Domestic politics and interstate disputes: Examining US mid involvement and reciprocation, 1870-1992
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Increasingly scholars have become interested in conflict behavior that falls short of war. Chan (1997), for example, has insisted that a concern for less intense engagements is crucial for fully understanding the conflict-proneness of different regimes. Chan (1997) furthermore noted that scholars have generally failed to account for whether a state was the initiator or target of a dispute. Such a distinction, however, is crucial for discriminating the pacific effects of democratic culture and institutions. In this paper, I investigate the domestic determinants of US MID involvement and reciprocation from 1870 to 1992. I find that politics does not stop at the water’s edge. Unlike Gowa (1998) who found no relationship between the use of force and dissatisfaction with the status quo, I uncover an association between US domestic conditions and whether the US was an initiator or target of a MID. Not only is the US more likely to be targeted during periods of domestic political weakness, but Democratic administrations also appear to be challenged to a greater extent than their Republican counterparts. Furthermore, when targeted, the US is much more likely to reciprocate when the initiating state is a non-democracy suggesting that regime type continues to play an important role in conflict propensity even after a demand has been made.

KEY WORDS: democratic peace, diversionary behavior, US foreign policy, conflict, domestic politics
Statesmen may be driven to a policy of foreign conflict — if not open war — in order to defend themselves against the onslaught of domestic enemies

(Haas and Whiting, 1956, p. 62)

[War] might either cause domestic quarrels to be forgotten, or might on the contrary aggravate them beyond reconciliation

(Simmel, 1898, p. 832)

Increasingly scholars have become interested in conflict behavior that falls short of the threshold for an interstate war. Chan (1997), for example, has insisted that a concern for less intense engagements is crucial for fully understanding the conflict-proneness of different regimes. That is, should we expect the democratic peace to hold for quarrels that result in only minor uses of force? Some scholars suggest that democracies may in fact exhibit a greater propensity to become involved in low-level disputes as a consequence of domestic-political exigencies (see Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson, 1995; Leeds and Davis, 1997). Chan (1997) furthermore has noted that scholars have generally failed to account for whether a state was the initiator or target of a dispute (exceptions include Leeds and Davis, 1997, Rousseau et al., 1996; Gowa, 1998). However, given that democracies tend to be on the receiving end of militarized demands, analyses that fail to recognize dispute origins may not fully capture the pacific effects of democratic culture and institutions (Chan, 1997, p. 68; Ray, 1999).

In this paper, I investigate the domestic determinants of US MID (militarized interstate dispute) involvement and reciprocation from 1870 to 1992. Unlike Gowa (1998), I find that politics does not stop at the water's edge. Both domestic economic conditions and political opposition play an important role in the foreign policy decision-making of a president. Furthermore, while Gowa (1998) found no relationship between the use of force and dissatisfaction with the status quo, I uncover an association between US domestic conditions and whether the US was an initiator or target of a MID. My evidence indicates that the US tends to be a target of militarized disputes when Democratic administrations are in power and when divided government is present. Republican administrations, in contrast, demonstrate a greater propensity to initiate disputes. Additionally, it appears that the US is much more likely to reciprocate against non-democratic states than democratic ones which suggests that regime type may continue to play an important role in conflict propensity even after a militarized demand has been made.

In the first section of this article, I address literature on foreign policy decision-making. I insist that scholars need to pay attention to not only...
whether domestic affairs affect foreign policy decision-making, but also how domestic affairs affect this decision-making. That is, many studies show domestic conditions to increase the conflict propensity of state leaders. Other studies, however, demonstrate that aspects of domestic politics decrease conflict involvement. Greater attention, it seems, should be devoted to understanding the directionality of these relationships. Next, I suggest that initiation may be an important element to consider when evaluating conflict proneness. Indeed, it may be the powerful image of being a target that enables democratic leaders to overcome institutional and electoral constraints to use military force. I then discuss the research design and make comparisons to Gowa's (1998) study. Lastly, I present results from an event-count model of MID involvement, followed by a tentative analysis of US dispute reciprocation.

DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS

International relations theory has been profoundly affected by a set of assumptions championed by the realist school. Of particular import has been the distinction between domestic and international politics. While a systemic approach has proved useful in explaining many aspects of international relations (e.g., alliance formation and war behavior, capability distribution and arms races, long-cycles, system stability), such a structural model does neglect the influence of domestic demands made upon foreign policy elites. Vasquez (1993, p. 223), for example, has insisted that when it comes to explaining the onset of war "a more complete and accurate account...can be attained by identifying the kind of domestic political context that encourages the adoption of power politics behavior" (also see Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman, 1990; Russett, 1990; Nincic, 1992; Peterson, 1994; Partell, 1997). Furthermore, both liberals and institutionalists continue to assert that societal preferences and domestic decision processes play instrumental roles in the actions of a state leader (see for example Moravcsik, 1997; Milner, 1997; Russett, 1990 and 1993; Snyder, 1991). According to Moravcsik (1997, p. 518), "Representative institutions and practices constitute the critical 'transmission belt' by which the preferences and social power of individuals are translated into state policy." He further goes on to argue that "government policy is therefore constrained by the underlying identities, interests, and power of individuals and groups who constantly pressure the central decision makers to pursue policies consistent with their preferences" (p. 518).
Despite the growing consensus that domestic affairs do influence foreign policy decision-making, considerable disagreement remains regarding the direction of this influence. For example, evidence appears to demonstrate that cultural norms and political institutions decrease conflict propensities within the democratic community of nations (see for example, Levy, 1988; Bremer, 1992; Maoz and Russett, 1993; Oneal and Russett, 1997; Ray, 1995; Rummel, 1983). Not only are democratic states unlikely to fight one another, but they are also more likely to resolve their disputes using non-violent conflict resolution strategies (Dixon, 1994; Raymond, 1994). On the other hand, research also indicates that electoral trepidation can incite leaders to use military force for domestic-political purposes (Smith, 1996). Indeed, military engagements can sometimes produce sharp short-term increases in approval ratings creating an incentive to employ the use of force prior to national elections. With seemingly little dialogue between these two research traditions, a puzzle appears to emerge from the conspicuous theoretical and empirical discrepancies.

Creating Diversions

Diversionary theories explicitly maintain that domestic politics is a primary influence on foreign policy decision-making, and considerable empirical evidence exists indicating that elites attempt to divert attention during periods of domestic turmoil. Russett (1990), for example, found a significant increase in US dispute involvement during economic downturns (also see DeRouen, 1995; Fordham, 1998; Hess and Orphanides, 1995; James and Oneal, 1991; Morgan and Bickers, 1992; Richards et al., 1993). Lebow (1981) found a similar relationship 10 years earlier. Stoll (1984) presented evidence linking uses of force to the electoral calendar, and Morgan and Bickers (1992) and James and Hristoulas (1994) showed diversionary behavior to be associated with higher levels of political opposition. Evidence also exists showing a relationship between presidential approval and involvement in hostilities (Ostrom and Job, 1986; James and Oneal, 1991; DeRouen, 1995; Hess and Orphanides, 1995).

Theoretical research also ties elites to diversionary behavior. Downs and Rocke (1995), for instance, insisted that information asymmetries between a leader and the public creates incentives for the manipulation of foreign affairs. Smith (1996) agreed. "If foreign policy evaluation is likely to be important at the next election," Smith (1996, p. 147) asserted, "then the range of international conditions under which intervention occurs increases." Richards et al. (1993) qualified these information arguments
by showing that particular attributes of an executive, such as his or her attitudes toward risk, also tend to play a significant role in foreign policy decision-making.

To be sure, international affairs provides a leader with a visible platform from which to demonstrate leadership skill. Given a concern with reelection, initiating a dispute may provide a leader with an opportunity to evince commander in chief competence, or provide a pretext for concealing egregious incompetence (Richards et al., 1993). Moreover, if public opinion can indeed be moved propitiously through decisive and conspicuous military actions on the international stage, presidents would seemingly have an incentive to adopt an aggressive foreign policy stance.

Despite the theoretical contributions and empirical evidence collected to date, many scholars challenge these diversionary findings. Meernik and Waterman (1996) in fact concluded that, in the United States at least, the link between domestic political conditions and uses of military force is nearly non-existent. Ward and Widmaier (1982) gathered that not only is there little evidence supporting the externalization of conflict, but there appears to be a very limited range of circumstances that would persuade a president to use military force abroad to moderate conflict at home. A case in point, Brody and Shapiro (1989) reported that a substantial number of events deemed likely to produce a rally effect actually led to a decline in the president's approval rating. Moreover, Lian and Oneal (1993, p. 278) insisted that, "if it could be proven in a single instance that a president used America's armed forces for partisan purposes, there would be justifiable calls for impeachment."

Executive Constraints

In contrast to diversionary theories, many proponents of the democratic peace proposition contend that domestic political structures and processes inhibit the belligerent actions of democratically-elected leaders (see for example, Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman, 1992; Morrow, 1991; Morgan and Campbell, 1991; Morgan and Schwebach, 1992; Peterson, 1994). "Due to the complexity of the democratic process and the requirement of securing a broad base of support for risky policies," Maoz and Russett (1993, p. 626) wrote, "democratic leaders are reluctant to wage wars, except in cases wherein war seems a necessity or when the war aims are seen as justifying the mobilization costs." War, admittedly, is a rare event. However, the institutional structures that define the policy-making process also affect issues of foreign policy more broadly. Schweller (1992), for
example, concluded that democratic institutions bestow prudence in decision-making, and Snyder (1991) found the foreign policy behavior of states to be pacified by democratic decision processes.

Democratic peace theorists, then, like diversionary theorists, argue that domestic politics cannot be ignored. But, they also insist that the effect of domestic decision processes on foreign policy is very different. Rather than provoking brazen foreign policy initiatives, executives are limited in the actions they can take. For instance, Russett (1993, p. 80) explained that “federalism restricts the ability [of executives] to mobilize economic and military resources rapidly in the event of a serious international dispute.” As a result, a president is unlikely to initiate hostilities because of institutional checks on executive authority as well as the rule of law.

Smith (1996, p. 148) also concluded that constraints placed on an executive, such as the presence of an independent legislature, can help reduce the occurrence of dubious foreign policy initiatives. He indicated that presidents will strive to avoid congressional sanctions by basing policy decisions on national security concerns, rather than personal or partisan calculations. Gelpi and Grieco (1998) further questioned the costs associated with belligerent foreign policy initiatives. They found democratic leaders, regardless of the outcome, to be frequently removed from office for using force abroad (also see Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson, 1995). Their research fundamentally brings into question the potential benefits derived from political uses of force. Indeed, given that rally-around-the-flag support is generally short-lived, the use of force may not in fact be a cost-effective way of generating a successful electoral coalition. As Russett (1990, p. 47) noted, “fears of the domestic political consequences of becoming involved in a real war work to restrain the belligerent actions of leaders.”

THE INITIATION OF VIOLENCE

The different directional hypotheses posited by democratic peace theorists and political use of force theorists continue to confound scholars of international politics. One potential explanation for the empirical discrepancies involves the origins of the militarized conflicts. That is, democratic states may appear equally as conflict prone as non-democratic states as a result of being frequently targeted by unconstrained autocratic regimes (see Rousseau et al., 1996). If so, not only would democracy be insignificant as an explanatory variable in monadic analyses, but democratic leaders may be targeted during periods of domestic turmoil.
inflating the relationship between domestic conditions and the use of force (Blainey, 1988; Ward and Widmaier, 1982, p. 77; Leeds and Davis, 1997).  

10 Chan (1997, p. 68), for example, has insisted that "even though the role of initiator of violence does not necessarily mean the country in question is the aggressor in a particular conflict, it is still the most important discriminating indicator for examining the democratic peace proposition." Consequently, by not specifying the origins of militarized disputes scholars may draw inaccurate inferences regarding the determinants of foreign policy decision-making.

Fearon (1998), as well, has suggested that initiation is a salient distinction to make when investigating conflict proneness. Not only does his theoretical model predict that democracies will be unlikely to make militarized demands, but once involved in a conflict (such as by being targeted) democratic leaders ought not to back down as a result of latent electoral costs. 11 Being targeted, then, may briefly lift institutional constraints that inhibit the use of force. If so, then democratic states should be equally as likely as their non-democratic counterparts to reciprocate militarized demands regardless of the regime type of the opponent (see Chan, 1997, p. 68).

Satisfaction and the Status Quo

Satisfaction is an alternative selection criterion that is sometimes used when investigating conflict proneness. Gowa (1998) employed this measure, rather than initiation, to assess the differential influence of domestic political context. 12 She (1998, p. 313) surmised that domestic conditions may be only influential for states seeking to alter a bilateral or regional status quo. 13 Gowa (1998, p. 313) wrote, "any variance across parties or political cycles might be expected to emerge more clearly in cases that involve a challenge to the status quo, making these cases more appropriate to test whether domestic politics influence the use of military power abroad." While both initiation and revision may be salient theoretical distinctions, the latter it seems necessarily requires the identification of intent, always a discomfiting task. 14 In contrast, the initial militarization of a dispute would seem a considerably more reliable variable, demanding only precision in the reporting of the event. 15

It furthermore is not clear whether revision type is a useful distinction to make when explaining the onset of militarized disputes. Not only is there considerable uncertainty with regards to the fundamental aims of revisionist states, but what are we to make of a situation where revision type and
initiation do not coincide?\textsuperscript{16} Presumably, in such instances a preemptive strike is launched by the status quo state to avert becoming the target of revisionist aggression.\textsuperscript{17} While theoretically possible, Reiter (1995) has in fact found few instances of preemptive war. If such anticipatory actions do not occur when fundamental security interests are at stake, is it reasonable to assume that preventive threats or attacks are occurring at the level of a dispute?\textsuperscript{18} Ray (1999) has also made it clear that culpability is difficult to assign and therefore efforts are better spent trying to gauge initiation.

Initiation, then, may help explain the theoretical and empirical discrepancies that exist in research on US foreign policy decision-making. If the US is targeted under certain domestic economic and political conditions, then political motives may be imparted to leaders for military actions that were not originated by the White House. What is more, without controlling for initiation, scholars may under-estimate the relationship between domestic political context and conflict propensity. That is, analyses of dispute or war involvement, with no concern for the state that first militarized, will most likely bias downward the effects of democratic politics on non-violent conflict resolution.

**EXPECTATIONS**

The following research design examines more explicitly the directional link between domestic political context and conflict proneness. This will help clarify whether domestic political and economic conditions lead executives to use military force abroad. Diversionary theories suggest domestic vulnerability increases the likelihood of dispute initiation. Democratic peace theories, in contrast, propose that political structures act as a constraint on the use of force and thus decrease conflict initiation. Four testable hypotheses can be drawn, then, from the discussion above.

\[ H_{1DIV} : \] The number of militarized disputes the US initiates each year increases as electoral incentives, political opposition, and economic vulnerability increase.

\[ H_{2DIV} : \] The number of militarized disputes the US becomes involved in as a target each year decreases as electoral incentives, political opposition, and economic vulnerability increase.

\[ H_{1DEM} : \] The number of militarized disputes the US initiates each year decreases as electoral incentives, political opposition, and economic vulnerability increase.
H2DEM: The number of militarized disputes the US becomes involved in as a target each year increases as electoral incentives, political opposition, and economic vulnerability increase.

Evidence supporting Hypothesis 1DIV implies that US presidents are using military force for personal or partisan political reasons. More specifically, a diversionary argument seemingly insists that domestic vulnerability increases the likelihood of dispute initiation (H1DIV), but at the same time decreases the chances of a vulnerable state becoming a target (H2DIV). While diversionary theories rarely specify the target, a concern with one's opponent is warranted if state leaders act strategically. That is, assuming democratic leaders are at times compelled for political reasons to divert, foreign leaders should hesitate to initiate if domestic-political conditions have increased the likelihood of reciprocation, rather than acquiescence. The same conditions, then, that lead political leaders to divert also tend to reduce the opportunities available.

Evidence supporting Hypothesis 1DEM, on the other hand, suggests that political opposition, national elections, and economic weakness all tend to constrain a president's use of military force. Indeed, if domestic vulnerability acts as a constraint then executives should be less likely to initiate disputes during periods of economic and political weakness (H1DEM). However, it would follow that these domestic conditions may also tend to increase the probability of becoming a target as well (H2DEM).

Four additional hypotheses are posited to test relationships between domestic context, regime type of the opponent, and the reciprocation of militarized demands. Given the initial concern for the differential effects of domestic context on targeting versus initiation, an additional step is taken to explore the determinants of dispute reciprocation. This will help clarify whether electoral incentives, political opposition, and economic weakness play a role in foreign policy decision-making after the US has been targeted by another state.

H3DIV: The likelihood of dispute reciprocation increases as electoral incentives, political opposition, and economic vulnerability increase.

H3DEM: The likelihood of dispute reciprocation decreases as electoral incentives, political opposition, and economic vulnerability increase.

H4DIV: The regime type of an opponent has no impact on the decision to reciprocate.

H4DEM: The likelihood of dispute reciprocation decreases when the opponent is a democracy.
A diversionary theory of US foreign policy decision-making presumably would maintain that regime type plays little or no role in dispute reciprocation. Indeed, the theory is fundamentally decision theoretic. Yet, if one assumes that becoming a target might be politically useful during periods of domestic vulnerability, dispute reciprocation may be even more strongly related to the domestic context than dispute initiation. Democratic peace theories, in contrast, presumably would insist that domestic context and regime type continue to pacify foreign policy decision-making despite a state being the target of aggression.20

RESEARCH DESIGN

To test whether US sub-war conflict behavior is associated with domestic political context, two separate analyses are administered. First, an event-count model of annual MID involvement is used to assess whether the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy decision-making differs when controlling for the initiation of conflict. Second, I examine the determinants of US reciprocation by looking only at cases where the US is the target of a dispute. Not only will this latter analysis provide evidence for better understanding the relationship between domestic politics and low-level conflict escalation, but it will also provide a preliminary test of Chan's (1997, p. 68) conjecture that regime type may not play a role in democratic dispute reciprocation decisions.

The Militarized Dispute Dataset (MIDs) is used as a data source as it offers a lengthy set of cases short of war that allow for a systematic examination of US foreign policy decision-making. According to Jones, Bremer and Singer (1996, p. 166), MIDs are “confrontations that [lead] politicians to invest energy, attention, resources, and credibility in an effort to thwart, resist, intimidate, discredit, or damage those representing the other side.” Furthermore, these events were selected because of a heightened probability that military hostilities would result. By definition, the threat, display, or use of military force has occurred for a dispute to be included in the dataset.

The time frame of this study is 1870–1992.21 During this 123 year period, 262 MIDs are recorded by the COW (Correlates of War) data project. An initial analysis is run on this complete sample. However, a subsample of 218 disputes is also created. To avoid dispute joining, I use only those MIDs in which the US is an originating actor (i.e., a state that is involved on the first day of a dispute). By not controlling for whether the US was an originating state, MIDs could be included where
DOMESTIC POLITICS AND DISPUTES

TABLE I
Hostility Level and Number of US MIDs, 1870-1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hostility Level</th>
<th>Number of MIDs</th>
<th>Number of Originating MIDs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threats to use force</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays of force</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses of force</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wars</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Reciprocated Disputes*</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The MIDs dataset does code for the hostility level of each of these disputes, but because the US was the targeted state and chose not to respond to the militarized action, its hostility level is coded as missing in the Parts component of the dataset.

Source: Revised MIDs dataset 2.10, 1996.

the US was on the initiating side, but entered the conflict long after it had begun.

A further distinction made in the analysis below involves the level of dispute hostility. To assess whether low and high-level MIDs are subject to different forces, I first analyze all MIDs, and then select out a subset that involve only disputes that resulted in a use of force or war (i.e., a four or five on the MIDs hostility level scale). The intent is to make sense of the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy choices (Gowa, 1998). It may be that the decision calculus for low-level dispute actions, such as threats and displays of force, is different from that which involves the actual use of military force. "Given the risks associated with the use of force or war," Gowa (1998, p. 312) wrote, "lower-level conflicts might be a reelection-minded president's preferred instruments of choice."

Electoral Accountability and Political Opposition

To test the effects of political opposition, I create a dummy variable for divided government. This variable equals 1 when the majority party in one or both houses of Congress is different from that of the executive. The variable equals 0 when a unified government is in office. I also create a dummy variable for the political party holding the presidency, which is 1 when Republicans control the White House and 0 otherwise.

I also include variables controlling for the state of the economy and the presidential electoral cycle. For the latter, a dummy variable is created that equals 1 for years that include a presidential election race and 0
otherwise. For the state of the economy, annual GNP growth rates are used. Similar to Gowa (1998), the growth-rate data is also used to construct an interaction term. This variable, as Gowa (1998, p. 314) wrote, "allows for a differential effect of the state of the economy during an election year."

### Systemic Control Variables

Three additional dummy variables are included to capture systemic effects. More precisely, these variables are intended to measure "the effects of variations in US national power and the advent of general wars" (Gowa, 1998, p. 315). The first temporal dummy marks the change from a minor or regional power, to a major world player. The second denotes the change to a super power. Given that great powers are statistically much more likely to become involved in disputes than minor states (Bremer, 1992), controlling for national power helps prevent biasing other coefficient estimates. Gowa (1998), for instance, found that the covariation between the post-World War II era and Democratic governments tended to effect her variable measuring partisan politics. The two dummy variables included are measured as follows: 1870–1897, the US is considered a minor power; 1898–1948, the US is considered a major power; 1949–1992, the US is considered a super power.

The third dummy variable is created to demarcate the two world war periods (1914–1918 and 1939–1945). Once again, it is likely that US MID involvement is different during protracted conflicts and should be once again controlled for to prevent obscuring a mean relationship.

### RESULTS

Table II presents the results of two Poisson models run on the complete sample of 262 disputes. The first evaluates all US MIDs from 1870 to 1992, the second includes only disputes that involve the use of force or war (MaxMIDs). The evidence indicates that both low and high-level MID involvement do not appear to be related to electoral or partisan variables. However, both MID and MaxMID involvement are related to domestic economic conditions. As the percent change in the gross national product decreases, low- and high-level MID activity rise. This may be evidence in support of diversionary theory or constraints theory. That is, presidents may engage in militarized disputes when the economy is performing poorly to detract attention from domestic concerns, or they may be
**TABLE II**

Poisson Analysis of US MID Involvement, 1870–1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MIDs&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>MaxMIDs&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidential election year</td>
<td>-.1389</td>
<td>-.4806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.2018)</td>
<td>(.4325)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNP growth rate</td>
<td>-.0330**</td>
<td>-.0444*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.0160)</td>
<td>(.0246)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election year × GNP growth rate</td>
<td>.0165</td>
<td>.1036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.0377)</td>
<td>(.0731)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divided government</td>
<td>.0885</td>
<td>.3134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.1829)</td>
<td>(.3559)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican administration</td>
<td>-.0161</td>
<td>-.1715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.1833)</td>
<td>(.3521)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major power</td>
<td>-.1669</td>
<td>.8507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.2797)</td>
<td>(.6007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superpower</td>
<td>1.442***</td>
<td>2.021***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.2111)</td>
<td>(.5251)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War</td>
<td>1.115***</td>
<td>1.496***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.2946)</td>
<td>(.4323)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.0442</td>
<td>-1.712**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.3300)</td>
<td>(.7030)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All 262 MIDs are included in this analysis. \( N = 123 \). Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

* \( p < .10 \), two-tailed test.
** \( p < .05 \), two-tailed test.
*** \( p < .01 \), two-tailed test.

\( ^* \text{LL} = -189.18; \chi^2 = 130.57 (.0000); \text{Pseudo-}R^2 = .257. \)
\( ^* \text{LL} = -115.98; \chi^2 = 46.84 (.0000); \text{Pseudo-}R^2 = .168. \)

Source: Revised MIDs dataset 2.10.1996.

DOMESTIC POLITICS AND DISPUTES

targeted because of this domestic political weakness. Without controlling for initiation we cannot be sure which theory the evidence supports.

The systemic variables designed to capture temporal shifts in power appear to exert the most significant effects on MID involvement. The likelihood of US MID involvement and MaxMID involvement increases markedly during the two World Wars \( (p < .01) \) and is also considerably higher during the Cold War era \( (p < .002) \). Interestingly, no discernible change in US behavior occurred from 1870 to 1945. During this period of time dispute propensity remains remarkably invariant despite US gains in military and economic power.

Admittedly, as Gowa (1998, p. 318) recognized, the temporal dummies measuring power may hide other forces at work affecting US foreign
policy decision-making. Gowa (1998) in fact surmised that the sharp increase in the number of recognized states in the international system may have played a role in the incidence of MIDs during the post-World War II era. She wrote, "the postwar increase in US MID rates may be the product of increasing opportunities rather than of a change in US power status" (p. 318). However, she subsequently found an inverse relationship between the number of MIDs and the number of states in the system, casting doubt on her supposition. Still, the primary objective of this analysis is to assess the role domestic forces play in dispute involvement. The systemic dummies therefore are included as statistical controls. Certainly, though, some caution should be observed in their interpretation.

**Initiators versus Targets**

When controlling for initiator and target, the relationship with the partisan and economic variables changes substantially (see Table III). Not only does divided government appear to be related to targeting as expected by a constraints model (Hypothesis DEM), but Democrat administrations also show a greater propensity to be on the receiving end of militarized demands. These results do not support the findings of Leeds and Davis (1997). They concluded that "domestic political vulnerability enhance[d] deterrence" (p. 815). Afraid of providing opportunities for diversionary actions, states were argued to make fewer demands on targets during times of domestic discontent (also see Fordham, 1998). Here we see, though, that foreign initiators tend to challenge the US when they perceive the domestic environment to be particularly constraining on a president. Interestingly, this is precisely when political opposition is higher on Capitol Hill due to divided government, and when Democrat administrations hold the executive reigns of power.

These findings support the conjecture discussed above regarding the potential selection problems involved in monadic analyses. Not only does it appear that the US is often targeted, which naturally inflates the relationship between regime type and war at the nation-state level, but monadic analyses that uncover a relationship between domestic vulnerability and uses of force may incorrectly infer that executives are attempting to divert attention for political purposes. In fact, it may be that foreign leaders are counting on economic and political conditions concentrating administration attention on domestic policy.

In contrast to the targeting results, the initiation of MIDs by the US is positively associated with Republican administrations. Given that
**DOMESTIC POLITICS AND DISPUTES**

**TABLE III**

Poisson Analysis of US Targeted versus Initiated MIDs, 1870–1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Targeted MIDs&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Initiated MIDs&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidential election year</td>
<td>-.2335 (.4208)</td>
<td>.0511 (.2559)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNP growth rate</td>
<td>-.0173 (.0315)</td>
<td>-.0429* (.0229)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election year x GNP growth rate</td>
<td>.0472 (.0876)</td>
<td>.0170 (.0452)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divided government</td>
<td>1.180*** (.4385)</td>
<td>-.0919 (.2574)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican administration</td>
<td>-1.398*** (.4356)</td>
<td>.6265** (.2722)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major power</td>
<td>-.464* (.7992)</td>
<td>.1217 (.3600)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superpower</td>
<td>1.990*** (.4156)</td>
<td>1.146*** (.2993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War</td>
<td>2.548*** (.8026)</td>
<td>.8853** (.4377)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.2108 (.5000)</td>
<td>-1.611*** (.5211)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Only those MIDs in which the US was an originating state are included in this analysis. 
N = 123. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

<sup>a</sup><sup>p < .10, two-tailed test.</sup>  
<sup>b</sup><sup>p < .05, two-tailed test.</sup>  
<sup>***p < .01, two-tailed test.</sup>  
<sup>LL = -104.23; \chi^2 = 108.94 (.0000); Pseudo-R^2 = .343</sup>  
<sup>bLL = -142.10; \chi^2 = 37.5 (.0000); Pseudo-R^2 = .117</sup>  

Source: Revised MIDs dataset 2.10, 1996.

the two parties have noticeably different alignments toward the use of force (Holsti, 1996), it probably should not be surprising that these partisan divisions appear. Holsti (1996) in fact found that Republicans demonstrate a greater propensity to be hard-liners on national security policy, while Democrats tend to be accommodationists. Given their hawkish leanings, then, Republican presidents may have fewer reservations about initiating military hostilities.

The domestic economy is also marginally related to the initiation of MIDs, and the direction of the relationship may support a diversionary interpretation as stipulated in Hypothesis D<sub>rv</sub> above. As the GNP growth rate declines, presidents are increasingly likely to initiate militarized
disputes. This supports the findings of Russett (1990) and Hypothesis 1 offered by Leeds and David (1997). Declines in the economic growth rate do lead US administrations to make forceful demands abroad. In other words, as economic conditions deteriorate, presidents show an increasing propensity to initiate militarized disputes.

No systematic relationship between the presidential electoral cycle and MID involvement is discerned here, even when controlling for initiation and targeting. Midterm elections, though, do appear to have a marginal effect on the initiation of disputes (see Table IV). In fact, it is during election years when a president is not running for office that electoral effects

### TABLE IV
Poisson Analysis of US Initiated MIDs, 1870–1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidential election year</td>
<td>.0511</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.2559)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-Presidential election year</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>−.4399*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.2431)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNP growth rate</td>
<td>−.0429*</td>
<td>−.0525**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.0229)</td>
<td>(.0240)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election year × GNP growth rate</td>
<td>.0170</td>
<td>.0172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.0452)</td>
<td>(.0376)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divided government</td>
<td>−.0919</td>
<td>−.1832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.2574)</td>
<td>(.2588)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican administration</td>
<td>.6265**</td>
<td>.6807**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.2722)</td>
<td>(.2753)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major power</td>
<td>.0127</td>
<td>.0653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.3600)</td>
<td>(.3578)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superpower</td>
<td>1.146***</td>
<td>1.152***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.2993)</td>
<td>(.2992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War</td>
<td>.8853**</td>
<td>.9370**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.4377)</td>
<td>(.4367)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>−1.611***</td>
<td>−1.511***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.5211)</td>
<td>(.5224)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Only those MIDs in which the US was an originating state are included in this analysis. N = 123. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

*p < .10, two-tailed test.

**p < .05, two-tailed test.

***p < .01, two-tailed test.

*aLL = -142.10; χ² = 37.5 (.0000); Pseudo-R² = .117.

bLL = -140.36; χ² = 41.0 (.0000); Pseudo-R² = .127.

Source: Revised MIDs dataset 2.10, 1996.
are their strongest. However, the direction of the relationship supports Hypothesis 1DEM above, rather than Hypothesis 1DEIV. That is, executives are less likely to initiate disputes during midterm election years. Presumably, this indicates that presidents are both focused on the congressional election campaign and concerned about providing political ammunition to partisan opposition by engaging in belligerent foreign policy initiatives.

For MaxMIDs, the relationships shown in Table III remain largely the same. The fewer number of disputes included in these analyses, though, do result in less significant coefficients. The only association to change substantially involves the party of the president. When confined to these higher-level disputes, no party effects are discernible. It appears that Republican administrations may be more likely to rattle the sword, but demonstrate no noticeably different propensity to actually use military force.

Reciprocation

Given the finding that the US is targeted both during periods of divided government and when Democratic administrations are in power, a sensible next step is to investigate the frequency of US reciprocation. If foreign leaders are challenging the US under certain domestic conditions, then are US presidents likely to meet such demands with demands of their own? Indeed, given that democratic states show a proclivity to resolve conflicts with other democracies without belligerency, one might expect a pronounced difference in reciprocation rates conditional on the regime type of the initiating opponent. Interestingly, though, Chan (1997, p. 68) has argued that the democratic peace proposition says nothing about the reciprocation of military force. He writes:

> Simple frequency counts of past conflict involvement cannot address the core claim of the democratic peace proposition, because they fail to distinguish between initiators and defenders in international hostilities. The democratic peace proposition contends that for structural or cultural reasons democracies are less able or willing to initiate violence or to start war. It does not argue that, if attacked, democracies will fail to respond in kind (p. 68).

In this regard, the analysis below is also designed to provide a tentative assessment of Chan's conjecture.

Table V represents a comparison of the frequencies of reciprocated and non-reciprocated disputes from 1870 to 1992. It is clear that the US was targeted much more often during the Cold War than the 70 or so preceding
B. C. PRINS

TABLE V
A Comparison of the Frequencies of Non-Reciprocated and Reciprocated Disputes, 1870–1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Number of MIDs</th>
<th>Percent Reciprocated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870–1879</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880–1889</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890–1899</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900–1909</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910–1919</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920–1929</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930–1939</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940–1949</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950–1959</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960–1969</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970–1979</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980–1989</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990–1992</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

years. This certainly reflects the more active internationalist role the US played after World War II as well as the ideologically-charged struggle with the Soviet Union. The rate of dispute reciprocation, however, does not appear to fluctuate as much as the total number of militarized disputes. This is particularly evident during the Cold War where the US responded each decade to between approximately 40% and 50% of the disputes in which it was the targeted state.

What explains why the US responds to certain militarized demands and not to others? As Table VI shows, non-democracies are overwhelmingly the regimes challenging the US. In 91 of the 99 MIDs (92%), the US is

TABLE VI
Contingency Table of US Reciprocation by Regime Type of Opponent, 1870–1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regime Type of Opponent</th>
<th>No Reciprocation</th>
<th>Reciprocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Democratic Opponent</td>
<td>50 (54.9%)</td>
<td>41 (45.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Opponent</td>
<td>7 (87.5%)</td>
<td>1 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $\chi^2 = 3.191(p < .074)$.
Source: Revised MIDs dataset 2.10, 1996.
faced with a demand made by a non-democratic state. Plus, as Table VI also demonstrates, the rate of reciprocation is significantly different across regimes. The U.S reciprocated nearly half (45.1%) of the disputes in which the initiating opponent was a non-democracy but only 12.5% of the disputes launched by democratic opponents. This result supports Hypothesis $4_{DEM}$ above but challenges the assertion by Chan (1997) that democratic reciprocation will be invariant to the regime type of the initiating state. At least with the US, the opposite appears to be the case. Regime type continues to play an important role in foreign policy decision-making even after a militarized demand has been issued. 34

Besides regime type, a further salient distinguishing feature of reciprocated versus non-reciprocated disputes involves their severity. As shown in Table VII, disputes that revolve around the naval seizure of maritime vessels are considerably less likely to involve reciprocation. Indeed, only 22% of the seizure MIDs were reciprocated by the US while over 50% (52.2%) of the non-seizure disputes were reciprocated. Furthermore, when controlling for the type of dispute, the regime of the initiating state only plays a role in US decision-making during the more severe non-seizure MIDs. That is, the US is significantly less likely to reciprocate non-seizure disputes when the opponent is a democracy. However, when the dispute involves a naval seizure, not only is the likelihood of a militarized response by the US low, but the decision to respond is invariant to the regime type of the initiating state. So, when disputes involve minor issues, such as maritime vessel seizures, the US is unlikely to escalate the quarrel regardless of the regime type of the opponent. When the dispute is more substantial, though, regime type does appear to play an important role, decreasing the chances that the US will ratchet up the conflict by issuing its own militarized demand.

Interestingly, domestic political context appears to have little influence on US reciprocation (Hypotheses $3_{DPV}$ and $3_{DEM}$). 35 Not only is there no
significant difference between unified and divided governments with regards to the frequency of reciprocation, but neither is there any statistically significant increase or decrease in the propensity to reciprocate during presidential or midterm election years. Furthermore, the party of the president does not appear to influence the decision to reciprocate militarized disputes. While Republican administrations are slightly more likely to respond to dispute challenges (46% to 39%), the difference is not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = .37$). Lastly, GNP is negatively related to US dispute reciprocation, which seemingly is the direction proffered by a diversionary model (Hypothesis $H_{DIV}$). However, the variable is not significant ($p = .20$) at a standard level, even when controlling for regime and dispute types. The empirical evidence uncovered here, then, provides little support for Hypotheses $H_{DIV}$ and $H_{DEM}$. There appears to be no relationship between domestic political and economic conditions and dispute reciprocation.

**CONCLUSION**

Considerable disagreement remains regarding the role domestic politics play in foreign policy decision-making. Despite the substantial and convincing evidence supporting a democratic peace, theoretical and empirical research continues to suggest that the democratic policy-making process creates incentives for belligerent interstate demands. And, scholars and political pundits appear ready to infer such behavior on the part of an executive. Many, for example, were quick to accuse the Clinton administration of political profiteering by launching the cruise missile attacks against Afghanistan and Sudan prior to the 1998 congressional elections.

The evidence presented here suggests that domestic economic and political conditions may tend to affect foreign policy decision-making in very different ways. While the US appears to be targeted during periods of high political opposition as expected by a constraints model, the initiation of militarized disputes by administrations tends to increase as the domestic economy deteriorates as expected by a diversionary model. Yet interestingly, the decision to reciprocate appears to be unaffected by domestic conditions. This seems odd if the US is being targeted during these vulnerable periods.

These divergent results suggest that political and economic conditions are perceived very differently by different actors. Divided government elicits pro-active behavior on the part of adversaries inasmuch as these foreign leaders see political opposition as encouraging risk-averse
behavior on the part of a president. There are political penalties for using force and these penalties are presumably higher during periods of divided government. Economic conditions, on the other hand, may be particularly important to presidents concerned about their prospects for policy success. A lackluster performance on economic policy may convince a president to turn to foreign affairs to establish a successful policy record, as well as a positive image as a capable statesman and leader.

There also is marginal evidence suggesting that presidents avoid belligerent foreign policy actions during congressional election seasons, which supports a constraints model of decision making. And, not surprisingly, the results show Republican administrations to possess a greater propensity than their Democratic counterparts to initiate hostilities. Democrats, on the other hand, are much more likely to be the targets of aggression by foreign leaders, which may reflect their dovish leanings.

Little evidence was found to support Chan's (1997) conjecture that democratic dispute reciprocation may be invariant to the regime type of a state's opponent. In fact, the US is considerably more likely to reciprocate militarized demands made by non-democratic states rather than democratic ones. This does suggest that democratic political structures and cultural norms continue to inhibit belligerent foreign policy actions even after a militarized demand has been made. Democracy, then, appears not only to prevent conflict involvement, but it also tends to discourage conflict escalation once quarrels have already begun.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author has benefited from the helpful comments of Scott Gates, Bryan Marshall, Chris Butler, and Mark Souva. They, of course, are not responsible for the remaining errors and omissions. The data used in this manuscript can be obtained from: http://www.uno.edu/~bprins/data.html.

NOTES

1. As I discuss further below, militarized interstate disputes refer to quarrels between nation-states that involve the threat, show, or use of military force.
2. See for example, Morgenthau (1948), Waltz (1979), and Mearsheimer (1994/95 and 1995).
3. Certainly President Clinton has been criticized for jeopardizing carefully crafted security arrangements by his administration's singular concern for promoting the commercial interests of domestic industry (see for example, The Economist, November 23, 1996, p. 24).
4. For example, the imprint of agricultural interests and the business sector on trade issues and foreign aid policy is unambiguous (O'Halloran, 1994; Hansen, 1990; Bacchus, 1997).

5. Despite realist claims that international affairs should be above the popular embrace, politics in fact does not stop at the water's edge. Indeed, foreign policy has always been subject to the push and pull of domestic-political interests (see for example, Auerswald and Cowhey, 1997; Bacchus, 1997; Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman, 1990; Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson, 1995; Downs and Rocke, 1995; Evans, Putnam, and Jacobson, 1993; Ghatatz, 1993; Hagan, 1994; Mo, 1995; Nincic, 1992; Snyder, 1991). According to Hagan (1993, p. 2), “foreign policy making is an inherently political process and such domestic influences on foreign policy are a cross-nationally pervasive phenomenon.” And, White (1989, p. 2) has insisted “that an understanding of the way in which policy is made is central to an understanding of the substance of foreign policy.”

6. Putnam (1988, p. 427) observed in his seminal two-level game piece that the question of whether domestic politics determines international relations is nowhere near as interesting, nor as fruitful, as probing for when and how domestic politics influences international behavior. Indeed, the direction of influence has profound normative implications. As Lindsay et al. wrote (1992, p. 5), “the defense of imperial presidency rests on the claim that presidents are more rational and more immune to the tide of public opinion than is Congress. The claim of superior presidential decision making crumbles, however, if presidents use foreign policy to serve their own political ends.”

7. The rich literature on Lateral Pressure Theory assesses more broadly the impact of economic cycles on interstate conflict (see for example Choucri and North, 1975; Goldstein, 1988). This theory contrasts sharply with diversionary or scapegoat theories (see Russet, 1990).

8. Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman (1990) also have concluded that violent foreign policies often tend to elicit political opposition.

9. Classical liberals, such as Schumpeter (1950) and Rummel (1983) insist that economically and politically free states should be less likely than non-free polities to initiate conflicts, regardless of the regime type of one’s opponent (also see Doyle, 1986).

10. According to Maoz and Abdolali (1989, pp. 6–7), “politically free states may be more likely targets of international violence than nonfree states. A political elite of a nonfree state may calculate that its chances of getting its way in a dispute are higher if it picks on a politically free state.” Blainey (1988) also notes that domestic unrest often tends to incite foreign aggression (see Walt, 1997 for similar evidence with regards to revolutionary regimes). Thanks go to an anonymous reviewer for bringing these latter two cites to the author’s attention.

11. Conflict proneness may vary across parties and economic circumstances depending on what signal these conditions send to a potential opponent.

12. The former measure attempts to capture which state militarized the dispute first, the latter seemingly endeavors to assign blame.

13. According to Jones, Bremer and Singer (1996, p. 178), the revision variable “attempts to indicate which states are dissatisfied with the existing status quo prior to the onset of a militarized interstate dispute.” The indicator is based on fundamental differences over important policy concerns that were present prior to the onset of the dispute.

14. An additional problem is that it is quite possible for both (or all) states involved in a MID to be simultaneously coded as revisionist. While this may not invalidate revision type as a theoretical construct, it does bring in to question the usefulness of the empirical distinction.
DOMESTIC POLITICS AND DISPUTES

15. If the two variables, satisfaction and initiation, are in fact measuring similar concerns as Gowa (1998) argued the event-count results presented below should not differ dramatically from what she observed. Curiously, though, Gowa (1998, p. 313) found that in 76.5% of the disputes, the US was coded as both an initiator and a revisionist state. I have been unable to replicate this finding. In fact, I find that the US is both an initiator and a revisionist state in only 81 disputes out of 262 (31%). Additionally, the bivariate correlation between these two variables is a modest .54.

16. In fact, a domestic audience may often be the intended target in many low-level clashes.

17. Evidence also suggests that powerful states are seldom revisionist (Kacowicz, 1995; Lemke and Reed, 1996). Given that democratic states tend to be wealthy and thus powerful, democracies should be predisposed to support the status quo (Kacowicz, 1995).

18. Indeed, if a state believes that an attack is imminent, a preemptive probe would seemingly provide one's opponent with a justification for aggression. On the other hand, one might conjecture that a revisionist state might attempt to induce a preemptive strike to moderate domestic constraints on the use of force. This would appear to be a risky strategy, though, particularly if offensive capabilities provide a first blow advantage. Furthermore, some theories posit that status quo states are by definition not attackers (see Reiter, 1995, p. 8).

19. A third possibility is that these indicators will not move together, but each may in fact be related differently to foreign policy decision-making.

20. Some scholars disagree with this statement. Gochman (1996/97) has questioned whether the democratic peace can legitimately be expanded to include minor militarized disputes between states. Chan (1997, p. 68) also, as I discuss further below, argues that the democratic peace proposition says nothing about reciprocation.

21. Due to data limitations on the GNP series, the empirical analysis only extends back to 1870. I furthermore wanted to make comparisons to Gowa's (1998) analysis, which also stopped at 1870.

22. According to Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman (1990), political opposition tends to reinforce risk-averse foreign policy attitudes.

23. I include this variable principally as a control; although any striking differences uncovered between the parties have interesting policy implications.

24. GNP data come from the Statistical Abstract of the United States (various years) and Rorner (1989). Various other indicators of economic performance are commonly used to help explain foreign policy decision-making. GNP was used here because it was readily available and also because reliable US unemployment data did not extend back as early as 1870.

25. A negative binomial model was also used to estimate the posited relationships. However, the coefficient measuring overdispersion was never significant. A dependent variable lag was also evaluated. This variable never reached standard (< .05) statistical significance in any of the analyses run below and its substantive effect on the other coefficient estimates was minimal.

26. One possible reason for why few differences emerge when considering MIDs and MaxMIDs has to do with the nature of the disputes themselves. In less than 15% of the MIDs included in the analysis here are casualties recorded; less than 20% when confined to MaxMIDs. So, if violence is an important distinguishing factor, neither set of cases shows any significant variation from each other.

27. Similar to Leeds and Davis (1997), an initiator is defined as an originating state that was first to militarize the dispute. A target is defined as a state that also was an originator, but was not on the side that was first to militarize.
28. Fordham (1998) found opportunities to be related to economic turmoil in the US if militarized disputes are assumed to be opportunities, then the results here support Fordham’s finding. However, Fordham (1998) insisted that these opportunities are endogenous, or in other words, they arise when a president needs them to arise. The inference drawn here, in contrast, is not that presidents are creating opportunities, but that foreign leaders may make demands on the US when they calculate that the likelihood of a response will be low. This appears to be when political and economic conditions necessitate a president addressing domestic issues.

29. According to Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman (1990, p. 752), “the very need to resort to force suggests a political failure by the national leadership, creating openings for oppositional factions.” Due to Republican opposition on Capitol Hill as well as significant aversion for the use of militant internationalism within the Democratic party, foreign leaders may strategically issue demands when the likelihood of reciprocation is perceived to be low.

30. The model appears to do a much better job explaining targeting, rather than US initiation. This may indicate that US domestic economic and electoral conditions enter into the decision calculus of foreign leaders. For initiation, however, the model may be under-specified. By not incorporating more precise systemic measures, such as threat, or Soviet decision making, the model may be a poor predictor of US dispute initiation.


32. Leeds and Davis (1997), however, found no empirical support for their supposition using data from 18 Western industrialized democracies.

33. In Tables V–VI, the total number of MIDs is 99. This is due to the initiator/target distinction. Of the 218 disputes the US was a party to as an originating actor, 119 were as an initiator and 99 were as a target. The analysis of reciprocation only includes those disputes in which the US was a targeted actor.

34. In comparison, the US targeted non-democracies in 101 of its 119 initiated disputes from 1870 to 1992. Only 10 (less than 9%) were directed at other democratic states. The remaining 8 disputes were against polities that were in transition, as coded by the Polity III dataset.

35. Given the null results, these findings are not included in a table.

REFERENCES


DOMESTIC POLITICS AND DISPUTES


