

# Influencer Diplomacy: Non-Traditional Actors in Public Diplomacy

## *Pre-Analysis Plan*<sup>\*</sup>

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July 17, 2026

### Abstract

Public diplomacy, traditionally led by government actors through initiatives like state visits, foreign aid, and official messaging, aims to communicate with and attract foreign publics. However, states are increasingly delegating these efforts to private and non-state actors, including celebrities and social media influencers. Is this ‘influencer diplomacy’ effective at accomplishing the goals of traditional public diplomacy? We theorize that the credibility of influencer diplomats significantly impacts their effectiveness relative to traditional messengers. We further argue that this advantage grows during international image crises, when foreign audiences discount official messaging as propaganda. We propose a survey experiment in the U.S. to evaluate whether influencers, due to their likability and perceived authenticity, are more effective than traditional diplomats, or if their potential lack of expertise and objectivity undermines their impact across image-crisis and non-crisis contexts. This research contributes to understanding the evolving landscape of public diplomacy and the non-state actors in IR.

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<sup>\*</sup>Names are in alphabetical order with equal authorship implied. We are grateful to the 2023-2024 Niehaus Center for Globalization and Governance (NCGG) Cohort Workshop for helpful feedback. The survey experiments in this paper were funded by NCGG at Princeton University. This study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Boards of Lehigh University and Harvard University and granted exempted status.

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# Introduction

Governments allocate significant resources to *public diplomacy*, defined broadly as “governments’ attempts to communicate with and attract the public of a foreign country,” (Nye Jr 2008, p. 85).<sup>1</sup> The international relations (IR) literature has focused, for the most part, on traditional public diplomacy initiatives like state visits (Goldsmith and Horiuchi 2009; Goldsmith, Horiuchi and Matush 2021), foreign aid (Goldsmith, Horiuchi and Wood 2014; Dietrich, Mahmud and Winters 2018), and official government messaging (Kitagawa and Chu 2021; Mattingly and Sundquist 2023; Mattingly et al. 2025). These works offer important insights into the role of the mode, message, and context in which public diplomacy is employed — for example, accounting for the changes brought about by the advent of social media as a medium of public diplomacy — but are focused on government actors as the primary communicators.

While government actors traditionally led public diplomacy efforts, the landscape is evolving. States increasingly delegate diplomatic endeavors to private and non-state entities. From celebrity endorsements to collaborations with social media influencers, states employ diverse tactics to engage foreign audiences. In 2022, former Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid appointed Israeli-American actress Noa Tishby — author of the book *“Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth”* — as Israel’s special envoy for fighting antisemitism and de-legitimization.<sup>2</sup> Although Tishby has since lost this title under Netanyahu’s new government, she continues to actively promote pro-Israel content on her social media platforms, alongside other celebrities, such as Gal Gadot. In a similar vein, in 2021, South Korean President Moon Jae-in appointed the music group BTS as special presidential envoys for culture, with the mandate of “strengthening the nation’s diplomatic

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<sup>1</sup>A distinct but related definition of public diplomacy is proposed by Cull (2019, 39): “Public diplomacy may be defined as an actor’s attempt to manage the international environment by undertaking an international communication activity to promote a particular policy, idea, or that actor’s general interests in the minds of a foreign public.”

<sup>2</sup>“Lapid appoints activist actress Noa Tishby as antisemitism envoy” (JPost)



power across the world.”<sup>3</sup>

These strategies are not restricted to democracies. Authoritarian governments also promote national interests and shape foreign public opinion through social media influencers (Incerti, Elkobi and Mattingly 2026). The Chinese government reportedly incentivizes social media creators to post favorable content about China by sharing their videos to generate “lucrative traffic.”<sup>4</sup> The Russian government has been accused of spreading misinformation about the war in Ukraine through micro-influencers on TikTok who have become “key communicators of strategic narratives on behalf of the Russian state.”<sup>5</sup> We see that across various levels of celebrity — from the extremely famous to the niche — influencers are playing an increasingly important role in the conduct of public diplomacy.

The growing use of influencers in public diplomacy raises an important question. How effective are these non-traditional messengers at communicating with foreign audiences? Given that such individuals are not foreign policy experts, why would the public see them as credible messengers? As states shift more and more of their public diplomacy efforts towards these channels, understanding how such messengers are perceived becomes a crucial question, both for the study of public diplomacy and political communication as well as for foreign policy analysts. The sources of influencers’ credibility — for example, expertise and relatability — cut in opposite directions, and therefore the answer is not necessarily intuitive. To better understand these dynamics, we examine how public diplomacy efforts conveyed through influencers shape audience perceptions and under what conditions non-traditional messengers are more effective than members of the traditional diplomatic corps. We label these efforts “influencer diplomacy” and assess their effectiveness relative to conventional public diplomacy messengers. We theorize that the credibility and positionality of non-traditional messengers enhance their effectiveness relative to official representatives of the state. We further argue that this advantage is not constant across political contexts. During

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<sup>3</sup>“BTS appointed special presidential envoy for culture by Moon Jae-in” (NME)

<sup>4</sup>“How Beijing influences the influencers” (The Economic Times)

<sup>5</sup>“Russia’s TikTok: Micro-influencers amplifying misinformation” (The University of Sydney)

image crises, foreign audiences may discount government communications and view official messages with greater skepticism, increasing the relative effectiveness of influencers as public diplomacy messengers.

In this paper, we first conceptualize *influencer diplomacy* as public diplomacy efforts taken by private and non-state actors, in particular focusing on social media content creators. While influencer diplomats also differ from traditional messengers in the audience they are able to reach and the specific messages they may convey, in this paper, we focus on the attributes of these messengers themselves, as individual-level credibility is an essential component of effective political communication (e.g., [Hovland and Weiss 1951](#); [Eagly and Chaiken 1993](#)).<sup>6</sup> We bring the insights on source credibility from the study of persuasion to bear on a novel and increasingly consequential domain — public diplomacy conducted through non-state messengers.

We theorize that while, compared to government officials, influencers lack expertise, and thus may be seen as less credible, because influencers are likely to be perceived as more relatable, likeable, independent, and less biased, they are likely to be more effective messengers of public diplomacy. We further argue that the effectiveness of influencer diplomacy relative to traditional messengers is conditional on context. During international image crises — periods when a state’s standing among foreign publics sharply deteriorates — we argue that official messages are more likely to be dismissed as propaganda, while the perceived authenticity and independence of influencers become more valuable. The comparative effectiveness of influencer diplomacy should therefore be greatest precisely when states most need it.

To test these expectations, we propose a survey experiment on a sample of U.S. adults using a  $2 \times 2$  between-subjects vignette design that varies the *messenger* (an official government account versus a lifestyle influencer) and the *country context* (whether the state is experiencing an image crisis or not). To avoid the unique characteristics of a particular state context — for example, Israel — driving our results, we randomize over a list of real

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<sup>6</sup>We assess how differences in audiences, message content, and other features condition the effectiveness of influencer diplomacy in parallel studies.

country names ([Bassan-Nygate Forthcoming](#); [Tomz and Weeks 2025](#)). Unlike prior studies, we hold the message, format, and influencer image constant across conditions, which allows us to isolate the causal effect of messenger identity and allows us to test whether the comparative advantage of influencer diplomacy is greater under conditions of image crisis. We also measure the building blocks of credibility — such as perceived expertise, relatability, and independence to better understand what features of messengers matter to international publics.

To provide face validity for our core assumptions, we present the results of a pilot study that examined the image-crisis case, fielding the influencer and government conditions in the Israeli context several months into the Gaza war. While the modest sample (N=257) yields mostly suggestive, directional patterns, these results are in line with our theory: respondents distinguished the two messenger types, and the influencer was perceived as more likable, relatable, trustworthy, and credible — with several of these differences, including likability and relatability, reaching statistical significance even at this sample size — while the official account rated higher only on expertise. These perceptions carried through to substantive outcomes: relative to the government condition, the influencer condition was associated with greater favorability toward Israel and stronger support for diplomatic, economic, and security engagement, as well as greater willingness to visit, purchase goods from, and share positive information about the country. Because the pilot did not include a non-crisis comparison, it speaks to the plausibility of our baseline expectations rather than to the conditional logic of image crises, which the full design will allow us to assess.

This research contributes to research in political science in three ways. First, we conceptualize *influencer diplomacy* as a distinct form of public diplomacy and develop a theory of when and why states may benefit from relying on non-state messengers. Second, we contribute to the growing IR literature on public diplomacy (e.g., [Mattingly et al. 2025](#); [Mattingly and Sundquist 2023](#); [Green-Riley 2023](#); [Coticchia et al. 2024](#); [Rhee, Crabtree and Horiuchi 2024](#)) by shifting attention from governments as communicators to the strategic

use of private actors, and by identifying the conditions under which such messengers are most effective. Third, we contribute to the growing literature in political communication on influencer effects ([Chmel et al. 2025](#); [Schmuck et al. 2022](#); [Dekoninck and Schmuck 2022](#), e.g.,). While this body of work shows that influencers can shape domestic political attitudes, whether these effects travel to international politics and foreign policy attitudes remains largely unknown.

## Defining Influencer Diplomacy

As noted above, public diplomacy comprises efforts to communicate with and attract the public of a foreign country. While the set of activities that comprise public diplomacy are broad — including traditional media engagements, social media, educational exchanges, state visits, and even foreign aid — the actors that can engage in these activities have always been theorized to be official representatives of the state. Here, we focus on one specific form of public diplomacy — social media messaging and engagement campaigns. The goals of public diplomacy are to shape public opinion by communicating with and attracting foreign audiences ([Nye Jr 2008](#)), increasing familiarity with the messaging state, and influencing global publics in favorable ways ([Leonard, Stead and Smewing N.d.](#)). Public diplomacy can be positive, seeking to promote friendship and goodwill, or negative, aiming to criticize rivals ([Mattingly and Sundquist 2023](#)). Public diplomacy is an instrument that can activate the attractive soft power resources of a state such as culture and political ideals ([Hartig 2013](#); [Nye Jr 2008](#)).

Importantly, public diplomacy usually encourages a two-way exchange of ideas, often through establishing durable relationships that are dialogic. Social media influencers are well-positioned to conduct such relational messaging on their platforms. As [Kim and York \(2026, 1\)](#) describe, the relationships between influencers and their followers are more “intimate, interactive, and parasocial than traditional celebrity-fan dynamics.” We contend that

because influencers on social media generally establish long-term, parasocial relationships with their communities, diplomatic messaging conducted on these platforms is a general example of public diplomacy, though one-off messages — such as the minimal example we test in our empirical design — is a conservative deployment.

As part of mainstream definitions of public diplomacy, these activities are exclusively undertaken by *government actors* (Nye Jr 2008). This follows from traditional conceptualizations of diplomacy writ large in international relations, which have generally specified that the actors that can participate in diplomatic activities are narrowly defined as a professional class of experts in diplomacy (e.g., Gray and Baturu 2021, 719; Cull 2019, 7). For example, Nicholson (1988, 4-5) seminally defines diplomacy as “the management of international relations by negotiation; the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys; the business or art of the diplomatist.” This definition clearly delineates the role of diplomacy to professional representatives of the state. Though a growing number of studies in public diplomacy seek to expand upon traditional frameworks by addressing innovations in the technology of public diplomacy, these works follow the traditional limitation of focusing on official state actors as the diplomatic messengers (e.g., Bjola and Manor 2022; Naylor 2020; Wheeler and Holmes 2021; Eggeling and Adler-Nissen 2021; Mattingly and Sundquist 2023). Influencer diplomacy might be fundamentally different from traditional diplomacy, or it might be the same, and governments are simply trying to maximize their reach and resources. As we theorize below, we suggest that influencer diplomacy is conceptually and functionally distinct from traditional public diplomacy because of the varied characteristics of influencers, which are uniquely likely to impact public perceptions — especially when government messengers suffer from a lack of credibility. While we note that influencers and traditional diplomats may also differ in the audiences they are likely to reach and in the types of information they may communicate, we focus on the differences in messengers themselves as a crucial first-order difference to theorize and establish, and leave the assessment of different audiences and message content for future work.

Our attention to influencer diplomacy builds on a large body of research that social media content creators may indeed have meaningful effects on the political attitudes of their followers. This work illustrates that interactions on social media platforms can affect political knowledge (e.g., [Arceneaux et al. 2024](#)), though its effects on polarization are not as pronounced (e.g., [Guess et al. 2023](#)).<sup>7</sup> Yet only a small number of studies assess the political impacts of social media influencers on public attitudes and whether such sources of political information have similar — or different — impacts compared to traditional sources — but this nascent scholarship suggests that influencers can substantially shift attitudes. [Chmel et al. \(2025\)](#) show, for example, that when exposed to political content produced by social media influencers, individuals’ policy positions and vote choice intentions change, with larger impacts than legacy campaign media. Influencers are also shown to increase political interest and perceived simplification of complex topics ([Schmuck et al. 2022](#)) and offline political participation ([Dekoninck and Schmuck 2022](#)).<sup>8</sup>

This evidence, however, bears almost entirely on domestic political attitudes. Foreign policy attitudes are unusually anchored to elite and partisan cues (e.g., [Guisinger and Saunders 2017](#)) and tend to be less crystallized than domestic policy attitudes ([Zaller 1992](#)). Further, cues from closer social peers are just as informative as those from traditional elites ([Kertzer and Zeitsoff 2017](#)). Thus, whether social media influencers’ reach extends to them is plausible but remains an open question — which we take up directly below.

We theorize that by expanding the conceptualization of public diplomacy to account for the behavior of non-traditional actors as messengers, we can develop more nuanced expectations about the effectiveness of public diplomacy activities and better understand this distinct set of public diplomacy activities. We thus define a new concept — *influencer diplomacy* — as public diplomacy activities carried out by actors from outside the traditional diplomatic orbit with broad social reach. We maintain a fairly broad definition of influ-

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<sup>7</sup>See [Zhuravskaya, Petrova and Enikolopov \(2020\)](#) for a broader overview of the political effects of social media.

<sup>8</sup>Not all studies of social media influencers find that they engender political attitude changes — see, e.g., ([Alsharawy, Anstett and Landgrave 2026](#)).

encer in this regard, incorporating individuals from major celebrities to academic experts to viral social media personalities. The degree of social reach similarly varies, spanning ‘nano-influencers’ who may reach only 1,000 followers on social media to movie stars, whose activities and positions are covered in mainstream media outlets.<sup>9</sup> Differentiating influencer diplomacy from traditional public diplomacy allows us to examine the relative effectiveness of these two strategies, and specifically to generate novel expectations about how likely such actors’ efforts are to succeed in accomplishing the goals of public diplomacy. Non-traditional diplomats vary from traditional diplomats across several key features, which we expect to have direct impacts on the effectiveness of their efforts.

Understanding influencer diplomacy is of growing importance as individuals increasingly receive their information from digital media environments, and in particular, from social media. As of 2024, 37% of Americans between 18–29 and 26% of those between 30–49 regularly obtain news from social media influencers.<sup>10</sup> [Incerti, Elkobi and Mattingly \(2026\)](#) show that foreign influencers have significant reach — for example, approximately 10% of Chinese influencers on TikTok have 2.5 million views, that such videos receive more engagement than those created by official state media, and that engagement with pro-China foreign influencer content increased favorability towards China. [Incerti, Elkobi and Mattingly \(2026\)](#) focus on the role that such influencers play for authoritarian regimes — China specifically. We build on their work to develop a broader theoretical framework about the demand for and effectiveness of influencer diplomacy cross-nationally. We argue that all states — not just authoritarian regimes — likely have incentives to utilize influencers for public diplomacy efforts, a pattern that is borne out descriptively — and that the specific context that states face — image crisis — make the marginal returns more attractive. We also move beyond top-level results to unpack and provide evidence of the specific mechanisms that make influencer diplomacy more effective than traditional messengers.

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<sup>9</sup>See, e.g., [here](#) and [Khamis, Ang and Welling \(2017\)](#).

<sup>10</sup>[Pew Research Center](#), “America’s News Influencers,” November 18, 2024.

# Theoretical Expectations

## The persuasive advantages of influencers

Past work has, for the most part, held constant the messengers who employ public diplomacy and focused on the effectiveness of different government initiatives. However, as [Lasswell \(1948\)](#) aptly notes, a persuasive attempt comprises three essential components: the recipient (*whom*), the message (*what*), and the source (*who*). We integrate valuable insights from the broad literature on persuasion to theorize about the significance of the actor’s identity — the *who* — in shaping effective public diplomacy. Specifically, we focus on different sources of credibility — expertise and positionality, most importantly — along which influencers and traditional messengers are likely to differ.

Assuredly, influencer diplomats depart from conventional government messengers not only in their personal characteristics, but also in who their messages are likely to reach, and what these messages specifically contain. In this paper, however, we deliberately hold audience and message fixed in both our theory and our experimental design to isolate the messenger itself. Cleanly theorizing and identifying a messenger effect is a prerequisite for any subsequent account of how messenger, audience, and message interact. Furthermore, messenger credibility is a first-order determinant of persuasion.

The literature on persuasion has long posited that the effectiveness of messages relies on the perceived credibility of the messenger ([Hovland and Weiss 1951](#); [Hovland, Janis and Kelley 1953](#)). This notion has been supported by various studies ([Eagly and Chaiken 1993](#); [Druckman 2001](#); [Lupia 2002](#); [Hartman and Weber 2009](#); [Weber, Dunaway and Johnson 2012](#); [Franklin Fowler et al. 2014](#)), demonstrating that high-credibility sources are more persuasive than low-credibility. For instance, [Druckman \(2001\)](#) shows that a high-credibility source — The New York Times — is more trustworthy and yields stronger framing effects than a low-credibility source — The National Enquirer.

Scholars diverge, however, in the ways in which they distinguish what makes a partic-



ular source credible. Specifically, scholars focused on different foundations such as expertise ([Druckman 2001](#); [Lupia 2002](#); [Von Hohenberg and Guess 2023](#)), objectivity ([Eagly and Chaiken 1993](#)), likability ([Hovland, Janis and Kelley 1953](#); [Druckman 2001](#); [Hartman and Weber 2009](#); [Weber, Dunaway and Johnson 2012](#)), and relatability ([Hartman and Weber 2009](#)) that make messengers trustworthy and persuasive, fostering a sense of confidence in the message conveyed. *Expertise* relates to the knowledge, competence, and authority possessed by the messenger on the subject matter. *Objectivity* pertains to the impartiality and fairness demonstrated by the messenger in presenting information or arguments, minimizing perceptions of potential biases or hidden agendas. *Likability* involves the degree of attractiveness perceived in the messenger. A likable source is one that is relatable, affable, and appealing, fostering positive attitudes and receptivity towards the message. Finally, *relatability* relates to the social identity shared between the recipient and the messenger, fostering a sense of trust.

Different messengers may thus be perceived as more or less credible as a function of these distinct mechanisms. Research shows, for instance, that individuals are more easily persuaded by members of their in-group who are perceived as more trustworthy and having common interests ([Hartman and Weber 2009](#)). In the context of conflict and human rights advocacy, IR scholars showed that foreigners are seen as ill-intentioned and untrustworthy, and are thus less persuasive than national messengers ([Hayes and Guardino 2011](#); [Abramson, Menon and Gitlin 2024](#)). On the other hand, other work shows that in certain situations, less familiar or ambiguously named sources can be more persuasive because they are perceived as unbiased and independent ([Lupia 1994](#); [Weber, Dunaway and Johnson 2012](#)) – thus having high objectivity.

Importantly, several of these mechanisms may simultaneously contribute to the effectiveness of a particular source. For instance, considering the example set forth by [Druckman \(2001\)](#), the New York Times could be seen as being credible because its contributors have high expertise and because they tend to be impartial and objective in their reporting. Ulti-

mately, these mechanisms tend to be a bundle where some or all of them contribute to the trustworthiness of a messenger, and, as we detail below, in the case of influencers, some of the sources of credibility — such as expertise and relatability — move in opposite directions. This makes it an open question as to whether influencer diplomats are likely to be more effective than traditional ones.

These insights on source credibility were developed largely in the context of domestic political communication and marketing, where the source is a fellow citizen, a politician, or a brand. We ask what they imply when the “source” is non-state actor conducting a state’s foreign communication. Because of the many foundations of credibility, the answer is not obvious *ex ante*. When applied to our concept of *influencer diplomacy*, these mechanisms suggest that non-traditional messengers may enjoy several persuasive advantages over official diplomatic actors. Influencers often cultivate forms of trust, intimacy, and social connection that traditional representatives of the state struggle to achieve (Chmel et al. 2025). They may thus appear more authentic, relatable, and socially proximate, increasing receptivity among foreign audiences. Because influencers are positioned outside formal state institutions, their messages may appear less strategically motivated and therefore more objective or trustworthy than communications delivered directly by governments. Supporting these expectations, findings in neuroscience suggest that celebrity endorsements in advertising increase attention to messaging and openness to new experiences (D’Ambrogio et al. 2023).

Governments and official diplomats, in contrast, may retain important advantages of their own. Official representatives possess institutional authority, access to privileged information, and recognized expertise that influencers may lack. In some circumstances, these traits may increase confidence in the information conveyed and reinforce the credibility of official communication. We therefore do not expect influencer diplomacy to uniformly displace traditional public diplomacy. Instead, we view influencer and traditional public diplomacy as relying on distinct foundations of credibility. Because influencers are more likely to cue authenticity and social relatability, we anticipate that influencer diplomacy may possess

a modest comparative advantage on the whole, despite their comparative disadvantage in expertise.

**H1:** *Influencers have a comparative advantage over government messengers in the delivery of public diplomacy messages*

At the same time, we anticipate that the relative effectiveness of influencer diplomacy should be understood not as absolute, but as contingent upon both the broader political context in which communication occurs and audience predispositions, which we discuss in the following sections.

## **Image crisis and the comparative advantage of influencers**

The relative effectiveness of influencers is unlikely to remain constant across political contexts. Public diplomacy occurs under varying reputational conditions, and governments do not engage with foreign audiences from equivalent positions of credibility. Periods of international controversy and crisis, which may include armed conflict, allegations of human rights abuses, or broader image concerns, may be consequential in delivering public diplomacy messages. Specifically, such crises can generate heightened skepticism toward official government narratives. Foreign audiences may perceive state communication during these periods as strategically motivated, more resembling of propaganda than persuasive public diplomacy, and thereby discount the credibility of official messengers. These credibility deficits create distinctive challenges for traditional public diplomacy and alter the comparative value of alternative diplomatic actors.

We focus on a country’s image — which we define as the cognitive and evaluative construction individuals hold of other countries (Boulding 1959, 120).<sup>11</sup> Images represent cognitive models that help individuals process information and organize perceptions of states in more

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<sup>11</sup>See also Arias and Hulvey (2025), who use image in a similar manner.

positive or negative directions ([Herrmann 1985](#); [Herrmann et al. 1997](#)).<sup>12</sup> We conceive of image as a broader construct than reputation, which is often domain-specific (e.g., a reputation for resolve or for abiding by treaty commitments), and more closely aligned with a general power of attraction ([Nye Jr 2008](#)). A state may therefore possess a strong reputation in a particular domain while simultaneously suffering from a broadly negative image among foreign publics.

An image crisis, in our theory, occurs when a state’s image among foreign publics experiences a substantial deterioration from its recent baseline level in a relatively short period of time, in other words, a large and rapid decline in favorability among mass foreign publics. An image crisis is distinct from a chronically negative image, from gradual reputational erosion, and from routine volatility. Like the determinants of a state’s image more generally, such crises may arise from many different factors, including major human rights violations ([Bassan-Nygate Forthcoming](#)), ongoing conflicts, or public health emergencies ([Kam 2019](#)).

We argue that under these conditions, influencer diplomacy becomes a particularly effective public diplomacy strategy. Precisely because influencers and celebrities are positioned outside the formal diplomatic apparatus, they may be perceived as more authentic, socially independent, or less directly implicated in state strategic messaging. These characteristics may become especially valuable during periods of international image crisis, when foreign audiences seek cues that appear less institutionally constrained or politically motivated. Under image crises, the very traits that distinguish influencers from official diplomatic actors may therefore become increasingly persuasive – the trust, perceived objectivity, and social embeddedness cultivated by influencers — may heighten their persuasive appeal, rendering influencer diplomacy particularly effective.

At the same time, the characteristics that ordinarily strengthen official diplomacy may weaken during periods of international image crisis. Governments and diplomats often benefit

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<sup>12</sup>The concept of image is similar to, but distinct from, prestige and status. Prestige is defined as ‘public recognition of admired achievements or qualities’ ([Paul, Larson and Wohlforth 2014](#), 16), while status refers to ‘collective beliefs about a given state’s ranking on valued attributes’ that are granted by members of the international community ([Paul, Larson and Wohlforth 2014](#), 7).

from institutional authority, recognized expertise, and privileged access to information. Yet these same attributes may diminish in persuasive value when foreign audiences perceive official communication as strategically motivated or propagandistic. Under such conditions, the informational authority of government representatives may be discounted rather than trusted. The comparative advantage of influencer diplomacy should therefore increase as image crises simultaneously heighten the value of influencer characteristics and erode the advantages traditionally associated with official diplomatic actors.<sup>13</sup>

**H2:** *The comparative advantage of influencer diplomacy increases when governments face international image crises.*

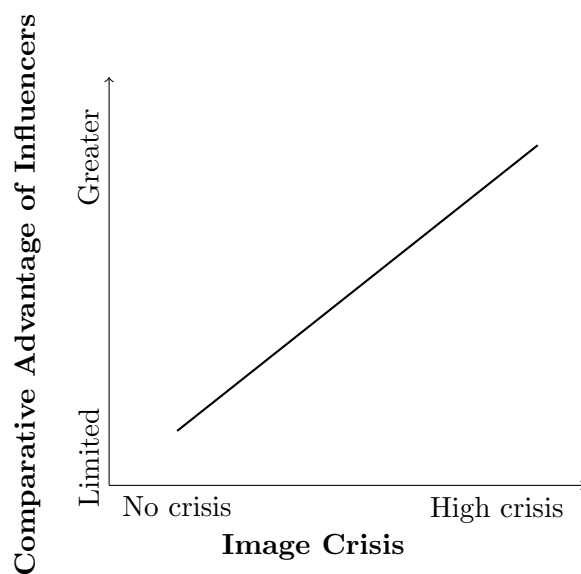


Figure 1: Conceptual illustration of our theoretical expectations

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<sup>13</sup>In this paper we bracket the broader state-level implication of this theory, namely that governments facing image crises may become more *likely* to rely on influencers because of this comparative advantage — in other words, that the relative frequency with which such states employ influencer diplomacy increases. Indeed, studying chef-influencers before and after the onset of the Israel-Hamas war, [Kim and York \(2026\)](#) show that previously non-political chefs incorporated political commentary into their routine content. These findings suggest that crises may increase the political salience of influencers and expand their participation in political communication, providing suggestive evidence that non-traditional messengers become increasingly relevant during periods of heightened political contestation.

## Mechanisms

Although our experiment is designed to identify the causal effects of messenger identity and political context on public diplomacy outcomes, it does not independently manipulate the mechanisms through which these effects operate — that is, the different sources of credibility. Nonetheless, we will examine whether respondents’ perceptions of the messenger are consistent with the theoretical mechanisms proposed above.

Our theory suggests that influencer diplomacy derives its persuasive advantage from perceptions of relatability, likability, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and objectivity, whereas official government representatives may benefit from greater perceived expertise and institutional authority. It further suggests that image crises increase skepticism toward official government communication by making government messages appear less trustworthy and more strategically motivated or propagandistic.

To explore these expectations, we will measure the potential mechanisms listed above, in addition to the overall outcome of credibility which they are expected to contribute to. We will compare these perceptions across experimental conditions to assess whether the observed treatment effects are accompanied by corresponding changes in respondents’ evaluations of the messenger. These analyses will be interpreted as descriptive evidence that is consistent with, or inconsistent with, the proposed theoretical mechanisms rather than as evidence of causal mediation.

## Subgroup effects

Our primary empirical focus in this study is on the average effects of influencer diplomacy (H1) and on how these effects vary across image crises (H2). Nevertheless, we intend to explore whether influencer diplomacy produces heterogeneous effects across audience subgroups.

We generally expect the impact of influencer diplomacy to be especially pronounced among younger audiences, who are more likely to favor information from social media in-

fluencers compared to legacy media sources (Harff and Schmuck 2025) and are more likely find the influencer relatable, as they are in closer age cohorts. We also anticipate that trust in institutions may condition responses to influencer diplomacy. Individuals with lower levels of trust in political and governmental institutions may be particularly skeptical of official diplomatic communication and therefore more receptive to messages conveyed by non-traditional actors positioned outside the formal state apparatus. Conversely, those with greater institutional trust may respond more favorably to official diplomatic representatives.

Beyond these expectations, we will examine a broader set of subgroup differences, including variation across party identification, political interest, ideology and gender. We do not have strong *ex ante* expectations for these dimensions, but view these additional analyses as exploratory and potentially informative regarding the audiences among whom influencer diplomacy is most effective.

## Research Design: A Survey Experiment

Assessing the impact of influencer diplomacy and the hypotheses laid out in the previous section is challenging in an observational context for several reasons. Exposure to influencer content is not random. First, audiences vary. Individuals who follow influencers may differ systematically from those who do not in ways that are also related to their attitudes toward foreign countries and international politics. As noted above, younger people are much more likely to obtain news from social media than older age cohorts. Second, messages vary. The specific types of content that influencer diplomats and traditional messengers may vary, for example, influencers are less likely to share technical information. Third, dosages and contexts vary. Governments do not deploy influencer diplomacy uniformly across contexts. Countries experiencing image crises may not only benefit more from influencer diplomacy, but may also be especially likely to actively seek out influencers, creating potential endogeneity between the use of influencer diplomacy and the outcomes it is intended to shape.

Indeed, even studies that rely on experimental designs to examine the effect of influencers typically utilize real-world social media content that bundles together both the messenger and the substantive content being communicated (Incerti, Elkobi and Mattingly 2026) and often focus on a single-country context, which does not allow for the examination of how variation in image crisis conditions across countries may condition the effectiveness of influencers as diplomatic messengers. As a result, it is difficult to determine whether observed differences are attributable to who delivers the message or to the message itself. In this initial study, we attempt to isolate the causal effect of messenger identity by holding constant the content, format, and platform of communication while experimentally varying the source of the message.

| <b>Context / Messenger</b> | <b>Government Official</b> | <b>Influencer</b> |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Image crisis prime         | 1                          | 2                 |
| No crisis prime            | 3                          | 4                 |

Table 1: 2x2 Experimental Design. Mode (Instagram) and message are held constant across cells.

Specifically, we utilize a survey experiment in the U.S. by employing a  $2 \times 2$  factorial experimental design, summarized in Table 1, on the U.S. adult population.<sup>14</sup> After obtaining informed consent, respondents complete a series of demographic and political questions designed to capture factors that may moderate responses to public diplomacy. These include gender, race, age, partisanship, ideology, religiosity, employment status, education, income, political interest, and trust in institutions, as well as baseline favorability towards several US allies and adversaries, including our countries of interest (discussed below). Capturing pre-treatment baselines allows us to analyze within-respondent treatment effects and also obviates the need to include a control condition in which no public diplomacy message is provided to respondents (for the general favorability outcomes). To mitigate the effects

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<sup>14</sup>See section C of the appendix for the full survey instrument. We obtained IRB exemption for the pilot study. An amendment will be submitted for the main study before fielding.



of inattentive respondents, we include a pre-treatment attention screener, a bot-detection measure ([Berinsky et al. 2021](#)), and an attention reminder immediately prior to treatment assignment.

Following the pre-treatment questionnaire, respondents are randomly assigned with equal probability to one of four experimental conditions and presented with an Instagram post corresponding to their treatment assignment. Specifically, we randomize two dimensions: the political context (crisis versus no crisis prime) and the messenger (government versus influencer). We hold constant the mode through which the message is delivered (a mock Instagram post), the message content itself (focusing on a broad positive message about the country), and the visual characteristics of the influencer and the government official (an AI generated). This design allows us to isolate the effect of messenger identity while examining how that effect varies across political contexts.

To increase external validity, the country featured in the vignette is randomly selected from a set of ten countries: Argentina, Croatia, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain, Turkey, and Uruguay, following designs similar to [Tomz and Weeks \(2025\)](#) and [Bassan-Nygate \(Forthcoming\)](#). We selected this set of countries because it enables us to create realistic and comparable mock influencer and official government Instagram accounts across countries while spanning diverse geographic regions and political-economic contexts. Randomizing across a set of countries rather than selecting one ensures that our results are not driven by the unique features of one particular country case and instead are generalizable. We will conduct robustness checks in which we iteratively exclude one country at a time (i.e., leave-one-country-out analyses) to verify that the estimated treatment effects are not disproportionately influenced or attenuated by any particular case. The country featured in each vignette is randomly assigned with equal probability independently of the messenger and crisis treatments. As a result, any baseline differences across countries are orthogonal to the experimental manipulations. In the main analysis, we pool observations across countries.

We acknowledge that some countries in the sample, particularly Israel and Lebanon,

may already evoke relatively negative international images, making it more difficult to experimentally manipulate perceptions of image crisis. Nevertheless, we choose to retain these countries because they are theoretically important — Israel, in particular, is one of the motivating cases underlying our theory — and because both are substantively relevant contexts in which influencer diplomacy has been employed. It is for this reason that our control (see below) specifies the country has a generally positive reputation — this imputes a set level for the state’s reputation, controlling it rather than allowing respondents to impute their own baseline image. Furthermore, by placing the experimental context in the near future (see below), we work to increase the plausibility of changes in a country’s image — either positively or negatively — compared to current levels.

After reading the vignette, respondents answer a series of questions that serve as our outcome measures (see section “Main Outcomes of Interest” for more details) including favorability toward the focal country, attitudes toward U.S. relations with that country, as well as semi-behavioral outcomes such as willingness to purchase products from the country, visit the country, or share positive information about it. We also include measures designed to capture potential mechanisms. Finally, respondents receive a debriefing informing them that the influencer profile used in the study was artificially generated rather than a real individual.

## Vignettes

Our vignette design manipulates two experimental factors: the identity of the messenger and the political context. To do so, respondents are exposed to a hypothetical scenario taking place in the near future (2028) involving a real country, randomly selected from the set of ten countries described above.

To manipulate political context, we vary whether the country is experiencing an international image crisis. We operationalize image crisis through a hypothetical human rights controversy because serious human rights violations constitute an important source of in-

ternational image deterioration. Human rights abuses shape foreign publics’ evaluations of states and generate substantial reputational costs (Tomz and Weeks 2020; Bassan-Nygate Forthcoming), making them a theoretically appropriate setting for evaluating our expectations about the comparative effectiveness of government and influencer diplomacy.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, situating the scenario in the hypothetical future (2028) minimizes the extent to which respondents rely on contemporary political events associated with any particular country.

Respondents assigned to the image crisis condition receive the following information:

“Imagine the year is 2028. Over the past several months, Country X has faced widespread international criticism following reports of serious human rights abuses committed by government security forces. The government’s actions have been widely condemned, and global media coverage has been overwhelmingly negative. As a result, Country X’s international reputation has declined substantially.”

This scenario satisfies our definition of an image crisis: substantial decline in public perceptions in a short period of time. Respondents in the no-crisis condition are told:

“Imagine the year is 2028. Country X enjoys a generally positive international reputation in recent months. News coverage of the country has been largely neutral, and people around the world hold generally favorable views of Country X.”

As described above, we specify the positive reputation in the control condition to minimize variation in how respondents perceive the hypothetical scenario. The core feature that captures “no image crisis” is the stability in public perceptions — whether those perceptions are positive or negative equally satisfies the definition of no image crisis.

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<sup>15</sup>Future work may fruitfully explore whether the effectiveness of influencer diplomacy varies across different types of image crises — for example, those stemming from corruption allegations, public health outbreaks, treaty violations, etc. Assessing multiple types of image crises is beyond the scope of this paper; as human rights-driven crises are common in the real world, we focus on this type of image crisis for external validity.

All respondents are subsequently informed that “The following post was shared by the account @account\_name on Instagram during [Country] Appreciation Day” and are then shown an Instagram post corresponding to their treatment condition (Government official vs. Influencer). To isolate the effect of messenger identity, we hold constant the visual content and message across conditions. The post consists of a stylized image of a heart containing the national flag and the caption: “The people and culture of #Country X are what makes it so special” illustrated in Figures C2 and C3. The country referenced in the post and the identity of the Instagram account vary according to respondents’ treatment assignment, while the visual design, message, and overall presentation remain identical across conditions.

We selected this message because it resembles many of the the broad, positive and image-oriented content produced in public diplomacy campaigns.<sup>16</sup> Rather than emphasizing specific policies, political issues, or factual claims, the post highlights general aspects of culture and people that governments frequently seek to promote abroad to create attraction. At the same time, the message is sufficiently informal and relatable that it could plausibly appear on either an official government account or the account of a lifestyle influencer. By employing a generic and non-controversial message, we minimize the possibility that respondents react to the substantive content of the post itself, allowing us to more cleanly identify the effects of messenger identity and political context.

After viewing the Instagram post, respondents receive additional contextual information about the source of the message. In the government condition, respondents are informed that the account belongs to the official ambassador of the relevant country to the United States and are shown a screenshot of a mock Instagram profile of a female ambassador. In the influencer condition, respondents are informed that the account belongs to a prominent lifestyle influencer from the relevant country and are shown a screenshot of the influencer’s Instagram profile (see Figure C5 and C4 for the corresponding screenshots). We include the

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<sup>16</sup>E.g., [Israeli](#) and [Italian](#) posts on June 6, 2026.



Figure 2: Mock Instagram posts published by ambassador accounts across the ten countries.



Figure 3: Mock Instagram posts published by influencer accounts across the ten countries.

beginning of the account’s grid of posted images to maximize the naturalism of the treatment and to increase the differentiation of the treatments — while the government official’s grid of images includes obviously political images, the influencer’s grid includes only lifestyle images with no political content.

We constructed both the mock influencer and ambassador Instagram profiles using ChatGPT 5.5. We first generated a single mock influencer profile designed to resemble a plausible lifestyle content creator from any of the countries in our sample. The profile depicts a female lifestyle and fashion entrepreneur with approximately 1.8 million followers who posts travel, fashion, and lifestyle content. We then adapted this same influencer profile across countries

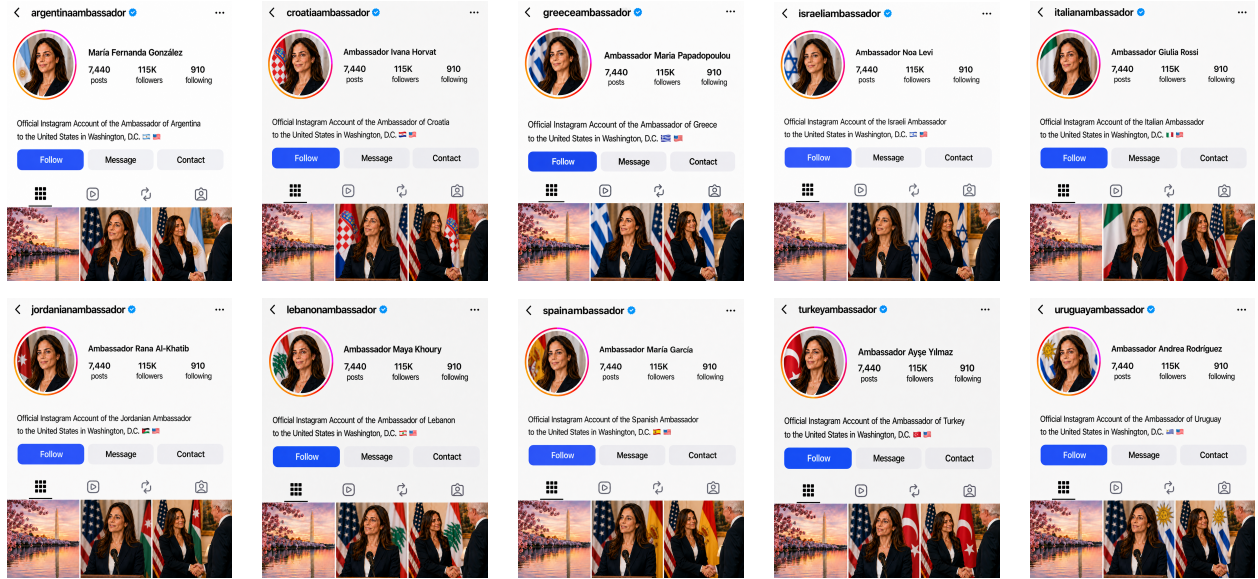


Figure 4: Mock Instagram ambassador accounts used in the study across the ten countries.

by varying only the account name, username, country of origin, and corresponding flags, while holding the profile image, follower counts, layout, and posted images constant.

We used a similar procedure to construct the mock ambassador profiles. We generated a single female ambassador profile designed to plausibly represent an official diplomatic account for any of the countries in our sample. The ambassador profile was adapted across countries by varying only the account name, username, country of origin, and corresponding flags, while holding the profile image, follower counts, layout, and posted images constant.

The influencer and ambassador profiles do not use the same image. However, they were designed to be visually comparable: both depict women with similar facial characteristics, while differing in role-appropriate presentation. We selected the country set partly to ensure that the same mock influencer and ambassador profiles could plausibly represent individuals from each country, thereby avoiding the need to vary race, gender, or other visual features across countries. This design thus allows us to isolate the effects of messenger identity. It is also for this reason that we do not include engagement metrics (e.g., the number of likes) on the posts, as in reality, these numbers would not be plausibly similar for the influencer and the ambassador.



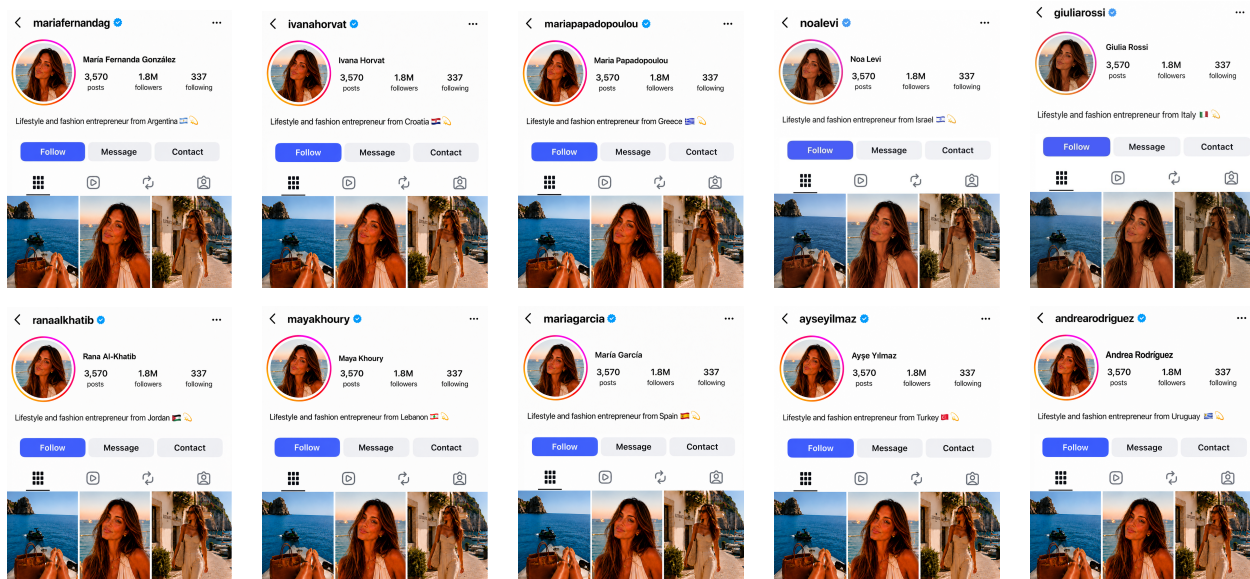


Figure 5: Mock Instagram influencer accounts used in the study across the ten countries.

## Main Outcomes of Interest<sup>17</sup>

To measure the direct effects on a state’s image, we first measure favorability, capturing respondents’ overall impression of the relevant country (Agadjanian and Horiuchi 2020). Favorability is the quantity that leader visits, foreign aid, and state messaging campaigns have been shown to move (Goldsmith, Horiuchi and Matush 2021; Goldsmith, Horiuchi and Wood 2014), and captures the affective evaluations that theories of soft power posit as the foundation of attraction (Nye Jr 2008).

Public diplomacy’s aims are not just perceptual, but instrumentally useful for improving foreign policy relations (Arias and Hulvey 2025). States seek to improve foreign audiences’ perceptions because favorable publics make it easier for governments to sustain alliances, strike trade deals, and secure aid (Nye Jr 2008). Thus, we measure support for bilateral engagement across key domains in international cooperation — diplomatic relations, economic ties, security and military cooperation, and foreign aid — to capture tangible foreign policy outcomes. These measures are adapted from Mattingly and Sundquist (2023).

<sup>17</sup>Several additional outcomes – including believability, desire to see more of the treatment account’s information, a placebo test of effects on the message, a manipulation check, and an open-ended question – are detailed in the Appendix (section C) and will be explored.

Relatedly, we include semi-behavioral measures to assess how shifts in public perceptions translate into tangible outcomes as a stronger test of the impact of influencer diplomacy. Soft power theories argue that country's images operate through these individual-level channels: willingness to visit, to buy a country's products, and to spread favorable information.

Finally, we draw on studies on the sources of messenger credibility (Druckman 2001; Lupia 2002; Von Hohenberg and Guess 2023; Hovland, Janis and Kelley 1953; Hartman and Weber 2009; Weber, Dunaway and Johnson 2012) to identify the messenger characteristics through which influencer diplomacy should operate. Our battery combines the classic source-credibility dimensions of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness with the relatability and likability that distinguish social media influencers from traditional elite messengers, and with perceived objectivity and propaganda promotion, since audiences discount messages they attribute to strategic government motives.

**Overall Favorability** How favorable or unfavorable is your overall impression of Country X? (5 point scale ranging from *Very unfavorable* to *Very favorable*)

**Support for US-Country engagement** How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (5 point scale ranging from *Strongly disagree* to *Strongly agree*)

- The United States should maintain close diplomatic relations with Country X.
- The United States should strengthen economic and business ties with Country X.
- The United States should maintain close security and military cooperation with Country X.
- The United States should provide aid to Country X.

**Semi-behavioral outcomes** (5 Point scale ranging from *Not at all* to *Very much*)

- How interested would you be in visiting Country X in the future?
- How willing would you be to purchase products made in Country X?
- How likely would you be to share positive information about Country X with friends



or family?

- How interested would you be in learning more about Country X?

**Mechanisms - messenger** Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the account that posted the instagram post you have seen earlier. (5 Point scale ranging from *Definitely disagree* to *Definitely agree*)

- @account\_name is an expert
- @account\_name is likable
- @account\_name is relatable
- @account\_name is trustworthy
- @account\_name is objective
- @account\_name is credible
- @account\_name is persuasive
- @account\_name is attractive
- @account\_name promotes propaganda

## Recruitment and Sampling

To test our theoretical expectations, we will implement an online survey experiment in the U.S. with  $N = 5,500$  respondents.<sup>18</sup> Specifically, we intend to rely on a sample that resembles the target population (U.S. public) with respect to sex, age, race, and region of residence, recruited by Cint/Lucid Theorem. Cint/Lucid was chosen for its ability to provide samples that align closely with key demographic characteristics of the general population. Recent methodological work (Stagnaro et al. 2024) highlights a tradeoff between representativeness and response quality across survey vendors, emphasizing that the best choice often depends on the specific requirements of a study. Given the relatively short stimuli and straightforward measures in this experiment, we determined that Cint/Lucid’s representativeness was

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<sup>18</sup>See a discussion of power analysis below, and in section A of the appendix.

particularly well-suited for this research.

However, to address potential concerns about attentiveness (Aronow et al. 2020), and following the recommendations from Stagnaro et al. (2024), we will incorporate attention checks and ‘bot’ filters (Berinsky, Margolis and Sances 2014) at the beginning of our survey. Respondents who fail these checks will be screened out to enhance data quality without compromising demographic alignment. Additionally, respondents under the age of 18 will be excluded from participation.

## Estimation

To examine the potential causal effects of influencer diplomacy (relative to traditional diplomacy) on foreign policy attitudes, we estimate the average treatment effect (ATE), which is an unbiased estimator of the individual-level treatment effect given the random assignment of respondents to treatment conditions (Gerber and Green 2008). Because the country featured in the vignette is independently randomized and is not itself a treatment of substantive interest, our main analyses pool observations across all ten countries and estimate average treatment effects over this set of countries.<sup>19</sup> As a robustness check, we re-estimate all models iteratively excluding one country at a time (leave one out) to ensure that the pooled estimates are not driven by any single country. We will also estimate within-respondent treatment effects for relevant outcomes by comparing the pre- and post-treatment measures of favorability.

To assess the relationships between demographic characteristics and attitudes, we additionally estimate linear regression models that incorporate respondent-level covariates and interaction terms. Estimation is conducted in R. For outcomes constructed as multi-item indices (e.g., personal actions and support for policies toward the focal country), we calculate Cronbach’s alpha to assess internal consistency. We also report treatment effects for each

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<sup>19</sup>Supplementary analyses in the appendix will also examine the results for each individual country, though we recognize that these analyses are likely to be underpowered and are thus exploratory.

individual outcome in the Appendix.

To test H1, we estimate the ATE of influencer messengers relative to government messengers, pooling across the ten randomly assigned countries and across both political contexts (crisis and no-crisis). This corresponds to  $((2+4)-(1+3))$  in Table 1. To test H2, we estimate whether the relative advantage of influencer messengers is larger in the image-crisis condition than in the no-crisis condition. This corresponds to the difference-in-difference estimator,  $((2-1)-(4-3))$  where (2-1) captures the effect of influencer vs. government messengers under an image crisis and (4-3) captures the corresponding effect in the no-crisis condition.

## Interpretation of Main Results

When evaluating H1, a positive and statistically significant ATE will be interpreted as evidence that influencer diplomacy is more effective than government-led public diplomacy in improving attitudes toward the focal country. Conversely, a statistically significant negative ATE will be interpreted as evidence that government officials are more effective messengers than influencers. If the estimated ATE is not statistically distinguishable from zero ( $(p \geq 0.10)$ ), we will conclude that we do not find evidence that messenger identity systematically affects respondents' attitudes under the conditions of the experiment. Each of these findings — including a null result — would constitute theoretically interesting results, providing the first evidence as to whether the public responds differently to these messengers.

When examining H2, a statistically significant interaction between messenger identity and image crisis will be interpreted as evidence that the effectiveness of influencer diplomacy depends on the broader political context. We will examine the estimated marginal effects within each experimental condition to determine whether influencers are relatively more or less effective during image crises than under normal circumstances. If the interaction term is not statistically distinguishable from zero ( $(p \geq 0.10)$ ), we will conclude that there is no evidence that the effectiveness of influencer diplomacy differs across crisis and non-

crisis contexts, while recognizing that such a finding does not rule out the existence of smaller effects below the study’s detectable threshold. Again, each potential outcome is of theoretical interest, as it suggests whether or not the utility of influencer diplomacy varies across settings.

## **Additional Analyses**

In addition to examining the mechanisms underlying influencer diplomacy, we also explore whether its effectiveness varies across different audiences. While our primary empirical focus is on the average effects of influencer diplomacy and on how those effects vary across image crises, understanding who is most responsive to influencer diplomacy can provide additional insight into why governments increasingly employ non-traditional messengers in international communication, and can motivate future studies that specifically assess how influencer diplomacy’s audience varies from that of traditional messengers.

We are particularly interested in heterogeneity by age and trust in institutions. Influencers derive much of their influence from social media environments and often cultivate forms of trust, familiarity, and social connection that differ from those associated with traditional political and diplomatic institutions. We therefore expect influencer diplomacy to be especially effective among younger respondents, who are generally more accustomed to receiving information through social media personalities, and among respondents with lower levels of trust in political and governmental institutions, who may be particularly skeptical of official diplomatic communication. If influencer diplomacy operates through perceptions of objectivity, relatability, and trustworthiness, these groups should be especially receptive to influencer-based messages.

Beyond these theoretically motivated expectations, we will also examine whether the effectiveness of influencer diplomacy varies across partisanship, political interest, ideology, gender, and other demographic characteristics, but we do not have strong expectations for

these dimensions.

## Power Analysis

To assess the statistical power of our experimental design, we conducted a Monte Carlo simulation in R, described in detail in Appendix A. We simulated 500 datasets based on our planned  $2 \times 2$  factorial design, randomly assigning respondents to the messenger (government official vs. influencer) and political context (image crisis vs. no crisis) treatments with equal probability. We power to detect effect sizes as small as 0.15 (approximately 15% of one standard deviation). This assumed effect size is conservative relative to our pilot data, and is in line with the definition of a “small” effect size (Lakens 2022). In the pilot study, the estimated effect of the influencer treatment was 0.21 points on the favorability scale (equivalent to approximately 0.28 standard deviations). Nonetheless, because our pilot did not include the full  $2 \times 2$  design, it cannot directly inform the expected magnitude of the messenger-by-crisis interaction. We therefore use a smaller standardized effect size of 0.15 for both the main messenger effect and the interaction in the power analysis. Our power calculations suggest that we should be sufficiently powered to detect effects of this size when assessing H1: estimating the average treatment effect (ATE) of influencers, compared to government messengers ( $P \approx 1, \alpha = 0.05$ ) and when assessing H2: estimating the heterogeneous treatment effect (HTE) of influencer\*crisis ( $P \approx 0.8, \alpha = 0.05$ ), with  $N = 5,500$  respondents.

## Pilot Study

Though our proposed design makes several important changes from the pilot study, the essential design remains the same, and we therefore think it is still instructive to discuss the results here, as it provides face validity to some of our core theoretical assumptions — namely that influencers distinguishable from traditional messengers, that influencer diplo-

agents perform better (or at least not worse) on key outcomes, that such effects are derived from the messenger rather than the message, and that this advantage is conferred via credibility.

Our pilot study tests the effects of influencer scenario under one of our motivating cases of image crisis — Israel — several months into the Gaza conflict. We would expect that the results in such a case would be stronger for the influencer condition than in a low image crisis scenario, which our pilot study did not test. In our proposed full study, we also replace the real influencer with an AI generated influencer, which provides a cleaner, more controlled tests, as it removes the potential that participants are bringing pre-formed attitudes on the influencer into the study, while our pilot study provides a higher level of experimental realism at the cost of this validity. Because it captures these different dimensions (and their potential consistency), we feel it is worth including the pilot results here, and the details of the pilot design are described below.

In our pilot design, following the pre-treatment questionnaire described above, respondents were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions, and presented with a text vignette and images that corresponded to the treatment condition (presented in full in the section below). As in our final proposed design, these included an ‘influencer’ condition and a ‘government’ condition, and held constant the content of the message administered to respondents as well as the mode (mock Instagram posts). Unlike our final design, the pilot message and several of the outcome measures focused on messaging around Israelis taken hostage during the October 7th attacks. As opposed to our proposed full design, our treatments included real accounts rather than AI-generated ones. Specifically, for the government condition, we relied on the official account of the Israeli government’s embassy in the U.S., and for the influencer account we used a real individual — Noa Tishby, an Israeli influencer. Subsequently, we measured four key sets of outcome variables: respondents’ attitudes toward foreign policies involving Israel, general attitudes toward Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, potential personal actions related to Israel, and mechanisms driving these effects.

## Vignettes

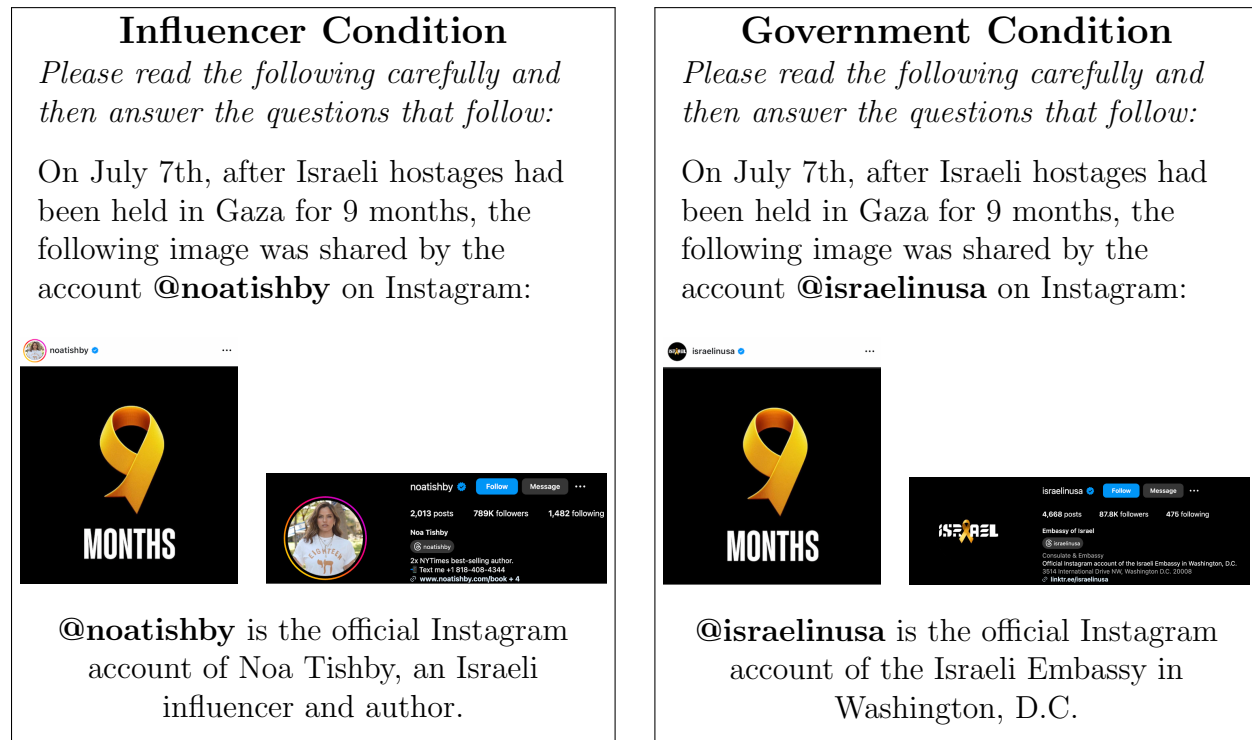


Figure 6: Experimental conditions presented to participants in the pilot study.

For the pilot study, we collected 257 responses between December 31, 2024 and January 2, 2025. Our pilot was conducted via Lucid Theorem, which uses quota sampling to match census benchmarks on age, gender, race/ethnicity, and region.<sup>20</sup> Prior research demonstrates that experiments fielded on Lucid are high-quality and replicate the findings of previous studies (Coppock and McClellan 2019; Peyton, Huber and Coppock 2021). The results from our manipulation check suggest that the treatments were salient to the respondents, as respondents in the influencer condition more overwhelmingly likely to (correctly) identify messenger was @noatishby ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Because of the small sample size, the results discussed in this section should be interpreted suggestively based on the directional shift. In most cases (unless we specify otherwise below), in neither bivariate specifications nor models with demographic controls did the pilot results

<sup>20</sup>Only US adults 18 years or older are eligible to participate. Balance table is shown in Appendix (Table F1).

achieve statistical significance, which is not surprising. We assess these results to examine suggestive patterns and investigate whether responses demonstrate internal consistency.

First, we obtain suggestive evidence that influencer messengers may be more effective agents of public diplomacy than traditional state representatives.<sup>21</sup> Influencers were more likely to be perceived as credible overall, and performed better on many of the building blocks of credibility, being rated as more likable, relatable, trustworthy, objective, believable, and persuasive (Figure 7b). Indeed, even in our small pilot study, the results on relatability and likability achieve statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ). The only characteristic in which state messengers performed better than influencers was on perceived expertise, which is unsurprising. These results are consistent in the bivariate models and models with controls. This interpretation is reinforced by our placebo test on perceptions of the message itself (Figure 7a). Because the message was held constant across conditions, we would not expect systematic differences in how respondents evaluated its content. Consistent with this expectation, we observe mixed effects across message attributes, with none reaching conventional levels of statistical significance.

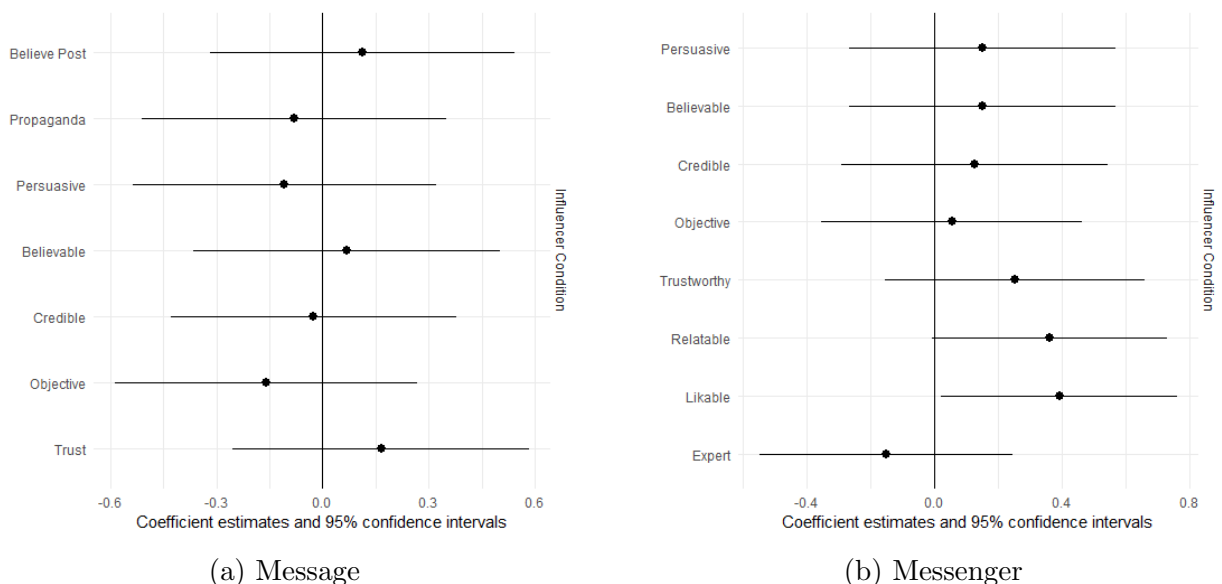


Figure 7: Perceptions of Message and Messenger

<sup>21</sup>Full tabular results for all models are included in the Appendix, see Tables F2 — F9. We also include graphical representations of the bivariate results in Appendix Figures F6a — F6d.



We observe that the positive perception of influencers transmits to consistently increased public support for the instrumental goals of public diplomacy that we measure (Figure 8a). Respondents in the influencer condition were more likely to support engaging in diplomacy with Israel, sending aid and infrastructure development funding to Israel, and engaging in business partnerships with firms in Israel. Respondents were also more likely to express an overall favorable towards Israel at a level of moderate statistical significance ( $p < 0.1$ ).<sup>22</sup>

The positive effects of the influencer messaging also translated to respondents' willingness to engage in personal actions with respect to Israel (Figure 8b). We observe positive effects of the influencer condition on respondents' willingness to visit Israel in the future, to purchase goods from Israel, to share positive information about Israel with friends or family, and to send a letter to the Congressional representative in support of Israel. Finally, we also observe a positive effect on behavioral outcomes, as respondents in the influencer condition were more likely to desire more information about the messenger, which we observed with an increased desire to be redirected to the account's page on Instagram.

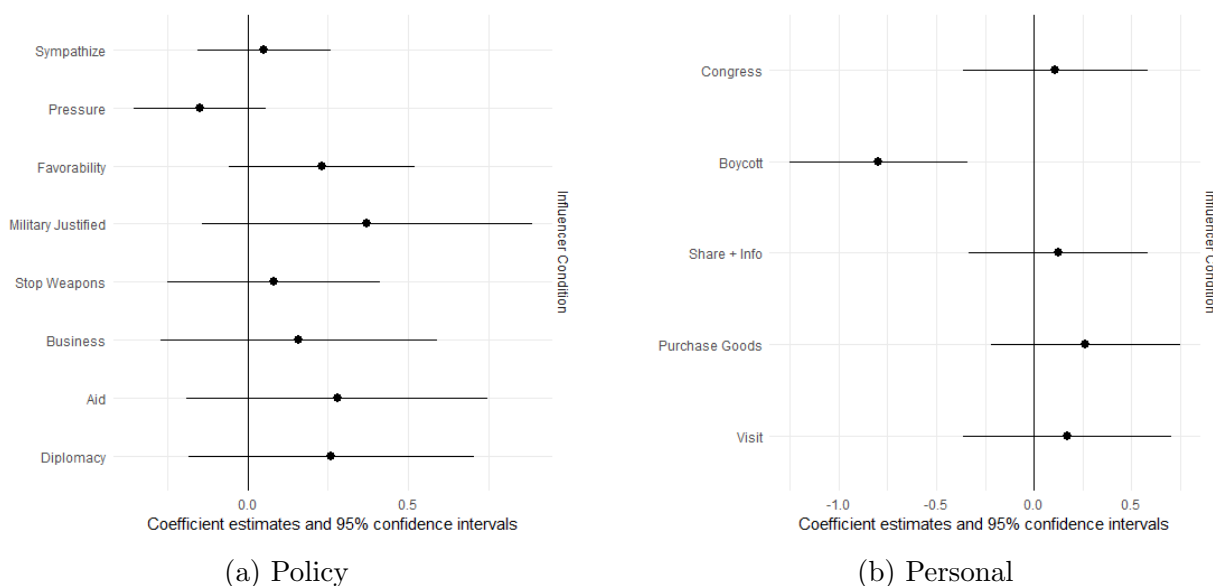


Figure 8: Effects on Outcomes

<sup>22</sup>Additional outcomes specifically related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are reported in Figures 8a and 8b but not discussed in the text, as they will not be assessed in our final study.

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*Supplementary Information*  
**Influencer Diplomacy: Non-Traditional Actors in Public Diplomacy**

**Contents**

|          |                                                 |            |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>A</b> | <b>Power Analysis</b>                           | <b>A-1</b> |
| <b>B</b> | <b>Research Ethics &amp; AI Use</b>             | <b>B-1</b> |
| <b>C</b> | <b>Survey Instrument</b>                        | <b>C-1</b> |
| C.1      | Consent . . . . .                               | C-1        |
| C.2      | Demographics . . . . .                          | C-3        |
| C.3      | Vignettes . . . . .                             | C-7        |
| C.3.1    | Opening prompt . . . . .                        | C-7        |
| C.3.2    | Randomization . . . . .                         | C-7        |
| C.3.3    | Condition 1: Crisis–Ambassador . . . . .        | C-7        |
| C.3.4    | Condition 2: Crisis–Influencer . . . . .        | C-8        |
| C.3.5    | Condition 3: No Crisis–Ambassador . . . . .     | C-8        |
| C.3.6    | Condition 4: No Crisis–Influencer . . . . .     | C-9        |
| C.3.7    | Visual Stimuli . . . . .                        | C-9        |
| C.4      | Outcome Measures . . . . .                      | C-11       |
| C.5      | Debriefing . . . . .                            | C-12       |
| <b>D</b> | <b>AI Instagram Accounts Composition</b>        | <b>D-1</b> |
| <b>E</b> | <b>Pilot Survey Instrument</b>                  | <b>E-1</b> |
| E.1      | Consent . . . . .                               | E-1        |
| E.2      | Demographics . . . . .                          | E-3        |
| E.3      | Vignettes . . . . .                             | E-7        |
| E.4      | Outcome Measures . . . . .                      | E-8        |
| <b>F</b> | <b>Pilot Results</b>                            | <b>F-1</b> |
| F.1      | Graphical Results of Bivariate Models . . . . . | F-1        |
| F.2      | Full Tabular Results . . . . .                  | F-2        |

# A Power Analysis

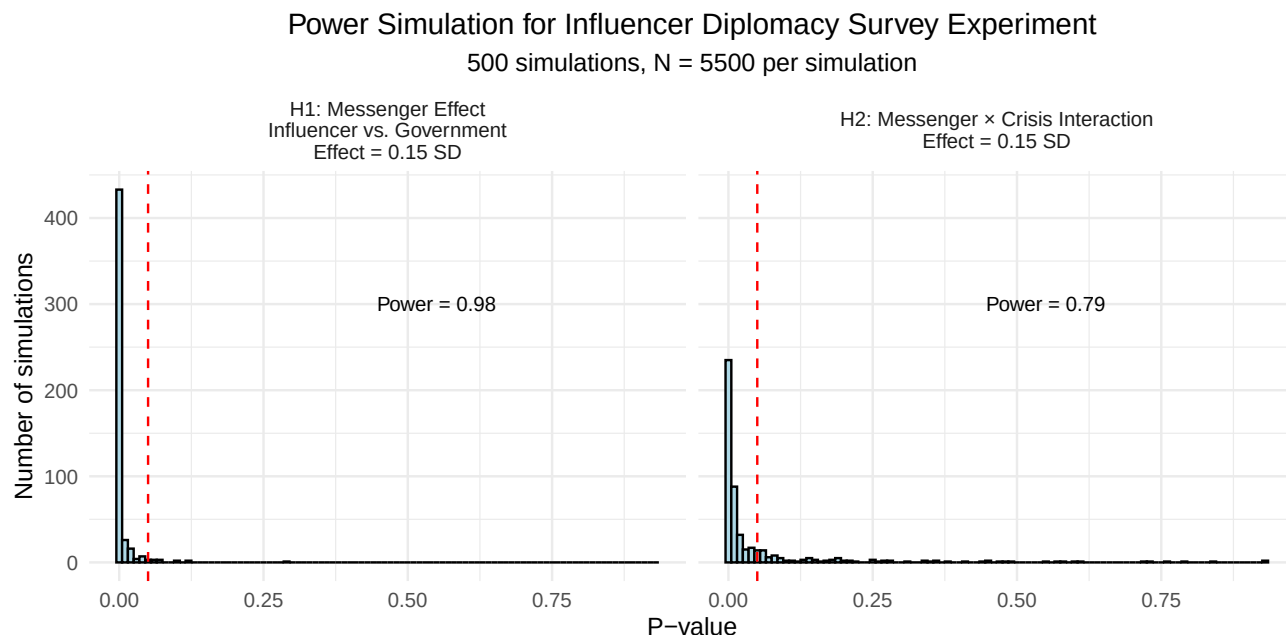


Figure A1: **Power Analysis.** Results from a simulation study with 500 simulations (N=5,500 per simulation). Power calculated for two different analyses: H1, estimating the average effect of influencers compared to government messengers (left), and H2, estimating the heterogeneous effect of influencers, conditional on crisis (right). The effect size is estimated at 0.15 (approximately 15% of a standard deviation),  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

Figure A1 presents results from a simulated power analysis, where power was calculated for the two main intended analyses. Specifically, we report results from the average treatment effect (ATE) of influencers (compared to governments) and the heterogeneous treatment effect (HTE) of the political context (crisis) and influencer. Below, we include the R code to reproduce this power calculation.



```

1
2 # Power Analysis
3 library(tidyverse)
4 library(ggplot2)
5
6 set.seed(123)
7
8 num_simulations <- 500
9 N <- 5500
10
11 # Effects are 0.15 SD units on Y
12 effect_size <- 0.15
13
14 countries <- c(
15   "Argentina", "Croatia", "Greece", "Israel", "Italy",
16   "Jordan", "Lebanon", "Spain", "Turkey", "Uruguay"
17 )
18
19 messenger_pvalues <- numeric(num_simulations)
20 interaction_pvalues <- numeric(num_simulations)
21
22 for (i in 1:num_simulations) {
23   messenger <- sample(0:1, N, replace = TRUE)
24   # 0 = Government Official, 1 = Influencer
25
26   crisis <- sample(0:1, N, replace = TRUE)
27   # 0 = No Crisis, 1 = Image Crisis
28
29   country <- sample(countries, N, replace = TRUE)
30
31   # Error SD = 1, so coefficients are interpreted as SD shifts in Y
32   Y <- effect_size * messenger +
33     effect_size * messenger * crisis +
34     rnorm(N, mean = 0, sd = 1)
35
36   model <- lm(Y ~ messenger * crisis )
37   coefs <- summary(model)$coefficients
38
39   messenger_pvalues[i] <- coefs["messenger", "Pr(>|t|)"]
40   interaction_pvalues[i] <- coefs["messenger:crisis", "Pr(>|t|)"]
41 }
42
43
44 p_level_messenger <- mean(messenger_pvalues < 0.05)
45 p_level_interaction <- mean(interaction_pvalues < 0.05)
46
47 cat("Power for messenger effect, Influencer vs. Government:", p_level_messenger, "\n")
48 cat("Power for Messenger x Crisis interaction:", p_level_interaction, "\n")
49
50 all_data <- bind_rows(
51   data.frame(
52     p_values = messenger_pvalues,
53     effect = "H1: Messenger Effect\nInfluencer vs. Government\nEffect = 0.15 SD"
54   ),
55   data.frame(
56     p_values = interaction_pvalues,
57     effect = "H2: Messenger Crisis Interaction\nEffect = 0.15 SD"
58   )
59 )
60
61 summary_stats <- all_data %>%
62   group_by(effect) %>%
63   summarize(power = mean(p_values < 0.05), .groups = "drop")
64
65 ggplot(all_data, aes(x = p_values)) +
66   geom_histogram(binwidth = 0.01, fill = "lightblue", color = "black") +
67   geom_vline(xintercept = 0.05, linetype = "dashed", color = "red") +
68   geom_text(

```

```

69   data = summary_stats,
70   aes(x = 0.55, y = 300, label = paste0("Power = ", round(power, 2))),
71   inherit.aes = FALSE,
72   size = 3
73 ) +
74 facet_wrap(~ effect) +
75 labs(
76   title = "Power Simulation for Influencer Diplomacy Survey Experiment",
77   subtitle = paste0(num_simulations, " simulations, N = ", N, " per simulation"),
78   x = "P-value",
79   y = "Number of simulations"
80 ) +
81 theme_minimal() +
82 theme(
83   plot.title = element_text(hjust = 0.5),
84   plot.subtitle = element_text(hjust = 0.5)
85 )
86
87 ggsave("power_simulation_influencer_diplomacy.png", width = 8, height = 4)

```

## B Research Ethics & AI Use

We have taken various measures and made consideration to minimize potential risks associated with this research. The pilot study protocol was reviewed by the IRB at the author’s universities, which determined that it met eligibility criteria for review exemption. The main study will be submitted as an amendment for IRB approval following initial review. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants (see Section C for the full informed consent document). In the informed consent, all participants are informed of their rights, including their ability to refuse to participate or to withdraw consent at any time. Deception is not employed in the experiment, as the scenario is explicitly described as hypothetical. Respondents are debriefed at the end of the experiment and informed that the accounts were AI-generated. Personally identifying data on experimental participants will not be collected by the research team. In our assessment, the potential benefits of the project are substantial compared to the risks, which are minimal. Compensation for participation is provided by Lucid/Cint. We used AI to assist in the power analysis, the generation of the treatment images (see Section D), and to assist in identifying relevant papers for the literature review. The authors used ChatGPT 5.5 (OpenAI) and Claude Opus 4.8 (Anthropic) browser-based interfaces for these tasks.

## C Survey Instrument

### C.1 Consent

Study Title: Questionnaire on foreign policy

[Researchers' Names]

[Researchers' Names] are inviting you to take part in a research study.

**What should I know about a research study?**

- (a) Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- (b) Your participation is completely voluntary.
- (c) You can choose not to take part.
- (d) You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- (e) Your decision will not be held against you.
- (f) Your refusal to participate will not result in any consequences or any loss of benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
- (g) You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

**Why is this research being done?**

We are interested in exploring how people interact with and respond to social media content related to foreign policy and public opinion.

**How long will the research last and what will I need to do?**

You will be asked to answer a short survey, which we expect will take about 15 minutes to complete. The survey includes questions about your opinions on social media posts, your attitudes toward international topics, and some general demographic information.

**Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?**

We don't believe there are any risks from participating in this research. Since identifiable information is not collected, there is no risk of a loss of confidentiality. Some political questions may make you feel some discomfort, but participation is completely voluntary, and you are welcome to stop the survey at any time.

**Will being in this study help me in any way?**

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include contributing to a better understanding public opinion on foreign policy issues.

**What happens if I do not want to be in this research?**

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You can decide to participate, not participate, or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your alternative to participating in this research study is to not participate.

**What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?**

You can leave the research at any time; it will not be held against you.

**If I take part in this research, how will my privacy be protected? What happens to the information you collect?**

This survey is anonymous since identifiers are removed from your identifiable private information during this research, this information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without your additional informed consent.

**You may not be told everything or may be misled**

For scientific reasons, you may be unaware of the study hypotheses and the research questions being tested. You also may be exposed to hypothetical materials, though they will be similar to materials you would see in real life.

**Who can I talk to?**

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to [researchers' names] at [researchers' email addresses]. This research has been reviewed and approved by the [researchers' institutions'] Institutional Review Board ("IRB"). You may talk to them at [Institutions' IRB email and number] if:

- (a) Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- (b) You cannot reach the research team.
- (c) You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- (d) You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- (e) You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Do you freely give your consent to participate in this study?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

(Captcha) Please verify that you are not a robot.

## C.2 Demographics

1. What is your gender?

- (a) Male
- (b) Female
- (c) Prefer not to say
- (d) Other

2. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- (a) Elementary or some high school
- (b) High school graduate/GED
- (c) Trade or vocational certification
- (d) Some college/Associate's degree
- (e) College graduate
- (f) Post-graduate degree

3. In general, I think of myself as:

- (a) Extremely liberal
- (b) Liberal
- (c) Slightly liberal
- (d) Moderate, middle of the road
- (e) Slightly conservative
- (f) Conservative
- (g) Extremely conservative

4. Generally speaking, I think of myself as a:

- (a) Democrat
- (b) Republican
- (c) Independent

5. *If Democrat selected:* Would you call yourself a strong Democrat, or a not very strong Democrat?

- (a) Strong Democrat
  - (b) Not very strong Democrat
6. *If Republican selected:* Would you call yourself a strong Republican, or a not very strong Republican?
- (a) Strong Republican
  - (b) Not very strong Republican
7. *If Independent selected:* Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic Party or the Republican Party?
- (a) Closer to the Democratic Party
  - (b) Closer to the Republican Party
8. Who did you vote for in the 2024 Presidential election?
- (a) Donald Trump
  - (b) Kamala Harris
  - (c) Another candidate
  - (d) I did not vote in the 2024 presidential election
9. Which of these options best describes your situation (in the last seven days)?
- (a) Employed full time
  - (b) Employed part time
  - (c) Unemployed
  - (d) Student
  - (e) Retired
  - (f) Homemaker
  - (g) Self-employed
10. How old are you?
11. What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?
- (a) Less than \$25,000
  - (b) \$25,000-\$49,999
  - (c) \$50,000-\$74,999
  - (d) \$75,000-\$99,999
  - (e) \$100,000-\$149,999
  - (f) \$150,000 or more

- (g) Prefer not to say
12. (*Attention Check*): We would like to get a sense of your general preferences. Most modern theories of decision making recognize that decisions do not take place in a vacuum. Individual preferences and knowledge, along with situational variables, can greatly impact the decision process. To demonstrate that you've read this much, just go ahead and select both red and green among the alternatives below, no matter what your favorite color is. Yes, ignore the question below and select both of these options. What is your favorite color?
- (a) White
  - (b) Black
  - (c) Red
  - (d) Pink
  - (e) Green
  - (f) Blue
13. Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be.
- (a) White or Caucasian
  - (b) Black or African American
  - (c) American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native
  - (d) Asian
  - (e) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - (f) Other
  - (g) Prefer not to say
14. Are you of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin?
- (a) Yes
  - (b) No
  - (c) Prefer not to say
15. How favorable or unfavorable is your overall impression of the following **countries**? (5 point scale ranging from *Very unfavorable* to *Very favorable*) [Argentina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain, Turkey, Uruguay, Israel, China, India, Russia]
16. What is your present religion, if any? Are you
- (a) Christian
  - (b) Jewish
  - (c) Muslim



- (d) Buddhist
  - (e) Hindu
  - (f) Atheist
  - (g) Agnostic
  - (h) Something else
17. How often do you attend religious services?
- (a) More than once a week
  - (b) Once a week
  - (c) A few times a month
  - (d) A few times a year
  - (e) Once a year or less
  - (f) Never
18. How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?
- (a) Most of the time
  - (b) Some of the time
  - (c) Only now and then
  - (d) Hardly at all
19. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs:
- (a) Most of the time
  - (b) Some of the time
  - (c) Only now and then
  - (d) Hardly at all
20. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.  
(Respondent selects from Definitely disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, definitely agree)
- (a) The use of military force only makes problems worse
  - (b) Generally speaking, the United States can trust other nations.
  - (c) Going to war is unfortunate, but sometimes the only solution to international problems.
  - (d) The United States is superior to other nations.
21. Which of the following best describes you and the Internet?

- (a) Very comfortable with Internet navigation, could teach a class
  - (b) Somewhat comfortable with Internet navigation, need some assistance
  - (c) Hardly know the basics, enough to get on and off the Internet
22. How often do you use social media in an average day?
- (a) 4 or more hours
  - (b) 3-4 hours
  - (c) 2-3 hours
  - (d) 1-2 hours
  - (e) Less than an hour
  - (f) Not at all
23. On the next pages, you will read about several pieces of information. Please read this information carefully because you will be asked questions to check your attention and comprehension.

Do you agree to read the details very carefully, and then give your most thoughtful answers?

- (a) Yes, I agree to read the details carefully
- (b) No, I don't agree to read the details carefully

## C.3 Vignettes

### C.3.1 Opening prompt

We are now going to ask you to read a hypothetical social media post. For scientific purposes, the post and the accompanying scenario are fictional. As you read them, please imagine that they are real.

### C.3.2 Randomization

*Coder notes: Participants are randomly assigned with equal probability (0.25) to one of four conditions: (1) Crisis + Ambassador, (2) Crisis + Influencer, (3) No Crisis + Ambassador, (4) No Crisis + Influencer. Within each condition, one of ten countries is randomly selected: Argentina, Croatia, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain, Turkey, or Uruguay.*

### C.3.3 Condition 1: Crisis–Ambassador

Imagine the year is 2028. Over the past several months, Country X has faced widespread international criticism following reports of serious human rights abuses committed by government security forces. The government's actions have been widely condemned, and global media coverage has been

overwhelmingly negative. As a result, Country X's international reputation has declined substantially.

The following post was shared by the account @account\_name on Instagram during [Country] Appreciation Day. @account\_name is the official account of the [Country] Ambassador in Washington, D.C.

*Coder notes: Respondents are shown a randomly selected ambassador account and the corresponding Instagram post for one of the ten countries. The ambassador accounts are reproduced in Figure C4, and the corresponding posts are reproduced in Figure C2.*

#### **C.3.4 Condition 2: Crisis–Influencer**

Imagine the year is 2028. Over the past several months, Country X has faced widespread international criticism following reports of serious human rights abuses committed by government security forces. The government's actions have been widely condemned, and global media coverage has been overwhelmingly negative. As a result, Country X's international reputation has declined substantially.

The following post was shared by the account @account\_name on Instagram during [Country] Appreciation Day. @account\_name is the official account of [influencer name], a [Country] influencer on social media.

*Coder notes: Respondents are shown a randomly selected influencer account and the corresponding Instagram post for one of the ten countries. The influencer accounts are reproduced in Figure C5, and the corresponding posts are reproduced in Figure C3.*

#### **C.3.5 Condition 3: No Crisis–Ambassador**

Imagine the year is 2028. Country X enjoys a generally positive international reputation in recent months. News coverage of the country has been largely neutral, and people around the world hold generally favorable views of Country X.

The following post was shared by the account @account\_name on Instagram during [Country] Appreciation Day. @account\_name is the official account of the [Country] Ambassador in Washington, D.C.

*Coder notes: Respondents are shown a randomly selected ambassador account and the corresponding Instagram post for one of the ten countries. The ambassador accounts are reproduced in Figure C4, and the corresponding posts are reproduced in Figure C2.*

### C.3.6 Condition 4: No Crisis–Influencer

Imagine the year is 2028. Country X enjoys a generally positive international reputation in recent months. News coverage of the country has been largely neutral, and people around the world hold generally favorable views of Country X.

The following post was shared by the account @account\_name on Instagram during [Country] Appreciation Day. @account\_name is the official account of [influencer name], a [Country] influencer on social media.

*Coder notes: Respondents are shown a randomly selected influencer account and the corresponding Instagram post for one of the ten countries. The influencer accounts are reproduced in Figure C5, and the corresponding posts are reproduced in Figure C3.*

### C.3.7 Visual Stimuli



Figure C2: Mock Instagram posts published by ambassador accounts across the ten countries.



Figure C3: Mock Instagram posts published by influencer accounts across the ten countries.

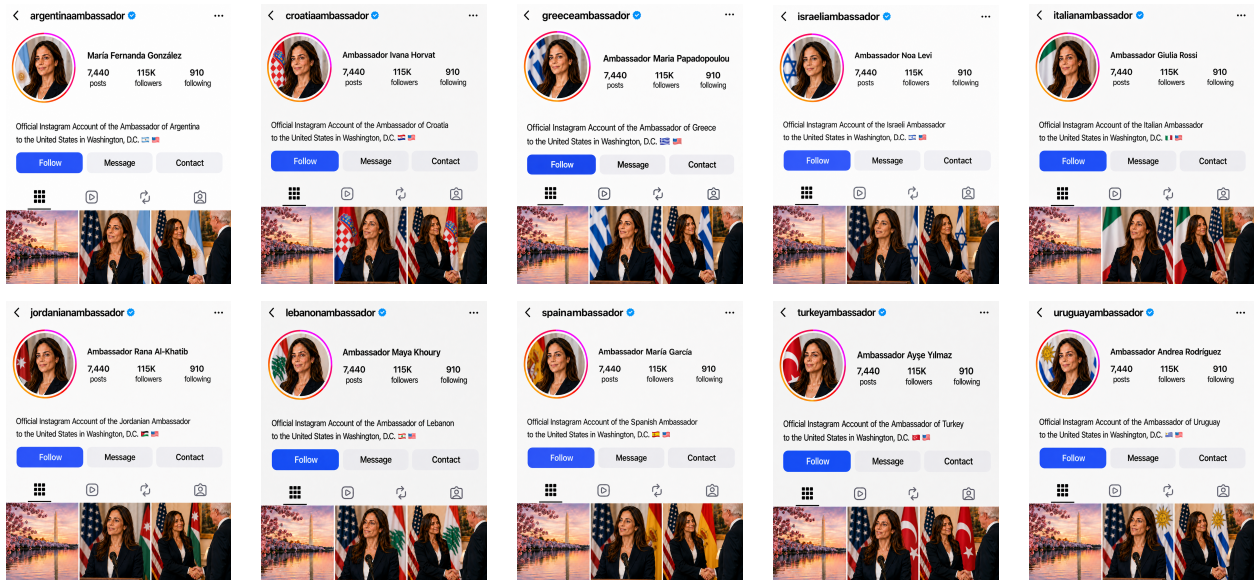


Figure C4: Mock Instagram ambassador accounts used in the study across the ten countries.

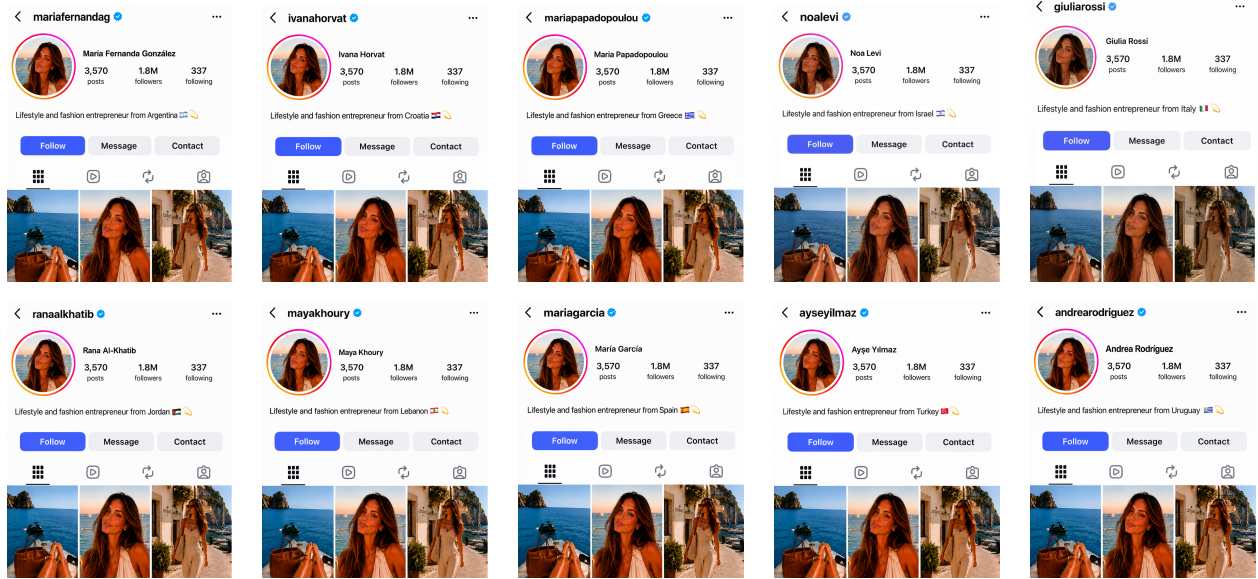


Figure C5: Mock Instagram influencer accounts used in the study across the ten countries.

## C.4 Outcome Measures

**Overall Favorability** How favorable or unfavorable is your overall impression of [Country X]? (5 point scale ranging from *Very unfavorable* to *Very favorable*)

**Support for US-Country engagement** How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (5 point scale ranging from *Strongly disagree* to *Strongly agree*)

- The United States should maintain close diplomatic relations with Country X.
- The United States should strengthen economic and business ties with Country X.
- The United States should maintain close security and military cooperation with Country X.
- The United States should provide aid to Country X.

**Behavioral outcomes** (5 Point scale ranging from *Not at all* to *Very much*)

- How interested would you be in visiting Country X in the future?
- How willing would you be to purchase products made in Country X?
- How likely would you be to share positive information about Country X with friends or family?
- How interested would you be in learning more about Country X?

**Mechanisms - messenger** Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the account that posted the instagram post you have seen earlier. (5 Point scale ranging from *Definitely disagree* to *Definitely agree*)

- @account\_name is an expert
- @account\_name is likable
- @account\_name is relatable



- @account\_name is trustworthy
- @account\_name is objective
- @account\_name is credible
- @account\_name is persuasive
- @account\_name is attractive
- @account\_name promotes propaganda

**Open ended** In just a few sentences, how did you perceive the social media content creator that you saw?

**Manipulation check:** Earlier in the survey you were presented with a post from an instagram account. Please select the account you saw:

1. @[influencer\_handle]
2. @[government\_handle]
3. I don't recall

## C.5 Debriefing

Thank you for completing this study. The information provided to you earlier in this study was purely hypothetical. The messages and Instagram accounts shown were AI-generated.

## D AI Instagram Accounts Composition

We constructed the mock influencer and ambassador Instagram profiles using ChatGPT 5.5. We first generated a single mock influencer profile designed to resemble a plausible lifestyle content creator who could reasonably represent any of the countries in our sample. To guide the design, we provided examples of well-known lifestyle influencers from multiple countries (e.g., Chiara Ferragni, Bar Refaeli, and Anna Zak) while instructing ChatGPT to generate an original profile rather than replicate any individual. We then adapted this profile across countries by varying only the account name, username, country of origin, and corresponding flags, while holding the profile image, follower counts, layout, and posted images constant. We verified using the LLM that the profile was plausible for all of the countries in our randomized sample.

We followed the same procedure to construct the ambassador profiles, generating a single mock official diplomatic account and adapting it across countries by varying only the account name, username, country of origin, and corresponding flags. The influencer and ambassador profiles use different images but were designed to be visually comparable, allowing us to isolate the effects of messenger identity while holding other visual features constant.



## E Pilot Survey Instrument

### E.1 Consent

Study Title: Questionnaire on foreign policy

[Researchers' Names]

[Researchers' Names] are inviting you to take part in a research study.

**What should I know about a research study?**

- (a) Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- (b) Your participation is completely voluntary.
- (c) You can choose not to take part.
- (d) You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- (e) Your decision will not be held against you.
- (f) Your refusal to participate will not result in any consequences or any loss of benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
- (g) You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

**Why is this research being done?**

We are interested in exploring how people interact with and respond to social media content related to foreign policy and public opinion.

**How long will the research last and what will I need to do?**

You will be asked to answer a short survey, which we expect will take about 15 minutes to complete. The survey includes questions about your opinions on social media posts, your attitudes toward international topics, and some general demographic information.

**Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?**

We don't believe there are any risks from participating in this research. Since identifiable information is not collected, there is no risk of a loss of confidentiality. Some political questions may make you feel some discomfort, but participation is completely voluntary, and you are welcome to stop the survey at any time.

**Will being in this study help me in any way?**

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include contributing to a better understanding public opinion on foreign policy issues.

**What happens if I do not want to be in this research?**

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You can decide to participate, not participate, or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your alternative to participating in this research study is to not participate.

**What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?**

You can leave the research at any time; it will not be held against you.

**If I take part in this research, how will my privacy be protected? What happens to the information you collect?**

This survey is anonymous since identifiers are removed from your identifiable private information during this research, this information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without your additional informed consent.

**You may not be told everything or may be misled**

For scientific reasons, you may be unaware of the study hypotheses and the research questions being tested. You also may be exposed to hypothetical materials, though they will be similar to materials you would see in real life.

**Who can I talk to?**

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to [researchers' names] at [researchers' email addresses]. This research has been reviewed and approved by the [researchers' institutions'] Institutional Review Board ("IRB"). You may talk to them at [Institutions' IRB email and number] if:

- (a) Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- (b) You cannot reach the research team.
- (c) You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- (d) You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- (e) You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Do you freely give your consent to participate in this study?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

1. (Captcha) Please verify that you are not a robot.

## E.2 Demographics

1. What is your gender?

- (a) Male
- (b) Female
- (c) Prefer not to say
- (d) Other

2. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- (a) Elementary or some high school
- (b) High school graduate/GED
- (c) Trade or vocational certification
- (d) Some college/Associate's degree
- (e) College graduate
- (f) Post-graduate degree

3. In general, I think of myself as:

- (a) Extremely liberal
- (b) Liberal
- (c) Slightly liberal
- (d) Moderate, middle of the road
- (e) Slightly conservative
- (f) Conservative
- (g) Extremely conservative

4. Generally speaking, I think of myself as a:

- (a) Democrat
- (b) Republican
- (c) Independent

5. *If Democrat selected:* Would you call yourself a strong Democrat, or a not very strong Democrat?

- (a) Strong Democrat
  - (b) Not very strong Democrat
6. *If Republican selected:* Would you call yourself a strong Republican, or a not very strong Republican?
- (a) Strong Republican
  - (b) Not very strong Republican
7. *If Independent selected:* Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic Party or the Republican Party?
- (a) Closer to the Democratic Party
  - (b) Closer to the Republican Party
8. Who did you vote for in the 2024 Presidential election?
- (a) Donald Trump
  - (b) Kamala Harris
  - (c) Another candidate
  - (d) I did not vote in the 2024 presidential election
9. Which of these options best describes your situation (in the last seven days)?
- (a) Employed full time
  - (b) Employed part time
  - (c) Unemployed
  - (d) Student
  - (e) Retired
  - (f) Homemaker
  - (g) Self-employed
10. How old are you?
11. What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?
- (a) Less than \$25,000
  - (b) \$25,000-\$49,999
  - (c) \$50,000-\$74,999
  - (d) \$75,000-\$99,999
  - (e) \$100,000-\$149,999
  - (f) \$150,000 or more

- (g) Prefer not to say
12. We would like to get a sense of your general preferences. Most modern theories of decision making recognize that decisions do not take place in a vacuum. Individual preferences and knowledge, along with situational variables, can greatly impact the decision process. To demonstrate that you've read this much, just go ahead and select both red and green among the alternatives below, no matter what your favorite color is. Yes, ignore the question below and select both of these options. What is your favorite color?
- (a) White
  - (b) Black
  - (c) Red
  - (d) Pink
  - (e) Green
  - (f) Blue
13. Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be.
- (a) White or Caucasian
  - (b) Black or African American
  - (c) American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native
  - (d) Asian
  - (e) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - (f) Other
  - (g) Prefer not to say
14. Are you of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin?
- (a) Yes
  - (b) No
  - (c) Prefer not to say
15. What is your present religion, if any? Are you
- (a) Christian
  - (b) Jewish
  - (c) Muslim
  - (d) Buddhist
  - (e) Hindu
  - (f) Atheist

- (g) Agnostic
  - (h) Something else
16. How often do you attend religious services?
- (a) More than once a week
  - (b) Once a week
  - (c) A few times a month
  - (d) A few times a year
  - (e) Once a year or less
  - (f) Never
17. How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?
- (a) Most of the time
  - (b) Some of the time
  - (c) Only now and then
  - (d) Hardly at all
18. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs:
- (a) Most of the time
  - (b) Some of the time
  - (c) Only now and then
  - (d) Hardly at all
19. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Respondent selects from Definitely disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, definitely agree)
- (a) The use of military force only makes problems worse
  - (b) Generally speaking, the United States can trust other nations.
  - (c) Going to war is unfortunate, but sometimes the only solution to international problems.
  - (d) The United States is superior to other nations.
20. Which of the following best describes you and the Internet?
- (a) Very comfortable with Internet navigation, could teach a class
  - (b) Somewhat comfortable with Internet navigation, need some assistance
  - (c) Hardly know the basics, enough to get on and off the Internet

21. How often do you use social media in an average day?

- (a) 4 or more hours
- (b) 3-4 hours
- (c) 2-3 hours
- (d) 1-2 hours
- (e) Less than an hour
- (f) Not at all

22. On the next pages, you will read about several pieces of information. Please read this information carefully because you will be asked questions to check your attention and comprehension.

Do you agree to read the details very carefully, and then give your most thoughtful answers?

- (a) Yes, I agree to read the details carefully
- (b) No, I don't agree to read the details carefully

### E.3 Vignettes

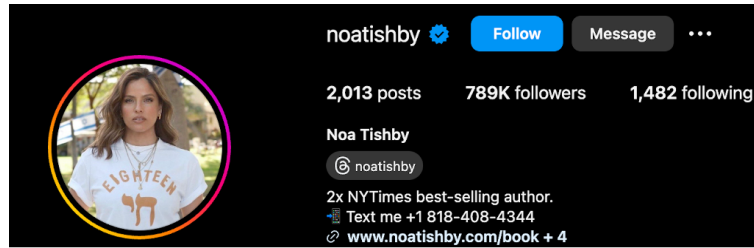
1. **Influencer Condition:**

*Please read the following carefully and then answer the questions that follow:*

On July 7th, after Israeli hostages had been held in Gaza for 9 months, the following image has been shared by the account **@noatishby** on Instagram:



**@noatishby** is the official Instagram account of Noa Tishby, an Israeli influencer and author. Here are her Instagram account details:



## 2. Government Condition:

*Please read the following carefully and then answer the questions that follow:*

On July 7th, after Israeli hostages had been held in Gaza for 9 months, the following image has been shared by the account **@israelinusa** on Instagram:



**@israelinusa** is the official Instagram account of the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C. Here are the Instagram account details:



## E.4 Outcome Measures

1. In your opinion, how acceptable or unacceptable is it for the United States government to take the following actions? (Respondent selects from Totally unacceptable, somewhat unacceptable, Neither acceptable nor unacceptable, somewhat acceptable, totally acceptable)
  - (a) Engage in diplomacy (directly talk with foreign leaders) with Israel
  - (b) Send aid and infrastructure development funding to Israel



- (c) Engage in business partnerships with firms from Israel
  - (d) Send military aid to Israel
2. How likely would it be for you personally to take the following actions? (Respondent selects from Very unlikely, somewhat unlikely, Neither unlikely nor likely, somewhat likely, very likely)
- (a) Visit Israel in the future
  - (b) Purchase goods from Israel
  - (c) Share positive information about Israel with friends or family
  - (d) Send a letter to your congressperson in support of Israel
3. What is your overall opinion of Israel?
- (a) Very favorable
  - (b) Mostly favorable
  - (c) Mostly unfavorable
  - (d) Very unfavorable
4. In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians?
- (a) Israelis
  - (b) Palestinians
5. When thinking about Israel's military response to the Hamas attacks, would you say they are:
- (a) Fully justified
  - (b) Mostly justified
  - (c) Mostly unjustified
  - (d) Not justified at all
6. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the account that posted the instagram post you have seen earlier. (Respondent selects from Definitely disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, definitely agree)
- (a) *Treatment* is an expert
  - (b) *Treatment* is likeable
  - (c) *Treatment* is relatable
  - (d) *Treatment* is trustworthy
  - (e) *Treatment* is objective

- (f) *Treatment* is credible
  - (g) *Treatment* is believable
  - (h) *Treatment* is persuasive
7. Would you consider the instagram post propaganda?
- (a) Definitely not
  - (b) Probably not
  - (c) Maybe or maybe not
  - (d) Probably yes
  - (e) Definitely yes
8. How believable did you find the instagram post?
- (a) Not believable at all
  - (b) Probably not believable
  - (c) Maybe or maybe not believable
  - (d) Probably believable
  - (e) Definitely believable
9. Would you like to be redirected to *Treatment*'s page after completing this survey?
- (a) Yes
  - (b) No
10. Earlier in the survey you were presented with a post from an instagram account. Please select the account you saw:
- (a) @noatishby
  - (b) @israelinusa
  - (c) I don't recall

## F Pilot Results

### F.1 Graphical Results of Bivariate Models

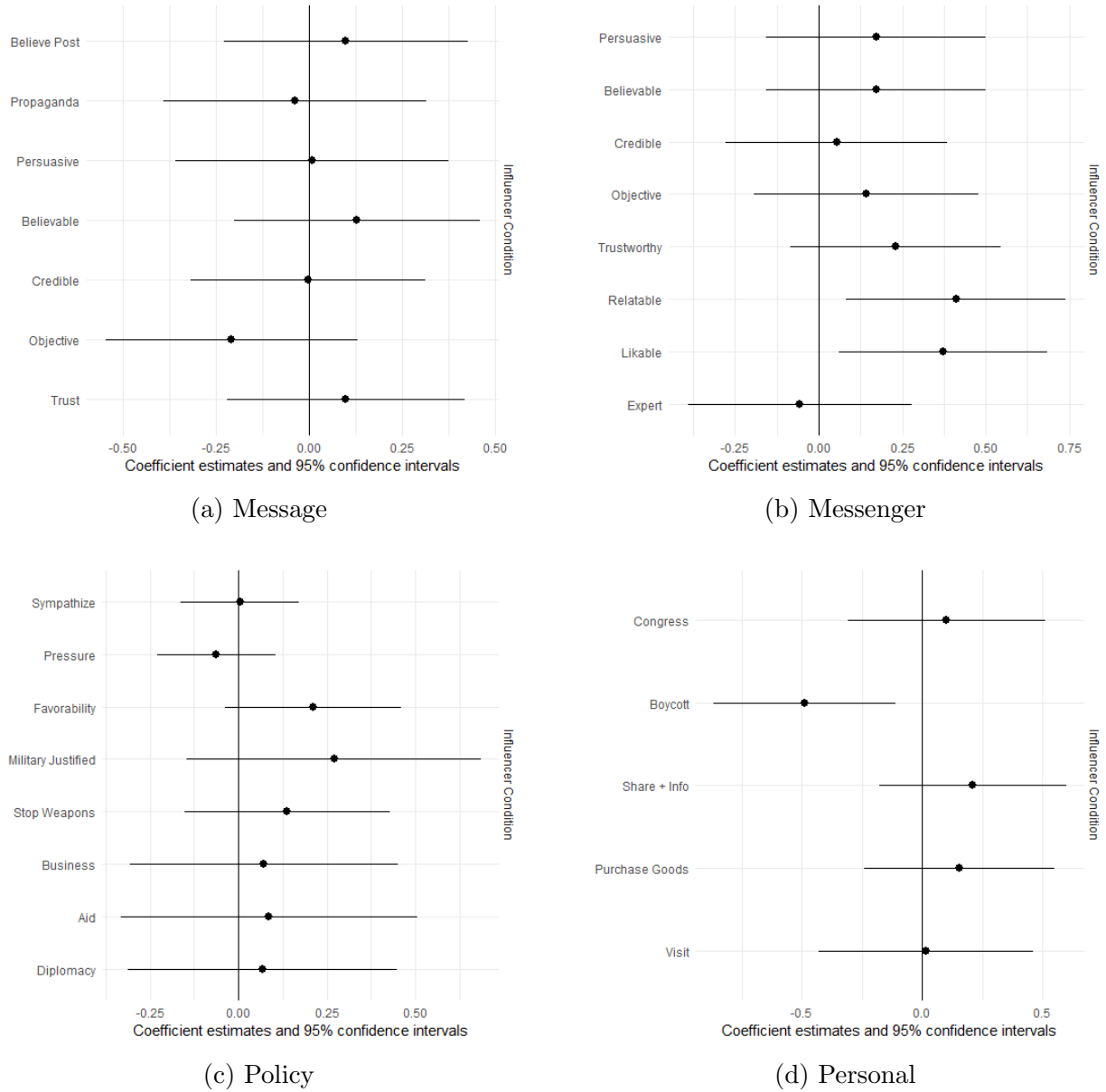


Figure F6: Bivariate model results for the four outcome measures. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

## F.2 Full Tabular Results

|         |                                                                     | influencer<br>(N=67) | state<br>(N=73)   | Overall<br>(N=140) |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| [0.3em] | <b>gender...19</b>                                                  |                      |                   |                    |
|         | Female                                                              | 35 (52.2%)           | 35 (47.9%)        | 70 (50.0%)         |
|         | Male                                                                | 32 (47.8%)           | 38 (52.1%)        | 70 (50.0%)         |
| [0.3em] | <b>as.factor(educ)</b>                                              |                      |                   |                    |
|         | College graduate                                                    | 13 (19.4%)           | 22 (30.1%)        | 35 (25.0%)         |
|         | Elementary or some high school                                      | 3 (4.5%)             | 0 (0%)            | 3 (2.1%)           |
|         | High school graduate/GED                                            | 20 (29.9%)           | 16 (21.9%)        | 36 (25.7%)         |
|         | Post-graduate degree                                                | 7 (10.4%)            | 9 (12.3%)         | 16 (11.4%)         |
|         | Some college/Associate's degree                                     | 19 (28.4%)           | 22 (30.1%)        | 41 (29.3%)         |
|         | Trade or vocational certification                                   | 5 (7.5%)             | 4 (5.5%)          | 9 (6.4%)           |
| [0.3em] | <b>as.factor(ideology)</b>                                          |                      |                   |                    |
|         | Conservative                                                        | 10 (14.9%)           | 15 (20.5%)        | 25 (17.9%)         |
|         | Extremely Conservative                                              | 6 (9.0%)             | 6 (8.2%)          | 12 (8.6%)          |
|         | Extremely Liberal                                                   | 5 (7.5%)             | 5 (6.8%)          | 10 (7.1%)          |
|         | Liberal                                                             | 10 (14.9%)           | 6 (8.2%)          | 16 (11.4%)         |
|         | Moderate, Middle of the Road                                        | 24 (35.8%)           | 26 (35.6%)        | 50 (35.7%)         |
|         | Slightly Conservative                                               | 7 (10.4%)            | 9 (12.3%)         | 16 (11.4%)         |
|         | Slightly Liberal                                                    | 5 (7.5%)             | 6 (8.2%)          | 11 (7.9%)          |
| [0.3em] | <b>as.factor(PID1)</b>                                              |                      |                   |                    |
|         | Democrat                                                            | 26 (38.8%)           | 18 (24.7%)        | 44 (31.4%)         |
|         | Independent                                                         | 15 (22.4%)           | 24 (32.9%)        | 39 (27.9%)         |
|         | Republican                                                          | 26 (38.8%)           | 31 (42.5%)        | 57 (40.7%)         |
| [0.3em] | <b>as.factor(Vote)</b>                                              |                      |                   |                    |
|         | Another candidate                                                   | 1 (1.5%)             | 2 (2.7%)          | 3 (2.1%)           |
|         | Donald Trump                                                        | 31 (46.3%)           | 34 (46.6%)        | 65 (46.4%)         |
|         | I did not vote in the 2024 presidential election                    | 11 (16.4%)           | 8 (11.0%)         | 19 (13.6%)         |
|         | Kamala Harris                                                       | 24 (35.8%)           | 29 (39.7%)        | 53 (37.9%)         |
| [0.3em] | <b>as.factor(employ)</b>                                            |                      |                   |                    |
|         | Employed Full Time                                                  | 29 (43.3%)           | 30 (41.1%)        | 59 (42.1%)         |
|         | Employed Part Time                                                  | 6 (9.0%)             | 11 (15.1%)        | 17 (12.1%)         |
|         | Homemaker                                                           | 3 (4.5%)             | 5 (6.8%)          | 8 (5.7%)           |
|         | Retired                                                             | 15 (22.4%)           | 18 (24.7%)        | 33 (23.6%)         |
|         | Self-Employed                                                       | 5 (7.5%)             | 3 (4.1%)          | 8 (5.7%)           |
|         | Unemployed                                                          | 9 (13.4%)            | 6 (8.2%)          | 15 (10.7%)         |
| [0.3em] | <b>as.factor(income)</b>                                            |                      |                   |                    |
|         | \$100,000-\$149,999                                                 | 11 (16.4%)           | 7 (9.6%)          | 18 (12.9%)         |
|         | \$150,000 or more                                                   | 3 (4.5%)             | 8 (11.0%)         | 11 (7.9%)          |
|         | \$25,000-\$49,999                                                   | 17 (25.4%)           | 21 (28.8%)        | 38 (27.1%)         |
|         | \$50,000-\$74,999                                                   | 11 (16.4%)           | 19 (26.0%)        | 30 (21.4%)         |
|         | \$75,000-\$99,999                                                   | 13 (19.4%)           | 9 (12.3%)         | 22 (15.7%)         |
|         | Less than \$25,000                                                  | 11 (16.4%)           | 9 (12.3%)         | 20 (14.3%)         |
|         | Prefer not to say                                                   | 1 (1.5%)             | 0 (0%)            | 1 (0.7%)           |
| [0.3em] | <b>as.numeric(age...28)</b>                                         |                      |                   |                    |
|         | Mean (SD)                                                           | 47.5 (17.5)          | 48.8 (18.6)       | 48.2 (18.0)        |
|         | Median [Min, Max]                                                   | 46.0 [18.0, 84.0]    | 48.0 [18.0, 83.0] | 48.0 [18.0, 84.0]  |
| [0.3em] | <b>as.factor(race)</b>                                              |                      |                   |                    |
|         | Asian                                                               | 1 (1.5%)             | 2 (2.7%)          | 3 (2.1%)           |
|         | Black or African American                                           | 14 (20.9%)           | 5 (6.8%)          | 19 (13.6%)         |
|         | Other                                                               | 4 (6.0%)             | 3 (4.1%)          | 7 (5.0%)           |
|         | Prefer not to say                                                   | 1 (1.5%)             | 0 (0%)            | 1 (0.7%)           |
|         | White or Caucasian                                                  | 44 (65.7%)           | 58 (79.5%)        | 102 (72.9%)        |
|         | White or Caucasian,American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native | 1 (1.5%)             | 2 (2.7%)          | 3 (2.1%)           |
|         | White or Caucasian,Asian                                            | 0 (0%)               | 1 (1.4%)          | 1 (0.7%)           |
|         | White or Caucasian,Black or African American                        | 0 (0%)               | 1 (1.4%)          | 1 (0.7%)           |
|         | White or Caucasian,Other                                            | 2 (3.0%)             | 1 (1.4%)          | 3 (2.1%)           |
| [0.3em] | <b>as.factor(religion)</b>                                          |                      |                   |                    |
|         | Agnostic                                                            | 2 (3.0%)             | 2 (2.7%)          | 4 (2.9%)           |
|         | Atheist                                                             | 3 (4.5%)             | 2 (2.7%)          | 5 (3.6%)           |
|         | Buddhist                                                            | 0 (0%)               | 1 (1.4%)          | 1 (0.7%)           |
|         | Christian                                                           | 44 (65.7%)           | 61 (83.6%)        | 105 (75.0%)        |
|         | Jewish                                                              | 1 (1.5%)             | 1 (1.4%)          | 2 (1.4%)           |
|         | Muslim                                                              | 1 (1.5%)             | 1 (1.4%)          | 2 (1.4%)           |
|         | Nothing in particular                                               | 12 (17.9%)           | 3 (4.1%)          | 15 (10.7%)         |
|         | Something else                                                      | 4 (6.0%)             | 2 (2.7%)          | 6 (4.3%)           |

Table F1: Balance Table

| Influencer Condition | Trust            | Objective         | Credible          | Believable       | Persuasive       | Propaganda        | Believe Post     |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
|                      | 0.099<br>(0.162) | -0.209<br>(0.171) | -0.003<br>(0.160) | 0.129<br>(0.167) | 0.008<br>(0.185) | -0.038<br>(0.179) | 0.099<br>(0.166) |
| Num.Obs.             | 140              | 140               | 140               | 140              | 140              | 140               | 140              |
| R2                   | 0.003            | 0.011             | 0.000             | 0.004            | 0.000            | 0.000             | 0.003            |
| R2 Adj.              | -0.005           | 0.004             | -0.007            | -0.003           | -0.007           | -0.007            | -0.005           |
| AIC                  | 389.2            | 404.5             | 384.8             | 397.8            | 426.5            | 416.8             | 395.7            |
| BIC                  | 398.1            | 413.3             | 393.6             | 406.7            | 435.3            | 425.6             | 404.6            |
| Log.Lik.             | -191.625         | -199.226          | -189.410          | -195.921         | -210.245         | -205.378          | -194.865         |
| F                    | 0.373            | 1.497             | 0.000             | 0.592            | 0.002            | 0.046             | 0.356            |
| RMSE                 | 0.95             | 1.00              | 0.94              | 0.98             | 1.09             | 1.05              | 0.97             |

+ p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

Table F2: Message Results (Bivariate)

| Influencer Condition | Trust            | Objective         | Credible          | Believable       | Persuasive        | Propaganda        | Believe Post     |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
|                      | 0.165<br>(0.211) | -0.160<br>(0.216) | -0.025<br>(0.203) | 0.068<br>(0.218) | -0.108<br>(0.216) | -0.081<br>(0.216) | 0.113<br>(0.218) |
| Num.Obs.             | 140              | 140               | 140               | 140              | 140               | 140               | 140              |
| R2                   | 0.261            | 0.312             | 0.291             | 0.257            | 0.404             | 0.360             | 0.250            |
| R2 Adj.              | -0.093           | -0.017            | -0.048            | -0.099           | 0.118             | 0.054             | -0.109           |
| AIC                  | 435.4            | 441.6             | 424.6             | 444.9            | 442.1             | 442.2             | 443.8            |
| BIC                  | 573.6            | 579.9             | 562.9             | 583.2            | 580.4             | 580.5             | 582.1            |
| Log.Lik.             | -170.677         | -173.807          | -165.303          | -175.467         | -174.048          | -174.122          | -174.923         |
| F                    | 0.736            | 0.947             | 0.859             | 0.721            | 1.415             | 1.177             | 0.696            |
| RMSE                 | 0.82             | 0.84              | 0.79              | 0.85             | 0.84              | 0.84              | 0.84             |

+ p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

Table F3: Message Results (with Controls)

| Influencer Condition | Expert            | Likable           | Relatable         | Trustworthy      | Objective        | Credible         | Believable       | Persuasive       |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                      | -0.057<br>(0.169) | 0.372*<br>(0.158) | 0.411*<br>(0.166) | 0.230<br>(0.160) | 0.143<br>(0.170) | 0.054<br>(0.168) | 0.171<br>(0.165) | 0.171<br>(0.165) |
| Num.Obs.             | 140               | 140               | 140               | 140              | 140              | 140              | 140              | 140              |
| R2                   | 0.001             | 0.039             | 0.043             | 0.015            | 0.005            | 0.001            | 0.008            | 0.008            |
| R2 Adj.              | -0.006            | 0.032             | 0.036             | 0.008            | -0.002           | -0.006           | 0.001            | 0.001            |
| AIC                  | 401.2             | 382.2             | 395.4             | 384.8            | 402.6            | 398.5            | 394.9            | 394.9            |
| BIC                  | 410.0             | 391.0             | 404.2             | 393.6            | 411.4            | 407.3            | 403.7            | 403.7            |
| Log.Lik.             | -197.586          | -188.088          | -194.682          | -189.411         | -198.293         | -196.259         | -194.458         | -194.458         |
| F                    | 0.115             | 5.539             | 6.143             | 2.079            | 0.709            | 0.105            | 1.073            | 1.073            |
| RMSE                 | 0.99              | 0.93              | 0.97              | 0.94             | 1.00             | 0.98             | 0.97             | 0.97             |

+ p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

Table F4: Messenger Results (bivariate)

| Influencer Condition | Trust             | Likable           | Relatable         | Trustworthy      | Objective        | Credible         | Believable       | Persuasive       |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                      | -0.153<br>(0.200) | 0.391*<br>(0.186) | 0.361+<br>(0.186) | 0.251<br>(0.205) | 0.054<br>(0.205) | 0.125<br>(0.211) | 0.151<br>(0.210) | 0.151<br>(0.210) |
| Num.Obs.             | 140               | 140               | 140               | 140              | 140              | 140              | 140              | 140              |
| R2                   | 0.390             | 0.417             | 0.474             | 0.290            | 0.366            | 0.310            | 0.299            | 0.299            |
| R2 Adj.              | 0.098             | 0.139             | 0.222             | -0.050           | 0.062            | -0.020           | -0.037           | -0.037           |
| AIC                  | 420.0             | 400.0             | 399.6             | 427.0            | 427.6            | 434.6            | 434.3            | 434.3            |
| BIC                  | 558.3             | 538.3             | 537.8             | 565.3            | 565.9            | 572.9            | 572.5            | 572.5            |
| Log.Lik.             | -163.016          | -153.022          | -152.792          | -166.500         | -166.800         | -170.296         | -170.130         | -170.130         |
| F                    | 1.337             | 1.497             | 1.881             | 0.853            | 1.204            | 0.940            | 0.891            | 0.891            |
| RMSE                 | 0.78              | 0.72              | 0.72              | 0.79             | 0.80             | 0.82             | 0.82             | 0.82             |

+ p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

Table F5: Messenger Results (with Controls)

|                      | Diplomacy        | Aid              | Business         | Stop Weapons     | Military Justified | Favorability      | Pressure          | Sympathize       |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Influencer Condition | 0.068<br>(0.193) | 0.086<br>(0.212) | 0.072<br>(0.192) | 0.138<br>(0.147) | 0.270<br>(0.210)   | 0.211+<br>(0.126) | -0.063<br>(0.084) | 0.004<br>(0.085) |
| Num.Obs.             | 140              | 140              | 140              | 140              | 140                | 140               | 140               | 140              |
| R2                   | 0.001            | 0.001            | 0.001            | 0.006            | 0.012              | 0.020             | 0.004             | 0.000            |
| R2 Adj.              | -0.006           | -0.006           | -0.006           | -0.001           | 0.005              | 0.013             | -0.003            | -0.007           |
| AIC                  | 437.4            | 464.5            | 436.0            | 362.7            | 461.7              | 317.8             | 206.3             | 207.8            |
| BIC                  | 446.3            | 473.3            | 444.8            | 371.5            | 470.5              | 326.6             | 215.2             | 216.6            |
| Log.Lik.             | -215.719         | -229.243         | -214.996         | -178.332         | -227.825           | -155.908          | -100.164          | -100.906         |
| F                    | 0.127            | 0.166            | 0.140            | 0.877            | 1.656              | 2.812             | 0.554             | 0.003            |
| RMSE                 | 1.13             | 1.24             | 1.12             | 0.86             | 1.23               | 0.74              | 0.49              | 0.50             |

+ p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

Table F6: Policy Results (bivariate)

|                      | Diplomacy        | Aid              | Business         | Stop Weapons     | Military Justified | Favorability     | Pressure          | Sympathize       |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Influencer Condition | 0.260<br>(0.224) | 0.279<br>(0.236) | 0.159<br>(0.217) | 0.080<br>(0.167) | 0.371<br>(0.259)   | 0.230<br>(0.146) | -0.149<br>(0.104) | 0.050<br>(0.104) |
| Num.Obs.             | 140              | 140              | 140              | 140              | 140                | 140              | 140               | 140              |
| R2                   | 0.408            | 0.459            | 0.437            | 0.444            | 0.341              | 0.420            | 0.336             | 0.336            |
| R2 Adj.              | 0.124            | 0.201            | 0.168            | 0.177            | 0.026              | 0.143            | 0.018             | 0.019            |
| AIC                  | 452.2            | 466.5            | 443.6            | 369.4            | 492.9              | 332.3            | 237.6             | 238.4            |
| BIC                  | 590.5            | 604.8            | 581.9            | 507.7            | 631.1              | 470.6            | 375.8             | 376.7            |
| Log.Lik.             | -179.101         | -186.263         | -174.825         | -137.720         | -199.427           | -119.152         | -71.785           | -72.213          |
| F                    | 1.439            | 1.776            | 1.623            | 1.666            | 1.083              | 1.515            | 1.057             | 1.058            |
| RMSE                 | 0.87             | 0.92             | 0.84             | 0.65             | 1.01               | 0.57             | 0.40              | 0.41             |

+ p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

Table F7: Policy Results (with Controls)

|                      | Visit            | Purchase Goods   | Share + Info     | Boycott            | Congress         |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Influencer Condition | 0.015<br>(0.226) | 0.155<br>(0.199) | 0.212<br>(0.197) | -0.489*<br>(0.192) | 0.102<br>(0.207) |
| Num.Obs.             | 140              | 140              | 140              | 140                | 140              |
| R2                   | 0.000            | 0.004            | 0.008            | 0.045              | 0.002            |
| R2 Adj.              | -0.007           | -0.003           | 0.001            | 0.038              | -0.005           |
| AIC                  | 481.8            | 447.2            | 443.7            | 436.2              | 458.4            |
| BIC                  | 490.6            | 456.0            | 452.5            | 445.0              | 467.2            |
| Log.Lik.             | -237.886         | -220.602         | -218.851         | -215.079           | -226.192         |
| F                    | 0.004            | 0.601            | 1.158            | 6.525              | 0.240            |
| RMSE                 | 1.32             | 1.17             | 1.16             | 1.12               | 1.22             |

+ p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

Table F8: Personal Results (bivariate)

|                      | Visit            | Purchase Goods   | Share + Info     | Boycott              | Congress         |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Influencer Condition | 0.171<br>(0.270) | 0.265<br>(0.245) | 0.126<br>(0.232) | -0.797***<br>(0.230) | 0.110<br>(0.239) |
| Num.Obs.             | 140              | 140              | 140              | 140                  | 140              |
| R2                   | 0.376            | 0.343            | 0.397            | 0.400                | 0.421            |
| R2 Adj.              | 0.077            | 0.028            | 0.108            | 0.112                | 0.143            |
| AIC                  | 503.8            | 477.1            | 462.1            | 459.2                | 470.2            |
| BIC                  | 642.1            | 615.3            | 600.4            | 597.4                | 608.5            |
| Log.Lik.             | -204.911         | -191.533         | -184.057         | -182.583             | -188.106         |
| F                    | 1.257            | 1.089            | 1.374            | 1.391                | 1.517            |
| RMSE                 | 1.05             | 0.95             | 0.90             | 0.89                 | 0.93             |

+ p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

Table F9: Personal Results (with Controls)