Appendix for "Threat Construction and Coercive Credibility"

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Table A1. Effect of Treatments on Perceptions of Credibility

Public vs.	
Private	-0.012 (0.045)
Vague & Low Severity vs.	
Vague & Mid Severity	-0.058 (0.074)
Vague & High Severity	-0.124 (0.075)
Precise & Low Severity	0.137 (0.076)
Precise & Mid Severity	0.096 ().078)
Precise & High Severity	0.106 (0.077)
National Security vs.	
Send A Message	-0.113 (0.089)
US Public Expectations	-0.155 (0.087)
Not Happen Again	-0.067 (0.084)
America Reputation	-0.231** (0.086)
Reputation with Allies	-0.024 (0.084)
Reputation with Adversaries	-0.050 (0.087)
Support Allies	-0.103 (0.085)
Constant	5.277*** (0.080)
R^2	0.0046
N (observations)	6,297
N (respondents)	2,099

Note: Coefficients reported with standard errors clustered by respondent in (). ***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05

Table A2. Impact of Specificity and Severity on Perceptions of Credibility

Vague vs.	
Precise	0.175*** (0.045)
Low Severity vs.	
Mid Severity	-0.051 (0.054)
High Severity	-0.082 (0.054)
Constant	5.162*** (0.051)
R^2	0.0029
N (observations)	6,297
N (respondents)	2,099

Note: Coefficients reported with standard errors clustered by respondent in (). ***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05

Table A3. Impact of Partisanship on Perceptions of Credibility

Democrat vs.	
Republican	0.984***
	(0.182)
Public vs.	
Private	-0.011
	(0.037)
Vague & Low Severity vs.	
Vague & Mid Severity	-0.024
	(0.128)
Vague & High Severity	-0.099
	(0.133)
Precise & Low Severity	0.156
	(0.140)
Precise & Mid Severity	0.197
	(0.147)
Precise & High Severity	0.120
	(0.139)
National Security vs.	
Send A Message	-0.212
	(0.167)
US Public Expectations	-0.321
	(0.167)
Not Happen Again	0.029
	(0.152)
America Reputation	-0.276
	(0.154)
Reputation with Allies	-0.005
	(0.148)
Reputation with Adversaries	-0.062
	(0.161)
Support Allies	-0.064
	(0.156)
Interaction Effects	
Republican * Private	-0.010
	(0.102)
Republican * Vague & Mid Severity	-0.070
	(0.166)
Republican * Vague & High Severity	0.012
	(0.166)
Republican * Precise & Low Severity	-0.077
	(0.175)
Republican * Precise & Mid Severity	-0.203
	(0.184)
Republican * Precise & High Severity	0.021
	(0.169)
Republican * Send A Message	0.154
	(0.206)
Republican * US Public Expectations	0.348
	(0.202)
Republican * Not Happen Again	-0.108
	(0.191)
Republican * America Reputation	0.238
	(0.198)
Republican * Reputation with	0.112

Allies	(0.189)
Republican * Reputation with Adversaries	0.051 (0.199)
Republican * Support Allies	0.043 (0.197)
Constant	4.835*** (0.139)
R^2	0.0939
N (observations)	4,479
N (respondents)	1,493

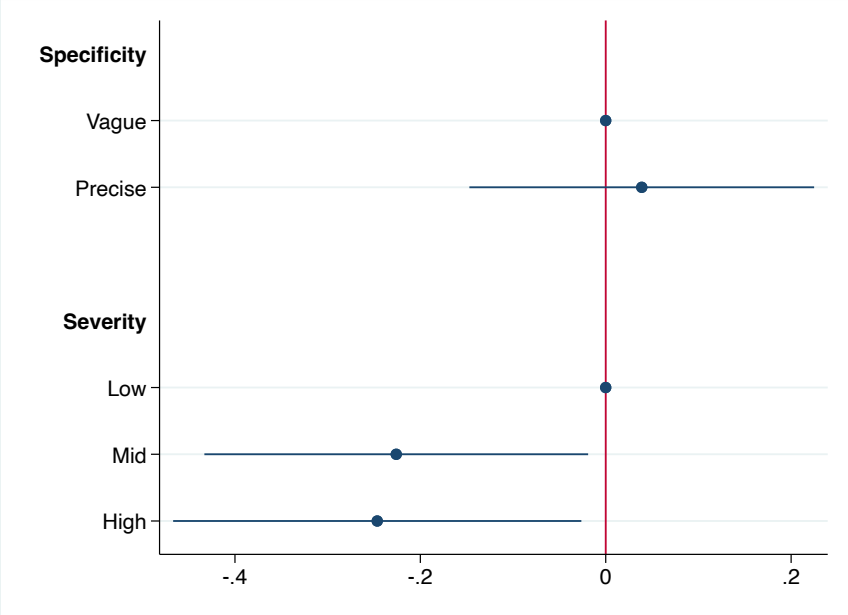
Note: Coefficients reported with standard errors clustered by respondent in (). ***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05

Table A4. Impact of Treatments on Perceptions of Credibility: Energy Crisis Framing

Public vs.	
Private	0.067 (0.093)
Vague & Low Severity vs.	
Vague & Mid Severity	0.127 (0.137)
Vague & High Severity	-0.292 (0.167)
Precise & Low Severity	0.276 (0.149)
Precise & Mid Severity	-0.346* (0.166)
Precise & High Severity	0.071 (0.167)
National Security vs.	
Send A Message	-0.024 (0.194)
US Public Expectations	-0.173 (0.192)
Not Happen Again	-0.066 (0.176)
America Reputation	-0.005 (0.167)
Reputation with Allies	0.190 (0.169)
Reputation with Adversaries	-0.229 (0.200)
Support Allies	0.118 (0.168)
Constant	5.163*** (0.170)
R^2	0.0240
N (observations)	1,341
N (respondents)	447

Note: Coefficients reported with standard errors clustered by respondent in (). ***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05

Figure A1. Impact of Specificity and Severity on Credibility: Energy Crisis Framing



Note: Dots represent OLS estimates with 95% confidence intervals. Coefficients reflect the change in predicted follow through for each attribute relative to the baseline category. Baseline categories are depicted as dots without confidence intervals.

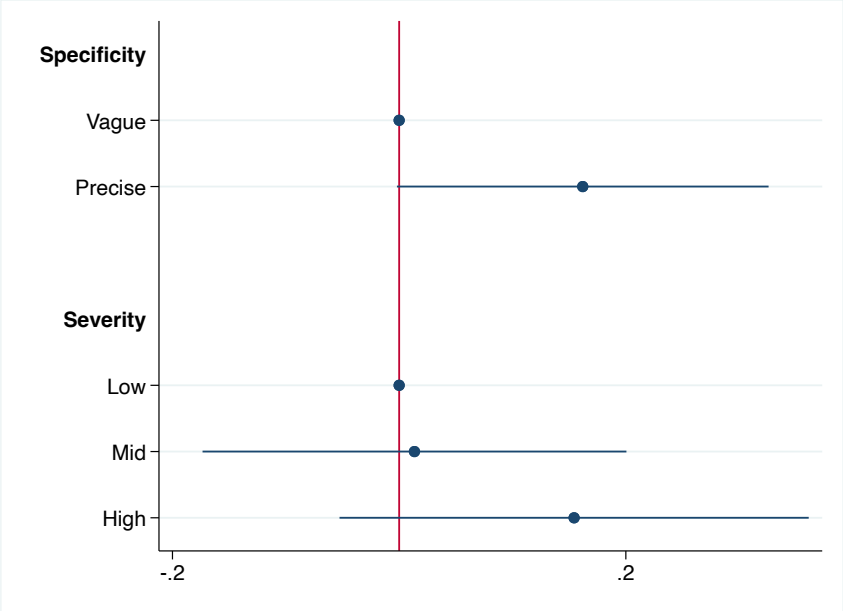
Table A5. Impact of Treatments on Perceptions of Credibility: U.K. Framing

Public vs.	
Private	-0.097
	(0.087)
Vague & Low Severity vs.	
Vague & Mid Severity	0.099
	(0.137)
Vague & High Severity	0.225
	(0.149)
Precise & Low Severity	0.247
	(0.142)
Precise & Mid Severity	0.191
	(0.130)
Precise & High Severity	0.310*
	(0.144)
National Security vs.	
Send A Message	-0.474**
	(0.175)
UK Public Expectations	-0.165
	(0.172)
Not Happen Again	-0.371*
	(0.157)
Britain Reputation	-0.284
	(0.179)
Reputation with Allies	-0.121
	(0.156)
Reputation with Adversaries	0.027
	(0.162)
Support Allies	-0.105

	(0.152)
Constant	5.349***
	(0.162)
R^2	0.0183
N (observations)	1,323
N (respondents)	441

Note: Coefficients reported with standard errors clustered by respondent in (). ***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05

Figure A2. Impact of Specificity and Severity on Credibility: U.K. Framing



Note: Dots represent OLS estimates with 95% confidence intervals. Coefficients reflect the change in predicted follow through for each attribute relative to the baseline category. Baseline categories are depicted as dots without confidence intervals.

Real World Examples of Treatments

Below, I present multiple historical examples for each of the treatments regarding specificity and severity as well as distinct justifications for the threat.

Will Not Be Tolerated: In 1939, the Soviet Union issued a coercive threat against Japan stating that "it would no longer 'tolerate any provocations'" (Crawford 2018, 244). During the Korean Tree Crisis, the Secretary of State Henry Kissinger stated the US "will not and cannot accept" North Korea's actions.[1] In issuing demands to Iran, President Trump stated that certain behaviors "will not be tolerated any longer."[2] More recently, Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned that threats against journalists by Saudi Arabia "would not be tolerated."[3]

[1] https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/09/14/north-korea-1976-axe-murder-incident-215605
[2] https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/01/08/transcript-trumps-iran-speech/
[3] https://www.state.gov/accountability-for-the-murder-of-jamal-khashoggi/

***There Will Be Consequences*:** In 1975, the US stated there would be "serious consequences" in response to the Khmer-Rouge seizing a US cargo ship (Pfundstein Chamberlain 2016, 87). In 1980, President Carter issued the following threat: "They know that the consequences to Iran will be quite sever if our hostages are injured or killed" (Wood 2012, 36). In 2011, the Obama administration threatened "consequences" if Qaddafi did not stop his aggression (Pfundstein Chamberlain 2016, 124). In April 2021, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan publicly stated "there will be consequences" if Russia allowed Alexei Navalny to die after his suspected poisoning by the Putin regime.[4] Similarly, President Biden warned China that "there will be repercussions" if they continue the Uyghur genocide.[5] Likewise, in 2019, Chinese officials warned Germany that "there would be consequences" if Germany excluded Huawei from their domestic markets.[6]

Hell to Pay: the Trump administration warned Iran "there will be hell to pay" if the state endangered US allies and promised "fire and fury" if North Korea threatened the US (Lupton et al. 2017). While not as strongly worded, Qaddafi threatened in 2011 that "there will be chaos" if international actors attempted to undermine the Libyan regime (Greenhill 2018, 217).

Threats of Economic Sanctions: President Clinton explicitly invoked the threat of economic sanctions in an attempt to coerce Iraq (Wood 2012, 41). Threats of sanctions were also used in an effort to coerce Russia in response to the invasion of Crimean and Iran in response to their pursuit of a nuclear program (Gompert and Binnedijk 2016). More broadly the literature exploring the use of coercive threats of economic sanctions is extensive. For more examples of coercive threats employing the threat of economic sanctions as well as their effectiveness, see Drury (2001), Drezner (2003), and Walentek et al. (2021) among others.

Threats of Air Strikes: In 1993, NATO explicitly threatened to employ wide-ranging air strikes in Bosnia-Herzegovina.[7] In 1996, the US led UN coalition threatened air strikes in response to Iraq's action in the Kurdish Civil War (Pfundstein Chamberlain 2016, 88). For more examples of coercive threats that employ the use of threats of air strikes, see Allen and Machain (2018).

Threats of Direct Military Action: The Kennedy administration's coercive threat during the Cuban Missile Crisis following the implementation of the blockade explicitly threatened direct military action if missiles were not removed from Cuba (see Pfundstein Chamberlain 2016). President Bush threatened a host of military and diplomatic actions in an attempt to coerce the Taliban to "turn over Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders" (Pfundstein Chamberlain 2016, 90). President Obama—backed by the UN—threatened military action in Libya if Qaddafi did not change his behavior in 2011 (Pfundstein Chamberlain 2016, 124).

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[4] https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/white-house-says-there-will-be-consequences-if-kremlin-critic-navalny-dies-2021-04-18/

[5] https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2021-02-16/biden-says-there-will-be-repercussions-for-china-over-human-rights

[6] https://www.forbes.com/sites/zakdoffman/2019/12/16/china-just-crossed-a-dangerous-new-line-for-huawei-there-will-be-consequences/?sh=5df0826475a3

[7] https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1993/s931007a.htm

National Security: President Obama's 2013 coercive threat directed a Syria explicitly invoked "national security" as a justification for US action. President Ford made implicit threats against the Soviet Union during his 1976 election campaign, justifying those statements in terms of broader US national interests and security (Wood 2012, 37). Similarly, President Nixon justified his hostile rhetoric towards North Korea in 1969 in terms of national security (Wood 2012, 41). Turkey explicitly justified its threats towards Iraq in 1992 in terms of its "right to ensure its national security" (Downes 2018, 133) and employed a similar justification in its coercive threat towards Syria in 1998 (Downes 2018, 130). The Blair administration similarly framed its coercive actions and later involvement in Iraq in terms of British national security (Strong 2017).

Need to Send a Message: The Trump administration explicitly used the language of wanting to "send a message" to North Korea through their coercive diplomatic efforts (Lupton et al. 2017).

Public Expectations for Action: In justifying Australia's participation in Iraq, Australian leaders invoked the Anzac myth and cited public expectations for the state's involvement (McDonald 2010). In negotiating trade talks during Brexit, British leaders cited expectations from the public in issuing their demands.[8]

Prevent From Happening Again: President Clinton framed his 1998 threat toward Iraq as necessary to "prevent another Gulf War" (Wood 2012, 36). During the Korea Tree Crisis, the Ford administration framed their coercive diplomatic statements in terms of making sure a similar incident did not happen again in the future (Haun 2015, 197).

Invoking America's Reputation: Lloyd George invoked national honor during his public speech issuing an implicit ultimatum during the Second Moroccan Crisis (Davis 2000). Obama's 2013 threat against Syria implicitly invoking concerns about America's reputation. NATO's 1993 coercive threat to employ wide-ranging air strikes was publicly justified by Secretary General Worner in reputational terms, with a special focus on US reputational concerns.[9] President Nixon justified his hostile rhetoric towards North Korea in 1969 in terms of "the credibility of our national security and our diplomacy throughout the world" (Wood 2012, 41).

Invoking Reputation with Allies: In the 1860s, Queen Victoria framed her demand to her advisers for more intervention in European affairs in terms of concern over British reputations vis-a-vis potential allies and adversaries (Guisinger and Smith 2002, 177). President Kennedy implicitly invoked America's reputation with allies in Southeast Asia when demand a cease-fire in Laos in

[8] https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-45603192;
https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/boris-johnson-threatens-to-walk-away-if-europe-doesnt-meet-his-demands-in-trade-talks/2020/02/27/4030135a-596e-11ea-8efd-0f904bdd8057_story.html

[9] https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1993/s931007a.htm

1961.[10] In issuing his Syrian redline, Obama not only invoked America's broader reputation but also referred to an explicit reputation vis-a-vis US allies as well as the need to support allies.[11]

Invoking Reputation with Adversaries: In the 1860s, Queen Victoria framed her demand to her advisers for more intervention in European affairs in terms of concern over British reputations vis-a-vis potential allies and adversaries (Guisinger and Smith 2002, 177). Kennedy framed several of his statements of resolve in terms of concerns as to how his reputation would be perceived vis-a-vis Khrushchev. Similarly, Nehru partially justified his actions in the lead up to the Sino-Indian War in terms of his future reputation with international rivals (Lupton 2020).

Need to Support Allies: President Kennedy framed his demand for a cease-fire in Laos in March 1961 in terms of the need to support American allies in Southeast Asia.[12] US action leading up to the Gulf War was similarly framed as a need to support allies in the region (Blechman and Wittes 1999). In issuing his Syrian redline, Obama not only invoked America's broader reputation but also referred to an explicit reputation vis-a-vis US allies as well as the need to support allies.[13]

Primary Experimental Protocol

Begin with Certificate of Informed Consent.

Screening questions for Qualtrics Quota

Please indicate your sex.

- Male
- Female

Please indicate the highest level of study you have achieved.

- Less than high school diploma
- High school diploma
- Some college
- Associates degree
- Bachelors degree
- Masters or Professional degree (MA, MBA, JD) Doctorate (PhD, MD)

[10] https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-press-conferences/news-conference-8
[11] https://www.stimson.org/2020/military-coercion-and-us-foreign-policy-the-use-of-force-short-of-war-2/
[12] https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-press-conferences/news-conference-8
[13] https://www.stimson.org/2020/military-coercion-and-us-foreign-policy-the-use-of-force-short-of-war-2/

Introduction to Vignette

The following questions are about U.S. relations with other countries around the world. You will read about a situation the U.S. has faced many times in the past and will probably face again. Different leaders have handled the situation in different ways. We will describe **three** approaches American leaders have taken and ask you about your views on these approaches.

Experiment Vignette

A foreign country recently sent its military to take over part of a neighboring country's territory in order to gain more power and resources. The country being invaded is an ally of the United States and has asked the U.S. for help. Today, the President of the United States is going to issue a statement about the situation. Please read the statement and then tell us what you think about this statement.

Conjoint Analysis Treatments

The conjoint analysis randomly varies the characteristics of the threat. These are as follows:

Severity and Specificity of the threat:

- The U.S. President said this behavior will not be tolerated
- The U.S. President said there will be consequences if the invading country does not stop the attack.
- The U.S. President said there will be hell to pay if the invading country does not stop the attack.
- The U.S. President said the U.S. would use economic sanctions against the invading country if the attack does not stop.
- The U.S. President said the U.S. would conduct air strikes against the invading country if the attack does not stop.
- The U.S. President said the U.S. would send military ground forces to push out the invading country if the attack does not stop.

How this threat was made:

- The U.S. President made this statement publicly at a press conference.
- The U.S. President made this statement privately in a meeting with diplomats from the invading country.

Justification for the threat:

- The U.S. President said the U.S. needs to act to support its allies and friends abroad.
- The U.S. President said the U.S. needs to send a message to the invading state.
- The U.S. President said the American public expects the U.S. to act.
- The U.S. President said the U.S. needs to act to prevent the invading country from doing this again in the future.

- The U.S. President said the U.S. needs to act because America's reputation is on the line.
- The U.S. President said that if America does not stand up to this aggression, its allies will doubt America's willingness to stand firm in the future.
- The U.S. President said that if America does not stand up to this aggression, its adversaries will doubt America's willingness to stand firm in the future.
- The U.S. President said the U.S. needs to act because this is an issue of national security.

Do you approve or disapprove of how the U.S. President handled this situation?

- Approve
- Disapprove

How much do you approve or disapprove of how the U.S. President handled this situation?

- Strongly approve
- Moderately approve
- Slightly approve
- Neither approve or disapprove
- Slightly disapprove
- Moderately disapprove
- Strongly disapprove

What do you think is the likelihood that the U.S. President will follow through if the invading country does not stop the attack if the president makes this statement?

- Extremely likely
- Moderately likely
- Slightly likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Slightly unlikely
- Moderately unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

Participants repeat this portion of the survey a total of three times.

Demographic Questions

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

The use of military force only makes problems worse.

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

- Disagree strongly

States should be able to talk things out and reach a peaceful solution to their problems.

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree strongly

Sometimes the only way to solve a problem between states is through military force.

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree strongly

Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a...

- Republican
- Democrat
- Independent
- No preference
- Other - please specify

Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as ....

- Extremely Conservative
- Conservative
- Slightly Conservative
- Moderate; Middle of the Road
- Slightly Liberal
- Liberal
- Extremely Liberal
- Don’t Know, I haven’t thought about it much.

How interested are you in international politics?

- Extremely interested
- Somewhat interested
- Neither interested/nor disinterested
- Somewhat uninterested
- Extremely uninterested

How closely do you follow international events?

- Very closely
- Somewhat closely
- Not very closely
- I don't follow international events at all.

Please tell us if you thought of any particular real world situation when reading the scenario. If so, please tell us which real world situation(s) you thought of.

Do you identify as... (please mark all that apply)

- Black or African American
- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian American
- Native American
- Other

Please indicate your age:

How would you describe your feelings towards Donald Trump?

- Extremely Positive
- Moderately Positive
- Slightly Positive
- Neutral
- Slightly Negative
- Moderately Negative
- Extremely Negative

Are you currently or have you ever served in the armed forces?

- Yes, I am currently serving in the armed forces.
- Yes, I previously served in the armed forces.
- No, I have not served in the armed forces.

What is your income?

- Less than $10,000
- $10,000 to $19,999
- $20,000 to $29,999
- $30,000 to $39,999
- $40,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $59,999

- $60,000 to $69,999
- $70,000 to $79,999
- $80,000 to $89,999
- $90,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to $149,999
- $150,000 or more

What part of the country do you live in?

- Northeast
- Southeast
- Midwest
- Southwest
- Pacific Northwest
- Pacific Southwest

Debriefing

Thank you for participating in this study. The purpose of this study was to examine how different factors affect the credibility of statements during international disputes. The situation we described for you in the experiment was purely hypothetical and did not represent any particular real-world event. Nor does it refer to any on-going event. Thank you again for your participation.

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