Saving Nation's Face: A Comparative Investigation of Rally-Round-The-Flag Periods in Four Democratic Countries
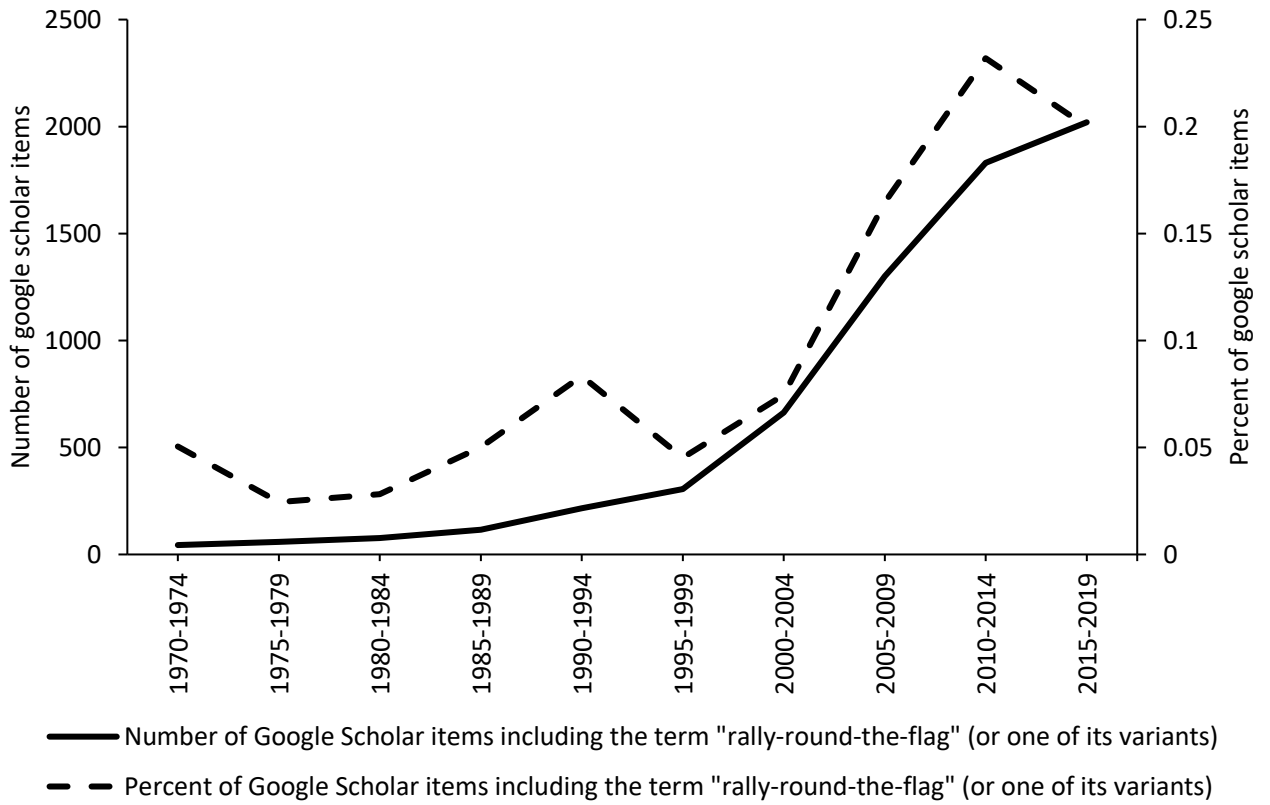
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The phrase "rally-round-the-flag" has been an American cultural idiom since George Fredrick Root used it in his 1862 *Battle Cry of Freedom* pro-unionist poem. However, since the early 1970s this idiom has also served as a scientific concept in studies of public opinion, in which it commonly denotes "a surge of patriotism and public approval for [the president's] administration and its policies during an international crisis" (Baker and Oneal 2001:661). In the past two decades, there has been an inflation of mentions of the term "rally-round-the-flag" in academic texts, as Figure 1 shows—the figure shows this trend when counting for each period of five years since 1970 the number of texts that included the term (the solid line), as well as when using a standardized measure, which for every period calculates the percent of texts that include the term out of the total number of texts in the database for each period (the dashed line).[1][2]

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[1] The numbers reported in Figure 1 are based on a search of the following alternate terms "rally-round-the-flag," "rally-round the flag," "rally around the flag," "rally-'round-the-flag," and "rally 'round the flag."

[2] While this text is written (late-December, 2019), the count for the last period (2015-2019) may be still increasing because 2019 is not over.

Figure 1. Use of the term "rally-round-the-flag" (and variants) in scientific texts per 5-year period

Number of Google Scholar items including the term "rally-round-the-flag" (or one of its variants)

Percent of Google Scholar items including the term "rally-round-the-flag" (or one of its variants)

Following John Mueller's (Mueller 1970, Mueller 1973) seminal study that identified rally-round-the-flag periods in data on public support for sitting presidents in the United States, the bulk of research about the rally phenomenon has largely maintained a focus on the United States (Feinstein 2016). However, in the past several years, several studies have been conducted about rally-round-the-flags effects in other countries, among them Britain (Lai and Reiter 2005, Lanoue and Headrick 1998, Norpoth 1987), Germany (Bytzek 2011), France (Georgarakis), Russia (Yudina 2015), and Israel (Feinstein 2018). Despite that remarkable progress, thus far no study has taken a *comparative* look at the rally-round-the-flag phenomenon, which may allow us to learn about common mechanisms of rallies as well as about more idiosyncratic, society-specific aspects of the rally phenomenon. ***The current study makes the first attempt to take a comparative, cross-national look at the rally-round-the-flag phenomenon of public opinion.***

An uncommon but greatly important political phenomenon

Following Mueller's original conceptualization and measurement, most studies measure rally-round-the-flag effects as sharp increases in public satisfaction with the work of the head of the government (the president or prime minister). Few studies have measured rally effects as increases in confidence in national institutions or (in parliamentary democracy) as boosts to the number of citizens that intend to vote for the ruling party in the next election (Lai and Reiter 2005). The current study adopts the more common conceptualization and measurement of rallies that focus on the popularity of the president in presidential democracy or prime minister in parliamentary democracy. The reason for this choice is practical: of all potential variables that can be used to measure rally-round-the-flag effects, reliable longitudinal data that can be used for cross-national comparison are only available for public approval ratings of governments and their heads.

The rally-round-the-flag effect is interesting from a theoretical point of view, because it represent a deviation from the regular patterns of public opinion that tend to be fairly stable and predictable (Page and Shapiro 1992); in the United States, public opinion is usually organized around partisan and ideological identities (Gries 2014, Jacobson 2010). While being an interesting topic for an academic theoretical discussion, the rally-round-the-flag is also an important *political* phenomenon with potential serious implications to policy making. During rally periods, relatively low levels of political polarization and overall positive public mood (Feinstein 2020) may lead policy makers to take decisions that otherwise they would be more reluctant to take, such as to start a war, restrict certain civil rights, or decide to hold the next national elections earlier than expected (Smith 2003).

Changes in public mood and opinion are more likely to influence policy making in democratic countries than in countries with non-democratic regimes, because in democracies political parties and elected officials who seek reelection tend to be concerned about their overall popularity as well as about public approval ratings for specific policies (Russett 1990). Therefore, rally-round-the-flag processes that boost to the public approval ratings of the head of the government give governments a leeway to pursue their preferred policies (Feinstein 2018). In some case, policies may be executed without proper deliberation and without sufficient supervision by the parliament, because during rally periods even members of opposition parties may rally around the flag or simply feel compelled to show patriotism by being supportive or at least refrain from criticizing the government.

The consequences of policy making during rally periods may be especially dramatic in response to an ongoing or anticipated war. Rally-round-the-flag periods in times of war are characterized by widespread agreement that the country is fighting a just war, and that the government is handling the situation in an adequate way. During rally periods, support for aggressive war policies is not based on rational-strategic assessment of policies and their

consequences. Rather, among decision makers and ordinary citizens alike, a rally-round-the-flag reaction to a violent conflict generates overconfidence about the chances of winning the war (Feinstein 2020), and it increases tolerance of war casualties, including casualties on "our" side (Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler 2006). In addition, the experience of rage due to perceived enemies' actions drives individuals to seek retaliation against the enemies and overlook or dismiss both imminent hazards and longer-term negative consequences of military confrontation (Huddy, Feldman and Cassese 2007). This kind of rally-round-the-flag reaction to a conflict provides a tailwind for aggressive policies against external enemies, and in some instances also against domestic ethnic or religious minorities that are portrayed as disloyal to the country and as linked to enemies thus potentially fifth column.

From a special theory to general theory of rally-round-the-flag

Conventional theoretical models of attitude formation entail two limitations that prevent adequate conceptualization of the rally-round-the-flag phenomenon. First, attitude changes during rally periods deviate from the relatively stable and predictable patterns of public opinion (Page and Shapiro 1992:173). Second, conventional rationalist arguments about attitudes toward military engagement (Eichenberg 2005, Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler 2006, Jentleson 1992), which suggest that the public supports successful and low-cost wars (i.e., those that entail few casualties on "our" side), cannot explain rally effects because these effects emerge before the public has information about the outcome and cost of the military engagement (Berinsky 2007).

Considering these limitations of prior models, through my previous investigation of rally periods in the United States, I have developed a theory that explains (a) under which circumstances rally periods of emerged in the United States (Feinstein 2016), and (b) precisely which types of interpretations and affective reactions motivate individuals to rally

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around the flag (Feinstein 2020). In brief, through a comparative investigation of public reaction to all major military operations and security crises in the United States since 1950, I have shown that in the United States rally effects are quite rare, and they emerge not as an automatic reaction to international conflicts. Rather, rallies have emerged under specific sets of conditions—i.e., certain characteristics of conflicts, their historical circumstances, and the reactions of the national leadership—that had jointly convinced the majority of Americans that taking military action is needed in order to maintain or restore collective honor and international prestige (Feinstein 2016) (more on this below). In another study that zoomed-in on individual-level mechanisms of rallying behind the president, I have shown that in contrast to non-rally periods, during which leaders and their policies evoke contrasting feelings in rival ideological and political camps, a relatively monolithic public opinion during rally period reflects widespread positive feelings about national leaders and policies due to increased levels of identification with the national group that temporarily suppresses the influence of partisanship (Feinstein 2020).[3]

The current study introduces three extensions to my research on the rally-round-the-flag phenomenon. First, so far my research has focused on rallies the United States (Feinstein 2016, Feinstein 2020) and in one study in Israel (Feinstein 2018). Other researchers too have studied the rally phenomenon mostly in the United States and only few of them studied rally effects in other countries. In contrast to this trend, the current study makes the first attempt to improve our theoretical understanding of the rally-round-the-flag phenomenon by examining it from a *comparative* perspective. In addition to the United States, the list of cases compared in this study include rally periods in Australia, Britain, and Germany.

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[3] In my previous studies, I have also highlighted the crucial role of opinion leaders—the media and political leaders—who steer public opinion during rally periods: they transform the meaning of events from diplomatic or military confrontations, to symbolic struggles over collective honor and status.

Second, in contrast to extant research on the topic, the current investigation does not focus solely on rally reactions to wars and security crises, but rather also pays attention to rally reactions to events that did not involve violent confrontations but nonetheless evoked rally-round-the-flag reactions.

Third, the above-mentioned two empirical extensions—a cross-national comparison and the inclusion of several types of rally-producing events—allows me to develop a general argument about the emergence of rally-round-the-flag effects in democratic countries. This general argument is a modification of my more specific argument about the emergence of rally effects in the United States (Feinstein 2016). In this paper, I suggest that *a rally-round-the-flag effect emerges when the public widely perceives an event as having a positive and greatly desired implications to the nations' symbolic value*. I develop this argument by creating a typology that includes three types of rallies that occurred in focal countries in the past several decades. The first two types—which I label "status maintenance by fighting aggressors" and "claiming moral leadership during international turmoil" were already introduced in my research on rallies in the United States, and this study demonstrate their relevance to other countries. The third type of rallies—labeled "restoring national honor by confronting demons of the past"—is introduced here for the first time.

Method

Case selection. For this comparative study, I strategically chose, in addition to the United States that was the focus of my previous research on the rally phenomenon, three countries: Australia, Britain, and Germany. I selected these countries for two reasons. First, as mentioned in the introduction, I am especially interested in rally-round-the-flag periods in democratic countries, because their governments rely at least partly on popular legitimacy. A second consideration for case selection was practical: the availability of reliable data on

popular approval ratings of heads of the government (or at least the government) that in the past several decades has been collected at least every month (democratic countries are more likely to meet this selection criteria than non-democratic countries)

Data sources. Data for on levels of satisfaction with the prime minister in Australia are from Newspoll polling company;[4] data on levels of satisfaction with the way the prime minister of Britain was doing her/his job are from Ipsos MORI polling company;[5] data on levels of satisfaction with the government of Germany are from GESIS Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences;[6] and data for presidential approval ratings in the United States are from the Roper Center at the University of Connecticut[7] and the American Presidency Project at the University of California in Santa Barbara.[8]

Identifying rally periods. In this study, rally periods were detected inductively in the data series of each country. In line with my previous investigation of rally periods in the United States (Feinstein 2016), when seeking to identify rally periods in data on public opinion I distinguish minor fluctuations in approval ratings that may be due to sampling variability, from greater deviations from the overall pattern of public opinion about a president or prime minister that clearly represent a rally effect. A second criterion for coding an event as "rally-point" is that in its aftermath the leadership was supported by a solid majority of the population (so, for instance, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 is not coded as a

[4] Data retrieved in June 2015 from http://polling.newspoll.com.au/cgi-bin/polling//display_poll_data.pl?mode=trend&page=continue_results&question_id=2420&url_caller=trend

[5] Data retrieved in February 2014 from https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/88/Political-Monitor-Satisfaction-Ratings-1997Present.aspx

[6] Data retrieved in December 2013 from http://www.gesis.org/en/allbus/allbus-home/

[7] Data retrieved in May 2011 from https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/CFIDE/cf/action/home/index.cfm.

[8] Data retrieved in August 2011 from www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=4912.

rally point in the United Kingdom, because even after an increase of 16 percentage points in the rates of public stratification with the Prime Minister, less than half of the public were satisfied with the Prime Minister). Table 1 presents a list of all the events that are coded as rally points.

Table 1. List of Rally-Round-The-Flag Events in Focal Countries, 1979-2019

Country	Event	Year of event	Head of government	Points increase in popular satisfaction with head of govt	Highest level of satisfaction with head of govt during rally period
United Kingdom	Falklands War	1982	Margaret Thatcher (Conservative Party)	23	59
	Gulf War (Conservative Party)	1990-1	John Major	38	63
	Successful referendum and Wales and Scotland	1997	Tony Blair (Labour Party)	10	75
	Good Friday Agreement	1998	Tony Blair (Labour Party)	6	68
	September 11 attack in the United States	2001	Tony Blair (Labour Party)	18	67
Australia	Port Arthur massacre	1996	John Howard (Liberal Party)	17	67
	September 11 attacks in the United States	2001	John Howard (Liberal Party)	11	61
	Monash University shooting	2002	John Howard (Liberal Party)	10	62
	Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples speech	2008	Kevin Rudd (Labour Party)	9	65
Germany	Schengen Agreement	2007	Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union party)	18	78
USA	Iran Hostage crisis	1979-80	Jimmy Carter (Democratic Party)	27	58
	Invasion of Panama	1989	George H.W. Bush (Republican Party)	9	80

Gulf War	1991	George H.W. Bush (Republican Party)	25	89
September 11 attacks	2001	George W. Bush (Republican Party)	33	90
Invasion of Iraq	2003	George W. Bush (Republican Party)	13	71

Analytical approach. After identifying rally periods in the data, I examined which events happen in a country shortly before or during data collection in each rally period. Then, I used both primary sources (newspaper reports) and secondary sources (academic publications) to characterize the media coverage of events and the how they were interpreted in the rhetoric of political leaders. I then zoomed in on events that I could tell with high level of confidence that were perceived as meaningful for collective national identity (in the conclusion I mention a few rally events that did not fit this inclusion criterion), and used these focal events to create a typology of rally events. I now turn to introduce this typology, which gives the structure for the subsequent discussion of findings.

Three types of rallies

The typology introduced in this study includes three analytically distinct types of rallies with a common thread: they all represent processes in which events have become loaded (via the rhetoric of politicians and the media) with the profound meaning of adding to the symbolic value of the nation. In the first type of rallies, adding positive value to the nation was through fighting enemies whose actions were portrayed as humiliating or greatly embarrassing the nation. The second type of rallies emerge from efforts to demonstrate positive international leadership, which may be unique to counties that are in leadership position or have been in such position in the past. This two types of rallies were already discussed in my comparative historical article about rally periods in the United States, thus the current discussion mainly demonstrates the relevant of my insights from that earlier

article to cases other than the United States. In contrast, the third type of rallies is uniquely discussed in the current paper and thus its contribution to the core theoretical argument developed here is crucial. That third type includes events in which the desire to add symbolic value to the nation stemmed not from perceived challenges by external enemies, but from certain shameful ("dark") periods in national history that required attornment or redemption.

The following discussion is structured according to the typology of rally periods. Rally periods in the United States are discussed quite briefly, because a detailed examination of each of these events can be found in my previous publications (Feinstein 2012, Feinstein 2016). The proposed typology covers 11of 15 rally periods that happened in the focal countries in the period covered in this study (past four decades). The four cases that do not fit my argument and typology are briefly discussed in the conclusion section.

Rally Type I: Status maintenance by fighting aggressors

Five events in the data set had evoked rally-round-the-flag reactions because they involved actions by foreign actors that were perceived as humiliating the home nation, and because the government's rhetoric promised to restore national honor by military retaliation. Four of the rally periods in this categories were in the United States, and because I have already examined them in detailed in previous publications I shall only restate here the pith of my findings about these events.

The Iran Hostage Crisis (1979-80), in which 52 U.S. citizens were held hostage in the American embassy in Tehran for 444 days, initially did not produce any rally-round-the-flag effect in the United States despite a widespread feeling of collective humiliation. In fact, President Carter's initial reaction to the crisis—using soft language and trying to solve the crisis through diplomacy behind closed doors—was widely seen as adding salt to injury. The rally reaction to the crisis emerged a few weeks into the crisis, when Carter changed his

rhetoric in a way that matched people's desire for retaliation. In his new rhetoric, Carter pointed to the Iranian regime as enemy of the US, talked about American pride, courage, and honor, and expressed a clear commitment of the United States to protect the lives of its citizens. While this rhetoric was sufficient to generate a modest rally effect (Carter's job approval rating nearly doubled, reaching 58 percent), his reluctance to actually take firm actions against Iran (except for a failed rescue attempt) limited the rally effect of this event that was weaker and shorter than most other rally periods in the United States.

The invasions of Panama (December 1989) and Iraq (March 2003) were also widely seen as a proper reactions to major national humiliations. While two of the official goals of the invasion of Panama were to protect the lives of Americans and to restore democracy in the country, a third goal of the invasion captured the hearts and minds of most Americans: taking down Panama's strongmen General Manual Noriega. In that period, one of the main issues that primed public opinion in the United States was the so-called war on drugs. The transformation of this issue into a matter of national honor and dignity was accelerated by the exposure in 1986 of the "Iran-Contra Affair" (or "Irangate"): the Central Intelligence Agency has sold weapons to Iran that was under international arms embargo, and used the money to fund the 'Contras' who fought against the socialist government of Nicaragua but were known to be involved in drug trafficking. In light of this scandal, the invasion of Panama provided an opportunity to restore collective dignity by taking down Noriega, a regional leader and a drug lord the United States had nurtured for years.

The invasion of Iraq in March 2003 was quite controversial in the United States, thus only about 70 percent rallied behind George W. Bush's leadership then. However, the majority that rallied around the flag in that period did so largely because the administration succeeded in portraying Iraq as the head of the snake in the "axis of evil" that Bush initially described in his January 2002 State of the Union address. In the aftermath of the September

11 attacks and the following futile hunt for Osama Bin Laden, the profound and widespread feeling of humiliation by the attacks were effectively channeled toward Iraq. In the public and political discourse in the United States, the conformation with Iraq was portrayed as a struggle between the core values of the United States and evil forces (Krebs 2007, McCartney 2004, Roshwald 2006), and the need to prevail in the conflict became a matter of national honor and prestige (Feinstein 2016, Krebs 2007, McCartney 2004, Roshwald 2006). That kind of discourse has emerged and was even more salient in the immediate period after the September 11 attacks and the following invasion of Afghanistan, which together make the fourth event in this category of rally events (see extended discussion in Feinstein 2020).

The Falkland War and the rally-round-the-flag in the United Kingdom

During the 18th Century, control over the Falklands ("Las Malvinas" in Spanish), a group of islands located roughly 400 miles off the Argentine coast in the South Atlantic (McClure 2004), has passed between Britain and Spain (Freedman 2004). Argentina claim the islands as part of its sovereign territory in 1829 (sixteen years after the Spanish left), but in 1833 Britain reconquered the islands (Boyce 2005, Freedman 2004, Gustafson 1988). Since then, Argentina has never given up its claim of ownership over the Falklands (Freedman 2004, Gustafson 1988), claiming that they were part of the territories it inherited from Spain; Britain justified its rule over the islands by referring to their discovery by English navigators in the 16th century (Boyce 2005).

On April 2, 1982, following several failed negotiations, the Argentine military junta ordered marine forces to invade the Malvinas in order to force Britain to negotiation. After the Argentine forces took over Stanley (the capital city of the Falklands), the British government of the islands surrendered. Contrary to the Argentine expectation for diplomatic negotiation, Britain launched a counter-invasion and sent a large naval task force in order to

reconquer the islands. In addition to military operation, Britain also used diplomacy and economy sanctions in order to pressure Argentina to withdraw its forces from the Falklands (Gibran 2015). While assembling its naval forces in preparation for an attack against the Argentinian forces in the Falklands (Bratton et al, 2011), Britain declared two hundred mile exclusionary zone around the Falklands (McClure, 2004). The British military attack began in May 1 (called operation "Black Buck") (Freedman, 1982). The difference in the levels of organization and professionalism between the two sides were sharp (Freedman, 1982), and on June 14 Argentina surrendered (McClure, 2004). During the 74 days of the war, 258 British military personnel and 649 Argentine military personnel died and there were larger numbers of wounded soldiers on both sides (militaryhistory.about.com).

The confrontation with Argentina was the central issue in the British electronic and printed media during the two months of the crisis (Adams 1986). Both the headlines and special sections of all news channels were devoted to this crisis. However, hard news were a rare commodity during the war itself (Freedman 1983) in what claimed to be "one of the most under-reported and misreported wars since 1945" (Wilcox 1992:58). The tone of media coverage of the war was overly positive: the media embraced the government's claim that declaring war was inevitable and highlighted the successes of the military operation (Adams 1986, Taylor 1992).

The media shaped public opinion about the war not only through the intensity and the positive tone of its coverage, but crucially through the *content* of that coverage that generated a significant symbolic value for the confrontation with Argentina. More than just a territorial dispute, the media depicted the Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Islands as an attack against British national sovereignty, as well as an attack of an authoritarian regime against British values, especially against democracy that was represented by British Falklands (Ross

2016). Many news reports highlighted the courage and sacrifice of the British soldiers who were fighting in the Falklands as national heroes (Taylor 1992).

Assigning the crisis in the Falklands high symbolic value was especially pronounced in the rhetoric of politicians, which the media embraced and circulated. Despite some disagreement within the British Cabinet about the proper way to handle the crisis,[9] the message the public received through the media from its leaders was unified. On April 3 in a special sitting of the British House of Commons, PM Margaret Thatcher announced that "British sovereign territory has been invaded by a foreign power" and that it is her "government's objective to see that the islands are freed from occupation" (British Hansard, 3.4.1982). Two days later, on April 5, Foreign Secretary Lord Peter Carrington resigned (taking responsibility for failing to foresee the developments in the crisis), and in his resignation letter he described the British military response to the Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Island as a response to "national humiliation" (Freedman 1982). That was not an unusual interpretation, other prominent politicians and the media frequently used terms like "fiasco" and "disgrace" to describe the Argentinian conquest of the Falkland Islands.[10]

The public in the United Kingdom embraced that message, thus support levels for military action against Argentina were very high (Freedman 1982). Notably, high levels of support for military action emerged despite the fact that the Falkland Island were not a major economic or strategic asset for Britain (Aulich 1992). Rather, the public rallied behind the

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[9] Specifically, there was a major disagreement between Thatcher and Foreign Secretary, Francis Pym who pushed for diplomatic negotiation with Argentina Bratton, Patrick and Wallace Thies. 2011. "When Governments Collide in the South Atlantic: Britain Coerces Argentina During the Falklands War." *Comparative Strategy* 30(1):1-27..

[10] See https://www.nytimes.com/1982/04/06/world/foreign-secretary-resigns-britain-falkland-crisis-text-carrington-letter-page-a6.html

war because it was widely construed as a confrontation with a third world country whose actions humiliated Britain, and thus taking military action was seen as Britain's way of reclaiming national pride and restore a sense of shared destiny (Aulich 1992). As a result, the public rewarded Thatcher for her firm action against Argentina: the Prime Minister's public approval rating increased by no less than 23 percentage points, reaching 59 percent.[11]

Rally Type II: Claiming moral leadership during international turmoil

Whereas in the first category military actions where perceived as helping to cope with collective humiliation evoked rally reactions, a widespread feeling of humiliation is not a necessary condition for the second type of rally reactions. Instead, the events discussed in this section are characterized by framing of military actions as claiming positive moral international leadership hence as increasing national honor and prestige. In the United States, this type of framing has characterized the public discourse regarding the 1991 Gulf War that aimed to push Iraqi forces out of Kuwait, which led to a sharp increase (from about 60

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[11] This was probably the reason behind Thatcher decision to hold the next national elections earlier than expected (Smith 2003?).

percent to nearly 90 percent) in public satisfaction from President George H. W. Bush (as I discuss extensively elsewhere (Feinstein 2016)).[12,13]

Rally-round-the-flag in the United Kingdom during the Gulf War

A similar framing of the Gulf War generated a rally reaction in the United Kingdom (see also (Lai and Reiter 2005)): during the war, public satisfaction with PM John Major increased from 38 to 63 percent.[14] Interestingly, in a period of global American hegemony,

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[12] One may speculate that the enthusiasm around the Gulf War was also related to the opportunity this war provided to fight the shadows of the Vietnam War, and eliminate the so-called "Vietnam-Syndrome" by winning a major international war. This kind of motivation, which in previous sections I referred to as a desire to reclaim national honor and prestige, seems to have indeed guided the attitudes of some of the more militarist parts of the American society toward the Gulf War Kellner, Douglas. 1992. *The Persian Gulf Tv War*. Boulder: Westview Press, Shaw, Donald L. and Shannon E. Martin. 1993. "The Natural, and Inevitable, Phases of War Reporting: Historical Shadows, New Communication in the Persian Gulf." Pp. 43--69 in *The Media and the Persian Gulf War*, edited by R. E. Denton, Jr. Westport, CT: Praeger.. However, the evidence at hand do not seem to suggest that inthe larger public conversation the Gulf War was seen as an opportunity to reclaim the national honor that was lost in Vietnam.

[13] The "international leadership" and "leader of the free world" themes have also appeared in the public discourse in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks and during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, but these events are included in the type of rally events discussed in the previous section because the main motivating theme in response to these events was America's need to demonstrate it power and claim national honor after the humiliation of the September 11 attack Feinstein, Yuval. 2016. "Rallying around the President: When and Why Do Americans Close Ranks Behind Their Presidents During International Crisis and War?". *Social science history* 40(2):305-38..

[14] Among the allay forces, Britain's contribution of military personnel (about fifty thousands) was second only to the United States (about half a million) Jones, Matt. 2018. "Ending Cold War Fears: Expectation and Interpretation in Mass Observers' Responses to the Gulf War, 1990–1991." *Contemporary British History* 32(2):253-75..

many Brits still saw their country as having a leadership role in the international arena and as an important force of democracy and human rights protection (in contrast, for example, to the fairly strong objection to the war in Spain [(Sentis, 1991; Cebrian, 1991; Mercado, 1991; El Pais, 1.2.91)]. Such an outlook was encouraged by the British media that frequently analogized the situation in the Persian Gulf to the situation in Europe at the beginning of the Second World War.

Before the eruption of the crisis in the Persian Gulf, few ordinary British citizens were knowledgeable about the Middle East (Philo and McLaughlin 2014). That changed dramatically during as the crisis proceeded. Similar to the United States, the popular media in Britain has highlighted an analogy between the crisis and the Gulf and the Second World War (Philo and McLaughlin 2014). Iraq's president, Saddam Hussein, was frequently compared to Adolf Hitler (Toth 1992). Furthermore, the possibility of using diplomatic and economic means instead of military force in order to try to solve the crisis was compared to the notorious Munich Agreement with Nazi Germany in 1938 (Philo and McLaughlin 2014). More generally, the crisis in the Persian Gulf was portrayed as a confrontation between Heroes (British and American soldiers) and an ultimate villain.[15]

Assuming an international leadership role, similar to the one featured in the British collective memory about the Second World War, was pronounced in the rhetoric of PM John Major (who took office on November 28, 1990, half a year after the crisis began and less than two months before the coalition attack against Iraq began). For instance, in his speech at the Parliament, on January 15, 1991, Major highlighted Britain's commitment to its NATO allies,

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[15] For instance, the Daily Mirror split its front page: on one side a picture of British soldiers and pilots was titled "Heroes", and on the other side a photo of Saddam Hussain was titled "The Villain" Philo, Greg and Greg McLaughlin. 2014. "The British Media and the Gulf War." *The Glasgow Media Group Reader, Vol. II: Industry, Economy, War and Politics*:146..

despite the fact that the operation was ordered by the United Nations Security Council and more than thirty countries contributed to the coalition forces. Furthermore, as the following quote from that speech demonstrates, PM Major tied Britain involvement in the war to its positive international leadership and to its leadership in Europe: *"The United Kingdom has played an important role in securing firm reaction of the United Nations in dealing with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. We have played a positive role in the building of the single market in the European Community."*[16]

Evidently, the public in Britain largely embraced that message and as a result both public support for the British involvement in the military action against Iraq and levels of satisfaction with PM Major increased dramatically (Wybrow 1991). However, the war was more controversial in Britain than in the United States. Arguably, significant levels of opposition or ambivalence about Britain's involvement in the Gulf War were driven by the belief that diplomatic means and economic sanctions against Iraq were not yet exhausted, as well as by concerns about a potential escalation of the war into another World War that might include a use of weapons of mass destruction (Jones 2018); these concerns were boosted by the media's analogy of the situation to eve of the Second World Wars. Furthermore, the fact that parts of the media (especially the Guardian) explicitly opposed the military action against Iraq contributed to the quite controversial character of this war in the public discourse in Britain.[17]

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[16] "Government Achievements", Parliament website. Accessed December 28, 2019, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1991/jan/15/government-achievements#S6CV0183P0_1991

[17] The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was even more controversial, and therefore while it led to a considerable increase (16 percentage point) in public support for PM Blair the overall support rate remained fairly low (47 percent) hence this even is not coded as a rally event in this study.

Rally-round-the-flag in the United Kingdom and Australia in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks in the United States

The September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States generated significant rally-round-the-flag effects both in the United Kingdom (Worcester 2002) and in Australia (McAllister 2003): in Britain Prime Minister Tony Blair's job approval rating increased from 49 percent before the attacks to 67 percent the aftermath of the attacks; in Australia, the popular approval ratings of Prime Minister John Howard increased in the same period from 50 percent to 61 percent. What turned the attacks against the United States into rally events in Britain and in Australia? In line with the general argument of this paper, I suggest that the answer is the profound meaning that the public discourse in these two countries attributed to the events, which turned not only the attacks but also the anticipated reaction to the attacks a matter of national identity and status.

In the days following the terrorist attacks, the British and Australian media covered intensively the attacks and coping efforts in the United States (as the media in many other countries did). The attacks were described as an apocalypse and September 11 was frequently referred to as the day that changed the world forever (Bouvier 2007, Kellner 2007, McNair 2007). However, what seem to have tied the terrorist attacks against the United States to national identities in Britain and Australia was the extended interpretive framework that political leaders imposed on the events, which linked them to core elements of collective historical legacies. In both countries, leaders of both the ruling and opposition parties united behind the idea that the attacks that took place on an American soil were actually attacks against the entire civilized world and against the core democratic values of their respective nations, a message that was also echoed in the media (Marron 2007, McNair 2007). With this understanding of the events, the message from Canberra and London to Washington not only

offered the solidarity of Brits and Australian with the American people in one of their gravest moments, but also a pledged to contribute to the effort to defeat global terrorism (McNair 2007).

In Britain, Tony Blair in an address to the nation a few hours after the attacks said that "this is not a battle between the United States of America and terrorism but between the free and democratic world and terrorism." He then added that the British people should "stand shoulder to shoulder with our American friends in this hour of tragedy and we like them will not rest until this evil is driven from our world" (BBC, 11.9.2001); that message was also embraced by the opposition in the British parliament. [18]

In Australia, Prime Minister John Howard—who on the day of the attacks happened to be in Washington for the 50th anniversary of the ANZUS Treaty (the 1951 security alliance between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States (White 2003)—declared that the attacks "represent an assault, not only on the people and the values of the United States of America, but of free societies everywhere" (Howard, 17.11.2001). Howard further announced that the Australian parliament "fully endorses the commitment of the Australian Government to support within Australia's capabilities United States-led action against those responsible for these tragic attacks" (ibid). The symbolic meaning of that commitment was further highlighted by Howard's comparison of the struggle with contemporary terrorism to the struggle against Nazi Germany in the Second World War (an analogy that was also applied by leaders from the opposition [Beazley 17.11.2001]). Howard even quoted Winston Churchill who said (in 1941) that those responsible for the Nazi occupation of Europe should be regarded in their brutish hour of triumph as the moral outcasts of mankind (ibid).

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[18] See for example the speech of Duncan Smith, the newly elected leader of the Conservative Party (BBC, 13.9.2001).

Through this type of framing of horrific terrorist attacks that took place in another country overseas, the emerging global "war on terror" and the anticipated military involvement of the United Kingdom and Australia in that global war became thematically linked to core national values and cherished legacy of the British Commonwealth as the great protectors of human freedoms and democracy.[19,20] As a result, national leaders' pledge to take active role in the fight against global terrorism was embraced and led the majority of Brits and Australians to rally around the flag.

Rally Type III: Restoring national honor by confronting demons of the past

The third category of rally-round-the-flag events is of special importance, because it shifts the focus from efforts to maintain and enhance the home nation's value by confronting external "others," to mnemonic elements of national identity that may load certain events that do not involve confrontations with external actor with a profound meaning of increasing collective self-worth. Two events in the current data set belong to this category: A rally in Australia following the official apology issued on February 13, 2008 by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to the aboriginals people, and rally in Germany following the expansion of the Schengen Agreement on December 21, 2007. The common thread of these two profoundly different events is that in both of them actions taken by national leaders had positive implications for collective self-worth, because in light of dark and shameful periods in the history of these nations current actions seemed to offer some remedy.

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[19] On Britishness as core component of Australian nationalism, see Meaney, Neville. 2001. "Britishness and Australian Identity: The Problem of Nationalism in Australian History and Historiography." *Australian Historical Studies* 32(116):76-90..

[20] For Howard nationalist rhetoric see Johnson, Carol. 2007. "John Howard's 'Values' and Australian Identity." *Australian Journal of Political Science* 42(2):195-209..

In Germany, the expansion of the Schengen Treaty to include nine Central-Eastern European countries—among them two neighbors of Germany: the Czech Republic and Poland—led to a nearly 20 points increase in approval ratings for the federal government that reached 78 percent. Given that Germany was already part of the Schengen Agreement, and was much more powerful and rich than all the new country members, it is unlikely that the root of the rally reaction in Germany was an expectation for new economic opportunities in the expanded Schengen Zone. Rather, the opening the borders between Germany and its eastern neighbors carried a symbolic meaning for Germans due to their country's notorious history in the two World Wars and the central place of Germany in the great divide of the Cold War.[21] In light of this problematic history, opening the borders to the East carried a strong symbolic message of correcting wrongs of the past. In a ceremony attended also by the prime ministers of Poland and the Czech Republic, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said: "Today, citizens have free travel through 24 countries. Those who are little older know that this is not a matter of course…We are all happy to have a truly historic moment together today" (Welt 2007). This framing of the decision to open the borders to free movement to and from the East won the hurts and minds of the public in German, as around the borders thousands of people were celebrating the even with fireworks, confetti, and sparkling wine.

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[21] For many Germans, expressing national pride, or even experiencing feelings of national pride, is mixed with guilt and shame due to the memory of the Second World War and the Holocaust Breuilly, John. 1998. "German National Identity." Pp. 44-66 in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern German Culture*, edited by E. Kolinsky and W. V. D. Will. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, Fulbrook, Mary. 2002. *German National Identity after the Holocaust*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press: Malden, MA:Blackwell Publishers, Ignatieff, Michael. 1994. *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*, Vol. 1st American. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Kattago, Siobhan. 2001. *Ambiguous Memory: The Nazi Past and German National Identity*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, Maier, Charles S. 1997. *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press..

Notably, in contrast to the events that were discussed in the previous sections, in which the public closed ranks behind confrontation with external "others", the rally in Germany followed a message of *unity* between peoples, because it touched a sensitive chord in the collective memory of Germans. Similarly, in our next event—the rally behind Australian Prime Minister Rudd in 2008—a call for unity was embraced and celebrated due to its linked to a troubling history of division and oppression.

On February 13, 2008, PM Rudd delivered in the Parliament of Australia a speech in which he apologized for the crimes European-Australians committed against the Aboriginals during the "stolen generation" era. The speech that was broadcast by nation-wide television networks evoked mass rallies in the cities and led to an increase of nine percentage points in public approval rating of the prime minister (from 56 before the speech to 65 after the speech). However, to properly assess the effect of Rudd's decision to make the apology, we should add to that nine-points increase an unknown number of Australian citizens whose rally behind Rudd's decision began already while he was running for office, because one of Rudd's main campaign promises was to make an apology to the aboriginal people.

Public awareness of the "Stolen Generations" and the crimes against the aboriginal populations has increased in Australia since the late 1980s due to activities by the civil society (Rule and Rice 2015) and in 1994 the Attorney-General order a national inquiry into this matter (Wilkie 1997). However, following the release to the public of the results of the inquiry (the "Bringing them Home" report) that established the horrific crimes against the aboriginals (Reed 2006), and despite a growing demand from the government to acknowledge this dark period in Australia's history, throughout his decade-long term in office Prime Minister Johan Howard has refused to issue a formal apology. Howard justified his reluctance by claiming that current Australians are not responsible for the wrongdoing of the past (Auguste 2010), and that even the wrongs of a particular period should not make

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Australian regret their grand national history (Short:298). Issuing a formal apology to the Aboriginal people was one of Kevin Rudd's main campaign promises, which he kept shortly after he defeated Howard in the 2007 federal election (Barta 2008). In the speech, Rudd highlighted that saying sorry was part of "the healing of the nation," and expressed his wish to "turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past." The speech was responded to with laud applause and many tearing eyes, both among members of the parliament and among large crowds of ordinary people who watched the speech on large screens in public areas (Barta 2008).[22] The widespread feeling of national pride and reassurance resulted in a rally of the public behind Rudd's leadership.

CONCLUSION

This study is the first to develop a typology of rally-round-the-flag events based on comparative investigation of rallies in several countries. Based on this investigation, I proposed a general explanation for the emergence of rally outcomes: *rallies emerge when the opinion leaders (politicians and the media) successfully portray events as having positive and greatly desired implications to the nations' symbolic value*. In contrast to extant research (including my previous publications on this topic), this type of meaning-making is not limited to confrontations with external "others," but rather it may also develop in response to events or policies that seem to confront a problematic collective past.

Potentially, the typology introduced in this paper can be extended and modified through the investigation of additional cases (i.e., other countries and periods), but such a desired development depends on finding relevant and reliable data. However, even with respect to the focal countries in the current study, there is still room for improvement. Most

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[22] See also Johnston, Tim (February 13, 2008) Australia Says 'Sorry' to Aborigines for Mistreatment, The New York Times, retrieved from: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/13/world/asia/13aborigine.html

importantly, four rally events remain outside the scope of the typology and the argument developed in this paper. Two of these events involve gun control legislation in Australia following massacres: the Port Arthur massacre (April 28-29, 1996) that led to a 16 points increase (from 50 percent to 67 percent) in PM John Howard's public approval ratings, and the Monash University Shooting (October 21, 2002) that led to a 10 points increase (from 50 percent to 62 percent) in Howard's approval ratings. In these two specific cases, satisfaction with the prime minister seem to have been driven simply from support for a policy that would solve a major public safety issue.

In Britain, the successful devolution referenda in Wales and Scotland in 1997 led to a 10 points increase (from 65 percent to 75 percent) in public approval of PM Tony Blair, and the Good Friday Agreement (signed on April 10, 1998) that ended the Troubles in Northern Ireland led to a 6 points increase in Blair's approval rating (from 62 percent to 68 percent). While a closer look into each of these two events is required in order to grasp their effect on the public in Britain, a reasonable speculation is that in both cases the popularity of the prime minister increased in response to policies that, while defusing major sources of conflict and tension, secured the integrity of the United Kingdom.

Despite the still quite limited scope of the current investigation that examined rally periods in four countries, the novel argument made in this article should be applicable to a wider range of cases. Indeed, recent studies about certain rally-round-the-flag periods in countries than were not included in my investigation—such as France (Georgarakis) and Russia (Yudina 2015)—commonly point to concerns about the nation's symbolic value as a primary motivation for rallying around the flag.

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