Presidential Greatness in a Polarized Era

Online Appendix

A.   Regression models of presidential greatness & polarization

In the article, we provide descriptive analyses of differences in expert ratings of presidential greatness and polarization across partisanship and political ideology. To assess more systematically the extent to which these differences vary by the partisan identity of the expert, we fit a series of regression models to control for the most common covariates used in assessments of presidential greatness. These variables include average GDP growth; number of years in office; intellectual brilliance; the number of years that the country was at war; whether a war was won; whether the president is considered a war hero; whether a scandal occurred during a president's time in office; and whether a president was assassinated (for details, see Curry and Morris, 2010).

   To assess the relationship between the partisan identity of the expert and ratings of presidential greatness and polarization, we code an indicator variable that takes the value 1 if a given expert shares the same partisan affiliation as the president whom they are rating, and 0 if they do not. Our model exploits the fact that Democratic- and Republican-identifying experts rate presidents from both parties—some of whom they share an affiliation with, and others whom they do not. In other words, we are able to use *within*-rater variation to examine the extent to which shared partisan-affiliation is associated with differences in presidential ratings and polarization among Democratic and Republican experts. To take advantage of this, we use a fixed effects model with robust standard errors clustered at the level of the respondent. Finally, as we note in the article, because the role of partisanship may vary differently in the modern era when presidencies have stronger partisan resonance, we fit regression models first to the complete sample, and then to ratings and polarization of presidents who came to office

Table A1: OLS Regression models for respondent ratings of Presidential greatness and polarization

	Rating		Polarization	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Shared party ID	3.627***	7.745***	0.014	−0.148***
	(0.759)	(1.240)	(0.040)	(0.047)
GDP growth	0.365***	5.239***	−0.037***	−0.090
	(0.093)	(0.822)	(0.006)	(0.059)
Years in office	4.148***	5.302***	0.067***	−0.009
	(0.135)	(0.292)	(0.008)	(0.020)
War hero	6.931***	13.624***	0.126***	−0.341*
	(0.727)	(2.815)	(0.049)	(0.201)
Scandal	−6.853***	−25.621***	0.180***	0.889***
	(0.964)	(3.423)	(0.054)	(0.199)
Assassinated	27.348***	−27.616***	0.571***	1.113***
	(0.834)	(6.263)	(0.080)	(0.431)
Years at war	−1.079***	−2.970***	0.114***	0.143***
	(0.220)	(0.282)	(0.013)	(0.017)
Won war	−2.209***	4.791***	−0.061***	−0.063
	(0.378)	(1.200)	(0.017)	(0.090)
Intellectual brilliance	4.460***	14.794***	−0.152***	−0.403**
	(0.414)	(2.928)	(0.019)	(0.192)
Post-war sample		✓		✓
Respondent FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	3,266	1,236	3,210	1,177
R^2	0.355	0.511	0.109	0.270
Adjusted R^2	0.330	0.458	0.076	0.191
Residual Std. Error	21.640 (df = 3144)	16.243 (df = 1114)	0.898 (df = 3094)	0.830 (df = 1061)

Robust standard errors clustered at the respondent-level are in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

in the post-war period.[1]

Results from these models are presented in Table A1. Models (1) and (2) present estimates of the relationship between an expert sharing a partisan affiliation with a president and his or her rating of that president. To begin, results from Model (1) demonstrate that sharing a partisan affiliation with a president is associated with an average increase in the rating of a president by 3.6 points (p < 0.01) when using the complete sample of presidential ratings. For the model fit to ratings of presidents from the post-war period (Model (2)), the relationship

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[1]For data from the post-war period, the variable indicating whether a president was assassinated is coded 1 only for JFK. Results of models that remove this variable do not, however, meaningfully change estimates of the relationship between shared partisanship and presidential ratings.

is even stronger: sharing a partisan affiliation with the president being rated by the expert is associated with an increased rating of 7.7 points (p < 0.01).

We then examine the relationship between co-partisanship and the extent to which a president is perceived by experts as one of the most polarizing. Results are presented in Models (3) and (4). Unlike the results for presidential greatness ratings, the regression results from the full sample (Model (3)) show no strong evidence (p = 0.73) that sharing a partisan affiliation with a president is related to whether that president is rated as polarizing. However, in Model (4), which is fit to data for presidents in the modern (post-war) era, the results provide evidence that experts who share a partisan affiliation with a president rate them, on average, as less polarizing ($\beta = -0.15$, p < 0.01) than those with who they do not share a partisan affiliation. In sum, our findings demonstrate that presidential experts rate presidential greatness higher, and polarization lower, when a president shares their own partisan affiliation, especially among presidents in the post-war period.

B.   Presidential greatness as rated by political Independents and ideological moderates

In Figure 1 of the article, we provide point estimates and confidence intervals of ratings of Presidential greatness and polarization among those experts who identify as (1) Democrats and Republicans, and (2) liberals and conservatives. In this section, we further extend these comparisons by providing estimates of presidential greatness ratings among both political Independents and ideological moderates. To do so, we present in Figure A1 and Figure A2 estimates of presidential ratings and polarization from Independents and moderates alongside those from Democrats and Republicans, and liberals and conservatives.

Interestingly, there appears to be substantial heterogeneity among both independents and moderates. Neither group appears to clearly rate presidents similar to that of Democratic or liberal experts, or Republican or conservative experts. For example, in Figure A1, independents

Figure A1: Presidential Greatness Ratings by Partisanship (including independents)
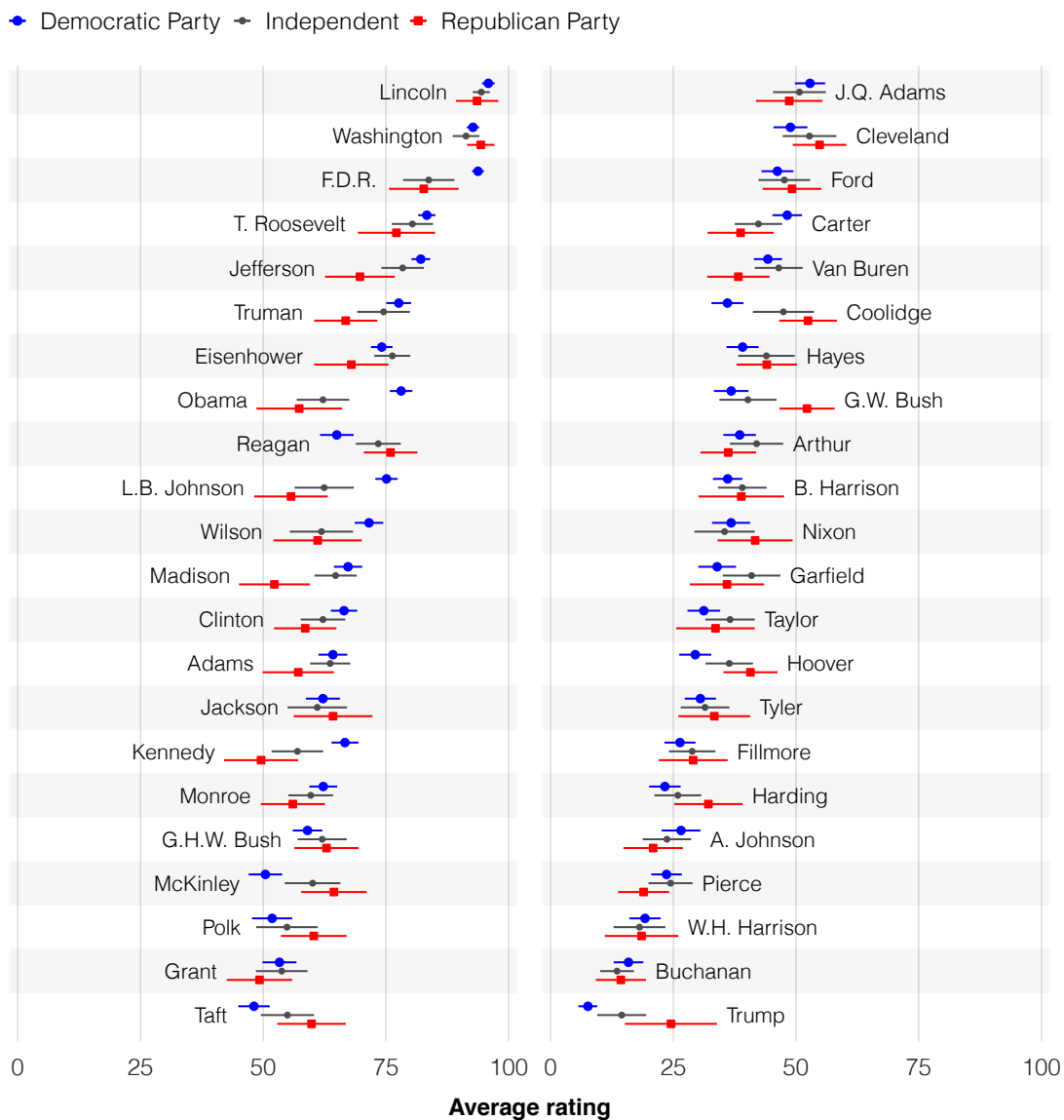
Horizontal lines indicate 90% confidence intervals

rate Democratic presidents Barack Obama, LBJ, and JFK similar to that of Republican experts (i.e. much lower than do Democratic experts). Like Democratic-identifying experts, however, independents also rate Republican president George W. Bush much lower than do Republican experts.

Figure A2: Presidential Greatness Ratings by Ideology (including moderates)
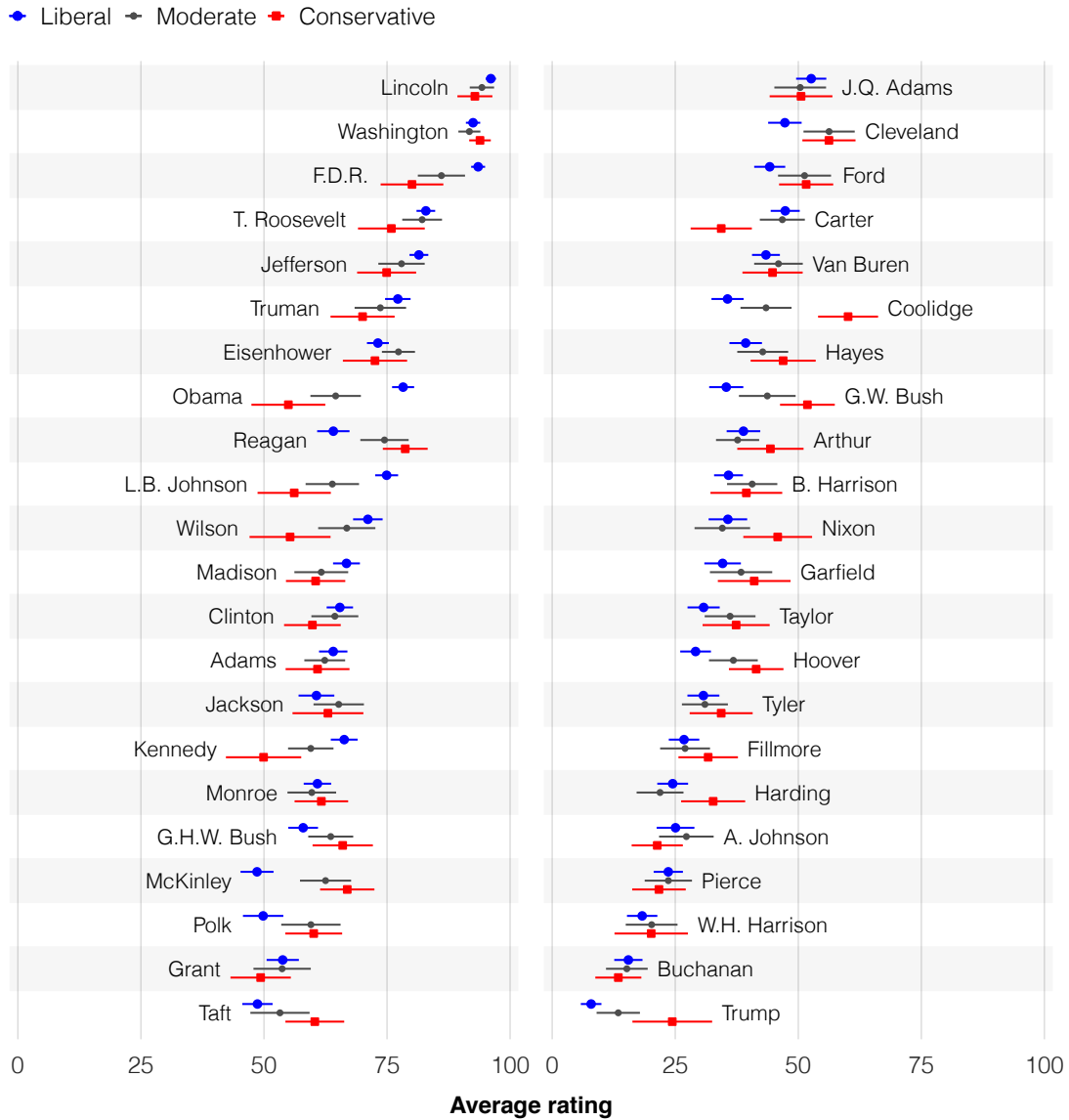
Horizontal lines indicate 90% confidence intervals

References

Curry, Jill L. and Irwin L. Morris. 2010. "Explaining Presidential Greatness: The Roles of Peace and Prosperity?" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 40(3):515–530.