

We write to you in regards to “One if by land, and two if by sea: Cross-domain contests and the escalation of international crises” (manuscript # 2021-05-0303) which you submitted to *International Studies Quarterly*.

We have received reviews from two highly qualified scholars. Please find these reviews below.

The reviewers are split in their overall evaluation of the current manuscript, but both find considerable merit in the original data and findings presented in the manuscript. Thus, we invite you to revise your manuscript and resubmit it *as a Research Note* for further review. Note that the word limit for Research Notes is 8,000 words. You should address the reviews via a revisions memo. For our part, we emphasize the following issues:

- Spotlight your main findings early in the manuscript, following the advice of Reviewer 1.
- Cut most of the theory (section 2) and implications (section 5) sections, focusing on the data and how it tests the two competing explanations.
- Clarify the presentation and discussion of the data, following the detailed advice of both reviewers.

Note in particular the importance of (1) tapping into other debates in the field and (2) writing the article in as clear and engaging a style as possible. Note also that *International Studies Quarterly* is committed to ensuring that scholars receive appropriate intellectual acknowledgement regardless of race, gender, class, professional standing, or other categorical attributes. Please pay particular attention to this issue when revising your citations for overlooked authors and literatures. You can easily check the gender-balance of your references by using the GBAT tool found here: <https://jlsumner.shinyapps.io/syllabustool/>. **Using this tool, your references are approximately 21.36% woman-authored.** Given the persistent gender citation gap in international relations and the increasing number of female students and faculty in the discipline, we aim for approximately 30% female citations to ensure appropriate scholarly recognition.

As *ISQ* receives an extraordinarily high number of submissions, we cannot guarantee the outcome of the review process. We hope, however, that the suggestions of the editors as well as the reviewers will assist in a productive revision.

If you do intend to pursue revisions for resubmission at *ISQ*, please let us know. Note that the window for resubmission is **six months** from the date of the decision email. Your resubmission should include a revision memo outlining how you have addressed referee and editorial comments. *Please put this revision memo in the manuscript itself -- before the abstract and text -- and omit any identifying information.*



Thank you for considering *International Studies Quarterly* for the publication of your research. We look forward to reading the revised manuscript.

Sincerely,
The Editors

Lead Editors: **Brandon Prins & Krista Wiegand**, University of Tennessee *Associate Editors:* **Pinar Bilgin**, Bilkent University; **Christopher Butler**, University of New Mexico; **Ajin Choi**, Yonsei University; **Martin Edwards**, Seton Hall University; **Courtney Hillebrecht**, University of Nebraska, Lincoln; **Reyko Huang**, Texas A&M University; **Wonjae Hwang**, University of Tennessee; **Brian Phillips**, University of Essex; **Laura Shepherd**, The University of Sydney

Reviewer 1:

This paper looks at cross-domain military action, seeking to understand whether cross-domain conflict is more frequent and/or more dangerous during international crises. It makes a clear contribution to ongoing debates about traditional means of warfare (land, naval, air) and recent shifts toward cyber, space, and WMD. There are cross-domain “optimists”, who believe that cross-domain military action can defuse crises, and cross-domain “pessimists”, who believe that cross-domain military action causes crisis escalation. The author uses new data to test these competing ideas: “a novel dataset of the military domain in which 1,282 crisis actors operate during 425 international crises from 1918 to 2015.” These new data allow the author to test whether cross-domain warfare is new (it is not) and whether it leads to more violent and longer crises (it does not). Such fine-grained data is some of the first of its kind and helps resolve some long-standing debates.

This is a terrific paper. While my reactions are mostly positive, I have two overarching suggestions for the author that I hope will make the paper more approachable and reach a wider audience.

Theory/framing

First, the paper lacks “punch.” I should note that this paper is polished and clearly written, but I emerge unenthused by the framing (albeit excited about the new data). Perhaps the author could incorporate policymaker quotes or something along those lines to liven it up a bit? I leave it up to the editors to decide whether this is necessary. This point might be related to the fact that the paper does not propose a new theory but rather relies on competing conceptions of the effectiveness of cross-domain warfare. The author proposes new data to speak to the ongoing debate between pessimists and optimists on cross-domain conflict. I have no problem with this approach. Indeed, I think it suitable to the introduction of a new dataset. However, I think this approach contributes to an underwhelming argument section.

The author simply needs to make their contribution clearer. S/he is making an important argument (that cross-domainness is neither new nor dangerous) but dances around the debate, almost as if hoping not to offend anyone. As one possible suggestion, the author could make it more explicit before section 3.1 that s/he is going to test two sets of competing theories. It is not 100% clear that this is the case throughout the early sections.

Empirics

The empirical contribution is substantial – a completely new dataset to test ideas that have mostly just been punted around by scholars and policymakers alike. I found the discussion of the data and coding to be spot-on. Regarding the following suggestions, most of them are minor items. I just think that the author could present the data analysis more clearly. First, I did struggle with the figures. To my mind, the figures should read at a glance. But I spent a lot of time trying to decipher them. I think that this is mostly due to aesthetics.

A few suggestions:

- Figures 1 & 3 could be simplified into tables to take up less space.
- For Figure 3, I'm unsure why there are two bars for 0.25 and 0.75. You could also label the bars.
- Figure 2 just needs to be more aesthetically pleasing with clear labels, smaller/different font, etc.
- I would cut figure 5 completely or move it to the appendix. Given that the author does not code the ICB dataset, no figures of the dataset are necessary. You can easily describe them verbally in the text or just put everything into the appendix.

When analyzing the data in Table 3, is the independent variable binary (cross-domain or no) or ordered (cross-domain at different levels)? I assume the latter based on the coding but it was unclear from the author's discussion. Personally, I'd like to see both the binary and the ordinal measures estimated in these models. With the binary, the author could get predicted probabilities, looking at the probability of violence at each stage. This might help the author interpret the substantive effects. I use `margins`, `margins(dydx)`, and `marginsplot` in Stata to this effect.

Finally, I'd like to see more descriptive statistics as they relate to the actors using the various military options. Do most of the cross-domain situations involve great powers? Mostly, I'd like to know whether cross-domain military conflict is just a thing of powerful states.

Overall Assessment

Overall, this is a nice, theoretically-grounded introduction to a novel dataset. The implications and conclusions are by no means overstated. I very much hope to see this paper in print soon.

Reviewer 2:

The manuscript titled “One if by land, and two if by sea: Cross-domain contests and the escalation of international crises,” studies how the cross domain interactions between states in crises lead to either escalation or de-escalation. It does so by using newly coded data on the domain in which a conflict is occurring, considering land, sea, air, space, cyber, and WMD domains.

Overall, while this paper deals with a very interesting topic and the author has clearly spent significant time coding some impressive, detailed data, I think that the paper needs to be developed much more significantly, mainly in terms of its theory. As it stands, the paper seems like it would make more sense as a data paper that focuses more on exploring the data. In what follows I will make several broad recommendations that I believe will help the author in revising this manuscript.

Mainly, I think that the largest problem with this manuscript is that while it discusses on page 15 that os (cases in which different countries did not use a particular domain) mean different things for countries that chose not to use that domain as opposed to those that were not able to use the domain, this is not further addressed in the analysis or in the theory. The author compares the similarity of domains that were used by both sides, but does not further address what it means when one side did not have a domain as an option and the other did.

I bring this point up because the author is dealing with the use of domains as a signal of resolve and willingness to escalate. If the author were focusing on the effect that the use of different domains has on outcomes, I could see how it would matter less whether a state had the ability to use one type of domain versus another. Yet, when we think of the use of domains as a signal, then choosing not to expand to a new domain can also be a signal in and of itself (for example, it can be a signal of restraint that keeps the crisis from escalating). In addition, countries that are much more powerful in one domain rather than another may focus on the one domain not because they are avoiding escalation, but because they know where their comparative advantage is. Thus, I think that without considering these points, the inferences that can be drawn from the similarity of domains in which the actors engaged is somewhat limited. If this were a paper that was more focused on introducing the data itself, this problem would be avoided.

One area that I think is left unexplored by the author is the increased effectiveness that comes from engaging in cross-domain warfare. This point is mentioned briefly on page 21, but not really discussed at length. Given that this is something that would not really be affected by the “different zeroes” problem mentioned on page 15, I think that it would be worth exploring further. If cross-domain warfare makes victory more likely, then perhaps what is being signaled by the use of new domains is one state’s greater capabilities (which “on paper” may not be as credible of a signal).

Finally, I believe that by addressing the cyber domain when only two of the crisis actors in the sample use it, the paper may be extending itself too much. I understand that we can draw inferences about the cyber domain from other cross-domain uses of force, but I still think that the difference in adding air power to a ground-only campaign is different from adding land-based forces to a cyber operation. Though cyber operations are indeed aggressive and can result in people being killed, I think they are still perceived differently than more traditional uses of military force. As an example, there have recently been various cyber attacks from foreign actors against U.S. actors. Though there has certainly been a strong public response to them, it is very different from what it would have been if these had been naval attacks against U.S. vessels, for example (even if they were attacks that did not result in any casualties).

As a minor point, when the author notes (under the pessimistic theory) that cross-domain conflict makes it harder to compare proportionality, an illustrative example would be useful to clarify this point.