IR scholars have long debated whether the American public is allergic to realism, which raises the question of how they would “contract” it in the first place. We argue that realism isn’t just an IR paradigm, but a belief system, whose relationship with other ideological systems in public opinion has rarely been fully examined. Operationalizing this disposition in ordinary citizens as “folk realism,” we investigate its relationship with a variety of personality traits, foreign policy orientations, and political knowledge. We then present the results of a laboratory experiment probing psychological microfoundations for realist theory, manipulating the amount of information subjects have about a foreign policy conflict to determine whether uncertainty leads individuals to adopt more realist views, and whether realists and idealists respond to uncertainty and fear differently. We find that many of realism’s causal mechanisms are conditional on whether subjects already hold realist views, and suggest that emotions like fear may play a larger role in realist theory than many realists have assumed.
Appendix A: Political and Personality Orientations

International Trust ($r = 0.13$)
1. Generally speaking, would you say that the United States can trust other nations, or that the United States can't be too careful in dealing with other nations?
2. Would you say that most of the time other nations try to be helpful to the United States, or that they are just looking out for themselves?

Social Trust ($\alpha = 0.68$)
1. Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?
2. Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance or would they try to be fair?
3. Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are just looking out for themselves?

Trust in Government ($\alpha = 0.63$)
1. How much of the time do you think that you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right – just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?
2. Do you think that people in government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?
3. Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?
4. Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are crooked?

National Attachment ($\alpha = 0.80$)
1. When someone says something bad about American people, how strongly do you feel it is as if they said something bad about you?
2. How much does being an American have to do with how you feel about yourself?
3. How much do you feel that what happens to America in general will be your fate?

National Chauvinism ($\alpha = 0.67$)
1. How superior is the United States compared to other nations?
2. How many things about America make you ashamed?
3. How much better would the world be if people from other countries were more like Americans?
4. Patriots should support America even if it is in the wrong.

Isolationism ($\alpha = 0.67$)
1. America needs to cooperate more with the United Nations in settling international disputes.
2. It is essential for the United States to work with other nations to solve problems such as overpopulation, hunger, and pollution.
3. The U.S. needs to play an active role in solving conflicts around the world.
4. The U.S. government should just try to take care of the wellbeing of Americans and not get involved with other nations.
Folk Realism

Militant assertiveness ($\alpha = 0.78$)
1. The best way to ensure world peace is through American military strength.
2. The use of military force only makes problems worse.
3. Rather than simply reacting to our enemies, it’s better for us to strike first.
4. Generally, the more influence America has on other nations, the better off they are.

Machiavellianism ($\alpha = 0.68$)
1. Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so.
2. The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear.
3. Honesty is the best policy in all cases.
4. When you ask someone to do something for you, it is best to give the real reasons for wanting it rather than giving reasons that carry more weight.

Need for closure ($\alpha = 0.45$)
1. My personal space is usually messy and disorganized.
2. I dislike unpredictable situations.
3. I tend to put off making important decisions until the last minute.
4. I feel uncomfortable when I don’t understand the reason why an event occurred in my life.
5. When considering most conflict situations, I can usually see how both sides could be right.

Just world ($r = 0.35$)
1. By and large people get what they deserve.
2. Basically, the world is a just place.

Social dominance orientation ($r = 0.31$)
1. Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups.
2. No one group should dominate in society.

Entity theorists ($\alpha = 0.83$)
1. People can do different things, but the important parts of who they are can’t really be changed.
2. People can change even their most basic qualities.
3. Everyone, no matter who they are, can change their most basic characteristics.

Post Materialism:
For a nation, it is not always possible to obtain everything one might wish. Several different goals are listed below. If you had to choose among them, which one seems most desirable to you? ...Which one would be your second choice?
- Maintaining order in the nation;
- Giving the people more say in important political decisions;
- Fighting rising prices;
- Protecting freedom of speech.
Authoritarianism ($\alpha = 0.51$):

For the following pairs, please indicate which of the two you believe is the most desirable quality for a child to have.

- Independence or respect for elders.
- Obedience or self-reliance.
- Curiosity or good manners.
- Being considerate or being well behaved.

Appendix B: Text of Briefing Articles

The Conflict in Iraq

Located in the Middle East on the border of the Persian Gulf, Iraq achieved independence from the British in 1932.

Iraq is home to 30 million people, consisting of three major ethnic groups: Kurds, who primarily live in the north, Shi'ias, who primarily live in the south and make up 60% of the population, and Sunnis, who are concentrated in the center of the country.

The three ethnic groups had long fought each other for control. The conflict among the three groups has resulted in untold thousands of casualties and created hundreds of thousands of refugees. Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist party was supported primarily by the Sunnis and since his regime was toppled, the Shi'as have dominated Iraqi government positions. Much of the insurgency since then has taken place in the Sunni triangle located north of Baghdad. The Kurds were traditionally persecuted by Saddam's regime, but have enjoyed greater autonomy in recent years.

Although violence is down from its previous peak, the ongoing struggle continues to impose considerable cost on the country, and threatens to escalate at moment's notice: fatalities due to clashes between the three groups continue, diplomatic disputes are erupting, and Iraq devotes increasing amounts of its budget to military purposes. Continued conflict could bear a major impact on international affairs, not only for economic reasons – the country has huge reserves of oil – but because the country is located in the middle of a strategically important region, in between major players like Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh

Located in Southwestern Asia between the Black and Caspian seas, Azerbaijan and Armenia are two neighboring countries that attained their independence when the USSR collapsed in 1991.

The two countries are relatively close in size, with Azerbaijan home to around 8 million people – mostly Azeris – and Armenia home to 3 million, mostly Armenians.

Azerbaijan and Armenia have long fought over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, an area that had been included in Azerbaijan under Soviet times, but which contains a predominantly
Folk Realism

Armenian population. A full-scale war erupted in 1991, and by the ceasefire in 1994, the conflict had resulted in untold thousands of casualties and created hundreds of thousands of refugees. Since that war, Armenia controls the province, as well as a “buffer zone” that encompasses a section of Azerbaijani territory.

Although violence has not returned to its previous peak, the ongoing struggle continues to impose considerable cost on both countries, and threatens to escalate at moment’s notice: fatalities due to clashes between the Armenians and Azerbaijani continue, diplomatic disputes are erupting, and both countries are increasing their military budgets. Continued conflict could bear a major impact on international affairs not only for economic reasons – the region has huge reserves of oil – but also because Nagorno-Karabakh is located in a strategically important area, in between major players like Iran, Turkey, Russia, and Georgia.