

Informed Doves: Nonpartisans and Attitudes on Military Intervention

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Abstract

How do nonpartisans make foreign policy decisions in terms of the use of force overseas? We propose two main hypotheses: 1) nonpartisans, compared to other partisans, should register lowest level of support for such intervention, and 2) whether their stance is malleable or not after receiving new information. We fielded two survey experiments on Amazon's MTurk in 2022 and 2023 with treatments on Taiwan's democratic systems, progressive policies and culinary culture. The results illustrate that nonpartisans' support is not the lowest among all the partisans, and their opinions about intervention were altered after learning more about Taiwan. To increase generalizability of our findings, we also conducted additional analyses using ANES 2022 and found identical patterns. We conclude with theoretical and policy implications.

Keywords: Nonpartisans, Military Internationalization, Political Knowledge, Cross-Strait Relations

Introduction

Why do citizens support the use of military forces in the international society to resolve foreign policy challenges? American military is one of the most frequently used foreign policy tools by the United States' government (Schultz, 2017). While the cost of military intervention is often observable, the military, political, and geopolitical outcomes after the intervention are often less transparent. The uncertain outcomes, coupled with ever-increasing costs and commitments by the United States worldwide, concern many people. For example, Former President Trump demanded allies in Europe and Asia to increase their share of the defense responsibilities.

Before any substantial outcome was achieved, the outbreak of the war between Russia and Ukraine, China's recent clashes with the Philippines in the South China Sea, and drills around Taiwan in recent years only make the issue of American willingness to intervene militarily overseas, also commonly referred to as military internationalization, more salient. Since citizens' preference of military internationalization could influence defense spending (Bartels 1994), understanding public sentiment on this issue is essential.

As it stands, the literature on public opinion and military internationalization yields different patterns between the individual and the aggregate levels.¹ At the individual level, people's attitude on the use of force internationally is driven by elite cues and rational calculation. Political elites often translate their ideological or policy goals into military actions abroad and motivate their voters to support them (e.g., Brownlee, 2020; Guisinger and Saunders, 2017; Maxey, 2022). On the other hand, citizens also weigh the chances of winning and the potential number of

¹ Here we are differentiating the literature on public opinion and military internationalization from the war support literature. Whereas the latter asks citizens their willingness to send troops to engage in a conflict that that is 1) overseas and 2) directly involve the United States as a target. Both assumptions are nonexistent for the former. In this paper, we are focusing on the literature that studies how the public views sending troops abroad to help another country, before a conflict has happened.

casualties to calculate if the military intervention is worth it (e.g. Dill and Schubiger, 2021; Fang and Oestman, 2022).

At the aggregate level, there is a clear gap between the belief in liberal internationalism among the elites and the skepticism of those views among the public (Drezner, 2008). Presidents often send troops abroad for either humanitarian reasons or democracy promotion, but voters are not always swayed by those reasonings (Drezner, 2008; Fang and Oestman, 2022). People also do not consider the regime type of the targeted countries important (Kiratli 2023). Consequently, although the public may support the use of force at the beginning of conflict (i.e., the rally-round-the-flag effect), their support always declines with time, regardless of the reason and outcome for the intervention.

While the literature has made great strides in understanding citizens' behaviors and what influence them, much less is said about the specific group of nonpartisans. For instance, research points out a negative correlation between the level of education and supporting the use of force (e.g. Brewer and Steenbergen, 2002; Brewer et al., 2004) but does not determine if there are heterogenous effects between partisans and nonpartisans. With the number of nonpartisans rapidly growing in the United States, their potential influence on U.S. foreign policy makes it an important group to study (Klar and Krupnikov, 2016). The literature on nonpartisans have examined topics such as elections or nonpartisan political candidates (Bonneau and Cann, 2015; Imai, King and Rivera, 2020), to the exclusion of this group's behavior with respect to foreign policy.

In this paper, we examine two hypotheses of nonpartisan decision-making in foreign policy. The first school maintains that compared to other partisans, nonpartisans tend to be untrusting or cynical about military interventions overseas. Since they are less likely to rely on elite cues to form their expectation of the conflict, they will not be persuaded by justifications such as humanitarian

reasons or democracy promotion. In reality, this means that nonpartisans should register lower support compared to other non-partisans and their attitude would not be influenced by other factors – receiving more information is not going to alter their views significantly.

This view has anecdotal support from public opinion polls of foreign affairs. In the long-standing Chicago Council survey, while Democrats and Republicans often support the US taking an active role in world affairs,² the rate of support among nonpartisans are always lower than both partisans. In another example, in the Pew surveys after 2010, nonpartisans were found to be less likely than the two partisans to claim that the Iraq war was a success.³

The second, more flexible, view suggest that attitudes toward foreign policy could be altered among nonpartisans when learning more about the issue at stake. It could be possible that nonpartisans oppose any deviation from the status quo (compared to approving military intervention) because they are uncertain about the benefits that come with it. But once they learn more, they might change their stance to supporting military internationalization.

To ascertain which viewpoint has empirical support, we ran an Amazon MTurk survey experiment and conducted robustness checks using ANES2020 data (American National Election Studies, 2021). The survey experiment focused on a potential conflict across the Taiwan Strait and examined whether the provision of additional information influenced nonpartisans on their attitude of defending Taiwan. To increase the generalizability of the findings from the survey experiment, we analyzed ANES2020 to determine whether political knowledge has different effects between partisans and nonpartisans on their general support of military internationalization. We found that, only for the nonpartisan groups, having more information led to their disapproval of sending

² Chicago Council. Pivot to Europe: US Public Opinion in a Time of War. 2022 Chicago Council Survey. Available at: <https://globalaffairs.org/research/public-opinion-survey/2022-chicago-council-survey>. Access: Dec 6, 2023.

³ Pew. A Decade Later, Iraq War Divides the Public. Pew Research Center. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2013/03/18/a-decade-later-iraq-war-divides-the-public/> Access: Dec 6, 2023.

military overseas, while the opposite trend was found in the other two partisan groups. We end the article with contributions to various literatures, research limitations, and policy implications.

Literature Review

The literature of public opinion and military internationalization highlights three critical factors: personality, rational choice, and the elite cues. To begin with, early studies identify the effect of one's worldview and personality. Bartels (1994) suggests that cynics are more likely to believe that the world is Leviathan and, therefore, support for military is necessary. However, Brewer et al. (2004) find a negative correlation between international trust and support for military intervention. More recently, Kertzer et al. (2014) reveal a significant correlation between the moral foundation and supporting for foreign military intervention.

These predispositions are the “unmoved movers” of public opinion and cannot explain the differences across similar cases, a weakness ameliorated by rational choice theory. This theory maintains that citizens would evaluate the costs and benefits of different policy options. Dill and Schubiger (2021) show that perceived high casualty and economic cost would undermine people's support for the use of force abroad, while perceived high chance of winning has the opposite effect. Similarly, survey experiments ran by Fang and Oestman (2022) reveal that perceived low cost and an increase in national security concern would increase public support for the use of force abroad. When there is no direct benefit to the United States, people lower their support for sending troops abroad (Drezner, 2008).

This “rational” calculation of the use of force, however, assumes sufficient information and knowledge about international affairs and the military, which ordinary citizens could hardly acquire on their own. Studies show that citizens often look to political elites as a source of their

information (Lodge and Taber, 2005; Barber and Pope, 2019; Lupton and Webb, 2022), and the cues may come from presidents (Jentleson and Britton, 1998; Brownlee, 2020), international organizations (Kiratli, 2023), or political party leaders (Cavari and Freedman, 2019). When the party supporters receive the information from their elites, they update their beliefs to align with them accordingly (Cavari and Freedman, 2019). It is thus not surprising that Democrats and Republicans are polarized on many foreign policy issues (Smeltz, 2022), upholding their own party's rationales for sending troops abroad while rejecting the opposition's. Citizens are heavily influenced by political elites that they would follow their parties to switch their positions on the preferred international role of the United States in polls.⁴

A glaring omission in the studies of partisan cues and public opinion is the omission of nonpartisans. In fact, the partisan heuristics thesis is unclear about the process with which nonpartisans form their attitudes. Most studies on partisan cues either only include respondents from the two major parties (e.g. Guisinger and Saunders, 2017; Lee, 2022) or lump partisans and nonpartisans altogether (e.g. Fang and Oestman, 2022; Kiratli, 2023). This question is important given the rapid increase in the number of nonpartisans in the United States: in 2022, registered independents outnumbered both Democrats and Republicans in at least 8 states. Klar and Krupnikov (2016) show that nonpartisans actively distance themselves from the two major parties, and the number of nonpartisans has reached more than one third of voter populations. Therefore, it is theoretically, empirically, and practically important to study how nonpartisans form their preference on foreign policy. Specifically: how do nonpartisans form their preferences on the use of force abroad?

⁴ See Footnote 1.

Two Views of Nonpartisan Opinion Formation

Most existing polls show that nonpartisans are less likely to support military internationalization than the supporters of the two major parties or are closer to the party with the least level of support. For example, in ANES2016, only 12.9% of nonpartisans supported the proposition that “*the United States uses military force to solve international problems,*” while 14% of Democrats and 25.4% of Republicans agreed with the claim. Similarly, in ANES2020, 10.4% of nonpartisans agreed with the same claim, while 12.0% and 21.7% of Democrats and Republicans did, respectively.

Meanwhile, in the Chicago Council Survey in 2022,⁵ nonpartisans were more likely than Democrats and Republicans to think that the cost of maintaining the US role in the world outweighed the benefits (47%, compared with 46% among Republicans and 34% among Democrats). Between 1990 and 2022, nonpartisans were less likely to support the US to play an active role in world affairs compared to both Democrats and Republicans in 26 of the 32 years.

Why do the nonpartisans oppose sending troops abroad? There are two possible explanations. First, nonpartisans may be generally untrusting and skeptical about the need for costly public policies, like foreign interventions. Their lack of support and apathy is clearly seen by their lack of emotional response toward public policy decisions. Psychology studies (e.g., Smirnov et al., 2010) have shown while partisans often have a much higher tendency to punish free riders of public goods (e.g., self-defense), nonpartisans are less likely to exhibit those behaviors. Experimental studies also show that, while partisans tend to view news coverage as unfavorable toward their own position, such effect was not evident among partisans (Christen, Kannaovakun, and Gunther, 2002). When nonpartisans watched a video of both sides in a strike,

⁵ See Footnote 2.

they rated both groups equally afterwards. Consequently, common reasons, employed to boost public support, such as promoting democracy or engaging in humanitarian operations, will not change their stance.

Nonpartisans might also be cynic about military interventions abroad. Research shows that nonpartisans are more cynical than partisans about the conventional wisdom that politicians need to play political games to win supporters (Valentino et al., 2001), leading them to distance themselves away from elections (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995). The prevalence of political misinformation nowadays only adds to the cynicism of this group (Lee and Jones-Jang, 2022). Taken together, if this view about nonpartisans is correct, then we should observe that this group should register lowest support for military interventions abroad and additional information would help little to change their attitudes.

The second view relaxes the assumption that nonpartisans are unmoved by additional relevant information. Although nonpartisans could be untrusting and/or cynic, it does not preclude them from changing their attitudes under certain conditions. They might simply do not believe in the benefits from those military operations, but could still change their minds after they receive information. There is still a lingering debate about whether partisans are influenced by political cues. In some cases, the effects are minimal (Samuels and Zucco, 2014), while other cases found clearer traces of evidence (Merolla et al., 2008; Boudreau and MacKenzie, 2014). In a more recent example, Shelef and Zeira (2023) find that when Palestine respondents learned about the U.N. recognition, nonpartisan support for using violence dropped by 27 percentage points. If this view about nonpartisans is correct, then we should observe that this group would register lowest support for military interventions overseas but additional information would change their mind, resulting

in different levels of support. These two competing explanations can be illustrated by the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Compared to Democrats and Republicans, nonpartisans are not less likely to support military interventions abroad.

Hypothesis 2: Acquiring relevant political information will not change their attitudes.

Research Design – Survey Experiment on Amazon Mturk (n = 1801)

We select Taiwan as the case to examine our hypotheses for several reasons. First, a conflict across the Strait is an increasingly salient issue, even making its way into the recent GOP presidential debate.⁶ Thus, citizens should be aware of this issue and might have an opinion about a potential U.S. military intervention. Second, there is a burgeoning literature on public opinion and Taiwanese willingness for self-defense. Suffice to say, most studies focus on the vantage points of Taiwanese citizens and their willingness to fight (e.g., Yeh and Wu, 2019; Wang, and Eldemerdash, 2023; for a review see Wu et al., 2023), with much less attention paid to understand willingness among *Americans, especially nonpartisans*, to help intervene militarily in a potential conflict. Understanding willingness among the American citizenry is crucial as many studies have shown that the U.S. influence Taiwanese public opinion in multiple ways, from conducting high-level visits, to showing the presence of U.S fighter jets near Taiwan’s Air-Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), to issuing open pledges to defend Taiwan (Wu et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023), but the public opinion perspective remains unexplored. The findings from this article

⁶ NA Youssef and C Hutzler (2023) Candidates Vow to Deter China From Invading Taiwan, but Pause Over Military Response. *The Wall Street Journal*. Dec 8, 2023. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/gop-republican-debate-alabama/card/candidates-vow-to-deter-china-from-invading-taiwan-but-pause-over-military-response->. Accessed Jan 29 2024.

could serve as the nexus to understand the relationship between public opinion among Americans and Taiwanese.

Third, the Taiwan issue is multifaceted so it can provide an opportunity to learn what drives public support for military interventions overseas among nonpartisans: The country provides strategic values to the United States for being on the first island chain, its Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) supplies the majority of high-end chips in the world, its political system is lauded for setting an example of Chinese democracy, and last but not least, its culinary cultures like bubble teas and “xiaolongbao,” a special type of small steamed bun, has huge following in the U.S. (Liu et al., 2023). The multiple aspects of the Taiwan issue help increase experimental realism when creating treatments.

In the experiment, there were four experimental groups. The control group includes passages that briefly summarize U.S. position on the Taiwan issue before asking respondents their level of willingness to defend Taiwan in a hypothetical conflict with China. Compared with the control group, respondents in the three treatment groups will read one additional sentence ranging from 11 to 14 words. The sentences are used to provide additional details about the case for respondents. Those three groups include statements based on Taiwan’s democracy, societal values, and culinary culture. To our knowledge, this is probably the first attempt to design treatments based on these factors.

To test the hypotheses, 1801 respondents were recruited through the Amazon MTurk. In the first wave, 831 respondents were recruited on November 27, 2022, and 802 completed (96.5%). In the second wave, 1045 respondents were recruited on August 29, 2023, and 999 completed (95.6%). In both waves, respondents were over 18 years old, located in the U.S., and had a 95% or above HIT approval rate. Respondents were invited to take a survey titled “A Brief Survey

About News, Society, and Politics” and were compensated with \$1 after completion. The research design for both waves was approved by an IRB and was pre-registered by Open Science Foundation before the data collection. The social-demographic background of the MTurk respondents in both waves can be found in the Appendix Table A1 and Table A2. The background of the respondents was similar in both waves: the majority of the respondents were male, white, College educated, and young. The only salient difference was that there were more Democrats in the first wave and more Republicans in the second.

In both surveys, all respondents were asked a series of political and attitudinal questions. An attention check was also included in the survey. 106 (13.2%) and 144 (14.4%) of respondents from both waves failed and were dropped from further analysis, respectively. After that, all respondents were randomly assigned into four groups below.

[*Control Group*] Taiwan has been self-governed since 1949, but China claims it as part of its territory. The United States supports Taiwan’s right to self-government and does not recognize China’s territorial claims on Taiwan. Would you favor or oppose the policy that the United States should commit to defend Taiwan from Chinese invasion? (Favor =1, otherwise = 0)

[*Democracy Group*] Taiwan has been self-governed since 1949, but China claims it as part of its territory. The United States supports Taiwan’s right to self-government and does not recognize China’s territorial claims on Taiwan. **Taiwan has direct presidential election since 1996 and already has four peaceful party turnovers.** Would you favor or oppose the policy that the United States should commit to defend Taiwan from Chinese invasion? (Favor =1, otherwise = 0)

[*Progressive Group*] Taiwan has been self-governed since 1949, but China claims it as part of its territory. The United States supports Taiwan's right to self-government and does not recognize China's territorial claims on Taiwan. **Taiwan just legalized same-sex marriage in 2019 and has adopted universal healthcare system.** Would you favor or oppose the policy that the United States should commit to defend Taiwan from Chinese invasion? (Favor =1, otherwise = 0)

[*Exotic Food Group*] Taiwan has been self-governed since 1949, but China claims it as part of its territory. The United States supports Taiwan's right to self-government and does not recognize China's territorial claims on Taiwan. **Taiwan is the birthplace of Boba milk tea and beef noodle soup.** Would you favor or oppose the policy that the United States should commit to defend Taiwan from Chinese invasion? (Favor =1, otherwise = 0)

After the random assignments, all respondents were then asked about their partisanship as well as other socio-demographic variables, such as gender (0 for male and 1 for female), race (white = 1, otherwise = 0), age (1 for 20-30, 2 for 30-40, and so on), level of education (1 to 8), and party identification (dummies for Democrats and Republicans). All respondents were debriefed and compensated at the end.

Results

Randomization Check

The two surveys were combined for analysis. After the combination, the four experimental groups had the same distribution of gender (Chi-squared $p = 0.736$), race (Chi-squared $p = 0.365$), age (One-way ANOVA $p = 0.771$), level of education (One-way ANOVA $p = 0.529$), and party

identification (Chi-squared $p = 0.819$). They were also indistinguishable on the attention check item (Chi-squared $p = 0.578$). These results enhanced our confidence that respondents were randomly assigned to the four experimental groups with similar backgrounds, and randomization was successful.

Difference by Experimental Groups X Party Identification

There was no significant difference in the mean value across the four experimental groups. The mean values for the Control Group, Democracy Group, Progressive Group, and Exotic Food Group were 0.52, 0.50, 0.51, and 0.47, respectively. The Chi-squared test showed that there was no mean difference between the four groups ($p = 0.715$).

An interesting pattern appeared when we divided respondents by their partisanship. Table 1 show the distribution of supporting US intervention in the scenario of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan by the experimental groups. Among Democrats and Republicans, the three treatments did not change the attitudes among the partisans – on average, about 60% Democrats and 38% Republicans supported the US intervention, respectively. The results on both partisans make sense as many have argued that high-salience issues would often leave little rooms for cues to be effective as citizens might have already developed stable opinions on these issues (Brader et al., 2020).

	Democrats (n=799)	Republicans (n=607)	Nonpartisans (n=144)
Control Group	0.598	0.397	0.594
Democracy Group	0.629	0.366	0.419
Progressive Group	0.572	0.388	0.333
Exotic Food Group	0.607	0.397	0.351

Among the nonpartisans, however, their attitudes were influenced by the three treatments considerably. In the control group, about 60% nonpartisans supported the intervention, almost

identical to Democrats’ attitude. Judging from this, we did not find enough evidence to reject H1 that nonpartisan support for a foreign intervention would be lower compared to the other two partisans. However, when nonpartisans were given information about democracy, progressive policy, and exotic food, their support of intervention dropped to around 30s and 40s. Thus, we found evidence to reject H2, obtaining more information significantly altered the support among nonpartisans toward defending Taiwan.

To mitigate the potential issue of small sample size and confounding variables, we also run a few logit regressions. In Table 2, the dependent variable is the respondent’s support for US intervention, model 1 includes dummies for treatments (control group as the baseline) and partisanship (Democrat as the baseline), model 2 further includes the interaction between partisanship and treatments, and model 3 includes sociodemographic background variables.

In this table, Republican negatively correlates with intervention in all three models, indicating their low willingness to support intervention under the Biden administration. Meanwhile, the interaction between Republican and treatments are nonsignificant, suggesting that the three treatments did not encourage Republicans to change their level of opposition. Especially, it is worth noting that, contrary to conventional wisdom, learning about the progressive policies in Taiwan (same sex marriage and universal healthcare) did not inhibit Republican’s level of support on intervention.

Table 2. Regression models of supporting intervention – Mturk Experiment

DV: Favor Intervention =1	(1)	(2)	(3)
Republican = 1	-0.872*** (0.110)	-0.814*** (0.224)	-0.785*** (0.231)
Nonpartisan = 1	-0.701*** (0.183)	-0.014 (0.365)	0.009 (0.374)
Democracy	-0.054 (0.147)	0.129 (0.205)	0.149 (0.207)
Progressive	-0.166 (0.148)	-0.103 (0.205)	-0.079 (0.207)

Exotic Food	-0.079 (0.148)	0.038 (0.207)	0.081 (0.209)
Republican X Democracy		-0.259 (0.315)	-0.298 (0.321)
Republican X Progressive		0.062 (0.311)	-0.049 (0.318)
Republican X Food		-0.038 (0.315)	-0.147 (0.321)
Nonpartisan X Democracy		-0.841* (0.500)	-0.804* (0.508)
Nonpartisan X Progressive		-0.973* (0.566)	-1.168** (0.584)
Nonpartisan X Food		-1.035** (0.523)	-1.106** (0.539)
age			-0.059 (0.041)
edu			-0.283*** (0.068)
White			-0.674*** (0.177)
female			-0.016 (0.123)
Constant	0.489*** (0.117)	0.397*** (0.146)	2.385*** (0.334)
Observations	1550	1550	1546
AIC	2092.0	2097.4	2047.0

Note: *p<0.01, **p<0.05, ***p<0.001

To illustrate the interactive effect between the partisanship and treatments, Figure 1 shows the simulation based on Model 3 in Table 2. In this figure, the Y axis is the predicted probability of supporting US intervention, while the X axis includes three partisanship categories; the colors indicate the four experimental groups. The mean value and the 95% confidence interval were calculated based on Model 3 in Table 2, controlling all other variables at their mean value (age = 2.3, female = 0.26, edu = 4.47, and white = 0.89).

In Figure 1, we reached the same result as earlier. Nonpartisan support in the control group was not lower compared to other nonpartisans, rejecting H1. On a different note, it is clear that the three treatments have no effect on either Democrats or Republicans; Democrats had over higher level of support for intervention, while Republicans were reluctant. A potential explanation of the result could be that the two partisans already formed strong beliefs toward foreign policies with

respect to Taiwan, so the three framings in our experiment were not strong enough to shift their stances.

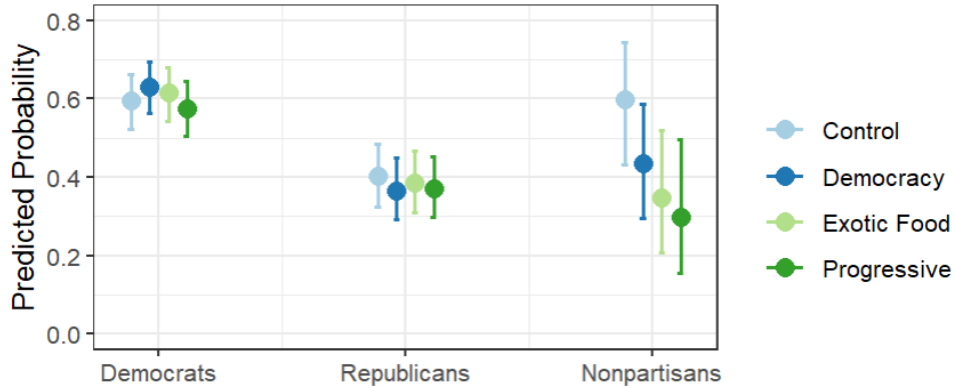


Figure 1. Simulated level of support by Model 3, Table 2, MTurk

On the other hand, the three treatments did trigger a statistically significant effect in reducing the level of support among the nonpartisans. Even though the nonpartisans have a wider confidence interval owing to the smaller sample size in the control group, the distributions of the nonpartisans in the three treatment groups were lower than the mean value of the control group. In other words, when nonpartisans received information about democratic values, progressive policies, and exotic food in Taiwan, they reduced their support for defending Taiwan. Once again, the logistic regression results help reject H2 – additional political information indeed changed political attitudes among nonpartisans. In this case, they retracted support for authorizing an intervention in a conflict across the Strait.

Generalizability – ANES2020 (n = 8280)

A common criticism of the MTurk sample is its generalizability. Since all respondents opted in, including many “professional takers,” they might not be representative of the target

population (for more discussions, see Hillygus et al. 2014 and Huff and Tingley 2015). Moreover, the potential Taiwan-China conflict is a new salient issue, so the result that nonpartisans, when additional political information was given, became unwilling to support military internationalization, might not be found in other contexts.

To alleviate concerns of generalizability, we analyzed the ANES2020, which had a question that asked respondents about their attitude on international military intervention: “*How willing should the United States be to use military force to solve international problems?*” (-2 Not at all willing to +2 Extremely willing, V201350). We chose this question as it does offer additional context or details, allowing us to examine whether respondents with more information can use it to weigh the cost and benefit of military interventions in general.

We also decided not to use the traditional measure of political knowledge, with a battery of true/false items or by the respondents’ self-assessment of political sophistication. Lupia (2015) argues that the knowledge in question needs to be “useful” for respondents when they answer the survey questions, and in this case, in ANES2020, the political knowledge battery (government spending, term limit of Senator, and the majority in the House and Senate) does not cover the realm of military intervention. Therefore, we used the respondents’ self-assessment of their political knowledge instead: “*You feel you understand the most important political issues of this country.*” (Disagree strongly -2 to Agree strongly +2, V202408).

Following the coding in the MTurk experiment, we also created dummies for partisanship (Self-identified Democrat, Republican, and Others, V201228). Other covariates include age (self-reported age between 18 to 80, V201507x), level of education (1 to 8, V201510), gender (male = 0, female = 1, V201600), and non-Hispanic white (=1, otherwise = 0, V201549x).

The OLS regression results are shown in Table 3. In this table, Model 4 includes partisanship and self-reported political knowledge, Model 5 includes the interaction of the two independent variables, and Model 6 further includes other covariates. To begin with, self-reported political knowledge has no *average* effect on supporting military intervention overseas in Model 4. When the interaction term is included in Model 5 and 6, however, we can see a divergent effect of political knowledge among partisans and nonpartisans. To be specific, both Democrats and Republicans support military intervention more with more political knowledge, as is shown in the positive main effect and insignificant interaction effect. On the other hand, when nonpartisans have more political knowledge, they support military intervention less (in Model 5) or do not change their support (in Model 6), as is shown in the significantly negative interactive terms in both models. The result holds after other covariates are added in Model 6.

Table 3. Regression models of supporting intervention – ANES2020

DV: Support Intervention -2 to +2	(4)	(5)	(6)
Democrat = 1	-0.307*** (0.025)	-0.288*** (0.036)	-0.295*** (0.037)
Nonpartisan = 1	-0.334*** (0.025)	-0.289*** (0.034)	-0.295*** (0.035)
Knowledge	0.013 (0.011)	0.042** (0.020)	0.053** (0.021)
Democrat X Knowledge		-0.023 (0.028)	-0.010 (0.029)
Nonpartisan X Knowledge		-0.056** (0.027)	-0.052* (0.028)
age			0.002** (0.001)
edu			-0.044*** (0.005)
White			-0.069*** (0.025)
female			0.029 (0.021)
Constant	-0.050** (0.021)	-0.075*** (0.025)	0.071*** (0.050)
Observations	7322	7322	6948
Adjusted R-squared	0.028	0.028	0.041

Note: *p<0.01, **p<0.05, ***p<0.001

Among the control variables, level of education and white both negatively correlates with the support for military intervention, which is the same as our MTurk sample (in Table 2) as well as in the previous studies (Brewer and Steenbergen, 2002; Brewer et al., 2004). Meanwhile, age is also statistically significant in Table 3 but not Table 2, possibly because ANES2020 has more elder respondents compared to our MTurk samples.

Figure 2 further shows the simulated results of the interaction between partisanship and political knowledge on the support for military intervention overseas. The simulation is based on the estimated coefficients from Model 5 in Table 3, controlling for all other variables at the mean value. In Figure 2, both Democrats and Republicans increase their level of supporting military intervention when they obtain a higher level of political knowledge. Clearly, the effect of political knowledge on nonpartisans is negative – when nonpartisans become more informed, they are less willing to support military intervention. This results from the ANES2022 demonstrate the same pattern from the MTurk experiment in Table 2 and Figure 1.

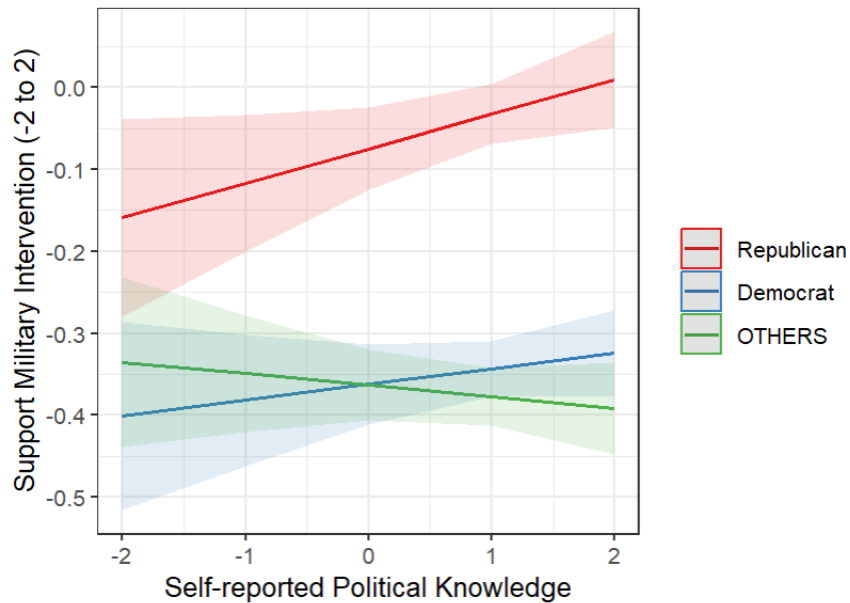


Figure 2. Simulated level of support by Model 2, Table 3, ANES2020

Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, we entertain two views of nonpartisan decision-making process when it comes to U.S. foreign policy. Specifically, we would like to know if giving nonpartisans additional political information would influence their support for the U.S. to defend Taiwan militarily. The first view, rooted in beliefs that nonpartisans are untrusting, or cynic about international involvement, so this group would not support government's decision to intervene in world affairs. Two implications from this reasoning. First, nonpartisans should show the lowest level of support compared to other partisans in terms of foreign military intervention. Second, receiving more information would not alter the group's stance.

The second, more flexible view, suggest that nonpartisans, like partisans, would change their attitudes after gaining more information. Our results from two experiments spanning across two years on MTurk provide support for the second view. We found that support for nonpartisans was not the lowest in all partisan group, and their attitudes certainly could be altered. To further examine if being informed leads to lower support for military intervention among nonpartisans in other contexts, we conducted additional analyses using ANES 2020, resulting in similar findings and boosts our confidence on the external validity of our findings. Taken together, our work adds to a growing list of studies that argue that political information could have an effect on nonpartisans (Merolla et al., 2008; Boudreau and MacKenzie, 2014), and in our case, similar to Shelef and Zeira's (2023) work, our work shows that such an effect could be seen on issues concerning foreign policy.

While our work focuses primarily on foreign policy with respect to Sino-U.S. relations, we believe that our findings are applicable to other cases with two boundary conditions: 1) a military conflict has not taken place, and 2) a potential U.S. military intervention is likely. In our paper, we do not distinguish between countries that the U.S. is obligated by a treaty to defend (e.g., South

Korea, Japan, and the Philippines) and those without (e.g., Ukraine, Taiwan, and other countries in the South China Sea), it will be interesting for future work to see if the additional information of having a mutual defense treaty would significantly boost willingness among nonpartisans to intervene militarily in foreign countries.

Our work also speaks to the war support literature. Currently, the cottage industry of war support has discovered many indicators that could sway war support while a military operation is *ongoing* (e.g. Mueller, 1973; Berinsky, 2007), and our work show that, under the condition that a military operation *has not* taken place and the United States is *not* directly attacked (the leading assumption of the war support literature) but hope to intervene, the level of knowledge nonpartisans has about the issue at stake determines their level of support for military interventions abroad. Future work could expand to locate factors that would influence not only nonpartisans but partisans in these more nuanced scenarios. Knowing what influences public support for military interventions abroad will help the U.S. craft more effective deterrence policies.

There are a number of limitations of our study. Most prominently, we could not provide reasons why offering more and different kinds of information to nonpartisans lead them to retract their support more. The reasons that we employed in the experiment are often cited by politicians as justifications for defending Taiwan. Another limitation is that, the information that the nonpartisans received in the experiment did not come from prominent leaders, so it is not an appropriate test to use it to evaluate the elite cues thesis, certainly another area future research could tackle.

Our work also has implications for policymakers in charge of managing relations with China. As Sino-U.S. relations continue to increase in tensions, we could foresee an increase in support for Taiwan in the military realm among political elites, and by extension, their supporters.

While some believe that politicians should try to win over nonpartisans than other partisans (Stokes, 2005; Nichter, 2008; Golden and Min, 2013), our work here suggests that such view might be harmful in the case of Taiwan. In our experiment, we show that the more nonpartisans learned about Taiwan, the less it supports an intervention. This insight is critical for US' upcoming presidential election and the future of relations with China, as the US-China strategic competition continues. In our experiment, nonpartisans account for only 10 percent of the sample, and in reality, there is more. Figuring out the narratives that could help move nonpartisans into their political camp is a question of both academic and policy value.

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Appendix

Appendix Table A1. MTurk respondents in the first wave (n=802)

<i>Gender</i>	Male	645 (80.4%)
	Female	152 (19.0%)
	Others	3 (0.4%)
<i>Age</i>	Under 18	3 (0.4%)
	18~24	58 (7.2%)
	25~34	475 (59.2%)
	35~44	156 (19.5%)
	45~54	60 (7.5%)
	55~64	41 (5.1%)
	65 and up	8 (1.0%)
<i>Education</i>	Some high school or less	3 (0.4%)
	High school diploma/GED	37 (4.6%)
	Associate degree	6 (0.7%)
	Some college	17 (2.1%)
	Bachelor's degree	542 (67.6%)
	Master's or Professional degree	188 (23.4%)
	Post-Graduate or Professional Degree (e.g., MBA, Ph.D., MD)	6 (0.7%)
<i>Ethnicity</i>	White	620 (77.3%)
	Black or African American	40 (5.0%)
	American Indian or Alaska	46 (5.7%)
	Asian	53 (6.6%)
	Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0 (0%)
	Middle East/North Africa	0 (0%)
	Other or multiple	39 (5.0%)
<i>Party Identification</i>	Democrat	292 (36.4%)
	Republicans	414 (51.6%)
	Independent	93 (11.6%)
	Others	2 (0.2%)

Appendix Table A2. MTurk respondents in wave 2 (n=999)

<i>Gender</i>	Male	688 (68.9%)
	Female	306 (30.6%)
	Others	5 (0.5%)
<i>Age</i>	Under 18	0 (0%)
	18~24	85 (8.5%)
	25~34	616 (61.6%)
	35~44	198 (19.8%)
	45~54	63 (6.3%)
	55~64	31 (3.1%)
	65 and up	6 (0.6%)
<i>Education</i>	Some high school or less	1 (0.1%)
	High school diploma/GED	58 (5.8%)
	Associate degree	7 (0.7%)
	Some college	20 (2.0%)
	Bachelor's degree	774 (77.4%)
	Master's or Professional degree	133 (13.3%)
	Post-Graduate or Professional Degree (e.g., MBA, Ph.D., MD)	6 (0.6%)
<i>Ethnicity</i>	White	925 (92.5%)
	Black or African American	14 (1.4%)
	American Indian or Alaska	1 (0.1%)
	Asian	14 (1.4%)
	Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1 (0.1%)
	Middle East/North Africa	0 (0%)
	Other or multiple	32 (3.2%)
<i>Party Identification</i>	Democrat	637 (63.7%)
	Republicans	271 (27.1%)
	Independent	86 (8.6%)
	Others	5 (0.5%)