

What draws politicians' attention.

An experimental study of issue framing effects on individual political elites.

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Abstract

What politicians devote attention to, is an important question as political attention is a precondition of policy change. We use an experimental design to study politicians' attention to incoming information and deploy it among large samples of elected politicians in three countries: Belgium, Canada, and Israel. Our sample includes party leaders, ministers and regular members of parliament. These elites were confronted with short bits of summary information framed in various ways and were then asked how likely it was that they would read the full information. We test for three frames: conflict, political conflict, and responsibility. We find that framing moderates the effect of messages on politicians' attention to information. Politicians react more strongly (i.e. they devote more attention) to political conflict frames than to non-political conflict frames and to political responsibility attributions than to non-political responsibility attributions. Conflict frames attract more attention than consensus frames only from members of opposition parties. Political conflict frames attract more attention from government party politicians. These effects occur largely across issues and across the three countries.

Keywords

framing; political elites; experimental design; comparative research; attention; information-processing; agenda-setting

Politicians face enormous amounts of information. Being society's main problem solvers, they are bombarded with endless streams of explicit or implicit societal information signaling problems, solutions, and support or opposition for various actions. Moreover, they are exposed to this while under conditions of accountability, where they are (theoretically, at least) rewarded or punished according to how well they process and act upon this information. Like all humans, politicians have limited cognitive capacities, time, and resources (Simon, 1985). To avoid information overload, elites have to be highly selective (Walgrave & Dejaeghere, 2016). Since processing information is a zero-sum game and attention a scarce resource in politics, attention becomes politically consequential, for both politicians and those trying to signal problems to them (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993). Since politicians are ultimately the sources of legal and political change in a society, any change in policy and the status quo implies preceding elite attention. It follows then that *what draws politicians' attention* is an important question.

The study of political attention attribution is growing (see for example: Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). Many scholars from the 'political agenda-setting' subfield have tackled the attentional puzzle in politics. This work has taught us a lot about the importance of institutions, electoral systems, coalitions, outside events, and elections (for example: Green-Pedersen & Walgrave, 2014). There are three limitations of this existing work, however.

First, most of this work on political agenda-setting deals with institutions, or with parties being the most disaggregated unit of analysis. No studies deal with *individual* elites. Yet, only individuals can devote attention to something—institutions represent the aggregation of these individuals. Perhaps partially as a consequence of this institutional skew, the agenda literature is not very strong in explaining why some issues gain attention at a certain moment in time. The main message of the highly influential punctuated equilibrium theory of agenda-setting operating on the aggregate level, for example, is simply that it is likely that some issues will explode on the agenda at some time and that this will have large policy consequences. In their seminal book, Baumgartner and Jones (2005) argue that what they call 'point predictions' are very hard to make based on their institutional approach.

Second, agenda work has typically treated issue attention as the salience of an issue on an agenda. Classic measures are the number of congressional hearings or parliamentary questions on an issue, the number of sentences in the state of the union speech devoted to an issue, or the size of budget appropriations for an issue. While agenda scholars acknowledge that the meaning of an issue matters—for example: when attention regarding an issue spikes most of the time also the policy image regarding the issue is challenged (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993)—they have not dealt a lot with the *framing* of policy issues. A vast literature on framing in psychology (e.g. Tversky & Kahneman, 1986) and communication science (e.g. Scheufele, 1999) has shown that how a matter is presented (or framed) affects how and whether people will address the issue. In other words: framing has an effect on attention. There has been some rare agenda work dealing with the framing of specific cases, see for example the book on the death penalty by Baumgartner and colleagues (2008). But systematic work on how the framing of issues impacts the political attention devoted to those issues is largely lacking. Again, this is partly because analysis occurs at an aggregated level, where different frames may be differently experienced by different politicians.

Third, when dealing with institutional attention, political agenda scholars typically operationalize attention as real behavior: questions asked, bills submitted, speeches given, etc. Yet, for individuals, attention does not equal action. Attention is instead mostly a *cognitive* phenomenon. Psychologists define attention as perceptual selectivity or focusing one's cognitive resources on one thing while ignoring other signals from the environment (Yantis, 2000). Attention precedes action (Ajzen, 1991). One has to cognitively attend to something in order to be able to act on it (except for hard-wired reflexes). Extant agenda work has focused on the institutional and behavioral consequence of *preceding* (individual) cognitive attention. But acting politically happens in a strongly constrained environment where the incentives or hindrances to act differ across positions. Because of its exclusive focus on formal action, the current literature on agenda-setting has not been able to distinguish the generically human, cognitive drivers of attention from the institutional drivers and barriers to political behavior. In other words, we do not know to what extent the agenda dynamics occurring in institutions

are the consequence of the fact that institutions are being manned by politicians or by their being institutions.

This paper tackles those three matters. It deals with individual elites, examines how the framing of issues directs their attention, and it operationalizes attention cognitively. We draw upon a novel experimental design to study politicians' attention to incoming information. The experimental subjects are elected politicians—party leaders, ministers and regular members of parliament—in three countries: Belgium, Canada, and Israel. Confronted with short bits of summary information differently framed they were asked how likely it was that they would read the full information. The messages contained one of three frames or their opposite: a conflict (or consensus) frame, a political (or non-political) conflict frame and a political (or non-political) responsibility frame. Results show that framing moderates the attention effect of the signals. Across the board, politicians reacted more strongly (i.e. they devote more attention) to signals with political responsibility attributions and with political conflict—although the effect of the latter frame applies to Belgium only. Furthermore, politicians from opposition parties react more strongly to conflict than to consensus framing; while politicians from government parties deem consensus framing equally newsworthy. Government politicians react stronger to political conflict than opposition politicians. The underlying issue does not matter.

Framing Political Issues

In addition to seeking shelter behind a wall of staffers who take over part of their selection and sorting out tasks, politicians rely on heuristics, shortcuts that can be easily applied to decide whether to actually attend to some information or not (Walgrave & Dejaeghere, 2016). For example, recent work by Miler (2007, 2009) about the U.S. Congress shows how congressmen's aides, due to the overload of information they are confronted with, do not look at the full information about their constituency but are drawn to specific bits of (biased) information. We argue that these heuristics that help politicians to select information are triggered by the presence of certain frames in the information to which politicians are exposed. The core of our argument is then that how a piece of information is

framed, increases (or decreases) the attention this piece of information gets. Or, in other words, framing moderates the attention effect of information signals on politicians.

In communication science, framing (of media messages) is defined as journalists selecting or emphasizing certain aspects of information by making these aspects more salient in a text or message (Entman, 1993). This definition of framing is very different from the conceptualization mostly used by cognitive psychologists. Psychologists talk about *equivalence* frames and investigate the effects of information that has an identical content but that presents this content by looking at it from another perspective. The best well-known example is talking about the share of people that will survive a disaster or about the share of people that will die of it (see for example: Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Even if the meaning of the two messages is entirely equivalent, people are differently affected by how the information is presented. We do not engage with that work in this paper. When we use the concept of framing here, we use related work in communication science that draws on a much less strict and precise definition of framing. A large body of work in communications has followed Entman's generic definition saying that framing consists of emphasizing certain aspects of information by selecting these aspects or by making them more salient (for an overview see Scheufele & Iyengar, 2012). Some have therefore called these types of frames *emphasis* frames (see for example: Chong & Druckman, 2007). If certain aspects are selected into a message by a communicator while other aspects are not selected to be part of the message this entails that the information that is given differs. The consumer of the information may get a fundamentally different perception of the situation or reality underlying the information—depending on the way in which the information is framed. In other words, most of the framing literature in communications actually addresses how different *content* of information affects peoples cognitions, attitudes and information (Leeper & Slothuus, 2016). It is in that sense, and in line with most work in communications (see for example the foundational work by Iyengar, 1991), that we will use the concept of framing in this study.

Studies in communication have taught us that by selecting and or emphasizing certain bits of information—by framing it—a news consumer's attention is drawn to these aspects potentially leading

to persuasive, cognitive or behavioral effects. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) distinguish between issue-specific frames and generic news frames. Generic frames are applicable to a wide variety of issues and stories, they form stereotypical ways of making sense of reality. Issue-specific frames are applicable to some (or one) issues only. The authors distinguish five generic frames: human interest, morality, economic consequence, conflict and responsibility frames. Because they are broadly applicable to any policy issue and because they are probably pervasive in the information elites receive, we focus here on these generic frames. More concretely, we zoom in on conflict and responsibility frames. We reckon these two generic frames have the highest relevance for political elites because they directly appeal to the key task politicians have: deliberation in case of conflict and being responsible for solving problems. We acknowledge that some of the other generic frames may bear political relevance as well, for instance the economic consequence frame. Yet, we expect that this frame resonates especially with elites that adhere to a certain political ideology and therefore opted for the two frames that we expect to influence politicians across the board.

The literature on framing effects provides many examples of how varying news frames cause people to interpret an underlying reality in different ways (e.g. Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Here we are interested in frames' effect on individual politicians' *attention* to a signal. We do not investigate to what extent a frame makes politicians think differently about an issue. In other words, we are interested in how frames reinforce or decrease the attention effect of a signal. Do issues framed in a certain way elicit more attention from politicians compared to when they are framed in another way? Our dependent variable is attention, not persuasion or knowledge. We are not the first to look at this—although we are the first to do this with elite politicians. Work by Valkenburg et al. (1999) examined 'recall' of stories as the dependent variable in an experimental framing study with citizens (see for example also: Kuvaas & Kaufmann, 2004; Otieno, Spada, & Renkl, 2013). Recall is the consequence of past attention; only when people attend to information does it get stored in memory (Lang, 2000). So, by measuring recall one indirectly measures attention. Our measurement strategy is different. As we will explain in the next section, we expose elites to bits of information and then ask them whether they

would attend to the full information or not. While more explicitly tapping attention, the downside is that our dependent variable gauges the *intention* to attend and not actual attention. The political agenda-setting literature holds that attention by elites is a precondition of policy making, and attention is mostly gauged at the institutional level by observing actual behavior. Here we study the cognitive attention by individual elites that, in many cases, precedes their actions in institutional settings.

We formulate three concrete hypotheses relating to the effect of news frames on politicians' attention.¹ First, information can be framed as a conflict or not. Conflict frames emphasize disagreement among people or institutions regarding an issue (Lengauer, Esser, & Berganza, 2012). There seems to be an agreement among scholars that news is very often framed in terms of conflict; conflict has a high news value and attracts the audience's attention (see for example: Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992). For example, longitudinal content analyses conducted in Belgium showed that up to 60% of the stories on an issue (e.g. state reform and government) are framed in a conflictual way (Sevenans & Vliegenthart, 2016). More generally, a good deal of work has found that conflict framing of political news has an effect on citizens. Conflictual framing increases the news' impact on the public agenda (Wanta & Hu, 1993). Other work has pointed out that conflict framing may have a mobilizing effect on voters (Schuck, Vliegenthart, & De Vreese, 2014). This literature does not provide us with a clue as to whether conflict is equally attractive for elites as it is for citizens. On the one hand, as elites are more purposeful and rational information users, we may expect them to be less sensitive to news framing in general. On the other hand, as politics essentially is about conflicts we may expect politicians to be especially attentive to bits of information that signal conflict. Such information is more applicable to the daily partisan game consisting of permanent conflict between political competitors. This is basically what Kingdon (1973) found when examining US congressmen's voting decisions. Without conflict congressmen vote 'automatically' and follow the people around them but when they perceive conflict on an issue they pay more attention and take more time to make up their mind. They inform

¹ All hypotheses laid out in this paper were generated *ex ante*—while designing the experiments. They were, however, not officially pre-registered.

themselves better before making a vote decision. Also a recent quantitative study by Sevenans and Vliegenthart (2016) found that conflict attracts political attention: when media coverage of an issue is framed conflictually, the chance increases that Belgian and Dutch MPs will ask questions about the issue in Parliament. Hence, our first hypothesis: *H1: Information framed as a conflict draws more attention from political elites than information not framed as a conflict.*

Conflicts can be defined in many ways. That people disagree does not by definition mean that the disagreement is political or between political actors. *Political* conflicts are especially relevant for elected representatives. Such conflict already exists within the political system. This proves that there is something at stake, and so politicians might have incentives to differentiate themselves on the issue (Sevenans & Vliegenthart, 2016). Moreover, the chance that the conflict will lead to fall out affecting a politician's own position, strategy or goals, increases as the conflict is political. There is recent work showing that politicians do prefer political news stories above non-political news stories (Sevenans, Walgrave, & Epping, 2016). By combining the work on conflict framing and on the political news bias of elites, we qualify our first hypothesis and formulate a second hypothesis: *H2: Information framed as a political conflict draws more attention from political elites than information that is framed as a non-political conflict.*

There is a good deal of work on responsibility framing; especially the work of Iyengar and colleagues (see for example: 1991, 1996) on episodic and thematic framing deserves mentioning here. This work does not address the effects of explicit responsibility framing, though; the basic finding is that implicit episodic or thematic news frames lead to explicit responsibility attributions among the audience. Moreover, this previous research deals with the effect of the news on citizens and does not address how elites process the news. Recent work by Gunnar Thesen (2011, 2013) in Denmark does directly examine the expectation that news that contains explicit responsibility attributions—political actors are held responsible for the fact that something goes wrong—leads to stronger reactions by political elites than news that does not contain such attributions. Thesen's dependent variable is parliamentary questioning, which is institutional political action. His underlying claim is that political

responsibility attributions draw politicians' attention which then leads to formal action in parliament. Negative issue developments for which the government is blamed are particularly relevant both for opposition and for government politicians, he says. For opposition elites these signals offer an opportunity to criticize government policy or inactivity and to generate negative government attention, while government elites tend to respond to responsibility framing in order to avoid blame, to defend the choices made or to propose new policy measures. *H3: Information framed as a political responsibility draws more attention from political elites than information that is framed as a non-political responsibility.*

So far, we formulated our hypotheses as if the framing effects would apply equally to all politicians irrespective of their role or position within the political system. They probably do not. In most countries, the key difference among politicians is between politicians being part of a government party and those affiliated with an opposition party. Government and opposition politicians play a different role, have different goals, have different informational resources at their disposal etc. Therefore, we expect them to be differently affected by the three frames we are considering in this paper. In a nutshell, we anticipate that all three frames have a larger effect on opposition party members than on government party representatives. Conflict, political conflict and political responsibility all challenge the government to some extent. All risk to lead to negative fallout that can damage the government. We expect that it are those politicians who would like to see the government battered and criticized to be attuned to this information. This leads to our fourth hypothesis consisting of three sub-hypotheses. *H4a: The effect of conflict framing on the attention of political elites is larger for opposition than for government elites. H4b: The effect of political conflict framing on the attention of political elites is larger for opposition than for government elites. H4c: The effect of political responsibility framing on the attention of political elites is larger for opposition than for government elites.*

Data and Methods

The framing-effects-on-the-public literature in communication science is increasingly dominated by experimental work. Earlier work relied on content analyses combined with population surveys but this raised problems both of self-selection of media and unobserved heterogeneity across subjects or institutions. People select themselves into being exposed to a certain media message—in this case: a frame—that they like. It is hard to speak of a media ‘effect’ if it is people’s pre-exposure beliefs that make them consume the media signal or not (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). Experimental designs with random assignment to exposure can solve this problem.

The literature on media—or broader: information—effects on political *elites* not only deals with a self-selection problem—politicians as well are expected to search for information that confirms their existing predispositions (Calvert, 1985). The additional problem specific to elites is that they also *make* media information. Elites form primary sources of information for journalists, especially about politics. Wolfsfeld (2011) speaks about the Politics-Media-Politics cycle whereby politicians react to media stories they themselves initiated. In other words, when in aggregate studies scholars find politicians to react to information in the media (by for example asking questions) we cannot be sure that the information these elites apparently reacted on was not first ‘planted’ in the media by politicians themselves (see the literature on close journalist-elite relations and the use of press leaks by elites, Davis, 2009). So, there is a second, and probably more grave, endogeneity concern students of elite information-processing need to consider.

The solution is the same as with the public effect studies: using experimental designs, subjects cannot pick their information stimuli and they cannot play a role in creating the information. Yet, as far as we know, no study exists that experimentally manipulates the information elites were exposed to (for an exception within the psychological stream of equivalence framing studies, see: Sheffer, Loewen, Soroka, Walgrave, & Sheaffer, 2015). The reason is very simple: it is hard to get access to elites and, if one does, it is maybe even harder to subject elites to experimental treatment (Druckman & Lupia, 2012). As we explain further in this section, for this study we managed to actually implement a survey-embedded experiment on a large group of national and regional political elites.

Concretely, we report in this paper a framing experiment, embedded in a survey with political elites in Belgium, Canada and Israel. Those countries are very different from each other in terms of institutional context. There are, for instance, large differences with regards to their electoral system, leading to different representational role conceptions (Blomgren & Rozenberg, 2012). The Canadian system, with its small electoral districts and first-past-the-post logic, tends to produce dyadic representation. Israel is on the other side of the spectrum, having a large national constituency and extreme proportionality that leads to a weak link between representatives and citizens. Belgium is, with its moderate district size and proportionality, an in-between-case. Those differences lead to differences in party dynamics: the Israeli system produces, for instance, much higher polarization and party competition than the Canadian one (Dalton, 2008). Our country selection constitutes a most-different-systems-design. If we find framing effects occur across countries, we can conclude that these effects are robust and are probably generalizable across many different other countries in the world as well.

Data collection ran from March 2015 to September 2015. In the three countries, we asked collaboration from politicians holding office at the federal level or at one of the most important regional levels in Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia) or Canada (Ontario). We sought collaboration from politicians occupying different political positions, ranging from members of parliament over party leaders to ministers. In Belgium (N = 269 out of 413 politicians) and Israel (N = 65 out of 159 politicians), the entire population of politicians was contacted and asked to participate. In Canada, all politicians were contacted as well except for those who refused to participate in a previous round of interviews in 2013 (N = 76 out of 278 politicians; while total population consists of 416 politicians). In total, 410 politicians have participated in our research—about 51% of the population of 811 contacted politicians. Details are provided in Table 1 below.

<Table 1 around here>

Response rates vary considerably across countries but are all pretty high compared to similar comparative elite survey efforts (see for example: Deschouwer & Depauw, 2014). Our response is

lower among, what we would call, top politicians, being party leaders and ministers, than among ‘ordinary’ Members of Parliament. Also, politicians of large parties tended to turn down our interview request more often than politicians representing small parties, but there are no different response rates of government versus opposition party members. Finally, male and more popular (votes) politicians were slightly more willing to collaborate (all these data can be provided upon request). There is no way for us to test whether these biases in our sample have affected the results we present below. We do not have any information about how the non-surveyed politicians deal with information. It could be that the non-participants are even more pressed for time than those who did grant an interview meeting, for example, and this could have an effect on how they select information.

After contacting the politicians via telephone, a face-to-face interview with a researcher was scheduled. The first part of the interview consisted of completing a survey on a laptop computer the interviewer brought to the interview. Politicians were informed that the survey gauged their information processing behavior. Politicians then by themselves completed the survey on a laptop computer (the survey part lasted approximately 35 minutes). The second part of the interview consisted of some in-depth follow-up questions.

The experiment discussed in this paper was part of the formal survey part of the interview. Respondents were presented with fictional pieces of information. In particular, respondents were presented with a news story title and a source. For example: *“Article in The Globe and Mail: Research (UBC) shows that stricter downpayment requirements prevent many families from buying property.”* They were then asked how likely it was that they would read the full story.

We did *not* use a cover story or diversion. The introductory text leading up to the experiments explicitly informed the politicians of the objective of the exercise: collecting expert opinions about the usefulness of different *fictional* pieces of information. Naturally, we did not reveal the exact frames we were testing nor the content of our manipulations. Although fictional, we are confident that our experiments were realistic. This was enhanced by the use of existing sources of information in the news story title—such as www.deredactie.be, the online news platform of the Flemish public

broadcaster—and the inclusion of real organizations in the titles—such as the European Central Bank (ECB) or the Canadian spy agency CSEC.

The stimuli we created reflect our hypotheses. For each of our three hypotheses, and thus for each of the three frames we test in this study, we developed stimuli regarding three different issues. Each respondent read and rated 9 story titles; he or she was confronted with nine combinations of issues and frames. So, per respondent we have 9 trials (3 frames x 3 issues). The issues we used are very dissimilar; they vary on the competence level to which they belong (federal versus regional), on their degree of salience (high versus low) and on the issue domain to which they belong (mobility, culture, finance, justice, and so forth). The goal of testing each hypothesis three times, each time with another issue, was to increase the generalizability of our results. We wanted to check whether a frame elicits attention irrespective of the underlying issue. Some of the stimuli differ a little between countries. We tried to choose issues with similar saliency for each country, rather than literally translating the stimuli, whereby some stimuli would be more salient or credible in one country than in another. For an overview of the full stimuli in all three countries, we refer to the tables in Online Material 1.

Each trial consisted of two treatments, one with a certain frame present and the other with the opposite frame. We opted for a balanced design in order to make sure that the frame and the issue were orthogonal and to test each frame on each subject. For the conflict frame, for instance, one of the Belgian sentences read “*Agreement* in the cultural sector about the distribution of culture subsidies”; this is the consensus condition. The corresponding conflict condition (of course applied to different respondents) was: “*Disagreement* in the cultural sector about the distribution of culture subsidies”. For the political responsibility frame, the following example comes from Canada. One title said: “Criminality in prisons often unpunished *due to lack of evidence*”; this is the non-political responsibility condition. The political responsibility condition reads: “Criminality in prisons often unpunished *due to weak government policy*”. The only difference between the two story titles is the framing, being the mentioning of conflict or political responsibility. These frames, naturally, change

the content of the information that is captured in the title and so we are not dealing with equivalence framing but with emphasis framing in our experiment.

As mentioned above, each treatment also provided the name of the (realistic) source that produced the information, for example the newsfeed from a news agency, an e-mail from an interest group etc. This increased the realism of a treatment. Because the source of the information is not part of our interest in this study, it was always kept constant in the corresponding treatments.

The experiment had a between-subjects design. That is, each politician had to rate 1 out of 2 treatments, of each of the 9 frame-issue combinations. The assignment of treatments to politicians was random². As a consequence, for the conflict frame hypothesis, for example, a politician might have had to evaluate the consensus frame for issue 1 and issue 3 and the conflict frame for issue 2. Overall, all frame-issue combinations were shown to the politicians in a randomly assigned order.

The dependent variable is the response of a politician after each treatment to the following question: *“Can you indicate for this piece of information how likely it is, on a scale from 0 to 10, that you would take a look at the full information?”* They were told that a full document was attached to the summary information—the source and title they were confronted with—and to indicate how likely it would be that they would read the full information. Our measure thus grasps the planned attention of politicians to a piece of information. We believe the external validity of this set-up to be high. Our experiments resemble how politicians process information in real life. Indeed, some of them offered spontaneously when they started the experiment that this is indeed how they allocate their attention: scan a summary or title and then decide to consume the full information or not. Since politicians’ time is scarce, they decide to invest more information-processing resources based on small bits of information. We think this design is well-suited to measure the effect of framing on attention as it triggers the heuristics elites (as well as ordinary people) are using on a daily basis. We acknowledge

² This resulted in balanced experimental conditions when controlling for socio-demographic factors like gender, age, country, years of experience, political function (MP/party leader/minister) and partisan membership (government/opposition). For all nine experiments, we regressed the experimental condition upon those variables. None of the models was significant in its entirety. For the full models, see Online Material 2.

that measuring attention by means of only one item has drawbacks, and ideally we would have had a scale consisting of multiple items. Due to political elites' time constraints, we decided to keep the survey as short as possible. Note also that our measure grasps intended attention and not attention itself. Since our procedure came across as realistic we believe it is a good proxy of the real attentiveness of politicians. So, all in all, we are confident that our single measure grasps attention allocation relatively well.

We analyze our hypotheses separately. Each model contains data from three trials (same frame, different issues). Our multilevel models predict politicians' attention (intention to consume full information) for the short bits of information. Our independent variables of interest are the frame in our experimental manipulation and a politicians' partisan membership (government/opposition), but we also include issue dummies (fixed effects) to control for the possibility that, within one experiment, some issues get on average more attention from politicians than other issues. Our primary interest lies not in those issue differences; we look at how framing affects politicians' attention *within* each issue. Moreover, we include country dummies as a non-experimental between-subjects factor to test whether politicians in one country systematically pay more attention to the stimuli than politicians in the other countries. By running additional models with two-way and three-way interaction effects between the experimental conditions on the one hand, and the issue/country dummies on the other hand, we also check whether the effect of the experimental condition applies across issues and countries. To control for the fact that we have three observations for each politician (three different issues), we included random effects on the level of the individual politicians in our models.³

Results

The full regression models are reported in the tables in Appendix; we marked the relevant cells in the tables in gray. The summary figures below visualize the effect of the different framing conditions by

³ Data and do-file for replication can be found on the Political Behavior Dataverse (see <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/B3YH3T>).

showing the predicted probabilities. The N-value of the three models is around 1,200 as each of the 410 politicians has been confronted with three trials for each hypothesis and we have a small number of missing observations on each experiment.

Figure 1 compares politicians' attention for information framed as conflict with their attention for information framed as consensus. Under a conflict frame, the likelihood that a politician will attend to the full information is 5.87 on a 0 to 10 scale; under a consensus frame it is lower at 5.62 (predicted probabilities from Model 1 in Table A1). So, the effect of conflict framing is positive, but (just) not significant ($b = .25$; $S.E. = .15$; $p = .089$). Hypothesis 1 must be rejected. The strength of this effect does not differ between countries and there are also no issue differences (see Model 3 and 4 in Table A1). It is not the case that politicians are systematically attracted to issues that are framed in a conflictual way; at least not across the board.

<Figure 1 about here>

<Figure 2 about here>

Figure 2 provides the test for Hypothesis 4a. We see it is confirmed. The effect of conflict framing differs significantly between politicians from government parties and politicians from opposition parties (interaction effect: $b = -.53$; $S.E. = .29$; $p = .071$; see Model 2 in Table A1); the main effect of conflict framing becomes significant for the reference group, that is, for opposition members. Members from the opposition *are* clearly more responsive to conflict framing: their likelihood to attend to the full information increases from 5.85 to 6.38 on a 0 to 10 point scale when information is framed in terms of conflict instead of consensus. It is politicians from government parties who are not sensitive to this effect. This might be due to the fact that we compare conflict with explicit *consensus*, whereas much of the existing literature studied conflict framing in comparison to 'non-conflict framing' more broadly. Consensus news is rare, and may be newsworthy for politicians as well. Especially politicians from government parties are probably interested in consensus because they are responsible for solving problems in society and consensus may be an indicator of a potential successful solution

for a problem. In sum, the evidence suggests that the tendency to be attenuated to conflict varies according to a politician's position; it is not something that characterizes politicians across the board.

Figure 3 indicates whether information framed as a *political* conflict gets more attention from politicians than non-political conflict information. Across all cases, our expectation is confirmed ($b = .53$; S.E. = .15 $p = .001$; Model 1 in Table A2). When a conflict is framed in political terms—it is parliament, or government, or political parties that clash—politicians pay more attention to the information than when the conflict is between non-political actors, such as within the academic world or within an industrial sector. Specifically, on a scale from 0 to 10, the likelihood for politicians to read the full information when cued by a politically conflictual cue increases from 5.55 to 6.07, a substantial difference. So, it seems to be the case that it is *political* conflict and not conflict as such that attracts elites' attention. Still, looking at Figure 3 immediately shows that the effect is only present in Belgium. In Canada and Israel it is absent. The interaction effects in Model 4 (Table A2) show that the differences between countries are significant. We can cautiously maintain Hypothesis 2 although we should acknowledge that the effect is really only driven by the Belgian case, for which we have no ready explanation.

<Figure 3 about here>

<Figure 4 about here>

Whereas the effect of conflict framing (vs. consensus framing) was mainly driven by opposition responses, we see that the effect of political conflict (vs. non-political conflict) is the consequence of how politicians from government parties respond to information. This directly contradicts Hypothesis 4b. The evidence is shown in Figure 4 and in Table A2. Government politicians pay significantly less attention to information when the conflict frame is not political in nature (5.31 on a scale from 0 to 10) than when it is political in nature (6.13 on a scale from 0 to 10). This effect is weaker for opposition members. We do not have a ready explanation why especially government party elites would care about political conflict. It may be the case that political conflict is more threatening to government representatives, they have more to lose. Disagreement among political parties has the potential to

destabilize the government. The consequences of political conflict may be less grave for opposition politicians. Anyway, we reject Hypothesis 4b.

Politicians' differential attention for political and non-political responsibility framing is displayed in Figure 5. The analysis confirms Hypothesis 3 that political responsibility framing attracts significantly more political attention ($b = .38$; $S.E. = .15$; $p = .009$; Model 1 in Table A3). When a piece of information blames the government or its policy for a negative development, the newsworthiness of that information for politicians increases. On average, the probability that politicians will read the information increases from 5.38 to 5.76 on a 0-10 scale. The effect works across all countries and issues, but is particularly strong in Israel.

Government and opposition parties do not differ from each other with respect to their reactions to information that contains responsibility attributions—see Figure 6 and Model 2 from Table A3. For both groups, information is considered more newsworthy when responsibility is directed towards a political actor. Hypothesis 4c does not get any support.

<Figure 5 about here>

<Figure 6 about here>

Discussion

The study examined which information draws politicians' attention. We found that framing matters. How the information regarding an issue is framed, affects whether politicians plan to attend to the signal and this, ultimately, may affect their political action. All three frames we examined have a significant positive effect on the attention allocation of politicians, but sometimes this effect only plays out for one category of politicians and in some of the countries.

With regard to conflict framing (as opposed to consensus framing) there is no main effect across politicians—it is not the case that politicians across the board attend more to conflictual stories. Yet, opposition politicians are more attuned to conflict stories, government party politicians both as

much about consensus stories. We established a main effect from political conflict framing. Politicians tend to bother more about stories when political actors have different opinions about an issue or event. This effect only occurs in Belgium though, it does not emerge at all in Canada and Israel. Additionally, especially government politicians care more about political conflict, significantly more so than opposition politicians. Finally, when the government is blamed for a negative development this sparks elites' attention as well; both government and opposition members are similarly sensitive to political responsibility attributions.

So, overlooking the evidence it appears that we can draw the most firm conclusions with regard to political responsibility frames. These frames seem to exert the most robust effect across countries and across issues. Our results with regard to conflict framing are robust as well, but a little weaker.⁴ The political conflict framing findings, then, only apply to Belgium really, and there is the unexpected positive correlation with government status. The reason for these divergent results for political conflict frames may simply be methodological. Political conflict was manipulated differently in our experiment by highlighting conflict among different kinds of political actors (see Table OM1.2 in Online Material 1). Additionally, political conflict and its relevance for politicians is probably more than the two other frames subject to the political intricacies of a specific polity.

We do find that frames matter but the effects we find are not very large. How come? One possibility is that our design did not induce any attention 'scarcity'. Politicians did not have to distribute a limited amount of attention over different stories, they could declare at no cost that they would attend to all stories. This makes the differences between the stories relatively limited as the subjects did not have to make tough choices, a situation which is very different from what most likely happens in the real world. Additionally, also the fact that we measured subjects' intended attention without

⁴ Models with three-way interactions between country, issue and frame confirm the robustness of these results (not shown in tables). In the conflict framing model and the political responsibility model, none of the three-way interaction effects are significant, showing that there are no differences between countries in the extent to which the framing effects apply across issues. With regards to the political conflict framing model, there is one significant, positive interaction effect (Israel * Issue 2 * Political conflict framing; $b = 2.57$, $S.E. = 1.01$, $p = .011$), showing that Political conflict framing *does* have the expected effect in Israel for one out of the three issues—or at least that the effect is stronger for this issue than for the other two issues, where it does not work.

implying any behavioral consequences could have led to a less sharp distinction between differently framed stories than would be the case in a real world context in which attention is more instrumental and directly connected to subsequent action. Therefore, we encourage subsequent work to use an information board design—these present subjects with different sorts of summarized information and ask them to click on those panels they would like to get the full information from (for example: Lau & Redlawsk, 2007)—which includes both scarcity and actual attentional behavior.

Conclusion

Our experimental study was conducted in three countries—Belgium, Canada, and Israel—among national and regional top-elites. It thus suggests that the found effects apply at the highest levels of political office, and across a variety of countries. We believe we are the first to show such effects to exist among elites. Previous work already suggested that framing moderates agenda-setting—elites’ agenda of the things they attend to is affected by how the information is presented—but these studies potentially suffered from endogeneity problems. The present study confirms these earlier results but goes a step further by clearly establishing a well-identified causal effect of framing on political attention and thus, ultimately, on the political agenda.

Additionally, we firmly ground at the individual level what has typically been found at the institutional level. Institutions are susceptible to display framing effects at least partially because the individuals populating those institutions process information in a biased way. The biases in information processing found in institutions in a host of agenda-setting studies are most likely not only due to the fact that institutions are affected by bottlenecks of attention and have a hard time processing incoming signals in a parallel fashion, but also because of the inherently cognitive limitations and biases of the human minds sitting in those institutions. We think our study brings us a step closer in disentangling the role of institutions and of humans in politics and policies being responsive to societal signals. The fact that we found some of our effects to play out similarly for government and opposition members

while other effects differed significantly across these institutional positions suggests that how politicians deal with information is a mix of their being human and of their being politicians occupying a specific institutional position.

To further that research agenda, we believe it is important to distinguish attention from action. Compared to previous work, our study took a step back, and examined ‘pure’ attention—or at least as close as we think we could get to measuring attention in its cognitive form by letting subjects estimate the chance that they would attend to something. Cognitive attention is a precondition for actual political action. While agenda-setting deals with the ‘pre-decisional phase’ of politics we even further retreated to an earlier phase here, that of individuals attending to bits of information or not. It is unclear to us at this point whether the impact of issue framing on individuals plays out most in the first cognitive phase we studied here or rather later during the next phases of those individuals undertaking political action. We found that individuals’ cognitive processing is at least partially shaped by the same frames as suggested by institutional and behaviorally-oriented studies. This suggests that the early phase of individuals’ processing info could be a crucial one. Nonetheless, we suspect that this opening stage of information acquisition is not the only one in the policy making process at which frames affect the choices of politicians (see Sheffer et al 2015). The way the elites in our experiments reacted to our framing stimuli may also be the consequence of them being politicians, rooted in and socialized by political institutions of which they have internalized the logic and rules. This is what the found differences between government and opposition members seem to suggest. To know for sure that their reactions are those of politicians and not just of humans, we would need to run identical experiments with citizens at large. Either way, the take-home message is that framing matters at the individual level and that this must have consequences for the actual outputs yielded by political institutions in which those individuals operate. Yet, it is nearly impossible to investigate framing effects on real policy outputs in an experimental fashion.

Our study has several additional limitations that could lead to potential extensions. First, our protocols could be administered in other countries. While we believe our findings are broadly

generalizable, replication in a fourth country (or set of countries), would do much to further establish the generalizability of our findings. Second, further work could examine how information acquisition varies according to both tenure and experience. Third, individual differences in politicians' personalities could be examined as a source of heterogeneity in attention allocation. Fourth, we could leverage variation in the electoral security of members to estimate how electoral pressures shape attention to different types of information. In sum, it appears that we are just at the start of investigating how message framing affects elites' attentional behavior.

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Tables and Graphs

Table 1 – Sample information per country

	Belgium	Canada	Israel
Competence level of politicians interviewed	Federal competence level and regional competence level (Flanders and Wallonia)	Federal competence level and regional competence level (Ontario)	Federal competence level
Position of politicians interviewed	MPs, ministers and party leaders	MPs, ministers and party leaders	MPs, ministers, party leaders and some ex-MPs (right after 2015 election)
Number of politicians in total research population	413	416	159
Number of politicians contacted for interview	413 (full population)	278 (sample of 171 federal politicians and 107 regional politicians)	159 (full population)
Number of politicians interviewed	269	76	65

Figure 1 — Politicians' attention for consensus framing vs. conflict framing in different countries. Predicted probabilities, obtained via 'margins' (from Table A1, Model 4). N = 1,205.

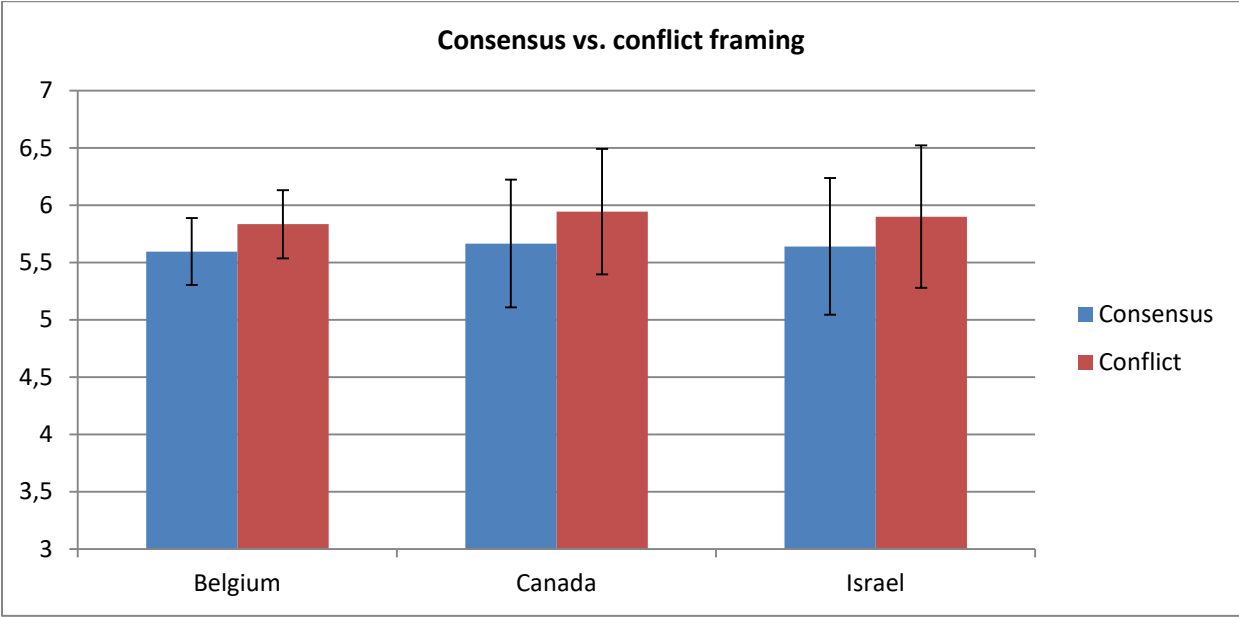


Figure 2 — Politicians’ attention for consensus framing vs. conflict framing in different parties. Predicted probabilities, obtained via ‘margins’ (from Table A1, Model 2). N = 1,205.

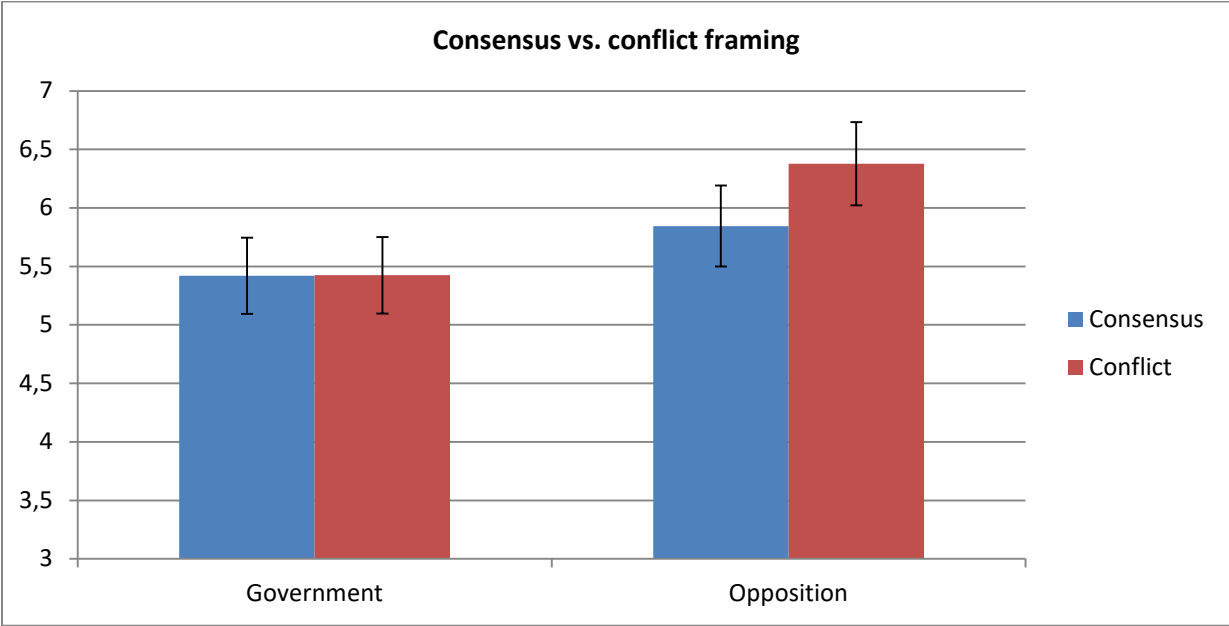


Figure 3 — Politicians’ attention for non-political conflict framing vs. political conflict framing in different countries. Predicted probabilities, obtained via ‘margins’ (from Table A2 – Model 4). N = 1,209.

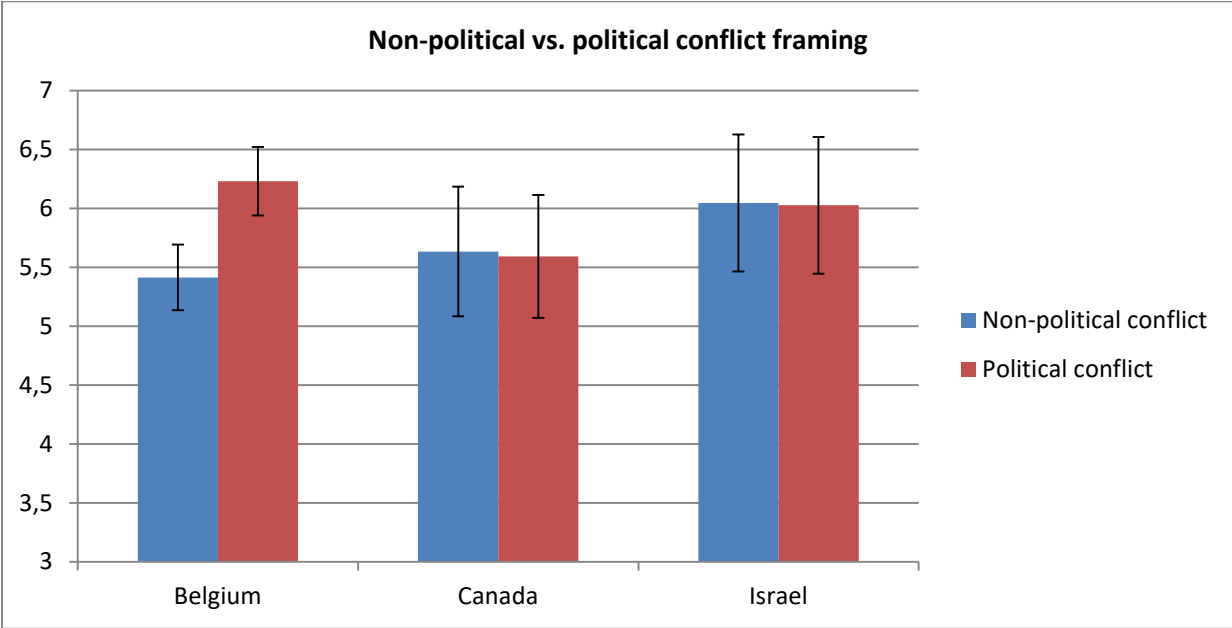


Figure 4 — Politicians’ attention for non-political conflict framing vs. political conflict framing in different parties. Predicted probabilities, obtained via ‘margins’ (from Table A2 – Model 2). N = 1,209.

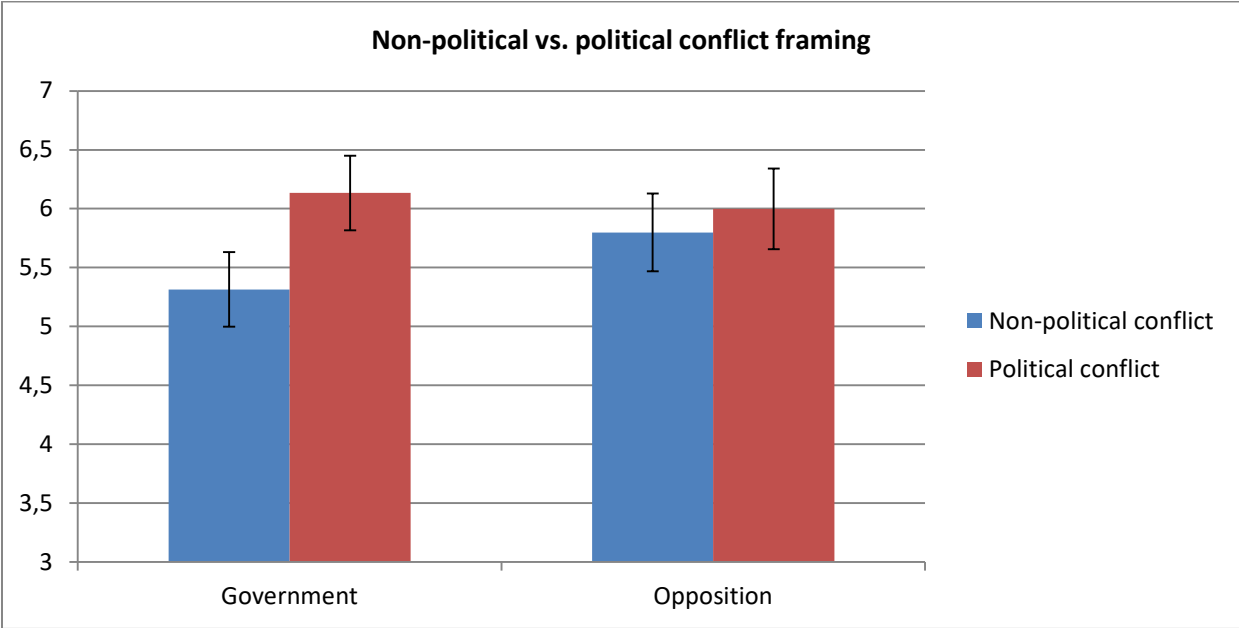


Figure 5 — Politicians’ attention for non-political responsibility framing vs. political responsibility framing in different countries. Predicted probabilities, obtained via ‘margins’ (from Table A3 – Model 4). N = 1,200.

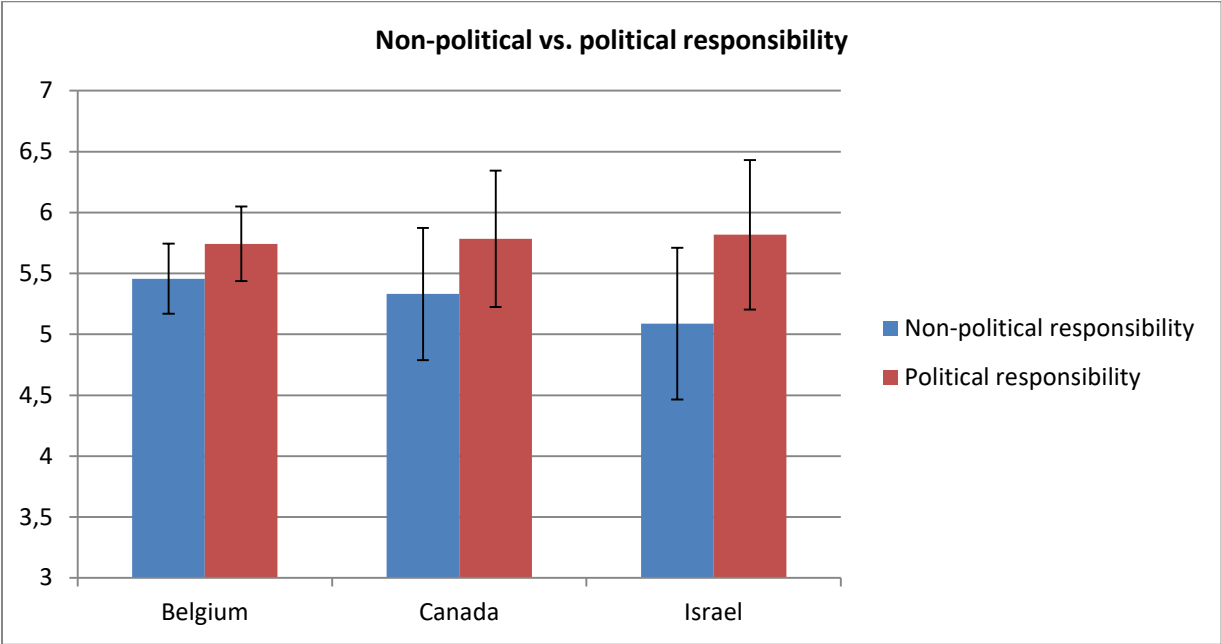
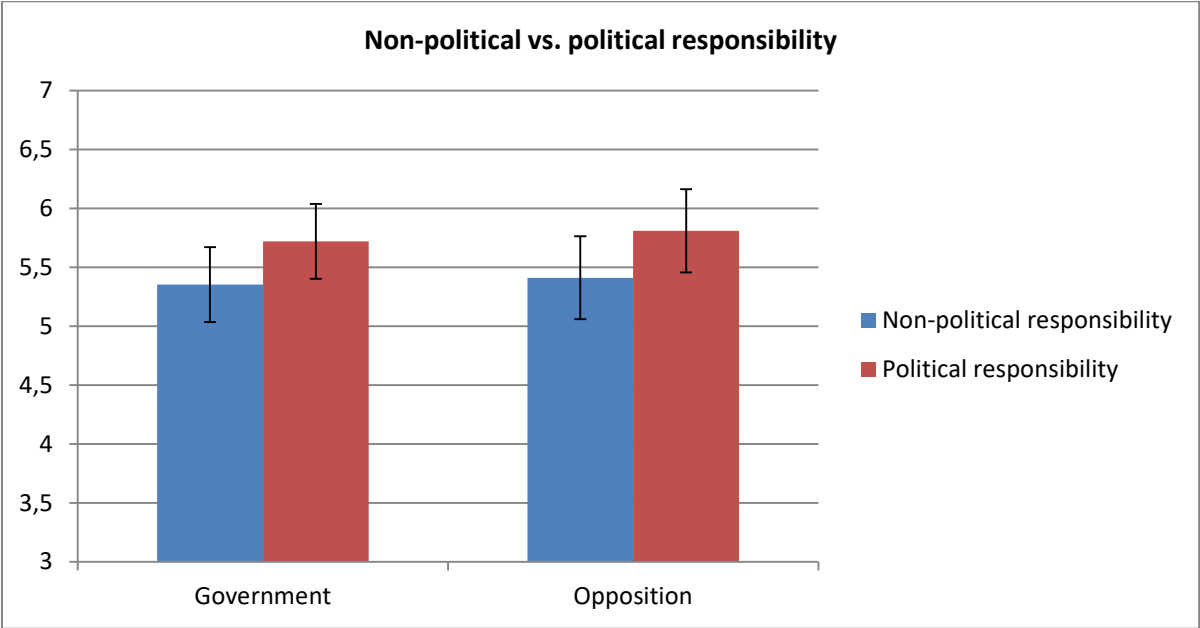


Figure 6 — Politicians’ attention for non-political responsibility framing vs. political responsibility framing in different parties. Predicted probabilities, obtained via ‘margins’ (from Table A3 – Model 2). N = 1,200.



Appendix: Tables of Full Models

Table A1 – Multilevel regression analysis predicting politicians’ attention for conflict framing vs. consensus framing

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	Coef.	S.E.	p	Coef.	S.E.	p	Coef.	S.E.	p	Coef.	S.E.	p
Conflict framing (vs. consensus framing)	.25	.15	.089	.53	.22	.013	.33	.25	.197	.24	.18	.188
Government MP	-.76	.21	.000	-.50	.25	.046	-.75	.21	.000	-.76	.21	.000
Issue (ref.: issue 1)												
Issue 2	.58	.16	.000	.59	.16	.000	.85	.24	.000	.58	.16	.000
Issue 3	-.28	.16	.087	-.27	.16	.094	-.45	.24	.062	-.28	.16	.088
Country (ref.: Belgium)												
Canada	-.22	.27	.412	-.25	.27	.369	-.20	.27	.461	-.24	.33	.465
Israel	-.20	.28	.492	-.20	.28	.487	-.19	.29	.516	-.21	.35	.552
Conflict framing * Government MP	-			-.53	.29	.071	-			-		
Conflict framing * Issue (ref.: issue 1)												
Conflict framing * Issue 2	-			-			-.59	.36	.103	-		
Conflict framing * Issue 3	-			-			.34	.36	.342	-		
Conflict framing * Country (ref.: Bel.)												
Conflict framing * Canada	-			-			-			.04	.38	.917
Conflict framing * Israel	-			-			-			.02	.41	.960
Constant	5.74	.30	.000	5.86	.23	.000	5.94	.24	.000	6.00	.22	.000
Variance (politician)	1.45			1.44			1.46			1.44		
Variance (residual)	2.31			2.31			2.31			2.32		
N (observations)	1,205			1,205			1,205			1,205		
N (politicians)	406			406			406			406		
R ² (overall)	.0339			.0368			.0374			.0339		

Table A2 – Multilevel regression analysis predicting politicians' attention for political conflict framing vs. non-political conflict framing

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	Coef.	S.E.	p	Coef.	S.E.	p	Coef.	S.E.	p	Coef.	S.E.	p
Political conflict framing (vs. non-political conflict framing)	.53	.15	.001	.20	.22	.360	.69	.26	.008	.82	.19	.000
Government MP	-.23	.19	.238	-.53	.24	.029	-.22	.19	.249	-.23	.19	.247
Issue (ref.: issue 1)												
Issue 2	1.63	.17	.000	1.64	.17	.000	1.98	.25	.000	1.65	.17	.000
Issue 3	-1.02	.17	.000	-1.01	.17	.000	-1.11	.26	.000	-1.00	.17	.000
Country (ref.: Belgium)												
Canada	-.31	.25	.213	-.30	.25	.228	-.29	.25	.241	.13	.32	.686
Israel	.15	.26	.570	.14	.26	.593	.15	.26	.570	.56	.34	.094
Pol. conflict framing * Government MP	-			.62	.30	.039	-			-		
Pol. conflict framing * Issue (ref.: issue 1)												
Pol. conflict framing * Issue 2	-			-			-.73	.37	.046	-		
Pol. conflict framing * Issue 3	-			-			.22	.37	.555	-		
Pol. conflict framing * Country (ref.: Bel.)												
Pol. conflict framing * Canada	-			-			-			-.86	.40	.031
Pol. conflict framing * Israel	-			-			-			-.84	.42	.045
Constant	4.97	.30	.000	5.64	.22	.000	5.40	.24	.000	5.34	.22	.000
Variance (politician)	1.15			1.15			1.15			1.17		
Variance (residual)	2.42			2.42			2.41			2.40		
N (observations)	1,209			1,209			1,209			1,209		
N (politicians)	405			405			405			405		
R ² (overall)	.1501			.1528			.1548			.1525		

Table A3 – Multilevel regression analysis predicting politicians' attention for political responsibility framing vs. non-political responsibility framing

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	Coef.	S.E.	p	Coef.	S.E.	p	Coef.	S.E.	p	Coef.	S.E.	p
Political responsibility framing (vs. non-political responsibility framing)	.38	.15	.009	.40	.21	.063	.36	.25	.150	.29	.18	.113
Government MP	-.12	.21	.577	-.10	.25	.682	-.12	.21	.580	-.11	.21	.598
Issue (ref.: issue 1)												
Issue 2	.77	.16	.000	.77	.16	.000	.72	.23	.002	.77	.16	.000
Issue 3	.44	.16	.005	.45	.16	.005	.46	.23	.046	.44	.16	.006
Country (ref.: Belgium)												
Canada	-.10	.27	.724	-.10	.27	.722	-.10	.27	.723	-.17	.32	.598
Israel	-.18	.29	.524	-.18	.29	.522	-.18	.29	.524	-.40	.36	.259
Pol. respons. framing * Government MP	-			-.03	.29	.914	-			-		
Pol. respons. framing * Issue (ref.: issue 1)												
Pol. respons. framing * Issue 2	-			-			.10	.35	.781	-		
Pol. respons. framing * Issue 3	-			-			-.04	.35	.911	-		
Pol. respons. framing * Country (ref.: Bel.)												
Pol. respons. framing * Canada	-			-			-			.17	.38	.661
Pol. respons. framing * Israel	-			-			-			.44	.43	.298
Constant	4.70	.30	.000	5.08	.23	.000	5.10	.24	.000	5.13	.22	.000
Variance (politician)	1.49			1.49			1.49			1.47		
Variance (residual)	2.26			2.26			2.26			2.26		
N (observations)	1,200			1,200			1,200			1,200		
N (politicians)	406			406			406			406		
R ² (overall)	.0204			.0204			.0207			.0224		

Online Material 1: Experimental Manipulations (original language versions)

Table OM1.1 - Conflict framing vs. consensus framing

Frame → Issue ↓	Version	Consensus framing	Conflict framing
1	Canada (English)	Canada press feed – ' <u>Agreement among Canadians on marijuana decriminalization</u> '	Canada press feed – " <u>Canadians divided over marijuana decriminalization</u> "
	Canada (French)	RSS Press Canada - "Les Canadiens <u>s'accordent</u> sur la légalisation en matière de marijuana."	RSS Press Canada - "Les Canadiens <u>sont divisés</u> sur la légalisation en matière de marijuana."
	Belgium (Dutch)	Belga newsfeed - 'Reizigersorganisatie en directie van NMBS <u>zijn het eens</u> over nieuwe tarieven openbaar vervoer'	Belga newsfeed - 'Reizigersorganisatie en directie van NMBS <u>botsen</u> over nieuwe tarieven openbaar vervoer'
	Belgium (French)	Belga RSS - "L'association des voyageurs et la direction de la SNCB <u>se mettent d'accord</u> sur les nouveaux tarifs du transport public."	Belga RSS - "L'association des voyageurs et la direction de la SNCB <u>s'affrontent</u> sur les nouveaux tarifs du transport public."
	Israel (Hebrew)	סוכנויות הידיעות - 'תמימות דעים בציבור הישראלי: יש לקדם לגליזציה של קנאביס'	סוכנויות הידיעות - 'מחלוקת בציבור הישראלי ביחס לקידום לגליזציה של קנאביס'
2	Canada (English)	Canada press feed – "Government and Civil Liberties Associations <u>agree on</u> greater accountability for Canadian spy agency CSEC"	Canada press feed – 'Government and Civil Liberties Associations <u>bicker over</u> greater accountability for Canadian spy agency CSEC'
	Canada (French)	RSS Press Canada - "Le gouvernement et les associations des libertés civiles <u>sont d'accord</u> sur une plus grande responsabilité de la part de l'agence d'espionnage canadienne CSEC."	RSS Press Canada - "Le gouvernement et les associations des libertés civiles <u>divisés</u> sur une plus grande responsabilité de la part de l'agence d'espionnage canadienne CSEC."
	Belgium (Dutch)	Belga newsfeed - 'Groeierende <u>consensus</u> tussen onderwijsnetten over hervorming van eerste graad secundair onderwijs'	Belga newsfeed - 'Groeierend <u>conflict</u> tussen onderwijsnetten over hervorming van eerste graad secundair onderwijs'
	Belgium (French)	Belga RSS - " <u>Consensus</u> croissant parmi les réseaux éducatifs sur la réforme du premier cycle de l'enseignement secondaire."	Belga RSS - " <u>Conflit</u> croissant parmi les réseaux éducatifs sur la réforme du premier cycle de l'enseignement secondaire."
	Israel (Hebrew)	סוכנויות הידיעות – 'הסכמה בין הממשלה וארגוני זכויות אדם על הגברת השקיפות של חקירות השב"כ'	סוכנויות הידיעות - 'מחלוקת בין הממשלה וארגוני זכויות אדם על הגברת השקיפות של חקירות השב"כ'
3	Canada	Canada press feed – "Experts <u>unanimous on</u>	Canada press feed – 'Experts <u>clash over</u> environmental benefits from natural

(English)	environmental benefits from natural gas use"	gas use'.
Canada (French)	RSS Press Canada - "Les experts <u>unanimes</u> sur les bienfaits environnementaux du gaz naturel."	RSS Press Canada - "Les experts <u>divisés</u> sur les bienfaits environnementaux du gaz naturel."
Belgium (Dutch)	Belga newsfeed - ' <u>Eensgezindheid</u> in de culturele sector over verdeling cultuursubsidies'	Belga newsfeed - ' <u>Onenigheid</u> in de culturele sector over verdeling cultuursubsidies'
Belgium (French)	Belga RSS - " <u>Unanimité</u> dans le secteur culturel au sujet de la distribution des subsides à la culture."	Belga RSS - " <u>Désaccords</u> dans le secteur culturel au sujet de la distribution des subsides à la culture."
Israel (Hebrew)	סוכנויות הידיעות - 'המומחים תמימי דעים: כדאי להמשיך לחפש גז טבעי לאורך חופי ישראל'	סוכנויות הידיעות - 'אי הסכמה בין מומחים בנוגע לכדאיות המשך חיפושי גז טבעי לאורך חופי ישראל'

Table OM1.2 - Political conflict framing vs. non-political conflict framing

Frame → Issue ↓	Version	Consensus framing	Conflict framing
1	Canada (English)	www.cbc.ca – 'Disagreement in <u>academic world</u> over Bank of Canada's cut in key interest rate'	www.cbc.ca – 'Disagreement <u>between political parties</u> over Bank of Canada's cut in key interest rate'
	Canada (French)	radio-canada.ca - "Désaccord <u>dans le milieu académique</u> concernant la baisse du taux directeur de la banque canadienne."	radio-canada.ca - "Désaccord <u>entre les partis politiques</u> concernant la baisse du taux directeur de la banque canadienne."
	Belgium (Dutch)	www.deredactie.be – 'Onenigheid <u>in de academische wereld</u> over de impact van de nieuwe financiële maatregelen door de ECB'	www.deredactie.be – 'Onenigheid <u>tussen politieke partijen</u> over de impact van de nieuwe financiële maatregelen door de ECB'
	Belgium (French)	www.rtf.be - "Désaccord <u>dans le milieu académique</u> concernant l'impact des nouvelles mesures financières de la BCE"	www.rtf.be - "Désaccord <u>entre les partis politiques</u> concernant l'impact des nouvelles mesures financières de la BCE"
	Israel (Hebrew)	אתרי החדשות - 'מחלוקת בין כלכלנים בנוגע להפחתת הריבית במשק על ידי בנק ישראל'	אתרי החדשות - 'מחלוקת בין סיעות הכנסת בנוגע להפחתת הריבית במשק על ידי בנק ישראל'
2	Canada (English)	www.cbc.ca – ' <u>Human rights organizations</u> divided over military intervention in Syria'	www.cbc.ca – ' <u>Government</u> divided over military intervention in Syria'
	Canada (French)	radio-canada.ca - " <u>Des organisations des droits de l'Homme</u> divisées sur une intervention militaire en Syrie."	radio-canada.ca - " <u>Le gouvernement</u> divisé sur une intervention militaire en Syrie."
	Belgium (Dutch)	www.deredactie.be – ' <u>Sociale partners</u> verdeeld over behoud van stakingsrecht'	www.deredactie.be – ' <u>Regeringsleden</u> verdeeld over behoud van stakingsrecht'
	Belgium (French)	www.rtf.be - " <u>Les partenaires sociaux</u> divisés sur le maintien du droit de grève"	www.rtf.be - " <u>Les membres du gouvernement</u> divisés sur le maintien du droit de grève"
	Israel (Hebrew)	אתרי החדשות - 'מחלוקת בין ארגוני זכויות אדם בנוגע לחקירת צה"ל את מבצע צוק איתן'	אתרי החדשות - 'מחלוקת בממשלה בנוגע לחקירת צה"ל את מבצע צוק איתן'
3	Canada (English)	www.cbc.ca – 'Fight in <u>food industry</u> about import of GMO products from US'	www.cbc.ca – 'Fight in <u>parliament</u> about import of GMO products from US'
	Canada (French)	radio-canada.ca - "Querelle <u>au sein de l'industrie alimentaire</u> concernant l'importation des produits OGM provenant des États-Unis."	radio-canada.ca - "Querelle <u>au sein du Parlement</u> concernant l'importation des produits OGM provenant des États-Unis."

Belgium (Dutch)	www.deredactie.be – 'Ruzie <u>in landbouwsector</u> over toelating aan boeren om een nieuw type mest te gebruiken'	www.deredactie.be – 'Ruzie <u>in het parlement</u> over toelating aan boeren om een nieuw type mest te gebruiken'
Belgium (French)	www.rtf.be - "Querelle <u>dans le secteur de l'agriculture</u> concernant l'autorisation aux agriculteurs d'utiliser un nouveau type d'engrais."	www.rtf.be - "Querelle <u>au Parlement</u> concernant l'autorisation aux agriculteurs d'utiliser un nouveau type d'engrais."
Israel (Hebrew)	אתרי החדשות - 'מחלוקת בין רשתות המרכולים על ההחמרות החדשות בדרישות הכשרות'	אתרי החדשות - 'מחלוקת בכנסת על ההחמרות החדשות בדרישות הכשרות'

Table OM13 - Political responsibility framing vs. non-political responsibility framing

Frame → Issue ↓	Version	Political responsibility framing	Non-political responsibility framing
1	Canada (English)	E-mail from an interest group – 'Criminality in prisons often unpunished <u>due to lack of evidence</u> '	E-mail from an interest group – 'Criminality in prisons often unpunished <u>due to weak government policy</u> '
	Canada (French)	Courriel d'un groupe d'intérêt - "La criminalité dans les prisons reste souvent impunie <u>par manque de preuves</u> ."	Courriel d'un groupe d'intérêt - "La criminalité dans les prisons reste souvent impunie <u>à cause d'une politique gouvernementale inadéquate</u> ."
	Belgium (Dutch)	E-mail van een belangengroep - 'Criminaliteit in gevangenen vaak onbestraft <u>omwille van gebrek aan bewijs</u> '	E-mail van een belangengroep - 'Criminaliteit in gevangenen vaak onbestraft <u>omwille van gebrek aan regeringsbeleid</u> '
	Belgium (French)	Courriel d'un groupe d'intérêt - "La criminalité dans les prisons reste souvent impunie <u>en raison du manque de preuves</u> "	Courriel d'un groupe d'intérêt - "La criminalité dans les prisons reste souvent impunie <u>en raison du manque d'une politique de gouvernement</u> "
	Israel (Hebrew)	דוא"ל מארגון חברתי - 'מחסור בראיות מקשה על התמודדות עם פשעים המבוצעים בתוך בתי הכלא'	דוא"ל מארגון חברתי - 'מדיניות שגויה של הממשלה מקשה על התמודדות עם פשעים המבוצעים בתוך בתי הכלא'
2	Canada (English)	E-mail from an interest group – ' <u>Increase in ageing population</u> is responsible for increasingly long waiting lists for health care '	E-mail from an interest group – ' <u>Failing policy</u> is responsible for increasingly long waiting lists for health care'
	Canada (French)	Courriel d'un groupe d'intérêt - " <u>Le vieillissement de la population</u> allonge les listes d'attente pour les soins de santé."	Courriel d'un groupe d'intérêt - " <u>Des politiques inadéquates</u> allongent les listes d'attente pour les soins de santé."
	Belgium (Dutch)	E-mail van een belangengroep - ' <u>Vergrijzing</u> is verantwoordelijk voor steeds langere wachtlijsten in rusthuizen'	E-mail van een belangengroep - ' <u>Falend beleid</u> is verantwoordelijk voor steeds langere wachtlijsten in rusthuizen'
	Belgium (French)	Courriel d'un groupe d'intérêt - " <u>Le vieillissement</u> est responsable de l'allongement des listes d'attente dans les maisons de repos."	Courriel d'un groupe d'intérêt - " <u>L'échec des politiques</u> est responsable de l'allongement des listes d'attente dans les maisons de repos."
	Israel (Hebrew)	דוא"ל מארגון חברתי – 'הסיבה להתארכות זמן ההמתנה לטיפולים רפואיים: גידול אוכלוסיית הקשישים'	דוא"ל מארגון חברתי – 'הסיבה להתארכות זמן ההמתנה לטיפולים רפואיים: מדיניות כושלת של המדינה'
3	Canada (English)	E-mail from an interest group – 'Billions of dollars lost due to <u>offshore tax cheats</u> '	E-mail from an interest group – ' <u>Government</u> loses billions of dollars due to offshore tax cheats'

Canada (French)	Courriel d'un groupe d'intérêt - "Des milliards de dollars perdus à cause de fraudes fiscales offshore."	Courriel d'un groupe d'intérêt - " <u>Le gouvernement</u> perd des milliards de dollars à cause de fraudes fiscales offshore."
Belgium (Dutch)	E-mail van een belangengroep - ' <u>Slechte huizenmarkt</u> berokkent de Belgische staat een miljoenenverlies door leegstand militaire gebouwen'	E-mail van een belangengroep - ' <u>Minister van Defensie</u> berokkent de Belgische staat een miljoenenverlies door leegstand militaire gebouwen'
Belgium (French)	Courriel d'un groupe d'intérêt - " <u>Les mauvaises conditions du marché du logement</u> provoquent une perte de plusieurs millions pour l'État belge en raison de bâtiments militaires vacants."	Courriel d'un groupe d'intérêt - " <u>Le ministre de la Défense</u> provoque une perte de plusieurs millions pour l'État belge en raison de bâtiments militaires vacants."
Israel (Hebrew)	דוא"ל מהתאחדות בעלי העסקים - 'המשבר במדינות ה-OECD גורם להאמרת המחירים לצרכן בישראל'	דוא"ל מהתאחדות בעלי העסקים - 'העלאת מיסי הייבוא בישראל גורמת להאמרת המחירים לצרכן בישראל'

Online Material 2: Balance Tests

Table OM2.1 – Logistic regression predicting experimental condition of conflict framing (vs. consensus framing) experiment

	Issue 1			Issue 2			Issue 3		
	Coef.	S.E.	p	Coef.	S.E.	p	Coef.	S.E.	p
Gender	.39	.22	.081	-.13	.22	.573	.14	.22	.517
Year of birth	-.01	.01	.385	-.01	.01	.278	-.00	.01	.965
Pol. experience	.01	.02	.349	.01	.02	.614	.03	.02	.112
Government	.06	.22	.769	-.27	.22	.231	-.03	.22	.878
Function									
Party leader	.90	.64	.158	.08	.61	.892	.51	.62	.411
Minister	1.19	.69	.082	-.16	.60	.789	-.57	.63	.364
Country (ref.: Belgium)									
Canada	.02	.29	.955	-.52	.29	.072	.13	.29	.646
Israel	-.09	.31	.771	-.18	.31	.565	.16	.31	.611
Constant	-10.11	29.69	.733	8.83	29.58	.765	-49.36	30.07	.101
N	400			399			400		
Prob > chi2	.3286			.7590			.5981		

Table OM2.2 – Logistic regression predicting experimental condition of political conflict framing (vs. non-political conflict framing) experiment

	Issue 1			Issue 2			Issue 3		
	Coef.	S.E.	p	Coef.	S.E.	p	Coef.	S.E.	p
Gender	-.19	.22	.387	-.10	.22	.642	.05	.22	.830
Year of birth	-.01	.01	.551	.02	.01	.130	-.01	.01	.300
Pol. experience	.02	.02	.152	-.02	.02	.178	-.02	.02	.272
Government	-.28	.22	.200	-.22	.22	.318	.01	.22	.949
Function									
Party leader	.62	.61	.311	.70	.69	.309	.18	.61	.775
Minister	.32	.60	.592	.54	.63	.395	-.87	.63	.164
Country (ref.: Belgium)									
Canada	-.07	.29	.803	-.45	.29	.125	-.32	.29	.267
Israel	-.18	.31	.569	-.11	.31	.727	-.32	.31	.304
Constant	-31.76	30.06	.291	9.38	30.09	.755	32.25	20.14	.109
N	399			403			401		
Prob > chi2	.7437			.2925			.4876		

Table OM2.3 – Logistic regression predicting experimental condition of political responsibility framing (vs. non-political responsibility framing) experiment

	Issue 1			Issue 2			Issue 3		
	Coef.	S.E.	p	Coef.	S.E.	p	Coef.	S.E.	p
Gender	.40	.23	.074	-.35	.22	.120	-.04	.22	.845
Year of birth	-.00	.01	.785	.01	.01	.578	-.00	.01	.681
Pol. experience	.01	.01	.675	-.01	.02	.746	.02	.02	.303
Government	.42	.22	.061	.18	.22	.412	-.03	.22	.901
Function									
Party leader	.44	.62	.473	.27	.61	.658	1.27	.69	.067
Minister	.93	.68	.174	.43	.63	.500	.66	.64	.296
Country (ref.: Belgium)									
Canada	-.06	.29	.843	-.05	.29	.866	.07	.29	.807
Israel	.17	.31	.579	-.27	.31	.392	-.54	.31	.085
Constant	-7.34	29.63	.804	-2.03	29.67	.946	-22.77	29.69	.443
N	398			398			398		
Prob > chi2	.1930			.6706			.4545		