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Personality Traits and Foreign Policy Attitudes:

A Cross-National Exploratory Study

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Abstract

The study of foreign policy attitudes lies at the intersection of political psychology and international relations. Despite a shared interest in both fields in the psychological bases of political phenomena, research exploring the links between personality traits and foreign policy attitudes is scarce. This article pursues a set of questions intended to bring these agendas together. Do personality traits influence attitudes toward foreign policy? Are the links between personality traits and foreign policy the same, or do they differ across different national contexts? In exploring these questions, this article draws on data from a series of large-scale public opinion surveys in six western democracies: the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, and Australia.

Key words: Public opinion; foreign policy; personality; Big Five

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Introduction

Influential studies in foreign policy analysis draw on a range of psychological concepts to understand elite decision-making, including risk acceptance and risk aversion, cognitive consistency seeking and cognitive dissonance, and the use of heuristics. Newer scholarship continues this tradition with work on resolve in international conflict (Kertzer, 2016), the roles of national and supranational identities (Bayram, 2017b; Herrmann, 2017; Mader & Pötzschke, 2014), the role of emotions (Fletcher & Hove, 2012; Kertzer & McGraw, 2012; Renshon, Lee, & Tingley, 2017) and values-based reasoning in foreign policy decision making (Kertzer, Powers, Rathbun, & Iyer, 2014; Rathbun, Kertzer, Reifler, Goren, & Scotto, 2016). The now-dominant “Big Five” model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1988) partially explains and underpins a host of important political attitudes and behaviors like left-right ideology (e.g., Bakker & Lelkes, 2018; Gerber, Huber, Doherty, Dowling, & Ha, 2010; Mondak, 2010) and voting (Caprara, Schwartz, Capanna, Vecchione, & Barbaranelli, 2006; Gerber, Huber, Doherty, Dowling, et al., 2011; Schoen & Schumann, 2007). Now it is time to view foreign policy attitudes through this lens.¹

Research on the links between the Big Five personality traits and foreign policy attitudes remains scarce. A mere handful of studies examine the effects of personality traits on attitudes toward specific foreign policy issues (Kowert & Hermann, 1997; Mondak, 2010, pp. 137–138; Schoen, 2007). This creates the impression that the political implications of personality traits largely stop at water’s edge. We consider this unlikely, and see an opportunity to integrate the concerns of both research agendas in light of their common focus on the psychological bases of decision-making. We agree with Kertzer and Zeitzoff (2017) that individuals sometimes may lack information about world affairs, but rarely do they lack *personality*. At the same time, the study of public opinion toward foreign policy relies on an evidence base that remains focused on the

1. The belief that personality may matter for foreign policy attitudes is not strictly new. John Maynard Keynes (1919) famously argued that one could not understand the “Carthaginian peace” concluded at Versailles without an appreciation of the dispositions of Lloyd George, Wilson, and Clemenceau.

American public (Gravelle, Reifler, & Scotto, 2017). The personality–political behavior literature is not far behind in this respect, with several landmark studies focused exclusively on the US (e.g., Gerber et al., 2010; Mondak, 2010). We thus also see an opportunity for cross-national comparative research.

Our primary contention – borne out by our empirical analyses – is that the Big Five personality traits play a role in shaping attitudes toward foreign policy. Further, the effects of personality traits are broadly similar across country contexts. Our findings have important implications for foreign policy analysis. Recent research seeks to disaggregate the foreign policy decision-making process and understand elite decision-making draws on survey data from mass public samples (cf. Kertzer, 2016; Tingley, 2014). Our results imply that variation in personality traits shapes broad orientations toward international politics, and in turn variation in foreign policy actions, even in the face of fixed material constraints (Gallagher & Allen, 2014).

We structure our discussion as follows. First, we articulate our preliminary research hypotheses relating the Big Five personality traits to core foreign policy postures – Cooperative Internationalism, Isolationism, Militant Internationalism, and support for Global Justice (Gravelle et al., 2017). Second, we introduce our studies – a series of large-scale, comparative public opinion surveys of the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, and Australia focused on foreign policy issues – and describe our methods of statistical analysis. Third, we discuss the results of our analyses, paying particular attention to how the results from these six countries align with (or differ from) one another. We conclude by noting future lines of inquiry relating to the linkages between personality traits and foreign policy attitudes.

Theory and Hypotheses: Personality and Foreign Policy Attitudes

A working definition of personality is the individual mechanisms for assimilating perceptions, memories, decisions and emotions (Winter 2003: 110). Put another way, personality is the multidimensional, internal psychological structure of individuals (Mondak, 2010, p. 6). Though numerous competing models of personality exist,

psychological research on personality converges around the “Big Five” model or “Five-Factor model” of personality. Proponents of the Big Five argue that a parsimonious model comprising five broad personality traits or factors captures a substantial amount of variation in individual personality differences.. The work of Goldberg (1990, 1992, 1993) and Costa and McCrae (1988, 1992; McCrae and Costa 1997, 2003) is influential in the development and popularization of the Big Five, and demonstrates how other models of personality are subsumed by the Big Five framework. The Big Five are so named because they “represent personality at a very broad level of abstraction; each dimension summarizes a large number of distinct, more specific, personality characteristics” (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008, p. 119). Research shows that the Big Five traits have a biological foundation, and are stable over the life course (Costa & McCrae, 1988, 1992). Though originating in the US and in English, the Big Five factors replicate in numerous countries and languages, suggesting that the Big Five are a human universal (Allik & McCrae, 2004; Schmitt, Allik, McCrae, & Benet-Martínez, 2007).

While there is broad agreement among proponents of the Big Five with respect to the content of each of the personality traits, variation exists in terms of the labels attached to them. *Openness* (or sometimes Openness to Experience, and its opposite closed-mindedness) associates with adjective descriptors such as curious, insightful, introspective, and imaginative (McCrae & John, 1992). People high in openness to experience tend to seek out experiences that are cognitively engaging, and consume large amounts of information from a variety of sources. This trait “encompasses a willingness to seek new paths, and a corresponding weak attachment to familiar ways.” (Mondak, 2010, p. 51). *Conscientiousness* (sometimes called Will to Achieve or Control of Impulse) connects to terms such as efficient, organized, orderliness, and impulsiveness (reversed). It “describes *socially prescribed impulse control* that facilitates task- and goal-directed behavior, such as thinking before acting, delaying gratification, following norms and rules” (John et al., 2008, p. 120). *Extraversion* (sometimes called Positive Emotionality or Surgency, and its opposite introversion) is one of the most readily

observable personality traits. It relates to adjectives such as active, assertive, outgoing, and talkative (McCrae & John, 1992). *Agreeableness* (and its opposite antagonism) is captured using adjectives such as generous, kind, sympathetic, trusting and warm (McCrae & John, 1992). Agreeableness thus “involves interpersonal relations, especially the individual’s level of desire for positive relations with others” (Mondak, 2010, p. 58). *Neuroticism* (sometimes called Negative Emotionality, and its opposite *Emotional Stability*), like Extraversion, has long been recognized as a core dimension of individual personality differences. Adjectives such as anxious, worrying, tense, unstable, impulsive, calm (reversed) and stable (reversed) capture the trait (John et al., 2008; McCrae & John, 1992).

While research linking individual personality differences and political attitudes can be traced back to early work by Adorno and colleagues (1950), there is a resurgent interest among political scientists in the effects of personality on mass political attitudes and behavior, with many drawing on the Big Five model. A primary focus of this literature is the relationship between personality traits and left–right ideology. Research consistently finds that Openness correlates strongly with left-wing placement (or liberalism) and Conscientiousness correlates with right-wing placement (or conservatism) (Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2011; Gerber et al., 2010; Mondak, 2010). Some research reports a weaker or inconsistent relationship between Agreeableness and left-wing placement (Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2011; Mondak, 2010). Findings with respect to Extraversion are mixed, with some studies reporting no relationship between Extraversion and ideology (Mondak, 2010), and others a weak relationship with conservatism (Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2011; Gerber et al., 2010). Beyond left–right ideology, Mondak claims that “it is more difficult to hypothesize intuitively satisfying effects of extraversion of political attitudes and predispositions” (2010, p. 57). Findings for Emotional Stability similarly are mixed. Some research finds no relationship between Emotional Stability and ideology while other studies find an association with liberalism (Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling,

2011; Gerber et al., 2010; Mondak, 2010). A related stream of research focusing on vote choice generally finds that Openness and Agreeableness correlate with voting for leftist parties, while Conscientiousness, and to a limited extent Extraversion, link to voting for rightist parties (Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Zimbardo, 1999; Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2011; Mondak, 2010; Schoen & Schumann, 2007).

As for the effects of personality traits on foreign policy preferences, existing research provides relatively little guidance. Among the American public, Mondak finds that high Openness correlates with opposition to the Iraq War (2010, pp. 137–138). Schoen (2007) similarly finds that Openness and Agreeableness predict opposition to the Iraq War among the German public. He (2007) also finds that Openness and Agreeableness positively predict support for European integration in Germany, and Bakker and de Vreese (2016) report similar effects of both traits on support for widening European Union membership in the Netherlands. Aside from these findings relating to two specific foreign policies, we know little about how the Big Five personality traits shape attitudes toward foreign policy among mass publics.

Following Hurwitz and Peffley (1987) we hold that broad foreign policy “postures” (latent orientations toward international cooperation or conflict) shape attitudes toward more specific foreign policy issues (e.g., support for trade agreements, armed conflicts, or other policies particular to individual countries). To facilitate cross-national comparisons, we focus our analyses on these general postures. Specifically, we follow Gravelle, Reifler, and Scotto (2017) in enumerating four such postures, though make no claims that these are exhaustive. This four-posture model subsumes a number of existing models. For example, it is commonplace to speak of *Cooperative Internationalism* and *Militant Internationalism* as distinct dimensions (Wittkopf, 1981, 1990). Rathbun and colleagues (2016, p. 125) describe these postures as oriented toward the outside world with either “open arms” or a “clenched fist”. Often seen as constituting a separate dimension and not merely the joint negation of cooperative and Militant Internationalism, *Isolationism* constitutes a third posture, reflecting beliefs about

whether one's country should engage with the world at all (Chittick, Billingsley, & Travis, 1995; Kertzer, 2013; Rathbun, 2007; Rathbun et al., 2016). Questions about whether wealthy states should redistribute wealth to other countries is a distinct form of international cooperation, and forms a fourth *Global Justice* posture (Bayram, 2016, 2017a; Gravelle et al., 2017). These four postures – Cooperative Internationalism, Militant Internationalism, Isolationism, and support for Global Justice – have the additional benefit of exhibiting cross-national measurement invariance (Gravelle et al., 2017). Cross-cultural validity, often assumed but not tested, enables us to draw comparisons across country contexts.

We anticipate that certain personality traits are more consequential than others for particular foreign policy postures (see Table 1 for a summary of our theoretical expectations). Further, we expect not all of the Big Five personality traits to shape all foreign policy postures. It is worth emphasizing that these are preliminary expectations. We endeavor to work out the implications of specific personality traits for different foreign policy postures, but our analyses remain exploratory in nature because the early state of the theoretical development of the personality–politics research literature.

[Table 1 about here]

With *Cooperative Internationalism*, we expect that Openness and Agreeableness to exert positive effects, and Conscientiousness a negative effect. For individuals high in Openness, their receptiveness to new ideas, lack of attachment to familiar ways and proclivity for consuming information likely incline them toward the kinds of fact-seeking, discussion and compromise inherent in international cooperation. Agreeableness would appear to be the personality trait most congruent with Cooperative Internationalism. Individuals high on Agreeableness are trusting, with a strong desire for positive interpersonal relations, and generally conflict-averse. We therefore expect such people to support Cooperative Internationalism. These expectations are supported by findings of previous research linking both Openness and Agreeableness to approval of European integration, a specific form of international

cooperation (Bakker & de Vreese, 2016; Schoen, 2007). For individuals high in Conscientiousness, their self-disciplined and responsible nature may lead them to see international cooperation as impinging on what they believe to be right, and therefore less inclined toward support for Cooperative Internationalism (Schoen, 2007). It is not apparent that Extraversion (which connotes both sociability and boldness) or Emotional Stability (which connotes calm and moderation) ought to shape support for Cooperative Internationalism in one direction or another.

As for *Isolationism*, our expectations are for negative effects of Openness, Agreeableness, Emotional Stability, and a positive effect of Conscientiousness. Retreating from engagement with the world would appear antithetical to individuals high in Openness, who are apt to seek out new experiences and different ways of life. The importance of positive interpersonal relations for those high in Agreeableness may transfer over to foreign policy, inclining them toward international engagement and away from Isolationism. Individuals high in Emotional Stability potentially are less prone to anxiety about threats beyond their borders, and should be less apt to support Isolationism. By contrast, those high in Conscientiousness tend to be self-reliant, suggesting that they are less likely to see engagement with the world beyond their borders as necessary. These theoretical expectations find support in cognate research on the effects of personality traits on xenophobic attitudes (Barbarino & Stürmer, 2016; Gallego & Pardos-Prado, 2014). Because Extraversion connotes both friendliness and assertiveness, we do not advance an expectation as to its effect on Isolationism.

With respect to *Militant Internationalism*, our expectations partly mirror those for Cooperative Internationalism: we expect Openness to exert a negative effect and Conscientiousness and Extraversion positive effects. The intellectual flexibility and appreciation of diverse viewpoints of individuals high in Openness should run counter to the notion that military force is a productive means of engaging in foreign affairs. On the other hand, individuals scoring high in Conscientiousness exhibit a strong sense of self-discipline and goal orientation, and may be more supportive of military engagement

if it advances particular goals (Schoen, 2007, p. 413). Extraversion connotes assertiveness, pointing to potential support for Militant Internationalism. It is not clear what effects (if any) ought to be present for Agreeableness and Emotional Stability. For highly agreeable individuals, their compassionate and caring nature may make them less supportive to the use of force abroad regardless of its aims. At the same time, their trusting and compliant nature may make them more likely to “go along” with their fellow citizens when they support armed conflict, as we see with “rally around the flag” effects in the public opinion literature (Mueller, 1970). These opposing forces may produce a null result for Agreeableness. We expect that Emotional Stability exerts similarly cross-cutting effects. Those high on Emotional Stability likely are less fearful of potential external threats, but also less anxious about the consequences of military action. These opposing forces may similarly produce a null result.

Our expectations relating to support for *Global Justice* largely parallel those for Cooperative Internationalism: Openness and Agreeableness should exert positive effects, and Conscientiousness a negative effect. The natural intellectual curiosity and information-seeking of individuals high in Openness coupled with their willingness to reconsider established ideas may lead them to consider (and support) different, more equal global political and economic structures. The kind, warm and forgiving character of those high in Agreeableness should also lead to support of the kinds of policies designed to advance global justice. By contrast, individuals high in Conscientiousness are hard-working and achievement-oriented, and likely to see little justification for supporting global redistributive initiatives. These expectations are motivated by cognate research on personality and support for redistribution in the domestic sphere, where Openness and Agreeableness link to greater support for redistribution and Conscientiousness reduced support (Bakker, 2017; Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2011). Highly conscientious individuals, who are goal- and achievement-oriented, tend to be less supportive of redistributive public policies at the domestic level (Bakker, 2016; Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2011).

Data and Methods

To test these hypotheses, we exploit survey data from demographically representative online samples from six countries: the US, UK, France, Germany, Canada and Australia. The choice of countries reflects our desire to collect samples from a diverse set of western democracies occupying different positions in the international system. The US remains a global superpower, though increasingly challenged by an ascendant China. The UK, France, and Germany are regional European powers. All three are also members of the European Union (EU), though at the time of writing, the UK is set to exit the EU in late 2019. Canada and Australia are “middle powers” – countries with less economic and military power than superpowers or greater powers, but that have nevertheless exercised issue-specific leadership in international affairs and can act as mediators within the western alliance. The UK, France, and US are also nuclear powers and permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. All five northern-hemisphere countries belong to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Australia is allied to the US under the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security (ANZUS) Treaty. The US, UK, Canada, and Australia are members of the “Five Eyes” intelligence alliance, and share long-standing (if loosely defined) ties as members of the so-called “Anglosphere.”

Data for Study 1 were collected in the US (n = 2,824), UK (n = 2,736), France (n = 5,921) and Germany (n = 2,551) by YouGov in November 2011 (US and UK), May 2014 (France) and October 2014 (Germany). Data for Study 2 were collected in Canada (n = 2,745) and Australia (n = 2,300) with Lucid and Research Now–Survey Sampling International panel members via the Qualtrics online survey platform in May 2018 and January 2019.

All surveys contained a 14-item battery of questions that capture the aforementioned four foreign policy postures (Gravelle et al., 2017) as well as brief measures of the Big Five common in social and political surveys. The American, British, French, and German surveys (Study 1) included a subset of items drawn from the Big

Five Inventory (BFI) (John et al., 2008). The Canadian and Australian surveys (Study 2) contained the 20-item mini-IPIP measuring the Big Five (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006). Though such brief personality batteries are common in social and political surveys, we acknowledge that they nevertheless trade a degree of psychometric validity for brevity (Bakker & Lelkes, 2018; Credé, Harms, Niehorster, & Gaye-Valentine, 2012). Complete question wording for the foreign policy and Big Five items appear in Appendices 1–4.

We analyze our data in an exploratory structural equation modelling (ESEM) framework (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2009; Marsh, Morin, Parker, & Kaur, 2014). ESEM represents an integration and extension of exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM). Here, our foreign policy items are allowed to load on all four factors as in EFA, and in line with Gravelle, Reifler and Scotto (2017). This is to say we relax the assumption of “simple structure” common in applications of structural equation modeling, where items load on one and only one factor, and which can distort the factor structure and overstate between-factor correlations (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2009). To ensure that the Big Five traits are measured consistently across the two studies, personality items load only on the corresponding factor as in CFA. Further, we specify a scalar-invariant model with intercepts and thresholds constrained to be equal across the countries included in each study. This procedure aligns with previous findings on the cross-national measurement invariance of both the Big Five framework (Allik & McCrae, 2004; Schmitt et al., 2007) and the four-factor model of foreign policy attitudes (Gravelle et al., 2017). This assures that the Big Five and the foreign policy dimensions are measured in an equivalent way across our country cases in each study, allowing valid comparisons of the regression coefficients across countries (Billiet, 2003; Davidov, Meuleman, Cieciuch, Schmidt, & Billiet, 2014). All of our analyses are performed using MPlus version 8.1 for Windows (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). Our models are estimated using robust weighted least squares while treating our indicators as ordered categories (Finney & DiStefano, 2013).

A diagram of the structural component of our model appears in Figure 1. More detailed diagrams showing the structural and measurement components of our models tested in Study 1 and Study 2 appear in the online appendix in Figures A1 and A2, respectively.

[Figure 1 about here]

It is worth noting that we do not include control variables in our analyses. In particular, we refrain from controlling for the effect of left–right ideology – a factor that previous studies show to play a role in shaping foreign policy preferences (e.g., Gravelle, 2014; Gries, 2014; Schoen, 2007; Wittkopf, 1990). In investigating the links between personality traits and policy attitudes, we follow Johnston, Lavine and Federico (2017) in assuming that personality is exogenous (and causally prior) to policy preferences. Further, other studies indicate that large parts of mass publics remain “innocent of ideology” with other factors shaping policy attitudes (Kinder & Kalmoe, 2017). We adopt the prevailing view in personality psychology and political psychology that personality traits are primarily rooted in biology (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Mondak, 2010). In short, personality is pre-political. Controlling for ideology would thus obscure the effects of personality traits on foreign policy attitudes operating via ideology.²

Results

Before examining specific model coefficients, it is worth noting that our models achieve acceptable fit to the data. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) fit statistics are below the suggested maximum value of 0.08 for acceptable models (Study 1: 0.058; Study 2: 0.036) (Browne & Cudeck, 1992; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Similarly, the comparative fit index (CFI) values are above the minimum value of 0.9 for acceptable fit (Study 1: 0.912; Study 2: 0.936). The results also confirm that we obtain acceptable convergent validity with our personality trait factors (see Appendix 1 and

2. In the Online Appendix, we test an alternative model that tests both direct relationships between the Big Five and the foreign policy factors as well as mediated (indirect) relationships via ideology. Overall, we find that the Big Five exert significant total (direct plus indirect) effects on the foreign policy factors in line with our hypotheses. Mediation via ideology is largely limited to the effects of Openness and Conscientiousness on both Cooperative Internationalism and Militant Internationalism. For example, in the American case, more than 60 percent of the effects of Openness and Conscientiousness on Cooperative Internationalism and Militant Internationalism are attributable to ideology. Such mediation is weaker (or non-existent) in other countries.

Appendix 2); we also recover the same foreign policy postures obtained by Gravelle, Reifler, and Scotto (2017) (see Appendix 3 and Appendix 4).

Turning to our model coefficients, presented in Table 2, it is worth recalling that because we specified a scalar-equivalent model, our personality and foreign policy factors are measured equivalently across our country samples. We can therefore meaningfully compare coefficients across country cases (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). Looking at the standardized coefficients for the effects of the Big Five on Cooperative Internationalism, the results largely align with our theoretical expectations. Openness exerts a positive effect in the US and UK; a one standard deviation increase in Openness associates with modest increases in Cooperative Internationalism (0.188 standard deviations in the US and 0.172 standard deviations in the UK). The coefficients are in the expected direction in France, Germany, Canada, and Australia, but do not approach statistical significance at conventional levels. The results for Conscientiousness more closely align with our expectations, with again modest (but significant) negative effects in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia ranging in magnitude from -0.097 (in the UK) to -0.166 (in Canada). The results for Agreeableness strongly support expectations: in all six countries, individuals high in Agreeableness show an inclination toward Cooperative Internationalism, ranging from the moderate effect of 0.126 in the US to the substantially stronger effect of 0.358 in Germany. Interestingly, Extraversion exerts a modest negative effect on Cooperative Internationalism in all four English-speaking countries. Though we refrained from advancing any theoretical expectations with respect to the relationship between Extraversion and Cooperative Internationalism because of the broad and complex content of Extraversion (containing both friendliness and assertiveness), we might conjecture that our results reflect extraverts' slight preference for international engagement in pursuit of national interests over international consensus and cooperation.

[Table 2 about here]

As for the effects of the Big Five on Isolationism, results align with most of our theoretical expectations. In all countries except France, Openness has a significant and negative effect on Isolationism, ranging from a weak effect in the US (-0.080) to larger effects in the UK (-0.188) and Canada (-0.206). Individuals who score higher in Openness are thus more open to the world, and less inclined toward Isolationism. The hypothesized positive relationship between Conscientiousness and Isolationism is observed in the UK (0.087), the US (0.176), France (0.202), and Germany (0.227), but not in Canada or Australia, the two middle-power cases. Individuals higher in Agreeableness are significantly lower on Isolationism in all countries except the UK. These effects are relatively weak in the US and continental European cases while being larger in magnitude in the middle-power cases (-0.262 in Canada, and -0.335 in Australia). In five out of six country cases, then, agreeable people are thus more likely to seek to engage with the world, or at least disagree with the notion of disengaging. With respect to Emotional Stability (a trait that less frequently presents political implications), we find weak-to-moderate negative effects in all countries except Canada ranging in magnitude from -0.051 in France to -0.178 in Germany. In general, then, more emotionally stable individuals are somewhat less likely to want to withdraw from the world. To our surprise, the results also yield a modest negative relationship between Extraversion and Isolationism in the UK, Germany, Canada, and Australia. This differs from previous research that reports null results for Extraversion on support for the openness of one's country to the world (Ackermann, Ackermann, & Freitag, 2018). Though we again did not advance a theoretical expectation relating Extraversion to Isolationism, we might surmise that extraverts are more likely to express greater nationalist sentiment (Wang & Weng, 2018), which is reflected in the content of some of our indicators of Isolationism.

Turning to Militant Internationalism, the expected negative effect of Openness is observed only in the American (-0.140), Canadian (-0.136) and Australian (-0.226) cases, while Conscientiousness exerts a significant positive effect only in the US (0.166), UK

(0.222), and France (0.224). By contrast, Extraversion has a modest positive effect on Militant Internationalism in all countries except France, ranging from 0.109 in Canada to 0.175 in Australia. Further, Extraversion is the only substantively meaningful effect in the case of Germans' orientations toward Militant Internationalism (0.118). In most countries, then, extroverted individuals, who are more inclined toward assertiveness in their personal relations, are slightly more inclined to endorse the use of force in world affairs. The expected "weak null" result for the effect of Agreeableness on Militant Internationalism is borne out in all six countries. Similarly, we obtain our expected null result for the effect of Emotional Stability on Militant Internationalism in the UK, France, Germany, and Canada, yet Emotional Stability has a modest positive effect in the US and a negative effect in Australia.

The effects of the Big Five on orientations toward Global Justice closely accord with our theoretical expectations. Openness exerts weak-to-moderate positive effects in the UK (0.088), US (0.173), France (0.190), and Germany (0.268), but not in the two middle-power cases, Canada and Australia (there is a weak but significant – and wrongly-signed negative effect in Canada). In the majority of cases, then, individuals who score high in Openness – and are thus more amenable to new ideas, and less tied to convention – are more likely to endorse policies designed to produce more equitable global economic arrangements. Conscientiousness exerts a significant and substantively stronger negative effect on support for Global Justice in all six countries, ranging from -0.241 in the UK to -0.436 in France. Highly conscientious individuals, who are goal- and achievement-oriented, tend to be less supportive of redistributive public policies at the domestic level (Bakker, 2017; Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2011). Our findings here confirm that this economically conservative orientation of those scoring high in Conscientiousness carries over to questions of international redistribution. Lastly, the effect of Agreeableness on orientations toward Global Justice is positive and significant in all six countries, though ranging in magnitude from 0.100 in the US to 0.349 in Germany.

To summarize, we advanced 15 specific theoretical expectations relating the Big Five personality traits to the four foreign policy dimensions, yielding 90 predictions in total across the six country cases. Of these, 68 (or 77 percent) were statistically significant and supported our theoretical expectations (see Tables 3 and 4). Overall, we fare best in predicting the effects of the Big Five personality traits on support for Global Justice (16 out of 18 predictions supported, or 89 percent), followed by Isolationism (19 out of 24, or 79 percent). Our success is somewhat lower with Militant Internationalism (21 out of 30, or 70 percent) and Cooperative Internationalism (12 out of 18, or 67 percent). We also fare best in predicting foreign policy postures in the US (14 out 15 hypotheses supported, or 93 percent) and the UK (13 out of 15, or 87 percent); fewer hypotheses are supported in Germany (11 out of 15, or 73 percent) and each of France, Canada, and Australia (10 out of 15, or 67 percent). Our results thus highlight the roles played by all the Big Five personality traits in shaping individuals' views of world affairs. These preliminary results point to some of the psychological – indeed pre-political – sources of foreign policy attitudes. Variation in country-level results also point to possible person–environment (or person–context) interactions that ought to be explored in greater depth (Mondak, 2010, p. 176; Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1991, p. 264). It may be the case that some of the relationships we hypothesize do not apply in some country contexts. For example, that the null relationships between Openness and Cooperative Internationalism, Conscientiousness and Isolationism, and Conscientiousness and Militarism in our Canadian and Australian samples may point to different dynamics in middle-power states, or indeed even less economically and militarily powerful states.

[Table 3 about here]

[Table 4 about here]

Conclusion

This article attempts to bring together some of the common concerns of the political psychology and behavioral international relations research agendas, focusing on the effects of the Big Five personality traits on broad foreign policy dimensions.

While the existing behavioral international relations literature focuses on other individual-level psychological concepts, research linking the Big Five to public opinion and political behavior rarely ventures beyond water's edge, typically focusing on partisanship and ideology (but see Gallagher & Allen, 2014; Kowert & Hermann, 1997; Schoen, 2007). Our findings demonstrate that the effects of personality traits extend further than previously acknowledged. The Big Five play roles in shaping the four foreign policy dimensions that we identify: Cooperative Internationalism, Isolationism, Militant Internationalism, and orientations toward Global Justice.

Most of the results we find replicate across country cases, providing additional confirmation of the robustness of our results. At the same time, some results obtain in only some of the six countries under study. This points toward the need to more fully explicate the strategic cultures of different states, which serve as contexts within which mass publics express their attitudes toward world affairs. At the same time, many important measurement issues relating to the individual-level measurement of strategic cultures, their cross-national comparability, and their relationship to foreign policy postures remain to be worked out (Endres, Mader, & Schoen, 2015; Irondelle, Mérand, & Foucault, 2015). Future work ought to develop this theme at greater length.

Similarly, our analyses focused on the effects of the Big Five on broad foreign policy postures. We set aside for present purposes a more detailed investigation of how the Big Five shape more specific foreign policy attitudes – e.g., support for the use of force in particular contexts, attitudes toward specific bilateral relationships, or support for particular international organizations. Future research ought to examine how foreign policy postures mediate the effects of personality traits on specific policy attitudes in a “hierarchical” fashion (e.g., Hurwitz & Peffley, 1987). In developing such a hierarchically-structured model of foreign policy attitudes, it is also worth considering potential mediators of the effects of personality traits on the broad foreign policy postures. As mentioned above, these may include left–right ideology, in addition to other factors such as political party identification.

At the same time, it is worth recalling that our operational measures of the Big Five rely on a small number of items. This represents a trade-off in survey design between brevity and psychometric validity. Our brief personality measures may understate the true relationships between the Big Five and foreign policy attitudes (cf. Bakker & Lelkes, 2018). Such brief personality measures also preclude examining the effects of different facets (or subcomponents) of the Big Five personality traits on foreign policy attitudes. Measuring the Big Five's constitutive facets is potentially important, as different facets may exert effects in opposing directions – for example, the assertiveness and sociability facets of Extraversion (John et al., 2008; Mondak, 2010). Existing work suggests that predictors of foreign policy behavior exist at the facet level (Gallagher & Allen, 2014). Consequently, a potentially fruitful avenue for further research is to collect new survey data with a more complete measurement of the Big Five along with our foreign policy attitude items.

Finally, it is worth recalling that the six country cases examined here are all western democracies. It is also worth remembering that all five northern hemisphere countries are NATO allies, and Australia remains closely allied to the UK, US, and Canada. Three of the six countries also exercise substantial global leadership as nuclear-armed states and permanent members of the UN Security Council. We acknowledge that our results – namely, that foreign policy attitudes are comparable cross-nationally, and many of the same relationships between personality traits and foreign policy dimensions are similarly found across countries – may be due to the broad similarities in national political cultures and state positions in the international system. States with different cultures, political institutions, material capabilities, or strategic contexts may differ in terms of personality–politics links in substantive ways. A challenge for future research is to examine where and how.

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