War that Feels Good:
A new explanation for the rally-round-the-flag phenomenon

ABSTRACT

Rally-round-the-flag (RRTF) is a phenomenon of abrupt and sharp increases in public support for sitting U.S. Presidents and their policies, which emerges primarily in response to wars and other international crises. Despite being an important political phenomenon, the RRTF phenomenon is not well understood for at least three reasons. First, existing explanations are generally hyper-rationalistic, ignoring the crucial role of emotions. Second, when existing explanations do consider the role of emotions, they tend to focus on negative ones such as fear and anger, thereby overlooking the role of positive emotions. Third, some approaches focus on the role of elite rhetoric in war time, but miss the fact that the rally phenomenon is co-produced from below. The paper proposes a new theoretical explanation for the RRTF phenomenon, weaving together elements from appraisal theory in psychology, social identity theory in social psychology, and social constructivist approaches in the study of nationalism. It argues that in the context of war the RRTF effect emerges when established nationalistic frameworks become more salient, and individual citizens experience widespread feelings of nationalist pride, confidence in the government, and hope with respect to the outcomes of war. In order to test this argument, data from surveys collected during two rally periods – the first following the 9-11 terrorist attack and the second at the beginning of the 2003 invasion of Iraq – are analyzed using logistic regression and structural equations modeling. The article concludes by attributing the rally around Bush's "war on terrorism" and the invasion of Iraq to individuals' sense of hope fueled by nationalist pride and confidence with respect to the government and its execution of the war. More generally, this study illustrates how micro-mechanisms that affect individual perceptions and feelings can explain larger scale political phenomena.

Introduction

Since the 1960s, scholars of public opinion have sought to understand the historical events during which public support for sitting U.S. Presidents and their policies increased dramatically and abruptly. John Mueller (1973) has dubbed this phenomenon the *"Rally-Round-the-Flag"* effect. Studies have found evidence for rally effects during wars and other international crises (Hetherington and Nelson 2003; Parker 1995; Perrin and Smolek 2009), though not all international conflicts produce such an effect. Rally periods in times of war are characterized by widespread agreement that the country is fighting a just war and that the President is handling the situation in an adequate way. Shortly after the outbreak of the Korean War in July 1950, for example, an estimated 77% of U.S. citizens stood behind President Truman's decision to send troops to Korea (Mueller 1973: 51). Following the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964, public support for military involvement in South-East Asia increased by 30 points, from 42% to 72% (Russett 1990: 37-38). At the beginning of the First Gulf War of 1991, eight out of every ten Americans approved of President Bush's performance as President and

his decision to go to war (Mueller 1994: 180). A decade later, in the aftermath of the terrorist attack of September 11, an estimated 94% of US citizens supported military action against those responsible for the attack (Larson and Savych 2005: 94), and a presidential approval rate of 51% skyrocketed to 86% (ibid: 92, n.7). Finally, following the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, about three quarters of the American public supported the war and President Bush (Gallup 2003).

The rally-round-the-flag (RRTF) phenomenon is of interest to public opinion research in the United States because it embraces most of the population, and temporarily reduces the effects of partisanship. Yet, this effect is not well understood for at least three reasons. First, existing theories of public opinion are usually hyper-rationalistic, ignoring the crucial role of emotions. Second, when scholars do consider the role of emotions, they tend to focus on negative ones such as fear and anger, thereby overlooking the role of positive emotions. Third, some approaches focus on the role of elite rhetoric in war time, but miss the fact that the rally phenomenon is co-produced from below. Following a critical review of established explanations for the rally phenomenon, this manuscript lays a foundation for a new explanation, according to which the RRTF phenomenon emerges when established nationalistic frameworks become more salient, and individual citizens experience feelings of nationalist pride, hope for victory, and high confidence that their government and army can achieve victory. Empirical results from testing this theory against the main established alternatives are presented in the second half of the manuscript. Using both conventional logistic regression and the more comprehensive structural equations modeling tool the data analysis shows that public attitudes in recent rally periods were motivated by positive emotions conjured by nationalism rather than by rational decision making or negative feelings that stem from perception of threat.

The "rational public" approach

The most common finding in studies of public opinion during wars is that public support of the president is negatively associated with the number of casualties suffered by the country's army. The usual interpretation is that the public uses a "body count" as a proxy for the success of the war because more direct information is typically lacking (Gartner and Segura 2000). However, it has been shown that the perception of success and the

reaction toward casualties are not constant, but depend on contextual factors. First and foremost, several studies have found variation in public attitudes across *types of armed conflicts*. Of all types of wars, intervention in civil wars has been the least popular type. In contrast, wars against direct adversaries of the U.S. have been the most popular (Eichenberg 2005; Jentleson 1992; Oneal, Lian, and Joyner 1996). Within the "rational public" paradigm, these findings were explained by the objective characteristics of different types of wars that the public considers when rationally calculating success probabilities. It is therefore irrational to support military interventions in civil wars, because these wars are intractable, no one side can be easily singled out as the villain, and it is difficult to define and achieve military success. In contrast, it is much more rational to support international wars, where both adversary and success can be clearly defined. Plausible as this explanation might seem, it is certainly not the only possible interpretation of the findings. Instead, I propose that the public rallies behind the government if it goes to war to protect the public's perceived interests. Instead of relying on rationalist assumptions, this interpretation emphasizes how nationalistic frames define perceived interests in two analytically (though not empirically) distinct ways: first by prioritizing in the public's mind 'national security' over other competing interests (e.g. personal security or economic stability); and second by defining *whose* interests count—i.e. those of 'our nation' rather than of other peoples.

In a second extension and modification of the "rational public" approach, scholars have pointed to variation in the sensitivity of the public to casualties across different *phases* of the war. Thus, during the first few months of the "major combat phase" of the second Iraq War Americans tended to be more tolerant of U.S. casualties than during other phases of the war (Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2006: 18-22). Because of these findings, proponents of the rationalist thesis had to modify their argument, explaining that "when the public appears to be confident of a U.S. victory, casualties have little effect on popular support. But if the public's confidence is shaken, then casualties erode support" (ibid: 23). By adding "confidence" to the equation, Gelpi and co-authors have introduced an emotional variable. But where does this initial confidence in the government and its war effort come from? To what extent is this confidence based on rational calculus? What can cause the public, which often expresses general skepticism or even mistrust of politicians, to lay this incredulity aside during rally periods? This question seems the most puzzling in respect to the rally period that followed major

catastrophes such as the attack on Pearl Harbor or 9/11. From a rational choice perspective, we should expect

that such devastating attacks would cause Americans to lose confidence in the very officials that failed to

protect them. Instead, the popularity of the sitting presidents skyrocketed in the aftermath of both attacks

(Schildkraut 2002). Therefore, while high levels of confidence represent an important mechanism of the RRTF

phenomenon, it is difficult to explain within a rationalistic framework. Instead, I argue that the increase in

confidence during rally periods is an emotional effect that results from greater identification with an emerging

national group and its leaders, a point to which I will return latter.

The "elite consensus" thesis

A second set of theories centers on how public attitudes are mediated by the flow of information from

political elites and the media. This approach suggests that public opinion tends to be fairly monolithic and

supportive of the war if the received information justifies the war. In contrast, public opinion becomes more

polarized when the public conversation contains discordant voices, particularly if there is a substantial

opposition to the war well represented in the media (Brody 1991; Groeling and Baum 2008; Zaller 1992: chap.

9). According to this view, then, the RRTF phenomenon is simply a reflection of an elite consensus that is

transmitted to the public by the media. Yet, such an argument might actually conflate cause with effect: it is

possible that during the rally period, the lack of oppositional voices is the *product* of the rally itself which forces

the opposition to hold its tongue in order not to appear "unpatriotic" (Hetherington and Nelson 2003: 38).

This is not to deny what many empirical studies have found: that media and public figures influence

public attitudes toward a war (e.g. Berinsky 2007; Brody 1994; Iyengar and Simon 1994). Yet, there are at least

two reasons why we should not be satisfied with these theories. First, these theories miss the fact that public

opinion is co-produced from below. For example, individuals may consume a certain media content (e.g.

"patriotic" TV channels) not because this is the only content available for them, but because it fits their already

established attitudes, a phenomenon known as "gratification effect" (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch 1973).

Second, more often than not theories with a top-down bent tend to emphasize the power of elites and the media

to *persuade* a public assumed to consist primarily of information processors (Taber 2003), thereby ignoring the

emotional aspect of attitude formation. These assumptions, which are shared by the "rational public" approach as well, have become increasingly problematic since much recent research has demonstrated the strong influence of emotions on political attitudes (Neuman, Marcus, Grigler, and MacKuan, 2007: multiple chapters).

Moving beyond rationalism and top-down theories

While the two types of theories of public opinion presented thus far differ greatly from one another in many respects, they both assume that public opinion during war is driven by the same mechanisms as during peace time. Against this continuity assumption I argue that the RRTF effect is an irregular phase of public opinion formation during which nationalist frameworks of interpretation are activated, thereby producing a special emotional charge that in turn drives individuals to close ranks behind the war effort and the government. The approach proposed here has roots in three types of theories. Through the use of *appraisal theories*, it builds on recent efforts in political science and political sociology (most notably in social movement studies) to give due attention to the emotional basis of political phenomena. Second and third, drawing on *social identity theory* in social-psychology and *social-constructivist* approaches to nationalism, my study moves beyond existing theories of public opinion by showing how war enthusiasm is co-produced from below. I will now briefly discuss these theoretical perspectives in order to show how they can jointly elucidate the RRTF phenomenon.

Appraisal Theories of Emotions

Appraisal theories are a class of approaches that study emotions. The common characteristic of appraisal theories is the view of discrete emotions as related to *evaluation* of events and situations (Ellsworth and Scherer 2003). Appraisal theories are especially useful for the study of public opinion because they emphasize that emotions are not the direct outcome of the events *per se*, but of the *interpretation* of events (Roseman and Smith 2001: 6). This has several implications for the study of RRTF phenomenon. First, the fact that only some events produce a rally effect can be explained by showing that the interpretation of these events was different. Second, the fact that individuals have different attitudes toward an ongoing war can be attributed to variation in the *meaning* they attribute to the war (e.g. war of self-defense vs. war of choice; war over national interest vs.

wars over elite's interests). Finally, thinking about emotions as the product of appraisal processes can help to explain the emergence of temporary political consensus (i.e. a "rally" period). This can be done by deciphering the shared interpretive framework that elicited similar emotional reactions to a given event.

Leonie Huddy and co-authors employed the appraisals approach in their study of public attitudes in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. They identify *perception of threat* as the main interpretive framework that generated the rally behind President Bush and his *War on Terrorism* policy (Huddy, Feldman, and Cassese 2007; Huddy, Feldman, Taber, and Lahav 2005). These scholars argue that perception of threat made people angry with the enemy, an anger that in turn fostered support for military actions by minimizing individuals' perception of war-related risk and motivating them for action. While this turn toward appraisal theory is promising, Huddy et al.'s emphasis on *anger* as the discrete emotion responsible for the rally effect is problematic. It seems unlikely that supporting the "war on terrorism" required the average American to overcome a strong sense of personal risk, because this war's military actions took place on other continents, and affected only a small portion of the American population directly (such as through ethnic profiling at airports). More generally, at least from the second half of the 20th century on, the participation of most U.S. residents in wars has been very limited and indirect (Mann 1987), and, thus, war-making entailed very little personal risk for the average citizen. Therefore, the mechanism suggested by Huddy and coauthors does not seem very relevant for recent rally periods. To be sure, during international crises or following a massive terrorist attack the average individual perceives great threat and thus might feel scared, anxious, angry, etc. Yet, the focus of my study is *not* the emotional state of individuals *per se*, but specifically those emotions that make individuals more likely to rally around the flag.

In contrast to the "perception of threat" argument that points to anger or fear, I argue that the rally-round-the-flag effect is motivated primarily by positive feelings of pride, hope, and confidence. The section that follows this theoretical discussion offers some empirical evidence for this view. Here, I wish to explore some theoretical reasons why a focus on pride, hope, and confidence is warranted. This will be done by referring to basic principles of appraisal theories.

Lazarus (2001: 42-45) distinguishes between *primary* and *secondary* appraisals. *Primary appraising* is the initial evaluation of an event as being relevant or irrelevant to the individual's goal attainment, and, if the event is relevant, whether it is consistent with or threatening to the individual's goals. Thus, the primary appraisal determines if the initial emotional reaction will have a positive or negative tone, and if indeed the event will elicit an emotional reaction at all. In s*econdary appraising*, individuals evaluate the event in light of their relationship with the environment, focusing on "[their] coping options, the social and intrapsychic constraints against acting them out, and expectations about the outcomes of that relationship" (ibid: 43).[1] Thus, through secondary appraisals individuals develop more nuanced feelings about the situation.

I argue that even if the primary appraisal of crisis situations involved a perception of threat and widespread feelings of fear, rage, hatred, or even despair, for that initial reaction to develop into support for military actions, the individual must evaluate the situation in a way that makes the crisis appear as manageable and a turn-around possible. In situations of crisis, hope is a coping resource (Lazarus 1999), thus people who feel hopeful are more likely to support war. I expect confidence to have a similar effect on the likelihood of war support -- that is, people who feel confident in the government and the military are more likely to support them in war. The rally effect, thus, emerges when feelings of hope and confidence in respect to the war, the military, and the government become widespread in the population. For reasons that will be discussed fully in the next section, pride is expected to have a positive effect on support of war. The short of it is this: I expect pride to have an association with war support, because of an emergent need to justify the actions taken "in the name of the nation" (i.e. a variant of what psychologists call "self-justification").

In sum, I propose that the feelings of pride, confidence, and hope are crucial parts of the RRTF effect in the context of war. This is an argument quite distinct from the existing literature, which either ignores emotions or emphasizes the significance only of negative ones. Given that my position is closer to those who highlight the role of negative emotions, it is worth reiterating the significant distance between this position and my own: While initial reactions to crisis events may be dominated by negative feelings, support for war depends on an

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[1] This distinction was also endorsed by other scholars who share with Lazarus the cognitive approach to emotions (e.g. Frijda 1986: 6, 453; Weiner 1986: 120).

emotional transition to more positive feelings. For example, during the 9/11 terrorist attacks, many Americans felt fear and anger, because they evaluated the situation as a challenge to their security. Shortly after the attack, however, the 'war on terrorism' took center stage as the main interpretive framework and elicited feelings of national pride, hope, and confidence. Thus, as I later will show, support for President Bush came not from everybody who felt angry or scared, but specifically from individuals who transitioned into feelings of pride, hope, and confidence. What causes people to experience these positive feelings in time of crisis? I hypothesize that pride, hope, and confidence result from invoking a *nationalist framework* of interpretation, an argument that I elaborate in the next section.

Construction of nation-ness and the in-group bias

Social-constructivism sees national identity as a psychological construct that *occasionally* takes center stage in people's cognition. Michael Billig (1995) uses the adjectives "hot" and "banal" to distinguish between the two phases of nationalism. "Hot" nationalism arises temporarily under extraordinary circumstances. For example, people may experience a moment of "hot" nationalism while watching the national flag being waved to the sounds of the national anthem at the opening of a sporting event or during a memorial service for dead soldiers. In such circumstances, individuals become aware of their membership in the nation and may feel emotional about that. According to Billig, however, this cognitive and emotional transition is possible because during other times the idea of the "nation" is present, but without much individual awareness of it. This "banal" form of nationalism is reproduced, for example, by national flags displayed in public spaces, which draw little attention from passersby but still remind them of the nation.

Wars and other international crises activate the nationalistic schema and bring it to the fore of people's cognition, thereby fostering a sense of "groupness" (Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004) and solidarity among co-patriots. This proposition is supported by Social Identity Theory (SIT) in social-psychology, which points to situations of *competition* as a major trigger for identification with the ingroup (Brewer, Weber, and Carini 1995). This partly explains why the outbreak of wars – a situation that is competitive by nature – tends to increase the salience of national identities, leading individuals to perceive reality through a nationalist schema.

The preceding section specified three distinct emotions – pride, hope, and confidence – that help to explain variation in individual support for war-efforts during rally periods. It is now time to draw the connection between the nationalist frameworks and these particular emotions (summarized in Figure 1 below). In order to feel hopeful, an individual must be sufficiently engaged in the situation (one cannot feel hopeful about something she does not care about).[2] In the context of war, the nationalist schema elevates the engagement of ordinary people and makes it possible for them to feel hopeful about the war. In addition, during rally periods, the average level of *confidence* is higher than normal, because the activation of a nationalist framework causes people to identify with the government and the military as symbols and guarantors of national sovereignty. Finally, pride is the main feeling that emerges from the activation of a nationalist frame of interpretation, because national identity moves to the fore of individual's perception of self. Feelings of national pride are nurtured throughout the life course, especially in schools where individuals learn about the great history and past achievements of the nation. Thus, modern people are likely to feel proud in moments when they view themselves through nationalist lenses. Pride is associated with support for war, because individuals who identify strongly with the nation support the war in order to maintain a positive self-esteem: they see the national group as an extension of themselves and thus feel compelled to justify the nation's action—a mechanism that social psychologists call "self-justification" (see Aronson 1997 for a brief review).

Figure 1. Hypothesized Causal Model
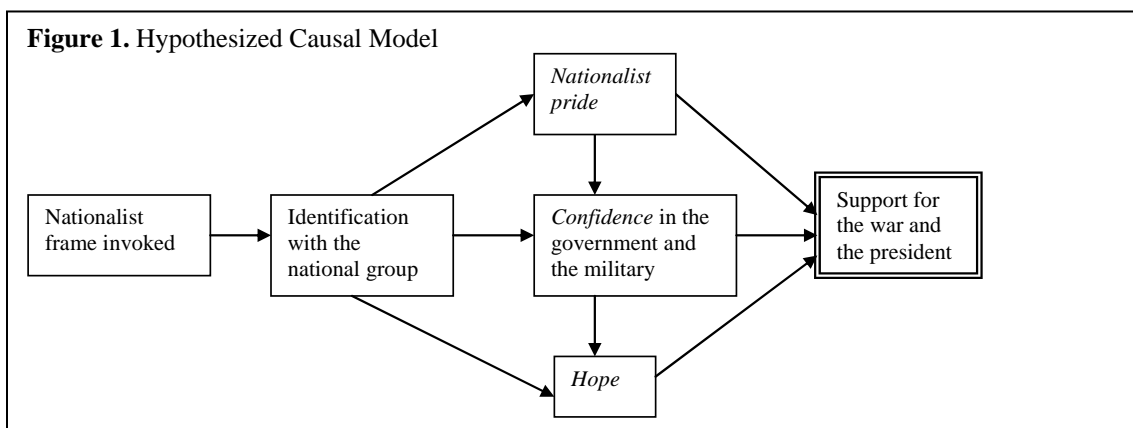
In sum, according to the proposed theoretical model, nationalist frames, when triggered by international conflict, bolster those feelings and perceptions that cause the rally effect. Thus, the individuals who rally around

[2] More generally, a basic principle of appraisal theories is that emotions can only evolve through appraisals if the individual interprets the situation, event, or issue as *relevant* to her (Lazarus 2001:42, 58).

the flag are not those that are more scared or angry, nor those that reach the rational conclusion that the war can be won. Instead, support for the war comes from individuals who experience greater identification with the national group, which in turn boosts their sense of national pride, their confidence in the capacity of the government and the military to take care of the situation, and their hope for a better future produced by the war. Are these theoretical expectations consistent with data?

Data and Research Design

Although the RRTF effect is an aggregate phenomenon, understanding it requires a micro-approach. The rally phenomenon occurs when, in response to some major event such as war, citizens who previously opposed a sitting president or were indifferent to him, become ardent supporters. It is this change that elevates presidential approval ratings from the range that prevails during 'normal' times (between 30 and 60 percent) to the range evident during rally periods (75-95 percent). My study seeks to trace the mechanisms that affect individuals' attitudes during rally periods, which in turn accumulate to a large shift in public opinion on the sitting president and the war policy. This study makes use of survey data conducted during a period when Americans rallied around President George W. Bush's leadership. To be sure, the most significant phase of this rally period occurred in the aftermath of 9/11 when presidential approval rates skyrocketed to nearly 90% in October 2001. Although a decline followed this peak, President Bush and his "War on Terrorism" policy enjoyed the support of a solid majority throughout a period of two years, which included a mini-rally following the invasion of Iraq. Figure 2 shows the trend line of the president's job approval rates from President Bush's inauguration to the end of 2004. The two periods addressed in this study are circled.[3]

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[3] Figure 2 is based on the data used in Eichenberg et al. 2008.

Figure 2. President Bush's job approval rates since first inauguration
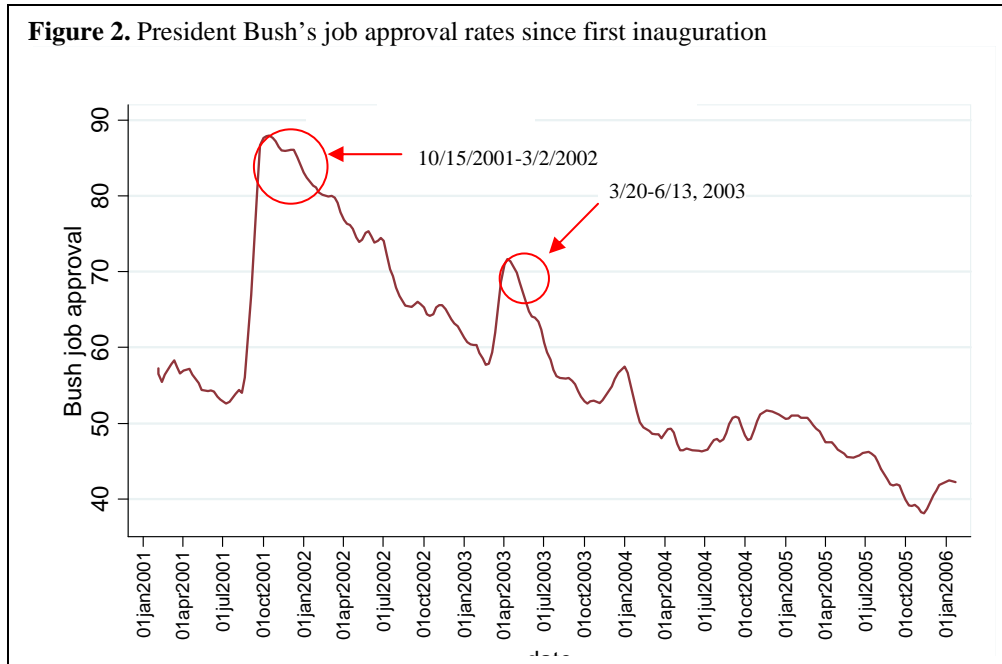
Testing theories that contain emotional mechanisms poses an estimable challenge because conventional polls almost never ask directly about feelings. Fortunately, two nationally representative data sources of public attitudes during the long rally period that followed 9/11, contain questions about emotions: a Gallup poll conducted a couple of days after the invasion of Iraq, and the National Threat and Terrorism Survey (NTTS) conducted in three rounds – in the aftermath of 9/11, in October and November of 2002, and in the first trimester of the second Iraq War. It should be noted, however, that there is some mismatch between the sources, which necessitate a two-step research design. Specifically, the Gallup poll and the first round of NTTS (henceforth "wave 1") resemble ordinary public opinion polls in the following sense: even though they contain some questions about individuals' feelings, for the most part they contain questions about opinions and demographic characteristics of respondents. In the first stage of the data analysis, these two data sets are analyzed using logistic regression in order to test my own theory against the major existing explanations. Then, in the second stage, Structural Equations Modeling is used in order to analyze the third rounds of NTTS (henceforth "wave 3"), which contains batteries of questions about emotions. In order to ease the reading of this research report, each part of the analysis is introduced separately.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Part 1: Using logistic regression to test determinants of public support of the war and the President

Shortly after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, a Gallup poll about the war contained several questions concerning emotional reactions. As can be seen in Table 1, at the beginning of the Iraq War about three out of every four Americans supported the president and the war.

Table 1. Binary distribution of categorical variables from a Gallup poll, March 22-23, 2003, U.S. adults (percents refer to valid responses).

	Yes	No
Approve the way the presidents is handling his job	72.8%	24.2%
Favor war	73.8	23.5
Worried about being victim of terrorism[*]	38.3	61.8
Perceived likelihood of more terrorism[*]	74.4	24.9
War going well[*]	91.4	7
U.S. is winning[*]	84.3	14.1
Confident because of the war	76.9	20.6
Proud because of the war	62.3	36.4
Afraid because of the war	25.3	74.3
Worried because of the war	49.4	50
Sad because of the war	71.4	28.2

Note: 986<=N<=1020
[*]Binary distribution was obtained by collapsing the ordinal variable with 3-4 categories.

What accounts for the high presidential job approval rate? Was it the prevalent perception of threat as some political-psychological theories suggest? Or maybe it was people's positive assessment of the chances for victory, as assumed by theories of the "rational public"? Or could variation in support for war be associated with positive emotions such as pride and confidence, as I am arguing? In order to adjudicate between these different explanations, the survey data were analyzed using logistic regressions with the president's job approval as a binary outcome. The analytical strategy had four stages. First, various control variables were tested, and those found to be statistically significant were kept as a baseline model. Next, independent variables were grouped based on their affinity to one of the three theoretical approaches. Each group of variables was tested in a separate model that also includes the variables of the baseline model. In the third stage, all statistically significant independent variables were combined into an "all-in-one" model. A final model was then created from all variables that remained statistically significant throughout the preceding analytical stages. Table 2 summarizes the findings.[4]

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[4] An additional analysis in which support for the war in Iraq served as the outcome of interest reveals that similar mechanisms affected both the president job's approval rate and the rate of public support for the war.

Table 2. Coefficients from logistic regression models of president job approval, US adult citizens, Gallup poll, March 22-23, 2003 (Robust standard errors in parentheses)

Explanatory variables	Model 1 Threat perception	Model 2 Rational Public	Model 3 Emotional Public	Model 4 All-in-one	Model 5 Final model
Worry about being victim of terrorism	-0.0877				
	(0.158)				
Expect more terrorism soon	-0.243				
	(0.173)				
Winning		1.476***		1.092***	1.262***
		(0.394)		(0.369)	(0.365)
Success (how war is going for us)		0.480**		0.262	
		(0.221)		(0.190)	
Expected duration of war		0.00396			
		(0.129)			
Expected number of U.S. casualties		-0.188			
		(0.151)			
War pessimism scale		-0.878			
		(0.856)			
Confident because of the war			1.604***	1.388***	1.426***
			(0.350)	(0.361)	(0.358)
Proud because of the war in Iraq			2.328***	2.403***	2.469***
			(0.342)	(0.345)	(0.329)
Afraid because of the war in Iraq			-0.645*		
			(0.360)		
Worried because of the war in Iraq			-0.430		
			(0.361)		
Sad because of the war in Iraq			-0.314		
			(0.435)		
How closely follow news about the war	0.573***	0.327	0.380	0.231	
	(0.187)	(0.216)	(0.240)	(0.242)	
Independent	-1.274***	-1.287***	-1.156**	-1.101**	-1.022*
	(0.414)	(0.464)	(0.562)	(0.545)	(0.552)
Lean democrat	-2.238***	-2.497***	-2.251***	-2.536***	-2.461***
	(0.378)	(0.437)	(0.422)	(0.415)	(0.418)
Democrat	-2.298***	-2.539***	-2.506***	-2.702***	-2.696***
	(0.326)	(0.379)	(0.366)	(0.347)	(0.354)
Level of liberalism	-0.591***	-0.572***	-0.465***	-0.409***	-0.414***
	(0.0980)	(0.111)	(0.113)	(0.118)	(0.117)
Age 50-64	-0.570**	-0.612*	-0.757**	-0.903***	-0.863***
	(0.262)	(0.329)	(0.331)	(0.338)	(0.332)
Income $30k-less than $50k	1.613***	1.584***	1.459***	1.393***	1.424***
	(0.348)	(0.455)	(0.420)	(0.440)	(0.379)
Income $50k and above	0.555*	0.335	0.220	0.00802	
	(0.294)	(0.365)	(0.362)	(0.379)	
College grad	-0.672***	-0.394	0.185	0.366	
	(0.245)	(0.302)	(0.342)	(0.350)	
Hispanic	0.710	1.322*	1.726**	1.566*	1.346*
	(0.908)	(0.752)	(0.843)	(0.837)	(0.796)
Black	-2.197***	-1.818***	-1.667***	-1.502***	-1.591***
	(0.403)	(0.535)	(0.409)	(0.409)	(0.405)
Observations	853	797	825	822	832
Chi-Square	194.2(13)***	215.9(16)***	240(16)***	218.9(15)***	224.7(11)***
BIC	-300	-315	-453	-437	-484

*P<0.1, **P<0.05, *** p<0.01

Note: "Republican & lean Rep.", <$30k, "white, and Asian, or other" are the omitted categories of party, income, and race. The constant was omitted from all models in the table.

The "perception of threat" thesis is not supported by the data, as can be seen in Model 1 where both the

coefficients for perceived likelihood of additional terrorist attacks and perception of personal threat are

statistically insignificant. Model 2 offers some support to the "rational public" thesis, because respondents who thought that the U.S was winning and that its military was successful were also more likely to support the president. However, in contrast to the "rational public" thesis, the expected duration of the war and number of American casualties have no statistically significant association with presidential job approval. Model 3 contains all five poll questions about emotional reaction to the war. This model reveals that support for the president has a strong association with positive feelings (pride and confidence), a weak negative association with being sad about the war (significant only at the 0.1 level), but no statistically significant association with the other negative feelings. This model fits the data much better than the "rational public" model, as the comparison of their Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) values suggest. Model 4 contains all the explanatory variables that were found to be statistically significant in models 1-3. Among the three alternative theoretical explanations, this model most strongly supports the "positive emotions" thesis. One covariate that so far was attributed to the "rational public" ("winning") remains statistically significant. However, *the meaning of this variable* is somewhat ambiguous, because it can refer to a general level of confidence about the war rather than to an assessment based on rational calculation. Finally, model 5 maximizes the fit to the data by including only statistically significant variable.

So far, the discussion has focused on variables that serve as indicators for the three alternative explanations for presidential job approval. Yet inspecting the control variables is interesting too. Some association between partisanship and presidential job approval was found; at the beginning of the Iraq war, opposition came primarily from the liberal-democratic side of the political spectrum. Significant variation appeared along racial/ethic lines. Individuals self-identified as Hispanic were the likeliest to support the war, while people who identified themselves as Black were the least likely to support the war. Perhaps this variation can be connected to a varying importance of nationalist frameworks. It is possible that Hispanics, many of whom are recently naturalized, were the most eager to express patriotism. In contrast, Blacks have an ambivalent relationship with American nationalism (Sidanius, Feshbach, Levin, and Pratto 1997) because of the history of slavery and post-emancipation forced segregation and thus were the most reluctant to join the rally. Respondents in the East were the least likely to favor the war. This is more evidence against the "perception of

threat" thesis, because even though the targets of the 9/11 attack were all in the East, and even though residents of the East were, on average, more worried about future terrorism, they were less likely to favor the war in Iraq than those residing in other regions. Finally, it is worth mentioning that no association was found between support of the war and respondent's gender, education (except in Model 1) exposure to news reports (except in Model 1), and type of residence (urban/suburban/rural). These are important findings because they point to the special character of the RRTF phenomenon: some of the variables that affect public opinion in "normal times" do not play a role during the rally period.

Are the findings discussed so far unique to the case of the Iraq war, or do they point toward more general features of the RRTF phenomenon? Unfortunately, past research has not lent itself to the study of the emotional aspects of public opinion. Fortunately, a special nationally representative survey that centers on emotions was conducted by Schulman, Ronca, and Bucuvalas and the Stony Brook University Center for Social Research shortly after the 9/11 attack, during the heyday of the rally behind President George W. Bush and his "war on terrorism".[5] In this National Threat and Terrorism Security (NTTS) poll of 1549 Americans, taken from October 15, 2001 to March 2, 2002, no less than 87.4% of respondents approved the way the president was handling his job.

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, and Range of Variables, US adult citizens, "Public Reactions to the Events of September 11," Stony Brook University Center for Survey Research, 10/15/2001-3/2/2002

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Proud being American	3.55	0.65	1	4
Trust the government to do the right thing	2.66	0.69	1	4
Confident government can protect from terrorism	2.88	0.74	1	4
Confident government can win war on terrorism	3.25	0.79	1	4
Angry at people who criticize the US	3.42	1.21	1	5
Concerned use of WOMD in US	3.32	0.78	1	4
Concerned by future terrorism in the US	3.34	0.78	1	4
Concerned that will be victim of terrorist attack	2.86	0.96	1	4
Attacks shaken sense of personal safety	2.5	1.03	1	4
Felt depressed because of the attacks	2.07	1	1	4
Felt anxious because of the attacks	2.38	0.95	1	4
Felt scared because of the attacks	2.03	0.96	1	4
Felt secure because of the attacks	3.23	0.87	1	4
Felt worried because of the attacks	2.43	0.96	1	4
Felt frightened because of the attacks	1.97	0.93	1	4
Felt confident because of the attacks	3.29	0.82	1	4
Level of Liberalism	3.54	2.09	1	7

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[5] The author is grateful to Leonie Huddy for kindly sharing the dataset.

Did Americans close ranks behind President Bush because 9/11 produced a strong perception of threat, as several scholars have argued? Alternatively, was the RRTF effect motivated by "hot" feelings of national pride, confidence, and hope, as I argue? To answer these questions, the survey data were reexamined, using logistic regressions with president's job approval as a binary dependent variable. Summary of the findings are shown in Table 4. Note that the "rational public" thesis is not addressed in this part, because no questions that could be used as indicators of "rational public" were included in the survey. However, the survey contains questions that permit a preliminary test of the "nationalist framework" argument, which has not yet been submitted to an empirical assessment. The data analysis was approached in the same way as for the March 2003 Gallup poll.

Model 1 tests the "perception of threat" thesis. It reveals that despite the fact that 87% of respondents said that they were either somewhat or very concerned by the possibility of another terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, they were not more likely to support the president than people who reported lower levels of perception of threat, nor was concern about personal safety associated with the president's job approval. Of all the variables in this model, only concerns about terrorists' use of chemical or biological weapons against the U.S. have a statistically significant (positive) association with support of the president. Model 2 tests variables related to emotion labels. Among all the emotional states respondents could choose from, only "confidence" has a statistically significant (positive) coefficient. None of the negative emotions are even close to statistical significance. Model 3 further expands the exploration of the effects of positive emotions, but adds a nationalist framing of these emotions. This model fits the data much better than models 1 and 2, and contains four highly significant coefficients: proud to be American, trust in the government to do the right thing, and confidence in the government capacity to protect its citizens and win the war against terrorism. Model 4 combines all statistically significant covariates from the first three models. As it turns out, only the variables from Model 3 remain statistically significant. In Model 5, only variables that remained statistically significant are included.

Table 4. Coefficients from logistic regression models of president job approval, US adult citizens, "Public Reactions to the Events of September 11," Stony Brook University Center for Survey Research, 10/15/2001-3/2/2002 (Standard errors in parentheses)

Explanatory variables	Model 1 Threat Perception	Model 2 Emotions	Model 3 Nationalism & Trust in gov'	Model 4 All-in-one	Model 5 Final
Concerned by future terrorism in the US	0.141 (0.159)				
Concerned by terrorism use of WOMD in US	0.342** (0.157)			0.123 (0.141)	
How concerned that will be victim of future attack?	-0.129 (0.137)				
Attacks shaken sense of personal safety	-0.0697 (0.123)				
Felt depressed because attacks		-0.0611 (0.120)			
Felt anxious because attacks		-0.0435 (0.151)			
Felt scared because attacks		0.0281 (0.172)			
Felt secure because attacks		-0.00199 (0.143)			
Felt worried because attacks		0.164 (0.161)			
Felt frightened because attacks		-0.197 (0.177)			
Felt confident because attacks		0.383*** (0.141)		0.0574 (0.135)	
Proud being an American			0.396** (0.160)	0.416*** (0.154)	0.525*** (0.134)
Trust the government to do the right thing			0.857*** (0.213)	0.868*** (0.214)	0.987*** (0.195)
Confident that gov can protect from terrorism			0.406*** (0.157)	0.363** (0.158)	0.383*** (0.141)
Confident that gov can win war on terrorism			0.555*** (0.150)	0.584*** (0.152)	0.607*** (0.133)
Angry at people who criticize the US			0.127 (0.106)		
How closely follow news stories about the attacks?	0.316** (0.154)	0.238 (0.159)	0.138 (0.173)	0.0911 (0.174)	
Days in past week read about events in newspaper?	0.129*** (0.0423)	0.139*** (0.0438)	0.0777 (0.0479)	0.0743 (0.0483)	
Level of liberalism	-0.191*** (0.0541)	-0.215*** (0.0555)	-0.0672 (0.0638)	-0.0716 (0.0632)	
Democrat or leaning dem.	-1.595*** (0.249)	-1.580*** (0.258)	-1.608*** (0.291)	-1.647*** (0.293)	-1.514*** (0.238)
You/friends/relatives know a victim?	-0.378* (0.218)	-0.267 (0.226)	-0.193 (0.249)	-0.268 (0.247)	
Observations	1294	1256	1223	1227	1390
Chi-Square	138.2(9)***	139.5(12)***	248.9(10)***	235.1(11)***	257.8(5)***
BIC	-74	-54	-178	-157	-222

*P<0.1, **P<0.05, *** p<0.01

Note: The constant was omitted from all models in the table.

Based on the results presented above, I conclude that the RRTF period following the 9/11 terrorist attacks was motivated primarily by hot feelings of nationalistic pride and confidence in the government. No robust evidence was found to support the "perception of threat" thesis. Unfortunately, the data did not permit a

direct test of the "rational public" argument. The analysis also points to the effect of partisanship (disapproval of President Bush came primarily from the Democrats and people who were leaning towards the Democratic Party). Finally, most control variables that were tested – e.g. exposure to news reports, gender, age, education, and race – were found to be statistically insignificant, revealing again the special character of the RRTF effect, which cuts across standard societal cleavages that otherwise structure public opinion.

The findings presented thus far suffer from two major limitations: First, the measurement of emotions, albeit producing interesting and statistically significant findings, was superficial: using single, self-reported questions to measure emotions might be insufficient; thus it may be better to use a battery of questions for each emotion. Second, by using the tool of regression, the analysis above tested only the partial effects of discrete independent variables. In order to test my proposed theoretical model as a whole, a different method is required, which can estimate the relationships among the different parts of the model. The next part uses structural equations modeling to meet both challenges.

Part 2: Using SEM to test the new theoretical model and to differentiate the effect of positive and negative emotions

In this part, the method of Structural Equations Modeling (SEM) is applied in order to test my proposed theoretical model, as well as to test Huddy et al.'s alternative arguments about the kind of emotionality that motivates people to rally behind the president. SEM has several advantages over the regression tool used in the previous part. First, it allows researchers to estimate the effects of latent variables by constructing each latent variable from the structure of relationships it has with a set of observed variables. For example, in my study, a sense of confidence in respect to the sitting government is a latent variable that serves as the predictor of three observed variables: belief in the capacity of the government to win the war on terrorism, belief in the capacity of the government to protect the people from terrorism, and a general trust in the government to do the right things. Second, SEM provides a framework for assessing the fit and robustness of *complete* theoretical models. In other words, unlike regression analysis that only estimates the partial effect of each independent observed variable on a certain outcome (and occasionally adds to the equation some interactions between independent

variables), SEM also estimates the relationships *among* independent variables. In fact, every variable (observed or latent) can serve *both* as an independent and dependent variable in the same model. These two qualities of SEM make it the most suitable method for testing my theoretical model as a whole, as well as its different parts.

Data for this part are taken from wave 3 of the NTTS that was conducted during two periods: immediately after the invasion of Iraq between March 20th and April 9th (354 respondents), and in the aftermath of the fall of Baghdad between May 21st and June 13th (375 respondents). All but three of the variables used in this part have the conventional form of public opinion scales (i.e. 4 or 5 degrees) and they were treated as continuous variables. Three variables that measure respondents' approval/disapproval of the way the President was handling his job, the economy, and the situation in Iraq, are binary variables coded 1 for "approve" and 0 for "disapprove". These binary variables serve as dependent variables, predicted by the "rally" factor, and since none of them has an extreme distribution (their univariate distributions are roughly 65/35) it is reasonable to treat them as if they were continuous variables (Bentler, 2006#: 145). Table 5 presents the univariate distributions of all variables in the analysis.

Table 5. Means, Standard Deviations, and Range of Variables, NTTS-Wave 3

| Variable	Mean	SD	Range
Presidential job approval	0.689209	0.463151	0-1
Approval of pres' job in econ'	0.511177	0.500248	0-1
Approval of pres' policy in Iraq	0.71261	0.452877	0-1
Favor war even without UN support	3.597305	0.490808	3-4
Favor the war	2.970381	1.089484	1-4
Proud of the war	2.790896	1.136209	1-4
Likelihood of terrorism	3.379694	0.713327	1-4
Likelihood of terrorist WOMD	2.877874	0.819387	1-4
Likelihood of being a victim of terror'	2.311798	0.837568	1-4
Likelihood of being a victim of WOMD	2.202837	0.815331	1-4
Personal safety shaken by 9/11	2.374656	1.007622	1-4
Angry with Saddam H.	3.024828	1.107205	1-4
Hostile toward Saddam H.	2.504868	1.194074	1-4
Disgusted with Saddam H.	3.32128	0.997758	1-4
Angry with the enemy	3.35221	0.92393	1-4
Hostile toward the enemy	2.737135	1.111674	1-4
Proud being a US citizen	3.387955	0.772545	1-4
Feel good when see flag	3.400844	0.758761	1-4
Angry with people criticizing US	3.438819	1.164673	1-5
Proud of the president	2.951321	1.090154	1-4
Gov' can protect from terrorism	2.74896	0.777783	1-4
Trust gov' to do the right thing	2.547486	0.678733	1-4
Gov' can win war on terrorism	2.984594	0.862846	1-4
Hopeful about the war	2.794979	0.967966	1-4
Hopeful about the president	2.834722	1.008539	1-4

Data analysis in this part had three stages: First, exploratory factor analysis via Stata was used, which confirmed most of my expectations about the latent factors and their indicators, but also suggested an additional factor: support for war against Iraq (independent of a rally around the president factor). Next, my theoretical model, as well as the mechanisms specified by Huddy and coauthors, were tested using EQS to estimate structural equations models. This process resulted in the deletion of a few aspects of my original model that were not supported by the data, and in the introduction of few other parts that were not expected initially. The criteria for adding new parts to the model were that they both improved the fit of the model and made sense theoretically.

Model estimation was done using Maximum Likelihood method, and robust standard errors were obtained in order to account for a high multivariate Kurtosis value. The data set contains some missing values; none of the variables had more than 10% missing observations, and the majority of them had much less than 10%.[6] Because list-wise deletion would have resulted in the loss of 40-50% of the cases, case-wise Maximum Likelihood method was used in order to deal with missing values. Compared to other alternatives that require the assumption of "Missing Completely at Random" (MCAR), ML works under the relatively weaker assumption that data are "Missing at Random" (MAR) but are multivariate normally distributed (Bentler, 2006#: 276). Figure 3 presents the final model estimated. All the coefficients in Figure 3 are standardized, with the unstandardized being statistically significant at the .05 level. Overall, this model fits the data quite well, with a Bentler's comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.889, Standardized Root Mean-Square Residual (SRMR) of 0.072, and a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of 0.059.

<Please continue to the next page for Figure 3>

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[6] Three variables were not used because they contain about 20% missing values.

Figure 3. Model for Wave 3, Standardized solution (N=1,458)
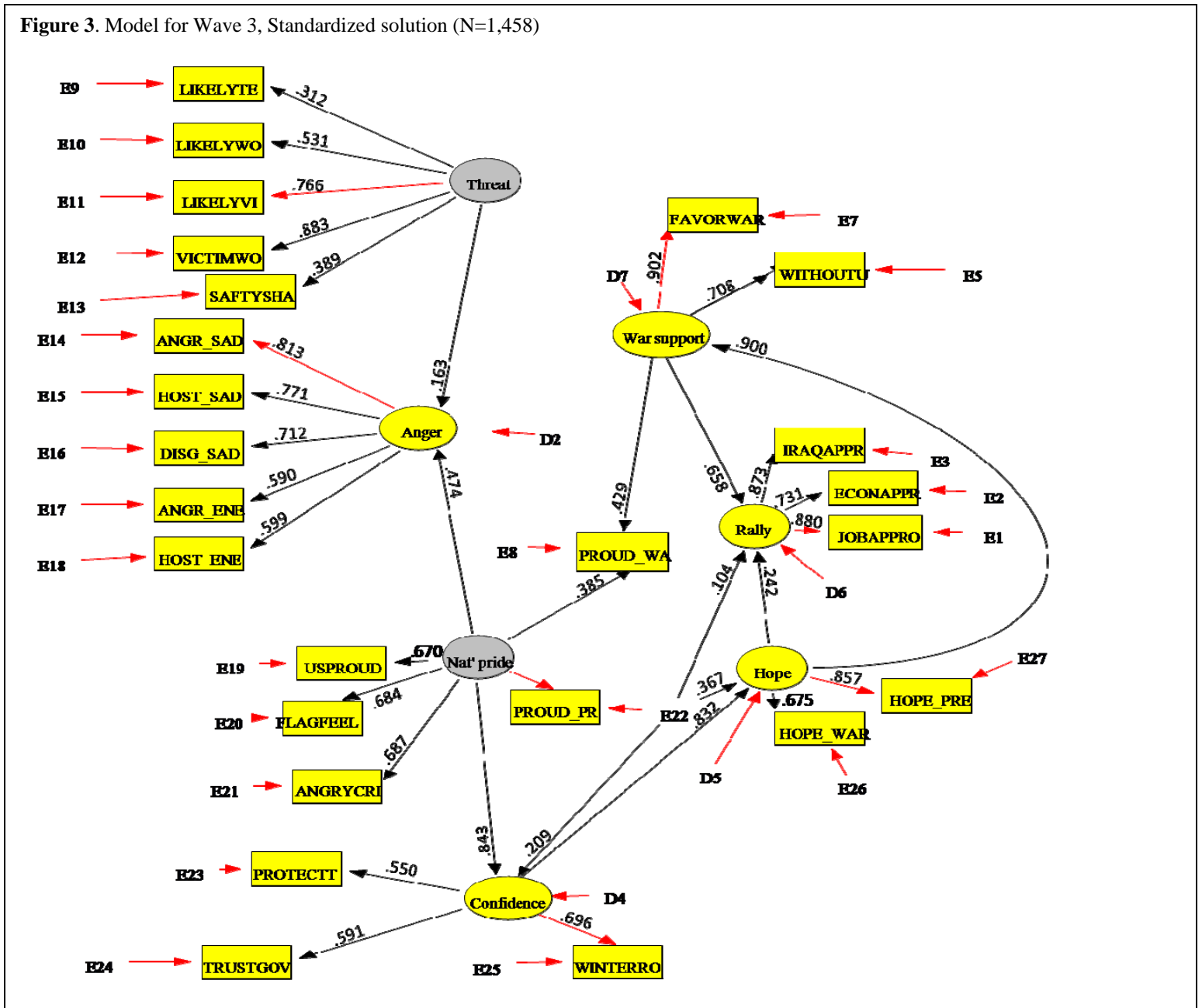
The model contains six factors: *perception of terrorism threat*, *anger with the enemy*, *nationalist pride*, *confidence in the government*, *hope with respect to the government and the war*, *support of the war*, and a general *rally factor* that explains individuals' approval of the way the President was handling his job, the economy, and the situation in Iraq.[7]

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[7] Names and labels of variables used: JOBAPPRO: Approve of the way the President is handling his job; ECONAPPR: Approve of the way the President is handling the economy; IRAQAPPR: Approve of the way the President is handling the situation in Iraq; WITHOUTU: Favor war even without UN support; FAVORWAR: Favor the war; PROUD_WA: Proud of the war; LIKELYTE: Likelihood of terrorist attack in the US in the near future; LIKELYWO: Likelihood of terrorist use of biological or chemical weapons in the US; LIKELYVI: Likelihood of being a victim of terrorism; VICTIMWO: Likelihood of being a victim of terrorist use of biological or chemical weapons; SAFTYSHA: Personal safety was shaken by 9/11; ANGR_SAD: Angry with Saddam Hussein;

In the process of constructing this model, several expectations were confirmed by the data, yet others had to be adjusted or dropped from the model all together. Overall, the model supports my claim that the rally effect, at least in the period at hand, was *not* caused by perception of threat and anger with the enemy, because the anger factor has no statistically significant effect on the rally factor. Instead, as I hypothesized, the model shows that nationalist pride, hope with respect to the war and the government, and confidence in the government are the main factors associated with the rally factor.[8]

In contrast to my expectations, the nationalist pride factor has no direct effect of the rally factor. However, very much in line with my expectations, nationalist pride has a substantial indirect effect (.585) on the rally through confidence and hope in respect to the government and the war – i.e., pride is a strong predictor of confidence, which in turn predicts hope.[9] Then, feeling hopeful in relation to the war and the government has both a direct effect on the rally factor (.242), and a very strong effect (.900) on the "war support factor" that is associated with the rally factor. Overall, the standardized total effect of hope is .834, and the total effects of pride and confidence are .585 and .694 respectively.[10],[11]

Conclusion

The aftermath of 9/11 became the focal point of a renewed debate about the RRTF phenomenon. This paper took issue with the main arguments that are part of that debate, and suggested an alternative theoretical explanation to the RRTF. Data analysis using logistic regression to explain Presidential job approval rates in

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HOST_SAD: Hostile toward Saddam Hussein; DISG_SAD: Disgusted of Saddam Hussein; ANGR_EN: Angry with the enemy; HOST_ENE: Hostile toward the enemy; USPROUD: Proud being a US citizen; FLAGFEEL: Feel good when see the US flag; ANGRYCRI: Angry with people criticizing US; PROUD_PR: Proud of the president; PROTECTT: Think that the government can protect the American people from terrorism; TRUSTGOV : Trust the government to do the right thing; WINTERRO: Think that the government can win war on terrorism; HOPE_WAR: Feel hopeful about the war; HOPE_PRE: Feel hopeful about the president.

[8] An additional analysis preformed on data from wave 2 of TNNS using SEM supports the main conclusion presented in this part. The results of this analysis are included in a longer version of this manuscript.

[9] All indirect effects reported in this paper were found to be statistically significant at the .05 level.

[10] The same hold for support for the war, on which hope has the strongest total effect (.900), then confidence (.749), and pride (.631), while the total effects of anger and perception of threat are much weaker and statistically insignificant.

[11] Several arrows start from the error term of the variable "PROUD_PR" (proud of the president) and point to the factors of rally, hope, and confidence. These are meant to capture an unobservable variation in basic attitudes toward President Bush, over and above attitudes that are associated with the sense of nationalist pride. It is not entirely clear what that unobservable variation represents, though one can speculate that it might represent variation along party, class, ethnicity, or religious line that could not be estimated directly. Standard demographic variables were included in wave 1, but about 16% of the participant in wave 3 did not participate in wave 1 and thus are not covered by these variables.

two rally periods – first in the aftermath of 9/11, and second following the invasion of Iraq – found no evidence to support the "perception of threat" thesis, and very little (and ambiguous) evidence in favor of the "rational public" thesis. In contrast, the data supported the alternative argument, according to which the rally effect emerges when a nationalist framework is invoked that generates the positive emotions of pride, confidence, and hope. Structural Equation Modeling to analyze data on public attitudes collected shortly after the invasion of Iraq further bolstered the appeal of my proposed explanation to the RRTF phenomenon by showing that support for the president and the war are best predicted by a sense of hope, motivated by nationalist pride and a sense of confidence in relation to the government and the war.

While I believe that the evidence shown here is strong enough to support most of my arguments, a word of caution is merited. The present study focused on the most recent rally periods related to President Bush's War on Terrorism and the invasion of Iraq. Therefore, the scope conditions of the model developed here might be limited to that period. More empirical work needs to be done in order to define the conditions in which the different elements of this model are at work, as well as the conditions in which other mechanisms might be more effective. For example, during Bush's "War on Terrorism" in general, and in the invasion of Iraq in particular, the average American was not directly involved in military activity, and the military supremacy of the U.S. made most threats to ordinary citizens very unlikely. That may explain why the perception of threat argument is not supported by the data. In contrast, it is still possible that perception of threat might create a rally effect under other circumstances, for instance in a situation where the army of one country invades the territory of another country and ordinary citizens feel that their own lives and the life of their beloved ones are at risk. Therefore, much work needs to be done before all or some of the arguments presented above could be extended to additional countries and other historical rally periods.

Finally, beyond the specific issue of a proper understanding of the RRTF phenomenon, this paper has a broader implication for political sociology. Ample studies in psychology have demonstrated that human beings make decisions and act on a cognitive and emotional basis. Yet, political sociology tends to ignore the emotional aspects of human behavior. Only recently have some political sociologists, especially in the social movements literature, taken first steps towards incorporating emotions into their analysis (Goodwin, Jasper, and

Polletta 2000; 2001). These pioneering studies have so far focused primarily on the "collective" aspects of emotions in politics (i.e., emotions as a derivative of shared culture, 'emotional work' as a recruitment strategy, and the emotional experience of interactions with co-activists), and thus have avoided specifying precisely how psychological mechanisms at the individual level contribute to the emergence of large scale political phenomena such as demonstrations, riots, etc. By showing empirically that the rally-round-the-flag phenomenon is motivated by discrete emotions – pride, confidence, and hope – conjured by nationalism, this study demonstrates the theoretical efficacy of focusing on psychological mechanisms at the individual level, suggesting another important avenue for realizing the promise of the 'emotional turn' in political sociology.

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