“The Art of Uncommitment: The domestic disengagement costs of peacetime withdrawals from alliance commitments”

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Are there significant domestic political costs to withdrawing from long-standing alliances that hinder disengagement? Leaders of major powers occasionally look for ways to disengage in non-crisis situations from some of their long-term commitments to other countries following the legal procedures laid out in the alliance treaty or commitment. However, such leaders sometimes fear that they will pay domestic withdrawal costs, i.e., a decline in domestic public support if they try to withdraw from such commitments in that manner in practice. To check if such expectations are justified, we conduct a survey experiment in the US examining the effects of a presidential decision to end an alliance commitment through the proscribed means.

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