Presidential Political Ambition and US Foreign Conflict Behavior, 1816-2010

Matthew DiLorenzo
Vanderbilt University

Rebecca McBride
Calvin College

James Lee Ray
Vanderbilt University

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Abstract

How do term limits affect international conflict behavior? We revisit this question using new quarter-year-level data on presidential political ambition in the United States (US) from 1816 to 2010. Multi-country research finds that the reelection motive decreases the likelihood of conflict initiation. We argue that there are good reasons to expect that the US is different. We find that politically-ambitious US presidents are more likely to initiate international conflicts. Consistent with previous research, however, we find that political ambition appears to be unrelated to a president's chances of becoming the target of a militarized dispute.

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If the highest priority for leaders of states is to attain and retain power, then this priority must affect the foreign policies of those states. In the United States (US), presidents have been aware that their days in power are clearly limited, even before the passage of the 22nd Amendment. How do term limits, self-imposed under historical norms or constitutionally imposed, impact leaders' foreign policies? Two recent articles conclude that term-limited democratic leaders are more belligerent than democratic leaders eligible for reelection (Conconi et al., 2014; Zeigler et al., 2014).[1]

We revisit this question as it relates to US conflict behavior. Theory and evidence suggest that the US case may be unusual. On one hand, US presidents appear to become more conflict prone prior to elections (Russett, 1990a; Stoll, 1984), and there is some evidence that US presidents are prone to diversionary conflict behavior (Clark, 2003; Fordham, 2002; Morgan and Bickers, 1992; Ostrom and Job, 1986; Russett, 1990b). Removing the prospects for reelection may thus have a pacifying effect on US foreign policy by reducing incentives for diversionary tactics. On the other hand, the nature of political interdependence between the executive and legislative branches in the US may make presidents responsive to public opinion regardless of concerns about reelection (Edwards, 1980; Fiorina, 1981; Oneal and Tir, 2006: 768). This implies that term-limited presidents should behave no differently from politically-ambitious presidents. While these perspectives make different predictions about the relationship between political ambition and US conflict behavior, neither predicts that lame duck US presidents should be more conflict prone as some existing evidence would suggest.

We consider whether results from multi-country studies find support in the US case using new quarter-year data on presidential political ambition in the US from 1816 to 2010. We show that in one respect the US is different: US presidents who have ostensibly given up hope of being re-elected are generally *less* likely to initiate militarized disputes. However, we do replicate Zeigler et al.'s (2014) finding that presidents eligible for reelection are no more or less likely to be targeted in international conflicts than their term-limited counterparts.

This article makes a number of contributions. First, it identifies an important excep-

tion to a more general relationship between political ambition and international conflict. The US holds a unique position of influence and its decisions to use military force affect a diverse array of actors. A reflection of this fact is that the US has been involved in a relatively high number of militarized disputes throughout its history (14% of the 2586 disputes documented in the Correlates of War Militarized Interstate Dispute Data Set (Palmer et al., 2015)). Our finding that the relationship between political ambition and conflict initiation in the US is the opposite of what multi-country studies find is thus substantively important. We do not interpret our findings as a refutation of previous research, but instead as evidence that the US does not fit into what appears to be a general pattern. Second, past research on this question has relied on annual observations of political ambition (e.g., Conconi et al., 2014; Zeigler et al., 2014). Depending on when an election occurs during a given year, this may introduce measurement error. We use quarter-year observations to help minimize this problem. Additionally, our data cover the entire period of 1816 to 2010, allowing us to study the relationship between political ambition and conflict behavior throughout the longest time period for which data on militarized disputes are available. Finally, we introduce a new data set on the political ambition of US presidents. While we use the data to study American conflict behavior, analysts might also find them useful in studying the effects of political ambition on a variety of other policy outcomes.

The article proceeds as follows. We begin by briefly reviewing research on political ambition and foreign policy, deriving hypotheses about the role of political ambition in affecting US conflict behavior. Next, we describe our data and develop a research design to evaluate our hypotheses. Finally, we present our results and consider some possible explanations for the difference between our results and prior research findings.

Political Ambition, Foreign Policy, and Term Limits

The axiom that national leaders engaged in foreign policy making place the highest priority on staying in power (rather than the "national interest") has deep historical

roots. According to Modelski (1964: 55), "Kautilya's *Arthasustra* is, above all, a manual of statecraft, a collection of rules that a king or administrator would be wise to follow if he wishes to acquire and maintain power." Nederman (2009) points out that Machiavelli's *The Prince* emphasizes that the only real concern of political leaders is the acquisition and maintenance of power. Even Morgenthau (1967: 32) asserts in *Politics Among Nations* that, "[t]he essence of international politics is identical with its domestic counterpart. Both domestic and international politics are a struggle for power, modified only by the different conditions under which this struggle takes place... ." In the more contemporary era, Domke (1988: 105) suggested that, "political elites wish to attain and stay in office," and further that government leaders would fight wars if those conflicts help to keep them in office. Milner (1997: 334) bases her work, which focuses primarily on democratic states, on the "simplifying assumption that staying in office is the main goal of executives." Probably the primary inspiration for the recent widespread adoption of a fundamental axiom that the highest priority of political leaders is to remain in power is *The Logic of Political Survival* (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003).[2] "We take it as axiomatic," according to the authors, "that everyone in a position of authority wants to keep that authority and that it is the maneuvering to do so that is central to politics in any type of regime" (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003: 9).[3] This assumption is core to the "selectorate" theory that those authors develop.

If leaders strive first to maintain themselves in power, then perhaps leaders who are constitutionally or otherwise prohibited from extending their hold on power approach foreign policy issues and interstate interactions in fundamentally different ways. Leaders of other states might also deal with them differently. Unfortunately, Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) offer limited guidance on these questions.[4] The authors do suggest that term limits in the Roman Republic apparently encouraged leaders – whom were limited to terms of one year – to engage in reckless foreign policy behavior (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003: 315).

Others have drawn on Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s (2003) framework to hypothesize about the relationship between term limits and conflict behavior. Conconi et al. (2014)

and Zeigler et al. (2014) both provide extensive reviews of literature suggesting possible relationships between term limits and conflict. One viewpoint based on selectorate theory says that leaders of democratic states will normally be cautious about becoming involved in interstate conflict, since defeat in a conflict will increase the risk of losing the next election. Because "[a]rriving in a final term lowers a leader's sensitivity to domestic audience costs," leaders that are term limited "should be more inclined to engage in military disputes..." (Zeigler et al., 2014: 662). Haynes (2012: 791) also speculates that term limits could "lead to riskier foreign policy behavior, as lame-duck presidents cannot be punished by their constituents in the wake of policy failures." Similarly, both Fearon (1994) and Jackson and Morelli (2007) suggest that lame-duck leaders are relatively impervious to the possible costs of losing an interstate conflict, and therefore tend to be more inclined to fight.

Two recent studies find support for this hypothesis. Zeigler et al. (2014: 673) analyze the conflict proneness of forty-eight democracies in the years from 1978 to 2000, concluding that, "the institutional constraint of term limits increases the likelihood of conflict by more than 50 percent."[5] Conconi et al. (2014) compare rates of conflict across dyads throughout the period of 1816 to 2001 and find that jointly-democratic dyads are more peaceful than democratic-autocratic or jointly-autocratic dyads only when neither democratic leader faces a binding term limit (Conconi et al., 2014: 1010). Further, Conconi et al. (2014: 997) report that "in democracies with two-term limits, conflicts are less likely to occur during the executive's first mandate than in the last one." Given the concurrent findings in these two cross-national time-series analyses, a reasonable prior expectation is that US presidents who can and intend to stand for reelection will be less likely to initiate international conflicts. Throughout we state our hypotheses in terms of comparisons between presidents who have "political ambition" (i.e., can and do aspire to reelection), and those who do not.

> *Hypothesis 1: Presidents with political ambition are* ***less likely*** *to initiate international conflicts than presidents who do not aspire to be re-elected.*

Politically-ambitious presidents might also evoke different responses from other states

in a way that affects the likelihood that those presidents will be the targets of international conflict. Hypothesis 1 implies that foreign adversaries should less often target leaders without political ambition since those leaders have no electoral incentive to avoid the costs of war. If it is true that US presidents in their final terms are relatively immune to the costs of conflict, then these expectations are reasonable in the US case. Further, Zeigler et al. (2014) cite a number of studies suggesting that length of time in office and experience correlate with a decreased likelihood of being targeted by foreign adversaries (e.g., Potter, 2007; Wolford, 2007). This suggests that politically-ambitious leaders, having been in office for less time, should more often be targeted in international conflicts.

> *Hypothesis 1-T: Presidents with political ambition are* ***more likely*** *to be targeted in international conflicts than presidents who do not aspire to be reelected.*

Is the United States Different?

Two bodies of research suggest that the US may be different. The first deals with the diversionary theory of conflict, which stipulates that a leader might attempt to divert attention from domestic problems with international conflict to improve her standing among the public and boost her chances of being reelected (e.g., GW Downs and Rocke, 1994; Morgan and Bickers, 1992; Oneal and Tir, 2006). Since term limits eliminate the reelection motive, theories of diversionary conflict imply that, all else equal, binding term limits should be pacifying. Evidence for the diversionary hypothesis is notoriously mixed and disputed (e.g., Oneal and Tir, 2006: 757-760; Chiozza and Goemans, 2011: 35-40). Two central critiques of the research agenda are that (1) many analysts rely on data from the US case for the sake of convenience and (2) the US case is likely to be exceptional because of the unique position of power held by the US (Oneal and Tir, 2006: 760).

Critiquing the broader diversionary war agenda for its heavy US focus makes sense, but if the US truly is exceptional, the implications for the relationship between political ambition and conflict behavior are different. A number of studies that suggest the

prospects for being reelected may lead US presidents to risk international conflict to their benefit. Stoll (1984) finds that American presidents have been prone to use military force during reelection campaigns in apparent attempts to create "rally round the flag" effects to their benefit. Russett (1990) also finds that the US has been more likely to initiate or participate in the escalation of a dispute in presidential elections years. This reinforces Russett's (1990) research suggesting that military action by the US becomes more likely in the immediate lead up to an election, a finding also reported by Wang (1996). The benefits of initiating or escalating crises are not certain, and on average may be quite small.[6] But presidents may be more willing to take this gamble when election to an additional term is possible (Chiozza and Goemans, 2003, 2011). While the evidence for the relationship between economic growth and the use of force by the US is mixed (Ostrom and Job, 1986; Oneal and Tir, 2006: 769), there is evidence that conflict can distract the public's attentiveness to economic problems in the US (DeRouen and Peake, 2002). Further, military action and the prominence of national security concerns help presidents receive greater deference from Congress in pursuing international and domestic policy goals, which may help them win reelection (Howell et al., 2013; Stoll, 1987).

So, the validity of the assumption that leaders will be penalized electorally for using force – an assumption Conconi et al. (2014: 1002) build in to their theory – is questionable in the US case. American presidents may have the motive to engage in diversionary behavior. Perhaps more importantly, many have suggested that the US and other great powers may be well-positioned to engage in diversionary behavior (Oneal and Tir, 2006: 763; Brule et al., 2010; James and Hristoulas, 1994). Regarding the interaction of the election motive with diversionary incentives, Zeigler et al. (2014: 664) comment that, "the United States is likely to be the exception rather than the norm, given its position of power" (Zeigler et al., 2014: 664). It is possible that the costs of initiating disputes relative to even modest expected gains in electoral fortunes are small enough to justify conflict. Thus, if US presidents have a propensity for diversionary behavior and engage in that behavior close to the time of elections, then US presidents who can stand for reelection should be more likely to initiate international conflicts than presidents without

political ambition on average.

> *Hypothesis 2: Presidents with political ambition are* ***more likely*** *to initiate international conflicts than presidents who do not aspire to be re-elected.*

Extending this logic, if the lack of incentive for reelection leaves little reason to incur the potential risks of conflict, outside aggressors might see lame duck presidents as easy targets who have little reason to fight back. As such, politically-ambitious presidents may be targets of international conflict less often than presidents without political ambition.

> *Hypothesis 2-T: Presidents with political ambition are* ***less likely*** *to be targeted in international conflicts than presidents who do not aspire to be re-elected.*

As both Oneal and Tir (2006: 768) and Zeigler et al. (2014: 667-668) point out, a second body of research in American politics suggests that the interaction of the legislative and executive branches in the US – in particular the relationship between congressional and presidential elections – makes American presidents responsive to public opinion throughout their entire terms. The president's standing with the public can affect the outcomes of local elections (e.g., Fiorina, 1981) and affect Congressional support for executive initiatives (e.g., Edwards, 1980). Russett (1990) argues that modern polling and extensive media activity in the US makes political leaders constantly sensitive to public opinion, not just near the time of elections (or even if they will never face the electorate again). For example, Brule et al. (2010: 489) speculate that US President Clinton's launching of cruise missile attacks in Afghanistan and Sudan in 1998 – after Clinton faced a binding term limit – was intended to shore up the position of the Democratic Party in Congress. If presidents also prioritize policy goals that are unrelated to the pursuit of remaining in office, then this "permanent referendum hypothesis" (Russett, 1990b) suggests that term limits will have little or no effect on the conflict proneness of states, contra the expectations underlying the above hypotheses. While Russett (1990) and Wang (1996) link elections to heightened conflict behavior by the US, other studies find no such link (e.g., Gowa, 1998).

*Hypothesis 3: Presidents with political ambition are **no more or less likely** to initiate international conflicts than presidents who do not aspire to be re-elected.*

If conflict incentives remain constant throughout a president's term as suggested by the permanent referendum hypothesis, then political ambition should not affect the likelihood that a US president is targeted in a military dispute. Yet, even if Hypothesis 2 is correct with respect to conflict initiation, the US' roles as a relatively isolationist and geographically remote nation after its founding and then as a global superpower beginning in the early twentieth century may influence its likelihood of being targeted in international conflicts in ways that could make any independent effect of political ambition small or difficult to detect.

*Hypothesis 3-T: Presidents with political ambition are **no more or less likely** to be targeted in international conflicts than presidents who do not aspire to be re-elected.*

In sum, there are good reasons to reconsider whether extant findings on political ambition and international conflict hold for the US. In the next section we develop a research design to test whether politically-ambitious US presidents behave differently than US presidents without ambition when it comes to international conflict.

Research Design

Independent Variable: Political Ambition

Comparing the foreign conflict behavior of politically-ambitious US presidents to those of presidents who are identifiably less ambitious requires generating data on which presidents have become "lame ducks" while still in office. Previous studies on ambition and conflict generate annual data on ambition. Though a reasonable design choice, this entails occasionally coding leaders as having ambition for some periods of time when we know they did not. For example, presidents lose political ambition upon defeat in their

reelection bids, yet they continue to serve as president for months. When political ambition is observed only on an annual basis, periods of service by chief executives who are unconcerned about holding onto the presidency during regular constitutional transfers of power are inaccessible. To better distinguish between portions of a year when a president did and did not have the ambition to be reelected, our units of observation are time periods three months in duration. Our temporal domain is 1816-2010, corresponding to the availability of the data on international conflict.

An aspect of our study that requires special attention is that the legal status of term limits in the US changes during our temporal domain. The 22nd Amendment to the US Constitution, passed by the US Congress in 1947 and ratified by the requisite three-fourths of the states by 1951, prohibits US presidents from serving more than two terms. It specifically excluded the sitting president, Harry Truman, from its impact, so Dwight Eisenhower was the first US president to be prohibited by the 22nd Amendment (after he won a second term in 1956) from running for a third term. Obviously, presidents who served after the passage of the 22nd Amendment have no reason to be concerned about reelection as soon as they are elected (or not) to their second terms. In the years from 1816 to 1951, the date by which presidents might have given up ambition to be reelected is more difficult to identify.

A review of the historical record suggests there was a norm of some strength prohibiting presidents from serving more than two terms. Starting with George Washington in 1796, many presidents adhered to a norm of foregoing a third term.[7] Some presidents even promised not to run for reelection in their first terms. Jefferson, for instance, actually favored a one-term limit. Andrew Jackson agreed, and between Jackson and Lincoln, "a one term tradition seems to have developed" (Peabody, 2001: 447. See also P Willis and G Willis (1952).) At least three nineteenth-century presidents publicly disavowed any intentions of running for a second term very close to the beginning of their first terms. James K. Polk, for example, declared in his speech accepting his party's nomination in 1844 that he would not run for a second term (Nelson, 2008). Milkis and Nelson (2012: 147) explain that "after winning the Democratic nomination, [Polk] stole

one of the Whigs' main issues by disclaiming any intention to seek a second term." James Buchanan waited until his inaugural address to announce that he would not run for re-election. He declared in that address (in 1857) that "having determined not to become a candidate for reelection, I shall have no motive to influence my conduct in administering the Government except the desire ably and fully to serve my country and live in grateful memory of my countrymen" (Peters and Wooley, 2014). And Rutherford B. Hayes pledged from the start of his presidential campaign that he would not run for reelection to a second term. He put that pledge in the letter he wrote to accept that Presidential nomination of the Republican Party in 1876. One of his main campaign pledges was to reform the Federal civil service. "In his acceptance letter, Hayes called for reform of the civil service and pledged to serve only one term, lest patronage be used to secure his re-election" (Anonymous, 2013). A review of the history of the Hayes administration suggests that little or no doubt surfaced in those years that Hayes would fail to keep his pledge (Hoogenboom, 1995).

Yet some presidents appeared to show interest in a third term despite the two term tradition in place before the passage of the 22nd Amendment. As Peabody (2001: 440-441) notes, "expectations about presidential term limits have actually been mutable and contested, reflecting a national opposition between a commitment to, and apprehension over, centralized governing structures." In particular, Ulysses Grant threatened to shatter the two term tradition (Parmet and Hecht, 1968: 3). His experience has mixed implications for any evaluation of the strength of the two term tradition in the US prior to the 22nd Amendment, as Grant came fairly close to being nominated for a third term. However, informed opinion suggests that, "Grant's defeat can be attributed to outspoken opposition to the third term" (Parmet and Hecht, 1968: 4). And arguably, Grant was able to come so close to overcoming the two term tradition because he made his attempt to be elected for a third term only after the hiatus of four years between the end of his second term and the Republican national convention in 1880.

In light of this norm, coding some pre-Truman presidents as having lacked the ambition to aspire to a third (or second) term seems appropriate and historically accurate

even in the absence of formal, binding term limits in that era. We have made decisions regarding how long those presidents aspired to be reelected (if they did) by reviewing historical accounts of their presidencies. In many cases, we will consider presidents who were elected to second terms to be without ambition for reelection on the date of their second election. Section C of the Online Appendix provides a more detailed account of our coding procedures for these cases. Each US president receives a score of 1 for each observation during which they apparently aspired to be reelected, and 0 otherwise.

We understand that the strength, or even the existence of this historical norm prohibiting third terms for US presidents before the 22nd amendment went into effect is debatable. One defense of it would point out that no president was nominated for, much less elected to a third term until 1940. But, it is possible that we give the norm too much credit every time we categorize second term presidents as without political ambition before the 22nd Amendment went into effect. If so, then the hypothesized effects of a lack of political ambition did not occur, and the results of our analyses should reflect that.

Dependent Variable: International Conflict

The US was involved in only 11 interstate wars from 1816 to 2010, which suggests that statistical analyses focused on wars are unlikely to be fruitful or enlightening. We instead measure conflict behavior by generating quarterly data on militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) using version 4.01 of the MID data set (Palmer et al., 2015). MIDs are "united historical cases in which the threat, display or use of military force short of war by one member state is explicitly directed toward the government, official representatives, official forces, property, or territory of another state" (Jones et al., 1996: 168). We code instances where the US initiated a MID, as well as cases where it was the target in a MID as two separate dummy variables. We also use an alternative version of this variable that counts only MIDs that reached a hostility level of 4 or 5 (on a 1 to 5 scale).[8]

Control Variables

We account for a number of factors that may affect conflict propensity or political ambition. First, we control for the age of the president, which correlates with the likelihood that a president faces a term limit.[9] Horowitz et al. (2005) report that older leaders (particularly in democracies) are more likely to initiate and escalate militarized disputes in their analysis of disputes that occurred between 1875 and 2002. They argue this results from older leaders having shorter time horizons and being more acceptant of risk to secure a favorable legacy (Horowitz et al., 2005: 667-669). Additionally, Bak and Palmer (2010) find that older leaders are more likely to be targets in militarized disputes.

Second, we control for the number of quarter-years that a president has been in office. Wolford (2007) argues that potential challengers have incentives to initiate disputes with states having newly elected leaders to assess their resolve. Gelpi and Grieco's (2001) finding that states with more inexperienced leaders are more likely to be targeted in militarized disputes supports this theory. Bak and Palmer (2010) also find that some US Presidents (especially Republican presidents) are more likely to be targeted in disputes early in their terms, and Potter (2007) finds that US Presidents are less likely to be involved in militarized disputes or crises the longer they serve in office. Since time in office is also correlated with the likelihood that a president faces a term limit, we control for it.

Third, we control for military capabilities. One fundamental factor that likely affects the probability that the US initiates, or even is targeted in a militarized dispute, would be its military-industrial capabilities. The more extensive its capabilities, the larger the number of targets for disputes that there will be within its reach. (Furthermore, when disputes arise, on occasion the other state may initiate the militarized phase of those conflicts.) We use the Correlates of War Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC) score (Singer et al., 1972).[10]

Fourth, we account for whether or not the US faced an economic recession during a given quarter-year. Recessions may increase the odds that a president loses an election or

chooses not to run for reelection (and thus loses political ambition) and create incentives to divert the electorate's attention from the state of the economy (Hess and Orphanides, 1995; Ostrom and Job, 1986; Russett, 1990b). Empirical support for this argument is mixed (James and Oneal, 1991; Oneal and Tir, 2006; Zeigler et al., 2014), but given the potential confounding influence of recessions and the mixed evidence in the US case, we control for whether the US was in an economic recession during a given quarter year. The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) provides specific information regarding recessions from 1854 to 2009. It defines a recession as "a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in real gross domestic product (GDP), real income, employment, industrial production, and wholesale-retail sales" (Hall, 2003). Economist Willard Tharp, an NBER employee, also generated data regarding the timing of recessions in the US all the way back to 1789. His estimates tend to be annual, but after 1854, the NBER estimates define recessions in terms of duration in months; thus they fit in well with our quarterly observations. This variable is equal to 1 when there is a recession in the US, and 0 otherwise.[11]

Fifth, we include a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 for quarter-years after President Truman's time in office. Any relationship between political ambition and conflict behavior might depend on term limits becoming legally binding, and coincide with a time when the US became increasingly involved in world affairs.

Finally, we account for some international factors that may correlate with ambition and conflict. Whether a president chooses to run for reelection could be influenced by conditions in international politics, in which case conflict and political ambition might be partly endogenous. For instance, if presidents abandon political ambition when international conditions are particularly challenging and the prospects for conflict are greatest, this may bias the results in favor of Hypothesis 1. Alternatively, presidents may want to tackle the most pressing international crises in world politics, in which case conditions conducive to conflict may entice presidents to pursue an additional term. This might bias the results in favor of Hypothesis 2. Either way, to account for some of the influence of these potentially confounding latent factors, we include three measures to proxy for the

international conflict environment a president faces. First, we measure of the number of MIDs a president was involved in prior to quarter t. Second, we control for the number of consecutive quarters immediately prior to quarter t in which the US was *not* involved in any militarized interstate disputes. Third, we control for the number of international rivalries in which the US is involved during a given year (Thompson and Dreyer (2011)). To account for unobserved factors that might affect conflict propensity or opportunity in specific historical periods and estimate the effect of ambition more precisely, in some models we include a set of dummy variables that take a value of 1 for each decade in the analysis.[12] We report descriptive statistics for our key variables and histograms for our dependent variables in Sections A and B of the Online Appendix.

Results

Table 1 reports the estimated coefficients from three logit models where the outcome variable is whether or not a president initiated a MID during a given quarter. All of the models in Table 1 include controls for time in office, age, CINC scores, a recession dummy, and a post-Truman dummy variable.[13] In Model 1, the estimated coefficient on ambition is positive and statistically significant at the $p < .10$ level. This is also the case in Model 2, which adds controls for previous MIDs, consecutive peace quarters, and international rivalries. When adding decade-fixed effects in Model 3, the relationship between ambition and conflict initiation is positive and statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level.[14] The positive and statistically significant sign on the coefficients indicates support for Hypothesis 2: the presence of ambition is associated with an increase in the likelihood that a president initiates a MID. This is the opposite of what existing multi-country studies find – that a *lack* of ambition to be reelected leads executives to engage in conflict more freely.

To give a substantive interpretation of the result, we calculated changes in the predicted probability that a president initiates a MID setting the control variables to their mean values and accounting for the four possible combinations of the recession and post-

Table 1: Political Ambition and MID Initiations, 1816-2010

	Dependent variable:		
	MID Initiation (Dummy)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Ambition (Dummy)	0.502*	0.459*	0.848***
	(0.259)	(0.262)	(0.317)
Observations	780	780	780
Log Likelihood	−373.675	−368.176	−348.414
Akaike Inf. Crit.	761.350	756.352	756.827

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. (Two-tailed tests.) Coefficient estimates from logit models. Estimated standard errors in parentheses. Time in office, age, CINC score, recession dummy, and post-Truman dummy included in all models. Previous MIDs, peace quarters, and international rivalries included in Models 2 and 3. Decade dummy variables included in Model 3.

Truman dummy variables using Models 1 and 2 in Table 1, as well as an alternative version of these models that counts only MIDs that reached a hostility level of 4 or higher in the dependent variable.[15] Formally, we calculate the difference in $\Pr(\text{MID}|X_i, \beta) = \frac{\exp(X_i\beta)}{1+\exp(X_i\beta)}$ changing *Ambition* from zero to one where X_i is a vector of values for our covariates and β is a vector of estimated coefficients. For the average president not facing a recession in the pre-Truman period, having political ambition is associated with an increase in the predicted probability of a MID from 0.095 to 0.148, about 55.5%. A president in the same period facing a recession is about 53.7% more likely to initiate a MID when reelection is a possibility (the change in predicted probability is from 0.115 to 0.176). In the post-Truman period, presidents not facing a recession are 39.3% more likely to initiate a MID when politically ambitious (the predicted probability changes from 0.285 to 0.397). Finally, having political ambition is associated with a 36% increase in the predicted probability of MID initiation (0.329 to 0.448) for a president in the post-22$^{\text{nd}}$ Amendment period facing a recession.

To characterize the uncertainty associated with these estimates, Figure 1 presents bootstrapped confidence intervals. In all cases the confidence intervals are away from zero. The effect of ambition is slightly larger in the post-Truman period where the baseline probability of conflict initiation is higher, but across both periods the change in

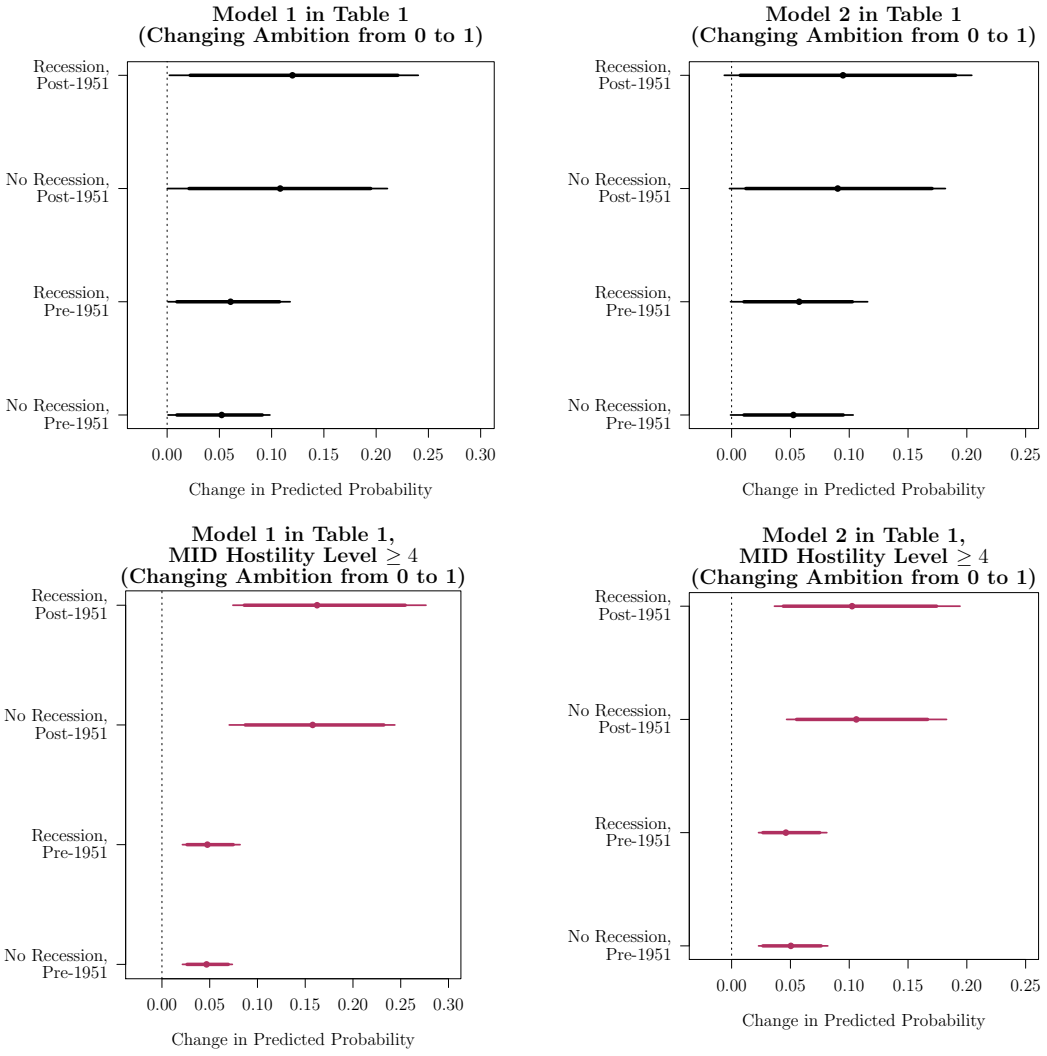

Figure 1: Changes in Predicted Probabilities from Models 1 and 2 in Table 1. Point estimates mark mean changes in predicted probability for each group changing ambition from 0 to 1, holding the other control variables at their means. Thin and thick lines respectively mark the 2.5% to 97.5% and 5% to 95% quantiles of the distribution of changes in predicted probably from 1000 bootstrapped samples with replacement.

predicted probability is significant. The same is true of the upper right panel in Figure 1, which repeats the procedure just discussed with Model 2 in Table 1. There is more uncertainty associated with the estimated change in predicted probability when using Model 2, but in all cases the 90% confidence intervals exclude zero. The effect of political ambition on the probability that a president initiates a high-hostility MID (the lower panels in Figure 1) is also positive and statistically significant.[16]

Turning to the question of whether term limits affect the likelihood of a president being the target in a militarized dispute, our findings agree with those reported in Zeigler et al. (2014). Table 2 reports the estimated coefficients from the same model specifications reported in Table 1, but with the outcome variable changed to a dummy indicating whether a president was the target of a militarized dispute in a given quarter. In all three models in Table 2, the coefficient for political ambition is statistically indistinguishable from zero, consistent with the null relationship predicted by Hypothesis 3-T. Of course, future research might consider additional implications of the theoretical perspectives (permanent referendum theory versus US predominance/remoteness) that motivate that hypothesis to discern between them.[17]

Table 2: Political Ambition and Probability of Being MID Target

	Dependent variable: Target of MID (Dummy)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Ambition	0.191	0.216	0.157
	(0.326)	(0.329)	(0.374)
Observations	780	780	780
Log Likelihood	−268.930	−265.916	−240.250
Akaike Inf. Crit.	551.860	551.831	540.500

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. (Two-tailed tests.) Coefficient estimates from logit models. Estimated standard errors in parentheses. Time in office, age, CINC score, recession dummy, and post-Truman dummy included in all models. Previous MIDs, peace quarters, and international rivalries included in Models 2 and 3. Decade dummy variables included in Model 3.

Robustness Checks and Discussion

On balance, our results with respect to conflict initiation are most consistent with Hypothesis 2, which expects that politically-ambitious presidents will be more likely to initiate conflict. Consistent with multi-country studies, however, we find no evidence in favor of either the Hypothesis 1-T or 2-T: political ambition is unrelated to the likelihood that another state targets the US.

There are a number of possible explanations for the discrepancy between our results and previous research. We investigate some of them here. Because Zeigler et al.'s (2014) article shares a similar focus on hypotheses about individual leaders, whereas Conconi et al. (2014) mainly test hypotheses about and make comparisons between different types of dyads, we focus on comparing our results to those reported in Zeigler et al.'s (2014) article. Table 3 reports the results of seven additional models using alternative coding procedures and temporal domains. First, it is possible coding some presidents who served prior to 1951 as having lacked political ambition during periods of their tenure when term limits were not legally binding would matter. In Model 1 we reestimate the relationship between ambition and conflict treating all quarterly observations before the 22$^{\text{nd}}$ Amendment (up to and including President Truman) as cases where a president could have aspired to be reelected, except for the last quarter that the president was in office.[18] Here the relationship is still positive but no longer statistically significant.[19] The same is true when including decade-fixed effects in Model 2 (though in this model, the one-tailed p-value on the ambition coefficient is 0.065). If we trust this coding scheme, then the results are clearly more consistent with the predictions of permanent referendum theory (Hypothesis 3), which predicts a null effect, though still not consistent with results reported in either Zeigler et al. (2014) or Conconi et al. (2014). However, given our careful review of the historical record and the evidence presented above (and in the Online Appendix) that many pre-Truman presidents *did* adhere to a norm of serving no more than two terms, we think it would be simplistic to code all pre-Truman presidents as aspiring to be re-elected for three of more terms.

Second, differences in the temporal domain might explain the disparate results. Model 3 in Table 3 reports the results of our model when the temporal domain is restricted to 1978-2000 as used in Zeigler et al.'s (2014). In Models 4 through 7, we consider whether the relationship between term limits and conflict may differ in the pre- and post-22nd Amendment time periods. In all of these models the estimated coefficient for political ambition is positive, though it is only statistically significant in Model 5. This is unsurprising since these estimates rely on substantially fewer observations. (Recall that the substantive interpretation in Figure 1 suggests that the effect of ambition may have differed in the pre- and post-Truman eras, though in all cases it is statistically significant.) In Models 6 and 7, where term limits were legally binding, the one-tailed p-values on the ambition coefficient are 0.085 and 0.106, respectively. Again, we believe including pre-Truman observations is appropriate. But, even if we discount this argument and adhere to stricter standards of statistical significance, none of the models are consistent with the hypothesis that a lack of political ambition makes US presidents more conflict prone (Hypothesis 1).

Table 3: Alternative Coding Decisions and Temporal Domains

	Dependent variable: MID Initiated (Dummy)						
	Ambition = 1 for Pre-22nd Cases,	Ambition = 1 for Pre-22nd Cases, Decade FEs	1978-2000 Subset	Pre-22nd	Pre-22nd Decade FEs	Post-22nd	Post-22nd Decade FEs
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Ambition (Alternate Coding)	0.191	0.542					
	(0.316)	(0.358)					
Ambition			0.849	0.381	0.906**	0.762	0.702
			(0.915)	(0.328)	(0.418)	(0.554)	(0.561)
Observations	780	780	92	548	548	232	232
Log Likelihood	−369.562	−351.003	−59.025	−215.521	−197.585	−149.814	−148.119
Akaike Inf. Crit.	759.124	762.006	136.049	449.041	441.170	317.628	326.238

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Two-tailed tests. Coefficient estimates from logit models. Estimated standard errors in parentheses. Controls included: time in office, age, CINC, recession, post-Truman dummy, previous MIDs, peace quarters, rivalries.

Evidence consistent with the argument that the US is different appears in Table 4. Subsetting Zeigler et al.'s (2014) data to include only cases where the US is the "sending" state, we find no evidence for a relationship between term limits and conflict initiation, though the coefficient is positive as originally reported in that study.[20] That the result is far from statistical significance when using the yearly coding of term limits suggests at

least a limitation on the external validity of Zeigler et al.'s (2014) findings. Whether this relationship is unique to the US or is part of a more general pattern – e.g., democratic major powers – is a question that we leave for future research.

Table 4: Term Limits and Conflict Initiation Using Zeigler et al.'s (2014) Directed-Dyadic Data Set, US Only, 1978-2000

	Dependent variable: MID Initiation (Dummy)	
	(1)	(2)
Term Limit Sender	0.134	0.229
	(0.311)	(0.347)
Distance		-0.0004^{***}
		(0.0001)
Polity 2 Receiver		-0.191^{***}
		(0.037)
Relative Capabilities		-0.005^{***}
		(0.001)
Major Power Receiver		0.697
		(0.769)
Constant	-4.526^{***}	-2.702^{***}
	(0.193)	(0.465)
Observations	3,912	3,354
Log Likelihood	−241.116	−169.990
Akaike Inf. Crit.	486.231	351.980

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Two-tailed tests. Coefficient estimates from logit models. Estimated standard errors in parentheses. Major power sender variable constant in sample and omitted.

It is possible that the difference in findings results from differences in measurement and levels of analysis. One factor that complicates a more direct comparison of results is the fact that Zeigler et al. (2014) rely on directed-dyad-year level analyses, while this article uses national quarter-year level observations. Since we generate four observations per year rather than the annual observations that analysts typically rely on in international relations research, a transition to a directed-dyadic-level design would be prohibitively time-consuming and labor intensive. Moreover, since our hypotheses pertain to the national or individual levels of analysis, it makes sense to evaluate them with analyses focusing on states or individuals.

When the data are available, choices regarding levels of analysis would seem straightforward. Perhaps, but Zeigler et al.'s (2014) choice to use directed-dyadic-level analyses to evaluate national-level hypotheses is not idiosyncratic. For example, Gelpi and Grieco (2001: 795) hypothesize that states with leaders in office for a longer time are less likely to be targeted in militarized crises. Horowitz et al. (2005: 667) expect that states with younger leaders will be more likely to initiate militarized disputes. And Bak and Palmer (2010: 260) assert that states with younger leaders are more likely to be targets in militarized disputes. Whether individual leaders or individual states are the units of analysis to which these hypotheses pertain is debatable. What seems less debatable is that all of these hypotheses focus on individual units, not pairs of social entities.[21] Yet all of these articles rely on directed-dyadic-level analyses. The question of whether and how choices about levels of analysis could affect statistical inferences is beyond the scope of this article. Probably the most serious practical obstacle to comparing and arbitrating among substantive results that vary depending on units of analysis is the incomparability of control variables that do not translate across levels. For example, there is no obvious national-level analogue for a variable that measures the physical distance separating dyad members. Additional research on the impact of term limits, as well as that of other characteristics of leaders, might usefully focus attention on possible inconsistencies between the results of analyses pertaining to different (even if closely related) levels of analysis. In any case, the apparent exception of the US is consistent with the theoretical motivation of this article.

Conclusion

The finding here of most general significance is that US presidents that are term limited, or lacking in political ambition, by law, by tradition, or by their own political commitments, have *not* in general been more likely to initiate militarized interstate disputes in the years from 1816 to 2010. Instead, our results suggest that it is US presidents who could aspire to reelection who are more likely to initiate international conflicts. This finding

is consistent with expectations that the US' unique position in the international system makes American presidents well-positioned to employ diversionary tactics in the pursuit of winning reelection.

To be clear, our analysis of the American case does not necessarily create doubts about the internal validity of multi-country research. Consistent with previous research, we find no evidence of a relationship between the political ambition of its presidents and the likelihood that the US will be a target in a MID. Our results, however, do suggest a specific limit on the external validity of the findings from multi-country studies. Even when we subset the data set used by Zeigler et al. (2014) to include only dyads where the US is the sending state, we find results inconsistent with broader patterns. Given the greater precision and coverage of our data relative to existing studies, and the theoretical reasons to expect that the US *is* different, we are confident we have identified a clear exception to previous research.

Given that some of our tests fail to reject null hypotheses at conventional thresholds of statistical significance, we are inclined to conclude with a word in defense of such results. "Modern scientists," according to a recent issue of the *Economist* ("How Science Goes Wrong", 13), "are doing too much trusting and not enough verifying – to the detriment of the whole of science..." One of the origins of this problem is insufficient attention to null results. "Failures to prove a hypothesis are rarely even offered for publication, let alone accepted" ("How Science Goes Wrong", 13). Null results should be published more often (Earp and Trafimow, 2015: 3). This article contributes to such a healthy trend.

Notes

[1]We consider US presidents to be "term limited" or "lame ducks" during a given period of time if they are conclusively in a final term in office because of constitutionally-binding provisions that impose term limits, because they have lost a bid for reelection and are governing in the interim period between administrations, or because they have announced that they will not seek reelection. Otherwise, we consider presidents to be "politically ambitious."

[2]As of May 2016, it has been cited, according to Google Scholar, 3106 times.

[3]Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) cite as prior works attracting their attention to this axiom A Downs

(1957), Black (1958), and Wintrobe (1998). Bueno de Mesquita and co-authors actually posit this axiom earlier (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita et al., 1999), but its position as a fundamental premise for *The Logic of Political Survival* has garnered the most attention. Chiozza and Goemans's (2011) description of the "historical arc of research on leaders in international relations" points to Leites (1951) and Snyder et al. (1962) as analysts who focused on leaders decades ago, and concludes that "in the last five years scholars such as Bueno de Mesquita have brought the field full circle by a renewed focus on the role of leaders" (Chiozza and Goemans, 2011: 5-6).

[4]As the authors explain, "We offer some conjectures and illustrative anecdotes, leaving systematic evidence for further research because we currently do not have the data necessary for rigorous tests regarding term limits" (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003: 314).

[5]The unconditional probability of conflict within directed dyads is only about .01.

[6]Oneal and Tir (2006: 773) note that because presidential popularity declined in 15 of 41 crises analyzed by Oneal and Bryan (1995), presidents "cannot assume that a meaningful rally will occur." This is true, but the evidence in that article also suggests that in expectation presidents may anticipate modest gains in popularity. See Morgan and Bickers (1992: 32) for a similar point.

[7]Actually, the notion that the norm was established by George Washington's decision to refrain from running for a third term is arguably unfounded. He refused to accept a nomination for a third term because he genuinely preferred to return to private life. (In other words, he was a prominent exception to the rule that leaders want primarily to hold onto power.) Milkis and Nelson (2012: 317) argue that, "[t]he source of the two term tradition was Thomas Jefferson, who was the first president to argue that no one should serve more than eight years as chief executive." Jefferson's successors quite regularly expressed support for a term-limited presidency. For more on this, see Section C of the Online Appendix.

[8]Section E of the Online Appendix also reports results from Poisson regression models that use a count of MIDs as the dependent variable.

[9]Our measure reflects quarterly observations of ages in increments of 0.25.

[10]We have interpolated to provide estimates of scores on this variable for those quarter-years that fall between the annual observations on which this data set is based. Since the COW project data currently cover on the years until 2007, extrapolations were calculated to provide estimates for the years from 2008 to 2010.

[11]We found these NBER estimates summarized in a "List of Recessions in the United States" provided by Wikipedia (`http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_recessions_in_the_United_States`). In deference to widespread skepticism about the reliability of Wikipedia, we cite it only informally in this footnote. We had economist Malcolm Getz review the list, and in his opinion the "List..." is "quite credible...well-documented, referencing well-known scholars of this area..." (Personal email correspondence, January 27, 2014). Getz points out that he directs the American Economic Association's website

for students. That website provides numerous links to Wikipedia regarding economics and various subfields, which have evoked no criticisms from members of the American Economic Association.

[12]The results are also robust to including year or president dummies. These results are available upon request. We omit them for space since decade dummies should provide a reasonable way to account for conflict opportunity across time while allowing for enough variation in our key variables.

[13]We omit the estimated coefficients for the other variables for space (reported in Section H of the Online Appendix). We find no evidence that *Age* is positively correlated with conflict initiation as reported by Horowitz et al. (2005). The only covariates that are significant predictors of US conflict initiation besides *Ambition* are the *Post-Truman* dummy (positive) and *Peace Quarters* (negative), though only in Models 1 and 2. In Model 3, *CINC* score is negatively associated with conflict initiation, and *Time in Office* is positively associated with initiation. This latter result is opposite of what Potter (2007) finds, which may be due to the different temporal domains (Potter's (2007) domain is 1918 to 2001). The only variable that does not maintain a consistent sign across the three models is *Age* which is negative in Models 1 and 2 and positive in Model 3.

[14]This is likely due to the fact that the inclusion of decade dummies helps account for more variability in the dependent variable, allowing for a more precise estimate of the coefficient for *Ambition*. In any case, the result is not drastically different from the results from Models 1 and 2, and our substantive interpretation focuses on Models 1 and 2.

[15]See Section D of the Online Appendix for these estimates.

[16]Interestingly, Figure 1 shows no indication that recessions moderate the effects of political ambition on initiation as reported by Zeigler et al. (2014). We find no statistically significant independent effect of recessions on conflict initiation (targeting) though the coefficient is consistently positive (negative). See the Online Appendix for the table output containing these results. This finding concurs with the report of Leeds and Davis (1997).

[17]The results for the control variables are mixed. *Time in Office*, *CINC*, *Previous MIDs*, *Peace Quarters* are unrelated to the likelihood that the US is targeted in a MID. The coefficient on *Age* is consistently positive as reported by Bak and Palmer (2010), though only statistically significant in Model 2 at the $p < .10$ level. The US is also significantly more likely to be a MID target in the post-Truman era in Models 1 and 2. *International rivalries* are positively correlated with the likelihood of being targeted at the $p < .10$ level, only in Model 2. The full results are available in Section H of the Online Appendix.

[18]This variable assigns all pre-Eisenhower cases a value of 1 except for each president's final quarter in office, also coding as 1 any cases during that time period where our original coding procedure indicated that a president could have aspired to be reelected.

[19]The only model where we find a negative relationship between ambition and conflict initiation is a modified version of Model 1 in Table 3 that omits the control variable for the post-Truman era, which

is available upon request. Omitting that variable is problematic since the alternate ambition coding procedure tends to code more observations as "1" on the ambition variable during the period before the 22nd Amendment became effective, which also correlates with a historical period in which the US was relatively uninvolved in international politics. As such, the results of that model are likely heavily biased in favor of a negative relationship.

[20]The authors' findings hold when excluding the US. (In fact, the coefficient on their primary term limits variable becomes larger.)

[21]Directed-dyadic-level hypotheses would stipulate that the action or phenomenon hypothesized about, that is, initiating or being initiated against in crises or militarized disputes, involved some other state with specific characteristics, attributes, or relationships to the focal state. An example: Leaders are more likely to initiate disputes against states with leaders younger than themselves.

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Online Appendix for "Presidential Political Ambition and US Foreign Conflict Behavior, 1816-2010"

This appendix contains materials that will be made available online upon publication of the article. It is not intended to appear in the main text of the published version of the manuscript.

Contents

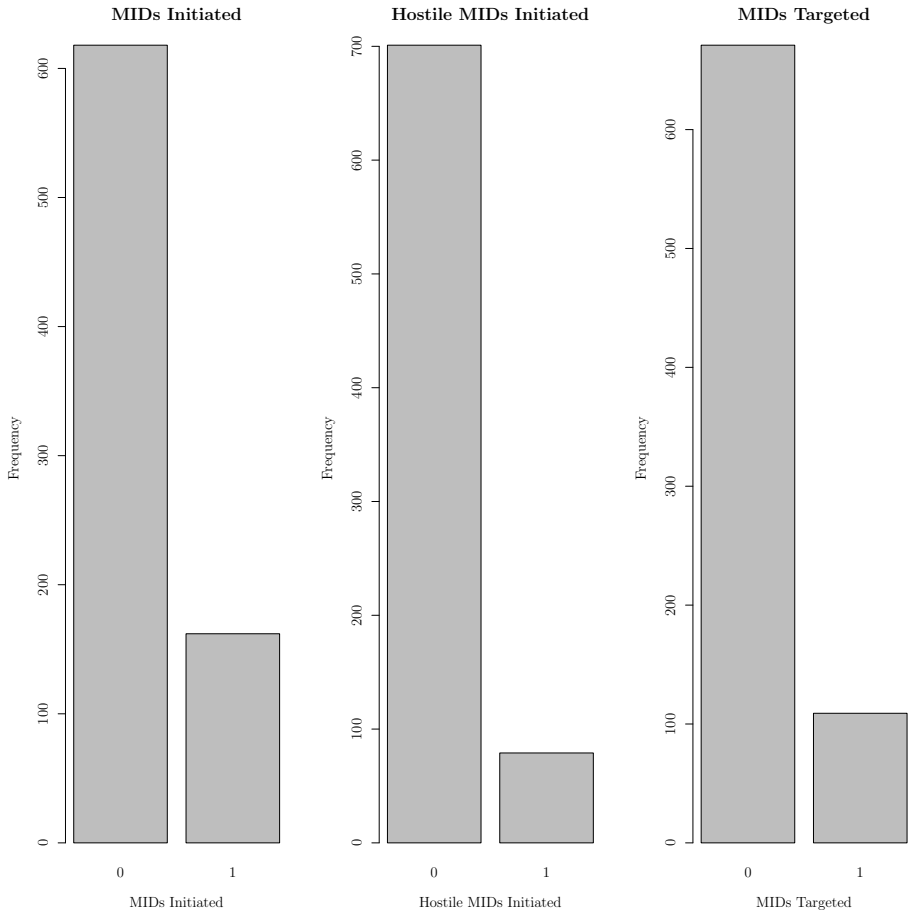
A Summary Statistics

Table 5 reports descriptive statistics for the variables used in our analyses.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Year	780	NA	NA	1816	2010
Time in Office	780	12.860	9.270	1	49
Code	780	25.756	11.720	4	44
Ambition	780	0.672	0.470	0	1
Recession	780	0.351	0.478	0	1
Age	780	57.752	6.827	43	77.75
CINC	780	0.158	0.079	0.033	0.384
Post-Truman Dummy	780	0.297	0.457	0	1
MID Initiator Dummy	780	0.208	0.406	0	1
Hostile MID Initiator Dummy	780	0.101	0.302	0	1
MID Target Dummy	780	0.140	0.347	0	1
Previous MIDs	780	5.981	7.213	0	39
Peace Quarters	780	3.297	5.073	0	33
Rivalries	780	2.021	0.664	1	3

B Histograms of Dependent Variables



C Coding Procedures for Ambition Data

The 22nd Amendment to the US Constitution was passed by the US Congress in 1947, and ratified by the requisite three-fourths of the states by 1951. It specifically excluded the sitting president, Harry Truman, from its impact, so Dwight Eisenhower was the first US president to be prohibited by the 22nd Amendment (after he won a second term in 1956) from running for a third term. That prohibition has been applied (since Eisenhower) to Presidents Nixon, Reagan, Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama.

But, as noted in the main text, some American Presidents have been term limited in effect even before the adoption of the 22nd Amendment. The first president, George Washington, refused to run for a third term in 1796. Actually, however, the notion that a norm was established by George Washington's decision to refrain from running for a third term is arguably unfounded. He refused to accept a nomination for a third term because he genuinely preferred to return to private life. (In other words, he was a prominent exception to the rule that leaders want primarily to hold onto power.) In fact, Washington believed in a strong executive, and would not have objected to a third term in principle.[22] John Adams did not have a chance to contribute to a two term tradition, because he lost his bid for re-election in 1800, to Thomas Jefferson. "The source of the two term tradition was Thomas Jefferson, who was the first president to argue that no one should serve more than eight years as chief executive" (Milkis and Nelson, 2012: 317). Successors to Jefferson quite regularly expressed support for a term limited presidency.

However, the norm was a long distance from universal or consistent acceptance. "While the two term tradition is typically portrayed as a consciously transmitted legacy of our first president, universally esteemed and upheld for almost a century and a half, ...expectations about presidential term limits have actually been mutable and contested, reflecting a national opposition between a commitment to, and apprehension over, centralized governing structures" (Peabody, 2001: 440-441). Jefferson, to begin with, actually thought that presidents might best be limited one term. Andrew Jackson shared those sentiments, and between Jackson and Lincoln, "a one term tradition seems to have developed" (Peabody, 2001: 447. See also Willis and Willis 1952.) Ulysses S. Grant threatened to shatter the two term tradition in the other direction.[23] His experience has mixed implications for any evaluation of the strength of the two term tradition in the United States before the passage of the 22nd Amendment. On the one hand, he came fairly close to being nominated for a third term. But on the other hand, informed opinion seems to suggest that "Grant's defeat can be attributed to outspoken opposition to the third term" (Parmet and Hecht, 1968: 4). And arguably, Grant was able to come so close to overcoming the two term tradition because he made his attempt to be elected for a third term only after the hiatus of four years between the end of his second term and the Republican national convention in 1880.

Discussion of term limits for presidents surfaced again toward the end of the 19th century. The Democratic party stipulated in its platform of 1896 that it is "the unwritten law of this Republic, established by custom and usage of a hundred years, and sanctioned by the example of the greatest and wisest of those who founded and maintained our Government, that no man should be eligible for a third term of the presidential office" (Cited by Peabody (2001: 448)). Theodore Roosevelt announced during his second term (ending in 1908) that he would respect the two term tradition (even though he became president for his first term because of William McKinley's assassination), and then tried to win his party's nomination in 1912. Woodrow Wilson showed signs of wanting a

third term, but suffered a mental breakdown in 1919. In short, the historical path of presidential term limits was not entirely uniform following Washington's retirement in 1796" (Peabody, 2001: 448). So it will not be argued here that American presidents before Franklin Roosevelt confronted an iron-clad norm that prohibited them from running for or being elected for a third term. However, there was a custom of some strength that suggested that American presidents should not serve more than two terms. One indication of the existence of this norm is that "from 1789 to 1947, 270 resolutions to limit the president's tenure were introduced in the House and Senate" (Milkis and Nelson, 2012: 319). It is then, possible to argue with some credibility that "the third term tradition did...achieve a place in the folklore of American democracy" (Parmet and Hecht, 1968: 6). There is in addition a small set of US presidents who were apparently and relatively devoid of political ambition even though they were in their first terms. At least three presidents in the nineteenth century publicly declared that they had no intention of running for a second term very close to the beginning of their first terms. James K. Polk, for example, declared in his speech accepting his party's nomination in 1844 that he would not run for a second term (Nelson, 2008). Milkis and Nelson (2012: 147) explain that "after winning the Democratic nomination, [Polk] stole one of the Whigs' main issues by disclaiming any intention to seek a second term."

James Buchanan waited until his inaugural address to announce that he would not run for re-election. He declared in that address (in 1857) that "having determined not to become a candidate for reelection, I shall have no motive to influence my conduct in administering the Government except the desire ably and fully to serve my country and live in grateful memory of my countrymen" (Peters and Wooley, 2014).

And Rutherford B. Hayes pledged right from the start of his campaign for President that he would not run for reelection to a second term. He put that pledge in the letter he wrote to accept that Presidential nomination of the Republican Party in 1876. One of his main campaign pledges was to reform the Federal civil service. "In his acceptance letter, Hayes called for reform of the civil service and pledged to serve only one term, lest patronage be used to secure his re-election" (Anonymous, 2013). An admittedly cursory review of the history of the Hayes administration suggests that little or no doubt surfaced in those years that Hayes would fail to keep his pledge (Hoogenboom, 1995). Finally, US Presidents have regularly served for months as lame ducks just in the course of regular constitutional transfers of power. Until the 1950s, incumbent presidents who lost an election in November of one year stayed in office until March of the following year. And even in the post–22nd Amendment era, incumbent presidents such as Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush lost their bids for a second term in November of the election year, but remained in office until the third week of January in the following year.

Below is a more detailed account of our coding procedures for each case.

DATA AND DOCUMENTATION ON

THE END OF POLITICAL AMBITION FOR US PRESIDENTS

1789-2009

(January 2014)

1. Washington George (April 30, 1789- March 4, 1797)
   Date: Sept. 19th, 1796
   Sources:
   Washington's Final address
   http://www.ushistory.org/documents/farewelladdress.htm

   Nelson, Michael, eds, 2008. CQ Press Guide to Presidency (fourth edition). Washington DC: CQ Press

   Note:
   Washington notified his intention to retire on February 19, 1792 to James Madison on a private meeting and seeking advice on when to publicize his retirement. On May 20, 1792, Washington wrote to Madison that the retirement decision stood and asked Madison to write a valedictory to explain that his advanced age and belief in rotation in office accounted for the decision. Washington then never openly signified his willingness to stay in office but he did publish the "farewell" address in mid-September 1792. He decided to serve a second term on September 1792. Washington's farewell address was published on American Daily Advertiser, Philadelphia, September 19, 1796 in which he expressed his declination "being considered among the number of those out of whom a choice is to be made".

   Shade, William G. and Ballard C. Campbell ,eds. 2003. American Presidential Campaigns and Elections. M.E. Sharpe Inc.
   Robert A. Rutland and Thomas A. Mason, eds. 1983. The Paper of James Madison, Vol. 14, Charlotteville: University Press of Virginia

2. John Adams (March 4, 1797- March 3, 1801)
   December 5, 1800
   Lost to Thomas Jefferson
   http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/johnadams/
   Sisung, Kelle S. and Gerda-Ann Raffaele, eds. 2000. Presidential Administration Profiles for Students. Farmington Hills: Gale Group

3. Thomas Jefferson (March 4, 1801-March 4, 1809)

January, 06, 1805

Shortly after his reelection, Jefferson privately announced that he would follow Washington's precedent and not seek another term. In letter to John Taylor on Jan 06, 1805 Jefferson said:

> "The service for 8 years and with a power to remove at the end of the first four, comes nearly to my principle as corrected by experience. And it is in adherence to that that I determined to withdraw at the end of my second term."

In the same letter, he said

"General Washington set the example of voluntary retirement after eight years. I shall follow it, and a few more precedents will oppose the obstacle of habit to anyone after a while who shall endeavor to extend his term. Perhaps it may beget a disposition to establish it by an amendment of the Constitution."

He also said that "I shall make no formal declaration to the public of my purpose, I have freely let it be understood in private conversation."

But he also gave the impression that he could count on popular support for another term if he wanted it because he said in the same letter that there is one circumstance that could engage my acquiescence in another election. To wit such a division about a successor as might bring in a monarchist". He conceived that circumstance "impossible".

http://etext.virginia.edu/jefferson/quotations/jeff1230.htm

The Jeffersonian cyclopedia; Edited by John P. Foley New York, Russell and Russell [1967]

Malone Dumas, 1974. Jefferson the President: Second Term: 1805-1809. Boston: Little, Brown and Company

Note:

In Dec, 1807 in responding the address of legislature of Vermont proposing his run for third term Jefferson said:

"Believing that a representative government, responsible at short intervals of election…I feel it duty to do no act which shall impair that principle; and I should unwillingly be the person who, disregarding the sound precedent set by an illustrious predecessor, should not furnish the first example prolongation beyond the second term of office".

4. James Madison (March 4, 1809-March 4, 1817)

Dec. 3. 1816

In State of the Union Address delivered on Dec 3. 1816 Madison said:
"The period of my retiring from the public service being at little distance"

Madison's nomination for a second term came just fifteen days prior to his war message to Congress. No incumbent wartime President before or since Madison has ever lost his bid for reelection.

http://www.infoplease.com/t/hist/state-of-the-union/28.html
http://www.presidentsusa.net/madison.html
The writings of James Madison ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York : G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900-1910.

5. James Monroe (March 4,1817-March 4, 1825)

March 5, 1821

Monroe mentioned his retirement in the second inaugural address delivered on **March 5, 1821**:

"To merit the continuance of this good opinion, and to carry it with me into my retirement as the solace of advancing years, will be the object of my most zealous and unceasing efforts".

http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/jm5/speeches/monroe2.htm

The writing of James Monroe. Edited by Gaillard Hunt

http://books.google.com/books?id=sZ0eN7mkQzAC&dq=The+writing+of+James+Monroe&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=qvkCoqX97Q&sig=seRqq2_g8V4Srs94-AYPH4hzdiA&hl=en&ei=fFtvSu2xNZ6Btwfd8tzdCA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=5

Monroe had no thought of seeking a third term as the election of 1824 neared. He was 67 years old when he turned over the presidency to John Quincy Adams

http://www.oswego.edu/library2/archives/digitized_collections/granger/jamesMonroe.html

6. John Quincy Adams (March 4, 1825-March 4, 1829)
December 3, 1828
Lost to Andrew Jackson general election of 1828.

Note: In 1824 election, John Quincy Adams emerged victorious mainly due to the strong support of Henry Clay, a powerful member of the House of Representatives despite

having received less than one-third of the popular vote. Adams faced absence of an electoral mandate and the disadvantage of a Congress during his first term.

1824 election was a confusing affair. With 133 electoral votes needed for election, Jackson received 99, John Quincy Adams 84, William Crawford and Henry Clay received 41 and 37 respectively. Jackson lost to Adams after Henry Clay threw his support to the second-place finisher (Adams maneuvered to win another two votes).

Adams had rejected active pursuit of reelection. He rarely permitted ceremonial honors in his behalf when he travelled home for his annual vacation.

Sources:
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.

Encyclopedia of the American Presidency. Edited by Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher. 1994. New York: Simon and Schuster Inc.

7. Andrew Jackson (March 4, 1829-March 4, 1937)

January 15th, 2014. It is not easy to find information about Andrew Jackson's attitude about a possible 3rd term. In Excel file on political ambition, she attributes ambition to Jackson until May of 1836, when Van Buren (she says) was nominated for President with the support of Jackson. But actually the Democratic convention that year was held in May of 1835, so early so as to avoid anybody being able to mobilize against Jackson's choice of Martin Van Buren as his successor.

And actually, I believe that Jackson was looking forward to passing the mantle onto Martin Van Buren will before 1835. Jon Meacham, *American Lion*, 2008, New York, Random House, observes that "Not even a full year into his administration, Jackson was promoting Van Buren for president." (p. 308) He also tells about a conversation that Jackson had with a friend in the autumn of 1834, in which he encouraged that friend to support Van Buren in the upcoming election of 1936.

And Meacham begins his discussion of the election of 1836 by saying that "The politics of 1836—the first presidential election in a dozen years in which Jackson, who was retiring n accordance with George Washington's two term tradition, would not be a candidate—were already moving quickly. For years now, Jackson had dreamed that Van Buren would succeed him."

It isn't absolutely clear, but I think those years go back to immediately after the re-election of Jackson in 1832. By the time he won that re-election, in other words, I think it was clear in Jackson's mind that he would support Van Buren in 1836, and that he, Jackson would not run for a third term.

3 December 1833

Andrew Jackson believed that "it is rotation in office that will perpetuate our liberty" and had proposed constitutional amendment that limit the life of president of a single term.

"I would also call your attention to the views I have heretofore expressed of the propriety of amending the Constitution in relation to the mode of electing the President and the Vice-President of the United States. Regarding it as all important to the future quiet and harmony of the people that every intermediate agency in the election of these officers should be removed and that their eligibility should be limited to one term of either 4 or 6 years, I can not too earnestly invite your consideration of the subject." _State of the Nation

Sources:
http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/aj7/speeches/ajson5.htm
Encyclopedia of the American Presidency. Edited by Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher. 1994. New York: Simon and Schuster Inc.

8. Martin Van Buren (March 4, 1837-March, 4, 1841)
November 3, 1840
Lost to William Henry Harrison in election.

Note: Van Buren remained optimistic about his chances for re-election until October 1840 but defeated by William Henry Harrison.
Van Buren attempted to run for his party's nomination in 1844 but failed.
In 1948 Van Buren ran for president as the candidate of the new anti-slavery Free Soil Party.
Sources:
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/vanburen/essays/biography/3
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.

9. William Henry Harrison (March 4, 1841- April 4, 1841)
April 4, 1841
Died one month after inauguration.

Sources:
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/vanburen/essays/biography/3
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.

10. John Tyler (April 6, 1841- March, 1845)

August 1844
Note: John Tyler wished to run for reelection in 1844 but neither of the major parties wanted to nominate him. He formed a new party and gained the nomination but he withdrew in last August 1844 and gave his support to Polk.

Sources:
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/vanburen/essays/biography/3
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.

11. James K. Polk (March 4, 1845- March 4, 1849)

March 4, 1845

Note: Upon accepting his party's nomination in 1844, Polk declared that he would not run for a second term and he kept his promise in 1848 by not seeking the Democratic presidential nomination.

Sources:
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/vanburen/essays/biography/3
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.

Presidential Administration Profiles for Students. Edited by Kelle S. Sisung and Gerda-Ann Raffaelle. 2000. Farmington Hills: Gale Group

12. Zachary Taylor (March 4, 1849-July 9, 1850)

July 9, 1850

Died on July 9, 1850.

Sources:
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.
Encyclopedia of the American Presidency. Edited by Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher. 1994. New York: Simon and Schuster Inc.

13. Millard Fillmore (July 10, 1850- March 4, 1853)

June 1852

Note: Fillmore said privately that he was reluctant to seek another term but he didn't announce formally. He joined the candidacy nomination campaign but lost Whig presidential nomination in 1852. Fillmore accepted the 1856 presidential nomination of "Know-Nothing" party but lost.

Sources:

CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.
Encyclopedia of the American Presidency. Edited by Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher. 1994. New York: Simon and Schuster Inc.

14. Franklin Pierce (March 4, 1853- March 4, 1857)

June 6th, 1856

Pierce's name was withdrawn from presidentional candidacy.
Note: Pierce was confident of another term but failed to be renominated by his party in 1856. Pierce retired after one term.

Sources:
Encyclopedia of the American Presidency. Edited by Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher. 1994. New York: Simon and Schuster Inc.
Presidential Administration Profiles for Students. Edited by Kelle S. Sisung and Gerda-Ann Raffaelle. 2000. Farmington Hills: Gale Group

15. James Buchanan (March 4, 1857- March 4, 1861)

March 4, 1857

Note: Buchanan had promised not to run again in his inaugural address.
"Having determined not to become a candidate for reelection, I shall have no motive to influence my conduct in administering the Government except the desire ably and faithfully to serve my country and to live in grateful memory of my countrymen".

And he did decline to run for second term as he promised.

Sources:
Presidential Administration Profiles for Students. Edited by Kelle S. Sisung and Gerda-Ann Raffaelle. 2000. Farmington Hills: Gale Group

http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/jb15/speeches/buchanan.htm

16. Abraham Lincoln (March 4, 1861- April 15, 1865)
April 15, 1865

Lincoln was assassinated at the beginning of his second term.

Note: Lincoln was not certain his renomination by his party and win of election in 1864. Lincoln believed a Democratic victory was likely in 1864 election partly because the custom of the previous three decades had been for the president to serve only one term and no sitting president been renominated by his party since 1840.

He said privately that "it seems exceedingly probable that the Administration will not be reelected. Then it will be my duty to so cooperate with the President-elect, as to save the Union between the election and inauguration" quoted in Hyman, "Election of 1864," 1170
In allowing 1864 election to take place, Lincoln "accepted a risk and permitted his power to be threatened in a way that no dictator, constitutional or not, would be tolerated."_ Belz, Lincoln and the Constitution, 16.

Sources:
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.
Presidential Administration Profiles for Students. Edited by Kelle S. Sisung and Gerda-Ann Raffaelle. 2000. Farmington Hills: Gale Group

17. Andrew Johnson (April 15, 1865-March 4, 1869)

July 9, 1868

Note: After escaped the impeachment trial on May, 1868 by one vote, President Andrew Johnson lost renomination in June, 1868.

Sources:
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/johnson/essays/biography/3
Presidential Administration Profiles for Students. Edited by Kelle S. Sisung and Gerda-Ann Raffaelle. 2000. Farmington Hills: Gale Group

18. Ulysses S. Grant (March 4, 1869- March 4, 1877)

June, 1876

Grant's followers planned to nominate him for a third presidential term in 1876 he declined to be nominated for a third consecutive term in 1876.
Attempted third term:
His supporters put him as presidential nomination in 1880, Grant didn't make any public statements for or against his candidacy but he accepted his nomination and lost in 1880 convention.

Later Grant said in State of the Union Address on 5 December 1876:

"In submitting my eighth and last annual message to Congress it seems proper that I should refer to and in some degree recapitulate the events and official acts of the past eight years."

"With the present term of Congress my official life terminates"

Sources:
http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/ug18/speeches/ug_1876.htm
Presidential Administration Profiles for Students. Edited by Kelle S. Sisung and Gerda-Ann Raffaelle. 2000. Farmington Hills: Gale Group

19. Rutherford B. Hayes (March 4, 1877- March 4, 1881)

March, 1877

Note: Hayes declared that he won't seek a second term by keeping the pledge he made as part of the compromise resulting in his winning the 1876 election.

Hayes made this pledge in a letter accepting the nomination of the Republican Party for president, in 1876. "In his acceptance letter, Hayes called for reform of the civil service and pledged to serve only one term, lest patronage be used to secure his reelection." (Anonymous, 2013) *Miller Center*. University of Virginia "American President: A Reference Resource: Rutherford B. Hayes, Campaigns and elections. Available at http://millercenter.org/president/hayes/essays/biography/3

He declared in State of the Union December 6th, 1880:

"In my last annual message I invited the attention of Congress to the subject of the indemnity funds received some years ago from China and Japan."
"In my last annual message I expressed the hope that the prevalence of quiet on the border between this country and Mexico would soon become so assured as to justify the modification of the orders then in force to our military commanders in regard to crossing the frontier, without encouraging such disturbances as would endanger the peace of the two countries."

And in inaugural address delivered in March 5, 1877, Hayes proposed that one term limitation:

"In furtherance of the reform we seek, and in other important respects a change of great importance, I recommend an amendment to the Constitution prescribing a term of six years for the Presidential office and forbidding a reelection."

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/hayes.asp
http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/rh19/speeches/rh_1880.htm

20. James A. Garfield (March 4, 1881-September 19, 1881)

September 18, 1881

Served 199 days of his presidential term, Garfield died after wounded on July 2, 1881.

Sources:
http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/jamesgarfield/

CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.

21. Chester A. Arthur (September 20, 1881- March 4, 1885)

June 1884

Note: He kept himself in the running for the Presidential nomination in 1884 in order not to appear that he feared defeat, but was not renominated, and died in 1886.

Sources:
http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/chesterarthur/
Encyclopedia of the American Presidency. Edited by Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher. 1994. New York: Simon and Schuster Inc.

22. and 24. Grover Cleveland (March 4, 1885- March 4, 1889; March 4, 1893- March 4, 1897)

Nov. 6, 1888 for first term
July 11, 1896 for second term

Cleveland run for reelection in 1888 but lost to Harrison.

In 1892 Cleveland was nominated again for his party and won the election. Cleveland was denied Democratic nomination in 1896 convention.

Sources:
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.
http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/grovercleveland/

23. Benjamin Harrison (March 4, 1889- March 4, 1893)

November 8, 1892.

Note: His party renominated him in 1892, but he was defeated by Cleveland in 1892 election.

Sources:
Presidential Administration Profiles for Students. Edited by Kelle S. Sisung and Gerda-Ann Raffaelle. 2000. Farmington Hills: Gale Group

http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/benjaminharrison/

25. William McKinley (March 4, 1897-September 14, 1901)

Modified, 01/21/2014 Actually, it is pretty clear that McKinley lost political ambition when he won the election in 1900. By June of 1901, he publicly announced he wouldn't run for a third term. See http://millercenter.org/president/mckinley/key-events

And http://www.shapell.org/manuscript.aspx?officials-on-president-william-mckinley-decision-to-not-seek-a-third-term

And those accounts make it reasonably clear that he never seriously considered running for a third term.

September 14, 1901

Died after shot on September 4, 1901.
Sources:
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.
http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/williammckinley/

26. Theodore Roosevelt (September 14, 1901- March 4, 1909)

Revised: James Ray. January 21, 2014

Roosevelt may have come to regret the pledge not to run again, but there is little evidence, it seems, that he seriously thought about breaking it. I think he was resigned to ending his career af the end of the term that he won for himself in the election of **November 1904.**

March 4, 1909

Note: After the 1904 election victory, Roosevelt vowed not to run again for the presidency, believing it was wise to follow the precedent of only serving two terms in office. However, he came to regret that promise in advance of the 1908 election, believing he still had much of his agenda to accomplish. However, he held true to his pledge and supported his chosen successor, William Howard Taft, in 1908. When he sought president nomination in 1912 he said that third term limitation only applied to consecutive terms.

In 1904 election, Roosevelt became the first successor president to win the White House in his own right after serving the unfinished term of his predecessor.

In 1912, Roosevelt declared his interest in the Republican nomination for president but lost the nomination to William Howard Tuft. The new organized party Progressive Party persuaded Roosevelt to run. He run as a third party presidential nominee but lost to Woodrow Wilson. In 1916, Progressive asked Roosevelt to run for president again he declined.

Sources:
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/roosevelt/essays/biography/3

Presidential Administration Profiles for Students. Edited by Kelle S. Sisung and Gerda-Ann Raffaelle. 2000. Farmington Hills: Gale Group

27. William Howard Taft (March 4, 1909- March 4, 1913)
November 1912

Note: Taft was nominated by the Republican party but split the Republican vote with Roosevelt that doomed his reelection bid.

Sources:
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.
http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/williamhowardtaft/

28. Woodrow Wilson (March 4, 1913- March 4, 1921)

June 1920
Wilson entertained thoughts of seeking a third term as president in 1920 but the Democratic party refused to consider it.

Sources:
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.
Encyclopedia of the American Presidency. Edited by Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher. 1994. New York: Simon and Schuster Inc.

29. Warren G. Harding (March 4, 1921-August 2, 1923)

Died on August 2, 1923 during first term.

Sources:
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/harding/essays/biography/6

30. Calvin Coolidge (August 3, 1923- March 4, 1929)

Aug. 2, 1927

Note: On August 2, 1927, the fourth anniversary of his assuming office, he announced his decision at his press conference, in writing, with typical terseness: "I do not choose to run for President in 1928."

Coolidge elaborated. "If I take another term, I will be in the White House till 1933 … Ten years in Washington is longer than any other man has had it—too long!"
In his memoirs, Coolidge explained his decision not to run: "The Presidential office takes a heavy toll of those who occupy it and those who are dear to them. While we should not refuse to spend and be spent in the service of our country, it is hazardous to attempt what we feel is beyond our strength to accomplish."

Sources:
http://www.answers.com/topic/calvin-coolidge
Encyclopedia of the American Presidency. Edited by Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher. 1994. New York: Simon and Schuster Inc.

31. Herbert Hoover (March 4, 1929-March 4, 1933)

November 8, 1932

Note: Hoover was nominated by the Republicans for a second term but lost to his Democratic opponent, Franklin D. Roosevelt in general election.

Sources:
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/hoover/essays/biography/3

32. Franklin D. Roosevelt (March 4, 1933-April, 12, 1945)

Revised, January 23, 2014 My impression is, based mostly on a chapter entitled "The President Decides" in *Never Again: A President Runs for a Third Term,* by Herbert S. Parmet & Marie B. Hecht. (New York: Macmillan, 1968.) The thesis of that chapter is summarized in this passage: "Any attempt to pinpoint accurately the precise date when Roosevelt made up his mind to be the Democratic candidate for 1940 is presumptuous. Contemporaries, including the President's closest friends and advisers, differ sharply on this matter. Most agree, however, that it was after Hitler's resumption of the war in the spring of 1940." (p. 176) So, we stipulate that Roosevelt was sufficiently uncertain up to July of 1940 that he lacked political ambition, and then he regained it. **(July 1940),** in other words.

Then of course there is the question of whether or not after he won third term, did he start to ponder immediately that he might run for a fourth term? We will stipulate here that he did, and that he felt that unless the war was concluded by 1944 he would run again. So, he will be

categorized as having political ambition until he successfully secured his election to a fourth term in **November 1944.** See Dallek, Matthew. (No date). "Franklin Delano Roosevelt—Four Term President—and the Election of 1944." *The Guilder Lehman Institute of American History*. Available at http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/world-war-ii/essays/franklin-delano-roosevelt%E2%80%94four-term-president%E2%80%94and-election-1944 (Accessed January 24, 2014).

April 12, 1945

Died on April 12 during his fourth term.

Note:
In 1940, Roosevelt decided to run for an unprecedented third term, breaking the tradition set by George Washington that limited Presidents to eight years in office. FDR had been coy about his future for most of his second term, but finally told confidantes that he would run only if the situation in Europe deteriorated further and his fellow Democrats drafted him as their candidate.

In 1944, in the midst of war, Roosevelt made it known to fellow Democrats that he was willing to run for a fourth term. With the war still raging, he urged voters not to "change horses in mid-stream." But what were his thoughts during most of the third term. Gordon (2011, 138-139) makes it pretty clear that Roosevelt was during the fourth term quite ambivalent about running for a fourth term, but also makes it clear that he never, probably even in his own mind, categorically rejected the idea. Since he never, apparently, rejected the idea of running for a 4th term, it would probably best to categorize him as still a politically ambitious president up to the time that he won re-election for that term.

Sources:
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/fdroosevelt

David M. Jordan. *FDR, Dewey, and the Election of 1944*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011. *Project MUSE*. Web. 8 Jan. 2014. <http://muse.jhu.edu/>.

33. Harry S. Truman (April 12, 1945- January 20, 1953)

March 29, 1952

Note:
Truman announced at Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner on March 29, 1952 that he would not run for reelection.

The 22 Amendment passed in 1951 prohibits any person who has succeeded to the Presidency and served as President or as Acting President for more than two years of their predecessor's unexpired term from being elected more than once.

The amendment specifically excluded the sitting president, Harry S. Truman. Truman, who had served most of FDR's unexpired fourth term and who had been elected to a full term in 1948, his name was on primary for a third term in 1952, but quit on March 29, 1952

Sources:
Presidential Administration Profiles for Students. Edited by Kelle S. Sisung and Gerda-Ann Raffaelle. 2000. Farmington Hills: Gale Group
Encyclopedia of the American Presidency. Edited by Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher. 1994. New York: Simon and Schuster Inc.

34. Dwight D. Eisenhower (January 20, 1953- January 20, 1961)

Nov. 6, 1956

Note: He told friends that he would be happy to serve only a single term. Then, in September 1955, the President had a major heart attack. For several months, as Eisenhower convalesced, the question was whether the President could run again. But by the beginning of 1956, Eisenhower had resumed a full schedule, and his cardiologist announced that the President was capable of serving a second term. On February 29, 1956, Eisenhower announced that he would seek reelection.

In 1960, under the provisions of the 22nd amendment, Eisenhower was disqualified from running because he had been elected twice.

Sources:
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/eisenhower/essays/biography/3

35. John F. Kennedy (January 20, 1961- November 22, 1963)

November 22, 1963

Assassinated during first term.
Sources:
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/kennedy/essays/biography/6
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.

36. Lyndon B. Johnson (November 22, 1963- January 20, 1969)

March 31, 1968

Note: Because Lyndon B. Johnson had been elected to the Presidency only once and had served less than two full years of the term before that, the 22nd Amendment did not disqualify him from running for another term.
Johnson announced via national television address that he would not seek or accept the Democratic nomination for president on March 31, 1968.
"Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President."

Sources:
http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/680331.asp
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.

37. Richard Nixon (January 20, 1969- August 9, 1974)

Nov. 1972

Won second term.

Sources:
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/nixon/essays/biography/6
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.

38. Gerald R. Food (August 9, 1974- January 20, 1977)

November 2, 1976

Lost in election to Jimmy Carter in 1976 election.
Sources:
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/ford/essays/biography/3
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.

39. Jimmy Carter (January 20, 1977- January 20, 1981)

November 4, 1980

Defeated by Ronald Reagan in 1980 election.

Note: It was the first loss by an elected presidential incumbent since Hoover had been defeated in 1932.

Sources:
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/carter/essays/biography/6
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.

40. Ronald Reagan (January 20, 1981- January 20, 1989)

Nov. 6, 1984
Won second term.
Sources:
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/reagan/essays/biography/6
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.

41. George H. W. Bush (January 20, 1989- January 20, 1993)

November 3, 1992 (lame duck)

Defeated by Bill Clinton in 1992 election.

Sources:
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/bush/essays/biography/3
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.

42. Bill Clinton (January 20, 1993- January 20, 2001)

Nov. 5, 1996

Sources:
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/clinton
CQ Press Guide to the Presidency. Edited by Michael Nelson. 2008. Washington DC: CQ Press.

43. George W. Bush (January 20, 2001- January 20, 2009)

Nov. 2, 2004

Sources:
http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/gwbush
http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/sunday/commentary/la-oe-greenberg17-2008aug17,0,3413713.story

D Alternative Dependent Variable: High-Hostility MIDs

In Table 6 we report seven models replacing our dependent variable with a dummy indicator for whether a president initiated a MID that reached a hostility level of 4 or greater on the "HostLev" variable in the MIDs data set. Models 2 and 3 are the models used to generate predicted probabilities in the high-hostility MID models in the main text.

Table 6: Political Ambition and High-Hostility MID Initiations

	Dependent variable: High-Hostility MID Initiation (Dummy)						
	Bivariate	Controls	International Controls	Decade FEs	Decade FEs	President FEs	Year FEs
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Ambition	0.331	1.105***	1.125***	1.277***	1.401***	1.461***	4.171**
	(0.267)	(0.370)	(0.385)	(0.459)	(0.485)	(0.536)	(1.825)
Time in Office		0.051***	0.046**	0.052**	0.038	0.047*	0.206
		(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.139)
Age		−0.005	−0.006	0.039	0.055*		−0.152
		(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.027)	(0.029)		(0.460)
CINC		−4.468**	−5.687***	−13.143*	−11.840	−15.420*	−41.757
		(1.954)	(2.059)	(7.188)	(7.367)	(8.272)	(30.042)
Recession		0.015	−0.105	−0.182	−0.363	−0.206	−1.507**
		(0.286)	(0.292)	(0.321)	(0.334)	(0.345)	(0.728)
Post-Truman Dummy		1.537***	0.898***	14.461	14.905	0.046	2.850
		(0.273)	(0.345)	(1,130.353)	(1,853.313)	(1.974)	(4.238)
Previous MIDs			0.025		0.031	0.019	0.059
			(0.018)		(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.039)
Peace Quarters			−0.127**		−0.108*	−0.069	0.115
			(0.056)		(0.060)	(0.059)	(0.101)
Rivalries			0.184		0.815**	0.499	−2.370
			(0.197)		(0.398)	(0.415)	(4.224)
Constant	−2.415***	−3.319***	−3.023**	−4.808***	−7.137***	−3.033*	10.338
	(0.228)	(1.132)	(1.257)	(1.853)	(2.290)	(1.626)	(34.817)
Observations	780	780	780	780	780	780	780
Log Likelihood	−254.953	−234.153	−228.780	−214.453	−209.434	−198.512	−144.968
Akaike Inf. Crit.	513.907	482.307	477.560	482.906	478.867	493.024	693.936

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Two-tailed tests. Standard errors in parentheses.
Decade-fixed effects included in Models 4 and 5.
President-fixed effects included in Model 6.
Year-fixed effects included in Model 7.

E Alternative Dependent Variable: Count Models for MID Initiations

The statistical models in the main text use dummy indicators for the dependent variable, though doing so may mask important variation in conflict behavior. In Table 7 we present the results of a set of count models where the outcome variable is a count of conflicts initiated. Since we find no evidence of over-dispersion in the outcome variable, we use Poisson models rather than negative binomial regression models. The results are similar to those reported in the main text.

Table 7: Political Ambition and Count of MID Initiations, Poisson Regression

	Dependent variable: Count of MIDs Initiated						
	Bivariate	Controls	International Controls	Decade FEs	Decade FEs	President FEs	Year FEs
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Ambition	0.141	0.401*	0.372*	0.640**	0.643**	0.744**	1.061**
	(0.159)	(0.215)	(0.218)	(0.254)	(0.257)	(0.290)	(0.523)
Time in Office		0.016	0.013	0.030**	0.027*	0.025*	0.081**
		(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.040)
Age		−0.002	−0.002	0.007	0.009		−0.136
		(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.016)		(0.105)
CINC		−0.556	−1.123	−7.543*	−7.173*	−6.078	−19.898
		(1.143)	(1.181)	(4.193)	(4.232)	(4.720)	(16.384)
Recession		0.209	0.147	0.125	0.084	0.074	−0.203
		(0.165)	(0.168)	(0.174)	(0.178)	(0.189)	(0.297)
Post-Truman Dummy		1.203***	0.821***	15.374	15.266	0.575	1.604
		(0.160)	(0.206)	(602.338)	(600.129)	(1.405)	(2.345)
Previous MIDs			0.013		0.007	0.0001	0.002
			(0.011)		(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.017)
Peace Quarters			−0.076***		−0.038	−0.018	0.104**
			(0.029)		(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.050)
Rivalries			0.085		0.140	0.235	−0.662
			(0.117)		(0.227)	(0.237)	(1.561)
Constant	−1.520***	−2.315***	−2.026***	−2.834**	−3.086**	−2.693**	7.335
	(0.032)	(0.663)	(0.740)	(1.157)	(1.321)	(1.200)	(8.604)
Observations	780	780	780	780	780	780	780
Log Likelihood	−474.336	−443.561	−438.021	−422.636	−421.390	−415.288	−345.192
Akaike Inf. Crit.	952.671	901.123	896.041	899.272	902.781	926.575	1,094.383

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

F Bootstrap Clustering Standard Errors on Presidents

In the main text we report models that account for unobserved heterogeneity across time with decade-fixed effects. Here we also report the results of estimating Models 1 and 2 from Table 1 in the main text with president-clustered standard errors to account for unobserved variation across presidents. This procedure is outlined in Cameron et al. (2008) and implemented in the *R* package clusterSEs (Esarey, 2015). In both models, the 95% confidence interval on the ambition variable does not include zero, and the mean estimate is positive.

Table 8: Initiation Models with President-clustered Standard Errors, 95% Confidence Intervals

	CI lower	CI higher
(Intercept)	-4.857	0.624
Ambition	0.071	0.933
Time in Office	-0.005	0.041
Age	-0.053	0.044
CINC	-5.101	3.910
Recession	-0.131	0.543
Post-Truman Dummy	0.780	1.884

Confidence intervals are for coefficient estimates from logit model.

Table 9: Initiation Models with President-clustered Standard Errors, International Controls, 95% Confidence Intervals

	CI lower	CI higher
(Intercept)	-3.715	0.525
Ambition	0.037	0.880
Time in Office	-0.009	0.038
Age	-0.049	0.037
CINC	-5.045	2.359
Recession	-0.212	0.486
Post-Truman Dummy	0.243	1.558
Previous MIDs	-0.008	0.041
Peace Quarters	-0.136	-0.035
Rivalries	-0.172	0.208

Confidence intervals are for coefficient estimates from logit model.

G Ambition and MID Hostility

In the main text we analyze MID initiation and targeting where the units of analysis are quarter-years. Here we ask a slightly different question to account for presidents' opportunities to initiate MIDs: conditional on a MID having occurred, how does the presence of political ambition related to MID hostility? We include in our analysis all MIDs that the US was involved in from Palmer et al. (2015). We estimate linear regression models where the outcome variable is the Correlates of War MID hostility index. This measure ranges from 1 to 5, with higher values indicating more hostile conflicts. The key independent variable is whether or not the president had political ambition during the month that a particular MID started. Consistent with the results in the main text, the results in Table 10 show that political ambition is associated with greater hostility levels when MIDs do occur.

Table 10: Ambition and MID Hostility

	Dependent variable:	
	MID Hostility	
	(1)	(2)
Ambition	0.266**	0.448**
	(0.187)	(0.181)
Time in Office		0.013
		(0.009)
Age		0.004
		(0.008)
CINC (Quarterly Interpolations)		−1.571
		(0.989)
Recession		−0.125
		(0.166)
Post-Truman Dummy		0.106
		(0.143)
Previous MIDs		−0.003
		(0.008)
Peace Quarters		−0.040**
		(0.020)
International Rivalries		−0.063
		(0.101)
Constant	2.711***	2.707***
	(0.559)	(0.586)
Observations	372	372
R^2	0.012	0.039
Adjusted R^2	0.009	0.015
Residual Std. Error	1.119 (df = 370)	1.116 (df = 362)
F Statistic	4.475** (df = 1; 370)	1.613 (df = 9; 362)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. (Two-tailed tests)
Heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors (HC1 variant) in parentheses.

H Full Output for Tables in Main Text

Table 11 reports the full output for the models included in Table 1 in the main text.

Table 11: Political Ambition and MID Initiations, 1816-2010

	Dependent variable:		
	MID Initiation (Dummy)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Ambition (Dummy)	0.502*	0.459*	0.848***
	(0.259)	(0.262)	(0.317)
Time in Office	0.018	0.014	0.038**
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.018)
Age	−0.005	−0.006	0.007
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.021)
CINC (Quarterly Interpolations)	−0.596	−1.343	−10.779**
	(1.349)	(1.411)	(5.110)
Recession	0.206	0.137	0.052
	(0.205)	(0.208)	(0.228)
Post-Truman Dummy	1.332***	0.901***	15.744
	(0.200)	(0.259)	(687.594)
Previous MIDs		0.016	0.008
		(0.015)	(0.016)
Peace Quarters		−0.086***	−0.035
		(0.032)	(0.036)
International Rivalries		0.018	0.005
		(0.146)	(0.293)
Constant	−2.116**	−1.595*	−2.653
	(0.850)	(0.945)	(1.711)
Decade Dummies	No	No	Yes
Observations	780	780	780
Log Likelihood	−373.675	−368.176	−348.414
Akaike Inf. Crit.	761.350	756.352	756.827

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. (Two-tailed tests.) Cell entries are coefficient estimates from logit models. Standard errors in parentheses. Time in office, age, CINC score, recession dummy, and post-Truman dummy included in all models. Previous MIDs, peace quarters, and international rivalries included in Models 2 and 3. Decade dummy variables included in Model 3.

Table 12 reports the full output for the models included in Table 2 in the main text. Table 13 reports the full output for the models reported in Table 3 of the main text.

Table 12: Political Ambition and Probability of Being MID Target

	Dependent variable: Target of MID (Dummy)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Ambition	0.191	0.216	0.157
	(0.326)	(0.329)	(0.374)
Time in Office	0.004	0.005	0.017
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.022)
Age	0.023	0.030*	0.001
	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.025)
CINC (Quarterly Interpolations)	1.537	2.298	−18.771**
	(1.753)	(1.790)	(7.518)
Recession	−0.290	−0.239	−0.092
	(0.271)	(0.275)	(0.295)
Post-Truman Dummy	1.900***	2.063***	0.785
	(0.241)	(0.319)	(1.007)
Previous MIDs		−0.017	−0.021
		(0.017)	(0.018)
Peace Quarters		0.023	0.052
		(0.028)	(0.033)
International Rivalries		0.352*	0.068
		(0.184)	(0.383)
Constant	−4.404***	−5.711***	−19.362
	(0.992)	(1.163)	(2,680.235)
Decade Dummies	No	No	Yes
Observations	780	780	780
Log Likelihood	−268.930	−265.916	−240.250
Akaike Inf. Crit.	551.860	551.831	540.500

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. (Two-tailed tests.) Cell entries are coefficient estimates from logit models. Standard errors in parentheses. Time in office, age, CINC score, recession dummy, and post-Truman dummy included in all models. Previous MIDs, peace quarters, and international rivalries included in Models 2 and 3. Decade dummy variables included in Model 3.

Table 13: Alternative Coding Decisions and Temporal Domains

	Dependent variable: MID Initiated (Dummy)						
	Ambition = 1 for Pre-22nd Cases, Post-Truman Dummy	Ambition = 1 for Pre-22nd Cases, Decade FEs	1978-2000 Subset	Pre-22nd Amendment	Pre-22nd Amendment with Decade FEs	Post-22nd Amendment	Post-22nd Amendment with Decade FEs
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Ambition (Alternate Coding)	0.191	0.542					
	(0.316)	(0.358)					
Ambition			0.849	0.381	0.906**	0.762	0.702
			(0.915)	(0.328)	(0.418)	(0.554)	(0.561)
Time in Office	0.005	0.022	0.029	0.014	0.051**	0.033	0.035
	(0.013)	(0.016)	(0.049)	(0.016)	(0.023)	(0.031)	(0.033)
Age	−0.008	−0.002	0.017	−0.039	0.005	0.011	0.006
	(0.014)	(0.021)	(0.026)	(0.024)	(0.036)	(0.018)	(0.028)
CINC (Quarterly Interpolations)	−0.711	−8.964*	26.724	−1.301	−15.905**	−1.733	13.550
	(1.366)	(4.982)	(60.501)	(1.800)	(6.181)	(3.479)	(13.653)
Recession	0.131	0.081	0.583	0.130	−0.049	0.176	0.221
	(0.208)	(0.225)	(0.813)	(0.255)	(0.289)	(0.377)	(0.389)
Post-Truman Dummy	0.914***	15.645					
	(0.274)	(691.619)					
Previous MIDs	0.017	0.009	0.002	0.030	0.017	0.012	0.006
	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.025)	(0.043)	(0.047)	(0.016)	(0.017)
Peace Quarters	−0.088***	−0.036	−0.334	−0.093***	−0.037	0.116	0.110
	(0.032)	(0.035)	(0.277)	(0.035)	(0.038)	(0.159)	(0.162)
International Rivalries	0.009	0.053	0.364	0.067	0.123	−0.018	−0.170
	(0.146)	(0.294)	(0.698)	(0.196)	(0.451)	(0.248)	(0.435)
Constant	−1.291	−2.012	−6.706	0.197	−2.756	−2.062	−5.424
	(0.974)	(1.708)	(10.305)	(1.454)	(2.627)	(1.440)	(4.052)
Observations	780	780	92	548	548	232	232
Log Likelihood	−369.562	−351.003	−59.025	−215.521	−197.585	−149.814	−148.119
Akaike Inf. Crit.	759.124	762.006	136.049	449.041	441.170	317.628	326.238

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Two-tailed tests. Cell entries are coefficient estimates from logit models. Standard errors in parentheses.

I Political Ambition During Recessions

When we consider the relationship between ambition, recessions, and conflict behavior, we find little support for the immunity hypothesis proposed by Zeigler et al. (2014), a result that was previewed in the substantive interpretation of Models 1 and 2 from Table 1 in Figure 1. There we found that in both the pre- and post-22nd Amendment periods, the effect of ambition is nearly identical whether or not a president faces a recession. In Table 14 we report the results of a few different models that specify the possible interactive relationship between ambition and recession in different ways. We see no evidence of an interaction between ambition and recessions when specifying the models using a multiplicative interaction term (Models 1 through 3). Models 4 through 9 estimate our key models on separate subsets of recession and non-recession quarters. Only when we subset the data to include those quarters where the US experienced a recession and include our domestic controls (Model 6) do we find a positive effect of ambition on conflict initiation. However, this relationship is no longer statistically significant at the $p < .05$ in Model 8, though it is significant at the $p < .10$ level in a one-tailed test. Given the weak evidence here and the fact that we find no evidence of a conditional relationship between recessions and ambition when we estimate our models using the full sample, on balance the results provide only tepid support for an interactive effect of recessions and ambition. At least in the case of the United States, recessions do not appear to exert much of a moderating influence in the relationship between political ambition and conflict behavior.

Table 14: Political Ambition, Recessions, and Conflict Initiation

	Dependent variable: MID Initiation (Dummy)								
				Recessions	No Recession	Recessions	No Recession	Recessions	No Recession
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Ambition	0.073	0.361	0.379	0.502	0.073	0.951**	0.295	0.849	0.333
	(0.234)	(0.291)	(0.292)	(0.342)	(0.234)	(0.480)	(0.315)	(0.526)	(0.318)
Recession	−0.460	−0.102	−0.045						
	(0.349)	(0.366)	(0.369)						
Ambition × Recession	0.429	0.441	0.263						
	(0.415)	(0.429)	(0.437)						
Time in Office		0.019	0.015			0.030	0.013	0.027	0.011
		(0.013)	(0.013)			(0.022)	(0.017)	(0.023)	(0.017)
Age		−0.005	−0.006			−0.007	−0.003	−0.013	−0.003
		(0.014)	(0.014)			(0.029)	(0.016)	(0.032)	(0.016)
CINC		−0.576	−1.305			−0.736	−0.409	−1.099	−1.389
		(1.351)	(1.413)			(2.148)	(1.757)	(2.292)	(1.833)
Post-Truman Dummy		1.332***	0.911***			1.431***	1.296***	0.758	0.961***
		(0.200)	(0.260)			(0.421)	(0.229)	(0.569)	(0.299)
Previous MIDs			0.015					0.026	0.011
			(0.015)					(0.031)	(0.018)
Peace Quarters			−0.084***					−0.079	−0.089**
			(0.032)					(0.051)	(0.043)
Rivalries			0.026					0.329	−0.161
			(0.147)					(0.242)	(0.187)
Constant	−1.332***	−2.040**	−1.591*	−1.792***	−1.332***	−2.231	−2.003**	−2.179	−1.239
	(0.196)	(0.851)	(0.945)	(0.289)	(0.196)	(1.789)	(0.978)	(2.149)	(1.080)
Observations	780	780	780	274	506	274	506	274	506
Log Likelihood	−396.893	−373.138	−367.994	−132.007	−264.885	−125.072	−247.854	−122.126	−244.221
Akaike Inf. Crit.	801.785	762.276	757.987	268.015	533.771	262.144	507.707	262.253	506.442

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Two-tailed tests. Coefficient estimates from logit models. Estimated standard errors in parentheses.

J Appendix References

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