

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.R1), which you submitted to *International Studies Quarterly*.

We have received reviews from two highly qualified scholars who previously reviewed your article. Please find these reviews below.

Based on their recommendations and discussion among the senior editorial staff, we offer you a conditional acceptance for your manuscript. In accordance with *ISQ*’s mission statement, we strive to publish articles that establish the significance of their analyses to the broader field of international studies and are drafted in a clear, accessible, and engaging style.

Reviewer 1 makes a number of recommendations regarding framing, how to better emphasize your contribution, and cleaning up the manuscript. You do not need to attend to all of these, but we agree with most of them and feel this will greatly strengthen your article. Please include a revision memo *in your cover letter* discussing how you addressed these concerns.

Please keep in mind that manuscripts should not exceed *ISQ*’s word limit (12,000 words for research articles, 8,000 words for research notes and theory notes). 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/>. 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.

If you do intend to pursue revisions for final submission at *ISQ*, please let us know. Note that the window for submissions on a conditional acceptance is **one month** from the date of the decision email. If you have any questions regarding any of these instructions, do not hesitate to contact us.

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

Sincerely,
The Editors

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Reviewer 1:

This research note examines whether cross-domain conflict is new and whether cross-domain conflict is associated with more violent or longer crises. Using new data on conflict domains between 1918 and 2015, the author argues 1) that cross-domain conflict is neither new nor uncommon and 2) that cross-domain crises are actually less violent and no longer in duration than single-domain crises.

At the suggestions of the editors and reviewers, the author has converted this paper to a research note. As such, the author has had to significantly revise the paper. Although the author has addressed all of the concerns raised by the editors/reviewers, I like this version of the paper less than the original manuscript. My enthusiasm for the new data remains the same, but I have a number of new concerns (outlined below).

Introduction

The author does a nice job of pulling in the reader at the beginning of the paper. However, I couldn't find the author's research question or answer until paragraph 4. I encourage the author to be more up front in this. For example, in paragraph 4, the author notes that "Cross-domain military contests are neither new nor a cause for alarm." This may be the case, but the author needs to explicitly note whether this is their argument and finding. This one is a simple fix: Just rephrase the sentence and move it to the first paragraph: "In this paper, I find that cross-domain military contests are neither new nor a cause for alarm." However, this is but one example of difficult phrasing in the paper.

Second, the author continues to undersell their contributions. For example, the author notes, "Rather than introduce a new theory, this paper contributes to. . ." Why not try: "This paper introduces new data that adjudicates between the deterrence and spiral models of conflict, finding support for the former. Essentially, . . ." The author needs to distill their findings in a more cogent manner, as this entire paragraph disconnects the findings from the very theories that the author promises to test.

Third, I believe that the author could conduct what some call a "critical literature review" by combining sections 2 and 3. Section 2 discussing existing theories of cross-domain warfare, while section 3 discusses the spiral model ("pessimists") and the deterrence model ("optimists"). The author should seek to weave these discussions into a coherent section that introduces the theoretical framework. In a research note, the author does not have time for "throat-clearing" phrases such as "Rather than engage in ontological debates about the best way to typologize conflict behavior. . ."

Relatedly, although the author insists that they are contrasting the spiral and deterrence modes, they only mention Jervis (1976) once in this version and they barely discuss how the various literatures fit into these models in section 3. I presume this is because of the material that the author cut out from the previous version. However, after making the revisions, the author should carefully reassess their paper to make sure they are doing what they say they are doing. It may be time to drop the spiral v. deterrence model framing entirely. On a minor note: I found the reliance on analogies tiring after a while—the "rock, paper, scissors", chess and checkers, apples versus oranges. These are helpful analogies for conference presentations, but I found them difficult to follow when I just wanted a clear explication of the author's theoretical framework. Cutting them would also help the author get below the 8,000 word limit for the research note.

Empirics

Similar to the author needing to present their argument more forcefully, the author should own the data. For example, they note that a "research team extended. . ." I presume, however, that the author led this research team? The author should emphasize that: "In this paper, I introduce a new dataset detailing the

domains in which conflict occurs to assessing existing theories of cross-domainness.”

The actual data analysis is still great, and I absolutely can't wait to see the data come out. The new tables and figures are somewhat improved, although I still think the author can do better. Given that this paper is introducing new data, the author needs to clearly present it in a way that makes people want to use it. Here are a few suggestions for improvement:

1. Add percentage of total observations as third column to Table 2.
2. Remove colors from Figure 1 in case of color-blind readers. Also, make sure that the text fits within the circles and is of similar font to the text. I was surprised by the author's exclusion of space/cyber/WMD. At the broadest level, I feel like this figure undersells the author's contributions and would prefer a revised version of the original version (now in the appendix).
3. Instead of doing number of crises in Figure 2, why not percent of crises and then label the bars with the actual number of crises? This allows for easier comparison. In the analysis: Given that some states cannot respond in kind or in a cross-domain fashion, should we see more violent crises among certain categories of states? In other words, states with similar domain capabilities are likely to experience higher levels of conflict while states that have dissimilar domain capabilities should experience lower levels of conflict? This is something to consider given the discussion on page 13.

Small note: “There is a control for whether one of the two superpowers, the United States or the Soviet Union, was involved in the crisis” (16). Is this a control just for the Cold War years? Controlling for Russia post-1990 does not make sense in a dataset that continues through 2015.

The author should spend more time discussing the models reported the appendix and polishing the overall presentation, as it is a bit messy at the moment. There are several times when the author refers to a table in LaTeX that gets the “??” outcome. And one of the tables ends up on the second page of references. Try to get the tables close to the discussion, otherwise it is a bit overwhelming for the reader.

Also, in my previous memo, I asked for a discussion of what types of states utilize these various domains (great powers, etc.). The author discusses this in Appendix 1.1, but I don't know what small power, middle power, great power, and superpower means. The number of NA codings is surprising as well. There are many other codings of power status in the literature. The author should explore them. Also, “crisis count” means little when not given as a percentage (a problem throughout the paper). Mean Domain Count means even less. Please do provide more detail on the ICB coding on great power status and what types of states use each. This will make me more confident that the author's findings are not driven by selection effects.

Conclusion

While I still like this paper, I have some serious lingering concerns about the presentation of both the theory and data. I hope that my comments help the author on both fronts.

Reviewer 2:

The author has thoughtfully addressed all reviewer comments and I have no remaining major concerns regarding it.