

Credible to Whom? The Organizational Politics of Credibility in International Relations

Donald P. Casler

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
under the Executive Committee  
of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2022

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## **Abstract**

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Why do foreign policy decision makers care about the credibility of their own state's commitments? How does organizational identity shape policymakers' concern for credibility, and in turn, their willingness to use force during crises? While much previous research examines how decision makers assess *others'* credibility, only recently have scholars questioned when and why leaders or their advisers prioritize their own state's credibility. Building on classic scholarship in bureaucratic politics, I argue that organizational identity affects the dimensions of credibility that national security officials value, and ultimately, their policy advocacy around the use of force. Particular differences arise between military and diplomatic organizations; while military officials equate credibility with hard military capabilities, diplomats view credibility in terms of reputation, or demonstrating reliability and resolve to external parties. During crises, military officials confine their advice on the use of force to what can be achieved given current capabilities, while diplomats exhibit higher willingness to use force as a signal of a strong commitment. I test these propositions using text analysis of archival records from two collections of U.S. national security policy documents, eight case studies of American, British, and French crisis decision making, and an original survey experiment involving more than 400 current or former U.S. national security officials. I demonstrate that credibility concerns affect the balance of hawkishness in advice that diplomats and military officials deliver to leaders as a function of organizational identity.

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## **Acknowledgements**

While writing a dissertation is often discussed as an individual (and sometimes lonely) enterprise, in reality it takes a village to generate and refine the ideas that end up in the final manuscript. For the last five years, Robert Jervis was the mayor of my dissertation village, and words cannot capture how thankful I am for his unwavering support. From the moment that I arrived at Columbia in fall 2016, he immediately agreed to advise my studies, showing me nothing but the utmost generosity and care. He encouraged me to write a paper for his legendary seminar on international signaling and communication during spring 2017 that contained the earliest (and in hindsight, ugliest) roots of this project. He subsequently spent hours with me in his famously cluttered office, shaping those initial thoughts into something tractable and researchable. He connected me with additional advisers who shared my substantive and methodological interests, sponsored me for countless grant and fellowship applications, and provided brilliant, incisive feedback on various iterations of the project's theoretical and empirical components. Any time that something even tangentially related to my work came up in his own reading, he would email me at random with totally unsolicited, utterly genius ideas about how to incorporate some new insight or methodological approach into the project. He continued this pattern of fierce and dogged mentorship even after being diagnosed with lung cancer in fall 2020. One of our final email correspondences involved him forwarding me a report about the outstanding funds available in my grant accounts, urging me to ensure that Columbia hadn't misplaced any of the resources that I had been awarded to work on the dissertation. To the very end, he championed my scholarship and enabled my success, and it is

beyond bittersweet that he did not live to see the full fruits of his labor. Nevertheless, I assume that he is still watching me from somewhere while sipping his tea and having a rousing conversation with Kennedy and Khrushchev about the Cuban Missile Crisis.

I am also grateful to Keren Yarhi-Milo and Jack Snyder for their steadfast backing of my scholarly development. Keren's input was indispensable, especially in my final year of research and writing, and I particularly want to thank her for the kindness, candor, and passion she displayed in helping me shape the project into a completed dissertation. Keren has many superpowers, but her best one is the ability to cut through the noise and quickly get to the heart of complex theoretical and empirical issues, a tool that she would often employ to focus my ramblings during our phone calls or Zoom meetings. Meanwhile, Jack provided diligent, detailed, and deeply thoughtful feedback at every stage of the project, from the initial ideas through to draft chapters; I would frequently come away from our office hours discussions and email exchanges with more questions than answers, which always proved fruitful for the project's theoretical and empirical development. I particularly appreciate how both Keren and Jack stepped up their input and advice as Jervis's health declined, which must have been extra difficult as they faced the loss of their dear friend and colleague. I am extremely thankful and feel so fortunate for their continued mentorship and guidance.

I also thank Richard Betts, Matthew Connolly, and Joshua Kertzer for both informally advising the project at several points and participating in an extremely constructive dissertation defense. After observing my research at different stages of its development, their feedback proved incredibly important to molding the final product into the basis of a book manuscript. I am particularly grateful to Professor Betts for sharply challenging my categorization of diplomats versus military officials, to Matt for taking me under his wing as a historically-minded political scientist, and to Josh for his thorough critiques and unique skill with limericks.

Within the political science department more broadly, I am grateful to Allison Carnegie, Thomas Christensen, Sarah Daly, Page Fortna, Nikhar Gaikwad, Shigeo Hirano, and Tonya Putnam for their constructive suggestions as well as for providing a research environment in which I felt comfortable presenting my work, even when it was in an early and rough form. My graduate student peers

were similarly generous with their time and expertise. Stephanie Char, Lindsay Dolan, Kolby Hanson, Renanah Miles Joyce, Colleen Larkin, Erik Lin-Greenberg, Theo Milonopoulos, and Laura Resnick Samotin were not only model colleagues, but also furnished essential feedback at key early and middle phases of the project. I also thank Ricky Clark, Jaclyn Davis, Dylan Groves, Sean Hiroshima, Salif Jaiteh, Jenny Jun, and Noah Zucker for helping me develop the project's core ideas during our cohort's dissertation seminar. I am particularly grateful to Ricky for always being willing to exchange feedback, keep me company at conferences, and hit the links when our schedules allowed.

I would also be remiss in not thanking the coterie of advisers from my undergraduate days at Dartmouth College who set me on the path to graduate school and continue to provide me with guidance, despite the fact that I left Hanover long ago. Andrew Samwick and Charles Wheelan first piqued my interest in conducting policy-oriented research, then supported me in my desire to pursue a Ph.D. Daryl Press supplied the mentorship and scholarly stimulus that brought this project to fruition, helping me think through the core puzzle just as my research was getting off the ground in spring 2019. Even though we did not overlap at Dartmouth, Jeffrey Friedman provided extremely valuable insights from his experience with conducting elite experiments. Last but hardly least, Benjamin Valentino offered insightful comments on the theory chapter and spent several hours helping me with the experimental design.

Writing a dissertation during a global pandemic certainly had its pros and cons, but one major benefit was receiving feedback from a wider audience of colleagues at other institutions, via the advent of virtual formats for presenting research, than might have been typical in the "before times." In addition to receiving valuable comments on the project at both virtual and in-person versions of the American Political Science Association and International Studies Association conferences, I was fortunate enough to share my work at the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society, the New Wave Realism conference at Ohio State's Mershon Center, the Graduate Students in International Security Etc. (GSISE) virtual workshop, the Charles Koch Foundation's International Relations Workshop, the Cato Institute's Junior Scholars Symposium, and the Institute for Qualita-

tive and Multimethod Research (IQMR) summer workshop. From these experiences, I am grateful to David Arcenaux, Alexandra Chinchilla, Abby Fanlo, Andres Gannon, Erik Gartzke, Michael Goldfien, Kendrick Kuo, Alex Lin, Ariel Petrovics, Sara Plana, Abby Post, Robert Ralston, Joshua Schwartz, Trevor Thrall, and Sanne Verschuren for their help in improving the project. Austin Carson, Jonathan Caverley, Raymond Hicks, Michael Horowitz, and Elizabeth Saunders also generously furnished comments on article-length drafts of Chapters 2 and 3. Ray deserves a special shout-out for deploying his methodological prowess and endless patience while helping me categorize and analyze the textual data that appear in Chapter 2.

A number of institutions provided financial support without which this research would not have been possible. I am especially grateful to the Columbia University political science department, the Smith Richardson Foundation, and the Charles Koch Foundation. Funding from these organizations covered the cost of collecting archival documents from presidential libraries as well as fielding a survey experiment while defraying the expenses associated with living and working in New York.

I am also deeply indebted to my family and friends for their love and support. My parents and grandparents not only encouraged me to follow my passion (and in the footsteps of my paternal grandfather) by attending graduate school, but have also been a source of boundless encouragement and positivity over the last six years. My brother, Jack, and parents, Barbara and Don, have consistently reminded me that sometimes, it pays to relax and not obsess about the dissertation. My non-academic friends (the “Ocho”) have similarly supplied no shortage of productive distractions. My future in-laws, Bob and Mary Beth Malmsheimer, deserve some special words of thanks for allowing my fiancé, Taylor, and me to flee Manhattan in the early stages of the pandemic and take up temporary residence at their home in Cazenovia, New York. I subsequently wrote initial drafts of Chapters 1-3 and began the legwork for Chapter 4 under their roof, and I have leaned on Bob’s sage counsel for all things academic ever since. Finally, I thank Taylor for her love, patience, generosity, and friendship. She stuck with me through the highs and lows of this process, persistently talking me off the ledge when (occasionally) necessary and providing endless inspiration to strive

for the best. This is for her.



## Introduction

“The stakes are high – they go far beyond Lebanon...A Syrian success in Lebanon – if it is seen as a humiliation of the United States – would strengthen Syria’s position in the Middle East, tilting the balance of forces in the Arab world in favor of the radicals and rejectionists at the expense of the moderates. This would weaken the position of our friends in Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia and make them less willing to take risks for peace.”

“A satisfactory outcome to the Lebanese political negotiations should be our priority objective, since so much depends on it – our standing in the Middle East and our prospects for bringing the Marines home in honorable circumstances.”

“Our credibility in the Arab world and Gemayel’s credibility in Lebanon depend on keeping open the prospect of future unilateral Israeli withdrawals.”

— Memorandum for the President from George P. Shultz. “Our Strategy in Lebanon and the Middle East,” October 13, 1983.

“I was opposed to our taking part in the operation in the first place, and the rest of the Joint Chiefs joined me, some not as enthusiastically or as strongly as my views were, but at any rate.”

“In fact, it was my very first memorandum as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs to the President of the United States, urging him not to involve American forces...The rationale that I gave him was that this will become then a bigger part of the confrontation with the Soviet Union. That is, we’ll get to choosing sides, and us and the Soviet Union finding another place to square off, and we don’t need that...There’s not a clear mission for American forces here, particularly in the size that we’re talking about.”

— Saylor, Thomas, “Gen. John W. Vessey, Jr. - Interview No. 30” (2012). General John W. Vessey, Jr. Oral History Project. 33. <https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/oral-history-vessey/33>

During the early 1980s, the Reagan administration was divided over whether and how to intercede in the Lebanese civil war, which was threatening to spill over into a wider regional conflict. Policymakers argued over how best to avert further bloodshed, support the Lebanese government, and deter further escalation by Syrian or Israeli forces. On one side, diplomatic officials like Secretary of State George Shultz consistently argued that the situation was a test of U.S. credibility while pushing for the dispatch of U.S. Marines to aid the Lebanese government in reasserting territorial control. In an October 1983 memorandum to President Ronald Reagan, Shultz painted the situation in stark and sweeping terms — the stakes were high and extended far beyond Lebanon to the regional balance of power, the relative position of American partners in the Middle East, and how the Arab world would view the United States. On the other side, military officials such as the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Vessey, never bought into committing American forces in Lebanon and continued to oppose the Marines’ presence there even after President Reagan chose to deploy U.S. troops. In a 2013 interview, General Vessey recalled his steadfast opposition to the deployment, arguing that it not only risked provoking the Soviet Union, but also lacked the personnel and clarity of mission to meaningfully influence Lebanon’s realities. Thus, while diplomats saw in Lebanon the essential need to signal American credibility via boots on the ground, military officials doubted the wisdom of this policy, which they viewed as both risky and incapable of shifting the local balance of forces.

As we now know, arguments about preserving credibility carried the day in this case. President Reagan not only sent the troops but also sought to keep them there even after the tragic October 1983 bombing that killed 241 U.S. servicemembers.<sup>1</sup> On some level, this is unsurprising. The conventional wisdom in international politics holds that credibility — defined as the perceived likelihood that an actor will follow through on its commitments — is an essential currency among policymakers,<sup>2</sup> who believe that being seen as credible confers status and material benefits in

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<sup>1</sup>Evans and Potter (2019, p. 24).

<sup>2</sup>Press (2005, p. 11).

bargaining situations.<sup>3</sup> As Schelling (1966, p. 124) reminds us, credibility is “one of the few things worth fighting for.”

Perhaps because Schelling’s assertion left little room for divergence in policymakers’ views on the meaning and importance of credibility, subsequent scholarship has mostly remained silent on how officials’ “second-order beliefs” about credibility connect with key policy questions, such as initiating uses of force during crises.<sup>4</sup> Lebanon is one of several examples where fighting for credibility proved costly in blood and treasure,<sup>5</sup> yet the divergence of views between Shultz and Vessey suggests that Schelling’s insight leaves something to be desired: not all policymakers view preserving credibility as important enough to justify military action. Officials were similarly divided on this question prior to Britain’s war with Argentina over the Falkland Islands and U.S. interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo.<sup>6</sup> Variation in concern for credibility matters because it affects the balance of policy advocacy that leaders receive from their civilian and military advisers, and in turn, constrains the leader’s decision environment. But if we want to understand who wins these tugs-of-war between advisers, we need to know why officials tug differently in the first place.<sup>7</sup>

Why do foreign policy decision makers care about the credibility of their own state’s commitments? How does policymakers’ organizational identity affect their concern for credibility, and in turn, their willingness to use force during crises? Prior research does not answer these questions, concentrating instead on how decision makers appraise *others*’ credibility and how to manipulate these perceptions.<sup>8</sup> Recent scholarship advances individual-centric explanations for decision makers’ focus on credibility and reputation,<sup>9</sup> yet substantial theoretical gaps remain at other levels of analysis regarding how perceptions of credibility shape information uptake and policy responses during crises.

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<sup>3</sup>Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth (2014) and Lupton (2020).

<sup>4</sup>Second order beliefs are what domestic constituencies think others think about the former country’s or leader’s characteristics. See O’Neill (1999), Brutger and Kertzer (2018), and Butt (2019).

<sup>5</sup>Logevall (1999) and Mercer (2013).

<sup>6</sup>Burg and Shoup (1999), Daalder and O’Hanlon (2001), and Freedman (2005a).

<sup>7</sup>Feaver and Gelpi (2004) and Saunders (2018).

<sup>8</sup>Snyder and Diesing (1977), Hopf (1994), Mercer (1996), Press (2005), Weisiger and Yarhi-Milo (2015), Harvey and Mitton (2016), Jackson (2016), and Crescenzi (2018).

<sup>9</sup>Yarhi-Milo (2018).

I examine this puzzle through an organizational lens, offering new theory and evidence to a burgeoning literature on how adviser input shapes leaders' choices.<sup>10</sup> Building on classic scholarship in bureaucratic politics, I argue in Chapter 1 that organizational identity — a combination of the organization's mission or essence and its associated routines and procedures — frames the dimensions of credibility that officials value, and ultimately, their policy advocacy on uses of force during crises, or periods defined by perceived threats to basic values, finite time to respond, and heightened likelihood of military hostilities.<sup>11</sup> Deterrence theory suggests that we can model credibility as a combination of capabilities, interests, and (reputation for) resolve.<sup>12</sup> To this formula, I add Jervis's concept of signaling reputation, which encompasses an actor's reputation for living up to its word, or usually doing as it says it will.<sup>13</sup> I then posit that organizational identity leads two ideal types of foreign policy advisers — diplomats and military officials — to focus on different aspects of credibility. For purposes of theoretical and empirical tractability, I concentrate on how these dynamics affect decisions to *initiate* (rather than escalate or terminate) uses of force in times of crisis.

Diplomats conceive of credibility primarily in terms of interests and reputation, with less emphasis on capabilities. Diplomats see themselves as master statesmen charged with burnishing their country's profile among other members of the international system. This self-image yields diplomats' capacious sense of national interests and close attention to how others perceive the home country. The result is that diplomats regard credibility as an impressionistic asset to be preserved by demonstrating reliable partnership and resolute intentions before international audiences.<sup>14</sup> This means that during crises, diplomats will advocate for initiating force when they believe that their state's interests and reputation are at stake.

Military officials, meanwhile, conceive of credibility primarily in terms of interests and capabilities. Military officials see themselves as goal-oriented tacticians charged with ensuring op-

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<sup>10</sup>Brooks (2008), Recchia (2014), Saunders (2017), Golby, Feaver, and Dropp (2018), Lin-Greenberg (2021), Jost et al. (2022), Kenwick and Maxey (2022), and Schub (2022).

<sup>11</sup>Allison and Zelikow (1999), Halperin, Clapp, and Kanter (2006), and Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1997).

<sup>12</sup>Schelling (1960), Schelling (1966), Jervis (1976), Mercer (1996), and Tang (2005).

<sup>13</sup>Jervis (1970).

<sup>14</sup>Murphy (1964), Simpson (1967), Schulzinger (1975), Jett (2014), and Dobbins (2017).

erational success on the battlefield.<sup>15</sup> This self-image produces a narrow perspective on what constitutes the national interest and an expansive view of what capabilities are needed to defend it, with the credibility of threats and promises hinging on the actual capacity to carry them out. The result is that military officials regard credibility mostly as a function of military capabilities. This means that during crises, military officials will advocate for initiating force only when they believe that their state's interests are at stake and that the capability to effect the desired outcome exists.

Diplomats and military officials' diverging conceptions of credibility in turn affect the balance of policy advocacy that leaders receive when considering whether to initiate force in crises. From the top down, presidents and prime ministers reign supreme in foreign affairs, with various dispositional and experiential factors (which are beyond the scope of this study) influencing their propensity for military action.<sup>16</sup> But from the bottom up, advisers and associated bureaucracies generate the options that structure leaders' choices, including whether kinetic options are on the table and how hawkish — or biased toward the use of force — the option set is more generally. When these organizations arrive at conflicting judgments based on their competing conceptions of credibility and preferences on initiating force, I posit that military officials' capabilities-based assessments determine the option set's level of hawkishness by either reining in or bolstering diplomats' advocacy. Adviser input thereby pushes leaders toward more or less expansive means for addressing the issue at hand.

I support these propositions through a multimethod approach involving text analysis of two archival document collections, comparative case studies of U.S., British, and French decision making across eight crises, and an original survey experiment involving more than 400 current and former U.S. policymakers. The mixture of methodological techniques allows for triangulation of the research questions along multiple avenues, providing a constellation of evidence against which to examine my hypotheses.<sup>17</sup> First, the text analysis described in Chapter 2 demonstrates that diplomats conceive of credibility as the *willingness* to keep commitments and bear costs, while

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<sup>15</sup>Huntington (1957), Posen (1984), Kier (1997), Feaver (2003), and Brooks (2020).

<sup>16</sup>Horowitz and Stam (2014), Yarhi-Milo, Kertzer, and Renshon (2018), and Wu and Wolford (2018).

<sup>17</sup>Seawright (2016) and Huber (2017).

military officials associate it with the *capacity* to do so. These results provide important *prima facie* evidence of organizational differences that I proceed to test for and further elaborate on in subsequent chapters.

Second, the case studies in Chapter 3 show that diplomats consistently define interests broadly and back the use of force out of concern for reputation, while military officials view interests more narrowly and support the use of force chiefly in the presence of adequate capabilities. In crises over Greece (1947-48) and Berlin (1948), U.S. diplomats sought firmer action to preserve American credibility, while military officials refused to sanction such moves based on concerns about adequate troops and materiel, resulting in a relatively dovish option set that did not push President Truman to initiate the use of force. By contrast, at Dien Bien Phu (1954) and over the Taiwan Straits (1954-55), diplomats again advocated the use of force, while military officials were split on the wisdom of that policy, resulting in closer alignment between diplomatic and military positions and a relatively hawkish option set that encouraged President Eisenhower to pursue armed intervention. Through additional case studies of crises over Fashoda (1898), the Falklands (1982), Bosnia (1995), and Kosovo (1999), I demonstrate in Chapter 5 that similar mechanisms operated in other states, at different times, and under various configurations of power in the international system, thereby guarding against any false positive results from the early Cold War crises.

Third, the experiment presented in Chapter 4 demonstrates the applicability of these findings to present-day policymakers' behavior while furnishing additional causal leverage on my hypotheses. Respondents with diplomatic experience are more likely than their military counterparts to advocate the use of force in support of a hypothetical American ally when treated with the same reputation- and capability-based considerations. Thus, contrary to popular stereotypes of conciliatory diplomats and militant generals, I argue and find that conceptions of credibility are a crucial intervening variable linking civil-military relations with policy debates about the use of force during crises.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Betts (1991).

According to former U.S. diplomat William Burns, “‘Credibility’ can be an overused term in Washington, a town sometimes too prone to badger presidents into using force to prop up our currency and influence around the world.”<sup>19</sup> In examining who is most likely to do that badgering, I develop and test an argument, rooted in policymakers’ organizational identity, that offers distinct predictions compared with explanations grounded in the balance of power, interests, and/or resolve (Schelling, 1966; Waltz, 1979; Press, 2005); bureaucratic politics (Allison and Zelikow, 1999); and individual-level dispositions toward the use of force (Kertzer, 2016; Yarhi-Milo, 2018). These results have important implications for contemporary theoretical and policy debates about credibility, commitments, and crisis bargaining.

One central takeaway from my theory and evidence is that military officials may rein in or amplify diplomats’ often more extreme policy preferences during crises. Military officials are more likely than diplomats to think of credibility through the lens of hard capabilities, so their policy advocacy will generally align with what they deem feasible given current resources. In each of the cases considered here, military officials’ advocacy was critical in ratcheting up or down the level of hawkishness in options that leaders received. This dynamic potentially places military officials in the curious position of moderating diplomats’ inclination to use force. Canonical theories of civil-military relations, however, might find this implication troubling. Clausewitz (1976)’s most enduring maxim suggests that war is the continuation of politics by other means. Huntington (1957)’s concept of objective control rests on a clear division of labor between civilian and military leadership, wherein the former is responsible for policy decisions while the latter takes charge of managing violence. For both theorists, the idea is that an appropriate balance between political and military considerations must be struck if force is to be wielded effectively — yet such balance can often be elusive in practice. To the extent that military officials’ advocacy can determine the direction of advice that leaders receive during crises, it may help states avoid war, but may not contribute to the normatively desirable, longer-run goal of integration between civilian and military perspectives in the policy process.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Burns (2019, p. 387).

<sup>20</sup>Feaver (2003) and Feaver and Gelpi (2004).

However, the military's ability to forestall the use of force does not mean that diplomats' reputation-based advocacy is mere noise or never decisive. Diplomats' reporting, analysis, and relationship monitoring is often the mechanism by which leaders and advisers receive information and diagnose crises. While ultimate policy may not match their preferred outcome, diplomats' concern for reputation shapes the terms of debate in dialogue with the military's capabilities-based assessments. For instance, to preview some of my major findings, it is not implausible that if diplomats' advocacy had been more restrained during the first Berlin crisis, military officials' initial impulse to withdraw from the city might have held more sway with President Truman. Meanwhile, diplomats' fierce advocacy, over the Pentagon's initial objections, for NATO intervention in Kosovo to convince Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic of the West's resolve to protect ethnic Kosovars suggests that diplomats' input can be decisive even in the face of military opposition. Therefore, diplomats' willingness to fight for credibility may be a necessary (but not sufficient) condition to put initiating force on the table, while military officials' propensity to endorse armed action may be a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for the use of force to occur. Both perspectives are worth studying and accounting for so that policymakers at either end of the civil-military divide can better understand each other's point of view.

Indeed, military officials may be perfectly willing support the use of force if they possess the capabilities to enable such action. And if diplomats have a relatively high baseline willingness to act in the name of credibility, as my theory suggests, then this could feed overly militarized policy responses to crises. As the most powerful state in the international system, the United States has many commitments to uphold and the capacity to deploy military forces globally. However, various critiques of American foreign policy, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq, have derided the U.S.'s tendency to reach for military options when diplomacy or softer forms of power might be the more appropriate option.<sup>21</sup> My findings might help to explain this pattern: with a diplomatic corps attuned to the preservation of resolve and reliability, and a military establishment endowed with substantial military capabilities, my theory expects frequent joint advocacy on using force to

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<sup>21</sup>Schake (2012), Suri (2019), and Gates (2020).



emanate from both ideal type organizations — which may or may not reflect the appropriate mix of political signaling and capability deployment for successful deterrence or crisis management.

While leaders can and do disagree with their advisers' recommendations, my theory indicates why the option set in crises may still often be biased toward the use of force, with worrying consequences for a potential U.S.-China or U.S.-Russia confrontation. For example, as China's military becomes more powerful, the prospects for a cross-strait invasion of Taiwan — however geopolitically unwise and militarily costly it might prove for the PRC — increase. But even if Beijing simply continues provocations such as sending its warplanes into Taiwan's air defense identification zone, the U.S.'s policy of strategic ambiguity toward Taipei will remain an important instrument of deterrence. Recent U.S. actions evince both diplomatic concern for reputation (with Taiwan and regionally) and the military's willingness to deploy capabilities in support of this quasi-commitment. The State Department has explicitly signaled the strength of the U.S.'s commitment to Taiwan while warning Beijing off further aggression.<sup>22</sup> The U.S. Navy continues to demonstrate its local capabilities by conducting freedom of navigation patrols (FONOPs) in and around the Taiwan Straits.<sup>23</sup> If these moves reflect officials' appetite for using force in defending Taiwan, they may result in a hawkish menu of options for a future U.S. leader facing a cross-strait crisis. The potential for escalation is significant and concern for credibility is a major reason why.

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<sup>22</sup><https://www.state.gov/prc-military-pressure-against-taiwan-threatens-regional-peace-and-stability/>

<sup>23</sup><https://twitter.com/CollinSLKoh/status/1497716905234223106/photo/1/>

## Chapter 1: Theory and Research Design

In this chapter, I develop my thesis regarding organizational identity, highlight the scope conditions of the argument, and describe the methodological approach for testing my hypotheses. First, using deterrence theory as a starting point, I posit that officials hailing from different bureaucratic traditions value different dimensions of credibility and thus emphasize different priorities in the policy process. This in turn influences their relative willingness to use force for credibility's sake along with the level of hawkishness in policy options that senior leaders receive. Second, I indicate where and how my predictions differ from prominent alternative explanations based on structural conditions, bureaucratic politics, and individual psychology. Third, I conclude by describing how I measure key variables and deploy a mixed-methods empirical strategy.

### 1.1 What Is Credibility? Why Might It Matter?

While we know that foreign policy decision makers care about their state's credibility, previous research has not fully explored the sources of these concerns, their possible heterogeneity among advisers, or their impact on policy advocacy.<sup>1</sup> However, this literature offers several key points of departure for parsing central concepts and modeling inputs to credibility.

First, credibility is conceptually slippery. In principle, it signifies reliability, or the perceived likelihood that an actor will meet its commitments.<sup>2</sup> This is different from reputation, or a belief about an actor's persistent characteristics based on past behavior, broadly defined.<sup>3</sup> In theory, the latter contributes to the former; a state's credibility equals its capabilities times its interests times

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<sup>1</sup>Jervis and Snyder (1991) and Kupchan (1994).

<sup>2</sup>Press (2005, p. 11).

<sup>3</sup>Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth (2014, p. 374). Various research suggests that states and leaders can acquire reputations for qualities including honesty, violence or hostility, keeping alliance commitments, repaying debts, or dealing with secessionists; see Guisinger and Smith (2002), Gibler (2008), Tomz (2007b), Walter (2009), Miller (2012), and Peterson (2013).

its reputation for resolve.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, if credibility pertains to whether an actor will follow through on a threat or promise, then reputation is a key ingredient therein to the extent that previous actions are viewed as dispositive of current or future behavior.

In practice, however, credibility often connotes some blend of “resolve, reliability, believability, and decisiveness” while serving as code for one’s image and reputation on a particular issue.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, I argue for modeling credibility as a function of capabilities, interests, resolve, and *signaling reputation*, or an actor’s “reputation for living up to its word, for usually doing as it says it will do.”<sup>6</sup> This is because resolve, or the willingness to stand firm or pay costs in the face of pressure to back down,<sup>7</sup> and reliability, especially with regard to keeping commitments, are distinct but related concepts. On the one hand, actions that maintain commitments (such as sending economic aid to an ally) might indicate reliable partnership, but do not necessarily demonstrate that the patron state will bear costs (such as adjusting its trade or financial policies to benefit that ally). On the other hand, keeping commitments and demonstrating firmness may run parallel to one another in instances (such as defending an ally against military threats) that require some willingness to bear costs.<sup>8</sup> To account for these realities, I elevate signaling reputation as coequal with resolve and posit that they together comprise the reputational dimensions of credibility.

Second, how states and leaders calculate *others’* credibility has been the subject of fierce scholarly debate. Much of the original work on deterrence and credibility was premised on the idea that reputation is a powerful force in world politics.<sup>9</sup> Yet a second wave of scholarship indicated that policymakers do not necessarily make attributions about other states or leaders based on their past record of keeping commitments.<sup>10</sup> Of late, however, a third collection of studies has identified consistent effects of state A’s previous behavior on state B’s likely responses in subsequent interactions.<sup>11</sup> The former perspective implies that policymakers need not care about credibility given

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<sup>4</sup>Mercer (1996, p. 15); Tang (2005, p. 38).

<sup>5</sup>McMahon (1991, p. 455).

<sup>6</sup>Monroe (2001, p. 305).

<sup>7</sup>Kertzer (2016, p. 3); Lupton (2020, pp. 2–3).

<sup>8</sup>Jackson (2016, pp. 17–18) and Sartori (2005) similarly distinguish between resolve and honesty.

<sup>9</sup>Schelling (1960), Schelling (1966), Jervis (1970), Jervis (1976), and Snyder and Diesing (1977).

<sup>10</sup>Hopf (1994), Mercer (1996), and Press (2005).

<sup>11</sup>Yarhi-Milo (2014), Weisiger and Yarhi-Milo (2015), Harvey and Mitton (2016), Jackson (2016), Kertzer (2016),

the apparently dubious value of their past actions to other states and leaders, while the latter — which comprises the literature’s emerging consensus — suggests that fretting over credibility is entirely justified.<sup>12</sup> In seeking to strike fresh scholarly ground, my argument is that researchers ought to move from asking *whether* credibility matters to probing *when* and *why* policymakers think it is important. More specifically, the question of whether credibility matters is a function of what credibility actually means to foreign policy officials.

Third, then, we generally know that policymakers care about their state’s credibility because they believe it is linked with both status and material benefits in bargaining situations.<sup>13</sup> Foreign policy officials think that allies demand loyalty and thus see their commitments to other states as intrinsically connected,<sup>14</sup> even engaging in disputes proactively when their resolve is flagging and they face multiple potential rivals.<sup>15</sup> However, Yarhi-Milo (2018) has established that individual leaders vary in their willingness to fight for reputation based not only on their own hawkish or dovish tendencies, but also in the extent to which they are “self-monitors,” or concerned with how others perceive them. Thus, there may be multiple axes of heterogeneity among leaders or groups of policymakers in how they conceive of credibility, with potential implications for bias in the policy process.<sup>16</sup> Yet as I describe in the next section, conventional theories of deterrence have not traditionally disaggregated the concept of credibility or theorized about the sources of concern therein at levels of analysis below the state or leader.

## 1.2 The Organizational Politics of Credibility

Taking organizations as the unit of analysis, I posit that organizational identity pushes policymakers to value different dimensions of credibility, and in turn, to advocate different policies regarding the use of force. For theoretical and empirical tractability, I delimit the argument’s scope

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Renshon, Dafoe, and Huth (2018), Yarhi-Milo (2018), and Lupton (2020).

<sup>12</sup>Jervis, Yarhi-Milo, and Casler (2021).

<sup>13</sup>Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth (2014) and Lupton (2020).

<sup>14</sup>Schelling (1966) and Henry (2020).

<sup>15</sup>Jervis (1970), Jervis (1998), and Clare and Danilovic (2012).

<sup>16</sup>Kertzer et al. (2022).

as applying only to the *initiation* (rather than escalation or termination) of force during *crises*, defined as periods in which decision makers perceive threats to basic values, finite time to respond, and heightened likelihood of military hostilities.<sup>17</sup> The core implication of my argument is that diplomats are more likely than military officials to support the use of force to maintain or build credibility, shaping the balance of advice that leaders receive under crisis conditions. Contra standard theories of deterrence that emphasize structural variables such as the balance of interests, power, and/or resolve between adversaries, I posit that policymakers' perspectives on credibility emerge via organizational identities.

### **Deterrence Theory: A Starting Point**

Classic theories of deterrence stress how to signal and reinforce commitments, estimate opposing forces, and leverage fears of escalation to achieve desired policy ends.<sup>18</sup> Whether the task involves preventing nuclear conflict, prosecuting a conventional war, or conducting crisis bargaining, credible deterrence requires demonstrating intent and deploying relevant capabilities — in other words, conveying to adversaries that one possesses the requisite levels of interest, power, and/or resolve to fight and win.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, when and why policymakers care about their state's credibility should be a function of their capability to carry out a threat or promise and their willingness to do so in conjunction with perceived national interests; larger gaps between commitments, on the one hand, and capabilities, interests, and/or will on the other, ought to elicit greater concern.<sup>20</sup>

Following Schelling (1966), this rationalist logic assumes that credibility's importance is self-evident: policymakers are not only certain of their own commitments and interests, but also reach similar conclusions when presented with the same information about capabilities and resolve. Yet during crises, officials tend to encounter what scholars term “ill-structured problems,” in which complex issues are at stake, variables are difficult to measure, and available means are relatively

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<sup>17</sup>Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1997).

<sup>18</sup>For a broad overview, see Jervis (1989).

<sup>19</sup>George and Smoke (1974, pp. 41–44, 64).

<sup>20</sup>Tang (2005). Many thanks to Daryl Press for helpful discussions on this point.

unrestricted.<sup>21</sup> As a result, the relevant objectives, motives for pursuing them, appropriate policy levers, and tradeoffs between addressing the problem at hand and other competing priorities are open to interpretation — as in the Lebanon example referenced above. For some officials, the perceived requirements for deterrence lay more in demonstrating concern or communicating intentions than in possessing overwhelming military capabilities, while for others the opposite was true. Put differently, it is not necessarily obvious *ex ante* what signals of resolve and/or capability observers will find credible.<sup>22</sup> Since crises often feature such significant ambiguity, policymakers struggle to assess their own power, interests, and resolve, and therefore need cues to sort out their positions.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Role of Organizational Identity**

Organizational identity shapes policymakers' conceptions of credibility, and in turn, their advocacy around initiating force during crises, by providing cues for framing priorities and tradeoffs. Most foreign policy is crafted within highly institutionalized and boundedly rational bureaucracies whose standard operating procedures (SOPs) powerfully influence information processing, entrenching issue framings that dispose how institutions react to a given event.<sup>24</sup> While some framings may be held broadly among a state's leadership,<sup>25</sup> where one sits within the bureaucratic structure affects one's exposure to organization-specific norms and practices,<sup>26</sup> because organizational "essence" and SOPs are distinct across bureaucracies.<sup>27</sup> Essence is an organization's dominant view of what its missions and capabilities should be, while SOPs reflect the distilled learning experiences that organizations apply consistently across situations. If essence provides a shared intra-organizational frame of reference for structuring problems, then SOPs shape and constrain

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<sup>21</sup> Brutger and Kertzer (2018, p. 7).

<sup>22</sup> Kertzer, Renshon, and Yarhi-Milo (2019) and Blankenship and Lin-Greenberg (2022).

<sup>23</sup> Wolfers (1952), Bem (1972), George and Smoke (1974), Finnemore (2003), and Wilson (2004).

<sup>24</sup> Simon (1947), March (1958), Cyert (1963), Wilson (1989), Halperin, Clapp, and Kanter (2006), Gavetti et al. (2012), and Hudson (2014).

<sup>25</sup> Khong (1992).

<sup>26</sup> Allison and Zelikow (1999), though see Krasner (1972), Art (1973), Rosati (1981), Bendor and Hammond (1992), Welch (1992), and Rhodes (1994).

<sup>27</sup> Legro (1996) and Kier (1997).

organizations' cognition and action.<sup>28</sup>

I operationalize these factors as “organizational identity” to capture the cultural and practical milieu that bureaucracies comprise and cultivate. My analytical framework contains two theoretically distinct but empirically intertwined mechanisms. On the one hand, organizations *socialize* their members to particular outlooks and behaviors over time; the longer that an individual has been part of a bureaucracy, the more likely she is to have adopted its frames of reference.<sup>29</sup> This pathway captures dynamics related to professionalization, in which members of an organization accumulate knowledge and experience through prolonged periods of specialized training.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, organizations inculcate specific *missions and responsibilities* that map to their functional perspectives and priorities; even new members internalize the organization's role and duties relatively quickly.<sup>31</sup> This pathway captures dynamics related to position, whereby members of an organization pick up the institution's standard viewpoints and behaviors as a product of its functionally-defined inputs into some overall process.<sup>32</sup> Along both theoretical routes, bureaucracies cultivate *informational expertise* within their respective domains.<sup>33</sup> While adjudicating between these mechanisms is beyond my scope, I argue that both channels contribute to the broader pattern in which organizational identity influences policymakers' worldviews and behavior.

In shaping bureaucrats' priors, organizational identity determines the aspects of credibility they learn to prioritize, and in turn, their policy advocacy, and therefore has effects beyond the “game of small thrones” over turf and resources that often characterizes interagency politics.<sup>34</sup> I consider two organizational ideal types — diplomatic and military — whose distinct sets of norms, roles, and missions allow me to derive clear theoretical predictions. By diplomats, I refer to career or appointed officials responsible for conducting their state's foreign policy through employment at their government's main international affairs agency. By military officers or officials, I mean career

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<sup>28</sup>Vertzberger (1990, pp. 194, 209).

<sup>29</sup>Jost, Meshkin, and Schub (2022) and Lupton (2022).

<sup>30</sup>Huntington (1957, Ch. 3); Janowitz (1971, Ch. 1).

<sup>31</sup>Sagan (1994) and Barnett and Finnemore (1999).

<sup>32</sup>Allison and Zelikow (1999, pp. 143–147).

<sup>33</sup>Schub (2022).

<sup>34</sup>Posen (1984); Hudson (2014, p. 101).

members of a state's armed services who have attained officer rank.<sup>35</sup> In outlining these ideal types, I restrict the theory's scope to states with strong norms regarding civilian control of the military, where military officials principally advise on rather than hold final authority over decisions to initiate force.<sup>36</sup>

Diplomats' conception of credibility derives from the norms associated with their many roles: translating between the home government and the world; providing early warning of troubles and opportunities; building and fixing relationships; and integrating the military, economic, and intelligence tools of statecraft.<sup>37</sup> Diplomats are socialized to be experts in communication, relationship management, and negotiation — whether because they are professional civil servants steeped in the art of diplomacy or because they enter government from fields like business, politics, or law, where such skills also receive special emphasis.<sup>38</sup> As a result, their organizational self-image is as the first line of defense against international strife whose job is to inform, represent, and persuade on the home government's behalf. Securing others' trust is essential to these objectives, making diplomats highly focused on the personal and behavioral dimensions of cultivating relationships.<sup>39</sup> Thus, diplomats constantly observe and record how policymakers in other states perceive the home government's commitments and behavior both within and across a range of issues, under the assumption that state B will draw quick and broad inferences from the home government's behavior not just toward state B but also towards states C and D.<sup>40</sup>

The wide scope of diplomats' core mission inculcates a broad definition of national interests and a capacious understanding of what the home government's actions can indicate to international audiences given their focus on and expertise in others' perceptions.<sup>41</sup> Since their chief objective is to cultivate strong, durable impressions and relationships that will persist over anticipated future

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<sup>35</sup>For theoretical tractability, I do not consider civilian members of defense or intelligence agencies, who may be exposed to a mix of these norms and thus display less predictable tendencies. For example, the U.S. Secretary of Defense is usually a civilian but not a career military officer and does not fit either ideal type.

<sup>36</sup>My theory does not apply to authoritarian regimes such as those studied by Weeks (2014), Talmadge (2015), and White (2020), where the military itself is often explicitly political in shaping domestic and foreign policy.

<sup>37</sup>Murphy (1964, pp. 15, 31); Simpson (1967, p. 3); Burns (2019, p. 9).

<sup>38</sup>Jett (2014, pp. 41–42, 47, 123); MacDonald (2021, p. 28).

<sup>39</sup>Schulzinger (1975, p. 10); Dobbins (2017, p. x).

<sup>40</sup>Crescenzi (2018).

<sup>41</sup>Schake (2012, p. 8).



interactions, diplomats emphasize signals that can be quickly manipulated to demonstrate commitment.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, I argue that diplomats conceive of credibility primarily in terms of national interests and reputation — in other words, as the *willingness* to keep commitments (i.e. reliability) and bear costs (i.e. resolve).

Military officers' conception of credibility stems from their military education and combat experience. The former socializes military officials to be experts in managing violence through deep knowledge of military operations, tactics, and logistics, while the latter makes them highly attentive to the nuts and bolts of military interventions as well as all that can go wrong in war.<sup>43</sup> As a result, their organizational self-image is as the goal-oriented technician, taking sober stock of a given task's hard capability demands.<sup>44</sup> While members of individual services may rate these requirements differently, military officials generally stress the possession of ready forces to meet potential challenges and oppose the extension of commitments or issuance of threats unless the capacity to follow through exists. Thus, military officials are not uniformly restrained or aggressive in their policy preferences, but rather sensitive above all to the relative balance of combat capability.<sup>45</sup>

The focused nature of military officials' central mission means that they hold a narrow perspective on national interests and a capabilities-centric view of what using force can accomplish. Since their chief objective is to ensure battlefield success, military officials emphasize indices such as the caliber of military leadership, forces, and weaponry.<sup>46</sup> This makes them far more focused on how devoting resources in the moment could compromise other contingencies than on what inferences others might draw down the road from present behavior. Therefore, I argue that military officials conceive of credibility primarily in terms of national interests and capabilities — in other words, as the *capacity* to keep commitments and bear costs. My first hypothesis follows:

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<sup>42</sup>Jervis (1970, pp. 38–40).

<sup>43</sup>Posen (1984, pp. 46, 52); Avant (1996, p. 53); Brooks (2008, p. 3); Feaver (2003, p. 68); Schake (2012, p. 40); Horowitz and Stam (2014, p. 529).

<sup>44</sup>Brooks (2020, p. 7).

<sup>45</sup>Huntington (1957, Ch. 3); Betts (1991, pp. 36, 116–120).

<sup>46</sup>Jervis (1970, pp. 38–40); Betts (1991, pp. 83–84).

Table 1.1: Implications of the Theoretical Argument

Dimension	Diplomats	Military Officers
	Credibility = Interests · Resolve · Signaling Reputation	Credibility = Interests · Capabilities
Definition of national interests	Broad	Narrow
Beliefs about interdependence of commitments	Strong	Qualified
Concern for quality of military leadership, forces, and weapons	Moderate	High
Risk acceptance on use of force	High	Low

**Hypothesis 1:** Diplomats conceive of credibility primarily in terms of national interests and reputation, while military officers conceive of credibility primarily in terms of national interests and capabilities.

Table 1.1 summarizes the key dimensions of difference between diplomatic and military officials pertaining to their conceptions of credibility, building on work by Huth (1997, pp. 75–76).<sup>47</sup> First, and as previously indicated, diplomats and military officials diverge in their definitions of national interests as a function of the professional and organizational norms to which they are socialized. I view this as a baseline or background condition that establishes each type’s average *level* of concern for credibility.<sup>48</sup>

Further distinctions determine the *nature* of these officials’ concerns. A second discrepancy lies in their respective beliefs about the interdependence of commitments. Diplomats tend to take a strong view given their focus on building trust and cultivating personal connections, perceiving

<sup>47</sup>Huth distinguishes between qualities that contribute to a reputation for resolve versus a reputation for power.

<sup>48</sup>More expansive interests could independently predict a higher willingness to initiate force, but interests themselves are often underspecified and open to interpretation (Wolfers, 1952). For improved theoretical traction, I focus on how interests interact with reputation and/or capabilities to shape conceptions of credibility.

any failure to keep their word as having a potentially outsized impact on reputational dynamics with allies and adversaries. Meanwhile, military officers take a qualified view of interdependence given their narrow concept of interests and focus on capabilities. Though not entirely unconcerned with how behavior in one instance may be connected to the next, military officers are more likely to weigh the issue in terms of how devoting resources in the present could compromise their ability to act effectively in the future rather than the impressions that observers might draw from action (or lack thereof) in the present.

This raises the third dimension on which diplomats and military officers differ — concern for the quality of military leadership, forces, and weapons. While not wholly ignorant of military affairs, diplomats pay less attention to hard capability requirements given their focus on political signaling. But for military officials, capability assessments are the primary channels through which they can shape policy and outcomes. Military officials therefore emphasize and see credibility as stemming from the prudent use of power, the ability to take initiative and adapt to tactical opportunities, the capacity of their troops to fight effectively, and the lethality of their systems and platforms.

Finally, these differences flow through to diplomats' and military officials' levels of risk acceptance on initiating force. Diplomats' broad conception of national interests and beliefs about the interdependence of commitments means that they often find credibility to be at stake, and in turn, are willing to employ an expansive policy toolkit — including threats and shows of force — in reassuring allies and deterring or bluffing adversaries into line. Military officials' narrow perspective on national interests and capabilities-centric view of foreign policy means that they are less inclined, by comparison, to advocate the use or show of force unless national interests are at stake and the capability to act is assured.<sup>49</sup>

Figure 1.1 models the hypothesized relationship between the underlying determinants of credibility and policymakers' willingness to use force during crises. Since diplomats chiefly care about others' views of the home country's resolve and reliability, which they see as fungible across

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<sup>49</sup> Betts (1991, p. 36).

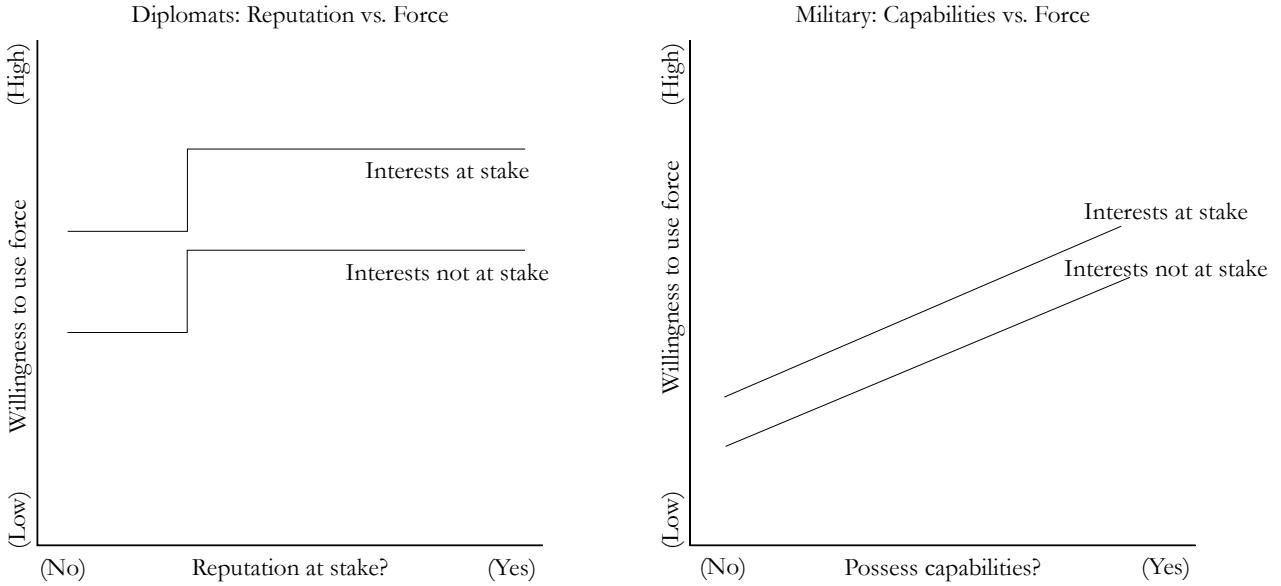


Figure 1.1: Diplomatic vs. Military Officials on Credibility and Use of Force

events and issues, their default assumption is that the state's reputation needs constant maintenance, wherein the military is just another instrument in the foreign policy toolkit.<sup>50</sup> For this reason, diplomats' willingness to use force during crises increases steeply as soon as they perceive reputation to be even slightly at stake and remains high thereafter, following the step function in the left plot. And since diplomats define national interests broadly, I suggest that their willingness to use force typically approximates the topmost curve in the left plot.

Meanwhile, military officials' narrow perspective on national interests and capabilities-centric view of foreign policy makes them highly attentive to the balance of military power in any given situation. Their orientation toward battlefield success means their willingness to use force linearly tracks the available capacity to address foreseeable contingencies.<sup>51</sup> And even when there is a surfeit of capability, military officers may be unwilling to advocate for the use of force unless they deem national interests to be at stake. Hence the shape and placement of the lines on the right plot in Figure 1.1, where I expect that military officials' willingness to use force will often approximate the bottommost curve. This yields my second hypothesis:

<sup>50</sup>Schulzinger (1975, p. 141); Feaver and Gelpi (2004, pp. 45–46).

<sup>51</sup>Betts (1991, pp. 96–97).

**Hypothesis 2:** Diplomats display higher willingness than military officers to build or maintain credibility by initiating force during crises.

To summarize, then, my theoretical contribution advances the causal logic illustrated below. My argument is not that diplomats are wholly inattentive to capabilities, but rather that they often do not grasp the limits of what is militarily possible and still prefer uses or shows of force even when aware of military constraints. Nor do I claim that military officials entirely disregard reputational concerns, but rather that these are at best secondary considerations relative to available capabilities. And while each type has different expertise, exposure to the other's knowledge and perspective does not necessarily yield converging policy preferences. Rather, organizational identity affects policy advocacy related to the use of force through officials' conceptions of credibility.

*Organizational identity → Conception of credibility → Policy advocacy*

### **Why Does Organizational Identity Matter?**

Why does it matter if military officials and diplomats diverge in how they think about credibility? Even if presidents and prime ministers reign supreme in foreign affairs, advisers' estimates still shape policy deliberations by influencing the relative hawkishness of the options that leaders receive during crises.<sup>52</sup> Modeling this informational pipeline requires consideration of the organizational processes and perspectives that feed content to leaders by deriving testable implications for military officials' and diplomats' policy advocacy. When organizational perspectives on credibility collide in the policy process, they shape contours of leaders' choices during by influencing how hawkish or dovish the option set is — that is, how biased these options are toward the use of force.

Figure 1.2 lays out four possibilities. The extremes result from combinations on the off-diagonal, where diplomatic and military advocacy aligns. In the top right quadrant, if diplomats believe that reputation is at stake and military officials possess the capability to act, a hawkish option set is the most likely result. Conversely, in the bottom left quadrant, if diplomats do not

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<sup>52</sup>Neustadt (1960) and Saunders (2017).

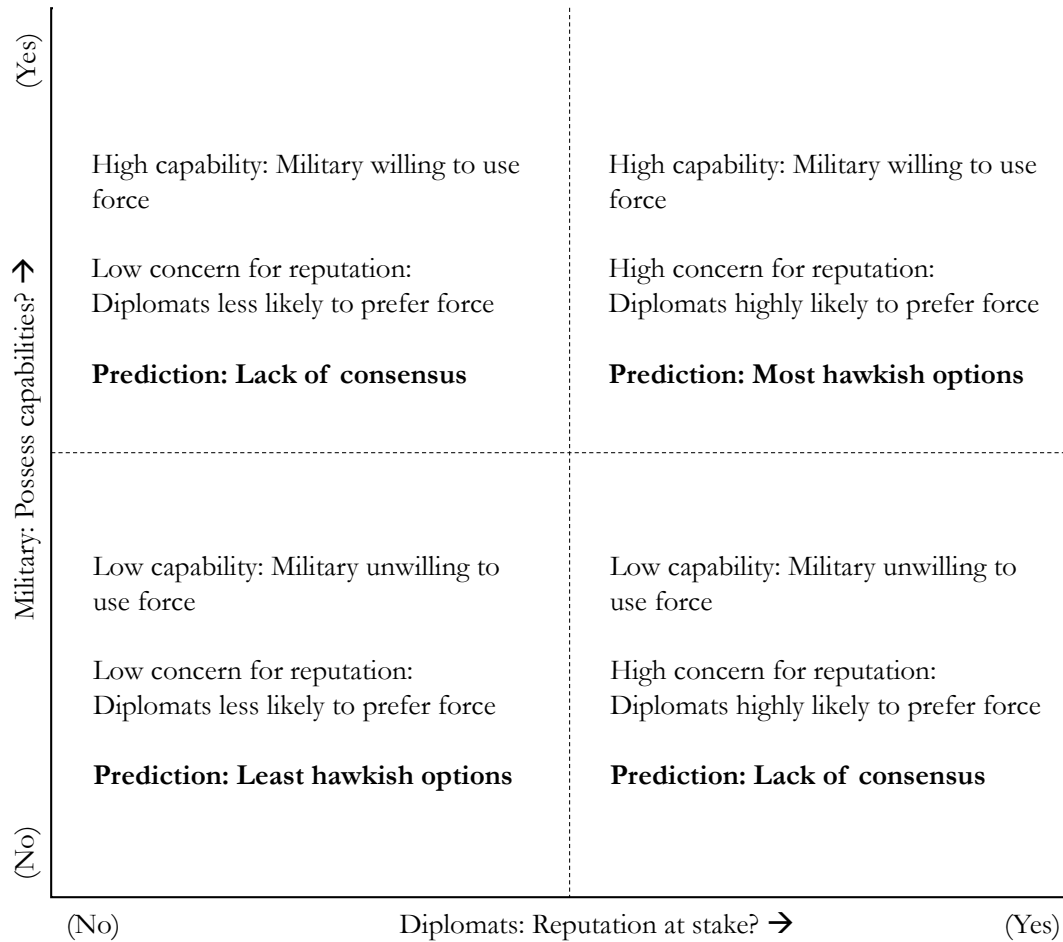


Figure 1.2: Possible Combinations of Diplomatic and Military Assessments

see reputation at stake and military officials do not possess the capability to act, a dovish option set is the most probable outcome. The less extreme cases derive from the main diagonal, where diplomatic and military advocacy conflicts, and I expect that the lack of consensus will necessitate some sort of policy compromise. In the top left quadrant, military officials are willing to use force given the possession of capabilities, but diplomats do not see as pressing a need to use force. In the bottom right quadrant, diplomats are willing to use force out of concern for reputation but military officials do not judge capabilities to be adequate.<sup>53</sup> These implications extend the causal chain

<sup>53</sup>The top-left quadrant could yield more hawkish options than the bottom-right because I assume that the military is a veto player on initiating force (Betts, 1991; Feaver, 2003; McManus, 2017). In the top-left case, even if diplomats' concern for reputation is low, it is still not zero. Therefore, diplomats are unlikely to stand in the way of military advocacy favoring force. In the bottom-right case, however, the military's unwillingness to initiate force should tamp down the level of hawkishness despite diplomats' advocacy.

detailed above as follows:

*Organizational identity → Conception of credibility → Policy advocacy → Menu of options*

Of course, the menu of options is only one factor in determining whether force will be used. Leaders bring their own causal beliefs to the table when weighing military interventions, exhibit different dispositions to fight for reputation, and may wish to burnish others' impressions of their resolve, especially early in their tenure.<sup>54</sup> I do not argue that leaders never ignore their deputies or request other options, but rather that since leaders typically do not want to be seen as crossing their advisers, the balance of advice necessarily shapes the parameters of debate.<sup>55</sup> For instance, as a contrast to the Lebanon example, President Richard Nixon declined to retaliate against North Korea for shooting down an American surveillance plane in 1969 at least partly because the Joint Chiefs of Staff viewed the available military options as both lacking utility and needlessly escalatory.<sup>56</sup> This prevented the United States from being drawn into another conflict in Asia while it was already mired in Vietnam. Organizational identity matters, then, because it can bias the option set toward more or less expansive means. While the theory does not attempt to explain which types of advice leaders are most likely to act on, it does elucidate how advisers frame policies for leaders up to the point of decision, which is essential for understanding what comes next.

### **1.3 Alternative Explanations**

So far, I have advanced an argument in which organizational identity disposes diplomats and military officials toward different framings of credibility and potentially diverging preferences over the use of force during crises. Along the way, I have distinguished my theory from the standard view of credibility as a monolithic element of foreign policy that all officials define and prioritize similarly. In this section, I formalize this alternative explanation, along with others pitched at the organizational and individual levels of analysis that could also account for how policymakers conceive of credibility and advocate policy.

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<sup>54</sup>Saunders (2011), Yarhi-Milo (2018), and Lupton (2020).

<sup>55</sup>Saunders (2018).

<sup>56</sup>Jackson (2016, p. 76).

First, several *structural factors* may shape policymakers' conceptions of their state's credibility and corresponding willingness to use force. Consistent with prevailing theories of deterrence, these would include accounts that identify the balance of power, resolve, and/or interests as affecting all policymakers' perspectives and reactions similarly and equally. Regarding power, for example, a crisis may draw officials' attention to an unfavorable balance of capabilities vis-a-vis an adversary and raise concerns about the credibility of their state's commitments.<sup>57</sup> The nature and degree of these concerns may also depend on the broader distribution of power in the international system. Multipolarity may stimulate persistent concerns about credibility among great powers given the potential for shifting alliances and intense competitive pressures that this configuration of power tends to generate.<sup>58</sup> Bipolarity may similarly produce constant and uniform concern for credibility among policymakers, as any dispute involving at least one of the poles automatically becomes a test of will and prompts invocations of the domino theory, wherein a defeat or retreat on one issue or in one part of the world produces further demands from adversaries and defections by allies.<sup>59</sup> And while the effects of unipolarity are less clear-cut, there is reason to believe that this distribution of power also generates strong credibility concerns — whether because, theoretically, the situation resembles the chain store paradox from economics, in which the unipole is the monopolist facing challenges from multiple weaker rivals, or because, empirically, U.S. policymakers in particular retained their learned experiences from Cold War bipolarity even after the fall of the Soviet Union.<sup>60</sup> At the same time, there is also reason to be skeptical that unipolarity yields similar credibility concerns as bipolarity or multipolarity, as competitive dynamics should be less binding in a world with fewer very powerful states and where the audience for the unipole's behavior is less concentrated.<sup>61</sup> Regardless of the specific distribution, however, the testable implication is clear: the structure of the international system predicts consistent concern for credibility (or lack thereof) among policymakers according to shared views of power; their organizational identities should not

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<sup>57</sup>Walt (1987).

<sup>58</sup>Waltz (1979) and Lake and Morgan (1997).

<sup>59</sup>Jervis and Snyder (1991).

<sup>60</sup>Tang (2005) and Fettweis (2013).

<sup>61</sup>See Layne (1991), Jervis in Edgerington and Mazarr (1994), and Lake and Morgan (1997).



matter.

A corollary of the power distribution is the balance of nuclear capabilities. Under conditions of nuclear parity and mutually assured destruction, a nuclear strike invites societal ruin. This makes nuclear threats less believable, heightens policymakers' focus on credibility, and increases the perceived importance of conventional forces. Conversely, when the nuclear balance favors one side, a nuclear strike by the more powerful state is more plausible, so policymakers in that state that enjoys greater capability should be less focused on credibility.<sup>62</sup> Again, however, the implication is that structural conditions should inculcate similar views about credibility among all policymakers, in contrast to my organizational approach.

Another possibility is that the balance of resolve between states could explain policymakers' concern for credibility. If credibility is chiefly a matter of resolve, as Schelling (1966, pp. 51, 55–56) posits, then potential adversaries cannot be allowed to “learn by experience that they can grab large chunks of the earth and its population without a genuine risk of violent [Western] reaction.” In the parlance of the Cold War, “Essentially we tell the Soviets that we have to react here because, if we did not, they would not believe us when they say we would react there.” Put differently, the balance of capabilities is irrelevant if state A does not believe that state B has the political will to carry out its threats and promises. Thus, under this alternative, all policymakers ought to be concerned about projecting firmness at all times, and with force if necessary, to cultivate a reputation for resolve.

A third set of structural factors that may shape policymakers' concern for credibility is their perception of the immediate interests and capabilities involved in a crisis, contra Schelling's perspective. If credibility is mainly about what is at stake in the moment and whether an actor has the ability to do what she has pledged, as Press (2005) posits, then demonstrating resolve is less important than communicating one's level of interest and capacity to act. Therefore, when the chips are down, policymakers may see credibility as stemming from their available means and the importance that they attach to the issue in question — in other words, from their current calculus

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<sup>62</sup>Jervis (1998).

of interests and capabilities. Once again, this line of thinking would expect all policymakers to follow a similar logic when thinking about credibility and advocating policy.

Second, an alternative organizational perspective derived from the bureaucratic politics paradigm may concur with my expectations about officials' conceptions of credibility, but differ in terms of associated outcomes regarding policy advocacy.<sup>63</sup> I label this alternative *organizational influence* to capture the practical reality of bureaucratic politics, in which government agencies constantly seek to bolster their role in the policy process by expanding their turf and resource base; military and diplomatic officials may have different preferences as a function of what solutions they perceive as burnishing their role and relative prominence among competing organizations.<sup>64</sup> Diplomats might always prefer options involving negotiations to leverage their skillset in communication, relationship management, and bargaining. Military officials might always prefer solutions involving the use of force to privilege their expertise in managing violence and oft-cited preference for offensive doctrines.<sup>65</sup> Each might still conceptualize credibility as my theory suggests, but believe that their organizationally-preferred solution is the best way to preserve it while garnering additional resources and responsibilities.

Third, an *individual difference* alternative would locate policymakers' conceptions of credibility not in structural factors or organizational perspectives, but rather in officials' own psychological makeup. Several recent studies demonstrate that policymakers' dispositions powerfully influence how they assign credibility to signals, estimate others' resolve, and attribute reputational costs to leaders.<sup>66</sup> In particular, foreign policy orientations toward hawkish or dovish preferences stand out as a uniquely important heuristic for understanding not just individuals' support for the use of military force, but also the weight that they place on reputational considerations. For example, both Brutger and Kertzer (2018) and Yarhi-Milo (2018) establish that hawks rather than doves exhibit

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<sup>63</sup>I do not consider whether bureaucrats self-select into particular roles based on their personal preferences. Various evidence (Feaver and Gelpi, 2004; Woodruff, Kelty, and Segal, 2006; Dempsey, 2009; Krebs and Ralston, 2020) casts doubt on this alternative.

<sup>64</sup>Allison and Zelikow (1999).

<sup>65</sup>Posen (1984), Snyder (1984), and Sagan (1994).

<sup>66</sup>Yarhi-Milo (2014), Kertzer and Brutger (2016), Kertzer, Renshon, and Yarhi-Milo (2019), and Kertzer, Rathbun, and Rathbun (2020).

greater concern for the potential reputational consequences of backing down from a threat. As such, under this alternative, hawkish policymakers may express high concern for credibility and high willingness to use force during crises regardless of their organizational identity. I do not view this explanation as mutually exclusive with my argument, but rather suggest that these individual-level characteristics may attenuate or exacerbate the organizationally-derived tendencies outlined in the theory.

As I detail in the next section, my empirical strategy is designed to assess the validity of these alternative explanations in comparison to my theory. By integrating a variety of methodological approaches, I am able to test my hypotheses against competing ones while increasing confidence in the soundness of my expectations.

## 1.4 Research Design

I investigate the propositions advanced in the previous section through a mixed-methods approach involving text analysis, case studies, and experiments. Each component of the research design addresses a different inferential challenge posed by the theory, thereby allowing for triangulation of the key questions at stake via a constellation of tools and evidence.<sup>67</sup>

First, to establish a baseline level of confidence in my first hypothesis, Chapter 2 uses text analysis to explore variation in how diplomatic and military officials reference and discuss the concept of credibility as it arises in their conduct of foreign policy-related duties. I employ natural language processing (NLP) methods to examine these officials' patterns of speech and writing in documents drawn from two collections: *Foreign Relations of the United States* and *Declassified Documents Online*. I combine these techniques with close reading of individual documents to show that diplomats refer to credibility as the *willingness* to incur costs in service of a commitment, while military officials define it as the *capacity* to follow through when needed. Altogether, the text analysis allows me compare my predictions to those derived from structural factors.

Second, to probe connections between conceptions of credibility and policy advocacy on the

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<sup>67</sup>Seawright (2016) and Huber (2017).

use of force, Chapter 3 performs process tracing on several cases of crisis bargaining using both archival and secondary sources. For the primary test, I select four early Cold War crises involving the United States: Greece (1947-48), Berlin (1948), Dien Bien Phu (1954) and the Taiwan Straits (1954-55). These represent challenging cases for my expectations: if structural factors such as bipolarity made credibility concerns pervasive and uniform during this period, then demonstrating that organizational identity influenced both the nature of these concerns and subsequent policy advocacy would provide important validation for the theory.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, if these organizations strove to maintain or expand their turf and resources, then showing that organizational identity predicted behavior inconsistent with organizational influence would furnish important evidence in my favor. Nevertheless, I find that diplomats consistently fretted about the U.S.'s reputation and advocated for the use of force in all four cases, while military officials framed each potential intervention in terms of military capabilities and only advocated the use of force when they believed such capacity was available. To probe the validity of the causal mechanisms identified through these cases, Chapter 5 selects several supplemental examples — Fashoda (1898), the Falklands (1982), Bosnia (1995), and Kosovo (1999) — as a check for false positives. For case-specific reasons that I detail below, each crisis represents a difficult test for my theoretical propositions. In performing these latter analyses, I furnish additional evidence that favorably compares my hypotheses to structural and organizational alternatives.

Third, to probe the applicability of the argument to present-day policymakers and gain additional causal leverage over distinctions between diplomats and military officials, Chapter 4 details the results of a survey experiment fielded on a sample of more than 400 current and former U.S. national security officials. I demonstrate that participants with diplomatic experience are more willing than their military counterparts to support the use of force in a hypothetical dispute when treated with information about the United States' reputation and military capabilities. The experimental results permit further examination of my expectations versus the organizational influence and individual difference alternatives.

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<sup>68</sup>Jervis and Snyder (1991).

Before describing how each empirical component contributes to the project in greater detail, however, I more closely specify the relevant variables and how they will be measured.

### **Variable: Organizational Identity**

By organizational identity, I mean the primary organizational unit to which a policymaker belongs. Officials' placement within their state's national security apparatus in turn reflects the norms of professional behavior and bureaucratic practice to which they have been exposed. Diplomatic and military organizations are the chosen units of interest because they comprise distinct groups of policymakers who are trained and socialized to perform their duties according to the particular roles that they play in crafting and executing foreign policy. While these categories represent just two of the many versions of policymakers who have input into and authority over decision making during crises, I believe that this simplification is productive in allowing me to theorize deeply about two important types of officials that comprise a typical national security policymaking team (which could also include intelligence officials as well as various other kinds of civilians, whether elected or appointed).

I generally take a "long view" of organizational identity, especially where military service is concerned. In other words, I am often interested in the organization that policymakers first join when they enter government service rather than whatever happens to be their most recent posting. For instance, I view military officers as remaining military officials in terms of their expected outlook even after they take off the uniform, particularly for those who served in combat or commanded troops in battle. As I discuss in Chapter 3, General George Marshall is a key example of a military officer who retained his capabilities-centric perspective on credibility even after becoming Secretary of State. Marshall's case reflects the formative socialization that policymakers experience early in their government careers and continues to shape their perspectives long afterwards. Nevertheless, because the theory builds in a role for organizational missions and responsibilities, it is also possible for policymakers' immediate organizational perspective to determine their views. As I also detail in Chapter 3, General Lucius Clay behaved much more like a diplomat than a military

officer while serving as military governor of Germany.

Lastly, in terms of who is deemed representative of each organizational identity, I suggest that all of a country's senior diplomats and military officers are in scope, but in practice my analysis tends to focus on the views of the seniormost officials and their staffs for reasons of empirical tractability. In the United States, for example, on the diplomatic side this would comprise the Secretary of State as well as their immediate staff and high-ranking officials at embassies worldwide, while on the military side, this would include the Joint Chiefs of Staff, their associated functional departments, and regional theater commanders.

### **Variable: Conception of Credibility**

By conception of credibility, I refer to what is described earlier in this chapter under the "What is Credibility?" and "The Role of Organizational Identity" subheadings. With respect to measurement, I lay out my approach more thoroughly in the discussion of the text analysis and case studies below (to avoid priming, the experiment does not seek to capture these conceptions directly). My guiding principle is to examine the patterns of speech and writing on display when diplomats and military officials talk about credibility in internal papers, memoranda, interagency discussions, and other written documents. I am interested in these policymakers' word choice, framing, argumentation, and conclusions in cases where credibility is invoked as a concern.

### **Variable: Policy Advocacy**

By policy advocacy, I mean the main recommendations or set of suggestions that a given organization supports with regard to the issue at stake in a given crisis. These may be formulated and debated via a variety of formal and informal channels, including some of the same papers, memoranda, and discussions referenced in the previous subsection. My operationalization of policy advocacy does not require every member of an organization's senior staff to be in favor of achieving a particular outcome via a specific set of steps; rather, it reflects the majority view or consensus within the organization on what ought to be done. Therefore, diplomats or military

officers can (and often do) disagree among themselves about appropriate courses of action, but generally resolve these intra-organizational differences in the process of generating their agency's position.

### **Variable: Menu of Options**

By the menu of options, I refer to the intersecting set of policies generated by each organization that gets delivered to the leader and/or her decision making council. The “menu” itself does not have to take the shape of a formal document or list of choices, but rather reflects the range of options that are on the table or being actively debated. As discussed above, I envision this menu as ranging in hawkishness depending on how biased it is toward the use of force. For instance, a menu generated by diplomats concerned with reputation and military officers with high estimates of available capabilities might include three options, all of which involve use of force at some level. By contrast, a menu generated by diplomats concerned with reputation and military officers with low estimates of available capabilities might also include three options, but perhaps featuring only one or none requiring the use of force. I would categorize the former set as more hawkish than the latter.

Having specified the variables at each step in my causal chain more closely, I now turn to a discussion of each method's contribution to the project.

### **Method: Text Analysis**

In Chapter 2, I use NLP methods to examine broad patterns in use of the term “credibility” by diplomats and military officials in documents drawn from two corpora, *Foreign Relations of the United States* and *Declassified Documents Online*, since 1945.<sup>69</sup> These collections have two important features that make them the best available bases of evidence for this study. The first is that they contain U.S. government documents produced by a range of national security policy-making organizations, including the Departments of State and Defense. Document-level metadata

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<sup>69</sup>For details on each collection, see <http://history-lab.org/analytics>

allows me to extract the originating agency in most cases, and where necessary, I supplement with hand-coding through close reading of the relevant documents. This allows me to identify mentions of credibility according to whether they come from diplomats or military officials. The second key feature is that their temporal scope covers much of the post-1945 period, meaning that I can explore policymakers' conceptions of credibility across time and issue areas.<sup>70</sup> This widens the potential generalizability of the argument by allowing me to survey a variety of examples rather than just a few important ones, as recent and similar applications have done.<sup>71</sup>

I combine three text analysis techniques — word embeddings, keyness testing, and structural topic modeling (STM) — with close reading of individual documents to assess whether U.S. military and diplomatic officials think about credibility in different terms. As I detail in Chapter 2, this offers a *prima facie* test of my argument against system-level explanations, which do not anticipate such differences by organization in policymakers' conceptions of credibility. Word embeddings map the semantic and contextual relationships between concepts, allowing for modeling and measurement of these connections in three-dimensional space. I use embeddings to examine the terms that constitute credibility's nearest semantic neighbors among diplomatic and military officials. Keyness testing captures differential associations of words between sets of documents by identifying terms that are conspicuously over-present or under-present in a target group compared to a reference group.<sup>72</sup> This makes it useful for identifying words that most distinguish military from diplomatic officials when they discuss credibility. Similarly, STM is an increasingly popular method for grouping text into semantically interpretable clusters of words (otherwise known as topics) while integrating relevant document-level metadata, such as its organizational source.<sup>73</sup> Again, I draw contrasts between documents created by diplomatic versus military officials, in this case through comparing the distribution of topics across documents by organizational source. These analyses comport with my first hypothesis — diplomats conceive of credibility through the lens of reputation, while military officials conceive of credibility in relation to capabilities (I

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<sup>70</sup>FRUS's current coverage runs through the mid-1980s while DDO contains documents dated as recently as 2008.

<sup>71</sup>Katagiri and Min (2019).

<sup>72</sup>[https://quanteda.io/reference/textstat\\_keyness.html](https://quanteda.io/reference/textstat_keyness.html).

<sup>73</sup>Roberts et al. (2014).



examine the “interests” piece of the equation more fully in the case studies).

### **Method: Case Studies**

In Chapter 3, I turn to the first in a series of case studies, which I use to test both hypotheses more systematically and flesh out the underlying mechanisms. I conduct process tracing via both primary and secondary sources on four early Cold War crises involving the United States — Greece (1947-48), Berlin (1948), Dien Bien Phu (1954), and the Taiwan Straits (1954-55). My case selection strategy offers a challenging test for the theory while addressing the alternatives explanations detailed above.

Three considerations guide my choice of these cases. The first is that by choosing crises which fall narrowly before (Greece and Berlin) and after (Dien Bien Phu and the Taiwan Straits) the Korean War, I hold the polarity of the system and the balance of nuclear capabilities constant. While some important shocks fall between the first two and last two cases — including Soviet acquisition of nuclear weapons and the communists’ victory in the Chinese civil war — the system remained bipolar and the balance of U.S. nuclear superiority stayed substantial in this period.<sup>74</sup> These factors should make relatively easy cases for both structural explanations compared to my theory. From a systemic perspective, policymakers’ concern for credibility should have been persistent and uniform throughout this period. Observing organizational heterogeneity in how policymakers conceive of credibility and advocate policy would then be strong evidence for my theory.

The second principle driving my case selection is to address a major concern about studying policymakers’ perspectives on credibility during the Cold War, which is that related assumptions were often baked into the conventional wisdom and thus remained unspoken.<sup>75</sup> Looking at early Cold War cases minimizes this bias because in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the conventional wisdom was only just being established.<sup>76</sup> I therefore pick cases on either side of the Korean War to understand how diplomats and military officials first advanced arguments about credibility while

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<sup>74</sup>See <https://thebulletin.org/nuclear-notebook/>.

<sup>75</sup>Joll (1968).

<sup>76</sup>Larson (1985).

leveraging the massive increase in capabilities resulting from Korean operations as a potential discontinuity in these assessments.<sup>77</sup>

The third goal in picking these cases is to assess the alternate bureaucratic politics explanation regarding organizational influence. I accommodate this possibility by measuring military and diplomatic officials' policy advocacy in each historical case against what a more standard bureaucratic politics account would predict. Given what we know about the impact of bureaucratic politics on similar types of crises, it would not be surprising for concerns about organizational influence to drive observed policy advocacy.<sup>78</sup>

In Chapter 5, I perform a similar exercise on four historical cases drawn from a variety of time periods, under different distributions of power in the international system, and involving major actors other than the United States. I select prominent crises known to have generated credibility concerns among the major participants under conditions of multipolarity (Fashoda — Britain and France), bipolarity (Falklands — Britain), and unipolarity (Bosnia and Kosovo — United States). My purpose is to probe the validity of the causal mechanisms identified in the theory while addressing the possibility that the early Cold War cases yielded false positives relative to my expectations.

As I discuss further in the chapter itself, each constitutes a least likely case for my hypotheses, according to both structural and organizational alternatives. At Fashoda, the dominant historical narrative suggests that while British officials were uniformly concerned with controlling the Upper Nile as a means of imperial defense, French officials were themselves consumed with reclaiming Egypt as their traditional sphere of influence.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, French military officials' well-established organizational interest in offensive doctrines and tactics during this period offer a potentially direct counter to my expectations.<sup>80</sup> Regarding the Falklands, both contemporary and subsequent accounts paint the United Kingdom's military operations to retake the islands as a universal quest to demonstrate Britain's continued national power and relevance, especially among

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<sup>77</sup>Jervis (1980) and Gaddis (1982).

<sup>78</sup>Sagan (1993), Sagan (1994), and Allison and Zelikow (1999).

<sup>79</sup>Eubank (1960), Langer (1960), Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny (1961), and Sanderson (1965).

<sup>80</sup>Snyder (1989, Ch. 3).

its armed forces.<sup>81</sup> With respect to both Bosnia and Kosovo, scholars have argued that reputational concerns ought to be either particularly binding or far less acute under unipolarity.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, following their smashing success in the Gulf War and in conjunction with Clinton-era budget cuts, U.S. military officials ought to have embraced these operations as a way of ensuring their continued relevance and funding.<sup>83</sup>

In choosing these eight cases, I ensure that at least one crisis falls into each quadrant from Figure 1.2. Collectively, then, these examples provide both between- and within-crisis variation in diplomats' and military officials' views about credibility, their associated policy advocacy, and the overall balance of advice that leaders received, as depicted in Figure 1.3.

To retrace the bureaucratic tugs-of-war that yielded policy recommendations in each instance, I rely on primary source documentation wherever possible (particularly FRUS, for the sake of transparency and replication) and triangulate using secondary historical sources where necessary. In assessing the evidence, I derive observable implications that provide clear benchmarks for what patterns of policy deliberation and advocacy we should see under each potential explanation. Process tracing allows me to validate the text analysis while evaluating competing theories and mechanisms through close reading of the archival record. If officials displayed similar concern for credibility and advocate similar policies across cases, this would favor explanations based on structural factors. If diplomats and military officials expressed differential concern for credibility across cases, but advocated policies that increase their turf or resources, this would bolster the organizational influence alternative. Consistent with my argument about organizational identity, however, I find that while diplomats consistently fretted over reputation and advocated for the use of force, military officials framed problems in terms of capabilities and mainly advocated force when they believed such capacity was available. The evidence demonstrates that organizational identity can explain patterns of policy advocacy during crises through its effect on officials' conceptions of credibility. This in turn influenced the relative hawkishness of the policy choices delivered to senior leaders.

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<sup>81</sup>Richardson (1996, Ch. 6); Dolan (2015, pp. 547–554); Mercau (2019, Introduction).

<sup>82</sup>See Tang (2005) and Fettweis (2013) versus Layne (1991), Jervis in Edgerington and Mazarr (1994), and Lake and Morgan (1997).

<sup>83</sup>O'Hanlon (2003).

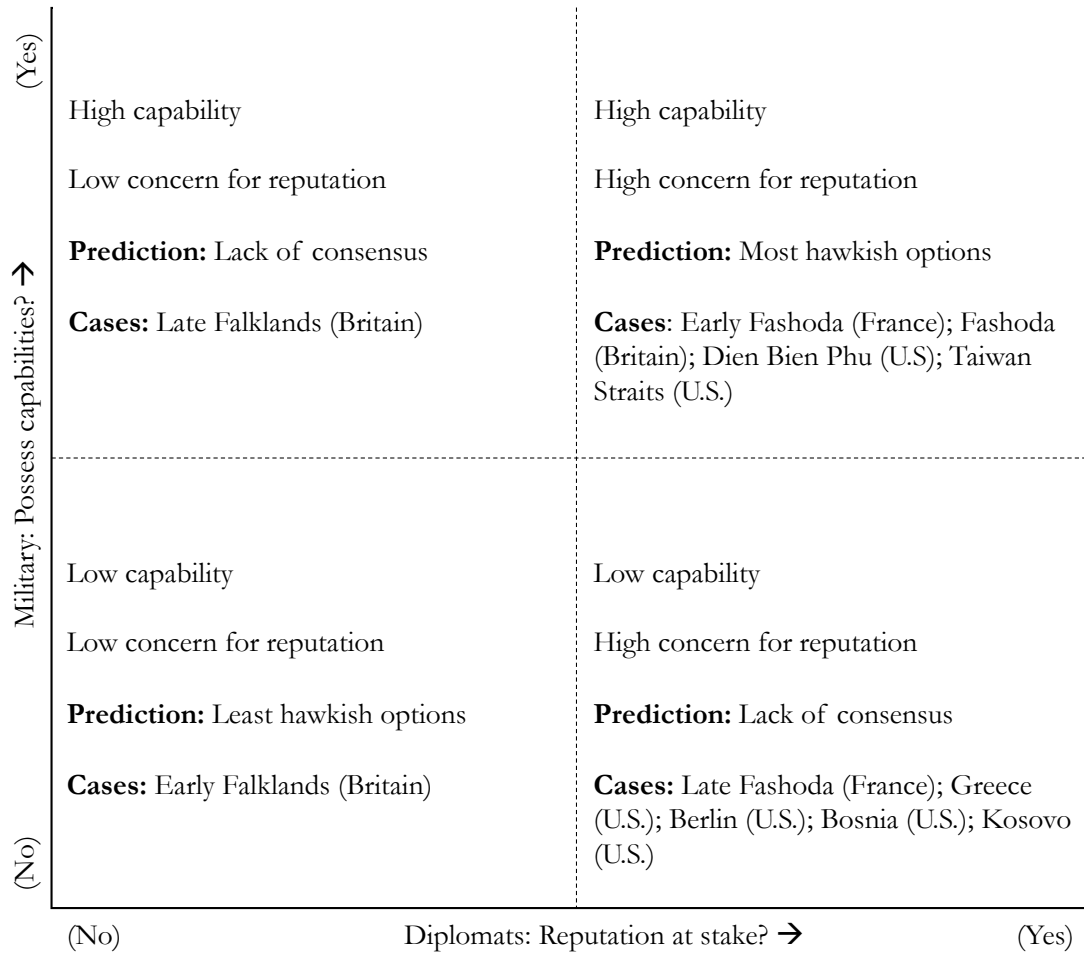


Figure 1.3: Case Studies in Theoretical Perspective

### Method: Survey Experiment

In Chapter 4, I deploy a survey experiment to gain causal leverage over how policymakers conceive of credibility and advocate policy while again ensuring that my case study findings are not just an artifact of the Cold War. Though survey experiments cannot approximate the actual time and resource constraints that policymakers face, they are still a useful tool for understanding what other variables are likely to matter during crises. The setup here strives for high realism and contextual richness by mimicking both actual past events and previous experiments in detailing a hypothetical crisis involving a U.S. ally while prompting participants to weigh various kinetic and non-kinetic options for a possible American response. Furthermore, by taking steps to recruit elites with policy experience rather than a convenience sample from now-ubiquitous survey platforms like Amazon's

Mechanical Turk, I increase the generalizability of my results to real policymakers.<sup>84</sup>

The experimental setup directly probes my theoretical expectation that diplomats and military officials will exhibit differential willingness to use force in crises based on their competing conceptions of credibility. Participants read a vignette about an American security commitment to a fictional country, Eastland, who is facing threats from a rising regional power, Westria. Participants are also told that Eastland shares a disputed and resource-rich border with Westria in which the United States has a vested interest because it contains most known supplies of a rare earth metal used in producing devices such as smartphones. Further, despite hosting a U.S. airbase and possessing substantial air capabilities, Eastland's ability to repel an invasion by Westria is limited because Westria possesses superior ground forces. Based on this military balance, U.S. intelligence concludes that Westria would likely defeat Eastland if the border dispute escalated into an armed conflict.

The key variation across experimental conditions concerns the U.S.'s past behavior toward Eastland and the availability of U.S. military capabilities to assist. In the control condition, the U.S. has not reliably defended Eastland in the past and does not have the capabilities to help out this time. In the Signaling condition, the U.S. has reliably defended Eastland in the past but capabilities are still not available. In the Capabilities condition, the U.S. has not reliably defended Eastland previously but has the capabilities available to intervene. And in the Signaling Plus Capabilities condition, the U.S. has been reliable in the past and the capabilities exist for a U.S. response.

Participants are then informed that Westria has moved ground troops into the disputed region; that that U.S. intelligence estimates a 48-hour window in which American action could prevent Eastland from losing access to the border region; and that the National Security Council is debating a range of options including deploying a Marine Expeditionary Unit, performing a flyover of the disputed region, increasing intelligence sharing with Eastland, pursuing sanctions against Westria through the UN, or doing nothing. I ask respondents to indicate how strongly they would support or oppose each of these policies as well as to rank-order their preferences over the entire range of

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<sup>84</sup>Though see Kertzer (2020) on differences, or lack thereof, between elite and mass samples on foreign policy questions.

options.

The experimental setup provides a controlled test of my proposed mechanisms. I find that, when treated with similar reputation- and capability-based considerations, participants with diplomatic experience are more likely than their military colleagues to support the use of force in helping Eastland. These results hold even after controlling for respondents' hawkish or dovish beliefs about foreign policy. The external validity of the results, of course, still hinge on the realism of the sample population. Accordingly, I gather an elite sample through a novel ensemble of recruitment methods. I use the networking platform LinkedIn to target member profiles that list past or current employment at the U.S. State Department, Department of Defense, and armed services.<sup>85</sup> I pair this strategy with outreach to top master's in international affairs programs at major degree-granting U.S. universities and the Senior Executive Fellows program at the Harvard Kennedy School. Altogether, this approach allows me to gather data from a wider network of current and former policymakers than is typical of most published elite surveys on foreign policy decision making.<sup>86</sup>

In sum, my research design is carefully constructed to leverage a broad methodological toolkit toward addressing different testable implications of the theory. I begin describing the results of these analyses in Chapter 2.

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<sup>85</sup>Clark (2021).

<sup>86</sup>Kertzer and Renshon (2022).

## Chapter 2: The Organizational Semantics of Credibility

In this chapter, I use natural language processing (NLP) techniques to evaluate my first hypothesis on how organizational identity affects the dimensions of credibility that diplomats and military officers value. I leverage archival documents drawn from two collections — the *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) series and *Declassified Documents Online* (DDO) — to examine patterns in how U.S. national security officials have talked about credibility since 1945. The relatively new availability of archival collections such as FRUS in digital form, coupled with the advent of NLP methods for social science, makes it possible for researchers to learn more about underlying trends in large document corpora than ever before. After coding the relevant records according to their organizational source, I employ these document-level metadata in NLP techniques to probe for differences in how military officers and diplomats conceive of credibility. This multi-archival survey of the historical record is not only useful in elucidating what these officials really mean when they invoke credibility, but also joins a growing group of studies attempting to apply new methodological techniques to classic questions in the study of international security.<sup>1</sup> I find support for the first hypothesis advanced in my theory: diplomats conceive of credibility primarily in terms of reputation, while military officers conceive of credibility primarily in terms of capabilities.<sup>2</sup> The evidence presented in this chapter therefore corroborates a key expectation of my theory while providing less backing for structural factors.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I discuss why FRUS and DDO are important bases of evidence for testing the theory. Second, I describe the NLP techniques that I employ and why they are an appropriate tool for answering my specific questions. Third, I present the results of my analysis along with close readings of the documents to illustrate organizationally-grounded

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<sup>1</sup> Allen and Connelly (2016), Katagiri and Min (2019), Carson and Min (2021), Jost et al. (2022), and Schub (2022).

<sup>2</sup>I focus more on the “interests” dimension of the equation in the next chapter.

differences in how diplomats and military officers think about credibility.

## 2.1 Why These Document Collections?

Before delving into the specific methods and associated results, I describe the records to be analyzed along with my rationale for selecting these particular document collections. I focus on FRUS and DDO for two main reasons, as noted in the previous chapter. The first is the organizational scope of each collection, which includes thousands of internal and external communications produced by several U.S. national security policymaking organs such as the Central Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense, Department of State, and National Security Council. Since my theory addresses how diplomats and military officers conceive of credibility, gathering documents that originate with both ideal types of policymakers is a prerequisite for evaluating the validity of my hypothesis. FRUS and DDO not only facilitate this exercise, but have also long been regarded as key sources of evidence for scholars of international politics and diplomatic history, as the documents therein range from inter- and intradepartmental memoranda to meeting minutes and transcripts involving both American and foreign officials.<sup>3</sup> Both collections are therefore among the best available sources for examining different bureaucratic actors' privately held views on topics of interest for this project, as they are more likely to indicate officials' honest opinions and policy positions than statements or speeches intended for public consumption.<sup>4</sup>

The second reason for analyzing both of these collections is their temporal coverage. Since FRUS and DDO cover much of the period between 1945 and the end of the Cold War, they not only span many crises to which my theory could potentially apply, but also capture decades of officials' everyday parlance in thinking, writing, and arguing about various foreign policy issues. Each of these features is important for my study, in large part because while crises are the events we tend to remember, the majority of foreign policy officials conduct their business under far less constrained circumstances that do not involve such elevated time and risk pressures.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, most

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<sup>3</sup>McAllister et al. (2015).

<sup>4</sup>For more on each collection, see <http://history-lab.org/frus> and <http://history-lab.org/ddo>.

<sup>5</sup>Sargent (2015) and Goldgeier and Saunders (2017).



members of the diplomatic and military officer corps are likely to learn about their duties and receive socialization to professional norms in a non-crisis environment, which in turn suggests that understanding how these policymakers conceive of credibility over longer stretches of time (that may still be punctuated by crises) is critical for grasping how they process information and structure choices. Importantly, then, my use of FRUS and DDO allows me to canvass the historical record for diplomats' and military officers' discussions of credibility without imposing any *ex ante* restrictions on the events or issues to be considered, which offers improved breadth over recent NLP-oriented studies that have only examined one high-profile case, like the Cuban Missile Crisis, in depth.<sup>6</sup>

However, one potential limitation in relying on FRUS is its status as an official history published by the State Department, meaning that it is a curated and potentially biased record. For starters, in collating thousands of documents for each volume, the department's historians must necessarily leave some out. Furthermore, key documents may either be published with redactions or remain classified entirely. Redactions generally do not prevent substantive interpretation of documents, as they often just conceal sensitive information such as intelligence sources or methods. But if FRUS systematically omits certain types of documents (whether due to space limitations or continued classification), this would be concerning for researchers. It is difficult to assess the scale of the potential problem. On the one hand, the U.S. government responded to a very public controversy over declassification of records related to the 1954 intervention in Guatemala by mandating a review of such documents after 30 years.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, recent commentary suggests that the slowing pace of declassification has hindered production of recent FRUS volumes.<sup>8</sup>

This is where DDO's availability proves critical, as it enables assessments regarding the robustness of my findings against a second corpus created via a different data-generating process. The records contained in DDO are not curated for release in the same manner as FRUS, as DDO

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<sup>6</sup>Katagiri and Min (2019).

<sup>7</sup>McAllister et al. (2015) and Schub (2022).

<sup>8</sup><https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/november-2019/secretary-prevents-as-declassification-slows-legally-required-to-release-documents-a-committee-signals-frustration>.

tends to hold documents whose initial publication was delayed due to continued classification but later occurred in response to a Freedom of Information Act request. Therefore, while FRUS and DDO may contain some of the same records, there is not significant overlap between the collections because DDO tends to comprise documents that were classified either secret or top secret and therefore held information considered to be seriously or exceptionally damaging to national security if it were made public.<sup>9</sup> While this does not make DDO any more random a collection than FRUS, it should provide a good sense of how officials discussed credibility in relation to highly sensitive topics and situations. As I demonstrate below, the results of the analysis do not differ widely regardless of whether I use FRUS or DDO as the underlying corpus, which should minimize concern that any biases baked into FRUS are distorting my findings.

## 2.2 Why NLP?

Having provided an overview of the textual data and the logic behind my approach, I turn to a discussion of the methodology used in this chapter. NLP has become an increasingly important and popular tool for political science research as a means to investigate patterns in political actors' speech and writing.<sup>10</sup> Scholars of international relations have begun to mine the archives, armed with new tools that allow them to tackle essential issues in international security through a significant expansion in the scope and scale of primary source documents that can be reviewed through computer-assisted text analysis.<sup>11</sup> Building on this work, I probe for variation in how decision makers conceive of credibility, using three methods that are well-suited to exploring organization-level patterns in policymakers' use of language.

I employ word embeddings, keyness testing, and structural topic modeling (STM) — in combination with close reading of individual documents — as my methods of choice because they enable structured, group-wise comparisons of documents in ways that leverage available document-level metadata. These tools are straightforward to describe and implement, offer a more systematic way

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<sup>9</sup><http://history-lab.org/ddo>;  
documents-online.

<https://www.gale.com/c/us-declassified-documents-online>

<sup>10</sup>For example, see Catalinac (2015) and Kim (2017).

<sup>11</sup>Katagiri and Min (2019), Carson and Min (2021), Jost et al. (2022), and Schub (2022).

to parse patterns of speech at scale than reading each document, and are not especially computationally intensive. These techniques illustrate the similarities and differences in words and phrases that arise when diplomats and military officers talk about credibility.

Word embeddings are an important tool for examining the terms that constitute credibility's nearest semantic neighbors for diplomats and military officials. This approach takes the local surroundings of a given term in-text to infer syntactic and contextual relationships between concepts.<sup>12</sup> Embeddings start from the premise that we can “know a word by the company it keeps;”<sup>13</sup> in other words, by modeling the relative space between a chosen keyword and the most proximate other terms.<sup>14</sup> The substantively interpretable output from an embedding model is a measure of cosine similarity between the term of interest and other words in the corpus. Recent methodological advances allow researchers to model these relationships as a function of document-level covariates, i.e. whether a given document originated with a diplomatic or military official, making NLP techniques well-suited to exploring organization-level patterns in policymakers' use of language.<sup>15</sup> Embeddings allow me to investigate whether credibility's nearest neighbors among diplomats and military officials pertain to reputation and capabilities, respectively. If the embeddings bear out these expectations, then they would provide some initial evidence consistent with my first hypothesis. However, if no such differences emerge, this would favor the structural factors alternative outlined in the previous chapter, wherein a relatively uniform logic governs policymakers' conception of credibility.

Keyness testing is similarly useful for comparing the words that most distinguish diplomats and military officers when they talk about credibility. This is because keyness captures differential associations of words between sets of documents by identifying terms that are conspicuously common or rare in a target group compared to a reference group.<sup>16</sup> In practice, this means that keyness

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<sup>12</sup>Mikolov et al. (2013)

<sup>13</sup>Firth (1957).

<sup>14</sup>Harris (1970).

<sup>15</sup>Katagiri and Min (2019) and Rodriguez, Spirling, and Stewart (2021).

<sup>16</sup>This generates a chi-squared value that is signed positively (negatively) if the observed number of occurrences for a given term in the target group exceeds (is less than) that in the reference group; [https://quanteda.io/reference/textstat\\_keyness.html](https://quanteda.io/reference/textstat_keyness.html).

tells us what words are most and least characteristic of one group of documents that share some underlying feature or trait (such as being created by diplomatic officials) relative to another group that share other some feature or trait (such as originating with military officials). For my purposes, then, keyness offers another route to identify the terms that best separate these policymakers when they talk about credibility. The theory would again anticipate that the most distinctive words for diplomats pertain to reputation, while the most characteristic words among military officials concern capabilities. If keyness testing points in this direction, it would bolster the embeddings results and increase confidence that my first hypothesis is on the mark.

Finally, structural topic modeling is helpful in contrasting the broad subjects that diplomats and military officers raise when they discuss credibility. This method uses unsupervised learning to map the underlying text as semantically interpretable clusters of words called “topics,” whose prevalence among subgroups of documents can be modeled as a function of document-level meta-data.<sup>17</sup> In practice, this means that STM results can not only show what topics are present in a given document collection (across all records selected for inclusion), but also how the distribution of those topics varies according to other document-level information that may be available (such as whether the document originated with a diplomat or military officer). For my purposes, then, STM illustrates the topics that pertain more strongly to diplomatic or military officials when they discuss credibility as well as the topics on which these officials’ discussions overlap. The theory would expect that for either type of topic, diplomats’ and military officials’ references to credibility should match a focus on reputation or capabilities, respectively. If the STM results match this prediction, they would contribute additional evidence consistent with my first hypothesis.

## 2.3 Data & Results

I first gather the relevant texts from FRUS and DDO using a regular expression search for the term “credibility.” This yields a sample of 1,156 FRUS records and 2,217 DDO records.<sup>18</sup> I

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<sup>17</sup>Blei, Ng, and Jordan (2003), Roberts et al. (2014), and Tingley (2017).

<sup>18</sup>I collect all data via <http://history-lab.org> and the Columbia University Libraries. I focus on credibility, and not related words like reputation, resolve, or reliability, because the latter have multiple meanings, whereas

then use metadata fields associated with each corpus to separate out only documents created by diplomatic or military officials.<sup>19</sup> Where the relevant metadata is not present, I supplement with hand-coding of individual documents. I consider records from the State Department to represent the diplomatic point of view and records from the Joint Chiefs of Staff or Defense Department to comprise the military point of view.<sup>20</sup> Where necessary, such as in meeting minutes or memoranda of conversation, I identify which type of official is speaking about credibility and code that document accordingly. This exercise produces 517 FRUS records (478 diplomatic, 39 military) and 958 DDO records (904 diplomatic, 54 military) that are in scope for analysis.<sup>21</sup> While my approach excludes documents where credibility is not mentioned explicitly, I show in Table A.4 that a divergence in diplomatic and military patterns of communication persists even in documents that do not reference credibility, suggesting that my results are representative of wider organizational differences.

Before analyzing the data, I follow standard procedures for preprocessing the raw text by lowercasing all words and removing punctuation, stopwords, and numbers.<sup>22</sup> For topic modeling, I also use the `stm` package in R to stem all words, remove very rare or very frequent terms from both corpora, tune the model parameters, and label the topics.<sup>23</sup>

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credibility has a specific cachet among policymakers. I also assume that this meaning does not change over time. I acknowledge that these are limitations of the study.

<sup>19</sup>The “Source” field in FRUS and the “Publisher” field in DDO indicate which agency produced each document.

<sup>20</sup>In the main analysis, I only include Defense Department documents if they were created by military officials rather than department civilians, as the latter are not explicitly part of the theory. However, various robustness checks in Appendix A show that the results generally remain consistent when I include DoD civilians. I exclude documents from other agencies because these entities are not part of the theory, but future research might consider, for instance, whether intelligence officials speak or write even differently than diplomats and military officials.

<sup>21</sup>Within FRUS, the number of military documents rises to 72 with department civilians included. Within DDO, the same statistic rises to 165 with department civilians included.

<sup>22</sup>Denny and Spirling (2018).

<sup>23</sup>I remove words that appear in less than 5 percent or more than 95 percent of documents. Model diagnostics provided in Figures A.3-A.4 display how I chose the number of topics to fit (via the `searchK` command) and which model runs to use in the analysis based on semantic coherence and exclusivity (via the `plotModels` command). For FRUS, I fit 9 topics and use model run #1 and for DDO, I fit 7 topics and use model run #4.

Table 2.1: Credibility Embeddings in FRUS

Diplomats	Military
undermined**	deterrent**
our**	capability*
detract**	sacrificing
reinforce**	leverage
importantly**	maintain
willingness**	capabilities
exert**	bolster
commitment**	maintaining
erode**	minimize
jeopardizing	strengthening

## Word Embeddings

Table 2.1 presents the embeddings results, which contrast credibility’s nearest neighbors among diplomats and military officials, ranked as a function of each word’s similarity with credibility. The stars indicate terms that are significantly more characteristic of particular groups at the 0.05 or 0.1 level.<sup>24</sup> The embeddings results are consistent with my first hypothesis and crystallize the key difference between diplomats and military officials’ conception of credibility: for the former, “willingness” is among the top nearest neighbors, while for the latter, the equivalent terms are “deterrent” and “capability.” The theory expects diplomats to concentrate on reputation as a component of credibility given their broad conception of national interests and strong belief about the interdependence of commitments. This focus heightens diplomats’ attention to others’ views of the home country’s perceived resolve or reliability, which they assume needs constant maintenance. Along with “willingness,” I observe this tendency in several other terms that are significantly associated with diplomats in the left column of Table 2.1, including “our,” “undermined,” “detract,” and “reinforce.” Collectively, these terms imply that diplomats either perceive or anticipate a deficit in credibility and seek to bolster others’ impressions of American will.

The theory further anticipates that military officials will zero in on capability as a component of credibility given their narrow perspective on national interests and capabilities-centric view

<sup>24</sup>See Rodriguez, Spirling, and Stewart (2021) for technical details.

of foreign policy. This focus accentuates military officials' attention to the balance of military power, which is essential to their ultimate goal of battlefield victory. I discern this pattern in the pair of terms — “deterrent” and “capability” — that significantly characterize military officials' discussions of credibility in the right column of Table 2.1. These words indicate that military officials think about credibility in terms of deterrent capabilities.

I demonstrate the consistency of these findings using DDO in Table A.1. In summary, embeddings provide suggestive evidence backing my first hypothesis: diplomats conceive of credibility in terms of resolve and signaling reputation, or the *willingness* to incur costs in service of a commitment, while military officials define it in terms of military capabilities, or the *capacity* to follow through when needed.

### **Keyness Testing**

To validate the embeddings, I turn to results from keyness testing in Tables 2.2 (for FRUS) and 2.3 (for DDO), which rank the top ten most characteristic words for diplomats and military officials, demonstrating substantial differences in the terms that diplomats and military officials use when discussing credibility. My theory argues that diplomats' focus on reporting and analysis of international affairs makes them most attentive to the dimensions of credibility that pertain to reputation. Since diplomats are chiefly responsible for collecting information on events in other states and on how foreign governments view the home country, it makes sense that “relations” is among their most characteristic words where credibility is concerned. Meanwhile, the topmost terms refer to issues like human rights. This is an area where diplomats assess not just foreign governments' behavior, but also the perceived reliability of U.S. international leadership on the issue — particularly during and after the domestic tumult of the 1960s.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, terms such as “israel,” “africa,” and “un” reflect known diplomatic priorities during the Cold War: being seen as a credible partner to Israel, a credible provider of development aid to Africa, and a credible actor at the United Nations. Reassuringly, the corresponding analysis for DDO yields substantively

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<sup>25</sup>Borstelmann (2012) and Keys (2014).

Table 2.2: Keynes in FRUS

<b>Diplomats</b>	<b>Military</b>
human	strategic
rights	forces
israel	military
african	capability
relations	war
policy	limited
see	rvn
un	cpr
vance	yar
issue	nuclear

Table 2.3: Keynes in DDO

<b>Diplomats</b>	<b>Military</b>
economic	minuteman
negotiations	data
israel	chiefs
africa	air
relations	radar
european	ctbt
trade	target
political	atomic
policy	regraded
viet-nam	amsa

similar results.

By contrast, my theory suggests that suggests that military officials' focus on fighting and winning wars makes them highly sensitive to the dimensions of credibility that relate to military capabilities. Since military officials are mainly responsible for the strategic and operational aspects of combat, it is logical that their most characteristic words in relation to credibility are those that concern military activities and the components of using force ("strategic," "forces," "military," "capability," "war," "nuclear"). Additionally, other terms reference specific entities whose credibility military officials assess through the lens of their operational capabilities, including the People's Republic of China, or CPR (whose nuclear and conventional forces were of perennial interest to military planners), Republic of Vietnam, or RVN (whose fighting strength was of substantial con-



cern to military officials during the Vietnam War), and the Yemen Arab Republic, or YAR (whose Egyptian-backed troops met forces aligned with U.S. partners Saudi Arabia and Jordan during the Yemeni civil war in the 1960s).<sup>26</sup> Similarly, for DDO, top terms such as “minuteman,” “air,” and “radar” pertain to the weapons and supporting systems (e.g. Minuteman nuclear missiles and air and radar assets) that were viewed as essential ingredients of deterrent credibility, especially the capacity to target and deliver an atomic strike. Keyness testing therefore suggests that diplomatic and military officials refer to credibility using words that pertain to reputation and capabilities, respectively, providing additional evidence in line with my first hypothesis.

## Topic Modeling

The STM results in Figure 2.1 deepen our understanding of how diplomats and military officials think about credibility, confirming that diplomats do so in terms of reputation while military officials do so in terms of capability. I demonstrate support for my first hypothesis by examining the topics that are unique to and shared by diplomats and military officials when they discuss credibility. The differences that I elucidate below suggest that system-level explanations for how diplomats and military officials conceive of credibility are missing an important factor: organizational identity.

Movement from left to right in Figure 2.1 indicates how the prevalence of various topics shifts as the underlying document sample changes from military to diplomatic records, while the point estimates that are bounded away from zero denote statistically significant differences in topical prevalence between these document pools.<sup>27</sup> Diplomats are more likely than military officials to talk about credibility in the context of Foreign Aid, Middle Eastern Affairs, and Public Affairs, while military officials are more likely than diplomats to discuss credibility in the context of Vietnam and Force Posture. Both sets of officials are equally likely to talk about credibility with regard to On-the-Ground Reporting, Treaties and Negotiations, and Grand Strategy.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Gelb and Betts (1979) and Orkaby (2014).

<sup>27</sup>Figure A.1 contains the full list of topic labels and highest probability word stems.

<sup>28</sup>I interpret the “Kissinger-NSC” topic as a residual effect of how often the former National Security Adviser and Secretary of State talked about credibility while he held these roles. I do not treat this topic as substantively

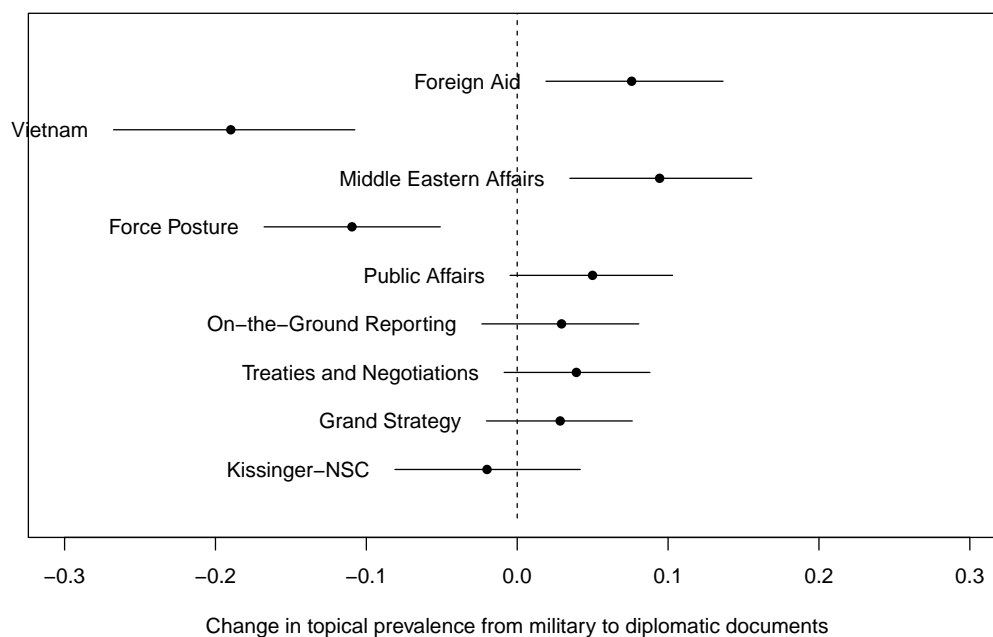


Figure 2.1: Topics in FRUS

Within and across these topics, what do diplomats mean when they invoke credibility? Tables A.5-A.7 contain representative quotes from the FRUS documents most closely associated with each topic, furnishing evidence that diplomats' references to credibility apply principally to cultivating an international image of reliable partnership. For instance, regarding Foreign Aid, diplomats see U.S. credibility at stake over its commitments to help its allies manage world oil prices,<sup>29</sup> to provide development loans through international financial institutions,<sup>30</sup> and to refrain from exporting arms to countries with poor records of adherence to international human rights standards.<sup>31</sup> On Middle Eastern Affairs, diplomats view U.S. credibility as an index of its regional influence relative to the Soviet Union and as asset to be managed with parties on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,<sup>32</sup> but especially with King Hussein of Jordan and other perceived moderates in the Arab meaningful.

<sup>29</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v37/d175>

<sup>30</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v02/d145>

<sup>31</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v13/d427>

<sup>32</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v08/d275>

world.<sup>33</sup> These examples suggest that diplomats conceive of credibility as a quality to be obtained or preserved through process-oriented actions, such as aiding allies or mediating regional disputes, that show willingness to take costly steps in service of commitments.

Similarly, what do military officials mean when they talk about credibility? The representative quotes supply evidence that military officials' references to credibility pertain to the ability to meet deterrence-related goals. For instance, on the topic of Vietnam (and the broader issue of U.S. posture in Southeast Asia), military officials assess the credibility of deterrence as a function of American capacity to meet immediate communist threats, such as in Laos<sup>34</sup> and Korea,<sup>35</sup> while remaining prepared for other regional contingencies or general war. Though military officials understand the American commitment to South Vietnam as symbolic of its determination to prevent communist expansion, they still interpret their primary goal as defending the RVN on the battlefield and invalidating the communists' "wars of national liberation" as a viable concept of military operations.<sup>36</sup> On the subject of Force Posture, military officials view credibility as a matter of relative military power, typically with reference to the Soviet Union. They conceptualize deterrence of a Soviet conventional attack on Europe as resting on the U.S.'s ability to employ strategic nuclear forces;<sup>37</sup> military officials also interpret the potential withdrawal of U.S. forces from bases in Greece and Turkey<sup>38</sup> and the expansion of Soviet military basing in Somalia<sup>39</sup> through the lens of how a shifting balance of capabilities would affect the credibility of deterrence. These examples suggest that military officials conceive of credibility as grounded in the relative (military) capacity to meet challenges and respond to threats in service of their overall goal: ensuring battlefield victory.

Though these results highlight a discrepancy in how diplomats and military officials conceive of credibility, additional evidence is necessary to judge whether these differences arise due to the

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<sup>33</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v08/d222>; <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v19/d359>

<sup>34</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v24/d134>

<sup>35</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d146>

<sup>36</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v03/d130>

<sup>37</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v34/d129>

<sup>38</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d121>

<sup>39</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve06/d155>

theoretical mechanism I have outlined or as a simple function of organizational specialization. In other words, given their diverging organizational remits, perhaps diplomats and military officials merely encounter credibility in the context of substantively different topics, but do not understand the term any differently. I explore this possibility by analyzing the topics that do not exhibit differences in prevalence between the underlying groups of documents, which should provide an even more direct test of what diplomatic and military officials mean when they invoke credibility under the aegis of the same broad topic or issue.

For these topics, however, the differences that the theory identifies do not drop away.<sup>40</sup> For instance, under Treaties and Negotiations, diplomats focus on preserving credibility by signaling consistent positions in public commitments and statements, whether in the context of international economic agreements,<sup>41</sup> at the United Nations,<sup>42</sup> or the return of the Panama Canal to Panama.<sup>43</sup> Yet when military officials refer to credibility on this topic, they concentrate on capability-centric dimensions of the problem at hand — whether in terms of how military capabilities could contribute to a favorable resolution of peace negotiations in Korea<sup>44</sup> or Vietnam,<sup>45</sup> or in how arms control negotiations could contravene capability advantages that the military currently enjoys.<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, in discussing Grand Strategy, diplomats frame credibility as a function of sustaining or developing military and/or economic relationships with countries outside of the direct Western orbit. In practice, this means that diplomats see U.S. credibility as tied up in matters such as the Philippines' success or failure as a democracy,<sup>47</sup> in the U.S.'s willingness to provide military and economic assistance to India,<sup>48</sup> and in its communicated interest in entertaining some degree of detente with Cuba.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, on this same topic, military officials cast credibility

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<sup>40</sup>I do not examine the “On-the-Ground Reporting” topic in detail because it concerns diplomats’ assessments of political credibility among foreign politicians and governments versus military officials’ assessments of information gathered through military operations.

<sup>41</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve03/d67>

<sup>42</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v05/d340>

<sup>43</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v29/d3>

<sup>44</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p1/d236>

<sup>45</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v02/d198>

<sup>46</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v11/d236>

<sup>47</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d373>

<sup>48</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d201>

<sup>49</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve11p1/d471>

as deriving from the U.S.'s ability to respond to regional contingencies in Europe and the Middle East.<sup>50</sup> Further, they view the relative credibility of the Soviet deterrent as lacking in the wake of the Sino-Soviet split and the USSR's failure to match Western military power.<sup>51</sup> And finally, military officials characterize deterrence as "a state of mind brought about by a credible threat of unacceptable counteraction...a function of obvious capability and known determination to employ it when necessary."<sup>52</sup> Thus, while military officials do not discount the importance of will in addition to capability, they chiefly concern themselves with assessing and building the latter in relation to credibility.

The evidence from the overlapping topics in FRUS therefore points to persistent differences in how diplomats and military officials conceive of credibility, backing up the inferences drawn from the topics that distinguish these ideal types. Nevertheless, to ensure that these results are not idiosyncratic to FRUS, I perform the same analysis using documents from DDO. Reassuringly, however, the overall pattern of topics, direction of effects, and organization-level differences remain consistent even after substituting in a different corpus. This provides additional confidence in my first hypothesis.

Indeed, several aspects of the DDO results bolster my organizationally-grounded conception of how diplomats and military officials think about credibility. First, a similar mix of topics arises as in FRUS, including Foreign Aid, Vietnam, Force Posture, and Middle Eastern Affairs. Second, the same subjects are significantly more prevalent in diplomatic versus military documents. Diplomats are again more likely than military officials to discuss credibility under the headings of Foreign Aid and Middle Eastern Affairs (as well as with respect to Communist Influence), while military officials are also more likely than diplomats to discuss credibility in the context of Force Posture. Third, the key differences relative to the FRUS analysis, as I elaborate below, are that military officials are not more likely than diplomats to talk about credibility in the context of Vietnam, but are more likely than diplomats to do so with respect to NATO.

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<sup>50</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v10/d12>

<sup>51</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v10/d43>

<sup>52</sup><https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v10/d188>

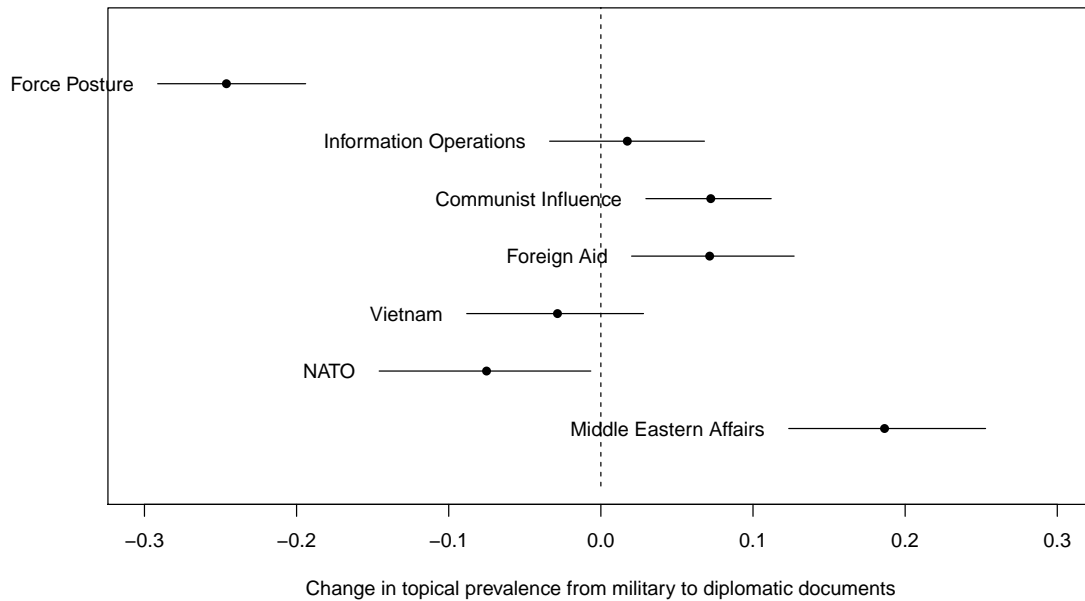


Figure 2.2: Topics in DDO

A closer examination of the Vietnam topic in the DDO results exemplifies the diverging conceptions of credibility that the theory identifies (though due to content licensing restrictions, I am unable to provide links to the relevant documents). For diplomats, credibility comes from demonstrating a willingness to incur costs in service of a commitment, or in other words, by backing up a threat to use force with an actual deployment of troops.<sup>53</sup> The adversary's credibility is similarly a function of their demonstrated willingness to follow through on threats via the use of force.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, any unilateral concessions (such as, in this example, halting bombing of North Vietnam) undertaken without reciprocal action from the adversary would be unacceptable, as these would detract from the credibility of the U.S.'s negotiating position.<sup>55</sup>

For military officials, however, credibility stems from the capability to perform on the battlefield. As an example, U.S. theater commanders in Vietnam did not view the International Control Commission (ICC) as a credible regulator of North Vietnamese infiltration into the demilitarized

<sup>53</sup> Alternatives to air attacks on North Vietnam: proposals for the use of U.S. ground forces in support of diplomacy in Vietnam; n.d.

<sup>54</sup> Paper lists probable Communist reaction to U.S. military actions in Vietnam; November 23, 1964.

<sup>55</sup> Report on peace negotiations; November 2, 1965.

zone because it had not demonstrated the capability to do more than publicize that such infiltration was occurring.<sup>56</sup> And though military officials are hardly ignorant of considerations of such as prestige and resolve, they equate these qualities with the capacity to fight effectively and deny the opponent victory as opposed to just a willingness to pay costs or meet commitments.<sup>57</sup> Particularly where national interests are concerned, military officials want to be sure that their capability to meet related threats is beyond question.<sup>58</sup>

To summarize, then, topic modeling results from two document collections underscore a key divergence in how diplomatic and military officials conceive of credibility: reputation versus military capabilities. Both the topical differences and similarities that arise in the analysis point to an organization-level disjuncture in how these officials talk about credibility. I find that diplomats refer to credibility as the *willingness* to incur costs in service of a commitment, while military officials define it as the *capacity* to follow through when needed, validating my first hypothesis. I conclude this chapter by relating these results to my broader theory.

## 2.4 Conclusion

Drawing on evidence from two archival collections, this chapter has examined the following proposition: diplomats conceive of credibility primarily in terms of reputation, while military officers conceive of credibility primarily in terms of capabilities. The evidence presented herein supports this contention — the words and phrases that diplomats use when discussing credibility pertain to reputation, while those that military officials employ relate to capabilities. This provides some initial and important confirmation for the theory, which I build on in the rest of the project through case study and experimental research.

Using word embeddings, keyness testing, and topic modeling, I offer a new and systematic comparison of what diplomats and military officials mean when they invoke credibility. The analysis indicates that organizational identity plays a key role in shaping how policymakers conceptual-

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<sup>56</sup>Admiral Sharp comments on policing of the DMZ; September 20, 1966.

<sup>57</sup>Memorandum for Secretary of Defense Dean Rusk from General Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; June 1, 1967.

<sup>58</sup>Analysis of U.S. involvement; June 1, 1968.

ize a quality that we know they care about deeply. By revealing organizationally-grounded notions of credibility, the results suggest that alternative explanations pitched at other levels of analysis are missing an important source of variation. Indeed, the differences that I observe emerge in contrast to a structural forces explanation that would expect a relatively uniform conception of credibility which develops and changes in response to variables such as the balance of power, interests, or resolve. Rather, the analysis here is consistent with the idea that diplomats' and military officials' views of credibility do not form and update according to an identical logic. And although military officials are not wholly ignorant of reputation-related factors, just as diplomats are not entirely inattentive to capability-based factors, the evidence indicates that these are not the primary lenses through which each frames key policy questions.

Nor are the patterns I observe simply the product of varying organizational remits that diplomats and military officials cover, as their contrasting conceptions of credibility persist across topics and issues. Even when talking about the same subject matter — whether the context is Vietnam, Treaties and Negotiations, or Grand Strategy — these officials demonstrate consistent differences in what they mean when invoking credibility. This suggests that my theory of organizational identity has explanatory purchase for understanding how decision makers who have been socialized to different bureaucratic norms approach the same issues.

In closing, a central implication of my findings is that diplomats and military officials do not develop or update their conceptions of credibility according to some universal logic. To assess the implications of this finding more thoroughly, I now turn to case studies of four crises from the early Cold War.



### Chapter 3: Organizational Identity in Historical Perspective

The previous chapter illustrates diverging organizational conceptions of credibility, contra theories at other levels of analysis that would expect more uniform views among foreign policy officials. But deeper examination of specific cases is required to verify this evidence, flesh out the underlying mechanisms, and test my second hypothesis. In this chapter, I conduct process tracing via both primary and secondary sources on four early Cold War crises — Greece (1947-48), Berlin (1948), Dien Bien Phu (1954), and the Taiwan Straits (1954-55). This approach is useful not just in accounting for alternative structural and bureaucratic explanations, but also in addressing a major concern about studying policymakers' perspectives on credibility during the Cold War, which is that related assumptions were often baked into the conventional wisdom and thus remained unspoken.<sup>1</sup> Looking at early Cold War cases minimizes this bias because in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the conventional wisdom was only just being established.<sup>2</sup> I pick cases on either side of the Korean War to test for variation in how diplomats and military officials first advanced arguments about credibility and probe how the massive increase in capabilities resulting from Korean operations may have affected their calculus.

To reiterate the key features of my research design, process tracing helps confirm whether military and diplomatic officials conceive of credibility differently, how this influences their policy advocacy, and how the theory stacks up against alternatives. I summarize these insights in Table 3.1. Should I find that officials exhibited constant concern for credibility and supported similar policies across cases, then structural explanations based on the balance of power, resolve, and/or interests may prove most persuasive. And if diplomats and military officials articulated concern for credibility according to the logic of organizational identity, but pushed for policies that bolstered

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<sup>1</sup>Joll (1968).

<sup>2</sup>Larson (1985).

their organizational unit's resources or autonomy, then a story about organizational influence may be the best explanation. In line with my argument about organizational identity, however, I find that while diplomats consistently fretted over resolve and reliability with regard to commitments and advocated for the use of force to shore them up, military officials framed problems in terms of capabilities and only advocated force when they believed such capacity was available. The hawkishness of policy options delivered to leaders varied accordingly, indicating that organizational identity can explain the balance of advocacy in crises through its effect on officials' conceptions of credibility.

Table 3.1: Observable Implications for Case Studies

<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Conception of Credibility</b>	<b>Policy Advocacy</b>
Organizational Identity	Diplomats: Resolve + signaling reputation	Diplomats: Use force if reputation is at stake
	Military: Capabilities	Military: Use force if capabilities are available
Structural Forces	Balance of power, resolve, and/or interests; no organization-level variation	Use force if interests, capabilities, and/or resolve are at stake
Organizational Influence	Diplomats: Resolve + signaling reputation	Diplomats: Use negotiations
	Military: Capabilities	Military: Use force

### 3.1 Greece (1947-48)

American involvement in the Greek civil war resulted from the United Kingdom's February 1947 decision to withdraw the 40,000 troops it had previously garrisoned there.<sup>3</sup> From late summer of that year through spring 1948, Britain's retrenchment and the Greek government's struggles to beat back a left-wing, Soviet-inspired resistance movement prompted clashes between U.S. diplo-

<sup>3</sup>Jones (1955); Steil (2018, p. 21).

mats and military officials over deploying U.S. combat troops to prevent a communist takeover in Athens.<sup>4</sup> Diplomats framed the potential deployment in symbolic terms, arguing that a failure to act would signal the end of the Western commitment to Greece.<sup>5</sup> Military officials, by contrast, saw Greece as an important strategic outpost, but cited a shortage of capabilities in refusing to approve intervention.<sup>6</sup> The evidence reveals differing conceptions of credibility, contra the structural explanation, and corresponding policy advocacy consistent with organizational identity rather than organizational influence. The lack of consensus between diplomatic and military officials led to a relatively dovish policy compromise in which President Truman was encouraged to supply aid and materiel, but not combat troops, to help Greece.

### **Diplomats' views**

Diplomats consistently argued that Greece was a test of American resolve and reliability in advocating the use of force to prevent the country from falling to communism. Meanwhile, they placed low priority on concurrent negotiations with the Soviets at the United Nations over the integrity of Greece's borders — the policy tool that arguably would have given the State Department greater influence over the U.S.'s position on the issue.<sup>7</sup>

The State Department's chain of command, which included Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson, Director of Near East Affairs Loy Henderson, and Ambassador Lincoln MacVeagh, viewed Greece as part of a single barrier to Russian expansion and sought to prevent it from becoming the first "domino" to fall.<sup>8</sup> Acheson warned Secretary of State George Marshall on the eve of British withdrawal that Greece's capitulation to the Soviets via lack of American or British support could result in the loss of the Middle East and North Africa to communism.<sup>9</sup> For this reason, Henderson argued that the U.S. had to assume responsibility "in such a way as to maintain

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<sup>4</sup>Wittner (1982, pp. 223–227).

<sup>5</sup>Jones (1997, p. 6).

<sup>6</sup>Jones (1997, p. 154).

<sup>7</sup>FRUS 1947, Volume V, Document 17.

<sup>8</sup>Wittner (1982, pp. 63–64); Steil (2018, p. 31). Secretary of State George Marshall, a career soldier, relied heavily on these senior deputies upon assuming the top diplomatic post. Since Marshall was a career military man, I code him as a military official rather than a diplomat.

<sup>9</sup>FRUS 1947, V, 23.

confidence in the United States and in their own ability to resist Soviet pressure.”<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, MacVeagh admonished from Athens that the UN process would prove meaningless for reestablishing order in Greece unless the U.S. more forcefully signaled its determination against foreign encroachment on Greek independence.<sup>11</sup>

Instead of putting stock in the UN talks, diplomats concluded that a new type of limited warfare was afoot in which prestige, or faith in the U.S. among nations not under Soviet control, would equal military force as a measure of strength.<sup>12</sup> In August 1947, a worsening military situation in Greece and a new British demarche announcing the departure of its remaining 5,000 troops brought calls from both MacVeagh and Chief of the American Aid Mission to Greece (AMAG), Dwight Griswold, for American intervention.<sup>13</sup> MacVeagh argued that if American troops did not replace the departing British, “we might as well pack up and go home” since this could not “fail [to] increase at least [the] appearance of fundamental weakness and lack of unity of western democracies.”<sup>14</sup> Griswold also endorsed this move, fearing that a failure to act would “inflict a severe blow to American prestige.”<sup>15</sup>

These dire warnings spurred an Army survey mission and the eventual dispatch of American advisers to train and assist Greek forces during fall 1947.<sup>16</sup> But diplomats in Washington and Athens still desired a more forceful response. To the extent that they sought to use UN channels, it was as cover for deploying troops rather than continuing negotiations with the Soviets. John Jernegan, the seniormost diplomat for Greek, Turkish, and Iranian affairs, inquired whether the U.S. could aid Greece under Article 51 of the UN Charter by deploying American troops and naval units therein for “moral support.”<sup>17</sup> James Keeley, chargé de affairs at the embassy in Athens, wrote that “The crux of the matter would seem to be ‘Is the United States in Greece to see the

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<sup>10</sup>FRUS 1947, V, 33.

<sup>11</sup>Jones (1997, p. 25); FRUS 1947, V, 14, 22.

<sup>12</sup>Jones (1997, p. 15).

<sup>13</sup>Offner (2002, p. 206); FRUS 1947, V, 187; 212. While Griswold was not a career diplomat, he was nonetheless a seasoned political operator as a multi-term former governor of Nebraska.

<sup>14</sup>FRUS 1947, V, 223.

<sup>15</sup>Jones (1997, p. 87); FRUS 1947, V, 227; 279.

<sup>16</sup>See FRUS 1947, V, 299; 312; 321.

<sup>17</sup>FRUS 1947, V, 333.

job through, i.e. to preserve Greek independence from Communist (Soviet) domination, or not’.” Keeley saw the use of U.S. forces as an almost foregone conclusion, estimating that events on the ground might require a decision on intervention at any time.<sup>18</sup>

In Washington, Henderson concurred. Sending troops to Greece was a political gesture to signal determination, even if this required partial mobilization for war.<sup>19</sup> Henderson saw Greece as the “test tube which the peoples of the whole world are watching” to ascertain Western determination to resist aggression and remained convinced that no amount of American resources could substitute for a willingness to meet force with force.<sup>20</sup>

By spring 1948, however, conditions on the ground in Greece had stabilized considerably thanks to an influx of American aid and materiel. Yet diplomats still favored the use of American military power in Greece, citing likely support from Congress, the public, and non-communist states around the world.<sup>21</sup> The Greek army’s successful spring offensive yielded another push from State to send American troops to Greece, purely for political signaling. Hinting at differences in military and diplomatic socialization, John Hickerson at European Affairs was put off by the Joint Chiefs of Staff’s advice that such a decision would be militarily unsound: “This raises a question which we have hashed over with the military boys time and time again. The purpose of sending forces to Greece would be to indicate a determination to clean up the situation in Greece and not effectively to conduct military operations if a shooting war started with Russia.”<sup>22</sup> Leonard Cromie at the division for Greek, Turkish, and Iranian Affairs agreed — the value in dispatching forces lay in signaling American determination now that this could be done safely.<sup>23</sup> Such considerations continued to dominate the State Department’s thinking even as discussions began in the fall of 1948 on how to wind down American aid. Nothing could be allowed to indicate “that the US has lessened its determination to assist Greece in maintaining her independence and territorial

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<sup>18</sup>Jones (1997, pp. 116–17); FRUS 1947, V, 360.

<sup>19</sup>FRUS 1947, V, 370.

<sup>20</sup>FRUS 1948, IV, 5; Jones (1997, pp. 130–31).

<sup>21</sup>FRUS 1948, IV, 67.

<sup>22</sup>FRUS 1948, IV, 71.

<sup>23</sup>Jones (1997, p. 171).

integrity.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Military officials’ views**

Military officials, by contrast, routinely met diplomats’ willingness to use force in Greece with a practical assessment of the required capabilities. While acknowledging Greece’s strategic relevance to U.S. regional interests,<sup>25</sup> military officials repeatedly pointed out that the U.S. did not have the swing capability to intervene without either jeopardizing the ability to meet other commitments or engaging in some level of domestic mobilization — even though such operations would likely have increased the military’s autonomy and resources.

Capability gaps dominated military officials’ assessment of events in Greece, leaving force as the last resort. George Marshall’s immediate reaction to Britain’s withdrawal was to probe the practicalities: “How long could the British be induced to keep troops in Greece? What forces would be necessary to replace them?”<sup>26</sup> During the first interagency meeting to discuss aid to Greece and Turkey, General James Crain, Deputy Chairman of the Policy Committee on Arms and Armaments, dissented from the majority view articulated by Henderson. Stationing forces in Greece had brought financial ruin on the British, Crain claimed; rather than acting now, it would be preferable to conserve U.S. resources for the “final trial of strength” if the Soviets intervened in Greece directly.<sup>27</sup>

Though the Joint Chiefs initially cited Greece’s strategic location as grounds for U.S. troops to replace the departing British, they quickly realized that this was not feasible.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, several other military officials refused to sanction armed intervention due to a lack of U.S. capability. General Marshall noted that the U.S. military mission was strictly advisory in nature. Lieutenant Colonel Walter Kerwin emphasized the grave foreign and domestic implications of backfilling the British with U.S. forces. And as the War Department undertook more serious contingency plan-

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<sup>24</sup>FRUS 1948, IV, 94.

<sup>25</sup>Jones (1997, p. 15).

<sup>26</sup>Steil (2018, pp. 40–41).

<sup>27</sup>Jones (1997, p. 37); FRUS 1947, V, 32.

<sup>28</sup>FRUS 1947, V, 269.

ning, practical problems emerged. The Air Force lacked sufficient lift capability to quickly surge troops to Greece without compromising operations elsewhere.<sup>29</sup> Army intelligence concluded that while troops could serve as a useful deterrent, their deployment might also provoke full-scale war that was unwinnable given the Soviets' local military superiority in the Balkans. The lack of capability to ensure a favorable outcome would become the military's mantra in Greece. Again underscoring differences in military and diplomatic socialization, General Lauris Norstad declared that "[I]t was usually the military people who had to hold back the sporadic and truculent impulses of political people and diplomats who [did] not realize the consequences of aggressive action."<sup>30</sup>

The U.S. did, however, extend operational advice to Greek forces following the fall 1947 Army survey mission.<sup>31</sup> Yet the survey did not call for a greater military role in Greece — it advised either withdrawing altogether or intervening with whatever means necessary to achieve American objectives, but not for introducing U.S. ground troops unless the British withdrew.<sup>32</sup> The chiefs soon took this option off the table following a fuller assessment of current American capabilities, validating the Army's earlier assessment. The armed services had too few men in uniform to favorably influence the Greek situation by deploying troops. Short of massive remobilization, which the chiefs did not advocate, the U.S. simply lacked the capability to act in Greece.<sup>33</sup>

When the intervention issue resurfaced in winter 1948, the chiefs again questioned whether the partial mobilization for war that this would entail was advisable or necessary.<sup>34</sup> For his part, General Marshall remained opposed to deploying U.S. forces based on the continued shortage of combat-ready troops and their likely vulnerability on mountainous Greek terrain.<sup>35</sup> Even after assuming the role of chief diplomat, Marshall's outlook and behavior continued to reflect the socialization and expertise of a career military officer. Marshall pointed out that nobody was sure about "the purpose of an expedition, the number of military officials needed, the logistical support

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<sup>29</sup>Jones (1997, pp. 85–86)

<sup>30</sup>Jones (1997, pp. 93–94).

<sup>31</sup>FRUS 1947, V, 285; 310.

<sup>32</sup>FRUS 1947, V, 315.

<sup>33</sup>Jones (1997, p. 99).

<sup>34</sup>FRUS 1948, IV, 4.

<sup>35</sup>Offner (2002, p. 206).

they would require, and whether the American public would be supportive.”<sup>36</sup> Though Marshall fretted about the consequences of not backing up policy with action, he also worried about a potentially ignominious withdrawal from Greece if U.S. troops were deployed then forced to retreat.<sup>37</sup> And in top-secret testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during March 1948, he leaned on his previous military experience in advocating against the use of force. Rather than use this platform to advocate for more military spending, Marshall noted that he had resisted identical pressures in his previous role as Army Chief of Staff “to apply American strength at once in various parts of the earth” in order to conserve limited resources and deploy them as effectively as possible. At the same hearing, Major General Arthur Harper (the deputy commander of AMAG) backed Marshall up on the lack of strategic rationale in such a deployment — on the contrary, he described it as a “mousetrap” operation that would have no beneficial effect in the region.<sup>38</sup>

By spring 1948, both Marshall and the chiefs understood that the U.S. had committed some prestige in Greece, but their overriding concern was the sufficiency of military capabilities to meet various potential contingencies. The chiefs were particularly unhappy with the approved version of NSC 5, which proposed military action if the Soviets or their allies recognized the Greek resistance as a legitimate government,<sup>39</sup> and in May issued the assessment that so rankled Hickerson: “The Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that the dispatch of forces, token or in strength, to Greece would be militarily unsound.”<sup>40</sup> The balance of policy advocacy thus weighed against intervention in Greece. Marshall’s pragmatic concerns resonated with Truman, who stuck with his summer 1947 decision to use economic leverage with the British to keep their troops deployed while leaning on American military aid and advisory capacity to build the Greek army into a capable fighting force.<sup>41</sup> Evidence from the Greek case therefore suggests that diplomats rather than military officials sought to use force for the sake of maintaining American credibility. Policymakers followed different logics with

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<sup>36</sup>Jones (1997, p. 132); FRUS 1948, IV, 12.

<sup>37</sup>Leffler (1992, p. 195).

<sup>38</sup>FRUS 1948, IV, 47.

<sup>39</sup>Jones (1997, pp. 130–31)

<sup>40</sup>Unless U.S. forces could be appropriately backed up, wouldn’t be needed elsewhere, and wouldn’t cause escalation; FRUS 1948, IV, 67.

<sup>41</sup>Offner (2002, pp. 206–207).



regard to credibility, but did not push for greater influence or resources in the way that a standard bureaucratic politics perspective would anticipate.

### **3.2 Berlin (1948)**

Few locations better symbolized the Cold War than Berlin.<sup>42</sup> Yet as the Soviets blockaded the city in June 1948, U.S. officials disputed whether it was worth risking allied resources or general war to retain Berlin's Western zones. Before the city became a symbol of Western resolve,<sup>43</sup> military officials questioned the feasibility and wisdom of holding an outpost deep within Soviet-occupied Germany, advocating for outright withdrawal and against the dispatch of an armed convoy to break the blockade. The urge to withdraw, however, met consistent pushback from diplomats, who routinely sought a more muscular response to Soviet pressure to forestall the reputational damage they associated with leaving Berlin.<sup>44</sup> Officials' conceptions of credibility were hardly uniform in the way that structural explanations would predict, while their resulting policy advocacy was consistently at odds with gaining organizational influence. Once again, the lack of consensus among diplomatic and military advisers resulted in a policy compromise that sought to defuse rather than escalate the crisis.

#### **Diplomats' views**

Diplomats immediately saw Berlin as a symbol of American resolve and reliability that had to be retained at all costs. The State Department warned as early as December 1947 that "Withdrawal of US power from Berlin would entail a great loss to US prestige in Central Europe."<sup>45</sup> Many in the department had "embraced the deterrence philosophy," arguing that avoiding war meant signaling both a refusal to abandon Berlin under any circumstances and a willingness to fight rather than capitulate.<sup>46</sup> Even when the opportunity to negotiate with Soviet premier Josef Stalin arose in

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<sup>42</sup>Schick (1971) and Trachtenberg (1999).

<sup>43</sup>Harrington (2012, p. 47).

<sup>44</sup>Shlaim (1983, pp. 35–36); FRUS 1948, II, 720.

<sup>45</sup>FRUS 1947, II, 362.

<sup>46</sup>Trachtenberg (1999, p. 82).

summer and fall of 1948, diplomats recommended a forceful response to Soviet pressure and were willing to run significant risks in sustaining the airlift that would end up supplying the city into spring 1949.

Senior diplomats such as Robert Murphy, State's chief political adviser in Germany, argued that withdrawal would have "severe psychological repercussions" extending "far beyond the boundaries of Berlin and even Germany."<sup>47</sup> Murphy's only worry about Berlin was "the strength of determination in Washington to maintain the position."<sup>48</sup> James Douglas, Ambassador to the United Kingdom, similarly averred that the United States could only "arrest and deter" the Soviet Union "by a real show of resolution." Douglas found former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's suggestion to harass Soviet shipping overly meek: "It seems to me to wave the strand of straw, disguised as a club, would have no effect;" rather, the United States needed a more dramatic showing of "solidarity and irresistible force."<sup>49</sup> So eager was Douglas to demonstrate American resolve that he interpreted ambiguous language in a draft note from Marshall to Moscow "to mean that we will fight to maintain the rights which we assert."<sup>50</sup>

General Lucius Clay, the American military governor of Germany, also concurred with this line of thinking. Despite his title, Clay was no average military man. After attending West Point, he spent much of his career as an engineer and administrator, serving during World War II in the Office of War Mobilization rather than in a combat role.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, his mission as military governor encompassed many political and diplomatic tasks, including gauging Soviet intentions and managing relations with his British and French counterparts. The son of a U.S. Senator from Georgia, historians have described Clay as a skilled politician and "striking exception to the [Huntingtonian] ideal-type of a cautious and apolitical professional soldier."<sup>52</sup> For these reasons, Clay fits better as a diplomat than a military official.

Accordingly, Clay sought to confront the Russians immediately in April 1948, first cabling

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<sup>47</sup>FRUS 1948, II, 527.

<sup>48</sup>FRUS 1948, II, 533.

<sup>49</sup>FRUS 1948, II, 536.

<sup>50</sup>FRUS 1948, II, 539; Trachtenberg (1999, p. 83).

<sup>51</sup>Harrington (2012, pp. 30–31, 58–59).

<sup>52</sup>Shlaim (1983, p. 103).

Army Chief of Staff Omar Bradley for permission to double the guard presence on Berlin-bound U.S. trains and shoot Russians who tried to board,<sup>53</sup> then proposing to challenge the blockade with an armed convoy of American, British, and French troops. Clay was ready to demonstrate American resolve with force, arguing that a retreat from Berlin would have “serious if not disastrous political consequences in Europe.”<sup>54</sup> Even as the Soviets ratcheted up access restrictions in June 1948, Clay admitted that there was nothing practical about staying in Berlin, but claimed he would do so until the Germans faced starvation because the American presence was “essential to our prestige.”<sup>55</sup>

When the full blockade began on June 24th, Clay and his compatriots at State doubled down on their hard line. In another indication of differential socialization, Clay would later claim that while his Army superiors viewed the crisis in purely military terms, only he grasped the political implications.<sup>56</sup> Murphy echoed these earlier conclusions on June 26th — the Western presence in Berlin was “unquestionably an index of our prestige in central and eastern Europe.” Retreating, he said, “would be the Munich of 1948.”<sup>57</sup> Rather than face another Munich, Clay revived the convoy scheme on both June 25th and July 10th,<sup>58</sup> a plan for which he had neither the troops nor the blessing of Pentagon planners.<sup>59</sup> Murphy also favored the convoy idea, lest the West admit that it lacked the will to enforce its surface access rights.<sup>60</sup> This view had substantial currency at the State Department, as Marshall attested during a July 15th NSC meeting: “his department ‘felt that we must pave the way for any possible use of armed convoys by showing that we have exhausted all other ways of solving the problem’.”<sup>61</sup> Douglas, too, reiterated that abandoning Berlin would be “a calamity of the first order” which would shatter “Western European confidence in us” unless it were paired with “spectacular commitments” and “unmistakably impressive acts designed to

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<sup>53</sup>FRUS 1948, II, 528.

<sup>54</sup>Harrington (2012, p. 48).

<sup>55</sup>Harrington (2012, pp. 58–59).

<sup>56</sup>Harrington (2012, p. 82).

<sup>57</sup>FRUS 1948, II, 559.

<sup>58</sup>FRUS 1948, II, 557.

<sup>59</sup>FRUS 1948, II, 577.

<sup>60</sup>Harrington (2012, pp. 128–29).

<sup>61</sup>Harrington (2012, p. 130). As discussed in the next section, Marshall himself did not support the convoy plan.

restore confidence.”<sup>62</sup>

Diplomats’ advocacy for a firm and forceful response continued through the summer and fall of 1948 despite the initiation of the airlift in late June. At the July 22nd NSC meeting, Clay and Murphy again sought permission to break the blockade and pressed their case about “the loss of our position in Europe.”<sup>63</sup> Though the NSC would turn this proposal aside in favor of a demarche to Moscow, diplomats continued to press for staying in Berlin no matter what — even though direct negotiations with the Soviets had been chosen as a central tactic. In his memoirs, Murphy later questioned why nobody on the NSC mentioned the U.S.’s “growing stockpile of atomic bombs” and lamented that he should have resigned over the major Soviet downgrading of “American determination and capability” for not having met force with force.<sup>64</sup> Showing remarkable disregard for the limitations of American resource constraints, Clay dismissed the Army’s objections in August and September that concentrating the U.S.’s air transport fleet on the airlift mission was militarily unwise, arguing instead that the West’s stake in Berlin outweighed such considerations.<sup>65</sup> When negotiations with Stalin collapsed in September 1948, Foy Kohler, chargé at the embassy in Moscow, expressed hope that U.S. military leaders in Berlin would “now feel themselves released from former restraints.”<sup>66</sup> And in a November memorandum, the Policy Planning Staff acknowledged that war with the Soviets was unwise, yet still ruled out Western withdrawal because Berlin had raised “one of the great recurrent imponderables of foreign policy: an emotional factor which may bear little logical relation to the practical considerations involved but which is of major, and unanswerable, importance.” In diplomats’ view, there could be no turning back from the U.S.’s numerous firm statements committing that “we will not get out of Berlin.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>FRUS 1948, II, 582.

<sup>63</sup>Harrington (2012, p. 136); Shlaim (1983, pp. 258–59).

<sup>64</sup>Murphy (1964, pp. 316–17).

<sup>65</sup>Harrington (2012, p. 238).

<sup>66</sup>FRUS 1948, II, 670.

<sup>67</sup>FRUS 1948, II, 693.

## **Military officials' views**

Yet military officials were not prepared to meet the Soviets with force in Berlin and never budged from this position. Postwar demobilization had yielded a dramatic loss of effective combat power that greatly restricted military officials' estimates of what was possible — a reality that military officials did not attempt to rectify by lobbying for more resources. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, in particular, emphasized the military's overextension, consistently admonishing that "American commitments were not in line with the country's military capabilities."<sup>68</sup>

From the outset, military officials were skeptical of committing to Berlin. When the Soviets first restricted surface traffic in April 1948, the Pentagon's initial impulse was to withdraw altogether. Meanwhile, Clay's initial proposals frightened General Bradley and other senior Army leaders with casual talk of shooting Russians.<sup>69</sup> In response, Bradley refused to authorize more guards or weapons for Berlin-bound trains, telling Clay that the U.S. would consider appropriate conditions for withdrawal rather than go war for access rights.<sup>70</sup> When Clay floated his convoy idea, Bradley quashed it immediately. Bradley knew that the Western allies would be hopelessly outnumbered if any shooting started — their 6,500 soldiers would be squaring off against 18,000 Soviet troops. Like Bradley, Secretary of the Army Kenneth Royall and Army Plans & Operations Director Lieutenant General Alfred Wedemeyer had been infantry officers during World War II. Their shared assessment was that Berlin could not be defended in a military confrontation.<sup>71</sup>

Even once the full blockade began, military officials refused to sanction armed action, despite the enhanced resources and influence this might have brought them.<sup>72</sup> If the goal was to avoid war, military officials posited, then the risks of staying in Berlin absent the capability to fight and win were too great — the United States had only limited interests there; prestige was not the coin of the realm; and withdrawal would harm but not torpedo the broader Western cause.<sup>73</sup> Secretary

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<sup>68</sup>Trachtenberg (1999, pp. 87–90).

<sup>69</sup>Harrington (2012, pp. 50–51).

<sup>70</sup>Harrington (2012, pp. 54, 58).

<sup>71</sup>Shlaim (1983, p. 214).

<sup>72</sup>FRUS 1948, II, 560; Shlaim (1983, p. 186).

<sup>73</sup>Harrington (2012, pp. 82–84).

Royall worried that “we might not fully have thought through our course of action” and feared having to “fight our way into Berlin,” arguing instead that it would be preferable to withdraw at once rather than attempt to stay but eventually abandon the city.<sup>74</sup> Admiral William Leahy echoed these remarks, stating that from a military point of view, the U.S. had to get out of Berlin or else face defeat.<sup>75</sup> As a result, Clay’s revised convoy proposal of late June met harsh criticism from Bradley and Pentagon planners, who pointed out that the Soviets could stop the troops in their tracks by blowing up bridges along the autobahn.<sup>76</sup>

Instead, military officials remained focused on the dearth of U.S. capability and argued that the impact of withdrawal could be minimized by demonstrating that the United States would stand firm where capabilities permitted.<sup>77</sup> The chiefs opposed the convoy in their formal opinion on July 22nd “in view of the risk of war involved and the inadequacy of United States preparation for global conflict.” Planning for a convoy would only be prudent if every other option had been exhausted; if there was a reasonable expectation of success; if the U.S. had accepted the risk of war over Berlin specifically; and if adequate mobilization time was built in.<sup>78</sup> For his part, General Marshall responded to the blockade with “pragmatic calculations of power and interest.” As a lifetime soldier, he appreciated the importance of a credible military posture and thus emphasized American intention and capability to stay in Berlin.<sup>79</sup> Yet he treated the convoy as a last resort and saw the airlift’s effect on warfighting capacity as a major concern.<sup>80</sup> “Like a good general,” Marshall tried to anticipate the Soviets’ moves, but understood that the U.S.’s conventional forces were vastly outgunned. This made him reluctant to forcefully break the blockade, even if the entire European project hinged on defending Berlin as an outpost.<sup>81</sup>

Thus, mutual opposition from Marshall and the chiefs limited the hawkishness of policy options

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<sup>74</sup>Shlaim (1983, p. 220).

<sup>75</sup>Harrington (2012, pp. 89, 106). Leahy acknowledged that “politically, it may be quite important for us to take a defeat there.”

<sup>76</sup>Shlaim (1983, p. 131).

<sup>77</sup>Harrington (2012, pp. 128–130).

<sup>78</sup>FRUS 1948, II, 591; Harrington (2012, pp. 135–36).

<sup>79</sup>Shlaim (1983, pp. 93, 183).

<sup>80</sup>Harrington (2012, p. 238).

<sup>81</sup>Shlaim (1983, pp. 185–86); FRUS 1948, II, 583.

on Berlin, constraining any serious debate about a blockade despite Clay and Murphy's direct plea in late July. President Truman, accounting for the military's resistance to a convoy but sympathetic to diplomats' arguments about standing firm, decided to muddle through: the U.S. would continue the airlift indefinitely as a means of buying time for negotiations with Stalin.<sup>82</sup> As American policy settled on this relatively conciliatory course in fall 1948, the chiefs and other military officials continued to highlight the disparity in foreign policy means and ends. In August and September, the Army staff objected to further diversions of transport planes to the airlift, which they feared was "placing all [our] eggs in one basket," on a handful of vulnerable airfields while virtually shutting down the Military Air Transport Service — thus crippling the nation's ability to fight if war came. Though they eventually relented on this issue, the chiefs remained uneasy about the West's lack of preparation should fighting result from the insistence on staying in Berlin.<sup>83</sup> Going to war, they judged, "would be neither militarily prudent nor strategically sound" at the current level of readiness.<sup>84</sup>

### **Summary: The Military's Restraining Influence**

In Berlin as in Greece, military officials were far less willing than their diplomatic counterparts to use force for the purposes of preserving American credibility. This disagreement stemmed from differing conceptions of credibility. Diplomats strove to maintain the U.S.'s reputation for resolve and reliability by seeking to demonstrate, through the use of American military power, that it would pay costs and run risks on behalf of its partners in Greece and Germany. But military officials saw these moves as imprudent given the military's limited forces-in-being and the potential escalatory consequences that could accompany troop deployments. The military's advocacy against a more forceful response was key to limiting the hawkishness of policy options that President Truman ultimately considered regarding how to respond in both cases.

These first two cases provide important evidence regarding military and diplomatic officials'

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<sup>82</sup>Harrington (2012, pp. 135–39).

<sup>83</sup>Harrington (2012, pp. 237–39).

<sup>84</sup>Trachtenberg (1999, p. 81).

diverging notions of credibility and resulting policy advocacy. Officials' conceptions of credibility followed organizationally-grounded logics, confirming the theory's observable implications: diplomats' beliefs about interdependence manifested in their concern for potential damage to U.S. reputation in Europe and elsewhere, while military officials' attention to the quality of military leadership, forces, and weapons is clear in their refusal to sanction actions for which capabilities were unavailable. The contrast between Marshall (the career soldier who retained a military officer's mindset even as head diplomat) and Clay (the West Point graduate who assumed an explicitly political role as military governor) illustrates how two mechanisms contribute to the patterns envisioned in the theory: military socialization stuck with the former, while a broad mission encompassing both diplomatic and military responsibilities shaped the latter. Furthermore, the evidence counters the structural explanation that expects all policymakers to draw similar inferences about credibility based simply on the balance of power, resolve, and/or interests. My findings are also at odds with a story about organizational influence. Neither did diplomats embrace the chance to seize turf by emphasizing negotiations, nor did military officials leverage the opportunity to increase their resources and autonomy by endorsing military operations.

While these cases provide encouraging support for my theory, I next seek to validate the results on other examples in which relevant contextual parameters have shifted. I turn to two post-Korean War examples to examine whether the capability buildup associated with this conflict altered patterns of policy advocacy.

### **3.3 Dien Bien Phu (1954)**

When France requested American intervention to spare its besieged garrison at Dien Bien Phu in April 1954,<sup>85</sup> U.S. officials nearly acquiesced. Though the U.S. had been aiding France's efforts to retain the Associated States of Indochina (Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam) since early 1950, debates about intervention to spare France a military defeat did not begin in earnest until after the Korean armistice in 1953. Nevertheless, diplomats once again argued that American resolve and

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<sup>85</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 691.



reliability were on the line, while military officials delivered split opinions based on diverging assessments of American capabilities. Given the generally favorable balance of capabilities that the U.S. enjoyed in the region, a structural explanation would not anticipate substantial credibility concerns — yet some officials saw U.S. military superiority as precisely the reason to act. However, military and diplomatic officials still framed intervention in terms of capability versus will, respectively. Though some military officials' advocacy reflected a bureaucratic desire to defend turf and influence, diplomats again shunned negotiations. On net, my theory of organizational identity explains patterns of policy advocacy in this case, which flirted with some very hawkish options.

### **Diplomats' views**

State Department officials consistently backed a larger American role in Indochina to support France as an ally, mirroring their stance on Greece and Berlin.<sup>86</sup> Diplomats favored active American participation in the conflict to shore up what they viewed as flagging American resolve and reliability, forswearing any efforts at negotiation with the Viet Minh while entertaining the use of nuclear weapons at Dien Bien Phu to spare the French garrison.

When John Foster Dulles became Secretary of State in 1953, he was already a seasoned diplomat who believed that any failure to check communist expansion would confirm the United States' irresolution and unreliability in the eyes of other nations.<sup>87</sup> Mirroring rhetoric from his diplomatic colleagues in the Truman administration, Dulles told senior civilian and military officials that a French defeat in Indochina could not be localized and would lead to the loss of Japan.<sup>88</sup> He feared “dishonorable abandonment” of those in Indochina who had risked their lives on the basis of French — and by extension, American — promises to defeat the Viet Minh.<sup>89</sup>

Throughout 1953 and 1954, Dulles and his staff — including State Department counselor Douglas MacArthur II, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter Robertson, and Di-

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<sup>86</sup>Prados (2014, Location 213).

<sup>87</sup>Gaddis (1982, p. 103).

<sup>88</sup>Logevall (2012, Location 5908).

<sup>89</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 301.

rector of Policy Planning Robert Bowie — routinely favored more forceful measures in Indochina. For his part, Bowie repeatedly pressed the NSC to consider U.S. intervention if the French were defeated or withdrew, even challenging the Joint Chiefs on their categorization of Southeast Asia as critical to U.S. security interests but not worth the commitment of ground forces.<sup>90</sup> A State Department report to the NSC in August 1953 encapsulated this view: the loss of Indochina would “weaken the confidence of other Southeast Asian states in Western leadership” and force the United States “to consider most seriously whether to take over in this area.”<sup>91</sup> Dulles himself vigorously lobbied the French against a negotiated settlement and testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the only acceptable result would be the military defeat of the Viet Minh.<sup>92</sup> On this point, Robertson acknowledged but discounted the potential pitfalls of an American intervention: “Withdrawal of French forces as well as refusal to commit American forces would weaken the free-world position and push neutralist nations toward the communist bloc.”<sup>93</sup>

Diplomats spent much of spring 1954 puzzling over how to signal American reliability and resolve while avoiding a total collapse or a negotiated settlement, which the French were increasingly keen to pursue. Though Dulles acknowledged that sending forces into Indochina would engage U.S. prestige and thus require a victory to avoid “worldwide repercussions,”<sup>94</sup> he also argued to Eisenhower’s cabinet that even if it was risky, the U.S. would have to take “fairly strong action,” including the harassment of Chinese shipping, to prevent the collapse of the defensive perimeter in Southeast Asia.<sup>95</sup> Along these lines, Dulles attempted to internationalize the conflict through “united action” by a U.S.-led coalition including the UK, France, Australia, Thailand, and the Associated States.<sup>96</sup> Rather than appeal to the UN, as the British encouraged, Dulles and his staff preferred to threaten “disastrous retaliation” against China with air and sea forces to compel a halt in PRC assistance to the Viet Minh.<sup>97</sup> Sitting passively by, Dulles argued, would be riskier in

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<sup>90</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 327; 332; 700.

<sup>91</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 367.

<sup>92</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 544; Prados (2014, Location 615, 1832).

<sup>93</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 497.

<sup>94</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 628.

<sup>95</sup>Morgan (2010, p. 401); Prados (2014, Location 2043); FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 636.

<sup>96</sup>Logevall (2012, Location 7868).

<sup>97</sup>Prados (2014, Location 2207).

the long run if it left the People's Republic of China (PRC) with the impression that adventurism in Southeast Asia would not face consequences, and especially since "the atomic balance, which is now advantageous to us, might decline over the next four years."<sup>98</sup> Thus, while Dulles was conscious of the nuclear balance, he viewed U.S. nuclear capabilities as a tool to be wielded for signaling purposes.

Though united action met resistance from allies, congressional leaders, and President Dwight Eisenhower, diplomats never abandoned the idea of signaling resolve and reliability through the threat of military force. The Policy Planning staff concluded that "a clear U.S. commitment to employ its own forces in defense of Indochina, Thailand, and Malaya would provide cement for an alliance."<sup>99</sup> At the April 6th NSC meeting, Dulles at once framed united action as "an effort to build up strength in the Southeast Asia area" and asserted that if this regional grouping failed, "it would certainly be necessary to contemplate armed intervention."<sup>100</sup> As Dulles embarked for the Geneva Conference later that month, MacArthur advised him that there were just two choices: accept a disastrous negotiated settlement or provide military forces for Indochina.<sup>101</sup> And though Dulles declined a French request for air support at Dien Bien Phu,<sup>102</sup> he also may have made a secret offer to French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault of two American atomic bombs for use at the besieged garrison — a potentially dramatic escalation of the conflict.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, Dulles posed several questions at the May 6th NSC meeting implying where he and his department stood: was the United States prepared to commit combat forces? And was it ready to accept a Viet Minh victory despite the seriousness of the loss to the free world and even though it had atomic bombs ready to redeem the situation?<sup>104</sup> In sum, diplomats thought U.S. credibility was on the line at Dien Bien Phu and preferred to go in, guns blazing, rather than accept a negotiated settlement.

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<sup>98</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 679.

<sup>99</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 665.

<sup>100</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 705.

<sup>101</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 781.

<sup>102</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 793.

<sup>103</sup>Prados (2014, Location 3646); Logevall (2016).

<sup>104</sup>Gravel (1971, Vol. 9, 425).

## **Military officials' views**

Meanwhile, military officials' willingness to intervene in Indochina moved in sync with their assessment of American military capabilities. Military officials were skeptical of deploying force to support the French prior to the armistice in Korea and the arrival of some new personnel at the Joint Chiefs of Staff. These developments shifted the chiefs' balance of advocacy based on what was possible from a capabilities perspective, but did not yield uniform preferences for the use of force despite the increased autonomy that this might have offered.

While the United States was engaged in Korean combat operations, the chiefs unanimously discouraged the use of any U.S. ground forces elsewhere in Southeast Asia.<sup>105</sup> They opposed the commitment of armed forces to French or British causes therein, positing that the U.S. would only "make such contribution as is possible" in line with worldwide commitments.<sup>106</sup> Though the chiefs appreciated the region's strategic importance, they could not "subscribe to the courses of action recommended with our military capabilities at their present level."<sup>107</sup> As General Bradley presciently argued in early 1953, the U.S. did not then have the capabilities to hold a beachhead in Indochina,<sup>108</sup> because simply deploying a Marine division wouldn't cut it — if intervention occurred, the U.S. would be there "for the long pull," "in up to our necks," and for a "major and protracted war."<sup>109</sup> The chiefs' balance of advice shifted in 1953, however, as fighting in Korea wound down and new personnel arrived. In August, Admiral Arthur Radford succeeded General Bradley as chairman.<sup>110</sup> Radford not only brought the can-do perspective of a naval aviator to the role, but had also been instrumental in retaining the Navy's tactical nuclear capabilities during previous interservice spats over who would control what aspects of the U.S.'s growing atomic arsenal.<sup>111</sup> He was therefore convinced of air power's efficacy in modern warfare, and given American aerial and nuclear superiority, thought that the U.S. should take advantage of a

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<sup>105</sup>Prados (2014, Location 314).

<sup>106</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XII, 2; 3.

<sup>107</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XII, 12.

<sup>108</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 170.

<sup>109</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 332.

<sup>110</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 388.

<sup>111</sup>Prados (2014, Location 1770-1784).

favorable military balance against communist forces in Asia while there was still time.<sup>112</sup> Radford was also instrumental in developing the “New Look” military doctrine, which considered air- and sea-launched nuclear weapons “as available for use as other munitions.”<sup>113</sup>

Consistent with these views, Radford repeatedly argued for American intervention in Indochina over the first six months of 1954. While serving as Commander in Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, Radford had devised contingency plans for assisting the French in the air. He thus speculated at the January 8th NSC meeting that putting a squad of American planes over Dien Bien Phu for an afternoon could save the situation, arguing that the U.S.’s interest in halting the communist advance made it worth a shot.<sup>114</sup> When French General Paul Ely arrived in Washington on March 20th to discuss the ongoing operations, Radford saw an opportunity to bolster his case.<sup>115</sup> In a memo to his fellow chiefs on March 23rd, Radford posited that U.S. must “be prepared to act promptly and in force” should the French request American help.<sup>116</sup>

However, not all of the chiefs thought the U.S. was capable of getting involved.<sup>117</sup> Army Chief of Staff General Matthew Ridgway argued emphatically that costs would outweigh whatever benefits accrued from intervention, as an airstrike at Dien Bien Phu would raise the risk of general war with the Viet Minh’s communist backers without decisively affecting the overall military picture. Having previously warned what New Look-related cuts would do to American ground capabilities, Ridgway believed that air power alone could not effectively cut Viet Minh supply or communication lines, which the United States lacked the ground forces to interdict.<sup>118</sup>

One could argue that Ridgway’s arguments reflected his vocal frustration with how New Look hurt the Army’s bureaucratic interests rather than a sober estimate of a capability shortfall.<sup>119</sup> Yet when the other chiefs delivered their own memos on April 2nd, they also framed the problem

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<sup>112</sup>Logevall (2012, Location 7763).

<sup>113</sup>Gravel (1971, Vol. 9, 195).

<sup>114</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 499.

<sup>115</sup>During this visit, Radford privately told Ely that the United States would consider a massive, one-time airstrike at Dien Bien Phu, codenamed Operation Vulture; Logevall (2012, Location 7809); Prados (2014, Locations 1960, 2024).

<sup>116</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 642.

<sup>117</sup>Prados (2014, Location 2173); FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 666; 669.

<sup>118</sup>Logevall (2012, Location 7945).

<sup>119</sup>Feaver (2003, pp. 130–131).

in terms of capabilities while differing in their estimates of what those capabilities could accomplish.<sup>120</sup> Air Force Chief of Staff General Nathan Twining was a qualified “yes” on intervention, citing the efficacy of tactical bombardment. Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Robert Carney hedged: though the U.S. had an interest in averting the loss of Indochina, the chiefs had to examine current U.S. capabilities and whether they could improve France’s tactical position. Marine Corps Commandant General Lemuel Shepherd thought intervention would be “an unprofitable adventure,” as air action pursued in the face of likely doom for French forces held little prospect of success since the Viet Minh’s communications and supply lines were relatively invulnerable.<sup>121</sup>

The chiefs continued to debate American capability to intervene in Indochina as the situation at Dien Bien Phu deteriorated and the Geneva Conference opened. Radford and Twining would not give up on the airstrike idea. In early April, a Pentagon study concluded that three tactical nuclear weapons would be sufficient to wipe out the Viet Minh forces at Dien Bien Phu, which Radford then proposed to the NSC on April 7th. Twining endorsed this idea, positing that a well-placed atomic bomb could “clean those Commies out of there and the band could play the Marseillaise and the French could come marching out...in great shape.”<sup>122</sup> Radford was still stuck on the wisdom of preemptive action in early May, citing how the nuclear balance would shift in the communists’ favor over the next three or four years, thus granting the U.S. a narrow window in which it would be capable of seizing the initiative in Southeast Asia.<sup>123</sup> Here we observe some convergence between Dulles and Radford’s views, but according to different logics: while Radford stressed how the *capacity* to act would diminish over time, Dulles focused on what inferences others might draw if the U.S. did not evince greater *willingness* to get involved.

By contrast, Ridgway put his anti-intervention case to Eisenhower directly on April 5th, painting any military action as a dangerous strategic diversion of limited resources to a non-decisive theater.<sup>124</sup> The lurking ambiguity over whether troops would be sent to Indochina ultimately proved

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<sup>120</sup>This is also consistent with Betts (1991, pp. 120–121)’s characterization of differences in capability estimates between the armed services.

<sup>121</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, Documents 682-685.

<sup>122</sup>Logevall (2016).

<sup>123</sup>Prados (2014, Location 4566).

<sup>124</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIII, 710.

too much for Ridgway, who arrived at the June 10th NSC meeting armed with charts, tables, and figures demonstrating the practical and logistical issues with deploying troops to Indochina as a result of the constraints on Army strength imposed by New Look. This convinced Twining to side with Ridgway and led President Eisenhower to finally take intervention off the table. The military's capability-based assessments were once again critical in shaping the hawkishness of the policy options up for debate — this time, via mixed judgments that bolstered diplomats' advocacy for more forceful options and maintained armed action as a live possibility well after the fall of the French garrison in early May.<sup>125</sup>

Therefore, at Dien Bien Phu, diplomats and military officials again displayed differing conceptions of credibility that are in line with the theory's expectations. But due to the new availability of military capacity to intervene, military officials exhibited far greater willingness to act than in the Greece or Berlin examples. This resulted in much more hawkish policy options, namely a potential intervention in force on behalf of the French. The evidence weighs against the structural explanations for how these officials conceive of credibility and advocate policy, as differences envisioned by my theory persist. Organizational influence played a more prominent but still limited role: diplomats displayed no propensity to engage in negotiations, though some military officials (Ridgway, in particular) may have advocated policy on the basis of how it would affect their specific branch of the armed services. Yet each of the Joint Chiefs ultimately fell back on capability-based assessments, as the theory predicts.

### **3.4 Taiwan Straits (1954-55)**

On the heels of the near-intervention at Dien Bien Phu, U.S. policymakers also weighed military operations to help Chiang Kai-shek's government on Formosa (Taiwan) retain control of several offshore islands that represented the Chinese Nationalists' last link to the mainland. American officials encouraged Nationalist forces to hold the remaining outlying territories while puzzling over how to cement a commitment to Taiwan without becoming directly entangled in the Chinese

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<sup>125</sup>Prados (2014, Location 4805, 4821).

civil war — entertaining schemes ranging from a nuclear strike to an evacuation of the islands and a blockade of the Chinese coast.<sup>126</sup> Diplomats argued that American credibility depended upon the islands remaining in Nationalist hands, while military officials were divided on the wisdom of holding the islands in relation to defending Formosa. The structural forces explanation continues to overlook variation in how different officials weighed competing factors. Furthermore, there is little indication that bureaucratic concerns about organizational influence played a significant role. Organizational identity again offers significant explanatory purchase in this case, illuminating how relatively close military-diplomatic alignment nearly led the United States to war with the PRC.

### **Diplomats' views**

As in the previous three cases, diplomatic officials consistently addressed the Formosa issue as one of signaling resolve and reliability to prevent a psychological blow regarding Taiwan. Dulles and his colleagues “believed there could be no doubts about U.S. resolve to act in a crisis” or any rupture to the U.S. defensive perimeter.<sup>127</sup> These sentiments dated to a May 1950 State Department proposal — supported by Dulles, then a consultant to the department, and Dean Rusk, then Assistant Secretary of State — for a new defensive military commitment to the island that would signal American resolution and determination.<sup>128</sup>

After the Chinese seized several of the lesser offshore islands in June 1953, diplomats posited that retaining the other surrounding territories was essential. Reporting from Taipei, Ambassador Karl Rankin argued for extending the U.S.’s naval and air defense perimeter to include the offshore islands, whose retention was “psychologically important to defense of Formosa.”<sup>129</sup> Dulles concurred, noting that even if the Joint Chiefs viewed the offshore islands as “not essential to the defense of Formosa,” their retention was “highly desirable,” lest their loss inflict “a severe political and psychological blow to the Chinese Government.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Accinelli (1996, pp. 123, 157, 222–23).

<sup>127</sup> Tucker (2009, p. 16).

<sup>128</sup> Accinelli (1996, pp. 20–22).

<sup>129</sup> FRUS 1952-1954, XIV, 122.

<sup>130</sup> FRUS 1952-1954, XIV, 135.



Though he feared serious damage to American prestige in Asia if the more militarily relevant islands were lost, Dulles also recognized potential danger in overcommitting prestige and military power.<sup>131</sup> Yet all the while, Rankin banged on from Taipei about the “serious loss of face” that would accompany a failure to defend the islands.<sup>132</sup> And when the NSC met to review U.S. policy toward Formosa in August 1954, Dulles sought the flexibility to intervene unilaterally if necessary while avoiding an openly confrontational stance against the PRC.<sup>133</sup> He continued to fret that China would misinterpret American refusal to match ground forces in Korea and Indochina if there were not a concurrent demonstration of U.S. willingness to use sea and air power in the region.<sup>134</sup>

The PRC’s September shelling of Quemoy put Dulles, Robertson, and Rankin on edge. Fearing “grave psychological repercussions” if Quemoy were lost, Dulles declared that even if the island was not related to the defense of Formosa, and even if committing U.S. forces and prestige would expand operations against the mainland, “we should help to hold Quemoy.”<sup>135</sup> For Robertson, the attack made clear that threats were insufficient to deter the Chinese and that “any attempt by the Communists to assault one of the major off-shore islands should be met with a positive though limited U.S. military response.”<sup>136</sup> Rankin argued that U.S. commanders on the spot should have full authority to support defense of Quemoy, Matsu, and several other islands.<sup>137</sup> Notably, although the State Department subsequently pursued a secret plan with Britain and New Zealand for a ceasefire resolution before the UN, Dulles and his colleagues had no intention of actually negotiating with the PRC on the status of the offshore islands.<sup>138</sup> This data point suggests that diplomats did not seriously entertain the type of resolution to the situation that they were theoretically best equipped to bring about.

Instead, through fall 1954 and winter 1955, Dulles and his colleagues were prepared to publicly state that the U.S. would defend the offshore islands in conjunction with the mutual security treaty

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<sup>131</sup> Accinelli (1996, pp. 145, 148).

<sup>132</sup> FRUS 1952-1954, Volume XIV, 188.

<sup>133</sup> FRUS 1952-1954, XIV, 256.

<sup>134</sup> FRUS 1952-1954, XIV, 260; 292.

<sup>135</sup> FRUS 1952-1954, XIV, 273.

<sup>136</sup> FRUS 1952-1954, XIV, 275.

<sup>137</sup> FRUS 1952-1954, XIV, 277.

<sup>138</sup> Accinelli (1996, p. 167).

that it was then negotiating with Chiang's government. Encouraged by Rankin and Robertson, Dulles argued to the NSC on October 28th that it was "basic policy" to be "clear and strong in our resolve to defend vital United States interests."<sup>139</sup> The PRC's bombardment of the Tachens on January 10th, 1955 further emphasized to Dulles that the time for clarity had arrived.<sup>140</sup> At lunch with Eisenhower and Radford on January 19th, he stressed "that doubt as to our intentions was having a bad effect on our prestige in the area, since it was in many quarters assumed that we would defend the islands, and our failure to do so indicated that we were running away when actual danger appeared."<sup>141</sup> Dulles's late February tour of Asia only reinforced his advocacy for a more forceful approach; he was greatly disturbed by the PRC's military buildup opposite Quemoy, which if continued might make the islands "indefensible in the absence of massive US intervention, perhaps with atomic weapons."<sup>142</sup> At the March 10th NSC meeting, Dulles said there was about an "even chance" that the United States would have to fight in East Asia and called for creating a "better public climate for the use of atomic weapons by the United States" if intervention to defend Formosa became necessary.<sup>143</sup>

From Taipei, Rankin wholly endorsed this view, positing that "a military engagement may well be necessary to convince the enemy that we mean business."<sup>144</sup> In late March, Dulles floated the idea of appealing to the UN — not for the sake of mediation or negotiation, but rather as pretext for a potential military operation to bolster Quemoy and Matsu's defenses. When Robert Bowie pointed out that the real priority from a prestige perspective was protecting Formosa while evacuating Nationalist forces from the outlying territories, Dulles suggested the deployment of a Marine division to the island and a potential blockade of the Chinese coast. Robertson egged him on: Quemoy and Matsu were "more defensible in military terms than was Berlin" and "Berlin was saved by the resolution of the free world."<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>139</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIV, 365.

<sup>140</sup>Accinelli (1996, pp. 187–88).

<sup>141</sup>FRUS 1955-1957, II, 17.

<sup>142</sup>FRUS 1955-1957, II, 123.

<sup>143</sup>FRUS 1955-1957, II, 146.

<sup>144</sup>FRUS 1955-1957, II, 151.

<sup>145</sup>FRUS 1955-1957, II, 175.

Thus, officials at the State Department were prepared to use force in defense of American credibility and mostly disinclined toward de-escalatory measures as the crisis came to a head in early April. Dulles's ultimate proposal, which he sent with Radford and Robertson to Taipei in search of Chiang's approval, was an evacuation of troops and civilians from Quemoy and Matsu paired with a blockade of some 500 miles of the Chinese coast — in other words, an act of war against the PRC.<sup>146</sup>

### **Military officials' views**

Like in Indochina, military officials initially hesitated on armed intervention to protect Formosa. As early as 1948, the Joint Chiefs recognized that the island's seizure by communist forces would have "seriously unfavorable" consequences for national security given its strategic location. At that time, however, they rejected any military action or defense commitment therein based on a disparity between the nation's military strength and its worldwide obligations.<sup>147</sup> Only once American military capabilities freed up following the armistice in Korea did military officials become more willing to invest in the defense of Taiwan with the use of U.S. forces. There is little evidence to suggest that this shift in advocacy was on the basis of turf or influence; organizational identity again provides a more complete explanation.

When the PRC seized several of the lesser islands in June 1953, Arthur Radford was still commanding U.S. forces in the Pacific and requested freedom to assist with Nationalist defenses — foreshadowing his subsequent advocacy for a hard line on Quemoy and Matsu.<sup>148</sup> But the chiefs, still under General Bradley at this point, were not yet interested in expanding the U.S. commitment; with their shortage of good harbors suitable for basing a large amphibious operation, the islands "could not be considered essential to the defense of Formosa."<sup>149</sup>

This policy next came up for debate in August 1954, when the chiefs called for greater clarity

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<sup>146</sup>FRUS 1955-1957, II, 207; Accinelli (1996, p. 223).

<sup>147</sup>Accinelli (1996, pp. 7–8).

<sup>148</sup>Accinelli (1996, p. 123).

<sup>149</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIV, 132.

on (but not greater military influence over) the United States' general objectives in the Far East.<sup>150</sup> If countering China was the goal, Radford argued, assisting in the islands' defense was critical because most of them "contained radar and other installations which greatly facilitate the defensive task of the Seventh Fleet." Furthermore, he claimed, the United States "could not afford, psychologically and otherwise, to see more territory pass under the control of Communist China."<sup>151</sup> When the PRC shelled Quemoy in September, a majority of the chiefs (Ridgway excluded) recommended allowing U.S. naval and air operations in defense of selected offshore islands. Here, I find a rare instance where military officials other than Radford framed the issue in non-capability terms. Though these outlying territories were "important but not essential to the defense of Formosa from a military perspective," the chiefs stressed as "overriding considerations" the psychological impact of their potential loss on both Nationalist troops and other Asian countries inclined to support U.S. policy as well as the number of Chinese Nationalist troops stationed therein who would otherwise be lost. Ridgway, however, emphasized that the islands were "not essential to the defense of Formosa" and did not view it as the military's place to assess the political implications of their loss.<sup>152</sup>

The subsequent exchange of views among military officials following the PRC's September shelling revealed similar cleavages on capability grounds as in the Indochina example, but not concerns about military autonomy or resources. Ridgway, for his part, reiterated that the islands were vulnerable given local Chinese military advantages and not very important to either defending Formosa or launching operations against the mainland. He again stressed that political and psychological dimensions of the problem were not within the chiefs' purview. The other chiefs (Carney, Twining, and Shepherd), meanwhile, thought there were tactical advantages to retaining the islands, especially in blocking potential PRC approaches to Formosa. They also considered morale among Nationalist forces, which would be essential to the defense of Formosa itself, and concluded that the islands would be defensible with American help, which was within current U.S.

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<sup>150</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XII, 296.

<sup>151</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIV, 256.

<sup>152</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIV, 270.

capabilities to execute. Radford, by contrast, framed his comments in terms of the United States' will as an ally and determination to resist the further spread of communism, while also critiquing Ridgway's assumptions about how quickly the Chinese could mount operations against Quemoy and whether U.S. ground forces would be required.<sup>153</sup>

When the PRC attacked the Tachens in January 1955, the chiefs emphasized restraint to commanders in the field, but weighed more dramatic action back in Washington.<sup>154</sup> As Dulles made the case for holding Quemoy, Radford again stressed the military rationale for retaining the islands (for both blocking the approach to Formosa and air reconnaissance) "if we really meant to defend Formosa."<sup>155</sup> He echoed these conclusions in a late February message to the new Pacific commander, Admiral Felix Stump — the islands were "part of Gimo's [Chiang's] defense of Formosa" as "outposts and warning stations," blocking two key port areas and preventing a secret force buildup by the PRC. But even if their loss "might be inconsequential" militarily, an increased burden would surely fall on the United States should the Nationalist government collapse following a successful PRC attack on the islands.<sup>156</sup>

Therefore, Radford and the majority of the chiefs agreed with Dulles's assessment at the March 10th NSC meeting regarding the potential use of nuclear weapons. Radford argued that the "whole military structure had been built around this assumption" since the U.S. lacked sufficient air bases in the region to attack China with conventional munitions.<sup>157</sup> Radford doubted whether the situation could be stabilized without the PRC "getting a bloody nose."<sup>158</sup> He would ultimately help Dulles, Robertson, and several other senior officials draft the evacuation-blockade plan as well as be charged by Eisenhower with delivering the proposal to Chiang in person, nearly leading to the implementation of a quite hawkish policy. This suggests that like his counterparts at the State Department, Radford was willing to escalate a potential dispute with the PRC over Taiwan into a military confrontation.

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<sup>153</sup>FRUS 1952-1954, XIV, 291.

<sup>154</sup>FRUS 1955-1957, II, 6; 49.

<sup>155</sup>FRUS 1955-1957, II, 23.

<sup>156</sup>FRUS 1955-1957, II, 47.

<sup>157</sup>FRUS 1955-1957, II, 146.

<sup>158</sup>FRUS 1955-1957, II, 170.

Evidence from the first Taiwan Straits crisis indicates that once again, diplomats were willing to use force in maintaining American credibility, while military officials weighed intervention through a capabilities lens. Contra the organizational influence explanation, diplomats did not actively seek a negotiated solution to the crisis; military officials did not favor force simply as a means to expand their resource base. This case provides additional evidence favoring my second hypothesis.

### **Summary: More Capabilities, More Hawkishness**

Both the Dien Bien Phu and the Taiwan Straits examples saw military officials exhibit support for hawkish options when they believed that the capability to follow through on those policies existed. In contrast, diplomats demonstrated high willingness to entertain the use of force, with far less regard for capabilities. I argue that these differences result from officials' diverging notions of credibility. Diplomats felt that the U.S.'s reputation for reliability and resolve was at stake in both cases and advocated policies that they believed would bolster allies' and adversaries' beliefs about American willingness to pay costs and run risks. Meanwhile, military officials at first hesitated to deploy greater resources and assume larger commitments on behalf of the French and Taiwanese, but became more comfortable in doing so as available capabilities increased. The Joint Chiefs' viewpoint became a contest between Radford's more expansive concept of what air and naval power could do and Ridgway's narrower perspective on what those assets could achieve without support from ground forces.<sup>159</sup> As indicated above, the expansive view was critical in preserving military action as a live option throughout both policy debates, while the narrower perspective was essential in eventually forestalling intervention in Indochina. Meanwhile, a major reason why the evacuation-blockade plan for Quemoy and Matsu did not proceed was that Chiang refused to vacate the offshore islands; U.S. officials were otherwise prepared to move ahead with these plans.<sup>160</sup>

The evidence marshaled in the portion of this chapter further emphasizes that differing conceptions of credibility not only exist among military and diplomatic officials, but also shape their

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<sup>159</sup> Betts (1991).

<sup>160</sup> FRUS 1955-57, II, 219; Accinelli (1996, p. 228).

policy advocacy. This cements my point that there is not a single logic governing how policy-makers think about credibility, countering explanations grounded purely in the balance of power, resolve, or interests; diplomats and military officials framed each potential intervention through the lenses of signaling to international audiences and possessing capabilities, respectively. And regarding the organizational influence alternative, at neither Dien Bien Phu nor over the Taiwan Straits do I observe narrow bureaucratic concerns over turf or resources playing a decisive role. I expand on the implications of these findings more fully in the concluding section below.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have explored the theoretical mechanism underlying my argument and examined its validity in comparison to alternative explanations and mechanisms through case studies of four early Cold War crises. The design of the case studies enables comparisons of patterns in how diplomats and military officials conceived of credibility and advocated policy before and after the Korean War. I find support for both of my hypotheses regarding the basis for how these policy-makers thought about credibility and the policies that they preferred as a result. These dynamics in turn shaped the menu of policy options that senior leaders received, pushing President Truman away from, and President Eisenhower toward, more forceful options for addressing the matter at hand.

The case studies validate several of the observable implications developed in Chapter 1. I previously posited that diplomats and military officials differ in terms of how they define national interests, think about the interdependence of commitments, express concern for the quality of military assets, and accept risk when it comes to the use of force. The qualitative data that I bring to bear in this chapter offer favorable evidence on each dimension.

First, on the question of interests, diplomats deemed them to be at stake in all four cases, yet military officials were mostly unwilling to think so broadly. In Greece and Berlin, neither the Joint Chiefs and nor General Marshall viewed U.S. interests as sufficiently threatened to warrant the deployment of ground troops. General Ridgway expressed a similar perspective in the Dien Bien

Phu and Taiwan examples — though his colleagues from the other services were willing to define U.S. interests a bit more expansively regarding Formosa. Yet the majority of military input stood in sharp contrast to the opinions delivered by diplomats such as Acheson, MacVeagh, Murphy, Dulles, and Robertson.

Second, regarding the interdependence of commitments, this same group of diplomats frequently asserted that if the U.S. failed to meet the perceived challenge being posed — whether by communist insurgents, the Soviets, or the Chinese — both these actors and third parties would draw inferences about American willingness to pay costs and run risks. For instance, Dulles' driving concern about both Dien Bien Phu and Taiwan was that the PRC would infer a lack of American resolve if the U.S. failed to intervene there after conceding a stalemate in Korea. While military officials did not uniformly dismiss these concerns, however, they typically saw other factors (such as those in the next paragraph) as paramount and expressed the opinion (as in the Berlin example) that the U.S. should make its stand where capabilities permitted.

Third, with respect to the quality of military assets, diplomats tended to downplay these concerns whereas military officials viewed them as the most critical currency. This is because diplomats primarily saw military forces and weapons as signaling tools that could be deployed to Greece as a message to the Soviets, or whose use could be threatened to intimidate the PRC in both of the Asian crises. By contrast, military officials' focus on the ability of forces-in-being to meet the current challenge was the key driver of their policy advocacy — yielding a conservative stance in Greece and Berlin (where resources were limited) but considerably more hawkish positions at Dien Bien Phu and Taiwan (where capabilities were less in question).

And finally, on the subject of risk acceptance, diplomats displayed high and relatively invariant willingness to assume the price of forceful action across all four cases. But military officials were mostly uninterested in running risks unless they believed that the capacity for battlefield success existed, and even then, some holdouts like Ridgway remained unconvinced. This dynamic had a critical impact on the ultimate balance of policy advocacy in each case.

Indeed, one takeaway from this analysis suggests that military officials' advocacy may exacer-



bate or attenuate diplomats' more extreme policy preferences when it comes to the use of force, depending on the underlying capability balance. Military officials effectively put the kibosh on the use of ground troops, and armed intervention more generally, in three of the four cases studied here out of concern for adequate capabilities. This finding may be reassuring to the extent that military officials prevented their civilian counterparts from rushing headlong into conflict, but could also prove troubling if it undermines balance between civilian and military perspectives in the policy process. Further evidence is needed to more fully probe these implications, which I collect in the following chapters through an original survey experiment and four additional case studies.

## **Chapter 4: An Experimental Study of Organizational Identity**

While the text and case analysis provide evidence that is consistent with both of my hypotheses, I now turn to an experiment that manipulates the theoretical dimensions of credibility which I seek to study. The experiment allows me to gain deeper causal leverage over how organizational identity translates into substantive differences in policy support. I anticipate that in weighing a potential use of force in the hypothetical dispute that the experiment sets up, diplomats will be most sensitive to reputational considerations, while military officials will be most attentive to capability-based factors, and that their support for the use of force will flow from these perspectives. By crafting a detailed, realistic vignette and targeting subjects with relevant real-world experiences, I demonstrate the applicability of my theory and evidence to non-Cold War contexts. The results suggest that during crises, diplomats are indeed more inclined to advocate the use of force out of concern for reputation, while military officials remain more reticent, even after controlling for these officials' foreign policy orientations. Furthermore, diplomats display little support for using negotiations or sanctions to address the hypothetical crisis. The findings are thus more consistent with my theory of organizational identity than either the organizational influence or individual-centric alternatives.

### **4.1 Why Field An Elite Experiment?**

Before describing the specific features of the experimental data and design, however, I discuss why I fielded the study on a sample of current and former national security policymakers and how these characteristics contribute to the project's broader purpose. As Kertzer and Renshon (2022, p. 11) point out, any research on political elites ought to be clear about who the relevant elites are, why they can be conceptualized as such, how well the study's subjects maps to the elites whose

behavior the theory addresses, and what additional descriptive statistics characterize the sample. In keeping with these guidelines, I opted for an elite experiment in order to test my hypotheses by a) using treatments that bear directly on national security officials' domain-specific expertise and b) recruiting participants who tightly mirror the policymakers considered in the theory.

First, given my theory of organizational identity, the relevant elites are national security professionals who have served in the military and/or diplomatic corps. My hypotheses deal explicitly with socialization- and role-based explanations for each type of official's conception of credibility and associated policy advocacy, which theoretically derive from their service in government bureaucracies. Second, therefore, I consider my respondents to be elite along two dimensions: by dint of their current or former occupation, which corresponds to their role in the policy process, and as a result of the cognitive traits they develop along the way, which capture how bureaucratic experience disposes members toward particular worldviews and behaviors.<sup>1</sup>

Third and fourth, as described below, the elite sample that I recruited possesses the relevant domain-specific expertise to provide a close fit with the theory's focus while avoiding bundling together respondents who exhibit widely varying backgrounds or professional experiences within the broad domain of foreign policy. Because I identify subjects via their current or former occupation, I am confident in their correspondence with the ideal types that the theory develops. One caveat is that these respondents may not have served at the seniormost levels of government. However, this arguably makes for a more compelling test of the theory, as my subjects may have been more insulated from political pressures external to their organization that might militate against their bureaucratic tendencies.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, since I target respondents who have served in diplomatic and/or military roles, I minimize the bundling of heterogeneous experiences that often characterizes surveys of the foreign policy "establishment," which might encompass everyone from congressional aides to think tankers.<sup>3</sup> While my approach also catches some civilian officials who have neither

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<sup>1</sup>On occupation, see Lasswell (1952), Putnam (1976), and Bussell (2020). Regarding expertise, see Hafner-Burton et al. (2017) and Saunders (2017).

<sup>2</sup>For instance, in the next chapter, I analyze the U.S. intervention in Bosnia, wherein several career diplomats implored Secretary of State Warren Christopher to pursue military action against Serbian forces, with seemingly little regard for the potential domestic unpopularity of such a move.

<sup>3</sup>Busby et al. (2020) and Kertzer et al. (2021).

diplomatic nor military experience, I exclude these respondents from the main analysis for purposes of representativeness, but assess the robustness of my findings to their inclusion in Tables B.6, B.8, and B.10.

## 4.2 Experimental Data

I collected 432 responses via a combination of LinkedIn messaging advertisements and snowball sampling within my own academic and professional networks between April 2020 and October 2021. Respondents were incentivized to participate via a lottery for a \$250 Amazon gift card.<sup>4</sup> In either case, the message ad or email invitation linked to a Qualtrics survey.<sup>5</sup> On LinkedIn, I constructed a target audience of current or former diplomats and military officials by directing messaging ads toward profiles that listed at least one year of work experience at the U.S. State Department, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, or U.S. Joint Staff. The resulting pool of potential respondents totaled roughly 2.6 million LinkedIn members who were either presently or previously employed at one of these organizations.<sup>6</sup> Within my own network, I contacted several individuals with ties to various international affairs institutions, including the Brookings Institution, the Harvard Kennedy School, Georgetown University, the George Washington University, and the RAND Corporation.<sup>7</sup> The small sample size, at least relative to surveys of mass audiences, reflects the continued challenges of recruiting elite survey participants, but represents a significant increase in the total number of subjects over recent research targeting similar populations.<sup>8</sup>

The survey first asked respondents to answer a series of demographic and attitudinal questions. Participants provided their age, gender, citizenship, level of education, and current and previous

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<sup>4</sup>Funding was provided by the Smith Richardson and Charles Koch Foundations. The research was declared exempt by Columbia University IRB Protocol #AAS9479.

<sup>5</sup>The text of the ad, along with the full survey instrument, can be found in Appendix 8. Table B.1 shows the breakdown of responses by source.

<sup>6</sup>LinkedIn sent my ad to 23,660 users. As is the case for many elite surveys, the response rate was extremely low. However, Clark (2021) has demonstrated the efficacy of this approach under similar circumstances.

<sup>7</sup>Special thanks to Chelsea Estevez, Keir Lieber, David Luckey, Michael O'Hanlon, William Rapp, Noah Reichblum, Arturo Sotomayor, and Paul Williams for facilitating survey distribution on my behalf.

<sup>8</sup>Bayram (2017), Hafner-Burton, LeVeck, and Victor (2017), and Yarhi-Milo, Kertzer, and Renshon (2018).

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics for Diplomats

<b>Statistic</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Age	207	42.976	16.604	21	78
Gender	207	0.391	0.489	0	1
Education	207	6.551	0.822	4	7
Militant Internationalism	207	2.618	0.710	1.000	4.750
Cooperative Internationalism	207	3.877	0.604	1.500	5.000
Years of Dip. Experience	207	10.700	11.294	0.000	46.000
Domestic Affairs	207	0.150	0.358	0	1
Defense Affairs	207	0.068	0.252	0	1
Private Sector	207	0.483	0.501	0	1
Other	207	0.551	0.499	0	1

employment experience.<sup>9</sup> Within employment, subjects indicated whether they had civil government and/or military experience (or had worked in the private sector, in politics, or for another type of organization), how long they had spent in these roles, what their main work activities were in each job, the highest-ranking person they had personally briefed, and if they had served in the military, what rank they attained and whether they served in combat. Given that government employees are often hesitant to share their opinions or provide information that could be traced back to them, even in a totally anonymous survey like this one, I did not ask respondents to name the specific organization or agency that they currently or previously worked for in order to maximize response rates. For similar reasons, I did not solicit respondents' party identification to avoid evoking any partisan priors about the information to be delivered in the vignette. Respondents also rated their level of agreement with the standard items for Herrmann, Tetlock, and Visser (1999)'s measures of militant and cooperative internationalism, which I aggregate into indices of their relative hawkishness on foreign policy.

The breakdown of these responses in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 shows that the average subject is over 40, male, highly educated, and has at least ten years of military or diplomatic experience. Among the military officials, I include only those who have attained officer rank. Of these 225 officers, the

<sup>9</sup>Gender is a binary variable coded as "1" for Female and "0" for male. Education is a 7-point scale from "No formal education" to "Post-graduate education, with degree."

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics for Military Officials

<b>Statistic</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Age	225	47.578	13.314	21	82
Gender	225	0.120	0.326	0	1
Education	225	6.316	1.087	3	7
Militant Internationalism	225	3.018	0.854	1.000	5.000
Cooperative Internationalism	225	3.553	0.791	1.000	5.000
Years of Mil. Experience	225	14.836	9.462	0	38
Officer	225	0.493	0.501	0	1
Enlisted	225	0.484	0.501	0	1
Combat	225	0.676	0.469	0	1
Foreign Affairs	225	0.129	0.336	0	1
Domestic Affairs	225	0.062	0.242	0	1
Defense Affairs	225	0.169	0.375	0	1
Private Sector	225	0.471	0.500	0	1
Other	225	0.858	0.350	0	1

sample is roughly half commissioned and half non-commissioned. A total of 50 (22 percent) are currently serving in the military. For the diplomats, I include only those who cite experience at a civilian foreign affairs agency. Of these 207 subjects, 78 (38 percent) are currently working at such an organization.<sup>10</sup> Table B.4 further shows that respondents reported being involved in a range of duties including administration, operations, policy, and strategy, but were not concentrated within any particular function. Table B.5 demonstrates that more than half of the sample had previously briefed someone at least as senior as an ambassador, three- or four-star flag officer, or national elected official. Altogether, these statistics suggest that my subjects have substantial government or military experience, have dealt with issues of real importance to national security, and therefore provide an appropriate proxy for the types of policymakers I seek to study.

<sup>10</sup>The survey deliberately separates experience at a civilian foreign affairs agency from experience at a civilian defense agency because the theory is about diplomats specifically rather than other civilian national security officials, such as those who work at civilian defense agencies like the Department of Defense or in the intelligence community. The “civilian foreign affairs agency” designation captures how the State Department itself describes its own responsibilities and operations; see <https://fam.state.gov/>. Officials with only civilian defense agency experience (but not military experience) could plausibly be closer to military officials in their views about credibility and policy orientations given that they interface directly with the military on a daily basis. As Table B.6 shows, however, the experimental results do not change regardless of whether I include these individuals as part of the military community.

### 4.3 Vignette and Treatment Design

After completing the battery of demographic and attitudinal characteristics, participants were told that they would be reading about a hypothetical scenario and responding to some questions about the information in that scenario. Subjects then received the experimental vignette, an example of which appears Figure 4.1. There are several standard features of the vignette, which builds on the classic repel-invader scenario popularized in the audience costs literature.<sup>11</sup> Respondents were informed that the United States is considering strengthening its alliance with a fictional country called Eastland as a result of threats against Eastland from a rising power called Westria, whose regional military buildup has shifted the balance of power against the U.S. and its allies in the region. Eastland and Westria are at odds over a disputed, resource-rich border region that contains most known supply of an key rare earth metal whose supply is an important strategic priority for the United States. Eastland is a U.S. ally, viewed favorably by Congress and the U.S. public, hosts an airbase and port used regularly by American military personnel, and has superior air forces to Westria. Westria, however, has a highly capable contingent of ground forces, leading the U.S. intelligence community to conclude that Westria would defeat Eastland if the dispute over the contested border escalated to the use of force.

To underscore the link between the theory and the domain-specific expertise that the experiment aims to evoke, the four experimental conditions correspond to the four quadrants originally outlined in Chapter 1 and reproduced here in Figure 4.2. The baseline condition is the bottom-left quadrant, where there is low concern for reputation and a low level of military capability. I operationalize this by informing respondents that a) the U.S. has not always defended Eastland against Westria's provocations in the past in an effort to avoid raising regional tensions; and b) the U.S. does not have military capabilities available locally to help Eastland and would have to redirect forces from other equally important mission in the event of a border crisis.

The "Signaling" condition comprises the bottom-right quadrant, where there is high concern for

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<sup>11</sup>Tomz (2007b), Levendusky and Horowitz (2012), Levy et al. (2015), Kertzer and Brutger (2016), Brutger and Kertzer (2018), and Lin-Greenberg (2019a).

The United States is considering strengthening its alliance with Eastland in response to threats against Eastland from a rising regional power, Westria. Westria recently embarked on a military buildup that shifted the balance of power in its favor in a region where the U.S. and its allies have long enjoyed an advantage in military capabilities. Eastland shares a disputed and resource-rich border with Westria. Several previous attempts by the United Nations to mediate this dispute have proven unsuccessful. The U.S. has a vested interest in retaining access to this border region, as it contains most of the known supply of a rare earth metal used in producing devices such as smartphones.

Eastland is a U.S. ally and viewed favorably by both Congress and the U.S. public as a result of Westria's recent behavior. The U.S. has always defended Eastland's interests against Westria's provocations in the past as part of its efforts to hedge against Westria's regional ambitions.

Eastland hosts a U.S. airbase and nearby port that is regularly used by American military personnel. Eastland has substantial military capabilities of its own, including well-equipped air forces that fly the latest American-made fighters, but its ground forces are numerically small.

Westria, by contrast, has a large and capable contingent of ground forces, but its air forces are numerically smaller and less technologically advanced than Eastland's.

Based on this military balance, the U.S. intelligence community has concluded that Westria would likely defeat Eastland if the dispute over the contested border escalated to the use of force. Intelligence officials have stated that the defense of Eastland is a top strategic priority for the United States in the region given the border area's resource endowments and estimate that a loss of access to these resources would result in a multibillion dollar hit to the U.S. economy until the issue is resolved. The intelligence community has also noted that the U.S. has military capabilities that it can deploy to Eastland in the event of a crisis in the disputed region without reducing forces committed to other equally important missions.

Figure 4.1: Example Vignette (Signaling Plus Capabilities)

reputation but still a low level of military capability. I operationalize this by informing respondents that the U.S. has always defended Eastland against Westria's provocations in the past in order to hedge against the latter's regional ambitions. This treatment is intended to imply that the U.S. has a record of reliable and resolute past behavior toward Eastland to uphold. In this condition, however, there is no change in U.S. capabilities relative to the baseline.

The "Capabilities condition" can be found in the top-left quadrant, where there is low concern for reputation but a high level of military capability. I operationalize this by informing respondents that the U.S. has military capabilities available locally to help Eastland and would not have to redirect forces from other equally important missions should there be a crisis in the disputed region. This treatment is intended to show that the U.S. could intervene to backstop Eastland if it wants.





forces into the border region, that U.S. intelligence estimates Eastland will lose access to the area within 48 hours, and that the U.S. will not have another opportunity to halt Westria's advance. Respondents are further informed that the NSC is debating the options listed below, which are designed to reflect the range of actions that might reasonably be in scope for the United States to address a contingency of this nature. Indeed, an important design consideration for realism of the vignette was to avoid asking respondents to view any particular policy as a binary choice or in isolation from other potential solutions. The options were listed alphabetically to avoid ordering effects:

- Deploy a Marine Expeditionary Unit to assist Eastland in repelling the invasion
- Do nothing
- Increase the level of intelligence sharing with Eastland
- Perform a flyover of the disputed region with a squadron of Air Force fighter jets
- Pursue sanctions against Westria through the United Nations

Respondents then completed an attention check regarding which country in the scenario was a U.S. ally. Removing those who failed the attention check from the sample yields a total of 432 responses in scope for analysis.<sup>12</sup> As shown in Table B.2, these responses are distributed evenly both across the four conditions.

#### **4.4 Outcomes and Estimation**

Following the attention check, respondents were asked to indicate whether they supported or opposed each of the discrete options listed above. For both sets of outcomes, respondents provided their answers on a five-point scale from “strongly oppose” to “strongly support.”<sup>13</sup> To ease interpretation of the results in percentage-point terms, I convert these responses into a numeric

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<sup>12</sup>Table B.11 shows that the results do not change when I include inattentive respondents.

<sup>13</sup>Respondents were also asked if they supported the use force to help Eastland in general, to rank each of these discrete options from what they would most support (1) to what they would least support (5) and to briefly describe, in their own words, the reasoning behind their decision.

scale where “Strongly support” is coded as 100, “Somewhat support” as 75, “Neither support nor oppose” as 50, “Somewhat oppose” as 25, and “Strongly oppose” as 0.

To estimate treatment effects by organizational identity, I use a series of OLS regressions to model the Conditional Average Treatment Effect (CATE) among diplomats and military officials. I also include controls for respondents’ age, gender, education, indexed scores for militant and cooperative internationalism, and an indicator for sampling method.

#### **4.5 Results: Support for Use or Show of Force**

First, I consider respondents’ views on the use or show of force in Table 4.3, examining their support in general (Columns 1-2) as well as for deploying Marines (Columns 3-4) and conducting a flyover (Columns 5-6). Because I argue that diplomats are most sensitive to reputational considerations, while military officials are most attentive to capability-related factors, I expect that each type of policymakers will respond chiefly to these dimensions of the hypothetical crisis, even after controlling for their individual dispositions toward militant and cooperative internationalism. A major implication is that when reputation is on the line, and in the presence of adequate capabilities, I should find that both diplomats and military officials back the use or show of force. Alternatively, if the organizational influence explanation is more persuasive, military officials should back options involving the use or show of force based on their perceived relevance to organizational turf, influence, and resources.

The experimental results generally support the theory’s propositions, with a few caveats. The Signaling and Capabilities conditions do not independently influence either diplomats’ or military officials’ support for using force in general, deploying the Marines more specifically, or performing a flyover. This is surprising relative to my expectations. However, I observe positive, statistically significant treatment effect of 11.2 percentage points on support for the Marine deployment among diplomats in response to the SignalingPlusCapabilities condition ( $p = 0.046$ ). For military officials, the equivalent effect is 8.5 percentage points, which approaches but falls short of statis-

tical significance ( $p = 0.110$ ).<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, these findings are directionally consistent with a key insight from the theory regarding the conditions under which we are likely to observe mutual support for the use of force by diplomats and military officials. But what is driving these effects?

To unpack these results, I rely on the experimental design to examine two additional sets of effects for each type of policymaker, depicted in Figure 4.3. In the top plot, I employ the Capabilities condition as the baseline for the regression analysis. Here, differences in effects between the Capabilities and Signaling Plus Capabilities conditions indicate the marginal influence of reputational considerations on respondents' assessments, holding capabilities constant at a high level. These are 13.0 percentage points ( $p = 0.023$ ) for diplomats and 5.6 percentage points ( $p = 0.339$ ) for military officials. In the bottom plot, I consider the Signaling condition as the baseline for the regression analysis. Here, differences in effects between the Signaling and Signaling Plus Capabilities conditions reflect the marginal impact of capability considerations, holding reputational considerations constant at a high level. These are 6.0 percentage points ( $p = 0.310$ ) for diplomats and 5.0 ( $p = 0.390$ ) percentage points for military officials.

Thus, for diplomats, the marginal influence of reputational considerations on support for the Marine deployment is large, positive, and statistically significant; the marginal impact of capability considerations is also positive but about half the size of the reputational effect and statistically insignificant. In comparison, for military officials, the marginal influence of reputational and capability considerations are positive and roughly the same size but statistically insignificant. While I anticipated more pronounced capability-oriented effects among military officials, the results still suggest that in backing the troop deployment, diplomats heavily weight reputational relative to capability considerations, even after controlling for their hawkish or dovish dispositions — which strongly and consistently predict support for the use or show of force, but hardly diminish the observed treatment effect. By contrast, it is not obvious that military officials have a strong preference for the use of force, contra the expectations derived from organizational influence. On net, then, the experimental analysis is in line with my second hypothesis: diplomats are more likely than

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<sup>14</sup>See the interaction plot in Figure B.2.

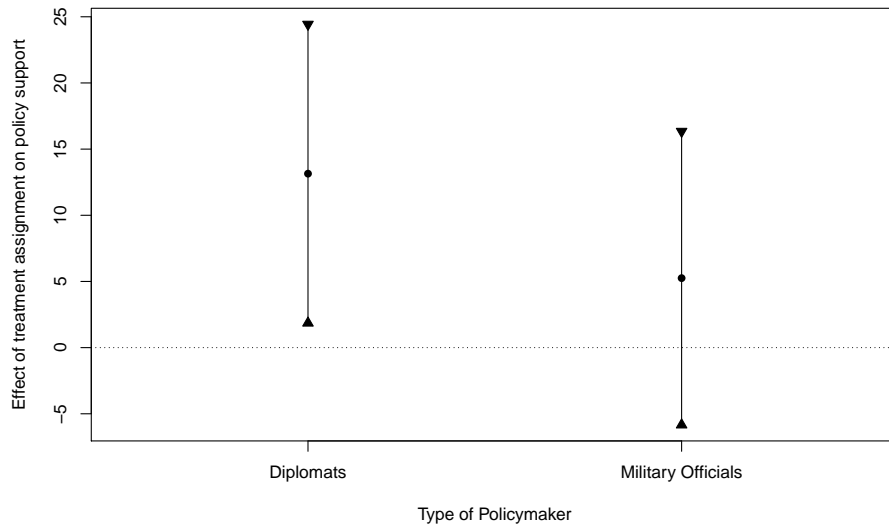
Table 4.3: Support for Use or Show of Force

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Force		Marines		Flyover	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Signaling	7.067 (5.051)	4.422 (4.663)	8.015 (6.084)	5.041 (5.696)	-0.228 (5.868)	-1.823 (5.614)
Military Experience	8.040* (4.674)	4.241 (5.365)	7.042 (5.630)	1.993 (6.554)	-0.089 (5.429)	2.030 (6.460)
Capabilities	0.170 (4.827)	-0.971 (4.439)	-0.843 (5.814)	-1.971 (5.422)	-5.993 (5.607)	-7.030 (5.344)
SignalingPlusCapabilities	10.852** (4.959)	8.711* (4.581)	13.397** (5.974)	11.174** (5.595)	4.286 (5.761)	3.571 (5.515)
Militant Internationalism		11.619*** (1.517)		13.847*** (1.853)		9.259*** (1.827)
Cooperative Internationalism		4.572*** (1.686)		4.398** (2.060)		8.667*** (2.031)
Gender		-0.929 (2.853)		2.541 (3.485)		-2.765 (3.436)
Education		0.259 (1.248)		-0.365 (1.524)		-1.353 (1.502)
Age		0.160* (0.084)		0.133 (0.102)		0.002 (0.101)
MilYears		-0.005 (0.188)		0.154 (0.229)		-0.123 (0.226)
Combat		2.411 (3.612)		1.038 (4.413)		-0.639 (4.349)
Sample		5.064 (4.277)		5.112 (5.224)		-4.704 (5.149)
Signaling*Military Experience	1.668 (6.908)	-1.618 (6.421)	2.233 (8.321)	-1.313 (7.843)	-3.678 (8.025)	-6.971 (7.731)
Capabilities*Military Experience	3.395 (6.822)	2.721 (6.313)	5.982 (8.218)	5.169 (7.711)	10.947 (7.925)	11.251 (7.601)
SignalingPlusCapabilities*Military Experience	-0.307 (6.951)	-3.871 (6.430)	1.251 (8.373)	-2.725 (7.854)	-0.312 (8.074)	-4.141 (7.742)
Constant	57.377*** (3.291)	1.997 (10.845)	47.541*** (3.964)	-9.010 (13.247)	69.672*** (3.823)	22.808* (13.057)
Observations	432	432	432	432	432	432
R <sup>2</sup>	0.061	0.227	0.056	0.201	0.015	0.129

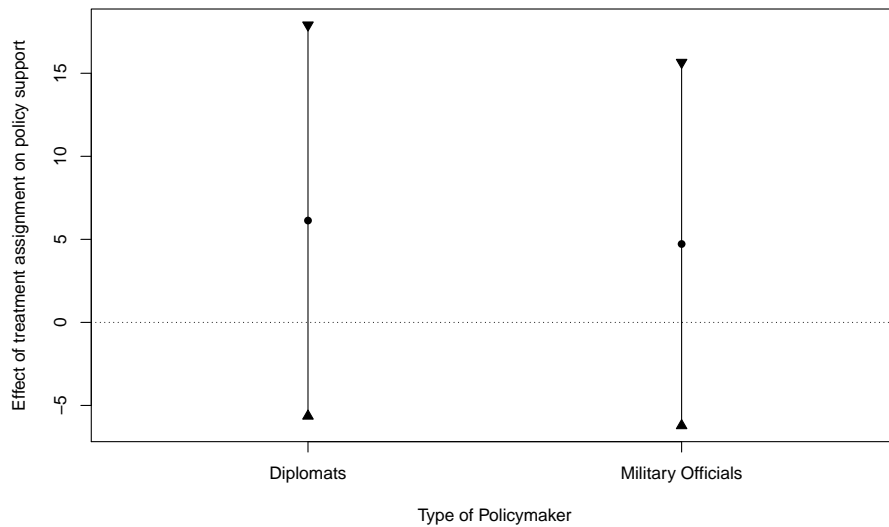
Note:

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

military officials to support the use of force in building or maintaining credibility during crises.



(a) Marginal Influence of Signaling Considerations



(b) Marginal Influence of Capability Considerations

Figure 4.3: Differential Impact of Signaling vs. Capability Considerations

#### 4.6 Results: Support for Non-Kinetic Policy Options

Next, I examine respondents' views on policies that do not involve the use or show of force, such as pursuing sanctions through the UN, increasing the level of intelligence sharing with East-

land, and simply doing nothing, as shown in Table 4.4. While the results in the previous section suggest that diplomats rather than military officials want to use force for the sake of credibility, debates about armed intervention rarely consider forceful policies in isolation, and so it is important to investigate the conditions under which policymakers back those options relative to non-kinetic ones. Furthermore, from an organizational influence perspective, diplomats ought to support options involving negotiations, whether bilateral or multilateral, to address the situation at hand.

These results offer several interesting insights. First, examining respondents' support for pursuing sanctions, diplomats show little attraction to this option across any of the treatment conditions. Whereas we might anticipate that negotiating a package of measures designed to hurt Westria diplomatically or economically might garner diplomats support, the data do not bear out this interpretation. Rather, in the Capabilities condition, diplomats actually exhibit *lower* support for sanctions relative to the baseline (by -11.5 percentage points,  $p = 0.009$ ). By contrast, there is no comparable effect among military officials, who (unsurprisingly) are no more or less likely to support sanctions in this treatment condition. Strikingly, in contrast to the conventional stereotype of the dovish diplomat, I find that these officials are less inclined to pursue an option that does not involve immediately escalating the dispute toward the use of force, specifically in the presence of strong military capabilities. Meanwhile, reputational considerations have no significant effect on diplomats' support for sanctions. Therefore, contra the organizational influence alternative, diplomats are not clearly attracted to the policy option that would allow them to flex their negotiating muscles.

Second, considering respondents' views on sharing intelligence with Eastland or simply doing nothing, military officials do appear sensitive to the costs of not acting in response to the Signaling treatment; they are -11.5 percentage points ( $p = 0.012$ ) less likely to support this option relative to the baseline. Military officials are thus not wholly oblivious to the potential reputational consequences of inaction. However, their idea of action seems to be raising the level of intelligence sharing with Eastland, support for which increases by 7.5 percentage points ( $p = 0.05$ ) in the Capabilities condition. Given adequate capabilities, then, military officials are most willing to pursue

Table 4.4: Support for Non-Kinetic Policy Options

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Sanctions		Intelligence		Nothing	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Signaling	3.233 (4.748)	3.700 (4.586)	-2.559 (3.851)	-1.771 (3.751)	3.461 (4.725)	4.458 (4.630)
Military Experience	-8.156* (4.394)	-4.968 (5.276)	-6.031* (3.564)	-4.199 (4.316)	6.100 (4.372)	5.661 (5.328)
Capabilities	-11.599** (4.538)	-11.479*** (4.365)	-2.737 (3.680)	-2.387 (3.570)	-0.418 (4.515)	0.273 (4.407)
SignalingPlusCapabilities	2.365 (4.662)	2.850 (4.505)	3.552 (3.781)	3.743 (3.685)	-4.004 (4.640)	-3.047 (4.548)
Militant Internationalism		1.760 (1.492)		-0.535 (1.221)		-3.583** (1.507)
Cooperative Internationalism		9.792*** (1.658)		7.760*** (1.357)		-6.438*** (1.675)
Gender		-4.513 (2.806)		-2.292 (2.295)		2.505 (2.833)
Education		0.698 (1.227)		-0.297 (1.004)		1.972 (1.239)
Age		0.016 (0.082)		0.083 (0.067)		-0.165** (0.083)
MilYears		0.005 (0.184)		-0.083 (0.151)		0.006 (0.186)
Combat		0.078 (3.553)		3.279 (2.906)		1.406 (3.587)
Sample		-1.945 (4.206)		0.900 (3.440)		3.616 (4.247)
Signaling*Military Experience	2.741 (6.494)	-1.485 (6.314)	7.340 (5.267)	4.036 (5.165)	-17.493*** (6.463)	-16.003** (6.375)
Capabilities*Military Experience	11.877* (6.414)	11.219* (6.208)	10.469** (5.202)	9.998** (5.078)	-4.999 (6.382)	-5.807 (6.268)
SignalingPlusCapabilities*Military Experience	1.866 (6.534)	-1.162 (6.323)	0.903 (5.300)	-0.146 (5.172)	-6.540 (6.502)	-5.033 (6.384)
Constant	85.656*** (3.094)	39.504*** (10.665)	88.115*** (2.509)	58.326*** (8.724)	15.984*** (3.079)	42.630*** (10.768)
Observations	432	432	432	432	432	432
R <sup>2</sup>	0.040	0.135	0.020	0.101	0.032	0.102

Note:

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

the relatively cheap option of supporting Eastland via increased intelligence sharing — perhaps because they infer that if the relevant capabilities are available, the U.S. has significant capacity to



collect and share intelligence with partners.

## 4.7 Conclusion

The headline results of the experiment can be summarized as follows. First, when told that U.S. reputation is on the line and sufficient local capabilities are present for American intervention, both diplomats and military officials lean toward the option of deploying the Marines. As demonstrated in my analysis of the marginal influence exerted by differences between treatment conditions, diplomats evidently back the Marine deployment according to a reputational logic, while the basis of military officials' support is less clear-cut. Nevertheless, my findings for this outcome are consistent with my second hypothesis: diplomats rather than military official evince greater support for uses of force to build or maintain credibility. Second, a variety of supplemental analyses show that diplomats display no clear attraction, and perhaps even an aversion, to sanctions, while military officials may grasp the reputational costs of doing nothing, but exhibit strong support for the relatively costless option of ramping up intelligence sharing with Eastland.

Furthermore, as depicted in both the tables presented herein and the appendix to this chapter, these inferences are robust to the inclusion of demographic and attitudinal covariates in the model as well as to considering civilian defense officials as equivalent to their military counterparts (Table B.6). Randomization inference (Figures B.3-B.7) also shows that the results are not simply a function of sample size. Altogether, the experimental findings are consistent with my theory of organizational identity, particularly when compared with the principal alternatives. On the one hand, the individual-centric explanation has clear relevance, as the measures of respondents' hawkish or dovish dispositions consistently enter the models with statistically significant coefficients. Notably, however, the treatment effects that I report account for these individual differences and are substantively on par with their impact on respondents' policy views. On the other hand, the organizational influence alternative does not gain much traction here. Neither diplomatic nor military officials show clear or strong attraction to the policy options that would theoretically burnish their role or resources. With the experimental evidence suggesting that my expectations travel to

actual current and former policymakers, I next return to qualitative evidence drawn from a series of supplementary cases that further probe the causal mechanisms within my argument.

## **Chapter 5: Organizational Identity in Additional Historical Contexts**

In this chapter, I probe the validity of my theoretical framework and empirical expectations in four supplemental cases — the crises over Fashoda (1898), the Falklands (1982), Bosnia (1995), and Kosovo (1999). These additional examples make three important contributions to the project.

First, the supplemental cases test for the presence of the hypothesized mechanisms in diplomatic and military officials' conceptions of credibility and associated policy advocacy during crises that vary several key contextual features, including the time period, configuration of the international system, and players and stakes involved. The primary and secondary source data marshaled herein offer an important check for false positives by suggesting that my findings elsewhere in the project are not driven by unique features of either the early Cold War environment or the American interagency policy process.

Second, the additional examples round out potential variation in balances of policy advocacy that the theory envisions. As depicted in Figure 1.3, the inclusion of the Fashoda (top right and bottom right), Falklands (top left and bottom left), and Bosnia and Kosovo (bottom right) cases ensures that my analysis examines at least one instance of each hypothesized resultant for diplomatic and military advocacy. Furthermore, because there is within-case variation in military officials' assessments of available capabilities, I can investigate the degree to which these changes produce behavior that is consistent with the theory's observable implications.

Third, each crisis makes for a hard, or least likely, test of the theory relative to alternative explanations. For reasons that I previewed in the research design section of Chapter 1 and detail further while introducing the examples below, officials' conceptions of credibility and associated policy advocacy should be easy for structural forces or organizational influence to explain. From a structural forces perspective, the balance of power, interests, and/or resolve ought to uniformly dispose policymakers' conceptions of credibility and related policy advocacy. Both historical and

contemporary accounts of all four crises indicate that these structural factors were present and operative. From an organizational influence perspective, various case-specific elements — from French military’s proclivity for offensive operations to the British armed services’ worries about budget cuts — should bolster the case for bureaucratic behavior as a function of concerns about resources and autonomy.

Across the four examples, however, I observe that when diplomats referred to credibility in reputational terms, they persistently advocated the use of force to preserve it, whereas military officials displayed consistent sensitivity to available capabilities and supported policy responses aligned with those judgments. In turn, these capability-based assessments magnified or moderated diplomats’ general inclination to fight for credibility. Since I continue to find organizational variation in conceptions for credibility and related policy advocacy, the cases bolster my intuition that structural forces alone cannot explain the dynamics that this project highlights. And while I observe some resource- and turf-motivated behavior (particularly in the Fashoda and Falklands examples), on the whole I find that officials more consistently advocated policy on the basis of organizational identity rather than organizational influence. Thus, the balance of evidence gathered from the supplementary cases indicates that policymakers’ organizational identity played a critical role in how they expressed concerns about credibility and what policies they were willing to support as a result.

## **5.1 Fashoda (1898)**

The Fashoda Crisis resulted from British and French colonial rivalry in Central Africa. From at least the early 1890s, and possibly before, London viewed the Sudan falling within the British sphere of influence extending south from Cairo. A powerful mythology in Egypt held that if any adversary gained control of the Upper Nile and altered the path of its floodwaters, Egyptian society could be wiped out — spelling doom for Britain’s control of the Suez Canal, which provided its lifeline to India. As a consequence, British officials came to view deterring other powers from this enterprise as a keynote of British policy in Africa, with far-reaching implications for what sort of

action Britain had to be ready to undertake.<sup>1</sup>

For its part, meanwhile, Paris sought to force the reopening of negotiations over Egypt, which British troops had occupied since quelling the 1882 'Urabi Revolt.<sup>2</sup> Over the next decade-plus, French officials grew increasingly bitter at their British counterparts for remaining in Egypt, which Paris had long viewed as falling within its own sphere of influence. Inspired by an 1893 report on the possibility of diverting the Nile's headwaters, French foreign and colonial ministers tried to establish a French presence at Fashoda to force Britain's hand.<sup>3</sup> However farfetched these efforts may appear in hindsight, they were instrumental in ratcheting up tensions that came to a head in the Sudanese desert during the summer and fall of 1898.

Thus, as Franco-British rivalry became more intense, the Upper Nile issue became more important, not just in terms of British imperial strategy and the balance of power in the Mediterranean, but also as an issue of national prestige on both sides. Indeed, prominent histories of the crisis suggest that British policymakers were uniformly captive to the "official mind of imperialism," in which mechanistic, domino theory-style thinking about the balances of power and resolve under multipolarity dominated preferences and outcomes.<sup>4</sup> This ought to make an easy case for structural forces and a hard test for organizational identity. By a similar token, it is well-established that the French military developed a preference for offensive doctrine after 1870, with particular emphasis on the decisive role of unit cohesion even in the face of numerical inferiority, and leaned further into an offensive orientation when facing threats to its organizational autonomy.<sup>5</sup> Such factors should make for a most likely case of organizational influence relative to organizational identity.

The evidence, however, reveals greater nuance than either alternative can sufficiently explain. British diplomats, viewing the entire Egyptian arena as essential to Britain's credibility as a global power, and British military officials, secure in their forces' ability to dispatch the French expedition and prevail in a wider conflict if necessary, pushed events at Fashoda to the brink of war. French

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<sup>1</sup>Layne (1994, pp. 28–33); Langer (1960, pp. 103–104, 108).

<sup>2</sup>Eubank (1960, p. 145).

<sup>3</sup>Langer (1960, p. 558).

<sup>4</sup>Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny (1961) and Sanderson (1965).

<sup>5</sup>Snyder (1989, Ch. 2-3).

diplomats, judging that France's credibility had been wounded by Britain's refusal to reopen the Egyptian question, and French military officials, confident in their ability to reach Fashoda and thereby force the issue, together mounted an ostensibly secret military campaign (disguised as exploratory expedition) to secure control of the Upper Nile and present the British with a *fait accompli*. But when French actions triggered a legitimate war scare rather than British willingness to reconsider the issue, French military officials advised their government that Paris had little choice but to back down in the face of overwhelming British military might. Thus, while French military officials' behavior is not always consistent with my expectations, British diplomats and military officials as well as French diplomats' actions support my theory. On net, then, I observe credibility concerns at odds with the structural explanation; policy advocacy more consistent with organizational identity than organizational influence; and balances of advocacy that encouraged hawkish stances on both sides.

### **British diplomats' views**

Diplomats at the Foreign Office consistently advanced a hard line on Egypt and the Sudan, arguing that preventing incursions by foreign powers was essential to British credibility. Their view was that major questions of British prestige, as well as insurance against danger to the empire, could be resolved through an expanded footprint around Egypt. The crisis resulted at least in part from diplomats' unyielding perspective on showcasing Britain's will to meet challenges in an area where London claimed a monopoly of influence.<sup>6</sup>

Africa policy achieved unique prominence at the Foreign Office and would eventually dwarf all other issues in British diplomacy.<sup>7</sup> As early as 1890, Lord Dufferin, the British ambassador at Rome, was warning that Italy had become too enterprising in its efforts to claim parts of Ethiopia that would allow them access to the Upper Nile and Sudan.<sup>8</sup> Sir Percy Anderson, the Foreign Office's resident Africa expert, refused France's offer to negotiate spheres of influence in the Upper

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<sup>6</sup>See Sanderson, "The Origins and Significance of the Anglo-French Confrontation at Fashoda, 1898," 289, in Louis and Gifford (1971).

<sup>7</sup>Taylor (1950, p. 52).

<sup>8</sup>Langer (1960, pp. 109–110).

Nile during 1894, insisting instead on both the prestige value that lay in France's "recognition of our sphere" and territorial expansion as a laudable goal in itself.<sup>9</sup>

For Lord Salisbury — who held various diplomatic posts en route to multiple terms as Prime Minister in the 1880s and 1890s — conquest of the Sudan became a dominating factor in his Egypt policy from 1889 onward. Because Salisbury served simultaneously as Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister, he offers a unique opportunity to explore whether and how diplomatic experience influences leaders' behavior once they assume the chief executive role. Having also served twice as Secretary of State for India before ascending to the top of British government, Salisbury transplanted the defensive psychology that had kept watch over the British Raj's northern boundaries into Britain's Africa policy, transforming the Upper Nile into Egypt's "new frontiers of insecurity." Once Britain publicly claimed the Upper Nile for itself while quibbling with Germany, Italy, and the Congo State in their collective scramble for territory, "its diplomatic defense against France became an important matter of prestige."<sup>10</sup> Salisbury believed that if Britain were to hold onto Egypt — which he saw not only as the linchpin of Britain's entire Mediterranean strategy, but also in terms of England's own greatness — it could not afford any other European power gaining a foothold in the Nile Valley, lest Britain expose itself to either blackmail or being levered out of Egypt altogether.<sup>11</sup>

Consistent with Salisbury's long-running concerns, British diplomats closely monitored the other European powers' activities in Africa and sought to demonstrate that Britain would react harshly to any meddling in its designated sphere. In what became known as the Grey Declaration, during a March 1895 speech to the House of Commons, the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Sir Edward Grey not only disclaimed any knowledge of a French expedition to the Nile but also asserted that Britain would view any such move as an "unfriendly act."<sup>12</sup> Whether or not Grey's words were an intentional signal to the French, the sentiments were consistent with what British officials had conveyed to their French counterparts privately, as the Foreign Office was only too

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<sup>9</sup>Sanderson (1965, p. 203).

<sup>10</sup>Sanderson, 290-293, in Louis and Gifford (1971).

<sup>11</sup>Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny (1961, pp. 284, 288).

<sup>12</sup>Taylor (1950, p. 77).

aware of possible French thrusts toward the Nile by mid-1895. And particularly following Britain's humiliation in Asia during April of that year — in which German, French, and Russian forces banded together to defend China from Japan's advances, thus turfing Britain out of its traditional roles as Beijing's protector and regional arbiter in the Far East — Salisbury was prepared to risk confrontation with the French in order to retain Egypt and defend the Nile Valley.<sup>13</sup>

From the beginning of 1896 through the resolution of the crisis at the start of 1899, Salisbury and the Foreign Office took a series of escalatory actions that they knew could provoke a conflict. First, in response to the defeat of its Italian allies by the Ethiopian army at Adwa, the British government ordered the invasion of Sudan by Egyptian forces under the command of Sir Herbert Kitchener. In doing so, Salisbury and his diplomatic colleagues acted out of fear that the Ethiopians were in cahoots with the French and thus that the former's western advance posed a serious threat to the Nile. Diplomats' perceived need to exclude other European powers from the region thereby manifested in the conclusion that only the use of force could guarantee this outcome.<sup>14</sup>

Though Salisbury meant for the invasion to proceed cautiously and without rapidly overwhelming the Sudan, he was undeterred by any "diplomatic difficulties" that might arise if a French explorer got to the Nile before Egyptian troops reached Khartoum, declaring that he was "not greatly impressed by this danger, because we shall have to meet it anyhow."<sup>15</sup> In a note to Lord Cromer, the Consul-General of Egypt, Salisbury remarked that "If we get to Fashoda, the diplomatic crisis will be something to remember and the 'What next?' will be a very interesting question."<sup>16</sup> Whereas some scholars have characterized Salisbury as an "old-school diplomat" who believed that great powers didn't push one another to the wall during crises and abhorred war as a sign that diplomacy had failed,<sup>17</sup> he was quite comfortable running risks to protect British credibility and influence in Egypt.

Over the course of 1897 and into 1898, Salisbury and the Foreign Office deepened Britain's

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<sup>13</sup>Bates (1984, pp. 23–24); Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny (1961, p. 345).

<sup>14</sup>Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny (1961, pp. 349, 354).

<sup>15</sup>Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny (1961, p. 361).

<sup>16</sup>Langer (1960, p. 549).

<sup>17</sup>Brown (1970, pp. 92–93).



commitment in the Sudan as a response to reports that the French expedition under the command of Captain Jean-Baptiste Marchand had crossed the Nile. He first dispatched a “considerable force” under Colonel James MacDonald to try and head off any further westward incursions by Ethiopian troops, but MacDonald quickly found himself bogged down in Uganda.<sup>18</sup> Recognizing that a show of force against French and Ethiopian advances would therefore have to come from north of Fashoda, Salisbury obliged Kitchener’s November 1897 request for British reinforcements to storm Khartoum and continue onward down the Nile.

With British forces thus committed, Salisbury anticipated not just that Khartoum would fall, but also that a clash with the French would be imminent. Following Kitchener’s victory at Khartoum in September 1898, Salisbury instructed him to continue up the Nile toward Fashoda. These orders forbade Kitchener from recognizing any French or Ethiopian claims to the valley and gave him full latitude to deal with the French as he saw fit.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, Salisbury wanted to compel rather than persuade the French to withdraw their forces. In granting Kitchener such wide authority, “Salisbury was evidently prepared to accept an armed collision with the French, which might bring on an [sic] European war.”<sup>20</sup> Especially following Russia’s March 1898 seizure of the Port Arthur (Lushun) naval base, there was a powerful sense of “now or never” within the Foreign Office: anything but the most vigorous response to France’s provocation would weaken Britain’s standing as a major power; Britain’s will had to be enforced “to the uttermost” in order to prevent Paris, St. Petersburg, and Berlin from writing her off as never willing to risk a war.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, by delegating to Kitchener the task of forcing the French party under Marchand’s command to withdraw from Fashoda, Salisbury brought a dimension of brinkmanship to the crisis. He instructed British officials in Cairo to make Marchand’s position as untenable as possible by blockading the surrounding stretch of the Upper Nile, resulting in a significant communications lag that prevented Marchand from getting in touch with Paris without himself traveling upriver to Cairo. Consequently, Lord Cromer deliberately delayed in transmitting downriver the message

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<sup>18</sup>Langer (1960, p. 548).

<sup>19</sup>Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny (1961, pp. 363–366).

<sup>20</sup>Sanderson (1965, pp. 332–334).

<sup>21</sup>Sanderson, 301, in Louis and Gifford (1971).

that the French government had agreed to a withdrawal.<sup>22</sup> As the standoff lingered into October 1898, the Foreign Office kept up its uncompromising line in communications between Sir Edmund Monson, the British ambassador in Paris, and Theophile Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, with the former indicating that Britain would only accept an unconditional French withdrawal; there would be no negotiations on terms acceptable to Paris. Perhaps most importantly, Salisbury and the Cabinet put the Navy on war footing from October 26th by readying the Reserve, Channel, and Mediterranean fleets for a potential conflict.<sup>23</sup>

In short, then, British diplomats never regarded Marchand's mission as merely a "French picnic party that was outstaying its welcome" but rather as an existential threat to Egypt's entire welfare. Because Salisbury was determined not to yield to the French, or any other European state, the issue became one of British power and influence.<sup>24</sup> The result was that Salisbury and the Foreign Office were willing to fight France (and her ally Russia, too, if necessary) to prove British mettle.<sup>25</sup>

### **British military officials' views**

British military officials were willing to go along with the Foreign Office's hard line on Fashoda because they viewed Egypt as strategically essential to the core interest of imperial defense. By the mid-1890s, the Admiralty had shifted its points of emphasis for maintaining military hegemony in the Mediterranean away from the Dardanelles Straits and toward its fleets and bases at Gibraltar, Malta, and Alexandria. Holding Egypt "against all comers" thus became a central focus of the British military's mission.<sup>26</sup> And given Britain's overwhelming naval superiority vis-a-vis France, the Admiralty was confident of its ability to hold the line in a potential conflict, even if Russia intervened.<sup>27</sup>

Consistent with Egypt's perceived importance to British military posture, British military officials deemed any French outpost in or around Fashoda as dangerous to British interests. As early

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<sup>22</sup>Sanderson (1965, p. 343).

<sup>23</sup>Sanderson (1965, p. 350); Brown (1970, p. 114).

<sup>24</sup>Langer (1960, p. 559).

<sup>25</sup>Sanderson (1965, p. 354).

<sup>26</sup>Sanderson, 291, in Louis and Gifford (1971).

<sup>27</sup>Sanderson (1965, p. 354).

as November 1896, Captain Albert Gleichen recommended that British occupy the entire Bahr el Ghazal region of the Sudan, which encompassed Fashoda. Sir John Ardagh, the director of British military intelligence, supported these conclusions.<sup>28</sup> Ardagh worried that Marchand would, with the Ethiopians' help, entrench himself in the area and thus threaten Britain's broader strategy for Central and Eastern Africa. Given that Egyptian troops would not be able to reestablish control on their own, and despite the potential strain that an operation would place on the British Army, Ardagh thought Britain should either mount an effort in the Nile at once or resign itself to a French takeover.<sup>29</sup>

Once the invasion of the Sudan commenced, British military officials consistently advocated devoting more troops and resources toward establishing control of the region. With MacDonald stuck in Uganda, Lord Wolseley, the commander-in-chief of British forces, argued for dispatching two British infantry divisions to support Kitchener's troops in their advance on Khartoum, which would allow Britain to occupy the area around Fashoda before Marchand arrived.<sup>30</sup> For his part, Kitchener may have overstated the threat that his Egyptian troops were under in order to secure the British reinforcements that Salisbury sent in late 1897. Yet as experienced soldiers, Kitchener and Sir Reginald Wingate, the director of military intelligence for the Egyptian Army, believed that the best time to complete the conquest of the Sudan would be in the fall and winter of 1898, and to achieve this objective, British forces would need to be dispatched and acclimatized to the harsh desert environment at once.<sup>31</sup>

Kitchener's subsequent success at Khartoum and substantial capability advantage relative to the French expedition led him to implement Salisbury's instructions in a confident and uncompromising manner following his eventual rendezvous with Marchand at Fashoda. Because Kitchener's forces controlled the Nile north of Fashoda, he could regulate the flow of information to Cairo, and ultimately London and Paris, which allowed him to manipulate (and quite possibly exaggerate) the relative balance of capability between his and Marchand's forces. After the pair met and exchanged

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<sup>28</sup>Eubank (1960, pp. 147, 154).

<sup>29</sup>Brown (1970, p. 72).

<sup>30</sup>Langer (1960, p. 549).

<sup>31</sup>Bates (1984, p. 83).

demarches in late September 1898, Kitchener composed a dispatch back to London that categorized Marchand's position "as impossible as it is absurd," indicating that Marchand was short of ammunition and supplies, cut off from the interior, lacking sufficient water transport, and possessing no local following whatsoever. Kitchener's reporting is noteworthy not just in its emphasis on Marchand's lack of capability to mount further resistance, but also because it framed how British and French officials in their respective capitals understood the situation on the ground.<sup>32</sup>

If Kitchener's assessment of the military balance at Fashoda unequivocally favored the British position, so too did British naval officials exhibit little doubt in the fleet's ability to prevail over the French should war come. On November 9th, with the crisis well underway, Admiral Sir William Kennedy remarked that whereas the British fleet had previously lacked ships, men, and guns relative to its rivals, it was now for the first time in a position to say to any potential opponent "thus far shalt thou go and no further." By 1898, not only did the balance of capabilities in the Mediterranean favor the British fleet, but behind it also lay the reserve and a third powerful fleet of battleships. If anything, First Naval Lord Frederick Richards worried that Salisbury's initial mobilization was too focused on not precipitating a conflict and potentially left the coasts and Home Fleet unprepared.<sup>33</sup>

In reality, however, years of "ardent shipbuilding" had put British naval supremacy beyond question and put the fleet in position to address all contingencies.<sup>34</sup> In conjunction with Salisbury's mobilization, a detailed battle strategy was ready by October 26th and the Admiralty was quite confident that any war would not be a long affair. While Britain's fleet held the advantage in both numbers and readiness, intelligence on the French fleet bolstered these convictions: British officials believed that the French navy was itself aware of its forces' weak points and would thus be unlikely to seek a direct confrontation. Though there was much subsequent bluster in the British press regarding a preventive war, the Admiralty's crisis correspondence suggests that this school of thought never had the upper hand. Rather, British naval officials simply remained both attentive to French military preparations and confident in their ability to prevail in a potential conflict given

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<sup>32</sup>Sanderson (1965, pp. 337–38, 341).

<sup>33</sup>Marder (1940, pp. 320–321).

<sup>34</sup>Langer (1960, p. 559).

superior capabilities, thereby bolstering the firm stance staked out by the Foreign Office.<sup>35</sup>

### **French diplomats' views**

Meanwhile, throughout the 1890s, French diplomats smarted at the loss of French influence in Egypt, which dated to the Napoleonic era. Their sense of bitterness at Britain's victory led French diplomats to believe that a bold stroke on the Upper Nile, together with a favorable diplomatic situation in Europe, could redeem the humiliation of 1882 by forcing England to honor her pledge of withdrawal from Egypt.<sup>36</sup> While prestige was not the only French motive here, "it was in terms of prestige rather than strategy that in the later 1890s French diplomatists discussed Egypt with the British, with other European Powers, and among themselves." In other words, diplomats thought that pushing Britain out of Egypt through direct pressure would burnish France's credibility as a great power.<sup>37</sup> These considerations were instrumental in producing the crisis at Fashoda.

French diplomats tended to frame the Egyptian question in non-material and perceptual terms. Alphonse de Courcel, the French ambassador to London, told Salisbury as early as 1896 that France sought no more than the "psychological satisfaction" of seeing British troops withdrawn. Simultaneously, French diplomats understood that the Upper Nile was transforming into a symbol of British power, prompting French ambassador Georges Cogordan to observe from Cairo that gaining a foothold in the Bahr el Ghazal would be the best route to reopening the issue. In the gamified realm of 19th century power politics, leveraging the threat of force was a major means for achieving diplomatic ends. French diplomats thus thought they could create the necessary leverage through Marchand's mission and did not believe that the British would actually fight back if challenged.<sup>38</sup>

Diplomats' desire to confront Britain over Egypt consistently outweighed more practical considerations regarding the need to maintain favorable ties with London as a hedge against other European rivals. Whereas Britain's decisions surrounding Fashoda were chiefly the province of

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<sup>35</sup>Marder (1940, pp. 324, 328, 329–330, 332).

<sup>36</sup>Andrew (1968, p. 22).

<sup>37</sup>Sanderson, 287, in Louis and Gifford (1971).

<sup>38</sup>Sanderson, 288–289, 303–305, in Louis and Gifford (1971).

the Foreign Office, France's Upper Nile policy was subject to the overlapping jurisdictions of one diplomatic (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and one quasi-diplomatic (Ministry of Colonies) entity, each jockeying for organizational influence over France's approach to Africa. With Colonies often taking the lead, both ministries prodded France toward a more aggressive posture at Fashoda.<sup>39</sup>

The driving force behind France's push for a confrontation in the Sudan was Théophile Delcassé, who held several posts at Colonies in the 1890s before himself becoming Foreign Minister in June 1898. Delcassé came of age as French prestige was suffering a series of blows from a rising Germany, especially France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. A journalist by trade and a protégé of avowed French colonialist Leon Gambetta, Delcassé came to view colonial expansion as a means of restoring France's status as a great power. Delcassé also inherited both Gambetta's desire for an alliance with England and his unwillingness to yield on Egypt for the sake of that alliance. Thus, while Delcassé's formative political experiences instilled a deep sense of crisis in France's global image that needed redemption through a final settlement on Egypt, his eventual role in government enabled him to act on this perspective.<sup>40</sup>

In each of the territorial disputes with England (over areas of modern-day Thailand, Niger, and Sudan) that consumed Delcassé's attention while serving as Undersecretary (January to November 1893), then Minister for Colonies (May 1894 to January 1895), he proved far readier than his colleagues in the French cabinet to run the risks of direct confrontation.<sup>41</sup> In February 1893, Delcassé initiated the French efforts to reassert control of the Nile basin that would eventually become the Marchand mission during early 1896.<sup>42</sup> Delcassé saw French expansion as a race against England, in which his role was "of the man who insists on not giving way to John Bull." Inspired by a paper from French engineer Victor Prompt on the possibility of damming and diverting the river, Delcassé devised a plan for a small expedition (consisting of African native regulars commanded by French officers) to challenge England's presence in Egypt by traveling west from Senegal along

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<sup>39</sup>Brown (1970, pp. 4–5, 17); Bates (1984, pp. 125–126). The Ministry of Colonies was a hybrid organization of civilian officials and military officers charged with expanding France's imperial remit.

<sup>40</sup>Andrew (1968, pp. 3–4).

<sup>41</sup>Andrew (1968, p. 32).

<sup>42</sup>Sanderson (1965, p. 140).

the Niger River to establish a position near the Nile's headwaters. The plan was for Marchand to beat the British to the spot, supported from the east by Ethiopian troops. Delcassé thus sought to force England to honor its withdrawal pledge by occupying territory first and negotiating later.<sup>43</sup>

While some officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not wholly embrace this line of thinking, they hardly sought to halt the momentum generated by Delcassé's policies.<sup>44</sup> Gabriel Hanotaux — a career diplomat who took turns as Foreign Minister during 1894-95 and 1896-98 — viewed the British presence in Egypt as a standing affront to both France and Europe more widely, but was not immediately prepared for France to seek resolution through unilateral action.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, if France's imperial impulses toward confrontation with England found their outlet at Colonies, then its continentalist inclinations toward more pacific relations with Britain lived within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>46</sup> Yet despite multiple opportunities over the next several years to quash the expedition, Hanotaux repeatedly demurred, avoiding any written commitment to the mission but doing little to discourage it in practice. Part of Hanotaux's motivation here may have been to avoid blame for a potential failure of the project.<sup>47</sup> But he also seems to have developed a new sense of urgency about the Nile Valley following his return to government in April 1896, as Cogordan's reporting from Cairo warned that France continued to lose face for not having made progress on the Egyptian question.<sup>48</sup> Further, as a result of the domestic turmoil over the Dreyfus Affair that France experienced beginning in March 1896, Hanotaux cabled Courcel in London that many European diplomats now saw France as weak and expressed the conviction that French diplomacy needed to defend its interests "as energetically as ever." In February 1898, during a speech to the Chamber of Deputies, Hanotaux publicly expressed his determination to "defend the rights of Egypt...[and]...the destinies of the Nile basin and continental Africa."<sup>49</sup>

By the time Marchand reached Fashoda in July 1898, however, Delcassé had succeeded Hano-

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<sup>43</sup> Andrew (1968, pp. 39–45).

<sup>44</sup> Sanderson (1965, p. 147).

<sup>45</sup> Sanderson, 288, Louis and Gifford (1971).

<sup>46</sup> Brown (1970, p. 17).

<sup>47</sup> Brown (1970, pp. 27–32).

<sup>48</sup> Sanderson (1965, p. 281).

<sup>49</sup> Brown (1970, pp. 70–71).

taux as Foreign Minister in a new government. In February, Delcassé had proudly claimed responsibility for the Marchand mission, using his own speech to the Chamber to argue that “It is not I who am to blame” for the French flag not having yet reached the Nile.<sup>50</sup> Yet by September 1898, Delcassé was tacking toward a more cautious approach and even expressing hope that Marchand would not go as far as Fashoda. Observing the steady decline in French relations with England, Kitchener’s triumph at Khartoum, and an apparent rapprochement between England and Germany, Delcassé worried that Marchand and Kitchener would come to blows, thus touching off a wider European conflict.<sup>51</sup> While the Anglo-Egyptian victory at Khartoum negated Marchand’s military advantage, France needed German cooperation to pressure Britain into a favorable outcome on the Egyptian question. Crucially, however, Delcassé still expected to gain at least some token concessions from Britain based on Marchand’s presence and was therefore caught off-guard by Britain’s demands for an unconditional withdrawal.<sup>52</sup>

In a series of subsequent discussions with British ambassador Monson, Delcassé tried to avoid being driven into a corner, telling the British ambassador that France would deeply resent the insult to its national honor involved in recalling Marchand and preferred war over submitting to British demands. As Delcassé would later put it privately, “How are we to combine the needs of honour with the necessity of avoiding a naval war which we are in no state to undertake, even with Russian help: that is the problem.”<sup>53</sup> Thus, although Delcassé understood by late October that he would have to order Marchand’s withdrawal, he was extremely reluctant to give way after his previous display of firmness on Egypt. Despite receiving a briefing from the Chief of the Naval Staff on October 11th regarding the inferior state of the French fleet, Delcassé apparently considered a plan on October 31st in which Marchand would withdraw from Fashoda, link up with the Ethiopians, and then challenge Kitchener’s forces at a more opportune moment. It was not until French President Félix Faure indicated his willingness to accept public responsibility for the

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<sup>50</sup>Andrew (1968, p. 91).

<sup>51</sup>Langer (1960, pp. 555–556); Andrew (1968, p. 92).

<sup>52</sup>Sanderson (1965, p. 354); Brown (1970, pp. 92–93).

<sup>53</sup>Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny (1961, pp. 371, 375).



withdrawal that Delcassé ordered Marchand out of Fashoda in early November.<sup>54</sup>

To summarize, French diplomats' desire to restore a sense of grandeur and credibility to French foreign policy motivated their aggressive stance on Upper Nile questions. If the Ministry of Colonies led the way, then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs largely went along for the ride. Because Delcassé premised Marchand's mission on presenting the British with a *fait accompli* rather than conducting an actual shooting war, diplomats believed that this show of force would compel a change in British behavior; they did not initially grasp the downside risks of France's naval inferiority or the possibility of unfavorable shifts in local conditions on the ground, and so embraced a policy of confrontation.<sup>55</sup>

### **French military officials' views**

While Delcassé set the wheels of Marchand's expedition in motion during his tenure at Colonies, it was permanent ministry officials — many of whom were current or former French military officers — that brought the mission to life in the latter stages of 1895. The Marchand mission was, in essence, “the policy of military officers and, more important, of high permanent officials who were by the tradition of their service extremely combative toward England and over-ready to assert French prestige by intensifying competition between the two countries.”<sup>56</sup> Therefore, the expedition was certainly bound up in French military notions of how to acquire prestige for both itself and the nation (through imperial conquest and battlefield victory). These undercurrents may have reflected the French military's longstanding emphasis on retaining organizational autonomy by cultivating a cohesive, professional army with superior skills, discipline, and *esprit de corps*.<sup>57</sup> Yet from a capabilities perspective, due to the military's heavy involvement, the Marchand mission was still well-equipped to perform its intended purpose: forcing Britain's hand on Egypt. While the narrow focus on reaching Fashoda may have obscured the blunt reality of British escalation dominance, French military officials never advocated for all-out war with Britain, and as tensions

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<sup>54</sup>Andrew (1968, p. 102); Brown (1970, pp. 115–116).

<sup>55</sup>Sanderson (1965, p. 361).

<sup>56</sup>Sanderson (1965, p. 313); Sanderson, 323, in Louis and Gifford (1971).

<sup>57</sup>Snyder (1989, p. 50).

mounted, attested to shortcomings in French military (and especially naval) posture.<sup>58</sup> If military officials' (possibly self-aggrandizing) optimism about what could be achieved at Fashoda was essential to France's initially hawkish posture, then their pessimism about overall French warfighting capabilities proved key to resolving the crisis.

French efforts to expand their control of the Sudan relied heavily on a core group of military officials known as the *officiers soudanais*. On the one hand, their role in precipitating the crisis speaks to organizational influence-oriented motivations and behavior. The *soudanais* were dedicated to the cause of colonial adventure, priding themselves on seizing the initiative to thwart competition from Britain and Germany, and thus saw empire-building in Africa as integral to both organizational and national prestige. Whereas Delcassé envisioned the expedition to the Nile as a low-cost affair with a small overall footprint, military officers such as General Gustave Borgnis-Desbordes argued that full-scale expeditions, involving "irresistible force," were the only practical means of French expansion in Africa.<sup>59</sup> As a member of the *soudanais* himself, Marchand was steeped in its traditions and general outlook on French policy in Africa, which held that organizational cohesion among French forces had consistently triumphed in the face of their numerical inferiority vis-a-vis native African armies.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, French military officials' belief in cohesion as a force multiplier as well as the actual setup of the Marchand mission suggest that considerations of men and materiel loomed large. In devising the expedition, Marchand split the difference between Delcassé's and Desbordes' positions, positing that the mission's costs and profile could be kept to a minimum while still achieving the desired military ends. His proposal to Hanotaux in September 1895 was to embark for the Bahr el Ghazal with a small number of French officers commanding a few hundred native troops ("200 men and 600,000 francs") so as not to appear outwardly menacing. Even if the plan had a political and patriotic core, however, Marchand also understood from his army experience that adequate forces and equipment would be required to achieve the desired ends, and so the final

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<sup>58</sup>Langer (1960, p. 561).

<sup>59</sup>Andrew (1968, p. 39).

<sup>60</sup>Brown (1970, pp. 47–48); Bates (1984, pp. 27–30); Snyder (1989, p. 58).

portion of his 21-page report to Hanotaux was laden with detailed specifications and estimates of the expedition's size, duration, and cost — in other words, the required capabilities.<sup>61</sup>

Because the French government fell shortly after Marchand made his proposal to Hanotaux, military officials within Colonies were able to push forward on the expedition largely without oversight. Yet another member of the *soudanais*, Colonel Louis Archinard, headed the Defense Directorate at Colonies and drew on his own extensive experience with securing large swaths of African territory for France in backing Marchand's proposal. Archinard's Defense Directorate carefully devised a four-phase mission in which Marchand would present himself as a peaceful and non-political explorer until he reached Central Africa, at which point he would declare himself "Chief of the Congo-Nile mission" before occupying and annexing the area around Fashoda. Thus, the Marchand mission emerged as a "full-blown expansionist military project."<sup>62</sup> Even so, military officials who participated in the expedition understood its relatively limited aims and hardly viewed it as a prelude to war with Britain; General Charles Mangin stated that its object was simply "to remove all pretext for the occupation of Egypt by the English..."<sup>63</sup>

Marchand received his formal instructions on February 24, 1896 and embarked for Fashoda shortly thereafter. He reached his destination more than two years later, on July 10, 1898, occupying a previously abandoned fort along the Nile.<sup>64</sup> Once entrenched at Fashoda, Marchand was loathe to relinquish his position, even after his rendezvous with Kitchener, based on his assessment of the significant capabilities that he possessed for resisting a British advance. Contrary to Kitchener's portrayal of Marchand's party as a destitute band of explorers, the reality on the ground was quite the opposite (even if Kitchener's men were still better armed and equipped): French forces were well-stocked and likely capable of dealing with any contingency short of a full-scale siege. Marchand's forces boasted several highly mobile boats that could be used to attack opposing forces on the river, a large supply of small-arms ammunition, and four months' worth of food and

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<sup>61</sup>Sanderson (1965, p. 272); Goode (1971, p. 157); Bates (1984, p. 29).

<sup>62</sup>Brown (1970, pp. 47–52).

<sup>63</sup>Langer (1960, p. 538).

<sup>64</sup>Sanderson (1965, pp. 278, 287).

supplies.<sup>65</sup> In Mangin's view, the French force could have given the British "a great deal more trouble" than they encountered at Khartoum.<sup>66</sup>

French military officials' optimism about the specific situation at Fashoda, however, did not extend to their assessment of the wider military balance vis-a-vis Britain, as they were well aware of British naval superiority.<sup>67</sup> Though the French navy was the next strongest in the world by comparison, the French naval staff had been paralyzed for some time by a dispute over whether to build capital ships versus cruisers and torpedoes. As a result, its Channel fleet still comprised battleships built prior to 1885 of varying design and for which no unified concept of operations was in place, while naval officials cited a severe shortage of soldiers to man the batteries along the French coast.<sup>68</sup> The lone existing contingency plan was years out of date and involved a scheme for invading England, which Admiral Jean de Curverville, the Chief of the French Naval Staff, viewed as totally unworkable. Indeed, French estimates suggested that over the last decade, its fleet had shrunk from three-quarters to half the size of Britain's, with just 565,399 tons in service compared to 1,074,266 for the Royal Navy — a sobering fact that Admiral de Curverville conveyed to a flailing Delcassé on October 11th. French naval officers were thus of one mind: France could not fight Britain at sea, not even by commerce-destroying.<sup>69</sup>

### **Summary: British Brinkmanship Versus French Bravado**

At Fashoda, both British and French diplomats pushed their countries toward confrontation out of concern for credibility, bolstered by their respective militaries' assessments of what the show or limited use of force could accomplish. Despite French military officials' optimism about the Marchand mission, their pessimism about a wider war with England played a key role in preventing the crisis from escalating further. While French military officials undoubtedly displayed prestige- and autonomy-related motives, their behavior and advice also consistently reflected assessments of

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<sup>65</sup>Eubank (1960, p. 158); Sanderson (1965, pp. 338–339).

<sup>66</sup>Langer (1960, p. 556).

<sup>67</sup>Sanderson (1965, p. 354).

<sup>68</sup>Langer (1960, p. 559).

<sup>69</sup>Langer (1960, p. 561); Andrew (1968, p. 102); Brown (1970, p. 130).

available men and materiel. The evidence in this case is then generally consistent with the theory's core insights: diplomats see credibility in reputational terms, while military officials do so chiefly through the lens of military capabilities, and the presence of both reputational concerns and sufficient military power can generate a hawkish consensus among advisers. In the British case, shared reputational concerns articulated by Salisbury and the Foreign Office coupled with the military's bullish assessments of British naval capabilities led to the fleet being put on a war footing. For the French, a profound sense of reputational damage combined with the daring instincts of the *officiers soudanais* midwifed the Marchand mission.

My theory of organizational identity matches up favorably with plausible alternatives, even though Fashoda represents an easy test for both. In terms of structural forces, the multipolar distribution of power does not appear to generate unique sets of credibility concerns or alter the patterns of policy advocacy observed in the foregoing cases under bipolarity. Whereas we might expect even more intense competitive pressures, and thus converging policy viewpoints among officials, in a world with multiple rivals and constantly shifting alliances, it is reassuring for my theory that officials' appear to meet expectations, at least among British diplomats and military officials and for French diplomats.

Regarding organizational influence, there is solid evidence that turf and resource concerns motivated French military officials — and especially the *officiers soudanais* — to pursue an expansion-minded, confrontational policy in the lead-up to the crisis. Given domestic political turmoil in France, officials at the Ministry of Colonies had both the incentive and opportunity to burnish their organization's influence in the absence of consistent oversight from the French Cabinet. Here, the theory does not stack up as favorably to an easy case for organizational influence and a hard one for organizational identity. But was the Marchand mission merely an exercise in empire-building, both literally (in terms of regaining territory) and/or figuratively (in terms of bolstering organizational clout)? The evidence marshaled here suggests that even if organizational influence was an important motive, officials like Marchand saw the potential task before them through the lens of what had worked in the past: namely, using locally superior French military capabilities to seize

the initiative in expanding the perimeters of the French Sudan.<sup>70</sup> Thus, French military officials advocated policy not just on the basis of organizational influence, but also as a function of what they deemed militarily possible. While it is difficult to neatly disentangle these competing explanations, one possible implication is that when officials' organizational identity and concerns about organizational influence align, these conditions may exacerbate bureaucratic tendencies toward hawkish policies. Having found overall support for my expectations in British and French behavior under multipolarity, I now turn to a case of British behavior as a non-pole under bipolarity.

## 5.2 Falklands (1982)

Conflict arose between Britain and Argentina in April 1982 due to a long-running sovereignty dispute concerning the Falkland Islands. Argentina (whose perspective I do not consider here because it was led by a military junta rather than a democratic government both before and during the crisis) asserted original authority over the territories via its inheritance of Spanish imperial rights. Britain traced its own claims to English explorers' sixteenth century discovery and successful 1833 conquest of the islands. However, in the context of post-World War II decolonization efforts, and specifically under United Nations Resolution 2065 of December 1965, self-determination and the end of colonialism in all forms were the order of the day. Britain and Argentina were thus invited to peacefully resolve their differences through negotiation. By August 1968, both governments had agreed to a draft memorandum of understanding that would transfer sovereignty to Argentina so long as Britain was satisfied that the islanders' interests were secured.<sup>71</sup>

Yet vehement opposition from the islanders themselves along with a well-organized and sympathetic lobbying campaign in Britain led to an uproar in Parliament and a change in tack from British leaders. Accordingly, Prime Minister Harold Wilson's government announced in December 1968 that while it would continue negotiations with Argentina, under no circumstances would Britain give up sovereignty against the islanders' *wishes* (rather than their interests). As efforts to settle the dispute dragged onward through the 1970s, this semantic change proved fateful: by

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<sup>70</sup>Brown (1970, p. 47); Bates (1984, pp. 27–30).

<sup>71</sup>Boyce (2005, pp. 9, 11).

engaging both Parliamentary and public opinion on the issue, the pledge to respect the islanders' wishes prevented the British government from either fully liquidating or adequately resourcing its commitment to the Falklands.<sup>72</sup> Consequently, when Argentina forcibly seized the islands in April 1982, strong popular and elite sentiments militated toward efforts to repel what the British public and its leaders perceived as unlawful aggression against national interests. The Falklands case therefore makes for another hard test of my argument. Structural explanations would predict a forceful reaction among UK officials to defend British power, interests, and/or resolve, while an organizational influence perspective would expect British diplomatic and military officials to seize on the crisis as a means to gather prestige and resources.<sup>73</sup>

Nevertheless, both before and during the crisis, British diplomats at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) repeatedly pushed for a negotiated solution that would release Britain from its commitment to the islands, thereby ridding FCO of a troublesome liability in its South American portfolio. If diplomats cared about Britain's reputation here, it was through the lens of establishing favorable trade relations with Argentina, which they viewed as an important emerging market for British goods and services, rather than through the lens of projecting reliability or resolve. With war looming, and even after hostilities broke out, FCO remained focused on how British actions intended to deter could instead provoke escalation by Argentina and/or turn world opinion against the British cause.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, British military officials argued from the late 1960s that the islands were neither strategically important nor easily defensible. As Britain retrenched from its overseas commitments and reoriented its defense posture toward NATO through the 1970s, military officials came to view the Falklands as an expensive nuisance and thus made little effort to reinforce the islands' defenses or develop contingency plans to deal with potential Argentine coercion.<sup>75</sup>

Because the Foreign Office did not perceive great reputational stakes, while British military officials acknowledged that they lacked a credible deterrent posture, until early 1982 the balance

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<sup>72</sup>Donaghy (2014, p. 6).

<sup>73</sup>Freedman (2005b, pp. 108, 174); Dolan (2015, pp. 547–554); Mercat (2019, pp. 1–2).

<sup>74</sup>Gibran (1998, p. 44); Boyce (2005, pp. 36–37); Freedman (2005b, p. 18).

<sup>75</sup>Charlton (1989, p. 6); Donaghy (2014, p. 14).

of policy advocacy was quite dovish in calling for Britain to divest from the Falklands. Only once military officials perceived a direct threat to British interests (following the Argentinian invasion) of the islands in March and revised their assessment of available capabilities (in conjunction with substantial, secret military assistance from the United States) did they indicate the willingness to use force and encourage British leaders to mount an operation aimed at repossessing the Falklands.<sup>76</sup> To summarize, I find credibility concerns (or lack thereof) that are inconsistent with structural forces; advocacy that matches officials' organizational identities, but also implicates organizational influence; and a balance of advice that swung sharply toward dispatching a naval task force to confront Argentina and reclaim the islands.

### **Diplomats' views**

Officials at FCO consistently saw the Falklands dispute as a regional issue rather than one that directly invoked British national interests and/or reputation.<sup>77</sup> Even before the 1968 incident in Parliament, FCO's Falklands policy had pragmatically aimed to terminate colonial rule and above all to improve British relations with Latin America writ large. Thereafter, FCO sought more emphatically to convince the islanders of the merits that closer relations with Argentina would bring as a means to facilitate ultimate British divestment from the territories.<sup>78</sup> While diplomats at FCO understood their "moral duty" to respect the islanders' wishes, wider British priorities dominated official attitudes. As Lord Chalfont, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs during the late 1960s, subsequently put it, "Argentina is important in the context of our relations with the Americas overall. It has always been a perception of foreign policy experts, including those in the Foreign Office, that those relationships are more important than the perceptions of a small number of inhabitants of the Falkland Islands."<sup>79</sup> Therefore, FCO's support for negotiations resulted less out of a desire to increase its own organizational influence (by talking to Argentina simply for the sake of talking) than to decrease the Falklands' influence on Britain's approach to

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<sup>76</sup>Richardson (1996, p. 125).

<sup>77</sup>Gibran (1998, pp. 48–49).

<sup>78</sup>Donaghy (2014, pp. 9–11).

<sup>79</sup>Charlton (1989, pp. 7–9, 16).



Latin America.

Because FCO, and its Latin American department in particular, had authority over everyday Falklands affairs and saw the dispute in regional terms, diplomats pushed senior Cabinet officials to make concessions wherever possible, advocating solutions that ranged from joint Argentine-British control to a leaseback scheme in which Argentina would receive formal sovereignty but allow the islanders' continued presence under a long-term rental agreement. By contrast, FCO never supported an expanded and/or more militarized commitment to the Falklands, even in response to Argentina's increasing belligerence on the issue. Frank Maynard, the chargé at the British embassy in Buenos Aires, warned in late 1975 that adopting a "Fortress Falklands" approach could irreparably harm Britain's diplomatic and trade relationships. Hugh Carless, the head of the Latin American department, and David Ennals, FCO's Minister of State from 1974 to 1976, concurred: "The political consequences [of bolstering the islands' defenses] for our relations with the United States, the United Nations, Latin America, and other Third World countries would be very serious." Thus, the motivation behind FCO's leaseback proposal during the mid-1970s was to show the UN and other global audiences that Britain would respect post-colonial independence and human rights, negotiate with Argentina in good faith, and seek improvement in its political and trade ties across Latin America.<sup>80</sup>

For their part, successive Foreign Secretaries — including James Callaghan (1974-76), Anthony Crosland (1976-77), David Owen (1977-79), and Peter Carrington (1979-82) — understood that Britain could not indefinitely sustain its middle ground position (i.e. appeasing both the islanders and the Argentines), but played for time in the hope that the islanders would come around to their essential dependence on Argentina.<sup>81</sup> However, as members of Parliament charged with setting foreign policy priorities before their fellow ministers, all four were more attuned than the career diplomats at FCO to the optics of failing to defend the islanders' wishes, even if they privately agreed on the overriding importance of harmonious trade and political relations with Latin

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<sup>80</sup>Boyce (2005, p. 17); Donaghy (2014, pp. 14–18, 45, 54, 57, 59).

<sup>81</sup>Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse (1990, p. 14); Freedman (2005a, p. 14).

America.<sup>82</sup> Concern for the domestic (rather than international) political implications yielded Foreign Secretaries' persistent efforts to maintain a local British naval presence via the icebreaker and research vessel, the HMS *Endurance*, despite the Ministry of Defence's (MoD) successive efforts to scrap the ship under its rationalization of Britain's force posture. Between 1976 and 1981, all four secretaries advocated for (and succeeded in) keeping the *Endurance* on station by suggesting that it was "essential for political reasons" (Callaghan) and "symbolic of HMG's determination to sustain British sovereignty" (Crosland). Withdrawing the ship would be viewed "as a clear admission of weakness on our part and a lack of determination to defend our interests" (Owen); "Any reduction [in our presence] would be interpreted by both the Islanders and the Argentines as a reduction in our commitment to the Islands and in our willingness to defend them" (Carrington).<sup>83</sup>

While appreciating the continued need for *Endurance*'s presence so as not to indicate flagging British interest, diplomats continued to back a negotiated settlement that would allow ultimate divestiture from the islands. Yet there was a powerful sense among both permanent and political officials of being boxed into mostly bad options given the British government's broader inability to take politically difficult decisions.<sup>84</sup> Diplomats' strategy was premised on keeping Argentina's military threat at bay by demonstrating willingness to discuss the problem, but persistently failed to get the islanders onside.<sup>85</sup> For instance, with FCO's backing, Minister of State Nicholas Ridley had embarked for the Falklands in November 1980 to sell the leaseback plan, but returned empty-handed in the face of continued islander opposition to any change in the status quo.<sup>86</sup>

Meanwhile, Argentina's diplomatic pressure and militant rhetoric increased through 1981 and into 1982. As a result, in April 1981, FCO's South American Department encouraged MoD to undertake contingency planning for a potential Argentine use of force. By fall, FCO officials were sufficiently alarmed at the Argentine government's perceived need for a resolution of the issue that

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<sup>82</sup>Donaghy (2014, p. 214).

<sup>83</sup>Donaghy (2014, pp. 98, 139, 154); Freedman (2005a, p. 125). Owen was also instrumental in securing the covert dispatch of a British submarine to the South Atlantic in 1977 as a contingency plan following the discovery of an Argentine presence on the island of Southern Thule (Donaghy, 2014, p. 168).

<sup>84</sup>Boyce (2005, p. 17).

<sup>85</sup>Donaghy (2014, p. 213).

<sup>86</sup>Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse (1990, p. 9).

they badgered Carrington to proceed on leaseback, with or without the islanders' consent.<sup>87</sup> A September 1981 Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) assessment (in which FCO played a crucial role) laid out the options: open negotiations without the islanders' consent; allow Argentina to conclude that a military solution was required in the absence of hope for peaceful transfer of sovereignty; or embark on an active campaign to educate both islanders and British opinion about the consequences of failed negotiations.<sup>88</sup> Sir Anthony Williams, the British ambassador in Buenos Aires, warned in January 1982 that the Argentines and islanders were increasingly "on each other's nerves," while an early March follow-up from the Foreign Office noted that events were moving "perilously...from dialogue to confrontation."<sup>89</sup>

Yet even as tensions ratcheted up — first with the Argentinian government's announcement, on March 9th, of an April 1st deadline for Britain to agree on the terms of a new permanent negotiating commission, and then over the discovery of several Argentinian scrap merchants on the outlying island of South Georgia on March 19th — FCO sought to get negotiations back on track. Ambassador Williams and Richard Luce, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, counseled a restrained response to the apparent Argentinian violation of British sovereignty on South Georgia.<sup>90</sup> Though Williams and Luce both agreed with Falklands Governor Rex Hunt on the value of sending *Endurance* to the scene (with a contingent of Royal Marines aboard), FCO envisioned this as an intelligence-gathering mission rather than a coercive effort to forcibly remove the Argentinians. Only once it became clear that the Argentinian party had no intention of leaving did Luce and Carrington instruct *Endurance*'s commander, Captain Nicholas Barker, to loiter offshore from the South Georgian port of Grytviken while awaiting further orders. Meanwhile, Carrington messaged his counterpart, Foreign Minister Nicanor Costa Mendez, with a plea to "avoid that this issue should gain political momentum," arguing that it was "essential for us not to lose the vital political climate for our mutual efforts regarding the peaceful resolution of the Falkland dispute through negotiations." In adopting this conciliatory line, Carrington recognized that Britain was

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<sup>87</sup>Charlton (1989, pp. 125–127).

<sup>88</sup>Freedman (2005a, pp. 119, 128).

<sup>89</sup>Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse (1990, pp. 20–21).

<sup>90</sup>Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse (1990, pp. 29–31, 48–51).

both militarily and politically exposed in the South Atlantic.<sup>91</sup>

Thus, as March turned to April, FCO judged the situation to be serious, insofar as Britain might have to make some real concessions to Argentina, but not necessarily close to any sort of climax. From Buenos Aires, Williams argued that cooler heads would prevail through a protracted test of political will rather than a forthcoming military engagement. In London, Carrington agreed with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on the wisdom of dispatching two British attack submarines (SSNs) to the South Atlantic as a hedge against any aggressive Argentine naval moves — but not, notably, as an effort to intimidate the Argentinians. However, since Argentine action was still not assumed to be imminent, and lest the Argentinians get the impression “that we are seeking a naval rather than a diplomatic solution” or that “we had run out of ideas other than military ones,” Carrington simultaneously announced to Costa Mendez that he would send a special British envoy to Buenos Aires with “constructive proposals” for resolving the dispute.<sup>92</sup>

While many of these last-minute moves were ultimately for naught — Argentinian forces invaded and occupied the Falklands on April 2nd, a decision that the Argentine government took on March 26th in response to perceived British intransigence over South Georgia — diplomats continued to advance proposals for compromise and conciliation even as events headed toward war.<sup>93</sup> FCO itself never advocated for the immediate policy solution on which Thatcher’s government settled, which was to dispatch a naval task force to the South Atlantic. Rather, its objectives for the April 1st Defence Committee meeting were merely to clarify that diplomatic options for South Georgia were being investigated and to secure *Endurance’s* retention for at least another year.<sup>94</sup> Though several senior diplomats (including Carrington and Luce) resigned or were discredited following the invasion, new Foreign Secretary Francis Pym’s instincts meshed with those of FCO; in his view, “the fact that people should die for an issue of this kind seemed to me to be wrong, unless absolutely no alternative presented itself.” Indeed, as the crisis broke, FCO published an analysis regarding the political costs of military action over the Falklands, which included probable

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<sup>91</sup>Freedman (2005a, pp. 151, 156–157, 164).

<sup>92</sup>Boyce (2005, pp. 33–34); Freedman (2005a, pp. 166–167, 173).

<sup>93</sup>Freedman (2005a, p. 161); Freedman (2005b, p. 26).

<sup>94</sup>Freedman (2005a, p. 177).

backlash or formal action against the 17,000 UK citizens in Argentina; the likely absence of UN support or allied backing; and the continued problem of sustaining a viable British presence even in the event of military victory.<sup>95</sup>

Therefore, if Thatcher's inclination toward military options rose as the crisis wore on, FCO sought to demonstrate continued British readiness to negotiate, including by using UN channels to secure a binding resolution that called for Argentinian withdrawal from the islands.<sup>96</sup> Attentive to the likely need for some sort of compromise, FCO considered options for an acceptable settlement in the immediate aftermath of the invasion. Indeed, diplomats hoped that the crisis could bring about an internationally-backed accord and obviate the need for either a costly, permanent commitment to the islands or continued FCO attention to the issue — in another sign that they did not view negotiations as a play for organizational influence.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, Pym's first speech to the House of Commons sought to temper public expectations for the outcome of the crisis. While indicating that Britain would deploy "strength of will" in resisting Argentinian aggression, Pym also emphasized that HMG would "spare no effort to reach a peaceful solution."<sup>98</sup> Behind closed doors, Pym reportedly lamented Thatcher's determination to fight for the Falklands: "The woman's gone mad. It won't, it can't come to that."<sup>99</sup> Pym backed up his public rhetoric and private hang-wringing with persistent engagement in the shuttle diplomacy undertaken by U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig, who sought to mediate the dispute throughout April.<sup>100</sup> Diplomats viewed Haig's mission as an opportunity to get the U.S. onside in persuading Argentina to withdraw from the Falklands and restore British administration, thereby avoiding the FCO's "nightmare" scenario: a possible military defeat, the weakening of NATO, the loss of international sympathy, and the straining of allied relationships. Despite the failure of Haig's efforts and the ultimate dispatch of the naval task force, FCO's stance of the previous fifteen years persisted: seeking to negotiate seriously in order

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<sup>95</sup>Boyce (2005, p. 41); Freedman (2005b, p. 33).

<sup>96</sup>Charlton (1989, p. 205); Richardson (1996, pp. 121–122).

<sup>97</sup>Freedman (2005b, p. 101).

<sup>98</sup>Boyce (2005, p. 51).

<sup>99</sup>Richardson (1996, p. 180).

<sup>100</sup>Richardson (1996, p. 143).

to cajole Argentina into a settlement that would be acceptable to the islanders.<sup>101</sup>

### **Military officials' views**

Since the 1960s, British military officials had persistently argued that the Falklands were not defensible against an Argentinian assault and that there were much more important priorities for limited British resources. Following Britain's 1967 retrenchment from commitments beyond the Suez Canal, both military and civilian officials at MoD were anxious to stick with the reorientation of British defense policy toward NATO. Defending the Falklands was viewed an expensive nuisance rather than a way to acquire more organizational resources or clout. Military officials' routine skepticism of the commitment and pessimistic view of the requirements for deterrence dominated MoD's input into policy debates surrounding the Falklands. Not until the territories were quite literally under attack, and not until it was apparent that covert American military assistance would be forthcoming, did military officials reconsider whether Britain could mount a successful operation to reclaim the islands.<sup>102</sup>

Military officials' capability-based assessments of the requirements for defending the Falklands expressed consistent pessimism throughout the 1970s. The considered view at MoD was to minimize the commitment, while the Chiefs of Staff noted that with the balance of power shifting away from the UK in the region, Britain's deterrent capability was more symbolic than real. As Admiral Terence Lewin, the Chief of the Defence Staff, later recounted, "We had a chiefs of staff 'view' on Argentina, which we dusted off every time it came to the top of the Foreign Office agenda. We had warned successive governments of the problems of defending these islands so far away from the UK base."<sup>103</sup>

Indeed, in response to Argentinian saber-rattling during late 1974, the chiefs compiled a February 1975 report on Britain's ability to defend the Falklands, measured against the most recent Defence Review and ongoing reduction in overseas forces. The analysis suggested that a brigade-

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<sup>101</sup>Freedman (2005b, pp. 108, 118, 159).

<sup>102</sup>Charlton (1989, p. 6); Richardson (1996, p. 123); Donaghy (2014, p. 14).

<sup>103</sup>Charlton (1989, pp. 133–134, 141).

strength task force would be needed, but the operational and transport difficulties with getting this many troops into the field were “insurmountable,” while reinforcement by air would also prove impossible given the immense distances involved. Stationing an SSN off the coast could be useful in deterring an invasion, yet would be too disruptive to Britain’s NATO and homeland defense obligations. When the chiefs next considered the issue in November 1977, they cited the meager defense capabilities offered by *Endurance* and the small contingent of Royal Marines stationed at Stanley on East Falkland. Among the additional limitations were the absence of a sufficient airfield, the likely inability to use bases in other countries across South America, and the distance from the nearest staging area at Ascension Island, which lay some 3,000 nautical miles away. The provision of proper air support would require deploying Britain’s lone remaining aircraft carrier. Short of pursuing a sizable naval deployment — which would be possible, but greatly strain available resources — MoD concluded that the requirements for adequate defense were impractical.<sup>104</sup>

While the chiefs articulated gloomy prospects for defending the Falklands, MoD did not seek to rectify the situation by lobbying for more resources to address the capability shortfall. In April 1981, when FCO asked MoD in to prepare a short-term politico-military assessment of the UK’s ability to respond to a range of potential Argentine actions, it took MoD five months to reply.<sup>105</sup> Even after a July 1981 JIC assessment identified various contingencies — including the harassment of British shipping, the military occupation of one or more uninhabited islands, the arrest of British scientists working on South Georgia, and small- or full-scale military invasion of the inhabited islands — MoD refused to alter its long-held position that defense and deterrence would require “substantial, and still possibly inadequate, deployments.” In MoD’s view, it was “in danger of being asked to provide a limited force for deterrent purposes in the knowledge that our bluff could be called.” Recalling earlier debates, officials noted that “we have been round this particular buoy many times before” regarding the challenges of getting relevant aircraft into the theater, keeping them fueled, and landing supply planes at Stanley. As one Wing Commander observed regarding these findings, “I hope you now have sufficient ammunition to shoot down the idea that RAF

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<sup>104</sup>Boyce (2005, p. 16); Donaghy (2014, pp. 58, 164–165).

<sup>105</sup>Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse (1990, p. 14).

aircraft may assist in the implausible task of trying to defend the Falklands.”<sup>106</sup>

Rather, with the chiefs’ (and in particular, the Navy’s) blessing, in mid-1981 MoD was pressing ahead with steps that would make it more difficult to deal with a confrontation should one arise, namely by finalizing plans to withdraw and scrap the *Endurance* after winter 1982. This stance was consistent with the chiefs’ judgment that substantial military capabilities — which *Endurance* did not offer — would have to be stationed in the South Atlantic to deter an invasion. Evicting a small force from an uninhabited island would call for 150 men, amphibious assault craft, and helicopter support. Preventing a small-scale operation against the Falklands themselves would take 850 men, air defense capabilities, and naval support, including an aircraft carrier, while deterring a full-fledged invasion would demand a balanced task force of naval and air assets. Furthermore, deploying these forces would be “very expensive,” “engage a significant portion of the country’s naval resources,” and possibly “precipitate the very action it was intended to deter.”<sup>107</sup> These forces would also take a long time to arrive in theater and could not guarantee success in recapturing any occupied territory. As one senior official commented, “it would be a practical nonsense, besides which Suez would look sensible, for us to attempt to engage in serious operations against a perfectly competent and well-equipped local opponent off the toe of South America.”<sup>108</sup>

Military officials therefore saw little point in retaining *Endurance*’s services. If seasoned naval operators like Admiral Henry Leach, the First Sea Lord, cared little for the ship’s straight naval capability, he cared even less for it as a symbol of British commitment, which was only useful “Up to a point. But, when the chips are down, and you have to pay through the nose for those symbols, then you have to cut your cloth again.”<sup>109</sup> Thus, during the initial row over South Georgia, MoD only grudgingly agreed to extend *Endurance*’s patrol through the duration of the crisis while making clear that the ship had to depart thereafter — a view reinforced by the knowledge that it could do so little against a potentially overwhelming Argentine force.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>Freedman (2005a, pp. 128–129).

<sup>107</sup>Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse (1990, p. 19).

<sup>108</sup>Freedman (2005a, p. 129).

<sup>109</sup>Charlton (1989, pp. 152–153).

<sup>110</sup>Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse (1990, pp. 73, 99).



Even as tensions over South Georgia ramped up in March 1982, MoD was not compelled to alter its assessment from July 1981. The next naval deployment to the South Atlantic was not scheduled until fall 1983; anything sooner would disrupt higher priority tasks. The only new idea was to covertly deploy an SSN whose presence could later be announced publicly for deterrence purposes. However, MoD stressed, the local balance of power vastly favored Argentina, whose highly efficient armed forces were well-equipped to mount a naval or amphibious assault operation. Its naval capabilities included an aircraft carrier and cruiser; an array of submarines, destroyers, amphibious ships, patrol aircraft and vessels; five marine battalions; and an independent fleet of land- and carrier-based aircraft. Its air forces boasted more than 200 planes plus medium-range bombers. Meanwhile, the same constraints bound for Britain — there was little that *Endurance* or the forty-odd marines at Stanley could do. Time and distance considerations continued to dominate military officials' assessment of Britain's options; a credible local deterrent force would not only be extremely expensive, but also produce operational penalties elsewhere, especially in the context of ongoing NATO exercises. As Admiral Peter Herbert complained, “with twelve scrap iron merchants creating a stir in South Georgia it is difficult to believe that it is necessary to disrupt Spartan's [a British SSN] exercises with FOF1 in SPRINGTRAIN [NATO exercises] and send her to the South Atlantic.”<sup>111</sup>

On March 30th — three days before the Argentine invasion — MoD was still hoping for a political solution and urging clear thinking on “the difficulties involved in the reinforcement of the Falklands and our disadvantage vis-a-vis the Argentines.” The chiefs, too, remained cautious, deeming the two SSNs dispatched at Thatcher and Carrington's request to be sufficient. Further, they noted that surface forces, if dispatched, would be too little, too late, and that if these assets had to stay in theater, they would disrupt other important plans. In response to a March 31st JIC report warning that the Argentine government might use any British action on South Georgia as a pretext for invading the Falklands, the chiefs again noted that a full naval task group would need to be on station in order to counter the whole range of Argentine military options. While MoD was ready for

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<sup>111</sup>Freedman (2005a, pp. 140–142, 168, 173).

such a precautionary move, the task force could not reach the South Atlantic for upwards of three weeks, while necessarily attracting international attention, further raising Argentina's hackles, and creating resource demands and restrictions on meeting other commitments.<sup>112</sup>

However, when intelligence reached London during the evening of March 31st that Argentina's own task force would reach Stanley in the early hours of April 2nd, the tenor of military advice changed considerably toward new consideration of an option that officials had long deemed possible, if quite risky and difficult. Admiral Leach's input appears to have been essential in the transition from caution to action. In a meeting with Thatcher, Defence Secretary John Nott, and other representatives from FCO and MoD, Leach questioned whether even his own naval staff were reacting urgently enough to updates on the Argentine threat. Leach argued that "something could be done, but whatever it was must not be half-hearted, for that was likely to result in a shambles." In his view, a full task force could not only be assembled in the coming days and arrive in the South Atlantic within three weeks, but also look after itself if attacked by Argentine forces and exert pressure on Buenos Aires.<sup>113</sup>

Given the imminent Argentine invasion, the implausibility of mounting a defense with the assets currently in theater, and the lack of a timely deterrent force, Leach pushed for sending every element of value in the fleet. He conceded that air support would still be a challenge, but expressed optimism in the capability of British Sea Harriers. When asked by Thatcher about recapturing the Falklands, Leach replied that "we could and in my judgment (though it is not my business to say so) we should...Because if we do not, or if we pussyfoot [sic] in our actions and do not achieve complete success, in another few months we shall be living in a different country whose word counts for little."<sup>114</sup> Here, Leach explicitly linked Britain's credibility with its military capability to counter Argentine aggression. Leach would later characterize the issue in the following terms: "What the hell's the point of having a navy if, when you get a requirement like this, you are not prepared to do anything with it?"<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>Freedman (2005a, pp. 178–179).

<sup>113</sup>Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse (1990, p. 122); Boyce (2005, p. 42).

<sup>114</sup>Freedman (2005a, p. 180).

<sup>115</sup>Charlton (1989, p. 187).

While Leach's enthusiastic assessment was instrumental in the April 1st decision to send the task force, some skepticism lingered among the chiefs and within MoD. For their parts, Chief of Air Staff Sir Michael Beetham and Chief of the General Staff Sir Edwin Bramall understood why the government had to do something, as well as the diplomatic utility of demonstrating resolve, but they were uncomfortable with where this course of action might lead. They may also have viewed Leach's advocacy in the context of ongoing cuts to the fleet and his concordant desire to show that Britain still needed a strong navy.<sup>116</sup> Bramall, in particular, lacked enthusiasm for the operation "because first of all I thought we needn't have got ourselves into this muddle. And I resented the casualties that I knew would be inevitable in order to recover from the mistakes we'd made."<sup>117</sup> When the question of retaking the Falklands was raised within MoD on April 2nd, the initial answers remained discouraging. Getting the right forces into position for long enough to potentially mount an amphibious assault over great distance meant working backwards and making important decisions before events had fully unfolded. The operational requirements for cutting Argentine forces off from the mainland, establishing naval and air superiority, and ultimately landing a force at Stanley were daunting and full of logistical challenges.<sup>118</sup>

Yet military officials anticipated that if the task force failed to burnish diplomatic efforts, then there would be no other option but to press ahead.<sup>119</sup> Their sense of the possible also seems to have dramatically expanded in concert with the volume of U.S. military assistance, in the form of supplies, weapons, and intelligence, which began to flow almost immediately following the dispatch of the task force (and thus well before the official U.S. "tilt" toward the British side following the collapse of Haig's shuttle diplomacy). In a very material sense, American aid compensated for precisely the shortfalls, in areas such as in air surveillance, communications links, and air-to-air missile capabilities, that the British military had previously cited as impediments to defending the Falklands. Upon request, senior U.S. military officials provided British forces not just with un-

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<sup>116</sup>Leach would later dispute this claim, positing that "There was no question of 'Oh, here's an opportunity to put the navy on the map'..." (Charlton, 1989, p. 189).

<sup>117</sup>Freedman (2005b, p. 21).

<sup>118</sup>Freedman (2005b, p. 58).

<sup>119</sup>Freedman (2005b, pp. 70–71).

fettered access to provisions, fuel, and staging facilities at Ascension Island, but also with aerial refueling capacity and Sidewinder missiles that proved crucial in sustaining the task force. Given historic levels of cooperation and interoperability between British and American forces, U.S. assistance (which probably totaled \$75 million over the course of the crisis) may have acted as a force multiplier because “Britain, more than any other country, knew what weapons the Americans had available and knew the people responsible for managing them.”<sup>120</sup> In this way, American aid appears to have provided the raw capability boost that British military officials needed to update their assessment of Britain’s capacity to fight for the Falklands and win.

Indeed, once diplomacy ran its course and hostilities ensued, military officials did not hesitate to use force as capabilities allowed and in support of the operation’s defined goals, which included enforcing an exclusion zone around the islands, establishing local air and naval superiority, and repossessing both South Georgia and the Falklands.<sup>121</sup> From the military’s point of view, the overriding priority was to mitigate any threat to the task force, which was “far from home and vulnerable to attack if the enemy could just get close enough.”<sup>122</sup> Accordingly, the Royal Air Force mounted a bombing raid against the Stanley airport on May 1st, designed not only to crater the runway but also draw out any planned Argentine defensive maneuvers. Under newly looser rules of engagement proposed by Admiral Lewin to counter an Argentine naval offensive and “knock off a major unit of the Argentine fleet”, the British submarine *Conqueror* sank the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano* on May 2nd.<sup>123</sup> Regarding repossession of territory, the chiefs concluded that there was little choice except to pursue an amphibious landing in the Falklands with haste, as “Questions of morale, weather, troop fitness, political direction and military judgment all strongly combined to favour an early landing date.”<sup>124</sup> The chiefs discounted a blockade as too difficult to sustain in the face of weather and enemy pressure and too likely to diminish combat readiness among soldiers stuck onboard ships. The chiefs saw no better option than a full-fledged amphibious

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<sup>120</sup>Richardson (1996, pp. 123–128, 145–156).

<sup>121</sup>Boyce (2005, p. 79).

<sup>122</sup>Freedman (2005b, pp. 224, 229).

<sup>123</sup>Richardson (1996, p. 144); Freedman (2005b, pp. 238–244).

<sup>124</sup>Freedman (2005b, p. 171).

operation as a means of bringing about an Argentine withdrawal or a ceasefire before the campaign unduly stressed Britain's NATO commitments or lost international sympathy.<sup>125</sup>

On May 18th, Thatcher's War Cabinet met with the chiefs at Downing Street. Following Argentina's rejection of Britain's final proposal at the UN, Admiral Lewin supported bringing the task force's activities to their logical conclusion by mounting what became known as Operation SUTTON. Speaking in turn, each of the other chiefs backed an amphibious landing. While acknowledging the risks of naval and aerial attack by Argentine forces, they all judged these to be militarily acceptable. Beetham was concerned about the lack of firm air superiority and thought additional softening up of Argentine defenses would be advantageous, but not at the expense of a delay that might lead to further losses; he was ultimately confident in the landing forces' ultimate success. Leach was also bothered by the lack of air superiority, but agreed that a longer delay risked unacceptable attrition. As in his initial comments on April 1st, Leach argued that hanging back now, with the necessary capabilities already amassed for a decisive operation, risked "profound and long-term" erosion of Britain's national standing. Finally, Bramall, too, was sensitive to both the geopolitical implications and the immediate practicalities. While also citing the troubling lack of air superiority, he asserted that a successful operation would enhance Britain's status, respect, and "the strength and credibility of her own deterrent strategy for years to come."<sup>126</sup> Therefore, in military officials' final calculus, Britain's credibility as a fighting force capable of deterring aggression loomed large.

### **Summary: Diplomatic Diplomats, Decisive Military Officers**

From Britain's perspective, the crisis over the Falklands resulted from the slow-burning controversy over how to minimize the UK's commitment to the territory while mollifying Argentina and respecting the wishes of British subjects therein. Given public and Parliamentary pressure to defend British interests and reputation against Argentine aggression, the Falklands crisis ought to be an easy case for structural alternatives to the theory. Yet Britain was not, in fact, prepared to use

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<sup>125</sup>Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse (1990, p. 323).

<sup>126</sup>Freedman (2005b, p. 388).

force in protecting the islands until they were quite literally under attack, at least in part because neither diplomatic nor military officials initially saw the Falklands as either worthy or capable of being defended. The Falklands case therefore offers some important contrasts with other examples while illuminating several insights that are still consistent with the theory. First, diplomats did not clearly perceive British reliability or resolve to be at stake, and accordingly, they did not advocate forceful policies for addressing the crisis, providing suggestive evidence that in the *absence* of credibility concerns, diplomats did not support the use of force. Second, because military officials had long been skeptical of the capability requirements for deterring an invasion, Admiral Leach's testimony to Thatcher in the immediate aftermath of the invasion, as well as the subsequent availability of American military materiel to compensate for gaps in British military capacity, proved quite decisive in shaping the hawkishness of the ultimate policy response.

For diplomats, the Falklands were a regional issue, or perhaps a domestic political one, but did not rise to the level of engaging British reputation. Rather, if Britain's reputation was at stake at all in their view, it was over being perceived by allies, other Latin American countries, and/or global audiences at the UN as intransigent or unwilling to compromise on a relatively trivial matter. The absence of major reputational concerns over Britain's commitment to the Falklands may explain why FCO pushed conciliatory policies to settle the dispute even after events escalated towards war. Indeed, while successive political heads of FCO shied away from the domestic costs of implementing options such as leaseback, they hardly disagreed with its basic premise. Rarely did diplomats infer that a failure to defend the Falklands would have wider repercussions for British reliability or resolve. If anything, diplomatic pressure to terminate rather than escalate the dispute contributed to the status quo-oriented policies that Britain pursued in the run-up to the invasion.

For military officials, the Falklands were an annoyance rather than a strategic priority under the capability plans and limitations set out in Britain's post-Suez force posture. The requirements for properly protecting the islands were massive and long viewed as extremely difficult given considerations of cost and distance. Military officials' pessimism about a successful defense thus persisted until (and even after) the challenge became real rather than hypothetical, perhaps because they

never anticipated that the required naval deployment would ever be necessary. Yet largely on Admiral Leach's initiative — based on his assessment of what capabilities could be marshaled under duress — this was exactly what transpired, as his stamp of approval coincided with Thatcher's already firm conviction to do something. If these factors militated toward sending the task force in the first place, then British receipt of substantial, covert U.S. military assistance that covered for the former's capability deficits likely contributed to the British military's ultimate support for launching Operation SUTTON.<sup>127</sup>

As in previous examples, it is not obvious that structural forces offer a complete explanation for British diplomats' and military officials' behavior during the Falklands crisis. Both sets of officials were cognizant that the balance of power in the region, as well as Argentina's resolve to satisfactorily conclude the dispute, was hardening against Britain, and appear to have priced this reality into their policy stances. Yet if conventional theories about power and resolve were right, we might have expected British officials to take steps aimed at bolstering Britain's perceived will and capability to defend the islands in the face of ongoing power shifts. Instead, diplomats sought to preserve others' impressions of Britain's willingness to negotiate in good faith, while military officials displayed little interest in rectifying the acknowledged deterrence deficit. If anything, military officials were prepared to increase this deficit by allowing even *Endurance's* meager, symbolic capabilities to be scrapped. British diplomats and military officials were thus attentive to the balances of power and resolve, but did not react to them in the way that this alternative would expect.

Finally, like in the Fashoda case, there is some indication that concerns about organizational influence — and specifically interservice rivalry — contributed to how military officials assessed the situation and advocated policy. Because British military resources sustained significant cuts after Suez and were due for further reductions in accordance with the 1981 Defence Review, some have argued that Admiral Leach's seizing of the initiative resulted from his determination to show that the British Navy was still a capable fighting force worthy of retaining.<sup>128</sup> As previously mentioned, Leach later denied this charge, but once again, it seems possible that alignment between

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<sup>127</sup> Charlton (1989, p. 205); Richardson (1996, pp. 165–166); Freedman (2005b, p. 119).

<sup>128</sup> Freedman (2005b, p. 24).

organizational identity and concerns about organizational influence can encourage the pursuit of hawkish policies.<sup>129</sup> Yet even if Leach saw and acted upon an opportunity to bolster the British Navy's relative standing, his and others' advocacy remained in line with what they deemed British capabilities could accomplish in a pinch (and ultimately with American help). Indeed, the chiefs' military perspective led them to repeatedly question the feasibility of defending the Falklands and caution that the necessary naval deployment would strain British resources, making them all too aware of the required capabilities for the actions that they endorsed. Since it was not just Leach, but rather all of the chiefs who ultimately assessed that Britain could and should mount an operation to retake the Falklands, I conclude that organizational influence is not a fully satisfying alternative to organizational identity in this case. With a variety of cross-national evidence now in hand, I next turn to analysis of behavior by American policymakers under non-Cold War conditions.

### **5.3 Bosnia (1995)**

The American-led NATO intervention in Bosnia during September 1995 came after more than three years of prevarication by the U.S. and its allies regarding how to compel a ceasefire between the warring parties. Following the breakup of the former Yugoslavia into Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian components during early 1992, widespread and brutal ethnic conflict ensued after nationalist leaders within each group mobilized armed forces to protect their territorial and communal rights against the others' competing claims. Whereas the Muslim-dominated Bosnian government under President Alija Izetbegovic sought to remain part of Yugoslavia and preserve Bosnia's historically multicultural character, the Croats (under President Franjo Tudman) and Serbs (under President Slobodan Milosevic) each aimed to translate the mixed distribution of their respective coethnics across Bosnia into territorial gains for their newly independent polities. Thus, the core questions at stake in Bosnia not only concerned the nature of individual versus collective rights in the context of statehood and sovereignty, but also the appropriate international response to the disintegration of multinational states.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup>Charlton (1989, p. 189).

<sup>130</sup>Burg and Shoup (1999, pp. 5–8, 12, 28).



Bosnia is therefore a challenging case for the theory on multiple levels. First, from a structural forces perspective, and in a newly unipolar world, it was not necessarily obvious that such events would engage the United States' (the unipole's) reputation. On the one hand, reputational concerns may be less acute under unipolarity, which features less competitive dynamics and a more diffuse audience for the unipole's behavior compared with bipolarity or multipolarity.<sup>131</sup> On the other hand, reputational concerns may be more binding under unipolarity to the extent that the unipole either perceives the need to resist any challenges to its dominance or retains received wisdom about credibility's importance under other distributions of power.<sup>132</sup> Structural forces would then either predict uniform concern for credibility, or a general lack thereof, among policymakers. Second, an organizational influence perspective would anticipate a strong commitment to negotiations from diplomats. Meanwhile, military officials — riding high from victory in the Gulf War but potentially worried about pending post-Cold War budget cuts — theoretically ought to have embraced a possible intervention in Bosnia as a means of ensuring continued relevance and funding.<sup>133</sup>

With the onset of violence, major international actors appealed to institutions such as the United Nations in addressing Yugoslavia's disintegration.<sup>134</sup> Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States (later known as the Contact Group) were the key players who shaped the collective response to the crisis, but typically according to their own national interests and against the conceptually cloudy backdrop of the immediate post-Cold War environment. While Britain and France provided the bulk of the peacekeepers comprising the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) that deployed to Bosnia and Croatia in February 1993, they resisted attempts to expand these troops' role. For their part, U.S. policymakers in the George H.W. Bush administration did not initially see the conflict as a clear threat to national interests and sought to contain the fallout through an arms embargo.<sup>135</sup> Only later — as a function of President Bill Clinton's pledge to use U.S. forces in as-

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<sup>131</sup>Layne (1991); Jervis in Edgerington and Mazarr (1994); Lake and Morgan (1997).

<sup>132</sup>Tang (2005) and Fettweis (2013).

<sup>133</sup>During the 1992 election, President George H.W. Bush and Governor Bill Clinton both campaigned on cutting defense spending; see Eric Schmidt, "THE 1992 CAMPAIGN; Clinton and Bush Agree on Trimming Armed Forces, but Their Paths Vary," *The New York Times*, October 21, 1992. Clinton followed through on his pledge while in office; see O'Hanlon (2003).

<sup>134</sup>Daalder (2000).

<sup>135</sup>Burg and Shoup (1999, pp. 105, 128, 190).

sisting UNPROFOR's potential withdrawal — did U.S. officials perceive a threat to NATO's, and ultimately the United States', credibility. Accordingly, between summer 1993 and spring 1995, the U.S. made several attempts to compel or persuade the Bosnian Serbs into ceasing certain behavior, thus offering multiple windows into policymakers' assessments of credibility and associated policy advocacy.<sup>136</sup>

However, the true turning point came with the Serbs' massacre of several thousand Bosnian Muslims at Srebrenica in July 1995.<sup>137</sup> U.S. diplomats led the way in arguing for coercive diplomacy, including the threat and use of force, to compel the warring parties into an agreement and demonstrate the continued credibility of the NATO alliance. American military officials, by contrast, were skeptical of any major intervention from the outset and only relented in response to the overwhelming pressure for action in the aftermath of Srebrenica. Once again, I find patterns in credibility concerns and policy advocacy that are more consistent with my theory of organizational identity than either the structural forces or organizational influence alternatives. These circumstances led President Clinton to back a policy compromise involving a sustained NATO air campaign against the Serbs to build pressure toward what would ultimately become the Dayton Accords.

### **Diplomats' views**

Diplomats persistently held that American credibility was at stake in Bosnia if the United States was going to continue its leadership of the NATO alliance. As the Balkans were descending into chaos in early 1993, the Clinton administration was taking office. Among the new president's top foreign policy aides were Secretary of State Warren Christopher, National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright, and Assistant Secretary of

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<sup>136</sup>These included making vague threats of future NATO action against those who attacked UNPROFOR or held up humanitarian aid in response to the Serbs' shelling of Sarajevo in July-August 1993; issuing an ultimatum to the Serbs on withdrawing heavy weapons around Sarajevo in February 1994; carrying out "pinprick" NATO air strikes against Serb forces attacking the Muslim enclave of Gorazde in April 1994; pursuing more substantial air attacks on Serb airbases and missile batteries near city of Bihac in November 1994; and once again using air power to target Serb ammunition dumps as well as enforce the exclusion zone around Sarajevo in May 1995. See Stephen Burg, "Coercive Diplomacy in the Balkans," 60-61, in Art and Cronin (2003).

<sup>137</sup>Chollet (2005, p. 184).

State for Europe Richard Holbrooke — all of whom had served in diplomatic or diplomat-adjacent roles during Jimmy Carter’s administration.<sup>138</sup> To a large degree, these experiences informed how key diplomatic players weighed credibility concerns and advocated policy when it came to using force in Bosnia.

For their part, Albright and Lake staked out pro-Bosnian, anti-Serb positions prior to taking office and shared the view that “violence in Bosnia affected European security and therefore our own interests.” While Albright saw the “credible threat of force” as integral in compelling the Serbs to negotiate, Lake painted the issue with an even broader brush, perhaps as a function of his experience as a Foreign Service Officer stationed in Vietnam during the 1960s.<sup>139</sup> Lake consistently pushed for strong action by the United States not only to prevent the conflict from spilling over into a wider European war, but also to demonstrate that the U.S. would take steps to stop the slaughter of Bosnian Muslims, thereby avoiding a wider reputational hit in the Islamic world. Christopher, however, was “on different sides of the issue at different times.” While clearly grasping the stakes in terms of U.S. credibility internationally, Christopher was more sensitive than either Albright or Lake to the domestic political costs of getting involved in Bosnia, which left him less consistently inclined than the other two to advocate armed action against the Serbs.<sup>140</sup>

However, the prevailing position at the State Department to begin 1993 mirrored Albright and Lake’s perspective: negotiations in and of themselves were not an effective approach; at minimum, the arms embargo had to be lifted so that weapons could flow freely to the Bosnian Muslims.<sup>141</sup> As one former diplomat put it, “In order to get the Serbs to negotiate seriously, we and our allies have to be prepared to use force, such as establishing a no-fly zone or engaging in air strikes against military targets.”<sup>142</sup> With the new administration canvassing its options, in mid-February Christopher publicly signaled that the U.S. would participate in ongoing multilateral diplomacy

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<sup>138</sup>Christopher was Deputy Secretary of State, Lake was Director of Policy Planning, and Albright was Zbigniew Brzezinski’s congressional liaison during his tenure as National Security Adviser.

<sup>139</sup>Albright (2003, pp. 180–181); Burg and Shoup (1999, p. 223).

<sup>140</sup>Drew (1994, pp. 142–144).

<sup>141</sup>As Western (2002, pp. 132, 134) reports, while this stance predated Clinton’s electoral victory, within two weeks of Election Day every relevant State Department bureau had signed onto a policy proposal to lift the embargo.

<sup>142</sup>Michael R. Gordon, “Powell Delivers a Resounding No On Using Limited Force in Bosnia,” *The New York Times*, September 28, 1992.

aimed at resolving the conflict, under the auspices of co-mediators Cyrus Vance and David Owen, and was open to military participation in enforcing any agreement so long as the warring parties accepted its terms in full.<sup>143</sup> Along the way, however, Christopher explicitly acknowledged that Bosnia would test “our commitment to nurturing democracy” as well as “our willingness to help our institutions of collective security, such as NATO, evolve in ways that can meet the demands of the new age.”<sup>144</sup>

Yet as the Vance-Owen negotiations were proceeding, the Serbs launched the first of many subsequent attacks on the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica, generating new impetus for action and prompting Lake to call a National Security Council Principals Committee (PC) meeting on March 25th in search of fresh ideas. At the same time, Christopher faced pressure from within the diplomatic ranks to do something. In a letter leaked to *The New York Times*, several Balkans specialists at the State Department called for a military intervention, arguing that a failure to respond with force “would teach would-be conquerors and ethnic bigots throughout the world that their crimes will go unpunished”; four senior diplomats would ultimately resign in protest over the U.S.’s Bosnia policy.<sup>145</sup> Over the next few weeks, diplomatic consensus emerged on pressuring the Serbs by lifting the arms embargo and employing U.S. and NATO air strikes (a proposal known as “lift and strike”).<sup>146</sup>

With diplomats (and as discussed below, their military counterparts) united in support of lift and strike, Christopher was tasked with gauging allied support. His subsequent trip to Europe, however, not only created friction with London and Paris, where British and French officials argued that lifting the embargo could endanger UNPROFOR, but also proved to be a searing experience for the Secretary of State. Christopher initially thought that the use of air power could both address humanitarian concerns and protect the U.S.’s strategic interest in limiting regional instability.<sup>147</sup> Though the U.S. ultimately persuaded the Europeans to agree on protecting several “safe areas”

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<sup>143</sup>Burg and Shoup (1999, pp. 233–234).

<sup>144</sup>Christopher (1998, pp. 344–345).

<sup>145</sup>Michael R. Gordon, “12 in State Dept. Ask Military Move Against the Serbs,” *The New York Times*, April 23, 1993; Drew (1994, p. 152).

<sup>146</sup>Daalder (2000, pp. 12–13).

<sup>147</sup>Burg and Shoup (1999, pp. 250–255); Daalder (2000, pp. 15–16).

with air power — under a dual-key arrangement in which UN civilian leadership retained a veto over any potential attacks — Christopher failed to secure European backing for lift and strike. This episode injected lingering skepticism into Christopher’s perspective on U.S. engagement in Bosnia, which he framed in terms of “acceptable risk and political will”; he saw serious U.S. involvement as neither politically sustainable nor contributing to Clinton’s broader policy agenda.<sup>148</sup>

Apart from Christopher, however, diplomats remained firmly supportive of combining an end to the arms embargo with air strikes. Lake, for example, “didn’t believe containment [of the crisis] would work unless the United States established credibility for what it was trying to do in Bosnia. It still had none.” During July 1993, in response to renewed shelling of Sarajevo, diplomats converged on a fresh push for air strikes as a means of forcing the Serbs back to the negotiating table. In Lake’s words, “The idea was, if we’re going to use power for the sake of diplomacy, let’s relate it directly to the diplomacy”; his theory of air power held that in addition to compelling the Serbs, a demonstration of American military might would convince allies of the U.S.’s willingness to act unilaterally, if necessary. Albright was willing to go even further, supporting the use of U.S. ground troops to save Sarajevo.<sup>149</sup> Lake then secretly flew to Europe in late July to secure British and French approval for air strikes that would end the siege of Sarajevo and other safe areas while forcing the Serbs to engage seriously in peace talks. This trip resulted in NATO approval to threaten strikes, subject again to the dual-key arrangement. But because the Serbs responded by easing up on Sarajevo, no NATO action was ultimately taken.<sup>150</sup>

As the crisis dragged into 1994, diplomats grew increasingly concerned that continued U.S. inaction would jeopardize NATO’s credibility and destabilize emerging democracies in Eastern Europe. Concurrently, France and Britain increased pressure for further American involvement, and after yet another episode of deadly shelling in Sarajevo on February 5th, even Christopher came on board with Albright and Lake’s view that something had to be done. In a cover note to

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<sup>148</sup>Chollet (2005, p. 5). Drew (1994, pp. 159–160) suggests that Christopher took a more “proprietary” interest in Clinton’s presidency than a typical Secretary of State and saw his responsibility as helping the president succeed in all endeavors, having played a key role in the electoral campaign and headed the White House transition team.

<sup>149</sup>Drew (1994, pp. 162, 275).

<sup>150</sup>Daalder (2000, p. 22).

a February 4th position paper, Christopher described himself as “acutely uncomfortable with the passive position we are now in” and feeling “that the risks to the reputation of NATO, to allied unity and to the credibility of our foreign policy are sufficient to justify a rethinking.”<sup>151</sup> With American prodding, NATO issued an ultimatum on February 9th ordering the Serbs to cease attacks and withdraw their heavy weapons from an exclusion zone around the city while admonishing Bosnian government forces against launching attacks of their own. In combination with Russian pressure on the Serbs, the ultimatum succeeded in lifting the siege of Sarajevo.<sup>152</sup>

Meanwhile, at President Clinton’s urging, diplomats sought a more active role in the ongoing multilateral negotiations to resolve the crisis. These efforts comprised (1) new willingness to directly engage with the Serbs while (2) deepening Belgrade’s diplomatic isolation by brokering an end to the conflict between the Croats and Bosnian Muslims and (3) convening the Contact Group to get the British, French, Germans, and Russians onside.<sup>153</sup> However, the outbreak of fighting around Gorazde in April 1994 wrecked any immediate hopes for a more permanent ceasefire. After UN and NATO commanders used their dual-key authority to carry out a series of “pinprick” strikes on Serb positions surrounding Gorzade, Christopher testified before Congress about the need to escalate the bombing in order to “vindicate United States leadership” and “ensure that we maintain the credibility of NATO as well as our own forces.”<sup>154</sup> NATO issued yet another ultimatum, similar to its recent declaration regarding Sarajevo, but UN officials would not consent to a wider barrage of air strikes against Serb forces. Although the shelling petered out over the next few days, Albright still took the opportunity, at the opening of the U.S. embassy in Sarajevo, to signal American commitment by declaring “I am a Sarajevan” and “Your future and America’s future are inseparable.”<sup>155</sup>

While the Contact Group remained focused on securing the Serbs’ agreement through the sum-

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<sup>151</sup>Elaine Sciolino with Douglas Jehl, “From Indecision To Ultimatum – A special report; As U.S. Sought a Bosnia Policy, The French Offered a Good Idea,” *The New York Times*, February 14, 1994.

<sup>152</sup>Burg and Shoup (1999, pp. 285–287); Daalder (2000, pp. 24–26).

<sup>153</sup>Daalder (2000, pp. 27–28).

<sup>154</sup>Burg and Shoup (1999, p. 299); Daniel Williams and Ann Devroy, “U.S. Bombing, Credibility Linked: Christopher Raises Stakes in Bosnia Before Skeptical Panel,” *The Washington Post*, April 22, 1994.

<sup>155</sup>Burg and Shoup (1999, pp. 149–151).

mer and fall of 1994, by October another mini-crisis was brewing around safe area of Bihac, from which the Bosnian Muslims had launched a new offensive. Following a Serb counterattack, NATO urged, and the UN reluctantly approved, air strikes against several airfields and surface-to-air missile sites in Croatia and Bosnia. Serb forces responded by detaining 200 members of UNPROFOR at several sites surrounding Sarajevo. Whereas U.S. officials lobbied for additional air strikes to spare Bihac, its European allies whose troops were newly in danger of Serb retaliation refused this measure. Caught between a potential rupture within NATO and assenting to a Serb victory in Bihac, for the first (and only) time, Lake argued against further strikes in a memo to the president, citing how U.S. advocacy for a wider assault had “only intensified trans-Atlantic frictions” while exposing “the inherent contradictions in trying to use NATO air power coercively against the Bosnian Serbs when our allies have troops on the ground attempting to maintain impartiality in performing a humanitarian mission.”<sup>156</sup> At a subsequent PC meeting, Albright fretted about relinquishing leverage over the Serbs. Christopher did not want to either rule out wider-ranging strikes or raise expectations of their future use.<sup>157</sup> But when Bihac forced them to choose, diplomats prioritized NATO unity over turning the military tide in Bosnia.<sup>158</sup>

Diplomats’ apparent about-face on Bosnia barely lasted through winter 1995, however. Concurrent with backing away from air strikes, they supported a scheme — known as NATO’s OPLAN 40104 — for deploying as many as 25,000 U.S. troops to assist with a potential UNPROFOR withdrawal if conditions continued to deteriorate.<sup>159</sup> Meanwhile, with a ceasefire brokered by former President Jimmy Carter largely holding, U.S. diplomats and their Contact Group counterparts fruitlessly sought a formula that would persuade President Milosevic to deliver the Serbs. But pressure for action ramped back up following the resumption of violence in May, when Serb forces took control of a heavy weapons depot within the previously established exclusion zone around Sara-

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<sup>156</sup>“1994-11-27B, Anthony Lake to President Clinton re Bosnia Policy after the Fall of Bihac,” Clinton Digital Library, accessed November 12, 2021, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/12382>.

<sup>157</sup>Michael Gordon, Douglas Jehl, and Elaine Sciolino, “Conflict in the Balkans: The Policy; Colliding Missions — A Special Report: U.S. and Bosnia: How a Policy Changed,” *The New York Times*, December 4, 1994.

<sup>158</sup>Daalder (2000, pp. 32–33).

<sup>159</sup>John Pomfret and Daniel Williams, “U.S. Forsees Sending GIs To Help U.N. Quit Croatia,” *The Washington Post*, February 25, 1995.

jevo. After the Serbs refused to relinquish the weapons, NATO and UN leadership agreed to bomb several ammunition sites. In an act of defiance, Serb forces then took several hundred UN peacekeepers hostage, raising the prospect that OPLAN 40104 would have to be implemented.<sup>160</sup>

While attaching new urgency to staving off UNPROFOR's withdrawal — as Lake recalled, “We all agreed that collapse would mean that American troops would have to go into Bosnia in order to rescue UNPROFOR, which meant that we were going in the context of a defeat. And nobody wanted that.”<sup>161</sup> — diplomats were painfully aware that “U.S. credibility among NATO Allies would be seriously damaged if we were to turn down a request for assistance.”<sup>162</sup> Lake and Albright thus supported a version of OPLAN 40104 from the Secretary of Defense and Joint Chiefs of Staff under which U.S. troops would help UN troops relocate to safer and stronger positions rather than evacuate altogether.<sup>163</sup> Christopher, for his part, fretted over public and congressional support for such a move, which he thought represented a potentially perilous and embarrassing use of American troops, yet understood that “a failure to keep our commitment would undermine our credibility as the leader of the [Atlantic] Alliance.”<sup>164</sup> As Albright attested at a June NSC meeting, Bosnia was “destroying” U.S. credibility, and “When U.S. leadership is questioned in one area, it affects our leadership in others.”<sup>165</sup> And as Holbrooke reportedly told the President on June 14th, if the UN decided to withdraw, “we may not have that much flexibility left.”<sup>166</sup>

If diplomats had already linked their credibility concerns to the need for forceful action in Bosnia by late June, then the Serbs' slaughter of more than 7,000 Bosnian Muslims at Srebrenica in early July provided the final impetus for the sort of major effort to end the war that officials like Lake, Albright, and Alexander (Sandy) Vershbow — Lake's top NSC aide for Europe — had sought since 1993. While the former pair had long advocated for a more assertive Bosnia policy,

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<sup>160</sup>Daalder (2000, pp. 40–48); Chollet (2005, pp. 8–9).

<sup>161</sup>Daalder (2000, p. 50).

<sup>162</sup>“1995-05-29, Anthony Lake to President Clinton re Policy for Bosnia Use of U.S. Ground Forces to Support NATO Assistance for Redeployment of UNPROFOR within Bosnia,” Clinton Digital Library, accessed November 15, 2021, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/12471>.

<sup>163</sup>Burg and Shoup (1999, p. 323); Daalder (2000, p. 52).

<sup>164</sup>Chollet (2005, p. 23).

<sup>165</sup>Albright (2003, p. 186).

<sup>166</sup>Holbrooke (1998, pp. 67–68).



Vershbow had been working Bosnia issues in a diplomatic capacity from early on, first as the number two official in the U.S. mission to NATO and then as the top deputy to the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs. In an influential March 1995 paper, Vershbow outlined a “lift, arm, train, and strike” option for a post-UNPROFOR withdrawal scenario, in which the U.S. would lift the arms embargo, train and arm Bosnian Muslim forces, and pursue air strikes should the Serbs attempt to consolidate any short-term gains.<sup>167</sup>

Meanwhile, senior diplomats including Strobe Talbott (Deputy Secretary of State), Peter Tarnoff (Undersecretary for Political Affairs), Tom Donilon (Christopher’s chief of staff), James Steinberg (Director of Policy Planning), and Robert Frasure (Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs) coalesced around an approach involving fresh negotiations on the basis of the Contact Group plan backstopped by a wider and more finely calibrated array of military options than were available under OPLAN 40104. At the July 17th PC meeting, Lake proposed what became known as the “endgame strategy”: mounting a renewed diplomatic push toward a peace settlement by the end of 1995 while being prepared to issue new NATO ultimatums, support covert arms shipments to the Bosnians, assist with UNPROFOR redeployments, and ratchet up both sanctions and air strikes against the Serbs if diplomacy failed.<sup>168</sup>

With encouragement from President Clinton, diplomatic officials fleshed out several proposals for the endgame in Bosnia through a series of strategy papers completed in early August. Positing that “Our interest in resolving this conflict has broadened,” Albright argued for placing Bosnia “within a larger political context” wherein “our continued reluctance...to resolve a military crisis in the heart of Europe” was not only risking “our leadership of the post Cold War world” but also threatening to “undermine moderate Islamic ties to the United States.” After observing that “our only successes have come when the Bosnian Serbs faced a credible threat of military force,” Albright advocated “using our military forces, primarily through the air, to help the Bosnians by changing the balance of power [on the ground].” Furthermore, should UNPROFOR withdraw, Albright supported offering a small ground contingent that would train Bosnian forces “In order to

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<sup>167</sup>Daalder (2000, pp. 85–88); Chollet (2005, p. 11).

<sup>168</sup>Daalder (2000, pp. 96–99).

show our bona fides to our allies and maximize our influence with the Bosnians.”<sup>169</sup>

Lake’s memo was similarly hawkish, building on the ideas Vershbow had first advanced in March. Lake saw the stakes as “maintaining our strategic relationship with key Allies and protecting the credibility of NATO”; “preventing the spread of the Bosnian conflict into a wider Balkan war that could destabilize southern Europe and draw in U.S. allies”; and “ensuring that the forcible changing of borders and acts of genocide do not become legitimate forms of behavior in post-Cold War Europe.” He therefore argued for either achieving a political resolution or “leveling the playing field” through arms transfers such that Bosnian forces could establish conditions conducive to a settlement in line with U.S. interests following a UNPROFOR withdrawal. He was also prepared to “face up to our extraction obligations” regarding UNPROFOR while enforcing, for up to one additional year, a no-fly zone and conducting “aggressive air strikes against a broad range of Bosnian Serb military targets to protect Sarajevo (and possibly other remaining safe areas) against Serb artillery attacks.”<sup>170</sup>

The State Department’s submission concurred that American interests were at stake, including “our commitment to resist aggression against sovereign states, the humanitarian and human rights consequences of a total Serb victory, the erosion of U.S. credibility, the impact on U.S. relations with the Islamic world, and the consequences for the region” and thus argued that greater U.S. involvement would be required “to influence the parties in favor of a political settlement.” While also supporting an immediate diplomatic initiative and arms transfers to the Bosnian Muslims, State’s paper couched the overall package of assistance in “limited” terms, whether regarding the quantity and types of weapons to be provided or the nature of air strikes to be pursued — likely in a reflection of Christopher’s continued ambivalence about the conflict. Nevertheless, even if State’s input was less enthusiastic about using aerial bombardment in service of diplomacy, diplomats on the whole shared the view that backstopping the Bosnian Muslims with arms and airpower could force a favorable political settlement, which comprised the core of their advocacy to President

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<sup>169</sup>National Security Council and NSC Records Management System, “Declassified Documents Concerning Bosnia,” Clinton Digital Library, accessed November 16, 2021, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/101134>.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid.

Clinton.<sup>171</sup>

### **Military officials' views**

If diplomats consistently pushed for a more aggressive U.S. stance in Bosnia, military officials represented a major roadblock in turning those preferences into action. Military officials were not only skeptical of greater U.S. involvement in the conflict based on the limited American interests that they perceived to be at stake, but also cited massive capability demands for protecting safe areas, evacuating UNPROFOR with assistance from U.S. ground forces, and/or enforcing a cease-fire. Starting with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell, military advisers evidently did not see Bosnia as an opportunity to increase organizational influence, and their input was an essential ingredient in the U.S.'s relatively muted policy responses to the Bosnia crisis until summer 1995.

From the very beginning of international involvement in the Bosnian conflict, military officials sought *a priori* exclusions on military options, even in the context of delivering humanitarian aid, under the view that putting boots on the ground could lead to combat operations in which the interests to be defended and goals to be achieved were not clear. They maintained that U.S. forces would neither be able to protect themselves nor effectively distribute relief in a situation where distinguishing enemy from friend or combatant from civilian would prove nearly impossible.<sup>172</sup>

While the Bush administration still held office in June 1992, military officials emphasized that operations to reopen the Sarajevo airport by force and set up a security perimeter would take some 35,000-50,000 troops, and more if the goal were to establish a ground corridor for shipping aid through the mountainous terrain surrounding the city.<sup>173</sup> Lieutenant General Barry McCaffrey, one of General Powell's senior aides, testified to Congress in August that a large force, on the order of 60,000-120,000 troops, would be required to secure a land route from the Mediterranean port of

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<sup>171</sup>Ibid; Daalder (2000, pp. 106–111).

<sup>172</sup>Western (2002, pp. 113, 117).

<sup>173</sup>Burg and Shoup (1999, pp. 200, 207); Barton Gellman and Ann Devroy, "Balkans Solution Sought," *The Washington Post*, June 27, 1992; Eric Scmitt, "Conflict in the Balkans; Bush Calls Allies on a Joint Effort to Help Sarajevo," *The New York Times*, June 29, 1992.

Split north to Sarajevo and safeguard the airport, while an even larger presence of some 400,000 troops would be needed to impose a ceasefire throughout Bosnia.<sup>174</sup> In September, General Powell argued in a now-famous *New York Times* interview (and subsequent opinion column) that military force only ought to be used for clear objectives and when decisive victory (via an evident capability advantage) was possible. For Powell and his colleagues, Bosnia did not meet these criteria, as even the use of limited air strikes would require the practically difficult tasks of locating Serb artillery while avoiding taking sides in the conflict or inviting retaliation against UN forces.<sup>175</sup> As Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral David Jeremiah later remarked, those favoring intervention “made unrealistic claims about what could be done with the use of force” and “wanted us to volunteer military solutions to very complex political problems...”<sup>176</sup>

Military officials delivered similar messages both privately and publicly on Bosnia at the start of the Clinton administration, even acquiescing to a humanitarian mission in Somalia on the premise that it would be much less daunting than a Balkans contingency.<sup>177</sup> In discussions with Clinton’s national security team about how to free the Sarajevo airport, Powell reiterated that the task would take tens of thousands of troops, cost a lot of money, probably result in many U.S. casualties, and require a long and open-ended commitment of American troops.<sup>178</sup> During initial debates over lift and strike, military officials conveyed general pessimism about the practical utility of bombing without a major ground contingent to exploit the air strikes’ effects.<sup>179</sup> Powell repeatedly asked about the endgame: if bombing Serb targets in Bosnia didn’t push them to negotiate, then what? Regarding the air strikes themselves, Admiral Jeremiah told reporters in April 1993 that bombing might cause civilian casualties on the ground and wouldn’t necessarily neutralize the Serbian

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<sup>174</sup>Burg and Shoup (1999, p. 210); U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Situation in Bosnia and Appropriate U.S. and Western Responses*, Hearing Before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 102nd Cong., 2nd Sess. (August 11, 1992), 39-40.

<sup>175</sup>Burg and Shoup (1999, p. 231); Michael R. Gordon, “Powell Delivers a Resounding No On Using Limited Force in Bosnia,” *The New York Times*, September 28, 1992; Colin L. Powell, “Why Generals Get Nervous,” *The New York Times*, October 8, 1992.

<sup>176</sup>Western (2002, p. 132).

<sup>177</sup>Western (2002, p. 137).

<sup>178</sup>Albright (2003, p. 186).

<sup>179</sup>Daalder (2000, p. 20).

threat.<sup>180</sup> In both congressional testimony and closed-door meetings with President Clinton on April 29th, senior military advisers stressed their reservations. Lieutenant General McCaffrey posited that bombing would be a “severe challenge for the use of air power” and saw no military solution. Marine Corps Major General John Sheehan did not see how victory could be achieved without ground troops. Air Force Major General Michael Ryan warned that Serb artillery would simply take cover and ride out the bombing. Only Air Force Chief of Staff General Merrill McPeak was optimistic about what could be accomplished with minimal risk to U.S. pilots.<sup>181</sup>

Having made his reservations known, Powell did ultimately support a modified version of lift and strike that would include arming and training Bosnian Muslim forces on the ground, which he believed would bolster air power’s efficacy.<sup>182</sup> Yet when the issue of using force next arose over renewed shelling of Sarajevo in July 1993, military officials reiterated the substantial capabilities required to relieve pressure on the city. At the July 13th PC meeting, Admiral Jeremiah cited the need for 70,000 troops to open and secure land routes given the airport’s inability to handle a large detachment of inbound soldiers. He also offered smaller troop packages, but plainly disagreed with them. Over the next week, Powell provided options requiring even fewer troops than Jeremiah’s proposals but that still envisioned the use of about 25,000 soldiers — and was thus viewed as a nonstarter by even Lake and Christopher given likely congressional opposition.<sup>183</sup>

After Powell’s term as Chairman expired in October 1993, however, he was replaced by General John Shalikashvili, who had most recently served as Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR). In this role, Shalikashvili had played an integral part in operationalizing the August 1993 NATO agreement to threaten strikes against the Serbs. While Shalikashvili shared Powell’s view that only a massive and ultimately “unrealistic” ground commitment could stop the slaughter in Bosnia, and was thus similarly skeptical about the application of military power, he was more comfortable than Powell with using carrots and sticks of varying sizes rather than just the big

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<sup>180</sup>Drew (1994, pp. 149, 154).

<sup>181</sup>Burg and Shoup (1999, p. 251); Daniel Williams, “U.S. Studies 2-Point Strategy on Balkans,” *The Washington Post*, April 29, 1993.

<sup>182</sup>Drew (1994, p. 155); Daalder (2000, p. 15).

<sup>183</sup>Drew (1994, pp. 274–275).

stick of overwhelming force. Accordingly, Shalikashvili supported diplomats' push for the February 1994 ultimatum regarding exclusion zone around Sarajevo.<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, Shalikashvili's previous experience with Bosnia contingency planning at SACEUR may explain why he and Clinton's other senior advisers recommended U.S. participation, at least in principle, in OPLAN 40104 despite reservations within the Department of Defense about the "formidable task" of extracting 23,000 UN troops from a warzone.<sup>185</sup>

However, as this largely theoretical commitment took on greater reality in May 1995, military officials explored every possible means of keeping UNPROFOR in action and limiting the scope of U.S./NATO ground operations should UNPROFOR withdrawal come about. A joint paper between the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that the mission was "to conduct withdrawal operations and depart. There will be no follow-on missions."<sup>186</sup> As Air Force Colonel Nelson Drew put it, linking credibility with the capability of UNPROFOR to carry out its duties, "U.S. interests are best served by finding a way to restore credibility to the UNPROFOR mission in a manner that permits existing troop commitments to sustain their continued presence and the Bosnian government to agree to retain that presence." In response to UN proposals for reviewing UNPROFOR's mandate — which included maintaining the status quo, pursuing a more aggressive military posture involving air strikes, withdrawing altogether, or redeploying and reducing UNPROFOR's overall size — a Joint Staff paper favored the status quo, arguing that "US troops should not become involved in Bosnia. This is why UNPROFOR must remain."<sup>187</sup> And although Shalikashvili and Secretary of Defense William Perry entertained the redeployment option, they did so on the basis of seeking to reduce UNPROFOR's vulnerability to Serb reprisals and thereby keep these forces on the ground.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>184</sup>Drew (1994, pp. 410–411); Marble (2019, pp. 248–249).

<sup>185</sup>Douglas Jehl, "25,000 U.S. Troops To Aid UN Force If It Quits Bosnia," *The New York Times*, December 9, 1994.

<sup>186</sup>"1995-05-12A, Office of the Secretary of Defense Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum re Proposed U.S. Policy Principals During NATO-led UNPROFOR Withdrawal" Clinton Digital Library, accessed November 18, 2021, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/12457>.

<sup>187</sup>National Security Council et al., "PC/DC [Principals Committee/Deputies Committee] Meetings on Bosnia, May 1995 [1]," Clinton Digital Library, accessed November 18, 2021, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/72208>.

<sup>188</sup>Daalder (2000, p. 51).

After Srebrenica, military officials became more willing to support expanded air operations against the Serbs but remained opposed to the use of ground troops. In response to a French proposal to retake the fallen Bosnian enclave and protect the remaining safe area of Gorazde through joint NATO action, military officials cautioned that such steps would bring the U.S. and its allies to the brink of war with the Serbs.<sup>189</sup> Shalikashvili was thus dispatched to London for a conference with the British and French military chiefs, at which he sought to sell his counterparts on a “militarily feasible and realistic” response, potentially to include a NATO air campaign. On the basis of a recently completed Air Force study, Shalikashvili posited that if troops were to be safely inserted at Gorazde, Serbian air defenses would need to be neutralized, and NATO could use the threat of such strikes to deter an attack on the safe area. Shalikashvili’s argument also resonated with Clinton, who charged Christopher, Perry, and Shalikashvili with securing allied support for this proposal at a subsequent NATO summit. Perry and Shalikashvili reportedly viewed Srebrenica and the summit as a fork in the road: presented with a choice between UNPROFOR’s withdrawal or an agreement to use overwhelming air power against future Serb provocations, they were confident in securing and implementing the latter option.<sup>190</sup>

Yet military officials’ support for using force in Bosnia still did not extend beyond making a stand at Gorazde. The Pentagon’s submission to the previously mentioned endgame discussions in early August 1995 rejected the broader thrust of diplomats’ advocacy for an American leadership role in Bosnia.<sup>191</sup> While acknowledging the need to “preserve NATO vitality and US leadership of the alliance,” military officials took as “an important constraint on US policy that we seek to avoid any course of action that could lead to US military personnel becoming involved on the ground, including as trainers” and that any US ground presence deployed in the context of 40104 or peace implementation “be of limited size and duration.” In a section titled “Military realities,” the paper cited the need for at least 100,000 U.S. troops to impose a settlement, the long-term nature of a commitment to train and equip a Bosnian army, and the limited capacity of U.S. or NATO air

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<sup>189</sup>Burg and Shoup (1999, p. 343).

<sup>190</sup>Daalder (2000, pp. 69–74).

<sup>191</sup>Daalder (2000, pp. 105–106).

strikes to meaningfully alter the balance of military power on the ground. Furthermore, in a series of footnotes and proposed amendments, the Joint Staff sought to establish a defined window (of 12-18 months) during which NATO/U.S. airpower would be available to protect the nascent Bosnian state while ruling out enforcement of a no-fly zone and/or air operations in support of Bosnian efforts to reclaim previously lost territory — steps that would, in their view “make us a belligerent party, be unlikely to produce any significant military impact, feed Russian paranoia, and thereby lead to intensifying and possibly widening the war, with an ever-deepening US commitment to the conflict.”<sup>192</sup> Thus, to the bitter end of internal deliberations over the appropriate policy to pursue in Bosnia, military officials did not see U.S. interests as sufficiently engaged to justify wielding military power on a wide scale and sought to curtail rather than expand their involvement in American efforts to resolve the conflict.

### **Summary: Hawkish Diplomats, Dovish Generals**

Debates over the use of force in Bosnia ultimately mirrored the patterns previously established in the Greece and Berlin cases. From the outset, diplomats officials displayed consistent reputational concerns and pushed for forceful U.S./NATO involvement in the conflict, whereas military officials contested whether such actions were in the national interest and cited the massive capability requirements for an effective intervention. The resulting lack of consensus necessitated the policy compromise that emerged from the series of endgame memos, which encouraged President Clinton to support a NATO bombing campaign but stopped short of advocating deeper involvement for U.S. armed forces. The evidence is not only in line with the theory but also indicates that diplomats’ and military officials’ varying levels of concern for credibility and differences in policy advocacy were not simply an artifact of early Cold War dynamics. Indeed, the persistence of the hypothesized effects under unipolarity and in more modern times suggest that neither structural forces nor organizational influence provide complete explanations for the phenomena documented herein.

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<sup>192</sup>National Security Council and NSC Records Management System, “Declassified Documents Concerning Bosnia,” Clinton Digital Library, accessed November 19, 2021, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/101134>.



Regarding structural forces, some scholars have argued that unipolarity ought to raise credibility concerns across the board for the most powerful state, whether because the unipole perceives the need to resist any challenges to its dominant position or because policymakers' received wisdom about credibility's importance from the days of bipolarity was slow to change.<sup>193</sup> Meanwhile, other scholars have posited that unipolarity ought to mute credibility concerns to the extent that these systems are less competitive and because the audience for the unipole's actions is less concentrated than in either bipolar or multipolar environments.<sup>194</sup> Policymakers in the unipole should then either uniformly view credibility as critical, and be prepared to defend it with force, or express a lack of concern for credibility relative to cases of bipolarity or multipolarity. Yet we again in Bosnia observe heterogeneity in who among diplomats and military officials is willing to fight for credibility and why. Whereas the structural condition of unipolarity cannot sufficiently explain the persistence of these differences, my theory of organizational identity offers reasons to expect precisely the assessments and behaviors that diplomats and military officials manifest in this case.

On organizational influence, there is little indication that either diplomats or military officials were motivated by concerns about their respective turf and resources. For diplomats, negotiations in and of themselves — the stereotypical hallmark of diplomatic expertise — were hardly the locus of activity during the crisis. From major players like Lake and Albright down to rank-and-file diplomats, there was typically greater emphasis on the episodic use of sticks (via the show or use of force) than the consistent deployment of carrots (such as non-military inducements or more creative diplomatic solutions) to coerce the Serbs. The endgame strategy itself was premised on the expectation that an acceptable settlement could not be achieved without wielding U.S. and NATO military power. Diplomats were thus hardly content to pursue a resolution to the conflict through negotiations alone. Meanwhile, for military officials, the use of force was consistently the last rather than the first resort. General Powell along with his colleagues and successors threw up various roadblocks to intervention and never displayed much interest in taking on additional resources and/or turf that could have accrued to the military through a more expansive intervention. While

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<sup>193</sup>Tang (2005) and Fettweis (2013).

<sup>194</sup>Layne (1991); Jervis in Edgerington and Mazarr (1994); Lake and Morgan (1997).

military officials may have been loath to add humanitarian-oriented missions to their remit, their prevailing attitude — questioning the interests at stake and pointing out the substantial capabilities needed for success — suggests that they did not view Bosnia through the lens of resource maximization, which in turn militated against a bigger or faster U.S. response to the crisis. To that end, I now review evidence from the follow-on crisis over Kosovo to gauge consistency in policymakers' behavior on a similar issue during a similar time period.

#### **5.4 Kosovo (1999)**

While Bosnia dominated headlines in the early 1990s, a similarly explosive powder keg of ethnic resentment was also building in Kosovo, a province of Serbia with a majority Albanian population. Though the proximate cause of the conflict that broke out in March 1998 was Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's consistent oppression of Kosovar ethnic Albanians over the previous decade, longstanding territorial grievances between Serbs and Kosovar Albanians (dating to the 14th century) provided the fuel for a confrontation involving Milosevic's security forces against the insurgent Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and other ethnic Albanians. Whereas Milosevic sought to retain Serbian control of Kosovo, the Kosovar Albanians strove to at least recover the autonomy they had enjoyed prior to the collapse of Yugoslavia and ideally achieve full independence, under the auspices of Ibrahim Rugova and his Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), as four other former Yugoslav republics had done in the early 1990s.<sup>195</sup>

For similar reasons as in the Bosnia example, Kosovo represents a tough test for the theory. Through a structural forces lens, it was again not immediately evident that events in Kosovo would have reputational consequences for the United States under unipolarity and given the largely domestic nature of the dispute — though the geographic and temporal interrelation of the two crises offers a fruitful opportunity to trace whether policymakers' behavior in the former disposed their reactions to the latter.<sup>196</sup> Regarding organizational influence, I would expect diplomats to prefer negotiations, and military officials, with Clinton-era budget cuts well underway by 1998-99, to

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<sup>195</sup>Daalder and O'Hanlon (2001, pp. 6–8).

<sup>196</sup>Mercer (1996) takes a similar approach in studying the Moroccan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Agadir crises.

leverage the crisis as a means to lobby for more resources.<sup>197</sup>

Indeed, like Bosnia, Kosovo did not immediately present a clear threat to core U.S. (or European) interests as Yugoslavia was imploding during the early 1990s.<sup>198</sup> On the one hand, the U.S. and its allies recognized that a war in Kosovo could be highly destabilizing for the region given the number of ethnic Albanians residing in neighboring countries. This prompted the George H.W. Bush administration to issue its so-called “Christmas warning” to Milosevic (which the Clinton administration subsequently reaffirmed): any violent crackdown by the Serbs on the Kosovars would result in U.S. military action.<sup>199</sup> On the other hand, Kosovo remained a lower priority than Bosnia, where the issue in question was self-determination rather than human rights and where ethnic violence was already spiraling out of control by early 1993. American and European policy goals for Kosovo therefore initially focused on ending Serb repression and securing greater Kosovar autonomy rather than sponsoring Kosovo’s independence.<sup>200</sup>

Thus, when hostilities began in Kosovo during early 1998, American and European views were aligned on the need to avoid another Bosnia, act with unity under American leadership, pressure Milosevic, and forestall Kosovar independence. Yet U.S. officials themselves struggled to reach consensus on how to put these principles into action. With Madeleine Albright now serving as Secretary of State, diplomats forcefully argued for a tough approach, including bombing of Serb targets, to convince Milosevic of the West’s willingness to defend the Kosovars from further ethnic cleansing and protect core U.S. interests by maintaining NATO’s credibility. Yet military officials, having reluctantly acceded to the intervention in Bosnia, staunchly opposed both air strikes and ground operations, arguing that bombing alone would not change the realities on the ground, while an appropriately-sized troop deployment would overstretch U.S. and NATO resources. Once again, however, the Serbs’ brutality — specifically, the massacre of 45 Kosovar Albanians in the village of Racak during January 1999 — was instrumental in raising the urgency of diplomats’ advocacy,

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<sup>197</sup>Clark (2002, p. 132).

<sup>198</sup>Burg and Shoup (1999, p. 105).

<sup>199</sup>Barton Gellman, “The Path to Crisis: How the United States and Its Allies Went to War,” *The Washington Post*, April 18, 1999.

<sup>200</sup>Daalder and O’Hanlon (2001, pp. 9–10).

which pushed President Clinton toward the use of NATO airpower in Kosovo. My argument about organizational identity therefore again appears to fit the Kosovo crisis more cleanly than either the structural forces or organizational influence alternatives.

### **Diplomats' views**

As in previous examples, diplomats evinced consistent support for the use of force as a means of coercive diplomacy to protect American and NATO credibility. In doing so, they defined U.S. interests in broad terms, arguing that there were humanitarian, normative, and strategic issues at stake in terms of upholding liberal principles and values as well as preventing instability in the Balkans from spilling over into the rest of Europe. As a result, State Department officials pushed “incessantly” for the use of air power to effect changes in Milosevic’s behavior.<sup>201</sup>

Diplomats perceived wider significance to events in Kosovo from the outbreak of hostilities during early 1998. In February, Richard Gelbard, the State Department’s senior envoy for the Balkans region, visited Belgrade to offer Milosevic sanctions relief for in exchange for cooperation on Kosovo while warning him not to pursue a further crackdown there.<sup>202</sup> For her part, Albright — who later described being Secretary of State as akin to playing multiple chess matches at once against various opponents (“the games were complicated because a change in the momentum of one altered the dynamic of every other”) — saw Kosovo as holding implications for the entire region and was determined not to allow the events in Bosnia to repeat themselves.<sup>203</sup> Thus, when Serb security forces pursued a major offensive within days of Gelbard’s departure, ultimately killing at least 85 Kosovars, Albright flew to Europe for consultations with her Contact Group counterparts. In a significant contrast with Warren Christopher’s tepid entreaties five years earlier, Albright sought to “lead through rhetoric” that would bring the European allies, American public opinion, and her colleagues in government toward action “with unity and resolve” while

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<sup>201</sup> Daalder and O’Hanlon (2001, pp. 12, 18).

<sup>202</sup> Jane Perlez, “U.S. Warned Serb Leader Not to Crack Down on Kosovo Albanians,” *The New York Times*, March 15, 1998.

<sup>203</sup> Albright (2003, pp. 378, 381).

hinting at the “broad range of options available to us.”<sup>204</sup> Determined to avoid “another Munich” and not “betray the trust of those who looked to America for leadership,” Albright pushed the Contact Group to issue a statement condemning Milosevic, demanding that Serb forces cease their attacks and leave Kosovo, insisting that Belgrade allow various international organizations to monitor implementation of these conditions, and threatening additional economic sanctions.<sup>205</sup>

Albright and her colleagues subsequently stepped up efforts to shape consensus on the threat or use of force in Kosovo, both within the government and among U.S. allies. As Gelbard testified to Congress in mid-March, while the goal was to use economic and diplomatic means to defuse the crisis, “we’re not ruling anything out.”<sup>206</sup> Despite the NSC and Pentagon’s discomfort with diplomats’ “declarations of resolve,” Albright felt a sense of urgency to “implant some spine into our policy” by raising the prospect of bombing. At an April 23rd meeting with Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and National Security Adviser Sandy Berger, Albright and Gelbard argued for moving beyond the position that “nothing has been ruled out” and toward a credible threat of force in the form of NATO planning for a bombing campaign. In response — and underscoring the degree to which diplomats may have been out ahead of their national security colleagues on Kosovo — Berger asked about the targets and endgame for a bombing campaign, concluding that it was “irresponsible to keep making threatening statements outside of some coherent plan. The way you people at the State Department talk about bombing, you sound like lunatics.”<sup>207</sup> Undeterred, however, Albright and Gelbard continued to push for air strikes at a meeting of national security officials in May.<sup>208</sup>

Following the KLA’s disastrous July offensive, which prompted a Serb counterattack that drove more than 100,000 Kosovars from their homes, Albright once again argued for the need to back

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<sup>204</sup>Gellman, “The Path to Crisis”; Madeleine K. Albright, “Statement at the Contact Group Ministerial on Kosovo,” U.S. Department of State, March 9, 1998.

<sup>205</sup>Daalder and O’Hanlon (2001, pp. 27–29); Albright (2003, p. 382).

<sup>206</sup>Robert S. Gelbard, testimony, Hearing, *The Prospects for Implementation of Dayton Agreements and the New NATO Mission in Bosnia*, Committee on International Relations, 105th Congress, 2nd session, March 12, 1998, 22–24.

<sup>207</sup>Albright (2003, p. 383). Despite Berger’s experience as Deputy Director of Policy Planning during the Carter administration, his policy stances were often at odds with those of diplomats.

<sup>208</sup>Elaine Sciolino and Ethan Bronner, “Crisis In The Balkans: The Road To War – A special report.; How a President, Distracted by Scandal, Entered Balkan War,” *The New York Times*, April 18, 1999.

diplomacy with force: peace in Europe was a core U.S. interest, and “if we did not act, the crisis would spread, more people would die, we would look weak, pressure would build, and we would end up resorting to force anyway under even more difficult and tragic circumstances.”<sup>209</sup> From his new perch as U.S. ambassador to NATO, Alexander Vershbow proposed a fresh endgame strategy involving the imposition of a political settlement by a joint contingent of NATO and Russian ground forces — with or without Milosevic’s consent. In an August 7th cable, Vershbow argued that “Sooner or later we are going to face the issue of deploying ground forces in Kosovo...We have too much at stake in the political stability of the south Balkans to permit the conflict to fester much longer.”<sup>210</sup> While the plan for ground forces did not gain wider traction, Albright nevertheless pushed for NATO agreement on enforcing a September 23rd UN Security Council resolution that called for Milosevic to halt his offensive, withdraw security forces from Kosovo, and commit to negotiations on an interim agreement for Kosovar autonomy; if these demands were not met, NATO would pursue a sustained air campaign against Serb targets in both Serbia and Kosovo. The improved leverage provided by the NATO agreement allowed Richard Holbrooke, now a private citizen but still negotiating on the U.S.’s behalf, to cajole Milosevic into accepting these terms in early October.<sup>211</sup>

Yet this agreement proved to be little more than a band-aid, as the situation in Kosovo remained tense and had descended into violence once more by mid-December. From the outset, Albright had argued that a strategy relying only or chiefly on negotiations would not succeed.<sup>212</sup> As she later recalled,

“I felt we had to try something new. The situation was emerging as a key test of American leadership and of the relevance and effectiveness of NATO. The Alliance was due to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in April. If my fears proved correct, that event would coincide with the spectacle of another humanitarian disaster in the Balkans. And we would look like fools proclaiming the Alliance’s readiness for the twenty-first century when we were unable to cope with a conflict that began in the fourteenth.”<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Albright (2003, p. 387).

<sup>210</sup> Sciolino and Bronner, “Crisis in the Balkans.”

<sup>211</sup> Daalder and O’Hanlon (2001, pp. 40–49); Albright (2003, pp. 389–390).

<sup>212</sup> Daalder and O’Hanlon (2001, p. 69).

<sup>213</sup> Albright (2003, p. 391).

Thus, Albright argued to a largely unsympathetic audience at the Principals Committee meeting on January 15th, 1999 that the threat of airstrikes had to be renewed in order to convince Milosevic of NATO's will. Unbeknownst to the meeting's participants, another Serb massacre was then unfolding in the village of Racak, where more than 40 Kosovars were brutally murdered. As this news reached Washington, at an NSC Deputies Committee meeting just hours later, State Department representatives "led the way in arguing for immediate military action, in the form of the limited air response involving dozens of cruise missiles that NATO had devised for exactly that purpose."<sup>214</sup> Albright, Talbott, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Jamie Rubin, and Director of Policy Planning Morton Halperin spent the next several days formulating a new strategy consisting of an ultimatum to the warring parties on accepting a settlement by a certain date, which would be enforced by NATO troops on the ground. If Belgrade refused to comply, NATO's standing orders for a phased air campaign would go into effect.<sup>215</sup>

In the absence of other alternatives from the interagency, Albright and her colleagues secured President Clinton's support, then worked to convince both the European allies and the Russians of the plan's merits. By pairing the concept of a NATO force and the threat of air strikes with a last-ditch peace summit to be held in the French resort town of Rambouillet during early February, diplomats managed to convince both sets of actors to go along.<sup>216</sup> Though Rambouillet ended in failure — the Kosovar delegation signed onto the peace plan, but only after the conference had concluded, while the Serbs simply refused to countenance a deal — this may have been by diplomats' design. With both warring parties gearing up for offensives and fundamentally opposed to compromise, Rambouillet's ultimate purpose may have been to build consensus in Washington and NATO capitals toward the use of force by emphatically marking the end of the diplomatic road. As one of Albright's aides remarked, the point of Rambouillet was not for the opposing sides to negotiate seriously, but rather "To get the war started with the Europeans locked in."<sup>217</sup> Indeed, Albright herself would later declare that "we left Rambouillet with much of what we had sought."

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<sup>214</sup>Daalder and O'Hanlon (2001, p. 71).

<sup>215</sup>Albright (2003, pp. 394–395).

<sup>216</sup>Daalder and O'Hanlon (2001, pp. 72–74).

<sup>217</sup>Daalder and O'Hanlon (2001, pp. 85–89).

In personally lobbying President Clinton to carry out the NATO ultimatum on March 19th, she argued that even if victory would require a long-term military commitment, backing down was “unthinkable.” The choice was between autocracy and democracy as well as between bigotry and tolerance in the very center of Europe. If the U.S. didn’t respond to Milosevic’s “thuggery” now, it would have to do so later, perhaps in Macedonia or even Bosnia.<sup>218</sup> Air strikes against targets in Serbia and Kosovo began on March 24th, 1999.

### **Military officials’ views**

Like in Bosnia, military officials resisted the threat or use of force to address the crisis over Kosovo. Indeed, having recently acquiesced to the intervention in Bosnia, military officials were especially wary of another potentially open-ended commitment of American resources to the Balkans. The Joint Chiefs of Staff not only expressed skepticism that air strikes could achieve their intended political aims of halting the bloodshed and driving Milosevic back to the negotiating table, but also strongly opposed any operations involving ground forces. While this perspective did not ultimately prevail in the policy process, military officials’ advocacy represented an important constraint on U.S. and NATO military operations in Kosovo.

From the outset, officials at the Pentagon — including Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Henry Shelton and Secretary of Defense William Cohen — were chary of fresh military involvement in the Balkans. As Albright later noted, the Pentagon was “uncomfortable with my declarations of resolve,” especially after yielding on the question of maintaining a U.S. peacekeeping presence in Bosnia under the terms of the Dayton Accords, and remained “unwilling to contemplate further missions” in the region.<sup>219</sup> Among senior U.S. military leaders, only General Wesley Clark, NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander and Commander-in-Chief of U.S. forces in Europe, clearly came out in support of a military response to the events in Kosovo. However, Clark’s particular role within NATO, along his atypical experience (for a military officer) as a major participant in the Dayton negotiations, may explain his somewhat iconoclastic views relative to his military

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<sup>218</sup> Albright (2003, pp. 405–406).

<sup>219</sup> Albright (2003, p. 383).



peers. As Clark himself later acknowledged in his memoir, while serving as SACEUR he was often torn between the diplomatic point of view, reflected in the heavy State Department presence at NATO, and the military perspective that he received through his relationship with the Pentagon.<sup>220</sup> Yet while Kosovo was “neither the conflict we had prepared for nor the war we wanted to fight,” Clark saw it as one in which the U.S. and NATO had to be victorious. In Clark’s view, based on his extensive interactions with Milosevic through the Dayton process, success was possible by conveying toughness, firmness, and determination to the Serbian leader through the threat and/or use of force (and especially air power). Thus, Clark was far more willing to not only engage in political analysis of Milosevic’s situation, but also bound by his role to take initiative in developing formal sets of options for NATO military operations.<sup>221</sup>

Nevertheless, Clark’s views held little sway with his military colleagues in Washington, who were determined to preserve force readiness rather than get bogged down in a conflict that they viewed as peripheral to U.S. interests.<sup>222</sup> At the January 15th PC meeting, where Albright made her case for a renewed threat of air strikes, Pentagon representatives questioned both the purpose of such attacks and what tangible objective they would achieve, not believing that an air campaign alone could end the fighting or persuade Milosevic to accept a political settlement. Cohen and Shelton also strongly opposed a peacekeeping force with any American members, which they viewed as just another resource drain that could potentially land U.S. forces in the middle of a civil war. Rather, they preferred to maintain existing measures for verifying Serb and Kosovar compliance with the ceasefire that was then still officially in place while stressing that peacekeeping forces could only be brought in under a “permissive environment,” or one in which the Serbs had bought into the peace process.<sup>223</sup>

Though the Racak massacre created significant momentum toward intervention, military officials continued to raise doubts through the winter and spring of 1999 about whether the capabilities offered by the air campaign could produce the desired political outcomes as well as whether U.S.

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<sup>220</sup> Betts (2001, p. 127); Clark (2002, p. xliii).

<sup>221</sup> Clark (2002, pp. 19, 68, 81, 112, 117).

<sup>222</sup> Betts (2001, pp. 128–129).

<sup>223</sup> Daalder and O’Hanlon (2001, p. 70); Albright (2003, p. 395).

national interests were sufficiently engaged to warrant forcefully confronting Milosevic. More specifically, General Shelton and his colleagues challenged the domino theory-style assumptions that Albright and her diplomatic corps put forth regarding how instability in the Balkans would spread to Europe and damage American interests, positing that this argument was “overdrawn” and “a poor case for intervention.” Instead, the chiefs suggested non-military means, including ratcheting up economic sanctions or indicting Milosevic for crimes against humanity, as more appropriate policy measures. They also cited the challenges of using air power against widely dispersed Serbian ground forces while avoiding Albanian refugees scattered across Kosovo. Although the chiefs ultimately went along with Albright’s idea for the NATO air campaign — they assessed that the operations under NATO’s strike plan “could achieve the articulated objective” — their input walked the objective itself back to degrading the Serbs’ repressive capabilities against the Kosovar Albanians, with no mention of halting the Serbs’ ethnic cleansing or convincing Milosevic to negotiate.<sup>224</sup> Thus, even though their skepticism was ultimately overruled, military officials sought to avoid operations in Kosovo that they deemed to be either unnecessary for American interests or ineffective in terms of the capabilities being marshaled.

### **Summary: A Familiar Pattern**

In Kosovo as in Bosnia, diplomats led the charge toward intervention, citing arguments about American and NATO credibility, while military officials protested that the U.S. had neither the interests engaged nor a clear capability to affect outcomes on the ground. The subsequent lack of consensus among advisers provided diplomats — especially Albright and senior members of her team — with an opportunity for policy entrepreneurship in the absence of other concrete options from the interagency, thereby shifting the balance of advocacy toward intervention. The similarities in organizational concern for credibility (or lack thereof) and policy advocacy between Bosnia and Kosovo, and the degree to which these dynamics mirror those observed in the Greece and Berlin examples, increase confidence in the mechanisms that the theory identifies: diplomats

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<sup>224</sup>Bradley Graham, “Joint Chiefs Doubted Air Strategy,” *The Washington Post*, April 5, 1999.

viewed credibility in reputational terms and sought to use force in preserving it, while military officials focused instead on the balance of interests and available capabilities in expressing skepticism of the proposed intervention. To briefly rehash the discussion of alternatives from the Bosnia example, for similar reasons, neither structural factors nor organizational influence can neatly explain the documented patterns in concern for credibility and policy advocacy. Structural forces under unipolarity would predict converging credibility assessments and preferences on the use of force among policymakers, but this is precisely the opposite of what I observe. Organizational influence would anticipate that diplomats preferred negotiations, and military officials the use of force, to address the crisis. Yet diplomats repeatedly registered their dim view of negotiations and appear to have constructed the conference at Rambouillet an expedient toward war, while military officials repeatedly expressed their opposition to armed action and pointed out non-kinetic solutions (over which they would have had little control or input) as more appropriate means. For these reasons, the evidence from Kosovo is more consistent with my theory of organizational identity than either of the main alternatives.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter assesses the degree to which my theoretical argument and empirical predictions travel to different time periods, configurations of power in the international system, and countries other than the United States. My findings support the notion that policymakers' organizational identity influences how they conceive of credibility and advocate policy, even in comparison to structural factors and possible concerns about organizational influence. On net, there is clear evidence in the Fashoda, Bosnia, and Kosovo cases that diplomats consistently defined credibility in reputational terms and advocated forceful, hawkish policies as a result. Alternatively, when diplomats did not perceive their government's reputation for reliability or resolve as being on the line, their policy advocacy was considerably more dovish, as in the Falklands example. For military officials, by contrast, capabilities were the more important quantity, and their willingness to support the use of force tracked with their judgments of what resources were available to meet a given

challenge. These capability-based assessments led to ultimate support for hawkish policies during the Fashoda and Falklands cases, but opposition to the use of force in the Bosnia and Kosovo examples. The resulting balances of policy advocacy pushed the events at Fashoda toward war, but necessitated compromises over the Falklands, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Finally, as is true of the evidence compiled in Chapter 3, these supplemental case studies are consistent with several of the theory's observable implications. Diplomats' policy advocacy tended to find its basis in a broad definition of national interests, strong beliefs about the interdependence of commitments, relatively muted concerns about the adequacy of available military assets, and high levels of risk acceptance on the use of force. Military officials' advocacy, meanwhile, was grounded in a generally narrower sense of the national interest, qualified concerns about the interdependence of commitments, significant focus on the sufficiency of available military assets, and low levels of risk acceptance on the use of force. In the concluding chapter, I put my findings into conversation with the broader theoretical insights developed throughout the project.

## **Conclusion**

Why do foreign policy decision makers care about the credibility of their own state's commitments? How does policymakers' organizational identity affect their concern for credibility, and in turn, their willingness to use force during crises? This project argues that where policymakers sit determines how they conceive of credibility and the circumstances under which they support initiating force to build or maintain it. Whereas prominent explanations derived from deterrence theory locate concern for credibility and associated policy advocacy in structural factors like the balance of power, interests, and/or resolve (Schelling, 1966; Waltz, 1979; Press, 2005), I identify organization-level variables that paint a richer picture of the dynamics at work. However, my argument also offers distinct predictions from alternatives within the bureaucratic politics paradigm concerning the quest for organizational influence, turf, and resources (Allison and Zelikow, 1999). Furthermore, it advances expectations that are separate from, but may magnify or moderate, individual differences in dispositions toward the use of force (Kertzer, 2016; Yarhi-Milo, 2018).

Focusing on two ideal types of policymakers, I posit that diplomats conceptualize credibility in reputational terms and under a broad definition of national interests, while military officials do so with regard to hard military capabilities and a narrower sense of national priorities. These divergent views predict distinct pathways for each ideal type's willingness to support the use of force during crises. Because diplomats' job, in large part, is to worry about the reputational inferences that observers will draw from the home government's behavior, they back the use of force to preserve others' impressions of the home government's resolve and reliability. Since military

officials' role, chiefly, is to weigh in on what options are militarily feasible based on current capabilities, they endorse armed action only when the capacity to accomplish a given mission is within reach. The intersection of these sometimes-competing perspectives subsequently establishes the level of hawkishness — or bias toward the use of force — in options that leaders receive for addressing crises. Thus, as I discuss in greater detail below, organizationally-derived perspectives on credibility are important for our understanding of foreign policy decision making and international relations, as they shape the balance of policy advocacy and the content of leaders' decision environment.

I test my argument about organizational identity using a mixed-methods approach that draws on text analysis, case studies, and experiments. Because each of these components relies on a different inferential approach, they are collectively useful for addressing different parts of the argument and comparing my predictions against those derived from other structural, bureaucratic, or individual-level alternatives. For starters, the text analysis presented in Chapter 2 provides important baseline evidence for my first hypothesis. Looking across thousands of declassified U.S. government records, using three different analytic techniques, there is a clear pattern in which diplomats invoke credibility in terms of the *willingness* to bear costs (i.e. resolve) and keep commitments (i.e. reliability) while military officials refer to credibility as the *capacity* (i.e. capability) to do so. While structural factors would not anticipate such differences, my argument about organizational identity can explain why policymakers may not all conceive of credibility in the same way.

Next, the case studies detailed in Chapters 3 and 5 not only marshal evidence consistent with the aforementioned patterns in diplomatic and military conceptions of credibility, but also connect those differences with each ideal type's policy advocacy regarding the use of force. Along the way, these historical episodes help to compare my theory of organizational identity against alternatives grounded in system structure and organizational influence. Chapter 3's examination of American policy deliberations during four early Cold War crises — Greece (1947), Berlin (1948), Dien Bien Phu (1954), and the Taiwan Straits (1954-55) — shows that diplomats persistently defined interests

in broad terms and encouraged the use of force on a reputational basis, while military officials defined interests less expansively and backed the use of force mainly in the existence of what they saw as appropriate capabilities. For the first two cases, military officials' circumscribed view of U.S. capabilities tempered diplomats' support for armed intervention, discouraging U.S. leaders from pursuing more forceful options. For the latter two examples, military officials' willingness to entertain the use of force as a function of substantially improved U.S. capabilities coincided with strong diplomatic pressure toward military action, pushing U.S. leaders in a more hawkish direction. These findings are not only out of step with what structural forces would predict, but evince relatively little attention among organizational actors to the policy solutions that would theoretically burnish their respective turf, influence, and resources.

Chapter 5's canvassing of British, French, and American crisis decision making tests for the presence of the theory's mechanisms during other time periods and under different configurations of power in the international system, and suggests that my findings in Chapter 3 are not a one-off result stemming from something unique about the Cold War or the United States. At Fashoda, British and French diplomats framed the stakes in terms of national interests and reputation, while their military counterparts greenlit several escalatory moves largely based on their assessments of the capability balance. Conversely, during the Falklands crisis, Britain was slow in reacting to Argentine coercion at least in part because her diplomats did not see the issue through a reputational lens and her military officers were not initially prepared for war over the islands. Meanwhile, in Bosnia and Kosovo, diplomats expressed persistent concern for reputation in advocating for armed intervention, yet military officials were skeptical that the use of force was either in the national interest or capable of achieving the desired political outcomes, necessitating a series of policy compromises that brought the U.S., however haltingly, toward the use of air power. Once again, structural forces cannot fully explain the dynamics that I observe. While there is more apparent concern for organizational influence in these cases, on net my theory of organizational identity retains predictive purchase and the evidence remains consistent with the causal mechanisms identified in the overall argument.

Finally, the survey experiment described in Chapter 4 seeks to probe the generalizability of the argument to present-day policymakers while furnishing additional causal leverage on my hypotheses and facilitating comparisons with individual differences in policymakers' dispositions. The experimental intervention is premised on the notion that current and former government officials who possess diplomatic and/or military experience will respond to key contextual features of a hypothetical crisis in the way that the theory predicts: diplomats will be more sensitive to reputational issues, military officials will pay greater attention to capability-based factors, and each type's willingness to support the use of force should follow from how they weigh these considerations. The results are consistent with the theory's major proposition, advanced in my second hypothesis, that diplomats are more willing than military officials to initiate force out of concern for credibility, and particularly because they place greater emphasis on reputational matters. That finding holds even after accounting for respondents' individual levels of militant and cooperative internationalism — which are themselves strong predictors of support for the use of force. Therefore, my account of organizational identity is distinct from, but very well may be complementary to, explanations that ground concern for credibility and related policy advocacy in the psychology of using force.

## **Limitations and Extensions**

While the empirical chapters provide support for my theoretical insights, there are several limitations to what we can learn from this study. I impose several scope conditions for the purposes of theoretical and empirical tractability, but these restrictions necessarily curtail the wider applicability of the argument and evidence. Nevertheless, the project's shortcomings also offer several routes forward for future research.

First, I focus on decisions to initiate the use of force during crises, but different dynamics may apply to choices about escalating or terminating military operations as crises ratchet up or wind down. For instance, once forces are engaged, military officials may prefer to keep fighting, thereby demonstrating the capability to achieve battlefield victory.<sup>225</sup> Follow-on work could theorize about

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<sup>225</sup> Betts (1991) and Lin-Greenberg (2019b).



and test for differences among diplomatic and military officials in the sort of credibility concerns and policy advocacy that the latter stages of a crisis may engage or stimulate.<sup>226</sup>

Second, I advance two potential mechanisms — socialization and missions or responsibilities — within the overall framework of organizational identity that contribute to policymakers’ behavior. Distinguishing between these explanations was not my explicit goal, however, and my research design is not set up to tease them apart (though the contrast between Generals George Marshall and Lucius Clay discussed in Chapter 3 points toward how each mechanism may operate). At the same time, recent scholarship has both emphasized and questioned the importance of socialization effects, particularly among military officials, on subsequent political attitudes and behavior, suggesting that additional attention to these dynamics would be more than warranted.<sup>227</sup>

Third, I only cover two ideal types of policymakers in advancing my argument and gathering empirical evidence, with emphasis on how bureaucratic rather than individual differences drive the observed behavior. While this move is a useful analytical simplification, it necessarily minimizes the role of non-diplomatic and non-military officials, such as those at civilian defense or intelligence agencies. Although we know that military intelligence organizations, in particular, tend to assess the credibility of *adversary intentions* through a capabilities lens, much less is known about how these institutions rate credibility where their own government is concerned (in part due to statutory limits on intelligence agencies’ ability to conduct such analyses, at least in the United States).<sup>228</sup> Future scholarship could extend my theoretical framework to address these sorts of organizations. Similarly, in arguing that diplomats are typically more hawkish than military officers when it comes to credibility concerns and policy advocacy, the theory leaves aside these officials’ own dispositions toward the use of force, which may amplify or cut against received organizational wisdom. It remains unclear when or why organizational biases may interact with individual dispositions to shape policymakers’ behavior, pointing to another avenue for additional study.

Fourth, I concentrate on states that exhibit strong norms regarding civilian control of the mil-

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<sup>226</sup>Milonopoulos (2021).

<sup>227</sup>Jost, Meshkin, and Schub (2022) and Lupton (2022).

<sup>228</sup>Yarhi-Milo (2014).

itary because these institutional settings incentivize and/or legally obligate military officers to advise on, rather than control, decisions to use force. Because these norms may be more common under democratic rather than autocratic forms of government, the theory likely has little to say about a large and increasingly important class of authoritarian states (especially personalist and/or military regimes) wherein the military is a distinctly political actor in its own right.<sup>229</sup> For instance, I do not seek to explain Argentine behavior in the Falklands crisis, in part because available evidence suggests that the Junta launched the invasion without adequately considering whether its forces could fight and win if an actual conflict broke out.<sup>230</sup> Yet additional research could, and should, consider how autocratic regimes and their component organizations conceive of credibility and explore potential implications for crisis bargaining.<sup>231</sup>

Fifth, and relatedly, I rely heavily on American archives and policymakers for my evidence, in part because the perceived importance of credibility continues to dominate public debates about U.S. foreign policy and provided much of my motivation for this project.<sup>232</sup> While evidence presented from other countries, such as Britain and France, suggests that the hypothesized dynamics operate there as well, the project is still U.S.-centric and leaves open interesting empirical questions that mirror those raised in the previous paragraph regarding regime type. In particular, subsequent inquiry could probe whether and how other powerful states, such as China or Russia, and their military and diplomatic establishments conceptualize credibility.

## **Theoretical Contributions**

With these limitations in mind, this project still makes at least three important theoretical contributions to the study of credibility, bureaucratic politics, and leader behavior. First, on credibility, my argument pushes back on the conventional wisdom articulated in Schelling (1966, p. 124): not all policymakers agree that credibility is “one of the few things worth fighting for.” Yet this per-

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<sup>229</sup>Weeks (2014), Talmadge (2015), Izadi (2020), and White (2020).

<sup>230</sup>Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse (1990).

<sup>231</sup>Weeks (2008) and Weiss (2013).

<sup>232</sup><https://www.duckofminerva.com/2021/08/will-afghanistan-hurt-u-s-credibility.html>

spective — which implies that credibility’s importance is both self-evident and widely understood among decision makers — not only informed much subsequent development of international relations theory, such as the logic of audience costs, but also helped to cement the domino theory as a major pillar of the U.S.’s Cold War consensus on containing communism.<sup>233</sup> In using the proverbial game of “Chicken” to emphasize the importance of not yielding to one’s adversaries, Schelling stressed that the USSR and PRC could not be allowed to seize large chunks of territory and population without the risk of a violent Western reaction. According to this logic, the willingness to not only make commitments, but also pay costs and run risks to keep up with them is paramount. Coupled with neorealism’s emphasis on parsimonious assumptions and macro-structural forces in explaining states’ interests and behavior, much subsequent scholarship did not even consider whether beliefs about qualities like credibility could vary from person to person, let alone from one organization to another.<sup>234</sup> Even prominent rejoinders to the conventional wisdom did not depart from the basic premise that policymakers tend to reach fairly uniform judgments concerning credibility.<sup>235</sup> Only in the last few years have scholars begun unpacking individual differences in beliefs about credibility and reputation in a manner that reflects their true heterogeneity among policymakers.<sup>236</sup> This project similarly foregrounds the reality that different people care about credibility for different reasons, but puts an organizational spin on explaining why, further opening up the black box of the state to better understand its behavior.

A second theoretical contribution lies in connecting the literature on signaling and perception with studies of bureaucratic politics and civil-military relations. Barring a few notable exceptions, these strands of research are not otherwise in close touch, yet have plenty to learn from one another.<sup>237</sup> On the one hand, rationalist scholarship places substantial weight on costly signals, which help states and leaders to indicate their “type” and thus convey some amount of information regarding their level of resolve, but have little (if anything) to say about the internal processes involved in

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<sup>233</sup> Fearon (1994) and Tomz (2007a).

<sup>234</sup> Waltz (1979), Wendt (1992), and Kertzer (2016).

<sup>235</sup> Mercer (1996) and Press (2005).

<sup>236</sup> Brutger and Kertzer (2018), Yarhi-Milo (2018), Yarhi-Milo, Kertzer, and Renshon (2018), and Kertzer, Renshon, and Yarhi-Milo (2019).

<sup>237</sup> Yarhi-Milo (2014).

calibrating these signals.<sup>238</sup> On the other hand, psychologically-informed approaches to signaling point out that states and leaders often misfire when attempting to convey the credibility of a threat or promise, but typically do not analyze these dynamics through an organizational lens.<sup>239</sup> For their part, major studies of bureaucratic politics and civil-military relations suggest that organizations often filter and repackage information in ways that fit the institution's parochial interests and priorities, yet have not explored how these tendencies shape organizational beliefs about the relative importance of perceptual factors like credibility.<sup>240</sup> By marrying insights derived from each research agenda, I advance a novel argument regarding which bureaucracies want to fight for credibility and why.

A final theoretical contribution comes from considering decisions to use force as not originating wholly with leaders (i.e. top-down) but in conjunction with advisory functions carried out by major government organizations (i.e. bottom-up). While a wave of scholarship over the last two decades has rightfully restored agency to leaders instead of seeing their behavior merely as a response to domestic or structural pressures, and has helpfully emphasized the variety of traits and prior experiences that may inform their choices, leaders typically do not make decisions (especially about the use of force) in a vacuum.<sup>241</sup> Yet many of these studies focus on what leaders do with the information that they receive from their advisers rather than where that information comes from in the first place. Indeed, options that leaders receive for dealing with crises do not just emerge from anywhere — they are generated, refined, and vetted by the mix of career and appointed officials who staff the national security bureaucracy.<sup>242</sup> Conceptualizing the (potentially diverging) preferences of these organizations not only fills in an important piece of the puzzle regarding the content of advisory input, but also attends to the realities of how foreign policy is made (especially in the United States). Put differently, by developing and testing a theory of organizational concern for credibility and associated policy advocacy, I set up a conversation between what leaders are

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<sup>238</sup>Morrow (1994), Fearon (1995), Fearon (1997), Kydd (2005), and Slantchev (2005).

<sup>239</sup>Jervis (1970) and Jervis (1976).

<sup>240</sup>Posen (1984), Vertzberger (1990), Legro (1996), Kier (1997), Allison and Zelikow (1999), Feaver (2003), Feaver and Gelpi (2004), and Halperin, Clapp, and Kanter (2006).

<sup>241</sup>Byman and Pollack (2001), Saunders (2011), Horowitz and Stam (2014), and Lupton (2020).

<sup>242</sup>Goldgeier and Saunders (2017); Gvosdev, Blankshain, and Cooper (2019, Ch. 5-6).

told and what they do next.

## **Policy Implications**

As mentioned at the outset, a number of policy implications flow from the project, especially for debates about credibility, commitments, and crisis bargaining. In closing, I concentrate on two particular insights. One concerns civil-military relations and considerations of balance in political versus military perspectives. The evidence marshaled herein suggests that military officials' buy-in (however grudging, in some cases) was essential for the use of force to occur, no matter how strident diplomats' reputational concerns and associated policy advocacy. For those who view might view fighting for credibility as unwise, this could be encouraging news, as it may indicate that some degree of restraint is built into the policy process, particularly when the capability to effect the desired outcome is in question. At the same time, military officials' hesitation could be perceived as, or might actually represent, some degree of shirking as far as their professional and legal duties are concerned. There is a tricky balance to be maintained in which military officials must both voice their reservations and follow civilians' orders, which are often in response to messy political realities rather than optimal military conditions. Diplomats' generally higher inclination to fight for credibility relative to their military counterparts is then not just noise, but rather engages issues central to the civil-military problematique.<sup>243</sup> If the ultimate goal is to advance the integration of civilian and military perspectives and thereby improve decision making, however, officials on either end of this divide need to know more about why their counterparts might approach these issues differently. Such knowledge could not only allow civilian and military advisers to better anticipate sources of disagreement amongst themselves, but also forecast how leaders might sort through conflicting recommendations.

Another implication relates to current and future deterrence challenges facing the United States. Potential crises over the Baltic states or Taiwan loom as Russia and China appear increasingly set on challenging American commitments (however vague or informal) therein. The theory and

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<sup>243</sup>Feaver (2003).

evidence presented in this project indicate that diplomats and military officials tend to advance organizationally-grounded and almost monocausal views of what factors produce deterrence and how to manage crises without events spiraling out of control. Yet rarely is successful deterrence or crisis management simply a question of conveying resolve or possessing the proper capabilities.<sup>244</sup> Rather, securing favorable crisis outcomes usually requires a carefully calibrated mix of these components that vary according to numerous situational and contextual variables. Once again, leaders are more likely to get this balance right, and avoid or better control crises, if their civilian and military advisers have a fuller appreciation of each other's perspectives.

## **Final Thoughts**

This project seeks to understand the sources and possible consequences of variation in policymakers' concern for the credibility of their state's commitments. It proposes and tests a theory grounded in the concept of organizational identity, which aims to offer a fuller explanation for the interaction between bureaucratic politics and the components of credibility than has previously been attempted. Using a mixed-methods research design, the project demonstrates significant predictive purchase for my theory relative to alternatives grounded in the balance of power, interests, and/or resolve; the organizational quest for influence and resources; and the varying dispositions that individuals display toward the use of force. The findings offer a novel take on who is willing to fight for credibility and why, enhancing our understanding of the factors that motivate decision makers to pursue war versus peace. An improved appreciation of the bureaucratic elements that militate for or against the use of force in response to credibility concerns will not only facilitate the explanation and prediction of future crises, but also ideally aid policymakers and practitioners in identifying factors that may threaten or enhance international security.

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<sup>244</sup>Blankenship and Lin-Greenberg (2022).

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## Appendix A: The Organizational Semantics of Credibility

### A.1 Word Embeddings Robustness

#### A.1.1 Additional Word Embeddings Analysis

Table A.1: Credibility Embeddings in DDO

Diplomats	Military
undercut**	seriousness
undermine**	readiness
solidify**	lessens
jeopardize**	usefulness
legitimacy**	effectiveness
undermines**	outweigh
endanger**	our
undermining**	importantly
willingness**	posture
sincerity**	capabilities
degrade**	deter
commitment**	diminishing

Table A.2: Credibility Embeddings in FRUS w/ DoD Civilians

Diplomats	Military
undermined**	deterrent**
undercut**	capability*
commitment**	deterrence
sincerity**	capabilities**
willingness**	minimize
detract**	maintain
detrimental**	leverage
erode**	readiness
importantly	assure
	preclude

Table A.3: Credibility Embeddings in DDO w/ DoD Civilians

Diplomats	Military
undercut**	posture**
willingness**	capabilities**
solidify**	deter**
legitimacy**	diminishing**
sincerity**	our
undermining**	usefulness
detract**	assure
degrade**	effectiveness
	readiness

### A.1.2 Out-of-Sample Random Forest Test

To ensure that the differences between diplomats and military officials that I identify are not unique to when they talk about credibility, I randomly sample 200 records from FRUS (100 from diplomats and 100 from military officials) and use a random forest model to classify the documents according to their organizational source. As indicated in Table A.4, the model is able to correctly classify the sampled documents in 92.5 percent of cases, suggesting that organizational differences between diplomatic and military patterns of communication persist apart from when they discuss credibility.

Table A.4: Summary of Metrics for the Random Forest Model

Metric	Score
$F_1$	0.921
Kappa	0.85
Accuracy	0.925
Sensitivity	0.88
Specificity	0.97



## A.2 Topic Modeling Robustness

### A.2.1 Topic Model Labels

Foreign Aid u., right, human, africa, polici, african, countri, south, option, govern, action, assist, support, intern, congress, saudi, us, state, sale, secur
Vietnam forc, militari, action, oper, us, south, north, vietnam, u., vietnames, communist, state, unit, support, lao, area, govern, defens, air, viet-nam
Middle Eastern Affairs said, secretari, us, presid, minist, israel, point, posit, time, talk, arab, ask, problem, question, now, ambassador, situat, soviet, say, meet
Force Posture soviet, forc, nuclear, weapon, capabl, us, militari, strateg, defens, nato, war, use, state, limit, missil, alli, europ, ussr, attack, unit
Public Affairs sup, href, depart, state, inform, file, foreign, document, polici, report, presid, propos, telegram, nation, meet, us, central, see, may, archiv
On-the-Ground Reporting govern, program, american, public, polit, iran, report, offici, peopl, one, present, offic, state, general, item, support, also, iranian, parti, effect
Treaties and Negotiations u., negoti, agreement, issu, treati, un, state, propos, resolut, question, posit, secur, unit, accept, discuss, taiwan, general, meet, normal, possibl
Grand Strategy us, polici, countri, nation, develop, interest, econom, world, relat, communist, militari, continu, polit, power, china, can, influenc, increas, relationship, aid
Kissinger-NSC mr, item, kissing, can, secretari, think, go, get, want, presid, dr, one, problem, say, question, now, sup, know, thing, general

Figure A.1: Topic Labels in FRUS

<p>Force Posture</p> <p>forc, s, c, e, top, air, oper, program, militari, b, defens, area, requir, system, t, capabl, aircraft, use, unit, u</p>
<p>Information Operations</p> <p>govern, report, state, confidenti, inform, one, presid, peopl, time, american, unit, parti, offic, made, offici, person, general, public, illeg, elect</p>
<p>Communist Influence</p> <p>polici, polit, militari, secret, nation, govern, interest, econom, soviet, may, relat, u., communist, countri, support, toward, foreign, power, world, continu</p>
<p>Foreign Aid</p> <p>countri, develop, program, confidenti, u., econom, librari, africa, assist, million, state, trade, copi, polici, intern, support, us, african, import, year</p>
<p>Vietnam</p> <p>secret, copi, us, action, south, chines, librari, lbj, communist, top, u., north, china, vietnam, militari, might, hanoi, possibl, asia, vietnames</p>
<p>NATO</p> <p>soviet, nuclear, secret, forc, europ, nato, us, weapon, european, german, might, defens, alli, germani, copi, berlin, librari, possibl, western, lbj</p>
<p>Middle Eastern Affairs</p> <p>us, state, secret, said, secretari, israel, text, presid, posit, talk, copi, illeg, meet, arab, amembassi, mr, depart, page, discuss, point</p>

Figure A.2: Topic Labels in DDO

## A.2.2 Topic Model Diagnostics

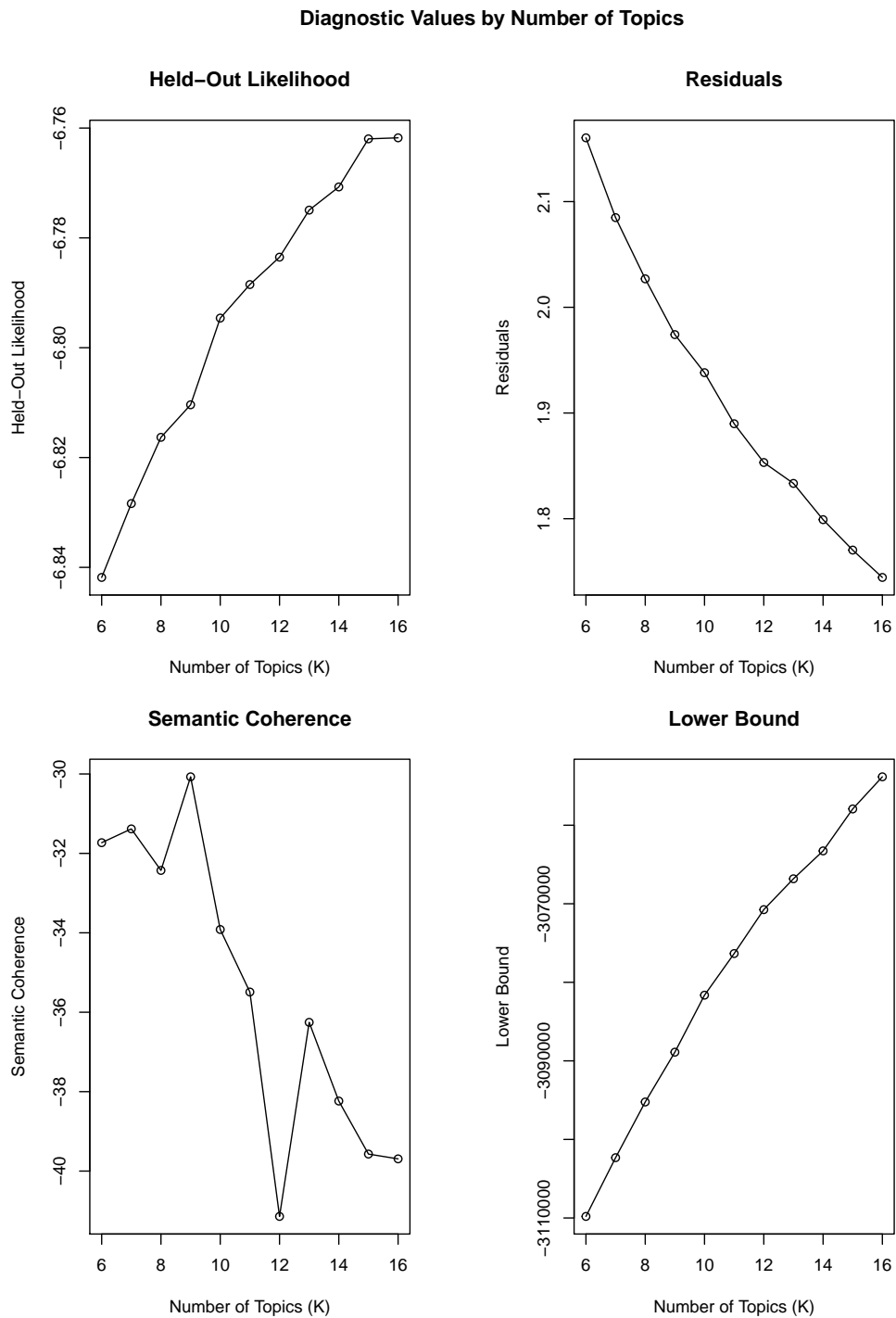


Figure A.3: Topic Fitting in FRUS

Diagnostic Values by Number of Topics

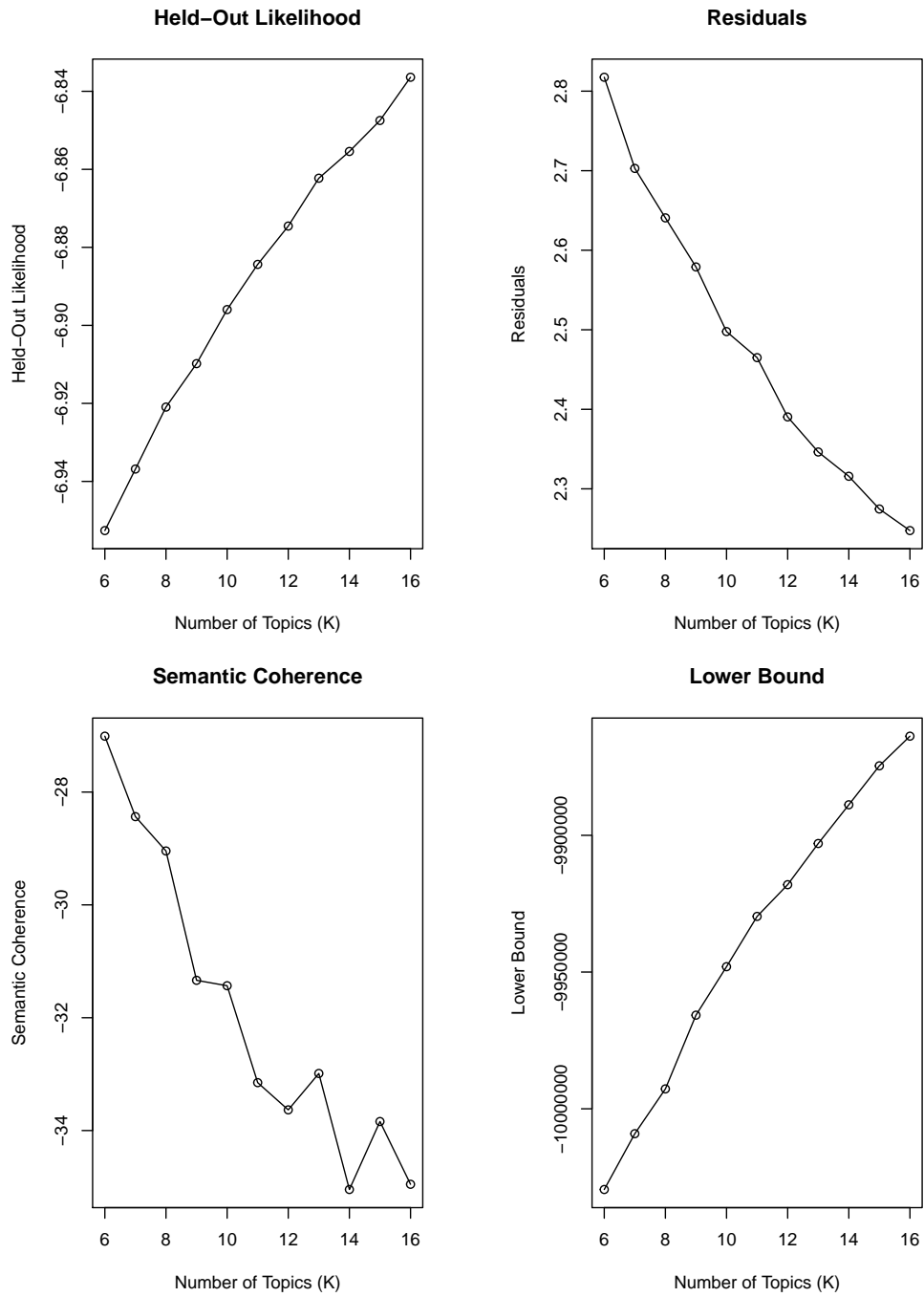


Figure A.4: Topic Fitting in DDO

### A.2.3 Robustness of Document Coding

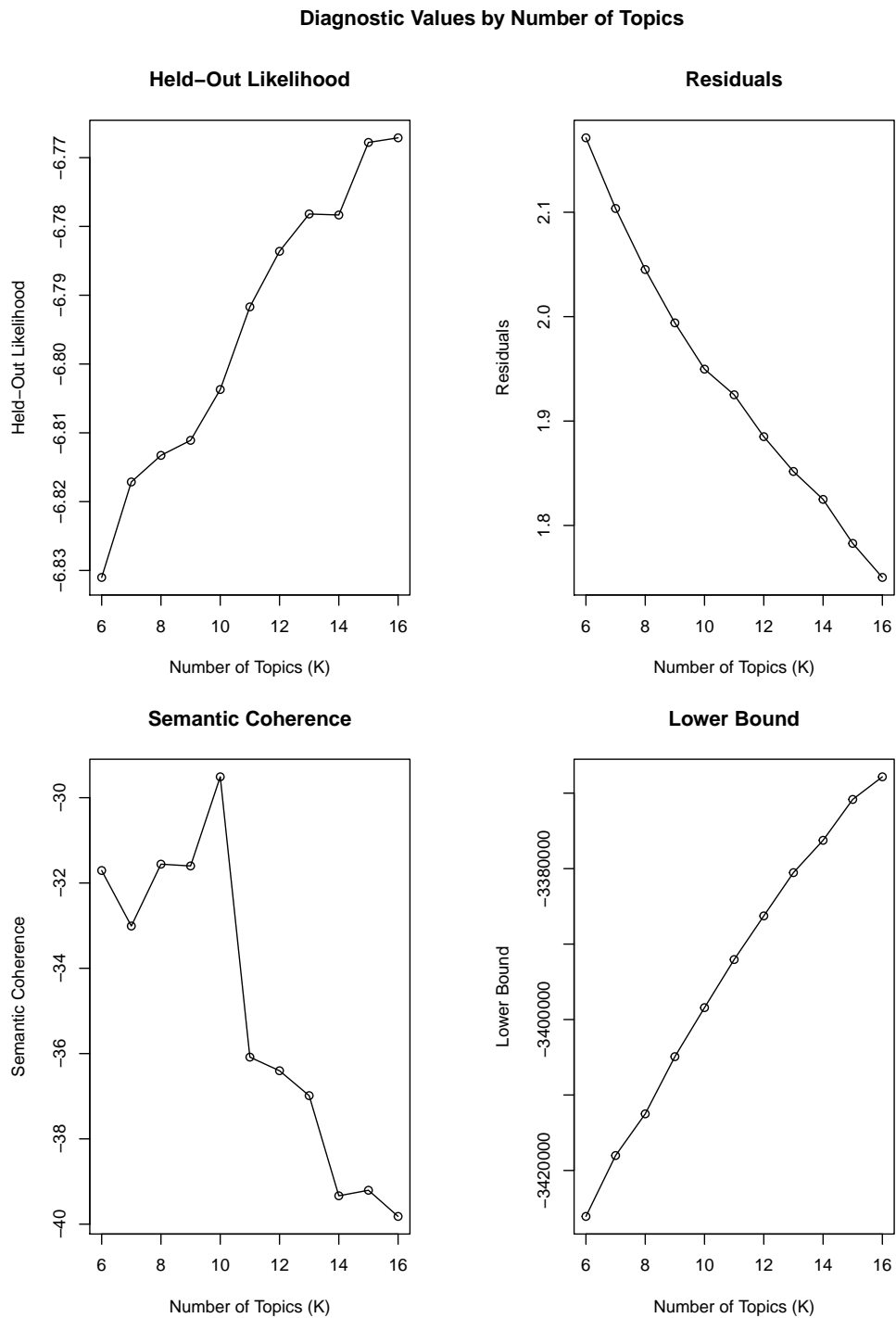


Figure A.5: Topic Fitting in FRUS, Including DoD Civilians

### Diagnostic Values by Number of Topics

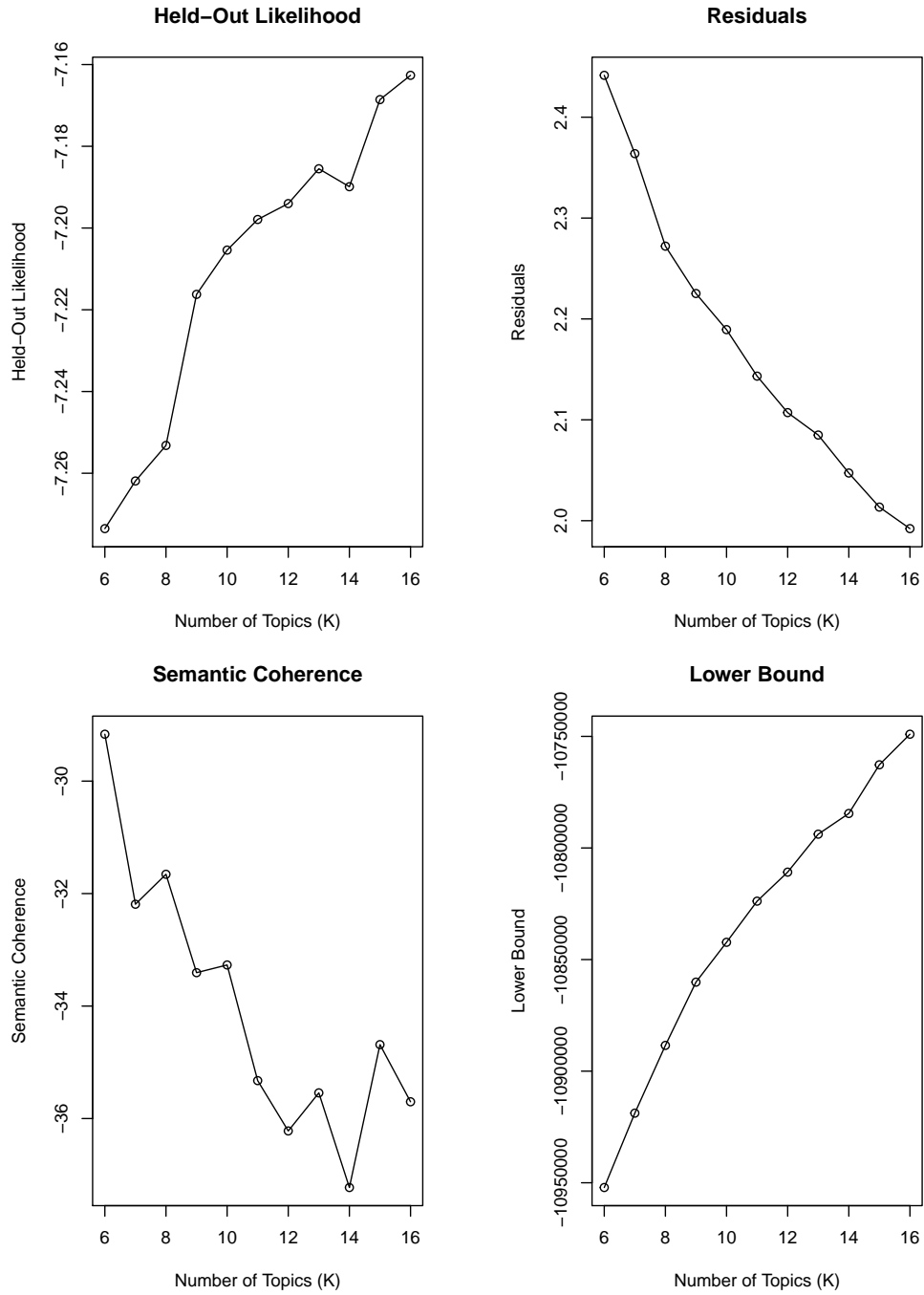


Figure A.6: Topic Fitting in DDO, Including DoD Civilians

<p>Kissinger–NSC</p> <p>mr, said, item, secretari, kissing, presid, can, go, get, think, want, say, one, problem, question, israel, ask, know, now, dr</p>
<p>Treaties &amp; Negotiations</p> <p>sup, href, negoti, agreement, meet, propos, document, posit, discuss, state, issu, see, presid, agre, point, new, time, possibl, make, accept</p>
<p>Public Affairs</p> <p>right, polici, human, state, depart, program, intern, countri, foreign, committe, inform, nation, issu, support, vote, unit, u., general, assist, public</p>
<p>Foreign Aid</p> <p>africa, countri, south, african, econom, saudi, develop, us, polici, increas, iran, import, interest, nation, year, oil, world, polit, program, price</p>
<p>Communist Influence</p> <p>u., militari, govern, action, polit, support, us, polici, may, continu, possibl, posit, public, relat, state, might, situat, assist, forc, time</p>
<p>Political Reporting</p> <p>us, item, report, ambassador, telegram, govern, depart, file, inform, embassi, press, central, state, request, action, offici, indic, visit, nation, made</p>
<p>Force Posture</p> <p>soviet, us, nuclear, forc, militari, state, weapon, unit, capabl, nato, alli, nation, europ, war, ussr, continu, union, strateg, general, use</p>
<p>Vietnam</p> <p>vietnam, south, militari, north, vietnames, forc, oper, lao, communist, us, enemi, gvn, war, viet–nam, thai, continu, area, support, polit, unit</p>
<p>Missile Defense</p> <p>forc, defens, program, missil, attack, soviet, capabl, threat, cost, air, deploy, system, strateg, develop, requir, provid, limit, fy, u., sup</p>
<p>Asian Security</p> <p>u., china, chines, relat, polici, secur, normal, prc, taiwan, option, japan, issu, pakistan, india, defens, interest, japanes, peke, treati, indian</p>

Figure A.7: Topic Labels in FRUS, Including DoD Civilians

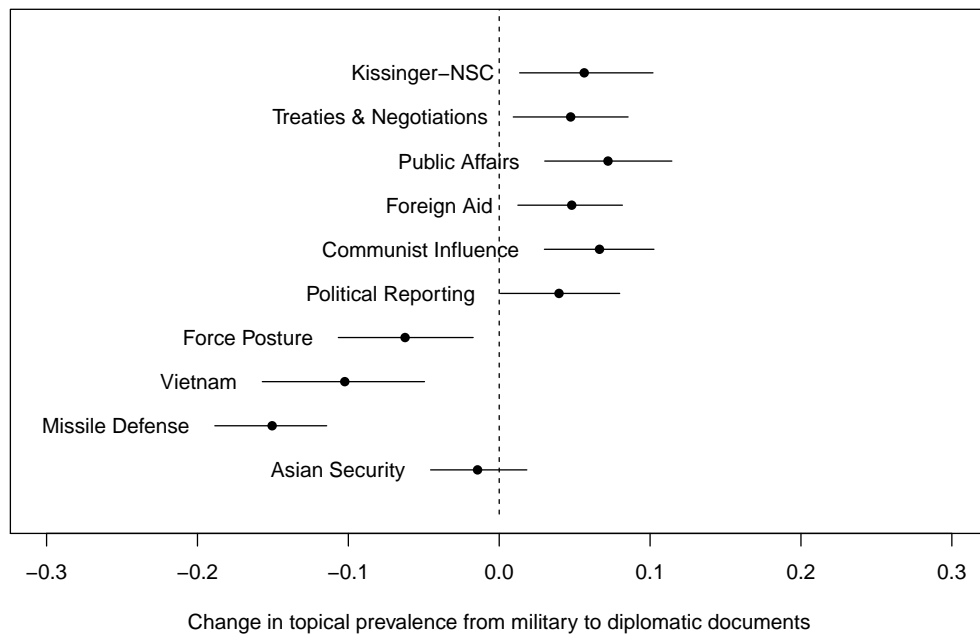


Figure A.8: Topics in FRUS, Including DoD Civilians



<p>NATO</p> <p>europ, european, nato, us, german, french, secret, germani, polici, franc, western, forc, polit, de, foreign, alli, nuclear, state, allianc, west</p>
<p>Middle Eastern Affairs</p> <p>us, u., state, israel, negoti, support, issu, arab, secur, r, polici, agreement, author, propos, action, posit, intern, continu, date, e</p>
<p>Vietnam</p> <p>south, vietnam, north, chines, china, us, communist, hanoi, vietnames, gvn, asia, negoti, forc, korea, viet-nam, lao, viet, continu, govern, drv</p>
<p>Foreign Aid</p> <p>develop, econom, countri, program, confidenti, polici, govern, million, increas, polit, nation, aid, year, trade, africa, u., assist, import, foreign, intern</p>
<p>Communist Influence</p> <p>soviet, militari, war, forc, may, polit, ussr, union, power, can, east, cuba, arm, one, world, polici, even, might, like, state</p>
<p>Information Operations</p> <p>report, inform, state, unit, oper, use, govern, u, offic, may, group, peopl, s, e, program, c, one, activ, time, plan</p>
<p>Force Posture</p> <p>nuclear, forc, weapon, capabl, defens, attack, strateg, nato, program, missil, use, deploy, us, system, air, u., limit, aircraft, requir, deterr</p>
<p>Asian Security</p> <p>secret, action, copi, top, lbj, librari, u., militari, possibl, us, might, communist, b, polit, effect, problem, c, use, can, make</p>
<p>Political Reporting</p> <p>said, presid, state, text, mr, illeg, secretari, meet, page, us, copi, minist, talk, one, point, question, confidenti, ambassador, discuss, amembassi</p>

Figure A.9: Topic Labels in DDO, Including DoD Civilians

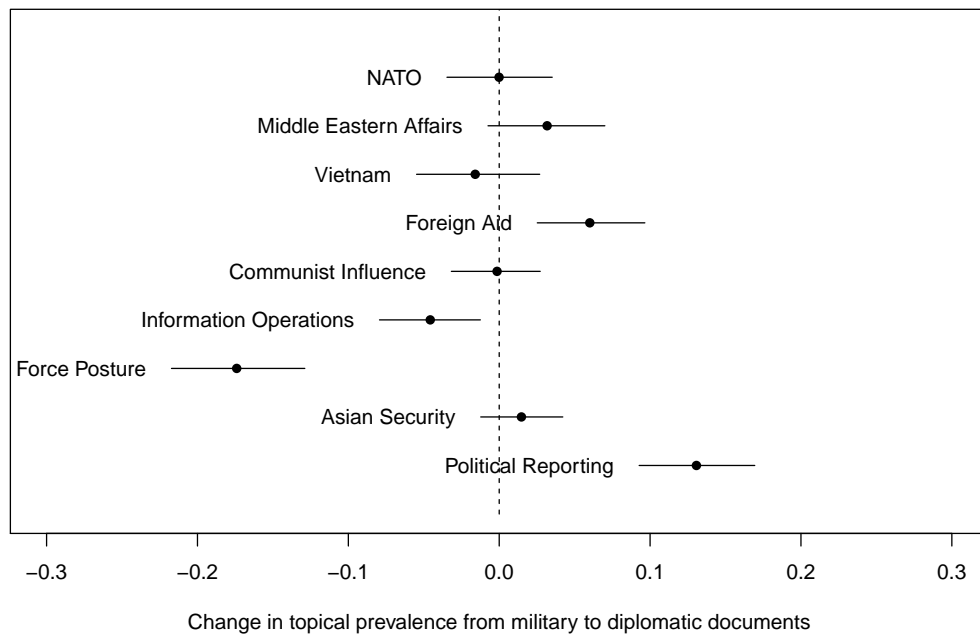


Figure A.10: Topics in DDO, Including DoD Civilians

## A.2.4 Example Documents by Topic

Table A.5: Representative FRUS Quotes By Topic, Part 1

Topic	Organization	Quote
Foreign Aid	Diplomats	"Internationally, the United States would fulfill what is viewed by our allies to be an important Bonn Summit commitment. Failure by the United States to honor this commitment, together with Japan's failure to implement fully their summit commitments, may be used by others, especially West Germany, as an excuse to back away from some of their own already-implemented commitments. Our failure would also have an adverse effect on U.S. credibility regarding future commitments."
Foreign Aid	Diplomats	"S/P believes that to preserve our credibility in the IFIs, we need to be able to demonstrate that the only difference in our attitude to their loans and to bilateral programs has to do with the kinds of loans brought forward."
Foreign Aid	Diplomats	"A statutory U.S. arms export ban also applies to Chile. To certify Chile, the law requires both Chilean cooperation on the Letelier/Moffitt murders and significant human rights progress. Chilean certification is not now feasible given the lack of positive developments on either issue, and our investigation of military exports from the U.S. to Chile in violation of our laws. In light of Chile's poor performance, its certification would undermine our credibility and thus Congressional support for our Central America policy."
Vietnam	Military	"The RVN is a politico/military keystone in Southeast Asia and is symbolic of US determination in Asia—as Berlin is in Europe—to prevent communist expansion. The United States is committed to the defense of the RVN in order to assist a free people to remain free. In addition to the freedom of the RVN, US national prestige, credibility, and honor with respect to world-wide pledges, and declared national policy are at stake. Further, it is incumbent upon the United States at this stage to invalidate the communist concept of 'wars of national liberation'."
Vietnam	Military	"Continuing evidence crop up in both North Korean actions and statements that Kim Il-Sung may be suffering from serious miscalculation as to U.S. capacity to react in Korea at same time war continues in Vietnam. This contains seeds of real danger if credibility of U.S. deterrent against overt action remains in doubt."
Vietnam	Military	"Credibility in the US deterrent is waning. The challenge has been made in Southeast Asia. Khrushchev has indicated Berlin may be next. If we take a stand on Laos, we can not, of course, avert the potential dangers of escalation. Nevertheless, the probability of escalation into a war of nuclear exchange with the USSR over Laos is less than would be the case with a more direct confrontation with the Soviets over Berlin. Taking a firm political and military position on Laos could serve to enhance credibility in US determination to use its military force wherever needed to protect its interests. Such a course of action need not unhinge our general war posture to a significant degree."
Middle Eastern Affairs	Diplomats	"I came away feeling somewhat encouraged by my meeting with King Hussein Tuesday. He listened more seriously and addressed the issues more thoughtfully than during my last meeting with him in March. This time I only detected once the 'I've heard this all before' smile on his face. His reply to our key question as to what circumstances the King required to feel justified in bringing Jordan into the negotiations did not go beyond what he has told us before, but he did agree to reflect further on the question. In addition, I believe our willingness to foreshadow the main elements of our ideas for bridging differences had effect of strengthening credibility in U.S. strategy and has assured some more time for the Sadat initiative as far as Jordan's attitude is concerned."
Middle Eastern Affairs	Diplomats	"Evidently questioning our credibility, Hussein took no pains to disguise his skepticism regarding assurances of our determination to see the peace effort through to a successful conclusion; he smiled broadly when I spoke of this, and he later referred to assurances given him by Ambassador Goldberg and other USG officials in 1967, which he obviously felt had not been honored."
Middle Eastern Affairs	Diplomats	"We would like to end this situation now, before myths take over and a new arms race becomes inevitable. However, while Arab moderates might well accept (and even be grateful for) any imposed solution of the problem on which we and the Soviets could agree, the Soviets have made it clear to us that they will not sacrifice their credibility in Arab eyes. We recognize that the Arab moderates are probably the prime Soviet target in this crisis. To a considerable extent, so do the moderates themselves."
Force Posture	Military	"Limitations in the credibility of assured destruction as the major element of our strategy would apply, in even greater measure, to the credibility of US nuclear strategy in support of allies. For example, NATO nuclear response to an all-out conventional attack by the Warsaw Pact has been credible because it was backed by the threat of employment of US strategic nuclear forces."
Force Posture	Military	"The present and anticipated future Soviet facilities in Berbera will provide the means for enhancing the capabilities and credibility of Soviet ships, submarines, and aircraft operating in the Indian Ocean area. We believe, however, that the facilities expansion activity does not presage a greatly expanded, continuous Soviet Indian Ocean military presence in the near future."
Force Posture	Military	"U.S. withdrawal from facilities in Greece and Turkey would...e. Cause other countries to question the credibility of U.S. commitments."
Public Affairs	Diplomats	"To establish an independent Voice of America would aggravate the present tendency of Voice of America to act outside established policy. An independent Voice of America would make difficult effective guidance by the Department. I am not persuaded that VOA would gain in credibility through organizational independence—a contention of the Stanton report and Senator Percy."
Public Affairs	Diplomats	"I intend to do all that I can to help bring into being a new organization that has credibility in this country and abroad. I look forward to your help and advice in the crucial period ahead."
Public Affairs	Diplomats	"The issue of VOA, with its tripartite mission of supporting American foreign policy, depicting American life and culture, and broadcasting the news, turns on the question of credibility. The Stanton Panel does not assert that VOA lacks credibility, but implies as much in recommending that its credibility would be enhanced by separation from USIA. The issue depends on a matter of judgment as to whether VOA is deficient in credibility, and whether giving it greater independence will produce a better result."

Table A.6: Representative FRUS Quotes By Topic, Part 2

Topic	Organization	Quote
On-the-Ground Reporting	Diplomats	"These trends all indicate that the already wide gulf between the students and the universities is becoming even larger and the government's credibility with the students is very low."
On-the-Ground Reporting	Diplomats	"The admission by the GON of a clearcut defeat for the first time in a clash on September 9 (1 6 870 0960 75), rather than having the (presumably) intended effect of improving credibility, merely confirmed for many what they had been whispering about for many weeks."
On-the-Ground Reporting	Diplomats	"The charge by Greek Govt that its northern neighbors were supporting guerrilla warfare in Greece was directed jointly against Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Evidence submitted, however, related primarily to Yugoslav intervention in this regard and only to a lesser degree to that of Albania and Bulgaria. Although liaison representatives repeatedly denied these charges and attacked credibility of witnesses who testified in their support little direct evidence was brought forward [to] disprove them."
On-the-Ground Reporting	Military	"Viet Cong propaganda still seems to have more credibility with the people, on this point, than does the information campaign on our side. This can still be reversed, but time is running out."
On-the-Ground Reporting	Military	"Team 25 returned Peiping from Anping 2200 hours Saturday 24 August after having interrogated two National Government witnesses. Colonel Martin, 2 U. S. member, was chairman. During interrogation the second witness at Anping, the proceedings became deadlocked when the Communist Party member, General Huang, challenged the credibility of National Government witnesses."
On-the-Ground Reporting	Military	"The horizons of the average U.S. advisor, except for those very near the top, are limited. Their attention, and thus their direct knowledge, are confined largely to the Vietnamese unit with whose fortunes they are identified. In terms of what they actually see, hear and interpret daily in this environment, their views have strong credibility. To the extent possible, this report derives from discussion oriented upon such matters of fact or of direct observation."
Treaties and Negotiations	Diplomats	"While this can work to our advantage, the Delegation should also bear in mind that overemphasizing the possibility that mineral exploitation may commence soon could strengthen positions in favor of moratoria and provide incentives for support of other measures to control the timing of commercial activities, possibly including delay in the adoption of a resources regime. The point could also lose its credibility over time if such activities do not occur when the expectations we might create suggest they should."
Treaties and Negotiations	Diplomats	"The credibility, hence the success or failure of any alternative to the old strategy, will depend on its not seeming just a gimmick to keep Peking out for another year or two. There is widespread view that the traditional I.Q. (Important Question) resolution is such a gimmick."
Treaties and Negotiations	Diplomats	"While Panama probably overemphasizes the value of international support at the negotiating table, a breakdown of the negotiations would gravely burden our policies throughout this Hemisphere, where the talks are generally viewed as a practical test of U.S. credibility. Conversely, to many Latin American countries the Canal is even more important commercially than it is to the United States. Those countries are supportive of a Canal treaty that will insure continuous effective operation and defense of the Canal."
Treaties and Negotiations	Military	"Once having achieved a negotiating threshold, the United States/RVN/Royal Laotian Government (RLG) must not lose it at the conference table. Unnecessarily protracted negotiations caused by communist stalling or intransigence would be a basis for increased military pressures against the DRV. Viet Cong, and the Pathet Lao/Viet Minh. Appropriate US/RVN/RLG military posture and actions must be maintained to assure that the communists are aware of the credibility of both the US/RVN/RLG power and resolve."
Treaties and Negotiations	Military	"These assumptions are not supportable. There is currently substantial support in the world community for a 12-mile territorial sea. The endorsement of a 12-mile limit in connection with an arms control proposal would further reduce the credibility of our current 3-mile position. This could adversely affect the US bargaining position in forthcoming discussions with the USSR on the subject of the breadth of the territorial sea, and weaken US ability to obtain navigational rights for vessels and aircraft which are necessary before a 12-mile limit can be accepted."
Treaties and Negotiations	Military	"Our approach to the Soviet government would be used as a strong propaganda weapon by them. They could claim, with credibility, that the UNC openly admits its inability to secure an armistice through military means, and must turn to the good offices of the Soviet Union to solve its problems."

Table A.7: Representative FRUS Quotes By Topic, Part 3

Topic	Organization	Quote
Grand Strategy	Diplomats	"Filipinos have become in a marked degree what they are because of us. On the one hand, this is a responsibility and an opportunity for us, if we believe, as we do, that the spread of independence and democracy promotes our own security and world peace. On the other hand, our credibility, our prestige, and our influence are tied with Philippine success or failure."
Grand Strategy	Diplomats	"There are other obstacles in the way of a better relationship. One is the fact that, according to Communist dogma and by definition, we are China's main enemy because we are the strongest non-Communist power. We cannot change the dogma but we can undermine its credibility, and challenge the validity of Chinese Communist views that war between us may be inevitable and, perhaps, ultimately necessary."
Grand Strategy	Diplomats	"IT IS ESSENTIAL TO THE MAINTENANCE OF US CREDIBILITY AND MINIMAL ENTREE TO THE INDIAN MILITARY THAT THE FOLLOWING BE CONTINUED: (A) MAP TRAINING AT CURRENT LEVELS WITH POSSIBLE FUTURE INCREASE (MAP TRAINEES CURRENTLY IN KEY POSITIONS GIVES US ENTREE TO INDIAN MILITARY OTHERWISE UNAVAILABLE AND VALUABLE FOR FUTURE); (B) FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PEACE INDIGO COMMUNICATIONS PROJECT FOR EARLY WARNING RADAR SYSTEM. (PROGRAM IS DEFENSIVE IN NATURE WITH FUNDS PARTIALLY COMMITTED FOR PROCUREMENT IN US). (C) COMMERCIAL SALES OF SPARES FOR C-119 FLEET."
Grand Strategy	Military	"The Soviet Bloc seeks to... (h) reduce the credibility of the Allied response in critical situations."
Grand Strategy	Military	"Continuation of present lines of policy will ensure the Soviets of a growing credibility for their deterrent. However, the dynamism of Soviet policy depends to a great extent on the proposition that the balance of forces in the world is shifting in favor of the communist world. The Sino-Soviet rupture has already badly damaged this thesis, as has the inability of the Soviets to match the West in military power."
Grand Strategy	Military	"Deterrence is a state of mind brought about by a credible threat of unacceptable counteraction. Credible deterrence is a function of obvious capability and known determination to employ it when necessary. Deterrence could fail for a number of reasons, important among which are miscalculation of intent or resolve, underestimation of military capabilities, or commission of an irrational act. Forces structured solely to deter may be insufficient to achieve US objectives if deterrence fails. It is important that deterrent credibility be established for all levels of conflict. There is an essential relationship among all the levels of deterrence."
Kissinger-NSC	Diplomats	"Mr. Kissinger: We may reach a point about this time tomorrow when we have to decide who goes. If we want to keep up the credibility of our planning we ought to do it."
Kissinger-NSC	Diplomats	"Dr. Kissinger: If our tactical air in Europe is highly vulnerable, but if it can also be moved quickly, why is it necessary to keep tactical aircraft in Europe. If we pull a division out, it would have tremendous political significance. If we pull an air wing out, we might sell it on strategic grounds. A promise to put the air wing back, if necessary, has credibility since it would be for the purpose of protecting our own forces. Since the Europeans are most concerned about ground forces, the withdrawal of an air wing with a promise to return it could be placed in a different political context."
Kissinger-NSC	Diplomats	"Mr. Kissinger: We can say these are the questions we see. We are having some difficulty making up our minds on some things. This can enhance our credibility when we say we want to consult with them."
Kissinger-NSC	Military	"A successful Saudi military action in South Yemen would be a defeat for the PDRY, a setback of some proportions for the USSR, and a significant gain in credibility for the United States (and Saudi Arabia). It would offset, and perhaps overcome, impressions current in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world that the friendship and support of the United States is of little practical value, and that the United States will not act in the face of Soviet-supported aggression."
Kissinger-NSC	Military	"The Team made a positive effort to achieve the proper balance between austerity and credibility in recommending a force capable of defending the Republic of Zaire against a rather ill-defined external threat."
Kissinger-NSC	Military	"In this eventuality, UAR reaction, at least to the extent of attacking Saudi supply points, can be expected. With Hard Surface in place, the United States will be forced to respond militarily or risk loss of credibility of its military power, not only in the Middle East, but world-wide."

Table A.8: Representative DDO Quotes By Topic, Part 1

Topic	Organization	Quote
Force Posture	Military	“Credibility of America’s land-based ICBM force as an effective deterrent to nuclear war underwent nervous scrutiny in fiscal years 1969 and 1970. The cause was the Soviet Union’s continuing drive to expand and improve its strategic offensive and defensive forces.” — U.S. Air Force Ballistic Missile Programs, 1969-1970; June 1, 1971
Force Posture	Military	“The existence of a Soviet AICBM system, if not matched by one in the U.S., could significantly reduce our deterrent power and perhaps more importantly the credibility of that deterrent in the eyes of our major allies, and even among some of our own citizens.” — Review of Fiscal years 1961 and 1962 military programs and budgets; February 21, 1961
Force Posture	Military	“The usefulness of these forces, and the credibility of U.S. military policy, depended on their readiness for action.” — The Air Force and Strategic Deterrence 1951-1960; December 1, 1967
Information Operations	Diplomats	“In a sense, Wills has to be seen to be believed. His soft-spoken and unassuming approach as well as his unwillingness to tell interviewers what he thought they might have wished to hear added to his credibility.” — John Holdridge provides the text of a debriefing of U.S. citizen Morris Wills, who has spent eleven years in China; November 19, 1965
Information Operations	Diplomats	“‘Throw-away’ information is information that is no longer of any significant value to the KGB and/or information operations which are already being investigated by Western intelligence and in the KGB’s judgment, more is to be gained by having a dispatched agent ‘give them up’ and gain credibility than by waiting for their inevitable discovery.” — Draft background data and a summary of interviews with defector and former Soviet Intelligence Agency agent Yuri Nosenko; n.d.
Information Operations	Diplomats	“Time is of the essence since the longer Hersh’s allegations go uncountered, the more credibility they assume. Can we proceed?” — Memo to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger from L. Eagleburger and Robert McCloskey; September 24, 1974.
Information Operations	Military	“Even disregarding the above, based on the entire U.S. PW experience in South Vietnam and Cambodia, there was never a group of U.S. PWs. this large. Concerning the possibility that individuals were collaborators, again, such a large group is outside the scope of credibility.”— Correlation and Evaluation of Select Intelligence Reports (April 1973-April 1975) Concerning the Presence of U.S. PWs in Cambodia; August 20, 1976
Information Operations	Military	“These by showing the contrast between words and made effective psychological virtually impossible for the Germans, while at the same time greatly increasing the credibility and effective of Soviet atrocity propaganda.” — Planning for the Effective Use of Soviet Prisoners of War. Report, Intelligence and Evaluation Branch, Psychological Warfare; December 6, 1951
Information Operations	Military	“Information of bona fide ralliers probably merits more credibility in general than that provided by captives, as they had definite reasons for leaving the Communist ranks.” — Study of morale of Viet Cong troops in South Vietnam; n.d.
Communist Influence	Diplomats	“Here again the credibility to the Iranians of US power as a counterweight to Soviet power is likely to be an important factor affecting their resolve to engage in a struggle to maintain some independence.” — Prospect of a neutral Iran outlined; June 5, 1961
Communist Influence	Diplomats	“The larger threat of Russian aggression, which has served in some degree as a centripetal force, has lost much of its credibility. It has existed so long without being fulfilled, and its fulfillment is so horrible to contemplate, that belief in its reality is numbed.” — Report for Secretary of State Dean Rusk from Thomas L. Hughes; February 7, 1964
Communist Influence	Diplomats	“If Moscow perceives a weakening of U.S. will in the face of Syrian intransigence, the Soviets may be emboldened to challenge and confront U.S. credibility and prestige in other areas.” — Paper regarding U.S. policy toward Syrian efforts to persuade Lebanon to avoid a Lebanese-Israeli peace agreement; n.d.
Foreign Aid	Diplomats	“The more important ongoing negotiations in which the credibility of the U.S. initiatives is involved are the following: – The Development Security Facility of the IMF.” — International Economic Summit; October 23, 1975
Foreign Aid	Diplomats	“How should the industrial countries reaffirm their shared commitment to abstain from trade restrictive actions? This commitment is currently embodied in the OECD Trade Pledge, originally adopted in 1974 and renewed unchanged in 1975 and 1976. The pledge has diminished credibility in part because it is not responsive to current economic problems...” — Strategy report in preparation for the international economic summit conference; March 22, 1977
Foreign Aid	Diplomats	“But even with the proposed Presidential override, we are concerned that such an approach could be viewed as an attempt by the US to impose these guidelines retroactively, to the detriment of our relations with a number of major allies and our overall credibility as a supplier.” — DOS positions on nuclear policy report to President Ford; n.d.

Table A.9: Representative DDO Quotes By Topic, Part 2

Topic	Organization	Quote
Vietnam	Diplomats	"Following upon initial GVN contact with the Front or the DRV, we communicate directly with Hanoi indicating that, while we are prepared to go along with negotiations, we reserve our position on the use of force against NVN in the future; we will retaliate for actions against us; and that, if nothing comes of negotiations, the war will continue on a basis that will involve new risks for the DRV. (Ground deployment lending increased credibility to last-mentioned threat)." — Alternatives to air attacks on North Vietnam: proposals for the use of U.S. ground forces in support of diplomacy in Vietnam; n.d.
Vietnam	Diplomats	"Hanoi and Peiping would increase their threats to counterattacks and both would probably undertake force deployments designed to add to the credibility of these threats." — Paper lists probable Communist reaction to U.S. military actions in Vietnam; November 23, 1964
Vietnam	Diplomats	"Hanoi might well interpret such a U.S. position as a sign of U.S. weakness, as a willingness to enter negotiations at all costs with the objective of finding a way to get out. This view would gain credibility in that previously the U.S. had indicated that any further pause in the bombing of the North would depend on a cessation of infiltration and a sharp reduction in military activity and terrorism in the South." — Report on peace negotiations; November 2, 1965
Vietnam	Military	"Given the proven ineffectiveness of the ICC from a practical standpoint, and the limited and non-military gains resulting from merely publicizing NVN infiltration through the DMZ, I seriously question the value of supporting a plan for increased extension of ICC operations into that area. There is nothing in the past activity of this organization that lends credibility to its capability to effectively stem infiltration through the DMZ even if it was disposed to openly find the NVN guilty, which two thirds of its membership is not." — Admiral Sharp comments on policing of the DMZ; September 20, 1966
Vietnam	Military	"Also, it is estimated that US prestige will not decline appreciably if prompt military action is taken to bring the conflict to an early close. In the long term, US prestige would probably rise. The effect of signs of US irresolution on allies in Southeast Asia and other friendly countries threatened by communist insurgency could be most damaging to the credibility of US commitments." — Memorandum for Secretary of Defense Dean Rusk from General Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; June 1, 1967
Vietnam	Military	"Armed with these lessons learned, the US must in its national interest continue to pursue an 'open' East Asia and hence the difficult policy of preventing communist encroachment in SEA. The extent of US involvement in SEA makes this doubly crucial in a global sense since the very credibility of our ability to 'contain' is in question." — Analysis of U.S. involvement; June 1, 1968
NATO	Military	"The Joint Chiefs of Staff favor the establishment of the NATO non-nuclear option, provided only that a tactical nuclear capability is retained for purposes of credibility, deterrence, and flexibility." — Minutes of briefing by General Wheeler on issues related to proliferation; January 7, 1965
NATO	Military	"Our force posture should be such as to permit us to respond to the whole range of the Soviet threat. In this connection, the credibility of the deterrent can be destroyed by emphasizing a policy that could be construed by the Soviets as permitting them to become involved, and then, if they decide the risks are too great, to disengage." — General Norstad's general comments on the Secretary of Defense's answers to the ten questions; September 16, 1961
NATO	Military	"Thus, the size and the credibility of the US contribution to the protection of NATO Europe would be reduced. On the other hand, Soviet offensive capabilities, though reduced numerically, would continue to present a serious threat to the United States and her European Allies." — Memorandum from Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Maxwell D. Taylor for Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara; January 13, 1964
Middle Eastern Affairs	Eastern Diplomats	"We have just been advised...that King intends to remain in London until 14 May on assumption that he can take something tangible with him in form of UK arms package. Effort on US part to block UK-GOJ deal at this late stage in negotiations in our judgment will not enhance our credibility with either King or HMG."
Middle Eastern Affairs	Eastern Diplomats	"We do not want to get in position of having our credibility affected adversely with the Arabs by us getting out in front and insisting on an interpretation of March 10 formula which is contradicted by [Ambassador Gunnar] Jarring's interpretation to the Arabs." — Cable regarding Egypt's denial of receiving a UN Middle East peace proposal from Ambassador Gunnar V. Jarring; April 27, 1968
Middle Eastern Affairs	Eastern Diplomats	"Main point that King emphasized was need for US to prevail on a genuine settlements freeze that included not only stopping construction of new settlements but also the thickening of existing settlements. He underlined Carter's vacillation and ultimate failure on this issue which undercut credibility of CDAs from outset." — Summary of a meeting between Jordanian King Hussein and Assistant Secretary of State Nicholas Veliotis; August 23, 1982

## Appendix B: An Experimental Analysis of Organizational Identity

### B.1 Experimental Setup and Demographics

#### B.1.1 Recruitment Materials

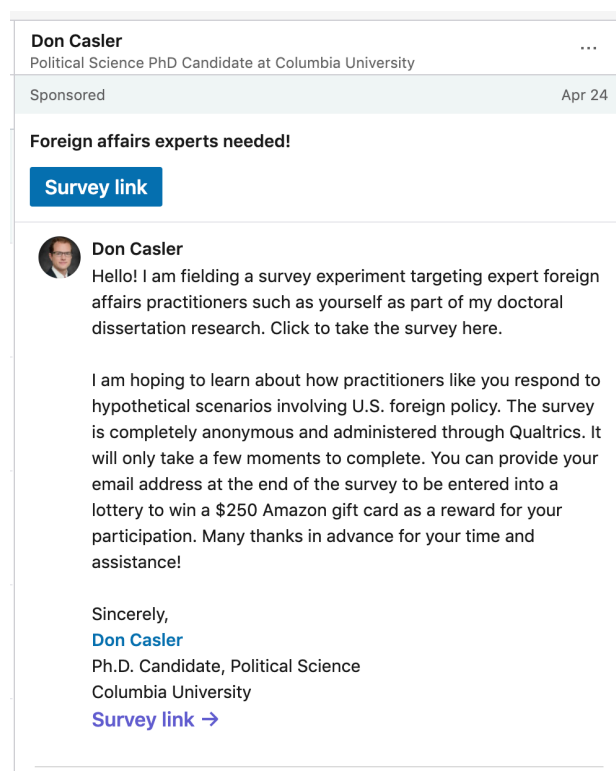


Figure B.1: LinkedIn Advertisement

#### B.1.2 Survey Instrument

##### Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study that will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You will be asked to answer some questions about yourself and your preferences.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you for participating. However, if you have previously received an invitation to participate in this study and completed the survey, please do not

participate for a second time.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate, or to end participation at any time for any reason. The researcher will not know your name, and no identifying information will be connected to your survey answers in any way. The survey is therefore anonymous. However, your account is associated with a survey ID that the researcher must be able to see; in some cases these IDs are associated with public profiles which could, in theory, be searched. For this reason, although the researcher will not be looking at anyone's public profiles, the fact of your participation in the research (as opposed to your actual survey responses) is technically considered "confidential" rather than truly anonymous. Only the researcher involved in this study and those responsible for research oversight will have access to the information that you provide.

If at any time you have questions or concerns about the survey or your rights or welfare as a research subject, contact Don Casler at [donald.casler@columbia.edu](mailto:donald.casler@columbia.edu). Please make a record of this information.

If you would like to participate, simply click the 'I agree to participate' box below, then click the "»" button to start the survey.

### **Covariates**

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

What is your age?

- Box to enter age

What is the highest level of education you have attained?

- No formal education
- Less than a complete high school education
- Complete high school education
- Some university-level education, without degree
- University-level education, with degree
- Some post-graduate education, without degree
- Post-graduate education, with degree

Have you received professional military education?

- Yes, service academy
- Yes, resident junior officer/NCO



- Yes, command or staff college
- Yes, war college
- No

Are you a citizen of the United States?

- Yes
- No

To what extent do you agree with the following statements [5-point Likert for each item]:

- The best way to ensure world peace is through American military strength
- The use of military force only makes problems worse
- Rather than reacting to our enemies, it's better for us to strike first
- Generally, the more influence America has on other nations, the better off they are

To what extent do you agree with the following statements [5-point Likert for each item]:

- America needs to cooperate more with the United Nations in settling international disputes
- It is essential for the United States to work with other nations to solve problems such as overpopulation, hunger, and pollution
- The U.S. needs to play an active role in solving conflicts around the world
- The U.S. government should just try to take care of the wellbeing of Americans and not get involved with other nations

Please describe your current employment status:

- Civilian foreign affairs agency
- Civilian domestic affairs agency
- Civilian defense agency
- Armed services
- Political party
- Private sector
- Other: [text box for please describe]

Please describe your main work activities at your CURRENT employer (select all that apply):

- Operations

- Strategy
- Policy
- Administration
- Other: [text box for please describe]

Please describe your PREVIOUS employment experience (select all that apply):

- Civilian foreign affairs agency
- Civilian domestic affairs agency
- Civilian defense agency
- Armed services
- Political party
- Private sector
- Other: [text box for please describe]

Please describe your main work activities at your CURRENT employer (select all that apply):

- Operations
- Strategy
- Policy
- Administration
- Other: [text box for please describe]

Please indicate the highest-ranking person you have PERSONALLY briefed in your previous employment experience

- Head of State
- Cabinet Official / Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff
- Ambassador / 3-4 Star Flag Officer / National Elected Official
- Career Diplomat / 1-2 Star Flag Officer / State Elected Official
- Other: [text box for please describe]

[If served in civil government] Please indicate how many years you have served in civil government

- Box to enter number of years

[If served in military] Please indicate how many years you have served in the military

- Box to enter number of years

[If served in military] As part of your military service, did you serve in combat?

- Yes
- No

[If served in military] What is the highest rank you have attained?

- List: E-1 to E-9
- List: W1 to W-5
- List: O-1 to O-9

### **Vignettes**

The following HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO will provide you with some information and ask you to answer some questions based on that information. Though hypothetical in nature, the scenario that you will read about is a type of situation that has occurred before and will probably happen again. Different people have different views on the appropriate way to respond.

#### *Control*

The United States is considering strengthening its alliance with Eastland in response to threats against Eastland from a rising regional power, Westria. Westria recently embarked on a military buildup that shifted the balance of power in its favor in a region where the U.S. and its allies have long enjoyed an advantage in military capabilities. Eastland shares a disputed and resource-rich border with Westria. Several previous attempts by the United Nations to mediate this dispute have proven unsuccessful. The U.S. has a vested interest in retaining access to this border region, as it contains most of the known supply of a rare earth metal used in producing devices such as smartphones.

Eastland is a U.S. ally and viewed favorably by both Congress and the U.S. public as a result of Westria's recent behavior. However, the U.S. has not always defended Eastland's interests against Westria's provocations in the past as part of its efforts to avoid raising regional tensions.

Eastland hosts a U.S. airbase and nearby port that is regularly used by American military personnel. Eastland has substantial military capabilities of its own, including well-equipped air forces that fly the latest American-made fighters, but its ground forces are numerically small.

Westria, by contrast, has a large and capable contingent of ground forces, but its air forces are numerically smaller and less technologically advanced than Eastland's.

Based on this military balance, the U.S. intelligence community has concluded that Westria would likely defeat Eastland if the dispute over the contested border escalated to the use of force. Intelligence officials have stated that the defense of Eastland is a top strategic priority for the United States in the region given the border area's resource endowments and estimate that a loss of access to these resources would result in a multibillion dollar hit to the U.S. economy until the issue is resolved. However, the intelligence community also noted that the U.S. does not have military

capabilities deployed locally to support Eastland in the event of a crisis in the disputed region and would have to reduce forces committed to other equally important missions to help Eastland.

### *Signaling*

The United States is considering strengthening its alliance with Eastland in response to threats against Eastland from a rising regional power, Westria. Westria recently embarked on a military buildup that shifted the balance of power in its favor in a region where the U.S. and its allies have long enjoyed an advantage in military capabilities. Eastland shares a disputed and resource-rich border with Westria. Several previous attempts by the United Nations to mediate this dispute have proven unsuccessful. The U.S. has a vested interest in retaining access to this border region, as it contains most of the known supply of a rare earth metal used in producing devices such as smartphones.

Eastland is a U.S. ally and viewed favorably by both Congress and the U.S. public as a result of Westria's recent behavior. The U.S. has always defended Eastland's interests against Westria's provocations in the past as part of its efforts to hedge against Westria's regional ambitions.

Eastland hosts a U.S. airbase and nearby port that is regularly used by American military personnel. Eastland has substantial military capabilities of its own, including well-equipped air forces that fly the latest American-made fighters, but its ground forces are numerically small.

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### *Capabilities*

The United States is considering strengthening its alliance with Eastland in response to threats against Eastland from a rising regional power, Westria. Westria recently embarked on a military buildup that shifted the balance of power in its favor in a region where the U.S. and its allies have long enjoyed an advantage in military capabilities. Eastland shares a disputed and resource-rich border with Westria. Several previous attempts by the United Nations to mediate this dispute have proven unsuccessful. The U.S. has a vested interest in retaining access to this border region, as it contains most of the known supply of a rare earth metal used in producing devices such as smartphones.

Eastland is a U.S. ally and viewed favorably by both Congress and the U.S. public as a result of Westria's recent behavior. However, the U.S. has not always defended Eastland's interests against Westria's provocations in the past as part of its efforts to avoid raising regional tensions.

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### *Signaling Plus Capabilities*

The United States is considering strengthening its alliance with Eastland in response to threats against Eastland from a rising regional power, Westria. Westria recently embarked on a military buildup that shifted the balance of power in its favor in a region where the U.S. and its allies have long enjoyed an advantage in military capabilities. Eastland shares a disputed and resource-rich border with Westria. Several previous attempts by the United Nations to mediate this dispute have proven unsuccessful. The U.S. has a vested interest in retaining access to this border region, as it contains most of the known supply of a rare earth metal used in producing devices such as smartphones.

Eastland is a U.S. ally and viewed favorably by both Congress and the U.S. public as a result of Westria's recent behavior. The U.S. has always defended Eastland's interests against Westria's provocations in the past as part of its efforts to hedge against Westria's regional ambitions.

Eastland hosts a U.S. airbase and nearby port that is regularly used by American military personnel. Eastland has substantial military capabilities of its own, including well-equipped air forces that fly the latest American-made fighters, but its ground forces are numerically small.

Westria, by contrast, has a large and capable contingent of ground forces, but its air forces are numerically smaller and less technologically advanced than Eastland's.

Based on this military balance, the U.S. intelligence community has concluded that Westria would likely defeat Eastland if the dispute over the contested border escalated to the use of force. Intelligence officials have stated that the defense of Eastland is a top strategic priority for the United States in the region given the border area's resource endowments and estimate that a loss of access to these resources would result in a multibillion dollar hit to the U.S. economy until the issue is resolved. The intelligence community has also noted that the U.S. has military capabilities that it can deploy to Eastland in the event of a crisis in the disputed region without reducing forces committed to other equally important missions.

### *Options*

U.S. intelligence reports that Westria has moved a battalion of ground forces into the disputed region. The intelligence community estimates that Eastland will lose control of the border area in the next 48 hours and that the U.S. will not have another opportunity to halt the Westrian advance.

In response to Westria's actions, the National Security Council is debating whether to:

- Deploy a Marine Expeditionary Unit to assist Eastland in repelling the invasion
- Do nothing
- Increase the level of intelligence sharing with Eastland
- Perform a flyover of the disputed region with a squadron of Air Force fighter jets

- Pursue sanctions against Westria through the United Nations

*Attention Check*

In the scenario you read about, which of the two countries was a U.S. ally?

- Eastland
- Westria
- I don't remember

**Outcomes**

Do you support or oppose the United States using force to support Eastland?

- Strongly oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Neither support nor oppose
- Somewhat support
- Strongly support

How strongly do you support or oppose each of the policy options being debated by the National Security Council? [Same response choices as question above, but presented in random order]

- Deploy a Marine Expeditionary Unit to assist Eastland in repelling the invasion
- Do nothing
- Increase the level of intelligence sharing with Eastland
- Perform a flyover of the disputed region with a squadron of Air Force fighter jets
- Pursue sanctions against Westria through the United Nations

Please rank the options being debated by the National Security Council in terms of what you would most support (1) to what you would least support (5): [Same response choices as question above, but presented in random order]

- Deploy a Marine Expeditionary Unit to assist Eastland in repelling the invasion
- Do nothing
- Increase the level of intelligence sharing with Eastland
- Perform a flyover of the disputed region with a squadron of Air Force fighter jets
- Pursue sanctions against Westria through the United Nations

In your own words, please explain the reasoning behind your decision

- Free text response

### **Mechanisms**

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements: The main factor in determining the appropriate U.S. response to Westria's actions should be... [5-point Likert]

- U.S. military capabilities
- Eastland's military capabilities
- U.S. reputation for reliability

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? [5-point Likert]

- Countries **in the region** would tend to doubt the strength of U.S. commitments if it does not support Eastland
- Countries **around the world** would tend to doubt the strength of U.S. commitments if it does not support Eastland
- Since Eastland faces an unfavorable military balance, the U.S. would look worse if its support for Eastland failed to help

In the scenario you read about, which real-world country do you think Eastland is?

- Free text response

In the scenario you read about, which real-world country do you think Westria is?

- Free text response

### **Raffle**

Would you like to enter a raffle for the chance to win a \$250 Amazon gift card?

- Yes
- No

## **B.1.3 Recruitment Breakdown**

Table B.1: Responses By Source

<b>Source</b>	<b>Number</b>
LinkedIn	397
George Washington Elliott School / Brookings Institution	19
Georgetown SFS	10
Harvard Kennedy School Senior Executive Fellows	5
RAND Corporation	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>432</b>

Table B.2: Distribution of Responses by Treatment Condition

<b>Treatment</b>	<b>Diplomat</b>	<b>Military</b>	<b>Total</b>
Baseline	45	59	104
Capabilities	48	52	100
Signaling	61	60	121
Signaling Plus Capabilities	53	54	107

## B.1.4 Respondents' Work Experience

Table B.3: Current and Previous Employment Experience

<b>Category</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Previous</b>
Civilian foreign affairs	78	203
Civilian domestic affairs	13	36
Civilian defense agency	25	41
Armed services	50	218
Political party	2	20
Private sector	118	130
Other	146	41

Table B.4: Employment Experience vs. Main Tasks

<b>Category</b>	<b>Admin.</b>	<b>Ops.</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Other</b>
Civilian foreign affairs	103	140	147	109	140
Civilian domestic affairs	24	32	31	26	32
Civilian defense agency	18	41	32	35	41
Armed services	78	193	76	99	193
Political party	10	16	15	12	16
Private sector	92	157	107	111	157

Table B.5: Most Senior Person Personally Briefed

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>
Head of State	38
Cabinet Official/Chairman of Joint Chiefs	58
Ambassador/3-4 Star Flag Officer/National Elected Official	190
Career Diplomat/1-2 Star Flag Officer/State Elected Official	36



## B.2 Robustness of Experimental Analysis

### B.2.1 Interaction Plot of Main Results

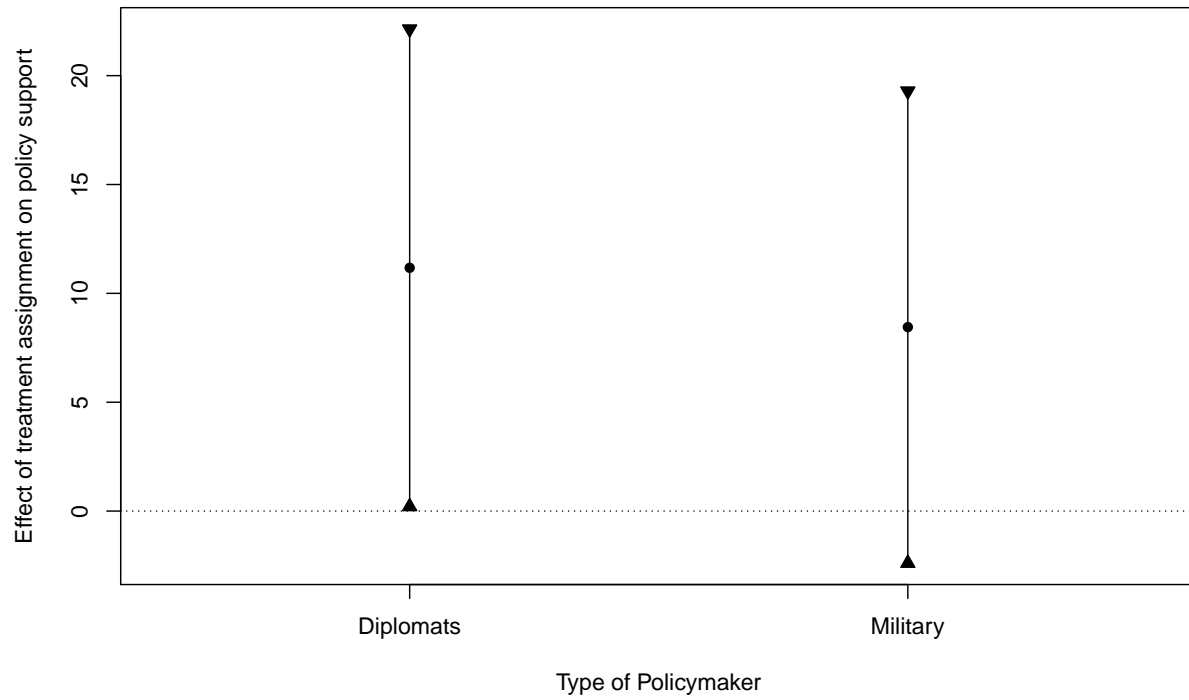


Figure B.2: Interactive Effect of SignalingPlusCapabilities

## B.2.2 Main Results with DoD Civilians

Table B.6: Main Results with DoD Civilians

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Force (1)	Marines (2)	Flyover (3)	Sanctions (4)	Intel (5)	Nothing (6)
Signaling	5.295 (4.747)	4.405 (5.801)	-2.160 (5.766)	4.088 (4.705)	-1.232 (3.864)	5.311 (4.710)
DoD	2.945 (4.750)	6.830 (5.805)	4.679 (5.770)	-3.987 (4.708)	-3.511 (3.866)	3.076 (4.713)
Capabilities	-1.081 (4.560)	-2.536 (5.573)	-6.388 (5.539)	-10.293** (4.520)	-2.202 (3.712)	0.456 (4.525)
SignalingPlusCapabilities	11.199** (4.690)	12.823** (5.731)	4.050 (5.697)	4.265 (4.648)	5.381 (3.817)	-4.950 (4.654)
Militant Internationalism	11.352*** (1.460)	13.558*** (1.784)	9.535*** (1.774)	1.762 (1.447)	-0.092 (1.189)	-3.642** (1.449)
Cooperative Internationalism	4.947*** (1.618)	5.277*** (1.977)	8.524*** (1.965)	9.506*** (1.603)	8.118*** (1.317)	-6.911*** (1.605)
Gender	-1.130 (2.722)	3.159 (3.327)	-2.492 (3.307)	-4.597* (2.698)	-2.402 (2.216)	1.494 (2.701)
Education	-0.178 (1.199)	-0.114 (1.465)	-1.179 (1.456)	0.497 (1.188)	-0.347 (0.976)	2.230* (1.189)
Age	0.138* (0.080)	0.124 (0.098)	-0.064 (0.097)	0.018 (0.079)	0.070 (0.065)	-0.178** (0.079)
MilYears	0.100 (0.169)	0.077 (0.207)	-0.119 (0.205)	0.042 (0.168)	-0.042 (0.138)	0.008 (0.168)
Combat	3.430 (3.392)	-0.526 (4.146)	-1.995 (4.120)	0.363 (3.362)	3.698 (2.761)	1.921 (3.366)
Sample	5.918 (4.044)	5.344 (4.943)	-3.220 (4.913)	-0.105 (4.009)	2.165 (3.292)	2.104 (4.013)
Signaling*DoD	-2.704 (6.282)	0.451 (7.677)	-5.035 (7.631)	-2.757 (6.227)	1.781 (5.114)	-15.779** (6.234)
Capabilities*DoD	2.027 (6.148)	6.257 (7.514)	8.449 (7.468)	6.657 (6.094)	8.206 (5.005)	-5.323 (6.101)
SignalingPlusCapabilities*DoD	-9.201 (6.237)	-6.066 (7.622)	-6.377 (7.576)	-5.759 (6.182)	-4.954 (5.077)	1.225 (6.189)
Constant	4.629 (10.391)	-14.560 (12.699)	23.420* (12.621)	41.363*** (10.299)	56.347*** (8.458)	44.388*** (10.311)
Observations	462	462	462	462	462	462
R <sup>2</sup>	0.221	0.206	0.125	0.130	0.109	0.108

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

### B.2.3 Marginal Influence of Reputation

Table B.7: Marginal Influence of Reputation

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Force	Marines	Flyover	Sanctions	Intel	Nothing
Signaling	5.393 (4.793)	7.012 (5.854)	5.208 (5.770)	15.180*** (4.713)	0.616 (3.855)	4.185 (4.759)
Military Experience	6.962 (5.510)	7.162 (6.730)	13.281** (6.634)	6.251 (5.418)	5.799 (4.432)	-0.146 (5.471)
Baseline	0.971 (4.439)	1.971 (5.422)	7.030 (5.344)	11.479*** (4.365)	2.387 (3.570)	-0.273 (4.407)
SignalingPlusCapabilities	9.682** (4.715)	13.144** (5.759)	10.601* (5.676)	14.329*** (4.636)	6.131 (3.792)	-3.320 (4.681)
Militant Internationalism	11.619*** (1.517)	13.847*** (1.853)	9.259*** (1.827)	1.760 (1.492)	-0.535 (1.221)	-3.583** (1.507)
Cooperative Internationalism	4.572*** (1.686)	4.398** (2.060)	8.667*** (2.031)	9.792*** (1.658)	7.760*** (1.357)	-6.438*** (1.675)
Gender	-0.929 (2.853)	2.541 (3.485)	-2.765 (3.436)	-4.513 (2.806)	-2.292 (2.295)	2.505 (2.833)
Education	0.259 (1.248)	-0.365 (1.524)	-1.353 (1.502)	0.698 (1.227)	-0.297 (1.004)	1.972 (1.239)
Age	0.160* (0.084)	0.133 (0.102)	0.002 (0.101)	0.016 (0.082)	0.083 (0.067)	-0.165** (0.083)
MilYears	-0.005 (0.188)	0.154 (0.229)	-0.123 (0.226)	0.005 (0.184)	-0.083 (0.151)	0.006 (0.186)
Combat	2.411 (3.612)	1.038 (4.413)	-0.639 (4.349)	0.078 (3.553)	3.279 (2.906)	1.406 (3.587)
Sample	5.064 (4.277)	5.112 (5.224)	-4.704 (5.149)	-1.945 (4.206)	0.900 (3.440)	3.616 (4.247)
Signaling*Military Experience	-4.339 (6.558)	-6.482 (8.011)	-18.222** (7.896)	-12.704** (6.449)	-5.962 (5.275)	-10.196 (6.512)
Baseline*Military Experience	-2.721 (6.313)	-5.169 (7.711)	-11.251 (7.601)	-11.219* (6.208)	-9.998** (5.078)	5.807 (6.268)
SignalingPlusCapabilities*Military Experience	-6.592 (6.604)	-7.894 (8.066)	-15.392* (7.951)	-12.381* (6.494)	-10.144* (5.312)	0.774 (6.557)
Constant	1.026 (10.775)	-10.980 (13.161)	15.778 (12.973)	28.025*** (10.596)	55.938*** (8.668)	42.903*** (10.699)
Observations	432	432	432	432	432	432
R <sup>2</sup>	0.227	0.201	0.129	0.135	0.101	0.102

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

## B.2.4 Marginal Influence of Reputation with DoD Civilians

Table B.8: Marginal Influence of Reputation with DoD Civilians

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Force	Marines	Flyover	Sanctions	Intel	Nothing
Signaling	6.376 (4.954)	6.940 (6.055)	4.228 (6.018)	14.381*** (4.910)	0.970 (4.033)	4.855 (4.916)
DoD	4.971 (4.835)	13.088** (5.909)	13.128** (5.873)	2.670 (4.792)	4.696 (3.935)	-2.247 (4.798)
Baseline	1.081 (4.560)	2.536 (5.573)	6.388 (5.539)	10.293** (4.520)	2.202 (3.712)	-0.456 (4.525)
SignalingPlusCapabilities	12.280** (4.897)	15.358** (5.985)	10.438* (5.948)	14.559*** (4.854)	7.583* (3.986)	-5.406 (4.859)
Militant Internationalism	11.352*** (1.460)	13.558*** (1.784)	9.535*** (1.774)	1.762 (1.447)	-0.092 (1.189)	-3.642** (1.449)
Cooperative Internationalism	4.947*** (1.618)	5.277*** (1.977)	8.524*** (1.965)	9.506*** (1.603)	8.118*** (1.317)	-6.911*** (1.605)
Gender	-1.130 (2.722)	3.159 (3.327)	-2.492 (3.307)	-4.597* (2.698)	-2.402 (2.216)	1.494 (2.701)
Education	-0.178 (1.199)	-0.114 (1.465)	-1.179 (1.456)	0.497 (1.188)	-0.347 (0.976)	2.230* (1.189)
Age	0.138* (0.080)	0.124 (0.098)	-0.064 (0.097)	0.018 (0.079)	0.070 (0.065)	-0.178** (0.079)
CivYears	0.100 (0.169)	0.077 (0.207)	-0.119 (0.205)	0.042 (0.168)	-0.042 (0.138)	0.008 (0.168)
MilYears	3.430 (3.392)	-0.526 (4.146)	-1.995 (4.120)	0.363 (3.362)	3.698 (2.761)	1.921 (3.366)
Combat	5.918 (4.044)	5.344 (4.943)	-3.220 (4.913)	-0.105 (4.009)	2.165 (3.292)	2.104 (4.013)
Sample	-4.730 (6.411)	-5.806 (7.835)	-13.484* (7.787)	-9.413 (6.354)	-6.425 (5.218)	-10.456 (6.362)
Signaling*DoD	-2.027 (6.148)	-6.257 (7.514)	-8.449 (7.468)	-6.657 (6.094)	-8.206 (5.005)	5.323 (6.101)
Baseline*DoD	-11.227* (6.397)	-12.323 (7.818)	-14.825* (7.770)	-12.416* (6.340)	-13.161** (5.207)	6.548 (6.348)
SignalingPlusCapabilities*DoD	3.548 (10.325)	-17.096 (12.618)	17.032 (12.541)	31.069*** (10.233)	54.145*** (8.404)	44.844*** (10.245)
Observations	462	462	462	462	462	462
R <sup>2</sup>	0.221	0.206	0.125	0.130	0.109	0.108

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

## B.2.5 Marginal Influence of Capabilities

Table B.9: Marginal Influence of Capabilities

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Force (1)	Marines (2)	Flyover (3)	Sanctions (4)	Intel (5)	Nothing (6)
Baseline	-4.422 (4.663)	-5.041 (5.696)	1.823 (5.614)	-3.700 (4.586)	1.771 (3.751)	-4.458 (4.630)
Military Experience	2.623 (5.781)	0.680 (7.062)	-4.940 (6.961)	-6.453 (5.685)	-0.163 (4.651)	-10.343* (5.740)
Capabilities	-5.393 (4.793)	-7.012 (5.854)	-5.208 (5.770)	-15.180*** (4.713)	-0.616 (3.855)	-4.185 (4.759)
SignalingPlusCapabilities	4.289 (4.917)	6.132 (6.006)	5.393 (5.920)	-0.850 (4.836)	5.515 (3.955)	-7.506 (4.882)
Militant Internationalism	11.619*** (1.517)	13.847*** (1.853)	9.259*** (1.827)	1.760 (1.492)	-0.535 (1.221)	-3.583** (1.507)
Cooperative Internationalism	4.572*** (1.686)	4.398** (2.060)	8.667*** (2.031)	9.792*** (1.658)	7.760*** (1.357)	-6.438*** (1.675)
Gender	-0.929 (2.853)	2.541 (3.485)	-2.765 (3.436)	-4.513 (2.806)	-2.292 (2.295)	2.505 (2.833)
Education	0.259 (1.248)	-0.365 (1.524)	-1.353 (1.502)	0.698 (1.227)	-0.297 (1.004)	1.972 (1.239)
Age	0.160* (0.084)	0.133 (0.102)	0.002 (0.101)	0.016 (0.082)	0.083 (0.067)	-0.165** (0.083)
MilYears	-0.005 (0.188)	0.154 (0.229)	-0.123 (0.226)	0.005 (0.184)	-0.083 (0.151)	0.006 (0.186)
Combat	2.411 (3.612)	1.038 (4.413)	-0.639 (4.349)	0.078 (3.553)	3.279 (2.906)	1.406 (3.587)
Sample	5.064 (4.277)	5.112 (5.224)	-4.704 (5.149)	-1.945 (4.206)	0.900 (3.440)	3.616 (4.247)
Baseline*Military Experience	1.618 (6.421)	1.313 (7.843)	6.971 (7.731)	1.485 (6.314)	-4.036 (5.165)	16.003** (6.375)
Capabilities*Military Experience	4.339 (6.558)	6.482 (8.011)	18.222** (7.896)	12.704** (6.449)	5.962 (5.275)	10.196 (6.512)
SignalingPlusCapabilities*Military Experience	-2.253 (6.705)	-1.412 (8.190)	2.830 (8.073)	0.322 (6.594)	-4.182 (5.394)	10.971 (6.658)
Constant	6.419 (11.065)	-3.968 (13.515)	20.986 (13.322)	43.204*** (10.881)	56.554*** (8.900)	47.089*** (10.986)
Observations	432	432	432	432	432	432
R <sup>2</sup>	0.227	0.201	0.129	0.135	0.101	0.102

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

## B.2.6 Marginal Influence of Capabilities with DoD Civilians

Table B.10: Marginal Influence of Capabilities with DoD Civilians

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Force (1)	Marines (2)	Flyover (3)	Sanctions (4)	Intel (5)	Nothing (6)
Baseline	-5.295 (4.747)	-4.405 (5.801)	2.160 (5.766)	-4.088 (4.705)	1.232 (3.864)	-5.311 (4.710)
DoD	0.241 (5.143)	7.281 (6.286)	-0.355 (6.248)	-6.743 (5.098)	-1.730 (4.187)	-12.704** (5.104)
Capabilities	-6.376 (4.954)	-6.940 (6.055)	-4.228 (6.018)	-14.381*** (4.910)	-0.970 (4.033)	-4.855 (4.916)
SignalingPlusCapabilities	5.904 (5.057)	8.418 (6.180)	6.210 (6.142)	0.177 (5.012)	6.613 (4.116)	-10.260** (5.018)
Militant Internationalism	11.352*** (1.460)	13.558*** (1.784)	9.535*** (1.774)	1.762 (1.447)	-0.092 (1.189)	-3.642** (1.449)
Cooperative Internationalism	4.947*** (1.618)	5.277*** (1.977)	8.524*** (1.965)	9.506*** (1.603)	8.118*** (1.317)	-6.911*** (1.605)
Gender	-1.130 (2.722)	3.159 (3.327)	-2.492 (3.307)	-4.597* (2.698)	-2.402 (2.216)	1.494 (2.701)
Education	-0.178 (1.199)	-0.114 (1.465)	-1.179 (1.456)	0.497 (1.188)	-0.347 (0.976)	2.230* (1.189)
Age	0.138* (0.080)	0.124 (0.098)	-0.064 (0.097)	0.018 (0.079)	0.070 (0.065)	-0.178** (0.079)
MilYears	0.100 (0.169)	0.077 (0.207)	-0.119 (0.205)	0.042 (0.168)	-0.042 (0.138)	0.008 (0.168)
Combat	3.430 (3.392)	-0.526 (4.146)	-1.995 (4.120)	0.363 (3.362)	3.698 (2.761)	1.921 (3.366)
Sample	5.918 (4.044)	5.344 (4.943)	-3.220 (4.913)	-0.105 (4.009)	2.165 (3.292)	2.104 (4.013)
Baseline*DoD	2.704 (6.282)	-0.451 (7.677)	5.035 (7.631)	2.757 (6.227)	-1.781 (5.114)	15.779** (6.234)
Capabilities*DoD	4.730 (6.411)	5.806 (7.835)	13.484* (7.787)	9.413 (6.354)	6.425 (5.218)	10.456 (6.362)
SignalingPlusCapabilities*DoD	-6.497 (6.519)	-6.517 (7.966)	-1.342 (7.918)	-3.002 (6.461)	-6.735 (5.306)	17.004*** (6.468)
Constant	9.924 (10.609)	-10.155 (12.965)	21.260* (12.887)	45.450*** (10.515)	55.115*** (8.636)	49.698*** (10.528)
Observations	462	462	462	462	462	462
R <sup>2</sup>	0.221	0.206	0.125	0.130	0.109	0.108

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

## B.2.7 Main Results Including Attention Check Failers

Table B.11: Main Results Including Attention Check Failers

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Force (1)	Marines (2)	Flyover (3)	Sanctions (4)	Intel (5)	Nothing (6)
Signaling	3.582 (4.440)	3.781 (5.516)	-4.411 (5.505)	4.432 (4.456)	-1.980 (3.660)	3.907 (4.589)
Military Experience	4.889 (5.194)	3.271 (6.452)	2.941 (6.440)	-3.905 (5.213)	-4.181 (4.281)	3.891 (5.369)
Capabilities	-0.650 (4.289)	-0.975 (5.328)	-6.882 (5.317)	-11.124** (4.304)	-0.914 (3.535)	-0.995 (4.433)
SignalingPlusCapabilities	7.501* (4.409)	11.636** (5.477)	-0.121 (5.466)	3.835 (4.425)	3.806 (3.634)	-4.426 (4.557)
Militant Internationalism	11.913*** (1.442)	13.059*** (1.791)	9.667*** (1.787)	2.391* (1.447)	-0.089 (1.188)	-4.050*** (1.490)
Cooperative Internationalism	4.934*** (1.623)	5.254*** (2.016)	9.232*** (2.012)	10.575*** (1.629)	8.272*** (1.338)	-7.470*** (1.678)
Gender	-1.335 (2.718)	2.518 (3.376)	-4.803 (3.370)	-5.071* (2.728)	-3.170 (2.240)	3.770 (2.809)
Education	0.921 (1.164)	0.720 (1.446)	-0.144 (1.443)	1.187 (1.168)	0.272 (0.959)	0.998 (1.203)
Age	0.148* (0.080)	0.133 (0.100)	-0.048 (0.100)	-0.009 (0.081)	0.086 (0.066)	-0.140* (0.083)
MilYears	-0.045 (0.180)	0.009 (0.223)	-0.213 (0.223)	-0.031 (0.180)	-0.092 (0.148)	0.064 (0.186)
Combat	1.082 (3.492)	0.845 (4.338)	-1.859 (4.330)	-2.832 (3.505)	1.693 (2.878)	4.138 (3.610)
Sample	5.347 (4.184)	5.042 (5.198)	-3.913 (5.188)	-1.966 (4.199)	1.725 (3.449)	2.993 (4.325)
Signaling*Military Experience	-0.780 (6.198)	1.131 (7.699)	-3.301 (7.684)	-1.021 (6.220)	5.685 (5.108)	-16.514** (6.406)
Capabilities*Military Experience	2.771 (6.142)	4.906 (7.629)	12.675* (7.615)	12.844** (6.164)	10.469** (5.062)	-6.615 (6.348)
SignalingPlusCapabilities*Military Experience	-4.796 (6.124)	-3.693 (7.607)	0.699 (7.592)	-4.275 (6.146)	0.660 (5.047)	-2.190 (6.329)
Constant	-3.261 (10.333)	-16.429 (12.836)	14.165 (12.811)	32.581*** (10.370)	50.804*** (8.516)	53.576*** (10.680)
Observations	462	462	462	462	462	462
R <sup>2</sup>	0.230	0.185	0.139	0.158	0.119	0.116

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

### B.2.8 Randomization Inference

Figures B.3 and B.4 demonstrate that the results are also robust to randomization inference, with and without covariates. Given the difficulty of recruiting a large elite sample, randomization inference is especially useful for investigating how unusual the results are compared to a large possible number of randomizations.<sup>1</sup> Re-running the analysis using 1,000 simulations demonstrates that the average treatment effects identified as statistically significant in the main results above fall well into the tails of their respective distributions, with  $p = 0.05$  in each case. Therefore, my findings are not simply a product of the relatively small sample.

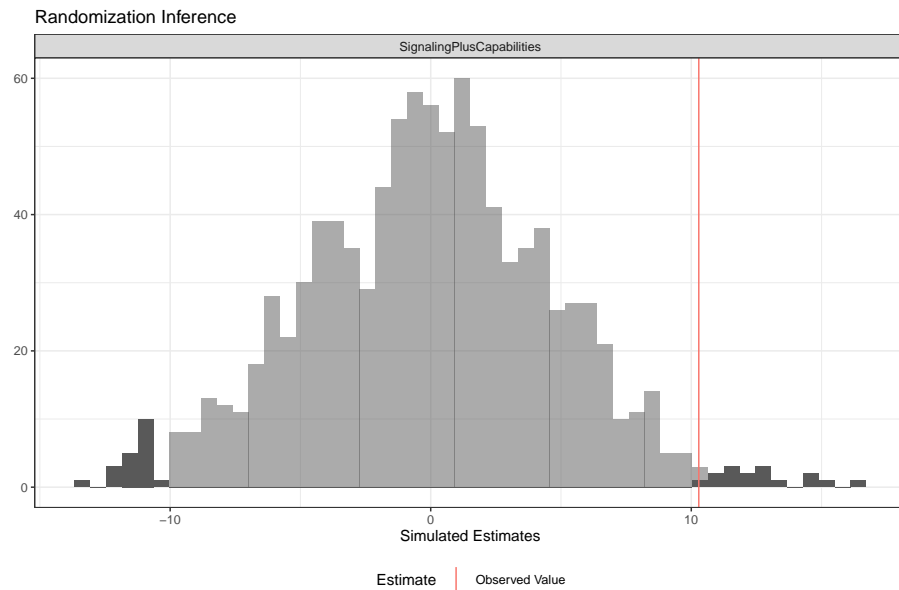


Figure B.3: Marines vs. Signaling Plus Capabilities for Diplomats

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<sup>1</sup>Gerber and Green (2012).



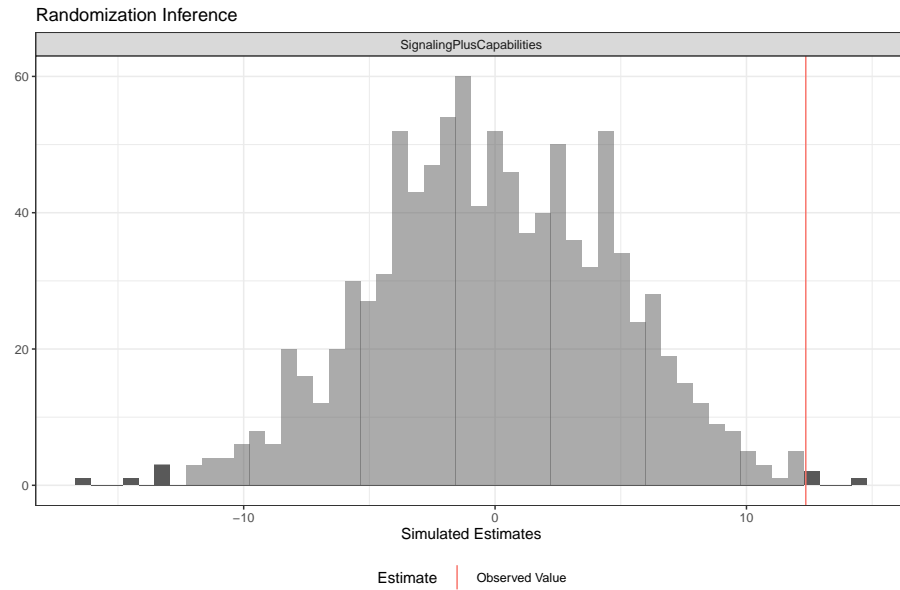


Figure B.4: Marginal Influence of Reputation Among Diplomats

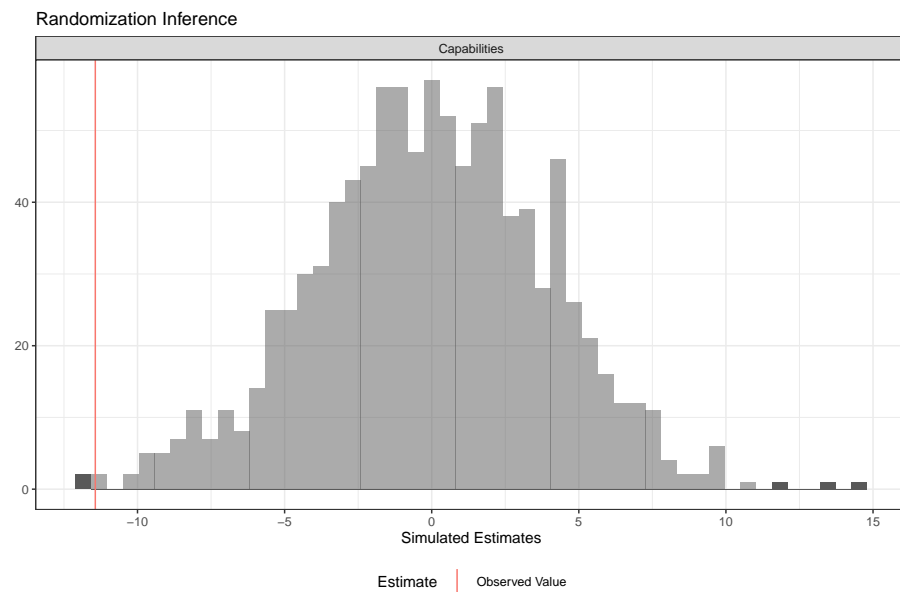


Figure B.5: Sanctions vs. Capabilities for Diplomats

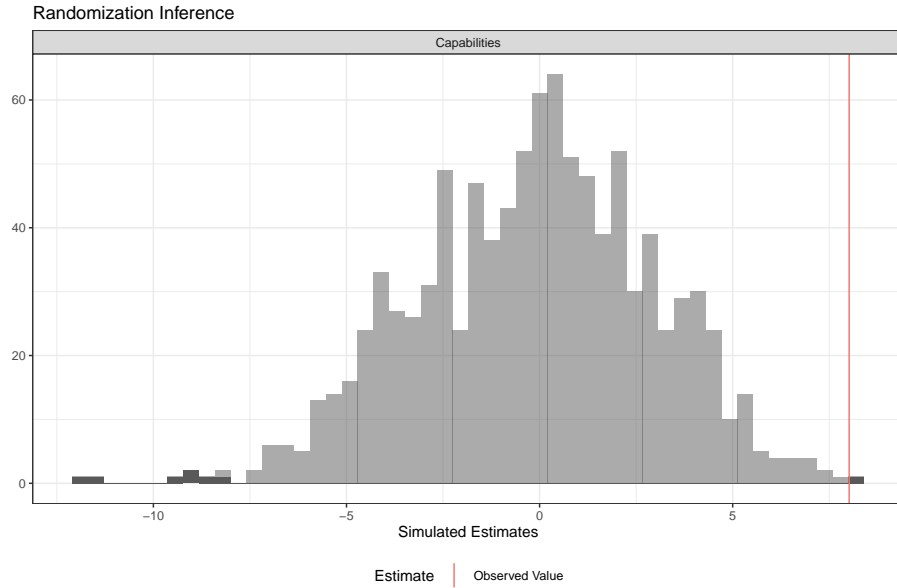


Figure B.6: Intelligence vs. Capabilities for Military

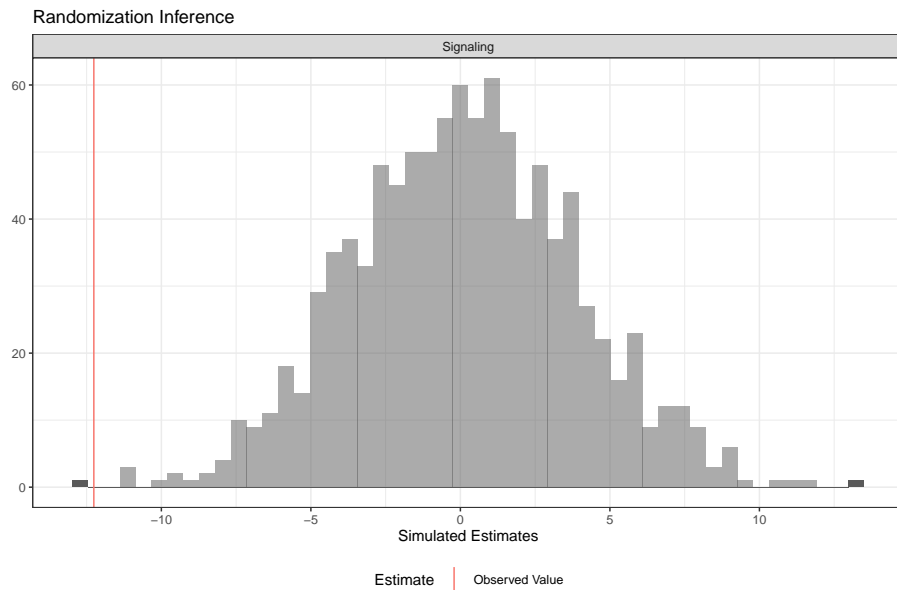


Figure B.7: Nothing vs. Signaling for Military

### B.3 Proposed Follow-Up Experiment

The experimental results presented in Chapter 4 are consistent with the notion that those with diplomatic rather than military experience respond chiefly to reputational rather than capability-based considerations. This evidence is in line with the two core theoretical insights developed in the project: namely that diplomats view credibility in reputational terms and are more willing than their military counterparts to use force during crises as a result. Nevertheless, the experimental

results are not entirely in step with an important observable implication about military officials' behavior, as these participants do not respond to capability-based considerations in the manner that the theory expects or as I observe in the case studies.

One possible explanation (beyond a lack of statistical power) for the weak and insignificant treatment effects among military officials could be that the capability-oriented considerations were not strong or specific enough in the original vignettes. In particular, the Capabilities and Signaling Plus Capabilities conditions did not reference what specific U.S. forces would be available and may therefore have left military respondents with too much uncertainty about the composition and feasibility of a potential military option. Without a more tangible sense of what forces were available and how they could be used, the treatment may have been too noisy for military respondents to react in the way that the theory anticipated.

In a follow-up study, I plan to strengthen the capability-based considerations present in the Capabilities and Signaling Plus Capabilities vignettes. Updated, draft vignettes for these conditions appear below, with the relevant text in bold.

### *Capabilities*

The United States is considering strengthening its alliance with Eastland in response to threats against Eastland from a rising regional power, Westria. Westria recently embarked on a military buildup that shifted the balance of power in its favor in a region where the U.S. and its allies have long enjoyed an advantage in military capabilities. Eastland shares a disputed and resource-rich border with Westria. Several previous attempts by the United Nations to mediate this dispute have proven unsuccessful. The U.S. has a vested interest in retaining access to this border region, as it contains most of the known supply of a rare earth metal used in producing devices such as smartphones.

Eastland is a U.S. ally and viewed favorably by both Congress and the U.S. public as a result of Westria's recent behavior. However, the U.S. has not always defended Eastland's interests against Westria's provocations in the past as part of its efforts to avoid raising regional tensions.

Eastland hosts a U.S. airbase and nearby port that is regularly used by American military personnel, including for joint exercises with Eastland's armed forces. Eastland has substantial military capabilities of its own, including well-equipped air forces that fly the latest American-made fighters, but its ground forces are numerically small.

Westria, by contrast, has a large and capable contingent of ground forces, but its air forces are numerically smaller and less technologically advanced than Eastland's.

Based on this military balance, the U.S. intelligence community has concluded that Westria would likely defeat Eastland if the dispute over the contested border escalated to the use of force. Intelligence officials have stated that the defense of Eastland is a top strategic priority for the United States in the region given the border area's resource endowments and estimate that a loss of access to these resources would result in a multibillion dollar hit to the U.S. economy until the issue is resolved. **The intelligence community has also noted that the U.S. has military capabilities — including an Amphibious Ready Group containing a Marine Expeditionary Unit of 2200 Marines in an Air-Ground Task Force — that it can deploy to Eastland in the event of a crisis in the disputed region without reducing forces committed to other equally important missions.**

### *Signaling Plus Capabilities*

The United States is considering strengthening its alliance with Eastland in response to threats

against Eastland from a rising regional power, Westria. Westria recently embarked on a military buildup that shifted the balance of power in its favor in a region where the U.S. and its allies have long enjoyed an advantage in military capabilities. Eastland shares a disputed and resource-rich border with Westria. Several previous attempts by the United Nations to mediate this dispute have proven unsuccessful. The U.S. has a vested interest in retaining access to this border region, as it contains most of the known supply of a rare earth metal used in producing devices such as smartphones.

Eastland is a U.S. ally and viewed favorably by both Congress and the U.S. public as a result of Westria's recent behavior. The U.S. has always defended Eastland's interests against Westria's provocations in the past as part of its efforts to hedge against Westria's regional ambitions.

Eastland hosts a U.S. airbase and nearby port that is regularly used by American military personnel, including for joint exercises with Eastland's armed forces. Eastland has substantial military capabilities of its own, including well-equipped air forces that fly the latest American-made fighters, but its ground forces are numerically small.

Westria, by contrast, has a large and capable contingent of ground forces, but its air forces are numerically smaller and less technologically advanced than Eastland's.

Based on this military balance, the U.S. intelligence community has concluded that Westria would likely defeat Eastland if the dispute over the contested border escalated to the use of force. Intelligence officials have stated that the defense of Eastland is a top strategic priority for the United States in the region given the border area's resource endowments and estimate that a loss of access to these resources would result in a multibillion dollar hit to the U.S. economy until the issue is resolved. **The intelligence community has also noted that the U.S. has military capabilities — including an Amphibious Ready Group containing a Marine Expeditionary Unit of 2,200 Marines in an Air-Ground Task Force — that it can deploy to Eastland in the event of a crisis in the disputed region without reducing forces committed to other equally important missions.**