Supplementary Files for "The Inter-Temporal Tradeoff in Mobilizing Support for War"

Contents

1 The Full Text of the Survey Experiment

In this section we provide information about the full text of the survey experiment. In this section we detail the design for the panel experiment. First, we provide information the background information for the conflict. This includes information on the types of adversaries faced by the United States and whether the United States deployed combat troops. Second, we discuss the structure of the presidential messages as well as the elite statements we used as a model. Third, we describe the fact updates used in the experiment. The different sequences of fact updates were tailored around whether the conflict randomization included the deployment of boots on the ground.

1.1 The Background Information

In the background information we provide respondents information about two different types of opponents as well as a third condition in which the opponent is unspecified. The first opponent includes a hostile county which has violated international law and invaded an American ally. The second opponent includes an Islamic fundamentalist terror group. In addition to randomizing the adversary we also randomly provide information about whether the United States sent in combat troops. These two types of randomization lead to six possible vignettes in total. Each of these vignettes are presented below.

> **Background Information 1:** The United States has decided to enter a military conflict.
>
> **Background Information 2:** The United States has decided to enter a military conflict in which they have sent in combat troops.
>
> **Background Information 3:** The United States has decided to enter a military conflict. A hostile country, violating international law, has invaded an American ally and the United States has been forced to respond.
>
> **Background Information 4:** The United States has decided to enter a military

conflict. A hostile country, violating international law, has invaded an American ally and the United States has been forced to send in combat troops in response.

Background Information 5: The United States has decided to enter a military conflict. Islamic fundamentalist terror groups threaten America's security and interests around the world and the United States has been forced to respond.

Background Information 6: The United States has decided to enter a military conflict. Islamic fundamentalist terror groups threaten America's security and interests around the world and the United States has been forced to send in combat troops in response.

1.2 The Presidential Messages

The presidential messages were written with the goal of mirroring actual elite statements throughout conflicts while simultaneously keeping the vignettes relatively simple. This was intended to provide the cleanest test of the hypotheses as possible. The three presidential messages for the long war and short war respectively are:

Short Message 1: As part of the speech announcing the initiation of military action, the president made the following statement: "America will win through to absolute victory. I think the conflict will go quickly. Months rather than years."

Short Message 2: After two years, the president makes the following statement about the conflict: "With confidence in our armed forces—with the determination of our people—we will triumph. I can't tell you if the remainder of the conflict will last weeks or months, but it certainly isn't going to last any longer than that."

Short Message 3: After four years, the president makes the following statement about the conflict: "I believe that America will stand united behind her fighting men and women and that we will emerge victorious. We will overwhelm opposing

forces over the next several months."

Long Message 1: As part of the speech announcing the initiation of military action, the president made the following statement: "America will win through to absolute victory. I do not think the conflict will go quickly. Years rather than months."

Long Message 2: After two years, the president makes the following statement about the conflict: "With confidence in our armed forces—with the determination of our people—we will triumph. I can't tell you if the remainder of the conflict will last several years or more, but it certainly isn't going to last any longer than that."

Long Message 3: After four years, the president makes the following statement about the conflict: "I believe that America will stand united behind her fighting men and women and that we will emerge victorious. We will overwhelm opposing forces over the next several years."

1.3 The Fact Updates

The fact updates are interspersed throughout the panel survey design with the presidential messages. The text of the fact updates varies with the initial randomization about whether the United States deployed combat troops. That is, if the United States deployed troops then respondents receive the sequence of facts which specifies a sequence of aviation crashes in which America incurs casualties. This was done to mirror as closely as possible newspaper article updates from throughout the Iraq War. If the initial vignette provided no information about troops being deployed to the conflict zone then respondents view the no boots on the ground fact updates sequence. This sequence of fact updates mirrors newspapers articles recent US military conflicts where the United States did not directly send in combat troops but still took military action. Varying the fact updates with the conflict scenarios was intended to make the updates on the ground seem plausible and similar to the types of

things the public would learn as a war progresses. Given this, it was important that the information respondents were learning about the war matched the actual type of war being fought. The two sequences of fact updates are presented below.

1.3.1 Boots on the Ground

For the randomization in which the United States deployed combat troops respondents observed fact updates about American military aircraft that had been shot down and the United States had incurred casualties. This was intended to provide respondents information that (1) the United States was incurring costs including casualties and (2) that the conflict was ongoing. We chose to have the fact updates to entail American military aircraft being shot down rather than casualties being incurred. Doing so allowed us to provide a factual update that is common across military conflicts from both the 20th and 21st centuries. This means that the fact updates in this military scenario were plausible for the United States fighting an adversary that had invaded an ally as well as fundamentalist Islamist organizations. This is in contrast to other types of combat operations which might be specific to fighting a particular type of adversary or conflict. To the best of our abilities we sought to minimize providing factual updates which might cue respondents to think about a particular conflict scenario when reading about the costs.

> **Fact 1**: One year into the war—An Army helicopter attached to the 101st Airborne Division was shot down, killing the two pilots, the American military said. It was the twenty-fourth helicopter crash suffered by American forces since the military conflict began one year ago.
>
> **Fact 2**: Two years into the war—A Black Hawk helicopter from the 101st Aviation Regiment was shot down yesterday. All four crew, and both passengers from the Department of the Army were killed. It was yet another in a recurring sequence of helicopter crashes since the conflict began two years ago.
>
> **Fact 3**: Three years into the war—An American Apache attack helicopter was

shot down on Friday and its two-member crew was killed, an American military official said. It was the fourth American helicopter to be shot down or crash under fire in the last two weeks. Next week marks the three-year anniversary since the start of the war.

Fact 4: Four years into the war—Five members of a security detail protecting an American convoy were killed on Tuesday when their helicopter came under attack and went down in one of the capital city's most dangerous neighborhoods. The crash was yet another in a recurring sequence of helicopter crashes since the conflict began four years ago.

Fact 5: The military conflict has now ended. The conflict lasted for five years in total.

1.3.2 No Boots on the Ground

For the randomization in which there is no information provided about the deployment of combat troops, respondents observed fact updates about a military conflict in which the the United States was engaged in air strikes. Once again, the nature of American military involvement was intended mirror both recent U.S. conflicts as well as a concrete military action that could be taken without the deployment of ground forces.

Fact 1: One year into the war—U.S. aircraft struck at least 15 targets early Tuesday with most of the airstrikes concentrated around an enemy stronghold. This was the heaviest attack since the start of the one-year-old bombing campaign.

Fact 2: Two years into the war—Forces from the United States carried out air strikes on an airport controlled by the enemy. It was yet another in a recurring sequence of airstrikes since the conflict began two years ago.

Fact 3: Three years into the war—Fighter and bomber aircraft conducted three airstrikes near an enemy stronghold, which targeted enemy units and several

fighting positions. It was the fourth airstrike by American forces this month. Next week marks the three-year anniversary since the start of the war.

Fact 4: Four years into the war—The U.S. launched seven air strikes since early Saturday against the enemy, an American military official said. The U.S used warplanes to target enemy tactical units, boats, and a storage facility, according to the statement. It was yet another in a recurring sequence of airstrikes since the conflict began four years ago.

Fact 5: The military conflict has now ended. The conflict lasted for five years in total.

2 Robustness Tests

We perform many robustness and generalizability tests.

- **Effect Heterogeneity:** MTurk respondents, including within our sample, differ from national representative samples in a number of ways. If treatment effects differ between those over and underrepresented in MTurk samples then this casts doubt on the generalizability of the results. Most importantly for political questions, MTurk respondents skew more liberal. As shown in the Appendix, we find that results supporting H1 and H2 are similar within ideologically liberal and conservative subsets of the data. This suggests results would replicate in a more balanced sample. We find similar effect homogeneity across other potentially salient demographic characteristics such as age, education, race, and gender.

- **Modeling:** All reported results in the analysis are based on OLS with no covariates. Robustness tests include demographic characteristics of our respondents and find similar results, substantively and statistically. Given the dichotomous outcome variable, approval/disapproval as operationalized throughout the paper, we also test and find that our results hold when using logistic regression.

- **Outcome Variable:** We excluded "Not Sure" responses from the outcome coding in the main analysis. Results are similar when employing three alternative coding schemes: 1) count not sure as approval, 2) count not sure as disapproval, and 3) use not sure as a separate outcome variable coding.

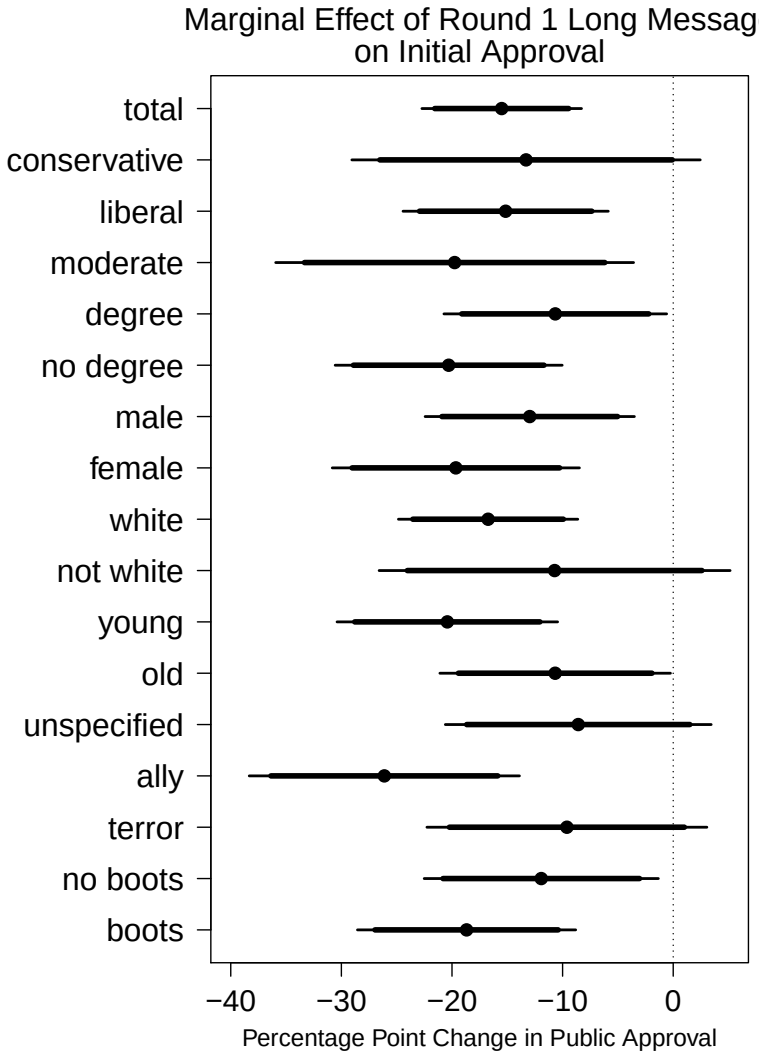

Figure A1: *H1 Effect Heterogeneity:* Marginal effect of 'long' prediction on initial approval by subgroup or sub-condition. Thick bar represents 90% confidence interval; thin bar, 95% confidence interval.

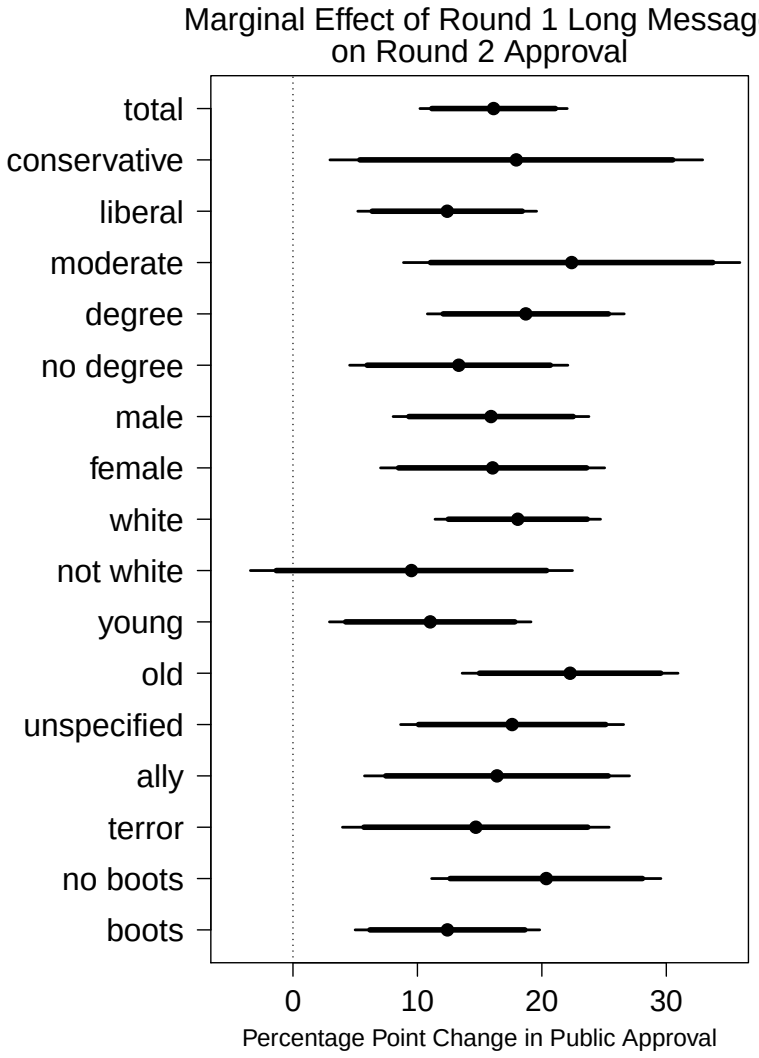

Figure A2: *H2 Effect Heterogeneity:* Marginal effect of an initially accurate prediction on round 2 approval by subgroup or sub-condition. Thick bar represents 90% confidence interval; thin bar, 95% confidence interval.

Table A1: Initial Public Approval: Specifications

	OLS		Logit	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Initial Long Message	-0.16***	-0.16***	-0.65***	-0.69***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.16)	(0.16)
Ideology		0.06***		0.25***
		(0.01)		(0.05)
Education		-0.01		-0.04
		(0.01)		(0.07)
Gender		-0.03		-0.14
		(0.04)		(0.17)
Age		0.00		0.01*
		(0.00)		(0.01)
Race		-0.00		-0.01
		(0.02)		(0.07)
Constant	0.48***	-5.42	-0.07	-26.93*
	(0.03)	(3.56)	(0.11)	(16.01)
N	696	696	696	696

$^{*}p < 0.1$ $^{**}p < 0.05$ $^{***}p < 0.01$

Notes: OLS and logit results without and with control variables. Outcome is public approval at conflict outset. Higher values for *Ideology* indicate more conservative.

Table A2: Initial Public Approval: Alternative DV

	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Initial Long Message	-0.16***	-0.10***	0.14***	-0.23***
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.05)
Ideology	0.06***	0.05***	-0.03***	0.08***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Education	-0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.02
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Gender	-0.03	-0.02	0.02	-0.04
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.05)
Age	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Race	-0.00	-0.00	-0.01	0.01
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Constant	-5.42	-0.09	0.09	0.82
	(3.56)	(0.33)	(0.36)	(0.60)
N	696	987	987	987

$^{*}p < 0.1$ $^{**}p < 0.05$ $^{***}p < 0.01$

Notes: OLS results with alternative outcome variable coding. Outcome is public approval at conflict outset. Higher values for *Ideology* indicate more conservative. From left to right, the outcome variable excludes "Not Sure," includes "Not Sure" as approval, includes "Not Sure" as disapproval where disapproval equals 1, and counts "Not Sure" as its own outcome between disapproval and approval.

Table A3: Accuracy Effects: Round Two Public Approval: Specifications

	OLS		Logit	
	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Initial Message Accurate	0.16***	0.16***	1.07***	1.07***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.21)	(0.21)
Ideology		0.03***		0.23***
		(0.01)		(0.06)
Education		-0.01		-0.05
		(0.01)		(0.08)
Gender		-0.02		-0.16
		(0.03)		(0.21)
Age		0.00		0.00
		(0.00)		(0.00)
Race		-0.01		-0.05
		(0.01)		(0.09)
Constant	0.12***	-0.01	-2.02***	-4.18
	(0.02)	(0.28)	(0.16)	(5.35)
N	656	656	656	656

$^{*}p < 0.1$ $^{**}p < 0.05$ $^{***}p < 0.01$

Notes: OLS and logit results without and with control variables. Outcome is public approval 2 years into war. Higher values for *Ideology* indicate more conservative.

Table A4: Accuracy Effects: Round Two Public Approval: Alternative Outcome Variable

	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
Initial Message Accurate	0.16***	0.12***	-0.17***	0.29***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.05)
Ideology	0.03***	0.03***	-0.04***	0.06***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Education	-0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.02
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Gender	-0.02	-0.02	0.02	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.05)
Age	0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Race	-0.01	-0.00	0.00	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Constant	-0.01	0.02	1.04***	-0.02
	(0.28)	(0.26)	(0.34)	(0.54)
N	656	801	801	801

$^{*}p < 0.1$ $^{**}p < 0.05$ $^{***}p < 0.01$

Notes: OLS results with alternative outcome variable coding. Outcome is public approval 2 years into war. Higher values for *Ideology* indicate more conservative. From left to right, the outcome variable excludes "Not Sure," includes "Not Sure" as approval, includes "Not Sure" as disapproval where disapproval equals 1, and counts "Not Sure" as its own outcome between disapproval and approval.

Table A5: Consistency Effects: Round Three Public Approval: Specifications

	OLS		Logit	
	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)
Short-Short-Short	-0.03	-0.02	-0.40	-0.42
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.56)	(0.57)
Ideology		0.02		0.27
		(0.01)		(0.17)
Education		-0.02		-0.34
		(0.01)		(0.21)
Gender		0.06		1.00*
		(0.04)		(0.60)
Age		0.00		0.00
		(0.00)		(0.00)
Race		0.01		0.12
		(0.02)		(0.26)
Constant	0.08***	-0.08	-2.40***	-6.17
	(0.03)	(0.21)	(0.37)	(7.19)
N	200	200	200	200

$^{*}p < 0.1$ $^{**}p < 0.05$ $^{***}p < 0.01$

Notes: OLS and logit results without and with control variables. Outcome is public approval 4 years into war. Compares effect of short-short-short treatment sequence to short-short-long sequence. Higher values for *Ideology* indicate more conservative.

Table A6: Consistency Effects: Round Three Public Approval: Alternative Outcome Variable

	(21)	(22)	(23)	(24)
Short-Short-Short	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.07)
Ideology	0.02	0.02	-0.03**	0.05**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Education	-0.02	-0.02	0.03	-0.05*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Gender	0.06	0.06*	-0.01	0.07
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.07)
Age	0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Race	0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.00
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Constant	-0.08	-0.08	1.00***	-0.08
	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.27)	(0.43)
N	200	213	213	213

$^{*}p < 0.1$ $^{**}p < 0.05$ $^{***}p < 0.01$

Notes: OLS results with alternative outcome variable coding. Outcome is public approval 4 years into war. Compares effect of short-short-short treatment sequence to short-short-long sequence. Higher values for *Ideology* indicate more conservative. From left to right, the outcome variable excludes "Not Sure," includes "Not Sure" as approval, includes "Not Sure" as disapproval where disapproval equals 1, and counts "Not Sure" as its own outcome between disapproval and approval.

3 Additional Results

3.1 Partisanship of President and Respondents

A follow-up experiment assesses whether being a co-partisan of the leader conditions the mobilization and/or punishment effects. The experimental design differs in only one respect. The initial message from the president now reads "the president, *who is a [Democrat/Republican]*, made the following statement ..." (emphasis added here). We ran this on October 6, 2016 with a sample of 600 MTurk respondents. Party ID on a 7-point scale was recorded for each respondent. Figures below examine the results for all respondents and then split by whether respondents were a co-partisan (of any party ID strength level) of the president. The partisanship results below exclude those unaffiliated with either party. The sub-samples of co-partisans and non-co-partisans consist of 203 and 190 respondents respectively; the other roughly 200 respondents were either independents or randomized into the short (6 month) war condition.

There are at least two ways for how we might theoretically expect partisanship status to substantively affect the results. First, we might expect co-partisanship to increase baseline support for the conflict irrespective of the president's message. More concretely, holding fixed the president's statements about expected conflict duration, we might expect Democrats to be more supportive of conflicts initiated by Democratic presidents than conflicts of the same duration initiated by Republican presidents. Indeed, the results of the follow-up experiment demonstrate that co-partisanship does change base levels of approval in the expected direction. While interesting, it is important to emphasize that this partisan effect has little bearing on the substantive treatment effects. Second, we might theoretically expect partisanship to moderate treatment effects by, for instance, dampening the punishment associated with incorrect statements about initial conflict duration among co-partisans. The results of the follow-up experiment do not lend support to this possible relationship. Instead, we find treatment effects substantively similar to those reported in the main analysis, regardless

of partisan status. That is, the partisanship of the president does not moderate effects or introduce statistically significant effect heterogeneity. Indeed, the interaction term between co-partisanship and the treatment of interest is never statistically significant.

There are a range of plausible explanations for why the partisanship of the cue-giver and respondent does not alter treatment effects. First, we know partisan affiliation does not deterministically dictate support for war. This leaves open the possibility of rallying or losing support among non-co-partisans and co-partisans respectively. More concretely, some Republicans did oppose Bush's handling of the Iraq War and might not have had he handled it differently. Some Democrats did support Bush's handling of the Iraq War and more might have had he handled it differently. Substantively, the fact that partisanship does not diminish our treatment effects highlights the importance of the mechanisms noted in the manuscript. Second, it's plausible that partisanship does induce effect heterogeneity in reality but our partisan treatment was simply too weak. Attachments might be far stronger when associated with a particular individual—e.g., President Trump—then when cued generically as we did in this experiment. While possible, this would restructure a president's incentives, motivating them to claim war will be short because co-partisans will not ever punish inaccuracy while non-co-partisans would punish the president regardless of statements and outcomes. The historical record does not accord with this as some leaders have warned that conflict will be of a longer duration.

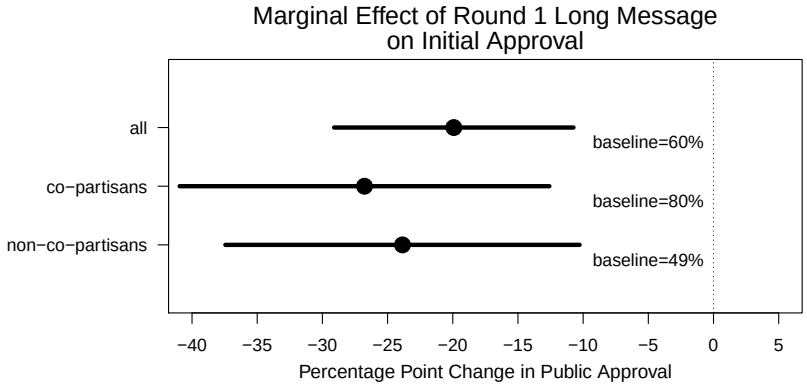

Figure A3: *H1 Mobilization:* Marginal effect of 'long' prediction on initial approval by co-partisanship. Bars represent 95% confidence interval. A 'short' initial message mobilizes support among all respondents, regardless of partisanship. Partisanship affects approval levels, not treatment effects.

3.2 Accuracy in the Short War Condition

Post-conflict approval for presidents who correctly predicted conflict would be short is higher than for those who said it would be long. In the latter treatment condition, 85% of respondents approve the president's handling of war. In comparison, issuing an optimistic message before a war that proves to be short increases post-conflict approval by 6% points, ± 10% points, as shown in Figure. Thus, accuracy is again rewarded, though the effect is not statistically significant likely due to ceiling effects.

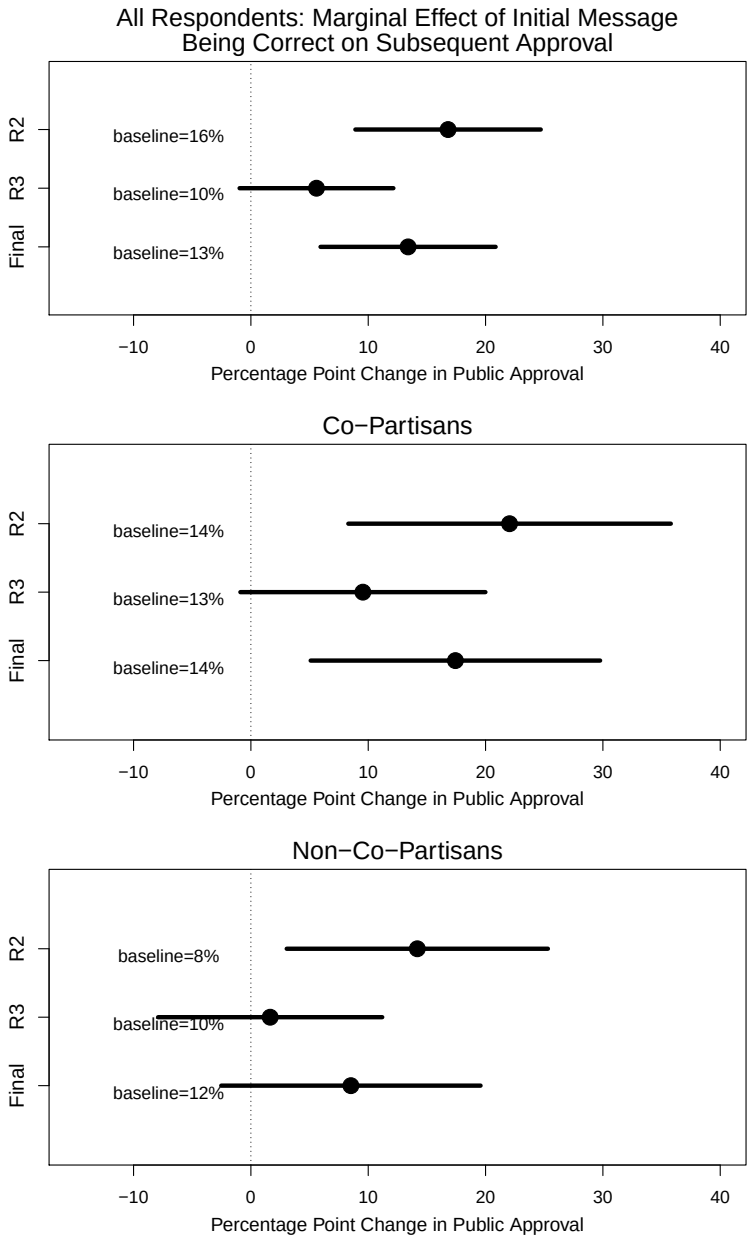

Figure A4: *H2 Inaccuracy:* Marginal effect of accuracy on subsequent approval. Bars represent 95% confidence interval. A 'long' initial message maintains support at higher levels. Partisanship affects approval levels. Differences in treatment effects across co-partisanship status—that is, interaction effects—are not statistically significant.

3.3 Inconsistency is neither Punished nor Rewarded

We found a null result for the third hypothesis pertaining to inconsistency. To partially unpack the mechanisms of this finding, we plot the effect of changing predictions on various

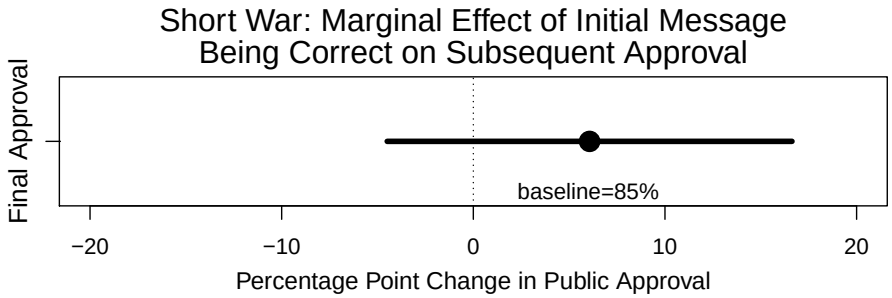

Figure A5: Correct initial predictions improve public approval rates at subsequent points in the conflict. Result shows the effect of correctly predicting war will be short on final post-war approval rates. This is likely not statistically significant due to ceiling effects where public approval of a short war is already so high that the ability of the president to affect support by being "correct" is minimized.

presidential and conflict traits. Note that this only captures two, as opposed to three, rounds of messages and so differs from the original experiment. Switching messages is positively associated with honesty but negatively associated with optimism, which highlights the cross-cutting effects of message inconsistency in the experiment.

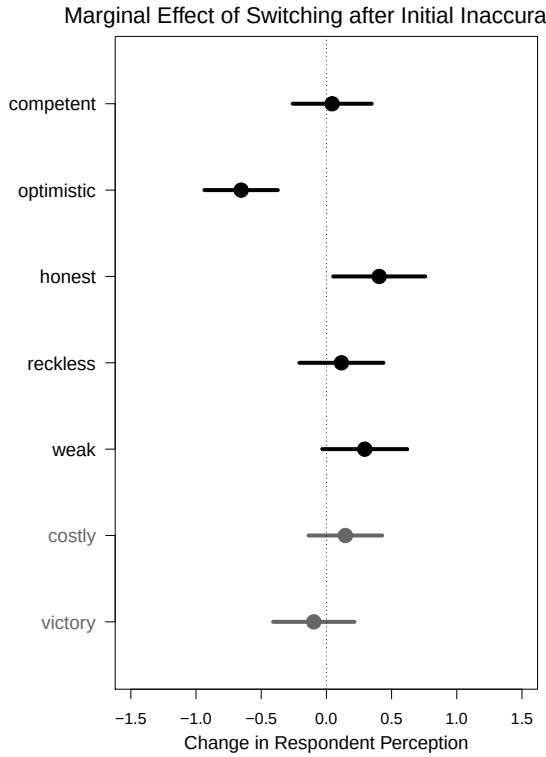

Figure A6: Marginal effect of switching messages after initially predicting short and being inaccurate on respondent assessments of president and conflict traits. President traits are shown in black, conflict traits in grey. Traits are measured on a 5-point scale; higher values indicate agreement.

3.4 Short Wars are Preferable

Conflict duration, as observed rather than estimated, affects post-conflict public approval. Reflecting on a completed short (six month) war, 88% of respondents approved the president's handling of the war. In contrast, being assigned to the long (five year) war condition reduced respondent approval by 71% points, ± 6% points at the 95% confidence interval. War duration unequivocally affects public support. This result is intuitive given the relationship between duration and conflict costs which shape the cost/benefit analysis for war. The decline in support over time in the long war condition is consistent with results from Mueller (1973). Declines are steepest in the early phase (first two years) and moderate thereafter.