Armies and Influence:
Public Deference to Foreign Policy Elites

Tyler Jost* and Joshua D. Kertzer†

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Abstract: When is the public more likely to defer to elites on foreign policy? Existing research suggests the public takes its cues from co-partisans, but what happens when co-partisans disagree? Drawing on research on the social origins of trust, we argue that the public prioritizes information from elites who signal expertise through prior experience. However, differing social standing of government institutions means the public values some types of experience more than others, even when the experience lies outside the policy domain of the cue. Using a conjoint experiment, we show that the American public defers to cue-givers with experience — but that it is especially deferential towards military experience, even on non-military issues. We replicate our findings in a second conjoint experiment showing that the same dynamics hold when considering partisan candidates for cabinet positions. The results have important implications for the study of public opinion, bureaucratic politics, and civil-military relations.

*Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Brown University. Email: tyler_jost@brown.edu. Web: http://www.tylerjost.com

†Professor of Government, Department of Government, Harvard University. 1737 Cambridge St, Cambridge MA 02138. Email: jkertzer@gov.harvard.edu. Web: http://people.fas.harvard.edu/~jkertzer/

In January 2017, three nominees for senior positions in the Trump administration — James Mattis, Rex Tillerson, and Mike Pompeo — publicly testified before Congress. On issues ranging from the Iran deal, to the ban on immigrants from a set of Muslim-majority countries, to US defense policy toward Russia, the nominees offered policy assessments and recommendations that not only differed from President Trump, but also from one another.[1] Long after these confirmation hearings ended, commentators continue to note that the Trump cabinet has been filled with an array of dissenting voices. Yet the "pulling and hauling" of the Trump administration is not unique in this regard: whether through public statements or resignation letters, senior foreign policy advisers routinely present competing and conflicting information to the public (Allison, 1971; Kaarbo, 1998; Marsh, 2014).

A prominent tradition in political science argues that these types of public messages from elites play an important role in public opinion, particularly for foreign policy issues, in which senior officials may possess private (oftentimes classified) information and technical expertise, prompting the public to give elites "the benefit of the doubt" (Zaller, 1992; Colaresi, 2007; Baum and Groeling, 2009; Berinsky, 2009; Guisinger and Saunders, 2017). Yet, existing literature offers surprisingly little insight into how the public adjudicates between co-partisan elites when they disagree. In such contexts, why does the public defer to some elites more than others?

In this article, we attempt to shed light on this question, integrating the study of public opinion in foreign policy with work on trust and credibility from elsewhere in the social sciences. We develop a theory of public deference in which the public adjudicates between competing elite messages based upon the cue-givers' perceived credentials. We argue that the public is more likely to defer to more experienced cue-givers, but that not all experience is created equal in the eyes of the public. Drawing on research on trust and credibility from elsewhere in the social sciences, we posit that audiences will evaluate cue-givers differently based on the social standing of the institution with which they are affiliated. Thus, public attitudes on foreign policy are more likely to be swayed when the background and prior institutional affiliations of the cue-giver signals expertise and good intentions, not simply when the cue-giver is a co-partisan. In a country like the United States, where the military enjoys high levels of standing — both compared to other institutions within the United States, and compared to other industrialized democracies around the world — this has important implications for the study of public opinion in foreign policy: Americans will defer to military credentials even in non-military domains.

To test these intuitions, we field two conjoint experiments embedded across national samples of a combined 2,599 American adults in the fall of 2018. Given our theoretical focus, a conjoint design offers a

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[1] Jennifer Steinhauer, "Latest to Disagree With Donald Trump: His Cabinet Nominees," *The New York Times*, January 12, 2017.

novel methodological advantage: it captures real-world situations in which the public adjudicates between conflicting messages from multiple cue-givers who possess subtly different traits, credentials, and affiliations. In our first experiment, we show that rather than looking solely to partisan status, the public privileges recommendations provided by *experienced* advisers. However, the American public disproportionately looks to the credential of military experience, *even when considering foreign policy issues outside the realm of national defense.* Importantly, this pattern holds across a number of respondent-level characteristics, including party identification and attitudes toward the use of force. We then replicate our results with a second conjoint experiment, where we show these findings also hold when evaluating appointments to cabinet positions: Americans defer to military experience even for non-military roles. In addition, we leverage our experimental designs to introduce two new measures of the intensity of Americans' deference to the military compared to other foreign policy bureaucracies. These measures allow us to illustrate how Americans are not only much more likely to listen to military voices on military issues than they listen to other foreign policy experts in their traditional areas of expertise, but also see military expertise as traveling to non-military domains to an extent that other types of experience do not.

These results have important implications for at least three areas of political science. First, they build on a burgeoning research agenda on the social context of elite cues (Klar, 2014; Kertzer and Zeitzoff, 2017), showing that rather than passively responding to trusted partisan elites, the public is more selective in who it chooses to listen to in foreign policy issues. Americans look to the background and prior affiliations of elite cue-givers – not simply their partisan identity – even in an era of profound partisan polarization (Mason, 2018). Second, our results advance recent work showing that the cues of a wide array of elites, including bureaucratic advisers, can influence public opinion on foreign policy (Saunders, 2017, 2018). Our contribution is to show that not all these advisers are equally positioned to persuade the public. All else equal, advisers with backgrounds and institutional affiliations that signal expertise and good intentions can cue the public in ways that advisers lacking these credential cannot. This suggests that *who* the president appoints to senior cabinet roles shapes how influential that cabinet official will be. Finally, the findings advance a growing literature that has turned to survey experiments to study cues from military elites (e.g. Kenwick and Maxey, 2018; Golby, Feaver and Dropp, 2018; Lin-Greenberg, 2020). Yet much of the field suffers from a missing counterfactual: deference to the military is an instance of deference to specialized foreign policy institutions more generally, and it is unclear the extent to which the public's deference to the armed forces differs from its patterns of deference to other specialized foreign policy institutions. By adding in this missing counterfactual, we put the study of civil-military relations in a comparative perspective, and show how past scholarly work may have even *underestimated* the magnitude and scope of American deference to the military (Recchia, 2015; Brooks, 2019).

1 Elites, Publics, and Heuristics for Credibility

A prominent tradition both in international relations and political science more generally posits that elites play a powerful role in shaping public opinion on political issues (Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock, 1991; Lupia and McCubbins, 1998; Lenz, 2013). In complex political environments, information search and processing is costly. In turn, members of the public rely upon informational shortcuts or rules of thumb — cues or heuristics — to reduce cognitive burden, and solve ill-defined problems for which optimal solutions are elusive (Gigerenzer and Gaissmaier, 2011). This is particularly true for foreign policy issues, which are not only relatively far-removed from many citizens' daily lives (Kertzer, 2013), but frequently involve questions where citizens may lack access to the classified information that inform elite assessments (Colaresi, 2007).

There is considerable debate, however, about which elite cues matter and why. Amongst proponents of elite-driven theories of public opinion, the traditional explanation has been that partisanship dominates. When Republicans and Democrats disagree on foreign policy, the public prioritizes information from their co-partisans (Zaller, 1992; Berinsky, 2009; Baum and Groeling, 2010). Republican voters, for example, need only know Donald Trump's position on the US drawdown of military forces in Syria to form an opinion mirroring the leader's. Quite naturally, this body of work prioritizes the role of elected officials, such as the president and Congress, in shaping public opinion (Baum and Groeling, 2009; Reeves and Rogowski, 2018).

Yet theories of partisan cue-taking in foreign policy have their limits. Empirically, there is mixed evidence in support of these models (Gelpi, 2010; Guisinger and Saunders, 2017). Elite cues matter because they are important sources of information, but partisan elites are not the only information sources to which citizens can turn (Downs, 1957; Hayes and Guardino, 2011; Grieco et al., 2011; Kertzer and Zeitzoff, 2017). Most important for our purposes, partisan elite cue-taking theories have difficulty capturing the intra-party debate and contestation characteristic of many administrations. Foreign policy deliberations within the executive branch are commonly characterized by conflicting information and recommendations from defense, foreign policy, and intelligence advisers — even though most are appointed by the president. Indeed, many presidents intentionally craft their advisory teams to include competing perspectives (George, 1972), perhaps due to the strategic benefits of permitting deliberation between advisers (Krishna and Morgan, 2001; Saunders, 2017).

This contestation creates a cacophony of conceivably credible cues for citizens to consider. Recent history is replete with examples of elite policy disagreements spilling over into the public through leaks, public statements, and Congressional testimony (Saunders, 2018). Media coverage of the 2003 invasion of Iraq described frequent disagreements between the Departments of State and Defense within the George W. Bush administration. Similarly, media coverage of Barack Obama's decision-making on force levels in Afghanistan similarly described continual dissent between the Vice President and senior military officials.

However, our existing theories of partisan cuetaking in political science offer few predictions as to which cue the public will prioritize under these circumstances. As Kertzer and Zeitzoff (2017, p. 544) note, "how publics weigh competing cues from multiple cue-givers remains an unanswered question." Baum and Groeling (2009) show that the public finds intra-party criticism more informative than in-party praise or out-party criticism, but how do members of the public decide who to listen to when co-partisans disagree with one another?

Finally, much of the recent debate about partisan cue theories has perhaps inadvertently led to an awkward theoretical impasse in which the public is understood to pay attention either to objective facts, such as the number of battlefield casualties, or to their trusted co-partisans. Yet if the public cares about getting the facts right, the crux of the debate is really about *who the public trusts to deliver unbiased information*. While party identification may be one dimension by which the public weights the credibility of foreign policy information, it need not be the only or even the most salient heuristic they use (Bullock, 2011; Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus, 2013). Druckman and Lupia (2016, p. 16) note that "party labels are not the only commonly used cues", while Lau and Redlawsk (2001, p. 958) find that, in addition to partisanship and ideology, nearly all participants in their study relied on other heuristics, such as group endorsements, appearance, and polls. Put differently, it is rather implausible that all elites are equally positioned to persuade even fellow partisans.

Beyond Partisanship: Expertise, Intentions and Institutional Experience

To answer how the public adjudicates between multiple cue-givers, we develop a theory of foreign policy cue-taking based on models of trust and credibility from elsewhere in the social sciences. Whether in formal models of delegation emphasizing perceived expertise and common interests (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998), experimental studies of credibility in developmental psychology emphasizing perceived knowledge and positive intent (Landrum, Mills and Johnston, 2013), models of epistemic trust from cognitive science emphasizing perceived competence and benevolence (Sperber et al., 2010), or models of source credibility emphasizing expertise and trustworthiness (Pornpitakpan, 2004), most theories of deference emphasize two key factors, one of which relates to the cue-giver's perceived capabilities (how much relevant knowledge or skill does the adviser possess?), and the other to its perceived intentions (to what extent would the adviser mislead you or pursue outcomes that harm you or your interests?).

The first component of deference is perceived expertise: in order to be credible, advisers must be seen as possessing relevant knowledge, skills, or capabilities. Chong and Druckman (2007), for example, show that information coming from expert news sources (major local newspapers) prompts greater change in political

preferences than from amateur news sources (a high school newspaper).[2] Because expertise is domain-specific (Wright and Bolger, 1992), however, these capabilities are weighted by their perceived relevance to the question at hand. For example, Druckman (2001) shows that some elite endorsements (Colin Powell) are more persuasive than others (Jerry Springer), but only within the area of the elite's substantive expertise. These findings are also consistent with research in which expertise is seen as something built through domain-specific experience (Hafner-Burton, Hughes and Victor, 2013).

The second component of deference is perceived intentions. This can be construed in a particularistic sense — as in some models of partisan cues, in which individuals infer overlapping policy preferences or shared group interests based on the cue-giver's partisanship, such that they should be more likely to listen to advisers they otherwise agree with (Zaller, 1992), or in a broader fashion, as in theories of credibility emphasizing perceptions of cue-givers' integrity, benevolence, or prosociality (Hendriks, Kienhues and Bromme, 2015). For our purposes, this broader conception is of greater interest, since partisanship is not a useful indicator for the situations we analyze here, where the public is trying to adjudicate between copartisans who disagree.

Perceived expertise and intentions offer two distinct pathways to public deference. Consider a hypothetical example in which the public is evaluating elite cues regarding US policy towards China. First, the public may defer to a cue-giver because she possesses specialized knowledge about the issue. For example, the public may be more likely to defer to the cues provided by a former ambassador to Beijing than a former ambassador to Brazil. Second, the public may defer to the cue-giver because they perceive her to have good intentions. Continuing the example, the public may prioritize between competing cues from two former ambassadors to China — both possessing the same level of expertise — because one possesses characteristics deemed socially desirable. For example, the public may see one of these actors as benevolent, perhaps through prior self-sacrifice behaviors, such as public service or charity work. While such cue-giver attributes have no direct bearing on the knowledge, skills, or capabilities pertinent to US policy toward China, the public may nonetheless prioritize the former ambassador perceived to be more prosocial, as they have greater confidence that she has their best interests at heart. More extreme examples emerge in situations in which the public defers to cues from elites *without* expertise over those *with* it — solely because their perceived intentions. For instance, the public might favor a cue from an emergency room doctor over either of the former ambassadors, because the former is more socially esteemed. Perceived intentions thus capture attributes of the cue-giver ungermane to the substance of the cue, but nonetheless increase the cue-giver's credibility.

More formally, we can integrate these components into a simple model $y_{ijk} = x_{ij} w_{ijk} + z_{ijk}$, where y_{ijk} is a continuous variable denoting the probability that actor i defers to cue-giver j on issue k, x_{ij} is the cue-giver's perceived expertise (weighted by w_{ijk}, the observer's belief about the relevance of cue-giver

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[2]See also Ladd (2011).

j's expertise to the given situation), and z_{ijk} is the perceived favorability of the cue-giver's intentions.[3] Formalizing the model in this way is instructive because it draws our attention to three considerations. First, expertise and intentions can work in tandem. Second, deference is inherently relational (Tyler, 1997). Third, these dimensions have a perceptual component: as Lupia and McCubbins (1998) argue, it is not actual expertise or intentions that matter in delegation models, but rather, observers' perceptions of these components. The relevant question is where these perceptions come from.

How does the public identify which cue-giver possesses more expertise or more favorable intentions? We argue that one way the public forms such perceptions is by examining the background and experience of the cue-givers. First, the public may infer a cue-giver's expertise by distinguishing between elites whose prior experience intersect with the issue being considered. A Nobel-winning economist might prove more persuasive in endorsing a tax policy than a cultural policy. In the context of foreign policy, this would imply that senior advisers inside the White House (e.g., the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, Central Intelligence Agency Director, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) would be more persuasive on policy issues than, for example, one of the president's political advisers. The more domain-specific experience possessed (the higher $x_{ij}w_{ijk}$), the more trustworthy the public should deem the adviser to be.[4]

> **H1**: The public is more likely to defer to elites who possess experience in institutions with domain-specific expertise than those without.

Second, the public may contextualize the cue-giver's prior experiences based upon social perceptions of the institution in which the experience was accrued. That is, not all forms of experience are equal in the eyes of the public, because the public holds some institutions in higher esteem than others (Gibson, 1989; Carpenter, 2014). As Easton (1965, 273) describes, some institutions benefit from "diffuse support," building up a "reservoir of favorable attitudes or good will" in the eyes of the public that shapes the way its members are perceived. As illustrated in Figure 1, the public possesses distinct attitudes about numerous institutions, ranging from the press to higher education, from the police to organized religion. Some institutions are held in high esteem, while others are not — and these attitudes can shift over time.

Social perceptions of institutions matter because diffuse trust can be leveraged to persuade the public to "accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed or the effects of which they see as damaging to their wants" (Easton, 1965, 273). The public is likely to view cue-givers affiliated with socially esteemed institutions in generally more favorable terms than those affiliated with unpopular ones. Put differently, the public does not merely look for signals of preference alignment with the cue-giver. The public evaluates the

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[3]For purposes of simplicity, we do not include differential weights for competence and benevolence here, but obviously the model can be made more complicated in a variety of ways.

[4]Note that our explanation differs from Saunders (2018, p. 2125), who proposes an alternate model in which elite cues gain "institutional credibility from their position on the president's team."

social desirability of the cue-giver's experiences. This means that the public is more likely to defer when a cue-giver's experience is in a socially esteemed institution.

In American foreign policy, the institution that enjoys perhaps the highest social standing is the US military. We argue that the wide esteem in which the military is held has important implications for who the American public listens to on foreign policy issues. As illustrated by multiple longitudinal surveys summarized in Figure 1, the modern US military is consistently one of the most trusted institutions in the United States — surpassing public schools, higher education, the police, the press, organized religion, the Supreme Court, and Congress (Gronke and Feaver, 2001).[5] Brooks (2019, p. 10) similarly notes that Americans "(blindly) revere" the military, even though they know relatively little about it. This social esteem is an important source of the military's power: as Brooks (2008, p. 30) notes, "militaries that enjoy substantial prestige within society are often formidable political forces," but influence wanes when the military "loses the esteem of the population." This logic helps to explain the rise of military influence in both autocracies (Geddes and Zaller, 1989, p. 329-30) and democracies (Brooks, 2009).[6]

Figure 1: Confidence in US Institutions
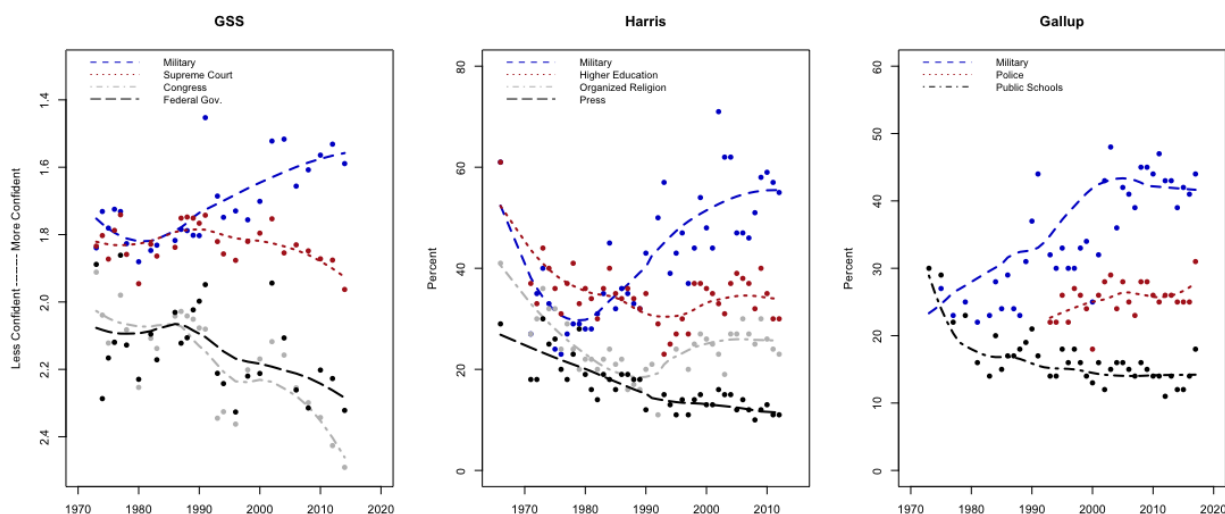
Note: Harris data indicates the percent of respondents reporting "a great deal of confidence" in the *leaders* of the institutions. Gallup data indicates the percent of respondents reporting "a great deal of confidence" in the institutions themselves. The GSS data indicate the mean respondent confidence score for a given year.

We argue that this social esteem affects who the public defers to on foreign policy issues — and importantly, our theory suggests three different pathways through which it can do so. First, it can increase

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[5]For a detailed comparison of changes of public attitudes in recent decades, see Burbach (2019). Golby, Cohn and Feaver (2016) find that respondents were increasingly likely to believe that "politicians should essentially let military leaders run the foreign policy show" and that "the president should basically follow the advice of the generals, though the question wording is slightly different" (p. 110-5).

[6]Specifically, Geddes and Zaller (1989) finds that in the early 1970s, "the military stood out [...] as the one institution in the country which enjoyed extraordinary public confidence," even higher than that of the Roman Catholic Church. 41% of respondents were "completely in favor" of "military involvement in national politics."

perceptions of x_{ij} — the amount of expertise the public believes the adviser possesses as a result of their institutional experience, as would be the case if the public believes military officers are simply more skilled than diplomats. Second, it can increase perceptions of w_{ijk} — how relevant the adviser's expertise is perceived to be across domains. For example, Brooks (2016) argues that one of the pathologies of contemporary American foreign policy is that the military is increasingly given tasks outside of its traditional areas of expertise, precisely because civilians have unrealistic expectations about what the military can accomplish. Third, this reverence can also increase z_{ijk}, such that institutional affiliation can shape perceptions of intentions rather than just capabilities. As Burbach (2017) notes, the public's trust in the military is partially a function of the institution's reputation for professionalism, prosociality, and patriotism, reinforced by the salience of the military in political cultures and rituals (Krebs and Ralston, 2020).

> **H2**: The public is more likely to defer to elites with experience in socially-esteemed institutions.

While social esteem and deference are related, there are several reasons to treat them as conceptually distinct. For one, holding an actor in high esteem and finding an actor's argument persuasive are two separate actions. For example, the public may deem nuns as selfless, or brain surgeons as brilliant, but this act of bestowing esteem is distinct from deferring to their policy recommendations. This is precisely the point made by the literature on diffuse trust by comparing social esteem to a reservoir (Gibson, 1989). As the "waterline" rises, the institution may have more persuasive leverage over the public — but the two are not synonymous.

One key contribution of this theoretical framework is that it helps to put the public's deference to different types of political actors — be they presidents, advisers, or bureaucracies — in comparative context. Specifically, the framework allows us to identify two quantities of interest with which we can compare differences in deference. The first is the premium afforded to an elite within their core domain of expertise: the extent, for example, to which Americans listen to military voices on military questions more than they listen to non-military voices on those same questions. We call this the *experience premium*. More formally, this is the difference between two hypothetical cue-givers' x_i and z_i terms for all k issues, holding w_i constant. The second is the extent to which deference decays as an elite moves beyond their core area of expertise: the extent, for example, to which Americans listen to military voices on non-military questions, compared to military ones. We call this the *decay effect*. More formally, this is the difference between two hypothetical cue-givers' w_i terms across all k issues.

The experience premium and decay effect can thus help us both distinguish between the persuasive power of multiple cue-givers that might otherwise seem fungible (e.g. co-partisans). Applying this framework to the

case of the contemporary American military illustrates the contribution of putting cue-givers in a comparative context. Recently, a number of studies have shown that the US military holds considerable sway over public opinion (Recchia, 2015; Golby, Feaver and Dropp, 2018; Caverley and Krupnikov, 2017; Kenwick and Maxey, 2018) but leave two questions unanswered. First, because past work has studied military cues in isolation, we do not know how they compare to other bureaucracies with domain-specific expertise.[7] For example, the public might defer to seasoned generals on defense issues, but also defer to seasoned diplomats on diplomatic issues or intelligence analysts on intelligence issues — whereupon there is nothing unique about deference to the military. Second, because previous studies largely examine deference to military cues on defense issues, we do not know how far deference to the military travels.

Our theory instead suggests that the military's social esteem may make its cues unique in two ways. First, the experience premium of military cue-givers will be *higher* than other bureaucracies with pertinent expertise. Second, the military should be able to persuade the public even on policies *outside* its bailiwick because the military enjoys higher social esteem. This would suggest that, by implicitly assuming a high decay effect, past research may have actually underestimated the military's persuasive power.

> **H3**: The experience premium of cues from military elites is higher than those from other bureaucratic institutions; the decay effect of cues from military elites is lower than those from other bureaucratic institutions.

Finally, in subsuming both expertise and partisanship in an overarching model of deference, our framework bridges the gap between arguments that military cues are actually partisan cues in disguise (Golby et al., 2012)[8] and recent scholarship casting doubt on such claims (Krebs and Ralston, 2020).[9] As Golby, Feaver and Dropp (2018, p. 55) note, while military endorsements may be more influential among Republicans, "factors beyond party identification" are also important. With this theoretical point in mind, we take care in our experimental design to manipulate both partisanship and types of expertise separately, thereby ensuring our results are not an artifact of experimental confounding (Dafoe, Zhang and Caughey, 2018).

2 Research Design

We design two conjoint experiments to assess if and when the public defers to different types of foreign policy elites (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2014), fielded on national samples of a combined 2599

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[7]To our knowledge, no existing study has studied the public's deference to other relevant foreign policy bureaucracies — much less examined the relative effects of their cues.

[8]For example, scholars of civil-military relations have shown that after the United States transitioned from conscription in 1973, a greater share of military officers began to identify as Republican rather than independent (Urben, 2010; Liebert and Golby, 2017; Burbach, 2019).

[9]Experimental evidence, perhaps the most direct methodological approach for isolating causal effects, that provides only mixed support for the partisanship hypothesis. For example, Teigen (2013, p. 422-7) find that voters perceive political candidates with prior military experience as better prepared to handle national security affairs once in office, *regardless* of the party identity of either the survey respondent or the candidate in the survey vignette.

American adults through Dynata (formerly Survey Sampling International (SSI) in November-December 2018.[10]

In the first experiment, which we call the RECOMMENDATIONS experiment ($N = 1286$), we present respondents with randomly generated profiles of two foreign policy elites, one supporting and one opposing a foreign policy proposal. The profile of each of the foreign policy advisers (from their demographic characteristics, to their institutional affiliation, to the justification they offer for their recommendation) was randomly generated along multiple dimensions, in a manner described in detail below. Each respondent was then asked whether they support or oppose the policy being proposed. In this way, the experiment lets us determine the types of of experience and institutional affiliations to which the American public is most deferential — the first evidence of it kind to be introduced to the study of public opinion on foreign policy.

This design offers a number of advantages. The first is causal identification. Foreign policy advisers are strategic actors: not only is their advice not randomly given, but a non-random subset of it reaches the public (Saunders, 2015). Thus, even if sufficiently granular and systematic public opinion polls existed for the questions we are interested in, drawing causal inferences about public reactions to foreign policy elites' signals is extremely difficult, since the signals are inevitably confounded with advisers' reasons for signaling. Experiments are extremely helpful in this regard.

The second is that the design accounts for a wide range of elite profiles that the public encounters in the real world. Table 1 illustrates this point empirically with data we collected on the prior backgrounds of 125 past appointees to six key positions overseeing the US national security bureaucracy from 1945 to 2020 (see additional details in Appendix §2). Many senior advisers entered their positions with substantial prior experience either *within* the domain of the bureaucracy to which they were appointed — or *outside* that domain, but within another diplomatic, defense, or intelligence bureaucracy. Yet, others enter office without such backgrounds. For example, of the previous heads of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), William Colby and Robert Gates had prior careers in the CIA; John McCone and James Woolsey had served elsewhere within the national security bureaucracy, but not the CIA; James Schlesinger was an academic without bureaucratic experience. In fact, roughly 55% of Secretaries of State, 31% of Secretaries of Defense, and 8% of CIA directors were appointed without any prior experience in the national security bureaucracy altogether. In addition to prior experience in domain-specific institutions, advisers also vary dramatically in the extent to which they possess prior political or military experience.

The third involves the virtues of conjoint experiments in particular, which afford greater statistical power, allowing us to consider a relatively large number of treatment conditions. Our design parallels a growing body of work applying conjoint methods for purposes of analyzing how individuals process information

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[10]See Appendix §4 for discussions of the sampling strategy and sample characteristics.

Position Title	Total #	Experience within the National Security Bureaucracy			Political Experience	Military Experience
		None	Same Bureaucracy	Different Bureaucracy		
Secretary of State	22	12	7	3	11	15
Secretary of Defense	26	8	12	6	10	19
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff	20	0	20	0	0	20
Director of Central Intelligence	25	2	13	10	5	18

Table 1: Prior Experience of Senior US National Security Officials, 1945-2020

when there are a large number of potential indicators to consider (Kertzer, Renshon and Yarhi-Milo, 2020). Conjoint experiments offer the best approach for the question in which we are theoretically interested: when presented with a plenitude of elite attributes, which ones capture the public's attention?

The fourth is measurement. Gronke and Feaver (2001), Burbach (2017) and others have raised questions about the validity of the standard measures of deference to military, such as the Gallup confidence measures. In particular, Burbach (2017, p. 155-56) raises questions about social desirability bias and measurement error, noting that the confidence expressed in these surveys may simply reflect "patriotism-lite", little more than "symbolic support from a grateful yet unengaged public" merely abiding by social norms. In contrast, our experimental design lowers social desirability bias. Respondents are presented with randomly generated pairs of foreign policy elites, with hundreds of thousands of potential combinations of attributes each. Each pair of advisers differs from one another in a wide variety of ways, one of which can include military experience. The design thus gives respondents cover to disagree with military voices, which also makes our findings a more conservative test.

We replicate our findings in a second conjoint experiment, which we call the APPOINTMENTS experiment ($N = 1313$), examining Americans' preferences about appointments to senior cabinet positions. We ask participants to choose between two candidates for a senior foreign policy position, whose attributes are again randomly generated on a large number of dimensions. We explicitly focus on cabinet positions whose functional position relates to national security (the Secretary of Defense), as well as two positions concerned with broader foreign policy issues (the Secretary of State and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency). In this second experiment, we widen the analytical aperture to include information about the appointee's party identification, allowing us to examine the interplay between expertise and partisan affiliation. Robustness tests showing the experiments meet the standard conjoint experiment assumptions, and analysis using marginal means rather than average marginal component effects (AMCEs) is presented in Appendix §1.

Pairing these two experiments together allows us to illuminate two interconnected facets of public opinion and international security. On the one hand, we are interested in what types of elites the public defers to when structuring its foreign policy preferences. On the other hand, many of the the particulars of foreign policy decision-making itself is executed by presidents, under the counsel of a team of advisers. Our approach

allows us to empirically investigate whether the public trusts some elites to advise the president but trusts others to inform their own beliefs.

3 Experiment I: Recommendations

(A) *Policy*	The United States is currently deciding whether or not to conduct a...
	(1) ...military strike against a foreign adversary
	(2) ...military exercise to demonstrate resolve to a foreign adversary
	(3) ...diplomatic summit with a foreign adversary
	(4) ...diplomatic summit with an ally
(B) *Position*	(1) Senior Political Adviser to the President
	(2) Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
	(3) Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
	(4) Secretary of State
	(5) Secretary of Defense
(C) *Policy Recommendation*	(1) Supports
	(2) Opposes
(D) *Justification for Recommendation*	(1) US public opinion
	(2) US national security interests
	(3) US diplomatic interests
(E) *Age*	48 to 56
(F) *Education*	(1) Bachelors Degree
	(2) Masters Degree
	(3) Doctorate Degree
(G) *Prior Experience*	Primary experience is...
	(1) ...outside government...
	(2) ...inside government...
· *Diplomatic*	...with [level] diplomatic experience in the State Department
	(1) none
	(2) some
	(3) extensive
· *Intelligence*	...with [level] intelligence experience in the CIA
	(1) none
	(2) some
	(3) extensive
· *Defense*	...with [level] defense experience in the Defense Department
	(1) none
	(2) some
	(3) extensive
(H) *Military Status*	(1) Military general...
	(2) Retired general...
	(3) Retired military officer...
	(4) No prior military experience...
(I) *Combat Experience*	...with...
	(1) ...combat experience
	(2) ...no combat experience

Table 2: Conjoint Study Treatments (Experiment I: RECOMMENDATIONS)

The RECOMMENDATIONS experiment asked respondents to consider a hypothetical scenario in which two presidential advisers disagreed about foreign policy. Respondents were told that they would be provided

with information on two advisers, as well as a foreign policy initiative they either support or oppose, and that subjects would be asked to determine which recommendation they support. Respondents then proceeded to the first task, in which they were provided with 12 pieces of information about the policy under consideration, the recommendations and justifications of the advisers, as well as characteristics of the advisers' themselves. A full list of treatment conditions is provided in Table 2 and an example scenario is detailed in Table 3.

Several points about the experimental design are important to note. First, the policy proposals were randomly assigned for each round of the experiment, and ranged in nature from a diplomatic summit with an ally to a military strike against an adversary. By presenting respondents with competing recommendations from foreign policy advisers with randomly assigned attributes, we can determine what types of advisers' recommendations are found to be the most persuasive for each type of policy. Second, as is standard in conjoint experiments (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2014) we impose randomization constraints to avoid logically inconsistent treatment combinations (all Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs, for example, must be an active general; all generals must have had military experience; Secretaries of Defense and State cannot be active military officers, and so on); we also use a weighted randomization procedure as a result to ensure sufficient statistical power for our quantities of interest. Third, following Kertzer, Renshon and Yarhi-Milo (2020), we employ a hybrid randomization structure, in which the order of each treatment in the grid was randomized at the respondent-level to avoid order effects, but some treatments were always presented together in order to bolster readability and external validity (thus, for example, information about military and combat experience were always presented together).

Finally, while the experiment is relatively information-rich compared to traditional experiments in IR that manipulate a small handful of factors at a time, this richness not only sets up a harder and more realistic test for our theory (how much does military experience matter given the myriad potential considerations that could determine which foreign policy advisers the public is most likely to defer to?), but also lets us make relative comparisons: we can determine not just whether a factor matters, but how much it matters compared to a set of theoretically-motivated alternatives. Moreover, many of these factors are also helpful to include to avoid potential confounding in the interpretation of our results: if we didn't include information about advisers' age, for example, respondents might draw inferences about age from respondents' levels of prior experience or military rank. Each respondent completed eight scenarios in total, such that the analysis below is based on 10288 choice tasks (each of which involved two randomly generated foreign policy advisers, so 20576 advisers in total) from 1286 respondents.

As Table 2 notes, respondents were randomly presented with a series of randomly assigned policy scenarios (in which the United States was deciding whether to conduct a military strike against a foreign adversary, considering a military exercise to demonstrate resolve, entertaining a diplomatic summit with a foreign ad-

The United States is currently deciding whether or not to conduct a military strike against a foreign adversary.

	Adviser A	Adviser B
Position	Secretary of State	Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
Recommendation	Supports	Opposes
Justification for Recommendation	US diplomatic interests	US national security interests
Age	50	52
Education	Masters Degree	Doctorate Degree
Prior Experience	No experience in the defense or intelligence community, but some diplomatic experience in the State Department	No experience in the diplomatic community, but some defense experience in the Defense Department, and some intelligence experience in the Central Intelligence Agency
Military Status	No Prior Military Experience	Retired military officer with combat experience

Given the information presented above, which adviser's recommendation do you support?

Adviser A

o

Adviser B

o

Table 3: Sample Conjoint Choice (Experiment I: RECOMMENDATIONS)

versary, or contemplating a diplomatic summit with an ally). In Appendix §1.4, we estimate the Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) separately for each type of policy scenario. This supplementary analysis shows that respondents gave very similar answers for each type of diplomatic scenario, but displayed more systematically different patterns of results between the military strike and military demonstration. To streamline the results in the main analysis below, then, we pool the two diplomatic scenarios together, and present our results in three phases, beginning with the effects of the basic demographic variables, before turning to the effects of the advisers' position and justification, and concluding with the effects of our main variables of theoretical interest: advisors' previous experience.
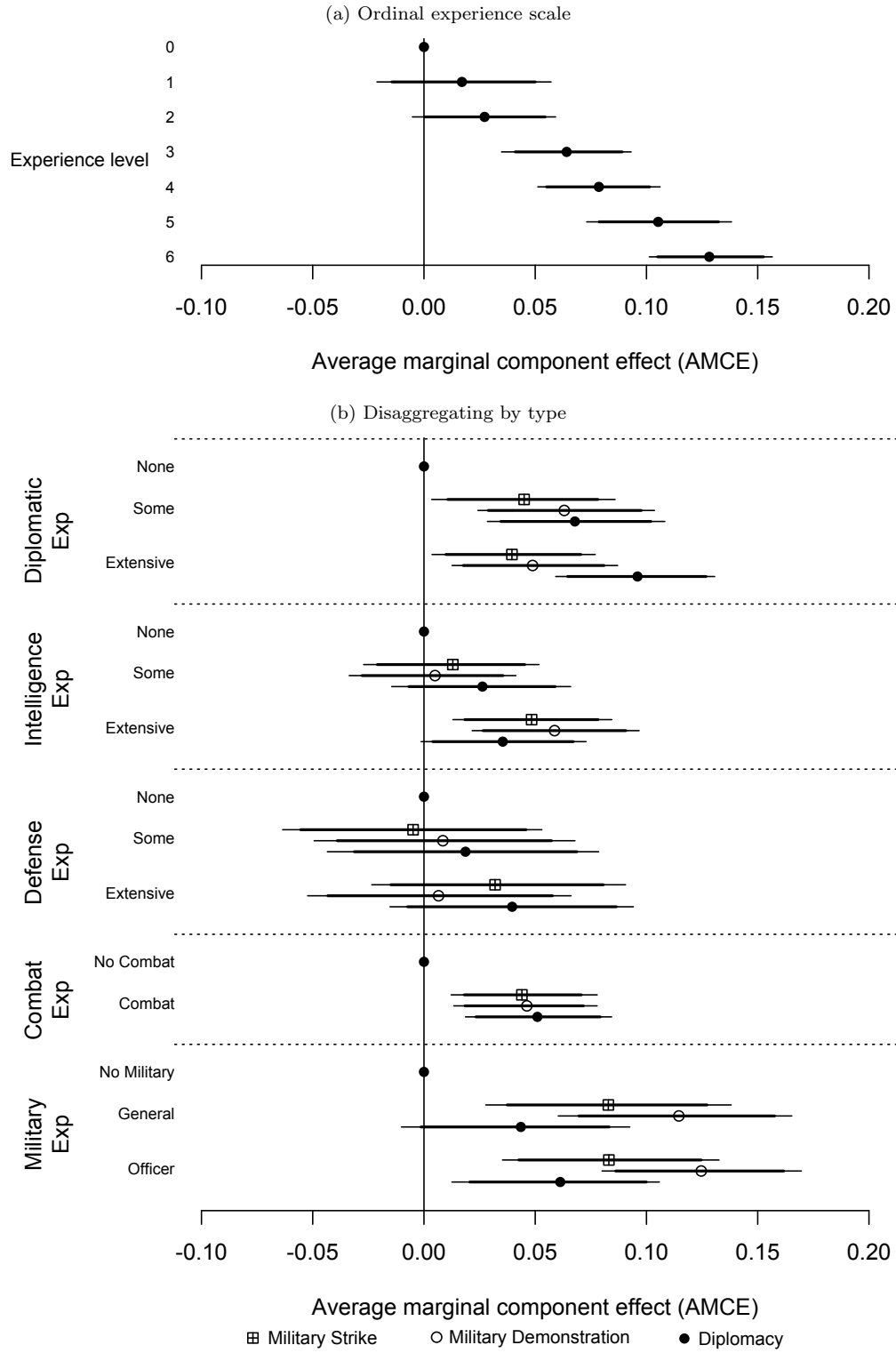
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We begin our analysis by examining our main theoretical variables of interest: the effects of previous experience. In the experiment, respondents see information about the adviser's level of prior experience (none, some, or extensive) in the diplomatic, intelligence, and defense communities, indicating the extent to which the adviser had previous experience in each of the three major foreign policy bureaucracies. We also include combat experience, as not all individuals with military experience have seen active combat (Horowitz and Stam, 2014), as well as military rank (either no military service, achieved the rank of officer, or achieved the rank of general).[11] Using this, we can measure the effects of experience both in general terms and by type, reflecting our two hypotheses.

We first create an general experience score, in which an adviser who has private sector experience but no experience in any of these three bureaucracies has a score of 0, an adviser who has some experience in one community has a score of 1, an adviser who has extensive experience in one community has a score of 2, and so on, producing an additive bureaucratic experience measure ranging from 0-6. Figure 2(a) illustrates the effects of experience generally, by presenting the AMCEs for our experience score and pooling the results across the policy proposals for presentational purposes. The results display a strong linear effect that supports **H1**: the more experience advisers have across different government bureaucracies, the more the public defers to their judgment. Supplementary analysis shows that even controlling for experience levels, however, individuals with military service are given significantly more deference than those without.

Figure 2(b) shows that, consistent with **H2**, not all experience is created equal. Some types of experience have largely issue-specific effects: individuals with extensive diplomatic experience, for example, are more likely to be deferred to on diplomatic issues than individuals with extensive intelligence or defense experience,
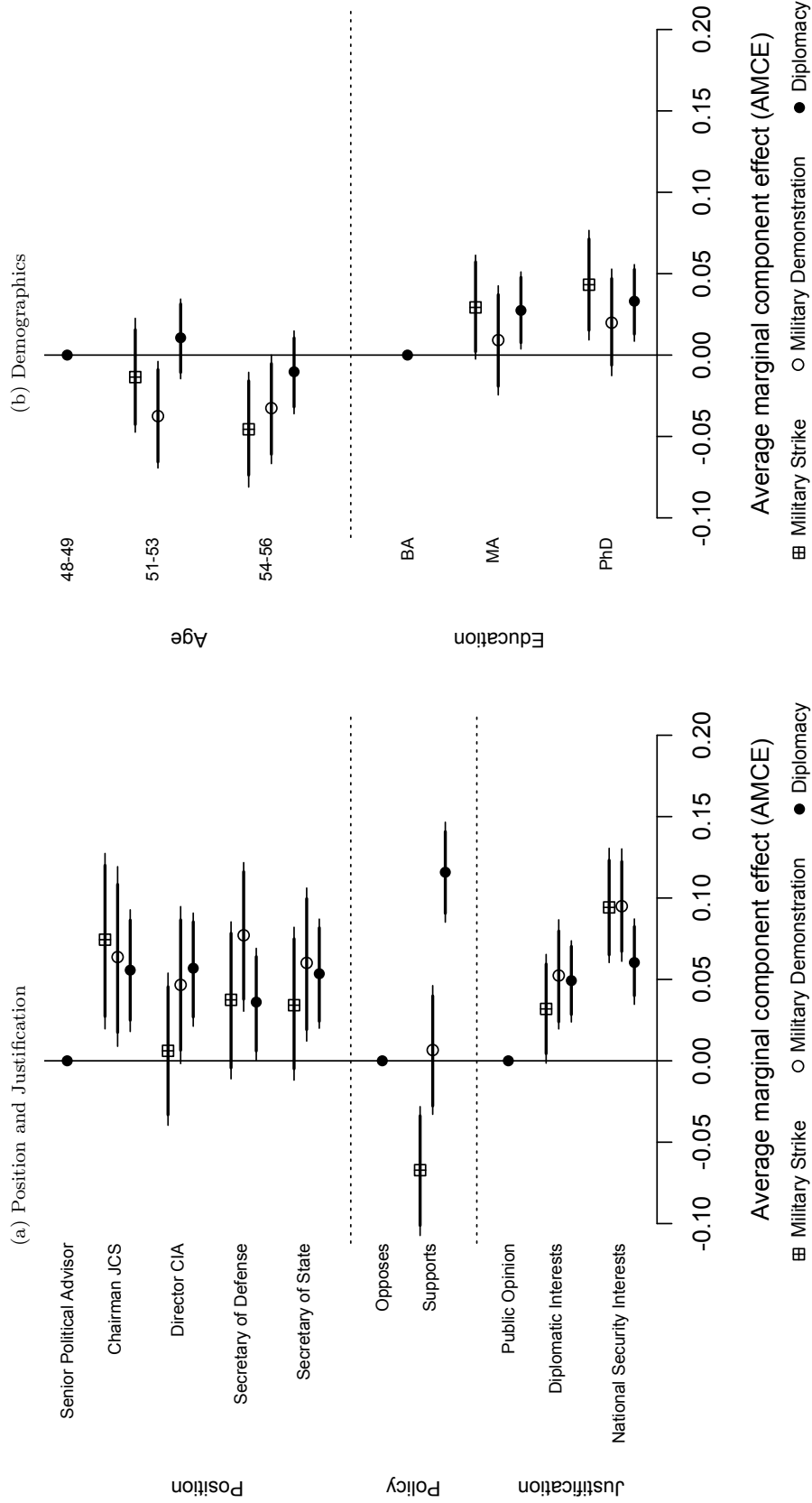
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[11]In the experiment, we randomize military experience and experience in the defense community separately: individuals can work in the Pentagon without being military officers, for example. This distinction lets us capture the variety of different ways in which military affiliations can manifest themselves on foreign policy advisory teams. Among individuals with military service, the experiment varied whether they had retired from the rank in question, or were still active, but we group these factors together to streamline the analysis.

Figure 2: Recommendation AMCEs: Experience

(a) Ordinal experience scale

(b) Disaggregating by type

⊞ Military Strike   ○ Military Demonstration   ● Diplomacy

Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. Figure 2(a) represents experience with an additive score ranging from 0 (for an adviser with no previous experience in any of the three foreign policy bureaucracies) to 6 (for an adviser with extensive experience in all three), showing that the public is more likely to agree with recommendations offered by advisers with more experience. Figure 2(b), however, shows that not all experience is created equal. In particular, the public is significantly more likely to defer to advisers with combat and (especially) military experience, even on non-military issues.

Figure 3: Recommendation AMCEs: Demographics, Position, and Justification

(a) Position and Justification

(b) Demographics

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for example. Yet other types of experience seem to cross issue areas: the systematically largest effects are associated with cue-givers with military (and combat) experience, regardless of whether the policy proposal is related to diplomacy or defense. In addition, the results show that the public doesn't appear to differentiate between generals and military officers. This suggests that military "credibility bumps" accrue in part because of the institutional reputation itself, rather than just the expertise gained over time.

The effects of the institutional, as opposed to political, affiliation of the cue-giver also support our hypotheses. Figure 3(a) illustrates that, consistent with **H1**, respondents tend to view foreign policy advisers as more credible cue-givers than a senior political adviser. However, consistent with **H2**, not all institutional affiliations are created equal. The recommendations of a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are the only ones that exert a significant effect across both defense and diplomatic policies in our experiment. Conversely, the persuasiveness of recommendations from non-military cue-givers, such as a Secretary of State or Director of the CIA, is more context-dependent. For example, the persuasive effects of Secretary of State support for a diplomatic initiative are statistically significant, whereas their support for a military strike are not. In short, we find that advisers with military service are seen as more credible, regardless of the policy under consideration. We return to this point below when we offer two novel measures to precisely estimate the cross-domain effects of different prior experiences.

One potential question concerns the relative size of the effects from cue-giver experience, particularly in comparison to other cue-giver traits that might be equally or more informative for respondents. Figure 3(b) therefore depicts the AMCEs for the demographic variables (age and education), presenting separate results for each scenario type. To simplify the presentation, we trichotomize the age variable, although similar results obtain if we estimate the effects of age for each year. Importantly, the results show weak and largely insignificant effects, especially when compared to the effects of experience from Figure 2. Respondents do not seem to be more likely to agree with advice presented by older advisers — and, if anything, appear *less* likely to agree with older advisers calling for military options. Similarly, formal education displays a relatively weak though positive effect: advisers with PhDs are less than 5% more likely to be seen as credible than advisers with a bachelors' degree.

Moreover, the effects of experience are generally comparable with those from the justification of the policy, suggesting that the experiential attributes of cue-givers may matter as much as the grounds on which they present their case. We also find that the policy being recommended matters considerably for the public: respondents are significantly more supportive of recommendations for diplomatic activities, and significantly less supportive of military strikes, regardless of who was advocating on their behalf. Substantively, these results are consistent with public opinion research showing that the public is less interested in costly uses of force (Jentleson, 1992), as well as with bottom-up theories of public opinion about foreign policy more

generally, which argue publics have more stable preferences than purely top-down theories of public opinion might suggest (Kertzer and Zeitzoff, 2017).

This raises a second potential question, in that cue-giver persuasiveness might be conditional on the substance of the policy recommendation being proffered. For example, perhaps cue-giver experience only matters when they are going "against-type," such as when a military adviser supports peace or a diplomatic adviser favors war (Trager and Vavreck, 2011; Kreps, Saunders and Schultz, 2018; Saunders, 2018; Mattes and Weeks, 2019). Figure 4 directly tests this proposition. We find relatively little evidence from our experiment that advisers in traditionally hawkish positions are seen as more credible when they support dovish policies, and vice versa. Furthermore, and consistent with our theory of deference, we again find that even while all advisers are more likely to be deferred to when supporting a diplomatic effort, there is also considerable heterogeneity across positions. For example, when a Secretary of State or Director of the CIA argues for military strikes, they are seen as significantly less credible than when a Chairman of Joint Chiefs does so. However, a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs appears to have credibility advantages that a Secretary of Defense does not, a finding further consistent with our theoretical predictions in that the former definitionally possesses military experience that the latter does not.

A third set of potential questions relate to whether the nature of a military career encompasses the expertise developed in diplomatic or intelligence ones — whether all international problems are, at their root, military in nature. For example, senior US military officers (e.g. the US Central Command Commander) might engage in military-to-military diplomacy. Yet, most of these experiences do not accrue until late in a military career, whereas the results in Figure 2 highlight that the public equally defers to even junior officers who lack these broadening experiences. Moreover, this logic is equally applicable, to the senior ranks of the US diplomatic corps (e.g. a US Ambassador) who outrank and oversee military attachés in US embassies. Finally, it is not immediately obvious that the public conceptualizes all the policies included in the experiment, particularly whether to hold a diplomatic summit, primarily in military terms. Even if this is the case, that would not necessarily undermine our findings, as this conceptualization of international problems could explain one source of the social esteem in which the US military is held.

Experiment II: Appointments

If the first experiment investigates which types of policy advisers Americans are more likely to listen to on foreign policy issues, the second asks what types of individuals Americans want to see fill those roles in the first place. The APPOINTMENTS experiment asked respondents to consider which types of individuals they preferred to serve as cabinet appointees responsible for advising the president and managing executive

Figure 4: Recommendation AMCEs: Position x Recommendation x Scenario
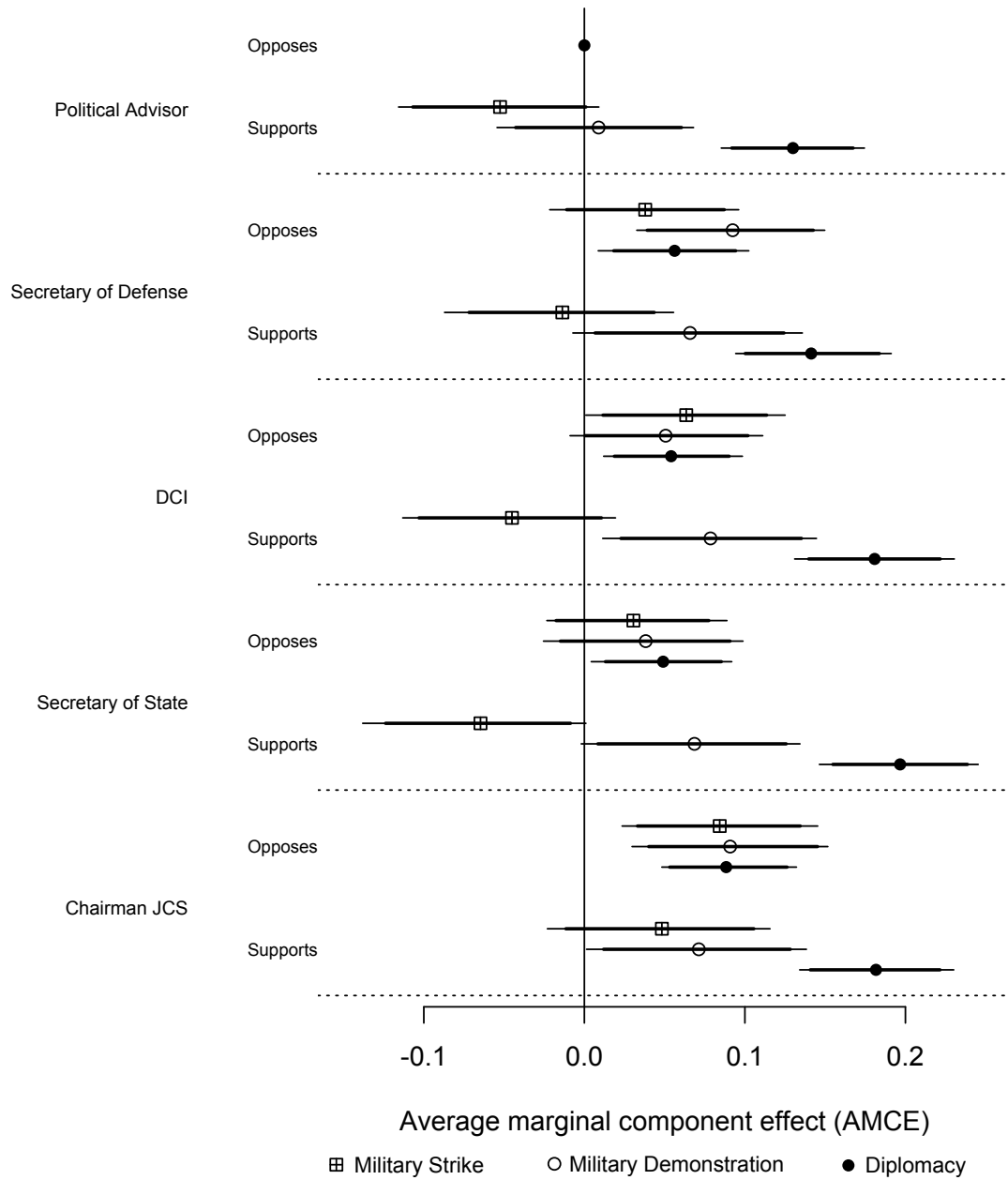
Average marginal component effect (AMCE)

⊞ Military Strike   ○ Military Demonstration   ● Diplomacy

Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. The figure re-estimates the quantities of interest from Figure 3, but interacted with one another, thereby letting the effect of recommendations vary based on the adviser and policy at hand. Thus, when a Secretary of State or Director of the CIA argue for military strikes, they are significantly less credible than when a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs does so.

bureaucracies. As in the first experiment, respondents were directed to an introductory screen that told subjects that they would be presented with information about pairs of hypothetical candidates and asked to choose which they preferred. Respondents then proceeded to the first task, in which they were given 12 pieces of information, including the cabinet position the candidates were being considered for (either the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, or CIA Director), along with the candidates' demographic, partisan, and experiential characteristics. Table 4 provides a full list of treatment conditions and an example scenario is detailed in Table 5.

The main contribution of this second experiment is that it allows us to directly observe the effects of cue-giver experience and partisanship in parallel.[12] The overall structure of the experiment is similar to its predecessor (a choice-based conjoint, with eight rounds per respondent, randomization constraints to avoid implausible treatment combinations, order randomizations at the respondent-level, a weighted randomization structure to bolster statistical power, and so on). The analysis below is based on 10504 choice tasks (each of which involved two randomly generated candidates, for 21008 candidates in total) from 1313 respondents. As before, a host of robustness checks are presented in Appendix §1.

Results and Discussion

As with the previous experiment, we find that experience plays a large and important role in the types of appointees Americans prefer. Figure 5(a) presents additive experience scores (ranging from 0, for an adviser with no previous experience in any of the three foreign policy bureaucracies, to 6, for an adviser with extensive experience in all three), pooling the results across appointment types for presentational purposes. Just as in the previous experiment, the experience score displays a strong linear effect consistent with **H1**: the more experience advisers have across different government bureaucracies, the more the public prefers their appointment. Figure 5(b) shows that some types of prior experience are position-specific: extensive intelligence experience is highly valued for potential CIA directors, and extensive diplomatic experience for potential Secretaries of State. But, as before, we see strong preferences for candidates with military (and, to a lesser extent, combat) experience, regardless of the position (**H2**). And, as before, the mere presence of military experience matters more than the rank attained, suggesting that this particular aspect of cue-giver credibility also reflects institutional reputation, rather than merely expertise accrued over time.

Figure 6(a) presents the core manipulation not present in the appointments experiment: the adviser's partisanship. Regardless of whether Americans take cues from partisan elites, it is clear that in aggregate

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[12]Although we compared institutional affiliations to a political adviser in the first experiment, we deliberately chose to omit party affiliation in the recommendations experiment for two reasons. First, we sought to replicate real-world conditions under the vast majority of US administrations. Second, as cross-partisan appointments (e.g. Robert Gates in the Obama administration) are comparatively rare, respondents might have responded in systematically different ways that might be explored in future research.

(A) *Position*	The United States is considering appointing a new...
	(1) ...Secretary of State
	(2) ...Secretary of Defense
	(3) ...Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
(B) *Age*	48 to 56
(C) *Education*	(1) Bachelors Degree
	(2) Masters Degree
	(3) Doctorate Degree
(D) *Gender*	(1) He
	(2) She
(E) *Reputation*	...has a reputation for being...
	(1) ...an expert in his/her field
	(2) ...a loyal adviser
(F) *Party Affiliation*	(1) Independent...
	(2) Republican...
	(3) Democrat...
(G) *Administration Type*	...with prior experience...
	(1) ...under both Republican and Democratic administrations
	(2) ...under Republican administrations
	(3) ...under Democratic administrations
(H) *Prior Experience*	Primary experience is...
	(1) ...outside government...
	(2) ...inside government...
· *Diplomatic*	...with [level] diplomatic experience in the State Department...
	(1) none
	(2) some
	(3) extensive
· *Intelligence*	...with [level] intelligence experience in the CIA...
	(1) none
	(2) some
	(3) extensive
· *Defense*	...with [level] defense experience in the Defense Department...
	(1) none
	(2) some
	(3) extensive
(I) *Military Status*	(1) Retired general...
	(2) Retired military officer...
	(3) No prior military experience...
(J) *Combat Experience*	...with...
	(1) combat experience
	(2) no combat experience

Table 4: Conjoint Study Treatments (Experiment II: Appointments)

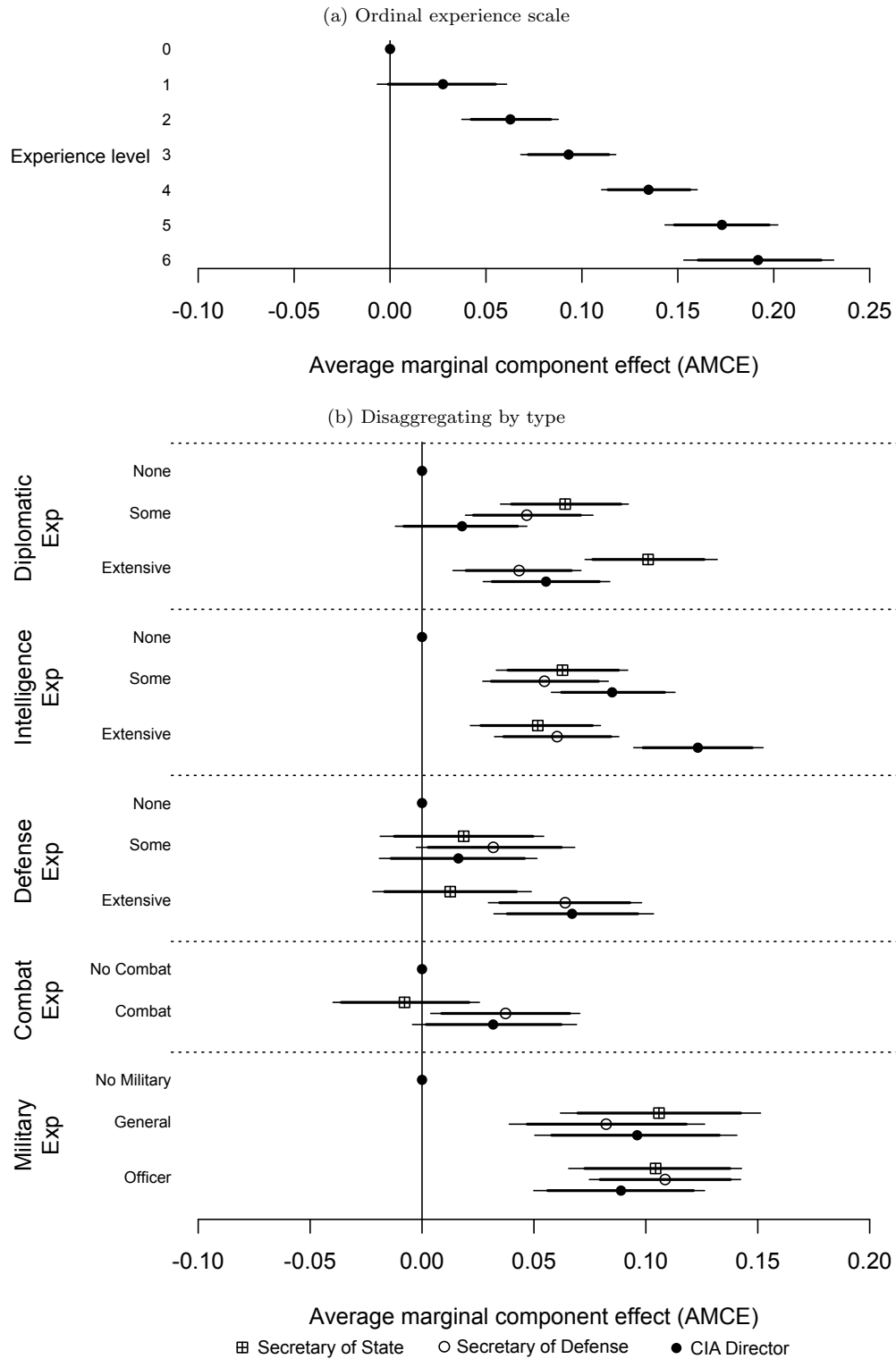The United States is considering appointing a new Secretary of Defense.

	Candidate A	Candidate B
Age	56	48
Education	Bachelors Degree	Doctorate Degree
Reputation	She has a reputation for being an expert in her field	She has a reputation for being an expert in her field
Party Affiliation	Independent with prior experience under both Republican and Democratic administrations	Republican with prior experience under Republican administrations
Prior Experience	No experience in the defense or intelligence community, but some diplomatic experience in the State Department	No experience in the diplomatic community, but some defense experience in the Defense Department, and some intelligence experience in the Central Intelligence Agency
Military Status	Retired general without combat experience	Retired military officer without combat experience

Given the characteristics listed above, which candidate for Secretary of Defense do you prefer?
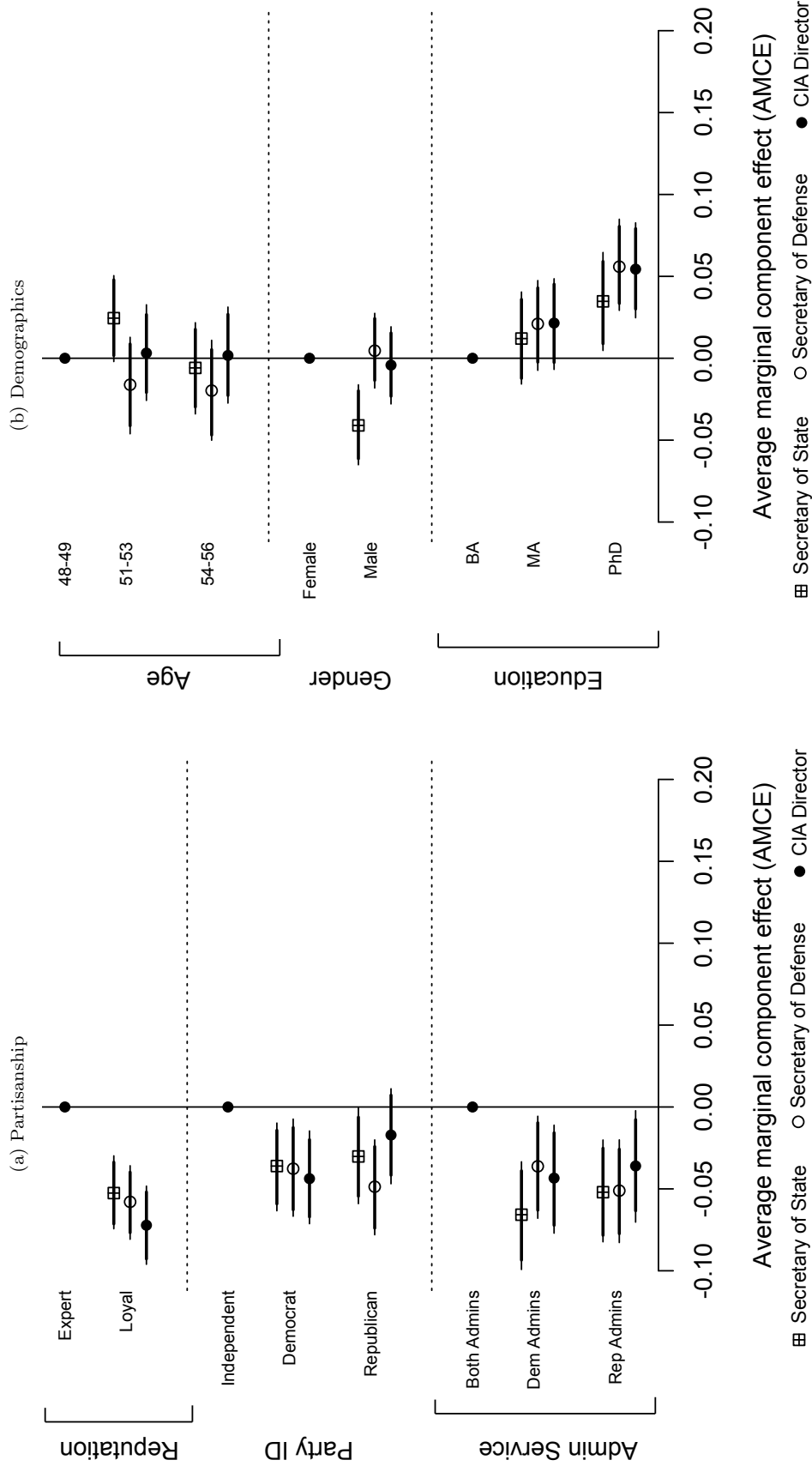
Candidate A   Candidate B

○   ○

Table 5: Sample Conjoint Choice (Experiment II)

Figure 5: Appointment AMCEs: Experience

(a) Ordinal experience scale

Average marginal component effect (AMCE)

(b) Disaggregating by type

Average marginal component effect (AMCE)

⊞ Secretary of State   ○ Secretary of Defense   ● CIA Director

Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. Figure 5(a) pools across appointment types to showcase the importance of experience more generally, represented here with an additive score ranging from 0 (for an adviser with no previous experience in any of the three foreign policy bureaucracies) to 6 (for an adviser with extensive experience in all three). It shows that the public is more likely to want to appoint advisers with more experience. However, Figure 5(b) shows that not all experience is created equal. In particular, the public is significantly more likely to prefer advisers with military experience, even for non-military positions.

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Figure 6: Appointment AMCEs: Demographics and Partisanship

Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. Figure 6(a) shows that in the aggregate, Americans dislike signs of partisanship amongst appointees: they prefer candidates with reputations for expertise rather than for loyalty, prefer independents over Democrats or Republicans, and prefer candidates who have served under both parties. Figure 6(b) shows candidates' demographic characteristics have little effect on whether respondents support their appointment, although education's effect is positive and statistically significant.

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they feel less comfortable having partisan players in advisory positions. They prefer candidates with reputations for expertise over those with reputations for loyalty; they prefer independents over Democrats and Republicans, and they prefer candidates who have served under administrations of both parties. Two points are relevant here. First, as we show in Appendix §1.2, these results partially mask respondent-level heterogeneity: Republicans prefer Republican appointees over Democratic ones, and Democrats prefer Democratic appointees over Republican ones.[13] Yet even here, neither Democrats nor Republicans strongly prefer co-partisan appointees over independent ones. Second, since we control for candidates' age, and a variety of other measures of experience, we can assume that the preference for candidates who have served under both Republicans and Democrats indicates a genuine appreciation for bipartisanship, rather than an artifact of respondents assuming that candidates who served under both types of administrations have more experience under their belt. Finally, as in the recommendation experiment, Figure 6(b) puts the effects of experience in context, showing that the effects of demographics are relatively weak and far substantively smaller than the effects of experience from Figure 5.

Putting Deference to the Military in a Comparative Perspective

Our findings from the two experiments show that the public defers to experienced cue-givers but suggest that it weights military experience above other experience types. To more precisely illustrate this finding, we re-analyze the results from the two experiments, but estimating two new quantities of interest: the *decay effect* and *experience premium*.[14] Recall from the discussion above that the former refers to the rate at which deference decays as one moves beyond an elite's core area of expertise, while the latter refers to the premium afforded to an elite within their own core domain. Calculating these quantities of interest formally is useful because it allows us to put questions of deference in civil-military relations into a comparative perspective: if public deference to military experience extends beyond the battlefield, but no more than public deference to diplomats extends beyond summitry, for example, it leads us to a very different conclusion than if there is a difference in deference in regards to the two types of elites.

The first two columns of Table 6 estimate these quantities for the appointments conjoint; the last two columns for the recommendations. The first column shows that deference to intelligence experience decays by nearly 55% once we move from appointing a director of the CIA to appointing candidates for other

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[13]The partisan preferences here are consistent with negative partisanship: it is less that Democrats have strong preferences for Democratic candidates, or Republicans have strong preferences for Republican candidates, than that Democrats are strongly opposed to Republican candidates and Republicans strongly opposed to Democratic candidates.

[14]More formally, let B_{ij} represent the average marginal component effect (AMCE) of expertise type $i = \{0, 1 \ldots, N-1\}$ in domain $j = \{0, 1, \ldots, N-1\}$; if $i = j$, it refers to the effect of in-domain expertise, whereas if $i \neq j$ it refers to the effect of out-domain expertise. In a world with $N = 2$ types of expertise, and two domains, the *decay effect* of expertise type $i = 1$ is $100(1 - \frac{B_{10}}{B_{11}})$, while the *experience premium* of expertise type $i = 1$ is $100(\frac{B_{11}}{B_{01}})$. The decay effect therefore tells us how much less the public defers to a type of expert outside the expert's domain, while the experience premium tells us how much more the public defers to a type of expert inside their domain than they do other types of experts.

Table 6: Putting deference to military expertise in comparative perspective

| | Appointments | | Recommendations | |
	Decay Effect (%)	Experience Premium (%)	Decay Effect (%)	Experience Premium (%)
Intelligence	54.67	68.19		
Diplomatic	50.74	26.58	40.99	7.34
Military (Officer)	11.09	111.19	38.92	132.72
Military (General)	-21.19	60.95	21.42	120.92

Note: the larger the decay effect, the *less* a type of experience is valued outside of its core domain. The larger the experience premium, the *more* a type of experience is valued within its core domain than alternative forms of experience are. Both quantities are expressed as percentages.

positions. Deference to diplomatic experience displays a similar decay effect, of nearly 51%. In contrast, military experience displays a decay effect of a much smaller magnitude: the public defers to appointees with experience as a military officer only 11% less outside of defense appointments; the deference decay effect for appointees with experience as a general is actually negative, such that the public refers to generals *more* in non-defense appointments! The second column demonstrates a similar asymmetry between military and diplomatic experience: Americans defer to diplomats only 27% more than non-diplomats on appointments for Secretary of State, whereas they defer to former military officers 111% more than individuals without military experience on appointments for Secretary of Defense. Decay effects are more consistent across experience types in the recommendations experiment (though deference to recommendations from former generals decays only 21%), but the expertise premiums are even starker than in the appointments experiment. Recommendations from individuals with extensive diplomatic experience are deferred to only 7% more on diplomatic issues than recommendations from elites with military experience, whereas recommendations from former military officers are deferred to 133% more, and recommendations from former military generals are deferred to 121% more, on military issues than recommendations from elites with diplomatic experience are. In other words, military experience displays both a weaker decay effect and a stronger experience premium; military experience is seen as traveling to other domains in a way that non-military forms of experience are not, consistent with our argument about the military's unique social standing within the United States.

Our theoretical framework suggests three potential pathways that can potentially explain this observed difference in deference. One is if Americans see the military as requiring a higher level of expertise (x) than other types of foreign policy bureaucracy — either because the public perceives military activities as requiring greater skill, or perceives military performance as demonstrating it. Another is if Americans perceive military expertise as applying to a wider range (w) of foreign policy issues than other types of foreign policy expertise do. A third relates not to expertise, but to intentions (z): if Americans perceive military experience as a better signal of character than other types of foreign policy experience, viewing military personnel as

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more benevolent, patriotic, or prosocial. In supplementary analysis in Appendix §1.5, we test and find some support for all three of these pathways: respondents view military personnel as more benevolent than members of other foreign policy bureaucracies, but although controlling for benevolence perceptions partially erodes this difference in deference, it does not eliminate it. The results suggest Americans therefore also see military personnel as having more expertise, and place greater weight on this expertise across domains.[15] In the court of public opinion, not all advisers are equal.

4   Conclusion

Political scientists are devoting increased attention not only to leaders (Weeks, 2012; Horowitz and Stam, 2014) but also to their senior foreign policy advisers (Saunders, 2017, 2018). Yet, political scientists are only beginning to understand how advisers derive their political influence. While partisan cue theories suggest advisers should primarily gain their persuasive power through partisan affiliation, these theoretical frameworks offer few predictions for how individuals adjudicate information between co-partisans. Given that US presidents typically pick their foreign policy team from a party bench,[16] as well as the rate at which elite disagreement leaks in the US system, existing research yields few intuitions about how the public adjudicates between cues from dueling co-partisans.

Our study pushes this debate forward in four ways. First, we demonstrate how advisers are not equally persuasive — or, by extension, politically powerful. Even with similar informational advantages stemming from senior cabinet positions, experienced advisers are more persuasive than inexperienced counterparts. Secretaries of State and CIA Directors are differentiated by the credentials they bring with them to office, suggesting that bureaucratic agents are not fungible as some traditional models imply (Bendor and Hammond, 1992). Moreover, while our findings are consistent with recent work by Saunders (2017) on how experience differentials between presidents and advisers shape foreign policy decision-making, our study suggests an additional causal mechanism. Just as Saunders (2017) shows that experience matters because more experienced presidents can better monitor their advisors, we show that experienced advisors can also be more influential because they are better equipped to persuade the public.

While our focus in this paper is patterns of deference to different types of foreign policy elites among

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[15]Crucially, this is not the same as assuming that military personnel acquire diplomatic and intelligence experience as a part of their job, whereas individuals with intelligence or diplomatic experience need not necessarily acquire military experience. Importantly, we designed the experiment to preclude this type of experimental confounding, since our experiments control for multiple types of experience simultaneously; the above analysis estimates the experience premium of military experience controlling for diplomatic and intelligence experience, for example.

[16]Of course, exceptions to this rule exist. For example, Robert Gates served as Secretary of Defense under both George W. Bush and Barack Obama. However, consistent with the results from the Appointments experiment, we note that one reason Gates may have been an appealing candidate for a Democratic administration was his career experience in the Central Intelligence Agency, serving under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

the mass public rather than within elite circles, our finding has potential implications for the study of elite decision-making as well: it may be that some advisers are better positioned to persuade the president than others. That is, Mike Pompeo's ability to "pull and haul" the decision-making process may be quite different from Rex Tillerson's. While more research is needed on how the distribution of experience in elite groups affects foreign policy outcomes, our findings suggest that scholars might begin to examine adviser backgrounds in ways parallel to scholarship on head of state experience. The social traits of elite groups may turn out to play an important role in how information and preferences are aggregated. For example, Lupton (2017) shows that members of Congress with military experience have distinctive voting patterns; future research should explore whether they exercise influence on fellow legislators in systematically different ways.

Second, drawing attention to adviser characteristics contributes to our understanding of how the public forms foreign policy opinions, particularly in environments characterised by in-party contestation. Existing scholarship posits that, faced with in-party fighting, the public shuts down and withdraws support. We show that the public is perhaps more discerning, even in a polarized environment. The public seems to have more heuristics for credibility in its toolkit than party affiliation alone. Similarly, our findings suggest that even in an era characterized by societal spurning of expertise (Kertzer and Zeitzoff, 2017), the public has not completely lost confidence in the foreign policy establishment. Consistent with Guisinger and Saunders (2017), the public seems to listen to more experienced and more expert voices in forming foreign policy opinions — and prefers that the president similarly stack the cabinet with experts as opposed to political loyalists.

Third, our study shows that the public values some types of prior experience more than others. This finding builds on scholarship on public deference toward the contemporary US military (Kenwick and Maxey, 2018; Golby and Karlin, 2018; Lin-Greenberg, 2020), but shows that scope conditions posited in past work may in fact be too conservative: the public defers to military leaders in *multiple* foreign policy domains — not simply on whether or not to use military force. To our knowledge, this is the first study to empirically demonstrate that public deference to military experience extends beyond the battlefield, raising a number of important normative questions for theories of civil-military relations (Brooks, 2019). While our interest here was in studying this difference in deference in the context of foreign policy questions — debates in which the cue-givers we study here are most likely to weigh in — future scholarship should examine whether the same perceptions of military expertise also extend to domestic political issues like health, or cross-cutting issues like climate change.

Fourth, by situating this empirical finding in the broader literature on political behavior and institutional trust, we add theoretical clarity to why this deference occurs in the first place, shedding new light on debates

about "democratic militarism" (Caverley, 2014). Despite all the institutional trappings of a democratic state, socially esteemed militaries are quite politically powerful; military influence does not end when the threat of coup dissipates. Many of the dynamics of civil-military relations emphasized by the recent literature (Kohn, 1994; Gronke and Feaver, 2001; Golby et al., 2012; Cohn, Coletta and Feaver, 2018) may in fact have much in common with how other government institutions gain credibility and power more generally. Future research might explore how much trust in the military mirrors other institutions, such as the US Supreme Court.

At the same time, while military influence over broader US foreign policy is striking, widening the analytical aperture to other senior advisory positions may temper concerns about military clout, in that our findings also demonstrate the public values voices with diplomatic and intelligence experience. On many policy issues, the public sees the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, and CIA Director as more credible than political advisers — even if a Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff remains the most persuasive when recommending the use of military force. This finding suggests that the field's focus on *military* advisers may in part obscure our understanding of public deference to foreign policy expertise writ large. More research is also needed to understand public trust in diplomatic and intelligence organizations, leveraging intuitions from civil-military relations but connecting both to the study of bureaucracy and institutions (Allison, 1971; Carpenter and Krause, 2012). Similarly, our recommendations experiment implicitly focused on the "information gathering" stage of decision-making, in which political leaders often lack strong opinions about what strategy is optimal and look to advisers for recommendations. Future research should test whether public deference still holds once the political leader had decided on a strategy that bureaucratic advisers do not support. Altogether, then, in showing how foreign policy institutions derive influence through social standing, these findings suggest the merit of facilitating greater dialogue between the study of bureaucratic politics and the study of public opinion in foreign policy more broadly.

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Armies and Influence
Supplementary Appendix
January 11, 2021

Contents

1 Supplementary analysis

1.1 Robustness checks

As Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto (2014) note, conjoint experiments rely a number of assumptions, all of which can be subject to direct empirical testing. The first is the stability and carryover effects assumption, which holds that potential outcomes remain stable across experimental rounds. This is also a valuable diagnostic for demand effects, as would be the case if participants changed their behavior over the course of the study as they became more familiar with the study's purpose. Figure 1 shows the results of the stability and carryover effects assumption for the recommendations and appointments conjoints (panels (a) and (b), respectively), showing that the results remain largely consistent across rounds: it is not the case, for example, that considerations that receive a large amount of weight in the first round of the experiment are no longer seen as important by the last round.

Second is the no profile order assumption, which holds that respondents' choices are not a function of the order in which the two profiles are presented within each pairing (in the recommendations experiment, whether the recommendation is offered by adviser A rather than adviser B; in the appointments experiment, where the candidate is appointee A or appointee B). Figure 2 visualizes the diagnostic results; panel (a) presents the results for the recommendations conjoint, and panel (b)for the appointments conjoint. Although some results differ slightly (the partisanship of the recommender appears to matter more when coming from adviser A rather than from adviser B, for example), there do not appear to be any systematic differences.

Third is the attribute order assumption, which tests whether effect sizes are a function of the order in which the characteristics were presented to respondents, which we visualize in Figures 3 - 4.

Next, Tables 1-2 present the results from the randomization checks, showing that randomization was successful. Finally, it is worth noting that as Abramson, Koçak and Magazinnik (2019) note, because the AMCE as a quantity of interest averages over both the direction and intensity of preferences, the results reported in the main text should not be interpreted as predictions about the behavior of the median voter; for this reason, the main text explicitly avoids making reference to electoral contests or precepts from social choice theory.

Figure 1: Stability and carryover effects

(a) Recommendations conjoint

(b) Appointments conjoint

2
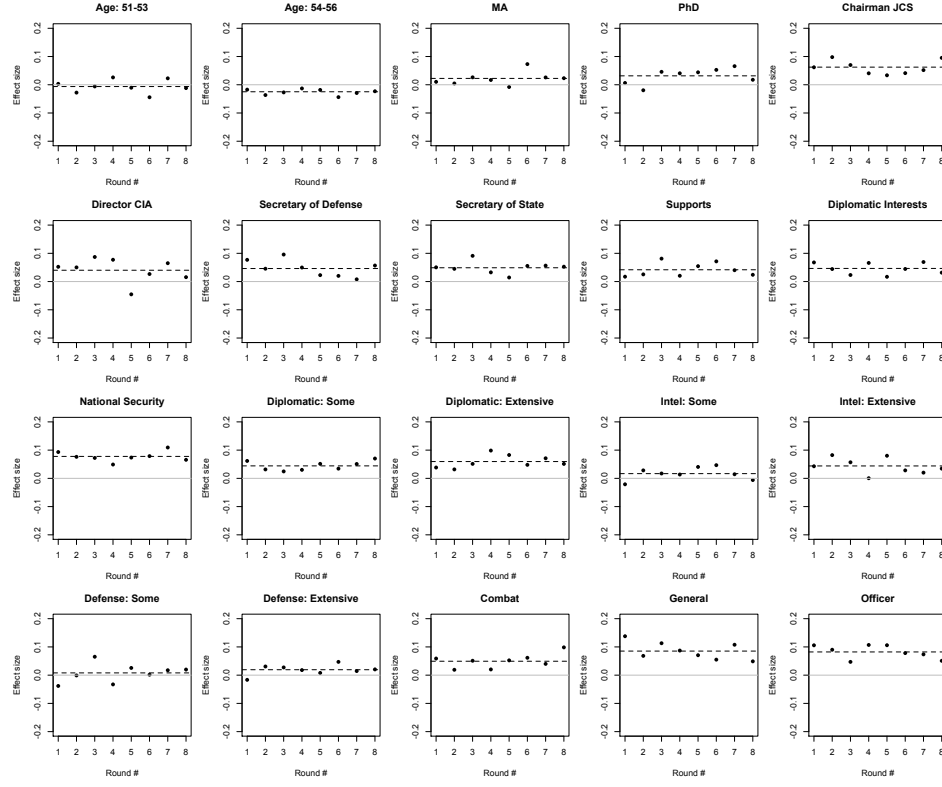
Figure 2: Profile order tests

(a) Recommendations conjoint

(b) Appointments conjoint

Note: In panel (a), adviser A in black and adviser B in grey; in panel (b), appointee A in black and appointee B in grey.

Table 1: Randomization check: recommendations conjoint

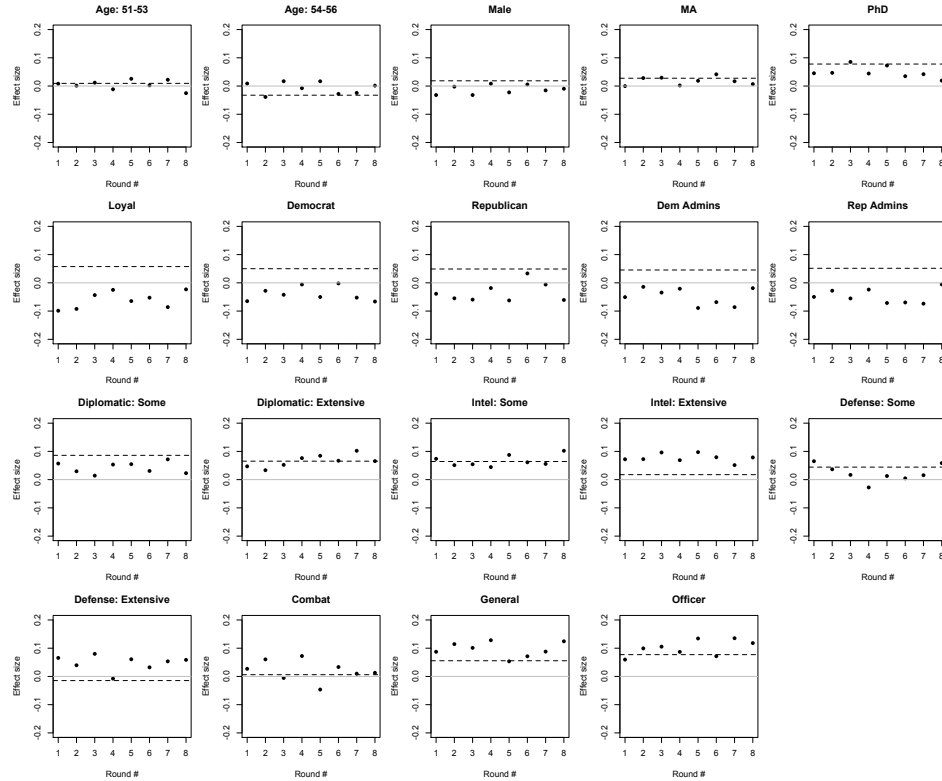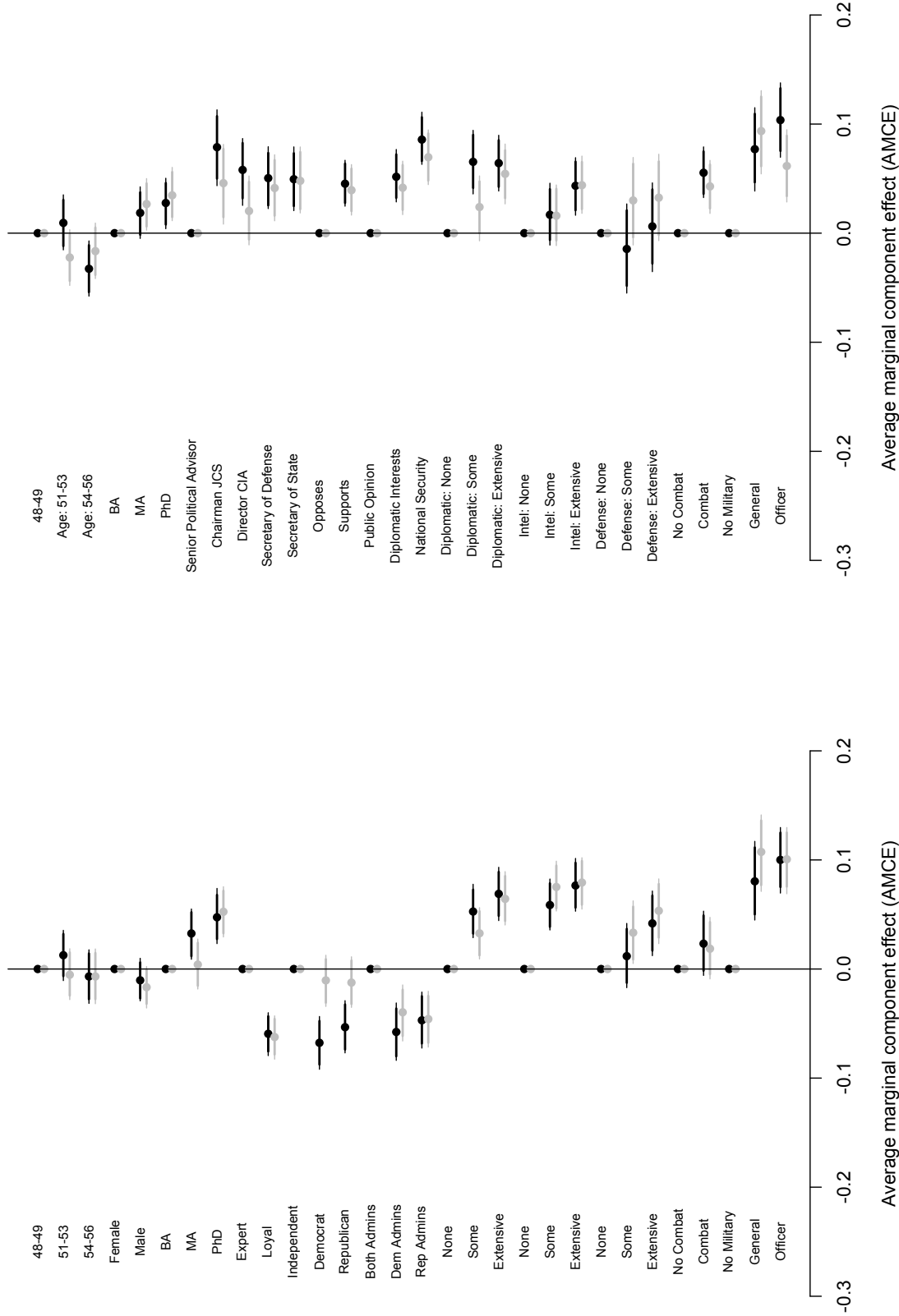|	Age (51-53)	Age (54-56)	Education (MA)	Education (PhD)	Position (CJCS)
(Intercept)	[0.332, 0.651]	[0.235, 0.542]	[-0.224, 0.094]	[-0.206, 0.104]	[-0.17, 0.199]
Male	[-0.068, 0.085]	[-0.064, 0.085]	[-0.005, 0.141]	[-0.034, 0.109]	[-0.119, 0.041]
Age	[-0.004, 0.001]	[-0.002, 0.003]	[-0.001, 0.003]	[-0.001, 0.004]	[-0.002, 0.003]
Education	[-0.225, 0.044]	[-0.206, 0.065]	[-0.152, 0.102]	[-0.101, 0.153]	[-0.161, 0.131]
Party ID	[-0.047, 0.192]	[-0.021, 0.214]	[-0.115, 0.112]	[-0.207, 0.018]	[-0.175, 0.068]
Media	[-0.131, 0.108]	[-0.128, 0.115]	[-0.156, 0.073]	[-0.195, 0.039]	[-0.09, 0.151]

	Position (DCI)	Position (SecDef)	Position (SecState)	Diplomatic Just.	Nat. Security Just.
(Intercept)	[-0.09, 0.22]	[-0.158, 0.197]	[-0.118, 0.217]	[-0.13, 0.172]	[-0.111, 0.202]
Male	[-0.071, 0.089]	[-0.116, 0.061]	[-0.074, 0.086]	[-0.078, 0.066]	[-0.042, 0.107]
Age	[-0.003, 0.002]	[-0.001, 0.004]	[-0.002, 0.003]	[-0.005, 0]	[-0.003, 0.001]
Education	[-0.172, 0.105]	[-0.25, 0.038]	[-0.24, 0.05]	[-0.011, 0.227]	[-0.169, 0.087]
Party ID	[-0.196, 0.041]	[-0.216, 0.044]	[-0.211, 0.03]	[-0.094, 0.136]	[-0.048, 0.182]
Media	[-0.082, 0.171]	[-0.092, 0.168]	[-0.04, 0.221]	[-0.108, 0.112]	[-0.163, 0.071]

	Diplomatic: Some	Diplomatic: Extensive	Intel: Some	Intel: Extensive	Defense: Some
(Intercept)	[-0.596, -0.255]	[0.223, 0.518]	[-0.577, -0.205]	[0.193, 0.515]	[-0.255, 0.183]
Male	[-0.056, 0.123]	[-0.088, 0.057]	[-0.03, 0.135]	[-0.101, 0.038]	[-0.096, 0.119]
Age	[-0.001, 0.004]	[-0.002, 0.002]	[-0.002, 0.003]	[-0.003, 0.002]	[-0.005, 0.001]
Education	[-0.036, 0.26]	[-0.047, 0.198]	[-0.072, 0.207]	[-0.12, 0.13]	[-0.258, 0.102]
Party ID	[-0.182, 0.056]	[-0.08, 0.131]	[-0.207, 0.038]	[-0.1, 0.124]	[-0.127, 0.173]
Media	[-0.189, 0.062]	[-0.171, 0.061]	[-0.138, 0.121]	[-0.069, 0.162]	[-0.076, 0.238]

	Defense: Extensive	Combat	Officer	General
(Intercept)	[1.019, 1.37]	[-0.73, -0.487]	[-0.016, 0.259]	[-0.32, -0.003]
Male	[-0.092, 0.067]	[-0.08, 0.05]	[-0.111, 0.023]	[-0.096, 0.056]
Age	[-0.002, 0.003]	[-0.004, 0]	[-0.002, 0.003]	[-0.002, 0.003]
Education	[-0.122, 0.147]	[-0.137, 0.085]	[-0.069, 0.169]	[-0.114, 0.145]
Party ID	[-0.077, 0.161]	[0.005, 0.203]	[0.026, 0.23]	[-0.027, 0.205]
Media	[-0.085, 0.168]	[-0.068, 0.132]	[-0.136, 0.081]	[-0.16, 0.081]

Table 2: Randomization check: appointments conjoint

	Age (51-53)	Age (54-56)	Male	Education (MA)	Education (PhD)
(Intercept)	[0.17, 0.499]	[0.258, 0.593]	[-0.077, 0.169]	[-0.21, 0.102]	[-0.223, 0.117]
Male	[-0.05, 0.103]	[-0.068, 0.078]	[-0.078, 0.033]	[-0.098, 0.047]	[-0.088, 0.063]
Age	[-0.001, 0.003]	[-0.002, 0.003]	[-0.002, 0.002]	[-0.003, 0.002]	[-0.002, 0.003]
Education	[-0.124, 0.144]	[-0.218, 0.067]	[-0.144, 0.06]	[-0.095, 0.149]	[-0.121, 0.127]
Party ID	[-0.074, 0.141]	[-0.135, 0.097]	[-0.076, 0.093]	[-0.075, 0.132]	[-0.166, 0.039]
Media	[-0.152, 0.084]	[-0.117, 0.117]	[-0.082, 0.099]	[0.015, 0.23]	[-0.063, 0.155]

	Expert	Democrat	Republican	Dem Admin	Rep Admin
(Intercept)	[-0.167, 0.079]	[-0.023, 0.305]	[-0.102, 0.191]	[-0.703, -0.38]	[-0.805, -0.491]
Male	[-0.07, 0.046]	[-0.107, 0.035]	[-0.084, 0.061]	[-0.044, 0.102]	[-0.095, 0.049]
Age	[-0.002, 0.001]	[-0.003, 0.001]	[-0.003, 0.001]	[-0.003, 0.002]	[0, 0.004]
Education	[0.01, 0.208]	[-0.155, 0.091]	[-0.083, 0.173]	[-0.145, 0.097]	[-0.11, 0.136]
Party ID	[-0.023, 0.138]	[-0.119, 0.079]	[-0.097, 0.123]	[-0.152, 0.065]	[-0.183, 0.026]
Media	[-0.105, 0.075]	[-0.155, 0.069]	[-0.117, 0.077]	[-0.116, 0.093]	[-0.086, 0.124]

	Diplomatic: Some	Diplomatic: Extensive	Intel: Some	Intel: Extensive	Defense: Some
(Intercept)	[-0.431, -0.12]	[-0.372, -0.058]	[-0.494, -0.18]	[-0.444, -0.137]	[-0.004, 0.359]
Male	[-0.129, 0.005]	[-0.115, 0.02]	[-0.129, 0.006]	[-0.099, 0.034]	[-0.106, 0.057]
Age	[-0.003, 0.001]	[-0.003, 0.002]	[-0.003, 0.001]	[-0.002, 0.003]	[-0.004, 0.001]
Education	[-0.236, 0.01]	[-0.117, 0.134]	[-0.132, 0.125]	[-0.134, 0.106]	[-0.17, 0.118]
Party ID	[0.041, 0.246]	[-0.035, 0.179]	[-0.088, 0.109]	[-0.134, 0.068]	[-0.123, 0.109]
Media	[-0.052, 0.162]	[-0.114, 0.081]	[-0.094, 0.147]	[-0.125, 0.079]	[-0.178, 0.06]

	Defense: Experience	Combat	Officer	General
(Intercept)	[0.428, 0.751]	[-1.375, -1.059]	[-1.242, -0.912]	[-1.034, -0.723]
Male	[-0.122, 0.013]	[-0.081, 0.06]	[-0.082, 0.072]	[-0.122, 0.014]
Age	[-0.003, 0.001]	[-0.003, 0.001]	[-0.001, 0.004]	[-0.002, 0.002]
Education	[-0.194, 0.055]	[-0.098, 0.163]	[-0.181, 0.081]	[-0.033, 0.22]
Party ID	[-0.042, 0.161]	[-0.127, 0.081]	[-0.049, 0.175]	[-0.065, 0.142]
Media	[-0.088, 0.119]	[-0.154, 0.047]	[-0.097, 0.119]	[-0.163, 0.042]

Figure 3: Attribute order tests: recommendations conjoint
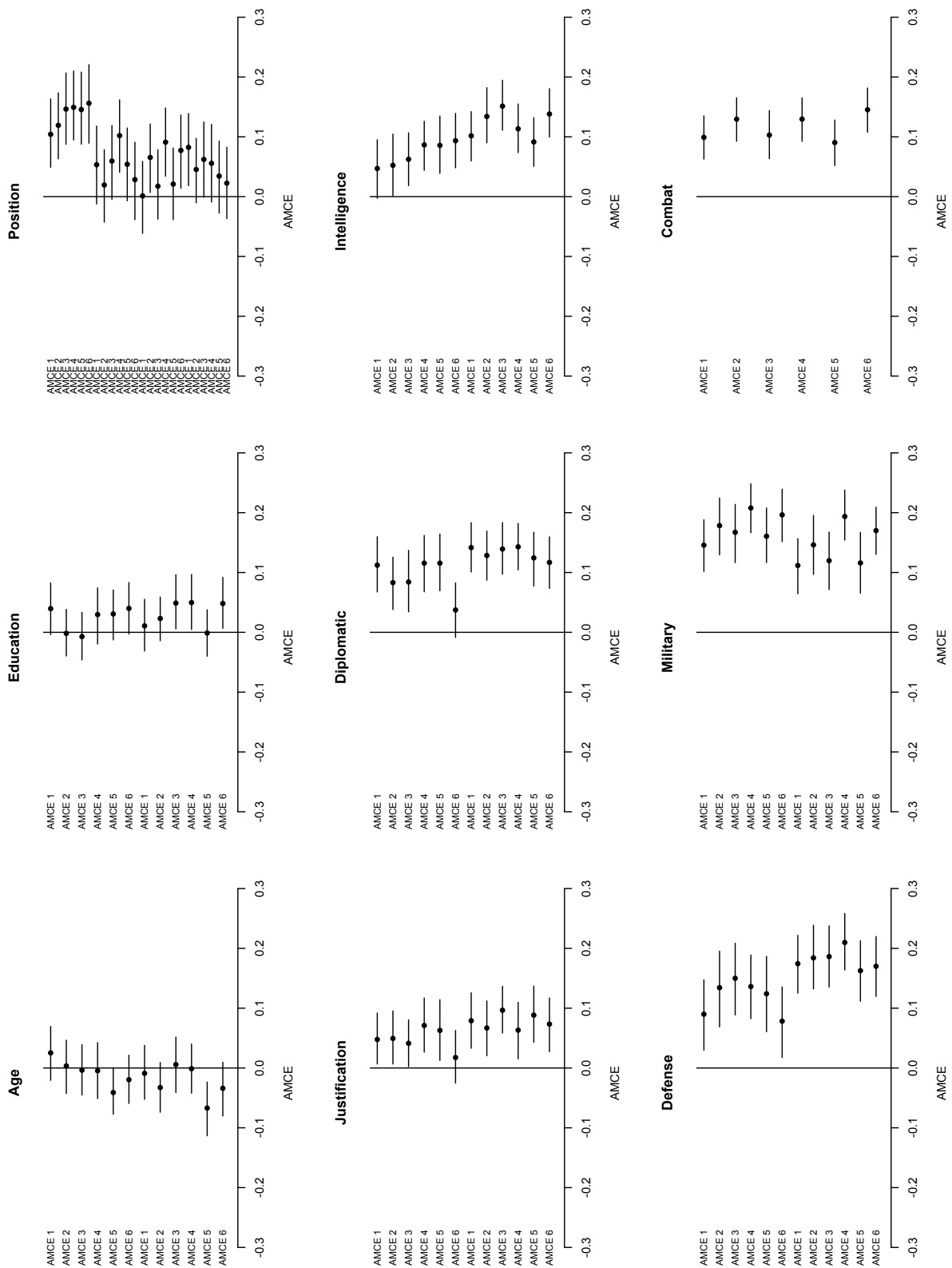
Figure 4: Attribute order tests: appointments conjoint
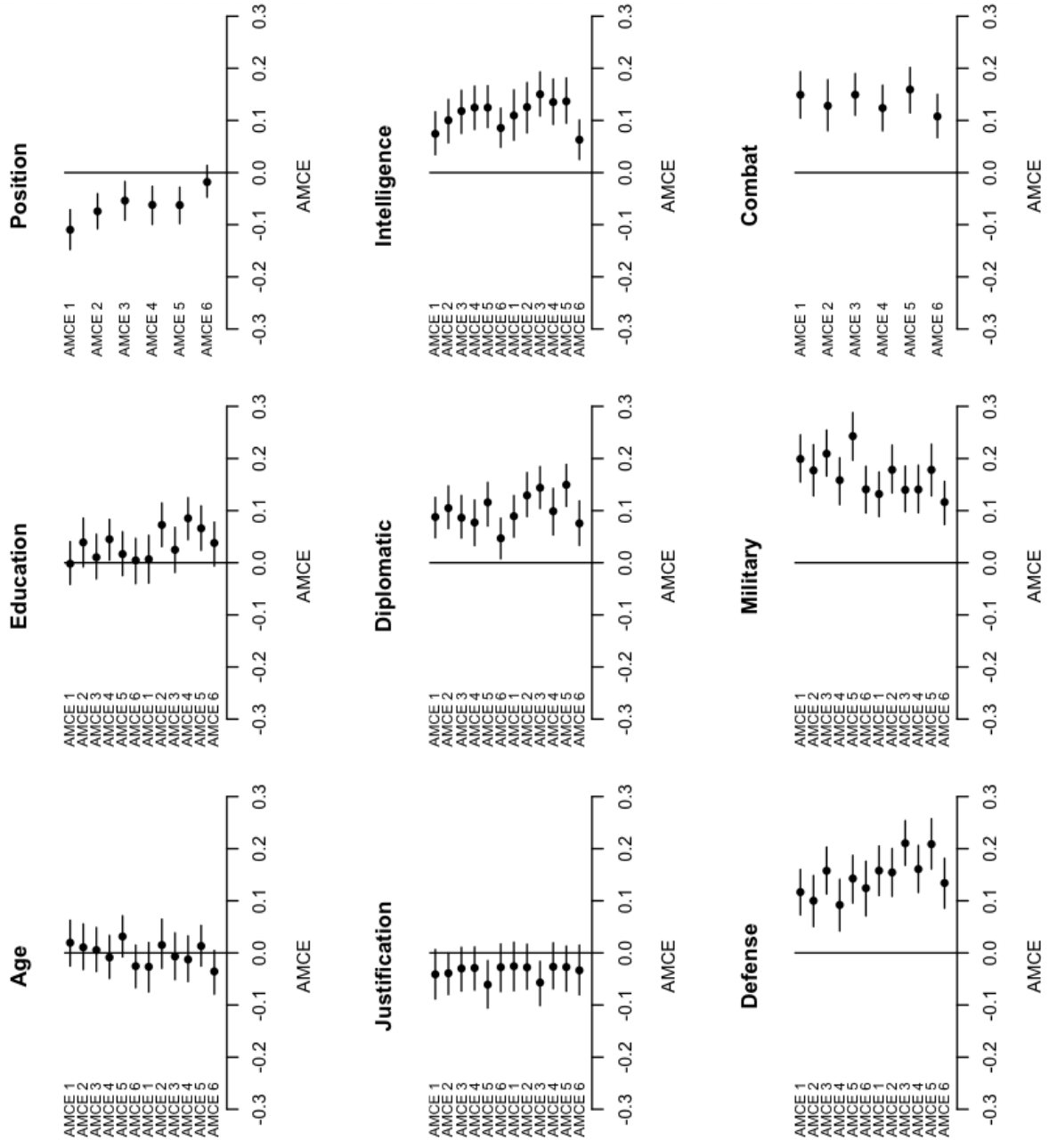
1.2 Estimated heterogeneous treatment effects

Figure 5: Recommendation AMCEs: Results by Party ID
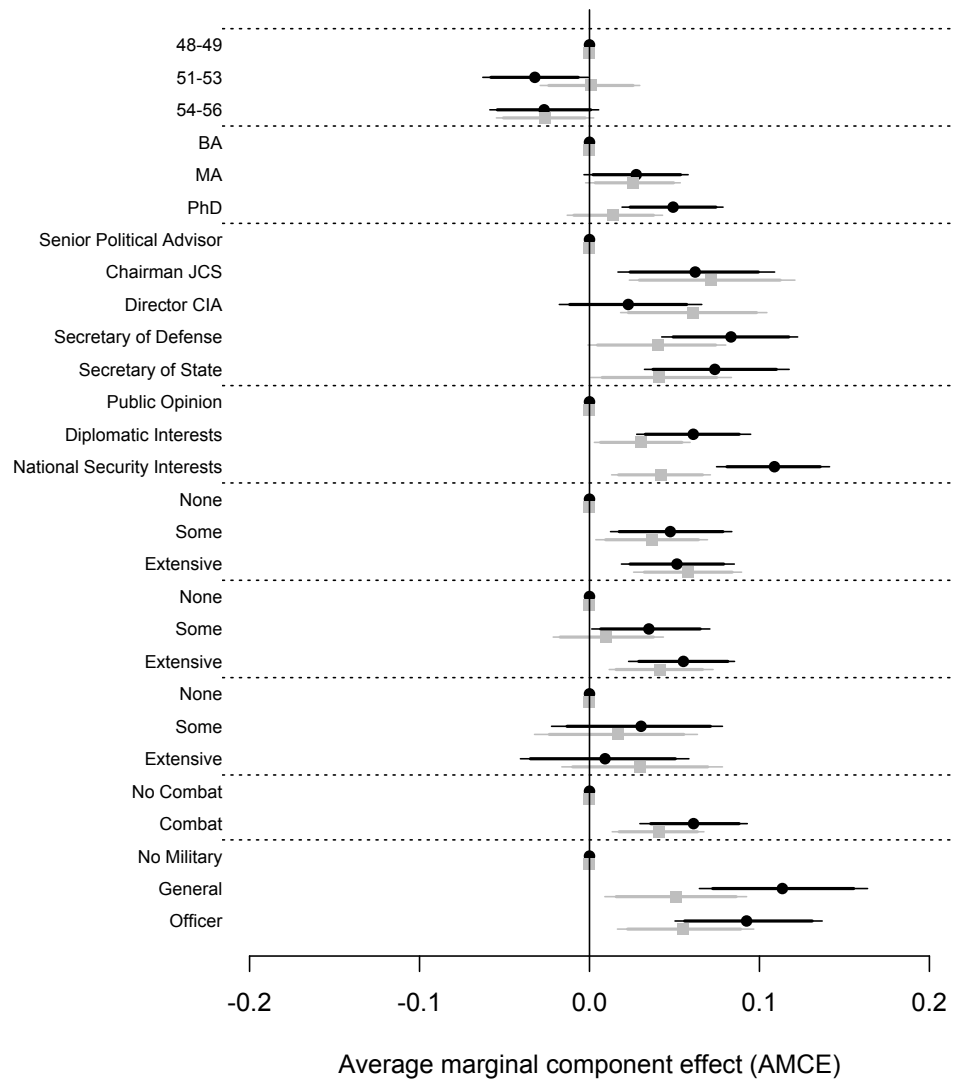
Average marginal component effect (AMCE)

Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. Results for Republicans are presented in black, and Democrats in gray. The results show Republicans are especially persuaded by national security justifications, and give additional deference to military experience, but these effects are also positive and significant among Democrats

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Figure 6: Appointment AMCEs: Results by Party ID
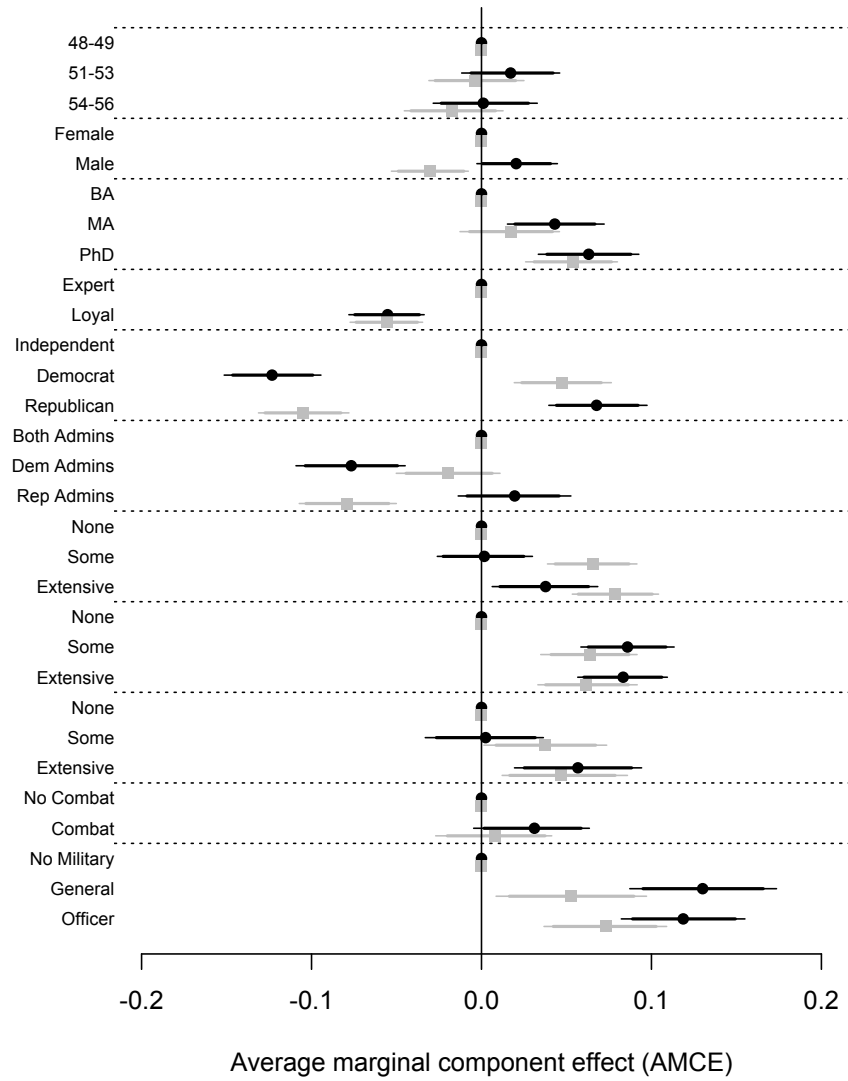
Average marginal component effect (AMCE)

Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. Results for Republicans are presented in black, and Democrats in gray.

Figure 7: Recommendation Marginal Means: Results by Party ID
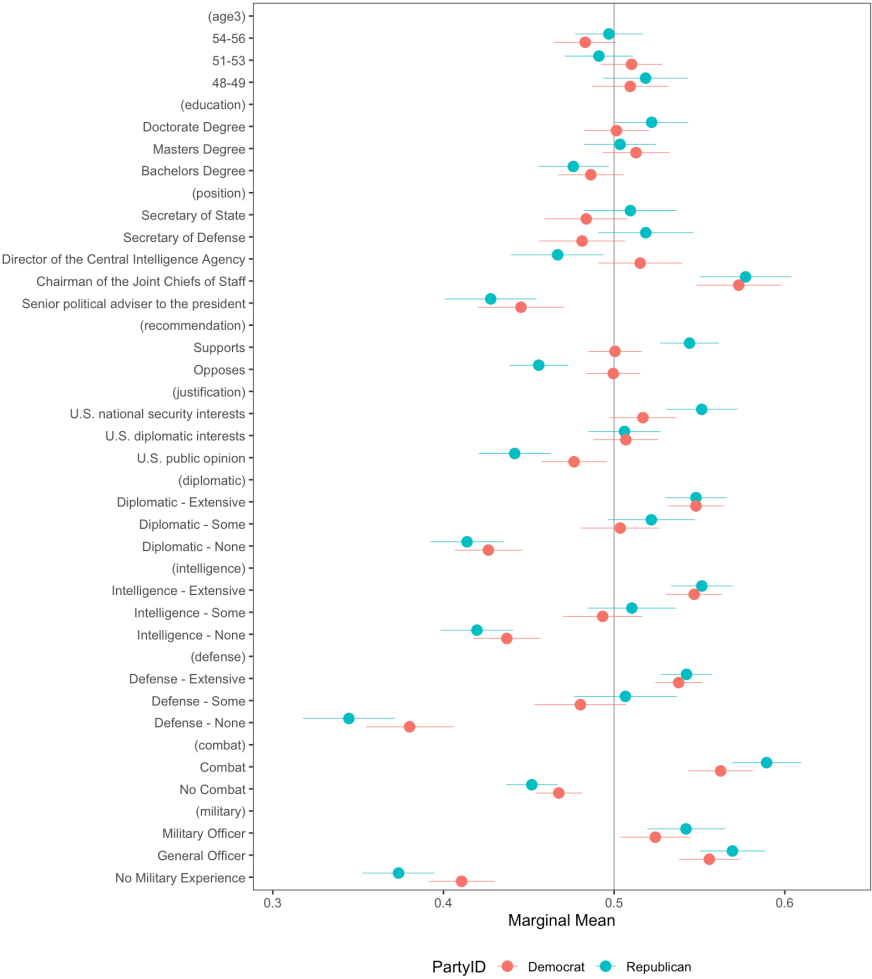
Figure 8: Appointment Marginal Means: Results by Party ID
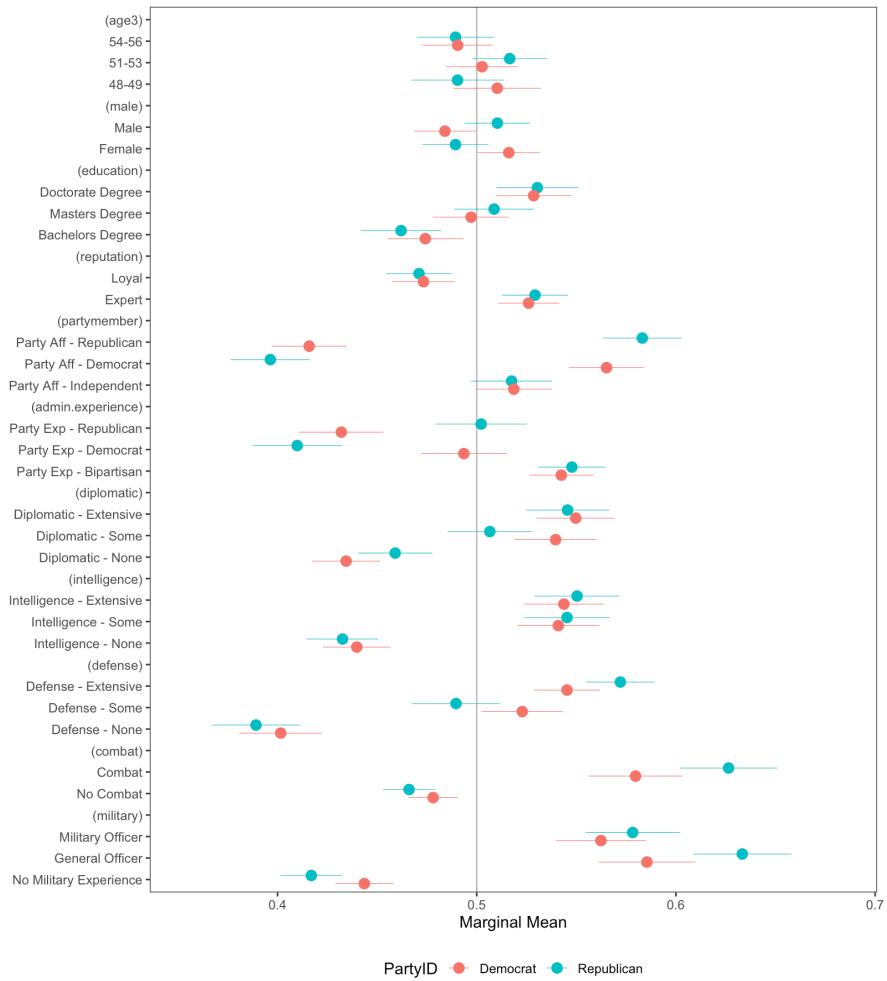
1.3 Marginal mean results

While we present average marginal component effects (AMCEs) as our main quantity of interest in the main text, following Leeper, Hobolt and Tilley (2019), we also present the same results as marginal means, in Figures 9 and 10 below. The interpretation of the marginal mean results are substantively similar to the AMCEs reported in the main text. The exception are for those treatments where there are randomization constraints (as listed in Appendix §5): for example, defense experience has a much larger effect in Figures 9 and 10 than in the main text, because all military generals had extensive defense experience, and all military officers had at least some defense experience; once you estimate the effects of both sets of treatments simultaneously, it becomes clear that military experience, rather than defense experience, is doing the work.

Figure 9: Recommendations Conjoint: Marginal Means
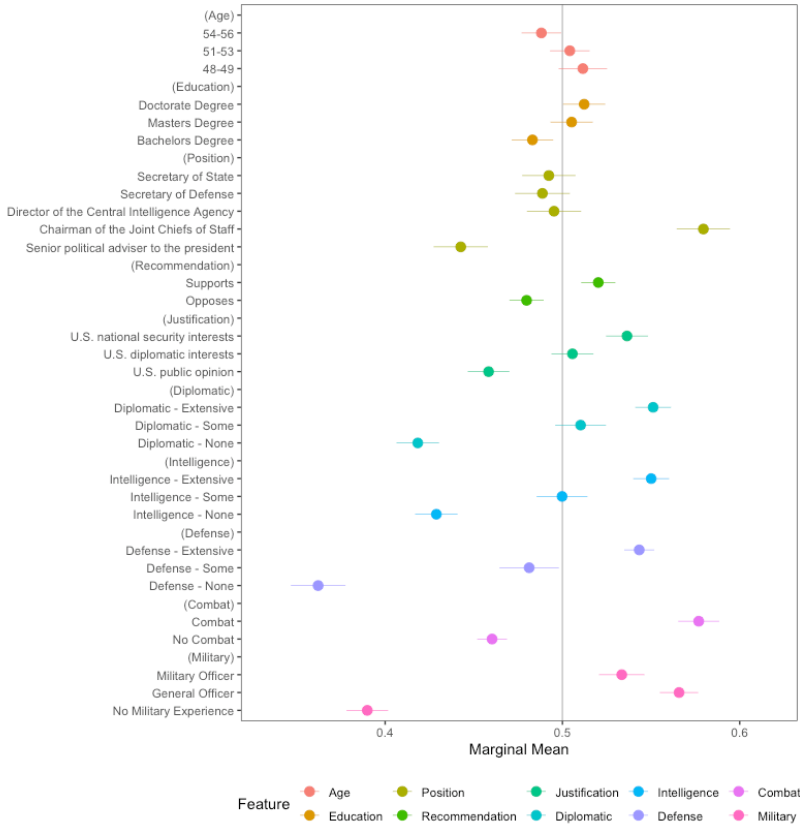
Figure 10: Appointments Conjoint: Marginal Means
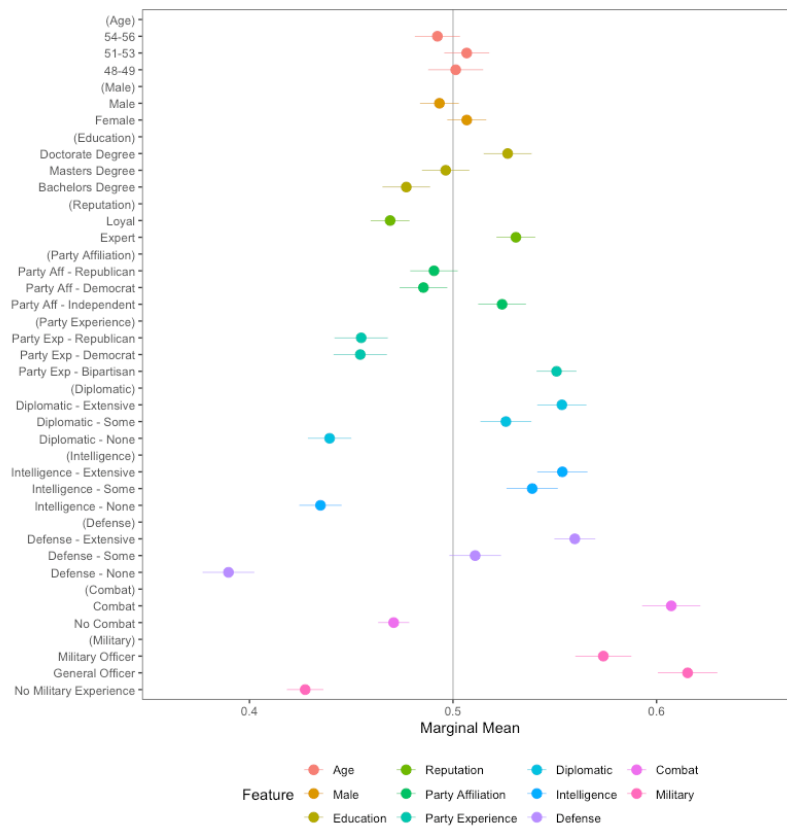
1.4 Disaggregating recommendation scenarios

Figure 11: Recommendation AMCEs (I)

(a) Diplomacy with an Adversary

(b) Diplomacy with an Ally

Figure 12: Recommendation AMCEs (II)

(a) Military demonstration

(b) Military strike

17

Figure 13: Recommendation AMCEs (III)

(a) Military (Pooled)

(b) Diplomacy (Pooled)

18
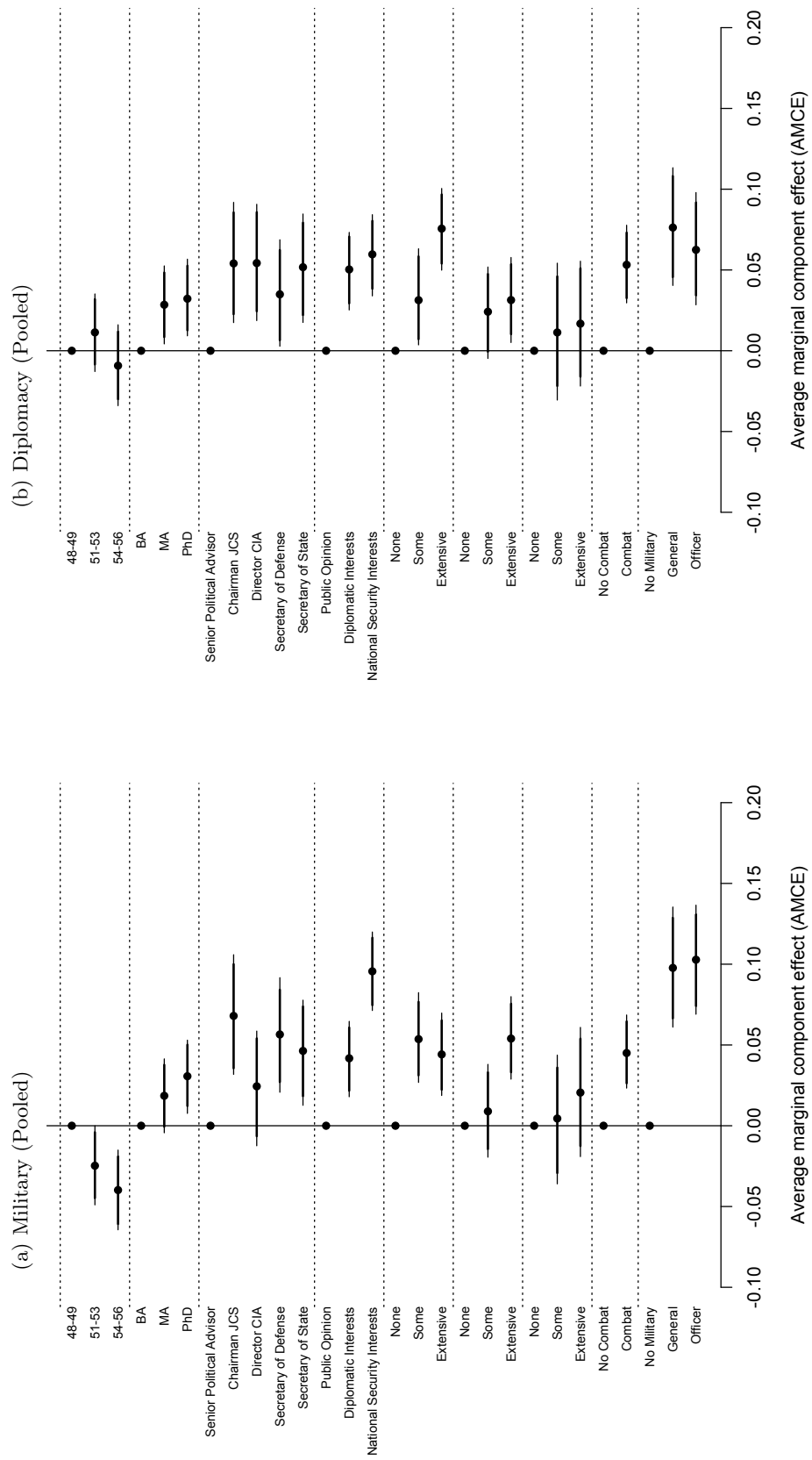
1.5 Why do Americans defer to the military?

Across two conjoint experiments, the analysis in the main text shows that Americans turn to institutional experience when adjudicating between foreign policy advisers, but because government institutions differ in their social standing, not all experience is seen as equal. In particular, Americans heavily weight military credentials: not only do Americans listen to military voices on military questions more then they listen to other voices on those same questions, but the deference displayed towards military experience decays less outside of these traditional domains; in the eyes of the public, military experience appears to decline in value at a slower rate as we move away from the battlefield than diplomatic experience does as we move away from summitry, for example.

In our theory section of the manuscript, we suggest three potential mechanisms that can explain this difference in deference. The f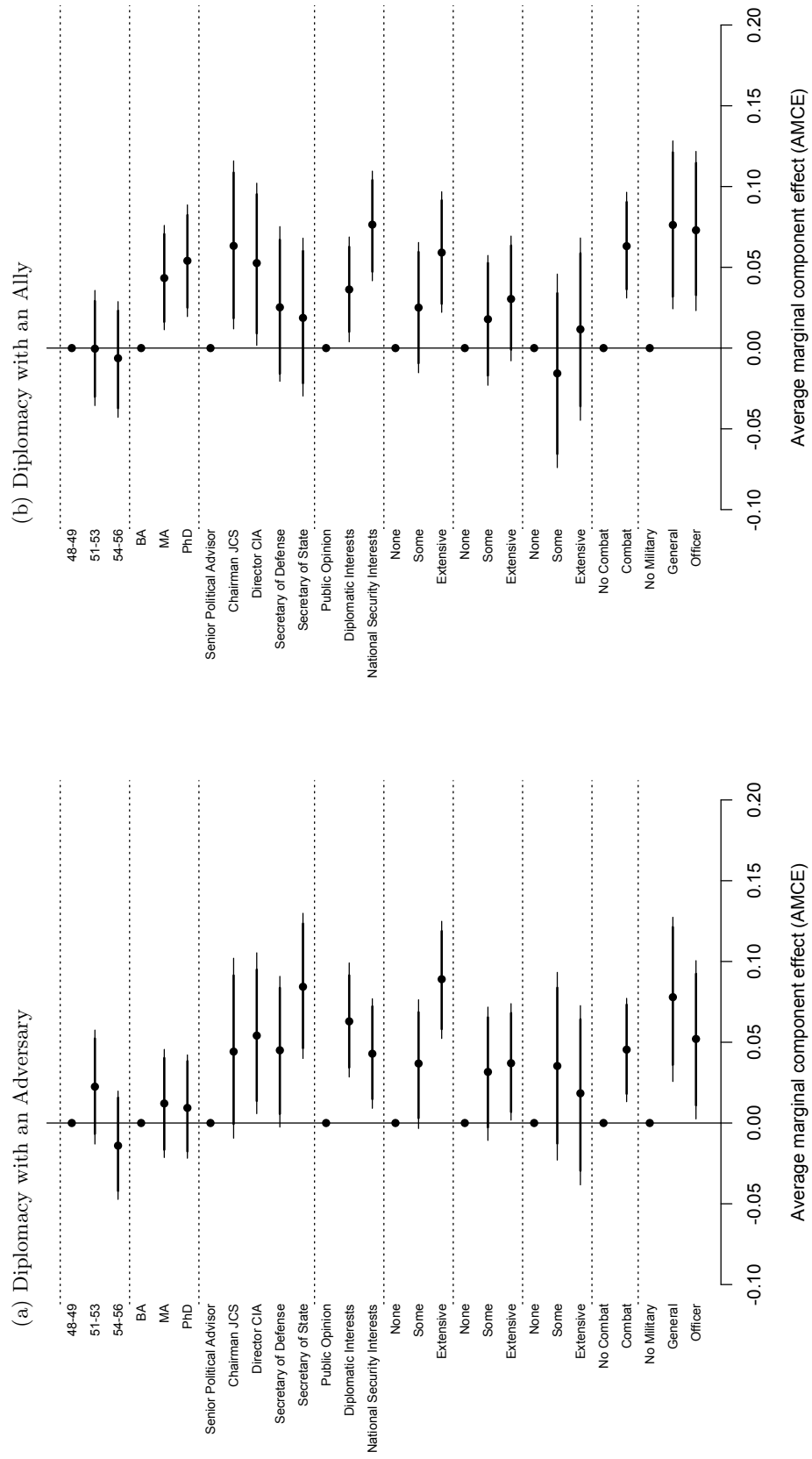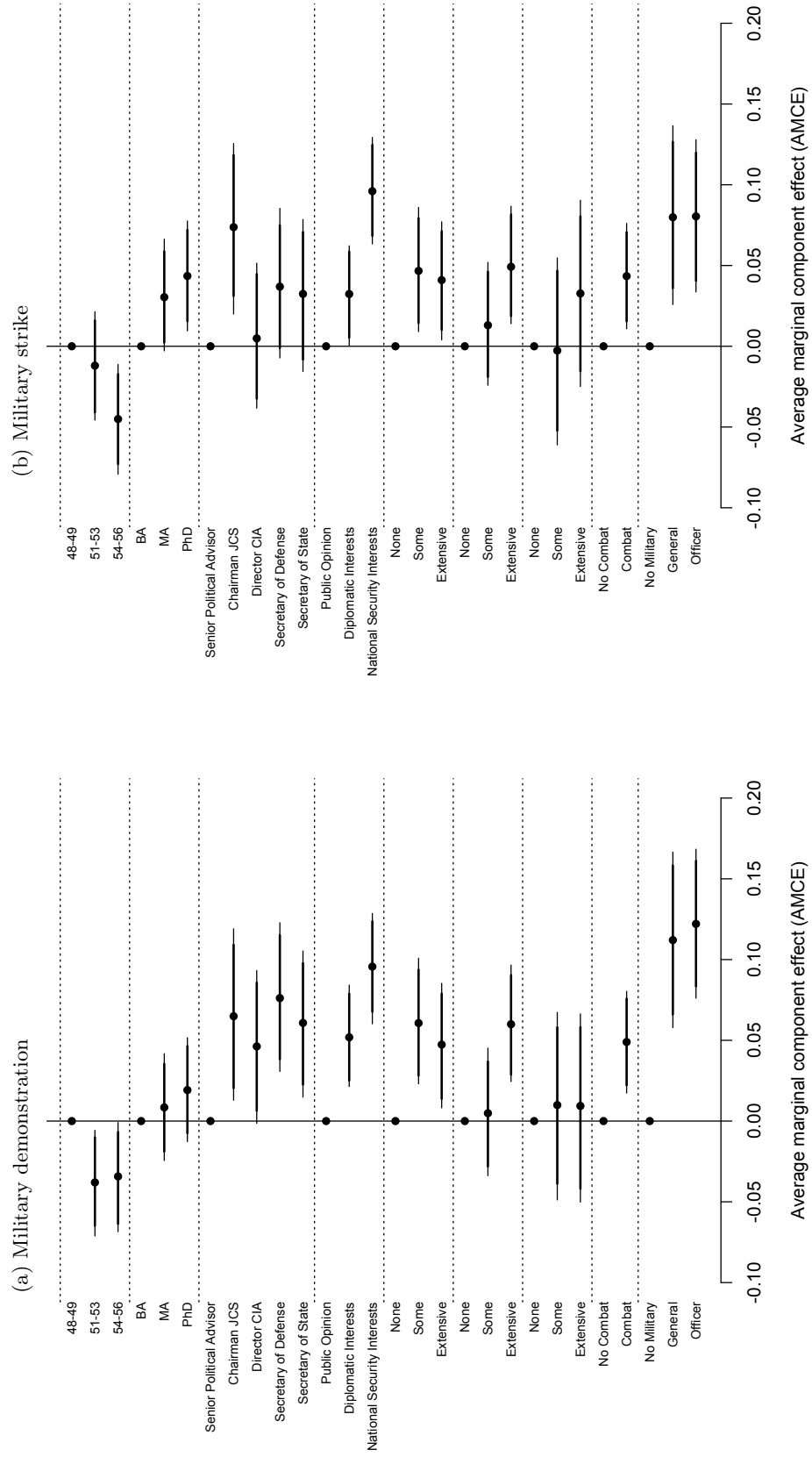irst is if Americans perceive military experience as significantly higher in expertise (x), as would be the case if the public sees the military as requiring a higher level of skill — or the military as displaying a greater degree of skill in its performance — than does other types of bureaucracy. The second is if Americans perceive military expertise to be more relevant across domains (w), as would be the case if the public looks at all foreign policy questions through military lenses, but doesn't see diplomatic or intelligence expertise to be as broadly applicable. According to this mechanism, it might not be that the public views the military as inherently more skilled, but just that greater weight is assigned to those skills across domains. The third is if Americans perceive military experience as signaling more benevolent or prosocial intentions (z) than other types of foreign policy experience do.

Disentangling these mechanisms is difficult, especially with observational data. Traditional survey questions measuring trust in institutions, for example, conflate diffuse support in an institution with evaluations of contemporary conditions (Cook and Gronke, 2005). In the specific context of trust in the military, for example, Burbach (2019) shows that partisans on both sides express more confidence in the military when their side controls the White House, which raises questions about construct validity, let alone our ability to unsnarl x from w from z, even though the three are presumably positively correlated with one another.[1]

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[1]Even though capabilities and intentions are two distinct dimensions in social perception (Fiske, Cuddy and Glick, 2007), given the tenets of balance theory (Heider, 1958), it is reasonable to expect that individuals who feel warmly about the members of a particular foreign policy institution are also likely to say nicer things about its level of expertise.

However, our experimental design can nonetheless provide some traction here. For the analysis that follows, we introduce two simple quantities of interest. The first is the *in-domain* effect size, which indicates the effect of domain-specific experience on the probability of deference in its own domain: for example, the effect of military service in the recommendations conjoint concerning military operations, or the effect of diplomatic experience in the recommendations conjoint concerning a diplomatic summit. The second is the *out-domain* effect size, which indicates the effect of domain-specific experience on the probability of deference outside of its own domain: for example, the effect of military service in the recommendations conjoint for a diplomatic summit, or the effect of diplomatic experience in the recommendations conjoint for a military operation. To assess whether this difference in deference is driven by differing perceptions of expertise (x), differing weights across domains (w), or differing perceptions of benevolence (z), we exploit the fact that, in a separate demographic battery, respondents were asked to provide their degree of trust in a set of foreign policy institutions; this trust battery included an item specifically designed to measure perceptions of the institution's intentions.[2] Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statement that when officials from each of these institutions "make mistakes, they were usually trying to do the right thing", such that higher values indicate a greater degree of perceived benevolence.

Because perceptions of benevolence and expertise are likely intercorrelated, simply conditioning our estimates of treatment effects on respondents' perceived level of military benevolence will lead to biased estimates of xw. However, because each respondent provided benevolence estimates for more than one foreign policy institution, we can subset our analysis to estimate our quantities of interest solely for those respondents who saw each institution as equally benevolent.[3]

Our empirical strategy is thus as follows:

- To study x, or perceived expertise, we estimate in-domain effects for the subsample of re-

[2]This full institutional trust battery is the subject of another paper.

[3]One limitation of the analysis is that due to space constraints on a lengthy study instrument, participants were randomly assigned to be administered the institutional trust batteries for either diplomats or intelligence officers (in addition to the military, which all respondents completed batteries for), rather than obtaining measures for all three institutions for each respondent. This does not affect our empirical strategy for the recommendations experiment, where there are only two types of scenarios (military, or diplomatic), such that the benevolence analysis focuses on the military-diplomatic comparison, but for the appointment conjoint, the relative benevolence contrast used varies with the treatment effect: for diplomatic experience, it focuses on the diplomatic-military comparison; for intelligence experience, it focuses on the intelligence-military comparison; for military experience, the calculations shown in Figure 14 utilize the military-diplomatic comparison, but as a robustness check we also use the military-intelligence contrast.

spondents who provided identical benevolence scores. Because these are in-domain effects, w is irrelevant, and because the effects are estimated only for those respondents who provided identical benevolence scores for both institutions in any given comparison, we are holding z constant.

- To study z, or perceived benevolence, we compare in-domain effects for the full sample to in-domain effects for the subsample of respondents who provided identical benevolence scores for both institutions. If controlling for z shrinks the magnitude of the in-domain effect, that suggests the results may be partially driven by z; if controlling for z does not affect the magnitude of the in-domain effect, it suggests that the results are unrelated to perceptions of benevolence.

- To study w, or the extent to which the value of experience is seen as traveling across domains, we compare the out-domain effects with in-domain effects, focusing on the subsample of respondents who provided identical benevolence scores for both institutions to control for z. More formally, we can estimate the same decay effect quantity of interest from the main text, but this time subsetting on the identical benevolence score subsample.

Figure 14: Comparing in-domain and out-domain effects

21
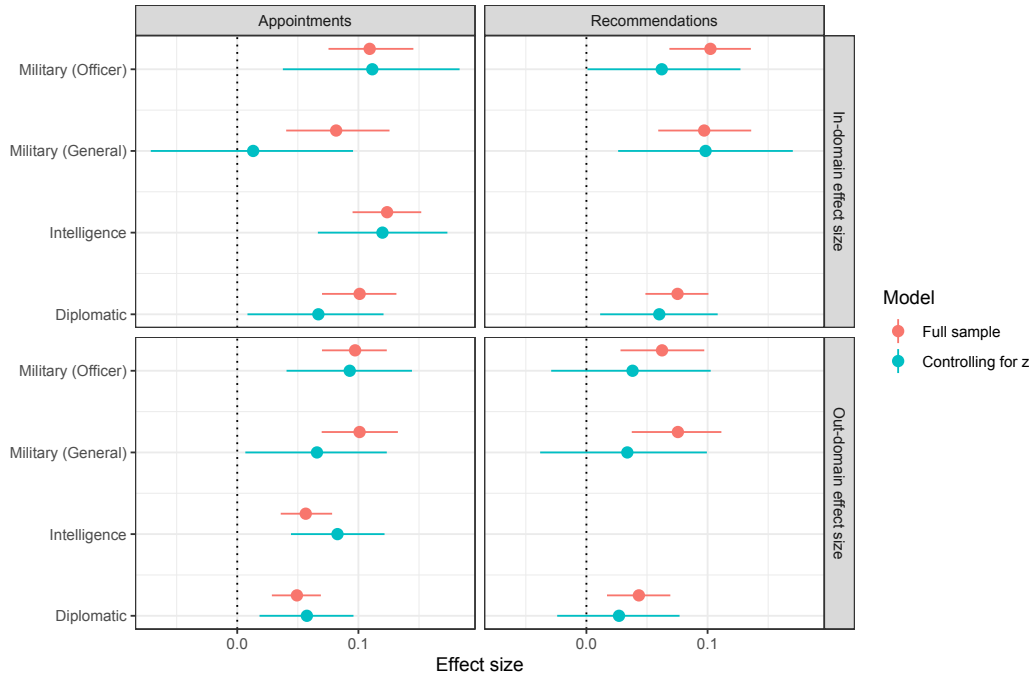
The top row of Figure 14 displays the in-domain effects for the two experiments. The bottom row displays the out-domain effects. The point estimates in red depict these quantities of interest for the full sample. Starting with the point estimates in red, the plot shows that for the recommendations conjoint, the effects of military experience are larger than those for diplomatic experience, both in- and out-domain, and the in-domain effects are stronger than the out-domain ones. For the appointments conjoint, the pattern is a bit weaker in-domain than out-domain, where the military AMCEs are substantially stronger, but the general pattern holds: military experience tends to have the largest effects, and seem to decay less outside of its own domain. The interesting question is why.

To study the perceived expertise pathway (x), we focus on the top panel of Figure 14, looking at the turquoise estimates, which represent the effects for the subsample of respondents who provided identical benevolence scores, thereby controlling for perceived benevolence. If there is still a premium placed on military experience even after controlling for benevolence, and focusing only on in-domain results, this suggests the military is seen as displaying a higher level of expertise in general. We find some evidence in support of this pathway, for military generals in the recommendations conjoint, and military officers in the appointments conjoint in particular. These results are consistent with respondents perceiving military experience to be a stronger signal of expertise – either because military service requires more skill than other types of service in foreign policy institutions, or perhaps because the military's performance compared to other institutions implies its members also have more skill.

To study the benevolence pathway (z), we once again turn to the top panel of Figure 14, this time making comparisons between the red and turquoise point estimates: does controlling for z shrink the effect sizes? We find some evidence in support of this pathway as well, not just for military personnel (military officers in the recommendations conjoint, military generals in the appointments conjoint) but also for diplomats in the appointments conjoint. These results are consistent with respondents deferring to military personnel not just because of their perceived skill, but also their perceived character, from their benevolence to their patriotism or prosociality. Indeed, a comparison of respondents' benevolence perceptions across each of the institutions finds that military personnel are perceived to have significantly more benevolent motivations ($W = 1902000, p < 0.000$ comparing the military and diplomats; $W = 1821500, p < 0.0001$ comparing the military and intelligence

officials).

To study the cross-domain applicability pathway (w), we focus on differences between the top and bottom panel of Figure 14, using the decay effect quantity of interest from the main text, but this time controlling for perceived benevolence. For the appointments experiment, the subsetted decay effect for intelligence is 30.1%; for diplomacy is 14.2%, for military officers is 16.7%, and military generals is -400%. Two points are relevant here: first, the decay effects for military experience are suppressed somewhat compared to those reported in the main text, suggesting that part of the smaller decay effect military advisers display is due to the military's greater perceived benevolence. Second, even controlling for benevolence, however, we still find some evidence that military experience is associated with a less steep decay in deference.

The above analysis has a number of limitations. It does not include a direct measure of x, for example. Nonetheless, it offers some evidence in support of each of the three pathways to deference, suggesting that Americans defer to military experience more than other types of experience in foreign policy issues both because i) they perceive military experience as a stronger signal of expertise, ii) they perceive military expertise to be relevant across a broader range of foreign policy domains than just military issues, and iii) they perceive military experience as signaling more benevolent or prosocial intentions than other types of foreign policy experience do. The analysis also leaves a number of questions unanswered, such as differences between the results for generals and military officers, or differences between how experience is treated in the appointments context versus the recommendations one. These questions serve as important directions for future work.

2 Dispositional Instrument

All respondents completed a battery of dispositional and demographic questions. In order to avoid potential spillover effects, all respondents dispositional battery *after* the conjoint experiment. Instrumentation is taken from public opinion work, such as Kertzer and Zeitzoff (2017).

2.1 Demographic Questions

1. In what year were you born (for example, 1978)?

2. What's your gender?

3. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as: [Strong Democrat / Democrat / Weak Democrat / Independent / Weak Republican / Republican / Strong Republican / Not Sure]

4. In general, how would you describe your own political viewpoint? [Very Liberal / Liberal / Moderate / Conservative / Very Conservative / Not Sure]

5. How frequently do you consume news media related to foreign affairs (online or print newspaper, radio, podcasts, television)? [At least once per day At least two to three times per week At least once per week At least once per month Not at all]

6. Thinking back over the past year, what was your household's income? [Less than $29,999 / $30,000 to $59,999 $60,000 to $99,999 $100,000 to $249,999 $250,000 or more Not Sure]

7. What racial or ethnic group best describes you? [White, Non-Hispanic Black or African-American Hispanic or Latino Asian or Asian-American Native American Middle Eastern Mixed Race Other (please specify)]

8. What is the highest level of education you have completed? [Did not graduate from high school High school graduate Some college, but no degree (yet) 2-year college degree 4-year college degree Postgraduate degree (MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, etc)]

9. In what zip code do you currently reside?

2.2 Militant Internationalism

1. Rather than simply countering our opponents' actions, it is necessary to strike at the heart of the opponents' power.

2. The US must demonstrate its resolve so that others do not take advantage of it.

3. The US should always do what is in its own interest, even if our allies object.

4. The US should take all steps including the use of force to prevent aggression by any expansionist power.

2.3 Nationalism

1. How superior is the United States compared to other nations?

2. How much better would the world be if people from other countries were more like the United States?

3. Americans should support their country even if they believe it is in the wrong.

2.4 Right Wing Authoritarianism

1. Although there are a number of qualities that people feel that children should have, every person thinks that some are more important than others.

   – Independence / respect for elders

   – Obedience / Self-reliance

2. If there were greater respect for authority in society generally, do you think it would be: [a good thing / a bad thing / don't mind either way]

3 Conjoint Instrument Screen

3.1 Recommendations

Presidents often face tough choices regarding who to appoint to senior positions in the U.S. government, such as the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, or Director of the Central Intelligence

Agency. These appointments are important not only because the individuals chosen are responsible for managing important government affairs, but also because they serve as advisers to the president.

In this section, we will show you a series of fictional candidates being considered for such positions in a hypothetical White House administration. We ask that you take a minute to think about each situation and tell us which candidate you prefer.

3.2 Appointments

Presidents often face tough choices regarding foreign policy. This is particularly true when their closest advisers disagree about what actions the United States should take.

In this portion of the study, we will present you with information about several hypothetical foreign policy initiatives under consideration by a hypothetical White House administration.

On each screen, we will present you with some information on the policy being debated. We will then provide you with a brief description about some fictional advisers, as well as whether they support or oppose the foreign policy initiative. We ask that you take a minute to think about each situation and tell us which adviser's recommendation you support.

4 Sample Information

The study was fielded on a national sample of 2599 American adults through Dynata (formerly Survey Sampling International (SSI) in November-December 2018.[4] The sample was stratified on age, gender, ethnicity, and census region. See Table 3 for the sample characteristics. To ensure data quality, we employed Burleigh, Kennedy and Clifford's (2019) protocol for screening out respondents using Virtual Private Servers (VPS) or located outside the United States.

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[4]For examples of recent published experimental work in political science fielded on SSI, see Brutger and Kertzer (2018); Ryan (2017).

Table 3: Sample characteristics

	Recommendations	Appointments
Gender		
Female	0.523	0.508
Male	0.477	0.492
Age		
18-29	0.153	0.147
30-44	0.262	0.252
45-64	0.381	0.373
65+	0.204	0.228
Education		
High school or below	0.198	0.181
Some college	0.189	0.175
College/university	0.373	0.371
Graduate/professional school	0.240	0.273
Race		
White	0.753	0.748

5 Randomization constraints

Consistent with best practices with conjoint experiments (e.g. Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2014; Kertzer, Renshon and Yarhi-Milo, 2020), we included randomization constraints to avoid presenting respondents with illogical or implausible treatment combinations. Most of these combinations are associated with the types of prior experiences that some adviser types possess (for example, all military generals, by definition, have extensive defense experience), as well as legal restrictions on certain adviser appointments (for example, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff must be an active duty general). We list the restrictions for each experiment in bullet point form below. Because of these randomization constraints, we employ a weighted rather than uniform randomization scheme for the conjoint (see de la Cuesta, Egami and Imai, 2019).

- Recommendations Conjoint

  - Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff must be an active duty general officer

  - Active/retired military officers must have at least some defense experience

  - Active/retired general officers must have extensive defense experience

  - Secretary of State/Secretary of Defense/Senior Political Adviser cannot have active military status

- Appointments Conjoint

  - Retired military officers must have at least some defense experience

  - Retired general officers must have extensive defense experience

  - Retired general officers must have prior experience under both Democratic and Republican administrations

6 Backgrounds of US National Security Appointees, 1945-2020

Both experiments explicitly assume that senior officials within the US national security bureaucracy have varying experiential backgrounds. To validate this assumption, we collected data on the backgrounds of 93 appointees to the advisory positions in our experiment from 1945 to 2020. This includes 22 Secretaries of State, 26 Secretaries of Defense, 20 Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and 25 Directors of the Central Intelligence Agency. We excluded temporary appointments to these positions, who were not confirmed by Congress. In addition, we collected data on 32 White House Chiefs of Staff, which are meant to mirror the "political adviser" in the Recommendations Experiment. Table 4 report the codings for the following variables:

- Name

- Position

- Start: year in which the appointment began

- Diplomatic: prior experience in the Department of State or as an ambassador

- Intelligence: prior experience in the US intelligence community (CIA, NSA, etc.)

- Defense: prior experience in the Department of Defense (note: for purposes of these data, prior experience as a junior member of the military is not coded as defense experience unless the individual served for a full career)

- Political: prior experience as an elected official or on an elected official's political staff

Table 1 in the main text leverages these data to calculate several types of institutional experience. Within-domain experience reflects appointees who previously worked in the institution to which they were appointed. Outside-domain experience reflects appointees who did not previously work in the institution to which they were appointed, but did work in one of the other three national security bureaucracies considered in the experiment (Defense, State, or an intelligence agency).

Table 4: Backgrounds of US National Security Appointees, 1945-2020

Name	Position	Start	Type	Defense	Diplomatic	Intelligence	Military	Combat	Political
				Defense	*Diplomatic*	*Intelligence*	*Military*	*Combat*	*Political*
Omar Bradley	JCS Chairman	1949	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
Arthur Radford	JCS Chairman	1953	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
Nathan Twining	JCS Chairman	1957	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
Lyman Lemnitzer	JCS Chairman	1960	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
Maxwell Taylor	JCS Chairman	1962	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
Earle Wheeler	JCS Chairman	1964	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
Thomas Moorer	JCS Chairman	1970	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
George Brown	JCS Chairman	1974	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
David Jones	JCS Chairman	1978	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
John Vessey	JCS Chairman	1982	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
William Crowe	JCS Chairman	1985	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
Colin Powell	JCS Chairman	1989	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
John Shalikashvili	JCS Chairman	1993	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
Hugh Shelton	JCS Chairman	1997	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
Richard Meyers	JCS Chairman	2001	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
Peter Pace	JCS Chairman	2005	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
Michael Mullen	JCS Chairman	2007	Military	1	0	0	1	0	0
Martin Dempsey	JCS Chairman	2011	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
Joseph Dunford	JCS Chairman	2015	Military	1	0	0	1	1	0
Mark Milley	JCS Chairman	2019	Military	1	0	0	1	0	0
Sidney Souers	CIA Director	1946	Intelligence	1	0	1	1	1	0
Hoyt Vandenberg	CIA Director	1946	Intelligence	1	0	0	1	1	0
Roscoe Hillenkoetter	CIA Director	1947	Intelligence	1	0	0	1	1	0
Walter Smith	CIA Director	1950	Intelligence	1	1	0	1	1	0
Allen Dulles	CIA Director	1953	Intelligence	1	1	1	1	1	0
John McCone	CIA Director	1961	Intelligence	1	0	0	0	0	0
William Raborn	CIA Director	1965	Intelligence	1	0	0	1	1	0
Richard Helms	CIA Director	1966	Intelligence	0	0	1	1	0	0
James Schlesinger	CIA Director	1973	Intelligence	0	0	0	0	0	0
William Colby	CIA Director	1973	Intelligence	0	0	1	1	1	0
George Bush	CIA Director	1976	Intelligence	0	1	0	1	1	1
Stansfield Turner	CIA Director	1977	Intelligence	1	0	0	1	1	0
William Casey	CIA Director	1981	Intelligence	0	1	1	1	0	1
William Webster	CIA Director	1987	Intelligence	0	0	1	1	1	0
Robert Gates	CIA Director	1991	Intelligence	0	0	1	1	0	0
James Woolsey	CIA Director	1993	Intelligence	1	1	0	0	0	0
John Deutch	CIA Director	1995	Intelligence	1	0	0	0	0	0
George Tenet	CIA Director	1997	Intelligence	0	0	1	0	0	0
Porter Goss	CIA Director	2004	Intelligence	0	0	1	1	0	1
Michael Hayden	CIA Director	2006	Intelligence	1	0	1	1	0	0
Leon Panetta	CIA Director	2009	Intelligence	0	0	1	1	0	1
David Petraeus	CIA Director	2011	Intelligence	1	0	0	1	1	0
John Brennan	CIA Director	2013	Intelligence	0	0	1	0	0	0
Mike Pompeo	CIA Director	2017	Intelligence	0	0	0	1	0	1
Gina Haspel	CIA Director	2018	Intelligence	0	0	1	0	0	0
James Forrestal	Secretary of Defense	1947	Defense	1	0	0	1	0	0
Louis Johnson	Secretary of Defense	1949	Defense	1	0	0	1	1	0
George Marshall	Secretary of Defense	1950	Defense	1	1	0	1	1	0
Robert Lovett	Secretary of Defense	1951	Defense	1	0	0	1	1	0
Charles Wilson	Secretary of Defense	1953	Defense	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neil McElroy	Secretary of Defense	1957	Defense	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thomas Gates	Secretary of Defense	1959	Defense	1	0	0	1	1	0
Robet McNamara	Secretary of Defense	1961	Defense	0	0	0	1	0	0
Clark Clifford	Secretary of Defense	1968	Defense	0	0	0	1	0	1
Melvin Laird	Secretary of Defense	1969	Defense	0	0	0	1	1	1
Elliot Richardson	Secretary of Defense	1973	Defense	0	1	0	0	1	1
James Schlesinger	Secretary of Defense	1973	Defense	0	0	1	0	0	0
Donald Rumsfeld	Secretary of Defense	1975	Defense	0	1	0	1	0	1

Table 5: Backgrounds of US National Security Appointees, 1945-2020 (cont.)

Name	Position	Start	Type	Defense	Diplomatic	Intelligence	Military	Combat	Political
Harold Brown	Secretary of Defense	1977	Defense	1	0	0	0	0	0
Caspar Weinberger	Secretary of Defense	1981	Defense	0	0	0	1	1	1
Frank Carlucci	Secretary of Defense	1987	Defense	1	1	1	1	0	0
Richard Cheney	Secretary of Defense	1989	Defense	0	0	0	0	0	1
Leslie Aspin	Secretary of Defense	1993	Defense	0	0	0	1	0	1
William Perry	Secretary of Defense	1994	Defense	1	0	0	1	0	0
Donald Rumsfeld	Secretary of Defense	2001	Defense	1	1	0	1	0	1
Harold Brown	Secretary of Defense	1977	Defense	1	0	0	0	0	0
Caspar Weinberger	Secretary of Defense	1981	Defense	0	0	0	1	1	1
Frank Carlucci	Secretary of Defense	1987	Defense	1	1	1	1	0	0
Richard Cheney	Secretary of Defense	1989	Defense	0	0	0	0	0	1
Leslie Aspin	Secretary of Defense	1993	Defense	0	0	0	1	0	1
William Perry	Secretary of Defense	1994	Defense	1	0	0	1	0	0
Donald Rumsfeld	Secretary of Defense	2001	Defense	1	1	0	1	0	1
Robert Gates	Secretary of Defense	2006	Defense	0	0	1	1	0	0
Leon Panetta	Secretary of Defense	2011	Defense	0	0	1	1	0	1
Chuck Hagel	Secretary of Defense	2013	Defense	0	0	1	1	1	1
Ash Carter	Secretary of Defense	2015	Defense	1	0	0	0	0	0
Jim Mattis	Secretary of Defense	2017	Defense	1	0	0	1	1	0
Mark Esper	Secretary of Defense	2019	Defense	1	0	0	1	1	0
James Byrnes	Secretary of State	1945	Diplomatic	1	0	0	0	0	1
George Marshall	Secretary of State	1947	Diplomatic	1	0	0	1	1	0
Dean Acheson	Secretary of State	1949	Diplomatic	1	1	0	1	0	0
John Dulles	Secretary of State	1953	Diplomatic	0	1	0	0	0	1
Christian Herter	Secretary of State	1959	Diplomatic	1	1	0	0	0	1
David Rusk	Secretary of State	1961	Diplomatic	1	1	0	1	1	0
William Rogers	Secretary of State	1969	Diplomatic	0	0	0	1	1	1
Henry Kissinger	Secretary of State	1973	Diplomatic	0	0	0	1	1	0
Cyrus Vance	Secretary of State	1977	Diplomatic	0	0	0	1	1	0
Edmund Muskie	Secretary of State	1980	Diplomatic	0	0	0	1	1	1
Alexander Haig	Secretary of State	1981	Diplomatic	0	0	0	1	1	1
George Shultz	Secretary of State	1982	Diplomatic	0	0	0	1	1	0
James Baker	Secretary of State	1989	Diplomatic	0	0	0	1	0	1
Lawrence Eagleberger	Secretary of State	1992	Diplomatic	0	1	0	1	0	0
Warren Christopher	Secretary of State	1993	Diplomatic	1	1	0	1	1	1
Madeleine Albright	Secretary of State	1997	Diplomatic	1	1	0	0	0	0
Colin Powell	Secretary of State	2001	Diplomatic	0	0	0	1	1	0
Condolezza Rice	Secretary of State	2005	Diplomatic	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hillary Clinton	Secretary of State	2009	Diplomatic	0	0	0	0	0	1
John Kerry	Secretary of State	2013	Diplomatic	0	0	0	1	1	1
Rex Tillerson	Secretary of State	2017	Diplomatic	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mike Pompeo	Secretary of State	2018	Diplomatic	0	0	1	1	0	1
John Steelman	White House Chief of Staff	1946	Political	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sherman Adams	White House Chief of Staff	1953	Political	0	0	0	1	1	1
Wilton Persons	White House Chief of Staff	1958	Political	1	0	0	1	1	0
Kenneth O'Donnell	White House Chief of Staff	1961	Political	0	0	0	1	1	1
Marvin Watson	White House Chief of Staff	1965	Political	0	0	0	1	1	1
James Jones	White House Chief of Staff	1968	Political	0	0	1	1	0	1
HR Haldeman	White House Chief of Staff	1969	Political	0	0	0	0	0	1
Alexander Haig	White House Chief of Staff	1973	Political	1	0	0	1	1	0
Donald Rumsfeld	White House Chief of Staff	1974	Political	0	1	0	1	0	1
Dick Cheney	White House Chief of Staff	1975	Political	0	0	0	0	0	1
Hamilton Jordan	White House Chief of Staff	1979	Political	0	0	0	0	0	1
Jack Watson	White House Chief of Staff	1980	Political	0	0	0	1	0	0
James Baker	White House Chief of Staff	1981	Political	0	0	0	1	0	1
Donald Regan	White House Chief of Staff	1985	Political	0	0	0	1	1	0
Howard Baker	White House Chief of Staff	1987	Political	0	0	0	1	0	1
Kenneth Duberstein	White House Chief of Staff	1987	Political	0	0	0	0	0	1
John Sununu	White House Chief of Staff	1989	Political	0	0	0	0	0	1
Samuel Skinner	White House Chief of Staff	1991	Political	0	0	0	1	0	1

Table 6: Backgrounds of US National Security Appointees, 1945-2020 (cont.)

Name	Position	Start	Type	Defense	Diplomatic	Intelligence	Military	Combat	Political
James Baker	White House Chief of Staff	1992	Political	0	0	0	1	0	1
Mack McLarty	White House Chief of Staff	1993	Political	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leon Panetta	White House Chief of Staff	1994	Political	0	0	1	1	0	1
Erskine Bowles	White House Chief of Staff	1997	Political	0	0	0	1	0	1
John Podesta	White House Chief of Staff	1998	Political	0	0	0	0	0	1
Andrew Card	White House Chief of Staff	2001	Political	0	0	0	0	0	1
Joshua Bolten	White House Chief of Staff	2006	Political	0	0	0	0	0	1
Rahm Emanuel	White House Chief of Staff	2009	Political	0	0	0	0	0	1
Bill Daley	White House Chief of Staff	2011	Political	0	0	0	0	0	1
Jack Lew	White House Chief of Staff	2012	Political	0	1	0	0	0	1
Denis McDonough	White House Chief of Staff	2013	Political	0	0	0	0	0	1
Reince Priebus	White House Chief of Staff	2017	Political	0	0	0	0	0	1
John Kelly	White House Chief of Staff	2017	Political	1	0	0	1	1	0
Mark Meadows	White House Chief of Staff	2020	Political	0	0	0	0	0	1

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