

Damned if You Do, Damned if You Don't: The Relationship between Political Leaders and Interstate Targets*

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June 29, 2018

Word Count: 10,764

Abstract

How do security threats and the political leaders we observe influence one another? I argue there is an endogenous relationship between whether a state is targeted in an international crisis and its leader's willingness to use force. In particular, domestic populations prefer hawkish leaders when threatened and hawkish leaders are more likely to deter challenges. Consistent with expectations, analyses using a new measure of leaders' latent willingness to use force and a structural estimator indicate states likely to be targeted in a crisis have relatively hawkish leaders and that hawkish leaders reduce the probability a state will be targeted. As hawks are more likely to initiate conflicts than doves, my findings suggest that when structural conditions make it likely a country will be challenged in a crisis, a domestic population can influence whether its state plays the role of initiator or target but can do little to prevent a crisis.

*Previous versions of this project were presented at the annual meetings of the Peace Science Society (International) (2015), the International Studies Association (2016), American Political Science Association (2016), and Midwest Political Science Association (2018). Sarah Croco, Connor Huff, Michael Reese, and Scott Wolford are thanked for comments on earlier drafts.

Scholars have long recognized that threats to national security exert a large influence on states' international and domestic politics. This idea is probably most closely associated with Vegetius' observation that *Si vis pacem, para bellum*: "If you want peace, prepare for war." Consistent with both classic and realist thought (e.g., Morgenthau 1978, Jervis 1978), contemporary scholarship finds systematic evidence that states engage in internal and/or external balancing when threatened. For example, states that face external threats spend more on their militaries, are more likely to engage in arms races, and are more likely to form defensive alliances than are other states (Fordham and Walker 2005, Rider, Findley and Diehl 2011, Johnson 2017). In terms of domestic politics, external threats are associated with states consolidating their political power and public opinion shifting shifting in favor of more aggressive policies, less political tolerance, and reducing institutional constraints on leaders (Huddy et al. 2005, Hutchison and Gibler 2007, Gadarian 2010a, Gibler 2010, Albertson and Gadarian 2015, Miller 2017).

Existing research therefore demonstrates that states' international and domestic politics are influenced by external threats. However, this scholarship is silent on how security threats influence who leads states. This is surprising given that the increased theoretical and empirical focus on the influence of political leaders arguably represents the most important innovation in interstate conflict research during the last twenty years. While the first wave of this leader-centric scholarship largely centered around how political institutions and incumbents' desire to remain in power influenced conflict processes (among many others, Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999, Chiozza and Goemans 2004b, Croco 2011), more recent research convincingly demonstrates that leaders' background experiences (Horowitz, Stam and Ellis 2015, Colgan and Weeks 2015, Carter and Nordstrom 2017), political orientations (Heffington 2018), and/or psychological traits (Kertzer 2016) exert a strong influence on conflict initiation. Thus, there is increasing agreement among scholars that who leads a country matters for patterns of interstate conflict.

This article considers a pair of important but thus far overlooked questions. First, how does the threat of being targeted in an interstate dispute influence the leaders we observe? Second, how do leaders influence the likelihood their state is targeted in an interstate dispute? I argue the answers to these two questions are intimately related. First, there is strong evidence that citizens are more likely to support hawkish policies and politicians when they face an external threat (among others, Gadarian 2010b, Getmansky and Zeitzoff 2014). Accordingly, we should observe states having relatively hawkish leaders when they are likely to be targeted in an interstate dispute, with a leader's relative hawkishness or dovishness conceived as his

or her latent willingness to use force or military assertiveness (e.g., Herrmann, Tetlock and Visser 1999, Carter and Smith 2018). Second, classic deterrence theory (Huth 1999) and a simple crisis bargaining model imply that hawkish leaders are less likely to be challenged in an interstate dispute than are dovish leaders. Thus, having a hawkish leader should reduce the probability a country is targeted in an interstate dispute. These two claims imply that the types of leaders we observe and whether a state is targeted in a dispute are endogenous and, further, that political leaders, states' domestic and foreign politics, and the larger international security environment all influence one another.

I assess the hypothesized relationships during the period between 1919 and 2003 using a recently developed measure of leaders' latent willingness to use military force and a statistical model that explicitly estimates the potentially endogenous relationship between leaders' hawkishness and the probability of being targeted in an interstate dispute. My results are consistent with expectations. I find that hawkish leaders are less likely to be challenged in an interstate dispute than are dovish leaders and increasing the probability of being targeted is associated with states having more hawkish leaders. Additional analyses suggest that a set of international and domestic factors commonly thought to influence interstate conflict processes condition one half of the reciprocal relationship between the leaders we observe and the probability a state is targeted in a dispute. I find that whether a state has an interstate rival, is involved in a territorial dispute, and its number of borders conditions the effect of the probability of being targeted on the hawkishness of its leader. However, dovish leaders are more likely to be targeted in an interstate dispute than are hawkish leaders regardless of these factors or regime type.

My findings have several implications for our understanding of the relationship between domestic and international politics. Perhaps most notably, my findings suggest that an increased risk of being targeted puts domestic populations in an unfortunate situation: the type of leader that lowers the probability their country will be targeted in an interstate dispute is the same type of leader that increases the probability their country will initiate an interstate dispute. Framed differently, when structural conditions make it likely a country will be challenged in an international crisis, a domestic audience can influence whether their state plays the role of initiator or target but can do little to prevent a crisis from occurring.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. The first section describes how the threat of being targeted influences the type of leaders domestic populations prefer. The second considers how a leader's willingness to use force influences the likelihood her country will be targeted in

an interstate dispute with a discussion of existing research and a simple crisis bargaining model. The third section describes the research design while the fourth reports my results. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of my findings and their implications for our understanding of how political leaders, domestic politics, and interstate conflict are related.

1 Threats and Preferences for Hawkish Leaders

Foreign policy and international relations typically play a minor role in determining who becomes a state's leader through domestic political processes (among others, Page and Brody 1972, Abramowitz 1995). This is likely due to the fact that the public generally pays little attention to foreign affairs (Holsti 1996). This implies that while leaders might play an outsized role in determining whether their states go to war (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999, Chiozza and Goemans 2011, Horowitz, Stam and Ellis 2015), in general domestic populations do not select political leaders based on their likely foreign policy performance.

While foreign policy considerations often have minimal influence on leader selection, this is not always the case. The importance of foreign policy in determining a country's leadership is increasing in citizens' concerns about foreign affairs and national security (Aldrich et al. 2006). As one might suspect, citizens pay more attention to foreign affairs during times of interstate crisis and war (among others, Holsti 1996, Aldrich et al. 2006, Baum and Groeling 2009). This implies the potential foreign policy consequences of selecting a leader should be more influential in domestic selection processes when countries face a high probability of being targeted in an interstate dispute.

A question that naturally follows is, what type of leader is preferred by a domestic population that fears being attacked by a foreign enemy? A number of prominent pieces of international relations scholarship argue domestic populations prefer resolved leaders who will “stand their ground” during interstate crises over territory and among rivals (e.g., Huth 1996, Senese and Vasquez 2005). For example, Vasquez (1993, Chapter 6) argues that during times of crisis citizens view “hard-liners” as more effective than and preferable to “accommodationists” and leaders’ “strong actions will be supported domestically, while anything less will be criticized as being soft” (pg. 213). This is consistent with Albertson and Gadarian’s (2015) more general claim that, “threats and the anxieties that accompany those threats lead to a public ... more

supportive of public policies they believe will return security” (pgs. 4-5).¹

Indeed, there is strong evidence that politicians and parties associated with hawkish policy positions typically are viewed as better able to protect citizens from external threats and, therefore, tend to garner greater political support than their dovish counterparts when the public feels threatened. In the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks, Huddy, Feldman, and co-authors found that higher levels of perceived threat were associated with greater support for more aggressive national security policies and military action among the U.S. public (Huddy et al. 2005, Huddy, Feldman and Weber 2007, Huddy, Feldman and Cassese 2009). More generally, higher levels of perceived threat increase support for aggressive military policies (Merolla and Zechmeister 2009) and reduce support for politicians with less aggressive traits, especially when they are from the party perceived as weaker on national security issues (Holman, Merolla and Zechmeister 2011). Gadarian (2010a, 2010b) demonstrates that higher levels of threat are associated with individuals adopting more hawkish foreign policy preferences and an increased probability of voting for politicians who espouse hawkish foreign policy positions. Relatedly, Albertson and Gadarian (2015, pgs. 117-124) find that higher levels of anxiety (which is a function of how threatened an individual feels) is associated with greater support for using military force instead of diplomacy, higher defense spending, stronger homeland security policies, and the Iraq war. Focusing more explicitly on leaders, Miller (2017) finds that, on average, citizens favor stronger, less constrained political executives during periods of territorial threat in an analysis of seventy countries. Moving from opinion and policy preferences to election outcomes, political candidates from relatively hawkish Israeli parties receive a higher vote-share in areas that suffer from terrorist attacks in general (Berrebi and Klor 2008) and rocket attacks in particular (Getmansky and Zeitzoff 2014).

The preceding discussions suggests that the types of leaders we observe should vary as a function of states’ national security. While citizens typically pay little attention to international affairs, foreign policy considerations play a larger role in influencing states’ leadership when threatened (e.g., Holsti 1996, Aldrich et al. 2006, Merolla and Zechmeister 2009). Further, citizens are more supportive of hawkish policy positions and politicians when they feel threatened by an external actor or crisis (e.g., Gadarian 2010a, Getmansky and Zeitzoff 2014, Albertson and Gadarian 2015). Taken together, these two points lead to my first expectation:

¹This claim can be viewed as an implication of the concept of “issue ownership,” where individuals are more likely to support politicians who are viewed as better able to handle salient issues (Petrocik 1996).

Expectation 1: As the probability a state will be targeted in an interstate dispute increases, states will have more hawkish leaders.

The next section considers how leaders' willingness to use of force influences whether their countries are targeted in interstate disputes.

2 Would You Rather Fight a Hawk or Hunt a Dove?

There is increasing evidence that a leader's willingness to use military force influences her state's involvement in interstate conflicts. Research on this topic typically focuses on how specific attributes or past experiences thought to make leaders relatively more hawkish or dovish influence conflict initiation (for a recent overview of this scholarship, see Carter and Chiozza 2018). For example, leaders who previously served in the military are more likely to initiate conflicts than leaders with a civilian background, especially if their military service did not involve combat (Horowitz and Stam 2014, Horowitz, Stam and Ellis 2015). Leaders who participated in revolutions prior to assuming office are more likely to initiate interstate conflicts (Colgan 2013, Colgan and Weeks 2015), likely due to their greater risk tolerance and desire to revise the international status quo (Skocpol 1979, Carter, Bernhard and Palmer 2012, Colgan 2013). More generally, leaders who possess multiple traits associated with hawkish preferences are more likely to initiate interstate conflicts than are other leaders (Carter and Nordstrom 2017). Democracies led by right governments are more likely to initiate interstate conflicts than those led by left governments (Arena and Palmer 2009, Clare 2010, Heffington 2018), the idea being that politicians and supporters of right parties are more hawkish than those associated with parties on the left (Schultz 2001, Palmer, London and Regan 2004). From a psychological perspective, leaders who are predisposed to challenge constraints (Keller 2005) are more likely to initiate conflicts. Thus, there is strong evidence that hawkish leaders are more likely to initiate interstate crises than are dovish leaders.

Where there is a clear relationship between a leader's willingness to use force and conflict initiation, empirical research on how leaders' preferences influence whether their states are targeted in an interstate dispute is lacking. Heffington (2018) finds that democratic leaders of hawkish parties are more likely to be targeted than those leaders from dovish parties, although

the significance of this relationship is sensitive to model specification. Though the context is a bit different, there is evidence that countries led by hawkish leaders are less likely to suffer from transnational terrorist attacks than are countries led by dovish leaders (Koch and Cranmer 2007, Carter and Smith 2018).

Although there is little systematic evidence on the relationship between leaders' willingness to use force and interstate targets, there are theoretical reasons to think hawkish leaders are less likely to be targeted than dovish leaders. Traditional approaches to deterrence suggest doves are more likely to be challenged than hawks (see Huth (1999) for a nice review of rational deterrence theory). A simple immediate deterrence game holds that, all else equal, a challenger is more likely to choose the status quo and less likely to attack a target as the target's expected utility for war increases (Achen and Snidal 1989, Huth 1999). As hawks are typically assumed to pay lower subjective costs for fighting a war than doves, a hawkish leader's expected utility for war is higher than a dovish leader's expected utility for war. Accordingly, the logic of immediate deterrence implies that states should be less likely to challenge hawkish leaders than dovish leaders.

While its implications are intuitive, traditional accounts of immediate deterrence situations suffer from a failure to explicitly consider non-random selection (Fearon 1994, 2002) or bargaining dynamics (Fearon 1995). Further, even bargaining models that consider the effect of hawkish and dovish leaders typically assume the leaders are already in an interstate crisis (e.g., Wolford 2007).² With these points in mind, I analyze a simple model that allows leaders to select into an interstate crisis and bargain over the terms of a negotiated settlement in order to identify how a leader's relative hawkishness influences whether his or her country is targeted in an interstate dispute.

Consider a scenario in which the leader of State 1 (L_1) decides whether or not to initiate a crisis against the leader of State 2 (L_2) over a piece of territory whose value is normalized to one.³ The model assumes that the status quo sees L_1 in control of proportion of territory q and L_2 in control of $1 - q$. L_1 has a choice between doing nothing (n) to alter the status quo or making demand $x \in [0, 1]$ of L_2 . If L_1 accepts the status quo, the game ends with L_1 and L_2 , respectively, continuing to possess q and $1 - q$ shares of the territory. If L_1 makes a demand and L_2 accepts, the game ends with L_1 receiving x and L_2 receiving $1 - x$. If L_1 makes

²A recent and notable exception to this is Wu and Wolford (Forthcoming).

³I refer to L_1 using female pronouns and L_2 using male pronouns.

a demand and L_2 rejects, the two sides fight a costly conflict in which the winner receives the entire territory. L_1 wins the conflict with probability p and pays cost $c_1 > 0$ for fighting, which implies L_1 's expected utility for war is $p - c_1$. L_2 wins the war with probability $1 - p$ and pays cost $c_2 > 0$ for fighting, which implies L_2 's expected utility for war is $1 - p - c_2$. Following convention (e.g., Wolford 2007), the model assumes that hawkish leaders pay a lower subjective cost for fighting than do dovish leaders ($c_i^d > c_i^h$). I assume leaders are risk-averse and complete information.

The model's subgame perfect equilibrium is easily identified using backwards induction. I describe the intuition underlying the solution with minimal notation here and provide technical details in the appendix. L_2 will reject a demand from L_1 if and only if L_2 's expected utility for fighting is greater than what she would receive from a negotiated settlement, which occurs when $x < p + c_2$. Thus, if L_1 chooses to initiate a crisis, she can induce a peaceful settlement by demanding $x = p + c_2 \equiv \hat{x}$ from L_2 . L_1 will only initiate a crisis when she will obtain a better outcome through a negotiated settlement or fighting a war than she is currently getting with the status quo distribution of territory. Otherwise, the status quo obtains and the crisis is averted.

The model presented here is very simple, yet it provides insight into how a leader's relative willingness to use military force influences whether his country is targeted in an interstate dispute. The model indicates that states with dovish leaders are more likely to be targeted by a challenger than are states with hawkish leaders. L_1 chooses the status quo instead of initiating a crisis against L_2 when doing so provides her with the best possible outcome, or $q \geq p + c_2 \wedge p - c_1$. This condition is more likely to be met when L_2 's cost of fighting is low. That is, as L_2 's cost of fighting decreases, L_1 requires an increasingly worse status quo distribution of territory to initiate a crisis against L_2 . The reason for this is that the amount of territory challengers can expect to gain through a peaceful settlement decreases as a target's cost of fighting decreases ($x = p + c_2 \equiv \hat{x}$). In canonical bargaining language, the value of a target's outside option (war) increases as the costs of fighting decrease, which allows the target to obtain better negotiated settlements and reduces the territory a potential challenger could hope to get through crisis bargaining.⁴ Given that hawkish targets pay a lower cost for fighting than do dovish targets ($c_2^d > c_2^h$), it then follows that hawkish leaders should be targeted less frequently in interstate

⁴See Muthoo (1999) on the relationship between outside options and negotiated settlements.

disputes than dovish leaders.⁵ Thus, my second theoretical expectation is as follows:

Expectation 2: States with hawkish leaders are less likely to be targeted in an interstate crisis than are states with dovish leaders.

Considered jointly, my theoretical expectations imply the probability states are targeted in an interstate dispute and the relative hawkishness of the leaders we observe are endogenous to one another. Hawkish leaders should reduce the likelihood a state is targeted because they are more willing to fight and, consequently, will give up less in an interstate crisis than dovish leaders. At the same time, citizens prefer hawkish politicians and policies over dovish politicians and policies when faced with an external threat. Accordingly, the probability a country is targeted in an interstate dispute should influence whether it has a relatively hawkish or relatively dovish leader and whether a country has a relatively hawkish or a relatively dovish leader should influence whether it is targeted in an interstate dispute. The next section describes the research design used to assess my expectations.

3 Research Design

I use a leader-year data set of all political executives between 1919 and 2003 to estimate the relationships between the probability of a country being targeted in an interstate dispute and the relative hawkishness of its leader.⁶ The base data set was taken from the replication materials associated with Debs and Goemans (2010).

My analysis requires two dependent variables. The first, *Target*, is coded one if a leader's country was targeted in an interstate crisis in a given year and zero otherwise. *Target* is drawn directly from Debs and Goemans (2010) and is based on data from the ICB project (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 1997).

The second dependent variable, *Leader Hawkishness*, measures a state's incumbent political leader's underlying willingness to use military force. Empirically identifying leaders' underlying

⁵The model developed here represents the simplest model possible for analyzing how leader hawkishness might influence whether a state is targeted in an interstate dispute. A slightly more complicated model in which L_1 is uncertain about L_2 's type indicates states are less likely to be targeted in a dispute when a potential challenger thinks it is likely the case that the state's leader is a hawk. Given a preference for parsimony, I use the simpler model to inform my theoretical expectation here.

⁶All code and data necessary to replicate all of the analyses associated with this project will be made available upon publication.

hawkishness is difficult. Scholars typically take one of three approaches. The first is to use a measure of a leader's government's left-right orientation (Palmer, London and Regan 2004, Arena and Palmer 2009, Clare 2010). The logic behind this approach is that parties on the right generally hold more hawkish foreign policy preferences than parties on the left (Schultz 2001, Palmer, London and Regan 2004). The second commonly used strategy is to construct measures of a leader's personality or operational code (Renshon 2008, Keller and Foster 2012). Unfortunately, measures of government orientation and leaders' personality traits and operational code have limited temporal and spatial domains and are rarely available for non-democratic countries. The third approach is to measure leaders' willingness to use force as a function of their objective attributes and background experiences (Horowitz, Stam and Ellis 2015, Carter and Nordstrom 2017).⁷ This approach is based on the idea that an individual's worldview, attitudes, and preferences are shaped by his or her life experiences.

Setting aside the availability of data on general orientations, psychological characteristics or personal attributes for the moment, arguably the principal difficulty of measuring a leader's willingness to use force is that it is not directly observable. Measures based on leaders' use of force inherently make the tenuous assumption that observed behavior represents a revealed preference (Sen 1971). Further, such measures are of limited utility if scholars want to use them to predict conflict participation given that the measures would not be independent of the dependent variable of interest. Motivated by these points, the measure of leaders' hawkishness used here was developed by Carter and Smith (2018) using latent variable modeling techniques and data measured independently of whether a leader used military force.⁸ Latent variable models increasingly are used in political science to measure concepts that are not directly observable; including but certainly not limited to legislators' ideology (Poole and Rosenthal 1991, Clinton, Jackman and Rivers 2004), judges' ideology (Martin and Quinn 2002), regime type (Treier and Jackman 2008, Pemstein, Meserve and Melton 2010), states' preferences over the international status quo (Reed et al. 2008), and standards of human rights accountability (Fariss 2014).

The variable *Leader Hawkishness* was derived from a hierarchical Rasch model implemented with Bayesian methods in Stan (Carpenter et al. 2016). The measure is based on data about leaders' personal attributes and background experiences, political orientations, and psychologi-

⁷Note that this is a natural extension of research that links individual leader attributes to the probability his or her country initiates an interstate conflict (Colgan 2013, Horowitz and Stam 2014).

⁸The variable *Leader Hawkishness* used in the analyses for this paper is taken from the measure that performed the best in Carter and Smith's (2018) validation analyses (θ_1).

cal traits. Information about leaders' personal attributes and background experiences are drawn from the LEAD project (Ellis, Horowitz and Stam 2015). The LEAD project contains data on a range of personal attributes and experiences for 2,965 national political executives between 1875 and 2004. These variables cover leaders' military service, involvement in a rebel movement, sex, family life, occupations, and other experiences. Information about leaders' general political orientations towards the use of military force are taken from two data sets. The first, Seki and Williams's (2014) Annual Government Partisanship data set, includes measures of a leader's general political orientation (*Right-Left*), support for peaceful international relations in general or with respect to specific countries (*International Peace*), and net support for military engagement with other countries (*Hawk*) based on data from the Manifesto Data Project (Volkens et al. 2013, version 16a). The Seki and Williams data includes information on 398 political executives from 37 democracies between 1944 and 2014. The second source of information about leaders' political orientations is the Heads of Government (HoG) data set (Brambor, Lindvall and Stjernquist 2017). The HoG data identify the ideological orientations (left/right/center) of 1,199 political executives from 33 countries, including some non-democracies, between 1870 and 2012. Finally, information about leaders' psychological willingness to challenge constraints is drawn from Keller (2005). Keller's data is derived from Hermann's (2005) leadership trait data and covers 42 national leaders between 1937 and 1998. This measure, and the underlying data from Hermann, are based on an analysis of at least 50 speeches by each national political executive. In this case, speeches were coded for what they revealed about leaders' underlying "need for power," "task emphasis," "distrust of others," and "nationalism." Keller standardized and combined leaders' scores on these four indicators to create a single index that represents leaders' "willingness to challenge potential pacifying constraints in the pursuit of aggressive foreign policy behavior" (Keller 2005, pg. 211-212).

The spatial and temporal coverage of data on leaders' background experiences, orientation/ideology, and psychological traits varies considerably. This results in very little overlap across the data sets, especially among measures that tap leaders' political orientations and psychological willingness to challenge constraints. This presents a problem for developing a measure of leaders' latent hawkishness based on all three types of data. Carter and Smith's (2018) approach is to use a variant of the classic Rasch model (Rasch 1960) centered around the LEAD data (available for all leaders between 1875 and 2004) and incorporate information about leaders' orientation/ideology and psychological traits as covariates that affect leaders'

latent willingness to use force whenever information from those sources are available. This allows one to estimate from the data what (if any) contribution the added information makes to the underlying latent variable and use the estimates to structure the information's contribution to a one-dimensional measure of leaders' latent hawkishness. More technical details about the measure and its construction are provided in the appendix. Ultimately, this process produces a variable with a mean of 0 that ranges from minimum of -1.88 to a maximum of 2.1. Figure 1 presents a histogram and density plot of *Leader Hawkishness* for the universe of national political executives in the interstate system between 1919 and 2003.

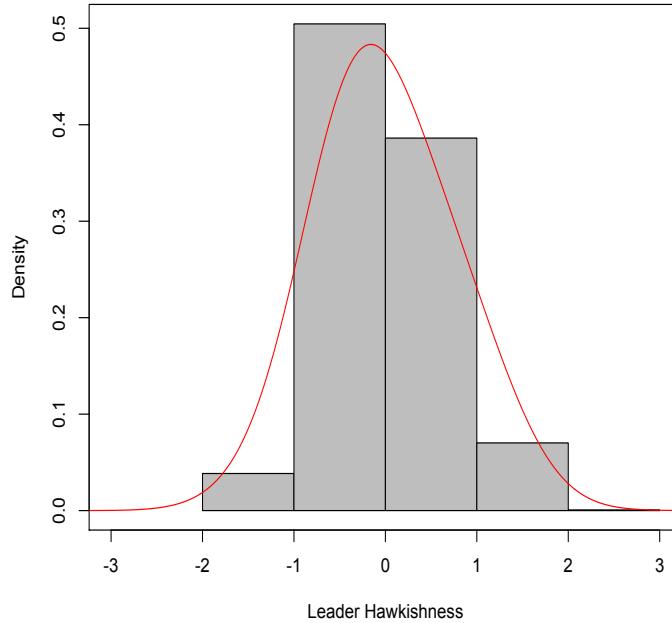


Figure 1: Latent Leader Hawkishness

My theoretical interest lies in the relationship between leaders' hawkishness and the probability a state is targeted in a dispute. However, it is worth providing some face validity to my measure of leaders' latent willingness to use military force. Table 1 reports the results of a bivariate logit of the probability a leader initiates an interstate crisis in a given year between 1919 and 2003 from the ICB project (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 1997) as a function of *Leader Hawkishness*. Consistent with expectations, Table 1 indicates the probability a leader initiates a crisis in a given year is increasing in *Leader Hawkishness*. This suggests that *Leader Hawkishness* is

capturing leaders' underlying willingness to use military force.

Table 1: Bivariate Relationship between Leader Hawkishness and Crisis Initiation

	<i>Crisis Initiator</i>
Leader Hawkishness	0.61*** (0.07)
Constant	-3.44*** (0.06)
Observations	10,850
χ^2	70.11
$p > \chi^2$	< 0.01
Log Likelihood	-1623.41

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

Two-tailed: *: $p \leq 0.05$; ** : $p \leq 0.01$.

Analyzing my theoretical expectations requires a statistical model that can jointly estimate 1) whether a leader's hawkishness influences the probability her country is targeted and 2) whether or not the probability of being targeted influences the hawkishness of the leaders we observe. I assess this possibility using a modified version of Chiozza and Goemans's (2004a, 2003) approach to estimating the reciprocal relationship between interstate conflict and leader survival.⁹ I first estimate a reduced-form probit model of the probability a country is targeted that includes a set of exogenous variables known to correlate with interstate conflict involvement, but does not include *Leader Hawkishness*. The probability of a state being targeted is modeled as a function of whether it is involved in a strategic interstate *Rivalry* (Thompson and Dreyer 2011) or an ongoing *Territorial Dispute* (Hensel 2001, Territorial Claims Data, version 1.01), its *Number of Borders* (Debs and Goemans 2010), its *Capabilities* (modeled by its CINC score (Singer, Bremer and Stuckey 1972)), whether it is a *Democracy* (identified by +7 or higher on the polity2 index (Marshall and Jaggers 2005)), whether it is involved in a *Civil War* (Fearon and Laitin 2003), and the cubic polynomial of the number of years since the last time it was targeted (Carter and Signorino 2010).¹⁰ I then estimated a reduced-form linear regression model of *Leader Hawkishness* as a function of a set of factors that might reason-

⁹My estimation strategy differs slightly from Chiozza and Goemans's (2004a, 2003) approach because both of their dependent variables were dichotomous and I have one dichotomous and one continuous dependent variable. Accordingly, where they estimated reduced-form and two-stage probit models, I use linear regression when modeling *Leader Hawkishness* in isolation and a "mixed-process" simultaneous equations model with a probit equation and a linear regression equation when jointly estimating *Leader Hawkishness* and *Target*. The mixed-process simultaneous equation model was estimated using the "cmp" package in Stata (Roodman 2009).

¹⁰Following Carter and Signorino's (2010) advice, I divided the number of peace years by ten to help aid the numeric stability of the estimates given that the maximum value of the non-standardized, cubed peace year was 592,704.

ably influence a domestic population's preferences for a hawkish or dovish leader, but excluded the variable *Target*. Specifically, leaders' willingness to use force are modeled as a function of *Rivalry*, *Territorial Dispute*, *Capabilities*, *Democracy*, *Civil War*, and *Economic Growth* (Debs and Goemans 2010). I then calculated the linear expectations of the two reduced-form models. Finally, I used a simultaneous equations model estimated via bootstrap to jointly model 1) the probability of a state being targeted as a function of its set of exogenous control variables and the linear expectation of *Leader Hawkishness*; and 2) *Leader Hawkishness* as a function of its set of exogenous variables and the linear expectation of *Target*.¹¹ The next section reports the results of this analysis.

4 Results

The results of my primary analysis are presented in Table 2. The second column reports the reduced-form estimates of *Target*. The probability a state is targeted in an interstate dispute is significantly higher when it has a rival, is a democracy, or is involved in a civil war, is increasing in its capabilities, and is a decreasing but non-monotonic function of the years since it was last targeted. The reduced-form model of *Leader Hawkishness* (third column) suggests having more borders, greater capabilities, and positive economic growth increase the expected hawkishness of a state's leader. Additionally, democracies tend to have less hawkish leaders than non-democracies. The reduced-form models yield interesting results in their own right. However, their primary purpose is to generate the linear expectations of *Target* and *Leader Hawkishness* to allow for an assessment of the endogenous relationship between the probability a state is attacked and the relative hawkishness of its leader. I now turn to this analysis.

The structural model reported in the fourth and fifth columns of Table 2 estimates *Target* and *Leader Hawkishness* as a function of their exogenous control variables and, respectively, $\widehat{\text{Leader Hawkishness}}$ and $\widehat{\text{Target}}$. Two important results emerge directly from Table 2. First, the probability of being targeted in an interstate crisis is decreasing in the the relative hawkishness of a state's leader, although the mean marginal effect across the multivariate normal distribution does not reach the 0.05 level of significance. Second, the hawkishness of states' leaders is increasing in their risk of being targeted in an interstate dispute. To get a better sense of these relationships, I used a set of post-estimation simulations based on the coefficient and

¹¹Note that *Target* and *Leader Hawkishness* are each modeled as a function of at least one explanatory variable that is not used to model the other (see Chiozza and Goemans 2003).

Table 2: The Relationship between Leader Hawkishness and Interstate Targets, 1919-2003

	Reduced-Form <i>Target</i>	Reduced-Form <i>Leader Hawkishness</i>	Structural Model	
			<i>Target</i>	<i>Leader Hawkishness</i>
<i>Leader Hawkishness</i>			-2.71	
			(1.71)	
<i>Target</i>				0.04*
				(0.02)
Rivalry	0.42** (0.06)	0.01 (0.02)	0.44** (0.06)	-0.01 (0.02)
Territorial Dispute	0.02 (0.05)	0.01 (0.02)	0.04 (0.06)	0.01 (0.02)
Number of Borders	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03** (0.00)	0.06 (0.05)	0.03** (0.00)
Capabilities	3.83** (0.55)	1.83** (0.25)	8.86** (3.16)	1.65** (0.26)
Democracy	0.15** (0.05)	-0.39** (0.01)	-0.88 (0.65)	-0.39** (0.01)
Civil War	0.48** (0.06)	0.06** (0.02)	0.65** (0.12)	0.04* (0.02)
Economic Growth		0.21+ (0.11)		0.21+ (0.11)
Years Since Target	-0.37** (0.10)		-0.36** (0.10)	
Years Since Target ²	0.14** (0.04)		0.13** (0.04)	
Years Since Target ³	-0.02** (0.01)		-0.01** (0.01)	
Constant	-2.01** (0.08)	0.10** (0.02)	-1.71** (0.19)	0.19** (0.05)
σ			-0.40** (0.01)	
Observations	10329	9075	9075	
χ^2	292.69		253.56	
$p > \chi^2$	<0.01		<0.01	
F-statistic		177.18		
$p > F$ -statistic		<0.01		
Log Likelihood	-1524.82	-9206.75	-10524.87	

Robust standard errors clustered on country reported for reduced-form models.

Bootstrapped, robust standard errors reported for structural model (500 Replications).

Two-tailed: *: $p \leq 0.05$; ** : $p \leq 0.01$; *** : $p \leq 0.001$.

variance-covariance matrices of the structural model to calculate how a leader's hawkishness and being targeted in an interstate dispute influence one another.¹²

¹²The simulations were based on 1,000 draws from a multivariate normal distribution. Predicted values were

Figure 2 presents the probability a state is targeted in an interstate dispute across the range of $\widehat{\text{Leader Hawkishness}}$. The shaded area in the figure represents the 95% confidence interval around the predicted probability and the ticks in the rug plot represent values of $\widehat{\text{Leader Hawkishness}}$. As Figure 2 makes clear, dovish leaders face a substantially higher risk of being targeted than hawkish leaders. Given the mean value of $\widehat{\text{Leader Hawkishness}}$ (0.1), the probability a state is targeted in an interstate crisis is 0.03, with 0.01 and 0.06 representing the lower and upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval. The probability a state is targeted increases to 0.11 [0.01, 0.38] when $\widehat{\text{Leader Hawkishness}}$ is reduced to one standard deviation below its mean (-0.11). In contrast, the probability a state is targeted in an interstate dispute falls to 0.007 [0.002, 0.02] when $\widehat{\text{Leader Hawkishness}}$ increases to one standard deviation above its mean (0.32). The probability a state is targeted given a leader who is one standard deviation more dovish than average therefore is 0.11 higher than when it has a leader who is one standard deviation more hawkish than average. Framed differently, a country is approximately 16 times more likely to be targeted in an interstate dispute given the relatively dovish leader than it is given the relatively hawkish leader. Thus, a leader's willingness to use military force exerts a substantial effect on the probability his or her country is targeted in an interstate crisis.

The results in Figure 3 demonstrate that the probability of being targeted affects the relative hawkishness of the political leaders we observe. At the mean value of $\widehat{\text{Target}}$ (-1.92, which translates to a predicted probability of 0.03), the expected value of $\widehat{\text{Leader Hawkishness}}$ is 0.22 [0.19, 0.25]. As the value of $\widehat{\text{Target}}$ rises to one standard deviation above its mean (-1.48, or a probability of 0.07), the value of $\widehat{\text{Leader Hawkishness}}$ is expected to increase to 0.24 [0.20, 0.28]. If instead $\widehat{\text{Target}}$ is reduced to one standard deviation below its mean (-2.36, or a probability of 0.01), the hawkishness of a leader is expected to fall to 0.2 [0.17, 0.23]. The expected value of $\widehat{\text{Leader Hawkishness}}$ therefore increases by 17.4% when we move from a scenario in which a state is one standard deviation below the average probability of being targeted in an interstate dispute to one in which a state is one standard deviation above the average probability of being targeted.

Taken together, Table 2 and Figures 2 and 3 are consistent with my theoretical expectations. Relatively hawkish leaders are less likely to be targeted in an interstate dispute than are relatively dovish leaders and we are more likely to observe relatively hawkish leaders than dovish leaders

calculated using the median values for categorical or ordinal exogenous variables and mean values for continuous exogenous variables. Predicted probabilities of Target were calculated across the range of $\widehat{\text{Leader Hawkishness}}$ and predicted values of $\widehat{\text{Leader Hawkishness}}$ were calculated across the range of $\widehat{\text{Target}}$.

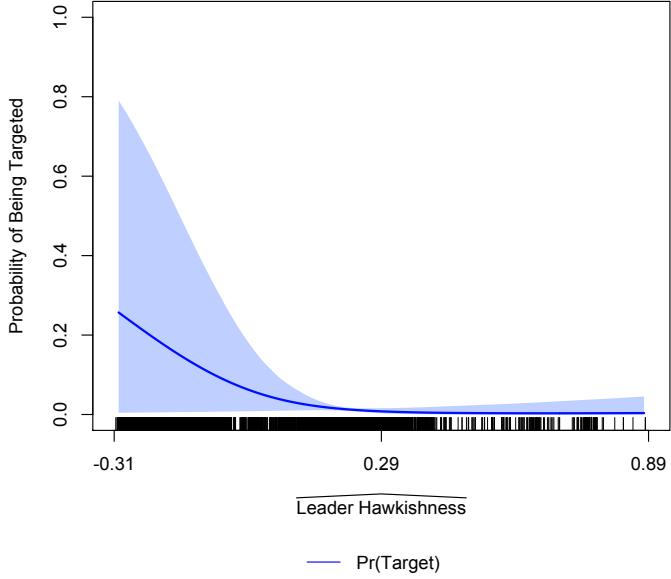


Figure 2: The Probability of Being Targeted as a Function of Leader Hawkishness.

as the probability a state will be targeted in an interstate dispute increases. Thus, my primary analyses suggest leaders' willingness to use military force and whether a country is targeted in an interstate dispute are endogenous to one another.

4.1 Additional Analyses

The analyses reported above consider the general relationships between leaders' latent hawkishness and the probability countries are targeted in an interstate dispute. However, it is likely that the international security environment and domestic political institutions influence the relationships between the leaders we observe and the probability a country is challenged in an interstate crisis. I therefore estimated a set of models that consider how interstate rivalry, involvement in a territorial dispute, a state's number of neighbors, and regime type might condition the endogenous relationship between leaders and interstate targets. More specifically, I estimated the same reduced-form models of *Target* and *Leader Hawkishness* as above and then specified the right hand-side of each equation in the structural model with an interaction between *Leader Hawkishness* or *Target* and *Rivalry*, *Territorial Dispute*, *Number of Borders*,

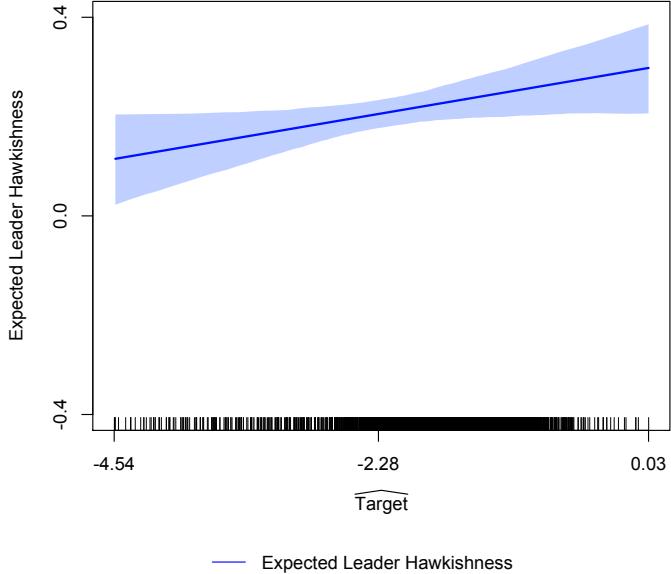


Figure 3: Leader Hawkishness as a Function of the Probability of Being Targeted.

or *Democracy* as appropriate. For space purposes, I focus my discussion here on the logic motivating each analysis and results from post-estimation simulations of the respective structural models. I begin with my analysis of how interstate rivalries might influence the relationship between leaders' willingness to use force and interstate targets.

Most interstate conflicts occur between pairs of rivals (Thompson 2001, Thompson and Dreyer 2011). States view themselves and their rivals as enemies involved in an explicit competition for power and influence and, therefore, seek to exploit opportunities to take advantage of one another, something not necessarily true of non-rivals (Thompson 2001). This implies that citizens in states with a rival likely have a stronger preference for hawkish leaders than those in states without a rival and that countries in a rivalry should be more likely to be targeted in an interstate dispute. Figure 4 reports the predicted probability a country is targeted in an interstate dispute across the range of *Leader Hawkishness* (Panel A) and the expected hawkishness of a state's leader across the range of $\widehat{\text{Target}}$ (Panel B) for a state without a rival (solid blue line) and a state with a rival (dashed red line).

Figure 4 yields four results of note. First, consistent with my primary analyses, countries

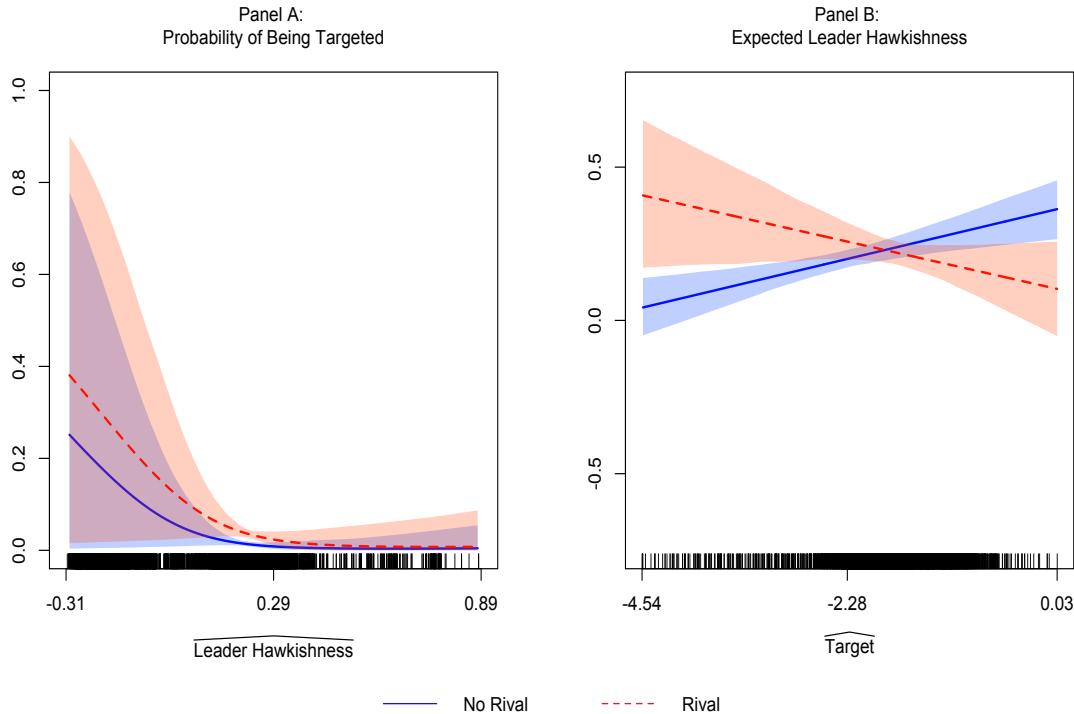


Figure 4: The Relationship between Leader Hawkishness, Targets, and Interstate Rivalry.

with relatively hawkish leaders are less likely to be targeted in an interstate dispute than are countries with relatively dovish leaders whether or not they have a rival. Second, states with a rival are generally more likely to be targeted in an interstate dispute than are states without a rival, but the difference in the probabilities is only statistically significant at moderate values of Leader Hawkishness. Third, as with my primary results, states without a rival are more likely to have hawkish leaders as the probability they are targeted in an interstate dispute increases. Fourth, and somewhat surprisingly, states with a rival generally have less hawkish leaders as the probability they will be targeted in an interstate dispute increases.

States are more likely fight over territorial disputes than disagreements over any other issue (Hensel 2001, Senese and Vasquez 2005). Indeed, resolving territorial disagreements is sometimes argued to be a prerequisite to peace and democratic political institutions (Gibler 2012, Owsianik 2012). Further, there is evidence that citizens are more supportive of unconstrained leaders given territorial threats (Miller 2017). It therefore is plausible that whether or not a state is involved in a territorial dispute influences the relationships between interstate targets and leaders' willingness to use force. Figure 5 reports the predicted probability a country will be

targeted in an interstate dispute across the range of $\widehat{\text{Leader Hawkishness}}$ (Panel A) and the expected hawkishness of a state's leader across the range of $\widehat{\text{Target}}$ (Panel B) for a state not involved in an ongoing territorial dispute (solid blue line) and a state engaged in a territorial disagreement (dashed red line).

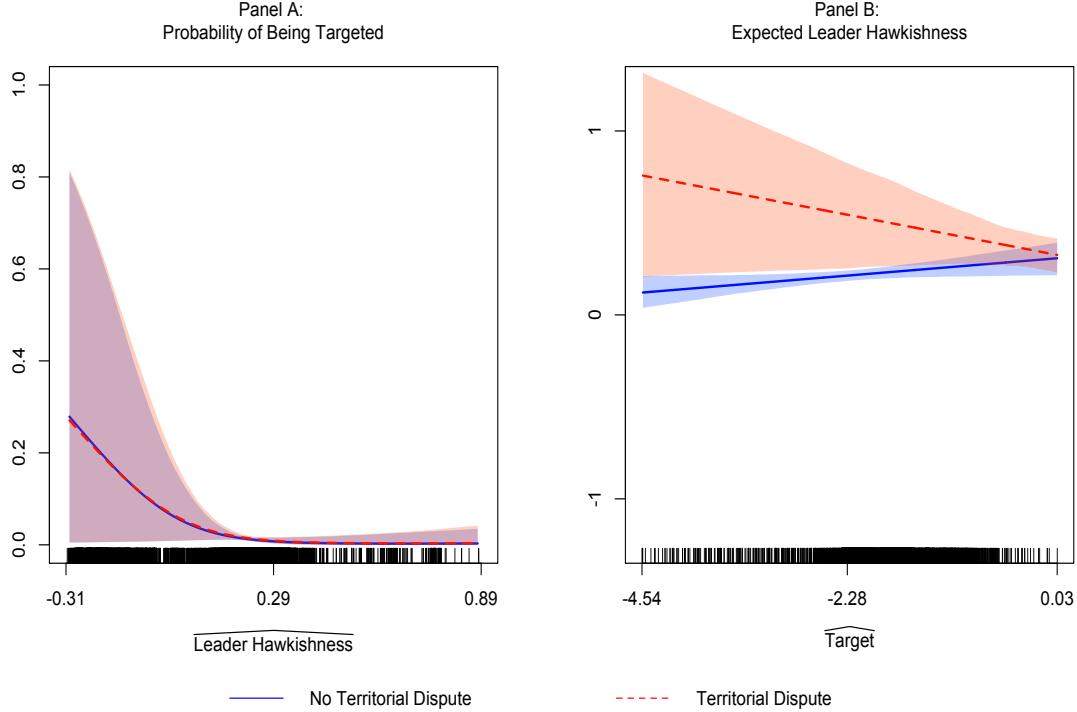


Figure 5: The Relationship between Leader Hawkishness, Targets, and Territorial Disputes.

Figure 5 suggests three empirical patterns. First, whether or not they have an ongoing territorial dispute, states are less likely to be targeted in an interstate crisis when they have hawkish leaders than when they have dovish leaders. Second, increasing the probability a country is targeted in an interstate dispute is associated with countries having more hawkish leaders among states not involved in a territorial disagreement. Third, states embroiled in a territorial dispute tend to have more dovish leaders as the probability they will be targeted in an interstate crisis increases. This is surprising given that previous research finds that citizens support stronger executives during times of territorial threat (Miller 2017).

Arguably the most robust empirical finding in the quantitative conflict literature is that neighbors are more likely to fight than other pairs of states (e.g., Senese and Vasquez 2005). Consistent with this, the probability a state fights an interstate war is increasing in its number

of bordering states (Cunningham and Lemke 2013, Lemke and Carter 2016). Moreover, Table 2 indicates that, all else equal, states with more borders tend to have more hawkish leaders than states with fewer borders. Taken together, these results suggest states with more neighbors might be more sensitive to an increase in the probability they are targeted in an interstate dispute than states with fewer neighbors. Figure 6 reports the predicted probability a country is targeted in an interstate dispute across the range of $\widehat{\text{Leader Hawkishness}}$ (Panel A) and the expected hawkishness of a state's leader across the range of $\widehat{\text{Target}}$ (Panel B) for a state with two interstate borders (solid blue line) and a state with five interstate borders (dashed red line).¹³

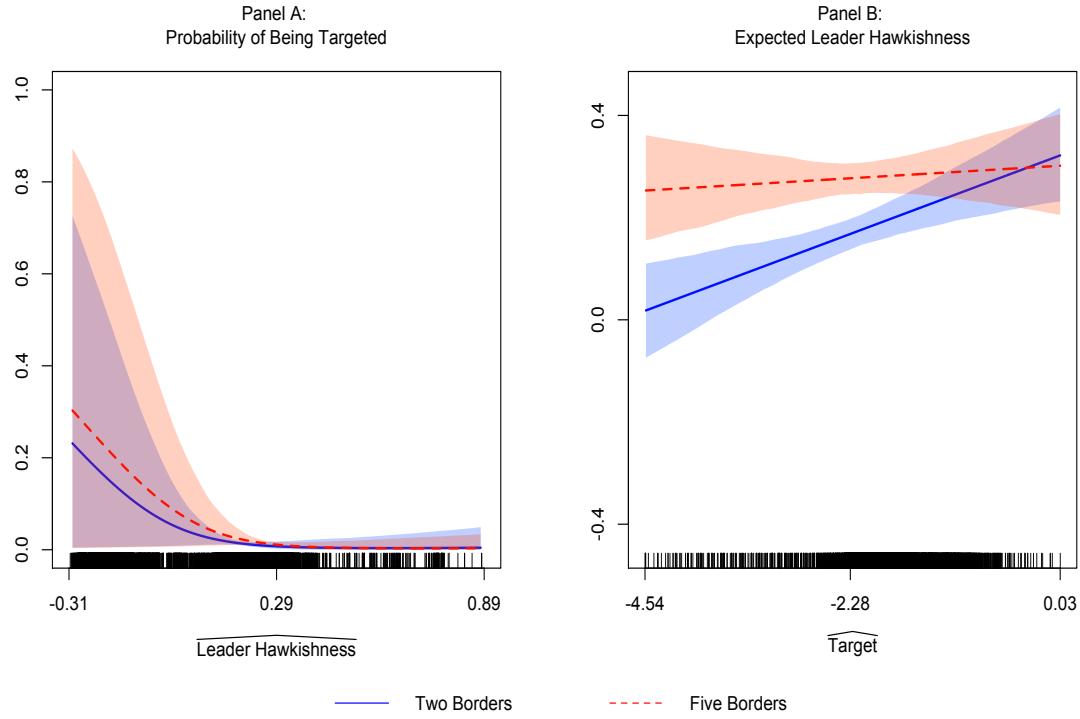


Figure 6: The Relationship between Leader Hawkishness, Targets, and Interstate Borders.

Three results stand out in Figure 6. First, hawkish leaders are less likely to be targeted in an interstate dispute than are dovish leaders regardless of a state's number of borders. Second, increasing the likelihood of being targeted in an interstate crisis has a larger positive effect on the expected hawkishness of leaders in states with relatively fewer borders. Third, while states

¹³The median value of *Number of Borders* is three. Two borders and five borders, respectively, represent the lower bound and upper bound of the interquartile range for *Number of Borders*.

with more borders have more hawkish leaders than states with fewer borders given low and moderate values of \widehat{T}_{Target} , there is no difference in leader hawkishness across a state's number of borders when the probability of being targeted is high.

My final analysis considers how regime type influences the relationships between leaders' relative willingness to use military force and the probability their country is targeted in an interstate dispute. There is a debate in the literature over the relative attractiveness of democracies and dictatorships as targets (among others, Schultz 1999, Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003, Sullivan and Gartner 2006). The results reported in Table 2 indicate that, on average, democracies are more likely to be targeted than non-democracies. Further, Table 2 also reports that, on average, democracies have less hawkish leaders than non-democracies. Figure 7 presents the predicted probability a country is targeted in an interstate dispute across the range of $\widehat{Leader\ Hawkishness}$ (Panel A) and the expected hawkishness of a state's leader across the range of \widehat{T}_{Target} (Panel B) for a democracy (solid blue line) and a non-democracy (dashed red line).

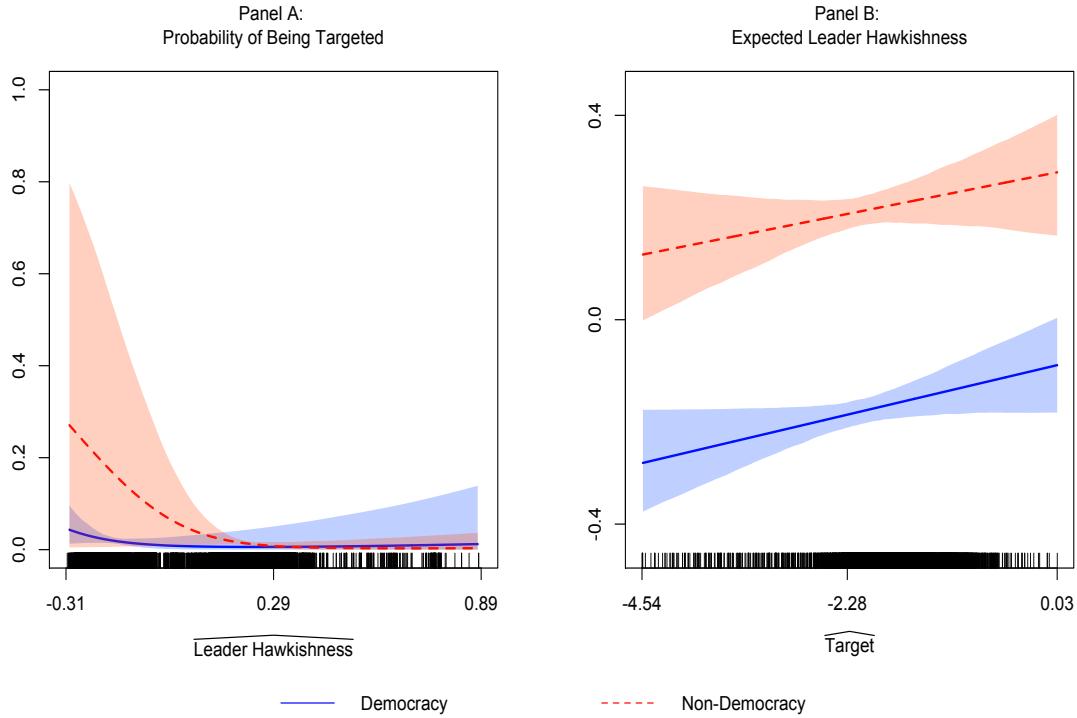


Figure 7: The Relationship between Leader Hawkishness, Targets, and Regime Type.

Figure 7 demonstrates three results. First, hawkish leaders are less likely to be targeted in

an interstate dispute than are dovish leaders in both democracies and non-democracies. Second, democracies and non-democracies are more likely to have hawkish leaders than dovish leaders as the probability they will be targeted in an interstate crisis increases. Third, regardless of the likelihood they will be challenged in an interstate conflict, non-democracies tend to have more hawkish leaders than do democracies.

Considered jointly, my additional analyses point to two interesting patterns in the relationships between the probability a country is targeted in an interstate dispute and the relative hawkishness of the political leaders we observe. First, the probability a state is challenged in a crisis is lower given hawkish leaders than it is with dovish leaders across international and domestic contexts. This suggests that political leaders can influence whether their countries will be attacked with the leaders they select.

Second, it appears that increasing the probability a country is targeted in an interstate dispute has a larger positive effect on the relative hawkishness of the leaders we observe among states in international security environments that are generally considered less threatening. States with a rival, an ongoing territorial dispute, and more neighbors are more likely to be involved in interstate conflicts than states without a rival, territorial disagreement, or few neighbors (Vasquez 1993, Senese and Vasquez 2005, Thompson and Dreyer 2011, Cunningham and Lemke 2013). It seems reasonable, then, that the domestic populations of countries in threatening security environments would be more likely to have hawkish leaders when faced with a heightened likelihood of being targeted. Yet, just the opposite holds: increasing the probability of being targeted is associated with countries having more hawkish leaders not when the security environment is generally threatening, but rather when states do not have a rival, are not engaged in a territorial dispute, or have few borders.

I am hesitant to engage in too much *ex post* theorizing, but these results are consistent with two data generating processes. First, they might reflect something of a ceiling effect. States in a dangerous security environment generally have relatively hawkish leaders, so there is not much room for them to have more hawkish leaders as the probability of being targeted increases. In contrast, states in secure environments usually have relatively dovish leaders and, therefore, it is comparatively easier for the hawkishness of the leaders we observe in those states to increase when they are threatened. Second, the results can be reconciled with Senese and Vasquez's (2005) claim that states involved in a rivalry can learn how to manage threats without resorting to violence over time. Domestic populations in states involved in a rivalry, a territorial dispute,

or many threatening neighbors might be more cognizant or sensitive to the consequences of fighting a war than the domestic populations of states in less threatening security environments. Given that hawkish leaders are more likely to start a conflict and low-level crises are more likely to escalate when they involve rivals and/or territorial disputes (Senese and Vasquez 2005), the domestic populations of states in dangerous security environments might be hesitant about selecting a relatively hawkish leader when there is an elevated probability of being targeted.

5 Conclusion

The increase in leader-centric research among scholars of interstate conflict follows from the recognition it is not governments, regimes, or the international system that determine whether states fight, but leaders. This insight has increased our understanding of, among other things, interstate conflict initiation (Chiozza and Goemans 2011, Colgan and Weeks 2015, Horowitz, Stam and Ellis 2015), strategic target selection (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999), conflict outcomes (Croco 2011), and military coalitions (Wolford and Ritter 2016). This article contributes to the literature on leaders and interstate conflict processes by analyzing the relationship between leaders' willingness to use military force and the probability a country is targeted in an interstate dispute.

I find that hawkish leaders reduce the probability a state is challenged in an interstate conflict and that, in general, an increase in the likelihood of being targeted is associated with states having relatively hawkish leaders. Importantly, these results are based on a measure of leaders' latent willingness to use force measured independently of a country's involvement in a conflict and an empirical strategy that explicitly models the potential endogeneity between the types of leaders we observe and whether a state is targeted in an international crisis. Further analyses suggest that half of the reciprocal relationship between leader hawkishness and international targets is conditional on aspects of states' broader security environment. Hawkish leaders are less likely than dovish leaders to be targeted in a crisis regardless of international conditions or regime type. However, an increase in the probability a country is targeted is associated with states having more hawkish leaders in those states in less threatening security environments and not when they are involved in a rivalry, a territorial dispute, or have many neighbors.

My findings lend further credence to the ideas that domestic and international politics are inextricably linked and leaders exert a powerful influence on patterns of interstate conflict.

Moreover, they also suggest that domestic populations face an unenviable choice when there is a heightened risk of being challenged in an interstate dispute due to the respective consequences of having a relatively hawkish leader or a relatively dovish leader in charge of a country. If they select a hawkish leader, their country is less likely to be targeted in an interstate dispute but is more likely to initiate a conflict. If they select a dovish leader, their country is less likely to initiate an interstate dispute but more likely to be targeted in a crisis. The results reported here suggest that, in general, domestic populations will choose hawkish leaders when threatened, a finding consistent with micro-level work on the relationship between external threat and citizens' policy preferences (e.g., Huddy, Feldman and Weber 2007, Albertson and Gadarian 2015). While these hawkish leaders might deter international challengers and make citizens feel safer, neither they nor their dovish counterparts will deliver peace, though they fail to do so in different ways.

The results reported here suggest that patterns of interstate conflict in space and time might be driven by the clustering and diffusion of hawkish and dovish leaders. I find that, all else equal, hawkish leaders reduce the probability a state will be targeted in a crisis and the probability a state will be targeted in a crisis makes it more likely they will have a hawkish leader. Combined with the well-established finding that hawkish leaders are more likely to initiate conflicts than are dovish leaders, the results presented here suggest that the presence or election of a hawkish leader in one state is likely to make its neighbors prefer hawkish leaders that will reduce the probability they will be targeted. Of course, the unfortunate consequence of domestic audiences selecting hawkish leaders to protect against external threats is that these are the leaders that are more likely to start conflicts. Thus, the analyses reported here and its implications suggest that interstate conflict likely clusters in space and over time due to domestic audiences' preference for hawkish leaders during times of threat and the subsequent diffusion of hawkish leaders who are likely to start conflicts. The argument and findings presented here, therefore, demonstrate that political leaders, domestic politics, and important characteristics of the international system are all related to one another and suggest fruitful avenues for future research.

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