executives worldwide by decade between 1880 and 2019, along with a fractional polynomial trend. Data on executives come from Archigos and REIGN.

mium operates because women are perceived as more inclined toward peace than men, directly telling respondents a leader’s foreign policy disposition, and thus inclination toward peace, makes sex a less informative heuristic. That is, a direct dispositional prime largely blocks the causal pathway by which sex shapes evaluations of a leader’s actions. Per our theoretical logic, we therefore find that the aggregate gendered peace premium disappears in Study 2.<sup>5</sup> This null finding provides suggestive evidence that perceptions of a leader’s foreign policy disposition (i.e., inclination toward peace) are a key mechanism explaining the gendered peace premium. However, even when directly telling respondents about a leader’s foreign policy disposition, we find that women leaders still face a 9–14 percentage point penalty among out-partisans. That is, Democratic (Republican) respondents punish Republican (Democratic) female presidents for pursuing peace.

Overall, this project makes several important contributions. First, we extend the literature on “going against type” and the hawk’s advantage in pursuing peace by applying its logic to an important empirical trend: the growing number of women in executive offices around the world. Extant research has examined whether hawks (Clare 2014; Mattes and Weeks 2019) or Republicans (Trager and Vavreck 2011; Brutger 2021) have an advantage in pursuing reconciliation with enemies, but has not analyzed the impact of other leader characteristics such as sex. We combine this literature on crisis bargaining with related research on how gender stereotypes shape negotiation (Maoz 2009; Anisman-Razin et al. 2018; Naurin, Naurin, and Alexander 2019). Our findings also build on feminist literature concerning the importance of women’s inclusion in peacebuilding (Elshtain 1995; Hudson et al. 2009). Our finding that policy success mat-

ters more for women leaders underscores the unique importance of their place at the negotiating table. Because women face greater penalties for policy failure, their peace proposals should be more credible.

Second, this paper contributes to the large and growing literature on sex, gender, and political violence (Barnhart et al. 2020; Cohen and Karim 2022). Much work in this vein adopts a macro-level approach, examining cross-national variation (e.g., Caprioli and Boyer 2001; Post and Sen 2020; Schramm and Stark 2020). This research highlights important, generalizable correlations between leader sex and foreign policy outcomes. However, extant macro-level research faces challenges in making causal inferences since neither sex nor gender can be randomly assigned cross-nationally (Reiter 2015). The strength of our micro-level empirical approach is thus enhanced internal validity, since we can randomize leader sex in the context of our experiments. As Cohen and Karim (2022) underscore, this strategy is an important way forward for scholarship on sex and gender in politics. This paper therefore contributes to the emerging experimental literature on sex and gender in political science (e.g., Bauer 2017; Teele, Kalla, and Rosenbluth 2018; Schwartz and Blair 2020). Our findings also echo work in American and comparative politics (e.g., Jamieson 1995; Barnes and O’Brien 2018), which further highlights the political barriers women leaders face as a result of gender stereotypes.

Third, this study has important implications for debates about whether increasing sex equality in executive office-holding will lead to less belligerent foreign policies. Supporters of the essentialized “women-as-peacemakers” view argue that bioevolutionary factors (Fukuyama 1998; Pinker 2011) and socialization processes (Goldstein 2001) incline women toward peace. Alternatively, supporters of the “iron ladies” view contend that more belligerent female leaders are selected into office (Enloe 1990), and that once in office, female executives face incentives to combat gen-

<sup>5</sup>On the other hand, we replicate Mattes and Weeks’ (2019) finding that hawks hold an advantage relative to doves when it comes to pursuing peace. Replicating this well-known result builds confidence in our design.



der stereotypes by adopting hawkish language and policies (Tickner 1992; Elshain 1995; Sjoberg and Via 2010; Schramm and Stark 2020; Schwartz and Blair 2020). Our findings bolster the latter perspective, and suggest that discriminatory gender stereotypes generate domestic political barriers for women leaders interested in pursuing conciliation. This dynamic does not make it impossible for women to seek and achieve peace, but it does mean their efforts may be more politically costly (Kreps, Saunders, and Schultz 2018). Because policy success evaporates the gendered peace premium, our findings also imply that if they initiate rapprochement, women leaders have stronger incentives to ensure that conciliatory overtures yield peace. Proposals initiated by women should therefore be more credible since failure is domestically costly.

### The Advantage of Going “Against Type”

Numerous historical examples illustrate the paradoxical fact that substantial policy shifts are often taken by leaders and parties whose traditional issue positions would oppose the policy in question. Famously, US rapprochement with China during the Cold War was initiated by President Nixon, who held a well-known reputation for hawkishness and belligerence (Cowen and Sutter 1998; Cukierman and Tommasi 1998). Existing literature accounts for these dynamics by emphasizing the domestic political advantages politicians gain by “going against type.” Scholars have considered the role of foreign policy dispositions (hawk–dove) and partisanship (Republican–Democrat) in conciliation. Our theoretical point of departure is to also consider how a leader’s sex and gender stereotypes impact the mass public’s evaluation of peace proposals.

#### *The Dispositional Peace Premium*

Intuitively, leaders who want peace the most should be the most likely to attain it. Yet, prior work demonstrates that these leaders often face the greatest domestic political barriers to achieving it (Nincic 1988; Cowen and Sutter 1998; Cukierman and Tommasi 1998; Schultz 2005; Kreps, Saunders, and Schultz 2018; Saunders 2018; Mattes and Weeks 2019). Compared to hawks, foreign policy doves face a relative disadvantage in pursuing reconciliation with foreign enemies because they are perceived as more likely to support peace efforts and nonviolent policies. We call this dynamic the “dispositional peace premium” because it relates to a leader’s foreign policy disposition (Brutger and Kertzer 2018).

Foreign policy dispositions are the core set of values and beliefs people hold about the world. Scholarship identifies a variety of these orientations, including internationalism, isolationism, and militant assertiveness. Militant assertiveness, which distinguishes hawks from doves, has received particular attention. Hawks are concerned about deterrence and prioritize aggressive foreign policies to dissuade adversaries from taking expansionist actions. By contrast, doves view conflict as rooted in misperceptions and eschew interventionism in favor of cooperation (Brutger and Kertzer 2018). These divergent preferences explain why hawks are better able to pursue reconciliation with adversaries. Policy choices are an informative signal about external circumstances.

This is particularly so in the realm of foreign policy, where incumbents hold vast information, while publics are relatively uninformed (Cukierman and Tommasi 1998). To implement proposed foreign policies, political elites have to garner public support (Tomz, Weeks, and Yarhi-Milo 2020).

This requires providing private information to the public about the desirability of a proposed policy (Cowen and Sutter 1998). When evaluating the wisdom of a policy proposal, citizens take stock of leaders’ personal and ideological proclivities and the external circumstances guiding leaders’ actions (Nincic 1988). If leaders propose policies at odds with their ideological predispositions, publics receive stronger signals that external circumstances, rather than personal preferences, are motivating the proposed policies (Schultz 2005).

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

#### *The Partisan Peace Premium*

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

### Theory: The Gendered Peace Premium

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

Contrary to this intuition, and per the going against type framework, we posit a “gendered peace premium,” whereby women leaders face a relative disadvantage in pursuing reconciliation with foreign adversaries compared to male leaders. Specifically, we argue that because of gender-stereotypical expectations that women are pacifistic and prefer cooperation to force (Sjoberg and Via 2010; Eichenberg 2019), women leaders are perceived as more likely to support conciliation, and hence face greater domestic political barriers to peacemaking.

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

Why might citizens rely, at least partially, on a leader’s sex in order to assess their inclination toward peace rather than relying *wholly* on their past foreign policy statements and actions? There are at least three reasons. First, although public opinion is central to foreign policy decision-making in democracies (Tomz, Weeks, and Yarhi-Milo 2020), the mass public is often poorly informed about foreign policy issues in general. This means the general public frequently lacks a clear sense of leaders’ past foreign policy statements and actions (Guisinger and Saunders 2017; Kertzer, Brooks, and Brooks 2021). Given this lack of attention, many members of the public may rely on more widely known characteristics—like a leader’s sex (or potentially party identification)—as a shortcut to estimate a leader’s inclination toward peace. Using a leader’s sex as a mental shortcut not only helps people compensate for their lack of attention to foreign policy, but also aids in dealing with information overload (Malhotra 1984).

Second, in the real world, leaders often adopt both hawkish *and* dovish positions on comparable foreign policy issues—if they adopt substantive positions at all. For example, President Obama withdrew from Iraq and signed a nuclear deal with Iran; however, he also escalated the war in Afghanistan and expanded drone use. President Trump signed a peace deal with the Taliban and sought rapprochement with North Korea, but also withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal, assassinated Qasem Soleimani, and adopted hawkish policies toward China. Contrary actions like this blur the distinction between hawk and dove categories, making it more difficult for members of the public to categorize leaders based *solely* on their prior foreign policy statements and actions. By contrast, there is typically little or no uncertainty about a leader’s sex and gender identity.

Third, to the extent that some members of the public believe that women are, by their biological nature, inclined toward peace, prior foreign policy statements and actions may not fully disabuse them of this notion. Similarly, even if a female leader is a Republican, which may suggest a lower inclination toward peace given partisan reputations, we expect they will still be viewed as relatively more inclined toward peace than male leaders, given that this disposition toward peace may be perceived as part of women’s nature. Additionally, as previously discussed, partisan types are relatively weaker for foreign policy than domestic policy issues (Kertzer, Brooks, and Brooks 2021). We therefore expect leader sex will be a stronger signal of a leader’s inclination toward peace than partisan identification.

In accordance with our argument that citizens will utilize a leader’s sex to assess their foreign policy inclinations, a pervasive gender stereotype exists in the real world that women are ill-suited for national security leadership. Specifically, a wealth of evidence shows men are viewed as tougher and better able to handle military crises than women (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Lawless 2004). Across more than eighty countries, polling reveals a preference for male leadership in times of threat (Kim and Kang 2022). At the same time, women are perceived as more supportive of cooperation and more opposed to using force (Goldstein 2001). These perceptions are rooted in gender-stereotypical beliefs that men are innately aggressive and protective, whereas women are defenseless and require protection (Sjoberg and Via 2010).

Gender-stereotypical expectations of weakness give women leaders incentives to “act tough” in the realm of foreign policy (Tickner 1992; Schwartz and Blair 2020). For example, Koch and Fulton (2011) find that female executives across twenty-two countries are more likely to engage in conflict and spend on defense. Schramm and Stark (2020) find that female leaders in democracies are more likely to initiate disputes. Schwartz and Blair (2020) demonstrate that the public punishes female leaders less than male leaders for belligerence (i.e., threatening to use force), and punishes them more for inconsistency (i.e., backing down from threats). Qualitative evidence further shows women diplomats often propose the most belligerent policies (Bashevkin 2018).

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

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

In sum, there exists a pervasive gender-stereotypical belief that women harbor a natural predisposition favoring nonviolence. This belief is widely held among members of the American public (and foreign publics), and can wield influence on individuals’ evaluations of foreign policy behavior, even when people do not themselves subscribe to gender-stereotypical beliefs. To the extent women are perceived as holding a deep-seated or innate preference against the use of force, women leaders should face barriers to conciliation for precisely the same reason as doves. According to

<sup>6</sup>Note that Maoz (2009) and Anisman-Razin et al. (2018) analyze the impact of a *negotiator’s* sex, while we analyze the impact of an *executive’s* sex.

this logic, if a woman leader acts according to her (gender-stereotypical) type and proposes a conciliatory policy, then the public may assume she is doing so because she is naturally inclined toward peace, not because the policy is optimal. We call this dynamic the “gendered peace premium.” This logic suggests the following pre-registered hypothesis:

**H<sub>1</sub> (Gendered peace premium):** Women leaders will face a greater penalty than male leaders for pursuing a conciliatory policy toward a distrusted adversary.

Formally, we anticipate:

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

### Study 1 Design

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

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

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

We set our scenario in the near future so that subjects will be less likely to make assumptions about the identity of the president. [Brutger et al. \(2022\)](#) find no empirical consequence of hypothetical treatments, alleviating concerns about this aspect of our design.

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

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

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

When using the word “sex” to describe this experimental treatment, we are referring to the definition of the word provided by [Cohen and Karim \(2022, 419\)](#): “the biological or physiological features that make an individual a man or a woman.” By contrast, gender “refers to the socially constructed ideas and narratives of what it means to be a man or a woman and individuals' conformity to those ideas” ([Cohen and Karim 2022, 419](#)). We recognize that gender identity

does not always align with the sex assigned at birth. Since we do not precisely distinguish in our experimental text whether the pronouns “he” and “she” refer to a leader's sex or gender identity, we believe either term could accurately describe what we are manipulating in this treatment. Nonetheless, we primarily use the term “sex” because we expect that is the lens through which most survey respondents likely view male and female leaders in our treatments. On the other hand, we believe that *gender* stereotypes—expectations about how male and female leaders will and should act—will drive divergent evaluations of conciliatory efforts.

We recognize that leaders' identities are intersectional and bundled. In particular, by priming sex, we also risk priming race. In both studies, we measure perceptions of the president's race post-treatment to help assess whether it might be racial stereotyping, rather than leader sex, driving our results ([Dafoe, Zhang, and Caughey 2018](#)). This would be a potential concern if respondents believed female presidents were more likely to be non-white. Encouragingly, our results are robust to controlling for perceived race in a regression setting (online appendix, tables A3 and A12). Future research should specifically explore how intersectional identities impact peace premia.

Although our experimental scenario takes place in the future, one potential concern with our design is that the United States has never had a female president. We are sanguine that respondents approach scenarios describing female presidents seriously.<sup>7</sup> In the last four US presidential elections, female candidates have made serious primary bids, and in three of the last four elections, a woman has served as a major party presidential or vice presidential nominee.<sup>8</sup> We believe concerns that respondents did not take our prompt seriously are mitigated by the realistic possibility of a female president. We also set the experiment in the near future to minimize the extent to which respondents think of any particular current woman leader in US politics.<sup>9</sup>

Apart from sex, we also vary whether the president is a Democrat or Republican. Manipulating partisanship allows us to explore whether a partisan peace premium exists, whereby Republicans hold an advantage in pursuing conciliation ([Trager and Vavreck 2011](#)). Accounting for a leader's partisan identification is also important methodologically. A key challenge is information leakage, where manipulating one factor (e.g., sex) leads respondents to update their beliefs about other relevant, but not experimentally controlled dimensions ([Dafoe, Zhang, and Caughey 2018](#)). For example, since women are often perceived as more liberal than men, respondents might assume that female leaders are more likely to be Democrats ([Koch 2000; Lawless 2004](#)). If this is the case, then it could be partisan identification that drives higher domestic barriers to peace for female leaders rather than leader sex. Lack of information equivalence is an important limitation of existing experimental studies of

<sup>7</sup>This is not to say women have an easy road to the presidency. Women candidates confront many barriers and double standards ([Bauer 2017; Teele, Kalla, and Rosenbluth 2018](#)). Rather, our point is that it is realistic that a woman could be president in the near future.

<sup>8</sup>In the 2008 election, Sarah Palin was the Republican vice presidential nominee and Hillary Clinton was the Democratic primary candidate. In 2012, Michele Bachmann was a Republican primary candidate. In 2016, Hillary Clinton was the Democratic presidential nominee, and Carly Fiorina was the Republican primary candidate. In 2020, Kamala Harris was the Democratic vice presidential nominee, and a historic number of women ran for the Democratic nomination.

<sup>9</sup>Nevertheless, even if our treatment primes a real female politician, it is unlikely that this would significantly bias our results. [Kromer and Parry \(2019\)](#) show that priming exemplary or high-profile female politicians has no effect on gender stereotypes.



how sex shapes peace negotiations. For example, neither Maoz (2009) nor Anisman-Razin et al. (2018) control for party identification. As a result, respondents may believe that the women referenced in these studies are more likely to belong to the Israeli Labor party, while men are more likely to belong to Likud. These studies also utilize small, unrepresentative samples.

Unlike Mattes and Weeks (2019), we do not manipulate the US president's foreign policy disposition in Study 1. Directly telling respondents in an unambiguous way whether a leader is inclined toward peace or not—as the foreign policy disposition treatment in Mattes and Weeks' (2019) study does—largely blocks the key causal mechanism through which we expect the gendered peace premium to operate. Methodologically, doing so would thus not allow us to effectively test  $H_1$ . Moreover, this choice is also motivated by theory. As previously discussed, in the real world, members of the public may not pay close attention to a leader's foreign policy actions, and leaders may adopt both hawkish and dovish positions. This brings into question the practicality of a strong, unambiguous dispositional prime.<sup>10</sup>

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

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

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

For over a decade, the US public has rated China one of America's "greatest enemies,"<sup>11</sup> and the US government considers China a strategic competitor and possibly a revisionist power. A crisis with China in 2027 is therefore quite plausible. Following Mattes and Weeks (2019), conflict in the Arctic was chosen over other alternatives, like a clash over Taiwan, because it should not prime unrelated concerns about ally abandonment. Next, respondents are informed that:

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

We then experimentally vary whether the president adopts a conciliatory policy or maintains the status quo. Per Mattes and Weeks' (2019) logic, the above language in the president's State of the Union speech makes clear that the goal of the president's policy (in either the conciliatory or status quo condition) is to get "China to cooperate." For example, in the conciliatory policy condition, the president's goal is to convince China to engage in reciprocal cooperation. It is necessary to include the status quo condition in order to determine whether public disapproval for a leader is

conditional on the policy chosen. Without including this factor, it would be impossible to distinguish between two possibilities: (1) women leaders are punished more than male leaders for pursuing conciliatory policies compared to more hardline policies, as we hypothesize or (2) the public prefers male foreign policy leadership during crises (Kim and Kang 2022), and so support for male leaders' policies is higher irrespective of policy choice. This is another important limitation of studies by Maoz (2009) and Anisman-Razin et al. (2018), which do not compare conciliatory policies by Israeli negotiators to the status quo. The conciliatory and status quo policy treatments are the following:

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

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

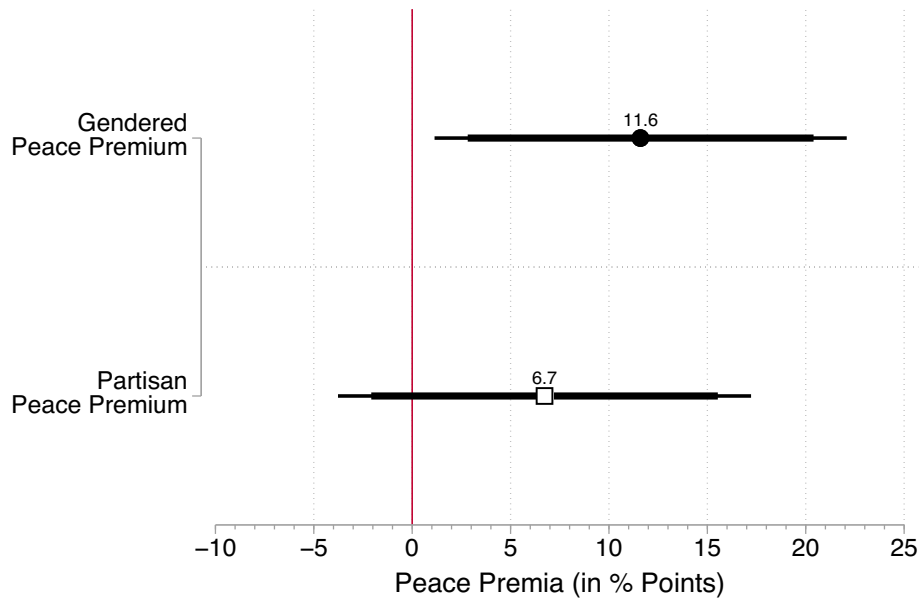
Following the extensive discussion in Mattes and Weeks' (2019) appendix, we contend that the conciliatory treatment approximates an attempt at rapprochement and peace rather than appeasement or retrenchment. Just as Nixon's trip to China looked like a sudden, risky, and unilateral move, so is the decision to reduce the US military presence in the Arctic. Unlike appeasement, which aims to avoid conflict and is not expected to yield reciprocal actions of comparable value, the president's action in the conciliatory treatment is performed in peacetime and designed to obtain reciprocal cooperation from China. As Kupchan (2010, 6) argues, the opening phase of reconciliation involves a "unilateral accommodation" where states make "concessions [that signal] a peace offering." This can then lead to "reciprocal constraint" and ultimately peace.

Another potential concern with our design is that it is relatively abstract, whereas the real world is information-dense. Although this is a possible concern with almost all vignette experiments, Brutger et al. (2022) study this question directly and find that adding more contextual detail to experiments does not change the direction of treatment effects. On the other hand, it does dampen the size of treatment effects by making the treatments less salient. More generally, Brutger et al. (2022, 14) outline the tradeoffs involved in experimental design. As they note, "if the purpose is to demonstrate that an effect exists, a sparser experimental design better enables researchers to identify this effect . . ." This is precisely the purpose we envision for Study 1: to demonstrate that there is a gendered peace premium.

Our outcome measure is a 7-point Likert scale that measures how much respondents disapprove of how President Richards is doing his job. Following Mattes and Weeks (2019), we then ask questions designed to test causal mechanisms. A central logic of the going-against-type phenomenon regards credibility. To test the policy credibility mechanism, we ask respondents to what extent they agree with the statement that "President Richards chose the best strategy for dealing with China." Stronger agreement indicates greater policy credibility. Per our pre-analysis plan, we also ask respondents about their perceptions of the president's competence, moderation, trustworthiness, and toughness (Nincic 1988; Schultz 2005).

<sup>10</sup>See Section A-2.1 for a more detailed discussion. Future experimental studies could vary a leader's disposition to include the hawk, dove, and neither conditions. This would help facilitate an even more direct comparison of how the gendered peace premium differs when leaders have a strong versus ambiguous dispositional reputation.

<sup>11</sup>See Gallup polling.



**Figure 2.** Study 1—peace premia. Bars are 90 and 95 percent confidence intervals. The gendered (partisan) peace premium is the gap in disapproval for women (Democrats) versus men (Republicans) pursuing conciliation versus the status quo.

As one last test, we control the outcome of the conciliation attempt.<sup>12</sup> Specifically, after recording respondents' assessments of President Richards's performance, we inform survey subjects that the conciliation attempt was successful:

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

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

### Study 1 Results

Study 1 was carried out on a representative sample of 892 US citizens recruited through Lucid in August 2021.<sup>13</sup> Lucid offers nationally representative samples based on age, gender identity, race/ethnicity, and region. Recent work shows experiments fielded on Lucid are high-quality and replicable (Coppock and McClellan 2019).

We turn directly to our main results in figure 2, which depicts the magnitudes of the gendered and partisan peace premia. We collapse the 7-point scale into a binary measure of disapproval to illustrate substantive effects. Per  $H_1$ , we find significant evidence for the gendered peace premium: Women leaders are punished 11.6 percentage points more for pursuing peace than male leaders. This result is robust to employing the full 7-point scale of disapproval

<sup>12</sup>Mattes and Weeks (2019) go a step beyond this and experimentally manipulate whether the conciliatory attempt leads to success or failure. We keep this factor constant to maximize experimental power.

<sup>13</sup>Although Study 1 was carried out chronologically after Study 2, we present them in this order for clarity. See our pre-analysis plan for more details on the research process. Both studies were pre-registered in advance of fielding.

(online appendix, table A1), excluding respondents that failed a factual manipulation check measuring attention to our treatments (online appendix, table A2), and controlling for covariates, including the president's perceived *race* (online appendix, table A3).<sup>14</sup> Experimental evidence of a gendered peace premium underscores the core intuition of Barnett Rubin's quote about Hillary Clinton—that gender stereotypes may disincentivize women leaders from pursuing peace.

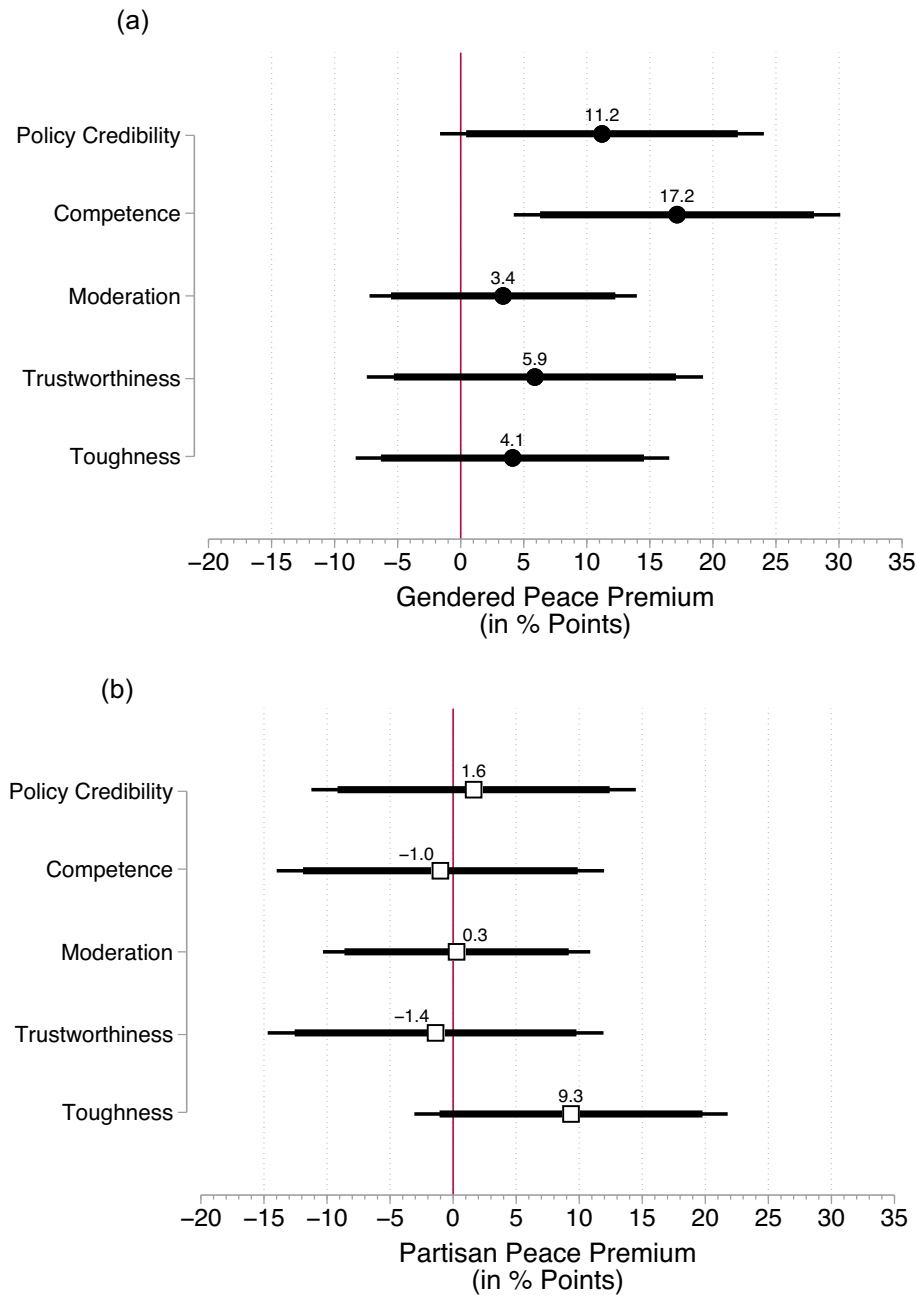
While we find Democratic leaders are generally punished more for pursuing peace than Republican leaders—in accordance with the logic of the partisan peace premium—the effect is not statistically distinguishable. This result implies that gender stereotypes exert a greater impact on evaluations of peace proposals than partisan stereotypes. The limited impact of partisan reputations is also consistent with Kertzer, Brooks, and Brooks' (2021) finding that the public holds weaker expectations about political parties' orientations on foreign policy issues.

### MECHANISMS

Why are women leaders punished more for conciliation? Supplementary outcomes we measured in Study 1 allow us to explore the mechanisms underpinning the overall gendered peace premium. As explained above, policy credibility is a central mechanism elaborated in extant work on the hawk's advantage (Cowen and Sutter 1998; Cukierman and Tommasi 1998). "Out-of-character" actions are interpreted as a signal that the proposed policy is prudent and in the country's national interest. When women leaders act according to their gender-stereotypical type and propose conciliation, they may be seen as less credible. Besides policy credibility, this logic may also mean that female leaders who pursue peace are perceived as less competent and trustworthy. While our policy credibility question asks whether the president chose the best strategy for dealing with China specifi-

<sup>14</sup>The effect size increases to 14.5 percentage points when we exclude inattentive respondents.





**Figure 3.** Study 1—mechanisms underpinning peace premia. Bars are 90 and 95 percent confidence intervals.

cally, our questions related to competence and trustworthiness are more general.

Another possibility is that “out-of-character” proposals signal a leader’s moderation. Politicians have incentives to prove to their constituents that they do not have extreme foreign policy preferences (Schultz 2005). Consequently, hawks can demonstrate moderation and elicit public approval by making peace with enemies. Conversely, doves (or women) that pursue peace may be perceived as extremists (i.e., extreme pacifists) and lose support. Mattes and Weeks (2019) demonstrate that mechanisms related to policy credibility and moderation can operate in parallel. Finally, because female leaders are often viewed as “weaker” than men, it is possible that conciliatory women executives will be perceived as less tough than comparable male leaders.

In figure 3, we plot the gendered and partisan peace premia in relation to these mechanisms. Formal mediation analyses in the online appendix (tables A4 and A5) yield similar results. Perceived policy credibility and competence are the key mechanisms underpinning the gendered peace premium.<sup>15</sup> Perceptions that the president chose the best strategy for dealing with China (policy credibility) are 11.2 percentage points lower for women leaders that pursued conciliation with China relative to maintaining the status quo than for male leaders that pursued conciliation with China relative to maintaining the status quo. Similarly, women leaders are viewed as 17.2 percentage points

<sup>15</sup>The impact of policy credibility is distinguishable at the 0.1 level in the left panel of figure 3 ( $p = 0.087$ ). Using the full, 7-point measure of policy credibility, this effect becomes distinguishable at the 0.01 level ( $p = 0.007$ ).

**Table 1.** Study 1—policy success attenuates the gendered peace premium

|                        | Sample: all respondents |                             | Sample: passed manipulation check |                             |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                        | Disapproval (% points)  | Disapproval (7-point scale) | Disapproval (% points)            | Disapproval (7-point scale) |
| Gendered peace premium | 1.704 (−6.147, 9.555)   | 0.233 (−0.163, 0.630)       | 0.894 (−8.934, 10.721)            | 0.306 (−0.191, 0.804)       |

Notes: 95 percent confidence intervals are in parentheses. Estimates represent the gap in disapproval for women vs. men pursuing conciliation vs. the status quo as measured after survey respondents were informed that the conciliatory policy successfully elicited Chinese reciprocation.

**Table 2.** Study 1—gendered peace premia by respondent partisanship

|                            | Sample: all respondents   |                             | Sample: passed manipulation check |                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                            | Disapproval (% points)    | Disapproval (7-point scale) | Disapproval (% points)            | Disapproval (7-point scale) |
| Republican respondents     | 23.721*** (6.215, 41.227) | 1.257*** (0.547, 1.968)     | 28.907*** (8.234, 49.580)         | 0.745* (−0.105, 1.595)      |
| Non-republican respondents | 6.330 (−5.359, 18.020)    | 0.233 (−0.212, 0.678)       | 3.733 (−12.868, 20.334)           | 0.278 (−0.343, 0.900)       |
| Difference in premia       | 17.390 (−3.659, 38.440)   | 1.024** (0.186, 1.863)      | 25.173* (−1.340, 51.687)          | 0.467 (−0.586, 1.520)       |

Notes: \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ . 95 percent confidence intervals are in parentheses. The difference estimate is marginally imprecise in column 1 ( $p = 0.105$ ).

less competent than male leaders in pursuing peace. Given the close theoretical connection between whether a leader's China policy is viewed as in the national interest and a leader's more general perceived competence in foreign affairs, analogous results for these two mechanisms are intuitive. Moreover, competence is a central trait that gender stereotypes often lead voters to doubt in women leaders (Bauer 2017, 283). We find no evidence that perceived moderation, trustworthiness, or toughness underlie the gendered peace premium.

#### Can Success Attenuate the Gendered Peace Premium?

Although we find evidence for an aggregate gendered peace premium in Study 1, this analysis focuses on the public's initial view of a policy before the adversary has a chance to respond, and therefore before it is clear whether the policy will achieve its objective or not. If citizens care most about policy success, then they might not punish women presidents (relative to male presidents) for pursuing peace, conditional on both eliciting reciprocation from China. To evaluate this possibility, we study whether the gendered peace premium attenuates after respondents are informed of policy success. That is, we compare successful woman-initiated conciliation with China to successful male-initiated conciliation with China. In our design, this entails comparing respondent attitudes measured at the end of the survey vignette, after subjects were informed of policy success in the form of Chinese reciprocation.<sup>16</sup>

Table 1 shows that after successful conciliation, the gendered peace premium evaporates entirely. In line with much extant work (e.g., Jamieson 1995; Heilman 2001), this finding suggests women leaders must prove they can achieve desirable outcomes in order to avoid gender-based penalties. Encouragingly, this means that women leaders' disadvantage in proposing peace is surmountable. Nevertheless, women leaders will face greater pressure to achieve success if they do initiate conciliation. Future work should also ex-

amine whether the gendered peace premium becomes larger if conciliation attempts fail to achieve their objectives.

#### Heterogeneous Effects

To probe heterogeneity in these results, we conduct a range of additional analyses. We pre-registered expectations that the gendered peace premium would be greater among hostile and second-order sexist respondents. Results in online appendix, table A6 assess these hypotheses, as well as exploratory tests concerning heterogeneity by partisanship, benevolent sexism, hawkishness, education, and respondent gender. We find no evidence in Study 1 that the gendered peace premium differs based on respondents' level of militant assertiveness, hostile or benevolent sexism, second-order beliefs about sexism, education, or respondent gender. While hawks are more likely to disapprove of conciliation in general (online appendix, table A9), they impose similar penalties on conciliatory men and women leaders.

Perhaps the most important possibility is that sex and partisan dynamics intersect in evaluations of leader behavior. Republicans tend to care more about wielding force to uphold reputation (Brutger and Kertzer 2018), and tend to espouse more traditional gender roles (Bauer 2017).<sup>17</sup> Hence, we explore whether Republican respondents impose the largest gendered peace premium. In line with this logic, in table 2, we find evidence that the gendered peace premium is larger among Republican respondents. This suggests that female presidents will face the strongest barriers to pursuing peace among Republican citizens.

In online appendix, table A7, we further investigate partisan heterogeneity in the gendered peace premium. Specifically, we examine whether the main effect we observe is driven by an especially severe penalty imposed on out-partisan women presidents. Although the gendered peace premium is slightly larger in magnitude for out-partisans, the difference compared to co-partisan women leaders is not statistically distinguishable. Given the high salience of leader sex in Study 1 (especially compared to Study 2), both out-partisan and co-partisan women presidents are punished for pursuing conciliation due to gender stereotypes.

<sup>16</sup>Recall that we measured respondent attitudes twice: first after respondents were informed of the president's initial policy action (conciliation or status quo) and second after respondents were informed of the president's policy success (Chinese reciprocation).

<sup>17</sup>Online appendix, table A9 verifies that Republicans are more opposed to conciliation irrespective of leader gender.

Partisan heterogeneity in the gendered peace premium also raises a natural question about whether *leader* sex and partisanship interact to shape citizens' evaluations. Of particular interest are situations where the heuristic value provided by a leader's sex and party countervail. For instance, Republican women might be perceived as hawkish (because of party) or dovish (because of sex), while Democratic women might be viewed as doubly dovish (because of party and sex). In online appendix, table A8, we explore the interaction of sex and party in our vignettes. Both Democratic and Republican women leaders face large gendered peace premia, with no distinguishable differences by leader partisanship. This finding comports with evidence on the strength and pervasiveness of gender stereotypes (Bauer 2017), and suggests that women leaders may face gender-based costs even if their partisanship and other traits offer counter-stereotypical dispositional signals.

### Study 2 Design

Study 2 is identical to Study 1 *except* for a single key difference: In Study 2, we also experimentally manipulate the president's foreign policy disposition in addition to their sex, partisan affiliation, and policy choice. Unlike Mattes and Weeks (2019), we did not directly manipulate a leader's foreign policy orientation (hawk or dove) in Study 1 because doing so would largely block the key causal mechanism—perceived inclination toward peace—through which we expect the gendered peace premium to operate. The benefit of including foreign policy disposition as an experimental factor in Study 2 is that it enables us to empirically probe how significant a mechanism it is.<sup>18</sup> If the gendered peace premium disappears when foreign policy disposition is manipulated, then that would provide evidence that sex matters in Study 1 by shaping perceptions of leaders' inclinations toward peace.

In accordance with this logic, we pre-registered an expectation that the gendered peace premium would be stronger in Study 1 than Study 2. Still, there are reasons why the gendered peace premium could potentially still operate in Study 2. For example, if some members of the public believe that women are, by their biological nature, inclined toward peace, then even a strong foreign policy disposition prime may not convince them otherwise.

To manipulate the president's foreign policy disposition, we add the following text directly from Mattes and Weeks' (2019) study: "President Richards has a reputation for ..."

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

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

This yields a fully-crossed  $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$  between-subjects factorial design in Study 2.

### Study 2 Results

Study 2 was carried out in two waves on a representative sample of 2,141 American adults recruited through Lucid. The first wave was fielded in October 2020, and the second was fielded in July 2021. Figure 4 depicts the magnitudes of the dispositional, gendered, and partisan peace premia in Study 2. In accordance with prior literature, we find significant evidence for the dispositional peace premium: Dovish US presidents face a 12.8 percentage point disadvantage in pursuing peace relative to hawkish US presidents. Replicating this core result from Mattes and Weeks (2019) builds confidence in our design and speaks to the robustness of the hawk's advantage, even when accounting for leader sex. On the other hand, we do not find distinguishable evidence of aggregate gendered or partisan peace premia. Although both women and Democrats face greater costs for conciliation than men or Republicans, respectively, these costs are not statistically significant overall.

As we discuss in our pre-analysis plan, the null aggregate effects for the gendered and partisan peace premia in this study accord with Mattes and Weeks' (2019) null finding for the partisan premium in their original experiment. These nulls suggest that the strong hawk-dove treatment in the experiment swamps any main effect of sex or party. The null effect for an aggregate gendered peace premium in Study 2 compared to the significant effect in Study 1 suggests that perceptions of a leader's inclination toward peace—which the foreign policy disposition treatment directly manipulates—are indeed a critical mechanism explaining the gendered peace premium. The finding that strong dispositional reputations (whether realistic or not) can eliminate the causal pathway through which the aggregate gendered peace premium operates lends nuance to the extant literature on women leaders' incentives to "act tough" (Enloe 1990; Schramm and Stark 2020; Schwartz and Blair 2020). In particular, our findings in Study 2 highlight a key benefit of this strategy. If women leaders are able to generate sufficiently clear hawkish reputations *ex ante*, they may be better able to overcome the negative consequences of gender stereotypes.

Additional tests in the online appendix confirm the robustness of our core results from Study 2. We observe a significant dispositional peace premium when we use the full 7-point measure of disapproval (online appendix, table A10), drop respondents who failed a factual attention check (online appendix, table A11), and estimate premia in a regression setting (online appendix, table A12).

The gendered and partisan peace premia remain indistinguishable in these tests.<sup>19</sup>

#### *Do Gender and Partisan Dynamics Intersect?*

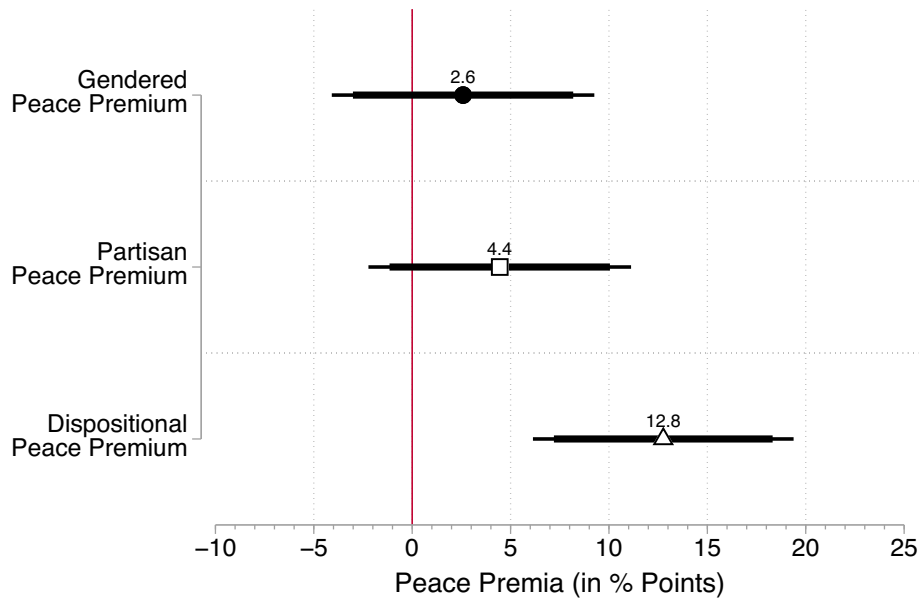
We do not uncover an aggregate gendered peace premium in Study 2. However, it is possible that sex and partisan dynamics intersect to structure respondents' beliefs in a more nuanced way.<sup>20</sup> In particular, it may be that in the current US context, characterized by substantial partisan polarization and hostility, women leaders are punished more for conciliation by out-partisans due to the phenomenon of condi-

<sup>18</sup>We thank an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this rationale for Study 2.

<sup>19</sup>Our estimate of the partisan peace premium becomes marginally precise in online appendix, table A11.

<sup>20</sup>See also online appendix, tables A13 and A14.





**Figure 4.** Study 2—peace premia. Bars are 90 and 95 percent confidence intervals.

tional stereotyping.<sup>21</sup> The logic of conditional stereotyping is that people will be more likely to activate negative stereotypes when they are “motivated” to find fault with someone, whereas these negative stereotypes are more likely to be suppressed when people are motivated to view someone in a more positive light (Kundra and Sinclair 1999; Bauer 2017). For example, since members of the public have a motivation to view out-partisan politicians in a negative light, they may be more likely to activate negative stereotypes about women’s weakness and incompetence in foreign affairs when faced with a female president of the opposing party. Thus, even in the context of Study 2, out-partisans may look past the strong dispositional prime and still view female presidents as inclined toward peace (perhaps due to a belief that this is in their biological nature) so that they may better justify disapproving of their job performance. This would follow from previous research, which finds, for example, that out-partisan female candidates are punished disproportionately for negative campaign ads (Krupnikov and Bauer 2014). To assess this possibility, we conducted a series of exploratory tests.

These tests yield strong evidence of an out-partisan gendered peace premium.<sup>22</sup> As illustrated in table 3, out-partisan respondents punish female presidents significantly more than male presidents for pursuing conciliation. The magnitude of this effect ranges from 9 to 14 percentage points, and this disadvantage is 13–21 percentage points greater than the disadvantage faced by co-partisan female presidents.

<sup>21</sup>Partisan polarization and hostility were particularly high in the run-up to the 2020 election when we fielded wave 1 of Study 2.

<sup>22</sup>A similar relationship does not hold for the dispositional peace premium. That is, doves are not punished more for pursuing peace when they are out-partisans. This is likely because conditional stereotyping is more pronounced for gender (Kundra and Sinclair 1999) than, say, foreign policy orientation; gender stereotypes are pervasive and common while dispositional stereotypes are not.

#### Mechanisms

In figure 5, we assess potential causal mechanisms. The overall dispositional peace premium (bottom right panel) is explained by perceptions of policy credibility, moderation, and trustworthiness. In line with the overall null effects for the gendered (top left panel) and partisan peace premia (bottom left panel) in Study 2, we find no distinguishable effects for any mechanism on these premia. Formal causal mediation analyses (online appendix, table A15) bolster these results.

In the top right panel of figure 5, we also explore mechanisms underpinning the out-partisan gendered peace premium identified in table 3. We find that policy credibility is the primary mechanism explaining this out-partisan premium.<sup>23</sup> Perceived policy credibility is more than 11 percentage points less ( $p$ -value = 0.091) for out-partisan women presidents that pursue conciliation compared to out-partisan male presidents that do so. This result is remarkably consistent in magnitude and precision with the main estimate on policy credibility from Study 1 (figure 3). In line with our theoretical logic, this finding suggests that conciliatory policies implemented by women leaders are less likely to be perceived as prudent and in the national interest.

#### Does Policy Success Attenuate Peace Premia?

Table 4 shows that, as in Study 1, the out-partisan gendered peace premium disappears once respondents are informed that conciliation efforts initiated by women presidents have succeeded in eliciting Chinese reciprocation. Although out-partisans punish women leaders for pursuing conciliation, this gendered peace premium is statistically indistinguishable after respondents are informed of policy success.

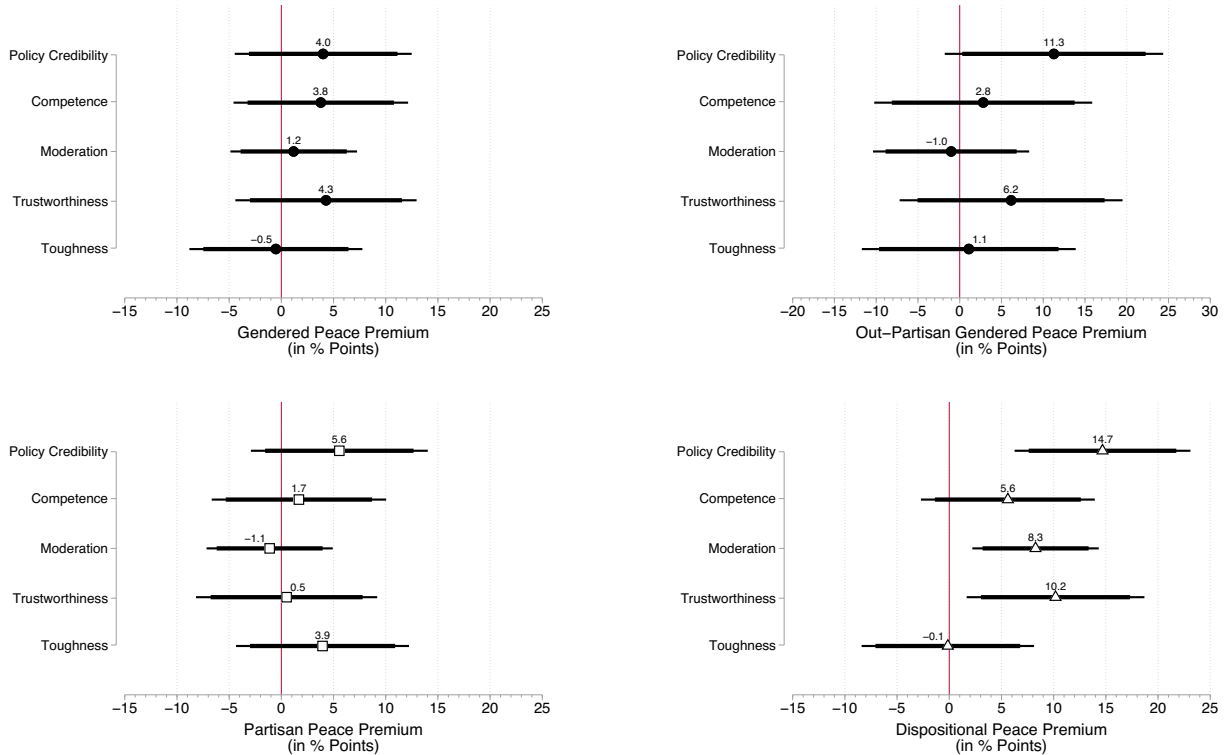
In table 4, we also consider the partisan and dispositional peace premia. Although the overall dispositional peace pre-

<sup>23</sup>Formal mediation analyses in online appendix, table A16 corroborate this result.

**Table 3.** Study 2—gendered peace premia for out-partisans vs. co-partisans

|                          | Sample: all respondents  |                             | Sample: passed manipulation check |                             |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                          | Disapproval (% points)   | Disapproval (7-point scale) | Disapproval (% points)            | Disapproval (7-point scale) |
| Out-partisan respondents | 9.682* (−1.574, 20.938)  | 0.325 (−0.118, 0.767)       | 13.534* (−1.910, 28.979)          | 0.476* (−0.078, 1.030)      |
| Co-partisan respondents  | −3.701 (−12.198, 4.796)  | −0.203 (−0.545, 0.139)      | −7.405 (−19.091, 4.280)           | −0.308 (−0.758, 0.143)      |
| Difference in premia     | 13.383* (−0.698, 27.464) | 0.527* (−0.032, 1.086)      | 20.940** (1.616, 40.263)          | 0.783** (0.070, 1.497)      |

Notes: \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ . 95 percent confidence intervals are in parentheses. Estimates are calculated from regressions including covariates. The out-partisan premium estimate is marginally imprecise in column 2 ( $p = 0.151$ ).

**Figure 5.** Study 2—mechanisms underpinning peace premia. Bars are 90 and 95 percent confidence intervals.**Table 4.** Study 2—policy success attenuates the gendered peace premium but not the dispositional peace premium

|                                     | Sample: all respondents |                             | Sample: passed manipulation check |                             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                                     | Disapproval (% points)  | Disapproval (7-point scale) | Disapproval (% points)            | Disapproval (7-point scale) |
| Gendered peace premium              | −1.130 (−5.609, 3.349)  | 0.005 (−0.243, 0.252)       | −4.179 (−9.729, 1.372)            | −0.094 (−0.410, 0.222)      |
| Out-partisan gendered peace premium | −0.441 (−8.250, 7.368)  | 0.143 (−0.247, 0.532)       | −7.502 (−16.835, 1.832)           | −0.042 (−0.539, 0.454)      |
| Partisan peace premium              | 0.231 (−4.256, 4.719)   | 0.152 (−0.096, 0.400)       | −0.897 (−5.885, 4.091)            | 0.132 (−0.143, 0.408)       |
| Dispositional peace premium         | 3.932* (−0.551, 8.415)  | 0.343*** (0.096, 0.590)     | 7.228*** (2.003, 12.452)          | 0.606*** (0.315, 0.896)     |

Notes: \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ . 95 percent confidence intervals are in parentheses. Estimates represent the gap in disapproval for women vs. men pursuing conciliation vs. the status quo as measured after survey respondents were informed that the conciliatory policy successfully elicited Chinese reciprocation.

mium attenuates in magnitude, it remains distinguishable even after respondents are informed that conciliatory efforts were reciprocated by the Chinese military. When a conciliatory policy succeeds, doves are still punished 3.9 percentage points more than hawks for initiating rapprochement ( $p$ -value = 0.086). This finding underscores the strength of

the dispositional peace premium, and replicates another key result from Mattes and Weeks' (2019) work.<sup>24</sup>

Why might policy success attenuate the gendered peace premium (Study 1) and the out-partisan gendered peace premium (Study 2) but not the dispositional peace pre-

<sup>24</sup>We find no evidence of a partisan peace premium before or after policy success.

mium (Study 2)? First, our mechanism tests are insightful. In both studies, we find that the gendered peace premium is driven by policy credibility. That is, respondents punish women leaders (and especially out-partisan women leaders) because they believe that conciliation pursued by women is imprudent and not in the national interest. Achieving policy success directly attenuates perceptions of imprudence because reciprocation underscores the fact that both countries in the scenario believed rapprochement to be the best course of action. By contrast, the dispositional peace premium is also driven by gaps in perceived moderation and trustworthiness of dovish leaders. Policy success has far less bearing on these traits than on perceived competence. Second, the foreign policy disposition treatment is quite strong relative to the sex treatment. Specifically, the dispositional treatment suggests that leaders have “repeatedly emphasized” and “long s[upported]” hawkish or dovish policies over their careers. Given the strength of this treatment, it is plausible that respondents may continue to believe dovish leaders pursued rapprochement in the focal crisis due to their ideological proclivities, and thus punish doves for their decision-making even despite policy success. In contrast, the sex treatment in Study 1 represents a subtler prime about a leader’s disposition. Hence, when a woman leader pursues rapprochement and succeeds, respondents may be more likely to update their beliefs and come to think the woman leader pursued the policy because it was prudent, rather than because they were predisposed to do so as a result of their sex. Third, the substantive sizes of the post-success effects do not differ greatly: 3.9 percentage points for the dispositional peace premium in Study 2 and 1.7 percentage points for the gendered peace premium in Study 1. The difference in significance, then, is due at least partly to the larger sample size and greater statistical power in Study 2. Exploring the varying effects of policy success in different scenarios represents a ripe avenue for future research.

### Conclusion

As more women rise to high political office around the world, it is crucial to understand how gender dynamics affect international security. To this end, this study provides the first causal test of whether women executives face greater domestic political barriers to pursuing rapprochement than male leaders. We find experimental evidence for the existence of a gendered peace premium. Compared to male leaders, women leaders may have to pay a “premium” in terms of domestic political support in order to make peace. Critically, policy success attenuates this premium, meaning women leaders can potentially make peace without incurring backlash in the long term, though they may face a short-term penalty before the outcome of conciliation is clear.

These findings have critical implications for what greater sex equality in executive officeholding means for international politics. The continued relevance of gender stereotypes means that women executives have political incentives to adopt hawkish foreign policies (Enloe 1990; Bashevkin 2018; Schramm and Stark 2020; Schwartz and Blair 2020). Hillary Clinton’s alleged reluctance to pursue peace with the Taliban, as well as prominent examples of “iron ladies” around the world, speak to this dynamic. Even if women are more likely to *want* peace than male leaders—as the gap in support for the use of force between men and women implies (Eichenberg 2019; Barnhart et al. 2020)—that may not translate into more pacific outcomes. Nevertheless, the existence of a gendered peace premium does not make it im-

possible for female leaders to seek and achieve peace; it is just more difficult and costly.

Of course, this particular disadvantage female leaders may face does *not* mean that women leaders will be less effective in office and thus should not be elected. In the realm of foreign policy, prior research suggests female leaders may be able to make *more credible* threats, an asset in coercive bargaining (Schwartz and Blair 2020). Similarly, the fact that women pay greater domestic political costs for conciliation means that their attempts at rapprochement should be perceived as more credible by adversaries. If women leaders are willing to bear heightened costs to seek peace, then that suggests a greater commitment to peace, thereby reassuring adversaries. This implication offers a potential new mechanism for why women-led and gender-inclusive peace agreements are more durable (Berry 2018). Greater sex equality in executive offices also contributes to descriptive representation.

This study also highlights several avenues for future research. First, while we focused on the views of US citizens given America’s prominent role in foreign affairs, future work should analyze whether the gendered and dispositional peace premiums also hold in other countries. We expect our Study 1 findings to hold in many other countries since the gender stereotypes that drive the gendered peace premium have been shown to operate cross-nationally (Kim and Kang 2022), but only future studies could confirm this. Future work could also consider replicating our study in countries with more pro- or regressive gender norms (Powell and Mukazhanova-Powell 2019), as the gendered peace premium might be even stronger in the latter case.

Second, follow-up experiments could add an escalatory condition to our design, in addition to the status quo and conciliatory treatments. Our study focused on whether women leaders face a disadvantage in pursuing conciliation; however, including an escalatory treatment would enable researchers to further assess whether women are rewarded or punished for acting against their gender stereotypical type. Third, future research should test whether elites also believe that female leaders and doves face a disadvantage in pursuing peace.<sup>25</sup> Fourth, our findings raise questions about whether other stereotypes—such as those surrounding race and sexual orientation—impact the evaluation of peace efforts. The role intersectionality plays in conditioning these effects should also be explored.

Finally, international negotiations are a two-level game where success depends on support at the domestic and international levels. Though female political leaders may find it more difficult to win domestic support for conciliatory policies, they may find it *easier* to gain international support for rapprochement (Maoz 2009; Clare 2014). For example, new research shows that foreign policy *doves* may be better at obtaining reciprocal cooperation from foreign audiences (Mattes and Weeks 2022). How the sex of *foreign* leaders impacts domestic evaluations of conciliatory policies is thus a natural avenue for future research. Women leaders may face greater domestic barriers to pursuing peace, but fewer international ones.

### Supplementary data

Supplementary information is available at the *International Studies Quarterly* data archive.

<sup>25</sup>See Naurin, Naurin, and Alexander (2019) for an example of an elite study on gender.



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