

Supplemental File

“Us and them: The role of group identity
in explaining cultural resonance and framing effects”

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A. Experimental Manipulations

US Control:

U.S. Soldiers Accused of Killing Civilians in Afghanistan

Associated Press, June 30, 2016

A report published on Monday revealed that in 2012 U.S. soldiers from the Army’s 5th Stryker Brigade killed several unarmed Afghan civilians in Kandahar Province. The report detailed a combat mission in which the U.S. soldiers conducted an ambush in a small village, killing a number of the local villagers. Among the dead were women, children and elderly men.

According to the report, the soldiers desecrated the bodies of the victims. They also posed for photographs in front of several of the corpses before burying the bodies in an unmarked grave.

These allegations come at a time when relations between the United States and Afghan governments are increasingly strained. In response to the report, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani condemned the killings and demanded an explanation from the U.S. government.

US framed:

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photographs in front of several of the corpses before burying the bodies in an unmarked grave.

A U.S. military official responded to the report in a press briefing on Tuesday, indicating that the scope of these incidents was limited. "I want to be very clear here. These despicable acts are inconsistent with the values, traditions and overall behavior of the U.S. military," said General Joseph Dunford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "These were isolated incidents committed by a handful of deranged soldiers, and this behavior does not extend beyond that remote village in Kandahar. I can promise you that."

General Dunford also emphasized the need to place this incident in the proper context. "This incident is deeply regrettable, but what the United States has done in Afghanistan should be commended. Today, the Afghan people are no longer living in a society where public executions are the norm and women are forbidden from going outside their homes. They are on the path to peace and stability, and none of this would have been possible without the courage, dedication and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform. This is a testament to the generosity and determination of our nation," said Dunford.

On Wednesday, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest refused to confirm any details of the allegations, but he strongly rejected claims that the soldiers involved were following orders. "Simply put, these actions were the work of a few bad apples," Earnest said. "They defied the orders and training given to them. There is no question about that." Earnest added, "And let's not forget that 99.99% of our service members who have served in Afghanistan have not behaved this way. You know this, I know this, and the Afghan people know this. These actions are terrible, but they are the actions of a few and nothing more."

Earnest was also adamant that the United States' image will not suffer because of these acts. "America has always been a champion of human rights and a source for good in the world. Our record speaks for itself," said Earnest. "Our military strictly adheres to international law and we do everything in our power to avoid harming innocent civilians. And let me remind you that this stands in stark contrast to terrorists who never hesitate to kill civilians whenever it suits their needs."

These allegations come at a time when relations between the United States and Afghan governments are increasingly strained. In response to the report, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani condemned the killings and demanded an explanation from the U.S. government.

UK control:

British Soldiers Accused of Killing Civilians in Afghanistan

Associated Press, June 30, 2016

A report published on Monday revealed that in 2012 British soldiers from the Coldstream Guards, 1st Battalion killed several unarmed Afghan civilians in Kandahar Province. The report detailed a combat mission in which the British soldiers conducted an ambush in a small village, killing a number of the local villagers. Among the dead were women, children and elderly men.

According to the report, the soldiers desecrated the bodies of the victims. They also posed for photographs in front of several of the corpses before burying the bodies in an unmarked grave.

These allegations come at a time when relations between the British and Afghan governments are increasingly strained. In response to the report, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani condemned the killings and demanded an explanation from the British government.

UK frames:

British Soldiers Accused of Killing Civilians in Afghanistan

Associated Press, June 30, 2016

A report published on Monday revealed that in 2012 British soldiers from the Coldstream Guards, 1st Battalion killed several unarmed Afghan civilians in Kandahar Province. The report detailed a combat mission in which the British soldiers conducted an ambush in a small village, killing a number of the local villagers. Among the dead were women, children and elderly men.

According to the report, the soldiers desecrated the bodies of the victims. They also posed for photographs in front of several of the corpses before burying the bodies in an unmarked grave.

A British military official responded to the report in a press briefing on Tuesday, indicating that the scope of these incidents was limited. "I want to be very clear here. These despicable acts are inconsistent with the values, traditions and overall behavior of the British military," said General Sir Nicholas Houghton, Chief of the Defence Staff. "These were isolated incidents committed by a handful of deranged soldiers, and this behavior does not extend beyond that remote village in Kandahar. I can promise you that."

General Houghton also emphasized the need to place this incident in the proper context. "This incident is deeply regrettable, but what the British have done in Afghanistan should be commended. Today, the Afghan people are no longer living in a society where public executions are the norm and women are forbidden from going outside their homes. They are on the path to peace and stability, and none of this would have been possible without the courage, dedication and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform. This is a testament to the generosity and determination of our nation," said Houghton.

On Wednesday, Downing Street Press Secretary Graeme Wilson refused to confirm any details of the allegations, but he strongly rejected claims that the soldiers involved were following orders. "Simply put, these actions were the work of a few bad apples," Wilson said. "They defied the orders and training given to them. There is no question about that." Wilson added, "And let's not forget that 99.99% of our service members who have served in Afghanistan have not behaved this way. You know this, I know this, and the Afghan people know this. These actions are terrible, but they are the actions of a few and nothing more."

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B. Original wording of relevant survey items

Variable	Item wording(s)	Response scale
Embarrassed / Ashamed	Reading about this incident, to what extent do you feel personally ashamed?	Not at all (1) – Very much so (6)
	Reading about this incident, to what extent do you feel personally embarrassed?	
Disassociation	Do you think the soldiers involved in this incident have brought shame to America/Britain?	Not at all (1) – Very much so (6)
	Do you think the soldiers involved in this incident deserve to wear the American/British military uniform?*	
Reaffirmation	Do you think that America/Britain is a champion of human rights around the world?	Not at all (1) – Very much so (6)
	Do you think that America's/Britain's military is a force for good in the world?	
	Do you think that America/Britain adheres to international law in its conduct during war?	None (1) – A lot (6)
	In general, how much confidence do you have in the U.S./British military?	
	How confident are you that the U.S./British military will take the necessary steps to prevent incidents like this from happening again?	Not at all (1) – Very much so (6)
	When it comes to solving world problems, the United States/Britain usually makes things worse.*	Strongly disagree (1) – Strongly agree (6)
	Problems in the world would be even worse without U.S./British involvement.	
National Attachment	How important is being American/British to you?	Not at all (1) – Very important (7)
	To what extent do you see yourself as a typical American/Brit?	Not at all (1) – Very much so (7)
	How well does the term "American"/"British" describe you?	Not at all (1) – Extremely well (7)
	How proud are you to be American/British?	Not at all proud (1) – Very proud (7)
Message credibility	Thinking back to the information in the article that you read, how believable did you find it?	Not at all (1) – Completely (6)

*item was reverse-scored

C. Sample demographics

		US sample (N=794)	UK sample (N=799)
Age	18-29	21.3%	22.6%
	30-44	25.1%	24.1%
	45-59	28.5%	25.5%
	60+	25.0%	27.9%
% Females		51.9%	50.9%
Household income	< \$50,000 < £30,000	29.7%	38.1%
	\$50,000 < \$100,000 £30,000 < £50,000	31.7%	21.7%
	\$100,000 + £50,000 +	26.8%	22.7%
	Prefer not to say	12.8%	17.6%
Racial/ethnic background (more than one possible)	White or Caucasian	85.1%	92.6%
	Black/African/Caribbean	4.8%	1.1%
	Hispanic or Latino/a	6.5%	0.4%
	Native American/American Indian	3.1%	
	Asian/Pacific Islander	3.5%	2.8%
	Other		0.5%
Political ideology	Very liberal/very left-wing	10.7%	3.5%
	Liberal/left-wing	19.8%	17.1%
	Slightly liberal/left-centre	12.3%	26.5%
	Moderate/centrist	25.1%	31.1%
	Slightly conservative/right-centre	11.5%	15.1%
	Conservative/right-wing	15.1%	5.3%
	Very conservative/very right-wing	5.5%	1.1%
U.S. Party Identification	Other	7.2%	
	Strong Republican	6.7%	
	Moderate Republican	12.8%	
	Slight Republican	7.7%	
	Independent	28.5%	
	Slight Democrat	5.8%	
	Moderate Democrat	14.6%	
Strong Democrat	16.8%		
U.K. Party Identification	Other		6.6%
	Conservatives		22.5%
	Labour		32.8%
	Liberal Democrats		14.3%
	Green		12.6%
	UKIP		7.5%
	SNP		3.0%
Plaid Cymru		0.6%	

D. Side-by-side analyses with 83 excluded respondents

We acknowledge the difficulty of our decision to exclude respondents who rejected the message as “not at all believable”, especially as it concerns potential conditioning on post-treatment variables (Montgomery et al., 2018). Beyond the information shared in endnote 3 of the manuscript, we took the following steps to explore this problem further.

First, we ran the core t-test analyses among these 83 respondents who rejected the message. We present these in parallel, below, for reference. What we can see is that whereas some findings (Tables 1 and 3) are relatively similar to the main sample, in Table 2—comparing the ingroup frames to ingroup control messages—the findings are all over the board. While the disassociation results are consistent with expectations and the rest of the sample—i.e., after receiving the frames, respondents are more likely to kick out the perpetrators from the national group—the embarrassment and reaffirmation results are in the opposite direction. Among message rejectors, respondents in the ingroup framed condition were likely to feel more embarrassed than those in the ingroup control condition, and less likely to reaffirm the national identity in response to the frames. The fact that these results work in opposing directions to the theoretically related disassociation measure is particularly puzzling. We next addressed whether it had something to do with the national attachment level of these message rejectors—perhaps if they systematically differed in reported levels of national attachment from the other respondents, we could find a theoretical reason for their inconsistent reactions. Yet here, too, the answer is elusive: they report a statistically identical level of national attachment ($M=5.12$, $SD=2.14$) as the rest of the sample ($M=5.23$, $SD=1.62$) ($t=.44$, $df=86.9$, $p=.66$). As argued in endnote 3, if finding the message to be “not at all believable” were an identity protective mechanism, then we would expect either stronger effects in the predicted direction for these respondents than the main sample, and/or higher reported levels of national attachment. Neither is the case. Therefore we maintain that excluding these respondents is the best course of action here; they are behaving not in a clear, yet different way from the other respondents, but in inconsistent and unpredictable ways on the core variables of interest here, and that leads us to believe that their results cannot be trusted. We acknowledge and unfortunately cannot solve the issue that this is, by definition, subsetting our sample based on post-treatment variables. But absent redesigning the entire study, we firmly believe this to be the best option.

Table 1

Comparing Ingroup and Outgroup Control Messages on Incident-Related Attitudes, Comparing Analytical Sample to Message Rejectors

	Analytical sample (N=1593)		Message rejectors (N=83)	
	Ingroup Control (N=406)	Outgroup Control (N=397)	Ingroup Control (N=34)	Outgroup Control (N=17)
Embarrassment /Shame	M=.63 (SD=.34)	M=.52 (SD=.35)	M=.24 (SD=.33)	M=.10 (SD=.19)
	t=4.39, df=801, p<.001		t=1.96, df=47.5, p<.05	

Disassociation	M=.72 (SD=.29)	M=.78 (SD=.25)	M=.43 (SD=.39)	M=.51 (S.32)
	t=2.78, df=791, p<.01		t=.776, df=38.9, p=.221	
Reaffirmation	M=.60 (SD=.22)	M=.52 (SD=.23)	M=.83 (SD=.20)	M=.46 (SD=.29)
	t=5.04, df=801, p<.001		t=4.77, df=24.1, p<.001	

Table 2

Comparing Framed to Control Conditions Among Ingroup Respondents, Comparing Analytical Sample to Message Rejectors

	Analytical sample (N=1593)		Message rejectors (N=83)	
	Ingroup Control (N=406)	Ingroup Framed (N=385)	Ingroup Control (N=34)	Outgroup Control (N=17)
Embarrassment /Shame	M=.63 (SD=.34)	M=.57 (SD=.33)	M=.24 (SD=.33)	M=.44 (SD=.41)
	t=42.2, df=789, p<.05		t=1.79, df=28.8, p<.05	
Disassociation	M=.72 (SD=.29)	M=.78 (SD=.24)	M=.43 (SD=.39)	M=.66 (SD=.32)
	t=2.84, df=778, p<.01		t=2.32, df=42.9, p<.05	
Reaffirmation	M=.60 (SD=.22)	M=.65 (SD=.21)	M=.83 (SD=.20)	M=.58 (SD=.33)
	t=2.61, df=789, p<.01		t=3.04, df=23.9, p<.01	

Table 3

Comparing Framed to Control Conditions for Outgroup Respondents, Comparing Analytical Sample to Message Rejectors

	Analytical sample (N=1593)		Message rejectors (N=83)	
	Outgroup Control (N=397)	Outgroup Framed (N=405)	Outgroup Control (N=17)	Outgroup Framed (N=14)
Embarrassment /Shame	M=.52 (SD=.35)	M=.49 (SD=.35)	M=.10 (SD=.19)	M=.24 (SD=.41)

	t=1.24, df=800, p=.216		t=1.19, df=17.6, p=.17	
Disassociation	M=.78 (SD=.25)	M=.80 (SD=.24)	M=.51 (SD=.32)	M=.61 (SD=.39)
	t=1.70, df=800, p=.089		t=.799, df=29, p=.22	
Reaffirmation	M=.52 (SD=.23)	M=.57 (SD=.24)	M=.46 (SD=.28)	M=.55 (SD=.34)
	t=3.09, df=800, p<.01		t=.79, df=29, p=.22	