

# **What Audiences Really Want:**

## **The Effect of Compromise on Domestic Audience Costs**

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# Introduction

## **Existing Literature:**

- Leaders pay a price when they backdown from commitments.
- Threats are meaningful because they are costly.

## **Puzzle:**

- Leaders often backdown and reach compromises.

## Broad Approval of Obama's Delay of Syrian Airstrikes

<i>Obama's delay of airstrike decision for diplomatic efforts</i>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>R-D gap</b>
	%	%	%	%
Approve	56	80	65	-24
Disapprove	29	13	27	+16
Don't know	<u>15</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>	
	100	100	100	

<i>Will Syria give up chemical weapons in response to diplomacy?</i>				
Yes	21	29	27	-8
No	63	53	59	+10
Don't know	<u>15</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>15</u>	
	100	100	100	

# Overview

- Q. How can leaders **credibly** signal their intentions in negotiations?
- Q. How does partisanship affect signaling strategies?
- Q. When can leaders compromise?

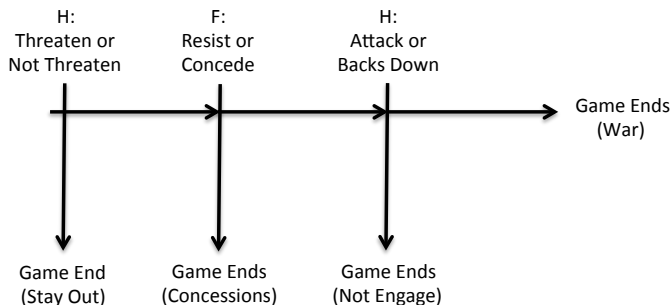
# Theory: Public Threats & Signaling

Audience Cost Theory Focuses on Two Potential Mechanisms:

- Lock-In: Leaders become “locked in” because the costs of backing down are greater than the cost of war. (*Fearon, 1994*)
- Separating Types: Audience costs may signal a leader’s resolve, independent of a commitment device. (*Tarar et al, 2013*)

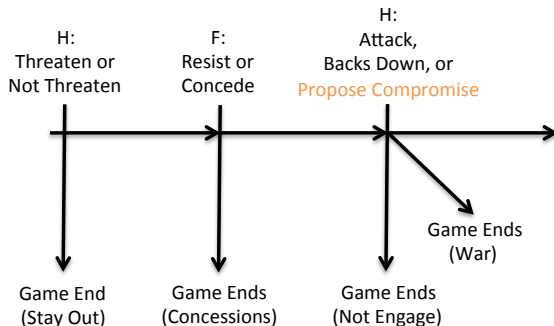
# Theory: Public Threats & Signaling

## Crisis Bargaining Model



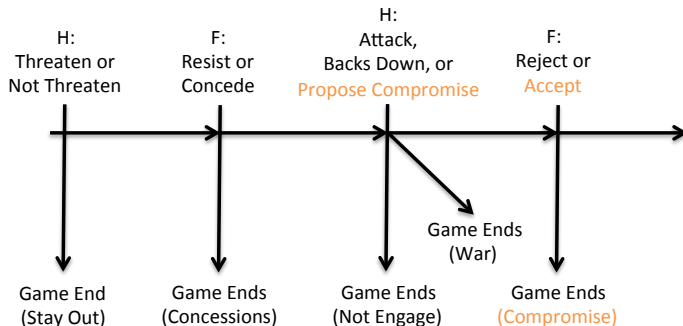
# Theory: Public Threats & Signaling

## Crisis Bargaining Model



# Theory: Public Threats & Signaling

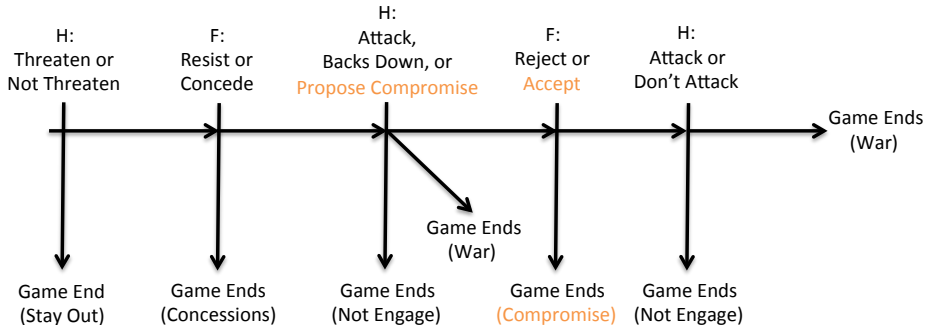
## Crisis Bargaining Model





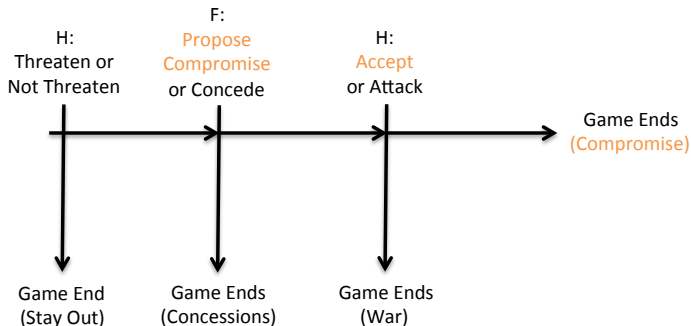
# Theory: Public Threats & Signaling

## Crisis Bargaining Model



# Theory: Public Threats & Signaling

## Crisis Bargaining Model



# Public Escalation & Compromise

## Reconsidering What Audiences Want:

- Audiences differentiate between types of inconsistency.  
Compromise settlements mitigate or eliminate audience costs.
  - Bluffing and compromising can be effective strategies.  
(Gowa, 1999; Mumpower, 1991)
  - Audience accountability does not reduce compromise behavior.  
(Druckman, 1994)

# Public Escalation & Compromise

## Reconsidering What Audiences Want:

- Existing Literature: Audience Costs are Non-Partisan

*“American politics scholars will no doubt be surprised by the dearth of partisan effects given their ubiquity elsewhere.”*

(Levendusky and Horowitz, 2012)

- Contrasts with Public Opinion Literature

- Growing role of partisanship in foreign policy opinion.

(Shapiro, 2005)

- Conservatives support more aggressive policies.

(Petrocik, 1980; Herrmann et al, 1999, Zavala, Cislak, and Wesolowska, 2010)

# Public Escalation & Compromise

## **Reconsidering What Audiences Want:**

- Proposal Power: public prefers leaders who propose settlements.
  - Perception of leadership boosts approval.
  - Domestic reputation is maintained.

# Testing Compromise & Audience Costs

## The Experiments:

- Respondents were told about a hypothetical international crisis:  
*“A country sent its military to take over a territorial region in a neighboring country.”*
- Randomly assigned the president's strategy.
- Approval of the president's strategy is the dependent variable.  
(Measured on a seven point scale)

# Testing Compromise & Audience Costs

## Respondent sees one randomly assigned condition:

- *Stay Out*

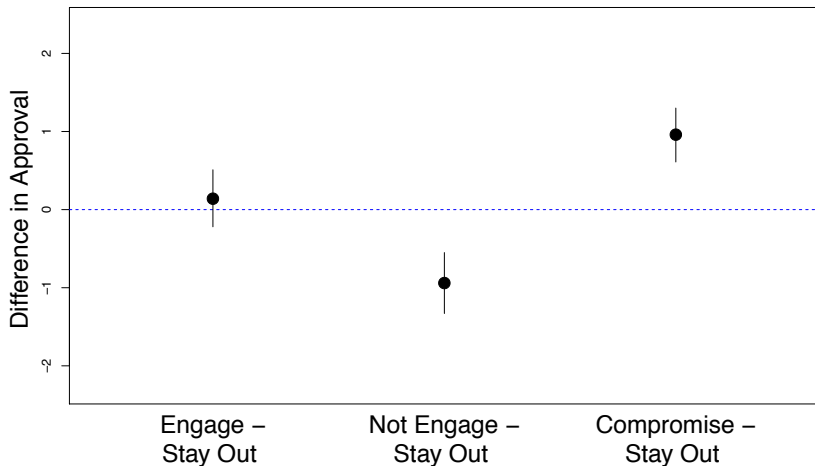
In remaining conditions, the President first issues threat:

*“The U.S. president said that if the attacking country continued to invade, the United States military would immediately engage and attempt to push out the attacking country.”*

- *Engage*
- *Not Engage*
- *Compromise*

# Testing Compromise & Audience Costs

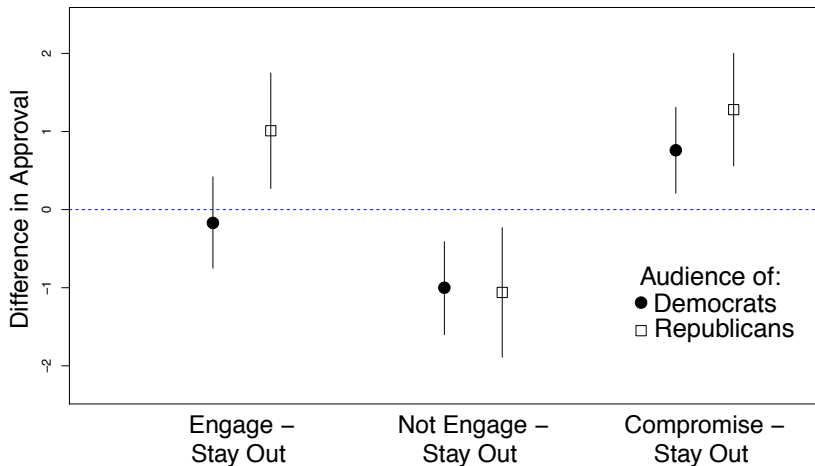
Qualtrics National Sample





# Testing Compromise & Partisanship

Qualtrics National Sample



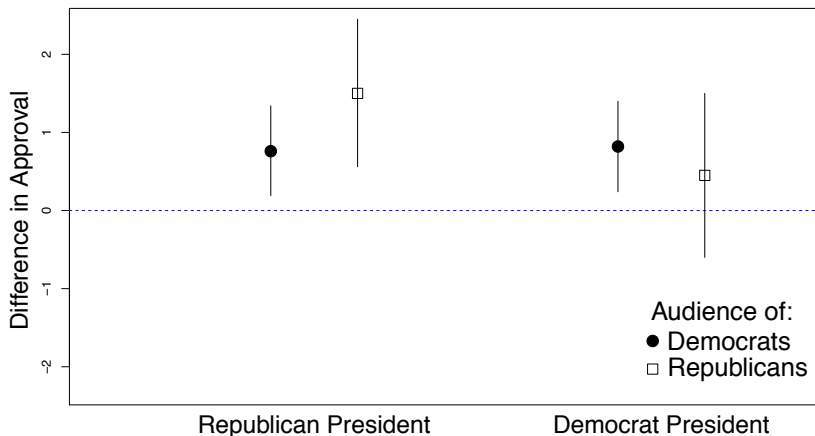
# Testing Compromise & Audience Costs

## Follow-up Experiments:

- Varied whether president was a Democrat or Republican.
- Outcomes held constant across all treatments:  
*“... the conflict ended with the attacking country taking control of 20 percent of the contested territory.”*

# Testing Compromise & Partisanship

Difference in Means: Compromise - Not Engage



# Testing Compromise & Proposal Power

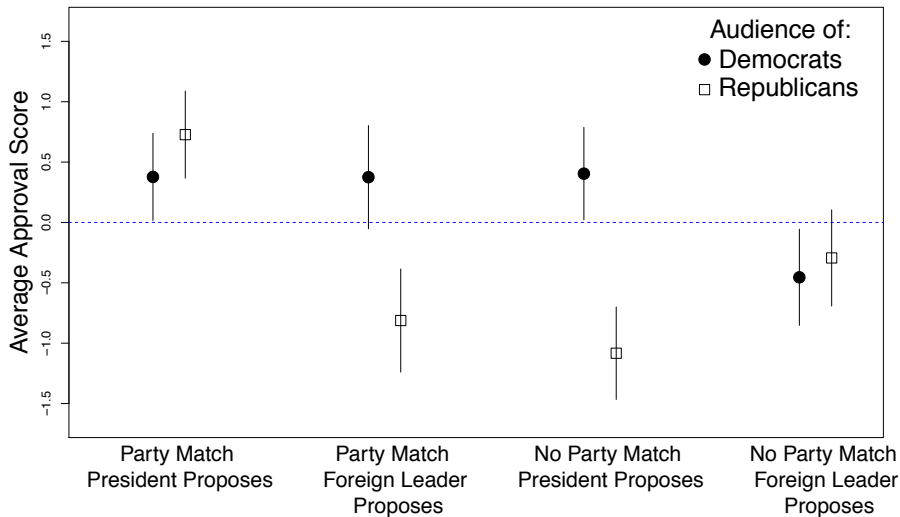
## Testing Proposal Power:

- The U.S. president (*or* leader of the attacking country) proposed a settlement...
- Test how partisans react to leaders of the same or opposing party

Compromise: *"The attacking country continued to invade, but the president did not immediately engage. The U.S. president (or leader of the attacking country) proposed a settlement, which was agreed to by all parties, and the conflict ended with the attacking country taking control of 20 percent of the contested territory."*

# Testing Compromise & Proposal Power

## Average Approval for Compromise



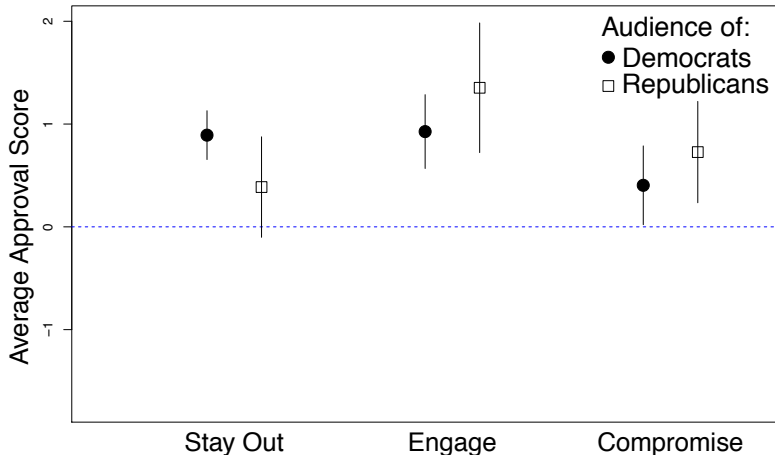
# Testing Compromise & Audience Costs

## Signaling: Lock-in or Screening?

- **Lock-in:** Engage > Compromise
- **Screening:** Stay Out > Compromise > Engage

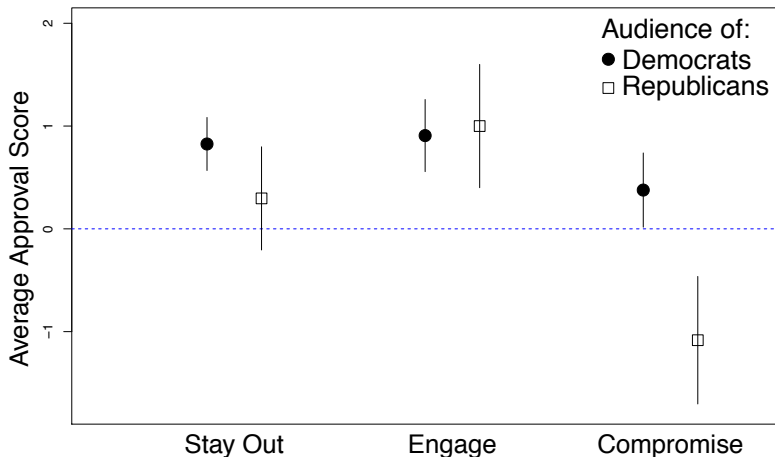
# Testing Compromise & Audience Costs

Republican President Proposes Compromise



# Testing Compromise & Audience Costs

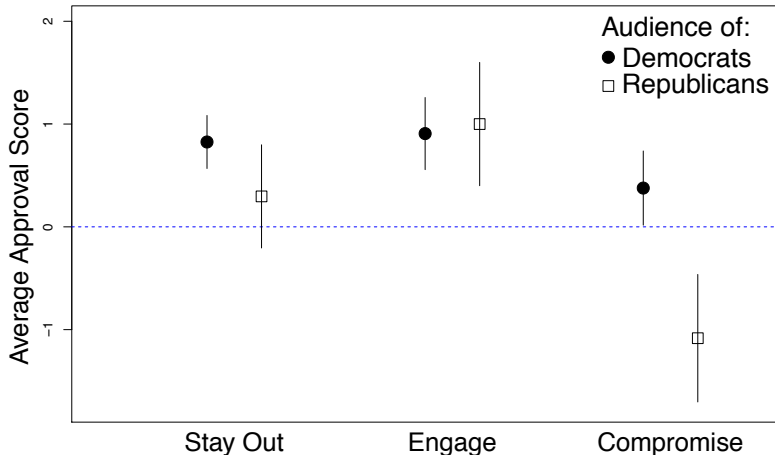
Democrat President Proposes Compromise





# Testing Compromise & Audience Costs

Democrat President Proposes Compromise



# Conclusions

- Republican presidents are unable to generate audience costs.
- Democratic presidents generate costs - only among republicans.
- Incomplete information & incentives to misrepresent persist.
- Rather than being committed to war, leaders have flexibility.

# Thank You

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