Dear Editorial Team,

Please find my revised manuscript “One if by land, and two if by sea: Cross-domain contests and the escalation of international crises” (manuscript #2021-05-0303.R1) which was previously offered a conditional acceptance.

I have made revisions to the manuscript based on the suggestions provided by Reviewer 1. Most are stylistic or cosmetic in nature, and none have altered the fundamental argument, results, or contribution of the manuscript. The revisions have improved the manuscript, particularly when it comes to framing, emphasizing the contribution, and cleaning up the manuscript (particularly the appendix). The resulting manuscript is also shorter, and is now just under 8,000 words, as requested for a Research Note.

Below, I provide the exact text provided by Reviewer 1 (in quotes) and the changes I have made, where appropriate (italicized and indented):

**Reviewer 1 Recommendations**

“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.”

*Added to the end of the first paragraph “Using a new dataset on the domains in which states took military action during international crises over the past century, this paper finds cross-domain military contests are neither new nor cause for alarm.”*

“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.”

*Sentence re-written as “This paper introduces new data that adjudicates between the deterrence and spiral models of conflict, with four main findings that provide empirical support for the former (deterrence) in the cross-domain context.” The rest of the paragraph has been re-written to better distill the findings.*

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. . . ”

*Section 2 and 3 have been combined, which includes editing the previous introduction to section 3 which was redundant with the ending of Section 2. Section 2 is now a “critical literature review” that briefly defines domains and explains the existing debate about whether means matter, and then describes the existing deterrence vs spiral model debate as applied to cross-domain conflict. “Throat-clearing” phrases have been deleted.*

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.

*I have opted to keep the deterrence vs spiral framing, as it is important for clarifying the contribution. The paper is fundamentally about what cross-domain conflict tells us about the spiral and deterrence models since it is an empirical test about whether responding to an adversary’s aggression within-domain as opposed to outside-domain is associated with that conflict spiraling or deterring your opponents aggression.*

*I have deleted 4 analogies in the paper, leaving only the one about “rock, paper, scissors” and the one about “apples vs oranges”.*

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 author’s role in creating the dataset has been clarified in a footnote at the beginning of the “Event coding” section. That was previously left ambiguous through an anonymous citation to ensure the peer-review process was double-blind, as the research team is publicly known.*

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.

*Added a third column, as suggested*

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).

*Figure 1 has been reverted to a revised version of the original figure (the upset plot). The figure is now black and white and all labels, annotations, and sizes have been cleaned up. I agree with the reviewer that what the data says about military actions in space, cyber, and WMD are sufficiently interesting and novel to not be left to 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.

*Fixed Figure 2. Y-axis is now percent and labels added above each bar for the number of observations. Caption updated to reflect that.*

*The issue about states not being able to respond in kind was addressed in response to Reviewer 2 in the previous memo. The data presented here concerns what states use, not what states possess. The latter is a research project the author is actively undertaking but will take some years to complete. More importantly, gathering that information does not change the underlying math used to calculate the Jaccard index.*

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.

*To clarify, the control is not just for the Cold War years since it controls for the US or Soviet Union prior to 1990 and controls for the US post 1990. This is in alignment with the existing research cited here.*

*The appendix has been cleaned in terms of formatting and more discussion is provided for the robustness check model results. Each additional model is now presented on a separate page, with the justification and interpretation provided prior to the results.*

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.

*This section of the appendix has been re-written by providing the ICB definition of those 4 categories. The author is unclear about how alternate great power codings would ameliorate selection effects, nor why the existing codings provided by the original ICB data produce selection effects. The fact that actors of different power status get involved in different international crises is a well-studied phenomenon in international affairs, but is distinct from the research question answered here.*