

What is the Mechanism Underlying Audience Costs?

Incompetence, Belligerence, and Inconsistency

Online Appendix

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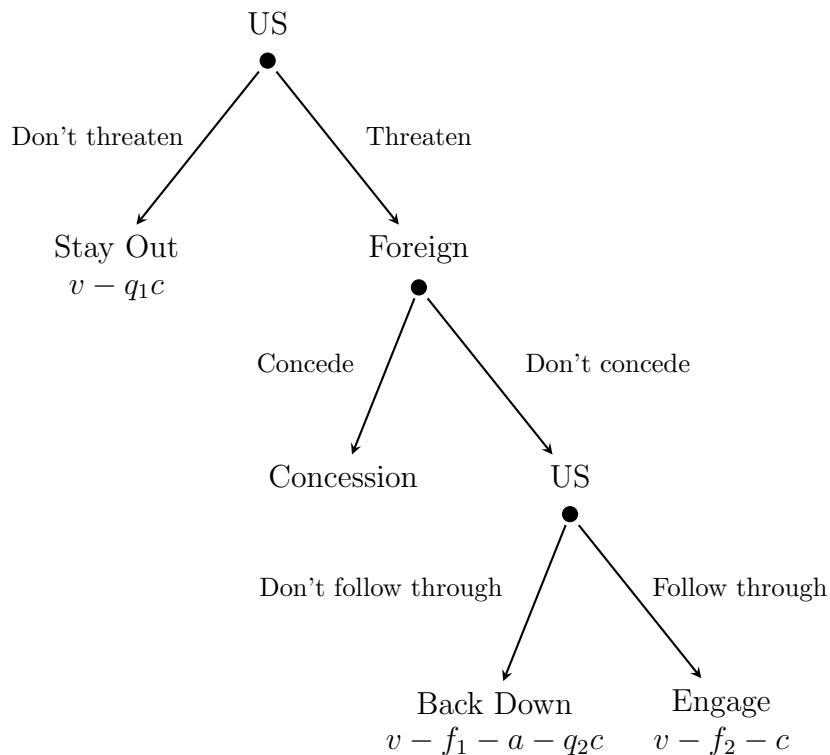
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A Deriving Audience Cost Payoffs

In this appendix, we describe in detail how we derive the payoffs for the formalization and game tree in the paper. We begin by revisiting the game tree (Figure ?? in the body of the paper) and each parameter and then breaking down the calculations in four parts: (1) audience costs, (2) incompetence costs, (3) belligerence costs, and (4) inconsistency costs. We show how we derive each equation in the body of the paper.

Figure 1: Game tree showing the logic of our argument.



v = approval rating when invading country takes over neighbor

a = reputational cost from backing down

f_1 = approval cost of aggression

f_2 = approval cost of military aggression

q_1 = proportion of voters who believe engagement would succeed (no threat)

q_2 = proportion of voters who believe engagement would succeed (threat)

c = approval cost of not achieving preferred policy outcome relative to priors

A.1 Audience Costs

We can calculate audience costs by subtracting payoffs from staying out from backing down:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Audience Costs} &= \text{Back Down} - \text{Stay Out} \\ \text{Audience Costs} &= v - f_1 - a - q_2c - (v - q_1c) \\ \text{Audience Costs} &= v - f_1 - a - q_2c - v + q_1c \\ \text{Audience Costs} &= -f_1 - a - q_2c + q_1c\end{aligned}$$

Conventional audience cost experiments, which do not include incompetence costs (c) calculate audience costs as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Audience Costs} &= \text{Back Down} - \text{Stay Out} \\ \text{Audience Costs} &= v - f_1 - a - v \\ \text{Audience Costs} &= -f_1 - a\end{aligned}$$

A.2 Incompetence Costs

We define incompetence costs as the difference between the payoffs from a failed engagement and successful engagement with payoffs $v - f_2$:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Incompetence Costs} &= \text{Engage and Fail} - \text{Engage and Succeed} \\ \text{Incompetence Costs} &= v - f_2 - c - (v - f_2) \\ \text{Incompetence Costs} &= v - f_2 - c - v + f_2 \\ \text{Incompetence Costs} &= -c\end{aligned}$$

However, we can alternatively define incompetence costs as the difference between a leader that stays out when all voters believe that a military engagement will succeed ($q_1 = 1$) and no voters believe that a military engagement will succeed ($q_1 = 0$):

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Incompetence Costs} &= v - 1c - (v - 0c) \\ \text{Incompetence Costs} &= v - c - v \\ \text{Incompetence Costs} &= -c\end{aligned}$$

A.3 Belligerence Costs

Belligerence costs are calculated by holding constant inconsistency and subtracting payoffs when staying out from those when engaging. The only cost that remains is the cost of making a threat (from engaging). Specifically, Kertzer and Brutger (2016) calculate belligerence costs as follows:

$$\text{Belligerence Costs} = \text{Engage} - \text{Stay Out}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Belligerence Costs} &= \text{Engage} - \text{Stay Out} \\ \text{Belligerence Costs} &= v - f_2 - c - (v - q_1c) \\ \text{Belligerence Costs} &= v - f_2 - c - v + q_1c \\ \text{Belligerence Costs} &= -f_2 - c + q_1c\end{aligned}$$

Kertzer and Brutger argue that belligerence costs equals $-f$. For $-f$ to equal $-f_2$, the term $-c + q_1c = 0$. Under what conditions does this hold?

$$\begin{aligned}0 &= -c + q_1c \\ c &= q_1c \\ q_1 &= 1\end{aligned}$$

A.4 Inconsistency Costs

Inconsistency costs are calculated by holding constant belligerence (making a threat) and subtracting payoffs when backing down from those when engaging. As a result, the only remaining cost in the calculation is the cost of inconsistency from making a threat and backing down. Specifically, Kertzer and Brutger (2016) calculate inconsistency costs as follows:

$$\text{Inconsistency Costs} = \text{Back Down} - \text{Engage}$$

Incorporating incompetence costs means the following calculation:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Inconsistency Costs} &= \text{Back Down} - \text{Engage} \\ \text{Inconsistency Costs} &= v - f_1 - a - q_2c - (v - f_2 - c) \\ \text{Inconsistency Costs} &= v - f_1 - a - q_2c - v + f_2 + c \\ \text{Inconsistency Costs} &= -f_1 + f_2 - a - q_2c + c \end{aligned}$$

Kertzer and Brutger find that inconsistency costs are $-a$. This assumes that $f_1 = f_2$ or that approval costs from making a threat are equal to those when authorizing a military intervention as well as that $c = 0$ or that there is not competence cost.

If we assume that $f_1 = f_2$, we have the following calculation for inconsistency costs:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Inconsistency Costs} &= -a - q_2c + c \\ \text{Inconsistency Costs} &= -a - c(q_2 + 1) \\ \text{Inconsistency Costs} &= -a + c(1 - q_2) \end{aligned}$$

In order to arrive at the same estimate as Kertzer and Brutger, $-q_2c + c = 0$. Under what conditions does this hold?

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &= -q_2c + c \\ 0 &= -q_2c + c \\ q_2c &= c \\ q_2 &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

Similar to belligerence costs, inconsistency costs are correctly estimated when the the proportion of voters who believe that a military engagement will succeed if a threat is made equals 1.

B Alternative Theoretical Frameworks

In this appendix, we present two alternative theoretical frameworks that introduces a successful military engagement as an outcome.

B.1 Probabilistic Model of Engagement Success

In this appendix, we describe in detail how we derive the payoffs for the formalization and game tree in the paper. We begin by introducing a new game tree (Figure 2) and each parameter and then breaking down the calculations in four parts: (1) audience costs, (2) incompetence costs, (3) belligerence costs, and (4) inconsistency costs. We show how we derive each equation in the body of the paper.

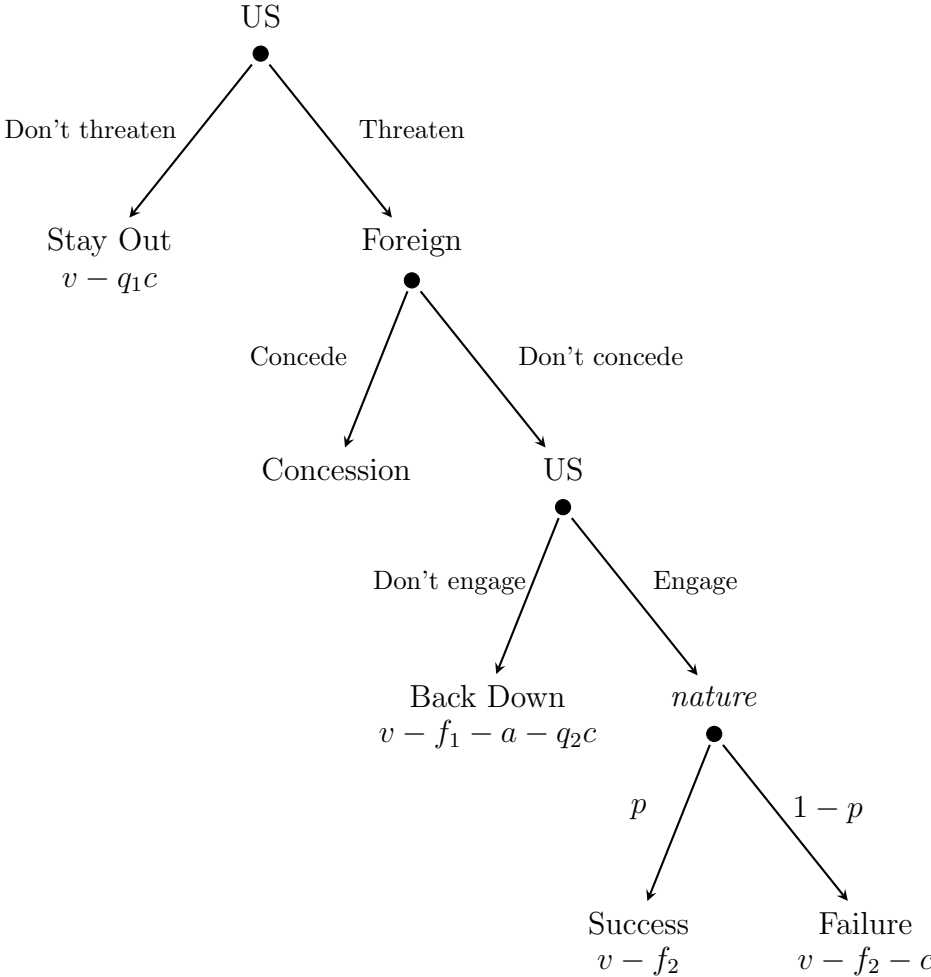


Figure 2: Game tree showing the logic of our argument.

v = approval rating when invading country takes over neighbor
 a = reputational cost from backing down
 f_1 = approval cost of aggression
 f_2 = approval cost of military aggression
 q_1 = proportion of voters who believe engagement would succeed (no threat)
 q_2 = proportion of voters who believe engagement would succeed (threat)
 p = probability that military engagement will succeed
 $1 - p$ = probability that military engagement will fail
 c = approval cost of not achieving preferred policy outcome relative to priors

B.1.1 Audience Costs

We can calculate audience costs by subtracting payoffs from staying out from backing down:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Audience Costs} &= \text{Back Down} - \text{Stay Out} \\
 \text{Audience Costs} &= v - f_1 - a - q_2c - (v - q_1c) \\
 \text{Audience Costs} &= v - f_1 - a - q_2c - v + q_1c \\
 \text{Audience Costs} &= -f_1 - a - q_2c + q_1c
 \end{aligned}$$

Conventional audience cost experiments, which do not include incompetence costs (c) calculate audience costs as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Audience Costs} &= \text{Back Down} - \text{Stay Out} \\
 \text{Audience Costs} &= v - f_1 - a - v \\
 \text{Audience Costs} &= -f_1 - a
 \end{aligned}$$

B.1.2 Incompetence Costs

We define incompetence costs as the difference between the payoffs from a failed engagement and successful engagement:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Incompetence Costs} &= \text{Engage and Fail} - \text{Engage and Succeed} \\ \text{Incompetence Costs} &= v - f_2 - c - (v - f_2) \\ \text{Incompetence Costs} &= v - f_2 - c - v + f_2 \\ \text{Incompetence Costs} &= -c \end{aligned}$$

However, we can alternatively define incompetence costs as the difference between a leader that stays out when all voters believe that a military engagement will succeed ($q_1 = 1$) and no voters believe that a military engagement will succeed ($q_1 = 0$):

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Incompetence Costs} &= v - 1c - (v - 0c) \\ \text{Incompetence Costs} &= v - c - v \\ \text{Incompetence Costs} &= -c \end{aligned}$$

B.1.3 Belligerence Costs

Belligerence costs are calculated by holding constant inconsistency and subtracting payoffs when staying out from those when engaging. The only cost that remains is the cost of making a threat (from engaging). Specifically, Kertzer and Brutger (2016) calculate belligerence costs as follows:

$$\text{Belligerence Costs} = \text{Engage} - \text{Stay Out}$$

In addition to adding the competence cost term, we add a branch where nature assigns with probability p the probability that the engagement succeeds, giving the following:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Belligerence Costs} &= p(\text{Engage and Succeed}) + (1 - p)(\text{Engage and Fail}) - \text{Stay Out} \\ \text{Belligerence Costs} &= p(v - f_2) + (1 - p)(v - f_2 - c) - (v - q_1c) \\ \text{Belligerence Costs} &= pv - pf_2 + v - f_2 - c - pv + pf_2 + pc - v + q_1c \\ \text{Belligerence Costs} &= -f_2 - c + pc + q_1c \\ \text{Belligerence Costs} &= -f_2 + c(-1 + p + q_1) \end{aligned}$$

Kertzer and Brutger implicitly assume that the military engagement will be a failure

since in their “engage” scenario, the US intervention fails to bring about a different outcome than it would had the US stayed out (invader takes over neighboring country). And so, we model a successful outcome with payoff v and model the payoff of an engagement that fails to stop the invasion with $v - c$. Note that in all three scenarios where the invader takes over the neighboring country, the president is assessed a smaller payoff because a competence cost term (q_1c , q_2c , or c). We also have nature assign a probability p to whether the engagement succeeds or not.

Kertzer and Brutger argue that belligerence costs equals $-f$. For $-f$ to equal $-f_2$, the term $-c + pc + q_1c = 0$. Under what conditions does this hold?

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &= -c + pc + q_1c \\ c &= pc + q_1c \\ c &= c(p + q_1) \\ 1 &= p + q_1 \end{aligned}$$

In other words, belligerence costs are correctly estimated when the sum of the proportion of voters who believe that a military engagement will succeed if no threat is made and the probability that the country will succeed in a military engagement equals 1. In a country such as the United States, both of these quantities are likely to approach 1, meaning that it is likely that the traditional belligerence cost estimates overestimating the size of belligerence costs because they do not include the competence cost term ($c(-1 + p + q_1)$).

B.1.4 Inconsistency Costs

Inconsistency costs are calculated by holding constant belligerence (making a threat) and subtracting payoffs when backing down from those when engaging. As a result, the only remaining cost in the calculation is the cost of inconsistency from making a threat and backing down. Specifically, Kertzer and Brutger (2016) calculate inconsistency costs as follows:

$$\text{Inconsistency Costs} = \text{Back Down} - \text{Engage}$$

In addition to adding the competence cost term, we add a branch where nature assigns with probability p the probability that the engagement succeeds, giving the following:

$$\text{Inconsistency Costs} = \text{Back Down} - (p(\text{Engage and Succeed}) + (1 - p)(\text{Engage and Fail}))$$

$$\text{Inconsistency Costs} = v - f_1 - a - q_2c - (p(v - f_2) + (1 - p)(v - f_2 - c))$$

$$\text{Inconsistency Costs} = v - f_1 - a - q_2c - (pv - pf_2 + v - f_2 - c - pv + pf_2 + pc)$$

$$\text{Inconsistency Costs} = v - f_1 - a - q_2c - (v - f_2 - c + pc)$$

$$\text{Inconsistency Costs} = v - f_1 - a - q_2c - v + f_2 + c - pc$$

$$\text{Inconsistency Costs} = f_2 - f_1 - a - q_2c + c - pc$$

Kertzer and Brutger find that inconsistency costs are $-a$. This assumes that $f_1 = f_2$ or that approval costs from making a threat are equal to those when authorizing a military intervention as well as that $c = 0$ or that there is not competence cost.

If we assume that $f_1 = f_2$, we have the following calculation for inconsistency costs:

$$\text{Inconsistency Costs} = -a - q_2c + c - pc$$

In order to arrive at the same estimate as Kertzer and Brutger, $-q_2c + c - pc = 0$. Under what conditions does this hold?

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &= -q_2c + c - pc \\ -c &= -q_2c - pc \\ c &= q_2c + pc \\ 1 &= p + q_2 \end{aligned}$$

Similar to belligerence costs, inconsistency costs are correctly estimated when the sum of the proportion of voters who believe that a military engagement will succeed if a threat is made and the probability that the country will succeed in a military engagement equals 1.

B.2 Payoff for Engagement Success

In the second alternative framework, we change the payoff for the engage and succeed condition, which we introduce in the first alternative framework. We add the parameter k , a constant payoff for engaging in a military intervention and succeeding. As we state in the paper, we do not believe that this term is necessary since the c term (competence) captures any variance in payoffs due to outcomes. Nonetheless, one might argue that there should be an additional payoff from succeeding in a military intervention. However, as we show here, this does not change the substantive interpretation of our theoretical framework. In actuality, it merely amplifies the magnitude of the effects we discuss in the paper: compe-

tency costs are larger and belligerence costs are even smaller relative to inconsistency costs. For this reason, we do not discuss this complication in the body of the paper but keep the discussion to the appendix. The modified game tree can be seen in Figure 3 below. They payoffs remain the same as above (with the exception of k).

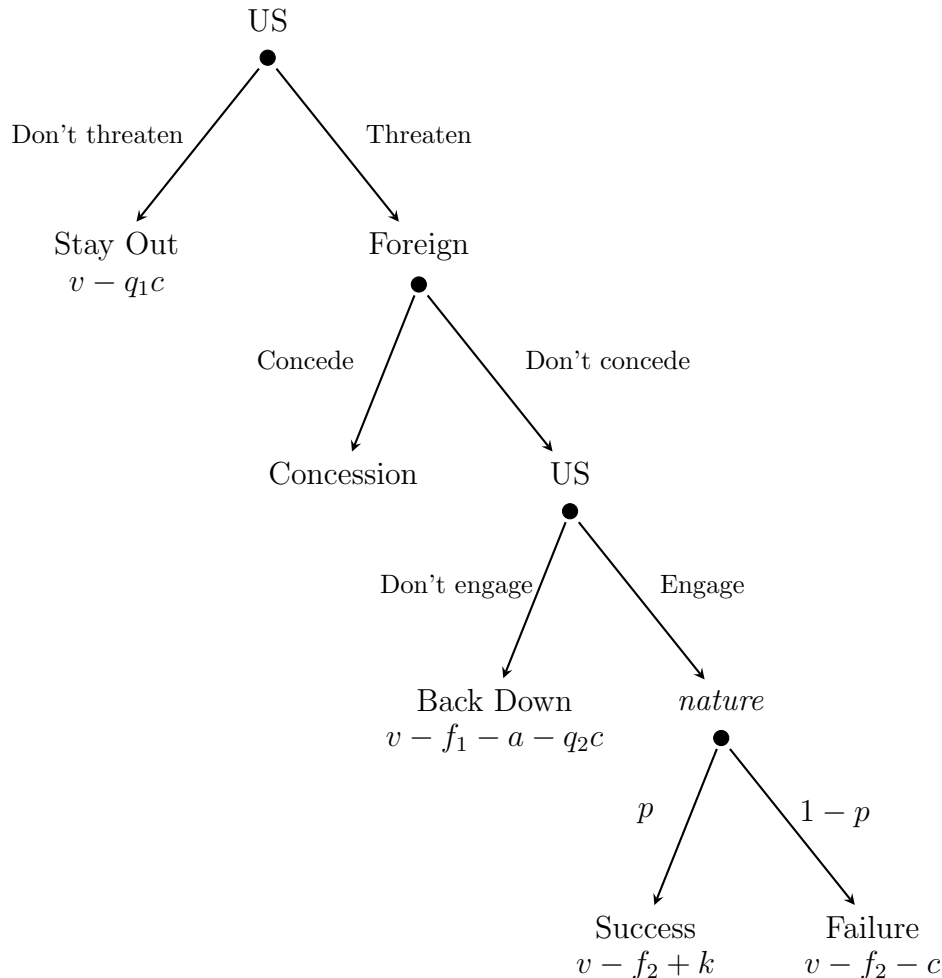


Figure 3: Game tree showing the logic of our argument (with added k payoff for engage and succeed outcome).

Since audience costs are not affected, we discuss only the three component costs: competence, belligerence, and inconsistency. Table 1 summarizes the differences in the costs.

B.2.1 Incompetence Costs

As before, we define incompetence costs as the difference between the payoffs from a failed engagement and successful engagement (now with k):

Table 1: Component Costs and Payoffs from Military Success (k)

	No k parameter	With k parameter
Incompetence Costs	$-c$	$-c - k$
Belligerence Costs	$-f_2 + c(-1 + p + q_1)$	$pk - f_2 + c(-1 + p + q_1)$
Inconsistency Costs	$f_2 - f_1 - a - q_2c + c - pc$	$f_2 - f_1 - a - q_2c + c - pc - pk$

Incompetence Costs = Engage and Fail – Engage and Succeed

Incompetence Costs = $v - f_2 - c - (v - f_2 + k)$

Incompetence Costs = $v - f_2 - c - v + f_2 - k$

Incompetence Costs = $-c - k$

incompetence costs are greater by magnitude $-k$. This captures the counterfactual payoff that the leader foregoes when he or she stays out of a crisis.

B.2.2 Belligerence Costs

Belligerence costs are calculated by holding constant inconsistency and subtracting payoffs when staying out from those when engaging:

Belligerence Costs = $p(\text{Engage and Succeed}) + (1 - p)(\text{Engage and Fail}) - \text{Stay Out}$

Belligerence Costs = $p(v - f_2 + k) + (1 - p)(v - f_2 - c) - (v - q_1c)$

Belligerence Costs = $pv - pf_2 + pk + v - f_2 - c - pv + pf_2 + pc - v + q_1c$

Belligerence Costs = $pk - f_2 - c + pc + q_1c$

Belligerence Costs = $pk - f_2 + c(-1 + p + q_1)$

Thus, even though belligerence will cost the leader the same as before, with probability p , she will also gain the payoff k , making belligerence costs lower relatively speaking. This decreases further the likelihood that belligerence costs have been correctly estimated.

B.2.3 Inconsistency Costs

Inconsistency costs are calculated by holding constant belligerence (making a threat) and subtracting payoffs when backing down from those when engaging:

$$\text{Inconsistency Costs} = \text{Back Down} - (p(\text{Engage and Succeed}) + (1 - p)(\text{Engage and Fail}))$$

$$\text{Inconsistency Costs} = v - f_1 - a - q_2c - (p(v - f_2 + k) + (1 - p)(v - f_2 - c))$$

$$\text{Inconsistency Costs} = v - f_1 - a - q_2c - (pv - pf_2 + pk + v - f_2 - c - pv + pf_2 + pc)$$

$$\text{Inconsistency Costs} = v - f_1 - a - q_2c - (v - f_2 - c + pc + pk)$$

$$\text{Inconsistency Costs} = v - f_1 - a - q_2c - v + f_2 + c - pc - pk$$

$$\text{Inconsistency Costs} = f_2 - f_1 - a - q_2c + c - pc - pk$$

Inconsistency costs are high as before. However, they would be even higher (by magnitude pk) if we model the payoff from engaging and succeeding. As with belligerence costs, this decreases further the likelihood that inconsistency costs and, by extension, the ratio of belligerence to inconsistency costs, has been correctly estimated.

C Additional Experiment: Placebo Test

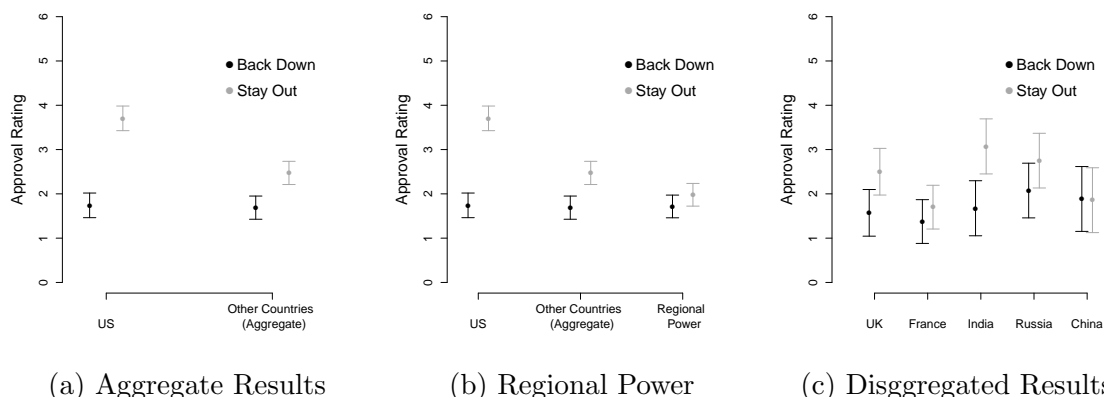
Fearon’s original model (1994) makes clear that audience costs arise due to concern with the country’s international standing: backing down from a public threat is thought to diminish the nation’s reputation. Standard empirical approaches based on Tomz’s experimental framework claim to estimate audience costs as inconsistency costs arising from engaging the national honor. We demonstrate that concern over inconsistency does generate audience costs, but this is not due to the perceived negative reputational effects of inconsistent behavior on the national honor.

Using Tomz’s experimental set-up, audience costs are measured by subtracting the average approval rating of a leader who stays out of a conflict from the average approval rating of a leader who makes a threat and backs down. According to Fearon’s theory, approval after backing down should be lower than approval after staying out, so a large negative number would indicate large audience costs. Empirical tests of audience cost theory to date have primarily focused on the difference between these two conditions, which is thought to capture the audience’s reaction to the leader’s inconsistency. But is concern over inconsistency really due to an overarching concern with preserving the country’s international reputation, or “honor,” as the theory claims?

To test this claim, we embedded a placebo test into an online survey conducted in the spring of 2013 on a national sample of 748 American respondents. We randomly assigned respondents to one of three types of vignettes: (1) standard audience cost vignettes with the U.S. President as leader; (2) audience cost vignette in which the leader is from a foreign state, which we name; (3) audience cost vignette in which the leader is from an unnamed “regional power.” We ask respondents to evaluate the leader’s handling of the crisis following the vignette. Results are measured on a seven-point approval rating scale, where 0 indicates low approval and 6 indicates high approval.

This experiment is a placebo test for audience cost theory because if the mechanism underlying audience costs is that the crisis “engages the national honor” (Fearon 1994, 580), then respondents should only punish leader inconsistency if it damages the national honor. However, if respondents have no reason to care about the country’s reputation (as in vignettes 2 and 3 in our experiment), they should not be prone to punish the leader’s inconsistent behavior. Thus, we expect to find a null result in a placebo test in which U.S. respondents are asked to evaluate the actions of a foreign leader (including leaders of countries hostile to the U.S.). Indeed, respondents who identify as American should approve of leader inconsistency if that behavior damages the country’s reputation and the country is an enemy of the United States. Moreover, the expected decline in the size of audience costs in our placebo test compared to Tomz’s standard treatment should be driven by the difference in approval ratings in the back down condition since it is only when the leader backs down that the national honor is clearly engaged. In short, according to audience cost theory, we should expect to see two patterns as a result of our placebo test. First, American respondents should approve less of a U.S. leader who backs down compared to a foreign leader who backs down. Second, we should find smaller (or no) audience costs when American respondents are asked to evaluate a foreign leader.

Figure 4: Results from Supplemental Experiment (Placebo Test). 95% Confidence Intervals.



We conduct three analyses of the experimental data. First, we begin by comparing respondents’ approval when they are told that the leader is from the United States compared to a set of five different countries—the United Kingdom, France, India, Russia, and China. As Figure 4a shows, audience costs decrease substantially in the placebo treatments when respondents are told that the leader is from a different country.¹ This suggests that the leader’s nationality does matter in assessing the leader’s handling of the crisis. However, we still find evidence of statistically significant audience costs even when the audience is responding to the actions of a foreign leader. Moreover, contrary to the theory’s predictions, the decline in audience costs in reference to foreign leaders’ actions is driven almost entirely by a drop in approval ratings in the stay out condition rather than the back down condition. There is barely any downward movement in approval ratings due to backing down and the approval rate in the back down condition is similar across all treatments.² The fact that the identity of the leader does not eliminate audience costs when voters are asked to evaluate a foreign leader’s behavior; and the uniformity of responses to the back down condition regardless of whether the leader is foreign or American both suggest that preference for consistent decision-making is independent of any reasonable concern with how inconsistency affects the national honor or the respondents’ own country’s relative international standing.

Might respondents in our placebo test be evaluating foreign leaders as they would if they were citizens of the country in question? We established via open-ended questions in the survey that respondents are not placing themselves in the position of a foreign citizen evaluating his leader and they, are in fact, responding as American citizens assessing a foreign leader. The fact that we do find a decline in audience costs relative to the original (Tomz)

¹In the presentation of these findings, we pool together four types of back down scenarios, which vary the degree to which the leader engages before backing down.

²We are not concerned about potential floor effects in approval for backing down for two reasons. First, approval ratings vary on a scale from 0 to 6, so with an average around 1.70, we should be able to detect lower approval ratings. Second, the standard error for approval ratings when backing down in the three treatment conditions is 0.14, 0.13, 0.13, allowing us to conclude with a high degree of confidence that the vast majority of respondents evaluated the leaders around the 1.70 level.

version is also consistent with this interpretation.³

The results of the first analysis suggest that disapproval of the leader’s inconsistency does not have to suggest concern over the national honor or reputation. Even though previous experimental studies found evidence that audience costs exist, they have not proven the theoretical claim that respondents are concerned about the reputational consequences of their leaders’ actions. If reputation is not the mechanism, then what is? To investigate this question further, our second analysis compares the results from the United States and country-specific treatments to an additional set of treatments in which the respondents are told that the leader comes from an unnamed “regional power” (see Figure 4b). In this case, we find no audience costs, seemingly at odds with our previous finding that audience costs exist when we named a specific country. However, we do still find, contrary to expectations from audience cost theory, that the finding is driven by changes in the approval of staying out, not by changes in the approval of backing down.

To uncover why this may be the case, we disaggregate the results from the country-specific treatment by country in our third analysis (see Figure 4c). These results suggest that reaction to leaders from two American allies—the United Kingdom and India—drive the aggregate audience costs findings in Figure 4a. Moreover, the results also suggest that Russia and China, likely viewed as “regional powers” by respondents, account for the null audience cost finding in the regional power treatment (Figure 4b). We also present results from France, an idiosyncratic case (an ally disliked by many Americans, especially in relation to foreign policy).⁴

A likely explanation of the country-specific findings is that respondents are reacting to norms or expectations about desirable foreign policy actions by allies as opposed to adversaries. They approve of close allies’ greater engagement; and we contend that assessments of leader competence drive the high approval ratings for allies in the stay out condition. Respondents do not have strong preferences about adversaries or about the competence of adversaries’ leaders. They might prefer it if adversaries’ leaders stay out and be indifferent between them staying out and backing down—they would disapprove of them either way. Next, we present results from an experiment that builds on the intuition derived from these findings to show that concern over leader competence is paramount for domestic audiences.

³See Supplement F for answers to the open-ended questions.

⁴French favorability dropped to 34% among Americans in the mid-2000s amidst French opposition to American intervention in Iraq (Gallup).

D Experimental Protocols

D.1 Protocol for Experiment 1: Respondent Beliefs and Incompetence Costs

Outline of the Experiment

1. Consent Page
2. Introduction
3. Background Questions
4. Vignette
5. Pre-Treatment Assessment of Beliefs
6. Treatments
7. Summary
8. Post-Treatment Assessment of Beliefs
9. Retention Check
10. Attentiveness Check
11. Approval Questions
12. Follow-up Questions
13. Demographic Question

We list each component of the experiment below.⁵

Randomization

Respondents are assigned to one of four Treatments:

1. Stay Out (Control in Experiment 1)
2. Back Down (Treatment 1 in Experiment 1)
3. Engage and Succeed
4. Engage and Fail

⁵Because of space considerations, we do not list the consent page, the introduction, the background questions (e.g., military background of respondents), retention check, attentiveness check, follow-up questions, and demographic questions. Please contact us if you wish to see any of these questions.

Vignette

A country sent its military to take over a neighboring country. The attacking country was led by a [dictator, who invaded OR democratically elected government, which invaded] [to get more power and resources OR because of a longstanding historical feud.] The attacking country had a [strong military, so it would OR weak military, so it would not] have taken a major effort for the United States to help push them out. A victory by the attacking country would [hurt OR not affect] the safety and economy of the United States.

Pre-treatment assessment of beliefs

Because we were interested in seeing how treatment affected beliefs in the Back Down and Stay Out groups without having the pre-treatment assessment of beliefs prime or affect the post-treatment measurement of beliefs, we only provided respondents in the Engage and Fail and Engage and Succeed groups questions about beliefs about intervention pre-treatment.

In the scenario you just read, the US President will choose among a series of policy alternatives in response to the invasion of a country by its neighbor. We will now ask you a series of questions about the President's options.

1. If the President chooses to send U.S. military forces to stop the invasion, how likely do you think it is that the invasion will be stopped?
2. How important is it to you that the country invading its neighbor be stopped?
3. How would you prefer the President to act in this crisis? Please rank-order your preferred actions, from most preferred to least preferred.
 - (a) President stays out of crisis entirely
 - (b) President sends diplomats to negotiate with the two countries' leaders
 - (c) President imposes economic sanctions on the invading country
 - (d) President sends U.S. military to stop the invasion
 - (e) President sends U.S. military in a coalition with U.S. allies
 - (f) President authorizes the United Nations to intervene

Treatments

Respondents are randomly assigned to one of four treatments:

- **Stay Out Treatment:** The President said the United States would stay out of the conflict. The attacking country continued to invade. In the end, the President did not send troops, and the attacking country took over 20% of its neighbor's territory.

- **Back Down Treatment:** The President said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders. The attacking country continued to invade. In the end, the President did not send troops, and the attacking country took over 20% of its neighbor's territory.
- **Engage and Fail Treatment:** The President said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders. The attacking country continued to invade. The President sent troops to the region to engage with the attacking country, but failed to stop the invasion. Although no Americans died in the operation, the American intervention failed and in the end the attacking country took over 20% of its neighbor's territory.
- **Engage and Succeed Treatment:** The President said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders. The attacking country continued to invade. The President sent troops to the region to engage with the attacking country and was successful in stopping the invasion. Moreover, no Americans died in the operation and in the end the attacking country did not take over any of its neighbor's territory.

Summary

- To summarize:
 - The attacking country had a [strong OR weak] military, was led by a [dictator OR democratically elected government], and invaded [to get more power and resources OR because of a longstanding historical feud].
 - A successful invasion would [hurt OR not affect] the safety and economy of the United States

Respondents receive additional bullet points, depending on the treatment to which they were assigned:

- If stay out, include these additional bullet points
 - The President said the United States would stay out of the conflict.
 - The attacking country continued to invade.
 - The President did not send troops.
 - The attacking country took over 20% of its neighbor's territory.
- If back down, include these additional bullet points
 - The President said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders.
 - The attacking country continued to invade.
 - The President did not send troops.

- The attacking country took over 20% of its neighbor’s territory.
- If engage and fail, include these additional bullet points
 - The President said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders.
 - The attacking country continued to invade.
 - The President sent troops to stop the invasion.
 - The President failed to stop the invasion
 - The attacking country took over 20% of its neighbor’s territory.
- If engage and succeed, include these additional bullet points
 - The President said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders.
 - The attacking country continued to invade.
 - The President sent troops to stop the invasion.
 - The President succeeded in stopping the invasion
 - The attacking country did not take over any of its neighbor’s territory.

Post-treatment assessment of beliefs

Because we were interested in seeing how treatment affected beliefs in the Back Down and Stay Out groups without having the pre-treatment assessment of beliefs prime or affect the post-treatment measurement of beliefs, we only provided respondents in these two groups questions about beliefs about intervention post-treatment.

In the scenario you just read, the US President chose among a series of policy alternatives in response to the invasion of a country by its neighbor. We will now ask you a series of questions about the President’s options.

1. If the President had chosen to send U.S. military forces to stop the invasion, how likely do you think it is that the invasion would have been stopped?
2. How important is it to you that the country invading its neighbor be stopped?
3. How would you have preferred the President to act in this crisis? Please rank-order your preferred actions, from most preferred to least preferred.
 - (a) President stays out of crisis entirely
 - (b) President sends diplomats to negotiate with the two countries’ leaders
 - (c) President imposes economic sanctions on the invading country
 - (d) President sends U.S. military to stop the invasion
 - (e) President sends U.S. military in a coalition with U.S. allies
 - (f) President authorizes the United Nations to intervene

Approval Questions

All respondents assigned to US experiment receive the following questions about approval:

- Do you approve, disapprove, or neither approve nor disapprove of the way the U.S. president handled the situation?
 - Approve
 - Disapprove
 - Neither
- Do you approve very strongly, or only somewhat? [If approve]
 - Approve very strongly
 - Approve only somewhat
- Do you disapprove very strongly, or only somewhat? [If disapprove]
 - Disapprove very strongly
 - Disapprove only somewhat
- Do you lean toward approving of the way the U.S. president handled the situation, lean toward disapproving, or don't you lean either way? [If neither]
 - Lean toward approving
 - Lean toward disapproving
 - Don't lean either way
- In your words, why did you feel the way that you did about the U.S. president's actions in the hypothetical scenario that you were presented (limit 100 words)?

D.2 Protocol for Experiment 2: Design-Based Corrective

Outline of the Experiment

1. Consent Page
2. Introduction
3. Background Questions
4. Vignette
5. Treatments
6. Summary
7. Post-Treatment Assessment of Beliefs

8. Retention Check
9. Attentiveness Check
10. Approval Questions
11. Demographic Question

We list each component of the experiment below.⁶

Randomization

Respondents are assigned to one of six experimental cells, based upon a 2x3 factorial design that involves a Treatment and an Information Prime:

1. Stay Out (no additional information)
2. Back Down (no additional information)
3. Stay Out (low likelihood of success prime)
4. Back Down (low likelihood of success prime)
5. Stay Out (high likelihood of success prime)
6. Back Down (high likelihood of success prime)

Vignette

A country sent its military to take over a neighboring country. The attacking country was led by a [dictator, who invaded OR democratically elected government, which invaded] [to get more power and resources OR because of a longstanding historical feud.] The attacking country had a [strong military, so it would OR weak military, so it would not] have taken a major effort for the United States to help push them out.

Treatments

Respondents are randomly assigned to one of two treatments:

- **Stay Out Treatment:** The President said the United States would stay out of the conflict. The attacking country continued to invade. In the end, the President did not send troops, and the attacking country took over 20% of its neighbor's territory.
- **Back Down Treatment:** The President said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders. The attacking country continued to invade. In the end, the President did not send troops, and the attacking country took over 20% of its neighbor's territory.

⁶Because of space considerations, we do not list the consent page, the background questions (e.g., military background of respondents), retention check, attentiveness check, and demographic questions. Please contact us if you wish to see any of these questions.

Information Prime

Respondents also received an additional paragraph of text as an informational prime. If they were assigned no prime, they would receive no additional information and would instead be presented with a conventional audience cost experiment.

If assigned to low likelihood of success prime:

- The President's military advisors in the Pentagon believe that due to the military strength of the invading country, an American military operation is unlikely to stop the invasion. They estimate that any such military operation would result in more than 100 American military deaths.

If assigned to high likelihood of success prime:

- The President's military advisors in the Pentagon believe that due to the military weakness of the invading country, an American military operation is likely to stop the invasion. They estimate that any such military operation would not result in any American military deaths.

Summary

- To summarize:
 - The attacking country had a [strong OR weak] military, was led by a [dictator OR democratically elected government], and invaded [to get more power and resources OR because of a longstanding historical feud].

Respondents receive additional bullet points, depending on the treatment to which they were assigned:

- If stay out, include these additional bullet points
 - The President said the United States would stay out of the conflict.
 - The attacking country continued to invade.
 - The President did not send troops.
 - The attacking country took over 20% of its neighbor's territory.
- If back down, include these additional bullet points
 - The President said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders.
 - The attacking country continued to invade.
 - The President did not send troops.
 - The attacking country took over 20% of its neighbor's territory.

Respondents receive additional bullet points, depending on the information prime to which they were assigned:

Approval Questions

All respondents assigned to the experiment receive the following questions about approval:

- Do you approve, disapprove, or neither approve nor disapprove of the way the U.S. president handled the situation?
 - Approve
 - Disapprove
 - Neither
- Do you approve very strongly, or only somewhat? [If approve]
 - Approve very strongly
 - Approve only somewhat
- Do you disapprove very strongly, or only somewhat? [If disapprove]
 - Disapprove very strongly
 - Disapprove only somewhat
- Do you lean toward approving of the way the U.S. president handled the situation, lean toward disapproving, or don't you lean either way? [If neither]
 - Lean toward approving
 - Lean toward disapproving
 - Don't lean either way
- In your words, why did you feel the way that you did about the U.S. president's actions in the hypothetical scenario that you were presented (limit 100 words)?

D.3 Protocol for Additional Experiment: Placebo Test

Outline of the Experiment

1. Consent Page
2. Introduction
3. Background Questions
4. Vignette
5. Control/Treatment 1/Treatment 2/Treatment 3/Treatment 4
6. Summary
7. Approval Questions

8. Retention Check
9. Attentiveness Check
10. Demographic Question

We list each component of the experiment below.⁷

Randomization

Each respondent is randomly assigned to receive US experiment, country-specific experiment, OR regional power experiment.

Introduction

- Respondents assigned to US experiment receive the following introduction:
The following questions are about U.S. relations with other countries around the world. You will read about a situation our country has faced many times in the past and will probably face again. Different leaders have handled the situation in different ways. We will describe one approach U.S. leaders have taken, and ask whether you approve or disapprove.
- Respondents assigned to country-specific experiment receive the following introduction:
The following questions are about international relations around the world. You will read about a situation countries have faced many times in the past and will probably face again. Leaders of different countries have handled the situation in different ways. We will describe one approach foreign leaders have taken, and ask whether you approve or disapprove.
- Respondents assigned to regional power experiment receive the following introduction:
The following questions are about international relations around the world. You will read about a situation countries have faced many times in the past and will probably face again. Leaders of different countries have handled the situation in different ways. We will describe one approach foreign leaders have taken, and ask whether you approve or disapprove.

Vignette

- Respondents assigned to US experiment receive the following vignette:
A country sent its military to take over a neighboring country. The attacking country was led by a [dictator, who invaded OR democratically elected government, which

⁷Because of space considerations, we do not list the consent page, the introduction, the background questions (e.g., military background of respondents), retention check, attentiveness check, and demographic questions. Please contact us if you wish to see any of these questions.

invaded] [to get more power and resources OR because of a longstanding historical feud.] The attacking country had a [strong military, so it would OR weak military, so it would not] have taken a major effort for the United States to help push them out. A victory by the attacking country would [hurt OR not affect] the safety and economy of the United States.

- Respondents assigned to country-specific experiment receive the following vignette:

A country sent its military to take over a neighboring country. The attacking country was led by a [dictator, who invaded OR democratically elected government, which invaded] [to get more power and resources OR because of a longstanding historical feud.] The attacking country had a [strong military, so it would OR weak military, so it would not] have taken a major effort for [Britain OR France OR India OR Russia OR China] to help push them out. A victory by the attacking country would [hurt OR not affect] the safety and economy of [Britain OR France OR India OR Russia OR China].

- Respondents assigned to regional power experiment receive the following vignette:

A country sent its military to take over a neighboring country. The attacking country was led by a [dictator, who invaded OR democratically elected government, which invaded] [to get more power and resources OR because of a longstanding historical feud.] The attacking country had a [strong military, so it would OR weak military, so it would not] have taken a major effort for another country in the region to help push them out. A victory by the attacking country would [hurt OR not affect] the safety and economy of its other neighbors.

Treatments

- Respondents assigned to US experiment are randomly assigned to receive Control, Treatment 1, Treatment 2, Treatment 3, OR Treatment 4.
 - Control: The U.S. president said the United States would stay out of the conflict. The attacking country continued to invade. In the end, the U.S. president did not send troops, and the attacking country took over its neighbor.
 - Treatment 1: The U.S. president said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders. The attacking country continued to invade. In the end, the U.S. president did not send troops, and the attacking country took over its neighbor.
 - Treatment 2: The U.S. president said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the region and prepared them for war. The attacking country continued to invade. In the end, the U.S. president did not send our troops into battle, and the attacking country took over its neighbor.

- Treatment 3: The U.S. president said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the region and prepared them for war. The attacking country continued to invade. The president then ordered U.S. troops to destroy one of the invader’s military bases. U.S. troops destroyed the base, and no Americans died in the operation. The invasion still continued. In the end, the U.S. president did not order more military action, and the attacking country took over its neighbor.
 - Treatment 4: The U.S. president said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the region and prepared them for war. The attacking country continued to invade. The president then ordered U.S. troops to destroy one of the invader’s military bases. U.S. troops destroyed the base, and 20 Americans died in the operation. The invasion still continued. In the end, the U.S. president did not order more military action, and the attacking country took over its neighbor.
- Respondents assigned to country-specific experiment are randomly assigned to receive Control, Treatment 1, Treatment 2, Treatment 3, OR Treatment 4.
 - Control: The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] said [Britain OR France OR India OR Russia OR China] would stay out of the conflict. The attacking country continued to invade. In the end, the [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] did not send troops, and the attacking country took over its neighbor.
 - Treatment 1: The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] said that if the attack continued, the [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] military would push out the invaders. The attacking country continued to invade. In the end, [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] did not send troops, and the attacking country took over its neighbor.
 - Treatment 2: The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] said that if the attack continued, the [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the region and prepared them for war. The attacking country continued to invade. In the end, the [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] did not send troops, and the attacking country took over its neighbor.
 - Treatment 3: The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] said that if the attack continued, the [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] military

would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the region and prepared them for war. The [prime minister OR president OR prime minister OR president OR premier] then ordered [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] troops to destroy one of the invader's military bases. [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] troops destroyed the base, and no [British OR French OR Indians OR Russians OR Chinese] died in the operation. The invasion still continued. In the end, the [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] did not order more military action, and the attacking country took over its neighbor.

- Treatment 4: The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] said that if the attack continued, the [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the region and prepared them for war. The [prime minister OR president OR prime minister OR president OR premier] then ordered [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] troops to destroy one of the invader's military bases. [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] soldiers destroyed the base, and 20 [British OR French OR Indians OR Russians OR Chinese] died in the operation. The invasion still continued. In the end, the [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] did not order more military action, and the attacking country took over its neighbor.
- Respondents assigned to regional power experiment are randomly assigned to receive Control, Treatment 1, Treatment 2, Treatment 3, OR Treatment 4.
 - Control: The leader of a regional power said that it would stay out of the conflict. The attacking country continued to invade. In the end, the leader did not send troops, and the attacking country took over its neighbor.
 - Treatment 1: The leader of a regional power said that if the attack continued, its military would push out the invaders. The attacking country continued to invade. In the end, the leader did not send troops, and the attacking country took over its neighbor.
 - Treatment 2: The leader of a regional power said that if the attack continued, its military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the area and prepared them for war. The attacking country continued to invade. In the end, the leader did not send troops into battle, and the attacking country took over its neighbor.
 - Treatment 3: The leader of a regional power said that if the attack continued, its military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the area and prepared them for war. The attacking country continued to invade. The leader then ordered his troops to destroy one of the invader's military bases. The troops destroyed the base, and no soldiers died in the operation. The invasion still continued. In

the end, the leader did not order more military action, and the attacking country took over its neighbor.

- Treatment 4: The leader of a regional power said that if the attack continued, its military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the area and prepared them for war. The attacking country continued to invade. The leader then ordered his troops to destroy one of the invader’s military bases. The troops destroyed the base, and 20 their soldiers died in the operation. The invasion still continued. In the end, the leader did not order more military action, and the attacking country took over its neighbor.

Summary

- All respondents assigned to US experiment receive the following bullet points:

To summarize,

- The attacking country had a [strong OR weak] military, was led by a [dictator OR democratically elected government], and invaded [to get more power and resources OR because of a longstanding historical feud].
 - A successful invasion would [hurt OR not affect] the safety and economy of the United States
- Respondents assigned to US experiment receive additional bullet points, depending on whether they had been assigned to control, Treatment 1, Treatment 2, Treatment 3, OR Treatment 4:
 - If control, include these additional bullet points
 - * The U.S. president said the United States would stay out of the conflict.
 - * The attacking country continued to invade.
 - * The U.S. president did not send troops.
 - If Treatment 1, include these additional bullet points
 - * The U.S. president said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders.
 - * The attacking country continued to invade.
 - * The U.S. president did not send troops.
 - If Treatment 2, include these additional bullet points
 - * The U.S. president said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the region and prepared them for war.
 - * The attacking country continued to invade.
 - * The U.S. president did not send our troops into battle.

- If Treatment 3, include these additional bullet points
 - * The U.S. president said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the region and prepared them for war.
 - * The attacking country continued to invade.
 - * The president then ordered U.S. troops to destroy a military base.
 - * U.S. troops destroyed the base, and no Americans died.
 - * The invasion still continued.
 - * The U.S. president did not order more military action.
- If Treatment 4, include these additional bullet points
 - * The U.S. president said that if the attack continued, the U.S. military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the region and prepared them for war.
 - * The attacking country continued to invade.
 - * The president then ordered U.S. troops to destroy a military base.
 - * U.S. troops destroyed the base, and 20 Americans died.
 - * The invasion still continued.
 - * The U.S. president did not order more military action.
- Respondents assigned to country-specific experiment receive additional bullet points, depending on whether they had been assigned to control, Treatment 1, Treatment 2, Treatment 3, OR Treatment 4:

To summarize,

- The attacking country had a [strong OR weak] military, was led by a [dictator OR democratically elected government], and invaded [to get more power and resources OR because of a longstanding historical feud].
- A successful invasion would [hurt OR not affect] the safety and economy of [Britain OR France OR India OR Russia OR China]
- Respondents assigned to country-specific experiment receive additional bullet points, depending on whether they had been assigned to control, Treatment 1, Treatment 2, Treatment 3, OR Treatment 4:
 - If control, include these additional bullet points
 - * The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] said [Britain OR France OR India OR Russia OR China] would stay out of the conflict.
 - * The attacking country continued to invade.

- * The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] did not send troops.
- If Treatment 1, include these additional bullet points
 - * The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] said that if the attack continued, the [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] military would push out the invaders.
 - * The attacking country continued to invade.
 - * The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] did not send troops.
- If Treatment 2, include these additional bullet points:
 - * The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] said that if the attack continued, the [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the region and prepared them for war.
 - * The attacking country continued to invade.
 - * The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] did not send [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] troops into battle.
- If Treatment 3, include these additional bullet points:
 - * The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] said that if the attack continued, the [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the region and prepared them for war.
 - * The attacking country continued to invade.
 - * The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] then ordered [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] troops to destroy a military base.
 - * The [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] troops destroyed the base, and no [British OR French OR Indians OR Russians OR Chinese] died.
 - * The invasion still continued.
 - * The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] did not order more military action.
- If Treatment 4, include these additional bullet points

- * The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] said that if the attack continued, the [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the region and prepared them for war.
 - * The attacking country continued to invade.
 - * The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] then ordered U.S. troops to destroy a military base.
 - * The [British OR French OR Indian OR Russian OR Chinese] troops destroyed the base, and 20 [British OR French OR Indians OR Russians OR Chinese] died.
 - * The invasion still continued.
 - * The [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] did not order more military action.
- Respondents assigned to regional power experiment receive additional bullet points, depending on whether they had been assigned to control, Treatment 1, Treatment 2, Treatment 3, OR Treatment 4:
 - If control, include these additional bullet points
 - * The leader of a regional power said that it would stay out of the conflict.
 - * The attacking country continued to invade.
 - * The leader did not send troops.
 - If Treatment 1, include these additional bullet points
 - * The leader of a regional power said that if the attack continued, its military would push out the invaders.
 - * The attacking country continued to invade.
 - * The leader did not send troops.
 - If Treatment 2, include these additional bullet points
 - * The leader of a regional power said that if the attack continued, its military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the region and prepared them for war.
 - * The attacking country continued to invade.
 - * The leader did not send our troops into battle.
 - If Treatment 3, include these additional bullet points
 - * The leader of a regional power said that if the attack continued, its military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the region and prepared them for war.

- * The attacking country continued to invade.
- * The leader then ordered his troops to destroy a military base.
- * The troops destroyed the base, and no soldiers died.
- * The invasion still continued.
- * The leader did not order more military action.
- If Treatment 4, include these additional bullet points
 - * The leader of a regional power said that if the attack continued, its military would push out the invaders. He sent troops to the region and prepared them for war.
 - * The attacking country continued to invade.
 - * The leader then ordered his troops to destroy a military base.
 - * The troops destroyed the base, and 20 of their soldiers died.
 - * The invasion still continued.
 - * The leader did not order more military action.
- All respondents receive the final bullet point:
 - The attacking country took over its neighbor.

Approval Questions

- All respondents assigned to US experiment receive the following questions about approval:
 - Do you approve, disapprove, or neither approve nor disapprove of the way the U.S. president handled the situation?
 - * Approve
 - * Disapprove
 - * Neither
 - Do you approve very strongly, or only somewhat? [If approve]
 - * Approve very strongly
 - * Approve only somewhat
 - Do you disapprove very strongly, or only somewhat? [If disapprove]
 - * Disapprove very strongly
 - * Disapprove only somewhat
 - Do you lean toward approving of the way the U.S. president handled the situation, lean toward disapproving, or don't you lean either way? [If neither]
 - * Lean toward approving

- * Lean toward disapproving
 - * Don't lean either way
- In your words, why did you feel the way that you did about the U.S. president's actions in the hypothetical scenario that you were presented (limit 100 words)?
- All respondents assigned to country-specific experiment receive the following question about approval:
 - Do you approve, disapprove, or neither approve nor disapprove of the way the [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] handled the situation?
 - * Approve
 - * Disapprove
 - * Neither
 - Do you approve very strongly, or only somewhat? [If approve]
 - * Approve very strongly
 - * Approve only somewhat
 - Do you disapprove very strongly, or only somewhat? [If disapprove]
 - * Disapprove very strongly
 - * Disapprove only somewhat
 - Do you lean toward approving of the way the [British Prime Minister OR French President OR Indian Prime Minister OR Russian President OR Chinese Premier] handled the situation, lean toward disapproving, or don't you lean either way? [If neither]
 - * Lean toward approving
 - * Lean toward disapproving
 - * Don't lean either way
 - In your words, why did you feel the way that you did about the [British Prime Minister's OR French President's OR Indian Prime Minister's OR Russian President's OR Chinese Premier's] actions in the hypothetical scenario that you were presented (limit 100 words)?
- All respondents assigned to regional power experiment receive the following question about approval:
 - Do you approve, disapprove, or neither approve nor disapprove of the way the leader of the regional power handled the situation?
 - * Approve
 - * Disapprove

- * Neither
- Do you approve very strongly, or only somewhat? [If approve]
 - * Approve very strongly
 - * Approve only somewhat
- Do you disapprove very strongly, or only somewhat? [If disapprove]
 - * Disapprove very strongly
 - * Disapprove only somewhat
- Do you lean toward approving of the way the leader handled the situation, lean toward disapproving, or don't you lean either way? [If neither]
 - * Lean toward approving
 - * Lean toward disapproving
 - * Don't lean either way
- In your words, why did you feel the way that you did about the regional power leader's actions in the hypothetical scenario that you were presented (limit 100 words)?

E Sampling Methodology

All three experiments drew from online sample using Amazon Mechanical Turk. Table 2 lists summary statistics from our two experiments as well as national demographic statistic from the U.S. Census.

	U.S. Population	Experiment 1	Experiment 2
Age (median)	37.2	32	34
Male population	49.2%	51.2%	50.1%
Female population	50.8%	48.8%	49.9%
Non-Hispanic White	74.6%	74.4%	77.3%
Black	12.6%	6.7%	7.2%
Hispanic	16.3%	3.9%	4.1%
Asian	4.8%	8.4%	5.5%
No high school diploma	13.1 %	0.6%	0.3%
High school graduate	27.8%	8.1%	10.4%
Some college, no degree	21.1%	24.2%	26.22%
2-year college degree	8.1%	11.6%	11.6%
4-year college degree	18.5%	41.3%	40.0%
Post-graduate degree	11.2%	14.2%	11.5%
Income < \$25,000	15.7%	18.2%	16.8%
\$25,000-\$49,999	21.6%	29.4%	29.9%
\$50,000-\$74,999	18.8%	23.7%	26.0%
\$75,000-\$99,999	14.1%	15.0%	14.3%
\$100,000-\$149,999	16.3%	9.4%	10.9%
\$150,000-\$199,999	6.6%	2.9%	1.4%
\$200,000 or more	6.8%	1.4%	0.7%

Table 2: Summary statistics from all experiments.

F Responses to Open-Ended Questions from Placebo Experiment

In this Appendix, we provide evidence that respondents in the Additional Experiment (the placebo test) did not answer questions as if they were citizens of the country in question but, rather, answered as Americans. To do so, we present a series of responses to an open-ended question at the end of the survey about why the respondent approved or disapproved of the leader's actions.⁸ As the responses show, the respondents evaluate the leaders as foreigners, not as citizens whose national honor has been engaged. While the respondents' reasoning varied, they never indicate that their own national honor was engaged. Some respondents indicate, as we suggest in the paper, that there is a general aversion to inconsistency, though this is not the politically salient inconsistency referred to by scholars in the audience cost literature.

Respondents who received the control (stay out)

- I believe it is the PM's duty to do all he can to protect and promote the welfare of the UK. He allowed the country's economy to be damaged by the complete invasion of this country. He does get credit for following through on his word and not i
- I felt he did a good job because it is not India's job to police the rest of the world. They should worry about themselves first and the invading country did not pose a threat to India so there was no reason to get involved. Getting involved
- The Indian PM's primary duty is the protection and prosperity of his/her people. Unless there was a risk of further aggression (toward India) down the road, this is not an Indian affair.
- Even though the information indicates that France would be hurt by the invasion, they did not interfere in another nations' conflicts. I think that some countries get too involved in the affairs of others. Without information about people suffe
- The French presidents actions could cause harm for his country later on and cause a bigger war.
- It wasn't a direct threat on the welfare of his country. If the invading country had attacked Russia, rather than their neighbor, then Russia should have retaliated.
- I think he was wise to stay out of it. Even though it would hurt the economy of Great Britain, lives of their soldiers would be saved. The attackers has a strong military force. Sometimes it is just not worth the loss of life to get into a b

⁸Because of space considerations, we do not present all responses. These are available in the replication data for the Placebo Experiment.

- I disapprove of the British Prime Minister's actions because either way the attack went, this British Government would have suffered. If they sent in the troops to assist their neighboring country, they would have been in conflict with the attacker.
- I disapprove of the choice to remain out of the conflict because as the leader of France, its President should first and foremost be concerned about the safety and interest of the people of France. Allowing a dictator to take over its neighbor.
- I don't blame the Chinese Premier for not wanting to get involved in what he or she might have seen as another country's conflict. However, they are neighbors, and to me that means they have some degree of responsibility if only to protect them.
- The British Prime Minister allowed a dictator to take over a weaker country that did not have the ability to defend itself. The details of the disagreement between the two fighting countries are necessary to determine whether or not the invasion is justified.
- It would violate national sovereignty for Russia to intervene in the matter.
- Russia could have stopped the dictator from getting stronger. It is in their best interest to keep him from feeling more powerful and being more likely to risk future invasions that may affect Russia.

Respondents who received Treatments 1-4 (back down)

- I approved because it's not France's job to police every country that is having problems with another country. I also assumed that the impact on France was very minimal.
- It was in the best interest of France to support this country against the invaders with minimal damage.
- A successful invasion would hurt the safety and economy of China. Given this, the Chinese Premier should have ordered troops to stop the invasion. However, since this was occurring outside of China and the attacking country has a strong military then don't people think you would even defend your own country.
- It was in the interest of Russia to help defend the attacked country. The Russian President threatened action if the attack continued, but did nothing. The Russian President exhibited weakness.
- If the Prime Minister said that he'd punish the invading country if they didn't stop, then he should have made good on his word. Now he looks weak for not following through.
- If sending in troops would not affect the safety or the economy of China, it would only be beneficial to send in the troops then. China should have taken action. Now China will be known as a weak country for not following through with sending in troops.

- The PM demonstrated a lack in leadership. First, the PM flip-flopped on his stated position of non-involvement threatening to send in troops. Worse, however, is that the threat was not supported by action. Not only did the PM allow the safety a
- What happens in France is of no concern whatsoever to me. I believe we have too much to worry about here in the US to worry about foreign affairs.
- I disapprove because I feel it was India's responsibility to push out the invaders regardless of whether it had any effect on India's safety or economy. It was the right thing to do morally and logically, backing down from the invading dictator
- the implication is that people were hurt and/or killed. If the French leader had stepped up to the proverbial plate and tried to prevent bloodshed and angst, he would have far less blood on his hands and conscience.
- China stayed out of a larger conflict. It is a gross oversimplification to assume that the attacking and defending countries were the only countries that would remain involved in the conflict had China chosen to intervene.
- The French president was elected by the French people to run the country of France. While France may have an interest in its neighbors, France is not obligated to protect other countries from themselves.
- It doesn't seem that the Chinese leaders are usually open and honest about any of their decisions and can't be trusted.
- The Russian president must do everything and anything to protect his own people. Sometimes you must do the controversial in order to preserve the peace.

G Supplemental Analysis of Experiment 1

G.1 Calculating Incompetence Costs

In order to calculate incompetence costs, we need to estimate the parameter c . From above, we know that we can calculate this term by subtracting the proportion of respondents who approved in the engage and succeed condition from those who approved in the engage and fail condition. Formally:

$$-c = \text{Engage and Fail} - \text{Engage and Succeed}$$

From the experiment, we know the proportion who approve in both the engage and fail as well as engage and succeed:

$$-c = 0.419 - 0.695$$

$$c = 0.276$$

G.2 Belligerence and Inconsistency Costs

For the second part of the Experiment 1 analysis, we want to show how belligerence and inconsistency costs—the components of audience costs in conventional experimental estimates of audience costs—change when we incorporate incompetence costs. In order to do so, we want to estimate each of the parameters from the game payoffs in order to see how inconsistency and belligerence costs compare to conventional measures of inconsistency and belligerence costs.

We begin by taking the formal derivation of belligerence costs and substituting in the known values.

$$\text{Engage-Stay Out} = -f_2 - c + q_1c$$

$$-0.18 = -f_2 - 0.276 + 0.544 * 0.276$$

$$f_2 = 0.18 + 0.15 - 0.276$$

$$f_2 = 0.054$$

Next, we do the same with inconsistency costs:

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{Back Down-Engage} &= -a + c(1 - q_2) \\
- 0.19 &= -a + 0.276(1 - 0.617) \\
a &= 0.19 + 0.276 * 0.383 \\
a &= 0.19 + 0.106 \\
a &= 0.306
\end{aligned}$$

G.3 Incorporating a Probabilistic Component into Experiment 1

Next, we estimate audience costs and its components using the probabilistic model from the Appendix. We begin by estimating audience costs the conventional way (i.e., belligerence and inconsistency without incompetence costs; see column 1 of Table ?? for the precise formulas).⁹ Audience costs are estimated by subtracting the proportion that approved of backing down from the proportion that approved of staying out, yielding 0.37. Next, we calculate belligerence and inconsistency costs. Belligerence costs are calculated by holding inconsistency constant and subtracting the proportion who approve of Engaging (and Failing) from the proportion who approve of staying out, yielding 0.18. Finally, inconsistency costs are calculated by holding belligerence constant and subtracting the proportion who approve of Engaging (and Failing) from the proportion who approve of Backing Down, yielding 0.19.

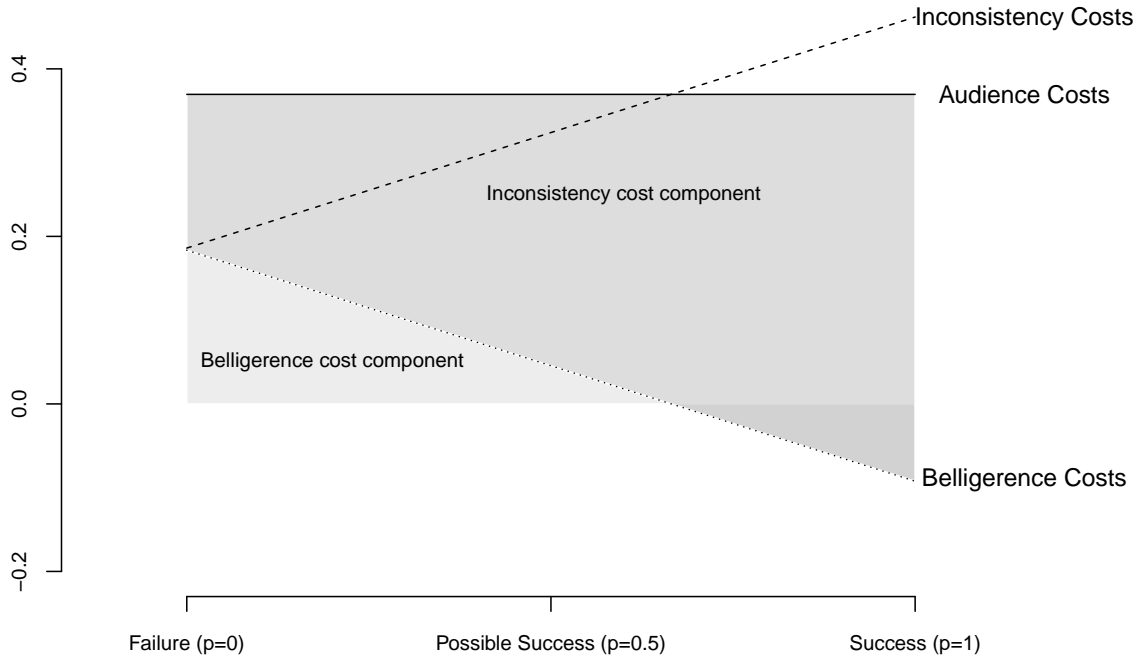
However, what our formal analysis revealed was that these proportions actually make two critical assumptions. First, they assume no incompetence costs. In actuality, as we showed above, incompetence costs exist and they affect different treatment vignettes in different ways. Second, the conventional “engage” vignette assumes that a military intervention would yield the same outcome (the invading country takes over 20% of its neighbor’s territory) as staying out entirely. Formally, we parameterize the probability of the intervention succeeding with the term p . Thus, existing empirical work assumes that $p = 0$. Empirically, 78.3% of respondents in this experiment said they would consider the invading state taking over 20% of its neighbor’s territory (or more) a failure of U.S. foreign policy, suggesting that a vast majority of respondents consider this outcome a failed policy.

[Figure 5 about here]

Figure 5 shows, as predicted by Hypothesis ??, that conventional estimates of belligerence costs overestimate the costs from belligerence because the experimental set-up implicitly assumes that any engagement will fail to stop the invasion. Even if we assume that the probability of success is 0.5, which approximates the prior beliefs of the respondents in the study, belligerence costs account for only 0.05 (13.5%) of audience costs in the experiment. Conversely, inconsistency costs are conventionally underestimated, in line with Hypothesis ??. Inconsistency costs overwhelm belligerence costs when the probability of success increases

⁹See Appendix G for detailed mathematical calculations to estimate these quantities.

Figure 5: Audience Cost Components as a Function of p



from 0 to 0.5. At this level of probability ($p = 0.5$), inconsistency costs account for 0.32 (86.5%) of audience costs. As military intervention becomes more likely to succeed than not ($p > 0.5$), belligerence costs continue to decline until becoming negative as the probability of success approaches 1 (i.e., a leader receives a cost for not intervening militarily when intervention success is assured). We also note that this experiment picks up a general aversion to inconsistency and not necessarily a negative reaction to how the leader’s actions affect that country’s reputation.¹⁰

¹⁰The reader could consider “inconsistency costs” to be the sum of two components: the first component is due to a generalized aversion to or mistrust of people who say one thing and do another; and the second is due to the perception that inconsistent behavior has negative outcomes on the country’s reputation. An implication of our third “placebo” experiment (in the appendix) is that the generalized aversion to inconsistency dwarfs any real concern over reputation in extant experimental studies of audience costs.