

Appendix for “Foreign Voices, Party Cues, and U.S. Public Opinion about Military Action”

Text of Treatment Vignettes

Obama Pro, Boehner Pro, UN Pro

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Number of Respondents in Each Treatment, Overall and by Party Identification

	All	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Obama Pro, Boehner Pro, UN Pro	169	81	68	20
Obama Pro, Boehner Pro, UN Con	176	78	81	17
Obama Pro, Boehner Con, UN Pro	173	88	68	17
Obama Pro, Boehner Con, UN Con	162	72	69	21
Total	695*	319	286	75

* Fifteen respondents did not identify their partisan affiliation. Thus, the number of Democrats, Republicans, and independents sums to 680.

Table A1. Explaining Support for Air Strikes against Iran

	Baseline	Interaction with Partisanship (Partisans Only)
Obama Pro, Boehner Pro, UN Con	-.65* (.24)	-.28 (.43)
Obama Pro, Boehner Con, UN Pro	-.34^ (.24)	-.50 (.44)
Obama Pro, Boehner Con, UN Con	-1.26* (.25)	-1.76* (.41)
Obama Pro, Boehner Pro, UN Con X Democrat	---	-.82^ (.55)
Obama Pro, Boehner Con, UN Pro X Democrat	---	.16 (.54)
Obama Pro, Boehner Con, UN Con X Democrat	---	.89* (.53)
Democrat	-.05 (.27)	-1.42* (.40)
Republican	1.25* (.28)	---
Education	-.14* (.06)	-.07 (.06)
Woman	-.42* (.17)	-.48* (.19)
White	-.44* (.22)	-.77* (.24)
Constant	1.33* (.41)	2.79* (.48)
N	680	605
Log Likelihood	-418.04	-360.51
Pseudo R ²	.11	.13

* $p < .05$; ^ $p < .10$. Entries are logistic regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is coded 1 if the subject supported air strikes against Iran. The reference condition is the elite consensus treatment (“Obama Pro, Boehner Pro, UN Pro”). Subjects were part of the 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Study.

Description of Pilot Study and Results

In addition to the experiment reported in the article, we conducted a pilot study in June 2011. We recruited subjects through Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an Amazon.com service in which people receive small payments in return for participation in market research, academic surveys, and related work.¹ A recent analysis shows that MTurk samples are more demographically representative than are the convenience samples of undergraduate students that are typical for political science and related research (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012). But because representativeness remains a concern, we report in the paper the results of our second experiment using a larger, nationally representative sample. Despite differences in sample size, sample composition, and design details (which we discuss below), results from the two studies are very similar, providing greater confidence in our findings.

In the pilot study, our 392 MTurk subjects initially completed a short survey including demographic questions and measures of partisanship and other political traits, and then were randomly assigned to one of four treatments in which they were exposed to newspaper stories about proposed U.S. air strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities.² We wrote the articles to closely resemble the Internet edition of *USA Today*, and only at the end of the experiment were subjects told that the stories had been fabricated. (Details about the sample, the number of subjects in each treatment, and the text of the articles appear below).

In the lead of every story, it was reported that then-Republican House Speaker John Boehner was urging air strikes against Iran's nuclear installations. The remainder of each article varied the other sources who were cited and their positions on the strikes. Those other sources were President Barack Obama and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon. Boehner and Obama's statements represent domestic party cues, and Ban's statements represent messages from foreign elite voices. The positions of these actors were also communicated in the headlines of the stories. Except for these key variations, the treatments were identical. Because of successful random assignment, we can be sure that any post-treatment differences in subjects' attitudes are caused by exposure to different messages from party leaders and foreign elites.

In the first treatment ("Boehner Pro, Obama Pro"), the story reported that Obama agreed with Boehner's argument that military action was needed; no opposition voices appeared. We used this treatment to establish a baseline of bipartisan domestic elite support for military action to which we could compare results in the other conditions. Here, both Republicans and Democrats receive a clear cue from a party leader in favor of intervention, and no statement from Ban. We expect support for military action to be highest in this treatment. In the second condition ("Boehner Pro, Obama Con"), Boehner proposed air strikes and Obama opposed them; here, subjects are exposed to competing cues from party leaders.

The third and fourth treatments introduce foreign voices. In the third treatment ("Boehner Pro, UN Con"), Boehner proposes military action, and Ban expresses opposition. Here, Obama does not appear in the story. We use this condition to determine whether Democrats are responsive to foreign voices when they are not offered a cue from their party. Finally, subjects in the fourth condition ("Boehner Pro, Obama Pro, UN Con") read a news story with Boehner and Obama both advocating military action and Ban opposing it. We can compare this treatment to the bipartisan support condition to determine whether information from a foreign voice, such as the U.N. secretary-general, can affect public support even in the face of bipartisan domestic elite consensus. This is a particularly difficult test for the influence of foreign voices, as it represents a case in which both Democrats and Republicans receive clear party cues in favor of military action.³

¹ For more information on Mechanical Turk, go to: <https://www.mturk.com/mturk/welcome>. Consistent with similar studies (e.g., Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz, 2012), we paid subjects \$0.75 for their participation.

² Participants from two conditions in which foreign voices were not relevant are not included in the analysis.

³ The design of the pilot study both provides an initial test of our expectations and allows us to model conditions that are analogous to the communication environment during the run-up to the 2003 Iraq War, the major empirical case in recent work on U.S. public opinion and foreign policy (e.g., Berinsky, 2009; Hayes & Guardino, 2013).

After reading the newspaper story, subjects answered the following question: “Would you say that you support or oppose U.S. military strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities?” Subjects could answer that they “strongly” or “somewhat” supported or opposed action. We dichotomize responses into support or opposition, which eases interpretation of the treatment effects. For reference, we note that overall levels of support for attacking Iran are fairly low, ranging from 18% to 48%; in no treatment did a majority favor military action. Our primary focus, however, is differences in support across conditions.

In the left-hand panel of Figure A1, we plot for each treatment the shift in predicted support for air strikes compared to the bipartisan consensus condition, derived from a logistic regression model (see the Supplemental Appendix).⁴ In the top row (“Boehner Pro, Obama Con”), changing Obama’s position from supporting to opposing the strikes reduces by about 0.29 the odds of a subject supporting military action. When Ban Ki-Moon’s opposition is paired with Boehner’s advocacy for strikes (“Boehner Pro, UN Con”), support dropped by 0.19. And in the final row (“Boehner Pro, Obama Pro, UN Con”), support was again reduced by 0.19, despite subjects having read a news story that reported a bipartisan domestic elite consensus in favor of intervention. In other words, even with the United States’ most prominent partisan political leaders advocating military action, opposition from the U.N. secretary-general significantly reduces Americans’ willingness to endorse an attack on Iran. When messages from foreign elites are available, the U.S. public indeed appears willing to listen.

But who moves in response to these messages? That is the key theoretical question for the debate about the circumstances under which foreign voices shape opinion. Do citizens automatically follow their own partisan leaders, or might some individuals be responsive to international elites who offer arguments that are in line with their basic predispositions? To examine these questions, we interact the treatment dummies with an indicator for whether a subject identifies as a Democrat or Republican. Because of the small number of independents (57) in our sample, we restrict the analysis to partisans (see also Druckman, Peterson, & Slothuus, 2013). We categorize independent “leaners” as partisans for all the well-known reasons (e.g., Keith et al., 1992).

The interactive effects of the treatments are shown by the separate lines for Democrats and Republicans in the right-hand panel of Figure 1, where we plot the predicted shifts in probabilities for partisan identifiers. Beginning with Democrats, President Obama is clearly influential. Changing Obama’s position from support to opposition (“Boehner Pro, Obama Con”) reduces Democratic support by 0.26. There is also strong evidence that foreign voices matter. Replacing Obama’s endorsement of air strikes with U.N. opposition lowers the odds of Democratic support by 0.19. In the absence of messages from a Democratic president, Democratic identifiers respond to opposition from a non-domestic actor. And adding U.N. opposition to the bipartisan consensus condition lowers Democratic support by 0.11. While the upper bound of the confidence interval overlaps the zero-line slightly, the p-value is 0.12, still indicating a low likelihood that the result is due to chance. Democrats are open to messages from foreign voices not only when there is no clear signal from a party leader, but also when a party leader—in this case President Obama—sends a message that is inconsistent with many Democrats’ dovish predispositions. Even in the presence of party cues, foreign voices can be influential.

The situation facing Republican subjects in our experiment is different than for Democrats because there is no variation in the Republican elite message; Boehner’s statement is always consistent with GOP identifiers’ relatively hawkish general foreign policy predispositions. It is thus somewhat surprising that Obama’s opposition (“Boehner Pro, Obama Con”) results in a 0.28 reduction in Republican support as compared to the bipartisan consensus condition. We do not, however, find significant movement among GOP identifiers when Boehner’s support is paired with U.N. opposition. This is consistent with a theoretical focus on the

⁴ The dependent variable is coded 1 if a subject said she supported military action, 0 if she opposed it. Our results are identical if we convert responses into a 4-point scale and run ordered logit models. That is also the case in the main study. In addition to partisanship, the models control for education, gender, and race, which are characteristics often associated with U.S. public support for military action (e.g., Hayes & Guardino, 2013; Nincic & Nincic, 2002).

importance of substantive predispositions. Because the foreign policy predispositions of Republicans are both more hawkish and more favorable to unilateral action than are those of Democrats, opposition to a military strike from overseas is less likely to move GOP identifiers. Pairing bipartisan domestic support with opposition from Ban (the last treatment) does, however, move Republicans in an anti-strike direction, by 0.29. One plausible interpretation is that GOP identifiers, who generally have little love for Obama, are likely reacting against his position, a move that would be consistent with an out-party polarization effect. Even in the face of support from Boehner, Republicans may seize on the signal from the United Nations as a reason to oppose a strike supported by a disliked Democratic president. And because the president is generally understood to be the prime mover in the national security domain in contemporary American politics, it is plausible that Republicans are discounting Boehner's pro-strike position in this condition and using U.N. opposition as a reason to move against a plan for military action that they attribute to a president whose policy judgments they distrust. At the same time, it is also important to note that the sample of Republicans in our study is small (between 25 and 32 per treatment), which cautions against drawing sweeping conclusions from these results.

Our results suggest two key conclusions. First, partisanship is clearly influential, as Democrats were more responsive to Obama than to any other cue-giver. Second, and most importantly, foreign voices can shape opinion, even in the presence of party cues. That was true both when Democrats did not receive a signal from Obama and, crucially, when the president explicitly argued for air strikes. In other words, Democrats likely relied on their substantive predispositions to accept a policy message from a foreign elite that contradicted a message from their own party leader. Republicans, on the other hand, did not respond to U.N. opposition when it was paired with support from Boehner.

Figure A1. Effect of Variations in Elite Support for Air Strikes against Iran, Pilot Study

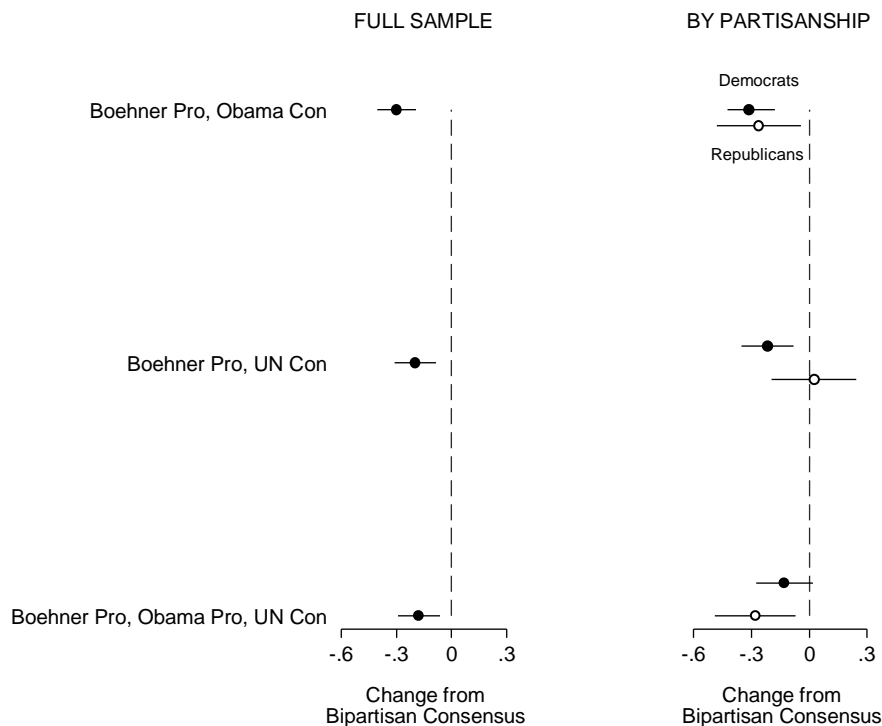


Figure shows the change in the likelihood of a respondent supporting air strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities compared to the bipartisan consensus condition (Boehner Pro, Obama Pro). Negative numbers indicate lower odds of support. In the left-hand graph, predicted probabilities are estimated from the Baseline model in Table A2. In the right-hand graph, predicted probabilities are estimated from the Interaction with Partisanship model in Table A2. Lines around the estimates are 95% confidence intervals. Subjects were recruited through Mechanical Turk.

Pilot Study Newspaper Story Treatments

“Boehner Pro, Obama Pro”



GOP leaders urge air strikes on Iranian nuke facilities; Obama agrees military action needed

By Bryan Fitzpatrick, USA Today

Republican leaders announced Monday that they believe President Obama should order the U.S. military to launch unilateral air strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities. Obama agreed that military action is necessary.

In a press conference at the U.S. Capitol, House Speaker John Boehner (R -Ohio), said his party's congressional representatives believed that military action was in the country's national security interest.

“Iran presents a significant threat to America, and to our allies,” Boehner said. *“The tyrannical regime of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad cannot continue to pursue nuclear weapons without facing the consequences. This game has gone on too long.”*

Boehner said the U.S. should use fighter jets to target Iranian nuclear facilities. The strikes would be designed to knock out the Iranians' ability to produce weapons-grade uranium.

In the past, Iranian officials have kept international nuclear inspectors from visiting those sites, raising suspicion that they may be manufacturing weapons. Iran says it is building a civilian nuclear power program, but the U.S. suspects it seeks the capacity to build nuclear bombs.

Boehner said the current policy of diplomatic and economic sanctions was not curtailing Iran's nuclear ambitions, and more direct action was required.

At the White House, President Obama said he would order U.S. airstrikes *“in the near future, when we feel they would be most effective.”*

“Although I would never want to use military action when a diplomatic solution was available, the Iranians time and time again have failed to come clean and reveal whether or not they are using their nuclear program to create weapons,” Obama said.

Obama said he believed it was in the United States' interest to prevent Iran from developing its nuclear program further. He said he is consulting with military officials to determine how and when military strikes could be carried out.

Boehner said that if the United Nations Security Council and major nations such as China, Russia, France and Germany will not agree to endorse a military campaign, the United States must act alone to protect its citizens and the world at large. Obama said he would consider unilateral action against Iran if international support is not forthcoming.

Both Boehner and Obama said that the priority should be to launch air strikes to eliminate Iran's capacity to produce nuclear arms, but neither would rule out the possibility of wider military action if that proves necessary for U.S. national security in the future.

“This is a regime that hates America and hates Western values,” Boehner said. *“We need to stop Iran's nuclear program before it's too late.”*



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At the White House, President Obama said he opposed military strikes at this time.

“There is insufficient evidence that Iran's nuclear facilities are—or are even capable of—producing weapons-grade uranium,” he said. *“At this point, military action would be premature, and could potentially be destabilizing.”*

Obama said he did not believe air strikes on Iran would make the United States or its allies safer.

“National security is a top priority, but military action against Iran would not make America or the world more secure,” the president said.

Obama said he and other Democrats preferred to continue the current sanctions against Iran in an effort to pressure its leaders to provide full information on their nuclear program and to halt any attempts to build weapons.

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“Boehner Pro Only”



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At the United Nations, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said he opposed the proposal.

“There is insufficient evidence that Iran’s nuclear facilities are—or are even capable of—producing weapons-grade uranium,” he said. “At this point, military action would be premature, and could potentially be destabilizing.”

Ban said he did not believe air strikes on Iran would make the United States or its allies safer.

“International security is a top priority, but military action against Iran would not make America or the world more secure,” he said.

Ban said he and other international officials preferred to continue the current sanctions against Iran in an effort to pressure its leaders to provide full information on their nuclear program and to halt any attempts to build weapons.

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Selected Characteristics of Experimental Subjects from Pilot Study and the 2012 CCES

	Pilot Study: MTurk (2011)	Main Study: CCES (2012)
Age		
Mean	32	54
Median	29	57
Youngest	18	18
Oldest	88	91
Sex		
Male	46%	52%
Female	54%	48%
Race/Ethnicity		
White	76%	82%
Black	6%	6%
Hispanic	5%	6%
Asian	11%	1%
Other	2%	5%
Education		
No HS diploma	<1%	2%
HS diploma	11%	24%
Some college	31%	26%
College degree (2 or 4 years)	33%	34%
Graduate degree	15%	15%
Party Identification		
Democrat	57%	47%
Republican	30%	43%
Independent or other	13%	11%
Ideology		
Very liberal	9%	10%
Liberal	24%	13%
Slightly (CCES wording: somewhat) liberal	18%	12%
Moderate (CCES wording: middle of the road)	17%	20%
Slightly (CCES wording: somewhat) conservative	12%	12%
Conservative	13%	19%
Very conservative	4%	12%
Haven't thought much about it (CCES wording: Not sure)	3%	2%

Number of Respondents in Each Treatment, Overall and by Party Identification, Pilot Study

	All	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Boehner Pro, Obama Pro	98	56	29	13
Boehner Pro, Obama Con	99	55	28	16
Boehner Pro, UN Con	99	57	25	17
Boehner Pro, Obama Pro, UN Con	96	53	32	11
Total	392	221	114	57

Table A2. Explaining Support for Air Strikes against Iran, Pilot Study

	Baseline	Interaction with Partisanship (Partisans Only)
Boehner Pro, Obama Con	-1.59* (.35)	-1.20* (.56)
Boehner Pro, UN Con	-.89* (.32)	.08 (.59)
Boehner Pro, Obama Pro, UN Con	-.91* (.33)	-1.25* (.55)
Boehner Pro, Obama Con X Democrat	---	-.88 (.82)
Boehner Pro, UN Con X Democrat	---	-1.22* (.75)
Boehner Pro, Obama Pro, UN Con X Democrat	---	.69 (.69)
Democrat	-.40 (.36)	-1.25* (.49)
Republican	1.09* (.37)	---
Education	.01 (.09)	-.01 (.10)
Woman	-.27 (.24)	.44* (.26)
White	-.18 (.28)	-.16 (.32)
Constant	.12 (.53)	1.12* (.67)
N	392	335
Log Likelihood	-214.92	-178.50
Pseudo R ²	.12	.15

* $p < .05$. Entries are logistic regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is coded 1 if the subject supported air strikes against Iran. The reference condition is the bipartisan consensus treatment (“Boehner Pro, Obama Pro”). Subjects were recruited through Mechanical Turk.