Spring 2020

International Conflict, Political Leaders, and Accountability

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

Political Science

College of Arts and Sciences

University of South Carolina

2020

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Dedication

To Tiffany, Camaya, and Mom.

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank my committee chair, Tobias Heinrich, whose constant support, mentoring, and patience have made a difficult degree possible and rewarding. He read countless iterations of every chapter and provided extensive feedback on every aspect of my development as a scholar. Additionally, my internal committee members played a crucial role in the development of this project: Chelsea Estancona, David Darmofal, and Timothy Peterson. I would also like to thank Ryan Bakker for agreeing to serve as my outside member on the project and being a reliable source of advice during my graduate career. The entire political science department at the University of South Carolina has supported my pursuits since the first day I arrived on campus.

My fellow graduate students were critical for support and advice: William Akoto, Kristin Bryant, Matthew Lawson, Leah Long, Yuleng Zheng, Matthew Wagner, and many others. Additionally, I would like to thank the political science department at Virginia Tech who has continued to support me well beyond my time there as an undergraduate/masters degree student. I would also like to thank the faculty and attendees of the EITM Summer Institute in 2018. This experience provided feedback critical to finalizing my prospectus. I would also like to thank VCU for providing such a welcoming environment to complete the dissertation in and for providing funding for the pilot survey included in the third paper.

Next, I would like to thank my mother, Debora, a survivor and constant believer in every dream of mine. Finally, I would like to thank my amazing wife, Tiffany, and daughter, Camaya Marie. To those I have failed to mention and for the mistakes made in this dissertation, the blame is mine alone.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the role that an individual leader's background (e.g. what they did before gaining power) plays in public evaluations of their performance managing international conflicts. I propose a novel theory arguing domestic audience members (e.g. the citizens of a leader's state paying attention to international conflicts) heuristically analyze the competence of a leader by examining their professional and educational background. Once audience members determine whether a leader is competent, they use these judgments to inform whether a given leader deserves blame or credit for the outcome of a given conflict. I find support for this theory by fielding a survey experiment designed to capture performance evaluations of leaders who fight conflicts resulting in different outcomes. Next, I develop a theoretical argument explaining why these backgrounds matter for the way leaders behave. I argue that leaders with stronger educational backgrounds (e.g. those with college/graduate degrees) should possess more cosmopolitan world views and critical thinking skills reducing the casualties their states suffer. Additionally, I argue that the leaders with combat experience should also be casualty averse reducing the battle deaths their states experience when engaged in armed conflict. Using cross-national analysis, I find mixed support for my hypotheses but identify important and consistent patterns that merit further empirical investigation. Finally, I investigate the way individuals assign culpability after surprise attacks to explore the conditions that make political leaders more likely to receive blame for surprise attacks. An initial study reveals that the level of certainty and agreement among the intelligence community revealed after the attack matters for how individuals hold politicians accountable.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

This chapter is an introduction to the dissertation *International Conflict, Political Leaders, and Accountability.* This dissertation provides three standalone papers investigating the relationship between leader characteristics, conflict behavior, and public opinion—along with a chapter that provides concluding remarks and outlines future research. This project centers upon a recurring narrative prevalent within the search for blame after conflicts end. After the zeal of rallying before conflict has been replaced with the sorrow of loss and death, political society finds a consistent need to determine a justifiable locus of blame. Nearly a decade after the Iraq War initiated under George W. Bush's administration, political candidates from both sides of the political aisle experience trouble justifying their initial support for the invasion (Glueck and Kaplan, 2020).

In some sense, the field of international relations originated as a response to the gap in our ability to understand why conflict occurs. From Thucydides' seminal project on the Peloponnesian War to modern attempts to blame particular leaders for failures and loss of life during international conflicts of smaller scale, assigning blame continually resurfaces after conflict in an attempt to provide an explanation for one of the most despicably consistent features of political society—death as result of international conflict.[1] Although it might seem that recent wars are becoming

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[1] Estimates of the total amount of death as a result of war (conflicts with over a 1000 deaths range widely between 150 million to over 1 billion lives lost (Hedges,

less deadly with the advancement of automated weaponry and appearance of a decline in large scale war, studies show that ongoing conflicts like the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have already produced approximately half a million casualties (Crawford, 2018). Further attesting to this project's importance, prominent scholars have recently cast further doubt on the accuracy of claims that war is less likely, declining in frequency, or in costs (Fazal and Poast, 2019).

This dissertation provides nuance to society's attempt to assign blame for war. In the first paper, I examine why some actors, specifically leaders, are more likely to receive disapproval for their performance in a given conflict while holding costs fixed. In the second chapter, I examine whether particular leaders are more deadly when they find themselves in international crises and wars. Such studies are often coined "leader-centric" in political science due to their focus on a variety of contextual factors related to leadership (e.g. leadership turnover and transitions) and the characteristics of leaders themselves. Both types of leader-centric work represent a family of theories and studies attempting to unpack the state-level processes by looking directly at leadership.

The state's internal or domestic attributes are commonly modeled by capturing the role a state's domestic institutions play in foreign policy. In contrast, the leader's internal characteristics are modeled as a function of their backgrounds (what they did before become a leader), their psychological traits (e.g. narcissism), behavioral patterns (e.g. hawkishness), and physical traits attached to notions of identity and power (e.g. sex, race, height, etc.). In most settings, political leaders at the highest level or, executives, possess strong influence over their state's foreign policy. For instance, presidents (usually reserved for popularly elected heads of republican states), are gifted authority over international crises, membership in international organiza-

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N.d.). It is likely that these estimates are conservative counts of all conflict deaths since many small conflicts are left out of the analysis.

tions, adherence to international regulations, and a state's economic relationships abroad. As a response to these powers, executives are often the subject of leader-centric studies of foreign policy behavior. These research agendas are beneficial to the field as they develop the reach of international relations in terms of the actors scholars possess theoretical expertise over. However, the international relations and political science scholarship has paid scant attention to a vast amount of literature on leadership characteristics from other fields.

This introduction reviews prominent leader-centric studies in political science and several other disciplines. I situate this review alongside a discussion of why these studies are so often attached to patterns of public opinion and issues of accountability. It concludes by proposing the research performed in this dissertation and summarizing each substantive chapter for the reader.

1.2 Studying leaders and conflict

King, kaiser, and commander-in-chief are all titles that grant leaders substantial authority over their state's foreign policy decisions. This point is important as it speaks to a concern over whether individuals can exert enough influence over an extremely complex international system while being constrained by other actors. Counter-arguments to the rise of leader-centric research are discussed too little in an effort to demonstrate their importance empirically. A naysayer to this type of project could claim that individual leaders are often in power for short periods of time, constrained by the court of public opinion, are limited in their ability to significantly alter the outcome of historical events by material realities like geography, natural resources, and power networks within the international system. All of these claims represents potential hurdles for scholars to consider when thinking about the impact of individual leaders upon a given outcome. Projects examining how public

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opinion responds to foreign policy outcomes by blaming leaders are still important even if members of the public incorrectly assign blame.

Discussions over the ability of the U.S. President to control gas prices elucidate this point. While the president has no direct authority over how much gas stations charge people at the pump, gas prices are sensitive to a variety of their foreign policy decisions (e.g. speculation concerning war in the oil producing countries, releasing national reserves of surplus oil). A president does not need direct control of prices to be blamed for it and this blame does not need to pass peer reviewed tests of logical coherence to constitute a strong narrative that could harm a leader's prospects of remaining in power (Mufson, 2012). While presidents do not directly decide the amount of casualties or costs a given conflict produces, they make an array of decisions that could theoretically affect casualty counts (e.g. proportionality of response, grand strategy, willingness to bargain). Studying the actual effect of individual leaders upon casualty counts is much more susceptible to failure from the counter-arguments discussed above. It is a tougher task argumentatively and empirically to demonstrate that a leader's attributes led to a difference in battlefield casualties than to show that people care about the attributes of leaders when assigning blame.

Political executives, at least in the modern age, are surrounded by a complex network of domestic and international institutions that constrain them directly through rules and indirectly through establishing precedents and norms for how leaders should behave. As such, we should only expect direct effects of leader characteristics upon policy outcomes where they possess explicit authority over the decision-making setting. This limit still leaves a great deal for scholars to explore. Scholars have discovered effects of individual leader characteristics upon business performance, the effectiveness of bureaucratic agencies, economic performance, crisis avoidance/resolution, and a growing variety of policy choices (Besley, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, 2011; Carreri, 2017; Jochimsen and Thomasius, 2014; Kaiser and Craig, 2008). In respect

to the focus of this dissertation, scholars have examined both the impact of leaders upon conflict and the reverse: how international conflicts affect the longevity and domestic support of leaders (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015; Croco, 2011; Croco and Weeks, 2016).

As the subset of international relations scholars that focus on leaders grow, so should our attention to the projects outside this recent bubble that were paying attention to leadership before it existed. Leadership studies, psychology, organizational science, economics, and history all have important insights for researchers attempting to break new ground in this area of literature.

1.3 Leaders in the literature

Machiavelli's work in *The Prince* can be seen as a very early leader-centric work related to potential dangers of foreign conquest and conflict (Machiavelli, 1532). The book highlights multiple areas where leaders influence the outcomes of war and multiple ways leaders can mitigate the risks of conflict and territorial expansion to their political survival. Biographical works detailing the historical role of leaders during conflicts should be thought of as contributing to the development of leader-centric projects. Most prominently, Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian detailing the role of multiple leaders (e.g. Pericles, Brasidas, Alcibiades, and Nicias) in cultivating freedom and wealth during conflict (Nichols, 2017).

While there are studies left out due to how quickly this area of research is developing, I focus on prominent work related to leaders and classify these studies by their attention to the contextual factors surrounding studies and the characteristics of leaders themselves. The most important advancements in leader-centric international relations research stem from Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2005). A renewed attention to the ultimate goal of leaders has paved the way for a variety of studies examining the role of domestic political selection upon a leader's foreign policy be-

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havior.[2] Simply put, all leaders desire to stay in power and must please a portion of the selectorate (i.e. those who can influence the selection of the leader) referred to as their winning coalition (i.e. the part of the selectorate responsible for the leader gaining/maintaining power) through the provision of private goods. If leaders are primarily interested in power, they will enact foreign policies that at least maintain the amount of public resources the leader can redistribute among the members of the winning coalition and maintain the necessary size of the coalition needed to retain power.

The assumption that leaders desire the retention of power has implications for how we view transitions between leaders as well. Wolford (2007) argues in similar fashion to Bueno de Mesquita (1981) that conflict can become inevitable and prolonged where the expected domestic benefit from winning is higher than the consequences from losing. However, Wolford (2012) argues that states can be stuck in wars they would otherwise not fight since new leaders possess incentives to strongly signal resolve early in their executive career. Even though populations might elect a new leader for the purpose of peace, doing so may force the other side to make less palatable offers to signal resolve to the new leader resulting in prolonged conflict. Furthermore, Wolford (2012) demonstrates that leader turnover can be seen as a commitment problem where new leaders cannot commit to keeping current deals. As such, deals are harder to strike as leaders approach elections or the prospect of them retaining office decreases more generally.

This implies a spiraling effect for leaders where costly conflict dampens their domestic support to the extent they cannot strike a deal for peace as the opponent believes they will not hold office for much longer. The longer they cannot strike the deal, the more likely the are to be blamed for costs associated to conflict and

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[2]Google Scholar, as of 1/7/2020, has 4,754 separate citations for Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2005).

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removed from power (Croco and Weeks, 2016). We can think of leaders being backed into a corner or experiencing a "Catch 22" in these situations. Failures in battle lead to reduced domestic support while reduced support prolongs the conflict further by reducing the leader's ability to strike a bargain that does not increase subsequent criticism from their winning coalition. These studies expand our knowledge of conflict by identifying the circuit breakers of state power. That is, recognizing that state interests and leader interests are not necessarily equivalent allows researchers to explain aspects of conflict not readily explainable by state driven theories of conflict. This approach is further supported by research agendas examining power and social hierarchies outside of mainstream political science.

Other studies outside of political science offer paths forward for international conflict research by delving into the qualities of individual leaders. The fields of applied psychology and leadership studies offer insights as to how a leader's characteristics matter for how they behave and are perceived by those they lead (Judge, 2002; Kaiser and Craig, 2008; Zaccaro et al., 1991). Judge (2002) analyzes the extent to which character traits correlate with indicators of leadership and leader effectiveness finding that extra-version is the strongest correlate with both. This suggests that leaders who socially outgoing and externally oriented (e.g. engaging their followers with speeches and consistent interaction) are more skilled at identifying effective leadership strategies. Future work could examine why by determining whether extroverted politicians are only perceived to be more active in an experimental setting or if they indeed pass legislation at higher rates, receive higher approval ratings, and achieve better policy outcomes.

Studies beyond political science reveal a careful attention to what "effective leadership" means. Kaiser and Craig (2008) improves upon former studies of leadership by distinguishing the success of particular careers (e.g. a leaders wealth, reputation, longevity in power) from the organizational outcomes related to the team or popula-

tion they are tasked with leading. After measuring effectiveness in this manner, they find that the individual traits of leaders matter for performance (Kaiser and Craig, 2008). The authors note that their work applies to politics as well as business in that politicians who are often "charming" or effective campaigners can relate to poor governance. Anecdotal evidence from U.S. presidents is cited exposing the need for more rigorous research on the applicability of this framework to interactions more political in nature. We could imagine a political leader who enhanced their personal positions and established a lasting legacy without necessarily producing any measurable improvements for the lives of their followers. Examining why some leaders are afforded this luxury while others are held more accountable for the measurable outcomes of their actions could be a fruitful area of research for those interested in how leader characteristics, bias/discrimination, and political accountability relate to each other. It is important to look at the characteristics and traits of leaders to determine the extent to which structural, systemic, and state-level theories overlook factors that increase the effectiveness of foreign policies.

Zaccaro et al. (1991) reviews leadership effectiveness in a similar way to Kaiser and Craig (2008) by looking measurable outcomes attached to the organization/group. Their specific interest or causal relationship is between effectiveness and "behavioral flexibility". Their work suggests that flexible leaders or those that do not adopt strict patterns and rituals in their leadership style are best suited to lead. This research points to multiple areas of inquiry important for political science scholars. It is possible that leaders are more flexible when their experience as leaders is not restricted to one particular domain. That is, political leaders are likely to implement and experiment with different approaches to leadership the more experience they have leading different types of organizations. This implies that leaders with more diverse professional experiences prior to political office might approach political leadership with more flexibility, generating improved policy outcomes for their constituents.

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Beyond behavioral patterns, scholars can also look at the influence of particular psychological or mental states have on the way one leads.

It might be the case that leaders with particular mental conditions behave in ways that followers perceive as 'leader-like' (Derue et al., 2011). Deluga (1997) finds that "narcissism was generally positively associated with presidential charismatic leadership and rated performance" suggesting that particular psychological traits can result in systematic differences in the way followers evaluate their leaders. It is not clear why a self-obsessed leader would act in a way benefiting followers. Leaders possessing these traits could more confidently frame their actions/choices to the public resulting in a perception of increased performance but it is largely unclear why this would make them better leaders in terms of observable policy outcomes. More research is needed in order to extend these findings beyond the U.S presidential context to determine the extent to which psychological traits affect perceptions of leadership and policy outcomes. It might be prudent to have a wide pool of psychological experts evaluate leaders from around the world in an effort to generate aggregated measures reflecting a leader's psychological condition. These ratings could help political science scholars investigate the relationship of psychological traits and policy outcomes in a variety of contexts. If leadership is related to a leader's psychological conditions, a leader's level of knowledge could also affect their ability to lead depending on the type of decisions being made by the leader.

Surprisingly, few studies examine the relationship between leadership performance and traits associated with competence, intelligence/critical thinking ability. Judge, Colbert and Ilies (2004) finds that indicators commonly associated with cognitive ability have a moderate impact on organizational outcomes. More specifically, House and Aditya (1997) performs a wide-ranging review of trends in leadership studies arguing that the field finds a pattern between experience, intelligence, and organizational outcomes. First, experienced leaders do poor in low stress environments as

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compared to intelligent ones implying leaders with experience are better paired for resolving crisis-like situations rather than issues more amenable to deliberation. If these findings map onto political organizations, we would expect a president with a great deal of experience to fare better in time-sensitive, high-stress situations and leaders with higher intelligence perform better where there is less stress and more time to critically analyze relevant information. These studies suggest that political organizations might be constrained or enhanced by the cognitive abilities of their respective leadership.

This field also pays attention to the psychological traits that characterize one's perceived ability to lead and one's willingness to serve as a leader. Rubin, Bartels and Bommer (2002) shows that intellectual competency is a key prerequisite for those attempting to find effective leadership. This suggests that individuals should prefer leaders that appear more competent, although these leaders are often seen as less relatable to some groups (Gift and Lastra-Anadón, 2018). Voters also look to physical characteristics they think determine effective leadership. Spisak (2012) demonstrates that masculine leaders are more likely to be selected in times of conflict and feminine leaders are more likely selected in times of peace. This provides evidence that individuals are using the traits of leaders to determine whether they possess an underlying attribute desirable for resolving a particular problem. It could be the case that individuals believe that masculine leaders are more hawkish or defensive in conflict, or that feminine leaders are more equipped to deal with challenges not related to conflict. While these biases are somewhat absurd, they contain information on how voters analyze leader characteristics. These findings suggest that voters think heuristically. That is, they develop mental shortcuts or rules of thumb to determine what traits signal a leader's ability and willingness to govern. Beyond perceptions of effective leadership, it is also important to know which characteristics produce effective leadership defined by measurable policy outcomes.

While political science literature of this kind is rare, it is expanding. Researchers have commonly focused upon the relationship between leader traits and economic or political outcomes. The approach adopted in this dissertation is supported by a recent push towards individual-level analysis of leaders in the international setting (Wolford, 2012, 2014; Besley, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, 2011; Besley and Reynal-Querol, 2011; Carreri, 2017; Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2005; Croco, 2011; Dafoe and Caughey, 2016; Saunders, 2011). If it is indeed the case that leaders with the "ideal set" of characteristics are more effective, then we should expect informed individuals to select leaders based off of these traits to maximize the likelihood that the commitments they care about become reality. Recent research suggests that more educated leaders are better at reducing deficits and creating economic growth (Besley, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, 2011; Carreri, 2017; Jochimsen and Thomasius, 2014). These studies are agnostic on how education relates to political competency yet imply that the ability of leaders to develop and implement policies creating growth varies. Carreri (2017) argues that leaders with higher levels of education are compensating for poor institutions in their efforts to reduce economic deficits. In line with economic performance, Besley, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol (2011) finds that educated leaders are strongly associated with positive economic outcomes yet does not relate this to other leader traits or develop a theory explaining exactly how political leaders use education to their advantage and how this affects public perception.

Once again, literature outside of political science reveals a similar consistent relationship between expertise, education, and effective leadership. Jochimsen and Thomasius (2014) examines the traits of finance ministers concluding professional experience prior to becoming minister and tenure as minister lower budget deficits. It is unclear whether ministers always prefer lower deficits when pursuing long term economic strategies yet other studies provide more evidence suggesting similar effects of experience. Moessinger (2014) finds that ministers with finance experience corre-

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late with lower national debt to GDP ratios yet surprisingly find null results for the affect of education upon these outcomes casting doubt on the ability to generalize from Carreri (2017) and Besley, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol (2011). It could be the case that particular positions require such a unique and high level of training that only extremely domain-specific experience result in the learning needed to improve performance. That is, general education might not improve policy outcomes where the issue matter is extremely complex. Further training like an advanced degree or on the job experience might be the only path to effective leadership.

Other research suggests that education and particular forms of identity matter for how leaders govern. Fuchs and Richert (2018) examines the effects of physical, character, and background traits upon aid giving finding "female ministers as well as officeholders with prior professional experience in development cooperation and a longer time in office provide higher-quality ODA (official development assistance)." This research implies that domain-specific experience matters for performance in a variety of political positions responsible for economic policy decision-making. It suggests that identity matters for organizational outcomes. It is not clear whether female ministers devote more time to ODA related policies or if structural biases working against women required them to be that much more skilled, educated, and trained to acquire the position in the first place. An important extension in this area could involve utilizing data on leaders from the Global Leadership Project and LEAD (Leader Experience and Attribute Descriptions) to determine the extent to which leaders from poorer backgrounds distribute higher levels of development aid (Ellis, Horowitz and Stam, 2015). This implies that certain backgrounds modify the willingness of leaders to exert effort in particular policy areas. It is possible that backgrounds provide some leaders with higher levels of ability when willingness/effort are held constant.

Indeed, multiple studies suggest that gender identity matters for public evaluations of people in leadership roles and for how leaders behave. Farvaque, Hammadou and Stanek (2009) analyzes the relationship between central banker professional backgrounds and inflation finding that academics, bank insiders, and those private sector members are better equipped at preventing inflation. They also find that women appear to be more hawkish over inflationary policy which is potentially contradictory to studies associating male identity with general conflict hawkishness. Scholars looking to contribute to this area of inquiry could develop experimental projects examining the role that gender identity plays in voter perceptions of aggression in particular policy domains. If identity in this context matters, it might also matter for particular characteristics directly attached to a leader's experiences in the economy. For instance, it could be the case that a leader's socio-economic status affects the way they approach producing economic policy.

Indeed, research on socio-economic status indicates leaders from poorer backgrounds care more about the development of social safety nets. Hayo and Neumeier (2014) shows that German Prime Ministers with from lower classes are more likely to increase public spending and debt financing. This implies that leaders care more about policy domains that had a memorable impact on their lives before governing. Similarly, Dreher et al. (2009) further demonstrates that the background of political leaders matters for the type of economic policy they enact by reviewing the backgrounds of 500 leaders from 73 countries. Specifically, they find that leaders with an entrepreneurial background are more likely to enact reforms inducing market liberalization and that education has little impact on such policies (Dreher et al., 2009). This shows that leaders may be motivated to dedicate effort towards specific policies based off of their own life experiences prior to entering office. It suggests that, regardless of one's success as an entrepreneur, this experience at least represents a signal for a leader's willingness to prioritize removing constraints on businesses. More broadly,

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it demonstrates the limits of education on effectiveness as educated leaders could always apply very little effort to areas they find less salient due to other characteristics they possess. In this way, a picture of leaders emerges where these traits compete to compel a leader to care and limit their ability to generate effective policies over what they find important.

Research on the relationship between leader traits and conflict is, perhaps, the fastest growing field of literature over the past twenty years. Historically, scholars ignored these traits to focus on system/state level indicators (Horowitz and Fuhrmann, 2018). Literature related to the ability of leaders to avoid punishment for their inconsistency during conflict (commonly audience costs) relates to this project as inconsistency is commonly associated with a signal of incompetence (Levy et al., 2015; Levendusky and Horowitz, 2012).[3] Their research points to a growing area of inquiry: the relative ability of leaders to groom support for their international actions. What is left unknown is why some leaders pay larger costs for casualties than others. More competent leaders could be able to identify situations where commitment inconsistency is unlikely. Levendusky and Horowitz (2012) calls for the research performed here arguing that we could benefit from studies, "...examining the causal mechanisms by which the public evaluates presidential behavior in the international realm is crucial to understanding not just audience costs, but foreign policy decision making as a whole." Potter (2007) answers this call with research that demonstrates the "probability of an international crisis involving the United States declines as a presidential administration gains time in office". This finding implies that leaders could be learning how to avoid crises as they become more competent at their position. Political experience in office is invaluable yet we do not know what explains why this rate of decrease varies across leaders. That is, why do some leaders learn more quickly than

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[3]For an experimental study of audience costs casting doubt on the strength of previous findings, see Kertzer and Brutger (2016).

others? Literature examining the role of education on political outcomes suggests leader backgrounds strongly inform the effectiveness of a leader's attempts to resolve multiple challenges related to political survival.

Similar to ministers with direct finance experience, scholars have begun investigating the relationship between a political leader's experience in the military and conflict behavior. Horowitz and Stam (2012) finds evidence that a leader's experience in conflict matters for how risky they are once they become leaders. Leaders with the rank of officer are more experienced in making large scale decisions that result in casualties where those who enlisted and are more combat experienced and risk-adverse concerning casualties. This is an extremely important finding as it demonstrates the countervailing effects particular backgrounds can have on a leader's behavior. It appears that military experience may make a leader better at avoiding casualties but, depending on whether you saw combat or not, could also make them callous or traumatized in a manner that changes the effort one exerts over casualty avoidance. Other research limits the role of military experience in determining approaches to foreign policymaking. Yarhi-Milo, Kertzer and Renshon (2018) examine the impact of leader traits upon how credible they perceive signaling surrounding conflicts to be "leaders vary significantly in how credible they perceive signals to be, depending on their foreign policy dispositions, rather than their levels of military or political experience." It is not clear whether leaders fare better in conflicts who perceive signals as credible but nonetheless represents a potential limit to the ability of military experience alone to explain foreign policy choices related to conflict.

These studies closely correspond to research that explains leader resolve or willingness to fight for reputation via geographical origin. The most prominent study investigating this relationship is Dafoe, Renshon and Huth (2014), which investigates why the culture of honor in southern states (i.e in the U.S.) instills certain leaders to be more likely to fight for reputation and status. Their framework posits that

leaders from the south, emigrating from predominantly Scot-Irish regions, are more culturally conditioned to fight for honor. These projects imply that leaders traits can impact the very reasons why leaders fight.

Recent research focusing on whether leaders are hawks or doves demonstrates that leader types also diffuse across regions due to individuals viewing nearby hawks as a security threat and desiring their own hawkish leader to respond (Carter, 2018b,a; Carter and Smith, 2018). This finding is plausible yet is entirely consistent with a theory arguing that the traits individuals deem 'hawkish' (e.g. military experience, aggressive statements of resolve) signal competence. Is it the case that an individual wants another hawk if this only increases the overall propensity of violence? Or is it more likely that individuals want a leader who is able or competent enough to provide security from the threat of an external hawk? The research in this dissertation strongly suggests that individuals care about a leader's level of competence when evaluating their performance and use a leader's background to help evaluate whether a leader possessed competence over a particular policy area. Horowitz et al. (2018) finds that leaders with military experience are indeed observably different in respect to how they approach coercion surrounding conflict where "leaders with combat experience and careers in national militaries are relatively better judges of their own military power." As a result, their threats are taken more seriously. They also find that leaders with military careers lacking combat experience are less selective in their demands and "correspondingly less successful when they make threats" (Horowitz et al., 2018). If leaders with military experience are better at measuring the capabilities of states, it is possible that they are better at determining the appropriate amount of risk to take and effort required in order to secure conflict related objectives (e.g. territorial gain/retention, casualty avoidance, collateral damage).

This logic is supported by research finding that leaders with varying competence (higher levels of cognitive complexity) and psychology (locus of control or the extent

to which people think they have power over their lives) are more willing to adopt simple policies like diversionary uses of force (Foster and Keller, 2014; Keller and Foster, 2012).[4] measures cognitive complexity by analyzing the words leaders use. The score is the ratio between highly complex words and all words appearing in the data meaning higher scores represent leaders who are able and or willing to discuss policy challenges with complex language. If leaders who are less competent are more willing to adopt highly risky policies like diversionary war, it could be the case that highly competent leaders approach complex international disputes with a more complicated, but potentially more rewarding policies.

Studies like Smith (1998) derive implications from a formal model of crisis bargaining paying particular attention to the role of competence in conflict escalation yet do not define why some leaders are more competent or test the extent to which this theory applies to observational data. Under the assumption that communication is minimal or uninformative (babbling) leaders with more competence are more likely to attack, retaliate, and intervene as a result of their self-perceived ability. While these theories are not empirically tested and the author does not focus on how leaders become competent or develop reputations for competence, this research argues that voters want to retain competent leaders, that competent leaders expect to perform better increasing their likelihood of intervention, and that this provides incentives for less competent leaders to intervene in order to signal their incompetence creating a dangerous "bias for violent behavior" practice by the least prepared of leaders (Smith, 1998). The implications of this formal model indicate that leaders strategically condition their conflict actions on their own perceived competence.

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[4]Foster and Keller (2014)

1.4 A proposal for studying backgrounds and conflict

This section outlines a proposal for contributing to the field of literature reviewed above. First, it specifies a general research agenda, then discusses specific questions that are of priority within this agenda.

First, there is a gap in international conflict literature as no project explores the relationship between backgrounds and public perceptions of ability as they pertain to conflict performance. For as much as political candidates discuss their experience and educational backgrounds on the campaign trail, it is surprising that there is no systematic investigation of the relationship between these characteristics and conflict performance. On a conceptual level, there is a scarce amount of research examining the relationship between perceived competence and accountability. Herein lies the broadest ranging impact of this dissertation. Fields like sociology, psychology, organizational management, economics, and others could benefit from an improved understanding of the extent to which experience and education improve decision-making. Additionally, understanding how individuals assign accountability in situations where performance is observed through outcomes, yet direct responsibility is debated or obscured could reveal interesting patterns in human decision making.

To my knowledge, there is no study in the field of international relations that investigates how people assign accountability in situations where they are uncertain over whether a given outcome is the product of some other actor's behavior. I argue that individuals will look to signals in an effort to heuristically (i.e. use of mental shortcuts) analyze the competence of the actor being evaluated. When outcomes are good, individuals are tasked with determining the extent to which the other person's behaviors resulted in the positive outcome. When outcomes are poor, individuals are similarly tasked in determining whether the other person's behavior is responsible for the negative outcomes reached.

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It could be the case that individuals hold more competent people at higher rates believing they should have known better and giving the benefit of the doubt to leaders who are less competent. Alternatively, believing that less competent people are responsible for mistakes (or the inverse where more competent people are responsible for less mistakes) could be all too easy. While I limit my investigation to blame for international conflict, findings could have implications for a variety of settings where performance evaluations occur.

To provide an example relevant to everyday life, imagine splitting the task of cooking with a new friend who has a culinary arts degree. As you eat the dish they provided, you notice that the dish has a horribly bitter taste. Your embarrassed friend argues that it must not have kept well or that the ingredients could have been tainted at the time of purchase but that is was not a product of their recipe or actions during preparation. Since you have never had their cooking before, you remember their background as a trained cook and easily agree the fault lies outside of their control. In this situation, the individual's background shielded them from blame by supporting the logic that they not be responsible for the poor outcome. Likewise, if your friend had a reputation for only eating fast food and rarely cooking dishes requiring complex preparation, you might be more willing to blame them rather than chalking up the bad taste to elements beyond their control.[5] In this sense, this dissertation is about who gets the benefit of the doubt and who does not.

In respect to international conflicts, leaders are evaluated for their performance in disputes and war. One only needs to think of the contested legacy of Neville Chamberlain after his policy of appeasement allowed the Third Reich to expand into the Sudentenland (Laybourn, 2001). In the mildest sense, he was seen as too attached to peace or too 'dovish' to apply the forceful counter to Hitler's aggression early on (Doyle, 1997). In the most extreme, he was painted as incompetent and

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[5]Perhaps they are writing a dissertation.

unprepared to deal with the realities of German expansionism. This sentiment likely fueled the Winston Churchill's rise to power, labeled a "bull dog" due to a reputation for resolve and toughness. Although Churchill also struggled to contain the spread of Nazi Germany, the stark contrast in their political legacies reflects the effect of failed foreign policy on leaders beyond survival.

Once outcomes of conflicts generated (i.e. who won, at what costs, etc.), individuals that care about holding leaders accountable for their foreign policy actions must evaluate their leader to determine the extent to which they are responsible. When leaders lose wars, individuals must determine whether success was unobtainable or whether the leader should be blamed. In a similar spirit to a person evaluating a person's competence in the kitchen, I argue individuals evaluate their leader's competence of international affairs by looking at their professional background characteristics (what a leader did prior to gaining power). When outcomes and backgrounds are intuitively compatible (war loss with weak background or war win with strong background) leaders are soft targets for the respective sentiments of blame and praise public ascribes to them post-conflict. When outcomes and backgrounds are logically incompatible (war win with weak background and war loss with strong background), I theorize that leaders will be hard targets for blame and praise levied towards them by their domestic audience. These theoretical arguments also imply that, when holding outcome fixed, leaders with stronger backgrounds will be rated higher than leaders with weaker backgrounds.

It is not enough to know whether these backgrounds matter for the way leaders are perceived. Although discerning patterns among public reactions to conflict carries important implications for what leaders do, it is also important to examine the extent to which these heuristics are effective shortcuts for audiences attempting to assign accountability. To fully grasp the importance of leader backgrounds and public opinion for international conflict, we must determine if leader behavior in conflict

varies systematically with backgrounds. It is important to understand whether these backgrounds do more than modify the way the public views their behavior. It is also possible that public audiences are occasionally correct in their use of backgrounds as heuristic devices for assigning blame and praise. That is, the backgrounds leaders have that signal competence actually generate it. While a combination of studies suggest backgrounds like education and military experience matter for how a leader governs, we are unable to determine if this matters for the ultimate cost a state pays for war: soldiers killed in action.

How much attention do individuals pay to conflict outcomes like casualties compared to other political outcomes more commonly thought to matter for measuring performance like tax policy? Initial analysis of public internet search data reveals that conflict outcomes are comparable, if not more popular on average than often highly salient topics like tax cuts. This shows one of the ways individuals find information related to conflict outcome and suggests that many are even willing to seek these type of data out if popular media fail to cover the costs of war.
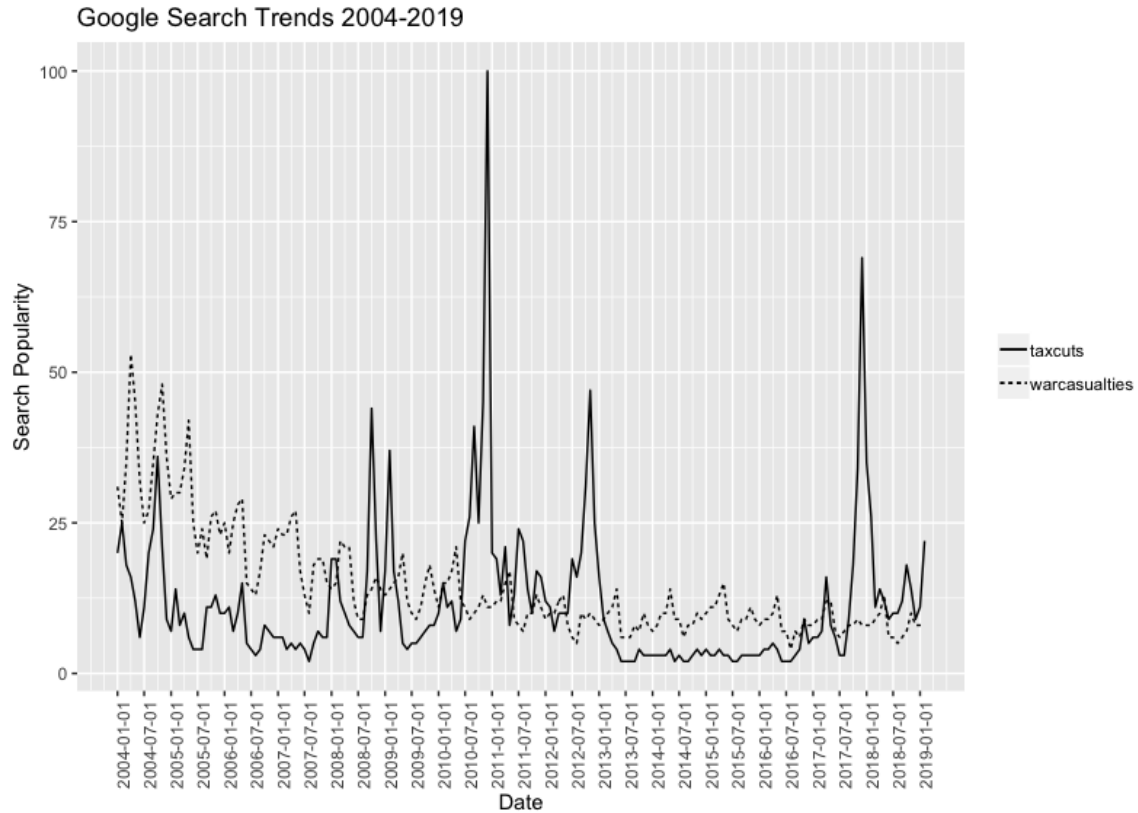
Figure 1.1: **Search engine data on keywords** *Numbers represent search popularity relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. A score of 0 means there was not enough data for this term.*

The dotted line represents search popularity on google for war casualties over time where the solid one shows the search popularity for tax cuts from 2004-2019. This graph shows a noisy but steady interest in a search term related to the study, 'war casualties', yet also shows the potential of economic policy, via 'tax cuts' to captivate audiences as the time surrounding the expiration of the George W. Bush's extensive tax cuts from approximately 2010-2011 represents a significant outlier for search popularity.[6] This suggests that people utilize search engines to learn about

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[6]In addition to this, scholarly research focused upon the relationship between foreign policy and domestic political behavior has demonstrated that conflict outcomes at least matter for wartime approval (Gartner, 2008*a*; Aldrich et al., 2006).

the costs of war at a relatively steady rate and that the casualties wars produce are salient enough to motivate individuals to seek out information. Once one has googled or searched for information related to conflict, newspaper articles like Azadzoi and Nordland (2018) represent a prominent way individual members of the public gain information about soldiers killed in action yet individuals can get this through leaked governmental reports and other sources. This demonstrates that individuals are both motivated and able to gather information relevant to wartime casualties.

I argue that accountability is a key mechanism underlying the relationship between leader characteristics and conflict behavior. Accountability represents a state of the world where people are held responsible for their actions whether they produce good or bad outcomes. When leaders lose wars or wage relatively costly ones and receive blame for it, this can be damaging to their political prospects (Croco, 2011). When leaders win wars and are praised for it, this is a key mechanism for increasing the likelihood that a leader will be retained or rewarded for their actions. While I argue that leaders should attempt to minimize blame and behave more freely when expecting less blame, individuals are often faced with multiple outlets to place blame. I extend the work performed in the first two chapters by examining why individuals choose to blame policymakers instead of intelligence organizations after surprise attacks.

1.4.1 Paper 1: Blame for Battle

How does the public evaluate the conflict performance of political leaders (e.g. prime ministers, presidents) when outcomes are observed (e.g. casualties, victory/loss) yet direct responsibility is debatable or unknown? Findings indicate that individuals are more likely to blame leaders for conflicts they initiate and that leaders are more likely to exert effort to winning a conflict when they are perceived as culpable (Croco, 2011). This implies that leaders strategically condition their effort in conflict to

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mitigate public backlash. However, determining whether a given leader is responsible for the initiation of conflict can be difficult when leaders commonly frame any conflict as a last resort option that the other side forced them to choose. Historical cases, from Churchill's reputation as a bulldog to George W. Bush's fighter jet landing on an aircraft carrier to the unveiling of a "mission accomplished banner", reveal that individuals pay attention to more than just the outcomes of conflict.[7] Framing matters. Yet it isn't clear what types of contextual information the public uses when interested in evaluating their leader's performance in conflict.

I theorize that individuals heuristically analyze the competence of their leaders to make these evaluations. If leaders are competent, they are deemed as less likely to be a fault for any negative outcome and more likely responsible for positive outcomes (e.g. war win, low costs). Conversely, leaders deemed incompetent are more likely to evaluated poorly for unfavorable outcomes (e.g. war loss, high costs) and less likely to be evaluated positively for good outcomes. by reviewing their professional experience prior to office to determine if they are responsible for the outcomes generated from conflict. This still leaves a critical question unanswered in respect to what information the public uses to determine whether a leader is competent. I argue that individuals look to the backgrounds of leaders or what they do before gaining power. When backgrounds convey competence over conflict, leaders benefit from both a shield and magnet effect during performance evaluations. Perceived competence shields or protects from blame whereas it attracts or invites praise. I argue that military experience and educational backgrounds are important indicators of competence. As such, we should expect leaders with stronger backgrounds (e.g. higher education level, military experience) to fare better in performance evaluations for conflict when holding costs and outcomes equal.

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[7]For a discussion of this announcement, see: Lucey (2018)

If backgrounds matter, leaders with high levels of experience in politics, military affairs, and educational attainment prior to reaching office should be treated differently than those without traits that generate perceived competence over conflict even when these leaders generate similar gains/losses from fighting. Initial results from an original survey utilizing an embedded natural experiment indicate that a leader's professional background affects the evaluation of leaders during conflict.[8] Specifically, respondents rank leaders (i.e. respondents are asked to asked to rate the leader's performance in the conflict on a 0-10 scale with stronger backgrounds higher for all three outcomes included in the experiment (win, stalemate, loss). However, analysis of sub-groups in the study reveal that these effects are heterogeneous. With respect to partisan identification, democrats penalized the leader with a weak background much more than republicans although the mean for the leader with a weak background was never higher than the stronger one. This research offers an experimental framework for analyzing the effect of leader traits upon public opinion of foreign policy outcomes and provides a preliminary examination of how leaders with varying backgrounds prosecute conflicts.

1.4.2 Paper 2: Less Lethal Leaders

The deadliness of international conflict is a persistent feature of international relations despite a wide array of studies examining the causes of conflict intensity. The issues at stake, parties involved, geographical terrain, and more have been leveraged to explain why some conflicts are more costly to human life. While these studies possess important implications for policymakers attempting to forecast the costs of a given conflict, they imply that there is little those outside of elite circles can do to reduce these costs even though members of the public are usually the ones sacrificing their

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[8]Embedded natural experiments or ENE utilize vignettes that make the realization of the treatment condition appear as if it were arrived at through a random process. See Dafoe, Zhang and Caughey (N.d.) for an extensive explanation of this approach.

lives for state security. Research shows that the public is sensitive to conflicts that incur relatively high costs to human life yet we do not know what makes leaders effective at reducing these costs (Gartner and Segura, 1998; Gartner, 2008a).

Multiple studies demonstrate that leaders who initiate conflicts are more likely to dedicate prolonged efforts towards victories and that leaders avoid crises when their reelection prospects are at risk (Croco, 2011; Chiozza and Goemans, 2003). These studies provide a context conditional explanation for why leaders become politically sensitive to battlefield casualties yet assume that any leader in these context would behave similarly. Much like selectorate theory, all leaders share an interest in political survival and are sensitive to what those who put them in power want (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2005). These projects are also similar in that they implicitly make a simplifying assumption: all leaders are equipped with equivalent skill sets. This work implies that changing characteristics of leaders would not alter the outcome or costs of a given conflict. That is, they would imply that a leader like Kaiser Wilhelm II would produce similar foreign policy outcomes to his predecessor, Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck. While one could argue that the large scale conflict was inevitable, few argue that Wilhelm's rise represented anything but a substantial turn towards risky and aggressive foreign policy leading Germany into a devastating war (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015). [9]

In line with historical cases that point to the importance of individual leader characteristics, recent studies suggest that the leader characteristics matter for how risk adverse they are in respect to initiating disputes, minimizing budget deficits, and whether the public defers to their decisions over military affairs (Besley, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, 2011; Carreri, 2017; Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015; Krebs, Ral-

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[9]A less cited example might be the replacement of Lord Aberdeen with the foreign policy expertise of Lord Palmerston during the Crimean War from 1853-1856. Palmerston's expertise was cited as a reason for his rise to power during the costly conflict and he was able to resolve the conflict expediently once taking power (Laybourn, 2001).

ston and Rapport, 2018). I theoretically link the casualties suffered in international conflict to the amount of blame leaders expect to receive for the conflict itself, their educational background, and domain-specific expertise over military affairs. Critically, I argue that educated leaders are better at minimizing casualties where military leaders are expected to be more aggressive, expect deference to their decisions, and used to accepting the costs of war. Utilizing time-series cross-sectional data on leader backgrounds from LEAD and casualty counts from the Militarized Interstate Dispute data, I use a variety of statistical techniques to test the relationship between casualties and blame in a cross-national setting with leader-conflict-year units of observation (Ellis, Horowitz and Stam, 2015; Jones, Bremer and Singer, 1996).

My findings suggest that the relationship between the educational level of a leader and MID casualties is robust and, as expected, higher levels of education negatively correlate with MID casualties. As approximately 60 percent of the statistical models used were negative and significant at the .05 level, the relationship is only moderately robust. This was not the case for combat experience. One one out of 12 models reported a negative and statistically significant coefficient. This suggests that the effect of combat experience on conflict behavior is isolated to the decision to initiate conflict and not how a leader behaves during conflict.

1.4.3 Paper 3: Bang them Blame

Why do some international crises get labeled as intelligence failures while others result in high levels of blame directed at policymakers? Historical events like 9/11, Benghazi, and Pearl Harbor have all been labeled as 'intelligence failures' and failures of policymakers. This could be due to the effectiveness of the leader at shifting blame to bureaucrats, crisis level attributes, or individual level characteristics relating to how preventable one thinks international crises are. Recent findings suggest that media outlets are more likely to blame intelligence communities (Davies, Schulzke

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and Almond, 2018). Although there is little reason to believe the public cannot find both actors culpable, leaders interested in political survival should prefer situations where intelligence communities are blamed more if it results in smaller decreases to their levels of support. Understanding why leaders avoid blame and how audiences will react to seemingly random shocks is crucial to understanding the implications of international crises for domestic politics.

Using original survey data, I examine how individuals assign culpability under a variety of crisis scenarios. I utilize vignettes to tell respondents a story about a country that experienced a surprise attack from another country resulting in casualties. I vary the extent to which the intelligence community gave policymakers time to prevent the attack by randomizing the amount of time between an intelligence report indicating the threat and the attack. Next, I randomize the way the president of the country that was attacked frames subsequent investigations by varying whether the leader directs investigations at the intelligence or the congressional committee responsible for reviewing the intelligence.

Centrally, I argue that the public looks to informational cues concerning how aware and certain policymakers should have been over a given threat to determine if intelligence communities gave adequate warnings. The amount of reports provided to policymakers, the number of agencies in agreement over the report's findings, and the amount of time policymakers had to act between the report and attack are all theorized to positively correlate with more blame for politicians and less blame for bureaucrats. Findings from an an initial pilot suggest that timing may only shelter intelligence agencies from blame and matter little for the level of blame policymakers receive. The pilot also suggests that a president's attempt to frame attack as an intelligence or policymaking failure may have an adverse effect where individuals assign more blame to policymakers when the president attempts to shift blame to the intelligence community.

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1.5 Conclusion

This dissertation includes three separate chapters designed for submission as journal articles. The first two papers are presented with full analyses sections where the third paper only presents a smaller pilot study designed to test the most critical parts of a theory concerning surprise attacks. In order to strengthen the impact of these studies, a few things should be considered before they are submitted.

First, the chapter concerning leader backgrounds and blame for conflict would benefit from a follow up study in a location outside of the U.S. as it appears partisanship and characteristics particular to the 2016 election might have influenced some of the results. It would also be beneficial to show that leaders with weaker backgrounds are rated lower regardless of the way this treatment is realized. In the survey experiment presented, a short biographical section is included in the vignettes. It would help to show that the results this approach produced hold even when respondents are given bullet point lists of biographical information before learning about the conflict. In respect to the second paper, more work is needed to establish the causal connection between leader backgrounds and conflict casualties. Additionally, it would strengthen the credibility of the argument to show that other types of conflict reveal similar patterns. For instance, if one could show that the effectiveness of conflict groups in civil war are also more effective in respect to casualty avoidance when led by educated leaders, it would be more difficult to argue these results were produced by factors isolated to the dispute setting or that irregularities inherent in the MID data led to these findings.

With that said, all of these projects represent standalone contributions to ongoing/active discussions in the conflict literature. They employ multiple models of human decision making, explore social phenomena relevant to discipline beyond political science, and utilize a variety of empirical strategies. This work has relevance to discussions about the psychological/cognitive states of leaders, conflict severity, fram-

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ing, and public opinion. The next chapter represents the beginning of this project and seeks to explain how a leader's professional and educational background influences public evaluations of their performance in international conflicts.

Chapter 2

Blame for Battle

2.1 Introduction

Following United States President George W. Bush's decision to declare a war on terrorism and invade Iraq, thousands of soldiers died and a controversy of culpability ensued. Debate over the conflict focused on whether Iraq had connections to the 9/11 terrorist attacker and whether the Iraqi state posed an existential threat via weapons of mass destruction (Miller, 2005; Kessler, 2019). As the war incurred more costs, critics centered upon Bush's competence as an explanation for why the U.S. became involved. Defenders argued that Bush's background in the military and elite educational achievement meant it was unlikely Bush was at fault while critics argued his military experience was limited, citing controversies surrounding his service in addition to his reputation as a "C-level" student (Glass, 2013). In an attempt to assign blame, opposing sides utilized differing interpretations of the President's life before politics to provide opposing evidence related to his ability to make competent decisions in respect to international conflict.

As more time passes, Bush's decision is only more widely condemned and even those who voted for the resolution to use force in 2002 are still suffering political consequences long after the conflict's end (Gompert, Binnendijk and Lin, 2014; Cole, 2019). President Bush's life prior to executive office (his background) harmed him while other parts like educational pedigree allowed supporters to bolster positive judgments of his performance as commander-in-chief during conflict. While this story

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elucidates the potential importance of a leader's background in attracting/repelling blame for costly battle, it puzzles one trying to determine which backgrounds help leaders and which ones make them all too easy targets for blame after conflicts.

In line with studies showing voters frequently use cognitive short-cuts to analyze complex choices, I argue that individuals heuristically use the professional backgrounds (i.e. military/political experience, education) of their agents or leaders to determine if they are responsible for a winning, losing, or needlessly prolonging a conflict (Lau and Redlawsk, 2001). This is perhaps one manifestation of the screening process discussed by Ashworth and Bueno De Mesquita (2014), Ashworth, de Mesquita and Friedenberg (2017) and Wagner (2010) where voters develop ways to remove incompetent leadership in effort to hold leaders accountable. This paper synthesizes literature demonstrating that a leader's educational background varies systematically with economic outcomes and literature examining why the public holds a leader culpable for conflict outcomes (Besley, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, 2011; Croco, 2011). It contributes to existing work on leader backgrounds by assessing how the relationship between blame and conflict outcomes is conditional on public perception of a leader's competence with a novel survey experiment.

Research on leader culpability demonstrates that a leader is culpable if they are in office when the conflict begins or politically connected to the leader who was (Croco, 2011). These individual assignments of blame and praise represent the micro-foundations of the public's general level of support important for whether branches of government decide to remove the executive, attempt to stop the conflict, and investigate the conflict retroactively. First, individual voters tend to ask if they applied enough effort (e.g. budgeting for war effort, rallying allies abroad). Second, and most importantly for this paper, if voters care about a leader's performance decisions in conflict, they need determine if the leader made the best decisions possible given available information. Since leaders are granted access to classified information over war

and voters are not, attentive voters are at a disadvantage when trying to determine the appropriate political response to their state becoming involved in costly conflicts. The complexity of international conflicts often requires a high level of attention by voters to determine the proper locus to assign accountability. This is a difficult task for voters as leader actions are often hidden, they possess informational disadvantages over the conflict, and studies suggest media outlets generally direct blame towards other actors like intelligence organizations (Davies, Schulzke and Almond, 2018).

It is not clear whether individuals blame competent leaders more or less when outcomes are poor compared to competent leaders. Individuals could believe that competent leaders should know better meaning individuals assign more blame to leaders with extensive backgrounds. While this alternative theory is attractive, I argue that individuals prefer simple heuristics and that a congruence pairing of outcome and background (negative outcome, weak background/positive outcome and strong background) is more simple than cases where leaders with high levels of perceived competence fail or incompetent ones succeed. In this setting, audience members determine that the failure could not be the direct fault of the leader because they are an 'expert' who would never make such mistakes. In this sense, leaders are given the 'benefit of the doubt' and audience members may shift blame to those executing the response or assume that a good outcome was not possible. This is similar to assuming an elite surgeon who looses a patient did everything in their power to save the patient whereas more scrutiny might be applied to a recent medical school graduate's failures. To investigate how these relationships work, I classify rivaling narratives of culpability in terms of whether they deal with a soft or hard target for blame/praise. Leaders with less experience could be held more culpable as they are 'soft targets' for criticism and 'hard targets' for praise.

I adopt a theoretical framework viewing leaders as potential targets of blame. As individuals search for information related to the leader to determine the extent to

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which they should be blamed, they analyze the extent to which a leader's professional background prepared them for the complex challenges of foreign policymaking. When leaders possess weak backgrounds, leaders become easy or 'soft' targets for blame as it makes intuitive sense to voters that an incompetent leader produced poor outcomes. When leaders possess strong backgrounds, they become hard targets for blame or soft targets for praise where outcomes are positive (i.e. low casualties, victory in conflict). I theorize that the most prominent relationship is described by the"soft target" effect where leaders receive higher levels of credit for winning conflicts when viewed as highly competent and higher levels of blame when losing if they are perceived as incompetent.[1] Hard-targets are leaders who possess qualities that run counter-type to expected outcomes. That is, leaders with reputations for competence are harder to blame for poor outcomes where leaders with reputations for incompetence are harder to praise when conflicts end in success.

While existing research identifies the contextual attributes of conflict that matter for leader behavior, we still know very little about the conditions under which leaders receive more or less support for their actions (Croco, 2011). Additionally, leaders with backgrounds conveying competence could be insulated from initiation culpability and able to act more aggressively once in office. In order to fill this gap, I conduct a novel survey experiment leveraging vignettes to describe a leader's background, conflict attributes, and capture levels of perceived culpability and competence. First, I describe an extremely close election between a leader with a strong background (e.g military experience, extensive education) and a leader with an weak background to

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[1] It is possible that respondents who perceive either high levels of similarity or difference in ideological disposition between themselves and the leader will simply find a narrative suitable to rewarding those like them and punishing those who are not. I expect that those with more ideologically extreme views will be less responsive to the individual traits of the leader in respect to forming views of competence as they might attempt to filter all information about a leader in respect to whether they are in agreement over certain policies.

avoid priming respondents to think that the leader in power also had other attributes related to competence that helped them rise to power. I then randomize which leader wins the election and tell the story of that leader getting attacked by another country a year later. Finally, I randomize the outcome of the conflict to see how backgrounds and outcomes interact. After these vignettes, I ask each respondent to evaluate the performance of the leader in the conflict. To field the experiment, I use Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform to conduct a series of online experiments providing an N of 1,109. Individuals are randomly assigned to vignettes that vary the background strength of the leader and the outcome of the conflict. To avoid confounding due to confusion over who started a conflict, I fix the vignettes to a scenario where the leader is attacked by another country resulting in war. This allows me to isolate scenarios where soft/hard target effects should apply. Results indicate that leaders with stronger backgrounds receive higher performance ratings for every outcome but the difference between leader types is most significant where leaders produce victories. This advances the way we currently think about public support for war by creating a model of support conditional on both a leader's background and the outcome reached. In order to understand how it benefits existing projects, it is important to review the most relevant literature to this study.

2.2 Relevant Literature

Do these backgrounds matter to voters if we usually assume that they care about ideological or distributional concerns? That is, do voters really care about competence when assigning culpability if they are so focused on what leaders do rather than how well they do it? Chiefly, there is little reason to expect that leaders will deliver on the promises they make to their voters if they lack the necessary skills to deliver. The commitments made by political actors only become credible when a "suitable set" of candidates are available to "carry them through once elected" (Besley, 2005). Qual-

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ities important for determining credibility can be divided between those that make candidates appear more honest and competent as found in Besley (2005). Instead of focusing on the qualities that individuals use to determine honesty, this paper extends a growing field of literature focusing on traits and backgrounds related to the competence leaders possess over conflict.

Leaders and Conflict

Leader-centric analyses are important for problems where the issue at hand revolves around outcomes that are largely determined by single actors. In times of conflict, individual leaders play extensive roles in determining acceptable risks and costs. In perhaps the most cited theoretical advancement on leaders, Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2005) provides a framework for analyzing the behavior of leaders based off of their domestic political context. This perspective argues that all leaders rely on some group to survive politically, or their winning coalition (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2005). To survive, leaders must maintain enough control over their winning coalition relative to a challenger by modifying the distribution of public and private goods. This model's wide applicability to the nexus between leader decision-making and domestic politics has been applied to coups, revolutions, purges, and more (Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, 2017). While this project does not offer a direct extension of this theory, it does focus upon how audiences (e.g. members of the winning coalition) measure their leader's performance during conflict. When security is conceptualized as a public good, it resembles territory where "expansion not only enriches the ruler; it also enriches the follower" (Wagner, 2010). This perspective classifies coalition members as principals where leaders are their agents attempting to provide security from interactions with foreign rulers (Miller, 2005; Wagner, 2010; Downs and Rocke, 1994). If conflicts end poorly for a leader and they are deemed culpable for the

initiation/costs/outcomes, coalition members, attempting to induce future agents to behave differently, might choose challengers in order to screen out incompetence.

Generally, the conflict literature classifies leaders and challengers as hawks and doves. Carter and Smith (2018) uses latent variable models to analyze the extent to which leaders are hawkish (roughly equivalent to war-prone or aggression) or doves (roughly equivalent to war adverse or peace-seeking). Carter (2018*b*) finds that populations prefer hawkish leaders when neighboring countries select hawkish leaders of their own. This could be explained by a possible deterrent effect where the public wants to increase their perceived war-proneness to deter neighbors from trying to gain leverage with a new bargaining agent (e.g. renegotiating economic deals, security alliances). Alternatively, audiences may conflate hawkish leaders from parties or backgrounds that indicate competence over military affairs where they desire a leader able to defend the country from a nearby hawk, not necessarily one that is more war prone. I contribute to this discussion by examining whether individuals pay attention to characteristics commonly thought of as competency forming, while testing the extent to which military leaders correlate with perceptions of hawkishness.

Horowitz and Stam (2012) finds evidence that a leader's professional background in the military (specifically rank) can impact the way they fight wars. Leaders with the rank of officer are more experienced in making tough decisions that result in casualties where those who enlisted are more combat experienced and risk-adverse concerning casualties. This implies that different types of professional experience in a similar domain can result in distinct foreign policy approaches yet it does not show whether leaders, attempting to avoid casualties, are better as a result of said experience. Additionally, other research suggests that the effect of military/professional experience may be isolated to risk aversion during conflict Yarhi-Milo, Kertzer and Renshon (2018) examine the impact of leader traits upon how credible they perceive signaling surrounding conflicts to be "leaders vary significantly in how credible they

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perceive signals to be, depending on their foreign policy dispositions, rather than their levels of military or political experience." It is not clear whether leaders fare better in conflicts who perceive signals as credible but nonetheless represents a potential limit to the ability of military experience alone to explain foreign policy choices related to conflict. If leader backgrounds matter for other social outcomes prominently related to executive performance, one can more comfortably believe leader backgrounds matter for the way international conflicts play out.

Multiple studies indicate that a leader's educational background affects the economic outcomes (budget deficits, GDP growth, inflation rates) of political systems at executive and local levels (Besley, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, 2011; Carreri, 2017). However, historical analyses of the relationship between experience type and economic success cast doubt. For instance, recent presidential candidates in the U.S. touted their business experience as a cue for their inevitable success at improving economic conditions. Yet, at least in the context of historical US presidential politics, Harry Truman, whose haberdashery went bankrupt in two years, was the only president with business experience since Herbert Hoover to improve economic welfare (McElvaine, 2012). I argue that characteristics like professional background matter to the extent they contribute to a public perception of competence. Individuals can differ over their approval of the outcome and over whether they believe the outcome is the product of their leader's actions. This implies that individuals may not approve of any casualties for a war they never approved of but still could analyze leader characteristics to determine if the leader receives punishments/rewards for that outcome. Individual characteristics formative of perceived competence could determine the extent to which individuals believe leaders are responsible for the failure to win a war or the number of casualties suffered while fighting.

Although I argue later that competence is important for determining culpability for conflict, this paper is predominantly concerned with perceptions of culpability.

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As such, it is most closely related to work examining the causes and consequences of leader's being blamed or praised for conflicts (Croco, 2015). Croco (2011) shows that U.S. presidents systematically differ in their conflict performance when one accounts for whether they initiated the conflict. Her work shows that prospective calculations of blame compel leaders to fight costly conflicts to positive outcomes where they or a closely linked predecessor started to war. This implies that leaders condition their behavior on how they expect the public to react in the future. This assumption is bolstered by the findings of Chiozza and Goemans (2003) demonstrating leaders are less likely to initiate crises when their risk of losing office is higher and that risk of losing office is higher when they initiate a crisis.

It is also helpful to think of the problem of incompetent leadership at war as a relationship between principal and agent in a canonical sense (Miller, 2005; Wagner, 2010; Downs and Rocke, 1994). Principal-agent theory is best described as a "flexible family of models" rather than an overarching theory with consistent assumptions (Gailmard, 2012). While issues of international security can be characterized as principal-agent problems with moral hazard (e.g. voters not wanting particular tactics used in battle) or adverse selection, the problem focused on here is that of hidden actions and information. When political leaders at the executive level (e.g. presidents, prime ministers) act on the behalf of their state in foreign affairs, they are hired by citizens to provide them public goods like security. When leaders engage other states in violent conflict, they can take extremely covert actions to pursue their interests and attempt to conceal or classify information that might harm their political careers. Since modern leaders rarely own the country they rule like traditional monarchs, they can often promote their ultimate interest of political survival at risk to the principal's interest in security (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2005). As a result, the principal must find a way of inducing the leader to behave as they would if they were governing. However, the problem lies in that the principal is not fully informed on the agent's

preferences and, most importantly, over what the leader does exactly during a given conflict as the leader has informational advantages due to the classified nature of military intelligence (Wagner, 2010; Downs and Rocke, 1994).

Since leaders have an incentive to conceal information damaging their prospects of retaining power, knowing the outcome is not enough to determine the leader's performance. Wagner (2010) compares this to the professions of medical doctors and lawyers where extremely competent practitioners inevitably lose patients and cases. To determine whether they acted in your best interests as you would have, you would have to know as much about the law or medicine as them which is unlikely considering you requested their expertise. The simplest way to resolve this problem include paying the agent for performance (e.g. perhaps figuratively by increasing your support or how expressed it is) yet providing incentives for winning conflicts may provide a leader with too much incentive to initiate conflicts. Other ways of resolving this problem include legislative oversight (found to increase a state's foreign policy ability), protocols for removing the leader, and separation of war powers across divisions of government (Downs and Rocke, 1994; Colaresi, 2012). This paper is not interesting in examining the extent to which principals are able to induce agents to take their most preferred action by screening for incompetence. As such, it should not be seen as a test of principal-agent theory but as an empirical test of a theory operating within the context of principal agent problem. Rather than examining leader behavior as a result of these inducements, it first examines the extent to which principals employ heuristics to determine whether they should punish or reward their agents, conditional on the outcomes reached. Specifically, I examine whether individuals employ a shortcut that utilizes a leader's background and the outcome of the conflict to determine whether a leader should be blamed or praised, resulting in systematic changes in their support for the leader. While the study is novel in many

ways, it is not the first study to examine the role of a leader characteristics and public opinion more broadly.

Leader Backgrounds and Public Opinion

There is a growing amount of research demonstrating that the individual backgrounds (i.g. training, education, experience) of leaders matter for their abilities once in a position of leadership. Besley and Reynal-Querol (2011) use cross-national analysis to determine that democracies are 20 percent more likely to select highly educated leaders. This implies that populations, when given the opportunity, prefer leaders with traits broadly associated with competence. In line with these findings, Gift and Lastra-Anadón (2018) finds that voters prefer highly educated voters on average but that conservatives find politicians harder to relate to if they attended elite schools. This could imply that individuals desire competent leadership but are wary of politicians with lives dissimilar to their own.

Additionally, research outside the field of political science on the determinants of effective leadership is abundant and well-received. Most prominently, the fields of applied psychology and leadership studies offer insights as to how a leader's characteristics could create both perceived and actual competency(Judge, 2002; Kaiser and Craig, 2008; Zaccaro et al., 1991). Most importantly, Hoffman et al. (2011) find evidence that "state-like individual differences (e.g. knowledge and skills)" can be a consistent predictor of effective leadership indicating that what background qualities like education and experience could matter for the ability of political leaders.

In line with the logic that intelligence can determine the quality of leadership, Judge, Colbert and Ilies (2004) find that indicators commonly associated with cognitive ability have a moderate impact on organizational outcomes. More specifically, House and Aditya (1997) perform a wide-ranging review of trends in leadership studies arguing that the literature finds a pattern where experienced leaders do poor in low

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stress environments as compared to intelligent ones with low experience (as well as the inverse that experience is preferred to intelligence in high stress situations). If these findings map onto political organizations, we would expect a president with a great deal of experience to fare better in time-sensitive, high-stress situations and leaders with higher intelligence to perform better where there is less stress and more time to critically analyze relevant information. Both concepts, experience and intelligence, are frequently associated with competence. It is not clear from this strain of research that the combination of these two, a situation where a leader would be predicted to possess high levels of competence, result in better outcomes for the organization they lead.

This field also pays attention to the psychological traits that characterize one's perceived ability to lead and one's willingness to serve as a leader. Rubin, Bartels and Bommer (2002) show that intellectual competency is a key prerequisite for those attempting to find effective leadership. Similarly, Spisak (2012) find support for their theory that masculine leaders are selected in times of conflict and feminine leaders are selected in times of peace. This provides evidence that individuals are using the traits of leaders to determine whether they possess an underlying attribute desirable for resolving a particular problem. It could be the case that individuals believe that masculine leaders are more hawkish or defensive in conflict, or that feminine leaders are more equipped to deal with challenges not related to conflict. The critical connection is that individuals look to leader characteristics to determine whether a given leader is in possession of a characteristic they believe has consequences for their effectiveness as a leader.

Studies demonstrate that the expectation of blame matters for how leaders behave during conflicts. Leaders are deemed more culpable (deserving of blame) for a conflict they start, as they preside over it longer, and the more they were connected to the prior elite who initiated the conflict if they inherited it (Croco, 2015). This

implies that the public uses widely available information to determine who to blame and how much. When expecting a high level of blame if conflict generates poor outcomes (e.g. loss of territory, civilian casualties, etc.), leaders should put more effort towards designing military operations that prevent these outcomes. Confirming these implications, (Croco, 2011) shows that leaders who expect to be held accountable achieve more favorable outcomes. However, there is evidence that individuals employ heuristics or mental shortcuts about their leaders and that these judgments affect the way audiences evaluate the specific actions of that leader (Hehman, Gaertner and Dovidio, 2011).

If fixed traits like race and gender are analogous to professional characteristics, recent findings demonstrating public attentiveness to physical characteristics should bolster our expectations that individuals also rely upon narratives surrounding professional backgrounds with varying rates of accuracy to determine latent qualities of the politicians they evaluate when deciding how to assign blame after conflict outcomes are generated (Hehman, Gaertner and Dovidio, 2011). In a recent article, Krebs, Ralston and Rapport (2018) found that Americans are willing to defer to military leaders on decisions over both when and how to use force abroad. If the public is willing to defer to military experts on military affairs, they could be more willing to defer to political leaders that have military expertise as to whether the particular outcomes of conflict were avoidable. Leaders frequently champion their professional experience to convince populations that they are not only competent, but experts in comparison to their challengers (Panic, 2016). It is possible that these reputations for competence, often promulgated by the leader, are 'sticky'—meaning they persist over time. The reputations for competence formed by leader background traits serve as shortcuts for audiences attempting to determine how competent their leaders are over particular domains once in office. To investigate the merit of this theory, I use an experimental design to recover the directional nature of the relationship between leader

characteristics, (education, military experience, political experience, etc.), perceived conflict competency, and culpability.

There is also strong evidence that the public defers to military leaders more generally. Krebs, Ralston and Rapport (2018) surveyed nearly 2,500 Americans asking them two rate their agreement with two prompts: (1) "When considering the use of military force abroad, we should first and foremost trust the judgment of U.S. military leaders regarding whether to deploy U.S. forces" and (2) "When considering the use of military force abroad, we should first and foremost trust the judgment of U.S. military leaders regarding how to use U.S. forces on the battlefield". The first question relates to the appropriate conditions under which force is necessary and the second relates to the tactical decisions made over how to prosecute the conflict. It is not clear whether this applies to political leaders with perceived competence over military affairs due to their experience prior to holding power. It could be the case that leaders with these traits are held less culpable for poor conflict outcomes. Research on leader culpability demonstrates that a leaders are perceived as more culpable for a conflict if they start it, are politically connected to the leader who was, or preside over the conflict for a longer period of time (Croco, 2011, 2015).

In a growing field of literature focused on leadership backgrounds, attributes, traits, and characteristics there is a significant amount of literature possessing some but not extreme relevance to the work performed in this study. While there is evidence that these backgrounds matter for actual competence, there is little to no evidence that those paying attention to international conflicts attempt to identify leader competence by using leader backgrounds. Finally, and most importantly for this study, there is no single study examining blame for international conflict in relation to the most prominent types of backgrounds politicians possess to prepare them for governing.

2.3 Theory

The following sections contain my theoretical expectations for why leaders receive more blame or praise relative to others conditional on their professional background and the outcome of the conflict. I opt to retain blame and praise in my conceptual framework instead of reducing these to changes in support to be clear which sentiments related to conflict matter for varying levels of support. Blame refers to assigned culpability for poor conflict performance related to casualties, outcome, and extent of concessions made. Praise is the symmetric positive sentiment individuals assign to leaders who manage to win conflicts. Blame is a sentiment that could manifest into lower approval ratings, less willingness to support financially, and vote share if the consequences of the conflict are extensive to the people the leader relies on to maintain power.

2.3.1 Overview

My theory captures a setting where a leader is tasked by an audience to provide security as a public good through their interactions with foreign leaders. This audience acts as a principal over the leader where the leader represents the principal as an agent in foreign affairs (Wagner, 2000; Downs and Rocke, 1994). Specifically, I focus on the process by which audiences review their leader's performance in an international conflict after outcomes are generated and costs are known. While the outcome and costs of conflict are known to the principal, the extent to which the leader or agent acted on their behalf (as audiences would act if they were not represented) is unknown. Specifically due to the covert nature of modern warfare, voters cannot be entirely sure of the actions taken by the agent. Additionally, the operational intelligence surrounding warfare is often classified obscuring key details over the effectiveness of the attack, motivations for conflict, and other options available to the leader when deciding how to engage. This should not matter if leaders and voters consistently share preferences

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over time. However, individuals also gain information about the actions leaders take and the outcomes these actions produce through 'leaks', investigative journalism, and information gathered from FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) requests.

I adopt a common assumption in political science that leaders prefer to remain in power or survive politically and do so by providing goods to those deciding whether they stay in power (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2005). However, what benefits do audience members in a leader's winning coalition want from an international crisis or conflict? Audience members desire candidates with the abilities to deliver on policy promises once in office. To do this, they select on a combinations of observable leader traits (education, professional expertise, experience) that signal their latent ability to govern. During conflicts where the potential for loss is high, individuals prefer leaders that minimize losses (casualties, territorial concessions) and maximize gains (economic growth, territorial gains, enhanced security).[2] It is possible, that a leader's interest in pleasing their winning coalition for the purpose of survival could run counter to the security interests of the state they control. As such, leaders have an interest in minimizing loss when in war, but may go to wars costly to those outside of their winning coalition if the distributive gains of war can be redirected to their base.

However, the losses and gains of conflict are often hard to measure for individuals saturated with partisan interpretations of each individual outcome from battle. After Sadaam Hussein's regime fell in Iraq, Republican leadership in the United States utilized this to claim that the war was a success yet the war is now hardly viewed as beneficial or successful (Lucey, 2018; Gompert, Binnendijk and Lin, 2014). I argue that conflict often generates noisy outcomes but most importantly, that individuals are tasked with assigning a particular amount of culpability for conflict outcomes.

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[2]See Smith (1998) for formal models with similar assumptions treating security as a public good.

When conflicts go well, individuals must determine if gains directly resulted from the decision-making of their leader or agent.

There are two prominent theoretical possibilities I explain with a theory of leader target types. Under this perspective, leaders become the targets of two sentiments voters hold in response to conflicts: blame and praise. Soft targets are leaders that are easy to blame or praise because their background is logically coherent with a narrative of them being responsible. Hard targets are leaders that are hard to blame or praise because their backgrounds are logically coherent with a narrative of responsibility. For example, a leader with a weak background is a hard target for praise because it is unlikely they were responsible for positive outcomes with no expertise or relevant experience. Likewise, a leader with with a strong background is a hard target for blame when conflicts are lost because it makes less sense that an extremely competent leader is responsible for making mistakes critical to the outcome realized.

Leaders as Targets of Blame and Praise

First, my theory concerning soft targets posits that individuals use background traits to identify leaders who are easy targets of credit/praise due to a perception of high competence or blame because of low levels of perceived competence. When leaders are blamed, their overall support decreases where praise is symmetrically beneficial for a leader's support. Since individuals are left to determine how competent a leader is through observable characteristics like professional background, perceived competence can be thought of as relying upon indicators that are crude proxies for actual competence. As a result, the critical claim of this theory is leaders can be helped or harmed by their background as voters attempt to remove incompetent leaders after war and retain competent ones. Under canonical assumptions of principal-agent theory, as voters value sending signals to future leaders more, the more likely they will be to remove any leader that loses and retain any leader that wins (Miller, 2005;

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Downs and Rocke, 1994). This means that PAT implies that leaders with extensive military/political experience and high educational achievement would become soft targets for praise if a military operation yields positive gains but that voters should treat a competent loser and incompetent loser in a equivalent manner. I diverge from this perspective by focusing on changes in support as a function of two sentiments related to accountability: blame and praise. Blame represents a negative sentiment where leaders are deemed culpable. Praise represents a positive sentiment held by the public where leaders are deemed responsible for positive outcomes.

A target becomes harder to apply criticism/easier to assign praise to when they accumulate perceived competence or gain more experience along three key traits commonly associated with the competence or expertise of political leaders: educational achievement, political experience, and military experience. One alternative theoretical argument is easy to think of as 'they should have known better' where leaders with more competence are blamed at higher levels. I argue that blame attribution rhetoric is similar to absolving someone of blame because they couldn't have known better and only more likely to be adopted by those with highly fixed beliefs surrounding the leader and or conflict. As such, this theory could be limited in its application to political systems possessing extreme partisanship or highly polarizing leadership.

My theory of target types implies a logic of blame where the leader couldn't be responsible for the specific outcomes of a given conflict because they have such a high level of expertise. Under this logic, the individual measuring performance assumes the fault must be elsewhere. Additionally, a target becomes harder to praise for successful conflicts when they possess a reputation of relatively less competence. These two narratives or component parts of this theory are not in contradiction with one another but are two distinct ways of justifying blame or credit in relation to perceived competence due to a leader's background strength. Leader backgrounds are stronger when a leader has more experience in multiple areas.

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If a leader is perceived to have high competence over conflict, they will associate positive outcomes with their actions as they are soft targets for praise. Conversely, when conflict outcomes are poor and leaders possess background traits that produce perceptions of incompetence, individuals will be more likely to blame a leader for outcomes when the other factors of culpability (initiation of conflict, conflict duration under current leader) are held equal.[3] *As such, the central expectation of this paper is that leaders with stronger backgrounds will receive higher performance ratings for conflicts for all possible outcomes (win/lose/stalemate).*

2.4 EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

In order to understand the benefit of an experimental approach, it is important discuss alternative approaches and their respective limitations. First, a researcher could approach analyzing the relationship between a leader's background and the public's opinion of their actions during conflict by comparing a leader's change in approval ratings after conflicts conditional on the leaders background. Data exist for leader characteristics (e.g. LEAD, Archigos) and cross-national ratings of approval are available. However, this approach involves arguing that observed changes in approval ratings are products of a leader's backgrounds and not the myriad of other elements that affect the aggregate approval rating of a leader. For instance, it could be the case that decreases coincide with other bad news related to the leader, the impact of the conflict upon the economy, the leader/media's ability to justify the conflict and frame outcomes as beneficial. These factors, along with too many others

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[3]The survey experiment will control for these potential confounders by examining a setting where the leader is attacked and the duration is not specified. Additionally, It is likely that audiences would increase support if a leader was able to fight a very strong opponent to a stalemate or decrease it if they were only able to fight a weak opponent to a stalemate. I leave the strength of the opponent out of this theoretical framework assuming that the parties were relatively comparable in capabilities to initiate armed conflict.

to discuss here, result in a sprawling statistical model with a long list of control variables that can be difficult to interpret in a manner that isolates a causal effect of a leader's backgrounds. Additionally, since a leader develops these backgrounds prior to entering office and fighting conflicts, controlling for the costs and outcomes of conflicts could induce a form of post-treatment bias over the regression estimates obtained (King, 2010).

In order to isolate the causal direction of the affect of competence upon culpability related to conflict management, I designed an instrument that isolates varying leader traits associated with competence from other causes of perceived culpability (e.g. initiation of conflict and duration of conflict). In order to do this, one needs a scenario where the leader is not responsible for the start of a conflict and has only presided over the conflict for a relatively short period of time. In order to isolate the extent to which varying backgrounds relates to performance ratings, I also need a treatment that can vary the background traits of leaders while minimizing potential confounding related to the approval of a leader's management of conflict (e.g. casualties, financial costs, issue type).

Considering the theoretical argument at hand is not concerned with the sensitivity of evaluations to a wide array of factors, developing a simple survey experiment that varies the leader's background and places them within a realistic scenario for international conflict is likely to the most effective and efficient way to determine the directional effect of the explanatory variables upon public evaluations, conditional upon outcomes.

EXPERIMENTAL TREATMENTS

This section describes the treatments used in the experimental survey to capture a respondents support, Y, conditional on a variety of treatments. Technically, the survey is 2×3 where all treatment conditions are realized resulting in 6 possible vignettes

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where each respondent will only see one possible realization they are randomly assigned to. Respondents are assigned randomly into groups with both the background (strong/weak) and the outcome of the conflict (win/loss/stalemate).

It is possible that individuals may confound any given treatment including highly experienced or tenured leaders with autocratic rule or other potential confounders for one's approval of a state's foreign policy. If seeing a highly competent leader or a leader with military experience (the treatment) is not seen as a random or event exogenous to the context, than there is no reason to worry. However, it is possible that respondents who see leaders with extensive military and political experience might form the belief that the state in question is autocratic since these regimes more often possess leaders with longer tenure and military rulers. This is seen as potential confounder since an individual might rate their performance of the leader based off of their disapproval of non-democratic principles rather than the intended treatment.

Most recently discussed in Dafoe and Caughey (2016), embedded natural experiments offer the researcher the ability to isolate the treatment affect from the respondents background beliefs about the randomness of the treatment occurring in reality. Most centrally, ENEs involve a treatment assignment mechanism "that is at least approximately independent of background attributes" (Dafoe and Caughey, 2016). If the treatment has an embedded lottery function, this is easily captured. As such, to control for the potential confounders surrounding military conflict, I employ a logic similar to that found in Jones and Olken 2009 and Dafoe and Caughey (2016) where they use an assassination attempt that 'just happened to miss' to instill the belief in the respondents that the experience of the leader occurred by random chance. Instead of an assassination that might prime respondents to think the state the leader rules is violent, I employ a scenario where a term-limited leader steps down resulting in a historically close election to avoid respondents believing leaders are competent because

they easily gained power. This approach attempts to balance the unseen indicators of competence not explicitly used as treatment conditions in the experiment.

The vignette is similar to a scenario where individuals read news reports related to conflict yet is not presented in long form mock news format. Recent research shows that the choice between vignettes and mock news reports is not consequential for individual responses to manipulation checks and credibility questions finding little to no trade-off between internal and external validity (Kreps and Roblin, 2019).

Vignette Manipulations

First, respondents see a vignette designed to set up a close election that resulted from an event that is unrelated to the eventual type of leader in power and the context of the conflict. To do this, I utilize term limits to stage an election between two leaders.

> A little over two years ago, the president of a country left office due to term limits. Two candidates from different parties than the deceased president emerged as front-runners and engaged in the one of the closest elections in history.

The election is described as historically close to capture a situation where either leader could have won but just 'happened to come out victorious' to prevent respondents from believing that leaders are competent as a result of their campaign skills rather than their background characteristics.

Next, respondents will see a description of the winner where some filler irrelevant to conflict and expertise has been added to make the vignettes read more naturally. [4]

> The newly elected leader had never pursued executive office before winning. Prior to running, they: (Low Competence)[attended college and

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[4](Treatment)[Conditions] Words in parentheses not shown to respondents.

worked outside of politics for the entirety of their career.], (High Competence)[graduated college with an advanced degree, served as an elected representative for their home state, and served in the military overseas.]

After this, information about the conflict is presented to the reader. Each vignette will also vary the outcome of the conflict to allow for an examination of how these backgrounds intersect with the prominent outcomes reached in conflict.

Recently, a foreign country initiated a conflict resulting in armed violence. The leader fought back and the conflict resulted in a (Outcome)[victory where the other side made significant concessions/loss where Leader B made significant concessions/stalemate where neither side made significant concessions].

In order to isolate the conflict from the previous leader and the election itself, the conflict begins as a result of a foreign state attacking the newly elected leader. While it might seem unnatural to have a new leader get attacked, this setting is justified by research investigating how tenure impacts the challenges leaders receive from the international community (Chiozza and Choi, 2003; Spaniel and Smith, 2015).[5]

Finally, more information is presented to the reader. I paint a picture of mixed expert opinion on the need for conflict and state that the cost was non-trivial in terms of casualties to remind the reader of the the additional costs of conflict beyond concessions.

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[5]Chiozza and Choi (2003) demonstrates that democratic leaders are more likely experience conflicts as their tenure increases but that autocratic leaders experience the reverse—as time passes they are less likely to experience conflicts. The aggregated results suggest that the effect of tenure is small (coefficient value is .004) but indicates that challengers resort to violent means to resolve disputes at earlier points in their tenure. Spaniel and Smith (2015) suggests that newer leaders are more likely to become the target of sanctioning efforts as challengers expect more recently elected targets to have less consolidated power in their regimes compared to other leaders.

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Some expert opinions argue that the conflict was avoidable while others argue that it was inevitable. All agree that the conflict resulted in a non-trivial amount of casualties for both sides.

After this, I will ask readers to rate the leader's performance in the conflict on an interval level scale from 0-10 (0 representing extremely poor performance, 10 representing excellent performance):

So, how did the leader do? Please rate the leader's performance in the conflict.

LIMITATIONS

While I attempt to abstract from partisanship by not identifying the leader's party affiliation in the survey experiment, it is likely that extreme partisans will be largely focused on whether the outcome is approved by their respective political ideology. In the context of US politics, conservatives might possess hawkish foreign policy views and approve of any outcome involving conflict more than Democrats finding the leader's actions acceptable regardless of their characteristics. Partisans will likely adopt the narrative of culpability appropriate to their preexisting level of support for a particular candidate. I examine the effect of partisanship upon approval with the use of demographic question over party affiliation but am hesitant to fully feature partisanship in the instrumental design via another treatment as the number of treatment categories is already high relative to available resources.

In order to strengthen the belief of randomness overall, I also use abstract encouragement found in Tomz and Weeks (2013) where the respondents are literally encouraged to think abstractly with a prompt. Abstract encouragement is most commonly applied with the following statement "For scientific validity the situation is general and is not about a specific leader in the news today". However, the results in Dafoe

and Caughey (2016) suggest that this technique is ineffective at reducing confounding as implemented above. Specifically, respondents could confound the treatment of military leader types as something that is more likely to appear in autocracies, generating lower levels of approval from democratic populations. Additionally, one might assume background characteristics about the leader (gender, age, ethnicity, etc.) as a result of them being in a high level of authority or being involved in a conflict. As such, I use a more direct and explicit encouragement.

> For scientific validity, the following scenario is completely abstract and does intend the reader to attach the descriptions stated here to any particular state or leader currently in or seeking office.

Regardless of this encouragement, it is possible that individual behavior in the experimental setting is not comparable to the ways audience members analyze news content with discussions of conflicts with realized consequences for the reader. Additionally, individuals might be able to infer or determine what the experimental design is meant to capture creating demand effects. However, research examining the extent to which respondents are able to do this in experimental settings casts doubt on the ability of the average respondent to interpret which parts of the survey are manipulated (Mummolo and Peterson, 2019).[6]

Finally, it could be the case that individuals care less about these background as they learn about a leader through their actions in office. This means that individuals might not find backgrounds as important if the leader has longer tenure meaning that this approach might have difficulty creating results that generalize to settings where the public is evaluating leaders with increased levels of tenure.

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[6]The survey also includes fixed information on casualties and other context surrounding the conflict that respondents might expect to vary instead of the leader's background.

After developing the corresponding surveys to each treatment online, I utilize Amazon's Mechanical Turk (hereafter MTurk) platform to collect a sample (n=1,109) of adults in the United States. MTurk samples are generally younger and more educated in respect to population characteristics. While these differences exist, recent research finds samples from MTurk are able to replicate the magnitudes of known benchmark effects and generally replicate the qualitative result in respect to the expected direction of effects (Berinsky, Huber and Lenz, 2012; Mullinix et al., 2015). Additionally, I restrict the sample to MTurk workers that are regarded as reliable and effective on the platform by only allowing workers with a 90 percent task success rate or higher to participate in the study. This keeps users that fail more than 10 percent of their tasks from participating in an effort to recruit attentive and effective survey takers. While this limit could have been set higher (i.e. 95 or 99 percent), the survey does not require any complex tasks or thought as it only asks respondents to read and answer questions. Doing this mitigates the risk of selecting workers that rush through tasks in a manner that compromises effectiveness from seeing the task. Finally, I also require users to manually enter a code generated after taking the survey that only generates if users complete the entire survey. [7]

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[7]In order to randomize across the six treatment groups, I ask each user to choose the group in which their mother's birth month falls and assign two months to each treatment groups. This strategy is simple yet effective as the outcome of interest is completely unrelated to this item and we have no reason to expect that respondent's with differing parental birth months would substantively differ. In general, this method is preferred for its simplicity and results generally indicate that the realization of particular treatment groups are not strongly correlated with any of the background characteristics. Males were positively correlated with experiencing the 'strong' treatment group yet we have no reason to believe males judge backgrounds differently (the leader in the vignette did not have an assigned gender) and being male does not correlate with performance ratings. Being a strong republican had a negative correlation with experiencing the 'strong' background. At first glance this may seem problematic. However, strong republicans are positively correlated with performance ratings meaning their increased propensity to rate leaders higher would

The sample broadly reflects the characteristics of the population yet is slightly younger, male-dominant, and more educated as expected. In order to account for these slight imbalances, I utilize a simple survey weighting technique that weights observations based off of their prevalence in the sample in respect to what national averages are. After gathering population-level statistics from the CCES (Cooperative Congressional Election Study), I use sample weighting across the most imbalanced aspects (gender and level of education) to construct a sample that is reflective of the U.S. population (Ansolabehere and Schaffner, 2014). The results from the weighted sample are nearly equivalent to the results from the non-weighted version suggesting that the small differences generated from online sampling are not consequential for the results appearing in the primary analysis.

2.5 Results

In general, results support the theory that leaders with weak backgrounds are easy targets of criticism. After viewing the vignettes discussed in the previous section, respondents are asked to rate the leader's performance in the conflict on a 0-10 scale with 0 being"Poor" and 10 being "Excellent".[8]. I then calculate the mean of each

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drive up the ratings of weak leaders working against the expected effects. If anything, this extremely small imbalance would make finding differences between 'strong' and 'weak' treatment groups more difficult. Please see the appendix for tables containing information on the exact correlations between demographic variables and treatment groups.

[8] 4.78 percent of the observations rated leaders at 0 where 4.69 percent rated them at 10. Cumulatively, the extremes of 0 and 10 composed 105 of 1108 of the observations in the study (9.47 percent). The third section of the appendix examines the extent to which assuming ratings are distributed normally is safe and implements a double-censored tobit regression model producing results consistent with the main findings when accounting for censoring. For a discussion of double censored tobit regression models, see Long (1997)

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treatment group's ratings and their respective standard errors.[9] The following table provides the descriptive statistics from these calculations:

Table 2.1: **Descriptive Statistics of Performance Ratings by Treatment**: *Number of observation, mean performance rating, standard deviation, standard error, and confidence interval for each group.*

Background	Outcome	N	Mean of Ratings	SD	SE	(95%) CI +/-
Strong	Loss	201.00	4.63	2.55	0.18	0.30
Strong	Stalemate	186.00	4.85	2.51	0.18	0.30
Strong	Win	211.00	6.73	2.20	0.15	0.25
Weak	Loss	211.00	4.29	2.82	0.19	0.32
Weak	Stalemate	134.00	4.72	2.48	0.21	0.35
Weak	Win	165.00	6.23	2.47	0.19	0.32

This table reveals the expected differences between leaders with backgrounds that strongly signal competence and those whose backgrounds do not. Leaders with a strong background who win conflict have a mean rating of 6.73 where leaders who reach the same outcome but possess weak backgrounds have a mean rating 6.23 representing a half point decrease. Since the the standard errors and confidence intervals (at the 95 percent level) are both smaller than these differences, the level of uncertainty around these results is small enough to conclude that they are statistically significant. To visualize these findings, I generate Figure 1 comparing treatment group means. This reveals a pattern where respondents rate leaders with stronger backgrounds higher regardless of outcomes. Most prominently, leaders with a strong background are rated approximately one point higher (statistically significant at the .05 level) when leaders win wars. Additionally, leaders with weak backgrounds are rated significantly lower than leaders with strong backgrounds when they lose conflicts.

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[9]Reporting confidence intervals reveals a similar relationship. Please see the appendix for a visualization of treatment effects with CIs.
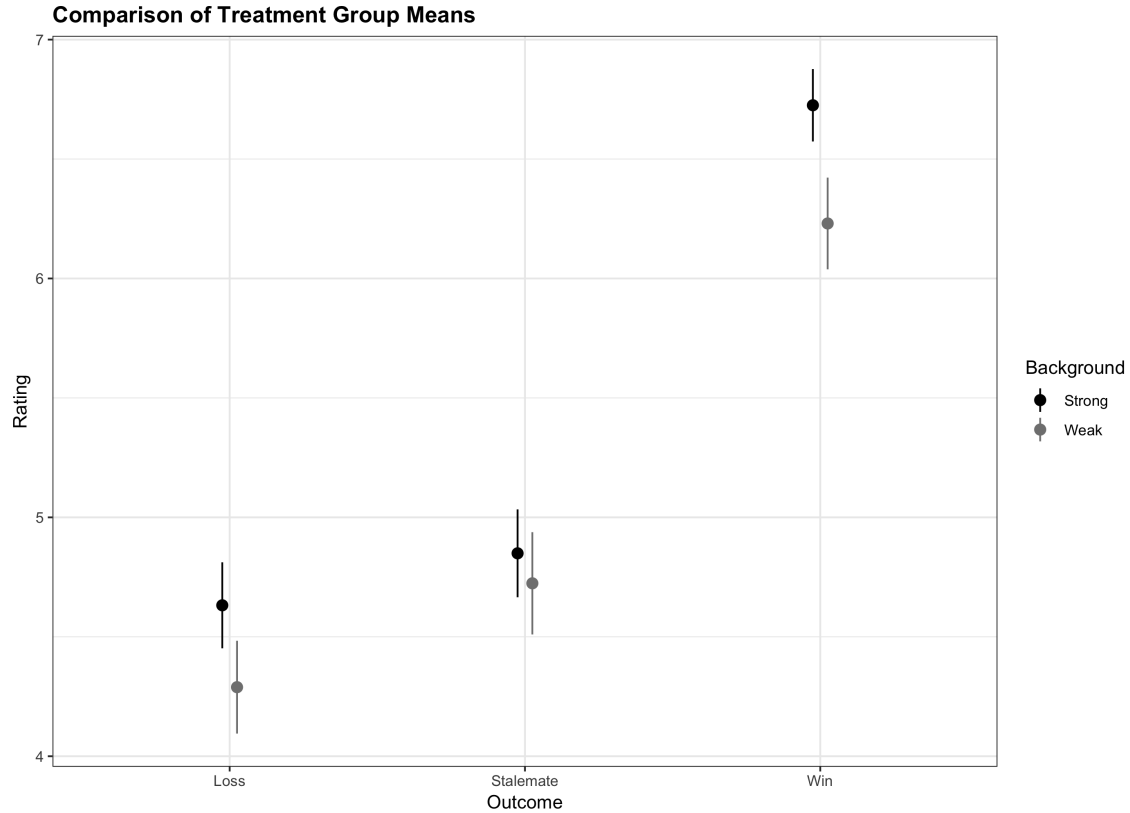
Figure 2.1: **Mean Performance Ratings** *Treatment group means with standard errors.*

Although the difference is not statistically significant, a slight difference also exists when the conflict outcome is a stalemate. Surprisingly, leaders who fight to stalemates rather than losses are not rated that much differently suggesting domestic audiences view stalemates as more similar to losing a conflict than winning one and that backgrounds only matter where a clear narrative of culpability can be generated by the respondent. When the outcome is unclear in terms of whether it is good or bad, respondents rate leaders with varying backgrounds at similar levels.

It is important to address how these findings hold across different subsets. Although these results hold when controlling for party identification (either by calculating sub-group effects or controlling for party identification in the linear regression models) but do not when interacting a leader's background with the respondent's

political identification. The following graph displays sub-group means for ratings including outcome, background, and party identification of respondent.
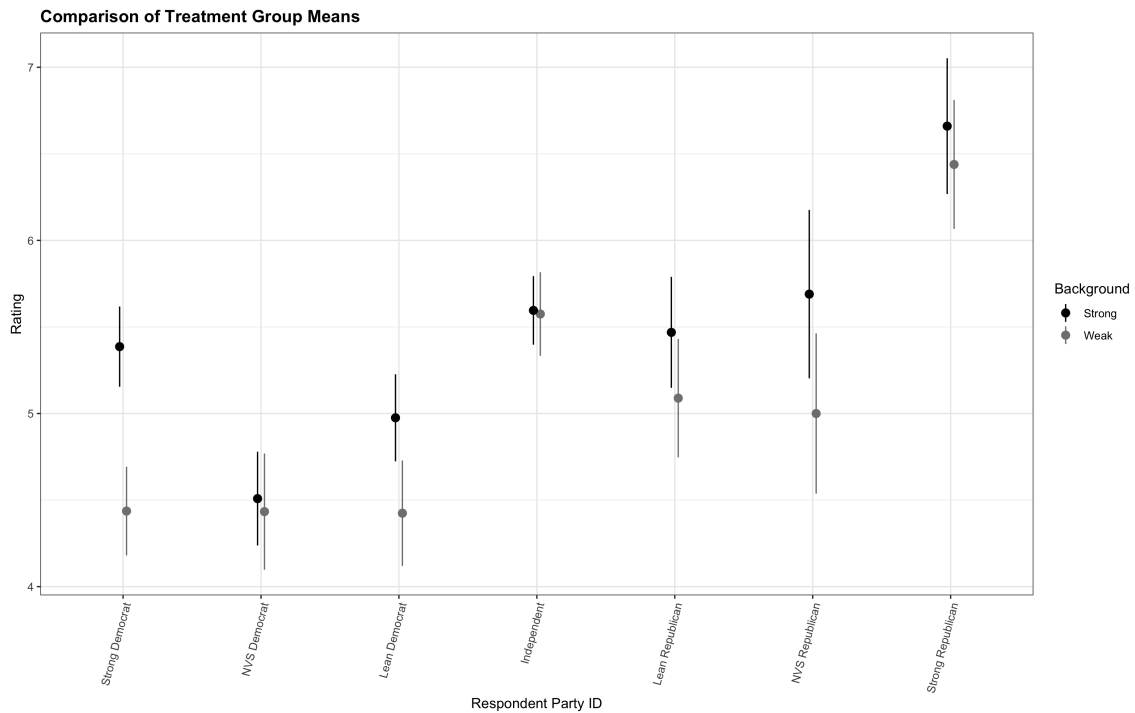
Figure 2.2: **Performance Ratings by Party** *Group means with standard errors across partisan identification.*

This graphs shows that backgrounds interact with partisanship. Generally speaking, democrats tend to punish leaders with weak backgrounds at higher rates where republicans tend to favor all leaders more on average. This is potentially a result of conservative voters possessing more hawkish foreign policy views and interpreting the leader's decision to fight as a good one. Conversely, if democrats possess dovish views or prefer peace, this could explain why they punish any leader who enters a conflict.

Additionally, the weak background is coincidentally similar to the background of the President Trump (business experience, no military experience, no graduate education). It could be that respondents attached their positive/negative sentiments of the president in office when the survey was conducted to the leader discussed in

the scenario. Even with explicit statements encouraging abstract thought and analysis, respondents could have rated these leaders based off of preexisting beliefs about leaders with weak backgrounds. Future research should field a similar instrument internationally in addition to varying the types of signals that convey incompetence. Please see the appendix for additional robustness checks, the effect of implementing multiple strategies to achieve a representative sample, and a discussion of other patterns of leader evaluation revealed by the study.

2.6 Conclusion

The professional backgrounds and educational achievement are important to consider when forming theories concerning how the public evaluates leadership. These backgrounds serve as informational cues or signals to voters utilizing a heuristic process to determine whether a given leader is competent and therefore responsible for a given political outcome. This study breaks new ground by testing this theory in a setting where voters evaluate a leader's performance in conflict. It demonstrates that leaders with weak backgrounds are strongly associated with lower performance ratings even when holding the outcome and partisanship of the respondent fixed.

This is, perhaps, why political leaders so frequently champion their experience and expertise to their voters: they are attempt to isolate themselves from blame if the outcomes reached are poor and attract praise if the outcomes reached are negative. Alternative theories arguing leaders discuss themselves so frequently due to narcissistic personality disorder merit investigation as well. This study casts new light on various areas of social science attempting to uncover the ways people make decisions when they know very little concerning the ability of the person being evaluated and are only able to perceive the outcome. Additionally, the study implies that scholars of conflict interested in how the public reacts to their leader's foreign policies should consider the leader's the effect of the leader's background characteristics. It's possible

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that leaders with weak backgrounds are more likely to pay audience costs and/or less able to justify their inconsistent behaviors in the international arena.

Outside of conflict, scholars of political economy could examine the role that backgrounds in business, trade, finance, and the like have in generating accountability for changes in the economy. Much like conflict, individual leaders are rarely directly responsible for larger changes in the economy. However, voters attempting to decide how responsible they are may isolate leaders failing to signal competence as targets for blame—resulting in lower ratings of their performance as "managers of the economy". Additionally, those interested in policy making could study the impact a leader's background in politics and law (e.g. law school, time as an attorney/judge) matters for the way voters evaluate their domestic policy proposals. Indeed, there are too many potential applications to this argument to list effectively here. Perhaps most salient to an academic audience, one could use this framework to continue analyzing bias in teaching evaluations. Where recent research has indicated a strong bias against women, one could also examine the impact of a teacher's background characteristics upon subsequent student evaluations.

Finally, it is not clear whether this relationship is isolated to Western democracy after conducting this study alone. An important next step could involve comparing the extent to which domestic audiences resort to these heuristics conditional on regime type, internet access, educational infrastructure, and the like. This could eventually reveal the set of institutions that provide the incentive and ability for audiences to seek more reliable and specific information on a leader's performance.

CHAPTER 3

LESS LETHAL LEADERS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The lives leaders live before holding political office matters for the way they govern. When political leaders at the highest level (e.g. presidents, dictators, prime ministers, etc.) face international crises or threats, society often focuses upon the extent to which their leader's decisions mattered for the outcomes reached (Hermann and Hagan, 1998).[1] However, the role of individual leadership in foreign policy outcomes or international relations more broadly has only recently started to gain prominence in the field. Specific to the focus of this project, a growing amount of literature focuses on how the individual characteristics (i.e. education and professional experience) of leaders affects their policy choices and outcomes (Besley, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, 2011; Carreri, 2017; Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015). These projects all demonstrate that the experiences of leaders prior to holding office can affect the way leaders weigh or value particular outcomes and the extent to which leaders can apply information to effectively accomplish foreign policy objectives. Crucially, they suggest that leaders with educational experience are more effective at reaching objec-

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[1]Hermann and Hagan (1998) uses Clinton's performance in negotiating peace in the middles east, Netanyahu's role in prolonging regional conflict, debating the actual intentions of Mohammed Khatami's regime in Iranian-American relations, or debates over what will happen when prolific leaders like Nelson Mandela or Boris Yeltsin leave office as key examples that support the idea that individual leadership matters for international politics.

tives commonly held by leaders and that leaders with direct combat experience are more risk adverse when it comes to initiating international disputes.

If leader backgrounds matter for dispute initiation and other foreign policy decisions, it is possible that these backgrounds continue to affect leader behavior during conflicts. I extend work on leader characteristics and foreign policy decision making by examining the effect of leader backgrounds on conflict behavior. Specifically, I test the effect of a leader's education and combat experience on casualties conditional on who started the conflict and other contextual factors that are largely believed to influence the intensity of violence. In line with former studies demonstrating education benefits leaders attempting to minimize economic deficits, I argue that educated leaders are better at minimizing casualties during war (Besley, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, 2011; Carreri, 2017). I theorize this is due to three factors: the impact of education on critical thinking ability, educational institutions largely promoting the preservation of life, and that educated leaders are more aware that casualties are salient indicators of their performance to the public. Two key examples demonstrate why educated leaders are more effective at reducing casualties.. Reagan attended Eureka College over a six year period graduating with a degree and less than impressive grades (National, 2012). This is likely why Reagan had a reputation for relying less on analysis and more on stories and anecdotes to comprehend reality, a potentially costly technique for developing military strategy (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015). Reagan drew attention to the question of what president's need to know to effectively govern as he was "notoriously lacking" in respect to specific over government affairs (Quirk, 2010).

Similarly, Isreali Prime Minister Golda Meir, represents a leader who never proceeded to an advanced degree after her activist efforts required her to drop out of teacher's college in Palestine. This experience led her to form a style that led people to say the "very word analysis provoked irritability" as she thought those with

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advanced training were too polished, susceptible to diverse perspectives, and lacked simplicity in their thinking (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015). She chose to share information with a very select group potentially leading to an investigation into her actions during the Yom Kippur War of 1973 ultimately causing her resignation (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015). In extreme contrast, President Woodrow Wilson received his Ph.D. in history and political science from Johns Hopkins University and went on the serve as Princeton's and the American Political Science Association's president. Wilson was known for applying theories from his time in academia to help grasp foreign policy challenges early on in his presidential career. Most importantly, he was acutely aware of the best possible outcome in war: winning it while taking as few casualties as possible. Wilson was responsible for launching a committee dedicated to waging psychological warfare on the axis powers in attempt to persuade them to end the conflict (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015).

In line with former studies examining the role of military experience in crises initiation, I argue that leaders with combat experience, will be associated with less deadly conflicts (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015). The reasoning is twofold: (1) leaders with combat experience are more likely to understand the traumatizing effects of battle increasing their willingness to search for less risky alternatives (2) they are more effective at identifying potential costs to lives as a result of direct experience in battle. Historical accounts of leaders with military service and no combat experience bolster a theory claiming the former wages more deadly wars. Although these leaders never rise above 15 percent of all leaders in any given decade, there are many cases exemplifying their deadliness (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015). Classical examples include Kaiser Wilhelm II's militarism and theatrical attempts to feign military competence by producing one aggressive policy after another leading to Germany's devastating involvement in World War I (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015). A modern example can be found in Reagan's experience as an interpreter rather than soldier in World War II.

He was largely responsible for promoting the war effort abroad and never participated in combat. As president, Reagan initiated many conflicts yet focused a great deal on selling conflicts abroad to his domestic audience and believed these communication efforts could counter decreases in support from the costs of war (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015). Anecdotal evidence for the importance of education is, perhaps, even stronger in the face of mixed empirical findings.

Initial attempts at transferring the implications of research showing education improves economic performance show that educated leaders do not systematically differ in respect to the probability they initiate a crisis (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015). This is puzzling if one assumes that leaders have no interest in starting conflicts. However, it is possible that leaders in advanced democracies are those who have the highest levels of education. If this is the case, then studies showing that democracies are more likely win conflicts resolve this finding because highly educated leaders should be aware of this advantage and more confident of their prospects of winning a war. I shed light on this topic by theoretically linking the costs of war to the blame one receives for the war arguing that leaders have an interest in minimizing the salient costs (i.e. casualties, loss of territory) of war to preserve their political survival. I develop an empirical model of casualties of war including multiple interactions of three leader backgrounds: education, military service, and political experience.

Even if the prior experiences of leaders do not substantially affect the nature of the policy outcomes they produce, it is still possible that leaders condition their policy responses upon the perceptions audiences have of their involvement with the conflict. Critically, a particular leader who experience combat or possessed a high level of education may be unable to overcome the structural constraints of the international system (e.g. geography, power asymmetry, alliances, etc.) in order to solely alter the outcome of a conflict. Although scholarly attention to the characteristics of leaders has been revived in the international relations literature, there is no comprehensive

theory of how multiple traits being discussed as consequential for competence and blame fit together or how this matters for the ways in which leaders behave.[2]

In order to examine how these traits affect foreign policy choices made by the leader rather than only how they affect public opinion, it is important to ask whether these perceptions affect the ways in which leaders prosecute wars. Specifically, do leaders with varying backgrounds produce different body counts from the battle field? I collect a sample of all available leaders from the LEAD data and merge this with information on crises from the MID (Militarized Interstate Dispute) and COW (Correlates of War) data to generate leader-year observations containing information on a leader's background traits and conflict episodes. Before discussing the specifics of this design, It is important to discuss the contribution of this dissertation alongside the various bodies of literature it speaks to. I argue that this study is the next logical step for those interested in wartime casualties, decision-making of political leaders, and international conflict more broadly.

My analysis produces mixed results. First, combat experience does not consistently correlate with less battlefield casualties. As expected, increased levels of education consistently correlate with less battlefield casualties yet these results are not robust across every statistical estimation procedure and are only obtained via an analysis of MIDs. This suggests that professional characteristics are too crude of proxies for multidimensional concepts like risk aversion, trauma, and competence. Furthermore, the results imply that characteristics matter little, if at all, in large-scale conflicts like interstate war where structural/systemic and state-level attributes do. While more work is needed to ascertain the extent to which the underlying theoretical concepts of interest (i.e. competence, values, etc.) matter for MID fatalities, this paper reveals breaks important ground by examining the extent to which profes-

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[2]For instance, the Journal of Conflict Resolution recently released a special issue on leader-centric studies of international conflict (October 2018).

sional characteristics commonly thought to be associated with these concepts explain the extent to which leaders are less lethal in battle.

3.2 Literature Review

This section reviews literature critical to bolstering to claims this paper makes: (1) public support for conflict and the leaders responsible for them is sensitive to the costs of war (i.e. casualties) and (2) leader backgrounds play a significant role in shaping the way politicians behave once elected.

Conflict Casualties, Severity, and Public Opinion

A wealth of literature suggests public opinion is sensitive to wartime casualties (Gartner, Segura and Wilkening, 1997; Gartner and Segura, 1998, 2000; Gartner, Segura and Barratt, 2004; Gartner, 2008a; Kriner and Shen, 2007, 2012; Gartner, 2008c). Boettcher III and Cobb (2006) examines the impact of using casualty ratios upon perceptions of war success finding that the rate of domestic casualties to enemy casualties as an important predictor of conflict success and support. In support, Gartner (2008b) finds that respondent's disapproval of domestic casualties is mitigated by casualties from the other side and responsive to the certainty that recent reports of casualties represent a pattern. This suggests that members of the public pay attention to particular aspects of battle related deaths in order to determine the extent to which a given conflict is going poorly.

Gartner and Segura (1998) , Gartner (2008a) and Gartner, Segura and Wilkening (1997) suggest that the public opinion is most sensitive to reports of recent accelerating casualty rates where Kriner and Shen (2007) shows (at the state and county level) that populations can be sensitive to casualties more generally, especially when their community has paid a disproportionate cost in terms of soldiers killed. Similarly, Gartner (2008c) finds that individuals who know the casualties of 9/11 or the Iraq

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War are are more likely to disapprove of President Bush. Also researching the impact of casualties on support for Bush, Karol and Miguel (2007) estimates that 10,000 soldiers killed and wounded prior to the 2004 election resulted in a 2 percent decrease in his popular vote share. This suggests that awareness of the actual number of deaths can modify the way individuals think about the costs of war and their willingness to assign those costs if they blame their political leaders.[3]

Should public opinion over war matter for a study of leader behavior if there are no observable consequences for policymakers? Thankfully, multiple studies suggest that leaders pay casualty costs at the voting booth (Gartner, Segura and Barratt, 2004; Karol and Miguel, 2007; Kriner and Shen, 2014). This implies that casualties are salient enough to drive down public opinion and that this effect is important enough to drive legislators to act. When leaders wage deadly wars, this can decrease public and elite support for the conflicts they might need to fight at later time period.

These studies help us understand why leaders seek to minimize casualties where possible (a key assumption made in the theoretical portion of this paper). They do not tell us why some conflicts are more deadly than others. Studies of the latter type are commonly referred to as probing the concept of conflict severity. It is surprisingly difficult to find recent studies of conflict severity. This could be due to recent concerns over the accuracy of battle related death estimates that have arguably led to scholars underestimating the severity and prevalence of future conflicts (Fazal, 2014). However, a handful of studies in the literature pinpoint a variety of historical and contextual factors that explain the deadliness of conflict.

These studies can be broken down by the level of analysis they employ. Studies that attempt to examine why particular periods of time or the long-term trends and patterns of severity can be seen as macro-level projects (Cederman, Warren and

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[3]Researchers also focus on the role individual characteristics play in casualty sensitivity (Gartner and Segura, 2000; Kriner and Shen, 2012).

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Sornette, 2011; Melander, Öberg and Hall, 2009; Clauset, 2018). Studies like Melander, Öberg and Hall (2009) could lead conflict scholars to infer that the prevalence and severity of conflict will continue to diminish over time—casting doubt on the continued valuing of studying interstate conflict. If we are believe the findings of a collection of studies examining this exact question, this prediction is a faulty one. Fazal (2014) and Fazal and Poast (2019) suggest that inaccurate estimates of battlefield casualties would only lead us to underestimate the severity of future conflicts and that interstate war is not experiencing a discernible decrease in prevalence. One study estimates that it would take another 100 to 140 years of similar levels of peace for the current state of international conflict to represent a statistically significant pattern (Clauset, 2018). This suggests that conflict scholars should be careful before ignoring interstate conflict as an important object of study.

In respect to smaller scale conflicts or international disputes, Gochman and Maoz (1984) and Sweeney (2003) demonstrate that the material capabilities of a state affect the severity of conflicts only under conditions where the states are both minor powers are preponderances coalesce with dyads that lack interest similarity. In respect to how conflict severity relates to the behavior and preferences of leaders, researchers have found that domestic drivers like the composition of constituencies and electoral proximity affect the willingness to enter conflict and accept casualties (Downs and Rocke, 1994; Koch and Gartner, 2005). Koch and Gartner (2005) finds that systems with more diffuse political accountability are less likely to enter conflicts, but more likely to sustain higher rates of casualties once in conflict. This is due, perhaps, to the fact that each individual in settings with multiple accountable actors has less control over entering their respective state in war. The second finding is extremely critical to bolstering a claim made in this paper. It implies that leaders expect blame from casualties and are more willing to accept casualties when the blame assigned would be shared across multiple actors. This implies that any analysis of the relationship

between a leader's background characteristics and conflict behavior must examine the institutional setting for decision-making. However, this project is distinct from studies of casualty sensitivity or conflict severity as it does not seek to produce a theory that could ultimately offer extremely accurate predictions over these outcomes. Instead, it seeks to understand the effect of individual leader characteristics upon conflict severity and relies upon studies of casualty sensitivity to bolster the theoretical claim that leaders possess a common interest in minimizing conflict casualties.

Leader Characteristics, Foreign Policy Decision Making, and Conflict Behavior

The approach adopted in this paper is supported by a recent push towards individual-level analysis of leaders in the international setting (Wolford, 2012, 2014; Besley, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, 2011; Gift and Krcmaric, 2017; Diaz-Serrano and Pérez, 2013; Barceló, 2018; Besley and Reynal-Querol, 2011; Carreri, 2017; Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2005; Croco, 2011; Dafoe and Caughey, 2016; Saunders, 2011). However, the development of the approach adopted in this project is also found in more dated works related to foreign policy decision making. In order to understand how leader characteristics affect the decision-making of leaders, we also need to develop a theory of how leaders make decisions. Scholars often distinguish these approaches between analytic (i.e. rational choice, prospect theory) and heuristic (i.e. mental shortcuts or rules of thumb) decision strategies (Renshon and Renshon, 2008). Most importantly for this study, Herek, Janis and Huth (1987) indicates that high quality decision-making processes lead to more non-negative outcomes during international crisis. However, the small sample size (n=8) used in the study, sole focus on U.S. foreign policy, and hand

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coded procedures suggest more work is needed before scholars can safely conclude that process matters.[4]

Scholars disagree over which model most accurately reflects the cognitive processes of all leaders or why some leaders use one approach rather than others. However, a consensus emerges in this literature surrounding a common assumption about the way leaders think—that leaders, much like all people, face a complex world with limited processes of gathering and processing information (Renshon and Renshon, 2008). Simply put, making decisions is difficult. Geva, Mayhar and Skorick (2000) describe the complexity of decision making by discussing the dynamics of processing information. They argue that leaders must determine the amount of information available, the valence of information (what choice it implies should be made), the relevance of information to the situation, the reliability of the information, and the redundancy of new information (Geva, Mayhar and Skorick, 2000). All of these challenges constrain leaders in their attempts to determine how the best way to act.

As a result of these constraints, foreign policy analysis as a framework posits that leaders must use models or be 'theory-driven' in their attempt to make decisions. This implies that a given leaders approach or model of decision-making matters for outcomes their decisions produce as some leaders could use theories or models that are insufficiently specified for the complexity of a given situation. In scenarios where individual leaders possess centralized authority over a given decision (i.e. foreign policy, international disputes), the biases and shortcomings of their decision-making processes are thought to have stronger adverse effects on the outcome of any given decision (Renshon and Renshon, 2008). Scholars have developed a wide range of

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[4]Low quality decision making is defined in Herek, Janis and Huth (1987) as processes that possess the following traits: gross omissions in surveying alternatives/objectives, failure to examine costs/risks or preferred choice, poor information collection/search, selective bias in information processing, failure to reconsider originally rejected options, failure to work out specific details for monitoring/enforcement of plan of action, and failure to develop a contingency plan.

models to capture how leaders think including: rational choice, cybernetic, prospect theory, poliheuristic theory, organizational/bureaucratic models, group/poly-think, and analogical reasoning (Redd and Mintz, 2013; Mintz, 2005; Shimko, 1994; Dyson and Preston, 2006; Foster and Keller, 2014). Several of these studies demonstrate that leaders adopt more complex and effective forms of decision-making when they possess more experience, expertise, and nuance in the way they differentiate among concepts (e.g. conceptual complexity).

This implies that leaders vary in terms of how they apply a given model to make decisions and that this variance can be explained, in some part, by a leaders expertise or prior knowledge over a given context for decision-making. If it is the case that the backgrounds of leaders alter the way they approach governing, then it could be true that some backgrounds motivate leaders to think of conflict in ways that reduce the amount of casualties their state suffers in battle. Multiple studies suggest that more educated leaders are better at reducing economic deficits and creating economic growth (Besley, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, 2011; Carreri, 2017; Jochimsen and Thomasius, 2014). These studies lack detail on exactly how education relates to effectiveness yet imply that the ability of leaders to develop and implement policies creating growth varies from leader to leader.

Findings identifying consistent effects for leader backgrounds extend well beyond the realm of executive and local political leadership into other organizational settings including but not limited to banking, foreign aid provisions, finance, and monetary policy (Jochimsen and Thomasius, 2014; Moessinger, 2014; Fuchs and Richert, 2018; Farvaque, Hammadou and Stanek, 2009). This research points towards the importance of experiences related to challenges a leader eventually encounters once in power. Researchers also pay attention to the policy choices leaders make when they have particular demographic traits like socio-economic status showing that leaders from lower classes increase public spending and those with entrepreneurial backgrounds increase

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market liberalization (Hayo and Neumeier, 2014; Dreher et al., 2009). This shows that leaders may be motivated to dedicate effort towards specific policies based off of their own life experiences prior to entering office. It suggests that, regardless of one's success as an entrepreneur, this experience at least represents a signal for a leader's willingness to prioritize removing constraints on businesses.

In respect to conflict, research on leader characteristics is still thin but growing. Scholars have studies leaders in respect to how much direct experience they have holding power, often equivalent to a leader's tenure (Potter, 2007; Chiozza and Choi, 2003). Research like Caprioli and Boyer (2001) and Horowitz, McDermott and Stam (2005)—finds that traits like gender identity and age of individual leaders can affect the severity of conflicts. This suggests that the individual characteristics of leaders than the attributes of the leadership (i.e. tenure, turnover, institutional constraints) can also play a role determining how severe a given conflict is.

Providing nuance to these findings, Horowitz and Stam (2012) finds evidence that a leader's professional background in the military (specifically rank) can impact the way they approach foreign policy crises where military leaders without combat experience are more likely to initiate deadly disputes. This implies that different types of professional experience in a similar domain can result in distinct foreign policy approaches yet it does not show whether leaders, attempting to avoid casualties, are better as a result of said experience. Additionally, other research suggests that the effect of military/professional experience may be mitigated by the type of educational background a leader has (Gift and Krcmaric, 2017; Barceló, 2018; Diaz-Serrano and Pérez, 2013; Dafoe, Renshon and Huth, 2014).

The most prominent study investigating this relationship is Dafoe, Renshon and Huth (2014), which investigates why the culture of honor in southern states instills certain leaders to be more likely to fight for reputation and status. Their framework posits that leaders from the southern region of the United States, emigrating from

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predominantly Scot-Irish regions, are more culturally conditioned to fight for status and honor. Other studies examine the interaction between education and geographical effects by looking at how 'western-educated' leaders (i.e. those attending college in Western Europe or Northern America) behave in contrast to leaders without this background finding that leaders with Western educations possess more cosmopolitan views leading them to spend effort on avoiding risky conflicts, promoting democratic institutions, and spend more on education (Gift and Krcmaric, 2017; Barceló, 2018; Diaz-Serrano and Pérez, 2013). This suggests that a leader's background can strongly condition the values and preferences a given leader possesses. Other studies attempt to look at the role backgrounds play in determining the approach a leader takes to realizing goals common to all leaders (Fuhrmann and Horowitz, 2014; Fuhrmann, 2017).

Bolstering arguments that a leader's foreign policy decisions are based in concerns over political survival, Fuhrmann and Horowitz (2014) show that leaders with rebel experience are more willing to develop nuclear weapons programs as they are more aware of the contingent nature of their power. Fuhrmann (2017) examines another background, business experience, and finds that leaders with business experience are less likely to contribute to collective defense agreements due to their focus on self-utility maximization. This implies that a leader's experience may alter the way they calculate their underlying propensity to be removed from office and the extent to which their survival relies upon the actions of other states. Recent research focusing on whether leaders are hawks or doves demonstrates that leader types also diffuse across regions due to individuals viewing nearby hawks as a security threat and desiring their own hawkish leader to respond (Carter, 2018*b,a*; Carter and Smith, 2018). This finding is plausible yet is entirely consistent with a theory arguing that the traits individuals deem 'hawkish' (e.g. military experience, aggressive statements of resolve) signal competence.

Is it the case that an individual wants another hawk if this only increases the overall propensity of violence? Or is it more likely that individuals want a leader who is able or competent enough to provide security from the threat of an external hawk? Horowitz et al. (2018) find that leaders with military experience are indeed observably different in respect to how they approach coercion surrounding conflict where "leaders with combat experience and careers in the military are relatively better judges of their own military power." As a result, their threats are taken more seriously. They also find that leaders with military careers lacking combat experience are less selective in their demands and "correspondingly less successful when they make threats" (Horowitz et al., 2018). If leaders with experience are better at measuring the capabilities of states, it is possible that they are better at determining the appropriate amount of risk to take and effort required in order to secure conflict related objectives (e.g. territorial gain/retention, casualty avoidance, collateral damage). However, if leaders with military experience are more socialized to use aggressive tactics and accept costs to preserve the reputation of the state and military, they might suffer more casualties when they engage in violent conflicts.

Although French leader Georges Clemenceau claimed that "war is too important to be left to generals", individual members of the public may not agree (Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, 2011). The claim that voters often defer to military expertise is supported by evidence that the public defers to military leaders on critical issues over whether to use force and the intensity of military actions. Krebs, Ralston and Rapport (2018) surveyed nearly 2,500 Americans and found that the public generally defers to military experts and elites over the decision to use force and how to use it.

If leaders with military expertise expect deference to their policy positions during conflict, they might expect less backlash for when wars incur high costs. Research on leader culpability demonstrates that a leaders are perceived as more culpable for a conflict if they start it, are politically connected to the leader who was, or preside

over the conflict for a longer (Croco, 2011; Croco and Weeks, 2016). Additionally, findings suggest leaders pay costs at the ballot box for initiating conflicts and suffering high costs during conflict (Chiozza and Goemans, 2003; Gartner, Segura and Barratt, 2004; Karol and Miguel, 2007). This implies that leaders could decide how much effort to place in conflict management based off of how they expect to be evaluated by the public. When expecting a high level of blame if conflict generates poor outcomes (e.g. loss of territory, civilian casualties, etc.), leaders should put more effort towards designing military operations that prevent these outcomes, constrained by their ability to think critically and evaluate the potential costs of international conflicts. In the next section, I provide a theory explaining the relationship between a leader's experiences prior to office and the severity of the disputes and conflicts they experience once in power.

3.3 THEORY

In this section, I outline my theoretical argument concerning leader backgrounds and conflict behavior. Most importantly, I intend to convince the reader that, ceteris paribus, education and combat experience should decrease the amount of casualties for a leader. I argue that educational organizations increase the ability of leaders to think critically, potentially raise the leader's awareness of casualties as a salient indicator of leader performance in conflict, and promote the value of individual rights/life. All of these factors decrease the expected amount of casualties a given leader should take. It is important to understand the timing and process that these effects are expected to follow.

The primary argument of this paper is twofold: (1) that a leader's background affects the overall cognitive state of a leader by determining their critical thinking capacities and conditioning them to value particular outcomes (i.e. less deadly conflicts), (2) that a leader's cognitive state directly affects the level of casualties a state

experiences in a given conflict. However, literature on dispute and conflict severity strongly suggests that state-level attributes/characteristics affect casualty counts. There are likely a variety of factors that could also be taken into consideration if one were ultimately concerned with generating accurate predictions of casualty counts. Rather, I am only interested in the extent to which backgrounds increase or decrease the casualties a given state can expect to incur.

RELEVANT ACTORS AND CONCEPTS

The term 'leader' is used interchangeably for any political executive with relatively minimal constraints on their authority over foreign policy. Leaders are assumed to have an interest in political survival, served most effectively in conflict by winning and minimizing casualties. I adopt a commonplace assumption in political science about political leaders: they want to retain office. If all leaders desire staying in power, their underlying ability to govern should affect whether they retain it yet the blame they receive for conflict casualties threatens their ability to do so if audience members are able/willing to punish them by attempting removal. Although my theoretical argument does not rest upon exactly how leaders make decisions, it is important to discuss this process to identify points at which leaders with particular levels of education and experience might diverge from leaders with different backgrounds.

I utilize poliheurstic theory (PH) to provide a model how leaders make foreign policy decisions.[5] PH theory posits that leaders participate in a two stage process. First, leaders eliminate alternatives that carry too high of a domestic political risk. PH theory argues that leaders eliminate crisis responses that are too personally costly (e.g. that threaten their political survival or violate a core principle) from the outset of the decision-making process. Next, leader make a decision from the set of remaining

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[5]Mintz (2005) and Redd and Mintz (2013) provide an extensive discussion of PH theory for further reading.

alternatives after the first stage. PH theory posits that leader decision-making during this stage is best described as a bounded ration-choice or cybernetic (e.g. rational decision making where assumptions about complete information are relaxed) process where leaders attempt to maximize their utility. The second stage of decision-making will still possess objectives that bear domestic political risks/costs for the leader, but the maximum amount is at least predicted to be something they can endure, given the expected benefits of that decision. Since my theory is about how prior experiences and educational attainment alter the way leaders attempt to minimize casualties, we do not need a model that simplifies or increases our ability to predict what leaders do, only one that allows us to model potential hurdles within the decision making process during international crises.

International crises and disputes represent events where a nation-state's interests are threatened by some external actor. These events range from the threat of force to the outright use of force to resolve and usually imply that a given leader has to make a decision that is consequential for how the conflict develops. Although leaders adopt different approaches to simplifying decision-making during crises, they all face similar challenges in respect to how to deal with information. My theories centers on the argument that leaders with different experiences will be conditioned to value particular things (i.e. minimizing loss of life) and better at avoiding the pitfalls of complex settings for decision making. Commonly identified hurdles to decision making include but are not limited to: determining how much information should and can be gathered on a given threat, determining whether new information is relevant, determining how relevant information should be interpreted with respect to which action to take, determining the reliability of new information, and whether new information is redundant (Geva, Mayhar and Skorick, 2000). Once a crisis begins, leaders must decide how to gather information, which parts of the policy formulation process to delegate, the extent to which they can trust advisers, if the advice of

subordinates can be combined, and finally how to act. When leaders are tasked with resolving crises, they can choose whether to respond with force and to what extent to they utilize force. I argue that leaders with superior cognitive abilities in respect to political decision-making are better at identifying responses that avoid the use of force when expected casualties are too high (e.g. these options would be eliminated in the first stage of PH theory) and identifying ways to use force that minimize the casualties their state suffers battle.

We should not expect leader characteristics to matter much at all if the decisions are relatively easy to make or crises are generally simple types of events to deal with. I argue that leaders face extremely complex decision-making environments during crises. They must engage in a two-level game where they assess what policies within a given resolution their foes and domestic audiences will commonly accept (Putnam, 1988). Additionally, in order to be able to predict what other leaders will do, they must consider the internal dynamics of other states with potentially different institutional settings than their own (Hermann and Hagan, 1998). This, along with the challenges to information processing inherent to crisis decision making, imply that leaders benefit from high levels of cognitive ability and critical thinking. The primary experience or background characteristic that varies with respect to leaders that attempts to enhance a leader's cognitive and critical thinking abilities is education.

EDUCATION AND CONFLICT CASUALTIES

I examine how leader characteristics convey narratives of perceived expertise and contribute to leader competence while also considering the impact being socialized or conditioned into/by a professional environment has on leader behavior. These backgrounds produce nuances in the ways leaders pursue goals by exacting a psychological impact on the leaders who possess them but they also increase the ability of the leader by increasing critical thinking skills and direct knowledge of international

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conflict. I argue that leaders with education are more willing and able to reduce casualties due to three primary reasons: (1) an increase to critical thinking abilities, (2) educational institutions predominantly promoting the value of individual life, and (3) an increased awareness of indicators public uses to measure their success.

When leaders face foreign opponents, they must decide the state's grand strategy in conflict and make specific decisions about the timing, location, and force of the strike. Classical contributions to the theoretical understanding of foreign policy formulation in the presidential setting support the claim that producing effective foreign policy is a complex task (Preston, 2017; Geva, Mayhar and Skorick, 2000).[6] Leaders are not left entirely alone in their efforts to manage crises as autocratic and democratic leaders often rely on expert advice to inform their decisions. However, this is only more of a reason why a leader's ability matters as it increases the information a leader needs to take into account before acting.[7] Even one decision during a crisis can have massive implications for the type of conflict that ensues. For example, Neville Chamberlain's choice to appease Hitler after he expanded Germany's influence into the Sudetenland is viewed as a critical failure that allowed the Third Reich time to develop military might and signaled to Hitler that European powers were hesitant to use force (Laybourn, 2001). This led many people to challenge Chamberlain's foreign policy experience and toughness aiding Winston Churchill's rise to power.

A leader's ability to respond to a threat and avoid negative outcomes (casualties, economic loss) should also be the result of analyzing and synthesizing subordinate

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[6]The most prominently displayed setting for crisis scenarios is the White House Situation Room where advisers from the NSC and CIA interact with leadership to formulate responses.

[7]Saunders explains this effect while discussing the importance of domain-specific experience: "Experienced leaders provide better oversight of foreign policy decision-making because they are more likely to ask hard questions, spot poor planning, or recognize unrealistic proposals... Experienced presidents are also better able to draw on diverse sources of advice (Saunders, 2019).

proposals. [8] Leaders are tasked with consuming a large amount of information in a short amount of time when threats arise. Information or intelligence prepared by subordinates is never perfectly reliable so leaders must utilize reading comprehension, historical knowledge of similar contexts, and skill at identifying accurate sources to synthesize a foreign policy response. A prominent example where a leader paid a penalty for failing to accurately interpret intelligence is George W. Bush's largely unsuccessful attempt to shift blame for finding very little evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq post-response. The conflict escalated resulting in a current total of approximately 5,000 casualties (Crawford, 2018).

The less informed the leader is about a given crisis, the more reliable they become on their subordinates or advisers. However, considering the leader chose the subordinates from which to solicit advice from, the ability of the leader to read through and listen to their proposals is paramount to them identifying responses to complex scenarios. Once again George Bush's choice to invade Iraq is useful as people frequently argue that his Vice President, Dick Cheney, was responsible for encouraging the use of force. [9] Leaders could face subordinates who have different motives than their own yet might have to rely on them during crises if they have less expertise over foreign policy. When these scenarios occur, leaders with weak critical thinking capacities are more likely to defer to experience and subordinates rather than carefully identifying potential pitfalls in their proposals.

To exemplify further: a competent leader with better critical thinking capabilities might be more aware of the difficulty of fighting in particular types of terrain enhancing their ability to consider the potential casualties of any response. Educated

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[8]Greenstein (1988) discussed the relationship between leader and adviser writing, "Leadership in the modern presidency is not carried out by the president alone, but rather by presidents with their associates. It depends therefore on both the president's strengths and weaknesses and on the quality of the aides' support" (Greenstein, 1988).

[9]See : https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/how-dick-cheney-became-most-powerful-vice-president-history/

leaders are more likely to encounter explicit training in strategy, intelligence analysis, and critical thinking skills allowing them to identify risks and predict the outcomes of their subordinate's policy proposals more effectively. Throughout the history of the U.S., one leader with an extensive educational background became a wartime president. Woodrow Wilson received a doctorate in political science in 1886 from Johns Hopkins University and later became the president of Princeton. After Germany sank the USS Lusitania, Wilson showed initial restraint and avoided war against the wishes of his Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan leading to Bryan's resignation (Peifer, 2016). In respect to the theoretical framework of this paper, it is possible Wilson viewed war with Germany as violating the non-compensatory principle of PH theory or that it was simply too politically costly of an option to escalate the conflict until he could argue he had no other choice.[10] However, after Germany's continued attacks on American and European ships, Wilson committed to building arms and eventually entered the conflict. During the war, he conveyed his understanding of the complexities of international politics through his release of the Fourteen Points—a multifaceted plan that would later aid in his receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize. Biographers of Wilson have noted that he applied some of the same skills and theories he employed as a professor (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015). He also was keen in adopting lessons from British intelligence by utilizing 'psychological warfare' near the end of the war where he established the Committee on Public Information worked with France to distribute leaflets containing his plan for peace throughout Germany in an effort to convince soldiers and citizens to oust Wilhelm II (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015). Although this war was extremely costly for every party involved, it is possible that Wilson's relatively high level of critical thinking ability reduced the duration and deadliness of the conflict.

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[10]Wilson ran for reelection using the slogan "he kept us out of war" (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015).

Leaders with high levels of education could reduce casualties because of their intellectual prowess, socialization in a university environment promoting the value of individual life, or awareness of how the public assesses the performance of leaders in conflicts. Educated leaders might be more likely to be aware of the historical relationship between war casualties and decreasing public support.[11] The story of Woodrow Wilson is again helpful to elucidate this mechanism. Wilson's first use of force to occupy the Mexican seaport at Veracruz was ideologically motivated by Wilson's intolerance for Victoriano Huerta's illegitimate dictatorship. However, Wilson was forced to reconsider this position after significant U.S. casualties and eventually reversed it (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015; McDermott, 2007) If educated leaders possess an equivalent interest in political survival than other leaders, we should expect them to use this knowledge to serve that purpose by applying their efforts to casualty reduction.

Education does more than increase general competency or ability, it also plays a role in shaping a leader's willingness to accept the loss of life. Leaders are routinely provided with estimated casualties for all relevant parties to a conflict. In line with studies demonstrating educated leaders are more likely to adopt liberal policies of democratization, pacifism via dispute avoidance, and value individual rights like education itself, I argue that education socializes leaders to adopt a more cosmopolitan and liberal worldview making the preservation of human life particularly important in the effectiveness of any military action (Gift and Krcmaric, 2017; Barceló, 2018; Diaz-Serrano and Pérez, 2013). This, along with the increased ability and awareness of casualty salience imply that highly educated leaders should be the least deadly.

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[11]See Gartner, Segura and Wilkening (1997)

If findings concerning the willingness of leaders to enter disputes are easily generalized, leaders with backgrounds in military affairs differ in terms of their risk-aversion over casualties in conflict (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015). Combat experience is traumatizing. Even if soldiers avoid suffering serious physical harm, it exacts a psychological costs that soldiers pay for the rest of their lives. At the elite level, prospective U.S. presidential candidates like John McCain often cite their combat experience as a reason they can be trusted to care fully consider the use of force in any dispute. Leaders with combat experience might see any option that is predicted to result in high casualties as unacceptable an therefore eliminated from contention. In respect to poliheuristic theory, leaders are theorized to eliminate any proposal that violates a non-compensatory principle. Usually this is theorized to be actions that carry great domestic political costs for the leader. However, it could be the case that leaders with combat experience also rule out any proposal that is too risky to the lives of soldiers in this first stage of decision making. In respect to a leader's attempt to maximize utility in the second stage of decision making discussed in PH theory, leaders who have a stronger emotional or psychological attachment to protecting their troops might perceive less utility in options that produce equivalent odds of success yet carry high costs to human life. In these cases, leaders might approach disputes with uses of force that require little 'boots on the ground'. Additionally, leaders with combat experience might be more attuned to the types of uses of force that are risky in respect to life. Combat experience might provide leaders increased insight over the conditions that make a given mission risky (i.e. weather, geographical conditions, uncertainty, ability to identify hard/soft targets). If leaders with combat experience care more about casualty avoidance and possess informational advantages over how to do so, they should be less deadly in disputes. However, it might not be the case

that all forms of military experience should be treated in a similar manner to direct combat experience.

In respect to the converse of combat experienced leaders being less deadly, there are multiple reasons a leader without combat experience might be more deadly. Leaders with extensive military experience, but not direct combat experience, are socialized to accept the costs of war without experiencing the traumatic and often life-changing consequences of battle. Limited experience in the military from an administrative or authoritative standpoint (e.g. commander-in-chief) could affect the way a leader views their role. The most prominently cited leader with little military experience and no combat experience is Kaiser Wilhelm II. Wilhelm was fascinated with military affairs at a young age yet thrown into power without extensive military experience and no direct combat experience. Once in control of the German military, Wilhelm sought the need to compensate for his lack of combat experience by becoming a battle tested leader ultimately producing an overly aggressive approach to foreign policy that would lead Germany into WWI (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015). It is possible that these leaders also feel entrenched during conflicts in a manner that motivates them to linger in deadly costs or ignore situation that have sunk costs. [12]

Fighting for your country is the ultimate sacrifice one can make for their nation. Each member risks their life in order to provide collective security and most military forces operate under a 'leave no soldier behind' whenever possible. I expect these ideals to be highly 'sticky' in that they do not disappear after service. Even if leaders do not experience traumatizing engagements during their combat experience, first-hand experience of the dangers of combat might make leaders think twice about any option that might unnecessarily risk lives.

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[12]Other prominent examples leaders with military experience but no combat experience are identified in the LEAD dataset from Stam, Horowitz and Ellis (2015). They include "Francisco Lopez of Paraguay, Mobutu Seko of the DRC, Saddam Hussein of Iraq, Muammar Qaddafi of Libya, and Hafez al-Assad of Syria."

As education and military experience simultaneously change a leader's willingness and ability to reduce casualties, it is hard to determine whether the backgrounds matter or if the latent qualities like competence and aggression are actually driving changes in casualties suffered. To address these concerns, I develop a measurement capturing whether leader's have strong backgrounds in terms of having multiple types of experience prior to leading. If the backgrounds matter less than the extent to which they contribute to a leader's preparedness or general competence, we should see pronounced effects for a measure of competence and reduced effects of the backgrounds when including the measure as a control. Additionally, studies like Caprioli and Boyer (2001) and Horowitz, McDermott and Stam (2005) suggest that a leader's gender and age matters for the severity of the crisis at hand. Other limits pertain to the institutional setting for decision-making a leader operates within.

The more institutionalized any given political setting for foreign policy decision-making, the less impact an individual leader should be able to have.[13] As a result, we might expect this argument to generalize to settings only where the leader has extensive control over foreign policy and is not strongly constrained by other elites in the decision making process. As such, we might expect that leader backgrounds matter more in presidential systems where the head of state possesses extensive foreign policy authority. However, presidential systems differ in their adoption of democratic institutions. When a leader decides to attack another state they must consider their likelihood of success and the extent to which poor outcomes would contribute to their removal of office. This implies that this theory might not possess as much leverage in explaining conflict behavior for leaders that see little likelihood of being removed or for

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[13]If one accepts the argument that political systems have become more institutionalized throughout time, we should expect to see the impact of individual leaders fall as this process occurs.

leaders that are term limited. There are other considerations related to the context and characteristics of states involved that could limit the strength of this theory. Autocracies might possess leaders that do not care about minimizing casualties if their domestic audiences are unable to constrain their executives. Leaders, regardless of characteristics are unlikely to fight against a state they are much more powerful than in terms of military capability. Additionally, a particular state will not fight a state with much greater capabilities than itself very often. However, as the capabilities of a state increases, they may be better able to cover for their mistakes.

In a similar manner to blame, some leaders are easier targets than others to attack. If leaders with backgrounds conveying competence are simultaneously more likely to receive blame and less likely to receive criticism during conflict, their ability to maintain support and fight costly wars should be perceived as high by other leaders in the international system representing potential foes. While this paper focuses on the conflict outcomes rather than initiation, it is possible that certain types of leaders (possibly less educated/experienced) are more likely to get attacked or experience intense conflict. This suggests that looking at disputes, that range from no use of force to extensive uses of force, is a better scenario to apply this theory to as interstate wars, by definition, represent highly costly (over 1000 battle related deaths) forms of conflict.

Observable Implications

The following table summarizes the implications of the theory laid out above. The first column represents the two primary independent variables where the second column represents the outcome or dependent variable (conflict casualties). In summary, leaders with higher levels of education and combat experience are expected to cut casualties.

Table 3.1: **Central Expectations** *Hypotheses for affect of education and combat experience on conflict casualties.*

Independent Variable	DV : Casualties	Hypothesis
Highly Educated	Lower	H1
Combat Experience	Lower	H2

H1 : Leaders with Leaders with higher levels of education will incur less casualties in comparison to similar leaders with lower levels of education.

H2 : Leaders with combat experience will accept lower amounts of casualties in comparison to a leader without combat experience.

3.4 Research Design

This section discusses the portion of the dissertation designed to examine the effects of leader competence on conflict management. After collecting data on leaders (LEAD contains data on 2,965 leaders from 1875 to 2004), I aggregate their characteristics and merge this with MID data containing information on over 6,000 disptutes to create a dataset with leader-conflict-year episode as the unit of analysis where conflicts with multiple leaders have additional observations for each year a new leader was in power. I utilize the most recent version of the MID data from the Correlates of War project discussed prominently in Jones, Bremer and Singer (1996) yet also use MID data with different coding procedures from Gibler, Miller and Little (2016) for the purposes of robustness. I proceed by discussing operationalization for leader backgrounds, conflict casualties, and important controls for properly testing the theoretical argument. I conclude by discussing the statistical models employed to test three hypotheses related to conflict casualties.

IVs : Education and Military Experience

I utilize the LEAD data produced primarily for Stam, Horowitz and Ellis (2015). The data contains variables measuring a leader's possession of a variety of characteristics.

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Most importantly, it has data for every political executive's military experience and educational achievement. To capture a leader's combat experience, I utilize 'combat', a binary variable with 1 indicating combat experience. For the combat variable, leaders are judged to experience battle where credible sources detail "deployment as part of a national military" in a war zone "absent evidence of nonparticipation" (Stam, Horowitz and Ellis, 2015). This does not require a leader to fire a weapon. Instead, it requires a leader to be a combat zone where the loss of life is at risk. This is logically compatible with the theoretical interest in combat experience as I do not argue that killing or using a weapon matters—only the experience of combat. The codebook indicates that cases without affirmative evidence of combat experience were coded as 0. Approximately 20 percent of leaders in the LEAD data have combat experience suggesting this is rare.

Next, I take advantage of the richness of LEAD by utilizing indicators related to educational experience. I capture education more generally with an ordinal variable measuring the leader's level of education, 'leveledu'. This variable rates a leaders highest level of education. As treating an ordinal level variable like a continuous variable can mask the non-linear effects of educational level, I create two key dummy variables to capture my theoretical argument. The 'leveledu' variable codes primary school as 0, secondary as 1, 2 as university or college, and 3 for graduate school/advanced degree students. I create a dummy variable 'college' indicating whether a leader obtained a college degree. Finally, I create a dummy variable 'gradschool' that measures whether a leader obtained a graduate degree. My theoretical argument relates to critical thinking and socialization into cosmopolitan values that are likely obtained and enhanced most during college. Approximately 40 percent of leaders had college as their highest level of education achieved.

Next, I gather data capturing the number of casualties a given state suffers in militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) from Jones, Bremer and Singer (1996) and Gibler, Miller and Little (2016) to test for robustness across different approaches to classifying MIDs. To see if the theoretical argument concerning disputes generalizes to large scale war, I also collect data on international conflicts considered 'war' with the Correlates of War (COW) data (Stinnett et al., 2002). To capture casualties suffered at war, I use 'BatDeaths' indicating the level of battle-related combatant fatalities suffered by the state. Similar to the COW data, MID data contains estimates for the precise amount of fatalities with 'FataPre'. This variable represents a count of the amount of casualties a state suffers as a result of a given MID. Since MIDs do not a minimum amount of casualties (or any casualties), there are a large number of zeros for the amount of fatalities. Approximately 70 percent of the observations have zero casualties. I proceed by discussing control variables that are of theoretical importance and the statistical modeling techniques used to model the relationship between the variables introduced.

Controls

I differentiate controls between those that are leader characteristics and state characteristics. First, it is important to state that I am not interested in creating a powerful model in terms of prediction. I only include variables as controls where there is strong evidence to suggest they could confound the relationship between leader characteristics and casualties. Confounders are variables that affect both the dependent variable (conflict casualties) and the independent variables of interest, combat and educational attainment.

In respect to leader attributes that could matter for conflict severity yet also relate to education and combat experience, I include two control variables indicating

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the leader's gender. Caprioli and Boyer (2001) and Horowitz, McDermott and Stam (2005) provide thorough discussions of how gender and age relate to casualties. One could also argue that historical data would reflect biases against women obtaining college agrees and serving in the military meaning gender could be correlated with both IVs. As such, gender becomes an extremely important control for examining the relationship between education, military experience, and conflict casualties.

Next, I include controls for state level confounders. First, I control for factors related to institutions. Democracies are known for being more successful in conflicts (perhaps because they are more constrained) and democratic countries are more likely to select educated leaders as demonstrated in (Besley and Reynal-Querol, 2011). I include a state's polity score where completely autocratic states receive a -10 and democratic states receive a 10. The institutional constraints placed on the leader might result from the type of leader or executive one is. As such, I also include a control for whether a leader is in a presidential system. Semi-presidential systems where presidents possess no direct authority over foreign policy are coded as 0.

Second, I included a control meant to capture the societal values of a state. It is hard to distinguish the effect of education upon casualties if that leader came to power due to what the people they govern value. If a leader's domestic audience holds highly cosmopolitan worldviews valuing individual life regardless of geographic origin, they might have been selected to reflect these values and these values could impact the extent to which a leader thinks casualties are politically costly. I aggregate responses from the World Values Survey longitudinal data to assign a score reflecting the prevalence of cosmopolitan values for each country (Inglehart et al., 2014). I take the percentage of responses for each country that agree with the statement (slightly agree, agree, strongly agree) "I see myself with a world citizen". As a result, values range from 0 to 1 where higher values represent increased levels of cosmopolitanism

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in a state. This control is not included in every model as including it drastically reduces the amount of observations in the MID data.

Nearly every study of conflict severity attempts to capture a state's material capabilities in some way. As a state increases in capabilities, it might be better equipped to avoid casualties during conflict. Additionally, states with high levels of power might be more willing to elect military leaders or the same capital endowments generating state-level capabilities important for conflict could reduce funding for public institutions like schools meaning states with more material capabilities could produce less educated leaders on average (Collier, 2006). I use the National Material Capabilities data to gather a state's CINC (Composite Index of National Capabilities) score described in the codebook for Singer et al. (1972).[14]

Since these scores are system dependent, they capture a state's capabilities relative to other capabilities in the system. This is important for capturing relative power in a non-dyadic analysis. Finally, it is important to capture who initiated the conflict with the variable 'orig' from the MID data. If leaders are willing to initiate a dispute, they might be more willing to fight and drive up casualties if they think they are going to be held culpable as demonstrated by Croco (2011). Additionally, Stam, Horowitz and Ellis (2015) provides strong evidence suggesting that military experience affects the probability a leader initiates a dispute. As such, it is critical that any model of education, military experience, and conflict casualties at least include a control variable for whether they started it.

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[14]Singer et al. (1972) describes CINC scores in detail: "CINC scores utilize the six individual measured components [iron/steel production, military expenditures, military personnel, energy, total population, urban population] of national material capabilities into a single value per state-year. The CINC reflects an average of a state's share of the system total of each element of capabilities in each year, weighting each component equally. In doing so, the CINC will always range between 0 and 1. "0.0" would indicate that a state had 0 percent of the total capabilities present in the system in that year, while "1.0" would indicate that the state had 100 percent of the capabilities in a given year (and by definition that every other state had exactly 0 percent capabilities in that year."

The following table summarizes the role confounders play in respect to the independent and dependent variables providing references where available:

Table 3.2: **Confounders** *This table summarizes groupings of the literature suggesting the presence of confounding. The first column describes the relationship between the potential confounder and conflict behavior and whereas the second relates the confounder to leader characteristics.*

Confounder	Conflict	Education/Combat Exp.
Gender	Women theorized to be less deadly in conflicts: Caprioli and Boyer (2001), Koch and Fulton (2011)	State-level discrimination against women reducing access to educational and military institutions
Age	Older leaders more likely to initiate and escalate disputes: Horowitz, McDermott and Stam (2005)	Older leaders more time to attain education/experience combat prior to ruling
Mil. Service	Serving could make leaders more likely to initiate disputes: Stam, Horowitz and Ellis (2015).	Leaders with military service could use payment to attend college, more likely to experience combat although they can gain this experience as rebel
Democracy	Democracies less likely experience war, more likely to achieve victory: Benoit (1996), Mitchell, Gates and Hegre (1999), Gelpi and Griesdorf (2001)	Democracies more likely to select educated leaders: Besley and Reynal-Querol (2011)
Initiator	Leaders responsible for starting conflict more likely to continue fighting, achieve victory: Croco (2011), Croco (2015)	Leaders with combat experience less likely to initiate conflicts: Stam, Horowitz and Ellis (2015)
Pres. System	Leaders w/direct authority over foreign policy held more culpable for conflict, less constrained in initiating conflict: Reiter and Tillman (2002), Horowitz (1990)	If pres. systems more likely to initiate conflict, populations from which future leaders selected should possess higher rates of combat exper.
Capabilities	Increase chances of winning conflict, preponderances affect severity: Sweeney (2003)	State's with low capabilities less likely to fight prolonged wars decreasing share of potential leaders who have combat exper.
Soc. Values	Cosmopolitan/liberal values decrease aggressiveness of states and leaders (analysis in appendix): Caprioli and Boyer (2001), Barceló (2018), Gift and Krcmaric (2017), Mousseau (2003)	Liberal/democratic states select more educated leaders, affects educational spending: Besley and Reynal-Querol (2011), Diaz-Serrano and Pérez (2013)

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Considering linear models often have trouble modeling dependent variables that are counts rather than truly continuous numbers potentially taking on negative numbers, I specify a count model with equivalent covariates to the linear model to obtain predicted casualties counts for each background. Each model has the outcome D_i for battle-related deaths and independent variables capturing the leaders level of education (E_i) and combat experience (C_i) Additionally, each model contains a vector of control variables, Λ_i, containing the variables discussed in the previous section. Finally, each model includes a random error term, ϵ_i.

This implies the following for the OLS model:

$$D_i = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 E_i + \beta_2 C_i + \Lambda_i + \epsilon_i \tag{3.1}$$

Next, the poisson model can be expressed as:

$$E(D_i \mid x_i, \Lambda_i) = exp(B_1 E_{i1} + B_2 C_{i1} + \Lambda_i) \tag{3.2}$$

This expresses the expected count of casualties, D_i as the function of covariates and a vector of control variables. The exponential function guarantees that the right side in the equation remains positive as we would expect in a variable of counts. I test the sensitivity of my findings by running a series of models. Casualties have a very low mean (.09) and relatively high variance (1.7) indicating overdispersion. I utilize a zero-inflated, negative binomial, and a zero-inflated negative binomial count model to account for overdispersion. Finally, to account for the right censoring discussed during introduction of the MID data on precise fatalities, I run a Tobit regression with 1000 as the upper bound.

Future work could identify an instrumental variable that reduces confounding between background characteristics and appearing in the MID data. Researchers often turn to instrumental variables to identify causal relationships where the presence of confounding is undeniable. Instruments are related to the independent variable, none of the confounders, and only related to the dependent variable through their relationship with the independent variable (that is they cannot directly affect the outcome of interest) (Sovey and Green, 2011; Dunning, 2008). If an instrument meets these standards (i.e. does not fail the exclusion principle), then any relationship found between the instrument and dependent variable represents the effect of the independent variable upon the outcome. Due to the presence of multiple confounders between leader backgrounds and conflict behavior, I could not find a suitable instrument for the relationship between leader backgrounds and conflict behavior. However, it is important to review two potential instruments to clarify why this approach was not taken. There were two instruments considered in respect to educational attainment and conflict behavior.

First, I considered utilizing educational spending of a state. At first glance, it might seem like educational spending might only relate to a leader's background meeting. However, if a state spends more on education, this should affect the average level of educational training an individual soldier has, not just leaders. If we can credibly claim that intelligent decisions during battle do not reduce casualties, then this would work. However, due to some of the arguments put forth in this paper concerning the affect of competency on battle-related casualties, this is an impossible argument to make as the average level of education for each soldier produced by spending will likely increase military effectiveness. Educational spending is also likely strongly correlated with democracies and other confounders like national capabilities.

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Second, I considered using the economic and marriage status of a leader's parents. Both of these variables are strongly correlated with a leader's level of education in the LEAD data but this correlation disappears once the LEAD data is merged with data on disputes. Leaders from wealthier backgrounds are likely to have higher levels of educational attainment and leaders with divorced parents are negatively correlated with educational attainment suggesting that these leaders have less financial support during the earlier parts of their lives. However, there is no clear theoretical connection between the economic/marriage status of a leader's parents and the amount of casualties a state suffer once that leader takes power. It could be the case that states with more people from wealthy backgrounds are also states with high levels of industrial capacity, something would affect the material capabilities of a state and casualties suffered. While these instruments may be effective for the biographical angle, they would not address the societal level factors that lead a given country to select an educated leader in the first place. Chiefly, if societies possess more cosmopolitan or liberal values that place heavy weight on preserving life or electing educated leaders, it could be the case that this, rather than the educational attributes of the leader, produces a selection effect where a particular type of leader is in power as a result of societal attributes.

Due to the difficulty inherent in identifying a strong instrument, I opted to demonstrate the strength of my correlative findings by examining the connection between backgrounds and casualties with a focus on robustness across modeling techniques.

3.5 Results

This section describes the results of the study. First, I provide basic descriptive statistics to identify general trends and patterns in the data. Next, I discuss the results of several statistical models capturing the relationship between conflict casualties and leader backgrounds.

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First, let's explore the data descriptively. The original MID data with missingness removed via listwise deletion shows us that not a single leader with combat experience in the data suffered a MID casualty.

Table 3.3: **Descriptive Statistics for Original MID Data** *Number of observations, mean of fatalities, standard deviation, standard error, and 95 percent confidence interval.*

College	Combat	N	Mean Fatalities	SD	SE	(95%) CI +/-
No	No	58	0.59	4.33	0.57	0.95
No	Yes	31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Yes	No	510	0.09	1.05	0.05	0.08
Yes	Yes	110	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

As expected the most frequent leader type is one with a college degree and no combat experience. However, if we look at the corrected MID data from Gibler, Miller and Little (2016), we can see that this is due to missingess in the original dataset. There are no fatal MIDs for leaders with the lowest level of education suggesting the existence of cases that directly counter the theory presented. However, we do see that the mean decreases as the level of education rises and that leaders with combat have low casualty MIDs for all levels of education.

Table 3.4: **Descriptive Statistics for Corrected MID Data** *Number of observations, mean of fatalities, standard deviation, standard error, and 95 percent confidence interval.*

Level of education	Combat	N	Mean Fatalities	SD	SE	(95%) CI +/-
Less than high school	No	13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Less than high school	Yes	5	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
High school	No	35	0.94	5.58	0.94	1.59
High school	Yes	23	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
College degree	No	185	0.10	1.00	0.07	0.12
College degree	Yes	67	0.01	0.12	0.01	0.02
Graduate school	No	258	0.31	2.50	0.16	0.26
Graduate school	Yes	31	0.03	0.18	0.03	0.05

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If we take these statistics and display them graphically, it demonstrates the difference in casualties between leaders with college and combat experience.

Descriptive Statistics of MID Casualties
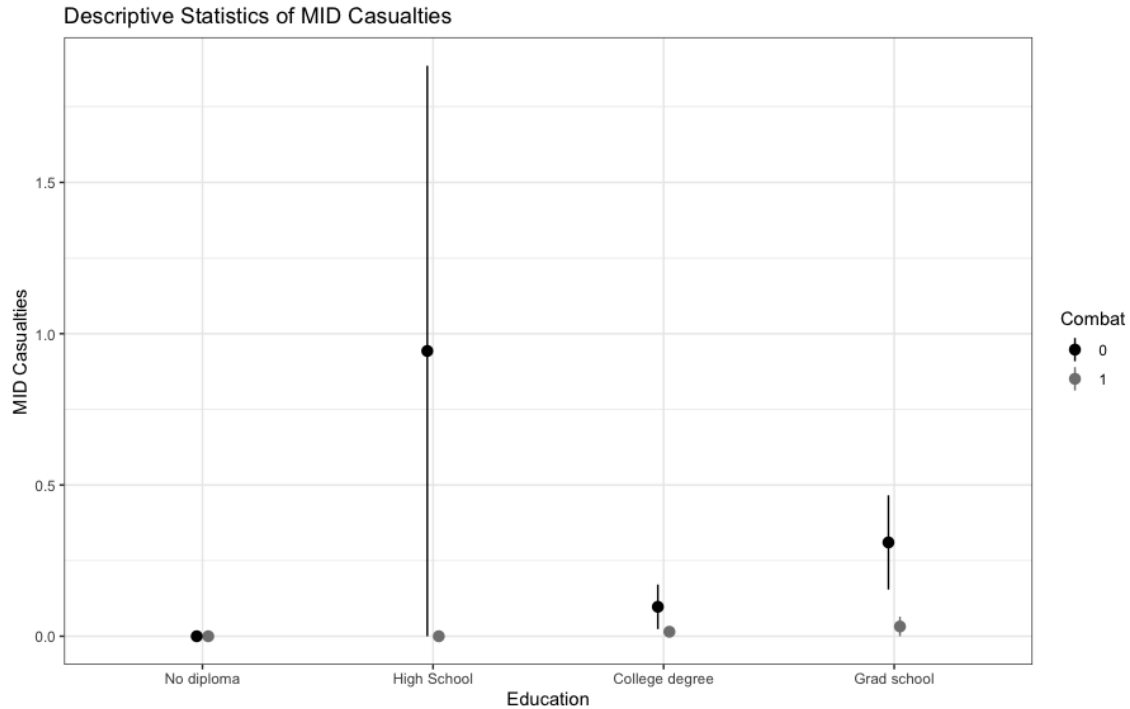
Figure 3.1: **Descriptive statistics of MID casualties** *Corrected MID data with standard errors.*

Since these data suggest that there are large numbers of zeros in the data and there is strong reason to believe the relationship between backgrounds and casualties is confounded by a number of factors, a comparison of means might not be the most appropriate form of analysis. The next section displays and discusses the results of six different models (poisson/count, OLS, negative binomial, zero inflated, zero-inflated negative binomial, tobit) across two different data sets (MID, Gibler et al. MID data,).

The results imply that leaders with military experience and no combat experience are no more deadly in MIDs offering consistent evidence against H2. However, leaders with combat experience are robustly correlated with less MID casualties supporting H3. In respect to H1, the analysis of MIDs reveals a negative correlation for casualties offering support towards the argument that increased levels of education result in lower casualties (remember this finding is not robust to interstate wars).

Table 3.5: **Results for Poisson/OLS Regression Models** *Results for poisson regression model of MID casualties.*

	Poisson Model	OLS Model
(Intercept)	−1.27	0.55
	(0.88)	(0.45)
College degree	−2.07***	−0.35*
	(0.26)	(0.16)
Grad. school	−0.44	−0.05
	(0.28)	(0.11)
Mil. service	−2.34**	−0.17
	(0.72)	(0.17)
Combat exp.	0.20	−0.02
	(0.82)	(0.19)
Polity	0.02	0.00
	(0.02)	(0.01)
Initiator	−1.76***	−0.33
	(0.23)	(0.17)
log(CINC)	0.04	0.00
	(0.06)	(0.03)
Pres. system	1.28***	0.13
	(0.23)	(0.11)
Gender	0.59	0.08
	(0.59)	(0.28)
Age	0.03**	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.00)
AIC	812.31	
BIC	864.87	
Log Likelihood	-395.16	
Deviance	746.23	
Num. obs.	878	878
R^2		0.01
Adj. R^2		0.00
RMSE		1.42

***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$

Multiple modeling strategies (OLS, poisson, negative binomial, zero inflated, zero inflated negative binomial, and tobit) were utilized to examine the robustness of the hypothesized relationships. The following table shows the direction of the coefficient for each IV (the first set of parentheses and a '✓' or 'x' indicating statistical signif-

icance at the .05 level) for every model across both the original MID and corrected

MID data.

Table 3.6: **Combined results** *(direction of coefficient value),(significant at .05?)*
tabular summary of regression output from multiple statistical estimation procedures
across MID and Gibler et al. MID data

	MID		GMLMID	
	College	*Combat Exp.*	*College*	*Combat Exp.*
Count	(-),(✓)	(+),(X)	(-),(✓)	(-),(X)
OLS	(-),(✓)	(-),(X)	(-),(X)	(-),(X)
NB	(-),(✓)	(-),(✓)	(-),(✓)	(+),(X)
Zero-Inf	(+),(X)	(+),(X)	(-),(✓)	(-),(X)
NB Zero-Inf	(+),(X)	(+),(✓)	(-),(✓)	(+),(X)
Tobit	(-),(X)*	(-),(X)	(-),(X)	(-),(X)

This shows that 10 out of 12 of the approaches to modeling the relationship be-
tween education and casualties produce a negative coefficient value as expected. 7
of these results are statistically significant at the .05 level. The results from the to-
bit model from the original mid data are very close to being significant (p-value of
.057). This suggests moderate support for H1. However, if we look at the robustness
of the relationship between combat experience and MID fatalities, support is much
weaker. Only 7 out 12 approaches produce coefficients with the negative value ex-
pected. However, only one of these coefficient values (the negative binomial model)
is statistically significant at the .05 level. This suggests that there is little to no
support for our finding over combat experience. It is possible that issues related to
missingness and variance of the dependent variable (there are very few fatal MIDs for
leaders w/combat experience) should not be ignored when drawing conclusions about
the relationship at hand. To further illustrate the relationship between education and
MID casualties, I generate predicted casualty counts from the poisson model for each
level of education.

MID Casualties and Educated Leaders
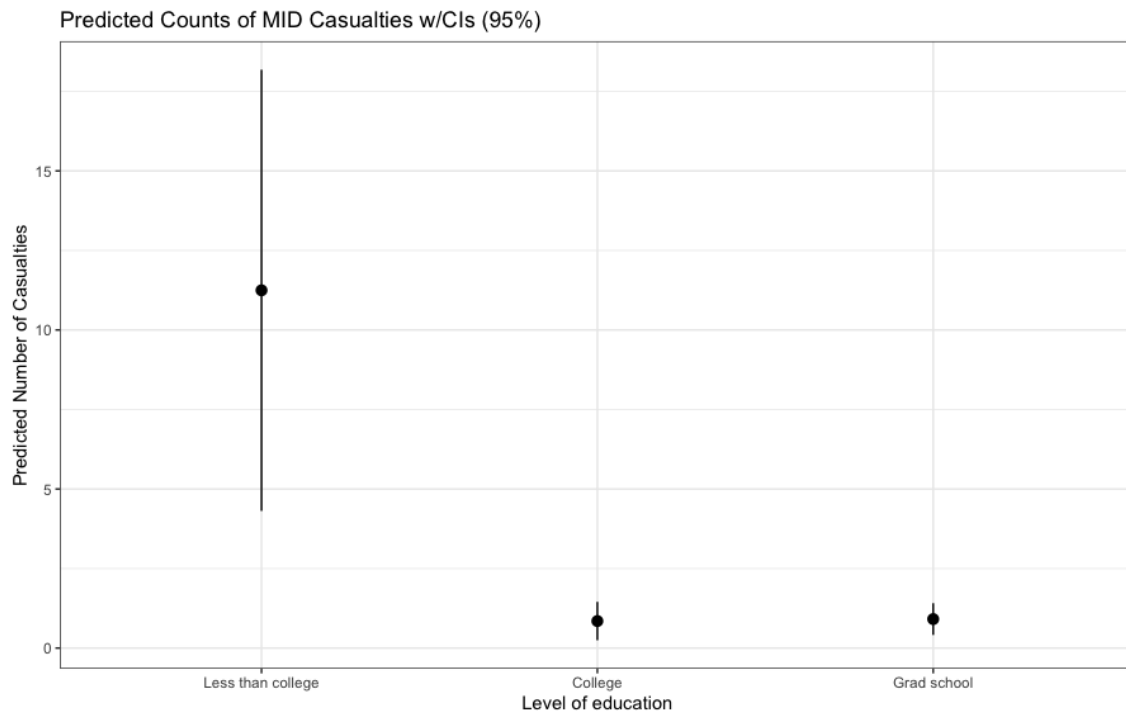
Figure 3.2: **Predicted counts of fatalities during MID** *To generate predictions, all continuous covariates are held at their means. Predictions are generated for presidential systems and for leaders without combat.*

This shows that leaders who do not possess college degrees are expected to produce approximately 11 more casualties per MID. It also shows that once leaders have a college degree, obtaining a graduate degree does not correlate with a significant decrease in casualties. This suggests that the difference between leaders with and without college degrees is the most important for determining which backgrounds correlate with decreased MID casualties.

DYADIC ANALYSIS

Although descriptive results of leader-dispute-year data reveal a moderately strong relationship between education and decreased fatalities, there are at least two sides to every conflict. Dyadic analysis represents another way to approach analyzing the relationship between education and conflict casualties without ignoring the strategic

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nature of conflict. We should not expect leaders with high levels of education to adopt strategies that are effective in battle if the leader of the other state has a relatively equal or greater amount of educational attainment. This suggests that non-dyadic analyses more accurately reveal a leader's casualty aversion where dyadic analysis are needed to examine the link between critical thinking and competence to conflict casualties.

In order to provide more insight over the mechanisms at play, I perform exploratory dyadic analysis to examine whether a leader with an educational advantage (i.e. holding a higher level of education than the other leader) is associated with negative casualty differentials (i.e. when state A suffers less casualties than state B). In short, extending the theoretical framework in this paper with respect to a competency advantage is straightforward. Leaders with educational advantages should be more likely to experience negative casualty differentials where they suffer less loss of life than the other state involved.

To test this, I utilize the dyadic version of the MID data, merge this with the LEAD data resulting in 840 dyad-dispute-year observations, and create two variables. First, I create a casualty differential variable by subtracting the fatalities of State B from State A. Next, I create a binary variable to indicate whether the leader of State A possesses an educational advantage where a 0 indicates the leader of State A had equal or less education than the other leader and a 1 indicates State A had a higher level of education. The following graph provides the mean of the casualty differential with standard errors on the Y axis and the two categories with respect to educational attainment on the X axis.

Figure 3.3: **Casualty differentials and educational differences** *Y axis shows the mean of the casualty differential for dyad-conflict-year data where the X axis displays the dummy capturing an educational advantage for the leader of State A.*

This suggests that the differential for leaders with educational attainment is negative and statistically distinguishable from zero. However, a simple bivariate regression model of the same two variables only reveals a small negative correlations that is not significant at the .05 level. Once again, support is moderate but most importantly limited with respect to the effect of education upon dispute performance.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The results indicate a consistent negative relationship between MID casualties and a leader's level of education. While the results combat experience are largely null (H2), available data used provided little information over how leaders with combat experience behave in fatal MIDs as very few of these observations had any fatalities

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whatsoever. It also provides an important limit to the argument outlined in Stam, Horowitz and Ellis (2015). Leaders with combat experience may be less willing to initiate conflicts, but might not be less deadly in disputes. This implies that voters preferring less soldiers killed in action should choose the leader with more education all else equal. Education enhances a leader's critical thinking skills and higher education socializes leaders in a cosmopolitan environment where individuals value the preservation of all life.

It is important to again remind the reader that these effects were not robust to interstate wars. This suggests that once the gears of war start churning, leader level characteristics matter less in comparison to state and system level characteristics. It could also be the case that interstate wars, by definition, are already very deadly conflicts and states have usually bought into the idea of accepting casualties to win a given war.

Additionally, this analysis was unable to identify an effective strategy to account for the existence of potential selection effects mentioned in the theoretical portions of the paper. As a result, I attempted to demonstrate the strength of my findings by showing how the results differ across different versions of the data and a variety of statistical modeling techniques. For a variety of statistical models on two separate version of dispute data, that educated leaders negatively correlate with MID casualties. This approach reveals that leader's with combat experience are not robustly associated with decreased casualty counts. Future work could utilize finer level conflict data to calculate differentials in conflict casualties when leaders with different levels of education replace leaders in the middle of conflict. This results of this study strongly imply that ignoring the educational background of leaders when analyzing dispute severity is a mistake. While education is a crude proxy for critical thinking ability, even this approach reveals that societies who place educated leaders in power stand to suffer less casualties in militarized disputes.

Chapter 4

Bang then Blame

4.1 Introduction

Why do some international crises get labeled as intelligence failures while others result in high levels of blame directed at policymakers? Historical events like the attacks on September 11th and Pearl Harbor have all been labeled as 'intelligence failures' and failures of policymakers. This could be due to the effectiveness of the leader at shifting blame to bureaucrats, crisis level attributes, or individual level characteristics relating to how preventable one thinks international crises are. Recent findings suggest that media outlets are more likely to blame intelligence communities (Davies, Schulzke and Almond, 2018). Although there is little reason to believe the public cannot find both actors culpable, leaders interested in political survival should prefer situations where intelligence communities are blamed more if it results in smaller decreases to their levels of support. Understanding why leaders avoid blame and how audiences will react to seemingly random shocks is crucial to understanding the implications of international crises for domestic politics.

Using original survey data, I examine how individuals assign culpability under a variety of crisis scenarios. Centrally, I argue that the public looks to informational cues concerning how aware and certain policymakers should have been over a given threat to determine if intelligence communities gave adequate warnings. The amount of reports provided to policymakers and the way in which the leader frames the failure are theorized to affect the way individuals assign blame. Specifically, I expect

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individuals to assign more blame to policymakers and less blame to intelligence agencies when intelligence warnings gave policymakers more time to act. I also expect that individuals will blame policymakers and intelligence communities more when elites direct blame towards these actors by framing the subsequent investigation of the attack around these actors.

When international disputes and crises result in observable costs (e.g. loss of resources/life), voters interested in preventing similar failures in the future must determine the extent to which policymakers should be held accountable for these costs. Often, reports are leaked to the media indicating policymakers were warned by intelligence agencies and had a particular amount of time to act.[1] When voters observe their state's suffer a costly attack from a foreign enemy, they are tasked with determining how aware the policymaker was of the impending attack and how certain they were that related intelligence was accurate. I argue that as voters perceive increases to policymaker awareness and certainty, they will blame intelligence communities at higher rates. Inversely, policymakers become softer targets of blame when they have had a stronger warning (e.g. more reports on the threat exist). Additionally, I theorize that these effects are conditional on the way elites choose to frame the response to a given failure to prevent an attack. In order to test this theory, I collect data from a simple experimental survey to isolate the effect of each contextual factor upon an individual's willingness to blame two key actors: policymakers and intelligence producers. I vary the time the intelligence agencies give policymakers and the way leaders frame the attempt to uncover blame after the attack to examine the relationship between context, framing, and blame for political actors. The results suggest that leaders interested in shifting blame away from political allies can shift blame towards the intelligence community. The ability to shift blame could affect the extent that leaders and other political actors can garner support for war.

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[1]See Mak (2020) for an example with respect to COVID-19.

The surprise terrorist attacks targeting the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11th resulted in thousands of people dead and helped lead the U.S. into an extensive war on terrorism (Porch and Wirtz, 2002; Garicano and Posner, 2005; Zegart, 2005). After the attacks, many wondered how such a tragedy could occur considering the limited capacity of the enemy and intelligence gathering capabilities of the United States. Much like the attacks on Pearl Harbor pulling the U.S. into WWII, the passing of time has slowly revealed the extent to which intelligence agencies warned policymakers was originally underestimated (Rovner, 2005; Pillar, 2006; Phythian, 2006). In both cases, surprise attacks resulted in varying levels of blame between actors as more contextual information concerning the event was revealed. However, it is not clear what types of information lead voters to shift blame from one actor to another.

When protesters raided the U.S. embassy in Benghazi in 2012, blame largely fell on United States' Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. The attack became a focal point for her critics as they campaigned against her for the presidency. Secretary Clinton's front-runner status undoubtedly contributed to why she was targeted. However, it is possible that the contextual factors surrounding the attack contributed to the effectiveness of these attacks as voters attempted to determine who deserved blame. This choice is not isolated to surprise attacks but is also similar to a situation where voters determine whether conflict should occur in the first place. When the U.S. entered Iraq after the 9/11 attacks, it justified the intervention by citing reports of WMDs and connections to terrorist cells responsible for the attack (Jervis, 2006; Garicano and Posner, 2005; Fitzgerald and Lebow, 2006). As time has passed, unclassified reports indicate intelligence agencies provided very weak support for these claims shifting blame directly upon policymakers. The high costs of the war and information concerning what policymakers were told by the intelligence community have resulted in

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voters and political challengers questioning their support of the war over a decade later.

International relations research demonstrates that media outlets tend to shift blame away from leaders towards intelligence communities (Davies, Schulzke and Almond, 2018). This has important implications for how leaders behave considering results indicate leaders condition their efforts at conflict upon the extent to which they think they will be held accountable (Croco, 2011; Chiozza and Goemans, 2003). If political leaders are easily able to avoid blame for these types of events, we should expect very little effort on their behalf to prevent them—especially when they are not facing reelection. It is possible that many of the most salient events just happen to feature the contextual factors related to higher levels of blame for the intelligence community.

It is important to know where voters will direct blame because crises, when costly enough in terms of casualties, can result in non-trivial decreases in public support for a leader, decreasing their odds of remaining in office (Gartner, Segura and Barratt, 2004; Karol and Miguel, 2007). Additionally, if we can determine the level of blame a leader will receive for a developing crisis, we should have a strong foundation for predicting the magnitude of their response. Specifically, crises resulting in low levels of blame for policymakers could result in a leader becoming less risk adverse in terms of how they handle it. Additionally, it could force a leader to remain inactive in an effort to maintain distance from public backlash related to conflict. It could be the case that political elites at the highest level (i.e. presidents, prime ministers, etc.) have an incentive to protect policymakers that they require support from motivating them to attempt to shift blame towards the intelligence community. If this incentive exists, future work could demonstrate this pattern by analyzing the speech of heads-of-state after surprise attacks. However, it is important to understand if a leader's

attempt to shift blame towards one actor or another matters for how individuals assign blame.

Insights into how voters assign blame after explosive international crises should shed light on how voters assign blame to their representatives more generally in relation to uncertainty and awareness of a given threat. In order to develop a theory of why voters assign blame to varying actors for crises, it is important to review literature establishing what key actors desire, how they act to reach these goals, and what information they have at their disposal when making decisions.

4.2 Literature Review

Several studies imply domestic political opinion matters for how a president applies force during international crises and that the public monitors the outcomes and costs of salient conflicts (James and Oneal, 1991; Berinsky, 2009). However, support for diversionary war theory (e.g. where domestically vulnerable leaders are more aggressive) is limited and leaders often attempt to avoid conflicts they would responsible for altogether (Leeds and Davis, 1997). Studies suggest that leaders can pay competency costs for commitment inconsistency, suffering casualties, and aggressiveness (Nomikos and Sambanis, 2019; Croco, 2011; Gartner and Segura, 1998). This implies that voters pay attention to salient indicators (e.g. casualties, public pronouncements like threats/assurances) of government performance in conflict.

Studies demonstrate that leaders are held at higher levels of accountability for wars they initiate and that reelection prospects influences a leader's willingness to initiate conflict (Croco, 2011; Chiozza and Goemans, 2003). However, historical analyses suggest that it is often in the interest of smaller powers to levy surprise attacks against stronger states suggesting that leaders from powerful states might be subject to blame over failure to prevent attacks/reduce the damages of surprise attacks (Brodin, 1978). Although it is impossible to determine if a surprise attack was fully preventable,

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individuals could argue that more could have been done to minimize costs or that political institutions/intelligence organizations are incapable of providing adequate security. There is very little work providing explanation as to why one actor gets blamed more than the other. However, there are several expert analyses of the events commonly called intelligence failures that help reveal the characteristics of crises that shift blame away from policymakers.

Reviews of prominent intelligence failures argue that policymakers and intelligence producers lack the use of proper social science methods and are susceptible to confirmation bias and forms of inefficiency inherent to all organizations (Jervis, 2006; Garicano and Posner, 2005). Reports analyzing the 9/11 attacks point to a failure of intelligence organizations to adapt and use new methods (Zegart, 2005). These arguments contrast a growing rise of social science methodology in intelligence collection method in place of traditional cloak and dagger methods (Knorr, 1964). Analyses of methods reveal expert pessimism over the capabilities of intelligence organizations to prevent crises, yet tell us little about why voters might shift blame away from policymakers.

Regardless of method, the tendency for actors to place blame on the intelligence community is high and, perhaps, magnified by the media's tendency to shift blame away from leaders during times of conflict (Davies, Schulzke and Almond, 2018). This combined with the ability of leaders to strategically leak the intelligence that supports their preferred policy position, gives leaders extraordinary power over how intelligence communities change public opinion (Hastedt, 2005). This increases the value of public opinion as it is unlikely that the media will challenge the behavior of policymakers unless public opinion is strongly critical of them. If we are to believe research concluding framing affects public opinion, it could be the case that elites (i.e. media sources, political leaders) frame attacks in ways that affect the way the public assigns blame (Nelson and Oxley, 1999). Druckman and Nelson (2003) shows

that these frame matter under conditions where individuals are not expected to communicate with people that have different perspectives. Furthermore, research shows that framing effects are limited where citizens deliberate, elites lack a reputation for credibility, and individuals possess expertise over the event being framed (Druckman, 2004, 2001). However, it is also important to demonstrate that particular frames matter in an effort to explain a particular pattern that isn't readily explainable otherwise. Specifically, framing might help explain why individuals and media outlets levy blame towards intelligence organizations if elite framing of the attack is a powerful predictor over how individuals assign blame.

The importance of blame post attack can be stated in terms of how the government responds to prevent future attacks. When people blame government actors for institutions, it decreases their willingness to restrict civil liberties after surprise terrorist attacks (Davis and Silver, 2004). Findings suggest that public opinion during crises shifts towards the restriction of liberties, but that this relationship is contingent upon faith in government. If individuals believe that the government is blameworthy for a given crises, they might be less willing to increase state power in times of uncertainty and fear. In order to explain why individuals blame one actor over another, I develop a theory focusing on how the context makes policymakers easier or 'softer' targets of blame (Christiansen 2019).

4.3 THEORY

This section explains the theoretical reasoning for the paper. Centrally, I argue that voters pay attention to the extent to which policymakers were made aware and certain of an impending threat. Additionally, voters pay attention to the costs of the attack and the strength of the opponent to determine aggregate levels of blame for both policymakers and intelligence agencies.

Policymaker refers to an elected member of the government whose authority allows them to contribute to the formulation of government policy. Under a broad classification, legislators like senators and members of parliament qualify. However, leaders or executives usually have the power to direct government resources to foreign policy issues making them a potential destination for public blame when foreign enemies levy costly attacks. A crisis is defined as a highly salient event where state resources are threatened. Foreign attacks by terrorist groups and other states represent events where the state is put in crisis.

The timing of the theoretical relationship is somewhat easy to explain. Intelligence communities issue reports with a varying amount of certainty (number of reports/agencies in agreement), then the attack occurs with a distance, t, from the date of the report. The attack results in a cost, c, which voters observe alongside contextual indicators over policymaker awareness and certainty. After these indicators of performance are observed, voters choose what amounts of blame to place on both policymakers and intelligence communities and decide the extent to which their support for them will decrease as a function of blame.

Awareness/Certainty

I argue that voters direct blame towards intelligence communities when they fail to make policymakers aware of a given threat. If policymakers are completely unaware of a foreign threat, voters will believe that the politician could not prevent the attack, given intelligence. The more aware intelligence communities make politicians of a given threat, the more responsible a policymaker is for resolving that threat.

I argue that voters use informational cues to determine the extent to which policymakers were aware of the threat. Centrally, I argue that, t, the amount of time between the first report and the attack is the most critical indicator of policymaker

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awareness. As this window increases in size, policymakers will be perceived to have adequate time to assess the validity of the report and direct resources to prevent the attack. As t decreases, it is expected that individuals will shift blame towards the intelligence community for failing to provide adequate warnings. Where warnings are provided to policymakers, individuals become aware of these by published reports, leaks, and whistle blowers that notify the nation of the warnings provided to policymakers. If people believe that the primary task of intelligence agencies is the collection of intelligence rather than acting upon it, they will blame agencies when intelligence is not produced enough time before the attack for policymakers to decide how to act. If intelligence agencies provide an early warning that is not conclusive over the interpretation of the threat, individuals will similarly shift blame away from policymakers. If the intelligence community produces one report, from one agency, this will be seen as a situation where policymakers could not be completely certain over the accuracy of the intelligence. However, as the number of reports during t increases, voters should believe that policymakers had more certainty over the validity of the threat.

In line with awareness, as voters believe policymakers were more certain of a threat, they will believe it was their responsibility to act and that intelligence agencies provided adequate information for policymakers to at least minimize the costs of the attack. In addition to these cues, I argue that two other factors should heavily influence the amount of blame voters levy towards both actors.

FRAMING

I also theorize that base levels of blame leveled towards both actors is conditional upon the costs of the attack and the perceived capabilities or strength of the opponent yet do not explicitly test these claims in this paper. As the cost of the attack rises, individuals will believe that the threat should have been prioritized by policymakers

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and intelligence communities. As such, I expect that blame for both actors will increase when the costs are higher. Next, I classify the foreign attacker by level of strength. As the opponent grows in capabilities, individuals should believe that the threat is harder to detect, sheltering all actors from blame but protecting intelligence communities (e.g. those assigned to threat detection duty) more.

Most importantly, I argue that political elites (e.g. presidents, prime ministers) are more reliant upon other political elites (e.g. policy makers) to implement particular policies than they are on the intelligence community. While presidents and heads of state are usually able to directly appoint the directors of intelligence agencies, policy makers (e.g. senators) are in a position to withdraw support for a given leader's policies if that leader frames the conflict in a way that places blame on them. Leaders might also be worried that any attempt to blame policymakers could legitimize the intelligence provided by the intelligence community to the extent that the political leader is also blamed for inaction alongside the average politician. For these arguments to possess explanatory power over why intelligence communities get blamed, we must assume that political elites are able to affect the locus of blame by how they blame the conflict. This might not be a safe assumption to make considering the effects of framing are often context conditional. As such, I propose a theory of a particular framing device leaders can use to direct blame by arguing that their attempts to uncover the cause of inaction can possess particular framing devices important for the eventual assignment of blame.

Most importantly, leaders affect blame by how they frame their administration's attempts to uncover why the attack was not prevented or stopped. When a leader directs the investigation toward the intelligence agency or intelligence itself, they are framing the attack as an intelligence failure. In contrast, leaders can also choose to call for an investigation of the policymakers responsible for analyzing military intelligence. The latter should serve to frame the intelligence as reliable/credible and

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focus blame on the political process by which intelligence is reviewed. The former, where leaders call for investigations into the intelligence itself, should bolster the view that policymakers could not be sure that a given threat existed as a result of intelligence that existed prior to the attack.

CENTRAL EXPECTATIONS

The following table summarizes the expectations for blame for both policymakers and intelligence agencies under different treatment conditions.

Table 4.1: **Central Expectations** *Hypothesis for each treatment condition and each actor (policymakers/intelligence agencies.*

Indicator	Effect on Blame for Non-Executive Politicians	Effect on Blame for Int. Comm.	H(I)
time between report and attack	Positive	Negative	H1, H2
Elite frame (intel)	Negative	Positive	H3, H4
Elite frames (policymaker)	Positive	Negative	H5, H6

H1 : Individuals will blame non-executive politicians at higher rates when the time between the report and attack is higher.

H2 : Individuals will blame intelligence communities at lower rates when the time between the report and attack is lower.

H3 : Individuals will blame non-executive politicians at lower rates when political executives frame subsequent investigations into the attack around the veracity of the intelligence.

H4 : Individuals will blame intelligence communities at higher rates when political executives frame subsequent investigations into the attack around the veracity of the intelligence.

H5 : Individuals will blame non-executive politicians at higher rates when political executives frame subsequent investigations into the congressional process/committee responsible for reviewing the intelligence.

H6 : Individuals will blame intelligence communities at lower rates when political executives frame subsequent investigations into the congressional process/committee responsible for reviewing the intelligence.

4.4 Research Design

Isolating the relationship between the contextual factors surrounding foreign attacks, intelligence agency/policymaker behavior, and public opinion would be a difficult, if not insurmountable task. One could approach this by collecting data on public support for politicians before and after crises, while hand coding the variety of indicators theoretically important for explaining patterns in blame. However, it would be very hard to construct the perfect or ideal set of control variables to isolate changes in support that occur for an infinite amount of reasons completely divorced from foreign policy decision-making, much a single attack. It is possible that one could collect the data similar to that found in Davies, Schulzke and Almond (2018) and use covariates with information on the attack to predict the extent to which media outlets direct blame at policymakers.

However, their research demonstrates that media outlets are biased in a way that directs more blame towards intelligence communities. In order to overcome challenges inherent to testing my theory with existing observational data, I construct a simple survey experiment isolating the effect of each contextual informational cue upon the amount of blame directed at each actor. The survey utilizes vignettes to construct a

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scenario where a state is attacked, the opponent is known, and the costs are known to the public. This way, the outcome of interest (blame) is explicitly and directly measured while allowing the researcher to freely manipulate the timing of the attack, the opponent, the cost, and the certainty policymakers had prior to the strike. In the following section, I explain how each treatment is realized and how this corresponds to the empirical implications discussed in previous sections.

TREATMENTS

The survey contains four treatment types and is 2×2 resulting in 4 possible vignettes respondents have an equal chance of viewing. Table 2 provides a summary of the concepts, variables, notation, related hypotheses, and portion of the vignette designed to realized associated treatment conditions.

Table 4.2: **Experimental Design** *Summary of vignettes with reference to related concept in theoretical framework, and hypotheses.*

Concept	Variable	H(#)	Vignette
Certainty	time between report and attack	H1:H2,	Intelligence agencies issued [one/multiple] reports on the threat prior to the attack.
Framing by leader	locus of investigation	H3:H6	The president requested a formal investigation of [the intelligence/the congressional committee] associated with the attack.

In order to capture the awareness of policymakers over the threat prior to an attack, I include information on how much time policymakers had to act after a report was issued but before the strike. I examine the role of certainty in assigning blame. As the number of reports indicating a threat rise, voters should infer that policymakers could be certain over the existence of the threat and therefore had enough intelligence to act. In a scenario where only one report is issued, voters could think policymakers were right not to waste resources over a potential threat when only

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one warning was issued. As voters try and understand whether a policymaker should act, they should look to whether reports provided them with enough awareness and certainty over the threat to determine if the politician is to blame. When intelligence communities provide ample time and reports, individuals should be left wondering what else policymakers needed to act.

Finally, I examine one of the more puzzling contextual cues voters could use to determine where to place blame—how a leader decides to frame the investigation into the attack. It could be the case that a leader's decision to frame the state's response to the attack around determining why the intelligence was faulty, as opposed to why a congressional committee failed to act, affects the way individuals assign blame over the attack.

Vignettes

This section describes and contains the vignettes used to create a scenario where voters analyze recent conflicts and decide both who and how much to blame. The following vignettes are designed to reflect short and simple descriptions of recent attacks. No specific locations, names, or other information is used in order to isolate respondent's views over the causal mechanisms of interest from a respondent's prior beliefs over who is to blame for surprise attacks.

First, respondents see a vignette designed to set up a random and surprising attack that happened in the recent past. Information introduced beyond the treatment conditions is presented passively and in a neutral manner to avoid framing effects not related to the treatments of interest.

> A little over a year ago, an average sized democratic country faced serious
> foreign policy challenges. The following sections describe their experience
> of being subjected to a surprise attack by a foreign country. Some experts

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refer to the attack as a random act of violence where others argue the country had adequate preparation for such a threat.

After respondents see information meant to capture a surprise attack where the underlying controversy surrounds whether more could have been done by government actors, I provide a vignette containing all four treatments.

Recent reports indicate that the country's foreign intelligence agency issued a warning [days/months] before the attack. Experts claim the attacker had an average level of military capabilities and reports confirm the attack resulted in casualties. In an effort to determine why no action was taken, the president ordered a full review of the [intelligence provided concerning the attack/investigation of the congressional committee responsible for reviewing military intelligence.].

The statements are past tense as this reflects a recent story for respondents to learn about. After this, I ask individuals to rate the amount of blame each actor (intelligence agency vs. policymakers) deserves.

QUESTIONS

I ask respondents demographic questions (age, gender, zip code, political affiliation, military service, and whether they reside in the US for a majority of the year. All questions have 'prefer not to say' options to allow respondents to avoid forcing respondents to answer questions they do not want to.

After the vignettes, I ask individuals to rate the amount of blame they think policy makers and intelligence officials deserve.

After this, I will ask readers to rate both groups on an interval level scale from 0-10 (0 representing no blame, 10 representing all of the blame):

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How much blame do politicians (other than the president) in the attacked country deserve?

And:

How much blame does the intelligence community deserve in the country that was attacked?

A sample version of the entire form can be accessed at :

https://forms.gle/wqh6ZAW6bzGva7yZ8.

4.5 FINDINGS

The results suggest that timing plays less of a role than theorized in this paper. Furthermore, the president's attempt to frame the investigation around congress or the intelligence seems to have adverse effects where respondents blame policymakers more when the president attempts to shift blame towards the intelligence community. In order to discuss these findings in greater detail, I calculate treatment group means and standard errors for each treatment condition and discuss how they relate to the hypotheses put forth in this paper.

First, I analyze treatment conditions for policymaker blame. The following graph shows the average amount of blame levied at policymakers under four different conditions.

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Comparison of Treatment Group Means (Blame for Policymakers)
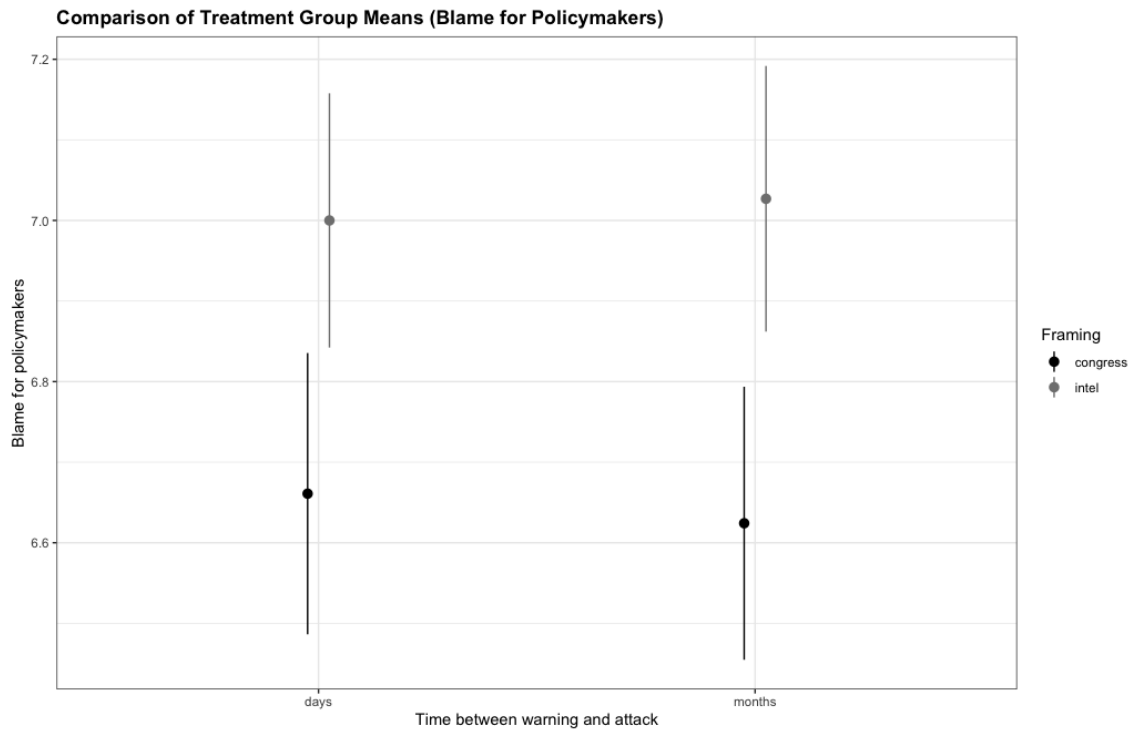
Figure 4.1: **Average level of blame for policymakers** *Treatment group means for blame levied at policymakers with timing of intelligence report and elite framing varied.*

This graph suggest that treatments related to time possess null effects failing to provide support for H1. Additionally, it shows that blame for policymakers actually increases when the president attempts to frame subsequent investigations around the intelligence community. The increase in blame for both time related conditions when the president frames the investigation around the intelligence community offers direct evidence against H3 and H5. It is possible that these attempts are seen as "cover-ups" or attempts to shift blame away from co-partisans in congress where respondents blame politicians more when the president tries to place the locus of blame elsewhere. This suggests that a leader's attempt to shift blame during crises can produce adverse effects or "backlash" towards policymakers. Next, I analyze timing and framing in respect to blame assigned for intelligence communities.

Comparison of Treatment Group Means (Blame for Intelligence Community)
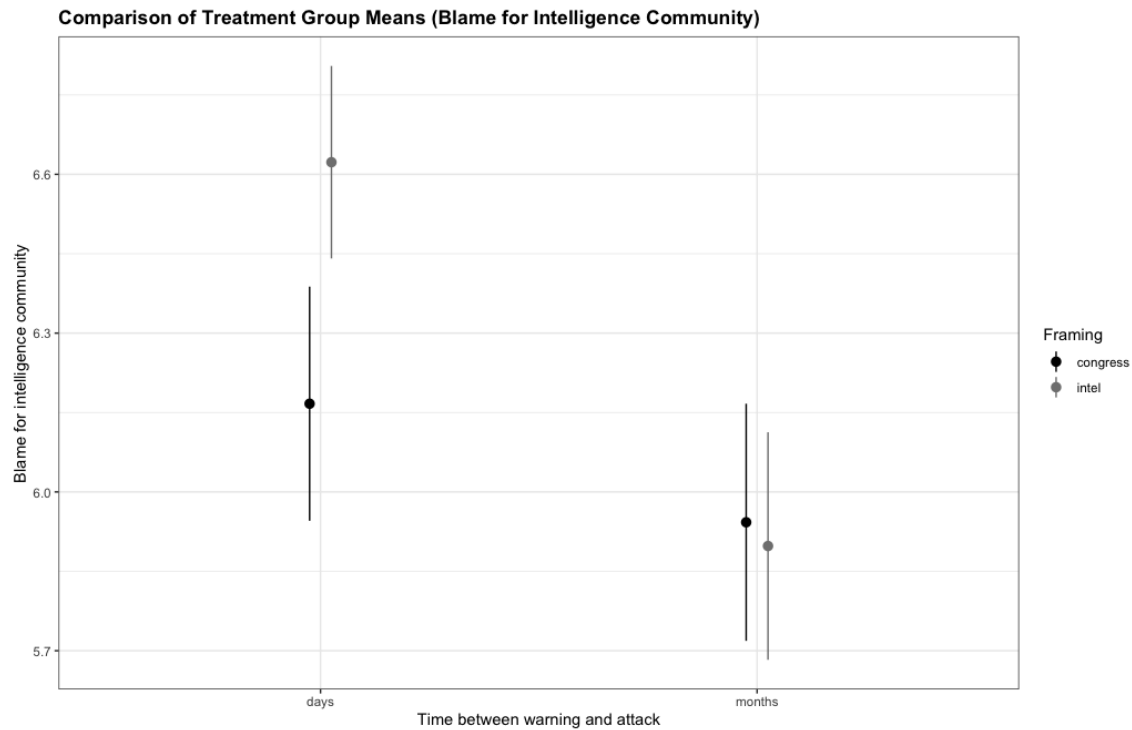
Figure 4.2: **Average level of blame for intelligence community** *Treatment group means for blame levied at intelligence community with timing of intelligence report and elite framing varied.*

In contrast to the findings concerning policymaker blame, we can see that the president's frame of investigations around intelligence does have the expected effect under the temporal treatment condition 'days'. This suggests that the adverse effect of elite framing could be limited to presidential attempts to get policymakers off the hook. However, this effect is not recovered under the temporal condition 'months' resulting in mixed support for H4 and H6. Examining the difference in blame for temporally related treatments, it becomes clear that intelligence communities are blame at lower levels when they give policymakers more time to act. While policymakers do not receive more blame when given more time, intelligence communities receive less when they produce reports indicating the threat of attack earlier on. This sug-

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gests that the data support H2 as both frames see decreases (intel frame decrease significant at .05 level) in blame when going from days to months.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This paper examines the way individuals assign blame after surprise attacks. I theorized that both the timing of intelligence reports and elite framing play critical roles in how the public assigns blame after an attack occurs. Utilizing a simple survey experiment, I find that timing only matters for how individuals assign blame to intelligence communities but does not necessarily affect the level of policymakers receive after an attack. Surprisingly, I find that a leader's attempt to frame the attack as the product of intelligence failure possesses adverse effects where policymakers are blamed more. This suggests that a leader's attempt to shift blame away from policymakers is not beneficial for the policymakers themselves and perhaps damaging to the president. While I did not include a question capturing blame for the president's actions, future iterations of the survey should probe the extent to which any attempt by the leader to assign blame increases the blame they receive themselves. Future waves of this survey should examine blame for all three types of actors in addition to thinking about how to capture the concept of certainty surrounding the knowledge policymakers have over a given threat as a result of intelligence.

While I focus on the time between the report and attack, it is possible that respondents are unwilling to assign blame for policymakers even when they had an ample amount of time as the intelligence report could be inconclusive. Further iterations of this survey should capture certainty by randomizing the extent to which agreement exists among intelligence agencies over the the threat. Additionally, I could explicitly vary the language of the report itself by modifying the instrument to include a story about an impending terrorist attack. Then, I could vary the extent to which the report provided a specific means and location as opposed to general language

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detailing a potential attack in a public space. While this paper focuses on surprise attacks and international conflict, it has important implications for a variety of types of international crises. Recent discussions of the extent to which U.S. policymakers and leadership should be accountable for the outbreak of disease have also focused upon the extent to which intelligence agencies indicating the threat existed before the outbreak was publicly known. Furthermore, the threat of economic collapse is often signaled by economic branches of bureaucracy suggesting scholars interested in economic crises could examine the extent to which early warnings over potential recessions relate to the ways leaders and policymakers are held accountable.

4.7 Proposal for next instrument

First, I intend to modify the set up of the vignettes surrounding an impending terrorist attack with the following paragraph:

> A little over a year ago, an average sized democratic country faced a threat from an international terrorist organization. The country's foreign intelligence agency issued a warning a couple of months beforehand but this failed to prevent the attack that occurred at a government building in the nation's capital city. Now, the citizens are debating the extent to which the intelligence agency and/or politicians deserve blame for the attack. Sadly, the attack resulted in almost 100 casualties.

Then, I'll ask them to review the details of the report where I vary the extent to which the report identified the location of the threat:

> The intelligence agency wrote this in their brief to the country's leader and congressional committee responsible for reviewing foreign intelligence: "After a careful review of multiple forms and sources of intelligence, our conclusion is that a foreign terrorist organization intends to [attack a

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metropolitan area on domestic soil/a government building in the nation's capital] within the [next two months/next year].

Finally, I'll tell them about the leaders decision to launch federal investigations into either the intelligence community or congressional committee responsible for reviewing intelligence but vary whether the committee is controlled by members of the opposite party.

> In an effort to determine why no action was taken, the president ordered a full review of the [intelligence provided concerning the attack/investigation of the congressional committee responsible for reviewing military intelligence.]. A majority of members in the congressional committee reviewing foreign intelligence are members of the [same/opposite] party as the president.

This will allow me to examine the theoretical argument with respect to certainty in a more nuanced fashion than just the time between report and attack. I will be able to investigate the extent to which the direction and level of blame is a function of whether the intelligence itself made the time and location of the attack certain to policymakers, Additionally, I can refine my examination of the leader's attempt to direct blame by examining how shifting blame towards and away from fellow/opposite party members matters for the assignment of blame to the intelligence community and policymakers. Finally, I will also include a question that asks respondents to rate the blame that the leader deserves to see how these attempts to shift blame across blame across partisan lines possess backlash effects.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

To my knowledge, this is the first project to examine the relationship between leader characteristics, accountability, and policy outcomes simultaneously. Current theories within international relations attempting to predict conflict outcomes that do not account for leader traits may underestimate the likelihood a state continues to fight. Understanding the attributes of leaders that help states navigate international conflicts is crucial for scholars and policy-makers attempting to develop more nuanced theories of why particular states remain in international conflicts. My primary findings indicate that leader backgrounds matter for the way the public assigns accountability after conflict and the way leaders behave during conflict. Specifically, individuals rate leaders with strong backgrounds higher for all conflict outcomes. This implies that individuals take a leader's background into account when making decisions related to accountability.

In order to understand how blame is assigned to leaders with different levels of perceived competence, I developed a theory related to how individuals heuristically analyze leader backgrounds in an effort to determine whether a leader is culpable for conflict outcomes. In order to test this theory, I developed an embedded natural experiment utilizing an extremely close election that places one of two leaders in power. Leaders with the stronger background theorized to generate more perceived competence were rate significantly higher than their counterparts with weaker backgrounds across all conflict outcomes (win, lose, stalemate) but the difference was most pronounced for scenarios where leaders led their states to a win. This suggests that

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individual members of the public look to more than just outcomes to determine their response to international conflict.

Citizens with an active interest in foreign affairs may believe that some conflict outcomes are the product of randomness and matters outside of the leaders control. When leaders have backgrounds that convey competence, individuals rate them higher for wins and losses. Leaders with weak backgrounds are rated lower for their performance in conflicts when holding the outcomes and contextual factors surrounding the conflict constant. Leaders with stronger backgrounds are rated as performing better in the very same conflicts. This implies that the public uses leader backgrounds to determine the extent to which a given leader is responsible for conflict outcomes.

Next, my findings related to how background matter for conflict behavior imply that increased levels of education correlate with decreased levels of casualties in MIDs. Support for these arguments is moderate at best as this relationship is not recovered in war is not robust to a few of the more conservative modeling techniques. Against my expectations, I find that leaders with combat experience are no less deadly than their counterparts. This is, perhaps, due to limitations inherent in the data analyzed,but it could be the case that combat experienced leaders are more selective with disputes but no more careful when attempting to resolve them with violence. However, this suggests that not all leader characteristics that matter for how leaders select disputes translate into different behavior once disputes start.

Implications for political science

Prominent conflict research indicates that conflict escalation cannot be studied without first gaining an understanding of the reasons why conflict initiated (Reed, 2000). If leaders are more willing to escalate conflicts as they are deemed more culpable, it could be possible that leaders expecting low amounts of culpability due to their perceived competence are more willing to fight long and deadly wars when attacked

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but very unlikely to provoke costly conflicts. This work improves our ability to empirically capture complex concepts like blame and competence so that future scholars can pay more attention to the extent to which these confound the effects of state and issue-level indicators upon conflict escalation.

Identifying the traits of leaders that are more likely to resolve crises may provide unique insights to discussions of how leaders learn about their expected win probabilities during conflict or signal their resolve (Powell, 2004; McManus, 2016). Formal models of conflict often involve the transfer of information between actors or a process of learning. It may be dangerous to assume that two leaders, even when endowed with similar state capacity, are similarly competent at analyzing and responding to threats. If leaders learn while fighting, we should expect some are quicker learners than others. This dissertation provides an initial discussion for the foundations of competence over international conflict. Researchers could expand these measures of perceived competence to create more concrete measures of predicted competence to empirically capture the ability of leaders to perform tasks related to successful bargaining.

Studies examining the distinction between hawks and doves could reexamine the validity of their findings when considering the potential confounding effect of competence. Recent research demonstrates that hawks are more likely to be elected when nearby states possess hawkish leadership (Carter, 2018b). However, it could be the case that individuals only prefer the traits associated with hawkishness because they also signal competence over military affairs. The instrument used in this dissertation will provide insight into the extent to which traits associated with military competence correlate with perceptions of leader aggressiveness.

If leaders are perceived to be more competent by their domestic audiences as a result of interacting leader traits, it is possible that international leaders (e.g. leaders of allied states) should be more willing to provide higher levels of support from them

in times of crises contributing to studies that assess how states leverage reputation for diplomacy (Kinne, 2014). This logic could also apply to potential threats where international foes attempting to estimate the cost of a potential conflict may be dissuaded by a leader's perceived competence. One layer deeper, if a leader is perceived to be competent by their base, potential threats could see this as mechanism that enhances credibility in that they are not only willing to follow through on a given threat but are also able. If a foreign leader believes that a leader is perceived incompetent by their domestic audience, where they are blamed heavily for the first visible negative outcome (e.g. losing a battle, high casualties), then the foreign threat may think that the leader is unable to wage a long term costly war. Under this scenario, foreign threats would attack leaders who are perceived as incompetent but may actually be much more aggressive than their inexperienced counterparts (Smith, 1998). These scenarios involve increasing the costs of conflict yet it might be unclear what research focusing on fixed traits implies.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER AREAS OF INQUIRY

This dissertation sheds light on the individual characteristics that matter for leadership performance. As noted in the earlier reviews of relevant literature, a variety of fields studying the impact of leaders and how leaders are evaluated can benefit from this project. Many of the theories here relate to the psychological impact of certain experiences and individuals make decisions when leadership is framed in varying ways. Those studying business/organizational management can use the insights produced here to better understand why particular organizations succeed at the tasks they set out to accomplish when theories related to the structure and resources of organizations appear inadequate.

Scholars of behavioral economics and financial investment might use the insights concerning perceived competence to explain why particular companies or organiza-

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tions receive varied level of support when expected gains and other characteristics relevant to why people invest in particular companies fail to explain different outcomes. Findings relevant to perceived competence are relevant to the field of public health and health care administration. Those interested in why particular types of doctors are more likely to be sued for malpractice can use this project as a model for understanding the types of biases that people hold towards doctors from less esteemed schools or with less experience. In short, any area where individuals review the competence of some leader via an evaluation of their characteristics in an effort to assign blame, trust, confidence, and concepts related to performance evaluation will benefit from the lessons learned here.

Implications for policymakers and voters

What are the policy implications of a study that focuses on a trait that cannot be changed once in office? That is, if leaders are unable to time travel and become more educated or experienced in respect to their current foreign policy challenges, what can we learn here? Is there something to be learned that would allow leaders, policy-makers, or scholars to think or act differently in a way that resolves a negative consequence of international conflict?

First, if the results of this work imply that leaders with particular backgrounds and amounts of experience perform better in respect to conflict management, electoral institutions and party leadership interesting in promoting national security can develop a better understanding of the types of leaders that will perform better once in office. Additionally, leaders without these traits interested in preserving life can choose to develop stronger networks of experts to account for actual and perceived deficits in competence. This project also contributes to our understanding of how individual people perceive expertise (being extremely knowledgeable about something),

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competence (being able to do something well), and culpability (being responsible for a given outcome).

This dissertation focuses on how background traits, as proxies, capture a latent concept, competency that has the potential to explain why leaders, regardless of ideological disposition or aggressiveness, are better at avoiding costs related to conflict. Activists seeking to play a role in the reduction of conflict related death could develop protocol for analyzing the ability of leaders to manage conflicts or execute particular policy proposals with the states and organizations they work with.

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Appendix: Blame for Battle

Instrument Implementation

This section discusses the implementation of the survey instrument in more detail. Specifically, it discusses the online process respondents participated in via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is an online platform that allows people to post request for short tasks, participation in surveys, and more. Once a job is posted, millions of workers can view the task and select it from a list of all tasks they qualify for. Additionally, the position was posted under broad keywords "survey" and "demographics". This study required workers to have greater than a 89 percent approval rating for all of their previous tasks to mitigate the risk of unskilled/careless workers participating.

When workers select the task titled "answer a survey about foreign policy", they are then directed to a task description that describes the work: "Provide your opinion for an academic study on foreign policy and international conflict." After they choose to participate, they are presented with six different options representing the six different versions of the survey vignettes. To randomize this process, I ask that respondents use their mother's birth month giving two months per vignette.[1]

After this, respondents read and choose whether they consent to be a participant. When consent is provided, they are directed answer a series of demographic questions. After this, they read the vignettes and answer questions in respect to the leader's

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[1]Please see the next section in the appendix for a discussion of whether this approach was successful.

performance in conflict. To receive payment, workers then must take a password they get after completion back to the original MTurk task page and enter it. The survey takes approximately 5-7 minutes to complete and receive payment.

The randomization was conducted by having respondents select their mother's birth month to provide six categories with two options each. The following table shows that there is very little correlation between the demographic qualities of respondents and the treatment group they were placed in.

Table A.1: **Correlations between demographics and treatment group for backgrounds** *Correlative analysis between backgrounds and demographic variables.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	$\Pr(> \mid t \mid)$
Lean Democrat	-0.0397	0.0503	-0.79	0.4300
Lean Republican	-0.0074	0.0558	-0.13	0.8945
Not very strong Democrat	-0.0893	0.0540	-1.65	0.0983
Not very strong Republican	-0.1017	0.0713	-1.43	0.1544
Strong Democrat	-0.0808	0.0424	-1.90	0.0573
Strong Republican	-0.1294	0.0559	-2.32	0.0207
Male	0.0639	0.0305	2.10	0.0363
Nonbinary	-0.5988	0.5001	-1.20	0.2315
Prefer not to say	-0.5243	0.5020	-1.04	0.2965
Bachelors degree	0.0208	0.0499	0.42	0.6763
High school	0.1096	0.0729	1.50	0.1331
No high school	-0.2063	0.2913	-0.71	0.4790
Post graduate	0.0670	0.0614	1.09	0.2753
Some college	0.0049	0.0581	0.08	0.9329
Age	-0.0000	0.0001	-0.52	0.6000

Finally, we can use a basic survey weighting technique to create a modified sample that more closely captures the characteristics of the national population. In order to account for these slight imbalances, I utilize a simple survey weighting technique that weights observations based off of their prevalence in the sample in respect to what national averages are. After gathering population-level statistics from the most recent CCES (Cooperative Congressional Election Study), I use sample weighting

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across the most imbalanced aspects (gender and level of education) to construct a sample that is reflective of the U.S. population. Observations with demographics that have been over-sampled (e.g. male and highly educated) will receive smaller where under-sampled demographics will be weighted higher. As our sample is most skewed with gender and level of education, I recover population statistics from the CCES, assign trimmed weights (between .3 and 3 to avoid instances where a few observations dominate the weighting procedure), and run a generalized linear model on the weighted sample to determine if the results are substantively different from those obtained from the original sample.

Table A.2: **Regression Estimates of Ratings w/Weighted Sample** *Model of ratings as a function of background, outcome, and party identification with standard errors.*

	Dependent variable:
	Rating
Strong Background	0.504***
	(0.179)
Win Conflict	1.865***
	(0.190)
Respondent Democrat	−0.539**
	(0.259)
Respondent Lean Republican	0.024
	(0.328)
Respondent Not very strong Democrat	−0.542*
	(0.291)
Respondent Not very strong Republican	0.298
	(0.414)
Respondent Strong Democrat	−0.448*
	(0.270)
Respondent Strong Republican	0.905***
	(0.345)
Observations	1,108
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

After weighting the survey sample, we recover the exact same correlations that the non-weighted sample produced. This suggests that the lack of a completely representative sample was not responsible for producing the results in the original model.

Censoring is possible where respondents wanted to rate a leader negatively or above 10 but did not have an option. We can visually represent the extent of censoring occurring in the sample by graphing counts of observations at each value and overlaying what an ideally normal distribution of responses would look like.
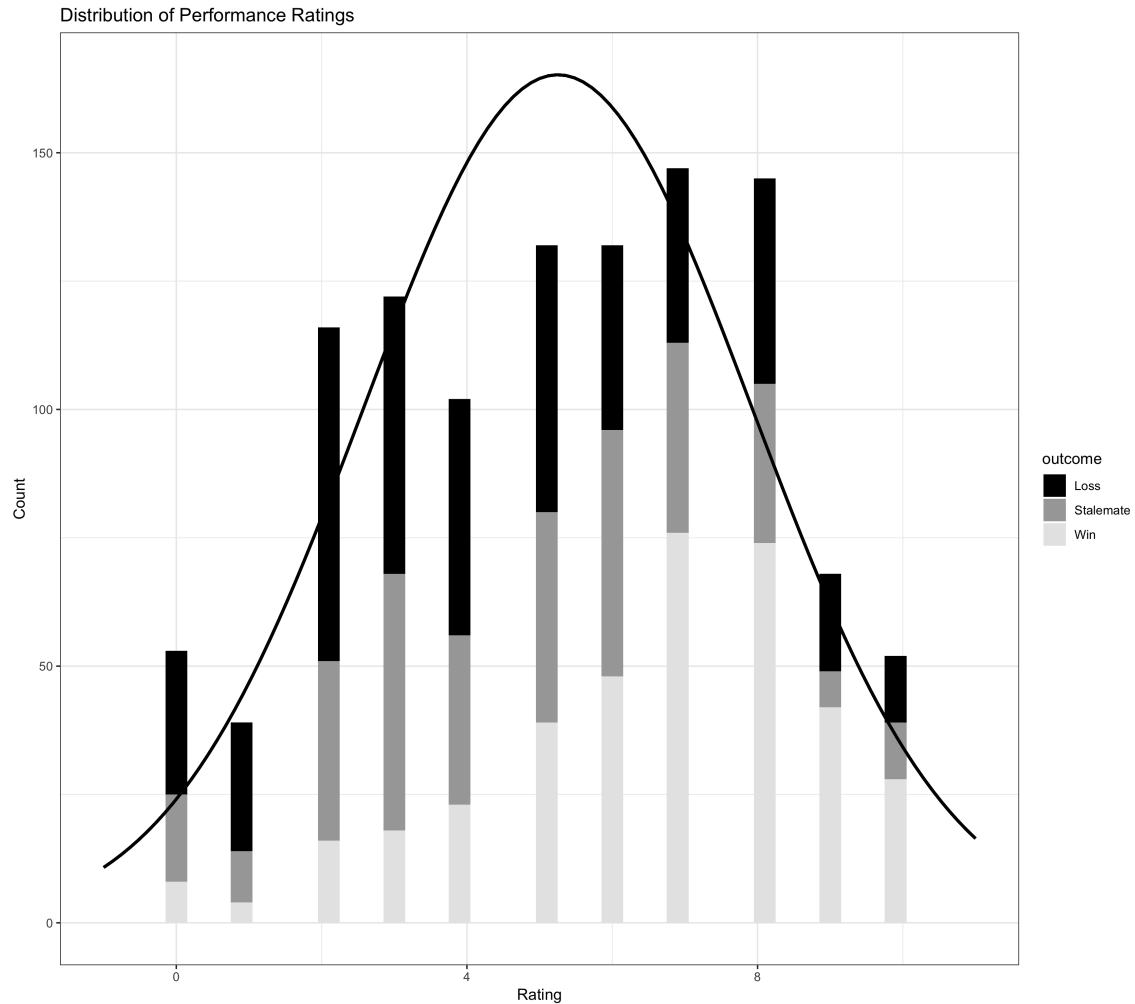

Figure A.1: **Distribution Performance Ratings** *Counts of rating values compared to normal distribution.*

As we can see that the amount of observations at 0 and 10 is slightly higher than what we might expect assuming normality, it is important to check the extent to which censoring reflects these results by specifying an estimation procedure that

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accounts for left and right censoring. The following double censored Tobit model reveals that our key IV is still significantly correlated with performance ratings when censoring is accounted for:

Table A.3: **Tobit regression model estimates** *Censored regression with 0 and 10 as the limits.*

	Model 1
(Intercept)	4.64***
	(0.19)
Strong background	0.39*
	(0.16)
Conflict win	1.96***
	(0.17)
Lean Democrat	−0.77**
	(0.27)
Lean Republican	−0.20
	(0.30)
Not very strong Democrat	−1.07***
	(0.29)
Not very strong Republican	−0.21
	(0.39)
Strong Democrat	−0.56*
	(0.23)
Strong Republican	1.22***
	(0.31)
AIC	5110.76
BIC	5160.87
Log Likelihood	-2545.38
Num. obs.	1108
Left-censored	53
Uncensored	1003
Right-censored	52

$^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$

I also ran a simple linear model of performance ratings by simply including the treatment groups as covariates. Results from a generalized linear model (preferable where the dependent variable is bounded) are virtually identical.
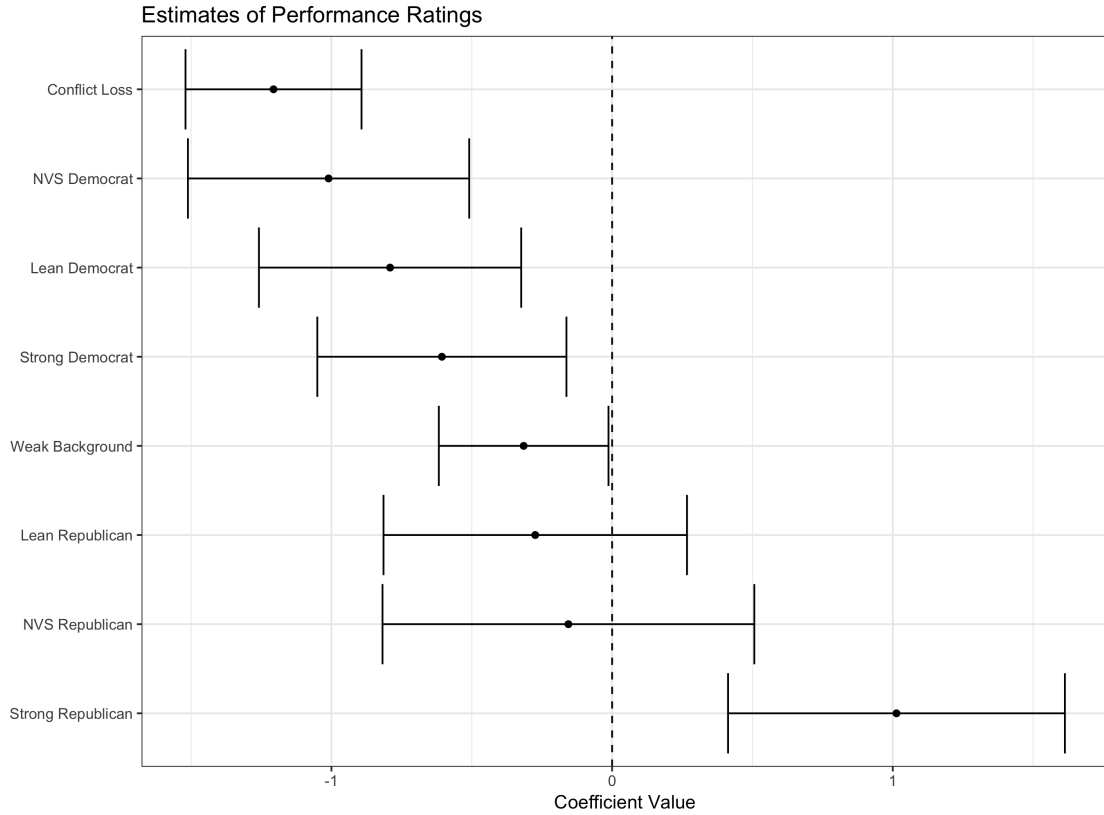
Figure A.2: **Performance Ratings** *Model of ratings for leaders with weak back-grounds, losses, and stalemates.*

The relationship between backgrounds is apparent when examining the how vary-ing a 'strong leader' dummy in the linear model impacts the coefficient value. Leaders with strong backgrounds clearly stand to do better in terms of public evaluations even controlling for the outcome and partisanship of the respondent.
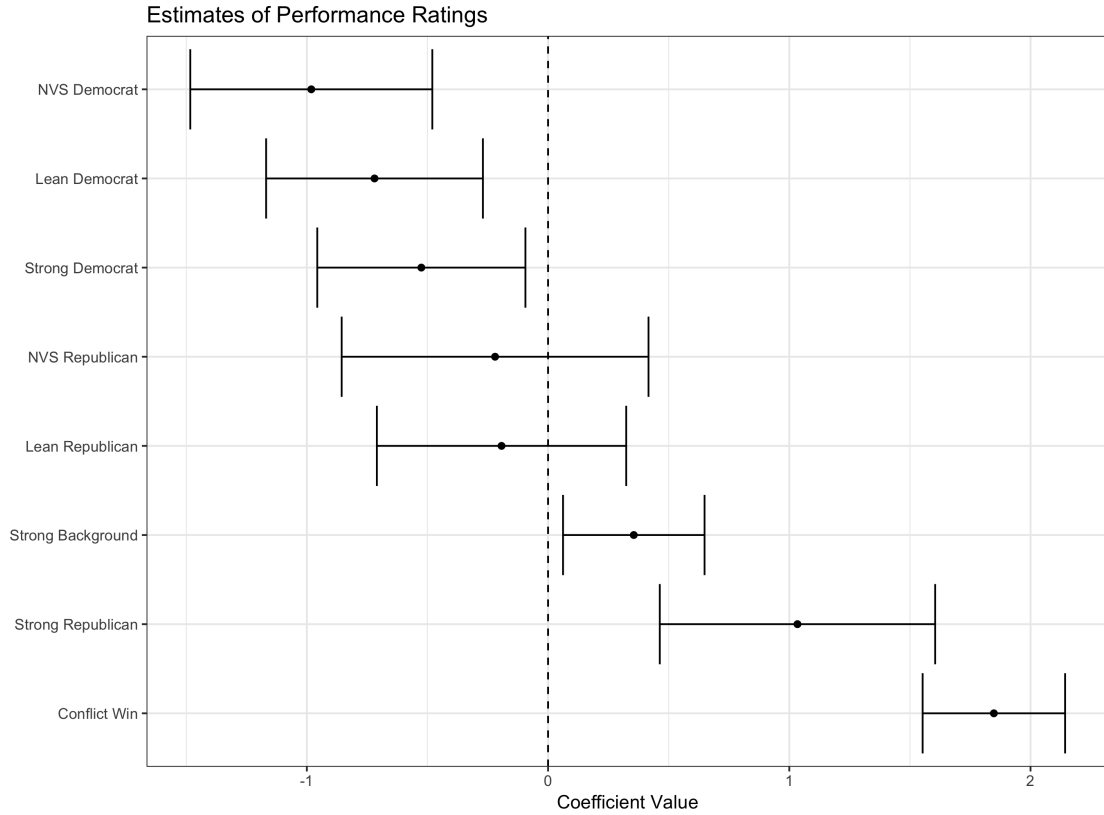
Figure A.3: **Performance Ratings** *Model of ratings for leaders with strong back-grounds, wins, and stalemates.*

Appendix B

Appendix: Less Lethal Leaders

The following table displays a variety of descriptive statistics for the leader-dispute level data used most prominently in the analysis.

Table B.1: **Descriptive Statistics** *Summary statistics for primary variables.*

	Combat	Start	Cas.	Polity	Age	Gender	Pres.	Mil.	CINC	Coll.	Grad.
Min	0.00	0.00	0.00	-10.00	23.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Max	1.00	1.00	33.00	10.00	91.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.25	1.00	1.00
Range	1.00	1.00	33.00	20.00	68.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.25	1.00	1.00
Median	0.00	1.00	0.00	8.00	60.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	1.00	0.00
Mean	0.17	0.91	0.21	4.93	60.39	0.96	0.36	0.08	0.06	0.85	0.48
SE	0.02	0.02	0.11	0.32	0.63	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.03
CI +/-	0.04	0.03	0.22	0.62	1.23	0.02	0.05	0.03	0.01	0.04	0.05
Var	0.14	0.09	4.51	36.22	142.32	0.04	0.23	0.07	0.00	0.13	0.25
SD	0.38	0.29	2.12	6.02	11.93	0.20	0.48	0.27	0.06	0.36	0.50

I test the robustness of my claims to an additional model specification including the variable 'cosmo' that aggregates responses to the World Values Survey question "I see myself as a world citizen" by taking the mean of respondents that agreed with the statement in anyway. This is designed to capture the societal level attributes of states that might lead a given country to select an educated leader or any leader that seeks to minimize casualties. After controlling for this additional variable, the size of the resulting data is greatly reduced to to the limited number of countries the WVS takes place in. After merging this with the original MID data, we are left with 86 crises with too little variance on either potential dependent variable (the max amount of MID casualties is 1 where the third quartile is zero). As a result, I collapse the ordered ordered category "Fatality" (possesses less missingness) to a binary variable indicated whether a given MID produced any fatalities. Finally, I run a binomial logistic regression to see if the effect of education holds after controlling for cosmopolitanism.

Table B.2: **Binomial Logistic Regression** *Binary outcome 'fatal' indicates whether a MID had any fatalities or not. Additional variable 'cosmo' added to represent societal attributes relevant for conflict behavior and leader selection.*

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	$Pr(> | z |)$
(Intercept)	31.2860	15.8608	1.97	0.0485
College	-1.2486	1.2206	-1.02	0.3063
Cosmopolitanism	-20.1581	10.1979	-1.98	0.0481
Military service	1.1060	2.4750	0.45	0.6550
Combat exp.	-0.4755	2.3602	-0.20	0.8403
Polity	-0.3725	0.1723	-2.16	0.0306
Initiator	-5.8053	3.1120	-1.87	0.0621
log(CINC)	0.9961	0.6250	1.59	0.1110
Pres. System	-6.0962	4.0184	-1.52	0.1293
Age	-0.1333	0.0840	-1.59	0.1123

This suggests that the effects of education are eliminated when controlling for the societal level attributes that might affect a country's willingness to accept casualties

or elect educated leaders in the first place. However, it is important to state that this reduces the amount of disputes from 1437 (original MID data merged w/LEAD) to 86 disputes. This suggests that further analysis is required to determine whether education affects MID fatalities once we account for societal/cultural factors.

APPENDIX: BANG THEN BLAME

TREATMENT EFFECTS ACROSS RESPONDENT PARTY IDENTIFICATION
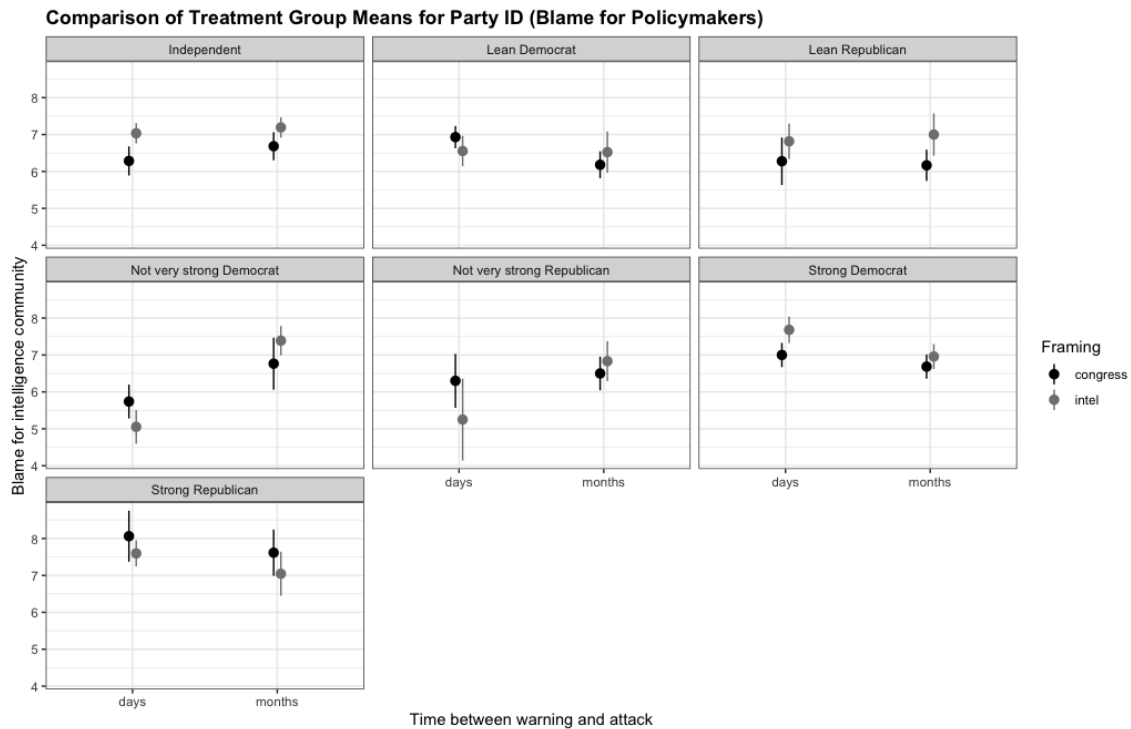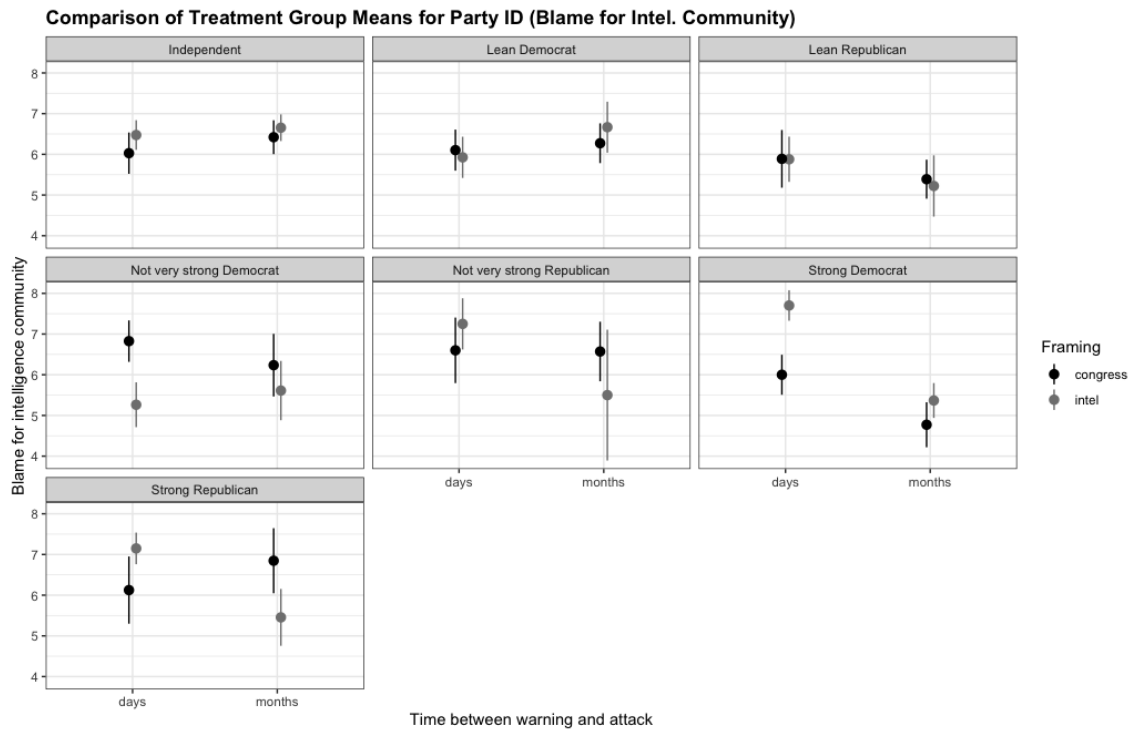
Surprise Attacks and Blame for Policymakers

Figure C.1: **Average level of blame for policymakers across party identification** *Treatment group means for blame levied at policymakers with timing of intelligence report and elite framing varied across respondent party identification.*

Figure C.2: **Average level of blame for intelligence community across party identification** *Treatment group means for blame levied at intelligence agencies with timing of intelligence report and elite framing varied across respondent party identification.*
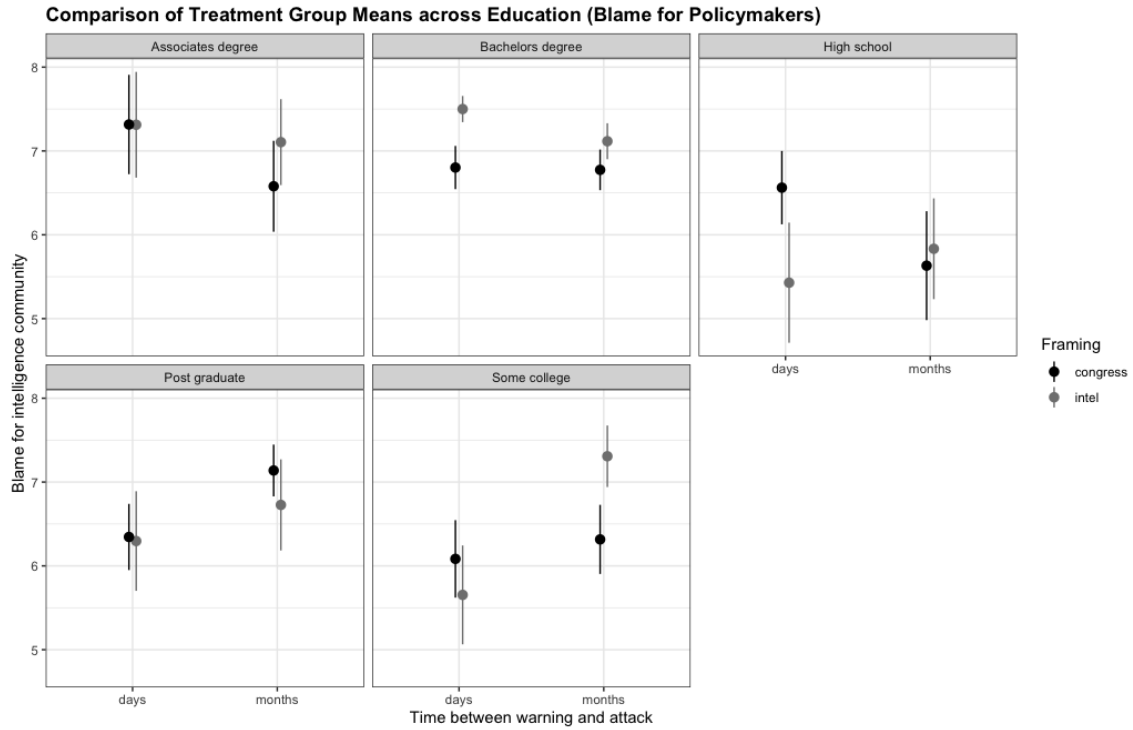
Surprise Attacks and Blame for Policymakers

Figure C.3: **Average level of blame for policymakers across level of education** *Treatment group means for blame levied at policymakers with timing of intelligence report and elite framing varied across respondent level of education.*

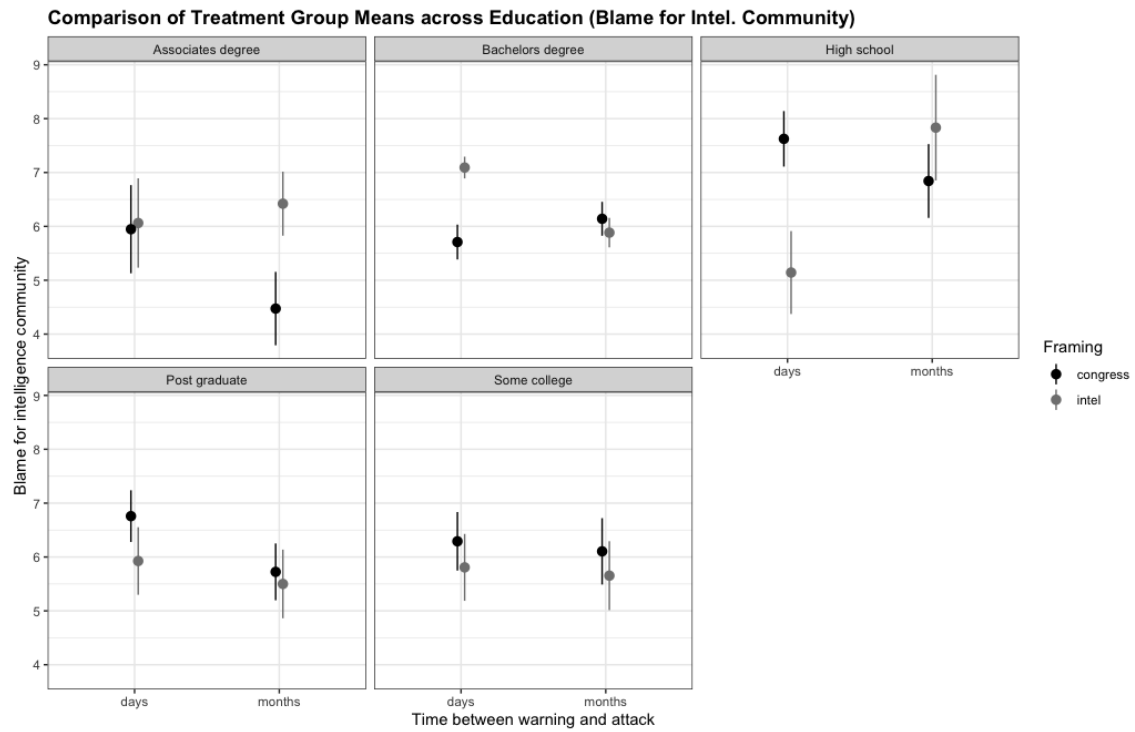Surprise Attacks and Blame for intelligence Community

Figure C.4: **Average level of blame for intelligence community across level of education** *Treatment group means for blame levied at intelligence agencies with timing of intelligence report and elite framing varied across respondent level of education.*