

DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:  
DOMESTIC PRESSURES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR COERCIVE FOREIGN  
POLICY

Dissertation

by

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## ABSTRACT

My dissertation contributes to the accountability literature in international relations by examining the role constituents' preferences can potentially play in fomenting or constraining coercive foreign policies in democracies. In times of international crises, domestic audiences have specific coercive foreign policy preferences and will support executives who represent them when selecting coercive foreign policies. Executive actions will increase popular support or generate audience costs depending on whether these actions are consistent with the specific policy preferences that domestic audiences have given the threat a crisis poses to national security. To determine when audiences prefer economic or military coercion and how these preferences affect their evaluation of the executive I conduct three experiments, including a survey experiment conducted with a representative sample of Americans and an experiment conducted with a convenience sample in the United Kingdom. The results show interesting similarities and differences between the cross-national samples regarding foreign policy preferences and the public's propensity to support and punish leaders during times of international conflict. Mainly, I find that (1) the concept of audience costs can be expanded to cases of economic coercion, (2) under certain circumstances audience costs operate even in crises that are not very salient and (3) when there is a mismatch between public preferences and threats issued by the executive, audience costs do not operate at all.

## DEDICATION

*To the love of my life and our daughter Mila.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As of January 2012, U.S. sanctions against Iran include blocking access to the international financial system and undermining the Iranian gas and oil industry (Cooper 2012). President Obama has stated that these sanctions were implemented to protect the national security interests of United States and the world community (Goldberg 2012). In an election year, it would be difficult to argue that this escalation of economic sanctions has nothing to do with the preferences of American citizens. Fifty-eight percent of Americans agree that the United States should prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, even if it involves military action. Popular preferences are not static and have changed as Iran's nuclear program has continued to develop. Domestic audiences are starting to perceive economic coercion against Iran as ineffective. As of February of 2012, 64% of Americans declare that escalating sanctions will not deter Iran (up from 56% in October 2009).<sup>1</sup> Presidential hopefuls seem to be taking note, as talk of military action against Iran has become a popular stance in GOP debates in 2012.

In this dissertation, I examine under what circumstances democratic constituents will support or punish executives for their foreign policy behaviors in times of international crises.<sup>2</sup> I specify the role public policy preferences and executive inconsistencies play in generating support for executives and their coercive foreign

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<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center poll, February 15, 2012, available at: <http://www.people-press.org/2012/02/15/public-takes-strong-stance-against-irans-nuclear-program/>, accessed March 5 2012.

<sup>2</sup> This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 1123291. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

policies. I first theorize about what affects public preferences for military and economic coercion. I then examine how these policy preferences influence when democratic leaders will be punished for not following through on threats of military or economic coercion. My dissertation contributes to the accountability literature in international relations by examining the role constituents' preferences can potentially play in fomenting or constraining coercive foreign policies in democracies.

Theories of democratic accountability have had a significant impact in the field of international relations. However, no consensus exists as to the specific role constituents' preferences play when it comes to fomenting or restraining the initiation of coercive foreign policies. At present two unconnected groups of accountability theories exist in international relations literature. A first group of theories emphasizes how citizens hold leaders accountable if they do not represent their policy preferences. A second group of theories has emerged from game theoretical models of domestic audience costs. In these models the relevant issue is whether leaders act consistently between what they promise they will do and the foreign policies they actually implement. It is assumed that people invariantly prefer consistent leaders and that this preference constrains the public commitments and actions made by democratic leaders in international crises.

Audience costs have played a paramount role in international relations in the past decades (Levendusky and Horowitz 2012; Downes and Sechser 2012). Even limited audience costs have been shown to affect crisis bargaining (Tarar and Leventoglu 2012). However, prominent international relations scholars have recently questioned the

usefulness of the concept (Snyder and Borghard 2011; Trachtenberg 2012; Downes and Sechser 2012). In this dissertation I address these critiques and show that specifying how executive actions in times of crises interact with public expectations refines the concept of audience costs, making it applicable to types of crises not considered by previous literature.

This study bridges the gap that exists between these two types of accountability theories. By empirically identifying the preferences of domestic audiences for coercive action in times of international crises, I provide one of the first systematic tests of how both public policy preferences and preferences for consistent leaders affect democratic accountability. The coercive foreign policies I examine are the threat of military action and the imposition of economic sanctions. Thus, this research also helps connect literature that highlights the role of domestic dynamics in military and economic coercion. The theory I set forth in this dissertation thus brings together two previously unconnected strands of accountability literature and expands the applicability of the concept of audience costs to cases of economic coercion and to crises that do not pose a significant threat to national security.<sup>3</sup>

The objective of this dissertation is to examine under what circumstances democratic audiences can potentially pressure their leaders into engaging in certain coercive foreign policy responses while constraining the implementation of others. The role played by domestic audiences in fomenting coercive foreign policies has been the subject of less empirical research than the role domestic audiences play in constraining

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<sup>3</sup> The concept of audience costs was created to analyze bargaining behavior in highly salient crises and has been applied primarily to militarized disputes.

democratic leader's aggressive actions.<sup>4</sup> This dissertation will incorporate both 'push' and 'pull' forces into a theoretical framework in which constituents have different foreign policy preferences depending on how salient they perceive a crisis to be. In my model, citizens' foreign policy preferences are variable, in contrast to many international relations theories regarding the role of domestic accountability that assume that domestic audiences are intrinsically less inclined to aggressive foreign policies than their leaders (Levy 1998). Leaders' approval can increase or decrease following foreign policy responses they either enact or fail to enact (either publicly committing to a given course of foreign policy action or actually implementing it).

The dissertation proceeds as follows. In this section, I describe the role of public foreign policy preferences<sup>5</sup> in theories of international relations and clarify how I define democratic accountability. I then present recent criticisms that have been made about audience cost theory and mention how my research resolves these issues. The following section outlines my theoretical framework. It describes how public preferences for certain coercive foreign policies vary depending on how salient they perceive an international crisis to be and addresses how these preferences affect the likelihood of audience costs being paid. The methods section describes the experiments by which my

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<sup>4</sup> There is however, historical evidence of domestic audiences 'pushing' their representatives into enacting costly foreign policies. President McKinley, for instance, felt tremendous popular pressure to go to war with Spain in the 1890s (Levy 1998:152).

<sup>5</sup> The terms "preference" and "attitude" are often used indistinguishably in studies of international relations. Preferences have been defined as "the ordering of choices according to desirability" (Bueno de Mesquita 2006:704). In his famous book of foreign policy decision-making Vertzberger defines attitudes as "an ideological formation having affective and cognitive dimensions that create a disposition for a particular pattern of behavior toward specific objects or categories of objects and social situations or some combination thereof" (1990:127-8). Attitudes help shape preferences and both attitudes and preferences influence behavior.

theory was tested with a representative sample of American adults, and also cross-nationally with convenience samples in the United States and the United Kingdom. I conclude with a summary of the findings and their implications for accountability research.

### 1.1. The Public as a Unit of Analysis in International Relations

Are democratic leaders held accountable for foreign policy promises and actions? Political scientists in general and international relations scholars in particular, have underscored the central role accountability plays in democracies. It has been posited that democratic leaders will be motivated to pursue public goods instead of private ones in order to build as wide a support-base as possible and thus enhance their possibilities of re-election (Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson and Smith 2004; Chiozza and Goemans 2003; Goemans 2000). The most common form of public goods is national policies. Democratic accountability mechanisms –such as elections– motivate leaders to adopt political stances believed to best represent the preferences of their constituents, not just their personal preferences. This feature applies to both domestic and foreign policies, and in itself would make democratic regimes a normatively desirable form of government. Democratic accountability also makes democracies proceed more cautiously when selecting conflicts to engage in, relative to autocracies. Democratic leaders, in order to remain in power, are constrained from waging war when domestic audiences do not perceive such a course of action as representing their own personal preferences.

International relations theories are increasingly incorporating domestic factors to further understanding of international phenomena. The realist paradigm that viewed international politics as the product of interactions among states acting as unitary entities, driven exclusively by exterior influences, has not been able to account for important variations in conflict behavior. Focusing on the domestic dynamics that motivate leaders to initiate and maintain foreign policies allows scholars to view the end product of a set of these actions (inter-state war, economic sanctions, etc.) while analyzing the strategic considerations that lead to these outcomes. As Bueno de Mesquita states bluntly, “International relations is, simply put, a venue for politicians to gain or lose domestic political advantage. From this viewpoint, concepts such as the national interest, grand strategy, and international politics as a domain distinct from foreign and domestic calculations are troubling” (2002:8).

The prevalent theoretical perspective in international relations today highlights the importance of strategic interactions across different political realms. Theories pertaining to the initiation of military inter-state conflict, as well as theories that focus on public reactions to economic sanctions have incorporated the logic of Putnam’s ‘two-level games’ (1988) in which actions at an international level cannot be fully understood without considering domestic political factors. My research will build on these models and fill theoretical gaps regarding executive-public relations.



## 1.2. Do Audiences Even Have Foreign Policy Preferences?

For decades the overarching consensus in international relations was that public opinion was too volatile and lacking in structure and coherence to possibly have any impact on foreign policy (Holsti 1992). The popular Almond-Lippmann thesis posited that people did not possess sufficient knowledge about international affairs to have any type of preferences on foreign issues (Lippmann 1922, 1925; Almond 1950). This view started changing after the Vietnam War, and today the prevailing consensus is that democratic leaders consider public opinion when conducting foreign policy. Even Walter Lippmann changed his mind and started to view American citizens as possibly more enlightened than the American government at times (Holsti 1992).

Scholars began challenging the Almond-Lippmann thesis by showing that not only do Americans have foreign policy preferences,<sup>6</sup> but also that changes in these preferences were rationally tied to international events (Caspary 1970; Mueller 1973; Page and Shapiro 1988; Peffley and Hurwitz 1992; Jentleson 1992; Page and Shapiro 1992; Popkin 1994; but see Zaller 1992), as opposed to being random. Even if citizens do not have a thorough knowledge of international affairs (Delli-Carpini and Keeter 1996; Holsti 2004), they can form preferences based on what information is available to them. This corresponds with the famous argument posited by Anthony Downs (1957), namely that acquiring political information is a costly endeavor, and the rational choice is most frequently to consume information indirectly from a designated source like a

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<sup>6</sup> I summarize the literature addressing the specific types of foreign policy preferences citizens have in the theoretical section of this dissertation. Here I only wish to highlight that citizens do have foreign policy preferences and that these can impact foreign policy in democratic states.

media spokesperson. As noted by Holsti, “even in the absence of much factual knowledge, members of the mass public use some simple—perhaps even simplistic—heuristics in order to make sense of an increasingly complex world; a few salient criteria rather than complete information may serve as the basis of judgment” (1992:450). The use of informational shortcuts can thus allow even relatively uninformed citizens to form general foreign policy preferences (Fiske and Taylor 1984; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991; Popkin 1993). This implies that relatively uninformed voters who rely on heuristics can make the same political choice they would have made had they been in a knowledgeable position (Lau and Redlawsk 1997; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Aldrich, Gelpi, Feaver, Reifler and Sharp 2006).<sup>7</sup>

Aldrich, Sullivan and Borgida (1989) and Vavreck (2009) find that the public frequently considers foreign issues as one of the most important problems faced by the United States and that foreign policy attitudes can be consequential in presidential elections. Anand and Krosnick (2003) also find that citizens’ foreign policy attitudes affect candidate evaluation. Voters prefer candidates with whom they share foreign policy goals. This is particularly the case when candidates take a clear foreign policy

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<sup>7</sup> Some research in the American political behavior subfield questions the usefulness of heuristics and political knowledge. Lau & Redlawsk (1997) find that when people with low sophistication use heuristics as information shortcuts in political decision-making processes, their choices are more effective. On the other hand, they find that political sophisticates are worse off when they employ heuristics. Other studies show that possessing information is not a relevant factor in making political decisions. Lodge et al (1995) experimentally demonstrate that memory-based models in which political information must be stored in order to affect vote choice are flawed. They propose an on-line process, where an affective evaluation of incoming information takes place instantly. The resulting “affective tally” is what determines vote choice. Employing this mechanism would be rational, for individuals do not have to expend scarce cognitive resources storing bundles of political facts.

stance. When this does not occur audiences can often infer a candidate's position by relying on heuristics such as political ideology or party affiliation.

How do people form foreign policy preferences? Hurwitz and Peffley (1987) and Peffley and Hurwitz (1993) propose that individuals use informational shortcuts or cognitive heuristics following a hierarchical structure in which higher-level beliefs influence responses to lower-level stimuli. When exposed to specific foreign policies an individual may not know much about (such as nuclear arms policy or international trade), these are interpreted guided by general beliefs that can ameliorate the effect of missing or ambiguous information with default values so the person can reach a conjectural judgment (Taylor and Crocker 1981; Tversky and Kahneman 1981; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987). For instance, a citizen may decide whether to favor U.S. military intervention in Yemen depending on whether his general posture is isolationist or interventionist or by relying on core values such as personal views on ethnocentrism or on the morality of forceful coercion (1987:1105).

Herrmann, Tetlock and Visser (1991) draw from interactionist models popular in social psychology and posit that the decision to support military interventions is made based on both personal dispositional beliefs and the consideration of objective geopolitical calculations. They conduct a series of national experiments and find that individuals' levels of assertiveness and internationalism interact with strategic considerations such as whether American interests are at stake in a crises, the relative power of an adversary, and whether the crisis involves intra-state or inter-state borders.

Domestic audiences are more likely to acquire information of foreign affairs in times of international crises. Previous studies have focused on the role American public opinion has played in specific foreign policies such as Nicaragua (Sobel 2001) or Somalia (Klarevas 2002). Baum and Potter note that most research distinguishes between public foreign policy opinion in times of crises and in absence of a crisis. They note that, “whereas the public is typically not closely attuned to the details of international politics, crises often appear to attract public attention” (2008:44). Consequently, studying domestic public opinion of coercive foreign policies in times of international crises, as I do in this project, is of particular importance to democratic accountability.

### 1.3. Public Opinion and Coercive Foreign Policy in Democracies

A democracy is by definition the rule of the majority. As highlighted by the strategic approach to international relations, in a democracy leaders wish to stay in power, and the primary way to achieve this goal is by representing the preferences of the mass public when designing and implementing policies (Bueno de Mesquita 2006). As discussed above, numerous studies show that people have foreign policy preferences. However, exactly how these preferences affect the actual implementation of foreign policies is not as clear (Holsti 1992). We know that public preferences and foreign policies tend to correlate with one another (see for instance Kusnitz 1984; Monroe 1979, 1998). What we don’t know is the direction of the causal arrow here. Some scholars propose that foreign policy elites frame their foreign policy decisions in a way that makes them amenable to the public and thus gain popular support for them. Others posit

that public opinion has the power to influence policy, either by audiences punishing foreign policy failures and rewarding successes, or by having leaders select foreign policies in anticipation of public opinion. Previous research supports both points of view.

On the one hand, research has highlighted the preponderant role elites play in framing national involvement in international affairs, particularly in times of international crises. These theories emphasize the process via which individuals learn about the implementation of coercive foreign policies. Unlike other policy arenas in which individuals have access to different information sources, foreign policy is an area in which they necessarily 'hold the short end of the stick' information-wise, at least in the initial stages of intervention (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960; Iyengar and Simon 1993; Baum 2004b; Baum and Potter 2008; but see Baum 2002; Aldrich, Gelpi, Feaver, Reifler and Sharp 2006; Baum and Groeling 2010). Individuals learn about the costs associated with coercive foreign policies in a highly politicized domestic context. Communicating issues necessarily involves frames; otherwise, people would turn on their television sets and see nothing but raw data. Framing implies "that leaders introduce organizing themes into the policy debate that affect how the public views a political issue" (Geva, Astorino-Courtois and Mintz 1996:361). Governments can influence media frames in an attempt to draw popular support for their policy objectives (Mermin 1997; Robinson 2000; Entman 2003; Berinsky and Kinder 2006; but see Roberts 1993; Mandelbaum 1996). Some have posited that elite framing can push voters to support certain policies by changing their attitudes even if their underlying beliefs

remain intact (Boettcher and Cobb 2009:682). Others have taken matters further, stating that the U.S. executive “lead members of the public to assume false beliefs in support of his position” (Kull, Ramsay and Lewis 2004: 596) during the Iraq war.

However, there is a limit to the effect elite framing can have on domestic audiences. Boettcher and Cobb (2009) conclude that only those initially willing to support military intervention in Iraq became more willing to incur increasing casualties when elites framed these as investments. Long-lasting ties like partisanship can outweigh the effects new information about casualties or the achievement of wartime goals can have on individuals’ support for war, regardless of how they are framed (Berinsky 2007). Jordan and Page (1992) find that only popular presidents can sway the public into supporting their foreign policies.

On the other hand, numerous studies support the notion that the casual arrow can be reversed: the public does influence policy-making. Baum and Potter (2008) note that scholars have recently begun to consider public opinion as a constraint for foreign policy that politicians need to consider. Studies have shown that candidates who campaign on foreign policy issues can gain votes by representing popular preferences. Aldrich, Sullivan and Borgida (1989) show that foreign policy issues had a significant effect on more than half the U.S. Presidential elections between 1952 and 1984. Bartels (1991) finds that public opinion has a significant effect on a broad array of national defense spending matters. Page and Shapiro (1983) show that 62% of the time public opinion has an effect on subsequent changes in foreign policy. Aldrich, Gelpi, Feaver, Reifler and Sharp (2006) claim that people’s foreign policy preferences influence how they vote in

democratic elections, and this forces policy-makers to take into account how the public will react to proposed foreign policies before implementing them. Evidence of foreign policies affecting Presidential approval and vote choice in Presidential elections was found after the American bombing of Libya in 1986 (Peffley, Langley and Goidel 1995) and during the Iraq war (Gelpi, Reifler and Feaver 2007; Campbell 2004; Karol and Miguel 2007).

Exactly how might public foreign policy preferences constrain actual policies? One option has been proposed by Nincic and Hinckley (1991). They study the discrepancy between political science theories, which posit that foreign policy stances do not affect vote choice, and the empirical regularity that candidates do devote considerable time and effort to making their foreign policy preferences known (with speeches and also by seemingly timing foreign policy actions right before an election) (Nincic 1990). They suggest a two-step process through which public preferences and democratic candidates' foreign policy stances affect voting behavior. In the first step, "the voters' evaluations of a candidate's performance or position on external affairs influence the *overall* impression that the public has of the candidate. In a second stage, the voters' *electoral* decisions are guided by the overall impression, even if a direct link between policies and vote is not easily established<sup>8</sup>" (1991: 335). This two-stage process would explain why previous studies have failed to find a direct link between foreign policy stances and vote choice.

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<sup>8</sup> Italics in the original text.

Some evidence supports the constraining effect public opinion can have on coercive foreign policies. Public opinion can influence when interventionist policies are implemented (Sobel 2001). As noted by Baum in the Somalia crisis, preoccupation with a possible public backlash prior to the presidential election “inhibited President Bush from launching a large-scale U.S. intervention prior to November 1992, while reduced public scrutiny after the November election removed this important barrier to intervention” (2004b: 189). Nincic (1988), Russett (1990), and Trager and Vavreck (2011) find that public opinion can help keep coercive foreign policies in balance because domestic audiences prefer hawkish policies when the executive is dovish and conservative ones when the President is a liberal (and vice-versa). For Aldrich, Gelpi, Feaver, Reifler and Sharp (2006), the way foreign policy was conducted in Lebanon and Somalia shows that, “the elite perception of public opinion can have a profound impact on foreign policy. The widespread assumption of public casualty aversion that flowed from these experiences also shaped American foreign policy in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo” (2006: 492).

Finding conclusive evidence of public opinion preceding and actually influencing foreign policy is no easy task. While analyzing studies addressing President Reagan’s covert intervention in Nicaragua, Holsti (1992) notes that foreign policy elites tried to foment public support for an intervention aimed at aiding the rebels, but such efforts were unsuccessful (Sobel 1989). He asks, “would the Reagan administration have intervened more directly or more massively in Nicaragua or El Salvador in the absence of such attitudes?” (1992: 453). Analyses of counterfactuals can of course not provide



robust evidence of public opinion influencing whether foreign policy actions are carried out covertly or overtly. However, such an analyses seems logically plausible.

Before concluding this section I must note that some scholars of international relations posit that no relationship exists between public foreign policy preferences and elections or actual foreign policy decisions.<sup>9</sup> Evidence exists supporting the notion that public opinion has no effect in constraining foreign policy (Lipset 1966; Cohen 1973; LaFeber 1977; Levering 1978; Paterson 1979; Graebner 1983; Holsti 1992). Miller and Stokes (1963) find that although public opinion influenced Congress's civil rights positions, a comparable effect of public foreign policy preferences was lacking. Others find that foreign policy preferences affect vote choice only when foreign affairs have unusually prevalent domestic effects (Hess and Nelson 1985). Arena (2008) argues that the role of democratic accountability in military foreign policies has been overstated, as leaders will only be held accountable when domestic political opposition exists. Jacobs and Page (2005) question previous research linking public opinion and foreign policy by noting that, "in our analyses, a very strong bivariate relationship between public opinion and the preferences of policy makers crumbled away almost completely when we included data on organized interests and experts in multivariate regressions" (2005: 121).

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<sup>9</sup> For realists and neorealists responsiveness to public opinion should normatively be avoided as it can be detrimental for national security (Lippmann 1955; Aldrich, Gelpi, Feaver, Reifler and Sharp 2006; Jacobs and Shapiro 1999).

#### 1.4. Executive Approval and Accountability in Democracies

Accountability refers to the link between constituents (their preferences) and their representatives (their actions). Accountability mechanisms present in democracies imply that political leaders who act in ways that do not represent constituents' preferences can be punished. How exactly do domestic audiences punish leaders? Traditionally, international relations theories have focused on the most dramatic form of punishment – voting a leader out of office (Anderson 2007).<sup>10</sup> However, recent empirical studies have lowered this threshold, both for punishing democratic leaders in general, as well as for the particular case of audience costs. Any substantive decline in executive approval can constitute a case of a leader being punished. Snyder and Borghard (2011) note that a substantive decline in executive approval generated by a leader backing down from a threat can undermine her political effectiveness and consequently should count as a case of audience costs. Voeten and Brewer (2006) also believe that approval ratings are important beyond elections in their study of the Iraq war. They highlight that democratic executives require public support not only to begin a war but also to continue fighting it.

Quantitative studies have demonstrated that a significant correlation exists between approval for an incumbent executive and her share of the presidential vote (Sigelman 1979) and also between executive approval and votes for the incumbent's political party (Lewis-Beck and Rice 1982; Brody and Sigelman 1983; Nincic and Hinckley 1991). Nincic and Hinckley find that, “for every 2% increase in a president's approval, one can expect a nearly 1% increase in the presidential vote” (1991:337).

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<sup>10</sup> I must note that accountability in studies of comparative politics usually refers to continuous political representation, not being reduced to elections (Taylor-Robinson 2010).

In this study, I measure executive approval and assume a decline in approval for the executive indicates that domestic audiences are punishing their leader. Assuming that an increase in executive approval corresponds with heightened popular support and that a decrease in approval is equivalent to punishing the executive (or to holding her accountable) has become customary in experimental studies of audience costs (Tomz 2007; Trager and Vavreck 2011; Levendusky and Horowitz 2012).

### 1.5. Addressing Recent Audience Costs Critiques

Audience costs constitute an important element of many theories of accountability in international relations. A vast literature has highlighted that democratic leaders have a bargaining advantage in international crises because when they make a military threat it is credible as backing down can trigger a loss of domestic support denominated audience costs. In the words of Downes and Sechser, audience costs are “one of the most widely accepted theoretical propositions in international relations scholarship” (2012:41). However, the concept has recently been the target of serious critiques issued by prominent scholars of international relations.

Downes and Sechser (2012) claim that audience costs theory has been predominantly tested with data that is inadequate for such purpose. A disconnect has occurred because a theory about the effects of international threats has been principally tested with the Militarized Interstate Disputes (MID) and the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) datasets. According to their estimations, inter-state threats constitute approximately 9% of the MID data and 15% of the ICB data (2012:13). They correctly

note that, “to test audience cost theory, one therefore needs a dataset of coercive threats so that threats issued by democracies and non-democracies can be compared. While this may seem obvious, it actually implies that many high-profile international conflicts should be excluded when testing the theory” (2012:5). Examples of international episodes that were not preceded by demands include high-stakes conflicts such as North Korea invading South Korea in 1950, as well as countless low-level cross-border raids and minor troop movements. They highlight that, “hypotheses about the outcomes of threats cannot be evaluated with historical events in which no threats were issued” (2012:5). They replicate influential analyses conducted by Schultz (2001) and Gelpi and Griesdorf (2001) with a new dataset of 194 interstate compellent threats issued between 1918 and 2001. Results do not support audience costs theory.

They conclude their study by asking, “If voters do indeed frown upon democratic leaders who renege on threats, as several studies have found (Tomz 2007; Levendusky and Horowitz 2102), why do they not appear to make democratic threats more effective?” (2012:41). They list several possible answers to this puzzle, suggesting that perhaps audience costs are not unique to democracies or that audience costs can be minimized by employing certain elite frames (as Levendusky and Horowitz 2012 effectively confirm). My dissertation answers this puzzle differently: I propose that audience costs are alive and well but predict they will only operate when leaders’ threats represent the foreign policy preferences of their constituents.

Other scholars have posited similar arguments, most recently Trachtenberg (2012) and Snyder and Borghard (2011). These authors highlight the importance of

considering that audience costs might or might not be paid depending on other domestic considerations and illustrate their claims using case studies. Trachtenberg notes that there is at least one clear historical case in which domestic audiences would have punished their governments for *not* backing down on a threat. Given the general reluctance of Europeans to risk going to war, if the French and the British governments would have followed through on threats to take action against Germany if Hitler remilitarized the Rhineland in March of 1936, they would have probably lost upcoming elections (2012:47).

Snyder and Borghard (2011) claim that audience costs are rare among other things because “domestic audiences understandably care more about policy substance than about consistency between the leader’s words and deeds. Where these criteria are in conflict, punishment is more likely to be doled out for an unpopular policy than for a failure to carry out a threat” (2011:455). They claim that, “audience costs are most likely to arise as a second-order complication when public opinion already has hawkish preferences and pushes the democratic leader to make a committing threat” (2011:452-3).

I complement these findings with the research presented in this dissertation. I provide a theory that specifies when domestic audiences will prefer economic or military coercion and posit that we can predict when audience costs will be paid by examining the salience of an international crises and popular expectations for national action. I conduct the first experimental test of a proposition that integrates public preferences and reactions to executive inconsistency in democracies. The following section presents my

theoretical framework and the hypotheses derived from it that I tested nationally and cross-nationally.

## 2. THEORY

In this section I present my theoretical framework, the assumptions it builds on, and the hypotheses derived from it. These assumptions are grounded on existing literature. Therefore, before describing my framework, I present three brief literature reviews. These reviews show that public foreign policy preferences and the reactions of domestic audiences to executive inconsistency play a role in democratic accountability. The first review summarizes work on domestic accountability that examines the representation of constituents' policy preferences in military confrontations. The second review also addresses how constituents' preferences influence international affairs, but this time regarding supporting or opposing economic coercion. The third literature review describes the international relations literature that posits that citizens prefer consistent leaders and make inconsistent ones pay audience costs. After concluding this review, I present my theoretical framework.

My framework includes two sets of novel hypotheses derived from my theory as well as one hypothesis that replicates of Tomz's 2007 audience costs argument. My framework provides a general explanation of public support (or lack thereof) in times of international crises by focusing on the interaction that occurs between public policy preferences and the executive's consistent or inconsistent actions. Before evaluating the interaction that occurs between these variables I will assess the role of each one

individually both here as well as in the subsequent empirical sections. This is the reason why I include a replication of Tomz's hypothesis.

The theoretical problem this dissertation addresses is the lack of consensus that exists in the field regarding the specific role constituents' preferences can potentially play in fomenting or constraining coercive foreign policies in democracies. The objective of the theory presented here is to specify the role public policy preferences and executive inconsistencies play in democratic accountability regarding coercive foreign policies. That is, I seek to examine under what conditions domestic audiences will reward or punish democratic leaders for their foreign policy behavior in times of international crises. To answer this question I first theorize about what affects public preferences for military and economic coercion. I then examine how these policy preferences influence when approval for democratic leaders will increase or decrease for not following through on threats of military or economic coercion.

My theory is a parsimonious alternative to previous theories of accountability because it is not constrained to salient crises (as theories of audience costs inherently are) or to cases of military or economic coercion. It constitutes one of the first systematic attempts to examine public preferences for two common types of policies enacted in times of international crises: military interventions and economic sanctions. My theory thereby addresses current criticisms of the audience costs concept (Trachtenberg 2012; Synder and Borghard 2011). These criticisms question the usefulness of a concept that ignores how the compatibility between public preferences and the coercive threats made by the executive can influence when executive inconsistency will be punished.



The theory presented here brings together theories of accountability that focus on the public's policy preferences and theories of audience costs. In doing so, I expand the applicability of the concept of audience costs to cases of economic coercion. My unique contribution is to present a theory that predicts when domestic audiences will prefer economic or military coercion and when audience costs will be paid or avoided following executive inconsistency in these policy domains.

## 2.1. Literature Review

### 2.1.1. The Public's Policy Preferences in Military Interventions

The realist paradigm, in which states were the primary unit of analysis, has given way to a growing scholarly focus on the influences of domestic political factors on the onset and duration of international conflict. Most international relations research examining the causes of war and peace currently include variables assessing domestic factors such as regime type, political institutions and popular preferences. Scholars initially developed diversionary theory models according to which unpopular leaders would initiate inter-state conflicts in order to increase their popularity at home (the so-called 'rally-around-the-flag' phenomenon). "The literature suggests that leaders adopt scapegoating as a rational instrument of policy to advance their interests, while publics respond on the basis of symbolic and emotional appeals, as explained by the in-group/out-group hypothesis" (Levy 1998:155). Empirical support for these theories has been mixed (Levy 1998; Chiozza and Goemans 2003).

Scholars have studied whether democratic accountability mechanisms like elections provide leaders with a motivation to act in accordance to constituents' interests. When a political leader is acting in a way that does not reflect the preferences of those she supposedly represents, domestic constituents can hold her accountable and potentially vote her out of office (Anderson 2007). Scholars in this group focus on the effects political regime type could have in fomenting or constraining the initiation of warfare (Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995; Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson and Smith 1999). It has been posited that democratic leaders, due to their motivation to remain in office, enact foreign policies (including waging war) that they anticipate broad sectors of the population will support.

While Bueno de Mesquita and his collaborators focus on the effects institutional elements have on the onset of military conflict, other scholars interested in the accountability constraints present in democracies have underlined the importance of normative factors. These arguments can be traced to Kant and claim that "political culture [democratic] and political norms constitute images that a state transmits to its external environment" (Maoz and Russett 1993:625). These models assume that democratic values, such as tolerance and a high regard for peace, inhibit the escalation of crises between pairs of democratic nations into full-fledged warfare. Observational empirical studies support both the role of normative and institutional factors in preventing war in democratic dyads (Maoz and Russett 1993; Oneal, Russett and Berbaum 2003).

Scholars have also studied the public's tendency to prefer supporting specific military objectives. Jentleson (1992) and Jentleson and Britton's (1998) theory highlights how domestic audiences have a tendency to prefer supporting certain types of military interventions while opposing others, thus offering a comprehensive theory of citizen reaction in times of armed conflict. In their model, public support for U.S. military interventions abroad is influenced by the principal policy objective for which military might is being employed. They pose that humanitarian interventions (designed to provide relief after widespread disasters, such as the U.S. intervention in Somalia) and foreign policy restraint objectives (designed to coerce an opponent who was aggressively acting against U.S. national interests or citizens –e.g. most Cold War era interventions) receive higher levels of support than military action seeking internal political change. However, they posit that for every crisis the principal policy objective will not monotonically affect public opinion, highlighting how audiences and leaders interact. In his 1992 paper (before humanitarian interventions were added as a foreign policy objective), Jentleson comments that, "Public support will not necessarily just be there; it must be cultivated and evoked through effective presidential leadership. But this evoking is far more likely to succeed when the principal policy objective is foreign policy restraint, even in the face of significant risks" (1992:71).

Research that examines the effects of specific popular preferences on state behavior in ongoing disputes also includes Koch and Sullivan (2010) and Huth and Alle (2002). Koch and Sullivan focus on how institutional settings within democracies can affect political leaders' decision to end a military conflict. Democratic citizens are

generally considered as being casualty adverse, and empirical evidence tends to support this claim (Nincic and Nincic 1995; Gartner, Segura and Wilkening 1997; Gartner, Segura and Barratt 2004; Gartner and Segura 1998, 2000; Koch and Gartner 2005; Karol and Miguel 2007; Kriner and Shen 2007; Gartner 2008). Others have stated that while democratic citizens are casualty adverse, how preponderant this preference will be in determining support for military interventions is conditioned by policy objectives being met (Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler 2005). The question for Koch and Gartner (2005) becomes under which circumstances institutional arrangements, such as district separation and the number of political parties, affect legislators' actions in anticipation of being held accountable by constituents if they fail to oppose a costly war.

Huth and Alle's (2002) political accountability model is unique in that they consider specific crises in which domestic audiences' preferences could actually push democratic leaders into war. They claim that, in ethnic conflicts, "democratic leaders will face particularly strong pressures from domestic opposition groups and public opinion to take forceful initiatives to challenge the status quo and support their ethnic conationals" (2002:761). They later add that, "for democratic leaders, the domestic political costs of diplomatic and military inaction in such circumstances are greater, and thus they are actually more likely to consider initiating and escalating military threats and to adopt unyielding positions in negotiations" (2002:762). In my model I build upon this notion of the public's expectations playing a primordial role in motivating democratic representatives into coercive foreign policy options and therefore in the onset of armed conflict.

Thus far accountability theories regarding audience's policy preferences have generally been tested with observational empirical analyzes.<sup>11</sup> Research has focused primarily on studying the behavior of nation-states and individual leaders. What is missing is an examination of when constituents will prefer specific coercive policy options such as military action or the imposition of economic sanctions in times of international crises. I now discuss the role domestic support for economic sanctions can play in fomenting or constraining the implementation of economic coercion.

#### 2.1.2. The Public's Policy Preferences in Economic Coercion

Economic sanctions are defined as a foreign policy action that seeks "to lower the aggregate economic welfare of a target state by reducing international trade in order to coerce the target government to change its political behavior" (Pape 1997:93-4). The puzzle regarding economic sanctions is that their use has risen exponentially since World War I (Bienen and Gilpin 1980; Pape 1997; Drury 2001) while a growing consensus in the international relations literature is that they are not effective in modifying state behavior (Hufbauer, Schott, Elliot, and Oegg 2008; Pape 1997). According to Pape, "sanctions have been successful less than 5 percent of the time" (1997:106).

Scholars have solved this puzzle by shifting their attention from whether economic sanctions are instrumentally effective (that is, do they achieve policy changes in the target state) to whether they provide some other positive benefit for the leaders

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<sup>11</sup> A noteworthy exemption is Gartner (2008), who experimentally examines the role of mounting casualties in public support for armed conflict.

enacting them. One such benefit is the symbolic function of sanctions (Galtung 1967; Barber 1979; Daoudi and Dajani 1983; Nincic and Wallenstein 1983; Eland 1995; Whang 2011). According to this view, the imposition of economic sanctions functions as a signal of disapproval for policies being carried out by the target state. Economic sanctions are thus frequently employed when target states are engaging in policies that general audiences in the sender state might dislike and disapprove of.

Sanction signals can be aimed at either international or domestic audiences. As noted by Dorussen and Mo, “sanctions are at the same time tools in international bargaining and part of domestic politics” (2001:396). Whang (2011) studies how domestic audiences react to sanction signals and finds that, “the initiation of sanctions tends to improve future public opinion regarding the incumbent leader’s job performance. On average, the imposition of sanctions tends to result in a 3.301% increase in the approval rating in the following month” (2011:18).

Audiences can either constrain or compel state leaders to employ economic sanctions. An example of the latter is when “there have been public outcries for action, one of the most notable being the demand for harsher economic sanctions against apartheid South Africa” (Drury 2001:490). When domestic audiences have such clear preferences, more likely than not it will be in the interest of national leaders to act accordingly, particularly democratic ones. “Democratic leaders know they hold a precarious and competitive position, requiring constant effort to curry public favor” (Allen 2005:118).

For Allen (2005) both military and economic foreign policy actions are two-level games in which domestic constraints influence the behavior of state leaders at the international level. She applies the bargaining dynamics commonly employed in the militarized literature to better understand inter-state behavior regarding economic sanctions. Two or more actors are disputing a given good, which can be a tangible good such as territory or an intangible one such as a policy, the target state has enacted that the sender state disapproves of. Although each actor would prefer to avoid the costs associated with economic sanctions, if these are imposed it is because the sender state believes her opponent will have to pay higher costs than she and will therefore yield to her demands regarding the distribution of the disputed good. If this is the case and the opponent yields, the use of economic sanctions was successful. However, if this does not occur and after a determined period of time the sender state decides she is no longer willing to pay the costs she herself is paying by imposing sanctions, these will be lifted and their use would be considered a failure. For Allen the key determinant that leads to a successful or a failed outcome relates to the domestic politics of both the sender and the target states. Regarding the sender state, domestic accountability links between the executive and those she represents determine when economic sanctions are to be lifted: “leadership change in the sender state will increase the likelihood that sanctions will end in concession by the sender state. New leaders want to choose policies that will enhance their ability to stay in power. Those policies should be in line with their supporters. A different coalition of supporters will likely support different policies” (2005:126).

Thus, accountability mechanisms can play an important role in the termination of economic sanctions that have already been enacted. According to Drury (2001), domestic factors also influence the decision to implement these sanctions: The president seems to prefer starting a sanctioning policy when his approval is high. Since sanctions can have a negative effect, especially on business trading with the target country, the president will be more at ease employing them when he has the political capacity to withstand a domestic backlash (2001:504).

Economic sanctions may not only increase presidential approval ratings, they may also decrease them. Dorussen and Mo (2001) claim that accountability mechanisms can contribute to make economic sanctions a more useful bargaining tool. Since democratic leaders have to respond to domestic institutions, it will not be in their best interest to impose sanctions in the international arena (which will necessarily have domestic effects) without due consideration of the effects these sanctions will have at home. The two-level game democratic leaders are engaged in therefore implies that they will only commit to imposing sanctions when they are relatively certain they will stick to them for a determined period of time. Ending sanctions is a bargaining situation where actors, “have taken actions that partially commit them to a bargaining position. Audience costs can make revoking the commitment costly [...] given the audience costs, the sender prefers to remain with sanctions for domestic reasons as long as the target refuses to yield sufficiently on the disputed policy” (2001:403).

When scholars of economic coercion use the term ‘audience costs’ they are frequently not referring to the same phenomena described in studies of militarized



disputes. In military literature the term is used to describe domestic dynamics that occur at a threat level, whereas in studies of economic sanctions it is usually employed to describe domestic political costs a leader may pay when lifting sanctions that have actually been implemented. One notable exception is Martin (1993). She highlights the role audience costs play when a state is imposing sanctions and wishes to encourage other states to cooperate by imposing sanctions against the same target. She notes that, “one mechanism by which the leading sender can establish a commitment involves increasing the audience costs that it will bear for renegeing on their threats or promises. The leading sender can increase audience costs on either domestic or international level by building a coalition in support of stringent sanctions” (1993: 431).

Before concluding this section, I must mention that some authors have warned against the potential pitfalls of studying the effects of economic sanctions employing natural variance data. Lacy and Niou (2004) point out that studies of sanctions that examine the cases in which these were actually implemented are omitting the most successful cases in which the threat of sanctions was enough to modify the policies of another state. “Economic sanctions are likely to be imposed when they are not likely to succeed in changing the target’s behavior. Sanctions that are likely to succeed will do so at the mere threat of sanctions” (2004:25).

In sum, international scholars have addressed how democratic leaders employing economic sanctions will likely consider the preferences of their domestic audiences before implementing sanctions, as well as when considering terminating them. They

have also made theoretical distinctions between the actual implementation of sanctions and the threat to use them.

### 2.1.3. The Public's Preference for Consistent Leaders in Military Interventions

International relations scholars have proposed that at an international level leaders engaging in pre-war bargaining processes have incentives to appear highly resolved about not backing down if their claims are not met. Both strong and weak types of states will be motivated to signal to their opponent that they are strong, that is, that engaging in war is not excessively costly for them and that they are resolved to follow through (Fearon 1995). This motivates them to publicly commit to harsh courses of action, including waging war, if their opponent does not yield. Committing publicly makes leader's threats credible because international opponents know that when a politician breaks a public promise she faces potential backlash at home. This accountability link existent in democratic regimes makes their threats more credible than the ones made by autocracies.

Putman's two-level games and (1988) and Schelling's nuclear deterrence studies (1960, 1966) provided some of the strategic insights Fearon later incorporated into his theory. Putman's logic of two-level games implies that the classical realist/neorealist 'state as a unitary actor' assumption can be abandoned, taking instead strategic interactions as the unit of analyses (Lake and Powell 1999). One level of the 'game' corresponds to international politics, whereas the other corresponds to domestic level politics. Understanding that the actions of state leaders occur at both levels implies that

behavior that could have previously been labeled as 'irrational,' can now be seen as beneficial for national representatives. As noted by Putnam, "the unusual complexity of this two-level game is that moves that are rational for a player at one board (such as raising energy prices, conceding territory, or limiting auto imports) may be impolitic for that same player at the other board" (1988:434).

Schelling set out to explain how weapons as deadly as nuclear ones could be used in international confrontations. Nuclear threats are hardly credible when one's opponent also has nuclear capacity, for mutual annihilation is at stake. Schelling's revolutionary work tackled how to make a credible threat out of an incredible one. Counter-intuitively, he advocated limiting the number of actions one's nation could incur in. This would make it clear to the opponent that the bargaining range no longer included their preferred sets of outcomes. The arsenal of ways in which options could be surrendered included making executive public commitments that could "tie one's hands" at the negotiating table. This consists of creating "a bargaining position by public statements, statements calculated to arouse a public opinion that permits no concessions to be made. If a binding public opinion can be cultivated and made evident to the other side, the initial position can thereby be made visibly 'final'" (1960:28).

International relations scholars have conducted formal (Fearon 1997; Smith 1998; Guisinger and Smith 2002) and observational empirical studies (Partell and Palmer 1999; Schultz 1999, 2001; Gelpi and Griesdorf 2001; Eyerman and Hart 1996; Gaubatz 1996) highlighting the beneficial positions democratic states would have relative to autocratic ones when it comes to credibly signaling resolve in an international

dispute. Experimental studies assessing the effects of executive inconsistency on presidential approval ratings have also been employed. Tomz's (2007) experiment demonstrates that democratic constituents punish their leaders for backing down mostly out of concern for national reputation, as well as for the personal credibility of their leader abroad. Trager and Vavreck (2011) find that even when experimental participants learn that U.S. involvement in an inter-state war yielded 4,000 military casualties and furthermore, that the U.S. did *not* achieve the objective that motivated it to intervene in the first place, audiences will punish backing down in the pre-war stage. In their experiment the president's approval rating after fighting an unsuccessful war stays at 40%, whereas the ratings of a president that publicly commits to war then backs down plummet to 24%. Levendusky and Horowitz (2012) focus on domestic factors, examining the effects partisanship, partisan elites and executive justifications have on "audience costs." They find that inconsistency is not punished when the action is framed as being a consequence of new information and backing down is presented as being in the national interest.

Clare (2007) and Baum (2004a) have underscored the importance the salience of a conflict has in determining whether a leader will pay audience costs for being inconsistent. Clare posits that the public will only punish inconsistent leaders when an international conflict is salient enough and tests his theory by observing whether intra-dyad threat reciprocation took place in salient and non-salient crises (he does not include any measure of public opinion). For Baum the president determines if a crisis is salient. He advises executives to avoid making an international issue salient by issuing a foreign

policy threat that would make otherwise inattentive audiences pay attention to a crisis they would have otherwise ignored. If the president avoids making a crisis salient, audience costs can be avoided were the executive to back down after delivering a threat. Executives will almost certainly have more to lose than to gain by making international threats as audiences tend to assume presidents know how to conduct foreign policy. They can either display competency people a-priori assumed they had or destroy that competent image. Baum concludes that U.S. presidents will generally only benefit by “going public” and making their military intervention intentions known when significant national interests are at stake in an international conflict (as does Clare 2007). Otherwise, U.S. leaders will have more to lose than to gain by publicly committing to a course of action.

Although presidential statements can undoubtedly increase an issue’s saliency, and at times effectively trigger public attentiveness, my framework is more in line with the current debate regarding the so-called “CNN effect.”<sup>12</sup> The “CNN effect” states that although governmental signals are very important for citizens, media outlets can also motivate individuals to follow a given conflict attentively. I relax the assumption that audiences rely exclusively on executive cues, which allows domestic audiences to have expectations regarding national foreign policy without being cued by the executive (Slantchev 2006).

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<sup>12</sup> Researchers that study the relationship between media exposure of humanitarian crises and foreign policy interventions use the label ‘CNN effect’ to refer to cases in which “emotive news coverage of suffering people appeared to drive intervention” (Robinson 2000:613).

In sum, existing literature suggests that public preferences exist regarding both military action and the imposition of economic sanctions. These preferences can play an important role in constraining or fomenting the implementation of these coercive foreign policies. Additionally, we know that executive inconsistency matters. Its effect on domestic support has been studied primarily in military disputes and has been limited to salient crises.

What is missing regarding public preferences in military and economic coercion is predicting when audiences will support the implementation of these policies, as well as specifying how these preferences influence the effect acting consistently or inconsistently has on support for the executive. Public policy preferences are not static; they vary according to how salient domestic audiences perceive an international crisis to be. The theory I present here specifies the effect the perceived salience of an international crisis has in determining public preferences and predicts how these preferences will affect support for democratic executives. By identifying how public policy preferences and preferences for consistent executives interact in times of international crises I am contributing to accountability research.

## 2.2. A Framework of Domestic Accountability in International Relations

### 2.2.1. Assumptions

Accountability refers to the link between constituents' preferences and the actions of their representatives (Anderson 2007). This is the focus of my theory. Similar to the theories presented in the literature review above, my theory rejects the

realist/neorealist assumption that states are unitary actors. Instead, my theory rests on two assumptions pertaining to the connection that exists between public opinion and foreign policies in democracies. These assumptions are as follows:

***(A) Public Preferences play a role in the Foreign Policies of Democratic States.***

Previous studies have shown that members of the public have preferences, and that these preferences can affect how leaders conduct foreign policy. As evidenced in the literature review, public preferences for military and economic coercion, as well as for consistent leaders, can play an important role in democracies. Although there is no consensus regarding the extent to which democratic leaders consider public opinion when designing and implementing policies, research in the field suggests this assumption is a tenable one to make.

***(B) Executive Approval Matters in Democracies.*** Executive approval matters due to the accountability mechanisms present in democracies. I assume that executive approval matters in democracies, even beyond elections. I assume that democratic leaders care about approval lasting through their tenure in office, as it facilitates dealings with Congress and can help keep strong challengers at bay. Research in the field suggests this assumption is a tenable one to make, as endogenous models of international relations find that constituents can decrease approval for an executive over a broad array of policies.

### 2.2.2. Theory

The objective of the theory presented here is to specify the role constituents' preferences can potentially play in fomenting or constraining coercive foreign policies in democracies. My theory builds on the assumptions presented above. If one assumes that public preferences play a role in the foreign policies of democratic states we can investigate what influences preferences for coercive foreign policies in times of international crises. In my first hypothesis (presented below) I propose that the perceived salience of an international crisis will determine public policy preferences. In turn, these public preferences will affect support for democratic executives in times of crises.

Regarding my second assumption, if one assumes that executive approval matters beyond immediate elections, it becomes necessary to examine how approval can increase or decrease in times as trying as international crises. In democracies accountability mechanisms such as elections imply that citizens' approval or disapproval of the executive plays an important role. The third set of hypotheses presented here specifies how public policy preferences will affect whether executive inconsistency leads to a drop in executive approval in times of crises.

#### 2.2.2.1. The Role of Salience

The public's general preference for active executives that issue threats is qualified by an important factor: the salience of the international crisis at hand. I propose that the salience of an international crisis will determine domestic audiences' preferences for national action. The importance of the saliency of international events has been



previously noted in the audience costs literature (Baum 2004a, Clare 2007). However, the field lacks a shared definition clarifying what constitutes a salient crisis. Most scholars of international relations do not provide a conceptual definition of the term in their work, even when it is pivotal to their theories, as is the case of Baum (2004a) and Clare (2007).

I define an international crisis as salient when it threatens national security. Ullman provides a definition of a national security threat that highlights the effects such a threat will have at an individual-level. His definition of a national security threat, which emphasizes the ability of an event to affect the lives of individuals, is appropriate for this study as I am focusing on individual-level reactions to foreign policy matters. Ullman defines a national security threat as, “an action or a sequence of events that (1) threatens drastically and over a relatively brief period of time to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state, or (2) threatens significantly to narrow the range of policy choices available to a state or to private, non-governmental entities (persons, groups, corporations) within the state” (1983:133).<sup>13</sup> In my framework, domestic audiences will consider an inter-state crisis that takes place abroad as salient when national security or economic interests are threatened.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> This is only one of many different definitions of national security threats. As noted by Levy, the term is “flexible enough to mean almost anything one wishes” (1995:37). Many definitions are narrower. Haftendorn for instance, limits her definition to military threats or to the possibility of a nation being overthrown or attacked (1991). Although Ullman’s definition is not regularly used in mainstream security studies (Levy 1995), it has been employed in studies that examine the links between security and broader issues such as the environment (Gleick 1991; Homer-Dixon 1991; Myers 1993; Romm 1993).

<sup>14</sup> As noted in the “Introduction to Empirics” section, the experiments conducted with student samples in the U.S. and the U.K. mention that national economic and security interests are at stake in salient crises (following Tomz 2007). The experiment conducted with the representative sample of American adults does not mention a threat to the national economy in salient scenarios. I believe this new manipulation improved the experiment even if it differs from previous experiments of audience costs. As noted by a

Unless an international crisis directly threatens a state's territory, there is often a considerable divergence of opinion regarding the extent to which a crisis presents a threat to the nation's security. Variation can be the result of how broadly individuals construe the notion of national security; for example it is increasingly common to hear environmental or resource issues defined as matters of national security (Ullman 1983, Levy 1995). Leaders and political elites can influence media frames in an attempt to draw popular support for their policy objectives (Mermin 1997; Robinson 2000; Entman 2003; Kull, Ramsay and Lewis 2004; Berinsky and Kinder 2006; Boettcher and Cobb 2009; Perla 2011; but see Roberts 1993; Mandelbaum 1996). What both of these factors highlight is the fundamentally perceptual nature of salience. There is no single, shared concept of national interest, or of what makes an issue or a crisis event salient. Rather, individuals' prior beliefs, combined with the framing of an issue by leaders and the media, play a role in determining whether a crisis will be perceived as salient or not.

While questions of how individuals perceive national security, or determine the salience of international crises are intriguing, they do not pertain to my theory. My theory focuses on whether the public will support the executive or indicate they disapprove of her performance in the context of a crisis perceived by them as either salient or not salient. That is, my theory applies to cases where the salience of a crisis has already been determined. The salience of a crisis affects whether individuals feel threatened. This state has both emotional and cognitive implications. Emotionally, individuals will be more likely to prefer policies they would have not preferred in

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committee member, confounding a threat to national security with a threat to national economic interests was problematic as they could work in opposite directions.

absence of a threat if they feel these policies can increase their personal security (Davis and Silver 2004). Cognitively, issue salience determines whether an international crisis will become prominent to an individual, influencing how much attention is paid to it. The more attention we pay to something, the greater influence it will have in our judgment (Taylor and Fiske 1975, 1978; Vertzberger 1990; Kunda 1999). Davis and Silver (2004) and Huddy, Feldman, Taber and Lahav (2005) find that threat levels can make domestic audiences support harsh policies they would otherwise find unacceptable. For the specific case of terrorism, they state that, “a heightened sense of threat releases people from standing decisions, habits, and ideological predispositions, then people may rely less on social norms protective civil liberties and come to favor increased governmental efforts to combat terrorism” (2004:30). Thus, when answering the question—under which circumstances will domestic audiences reward or penalize leaders accountable for foreign policies— it is pivotal to consider how salient a crisis is for the public. The salience of a crisis will determine audiences’ preferences for military or economic coercion.<sup>15</sup>

When an executive acts in a way that does not represent popular preferences, executive approval will decrease. Democratic audiences can thus constrain and also foment coercive foreign policies. Although the latter has been the subject of little empirical research, there is historical evidence of domestic audiences “pushing” their

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<sup>15</sup> The scope of this study encompasses the subset of military actions and economic sanctions that are publicly announced by the executive and subsequently carried out (or not carried out). This of course does not include all military or economic foreign policy actions. For instance, President Reagan’s covert funding of Nicaraguan counter-revolutionary movement fighting against the communist Sandinistas was not publicly announced.

representatives into enacting costly foreign policies. President McKinley, for instance, felt tremendous popular pressure to go to war with Spain in the 1890s (Levy 1998:152).

For some scholars, a natural progression of coercive foreign policies exists when leaders select actions to carry out against states. This means that leaders will first attempt to modify another nation's behavior by the use of diplomacy, then economic coercion, and only begin to consider military intervention if the previous steps have failed (Baldwin 1985). I take an alternative approach and consider that foreign policies are not considered sequentially. What constitutes an appropriate coercive foreign policy will not depend on what previous steps were attempted, but on the salience of a crisis. The public can support military measures in the face of international crises that threaten national security, even if these actions will be costly in terms of resources and lives lost. When facing international crises they perceive as less salient, audiences will prefer leaders to engage in less costly foreign policies such as the imposition of economic sanctions. This theoretical expectation is summarized in the following hypothesis:

*(H1) Preferences for coercive foreign policies are a function of the salience of a crisis. In a salient crisis domestic audiences will support taking action –either military or economic coercion. In a crisis that is not salient domestic audiences will support economic coercion and not military coercion.*

#### 2.2.2.2. Expanding the Concept of Audience Costs

The concept of audience costs was created to analyze signaling behavior and has been applied primarily to militarized disputes. Its use has been inherently limited to crises that are salient. However, the “two-level game” logic behind the concept can be applied to non-military inter-state disputes and also to less salient crises. Scholars of economic coercion have recently begun to focus on the domestic dynamics associated with the imposition of economic sanctions. Some authors have applied the concept of audience costs to the economic arena (Martin 1993; Dorussen and Mo 2001). On the practical front, as citizens we have witnessed domestic and European leaders threatening militarized and economic coercion directed against states that arguably do not pose an imminent threat to national security, such as Libya or Syria.<sup>16</sup> As has been noted by numerous scholars of international relations, the concept of audience costs constitutes a useful tool for understanding national action. As part of this study I wish to assess whether it can be expanded to cases of economic coercion and also to conflicts that are not necessarily salient in order to subsequently examine how executive’s consistent or inconsistent behavior interacts with public policy preferences in determining support in times of crises.

*(H2) Approval for executives that commit to a course of coercive foreign policy and consistently implement it will be higher than that of executives who act inconsistently.*

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<sup>16</sup> Although these nations are significant oil producers, whether domestic turmoil there constitutes a direct threat to national security can be questioned.

H2 is not a novel hypothesis but is an expansion of Tomz's (2007) work. His experiments show that audience costs exist in militarized disputes. In this study, I expand the concept to cases of economic coercion and to crises that are not salient. Directly comparing loss of executive approval after inconsistent behavior in both military and economic coercion will clarify if it is the type of foreign policy action, or executive inconsistencies in general, that determine whether domestic audiences will disapprove of executives that display inconsistent behavior in times of conflict.

#### 2.2.2.3. Interaction between Public Policy Preferences and Executive Inconsistency

I propose that executive inconsistency will not always lead to a drop in executive approval. Even if constituents do not have specific knowledge of foreign affairs, they do have general expectations about what their leader should do. Citizens are not blank slates reacting to what their representative announces; citizens have a set of expectations their representative can fulfill or fail to fulfill. The public might not fully comprehend specific foreign policy options such as what constituted a "no fly zone" in Libya, but they do have opinions about pursuing coercive action. If the executive publicly commits to a foreign policy action and subsequently backs down when domestic audiences did not prefer the action that was threatened, audience costs will not necessarily be paid, as executive approval might not drop. The effect of consistent/inconsistent behavior on executive approval depends on audience's policy preferences given the salience of a crisis.

*(H3.a) In salient crises, approval for executives that make military or economic threats will increase if these are consistently enacted and decrease if the executive is inconsistent and backs down.*

*(H3.b) In crises that are not salient, approval for executives that make economic threats will increase if these are consistently enacted and decrease if the executive is inconsistent and backs down.*

*(H3.c) In crises that are not salient, approval for executives that make military threats will not decrease if the executive is inconsistent and backs down.*

In sum, my theory suggests that, in times of international crises, democratic constituents have certain preferences and will support executives who represent them when selecting coercive foreign policies. Public preferences are affected by the salience of the international crisis at hand. When a crisis is salient, the public will support an executive who takes an active role and commits to either military or economic coercion. On the other hand, when a crisis is not salient the public is more selective about what kind of action they will support, i.e., a less costly policy like imposing sanctions is preferred.

In democracies, domestic audiences will penalize leaders who back down after threatening military or economic coercion because they prefer that these actions be implemented. However, when an executive backs down from a threat that did not

represent the policy preferences of her constituents, such as backing down from military action in a non-salient crisis, she will not be penalized. That is, executive inconsistency leads to audience costs only when the unfulfilled threat is not in line with the preferences of constituents.

The empirical section that follows describes in detail the procedures via which the hypotheses presented here were tested.



### 3. INTRODUCTION TO EMPIRICS

This section provides a roadmap to the experiments that will be described in the following sections. I first address the general strengths and weaknesses of experimental methodology in studies of democratic accountability, mentioning the strategies I employed to counter the weaknesses of the method. I then present the experiments I conducted.

#### 3.1. Strengths and Weaknesses of Experiments in Accountability Research

The main objective of the experiments in this dissertation is to examine the specific circumstances under which the public will support leaders in times of international conflict or penalize them. Many formal bargaining models currently employed in security studies are based on the assumption that audiences hold leaders accountable for inconsistent behavior by removing their approval. As in behavioral economics, experiments in international relations can prove to be a useful tool through which to test the assumptions on which formal accountability models are based (Ostrom 2000).

Experiments are especially useful tools in accountability research. First and foremost, given that political leaders strategically select their behavior in anticipation of public reactions, inferring the importance of executive approval and of democratic accountability mechanisms by analyzing observed patterns becomes problematic. As

Schultz notes regarding military crises, “to the extent that leaders value holding office, they are unlikely to make choices that lead to outcomes with high domestic political costs. If we can observe only the domestic costs that leaders choose to pay, then we will generally miss the cases in which these costs are large” (2001:33). Second, analyzing naturally occurring data might prove problematic when studying coercive foreign policies. As highlighted by Lacy and Niou (2004) studies of sanctions that examine cases in which these were actually implemented omit the most successful cases: the ones in which the threat alone was enough to modify the policies of another state. The same can be said of military coercion. Studying accountability experimentally can complement observational empirical studies by allowing us to carefully assess the causal links between political variables and citizen’s responses.

Of course experimental research has important limitations, particularly regarding external validity. As noted by Levendusky and Horowitz in their study of audience costs (2012) one issue is the generalizability of a theory tested only with American respondents. They tackle this hurdle by highlighting the role the United States plays in the international system and by mentioning that scholars find similar results using international samples (Tomz 2007 in Argentina). The strategy I employ to counter this limitation is to conduct an experiment in the United Kingdom. I selected the United Kingdom for two reasons. First, the U.S. and the U.K. share important similarities. They are both relatively powerful democratic nations in the international system. This means that they are a good sample with which to test my theory because (a) domestic audiences in these states might expect their nation to get involved in an international crisis, and (b)

these nations are powerful enough that when their leaders publicly state they will implement costly foreign policies people believe them. Second, the U.S. and the U.K. differ regarding their democratic institutions. Given that my theory pertains to the role of domestic audiences in democratic nations, it was interesting to test it on both a presidential and a parliamentary democracy.

A second issue is the generalizability of results obtained in a web-based experiment that lacks the complexities of real political environments. However, as noted by Trager and Vavreck, in an experiment “the sterility of the design helps to clarify the mechanisms at work in a way that observational methods cannot” (2011:533).

Levendusky and Horowitz (2012) emphasize the importance of experimental realism. If an experiment has experimental realism it engages the same decision-making processes real world politics do. Although no one study can definitely ascertain external validity, I employ two strategies designed to strengthen experimental realism and maximize the applicability of results. First, participants were exposed to scenarios that mentioned real countries. Although participants knew they would be reading hypothetical scenarios (i.e., there was no deception), I used specific country names from Asia as part of the description of the crises to increase the authenticity of the scenarios.<sup>17</sup> While it may be argued that by using real country names I increase the susceptibility for contamination by existing biases, I assumed that participants in the study would be unfamiliar with the political realities of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as they have not been prominently

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<sup>17</sup> In this sense my experiments differ from those of Tomz (2007), Trager and Vavreck (2011), and Levendusky and Horowitz (2012). In their audience costs experiments participants read abstract scenarios in which one country invades another.

mentioned in American news outlets recently. Second, I tested my hypotheses using alternative dependent variable measures (one static, another capturing changes in approval for the executive). In addition to helping evaluate the robustness of the results, according to McDermott (2011) this significantly enhances the external validity of experiments.

A third issue regarding generalizability is whether experiments conducted with university students can be extrapolated to the broader adult population. Some scholars have emphasized the differences that exist between students and the general adult population (Sears 1986; Mintz, Redd and Vedlitz 2006). The strategy I employ to counter this potential limitation is to conduct the main experiment on a nationally representative sample of American adults. I do not, however, replicate the main experiment using a representative sample of British adults. Theoretically, I do not expect that individual characteristics that differ among student and non-student populations to change the general pattern of the findings. On this point, I refer skeptics to Mook (1983). Mook argues that what researchers are generalizing after conducting an experiment is the theory being tested, not the findings. If experimental evidence supports a theory and this theory applies to the general population, results can be considered a test of the theory. Previous studies of audience costs that have employed both national and student samples do not suggest any significant differences between these two groups (Trager and Vavreck 2011; Levendusky and Horowitz 2012). Neither have studies that experimentally examine the public's reaction to casualties (Gartner 2008). Furthermore, when analyzing the results of student samples I compare the dependent variable means

across experimental conditions and assess which values of the independent variables lead to higher or lower dependent variable means. I do not claim that these means are indicative of the true population means. I only consider the means obtained in the nationally representative sample of American adults to reflect the true population parameters.

Following Tomz (2007), Trager and Vavreck (2011), and Levendusky and Horowitz (2012), the experiments I conducted have a between-groups factorial design. In a between-groups design participants make choices in only one state of the world and responses made by those in different groups are compared. Participants in the experiments were exposed to only one crisis scenario. This design was chosen to avoid over-sensitizing respondents to the experimental factors. Exposure to different scenarios would have allowed participants to identify what the experimental variables were and would have most likely triggered a comparison between them that might artificially increase the differences in the dependent variable measures.

The risk commonly associated with between-groups designs is that subject-specific observable and unobservable characteristics might affect participants' responses (Morton and Williams 2010). This has the potential to undermine the internal validity of the experiment, as measures for the dependent variables might be an effect of individual differences and not be causally linked to exposure to specific values of the independent variables. Although it is usually argued that internal validity is the greatest advantage of experimentation, this is only true when the researcher has effectively controlled the manipulation of the independent variables and ensured that what is being measured is

caused by these variables (McDermott 2002). In my experiments, random assignment of participants into experimental scenarios assures that the internal validity of the study is not threatened by using a between-groups design. I must note that using a between-groups design means that participants were either exposed to a case of economic or military coercion (and not to a scenario in which they could select one over the other). This means that while I can compare approval ratings for individuals exposed to military or economic coercive I cannot infer how participants would have responded if they had to select between both coercive foreign policies.

### 3.2. General Overview of Experiments in This Study

The following sections present the experiments I conducted as part of my dissertation. The section immediately following this one describes the experiments I conducted with students sample in the United States (with Texas A&M undergraduates) and in the United Kingdom (with undergraduates at the University of Manchester and graduate students at University College London). The objective of these experiments was to test my hypotheses cross-nationally. The section that follows describes the procedures and results for the experiment I conducted on a nationally representative sample of American adults. The objective of conducting that experiment was to enhance the external validity of this study.

The three experiments test the same hypotheses and the experimental design employed in these studies is identical. The scenarios participants were exposed to and the items with which I measured the dependent variables differ slightly across samples.

In this section I present the general research materials used to test my theory. When introducing each individual theory-testing experiment I will mention any modifications made to the materials described here.

Following Tomz (2007), Trager and Vavreck (2011), and Levendusky and Horowitz (2012) I conduct all my dissertation experiments online. Participants were told they were going to participate in a study of foreign policy. The instructions participants read are practically identical to the ones employed by Tomz (2007) and Trager and Vavreck (2011). These stated participants would read about U.S. relations (U.K. relations for the British sample) with other countries around the world, about a situation our country has faced in the past and will probably face again in the future.<sup>18</sup>

### 3.3. Research Materials

A first experiment was conducted on a sample of undergraduate students at Texas A&M University in October and November of 2010. A second experiment conducted in the United Kingdom was implemented during three different time periods (November of 2010 and March of 2011 with undergraduates at the University of Manchester; November of 2011 with graduate students at University College London). The third experiment, that tested my theory on a national sample of American adults, was conducted in December of 2011. Table 1 shows the experimental design:

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<sup>18</sup> For the exact text for this and all research materials please see the Appendix.

Table 1 Experimental Scenarios

	Threat of Economic Sanctions		Threat of Military Action	
	Consistent Executive	Inconsistent Executive	Consistent Executive	Inconsistent Executive
Salient Crisis	I	II	III	IV
Non-Salient Crisis	V	VI	VII	VIII

### 3.3.1. Experimental Manipulations

The salience of a crisis was initially introduced following what Tomz had done in his 2007 experiment. He manipulated national interest by having participants read that the safety and the economy of the United States were at stake. In the experiments I conducted on the student samples I followed Tomz and manipulated salience by stating that, *“If Kazakhstan’s military forces do take over the whole country, Asia’s regional balance of power will shift drastically. **This will significantly affect U.S. economic and security interests in Asia.** Kazakh authorities have time after time demonstrated they are very hostile against the U.S.”* Participants exposed to the non-salient scenarios read that, *“If Kazakhstan’s military forces do take over their neighbor, **neither the safety nor the economy of the United States will be affected.**”*

By the time I conducted the experiment on the national sample of American adults, I had changed the manipulation of the salience of a crisis. The new manipulation differed from previous experiments of audience costs, but I believe it improved the experiment. It augmented the experimental realism of the procedure as it made the scenarios more concise, concrete and authentic. The new manipulation of salience does not mention threats to economic interests. As noted by a committee member,



confounding a threat to national security with a threat to national economic interests was problematic as they could work in opposite directions. In the national sample, a salient crisis was introduced as: *“Uzbekistan, the country that has been invaded, has abundant mines of high quality uranium that can be used for the development of nuclear weapons. Kazakhstan, the invading country has a history of supporting anti-Western and anti-U.S. terrorist groups. **A victory by the attacking country would constitute a severe risk to U.S. national security.**”* Non-salient crises were presented as: *“If Kazakhstan’s military forces do take over their neighbor, **it will pose no threat to U.S. national security.** However, these actions constitute a clear violation of international law as chartered by the United Nations.”*

The type of coercive policy threat was introduced the same way in all experiments. Half the participants read that, *“Shortly after the attack, the U.S. president in a public statement in the media said that the United States would impose economic sanctions on the government of Kazakhstan.”* The other half of respondents read that, *“Shortly after the attack, the U.S. president in a public statement in the media said that the United States would send U.S. troops to defend the weaker country from its invaders.”*

Following Tomz 2007, neutral language was used to introduce executive consistency/inconsistency. Stating that the executive “backed down,” “contradicted previous commitments,” or “was inconsistent” has clear negative connotations that can bias results in favor of supporting audience costs (Tomz 2007: 825). The manipulation I employed was almost identical to that used by Tomz. Scenarios in which the executive

was consistent were presented as, “*Kazakhstan has continued its invasion. The President of the U.S. has sent troops that are now fighting against Kazakhstan.*” For the inconsistent conditions, participants learned that: “*Kazakhstan has continued its invasion. In the end, the President of the U.S. did **not** send troops.*”

### 3.3.2. Dependent Variable Measures

The main dependent variable, approval, was gauged by asking participants how much they approved of the executive’s actions in the international crisis scenario they were exposed to. Approval was measured in two ways. The first measure is approval after the implementation of a foreign policy threat. After reading summary bullet points, participants were asked, “*In the crisis you just read about, do you approve of how the President acted?*” and had to mark their responses on a scale ranging from 0 (definitely disapprove) to 10 (definitely approve). This variable was used to compare how participants exposed to different types of crises evaluated the actions of the executive. The second measure is the difference in executive approval after a coercive foreign policy threat was made and after the executive either implemented this threat or reneged. This variable,  $\Delta$ , captures the change in approval for each individual participant.<sup>19</sup>

Employing alternative measures enables me to assess the effects of the three experimental factors across experimental groups and also for each individual.

Additionally, as mentioned above, using two measures helps evaluate the robustness of

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<sup>19</sup> Each participant answered the question, “*In the crisis you just read about, do you approve of how the President acted?*” twice, on an 11-point scale. The item was presented for the first time after a threat was issued (before the executive followed through or backed down) and for the second time after the executive followed through or backed down.  $\Delta$  is the difference between these responses. Summary bullet points were presented before measuring approval both times.

the results while enhancing the external validity of the study (McDermott 2011). H1 (which predicts the effect of the salience of a crisis on public policy preferences) is tested using the first measure. H2 (which claims that executive inconsistency will be generally punished) and H3 (which predicts that policy preferences will affect accountability) are tested employing both measures.

As has become customary in experimental studies of audience costs (Tomz 2007; Trager and Vavreck 2011; Levendusky and Horowitz 2012), I assume that an increase in executive approval corresponds with heightened popular support and that a decrease in approval is equivalent to holding the executive accountable. Tomz (2007) uses a 7-point scale to measure approval for the executive; Levendusky and Horowitz (2012) use a 5-point one. I employ an 11-point scale, ranging from 0 to 10, as I think it more closely mimics approval questions and “political thermometers” common in the U.S. The items used to measure the other dependent variables are described in the experimental sections, and the exact wording of all scenarios and items can be seen in the Appendix.

The following sections describe the experimental procedures in more detail. The final sub-section of each section summarizes the main findings. The cross-national test of theory section includes a comparison of results found in the student samples in the U.S. and the U.K. In the concluding section of this dissertation I offer a general summary of the experimental findings and suggest their implications for international relations theory.

#### 4. CROSS-NATIONAL STUDENT SAMPLES

In this section I test the hypotheses presented in the theory section by conducting an experiment with two cross-national student samples. The first study was conducted with a student sample in the United States (with Texas A&M undergraduates) in October and November of 2010. The second study was conducted in the United Kingdom in three different time periods (November of 2010 and March of 2011 with undergraduates at the University of Manchester; November of 2011 with graduate students at University College London). Conducting an experiment with British participants strengthens the external validity of my dissertation. Experimental studies of audience costs have typically been conducted in the United States (Tomz 2007; Trager and Vavreck 2011; Levendusky and Horowitz 2012). However, Levendusky and Horowitz (2012) note that the generalizability of a theory tested only with American respondents can be questioned.

Comparing accountability mechanisms in the United States and in the United Kingdom has two important advantages. First, both states are relatively powerful democratic nations. The U.S. is obviously more powerful than the U.K., but both are powerful enough that their citizens may expect their executives to get involved in international crises, even if their national security or economic interests are not at stake. Both states have a history of intervening in international crises, employing both economic and military coercion.

Second, the U.S. and the U.K. have different democratic institutions, and it will be interesting to compare accountability mechanisms across presidential and parliamentary regimes. Both states are representative democracies. Representative democracies have a chain of delegation and accountability in which agents act on behalf of principals (Strøm 2000). The main difference is that in presidential regimes voters (principals) elect the executive (agent) directly. In parliamentary regimes, voters (principals) elect members of parliament. Members of parliament are at the same time both agents (of the voters) and principals (of the cabinet).<sup>20</sup> In both systems government representatives, including the President and the Prime Minister, are ultimately accountable to the public.

American Presidents and British Prime Ministers are considered responsible for most national foreign policies. In the U.S. the President is the commander in chief, and since the Second World War constitutional procedures stating that Congress has to approve of military interventions have been bypassed. In the U.K. the Prime Minister is generally considered the most powerful agent in the country.<sup>21</sup> This is particularly so in the foreign policy realm. According to Wren,

Although much parliamentary oversight of other areas of policy derive from legislation passed through due democratic processes (debates in the Parliament, votes, etc), there is no similar process for foreign affairs due to the continued existence of the Royal Prerogative. This hangover from the time of the absolute monarch who could take Britain to war over a

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<sup>20</sup>“In a pure form of parliamentary democracy, voters in each district elect a single representative in a unicameral legislature. Members of parliament in turn delegate to a prime minister overseeing an executive branch of ministries with non-overlapping jurisdictions. In contrast, voters in a presidential system typically elect multiple competing agents. Thus, parliamentary democracy means a particularly simple form of delegation” (Strøm 2000:268-69, describing cases without a coalition government).

<sup>21</sup> Fifty-eight percent of Britons surveyed named the Prime Minister as the pressure group who holds most power in the Survey of officials of business, labor, and campaign groups (Baggott 1992).

marriage proposal, gives the power to the Prime Minister to carry out many of the acts that make a foreign policy –from going to war to signing treaties. So broad are the powers conferred by the Royal Prerogative that even attempts to enumerate them are resisted by the Cabinet Office (2005: 42).

If the executive is generally responsible for conducting foreign policy in the U.S. and the U.K., it follows that domestic audiences will hold them accountable if they implement policies that do not represent their preferences. The objective of this section is to examine whether American and British citizens' reactions to the executive's handling of international crises are influenced by the same factors.

I described the experimental design and research materials in the section introducing the empirics section of this dissertation and will not repeat them here. I will first present the results for the experiment conducted on the sample of American students, then for the British ones. I conclude the section by summarizing the results and offering a cross-national comparison.

#### 4.1. American Student Sample

Four hundred and fifty one undergraduate students from Texas A&M University enrolled in political science classes participated in the experiment. Before presenting the results, I address the analyses of the manipulation checks.

#### 4.1.1. Internal Validity of the Experimental Procedure

Overall, analyses show that the majority of participants understood the values of the independent variables as intended. The effects of each independent variable on the pertinent manipulation check are statistically significant (each with a p-value of .000).

The data on each individual experimental factor are:

- (a) *Salience of the International Crises:*** The first manipulation check asked participants if the crisis they read about was salient (coded as 1) or not salient (coded as 0). The mean value for this manipulation check for those exposed to salient crises scenarios was .877, while the mean for those exposed to crises that were not salient was .179. If all participants had understood this manipulation check correctly the mean for those exposed to salient crises scenarios would be 1, while the mean for those exposed to crises that were not salient would be 0.
- (b) *Foreign Policy Threat:*** Participants were asked what the President said he was going to do in the report they had read. They could respond that he announced he was going to implement economic sanctions (coded as 0) or that he had announced that the U.S. was going to send troops to stop the aggressors (coded as 1). The mean value for participants that read the economic coercion scenario was .031. The mean for participants exposed to a military coercion scenario was .973. If 100% of participants had comprehended this manipulation check the mean value for participants who read the economic coercion scenario would have been 0 and the mean for those exposed to a military coercion would be 1.

(c) *Executive Consistency*: The final item in the questionnaire asked what the President ended up doing in the report they just read about. Participants could answer that the President had implemented sanctions, sent U.S. troops or done nothing. Responses were later recoded into a binary measure where 1 = consistently implemented the promised coercive foreign policy, and 0 = no policy was implemented, and therefore the executive was inconsistent. The mean value for participants that were exposed to a consistent executive was .976. The mean value for those exposed to a scenario where the executive acted inconsistently was .070. If every participant had understood this manipulation check correctly the mean for those who read about an executive being consistent would be 1, whereas the mean for an inconsistent executive would be 0.

#### 4.1.2. Results

The general pattern of findings shows that the three experimental factors (the salience of a crisis, the type of foreign policy threat made by the executive, and whether the executive was consistent or inconsistent) affect when the public will reward or punish American Presidents for foreign policies. Specifically, the salience of a crisis determines constituents' preferences for economic or military coercive foreign policies in times of international crises.<sup>22</sup> These policy preferences in turn affect whether inconsistent leader' approval increases or decreases. I find that constituents privilege

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<sup>22</sup> The objective of this study is to identify when audiences will reward or punish leaders. Individual policy preferences are measured indirectly through measures of executive approval after the executive has committed to economic or military coercive foreign policies.



executives that act according to their policy preferences and do not always punish inconsistency.

**(H1) Does the Salience of an International Crisis Affect Policy Preferences?**

To assess whether participants' evaluation of executives who threatened and implemented economic or military coercion was contingent on the salience of an international crisis, a 2 x 2 between-groups ANOVA was conducted on executive approval after the President had implemented either economic or military coercion.<sup>23</sup>

Table 2 Effects of Salience of Crisis and Foreign Policy Threat on Approval for American Students

Observations: 191		R-Squared = .855		Adj R-Squared = .851	
Source	Partial SS	df	MS	F	Prob. > F
Model	7386.089 <sup>a</sup>	4	1846.522	274.721	.000
Salience of Crisis	301.362	1	301.362	44.836	.000
Foreign Policy Threat	6.319	1	6.319	.940	.334
Salience of Crisis*Foreign Policy Threat	55.679	1	55.679	8.284	.004
Residual	1256.911	187	6.721		
Total	8643.000	191			

Table 2 shows the significant effect the independent variable *Salience of Crisis* on has domestic support for the executive [F(1,191)= 44.836, p=.000]. When an international crisis is salient citizens are predisposed to approve of executives who implement military or economic threats. Executive approval is higher (M=7.24) when an international crisis is salient compared to approval in a crisis that is not salient (M=4.72).

<sup>23</sup> H1 tests policy preferences only, and not reactions to executive inconsistency. Therefore responses provided to experimental conditions in which the executive was inconsistent, i.e. when a coercive foreign policy was threatened but not implemented, were not included in this analyses. These conditions were included in the sample with which H2 and H3 are tested.

This lends support for the popular ‘rally ‘round the flag’ thesis popular in international relations and in American political behavior.

The analyses show no significant main effect of *Foreign Policy Threat*. That is, whether the executive implements economic or military coercion does not directly influence approval. The effect of *Foreign Policy Threat* on approval is contingent on the salience of the crisis at hand. In line with H1 the analyses show a significant two-way interaction between *Salience of Crisis* and the *Foreign Policy Threat* [ $F(1,191)= 8.284$ ,  $p=.004$ ]. Figure 1 shows that in a salient crisis, approval for the executive is high after a commitment to send troops is made ( $M=7.60$ ) and also when economic sanctions are threatened ( $M=6.88$ ). On the other hand, when a crisis is not salient approval following a military threat is low ( $M=4.00$ ). Executive approval after a threat is made to impose economic sanctions is significantly higher ( $M=5.45$ ).



Figure 1 Effects of Salience of Crisis and Foreign Policy Threat on Approval for American Students

*(H2) Is Executive Inconsistency Punished Across the Board?*

To assess whether approval for consistent executives is higher than approval for inconsistent ones, two 2 x 2 x 2 between-groups ANOVAs were conducted. The first was conducted on executive approval measured after the President had either followed through or backed down on threats of military or economic coercion. The second was conducted on  $\Delta$ , the difference in executive approval that allows us to examine whether executive approval increased or decreased for each individual participant.  $\Delta$  is calculated by subtracting participants' approval of the executive after she acted consistently or inconsistently from the approval they had previously awarded her after a coercive foreign policy threat had been made.

Before presenting the analyses I will briefly describe the data. The highest mean for the first approval measure is observed in salient crises when the executive consistently intervened militarily ( $M=7.55$ ). The lowest means are observed when the executive reneges after making a commitment to a course of coercive foreign policy in a salient crisis ( $M=2.50$  for a military threat,  $M=3.04$  for economic coercion).

The second variable with which approval is measured is  $\Delta$ . Interestingly, most  $\Delta$  values are negative, implying that executives have higher approval when making an initial foreign policy threat than after having had the chance to implement or renege on it. The highest means for  $\Delta$  are observed after the executive acts consistently and imposes the economic sanctions she had threatened ( $M= .25$  in non-salient crises,  $M= .22$  in salient ones). The largest drops in  $\Delta$  occur when the executive is inconsistent in salient crises ( $M= -4.18$  for military coercion,  $M= -3.26$  for economic coercion).

Tables 3 and 4 show the different main and interactive effects the experimental factors have on both approval measures. The main effects of *Executive Consistency* and the interactions between this variable and *Saliency of Crisis* and *Foreign Policy Threat* address H2, as they assess the effect of executive consistency/inconsistency on approval. The three-way interaction among the three independent variables tests H3, as it examines the effects particular policy preferences have on holding the executive accountable for inconsistent behavior and will therefore be addressed in the following section. The effect of *Saliency of Crisis*, *Foreign Policy Threat*, and the interaction between them, refers exclusively to holding the executive accountable for not implementing public policy preferences and were already discussed in the test for H1.<sup>24</sup>

Table 3 Effects of Saliency of Crisis, Foreign Policy Threat, and Executive Consistency on Approval for American Students

Observations: 451		R-Squared = .772		Adj R-Squared = .768	
Source	Partial SS	df	MS	F	Prob. > F
Model	11299.808 <sup>a</sup>	8	1412.476	187.895	.000
Saliency of Crisis	36.995	1	36.995	4.921	.027
Foreign Policy Threat	1.074	1	1.074	.143	.706
Executive Consistency	856.303	1	856.303	113.910	.000
Saliency of Crisis*Foreign Policy Threat	6.207	1	6.207	.826	.364
Saliency of Crisis* Executive Consistency	288.897	1	288.897	38.431	.000
Foreign Policy Threat* Executive Consistency	.222	1	.222	.030	.864
3-way interaction	58.010	1	58.010	7.717	.006
Residual	3330.192	443	7.517		
Total	14630.000	451			

<sup>24</sup> The p-values for this interaction in Table 2 and Table 3 differ slightly as the results in Table 2 are limited to only those cases in which the executive acted consistently.

Table 4 Effects of Salience of Crisis, Foreign Policy Threat, and Executive Consistency on  $\Delta$  for American Students

Observations: 451		R-Squared = .287		Adj R-Squared = .274	
Source	Partial SS	df	MS	F	Prob. > F
Model	1822.055	8	227.757	22.308	.000
Salience of Crisis	100.240	1	100.240	9.818	.002
Foreign Policy Threat	1.144	1	1.144	.112	.738
Executive Consistency	880.757	1	880.757	86.266	.000
Salience of Crisis*Foreign Policy Threat	24.334	1	24.334	2.383	.123
Salience of Crisis* Executive Consistency	118.015	1	118.015	11.559	.001
Foreign Policy Threat* Executive Consistency	6.110	1	6.110	.598	.440
3-way interaction	37.945	1	37.945	3.717	.055
Residual	4522.945	443	10.210		
Total	6345.000	451			

Table 3 shows that *Executive Consistency* has a significant main effect on approval [ $F(1,451)=113.91$   $p=.000$ ].<sup>25</sup> As highlighted by scholars that stress the importance of a president consistently implementing her foreign policy promises in times of international crises, executives that back down are held accountable. When the executive consistently follows through on any of the coercive foreign policy threats, in both salient and non-salient crises, approval is higher ( $M=6.05$ ) than when she backs down after making a public statement committing to economic or military coercion ( $M=3.29$ ). Table 4 shows that *Executive Consistency* also has a significant main effect on  $\Delta$  [ $F(1,451)=86.266$   $p=.000$ ].  $\Delta$  for consistent executives is positive ( $M= .07$ ), and negative for inconsistent ones ( $M= -2.74$ ). This provides evidence for the notion that people generally have a tendency to punish inconsistent leaders, and that audience costs can be

<sup>25</sup> *Salience of Crisis* also has a significant main effect on approval [ $F(1,451)=4.921$ ,  $p=.027$ ] and on  $\Delta$  [ $F(1,451)=9.818$ ,  $p=.002$ ]. The means suggest that when a crisis is salient approval is higher than when a crisis is not salient. I do not discuss these results further here, as they test H1.

paid in both military and economic crises. Although the concept of audience costs was originally developed to understand the initiation of military conflicts, these results support H2 and suggest that the scope of the concept can be expanded to explain the imposition of sanctions. I must note however, that this effect is qualified by an important interaction.

The two-way interaction between *Salience of Crisis* and *Executive Consistency* significantly affects executive approval [ $F(1,451)=38.43, p=.000$ ]. This means that although domestic audiences tend to prefer consistent leaders to inconsistent ones, this main effect does not influence approval similarly across crises that are salient and those that are not. As we can see in Figure 2 executive inconsistency following an economic or military threat is much more severely punished in salient crises. When an international crisis is salient, approval following the consistent actions of a president is significantly higher ( $M=7.14$ ) than approval after the executive backs down from her coercive foreign policy threats ( $M=2.77$ ). The same trend can be observed in crises that are not salient, but the differences in approval means are much lower ( $M=3.80$  for inconsistent executives compared to  $M= 4.96$  for consistent ones).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> A t-test shows that the two means for non-salient crises, 3.80 and 4.96 are significantly different from each other ( $p\text{-value}=.000$ ).

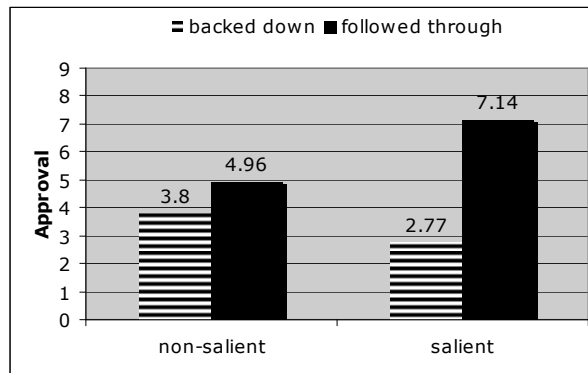


Figure 2 Effects of Salience of Crisis and Executive Consistency on Approval for American Students

The interaction between *Salience of Crisis* and *Executive Consistency* also affects  $\Delta$  [ $F(1,451)=11.559, p=.001$ ].  $\Delta$  values are positive when the executive follows through on her threats ( $M= .109$  in salient crises,  $M= .029$  in non-salient ones).  $\Delta$  values are negative whenever the President reneges, and the mean is particularly low in salient crises ( $M= -1.75$  for non-salient crises,  $M= -3.72$  for salient ones). Figure 3 shows that the decline in approval for inconsistent executives in salient crises more than doubles the decline in crises that are not salient. The concept of audience costs was designed to help explain inter-state signaling behavior in salient crises. It is precisely in those crises where inconsistent executives can expect to pay higher audience costs. However, the audience cost logic is applicable to lesser international incidents as well. Even if the magnitude of domestic political audience costs is lower when the executive backs down in a crisis that does not threaten national security or economic interests, losing domestic support in times of internal crises can be detrimental.

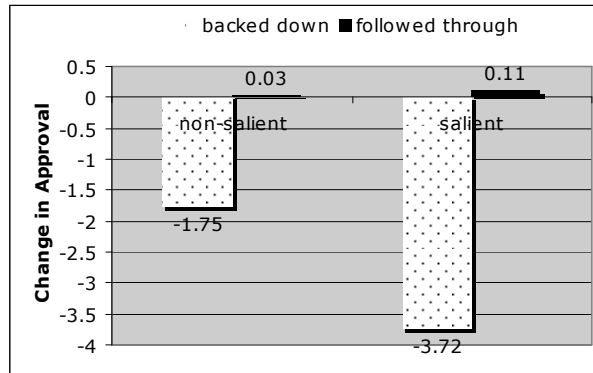


Figure 3 Effects of Salience of Crisis and Executive Consistency on  $\Delta$  for American Students

**(H3) How do Policy Preferences Affect Accountability?**

This section tests H3, that is, here I examine whether the preferences for specific coercive foreign policies given the salience of a crisis affect the likelihood that executive consistency will be rewarded or that executive inconsistency will be punished. The three-way interactions between *Salience of Crisis*, *Foreign Policy Threat*, and *Executive Consistency* presented in Tables 3 and 4 show that these factors have a significant joint effect on executive approval [ $F(1,451)=7.72, p=.006$ ] and also on  $\Delta$ , [ $F(1,451)=3.717, p=.055$ ]. These interactions are illustrated in Figures 4 and 5.



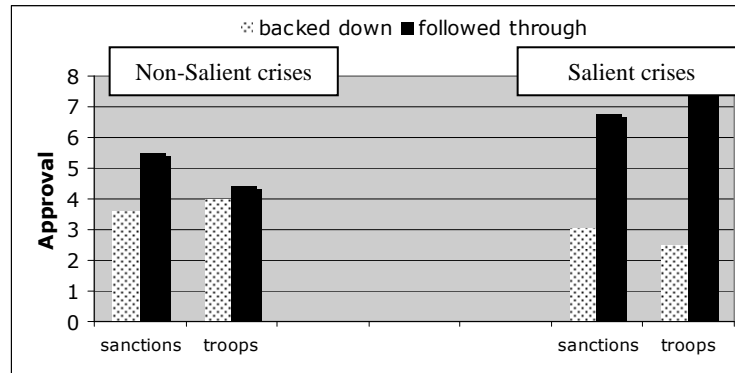


Figure 4 Effects of Salience of Crisis, Foreign Policy Threat and Executive Consistency on Approval for American Students



Figure 5 Effects of Salience of Crisis, Foreign Policy Threat and Executive Consistency on  $\Delta$  for American Students

The results support H3.a. In salient crises approval for executives that enact military or economic coercion is high. The highest mean for executive approval is for presidents that consistently enact military action in salient crises ( $M=7.55$ ). The mean for economic coercion is lower than that of military coercion ( $M=6.73$ ), but remains high. Although military action receives more popular support when a crisis threatens national security, threatening economic coercion might provide the executive with enough popular support in times of conflict. Inconsistency is punished for both military

( $M=2.5$ ) and economic coercion ( $M=3.03$ ). An examination of changes in executive approval also supports H3.a. In salient crises the lowest values for  $\Delta$  are for executives who renege on their threats ( $M= -4.18$  in cases of military coercion,  $M= -3.30$  in cases of economic coercion). On the other hand,  $\Delta$  for executives that act consistently are not negative ( $M= 0$  in cases of military coercion,  $M= 0.22$  in cases of economic coercion).

Approval results support H3.b. In non-salient crises approval for executives that consistently implement economic threats will rise whereas approval for executives that renege on economic threats will be low. In crises that are not salient executive approval is high after sanctions are implemented ( $M=5.51$ ). An analysis of  $\Delta$  confirms these findings. When an international crisis is not salient, executives who commit to imposing sanctions will see their approval increase when they impose them ( $M= .25$ ). In non-salient crises, executives who commit to imposing sanctions and subsequently renege pay audience costs ( $M= 3.59$ ).  $\Delta$  for executives that are inconsistent after threatening sanctions is negative and large ( $M= -2.34$ ).

As predicted in H3.c, executive inconsistency will not always be punished. When an executive threatens military action in a non-salient crisis and subsequently backs down, her approval will be indistinguishable ( $M=4.02$ ) from the approval she would have had she followed through on her threat ( $M=4.41$ ). Values for  $\Delta$  also suggest that executive inconsistency is not punished when military action is threatened but not implemented in crises that are not salient.  $\Delta$  for consistent and inconsistent executives is negative in both cases ( $M= -1.16$  for inconsistent Presidents,  $M= -.20$  for consistent ones) when military coercion is threatened in crises that are not salient. Executives that

commit to military intervention when national interests are not at stake will lose support when this commitment is made<sup>27</sup> and also when the threat is actually implemented (M= -.20).

#### 4.1.3. Summary of Results for the American Student Sample

American audiences evaluate the executive in times of international crises by comparing the type of foreign policy threats she makes, and the actions she implements, to their own personal policy preferences. These public preferences for military or economic coercion are determined by the salience of the crisis at hand. When an international crisis is salient, American audiences will prefer that the executive threaten military or economic coercion. However, when an international crisis is not salient, Americans will prefer to engage in economic coercion and will not support executives that commit to military action. American Presidents that implement coercive foreign policies that do not represent the preferences of her constituents see their approval decline.

#### 4.2. British Student Sample

One hundred and fourteen undergraduate and graduate students from the University of Manchester and from University College London enrolled in economics and/or political science classes participated in the experiment. Participants were randomly assigned to one of eight experimental conditions. Before presenting the results,

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<sup>27</sup> As discussed in the results section examining H1, in a non-salient crisis, executive approval is higher following economic coercion (M=5.57) than after a military threat is issued (M=4.91).

I describe the changes made to the research materials and present the analyses of the manipulation checks.

**Changes Made to the Research Material:** The web-based experiment was framed as a study of British foreign policy. The instructions and materials were almost identical to those used in the experiment conducted with Texas A&M students. Differences include: (1) mentioning foreign policy threats and actions carried out by the Prime Minister (instead of by the President), and (2) describing the crises as relevant for British national security and economic interests. Additionally, given that both the University of Manchester and University College London tend to have diverse student samples, after the manipulation checks participants were asked if they were British citizens.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4.2.1. Internal Validity of the Experimental Procedure

Overall, analyses show that most participants understood the values of the independent variables as intended. The effects of each independent variable on the pertinent manipulation check are statistically significant (each with a p-value of .000). The data on each individual experimental factor are:

**(a) *Salience of the International Crises:*** The first manipulation check asked participants if the crisis they read about was salient (coded as 1) or not salient (coded as 0). The mean value for this manipulation check for those exposed to

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<sup>28</sup> 75.44% of the total respondents are British citizens. Results that are significant in the sample that includes citizens and non-citizens are also significant in the sample made up exclusively of citizens, although p-values differ slightly.

salient crises scenarios was .689, while the mean for those exposed to crises that were not salient was .020. If all participants had understood this manipulation check correctly the mean for those exposed to salient crises scenarios would be 1, while the mean for those exposed to crises that were not salient would be 0.

**(b) *Foreign Policy Threat:*** Participants were asked what the Prime Minister said he was going to do in the report they had read. They could respond that he announced he was going to implement economic sanctions (coded as 0) or that he had announced that he was going to send British troops to stop the aggressors (coded as 1). The mean value for participants that read the economic coercion scenario was .018. Every single participant understood when military coercion was employed, as the mean for participants exposed to a military coercion scenario was 1.000. If 100% of participants had comprehended the manipulation of cases of economic coercion the mean value for this manipulation check in cases of economic coercion would have been 0.

**(c) *Prime Minister Consistency:*** The final item in the questionnaire asked what the Prime Minister ended up doing in the report they just read about. Participants could answer that the Prime Minister had imposed sanctions, sent British troops or done nothing. Responses were later recoded into a binary measure where 1 = consistently implemented the promised coercive foreign policy, and 0 = no policy was implemented, and therefore the Prime Minister was inconsistent. The mean value for participants that were exposed to a consistent Prime Minister was 1.000. The mean value for those exposed to a scenario where the Prime

Minister acted inconsistently was .000. This means that 100% of participants comprehended the manipulation of this experimental factor as I had intended.

#### 4.2.2. Results

This experiment was designed to assess whether British audiences reward and punish their Prime Ministers for coercive foreign policy threats and actions in a manner comparable to American audiences. Albeit some interesting differences, I find that the concept of audience costs travels well from American to British constituencies.

#### *(H1) Does the Salience of an International Crisis Affect Policy Preferences?*

After being exposed to scenarios in which the Prime Minister threatened economic or military coercion in a salient or a non-salient crisis, participants decided whether they approved of the threat their representative made (before they learn of her consistency or inconsistency).<sup>29</sup> This subsection examines which independent variables influence this initial approval measure and thus pertains to British audiences' foreign policy preferences. Approval for the Prime Minister was measured on an 11-point scale, and a 2 x 2 between groups ANOVA was conducted.

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<sup>29</sup> In the analyses conducted with the American student sample and with the representative sample of American adults H1 is tested after the executive has implemented a foreign policy threat. This procedure cannot be executed with the British student sample however, as limiting the sample exclusively to cases in which the Prime Minister was consistent brings the sample size down to 54.

Table 5 Effects of Salience of Crisis and Foreign Policy Threat on Approval for British Students

Observations: 114		R-Squared = .872		Adj R-Squared = .867	
Source	Partial SS	df	MS	F	Prob. > F
Model	4777.503	4	1194.379	187.020	.000
Salience of Crisis	1.051	1	1.051	.165	.686
Foreign Policy Threat	21.016	1	21.016	3.291	.072
Salience of Crisis*Foreign Policy Threat	4.439	1	4.439	.000	.406
Residual	702.497	110	6.386		
Total	5480.000	114			

Table 5 indicates that *Foreign Policy Threat* [ $F(1,114)=3.291, p=.072$ ] is on the verge of statistical significance. Participants' approval for the Prime Minister was higher ( $M=6.882$ ) when she committed to imposing economic sanctions than when she promised military action ( $M=6.015$ ). T-test results show ( $p=.052$ ) that when a crisis is not salient and the Prime Minister promises economic coercion her approval is significantly higher ( $M=7.719$ ) than when she commits to military coercion ( $M=5.913$ ).<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, when a crisis is salient there is no such difference. A Prime Minister that commits to imposing sanctions and one that promises to send troops receives similar approval ratings ( $M=6.586$  and  $M=6.118$  respectively). These results provide some support for H1 and are illustrated in Figure 6:

<sup>30</sup> The reason this t-test is statistically significant but the interaction between the variables *Salience of Crisis* and *Foreign Policy Threat* is not is that there is an area of overlap between the lower confidence interval (6.232; set at 95%) for the mean approval in the non-salient condition where the Prime Minister commits to economic sanctions and the upper confidence interval (6.957; set at 95%) for the mean approval for the non-salient condition in which the Prime Minister promises military action.



Figure 6 Effects of Saliency of Crisis and Foreign Policy Threat on Approval for British Students

**(H2) Is the Prime Minister's Inconsistency Punished Across the Board?**

After being exposed to scenarios in which the Prime Minister consistently carried out a coercive foreign policy threat or backed down after making such a threat, approval was measured for a second time. Two 2 x 2 x 2 between-groups ANOVAs were conducted. The first was conducted on approval measured after the Prime Minister had either followed through or backed down on threats of military or economic coercion. The second was conducted on  $\Delta$ , the difference in approval that allows us to examine whether executive approval increased or decreased for each individual participant. As in the American student sample,  $\Delta$  is calculated by subtracting participants' approval of the Prime Minister after she acted consistently or inconsistently from the approval they had previously awarded her after a coercive foreign policy threat had been made.  $\Delta$  takes on positive values if a participant's approval rating of the Prime Minister increases after learning if he followed through or backed down. Alternatively, a  $\Delta$  value will be negative if approval ratings for the Prime Minister decrease after learning if she followed through or backed down.



Most  $\Delta$  values are negative, which indicates that approval for the Prime Minister tends to be higher before she implements or reneges on a foreign policy threat.

Descriptively, the highest means for  $\Delta$  are observed in salient crises when the Prime Minister implements the coercive threat she had committed to ( $M = .91$  for economic sanctions,  $M = .37$  for military intervention). This differs from the highest means observed in the sample of American students, as approval for the executive in that sample had the biggest jump after she imposed sanctions in non-salient crises ( $M = .25$ ) and following troop deployment in salient crises ( $M = .22$ ). For Americans the main factor in rewarding executives is that foreign policy threats be contingent on the salience of an international crisis, while for Britons that the Prime Minister fulfills her promises when a crisis is salient takes center stage.

A similar contrast between American and British audiences can be observed when comparing the largest drops in approval. For British subjects, the largest drops occur when the Prime Minister reneges on a coercive threat in non-salient crises ( $M = -6.31$  for sanctions;  $M = -4.27$  for military action). For American citizens, the largest drops in approval are observed in non-salient crises after the executive does not carry out the economic sanctions she had promised ( $M = -2.34$ ), and in salient crises when the executive backs down after issuing a military threat ( $M = -4.18$ ).

Table 6 Effects of Saliency of Crisis, Foreign Policy Threat and Prime Minister Consistency on Approval for British Students

Observations: 114		R-Squared = .800		Adj R-Squared = .784	
Source	Partial SS	df	MS	F	Prob. > F
Model	2791.342	8	348.918	52.862	.000
Saliency of Crisis	67.281	1	67.281	10.193	.002
Foreign Policy Threat	.301	1	.301	.046	.831
Prime Minister Consistency	438.218	1	438.218	66.391	.000
Saliency of Crisis*Foreign Policy Threat	1.658	1	1.658	.251	.617
Saliency of Crisis* Prime Minister Consistency	1.746	1	1.746	.264	.608
Foreign Policy Threat* Prime Minister Consistency	10.359	1	10.359	1.569	.213
3-way interaction	3.305	1	3.305	.501	.481
Residual	702.497	699.658	6.601		
Total	3491.000	114			

Table 7 Effects of Saliency of Crisis, Foreign Policy Threat and Prime Minister Consistency on  $\Delta$  for British Students

Observations: 114		R-Squared = .537		Adj R-Squared = .502	
Source	Partial SS	df	MS	F	Prob. > F
Model	1136.634	8	142.079	15.362	.000
Saliency of Crisis	78.452	1	78.452	8.482	.004
Foreign Policy Threat	26.173	1	26.173	2.830	.095
Prime Minister Consistency	490.185	1	490.185	53.000	.000
Saliency of Crisis*Foreign Policy Threat	6.808	1	6.808	.736	.393
Saliency of Crisis* Prime Minister Consistency	19.629	1	19.629	2.122	.148
Foreign Policy Threat* Prime Minister Consistency	17.086	1	17.086	1.847	.177
3-way interaction	1.437	1	1.437	.155	.694
Residual	980.366	106	9.249		
Total	2117.000	114			

Tables 6 and 7 show that two experimental factors affect domestic audiences' propensity to approve of the Prime Minister in times of international crises. First, the analyses show that regardless of the type of threat the Prime Minister makes or whether such policies are implemented there is a significant effect of *Saliency of Crisis* on approval [ $F(1,114)=10.193, p=.002$ ] and on  $\Delta$  [ $F(1,114)=8.482, p=.004$ ]. When an

international crisis is salient approval for the Prime Minister is higher ( $M=5.32$ ) than when a crisis is not salient ( $M=3.75$ ). *Salience of Crisis* also affects  $\Delta$ . Although approval for the Prime Minister is always higher immediately following a foreign policy threat than when she implements her promise or reneges on it, the drop is significantly steeper when the crisis at hand is not salient ( $M= -2.75$  for non-salient crises,  $M= -1.06$  for salient ones). Interestingly, the opposite pattern is observed with American audiences. In a salient crisis the difference in executive approval just after a threat is issued and after it is implemented or reneged on is much steeper ( $M= -1.81$ ) than when a crisis is not salient ( $M= -.86$ ).

The question that emerges at this point is why the salience of a crisis has a main effect on this approval measure but not on approval before the implementation of a threat (the measure used to test H1). It is entirely plausible that British audiences do not consider an international crisis as being salient as readily as American audiences do due to their non-hegemonic world role. The United States plays a pivotal role in the preservation of the international system and is more interconnected with nations around the globe than the United Kingdom. This position should make it easier for Americans to believe that an international crisis in Asia can threaten national security or economic interests. For Britons the threshold to consider an international crisis as salient is higher. When the Prime Minister makes an initial threat, British citizens are not very likely to consider a crisis as salient, even if they are told it threatens national security and economic interests. Only in a second phase in which the Prime Minister is actually

enacting a coercive foreign policy (or when she decides to back down on her threat) will a crisis be considered salient.

I find support for H2, as *Prime Minister's Consistency* has a significant effect on approval [ $F(1,114)=66.391$   $p=.000$ ]. As highlighted by scholars that stress the importance of leaders consistently implementing foreign policy promises in times of international crises, Prime Ministers that back down see their approval decrease. When the Prime Minister consistently follows through on a coercive foreign policy threat approval is higher ( $M=6.54$ ) than when she backs down ( $M= 2.53$ ). This provides evidence for the notion that people generally have a tendency to punish inconsistent leaders, and that audience costs can be paid in both military and economic crises on both sides of the Atlantic. *Prime Minister Consistency* also affects  $\Delta$  [ $F(1,114)= 53.000$ ,  $p=.000$ ]. As in the American sample, Prime Ministers that consistently deliver on their foreign policies threats see approval ratings rise ( $M=.22$ ) compared to approval for Prime Ministers who back down ( $M= -4.02$ ).

It is interesting to note that British participants, unlike American ones, do not punish executive inconsistency more in salient crises. I did not anticipate this difference between samples and do not have a theoretical explanation for it. It is feasible that British history plays a role in this predilection for fulfilling commitments without considering if doing so is necessarily in one's best interest. Kesselman, Krieger and Joseph note the effects lacking a formal written constitution have had on British reliance on political customs, "the structure and principles of many areas of government have been accepted by constitutional authorities for so long that appeal to convention has

enormous cultural force. Thus, widely agreed-on rules of conduct, rather than law or U.S.-style checks and balances, set the limits of governmental power” (2004:49). It is also possible that cultural characteristics of British citizens play a role in explaining the pivotal role *Prime Minister Consistency* plays in determining executive approval. Americans will not always punish executive inconsistency because what matters is not only whether the President was consistent but whether she was going to implement a policy they agreed with in the first place. This is not the case across the pond. British citizens will punish Prime Ministers who back down after having threatened a policy no matter what, even if they did not favor the policy she reneged upon. As noted by Almond and Verba (1963), British political culture is characterized by deference to authority. It is possible that this motivates Britons to rely excessively on the actions of the Prime Minister, disregarding their own personal policy preferences.

### ***(H3) How do Policy Preferences Affect Accountability?***

In the sample of American students I test H3 by analyzing the effects the three-way interactions among *Saliency of Crisis*, *Foreign Policy Threat*, and *Executive Consistency* have on approval and on  $\Delta$ . In the British student sample these interactions are not significant. This means that I find no conclusive support for H3. However, an evaluation of  $\Delta$  values offers suggests support for H3.a and H3.b. As mentioned above,  $\Delta$  values are at their highest in salient crises when the Prime Minister implements a coercive foreign policy threat ( $M = .91$  for economic sanctions,  $M = .37$  for military intervention). Likewise, the largest drops in approval occur when the Prime Minister is

inconsistent in non-salient crises ( $\Delta$  has a mean of -6.31 for sanctions and a mean of -4.27 for military action). This is in line with the H3.a as it suggests that in salient crises approval increases when military or economic coercion is implemented and decreases after a Prime Minister reneges on a threat to impose economic sanctions. The fact that single largest drop in approval occurs following the Prime Minister reneging on economic coercion ( $\Delta$  has a mean of -6.31 for sanctions) lends some support for H3.b. There is no support for H3.c, as inconsistency is punished across the board in the British sample.

#### 4.2.3. Summary of Results for the British Student Sample

The concept of audience costs travels well across the Atlantic. Britons tend to prefer the implementation of economic sanctions over engaging in military action more than Americans. The approval the Prime Minister is awarded in times of international crises depends on how salient the crisis is (supporting the notion of a rally ‘round the flag phenomenon) and on whether she acts consistently.

#### 4.3. Summary of Results and Cross-National Comparison

I find important similarities across the American and British student samples as inconsistent Presidents and Prime Ministers are at risk of paying audience costs when they back down on their foreign policy threats. I also find an interesting difference –the role played by the public’s foreign policy preferences in attenuating the effect executive inconsistency can have on popular support during times of crises. When evaluating the

cost an executive should pay for inconsistent behavior, Americans consider whether they agreed with the policy that was not enacted in a way that Britons don't. If the executive committed to sending American troops in a non-salient crisis and then backs down her approval is not affected. On the other hand, inconsistent British Prime Ministers will always pay a cost.<sup>31</sup> Even considering that British citizens clearly prefer the imposition of economic sanctions to the use of military force, Prime Ministers that do not send national troops after having promised to do so will lose popular support (even in non-salient crises). Table 8 summarizes the supporting evidence for each hypothesis evidenced in each sample:

Table 8 Cross-National Support for Hypotheses

	<i>American Student Sample</i>	<i>British Student Sample</i>
<b>H1.</b> Salient crisis → support for military or economic coercion. Non-salient → support economic coercion.	<i>Supported.</i> Additionally find that approval is generally higher in salient crises.	<i>Supported.</i> Additionally find that approval is generally higher following economic coercion.
<b>H2.</b> Higher support for consistent executives.	<i>Supported,</i> especially in salient crises.	<i>Supported.</i>
<b>H3.a.</b> Salient crisis → approval ↑ if military or economic coercion are consistently enacted; and ↓ following inconsistency.	<i>Supported.</i>	<i>Some support.</i> Highest Δs are after consistent military and economic action in salient crises and lowest Δs are after backing down in non-salient crises.
<b>H3.b.</b> Non-salient → approval ↑ if economic coercion is consistently enacted; and ↓ following inconsistency.	<i>Supported.</i>	<i>Some support.</i> The lowest value for Δ occurs after failing to carry out an economic threat in a non-salient crisis.
<b>H3.c.</b> Non-salient → approval ↓ if military coercion is consistently enacted.	<i>Supported.</i>	<i>Not Supported.</i> Inconsistency is always punished.

<sup>31</sup> Of course the consequences of a loss in popular support are different in presidential and parliamentary systems.

## 5. NATIONAL SAMPLE

The hypotheses presented in the theory section were tested by conducting an experiment with three different samples. The first two studies were conducted with student samples in the United States and in the United Kingdom; the third was conducted with a sample of representative American adults. In this section I present the results for the study conducted with the national sample. The experimental design is the same as the one presented in the cross-national comparison section, thus, I will not repeat it here. The research materials are similar but not identical. I first describe the modifications done to the research materials for this study, and then present the results. I conclude the section by summarizing the findings and describing the effect participants' political affiliation has on the results.<sup>32</sup>

**Changes Made to the Research Material:** The web-based experiment was framed as a study of American foreign policy.<sup>33</sup> The three experiments designed to test my theory of accountability in international relations test the same hypotheses and therefore have equivalent designs. However, I introduced some changes in the research material members of the national sample were exposed to. Changes were implemented to

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<sup>32</sup> Whether participants identify with the Democratic or the Republican does not significantly change the effects the three experimental factors have on executive approval.

<sup>33</sup> For full text of the experimental scenarios please see the Appendix.



improve on the previous materials and strengthen the experiment. The changes and the rationale behind them are:

(1) The most important modification was that I no longer mentioned if national economic interests were at stake when introducing the salience of a crisis. This change was introduced as a realization that national economic interests and security interests will not necessarily move in tandem. Salient scenarios were introduced by mentioning that, *“Uzbekistan, the country that has been invaded, has abundant mines of high quality uranium that can be used for the development of nuclear weapons. Kazakhstan, the invading country has a history of supporting anti-Western and anti-U.S. terrorist groups. A victory by the attacking country would constitute a severe risk to U.S. national security.”* Participants exposed to non salient-crises read that, *“If Kazakhstan’s military forces do take over their neighbor, it will pose no threat to U.S. national security. However, these actions constitute a clear violation of international law as chartered by the United Nations.”*

(2) The analyses of the manipulation checks for the experiments conducted with student samples shows that participants generally understood the independent variables as intended. However, the manipulation check for the experimental factor “Salience of Crisis” was not as well comprehended as the other two experimental factors. I believe that the way the manipulation check was measured contributed to the relatively higher misunderstanding of this manipulation. Given this possibility, in the nationally representative sample I

measured this item using an 11-point scale, instead of using the binary measure I employ in the previous studies.

- (3) Given the importance the salience of crises has in my theory, I decided to include a second manipulation check designed to function as an alternative measure. If respondent's answers to both manipulation checks are correct, that provides further reassurance that the salience of crises was introduced convincingly in the experimental scenarios. Participants responded to the question, "*How threatening is the situation described to the U.S.?*" on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (not threatening at all) to 10 (very threatening).<sup>34</sup>

### 5.1. The Experiment

Six hundred and fifty seven American adults participated in the experiment, fielded by Knowledge Networks in November of 2011.<sup>35</sup> Knowledge Networks is an online survey source used in both government and academic research. They routinely conduct web-based experiments on a probability-based panel that is representative of the American population. Participants are recruited from a published sample frame of residential addresses that covers approximately 98% of American households.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Given the similarity this item shares with the manipulation check that asks whether the crisis was salient or not, it was placed near the beginning of the post-experimental questionnaire to avoid the answer to one item influencing the answer of the other. The correlation between both variables is .583, p-value=.000

<sup>35</sup> The experiment was funded by the National Science Foundation grant number SES-1123291, as well as by the Program of International Conflict and Cooperation (PICC) at Texas A&M University.

<sup>36</sup> Members of the Knowledge Networks panel are initially sent a letter informing them that they have been selected to participate. They then have a telephone recruitment interview, where they are informed that they have been selected to participate in the Knowledge Networks panel. They are also informed that if the household does not have internet Knowledge Networks will provide them with a webTV set-top box with free access to internet in return for answering weekly surveys. Panel members then provide Knowledge Networks with their email accounts and receive weekly surveys via email.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of eight experimental conditions. I ensure that randomization truly took place by conducting a multinomial logistic regression checking whether demographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, income and political affiliation predicted the assignment of participants to experimental conditions.<sup>37</sup> The results support the notion that randomization effectively occurred and the different values obtained for the dependent variables are causally linked to the experimental factors.<sup>38</sup>

## 5.2. Internal Validity of the Experimental Procedure

Overall, analyzes of the main study show that the majority of participants understood the values of the independent variables as intended. The effects of each independent variable on the pertinent manipulation check are statistically significant (each with a p-value of .000). The data on each individual experimental factor are:

*(a) Salience of the International Crises:* A first manipulation check asked participants to rate the salience of the crisis they read about on an 11-point scale. The mean value for this manipulation check for those exposed to salient crises scenarios was 6.91, while the mean for those exposed to non-salient crises was 4.99. A second item was designed to measure the difference between crises that were salient and those that were not in a less direct way. Participants were asked how threatening the situation described was to the U.S., also on an 11-point

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<sup>37</sup> This is the same procedure conducted by Levendusky and Horowitz (2012).

<sup>38</sup> The only factor that is statistically significant is ethnicity in the likelihood of being assigned to the eighth experimental condition (there are less whites in this condition). See Appendix 4 for the results of the randomization check.

scale. As with the other manipulation checks, participants responses to this item were also determined by the scenario they read about ( $p$ -value=.000). The mean value for those exposed to salient crises scenarios was 6.86, while the mean for those exposed to crises that were not salient was 3.77.

**(b) Foreign Policy Threat:** Participants were asked what the President said he was going to do in the report they had read. They could respond that he announced he was going to implement economic sanctions (coded as 0) or that he had announced that the U.S. was going to send troops to stop the aggressors (coded as 1). The mean value for the economic coercion was .13. The mean value for the military coercion scenario was .92. If 100% of participants had comprehended this manipulation check the mean value for participants who read the economic coercion scenario would have been 0 and the mean for those exposed to a military coercion would be 1.

**(c) Executive Consistency:** The final item in the questionnaire asked what the President ended up doing in the report they just read about. Participants could answer the President had implemented sanctions, sent U.S. troops or done nothing. Responses were later recoded into a binary measure where 1 = consistently implemented the promised coercive foreign policy, and 0 = no policy was implemented, and therefore the executive was inconsistent. The mean for scenarios in which participants were exposed to a consistent executive was .89. The mean value for scenarios where the executive acted inconsistently was .13. If every participant had understood this manipulation check correctly the

mean for those who read about an executive being consistent would be 1, whereas the mean for an inconsistent executive would be 0.

### 5.3. Results

The general pattern of findings shows that the salience of an international crisis affects constituents' preferences for coercive foreign policies.<sup>39</sup> These policy preferences in turn affect whether inconsistent leaders rewarded or punished. I find that executives who act in accordance to the policy preferences of their constituents receive more support in times of international crises and that executive inconsistency is not always punished.

#### *(H1) Does the Salience of an International Crisis Affect Policy Preferences?*

To assess whether participants' evaluation of executives who threatened and implemented economic or military coercion was contingent to the salience of an international crisis, a 2 x 2 between-groups ANOVA was conducted on executive approval after the President had implemented either economic or military coercion.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Individual policy preferences are measured indirectly through measures of executive approval after the executive has committed to economic or military coercive foreign policies.

<sup>40</sup> H1 tests policy preferences only, and not reactions to executive inconsistency. Therefore responses provided to cases in which the executive was inconsistent, i.e. when a coercive foreign policy was threatened but not implemented, were not included in the analyses presented in this section. These cases are included in the sample with which H2 and H3 are tested.

Table 9 Effects of Salience of Crisis and Foreign Policy Threat on Approval for National Sample

Observations: 318		R-Squared = .836		Adj R-Squared = .834	
Source	Partial SS	df	MS	F	Prob. > F
Model	14450.667	4	3612.667	399.804	.000
Salience of Crisis	85.541	1	85.541	9.467	.002
Foreign Policy Threat	27.645	1	27.645	3.059	.081
Salience of Crisis*Foreign Policy Threat	143.521	1	143.521	15.883	.000
Residual	2837.333	314	9.036		
Total	17288.000	318			

Table 9 shows a main effect of both *Salience of Crisis* and *Foreign Policy Threat* on domestic support for the executive in times of international conflict. Executive approval is higher ( $M=7.23$ ) when an international crisis is salient, when compared to approval in a non-salient crisis ( $M=6.19$ ) [ $F(1,318)=9.467$ ,  $p=.002$ ]. When an international crisis threatens national security, citizens are predisposed to approve of the President regardless of her actual response to the crisis. This lends support to the “rally ‘round the flag’” thesis (Mueller 1971). In the words of one participant, “I do not wish to see the US entering into another war or intervening in another country. However, when the US and other countries’ security are threatened by terrorists and/or their supporters, I believe the US must get involved.<sup>41</sup>” Another claimed that, “the US does not need to have these idiots develop a nuclear weapon. Stop the problem before one develops, instead of acting in (self) defense. The week will inherit nothing.<sup>42</sup>”

The type of *Foreign Policy Threat* made by the executive is on the verge of statistical significance [ $F(1,318)=3.059$ ,  $p=.081$ ]. Generally speaking, when the President engages in economic coercion approval tends to be higher ( $M=7.01$ ) than when

<sup>41</sup>As is standard practice in survey experiments conducted by Knowledge Networks, after answering the experimental items participants can voice their opinion about the survey.

<sup>42</sup>This last sentence was written in capital letters.

using military might (M=6.42). This main effect is qualified by the significant interaction between both experimental factors. One respondent notes that, “It was a good idea to use economic sanctions instead of sending troops right away.”

In line with H1 the analyses show a significant two-way interaction between *Salience of Crisis* and the *Foreign Policy Threat* [ $F(1,318)=15.883, p=.000$ ]. That is, although people generally prefer the implementation of less costly coercive foreign policies such as imposing economic sanctions, military alternatives are supported when national security is at stake. In the words of one respondent, “sanctions on all levels are ineffective. It’s like smacking the person on the wrist and it will not prevent that person or country from doing what they want to do. If you want to stop a country from doing something you don’t want it to do you must wage war.” As seen in Figure 7, approval for the president is high after a commitment to send troops is made (M=7.61) and when sanctions are threatened (M=6.86) in salient crises. On the other hand, when a crisis is not salient, domestic audiences prefer the implementation of sanctions (M=7.16) to sending troops (M=5.23).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> T-test results show that the difference of means between executive approval following economic and military coercion in salient crises is not statistically significant (a two-tailed test has a p-value of .193). The difference between both types of coercion is statistically significant in non-salient crises (a two-tailed t-test has a p-value of .002). This means that the statistical significance of the two-way interaction between *Salience of Crisis* and the *Foreign Policy Threat* is driven by the differences in non-salient crises only.

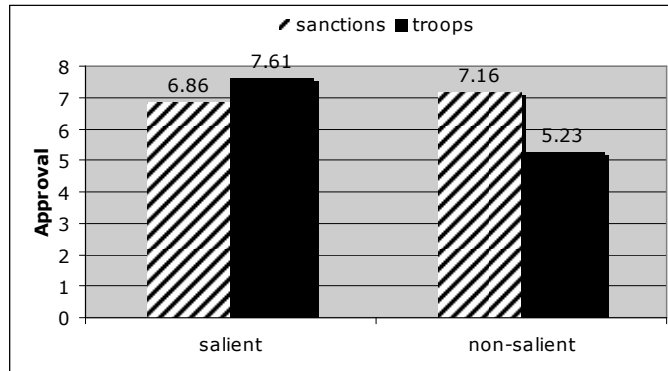


Figure 7 Effects of Salience of Crisis and Foreign Policy Threat on Approval for National Sample

**(H2) Is Executive Inconsistency Punished Across the Board?**

To assess whether approval for consistent executives is higher than approval for inconsistent ones, I conducted two 2 x 2 x 2 between-groups ANOVAs. The first was conducted on executive approval measured after the President had either followed through or backed down on threats of military or economic coercion. The second was conducted on a measure called  $\Delta$ .  $\Delta$  is the difference in executive approval that allows me to examine whether executive approval increased or decreased for each individual participant. This measure is calculated by subtracting the executive approval each participant awarded the executive after she acted consistently or inconsistently from the approval they had previously awarded her after a coercive foreign policy threat was first issued.

Descriptively, the highest means for the first approval measure are observed in salient crises when the executive consistently intervened militarily (M=7.61) and in non-salient crises when the executive consistently imposed sanctions (M=7.16). The lowest



means are observed when the executive threatens economic coercion and subsequently reneges (M=3.80 in salient crises, M=4.12 in non-salient ones).

Interestingly, most  $\Delta$  values are negative, implying that executives have higher approval when making an initial foreign policy threat than after having had the chance to implement or renege on it. As was the case for the first approval variable, the highest means for  $\Delta$  are observed in salient crises when the executive consistently intervened militarily (M=.68) and in crises that are not salient when the executive consistently imposed sanctions (M=.30). This indicates that executive approval increases in these cases after participants learn that the executive carried out the coercive foreign policies she had threatened. That is, the largest increases in  $\Delta$  occur when the executive consistently implemented policies that are preferred by the public given the salience of a crisis. The largest drops in  $\Delta$  occur when the executive is inconsistent in salient crises (M= -2.28 for military coercion, M= -3.73 for economic coercion).

Table 10 Effects of Salience of Crisis, Foreign Policy Threat, and Executive Consistency on Approval for National Sample

Observations: 639		R-Squared = . 784		Adj R-Squared = . 781	
Source	Partial SS	df	MS	F	Prob. > F
Model	21055.473	8	2631.934	286.458	.000
Salience of Crisis	17.289	1	17.289	1.882	.171
Foreign Policy Threat	13.770	1	13.770	1.499	.221
Executive Consistency	741.249	1	741.249	80.677	.000
Salience of Crisis*Foreign Policy Threat	66.052	1	66.052	7.189	.008
Salience of Crisis* Executive Consistency	79.630	1	79.630	8.667	.003
Foreign Policy Threat* Executive Consistency	124.267	1	124.267	13.525	.000
Three-way interaction	77.747	1	77.747	8.462	.004
Residual	5797.527	631	9.188		
Total	26853.000	639			

Table 11 Effects of Saliency of Crisis, Foreign Policy Threat, and Executive Consistency on  $\Delta$  for National Sample

Observations: 632		R-Squared = .207		Adj R-Squared = .196	
Source	Partial SS	df	MS	F	Prob. > F
Model	2054.719	8	256.840	20.310	.000
Saliency of Crisis	141.969	1	141.969	11.226	.001
Foreign Policy Threat	200.521	1	200.521	15.856	.000
Executive Consistency	774.686	1	774.686	61.258	.000
Saliency of Crisis*Foreign Policy Threat	.872	1	.872	.069	.793
Saliency of Crisis* Executive Consistency	151.959	1	151.959	12.016	.001
Foreign Policy Threat* Executive Consistency	96.639	1	96.639	7.642	.006
Three-way interaction	45.208	1	45.208	3.575	.059
Residual	7891.281	624	12.646		
Total	9946.000	632			

Table 10 and Table 11 show the different effects the experimental factors have on both approval measures. The main effects of *Executive Consistency* and the interactions between this variable and *Saliency of Crisis* and *Foreign Policy Threat* test H2 as they assess the effect of executive consistency/inconsistency on approval. The interaction between *Saliency of Crisis* and *Foreign Policy Threat* refers to rewarding or punishing the executive for not implementing public policy preferences and was already discussed in the test for H1.<sup>44</sup> The three-way interaction among the independent variables tests H3, as it examines the effects particular policy preferences have on executive approval following inconsistent behavior, and will therefore be addressed in the following section.

Table 10 and Table 11 show a main effect of *Executive Consistency* on domestic support for the executive in analyses run with both approval measures. The results indicate that executives who act consistently and implement the coercive foreign policies

<sup>44</sup> The p-values for this interaction in Table 10 and Table 9 differ slightly as the results in Table 9 are limited to only those cases in which the executive acted consistently.

they threaten have higher approval ratings ( $M=6.71$ ) than those who back down on such threats ( $M=4.55$ ) [ $F(1,639)=80.677, p=.000$ ]. A significant number of respondents noted angry comments when exposed to inconsistent executives. One noted that, “you can’t say one thing and then change your mind. The weaker people were counting on the troops the President said he would send. Then he changed his mind. This means to me that anything he says is a lie.” Another claimed, “we must follow through on what we say. If we say we’ll send troops we must. Thus we must be careful not to say something we don’t really mean. Never should our country say one thing and then do the opposite. It makes America appear weak and indecisive, just what our enemies want.”  $\Delta$  values are also higher for consistent executives ( $M= .19$ ) than for inconsistent ones ( $M= -2.04$ ) [ $F(1,632)=61.258, p=.000$ ]. That is, inconsistent executives are punished for backing down after issuing economic or military threats in crises that are salient and that are not salient. These main effects support H2 and are qualified by two important interactions.

First, the interaction between *Salience of Crisis* and *Executive Consistency* significantly affects executive approval and  $\Delta$ . That is, although executive inconsistency is punished across the board, the salience of the crisis at hand influences how much of an audience cost will be paid. As can be seen in Figure 8, in a salient crisis the difference in approval for consistent ( $M=7.23$ ) and inconsistent Presidents ( $M=4.36$ ) is twice the difference than in non-salient ones ( $M=6.19$  for consistent executives,  $M=4.74$  for inconsistent ones) [ $F(1,639)=8.667, p=.003$ ]. In the case of  $\Delta$  we find that approval increases when executives act consistently in both salient and non-salient scenarios ( $M=.20$  for salient crises,  $.17$  for ones that are not salient) and diminishes when executives

back down ( $M = -3.01$  for salient crises,  $-1.07$  for ones that are not salient). The decline in approval for inconsistent executives is approximately three times larger when a crisis threatens national security.

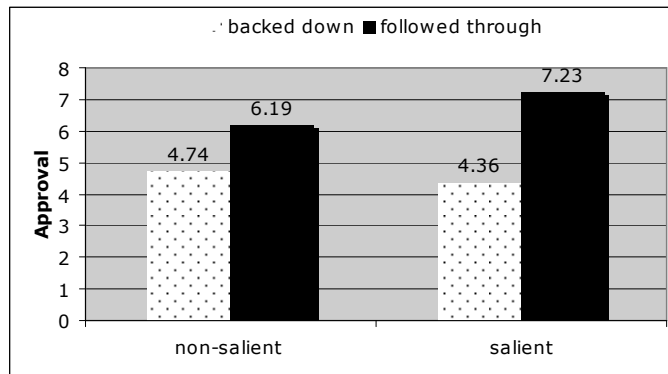


Figure 8 Effects of Salience of Crisis and Executive Consistency on Approval for National Sample

The second interaction that qualifies how domestic audiences punish inconsistent leaders in times of international crises is that between *Foreign Policy Threat* and *Executive Consistency* [ $F(1,639)=13.525, p=.000$ ]. Results for the first accountability measure show that executive inconsistency is punished more severely in cases of economic coercion than in militarized disputes. As illustrated by Figure 9, in these cases the difference in approval for consistent Presidents ( $M=7.01$ ) and for those that renege on sanctions ( $M=3.96$ ) more than doubles the difference between consistent ( $M=6.42$ ) and inconsistent leaders ( $M=5.14$ ) in cases of military coercion.  $\Delta$  results are very similar [ $F(1,632)=7.642, p=.006$ ]. The difference in approval for cases of economic coercion is 300% steeper ( $M = .01$  for consistent executives,  $M = -3.00$  for inconsistent

ones) than the difference for consistent ( $M = .36$ ) and inconsistent Presidents ( $M = -1.08$ ) engaging in military coercion.

There are two plausible explanations for the finding that may, at first glance, seem counterintuitive. On the one hand, it is feasible that the lower the execution costs associated with a coercive foreign policy are, the higher the domestic political costs will be for reneging. Reneging after committing to a foreign policy that will be costly in terms of lives and treasure can be perceived as having a positive effect, as these costs will be avoided. However, reneging after threatening the imposition of sanctions, which is relatively less costly than military action, is not accompanied by this positive externality. On the other hand, people prefer the executive to impose sanctions than to intervene militarily (as described in the section testing H1). In this sense this interaction supports my theoretical argument as constituents will punish executive inconsistency considering whether the action the executive failed to implement is something they wanted to see implemented in the first place.

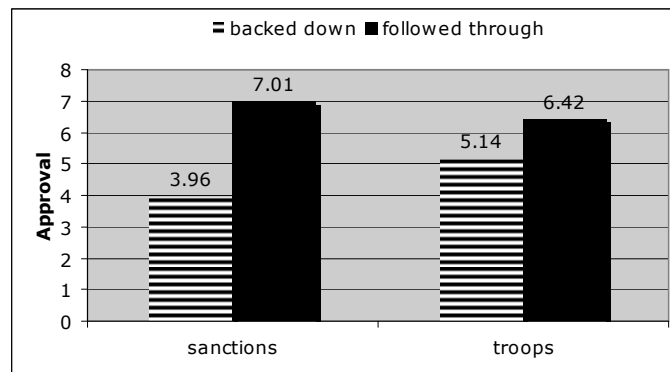


Figure 9 Effects of Foreign Policy Threat and Executive Consistency on Approval for National Sample

**(H3) How do Policy Preferences Affect Accountability?**

In this section I examine whether the preferences for specific coercive foreign policies given the salience of a crisis affect the likelihood that executive consistency will be rewarded or that executive inconsistency will be punished. The three-way interactions between *Salience of Crisis*, *Foreign Policy Threat*, and *Executive Consistency* presented in Tables 10 and 1 show that these factors have a significant joint effect on executive approval [ $F(1,639)=8.462, p=.004$ ] and on  $\Delta$ , [ $F(1,632)=3.575, p=.059$ ]. These interactions are graphed in Figures 10 and 11.

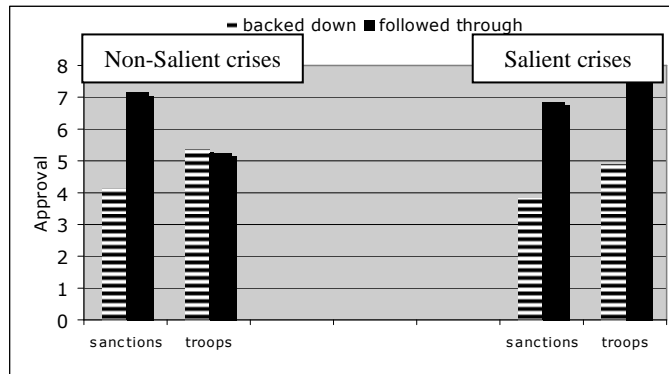


Figure 10 Effects of Salience of Crisis, Foreign Policy Threat, and Executive Consistency on Approval for National Sample

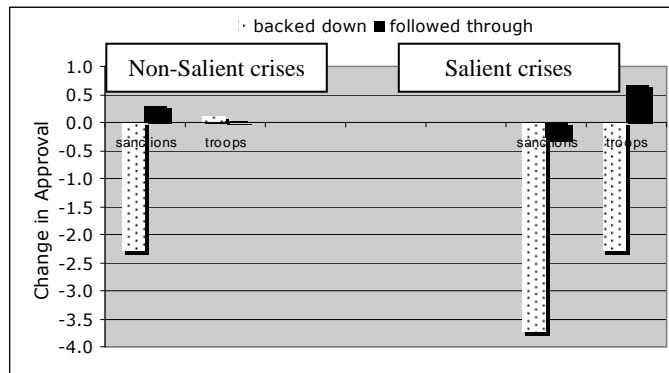


Figure 11 Effects of Salience of Crisis, Foreign Policy Threat, and Executive Consistency on  $\Delta$  for National Sample

The results support H3.a. In salient crises approval for executives that enact military or economic coercion is high. The highest mean for executive approval is for presidents that consistently enact military action in salient crises ( $M=7.61$ ). The mean for economic coercion ( $M=6.86$ ) is statistically indistinguishable from the military coercion mean.<sup>45</sup> Although military action receives marginally higher popular support when a crisis threatens national security, threatening economic coercion provides the executive with enough popular support in times of international crises. Inconsistency is punished for both military ( $M=4.93$ ) and economic coercion ( $M=3.80$ ). When a crisis affects national security constituents expect the executive to take action. Says one respondent exposed to a salient scenario in which the executive backed down, “the leader of a country is supposed to represent the values, morals and ethics of its citizens. The leader represented here lied, sold out the values and ethics of the people he represented.”

In salient crises the highest  $\Delta$  also is for presidents that intervene militarily ( $M=.68$ ). On the other hand,  $\Delta$  for executives that impose sanctions in salient crisis is low ( $M= -.28$ ). However, this result should be interpreted considering that executives who threaten economic coercion see their approval rise significantly at the time the threat is made (recall there was a main effect of *Foreign Policy Threat* on executive approval in the section testing H1 as participants generally preferred sanctions over sending troops). Specifically, executive approval averaged 7.01 when a threat to implement sanctions was made so in this particular case a low negative digit implies that

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<sup>45</sup> T –test results show that these means are not statistically different ( $p\text{-value} = .883$ ).

approval dropped somewhat but remains quite high. As was the case for executive approval, analyses of  $\Delta$  also show that Presidents that are inconsistent will pay audience costs if they renege on military and economic threats made in salient crises.  $\Delta$  values are negative and large following executive inconsistency in cases of military ( $M = -2.20$ ) and economic coercion ( $M = -3.73$ ).

Results also support H3.b. In crises that are not salient executive approval is high after sanctions are implemented ( $M = 7.16$ ).  $\Delta$  is low but positive ( $M = .03$ ). Executives who commit to imposing sanctions and subsequently renege pay audience costs ( $M = 4.12$ ).  $\Delta$  for executives that are inconsistent after threatening sanctions is negative and large ( $M = -2.26$ ).

Figure 10 and Figure 11 show that, as predicted, executive inconsistency will not always be punished. When an executive threatens troop deployment in a crisis that does not pose a direct threat to national security and subsequently backs down, her approval will be slightly higher ( $M = 5.36$ ) than it would have been had she followed through on her threat ( $M = 5.23$ ), which supports H3.c. Values for  $\Delta$  also suggest that executive inconsistency is not punished when military action is threatened but not implemented in crises that are not salient.  $\Delta$  for consistent and inconsistent executives is practically indistinguishable ( $M = .12$  for inconsistent Presidents,  $M = .04$  for consistent ones) when military coercion is threatened in crises that do not threaten national security. When the executive commits to military action in a crisis her constituents perceive as not being salient and backs down she will not be held accountable for being inconsistent, as her actions would be representing popular preferences. As noted by participants exposed to



such scenarios, “the President was quick with the lip, I assume his bark was to curtail the aggressor, but in failing he backed off, thankfully,” “I’m sure he had reasons for what was done, sometimes things are done behind closed doors that we don’t see.”

#### 5.4. Summary of Results

When an international crisis poses a threat to national security, the public will support executives that intervene militarily or impose economic sanctions. When a crisis does not pose such a threat, economic coercion will receive higher levels of public support. Inconsistent executives will pay higher costs for backing down in salient crises, but the loss in popular support following inconsistent actions in crises that are not salient can also be detrimental come election time. Regarding economic coercion, executives who commit to imposing sanctions and do not deliver will be punished, even when a crisis does not affect national security.

The salience of a crisis also affects whether executive actions will be rewarded. Issuing foreign policy threats can be costly but can also increase popular support in times of international conflict. Executives who make coercive foreign policy threats in salient crises (particularly those who commit to military action) and those who impose sanctions in non-salient ones will see their approval ratings surge, as these actions represent the policy preferences of their constituents.

I find that inconsistent executives will not always pay audience costs for being inconsistent. When the executive reneges on a foreign policy threat that domestic audiences do not consider an adequate response to an international crisis, domestic

political costs may not exist. Unlike research that has highlighted the preponderant role executive and elite cues have in times of conflict, I find that domestic audiences are not blank slates. If the executive commits to military action and subsequently backs down in a crisis that does not pose a direct threat to national security, her approval will remain untarnished.

I would like to address the role of political affiliation. First and foremost, the multinomial logistic regression I conducted to ensure that participants were randomly assigned to the different experimental scenarios shows that Democrats and Republicans were evenly distributed across conditions. Second, the inclusion of political affiliation does not significantly change the effects the independent variables have on executive approval. However, although participants know they are being exposed to hypothetical scenarios, I find that Democrats tend to approve of the executive more ( $M=5.93$  compared to  $M=5.14$  for Republicans) [ $F(1,635)=9.768, p=.002$ ]. As can be seen in Figure 12, I also find that political affiliation has an interactive effect with *Executive Consistency* [ $F(1,635)=4.315, p=.038$ ]. Although both Democrats and Republicans punish executive inconsistency, Republican's approval for the executive decreases more when the President does not follow through on her coercive policy threats.

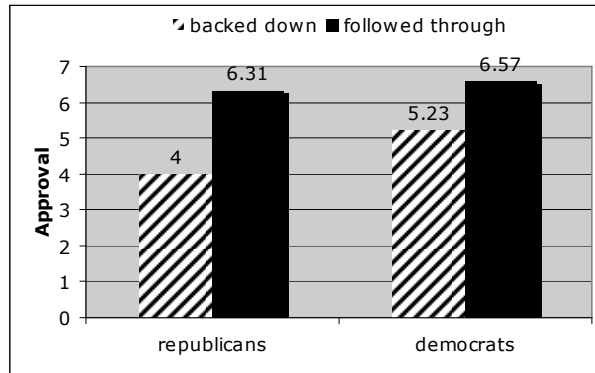


Figure 12 Effects of Political Affiliation and Salience of Crisis on Approval

The three-way interaction among *Foreign Policy Threat*, *Executive Consistency* and Political Affiliation also affects approval [ $F(1,635)=3.733, p=.054$ ]. Figure 13 shows that inconsistent executives pay audience costs across the board. As mentioned above, Democratic executive approval ratings tend to be higher than Republican ones. Also, Democrats tend to favor executives who consistently impose sanctions ( $M=6.67$ ), whereas Republicans prefer executives that follow through on military threats ( $M=6.53$ ).

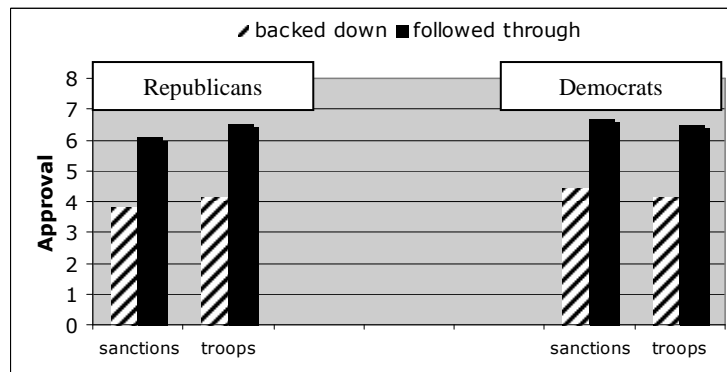


Figure 13 Effects of Political Affiliation, Foreign Policy Threat and Salience of Crisis on Approval

## 6. CONCLUSION

In times of crises, executives do not make foreign policy threats in a vacuum. When answering the question, “Under which circumstances will domestic audiences reward or penalize leaders for their coercive foreign policies behavior?” we must consider not only what the executive threatened and how she acted, but also what constituents’ preferences are. The findings presented in this dissertation show that the salience of an international crisis determines when domestic audiences will prefer military or economic coercion and that they will support executives who act in accordance to these preferences. Executives who display behavior that is incongruent with constituents’ preferences will be penalized. When an international crisis poses a threat to national security, the public will support executives that intervene militarily or impose economic sanctions because both policy options are congruent with public preferences. When a crisis does not pose such a threat, domestic audiences prefer economic coercion, and thus economic threats will receive higher levels of public support.

The theoretical problem this dissertation addresses is the lack of consensus that exists in the field regarding the specific role constituents’ preferences can potentially play in fomenting or constraining coercive foreign policies in democracies. By specifying the role public policy preferences and executive inconsistencies can play in coercive foreign policies this dissertation brings together two previously unconnected

types of accountability theories in international relations. On the one hand, a group of theories emphasizes how citizens hold leaders accountable if they do not represent their policy preferences. On the other hand, theories of audience costs emphasize whether leaders act consistently between what they promise they will do and the foreign policies they actually implement. Bridging these areas of research allowed me to expand the concept of audience costs to crises that are not salient and to cases of economic coercion. Thus, the theory I set forth in this dissertation integrates two approaches to accountability and expands the applicability of the concept of audience costs to cases that go beyond the original scope outlined by Fearon in the mid 90s. This is a timely expansion of the concept for both theoretical and practical reasons.

Theoretically, prominent scholars of international relations have recently questioned that audience costs will operate when the threat a leader backs down from is not in line with the preferences of domestic audiences (Snyder and Borghard 2011; Trachtenberg 2012). Some qualitative evidence showing that leaders backing down from militarized threats are not punished when domestic audiences do not have hawkish tendencies have been presented, but to the best of my knowledge this dissertation is the first systematic quantitative study to examine the connections between public expectations and leaders' actions. I present a theory that specifies when domestic audiences will prefer economic or military coercion and posit that we can predict when audience costs will be paid by examining the interaction between popular expectations for national action and the actions of the executive. By adding public expectations to the equation, my theory predicts there will be cases in which leaders' inconsistent behavior

in times of crises will not lead to audience costs. If an American executive commits to military action and subsequently backs down in a crisis that does not pose a direct threat to national security, her approval will remain untarnished. This finding has important implications for conflict literature in international relations. If the potential for incurring audience costs may not exist for democratic leaders engaged in militarized disputes over issues that do not threaten national security, these leaders lose the bargaining advantage conflict scholars have assumed they have over autocratic ones.

From a policy point of view, expanding the concept of audience costs to crises that do not pose a direct threat to national security and to cases of economic coercion is timely because such cases play an important role in today's post-Cold War world. Many of the international conflicts the United States and European states like the United Kingdom currently deal with pose no imminent threat to national security and economic coercion has risen exponentially since World War I (Pape 1997; Drury 2001). Identifying when audience costs will and will not operate can help us understand why threats made by democratic leaders have varying degrees of effectiveness. Military threats made by western leaders against Libyan or Syrian authorities might not be as credible as previously thought.<sup>46</sup>

In what follows I summarize the tests of assumptions and of the theory that rests on these assumptions. I then proceed to briefly present findings suggesting that

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<sup>46</sup> While it is plausible that a lack of credibility might help explain Gaddafi and al-Assad's resistance to make significant concessions in order to avoid military intervention, I am not claiming this is the only or even the most relevant explanation for their behavior in these crises. I cannot do justice here to the literature dedicated to understanding how incentive structures in personalistic autocratic regimes motivate leaders to try to retain power for as long as possible (Huntington 1991; Geddes 1999) and how dictators that make concessions risk losing office.

constituents' concern for national reputation influences executive approval across samples. After describing how this dissertation contributes to the accountability and audience costs literature, I identify areas of future research.

### 6.1. Summary of Results

I initially tested the hypothesis derived from my theory on a sample of 451 American students and 114 British students and found that domestic audiences reward and punish leaders both in the U.S. and the U.K. Inconsistent executives are at risk of paying audience costs when they back down on their foreign policy threats. This is particularly the case in the U.K. as executive inconsistency is always punished, regardless of the salience of a crisis and of the match or mismatch between public expectations and the actions of the Prime Minister. When evaluating whether to punish inconsistent behavior, Americans consider whether they agreed with the policy that was not enacted in a manner consistent with my theory. However, British citizens do not. If an American President threatened to send American troops in a non-salient crisis and then backs down she will not pay audience costs. This is not the case in Britain. Even if British citizens generally prefer not to employ military coercion, Prime Ministers that do not send national troops after having promised to will be held accountable, even if the crisis poses no threat to national security. Overall, I find support for my three hypotheses amongst American students, but support only for two hypotheses in the British sample. Table 12 lists the hypotheses and shows whether they were supported in each sample.

Table 12 Support for Hypotheses across Samples

	<i>American National Sample</i>	<i>American Student Sample</i>	<i>British Student Sample</i>
<b>H1.</b> Salient crisis → support for military or economic coercion. Non- salient → support economic coercion.	<i>Supported.</i> Additionally find that approval is generally higher in salient crises and following economic coercion.	<i>Supported.</i> Additionally find that approval is generally higher in salient crises.	<i>Supported.</i> Additionally find that approval is generally higher following economic coercion.
<b>H2.</b> Higher support for consistent executives.	<i>Supported,</i> especially in salient crises and in cases of economic coercion.	<i>Supported,</i> especially in salient crises.	<i>Supported,</i> regardless of type of coercion or salience of crisis.
<b>H3.a.</b> Salient crisis → approval ↑ if military or economic coercion are consistently enacted; and ↓ following inconsistency.	<i>Supported.</i>	<i>Supported.</i>	<i>Some support.</i> Highest Δs are after consistent military and economic action in salient crises and lowest Δs are after backing down in non-salient crises.
<b>H3.b.</b> Non- salient → approval ↑ if economic coercion is consistently enacted; and ↓ following inconsistency.	<i>Supported.</i>	<i>Supported.</i>	<i>Some support.</i> The lowest value for Δ occurs after failing to carry out an economic threat in a non-salient crisis.
<b>H3.c.</b> Non- salient → approval ↓ if military coercion is consistently enacted.	<i>Supported.</i>	<i>Supported.</i>	<i>Not Supported.</i> Inconsistency is always punished.

The findings of a national experiment conducted with a representative sample of 657 American adults also support my theory. Non-student Americans tended to behave similarly to Americans in the student sample regarding the interaction between popular preferences and the actions of the President. Both samples evaluated the actions of the executive taking into consideration their own policy preferences. Thus, executive inconsistency did not always lead to audience costs. When the President reneged on a foreign policy threat that domestic audiences did not agree with, she was spared



audience costs. If the executive committed to military action and subsequently backed down in a non-salient crisis her approval remained untarnished.

There was however, a slight difference between student and non-student Americans regarding policy preferences. This difference does not counter my theory but might be of interest. I find that in the national sample, American adults tend to prefer the use of economic sanctions to military intervention across the board (as did British students), whereas participants in the American student sample did not generally prefer one type of coercive foreign policy to the other. However, in both samples Americans preferred using either economic or military coercion in salient crises while privileging the use of economic coercion in crises that did not threaten national security as predicted by my theory.

The objective of the theory set forth in this dissertation is to answer four questions: (1) Are democratic leaders rewarded and punished for acting in ways that do not represent constituents' coercive foreign policy preferences? (2) What determines popular preferences for military and economic coercive foreign policies in times of international crises? (3) Are leaders rewarded and punished for backing down after threatening military and economic coercive foreign policies in times of international crises, even if a crisis does not threaten national security? (4) Do public coercive foreign policy preferences affect whether democratic leaders are rewarded and punished for backing down after issuing threats in times of international crises? The answer to the second question was the same across the three samples with which I tested my theory, which totaled 1,222 participants overall. I find that the salience of an international crisis

determines whether the public will support the use of either economic or military coercion or will only prefer the imposition of economic sanctions. The answers to the other questions were the same amongst Americans, but not for British citizens. Regarding questions (1) and (3) I find that American Presidents are rewarded and punished for acting in ways that do not represent constituents' coercive foreign policy preferences and executive inconsistency will be punished in non-salient crises when economic sanctions had been threatened. Regarding the fourth question, I find that if the President backs down after making a threat that did not represent popular preferences, she will not pay audience costs as domestic audiences will be relieved that a policy they did not favor was avoided. British Prime Ministers, on the other hand, will pay audience costs across the board, even if this means implementing an unpopular coercive foreign policy.

## 6.2. Contribution to Accountability Literature

After the Vietnam War, scholars of international relations challenged the Almond-Lippmann thesis, claiming that Americans have foreign policy preferences and that changes in these preferences were rationally tied to international events (Caspary 1970; Mueller 1973; Page and Shapiro 1988; Peffley and Hurwitz 1992; Jentleson 1992; Page and Shapiro 1992; Popkin 1994). My dissertation corroborates this claim: in times of international crises domestic audiences will consider whether national security is at stake when forming a preference for economic or military coercion. The coercive foreign

policy statements and actions of the executive will be evaluated in light of their correspondence to public preferences.

It has been posited that even if citizens do not have a nuanced understanding of international affairs, reliance on heuristics or informational shortcuts can enable the formation of general foreign policy preferences (Fiske and Taylor 1984; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991; Popkin 1993; Delli-Carpini and Keeter 1996; Lau and Redlawsk 1997; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Holsti 2004; Aldrich, Gelpi, Feaver, Reifler and Sharp 2006). Identifying an international crisis as salient can operate as such a heuristic. In the absence of more detailed information this cue guides the process of public foreign policy preference formation. One important caveat is that in my experiments participants were informed about the salience of a crisis without discussing who had categorized the crises as salient. That is, my research does not address the current debate regarding the direction of the casual arrow between public opinion and policy-making. Some scholars emphasize the predominant role of elites in framing public opinion (Mermin 1997; Robinson 2000; Entman 2003; Kull, Ramsay and Lewis 2004; Berinsky and Kinder 2006; Boettcher and Cobb 2009). On the other hand, numerous studies support the notion that the casual arrow can be reversed: the public does influence policy-making (Page and Shapiro 1983; Nincic 1988; Aldrich, Sullivan and Borgida 1989; Russett 1990; Bartels 1991; Nincic and Hinckley 1991; Roberts 1993; Mandelbaum 1996; Baum 2004b; Aldrich, Gelpi, Feaver, Reifler and Sharp 2006). My dissertation does not contribute to either perspective.

My findings corroborate those of Anand and Krosnick (2003) regarding the role public preferences play in evaluating political figures. My unique contribution is highlighting how these popular preferences interact with preferences for consistent executives. As noted by Levendusky and Horowitz, “audience costs have a distinguished intellectual pedigree in international relations research over the past two decades” (2012:323) and have been used as the foundation for numerous bargaining models of international crises. However, like Levendusky and Horowitz, I, too, find that inconsistent executives will not always pay audience costs for being inconsistent.<sup>47</sup> When the executive reneges on a foreign policy threat that domestic audiences do not consider an adequate response to an international crisis, domestic political costs may not exist. Unlike research that has highlighted the preponderant role executive and elite cues have in times of conflict, I find that domestic audiences are not blank slates.

Previous research in international relations has highlighted the role democratic accountability plays in constraining inter-state coercion (Nincic 1988; Russett 1990; Holsti 1992; Sobel 2001; Baum 2004b; Aldrich, Gelpi, Feaver, Reifler and Sharp 2006). This study shows that the accountability link that exists between constituents and executives can constrain coercive foreign policies but also foment them, particularly if citizens perceive a crisis as threatening national security. As highlighted previously by Baum (2004a) and Clare (2007), the saliency of an international conflict, or whether significant national interests are at stake, influences domestic reactions to presidential inconsistencies. The findings described in this dissertation help us understand the

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<sup>47</sup> Levendusky and Horowitz (2012) find that inconsistency is not punished when the action is framed as being a consequence of new information and backing down is presented as being in the national interest.

mechanisms through which the perceived salience of a crisis affects these distinct public reactions. The salience of an international crisis affects constituents' foreign policy preferences, and executives' consistent and inconsistent behavior in times of international crises will be punished or rewarded considering these preferences. Finally, my dissertation addresses recent critiques formulated by Trachtenberg (2012) and Snyder and Borghard (2011) claiming that audience costs might not be paid when a democratic leader backs down from a military threat if domestic audiences do not have hawkish preferences. The theory and experiments set forth in this dissertation complement the qualitative evidence provided by these scholars.

### 6.3. Areas of Future Research

This dissertation contributes to existing theories of democratic accountability in international relations by bridging previously unconnected areas of study and by proposing novel connections between public preferences and evaluations of the executive in times of international crises. Before concluding this section, I would like to address five areas of future study that would complement the research presented here. The first three are conceptual issues, whereas the latter two are methodological ones.

First and foremost, an area that elicits future research is trying to answer the question, "Why would constituents disapprove of inconsistent executives or leaders that do not act in accordance to their preferences?" I have already begun to investigate this issue. It has been posited that concern for national reputation is a micro-mechanism behind audience costs and that inconsistent executives lose approval not out of moral or

ethical concerns, but due to citizens' instrumental preoccupation with national reputation (Tomz 2007). In addition to examining the role concern with national reputation plays in rewarding or punishing the executive, I have also begun studying the effects the perceived competence of the executive and various emotions elicited by international crises play in the evaluation of the executive's actions.

Second, further specification of the relationship that exists between a systemic definition of salience and an individual-level definition is warranted. In the theory section I specified that a salient crisis was one that constituted a threat to national security. However, who defines when national security is threatened? Do individual-level characteristics such as political knowledge affect the perception of a crisis as salient? When an international crisis breaks out there is often a considerable degree of discrepancy about whether it threatens national security. How does an objective international threat impact the assessment individual citizens make regarding national security? How prevalent is the role of foreign policy elites in influencing citizens' perception of the salience of an international crisis? Trager and Vavreck (2011) find that elite framing plays a role in determining when audience costs will be paid or avoided. Is there a limit to how far elite frames can go in fomenting support for coercive foreign policies? As mentioned above, in this project participants were informed of the salience of a crisis without knowing who had made such a categorization. Experimental research manipulating different sources of information could shed light on the role of elite framing in coercive foreign policy.

A third area where conceptual clarification is needed is regarding the role specific political dynamics play in determining when democratic leaders will be held accountable for foreign policy choices. There are two types of relevant dynamics that can affect accountability: domestic and international. Scholars have recently begun to integrate audience costs theories with theories of domestic political behavior. Trager and Vavreck (2011) find that the political affiliation of an executive affects democratic accountability. Hawkish executives will receive more support than dovish ones when enacting peaceful foreign policies, and conversely, it will be easier for dovish executives to foment support for military action. Levendusky and Horowitz (2012) find that how a President justifies inconsistent behavior can spare her paying audience costs. Future research should address other issues such as the role the political affiliation of the executive plays in fomenting the idea that an international crisis poses a threat to national security, or in heightening fear of an international opponent in a bargaining crisis. Another area where further clarification of how domestic political dynamics can affect accountability is needed refers to the relevance international affairs play come election time. Even if the public frequently considers foreign issues as being one of the most important problems a nation can face (Aldrich, Sullivan and Borgida 1989; Vavreck 2009), can we really believe that foreign policy issues can outweigh domestic concerns? President Bush oversaw a quick, decisive victory in the first Iraq War, but voters seem more concerned with local economic troubles. Further research identifying the thresholds at which international or domestic issues will prevail in determining when democratic leaders will be rewarded or punished for coercive foreign policies is needed.

At an international level, more studies connecting audience costs with international events that occur during a crisis are warranted. Leventoglu and Tarar (2008) have shown that interstate bargaining dynamics change significantly depending on the time preferences of the players. Depending on this, uncertainty can lead to war or simply to a delay in reaching a negotiated settlement. What occurs in the period of time after a threat is issued and before the executive follows through or backs down is also relevant to accountability research. What if a threat succeeds in making an opponent yield...will inconsistency generally lead to audience costs in such cases? What if the nation being invaded by a third party is stronger than initially expected when an American leader issued a threat to intervene...will inconsistency be punished?

Methodologically, one issue is the scarcity of observational data appropriate to test theories of democratic accountability. This is the reason most recent audience costs studies have been formal theories, experiments, or cases studies. While these types of studies are important, observational research is essential in terms of strengthening the external validity of audience costs and accountability theories that focus on the role of threats. As noted by Downes and Sechser (2012), audience costs theories have been predominantly tested with data that is inadequate for such purpose. The Militarized Interstate Disputes (MID) and the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) datasets do not have many threats. According to their estimations, inter-state threats constitute approximately 9% of the MID data and 15% of the ICB data (2012:13). Analyses conducted with their new dataset of 194 interstate compellent threats issued between 1918 and 2001 do not support audience costs theory. Would analyses made including



deterrent threats support audience costs? Additionally, a comparison of audience costs across policy domains that examines real cases of economic and military coercion would be a very nice contribution to studies of democratic accountability.

Another fruitful methodological quest that would allow adequate tests of accountability theories with observational data would be to expand Baum's (2004a) 'Going Public' variable. Baum collected data of presidential public threats issued during pre-crisis stages in the United States. To capture whether an executive 'goes public,' he counted the number of times the President mentioned an opponent state in a national security context<sup>48</sup> (2004a:615) in the *Public Papers of the President of the United States*<sup>49</sup> (1998). From these counts, Baum tallied three different indicators used to construct his 'Going Public' variable. The first indicator is the average number of times an opponent state is mentioned daily since the international crisis began until the day in which one of the actors involved in the crisis initiates a major response.<sup>50</sup> The second indicator is the daily average of these same mentions during the month prior to the date on which the crisis began. The third indicator is the daily average number of mentions in that same calendar month during the previous year. Baum later averages his second and third indicators. This product is his 'pre-crisis' average. The difference between this pre-crisis indicator and his first indicator constitutes his 'going public' variable. This allows him to control for the fact that some nations just get mentioned more frequently than others, so he focuses on the *changes* in presidential rhetoric. Expanding this data set in

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<sup>48</sup> This excludes the times the president mentions a nation in a way that is unambiguously unrelated to a specific crisis.

<sup>49</sup> This includes presidential speeches, press conferences, as well as other written or verbal statements.

<sup>50</sup> To determine when a crisis begins and ends Baum uses the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) dataset.

the U.S., and collecting similar indices in the U.K. and other European states would be a significant contribution to accountability research in international relations.

The final methodological issue is that most experimental work analyzing the role of audience costs has been conducted in the United States. This dissertation is an initial step towards understanding the determinants of domestic audiences punishing leaders for carrying out foreign policies that are not in line with their expectations. One future step I would like to take is testing the hypotheses set forth in this dissertation on a larger sample of non-students in Britain. Additionally, in subsequent studies I wish to examine how relative power fits into the public-leader equation. It seems plausible that leaders of relatively weaker states in the international system could boost popularity ratings by committing to certain types of foreign policies, even if these are not subsequently carried out. Although citizens of weaker states were probably not expecting their leader to make a public statement when facing an international crisis, they might perceive the reputational benefits associated with such action<sup>51</sup>. Even if leaders of relatively weaker states do not follow through on their publicly stated commitments, their approval ratings might not drop.

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<sup>51</sup> Personally, I have observed that audiences behaved this way when Chilean President Ricardo Lagos sent Chilean troops to Haiti in a humanitarian mission. Although in this case Chilean troops were actually sent, the numbers were minimal and the public impact very significant. It would be interesting to see if this most informal observation of an almost nominal foreign policy action having an important effect on citizen's views of their international standing carries through even if the executive backs down after her commitment.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Experimental Scenarios for Test of Theory with American Students

#### (1) INSTRUCTIONS (Same for all conditions)

##### Democratic Accountability

###### Instructions:

The following questions are about U.S. relations with other countries around the world. You will read about a situation our country has faced in the past and will probably face again in the future. Different U.S. leaders have handled the situation in different ways. We will describe a particular international incident and how the U.S. President approached it, then ask you your opinion about this incident.

#### (2) EXAMPLES OF SCENARIOS

##### A. The Executive backs down after threatening Military Intervention in a Salient Crisis:

###### International Crisis in Asia

Kazakhstan, an Asian country, sent its military to take over its weaker neighbor Uzbekistan. The attackers are advancing rapidly and are about to invade Uzbekistan's capital and take over the whole country. An Uzbekistani farmer that witnessed the invasion declared that: "We were in the middle of harvesting our crops and we heard this loud bang. At first I couldn't see anything for there was dust and dirt all over the place but I could hear people screaming. As soon as the dirt began to settle I realized Kazakhstan men in uniform had thrown a bomb and there was blood all over the place. I don't see why they would attack us like this."

If Kazakhstan's military forces do take over the whole country, Asia's regional balance of power will shift drastically. **This will significantly affect U.S. economic and security interests in Asia.** Kazakh authorities have time after time demonstrated they are very hostile against the U.S.

Shortly after the attack, **the U.S. president in a public statement in the media said that the United States would send U.S. troops to defend the weaker country from its invaders.**

To summarize,

- Kazakhstan has invaded her weaker neighbor Uzbekistan.
- If Uzbekistan's capital is invaded U.S. economic and security interests in the region will be very significantly affected.
- The U.S. president said he would send troops to defend the weaker nation.

In the crisis you just read about, do you approve of how the President acted?

0= Definitely disapprove      10= Definitely Approve

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Kazakhstan has continued its invasion. In the end, the President of the U.S. did not send troops.

To summarize this international crisis and the U.S. President's reactions to it,

- Kazakhstan has invaded her weaker neighbor Uzbekistan.
- If Uzbekistan's capital is invaded U.S. economic and security interests in the region will be very significantly affected.
- The U.S. president **said he would send troops** to defend the weaker nation.
- Kazakhstan has continued the invasion.
- The U.S. President did **not** send troops.

### **B. The Executive consistently imposes Economic Coercion in a non-Salient Crisis: International Crisis in Asia**

Kazakhstan, an Asian country, sent its military to take over its weaker neighbor Uzbekistan. The attackers are advancing rapidly and are about to invade Uzbekistan's capital and take over the whole country. An Uzbekistani farmer that witnessed the invasion declared that: "We were in the middle of harvesting our crops and we heard this loud bang. At first I couldn't see anything for there was dust and dirt all over the place but I could hear people screaming. As soon as the dirt began to settle I realized Kazakhstan men in uniform had thrown a bomb and there was blood all over the place. I don't see why they would attack us like this."

If Kazakhstan's military forces do take over their neighbor, **neither the safety nor the economy of the United States will be affected.**

Shortly after the attack, **the U.S. president in a public statement in the media said that the United States would impose economic sanctions on the government of Kazakhstan.**

To summarize,

- Kazakhstan has invaded her weaker neighbor Uzbekistan.
- If the invasion continues, neither the safety nor the economy of the United States will be affected.
- The U.S. president said he would impose economic sanctions on Kazakhstan.

In the crisis you just read about, do you approve of how the President

0= Definitely disapprove      10= Definitely Approve

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Kazakhstan has continued its invasion. **The President of the U.S. did impose economic sanctions on Kazakhstan's government.**

To summarize this international crisis and the U.S. President's reactions to it,

- Kazakhstan has invaded her weaker neighbor Uzbekistan.
- If the invasion continues, neither the safety nor the economy of the United States will be affected.
- The U.S. president **said he would impose economic sanctions** on Kazakhstan.
- Kazakhstan has continued the invasion.
- The U.S. **did impose economic sanctions** on Kazakhstan.

**(3) QUESTIONNAIRE (Same for all conditions)<sup>52</sup>**

Now that you have all the information regarding how the President of the U.S. acted in this international crisis, do you approve of how he acted?

0= Definitely disapprove      10= Definitely Approve

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Was the international crisis you just read about relevant?

Yes, U.S. economic and security interests were going to be significantly affected

No it wasn't, neither the safety nor the economy of the U.S. were going to be affected

What did the President say he was going to do in the report you just read about?

Announced the U.S. was going to send troops to stop the aggressors

Announced the U.S. was going to impose economic sanctions on the aggressors

What did the President end up doing in the report you just read about?

Sent U.S. troops

Imposed economic sanctions

He did nothing

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<sup>52</sup> The experimental protocol included additional items that are not part of my dissertation. These items were introduced after both approval measures and thus their inclusion does not impact the results presented here. The final three items are manipulation checks.

## APPENDIX 2

### Experimental Scenarios for Test of Theory with British Students

#### (1) INSTRUCTIONS (Same for all conditions)

##### Democratic Accountability

##### Instructions:

The following questions are about British relations with other countries around the world. You will read about a situation our country has faced in the past and will probably face again in the future. Different British leaders have handled the situation in different ways. We will describe a particular international incident and how the British Prime Minister approached it, and ask whether you approve or disapprove.

#### (2) EXAMPLES OF SCENARIOS

##### A. The Prime Minister backs down after threatening Military Intervention in a Salient Crisis:

##### International Crisis in Asia

Kazakhstan, an Asian country, sent its military to take over its weaker neighbor Uzbekistan. The attackers are advancing rapidly and are about to invade Uzbekistan's capital and take over the whole country. An Uzbekistani farmer that witnessed the invasion declared that: "We were in the middle of harvesting our crops and we heard this loud bang. At first I couldn't see anything for there was dust and dirt all over the place but I could hear people screaming. As soon as the dirt began to settle I realized Kazakhstan men in uniform had thrown a bomb and there was blood all over the place. I don't see why they would attack us like this."

If Kazakhstan's military forces do take over the whole country, Asia's regional balance of power will shift drastically. **This will significantly affect British economic and security interests in Asia.** Kazakh authorities have time after time demonstrated they are very hostile against the U.K.

Shortly after the attack, **the British Prime Minister in a public statement in the media said that the U.K. would send British troops to defend the weaker country from its invaders.**

To summarize,

- Kazakhstan has invaded her weaker neighbor Uzbekistan.
- If Uzbekistan's capital is invaded British economic and security interests in the region will be very significantly affected.
- The British Prime Minister said he would send troops to defend the weaker nation.



In the crisis you just read about, do you approve of how the Prime Minister acted?

0= Definitely Disapprove    10= Definitely Approve

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Kazakhstan has continued its invasion. In the end, the British Prime Minister did **not** send troops.

To summarize this international crisis and the Prime Minister's reactions to it,

- Kazakhstan has invaded her weaker neighbor Uzbekistan.
- If Uzbekistan's capital is invaded British economic and security interests in the region will be very significantly affected.
- The British Prime Minister **said he would send troops** to defend the weaker nation.
- Kazakhstan has continued the invasion.
- The British Prime Minister did **not** send troops.

**B. The Prime Minister consistently imposes Economic Coercion in a non-Salient Crisis:**

**International Crisis in Asia**

Kazakhstan, an Asian country, sent its military to take over its weaker neighbor Uzbekistan. The attackers are advancing rapidly and are about to invade Uzbekistan's capital and take over the whole country. An Uzbekistani farmer that witnessed the invasion declared that: "We were in the middle of harvesting our crops and we heard this loud bang. At first I couldn't see anything for there was dust and dirt all over the place but I could hear people screaming. As soon as the dirt began to settle I realized Kazakhstan men in uniform had thrown a bomb and there was blood all over the place. I don't see why they would attack us like this."

If Kazakhstan's military forces do take over their neighbor, **neither the safety nor the economy of the U.K. will be affected.**

Shortly after the attack, **the British Prime Minister in a public statement in the media said that the U.K. would impose economic sanctions on the government of Kazakhstan.**

To summarize,

- Kazakhstan has invaded her weaker neighbor Uzbekistan.
- If the invasion continues, neither the safety nor the economy of the U.K. will be affected.
- The British Prime Minister said he would impose economic sanctions on Kazakhstan.

In the crisis you just read about, do you approve of how the Prime Minister acted?

0= Definitely Disapprove      10= Definitely Approve

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Kazakhstan has continued its invasion. **The British Prime Minister did impose economic sanctions on Kazakhstan's government.**

To summarize this international crisis and the Prime Minister's reactions to it,

- Kazakhstan has invaded her weaker neighbor Uzbekistan.
- If the invasion continues, neither the safety nor the economy of the U.K. will be affected.
- The British Prime Minister **said he would impose economic sanctions** on Kazakhstan.
- Kazakhstan has continued the invasion.
- The U.K. **did impose economic sanctions** on Kazakhstan.

**(3) QUESTIONNAIRE (Same for all conditions)<sup>53</sup>**

Now that you have all the information regarding how the British Prime Minister acted in this international crisis, do you approve of how he acted?

0= Definitely Disapprove      10= Definitely Approve

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Was the international crisis you just read about relevant?

Yes, British economic and security interests were going to be significantly affected

No it wasn't, neither the safety nor the economy of the U.K. were going to be affected

What did the Prime Minister say he was going to do in the report you just read about?

Announced the U.K. was going to send troops to stop the aggressors

Announced the U.K. was going to impose economic sanctions on the aggressors

What did the Prime Minister end up doing in the report you just read about?

Sent British troops

Imposed economic sanctions

He did nothing

Are you a British citizen?

(a) Yes

(b) No

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<sup>53</sup> The experimental protocol included additional items that are not part of my dissertation. These items were introduced after both approval measures and thus their inclusion does not impact the results presented here. Three of the items shown here are manipulation checks.

## APPENDIX 3

### Experimental Scenarios for Test of Theory with National American Sample

#### (1) INSTRUCTIONS (Same for all conditions)

##### Democratic Accountability

##### Instructions:

This experiment studies U.S. relations with other countries around the world. You will read about a situation our country has faced in the past and will probably face again in the future. Different U.S. leaders have handled the situation in different ways. We will describe a particular international incident and how the U.S. President approached it, and ask whether you approve or disapprove.

#### (2) EXAMPLES OF SCENARIOS

##### A. The Executive backs down after threatening Military Intervention in a Salient Crisis:

##### International Crisis in Asia

Kazakhstan, an Asian country, sent its military to take over its weaker neighbor Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan, the country that has been invaded, has abundant mines of high quality uranium that can be used for the development of nuclear weapons. Kazakhstan, the invading country has a history of supporting anti-Western and anti-U.S. terrorist groups. **A victory by the attacking country would constitute a severe risk to U.S. national security.**

Shortly after the attack, the U.S. president in a public statement in the media said that the United States **would send U.S. troops** to defend the weaker country from its invaders.

To summarize,

- Kazakhstan has invaded her weaker neighbor Uzbekistan.
- If the invasion continues it will constitute **a severe risk to U.S. national security interests.**
- The U.S. president said he would **send troops** to defend the weaker nation.

In the crisis you just read about, do you approve of how the President acted?

0= Definitely disapprove      10= Definitely Approve

Kazakhstan has continued its invasion. In the end, the President of the U.S. did not send troops.

To summarize this international crisis and the U.S. President's reactions to it,

- Kazakhstan has invaded her weaker neighbor Uzbekistan.
- If the invasion continues it will constitute **a severe risk to U.S. national security interests.**

- The U.S. president said he would **send troops** to defend the weaker nation.
- Kazakhstan has continued the invasion.
- The U.S. President did **not** send troops.

**B. The Executive consistently imposes Economic Coercion in a non-Salient Crisis: International Crisis in Asia**

Kazakhstan, an Asian country, sent its military to take over its weaker neighbor Uzbekistan. The attackers are advancing rapidly and are about to invade Uzbekistan's capital and take over the whole country. If Kazakhstan's military forces do take over their neighbor, **it will pose no threat to U.S. national security**. However, these actions constitute a clear violation of international law as chartered by the United Nations. Shortly after the attack, the U.S. president in a public statement in the media said that the United States would impose economic sanctions on the government of Kazakhstan.

To summarize,

- Kazakhstan has invaded her weaker neighbor Uzbekistan.
- If the invasion continues, **U.S. national security will not be threatened** although international law is being violated.
- The U.S. president said he would **impose economic sanctions** on Kazakhstan.

In the crisis you just read about, do you approve of how the President acted?

0= Definitely disapprove      10= Definitely Approve

Kazakhstan has continued its invasion. The U.S. **did impose economic sanctions** on Kazakhstan.

To summarize this international crisis and the U.S. President's reactions to it,

- Kazakhstan has invaded her weaker neighbor Uzbekistan.
- If the invasion continues, **U.S. national security will not be threatened** although international law is being violated.
- The U.S. president said he **would impose economic sanctions** on Kazakhstan.
- Kazakhstan has continued the invasion.
- The U.S. **did impose economic sanctions** on Kazakhstan

**(3) QUESTIONNAIRE (Same for all conditions)<sup>54</sup>**

Now that you have all the information regarding how the President of the U.S. acted in this international crisis, do you approve of how he acted?

0= Definitely Disapprove      10= Definitely Approve

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How threatening is the situation described to the U.S.?

0=not Threatening at all      10=Very Threatening

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How relevant is the crisis you just read about to the national security of the U.S.?

0 = Very Irrelevant      10= Very Relevant

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do you think the President's initial proposed policy is effective in dealing with this international crisis?

0= Not effective at all      10= Very effective

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What did the President say he was going to do in the report you just read about?

Announced the U.S. was going to implement economic sanctions on the aggressors

Announced the U.S. was going to send troops to stop the aggressors

What did the President end up doing in the report you just read about?

Imposed economic sanctions

Sent U.S. troops

He did nothing

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<sup>54</sup> The experimental protocol included additional items that are not part of my dissertation. These items were introduced after both approval measures and thus their inclusion does not impact the results presented here. The final four items are manipulation checks.

## APPENDIX 4

### Randomization Check

To ensure randomization took place in the study conducted with the national sample of American adults I conducted a multinomial logistic regression checking whether demographic characteristics and political affiliation predicted the assignment of participants to experimental conditions.<sup>55</sup> The following tables show the results. The only factor that is statistically significant is ethnicity in the likelihood of being assigned to the eighth experimental condition (there are less whites in this condition).

#### EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION I:

Variable	Coefficient	p-value
Political Affiliation	.040 (.076)	0.597
Age	.005 (.009)	0.558
Education	.124 (.091)	0.173
Ethnicity	.023 (.159)	0.880
Gender	-.087 (.318)	0.785
Income	-.024 (.039)	0.534
Constant	-1.529 (1.177)	0.194

#### EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION II:

Variable	Coefficient	p-value
Political Affiliation	.007 (.0754)	0.924
Age	.006 (.009)	0.494
Education	.027 (.088)	0.762
Ethnicity	.042 (.154)	0.785
Gender	-.011 (.313)	0.973
Income	-.027 (.039)	0.486
Constant	-.474 (1.134)	0.676

#### EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION III:

Variable	Coefficient	p-value
Political Affiliation	.081 (.075)	0.277
Age	.008 (.009)	0.358
Education	-.006 (.088)	0.945
Ethnicity	.014 (.153)	0.926
Gender	.258 (.309)	0.404
Income	.018 (.039)	0.644
Constant	-1.370 (1.134)	0.227

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<sup>55</sup> Scenario VI was the base level.

**EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION IV:**

Variable	Coefficient	p-value
Political Affiliation	.049 (.073)	0.504
Age	.014 (.009)	0.108
Education	-.087 (.085)	0.307
Ethnicity	-.058 (.157)	0.714
Gender	-.060 (.305)	0.845
Income	.046 (.039)	0.238
Constant	-.406 (1.100)	0.712

**EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION V:**

Variable	Coefficient	p-value
Political Affiliation	.081 (.075)	0.279
Age	.014 (.009)	0.117
Education	-.040 (.089)	0.652
Ethnicity	-.146 (.169)	0.387
Gender	.215 (.310)	0.489
Income	.069 (.041)	0.091
Constant	-1.654 (1.154)	0.152

**EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION VII:**

Variable	Coefficient	p-value
Political Affiliation	.003 (.074)	0.965
Age	.013 (.009)	0.151
Education	-.020 (.086)	0.814
Ethnicity	.236 (.139)	0.089
Gender	-.252 (.307)	0.412
Income	.0481 (.040)	0.222
Constant	-1.044 (1.105)	0.345

**EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION VIII:**

Variable	Coefficient	p-value
Political Affiliation	.063 (.079)	0.425
Age	.006 (.010)	0.530
Education	.046 (.091)	0.613
Ethnicity	.318 (.141)	0.024
Gender	-.144 (.324)	0.657
Income	.011 (.041)	0.790
Constant	-1.694 (1.172)	0.148