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Democracy and State Support for Arms Control

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This article presents the first global quantitative study of the relationship between states' level of liberal democracy and their support for arms control. While I expect that democracy leads to more support for conventional arms control, I argue that democracies are only more supportive of nuclear arms control agreements that are designed by fellow democracies. For my analysis, I use a new measure of states' arms control preferences that combines United Nations General Assembly voting data with manual coding of resolutions. In line with my expectations, I find a positive relationship between democracy and support for conventional arms control, but not nuclear arms control. This is because democracies tend to support conventional arms control regardless of who co-sponsors a resolution, whereas they only tend to support nuclear arms control resolutions co-sponsored by democracies. These findings contribute to our understanding of arms control as well as international politics more generally.

Este artículo presenta el primer estudio cuantitativo global con respecto a la relación entre el nivel de democracia liberal de los Estados y su apoyo al control de armas. Si bien espero que la democracia conlleva un mayor apoyo al control de armas convencionales, argumento que las democracias solo apoyan en mayor medida los acuerdos en materia de control de armas nucleares que están diseñados por otras democracias. Para mi análisis, utilizo una nueva medida de preferencias de los Estados en materia de control de armas, la cual combina datos de votaciones de la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas (AGNU) con la codificación manual de las resoluciones. De acuerdo con mis expectativas, encuentro una relación positiva entre democracia y apoyo al control de armas convencionales, pero no encuentro esta correlación con respecto al control de armas nucleares. Esto se debe a que las democracias tienden a apoyar el control de armas convencionales, independientemente de quién copatrocine una resolución, mientras que solo tienden a apoyar aquellas resoluciones en materia de control de armas nucleares que estén copatrocinadas por democracias.

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Estas conclusiones contribuyen a nuestra comprensión con relación al control de armas y a la política internacional, en general.

Cet article présente la première étude quantitative mondiale de la relation entre le niveau de démocratie libérale des États et leur soutien au contrôle des armes. Bien que je suppose que la démocratie engendre davantage de soutien au contrôle des armes conventionnelles, j'affirme que les démocraties ne soutiennent les accords de contrôle des armes nucléaires que s'ils ont été conçus par d'autres démocraties. Pour mon analyse, j'emploie une nouvelle mesure des préférences des États en matière de contrôle des armes qui combine les données relatives aux votes à l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies (AGNU) à un encodage manuel des résolutions. Dans la lignée de mes attentes, je constate l'existence d'une relation positive entre la démocratie et le soutien au contrôle des armes conventionnelles, mais pas au contrôle des armes nucléaires. La raison en est que les démocraties ont tendance à soutenir le contrôle des armes conventionnelles indépendamment des co-auteurs d'une résolution, alors qu'elles ne soutiennent généralement les résolutions de contrôle des armes nucléaires que si leurs co-auteurs sont des démocraties. Ces conclusions viennent enrichir notre compréhension du contrôle des armes, ainsi que de la politique internationale au sens large.

Introduction

Following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a series of nuclear threats, undermining arms control and disarmament efforts (Bugos 2022; Meier 2022). This is not an entirely new development: Alongside its process of autocratization, and especially since Putin's return to the presidency in 2012, Russia has pursued an increasingly aggressive and less cooperative arms control policy (Götz and MacFarlane 2018; Neuneck 2019). This resembles other dictatorships: North Korea has decided to withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), while Iran has continuously breached the treaty's guidelines (Wunderlich et al. 2013). Both states have blocked consensus on the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)—together with Syria, whose government at the time became infamous for its continued violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC; Meyer 2014; Trapp 2014). This raises the question of whether states' level of democracy affects their support for arms control.

Previous research has argued that democracies may be more favorable to arms control than autocracies because democratic states hold stronger preferences for international cooperation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts (Becker, Müller, and Wisotzki 2008; Efrat 2010; Brender 2018). This is for two reasons, which are based on different strands of the democratic peace theory (see, e.g., Maoz and Russett 1993; Becker et al. 2008): First, democratic governments are more accountable to their constituencies as well as other institutions, which discourages aggressive foreign policies. Second, both governments and populations in democracies follow and internalize democratic norms of cooperative behavior, non-violence, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

However, both arguments are disputed. Various examples illustrate that public opinion (Percovich 1999, 321–22), democratic institutions such as parliaments (Kreps, Saunders, and Schultz 2018), and democratic norms (Krause and Latham 1998) can hinder arms control rather than promote it. Accordingly, opposition to arms control is not an exclusively autocratic phenomenon, and several democracies show ambiguities in their arms control preferences (Becker et al. 2008).

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For example, the USA is well known for its ambivalent stance toward armament restrictions—particularly during the Republican presidencies of George W. Bush and Donald Trump (Fey et al. 2013; Kimball 2020). Israel—the only democratic country in the Middle East—is the only state in the region that has neither signed nor ratified the NPT (Ruzicka and Wheeler 2010, 83). Accordingly, existing research of variables related to arms control support—such as treaty ratifications—provides mixed evidence (e.g., Efrat 2010; Alcañiz 2012; Brender 2018). Despite these studies, comprehensive evidence on the impact of democracy on states' arms control preferences is still lacking.

In this article, I aim to fill this gap by conducting the first systematic, quantitative study of this relationship. I argue that democracies are not per se more supportive of arms control, but that this depends on the type of weapons under consideration. Specifically, I argue that democracy is positively related to support for conventional arms control, whereas for nuclear arms control, I expect this relationship to be positive only for "democratic" arms control measures; that is, those that are initiated and designed by democratic states.[1] I argue that both democratic institutions and democratic norms lead states to be more supportive of conventional arms control. In contrast, in the field of nuclear arms control, democratic norms facilitate support for democratic measures, but hinder support for non-democratic measures.

To test my arguments, I rely on a new indicator of states' arms control support that combines manual coding of UNGA resolutions adopted between 1994 and 2016 with states' voting records (Risse 2024). It covers all relevant aspects of arms control, identifies positions for every state, and captures variation over time. Moreover, it allows for the distinction between different subfields—in particular nuclear and conventional arms control. It also provides information on co-sponsorships and thus enables the analysis of democratic and non-democratic arms control agreements.

The empirical analyses support my theoretical arguments. They show that states' level of democracy, as measured by the V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index (LDI; Coppedge et al. 2023), is positively related to states' arms control support. However, separate analyses of conventional and nuclear arms control reveal that the positive association holds for the former, but not for the latter type of arms control. Furthermore, I find that the share of democratic co-sponsors significantly moderates the relationship between democracy and support for arms control across all subfields: the higher the share of democratic co-sponsors, the more positive the relationship. Yet, the interaction effect is much smaller for conventional arms control than for nuclear arms control. Moreover, only with respect to conventional arms restrictions are democracies more supportive than other states regardless of the regime type of the co-sponsors. In contrast, democracies are *less* supportive of nuclear arms control resolutions co-sponsored only by non-democracies, but more supportive of those co-sponsored only by democracies.

I conduct several exploratory analyses to assess the applicability of the underlying theoretical arguments. First, automated text analyses of UNGA resolutions and speeches suggest that democratic resolutions on nuclear arms control are more likely to focus on constraints on autocratic regimes, which provides an explanation for the significant interaction effect. Second, additional regression models indicate that the divergent findings concerning nuclear and conventional arms control may be driven by differential effects of two crucial components of liberal democracy: government accountability and democratic norms. Both government accountability and democratic experience—which I use as a proxy for the prevalence of democratic norms—are positively related to support for conventional arms control,

[1]This does not imply that democratic arms control measures are necessarily more democratic in design. In this regard, I broadly follow Libman and Obydenkova (2013, 222). They define democratic international organizations as those "in which the leading state and most of the member states of the IO are democracies" and emphasize that this definition does not refer "to their formal governance but rather to the *political regimes* of the member states, particularly the leading state."

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regardless of the share of democratic co-sponsors. In contrast, I find that support for nuclear arms control is positively associated with government accountability, but negatively with democratic experience. While the interaction effect remains significant in both models, it is much larger in the latter model. This may suggest that the establishment of liberal democratic norms facilitates support for conventional arms control but ambivalent positions toward nuclear arms control.

This study enhances our understanding of arms control by demonstrating that democracy fosters cooperation in some, yet not all of its subfields. It makes a valuable contribution on what determines states' arms control preferences and, consequently, the prospects of arms control agreements. In addition, the study underscores the importance of distinguishing between different types of arms control, as the dynamics and motivations behind conventional arms control may differ from those associated with nuclear arms control. Finally, the findings provide further evidence that domestic politics in general, and democracy in particular, can shape matters of interstate cooperation and conflict. This also sheds new light on the mechanisms linking democracy to a more peaceful and cooperative international system.

Extant Research: Applying Democratic Peace Theory to Arms Control

Studies of the relationship between democracy and state support for arms control[2] are based primarily on democratic peace theory (see, e.g., Maoz and Russett 1993; Risse-Kappen 1995; Czempiel 1996). In its monadic version, this theory claims that democracies are less likely to engage in interstate warfare than autocracies, whereas the dyadic theory proposes that democracies are merely less likely to engage in wars with each other (Risse-Kappen 1995). The underlying arguments can be broadly divided into two categories (Maoz and Russett 1993). The *structural model* (e.g., Maoz and Russett 1993; Czempiel 1996) posits that governments' responsiveness to a war-opposing public as well as institutional checks and balances hinder aggressive foreign policies. The *normative model* (e.g., Maoz and Russett 1993; Risse-Kappen 1995), on the other hand, postulates that democratic regimes are based on norms of non-violence and peaceful conflict resolution. Accordingly, democracies are more reluctant to use military force and engage in armed conflict than autocratic states.

The propositions of both strands of democratic peace theory can be applied to arms control. Restricting armaments means restricting the means of warfare, and "if democracy has an impact on the inclination to use military force, this should have effects on how democracies handle the related instruments" (Becker et al. 2008, 811). Given that the prevention of war is one of the primary goals—if not *the* primary goal—of arms control (Jervis 1993; Goldblat 2002, 11), this means that, if democracy facilitates a preference for peaceful conflict resolution, this should in turn increase support for arms control.

From a structural perspective, government accountability to citizens increases support for arms control because the public prefers international cooperation to unilateral armament. This is because (i) this decreases the risk of war and human suffering, and (ii) arms races tie up resources that could otherwise be used elsewhere (e.g., Becker et al. 2008; Brender 2018). In line with this, Knopf (1998) finds that anti-nuclear protests in the USA increased the government's willingness to engage in arms control talks. In addition to public pressure, institutional constraints also curb governments' excessive armament (e.g., Dunne and Perlo-Freeman 2003), lowering the costs of joining arms control agreements (e.g., Efrat 2010).

[2]Within the scope of this study, the concept of arms control is broadly interpreted, covering both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. It encompasses various measures such as disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, which can in principle be implemented through unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral approaches, yet the main focus here lies on multilateral agreements formed between sovereign states. For the precise definition of arms control, see Goldblat (2002, 3).

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Concerning the normative model, the set of democratic norms includes not only a stronger preference for non-violence and peaceful conflict resolution, but also for cooperation, compromise, and the rule of law (e.g., Becker et al. 2008; Brender 2018). These norms translate into higher levels of support for arms control agreements. Taken together, these arguments suggest that, for both structural and normative reasons, democracy leads to an aversion to war. This, in turn, facilitates support for arms control.

However, several arguments cast doubt on this strictly positive relationship between the two variables. Both parts of the causal chain between democracy and arms control support have been challenged. First, while there is strong empirical evidence for the dyadic version of the democratic peace theory, the monadic version is, at the very least, disputed (Hegre 2014). Specifically, scholars have argued that citizens do not want to avoid war at all costs (Tomz and Weeks 2013; Stein 2015; Tomz, Weeks, and Yarhi-Milo 2019), nor do democratic governments exhibit particularly peaceful behavior (Risse-Kappen 1995; Tomz et al. 2019). In addition, autocratic governments are also accountable to domestic audiences (Weeks 2008). Taken together, this means that democracy is not necessarily linked to a stronger preference for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Second, it is debated whether arms control really facilitates peace or is in fact counterproductive (see, e.g., Betts 1992). Thus, even if democratic governments, institutions, and citizens seek to avoid war, they may view arms control as an obstacle rather than a catalyst to achieving this goal. Indeed, several examples illustrate that the public (Percovich 1999, 321–22), civil society organizations (Müller, Below, and Wisotzki 2013b), parliaments (Morrow 1991; Kreps et al. 2018), and democratic governments (Krause and Latham 1998; Becker et al. 2008) are not unambiguously supportive of arms control.

In line with this, studies of the impact of democracy on variables related to arms control preferences—such as treaty ratifications—provide mixed results.[3] While some studies suggest a positive relationship (Efrat 2010; Brender 2018; Karlas 2023), Alcañiz (2012) only finds *new* democracies to be more likely to ratify arms control treaties. Similarly, Gleditsch et al. (2016) do not find democratic states to be more likely to sign the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention than autocratic states—although their study is limited to states involved in civil wars.

In sum, existing arguments on the relationship between democracy and states' arms control preferences are mostly based on the structural and normative strands of democratic peace theory. However, as with monadic democratic peace, these arguments and the empirical evidence for such a relationship remain disputed.

How Democracy Affects Conventional and Nuclear Arms Control Preferences

In this section, I present my theoretical arguments on the relationship between democracy and support for arms control. Here, I distinguish between the two most important subtypes of arms control—nuclear and conventional arms control. In the following, I will argue that democracy leads to more support for conventional arms control, whereas for nuclear arms control, this relationship crucially depends on the democraticness of the agreement under consideration (see Table 1 for a summary of my theoretical arguments).

Conventional Arms Control

Since the end of the Cold War, conventional arms control is primarily concerned with human security (Wisotzki 2013). While primarily motivated by the

[3]This also applies to studies that focus on armament levels rather than on arms control (e.g., Singh and Way 2004; Jo and Gartzke 2007; Albalate, Bel, and Elias 2012; Brauner 2015; Blomberg and Tocoian 2016).

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Table 1. Expected effect of democratic structures and norms on support for conventional/nuclear and democratic/non-democratic arms control.

	Conventional		*Nuclear*	
	Democratic	*Non-democratic*	*Democratic*	*Non-democratic*
Structures	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Norms	Positive	Positive	Positive	Negative

indiscriminate use of conventional weapons against civilians, these agreements not only restrict their use but also regulate their production, possession, and proliferation to prevent human suffering (Bauer 2010; Efrat 2010; Wisotzki 2013). Thus, while several conventional arms control agreements ban certain weapon categories, this is driven by these weapons' indiscriminate nature rather than their security implications (Wisotzki 2013). At the same time, all conventional arms control agreements acknowledge that states are in principle allowed to acquire, possess, and use conventional weapons for self-defense purposes (Bauer 2010). Importantly, this applies to both democratic and non-democratic initiatives.[4]

For these reasons, I propose that democracy increases support for both democratic and non-democratic agreements from both a structural and normative perspective. Even if the public is not necessarily opposed to waging war against other countries (Stein 2015), I argue that it favors agreements that aim to prevent harming, oppressing, and killing civilians. Accordingly, a government that is accountable to the demands of its citizens should follow this demand. Although autocracies may also face domestic constraints, these are likely to be more pronounced in democracies, particularly with respect to the public (Hyde and Saunders 2020). Democratic institutions may therefore facilitate support for conventional arms control.

Similarly, democratic norms should also be linked to a more positive position toward conventional arms control. A preference for non-violence and the peaceful resolution of conflicts implies a renunciation of violence to enforce one's own interests and, consequently, also the use of conventional weapons against the civilian population. This leads to the first hypothesis:

H1: The more democratic a state, the higher is its support for conventional arms control.

Nuclear Arms Control

Unlike conventional weapons, nuclear weapons hold an exceptional status for state security due to the unparalleled consequences of nuclear strikes (Kydd 2019). In the hands of an adversary, they pose an existential threat, while in a state's own hands or those of an ally, they serve as a crucial deterrent. Therefore, nuclear arms control is mostly driven by national security concerns; that is, it "focuses on preventing war and easing tension between states" (Wisotzki 2013).[5]

Even though nuclear arms control agreements are not primarily motivated by human security, citizens may fear the devastating consequences of nuclear weapons, leading them to support nuclear arms control. This is corroborated by survey data showing that a majority of European citizens do not feel safer because of nuclear weapons, call for the abolition of nuclear weapons (Egeland and Pelopidas 2020),

[4]For example, the ATT, which aims to establish humanitarian standards for arms transfers, was designed by democracies and non-democracies (Bromley, Cooper, and Holtom 2012).

[5]While the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons seeks to shift the focus of nuclear arms control to human security, its success is limited, and, importantly, the humanitarian approach has been dismissed primarily by liberal democracies (Onderco and Vignoli 2024).

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and are favorable to nuclear arms control due to the risk of nuclear war (Smetana, Vranka, and Rosendorf 2025). Thus, democratic structures should increase support for nuclear arms control.

In contrast, I propose that democratic norms facilitate support for nuclear arms control only with regard to democratic agreements. The diffusion of democratic norms facilitates not only a preference for peace and non-violence but also hostile attitudes toward those states that do not share these norms (Risse-Kappen 1995). This implies that democracies view each other as less aggressive, more trustworthy, and thus less threatening.[6] Consistent with this, multiple studies suggest that citizens and elites in democracies—but not in autocracies—view other democracies more favorably and autocracies less favorably (Tomz and Weeks 2013; Suong, Desposato, and Gartzke 2020; Hulvey 2023). Moreover, democratic dyads are not only more peaceful but also more likely to cooperate (Leeds 1999; Lai and Reiter 2000; Warren 2010; Libman and Obydenkova 2013).

In view of the destructiveness of nuclear weapons and their exceptional importance for states' security, this is particularly relevant to positions on nuclear arms control. Both liberal theorists (Rawls 1999, 9) and liberal democratic states have argued that a nuclear ban should apply *only* to non-democracies, whereas democratic states need to retain nuclear weapons to deter attacks by non-democratic adversaries (Krause and Latham 1998; Onderco and Smetana 2021). Thus, from a liberal democratic perspective, democracies' nuclear weapons tend to preserve the peace, while nuclear weapons in the hands of autocrats pose a security threat. This is a crucial difference from conventional weapons, which, as indicated above, all states agree are in principle legitimate for self-defense purposes.

Therefore, I argue, first, that democracies tend to design nuclear arms control agreements that constrain autocracies more heavily, since they consider limiting autocrats' nuclear armament highly relevant to their own security.[7] Naturally, this means that democracies are more likely than autocracies to support nuclear arms control measures designed by fellow democracies. Second, arms control measures designed by non-democracies tend to restrict either both democracies and non-democracies or primarily target the former. In either case, democracies perceive non-democratic nuclear arms control as obstructive to their security, as it limits their ability to deter autocratic security threats.[8] Thus, democracies tend to oppose non-democratic nuclear arms control.

Put differently, I expect diverging support levels between democratic and non-democratic nuclear arms control because the democraticness of a nuclear arms control agreement proxies the extent to which it constrains autocracies versus democracies. Again, this is an important difference from conventional arms control, where I propose that democracies are less inclined to design agreements that only restrict autocracies.

Overall, I argue that democratic structures, but not democratic norms, lead to higher levels of support for nuclear arms control. This is because democratic norms lead not only to a stronger preference for peaceful conflict resolution, but also to the view that the possession of nuclear weapons by democracies is conducive to peace, whereas the nuclear armament of autocracies threatens peace. This leads democracies to design nuclear arms control agreements that primarily constrain

[6] It should be noted, however, that the findings by Digiuseppe and Poast (2016) may suggest that all states, and not just democracies, view democracies as more credible and trustworthy—although they do not directly test this claim.

[7] Of course, neither all democracies nor all autocracies are alike in their arms policies, but certain tendencies are evident. For example, autocratic regimes are more likely to *pursue* nuclear weapons, while democracies are more likely to *possess* them (Singh and Way 2004). In line with this, democracies tend to push for non-proliferation rather than disarmament at NPT Review Conferences (Barnum and Lo 2020).

[8] Importantly, states may view the option of a nuclear strike as integral to the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence. Thus, this argument applies not only to restrictions on nuclear possession but also to restrictions on their use. See Fetter and Wolfsthal (2018) for a discussion of the links between nuclear use and deterrence.

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autocracies' armament and, in turn, to support those agreements designed by fellow democracies and to oppose those designed by autocracies. I therefore propose the following hypothesis:

H2: The relationship between states' level of democracy and their support for nuclear arms control is more positive for more democratic arms control measures.

Methodological Approach

Dependent Variable

As my dependent variable, I use the measure of state support for arms control developed by Risse (2024). It identifies states' positions by combining states' UNGA voting records with manual coding of 1,178 arms control resolutions adopted between the forty-ninth and seventy-first sessions (1994/1995 to 2016/2017).[9] Using UNGA voting records to infer support for arms control is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. This data source holds at least three important benefits, which is why it has become the primary data source for identifying states' foreign policy positions (Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten 2017, 430–31). First, the UNGA deals with all relevant aspects of international politics (Kim and Russett 1996), allowing for a comprehensive position measurement on a variety of issues. It also covers all relevant aspects of arms control—including those negotiated outside the UN framework—making it a suitable forum for studying states' positions on this topic (Müller et al. 2013b; Thakur 2017). Second, states' votes on UNGA resolutions enable the measurement of comparable positions on the same issues (Bailey et al. 2017). Third, while the non-bindingness of UNGA resolutions may cast doubt on the sincerity of states' voting behavior, various scholars have argued that this in fact minimizes strategic voting and allows states to openly express their sincere policy preferences (e.g., Mattes, Leeds, and Carroll 2015; Bailey et al. 2017; Binder and Lockwood Payton 2022).

I refrain from analyzing treaty ratifications—the most obvious alternative data source—for three reasons. First, this variable is subject to severe selection bias, as it does not capture preferences on any type of arms control that is not (yet) stipulated in an international treaty, whereas UNGA resolutions cover a much broader array of topics.[10] Second, treaty ratification depends not only on the variable of interest—support for arms control—but also on a variety of other factors, including, for example, institutional constraints (Hug and König 2002; Kreps et al. 2018) and international pressure (Price 2019).[11] Third, treaties often contain various provisions proposed by different states (see, e.g., Müller, Becker-Jakob, and Seidler-Diekmann 2013a), whereas the UNGA deals with such provisions separately in resolutions cosponsored by distinct groups of states. Thus, the use of UNGA voting allows me to distinguish between democratic and non-democratic forms of arms control. This would not be feasible in an analysis of treaty ratifications.

To identify states' support for arms control, Risse (2024) manually codes each resolution into one of five categories. Depending on a resolution's category, every vote is then assigned a score reflecting the voting state's support for arms control

[9] See Online Appendix B for a variety of validation checks, which demonstrate that country and country-year level scores are in line with conventional wisdom, and that the measure relates to existing variables as expected. This suggests that this indicator indeed captures states' arms control support while successfully eliminating distortions through other conflict dimensions.

[10] While UNGA voting behavior only covers resolutions that have been adopted, selection bias is arguably minimal: Finke's (2021) data on draft resolutions reveal that, on average, less than one (substantial) draft resolution on arms control per session is not adopted.

[11] For instance, Syria joined the CWC in 2013 under intense international pressure, but allegedly continued to use chemical weapons afterward (Price 2019). Colombia, on the other hand, has been among the strongest proponents of the ATT, but did not ratify it before October 2024, as the Constitutional Court rejected an initial ratification proposal (Kytömäki 2017).

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Table 2. Coded categories of UNGA resolutions (cf. Risse 2024).

Category	Yes	Abstain	No
1—strengthens arms control	In favor (1)	Neutral (0.5)	Against (0)
2—tends to strengthen arms control	In favor (1)	In favor (1)	Neutral (0.5)
3—tends to weaken arms control	Against (0)	In favor (1)	In favor (1)
4—weakens arms control	Against (0)	Neutral (0.5)	In favor (1)
0—on other issues	-	-	-

Table 3. Distribution of votes across subfields.

a. All Votes				b. Categories 1 and 2			
	In favor	Neutral	Against		In favor	Neutral	Against
All	173,772	7,748	7,683	All	170,093	7,531	702
Nuclear	59,225	4,497	3,873	Nuclear	57,339	4,497	577
Conv.	33,178	1,099	15	Conv.	33,178	1,099	15

(see Table 2; see Online Appendix A for a more detailed description of the coding procedure). In addition, the data provide information on the topic of each resolution. Hence, it allows for analyses not only of arms control support in general, but also of more nuanced models of nuclear and conventional arms control.

To assess the main effect of democracy, I include all resolutions except for those in Category 0. Since one may question the assumption that votes against resolutions that (tend to) weaken arms control are similar to votes in favor of resolutions that (tend to) strengthen arms control, I also run analyses that exclude resolutions in Categories 3 and 4. These produce substantially similar results.

I also include only resolutions in Categories 1 and 2 to analyze the interaction effect between democracy and democratic co-sponsorship.[12] This is because resolutions in Categories 3 and 4 aim to weaken arms control instruments. Hence, who co-sponsors these resolutions provides no information about who initiated the measures they seek to weaken. I expect that democracies are more likely to oppose resolutions introduced by non-democracies. However, votes against resolutions in Categories 3 and 4 are coded as being *favorable* to arms control.

In its disaggregated form, the dataset contains 189,203 votes, out of which 68,045 cover nuclear arms control and 34,292 deal with conventional arms control. The remaining votes are on chemical and biological weapons (9,558) or cannot be clearly attributed to a weapon type (77,308). I do not include separate analyses for these categories because, first, 99.3 percent of the votes on chemical and biological weapons are in favor of arms control, so there is hardly any variation. Second, the other votes are on topics as diverse as space armament, confidence-building measures, and new technologies, making a meaningful interpretation of this category difficult.

Table 3 summarizes the votes by subfield, and Figure 1 shows the resulting scores aggregated to the country level.[13] Although the high proportion of votes in favor and the low number of votes against arms control—especially on conventional weapons—may raise concerns, it is important to consider two factors in this regard. First, excluding consensus decisions and thus about half of the positive votes from the analysis leads to findings that are consistent with the main analysis.

[12]For conventional arms control, this makes no difference (see Table 3), as no resolutions in this subfield are coded 3 or 4.

[13]The figure shows the average scores for arms control in general. See Table A1 in Online Appendix C for a table also listing country level scores on nuclear and conventional arms control.

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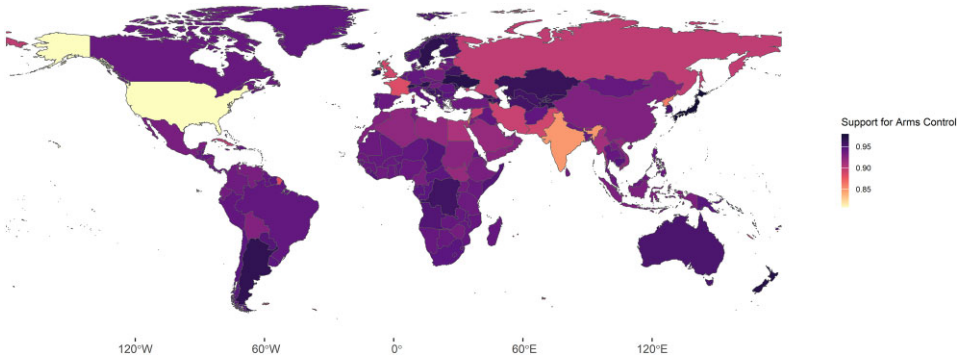


Figure 1. Average scores on the country level across the entire observation period

Second, abstentions are often considered a "soft" form of opposition and, like negative votes, indicate a lack of acceptance of a resolution (Voeten 2000, 193). Hence, both the neutral and negative votes create meaningful variation in the dependent variable.

Independent Variables

For the main independent variable of this study, states' level of democracy, I rely on the V-Dem dataset (Coppedge et al. 2023). The V-Dem data offer a distinct advantage over other data sources in that they provide a range of indicators that are based on different understandings of democracy. This allows scholars to select the indicators that align with the specific objectives of their research, making it a valuable resource for the study of democracy (Boese 2019, 105).

Among the two V-Dem indicators that reflect the "conventional understanding" of democracy, I use the LDI as it provides a more comprehensive measure than the Electoral Democracy Index (EDI; Teorell et al. 2019, 87). This is because the theoretical arguments linking democracy to arms control support go beyond governments' responsiveness to citizens' demands. The LDI is a continuous scale taking values between 0 (least democratic) and 1 (most democratic). I conduct additional analyses that replace the independent variable with the EDI, the Polity5 (P5) Project's Polity2 indicator (Marshall and Gurr 2020), Freedom House's (FH) Freedom in the World rating (Freedom House 2023), and the binary democracy measure by Boix, Miller, and Rosato (2013) (BMR).

To examine the moderating effect of the initiators' level of democracy, I use Finke's (2020) data on UNGA resolutions' co-sponsorships. For every resolution, I count the number of liberal democratic co-sponsors as identified by the Regimes of the World data (Lührmann, Tannenberg, and Lindberg 2018) and the number of other co-sponsors.[14] The moderating variable is the share of liberal democracies among the states co-sponsoring a resolution. I include robustness checks using the alternative measures of democracy listed above.

Empirical Model

In line with previous studies of UNGA voting (e.g., Boockmann and Dreher 2011), I use the vote (i.e., country-resolution) as my unit of analysis. I run the analyses at the vote instead of the country-year level (e.g., Dreher and Jensen 2013), as it enables me to include the resolution-level moderator. To enhance the comparability

[14]These include electoral democracies, electoral autocracies, and closed autocracies (Lührmann et al. 2018).

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between the models with and without the interaction term, I also run the analysis of the main effect of democracy at the vote level. However, I include a robustness check of the latter analysis that aggregates the data to the country-year level, which does not substantially change the findings.

I assign numerical values of 1, 0.5, and 0 to the votes in order to run a linear regression (e.g., Dreher and Jensen 2013), which is easier to compute than (ordered) logit and probit models, produces largely similar results (Angrist and Pischke 2009, 94–107; Hellevik 2009), and may even perform better when including interaction effects (Gomila 2021). Other studies have treated different voting options as ordinal (e.g., Boockmann and Dreher 2011) or binary (e.g., Wang 1999). I include robustness checks with ordinal and binary dependent variables, which lead to substantially similar results.

In addition, I need to account for the clustered data structure at the country, year, and repeated resolution[15] levels to avoid poorly fitting regression models and biased estimation. This can be achieved through fixed or random effects (Clark and Linzer 2015). I employ a model with random effects at all three levels, as a fixed effects model would remove a large amount of meaningful variation from the analysis. I include models with fixed effects at the country and year levels as robustness checks.[16]

I also include a number of control variables. To avoid omitted variable bias, I control for four variables on the country and country-year levels that may simultaneously affect states' democracy level and their support for arms control. First, economic development, measured by *GDP per capita* (United Nations Statistics Division 2020), may either hinder or facilitate democratization (Teorell 2010) and reduce support for arms regulations (Efrat 2010). Second, *trade openness* (Feenstra, Inklaar, and Timmer 2015), that is, exports plus imports divided by GDP per capita, can lead to higher levels of democracy (López-Córdova and Meissner 2008) and also influence states' arms control preferences (Gill and Medeiros 2000). Third, *conflict involvement* (Gleditsch et al. 2002; Pettersson et al. 2021) has been argued to be a main driver of opposition to arms control (Gray 1992), while it may shape democracy in different ways (Krebs 2009). Fourth, a state's *region* (Gleditsch et al. 2002; Pettersson et al. 2021) may influence its positions on arms control (Krause and Latham 1998). At the same time, democratic regimes cluster in space (Gleditsch and Ward 2006).

Moreover, as indicated above, I control for four variables at the resolution level to avoid biases due to agenda changes and to increase statistical efficiency: The *category* assigned in the manual coding procedure, the *topic* of the resolution (only in the analysis that includes all subfields), whether it is *globally relevant* or deals with a specific country or region (Risse 2024), and its *salience*—that is, the number of UNGA speeches that refer to the resolution (Finke 2023). See Tables A2 and A3 in Online Appendix D for descriptive statistics on all variables.

Empirical Analysis

Main Effect of Democracy

I first conduct regression analyses between states' level of democracy and their arms control support that only incorporate random effects and no control variables (see Table A4 in Online Appendix E). In addition to the models of nuclear and conventional arms control, I include a model that includes votes on all types of arms

[15]As UNGA resolutions are non-binding, many are adopted in multiple years (Panke 2014).

[16]The simultaneous inclusion of fixed effects for country and repeated resolution would remove all resolutions from the analysis that are not introduced at least twice. Consistent with this, models with fixed effects at all three levels yield similar effect sizes that are only partially significant.

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Table 4. Effect of liberal democracy on support for different types of arms control.

	All	Nuclear	Conventional
Liberal democracy	0.017 (0.005)***	0.006 (0.010)	0.044 (0.006)***
GDPPC (logged)	−0.002 (0.001)†	−0.006 (0.002)*	−0.003 (0.002)*
Trade openness (logged)	0.003 (0.002)	0.005 (0.003)	0.008 (0.002)***
Armed conflict	−0.003 (0.002)*	−0.008 (0.003)*	−0.000 (0.002)
Region#Americas	−0.004 (0.005)	0.001 (0.011)	−0.006 (0.006)
Region#Asia	−0.000 (0.004)	−0.000 (0.009)	−0.016 (0.005)**
Region#Europe	0.007 (0.005)	−0.016 (0.010)	−0.006 (0.006)
Region#Middle East	−0.016 (0.006)*	−0.009 (0.013)	−0.052 (0.008)***
Category 2	0.024 (0.021)	0.033 (0.034)	0.019 (0.032)
Category 3	−0.570 (0.023)***	−0.521 (0.047)***	
Category 4	−0.642 (0.069)***		
Topic#conventional	−0.015 (0.042)		
Topic#nuclear	−0.061 (0.041)		
Topic#others	−0.024 (0.041)		
Global relevance	−0.021 (0.016)	−0.030 (0.030)	−0.023 (0.023)
Salience (logged)	−0.004 (0.001)***	−0.011 (0.002)***	0.002 (0.001)†
Observations	170,401	61,388	30,838
Country-clusters	172	172	172
Resolution-clusters	120	49	19
Year-clusters	23	23	23

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$; †$p < .1$.

control. I find a positive and significant relationship for arms control in general as well as for conventional arms control, but not for restrictions on nuclear weapons.

The main analysis (see Table 4), which includes the above set of control variables, shows the same pattern. The model with all votes yields a positive association between democracy and support for arms control that is highly significant ($p < .001$). The regression coefficient indicates that the expected value of a vote by a perfect democracy is, on a scale from 0 to 1, 0.017 more positive than by a full autocracy. For a more straightforward interpretation, consider the results at the country-year level, which yield very similar results ($\beta \approx 0.014$; $p < .001$). Since there are, on average, about forty-six votes per year, this suggests that a perfect democracy votes more positively[17] on one to two resolutions per year compared to a perfect autocracy. This can be viewed as a considerable difference, given that more than 50 percent of the resolutions included in the analysis are adopted by consensus, and those that are put to a vote tend to receive broad support as well.

In the area of conventional arms control, the coefficient is also statistically significant at the 0.1 percent level, and even 2.5 times as large with a coefficient of 0.044. This is particularly striking as the share of positive votes in this subfield is larger than in other areas, so that a divergent vote sends an even stronger signal. In contrast, I do not find any significant relationship ($p \approx .59$) between states' level of liberal democracy and support for nuclear arms control, with a much smaller coefficient of approximately 0.006.

I conduct a variety of additional analyses to assess the robustness of these results (see Tables A5–A24 in Online Appendix E). These include models that control for nuclear weapons possession or for the UNGA ideal points by Bailey et al. (2017), treat the dependent variable as ordinal or binary, aggregate scores to the country-year level, include only roll-call votes, include only resolutions that (tend to) strengthen arms control, exclude one region at a time, exclude NATO

[17]That is, a state votes in favor of a resolution (1) instead of neutrally (0.5) or neutrally instead of against a resolution (0).

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Table 5. Interaction effect between liberal democracy and share of democratic co-sponsors on support for different types of arms control.

	All	Nuclear	Conventional
Liberal democracy	−0.043 (0.004)***	−0.066 (0.009)***	0.038 (0.007)***
Share dem. co-sponsors	−0.056 (0.002)***	−0.086 (0.006)***	−0.005 (0.004)
Lib.Dem × share dem.co-spon.	0.160 (0.003)***	0.285 (0.007)***	0.014 (0.007)*
GDPPC (logged)	−0.002 (0.001)	−0.004 (0.002)	−0.003 (0.002)*
Trade openness (logged)	0.002 (0.001)	0.001 (0.003)	0.007 (0.002)***
Armed conflict	−0.003 (0.001)*	−0.007 (0.002)**	−0.000 (0.002)
Region#Americas	−0.009 (0.006)	−0.014 (0.013)	−0.007 (0.006)
Region#Asia	−0.011 (0.006)*	−0.018 (0.012)	−0.016 (0.005)**
Region#Europe	−0.047 (0.006)***	−0.099 (0.012)***	−0.006 (0.006)
Region#Middle East	−0.025 (0.008)**	−0.022 (0.016)	−0.052 (0.008)***
Category 2	0.024 (0.019)	0.027 (0.032)	0.019 (0.032)
Topic#conventional	−0.013 (0.039)		
Topic#nuclear	−0.059 (0.038)		
Topic#others	−0.015 (0.038)		
Global relevance	−0.009 (0.015)	−0.015 (0.029)	−0.023 (0.023)
Salience (logged)	−0.004 (0.001)***	−0.010 (0.001)***	0.002 (0.001)†
Observations	160,568	56,703	30,838
Country-clusters	172	172	172
Resolution-clusters	109	45	19
Year-clusters	23	23	23

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$; †$p < .1$.

members, lag all country-year level variables by one year, include fixed instead of random effects, and replace the independent variable with other democracy indices. These replicate the findings with only two exceptions: I find a positive relationship between democracy and support for nuclear arms control in models relying on the EDI ($p < .1$) and the P5 data ($p < .05$) instead of the LDI.

Hence, the analysis yields a significant positive association between states' level of democracy and their overall support for arms control that is robust to a large variety of different model specifications. This suggests that, at least in this area of international politics, democracy is conducive to a more cooperative global environment. However, more disaggregated analyses of the two most important subfields—nuclear and conventional arms control—show, as expected, that the positive relationship does not hold under any circumstances. More specifically, I find a positive and robust association between democracy and support for conventional arms control. In contrast, support for nuclear arms control is not significantly linked to democracy in both the main regression model and in most robustness tests.

Interaction Effect Between Democracy and Democratic Co-Sponsorship

Next, I turn to the interaction effect between the voting state's level of liberal democracy and the share of liberal democratic states among the resolution's co-sponsors. Here, I also run three types of analyses containing all votes, votes on nuclear arms control, and votes on conventional arms control, respectively, to get a more nuanced picture of the interaction effect among different subfields. Again, I start with models that do not include any of the control variables (see Table A25 in Online Appendix F). This analysis shows that the interaction term is positive and significant in all three models. Yet, it is much smaller for conventional arms control than for other subfields, particularly nuclear arms control.

The introduction of the control variables does not substantially change this finding (see Table 5). For the model containing all subfields, the coefficient of the

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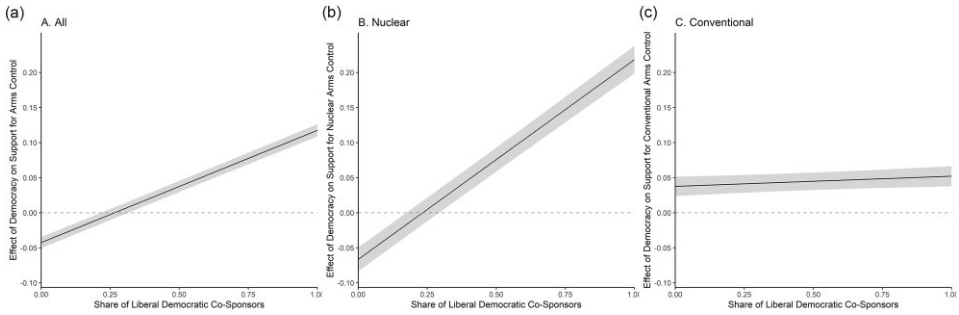


Figure 2. Conditional effects of democracy on support for different types of arms control

interaction term is approximately 0.16 and highly significant ($p < .001$). Following the guidelines by Braumoeller (2004) and Brambor, Clark, and Golder (2006), I also report the effect sizes of democracy on arms control support conditional on the share of democratic co-sponsors (see Figure 2). This shows that for a resolution without any democratic co-sponsors, the main effect of democracy is *negative* at −0.043 and highly significant ($p < .001$). However, it becomes positive with a value of the moderating variable around 0.27. For a resolution with only democratic co-sponsors, the association between democracy and support for arms control reaches 0.117—almost seven times as large as in the model without the interaction term—and is highly significant ($p < .001$). Thus, democratic co-sponsorship is a strong moderating variable in the relationship between democracy and support for arms control.

The interaction effect is even larger and also significant at the 0.1 percent level with regard to nuclear arms control. In this subfield, democracy has a significant ($p < .001$) negative effect of −0.066 for resolutions without any democratic co-sponsors. The coefficient becomes positive with the moderating variable at around 0.23. When resolutions are only co-sponsored by democracies, liberal democracy has a positive and, again, highly significant ($p < .001$) association of 0.218 with support for nuclear arms control.

In contrast, the interaction effect is also significant ($p < .05$) but much smaller for resolutions on conventional arms control. Moreover, and importantly, the coefficient of the main effect of liberal democracy is positive and significant for conventional arms control regardless of democratic co-sponsorships. For resolutions with no democratic co-sponsors, this value is at 0.038, while it reaches 0.052 for resolutions with only democratic co-sponsors. This also implies that democracies are much less supportive of democratic resolutions on conventional arms than on nuclear weapons.

These findings are corroborated by a variety of robustness tests (see Tables A26–A43 in Online Appendix F). For arms control in general and for nuclear arms control in particular, the interaction effect is consistently positive and significant across all model specifications. In all these models, the coefficient of liberal democracy is negative and significant for those resolutions not co-sponsored by any democracies, but positive and significant for resolutions co-sponsored by democracies only. For conventional arms control, the results hold in most, but not all, models. Models with fixed effects, with ordinal and binary dependent variables, and excluding Middle Eastern countries suggest a relationship between democracy and support for conventional arms control that is as positive for non-democratic resolutions as for democratic resolutions, and thus no significant interaction effect. In contrast, models with the P5 and BMR democracy measures as independent variables do not reproduce the positive relationship for non-democratic resolutions. Thus, the

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main effect for these resolutions appears to be somewhat model-specific, leading to more ambiguous results in several robustness tests. Nevertheless, almost all models confirm both that the share of democratic co-sponsors significantly moderates the relationship between democracy and support for conventional arms control, and that at the same time, this relationship remains positive regardless of resolutions' co-sponsors.

The moderating variable thus helps to explain the divergent findings concerning the main effect in the two subfields. While more democratic states are more likely to vote in favor of any type of conventional arms control measure, they are more likely to oppose nuclear arms control measures when they are introduced by non-democracies. Thus, the regression analyses yield support for both hypotheses. Yet, they do not explain why this is the case. More precisely, they neither reveal whether democratic arms control measures actually tend to favor democracies nor which aspects of democracy—norms or structures—lead states to support or oppose different types of arms control.

Exploratory Analyses

My next step is therefore to make a preliminary assessment of the applicability of the theoretical arguments. This involves two types of exploratory analyses. First, I examine the content of resolutions on nuclear arms control introduced by democratic and non-democratic regimes—as well as speeches discussing these resolutions—and how they differ from each other. Second, I run regression models in which the main independent variable is replaced by indicators more closely related to either the presence of democratic norms or democratic institutions.

For the first step, I use the data by Finke (2021), which contains the texts of all UNGA draft resolutions between 1993 and 2017. I use the Wordscores algorithm (Laver, Benoit, and Garry 2003) to analyze which terms appear in more or less democratic resolutions.[18] To this end, I use the drafts of all nuclear arms control resolutions in my analysis as reference texts[19] and their shares of democratic co-sponsors as reference scores. The scores of the resulting Wordscores model thus reveal which terms are primarily associated with democratic and non-democratic resolutions.

The results (see Table A44 in Online Appendix G) indicate that democratic resolutions on nuclear arms control indeed tend to focus more on the restriction of autocracies' nuclear armament, while the opposite is true for non-democratic resolutions. Terms related to non-proliferation (*prolifer*, *import*), the strengthening of the current nuclear order (*ratif*, *strengthen*, *fissil*), and transparency (*transpar*, *verif*, *sourc*) receive high scores. All of these favor democracies disproportionately, given that democracies are more likely to possess nuclear weapons and more transparent than autocracies (Singh and Way 2004; Hollyer, Rosendorff, and Vreeland 2011). In contrast, terms associated with a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East (*zone*, *east*, *middl*) are assigned the lowest scores. This reflects that Israel is the only country in this region possessing nuclear weapons (Ruzicka and Wheeler 2010, 83).[20] In line with this, terms with low scores also include those dealing with

[18]Note that, although the validity of Wordscores has often been criticized, this criticism is primarily directed at the last step of the model—the estimation of positions of documents, so-called "virgin texts" (see Bruinsma and Gemenis 2019 for an overview). My analysis focuses only on the prior step of assigning scores to words.

[19]Before running the Wordscores model, I convert all characters to lowercase, remove all country names, punctuation, numbers, URLs, stop words, and terms with less than three characters, and I use word stemming.

[20]This observation may raise the concern that democracies' opposition to non-democratic resolutions is exclusively driven by those dealing with the Middle East. This is not the case: The results hold when excluding resolutions on the Middle East. An analysis only of resolutions related to the Middle East—none of which are co-sponsored by any democracies—yields a negative but insignificant relationship. The same holds for an analysis of resolutions on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia (see Tables A52 and A53 in Online Appendix G). Note, however, that these

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nuclear disarmament more generally (*prohibit*, *assur*).[21] Importantly, the same analysis of resolutions on conventional weapons does not show the same pattern, except for a focus of democratic resolutions on dual-use goods (*technolog*, *dual*, *good*) (see Table A45 in Online Appendix G). Thus, the results of the Wordscores models support the argument that democratic arms control initiatives, more than autocratic ones, tend to focus on limiting the nuclear armaments of autocracies.

In addition, I use speeches from the UNGA First Committee to further explore whether autocracies also perceive democratic resolutions on nuclear arms control as imbalanced. To this end, I identify all speeches by democracies and by non-democracies that refer to resolutions on nuclear arms control that they voted against. I then analyze the "keyness" of terms in the speeches by non-democracies compared to those by democracies (see Tables A46 and A47 in Online Appendix G). My analysis shows that *discriminatori* has the highest keyness (i.e., most typical of non-democracies' justifications of opposition) among all terms included in these speeches. Similar terms that either criticize unequal restrictions (*imbal*, *coerciv*) or demand a more balanced approach (*fair*, *equal*, *comprehens*) are also among the terms with the highest keyness. In contrast, terms with low keyness (i.e., most typical of democracies' justifications of opposition) refer to the preservation of peace and international security (*peace*, *secur*, *assur*, *freedom*), emphasize security threats (*chemic*, *hostil*, *alert*), and point to other states' non-compliance with existing agreements (*complianc*, *oblig*, *failur*). This further illustrates that, consistent with my theoretical argument, autocratic regimes perceive democratic nuclear arms control resolutions as unbalanced, whereas democracies view non-democratic resolutions as obstructive to a peaceful global order.

The purpose of the second set of exploratory analyses is to explore the extent to which the structural and normative models can account for the results of the main analysis. Here, I conduct further regression analyses with two indicators included in, or based on, the V-Dem dataset. First, instead of the LDI, I include the Accountability Index, which measures to what degree governments' use of power is constrained by the population, other state institutions, civil society organizations, and the media (Coppedge et al. 2023). Second, I conduct analyses that replace the LDI with the liberal democratic stock measure introduced by Edgell et al. (2020). As democratic norms develop over time and with experience, I use this variable to proxy the prevalence of such norms (Edgell et al. 2020).[22]

The analyses of the main effects (see Tables A48 and A49 in Online Appendix G) show that government accountability is positively related to arms control support in all three models. In contrast, the democratic stock variable yields very different results. In the analyses of arms control in general and especially of nuclear arms control, democratic stock is strongly associated with more negative voting behavior ($p < .001$), while it is positively related to support for conventional arms control.

With regard to the moderating effect of democratic co-sponsorships, the interaction terms are significant in all models (see Tables A50 and A51 in Online Appendix G). However, while they are of similar magnitudes for the two models for conventional arms control, they are much larger for democratic stock than for government accountability with respect to the other types of arms control. This is mainly due to much more negative coefficients for democratic stock with regard to

results should not be overinterpreted given the small number of resolutions on nuclear-weapon-free zones in these regions.

[21]The term *disarma* itself receives a relatively high score, but it should be noted that disarmament is used interchangeably with arms control in the UN context (Goldblat 2002). Around 81 percent of resolutions with an above-average share of democratic co-sponsors contain the string "disarm," compared to 93 percent of other resolutions. For the string "prolif," this value is at 93 percent for resolutions with above-average democratic co-sponsors and 72 percent for others.

[22]It is important to note here that I do not claim that the prevalence of democratic norms is the only factor that distinguishes older from younger democracies. I merely claim that democratic experience is more closely related to this aspect of democracy, while government accountability rather captures the existence of institutional constraints.

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resolutions without democratic co-sponsors. These analyses may suggest that, as expected, strong liberal democratic norms are particularly likely to lead states to oppose nuclear arms control initiatives by non-democracies, while this is not the case for conventional arms control.

Overall, the empirical analysis provides important insights into the relationship between democracy and state support for arms control. I find that while the two variables are generally positively related to each other, this nexus holds for conventional arms control but is virtually non-existent for nuclear arms control—at least when employing a liberal understanding of democracy. Furthermore, the empirical analysis reveals that democracy is more positively related to support for democratic arms control measures. For conventional arms control, this means that democracies are more supportive of any type of agreement, but even more supportive of democratic ones. In contrast, democracies are more supportive of democratic arms control measures than autocracies in the nuclear realm, but less supportive of non-democratic measures. Thus, the association between states' level of democracy and their arms control preferences depends crucially on both the type of weapons and the regime of the states designing the agreement in question.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between states' democracy level and their support for arms control. Using a new measure of the latter variable based on UNGA voting records and V-Dem's LDI, I have found a positive association between the two variables when analyzing arms control as a whole. In contrast, disaggregated analyses of nuclear and conventional arms restrictions have shown that the positive relationship holds for the latter, though not for the former type of agreements. Moreover, more democratic states are more supportive of conventional arms control, regardless of the initiators. In contrast, democracy is associated with more favorable positions on nuclear arms control only for agreements initiated by democracies, but with less favorable positions for agreements initiated by non-democracies.

The analysis is not without limitations. One should be cautious about a causal interpretation of the results. However, they hold across various regression models, for instance, analyses with and without a set of potentially confounding control variables and with lagged independent variables. Moreover, one might argue that states' UNGA votes do not capture states' sincere preferences, given that the UNGA is considered a "talking shop" (Panke 2014). Instead, the findings might reflect that democracies have greater incentives for public signaling than autocracies. However, this argument can neither account for the moderating effect of democratic co-sponsorships nor for the divergent findings regarding nuclear and conventional arms control. On the contrary, one would rather expect debates about nuclear weapons to be more salient among democratic citizens. On top of that, as explained above, there are several reasons to believe that the dependent variable does indeed capture states' support for arms control—first and foremost the variety of validation checks conducted by Risse (2024).

Furthermore, one might suspect that alliances or geopolitical cleavages rather than democracy drive the interaction effect. Yet, the main models control for regional affiliation, and the results also hold when controlling for states' UNGA ideal points and when excluding NATO members from the analysis, arguing against these alternative explanations. In addition, alignment and cooperation between states are, as explained above, to a large degree correlated with democracy because democracies prefer to cooperate with each other (Warren 2010; but see also Gibler and Wolford 2006). Thus, even if common alliance memberships and similarities in geopolitical preferences play a role in explaining the findings, it is highly likely that they are ultimately driven by joint democracy.

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I therefore argue that the empirical results strongly suggest that a higher democracy level makes states more favorable to conventional, but not nuclear, arms control, and that this is mainly due to democracies' opposition to nuclear arms control measures proposed by non-democracies. Put differently, democracy is positively related to arms control, but only when the agreement in question (i) regulates conventional weapons or (ii) is designed by democracies. This enhances our understanding of arms control and international politics, but it also sparks several new questions and avenues for future research.

While the exploratory analyses of resolutions and speeches suggest that democratic nuclear arms control measures are objectively more beneficial to democracies, more can be done to explore whether this is the only factor that drives democracies' position taking. For example, states may also rely on (un)democratic cues (Hulvey 2023) to infer the utility of different types of arms control agreements. Furthermore, it remains open whether recent efforts to reframe nuclear arms control in humanitarian terms (Onderco and Vignoli 2024) will affect the nuclear arms control preferences of democratic citizens and governments. In addition, further research is needed to assess whether current conflicts—in particular the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war—affect democracies' views of democratic and autocratic armaments.

In sum, I establish that democracy matters for international cooperation in the field of arms control, but only partially in a positive way. This finding has several important implications. First, it highlights the importance of distinguishing between different types of arms control. The underlying dynamics and motivations may differ depending on the initiators of a particular measure as well as on the weapon type under consideration. Second, it provides further evidence that the domestic arena should not be disregarded in studies of arms control and, more generally, international relations. Internal processes are highly relevant and shape policymaking at the global level. Finally, this study sheds new light on the applicability of democratic peace theory to other policy fields.

Supplementary material

Supplementary material is available at *Foreign Policy Analysis* online.

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