William Christiansen
University of South Carolina
Gambrell Hall 350
817 Henderson Street
Columbia, S.C. 29208
christw@email.sc.edu
wtchristiansen.com

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Dear Search Committee:

I am writing to apply for the tenure-track position as an Assistant Professor in Political Science with expertise in International Relations. Currently, I am an advanced ABD student in the Department of Political Science at the University of South Carolina finishing my dissertation under Tobias Heinrich's supervision (expected completion in Spring 2020). I believe that my training as a researcher and educator in International Conflict and Cooperation, Comparative Politics, and statistical inference make me a strong candidate for the position. My strengths lie in generating novel research agendas and using a variety of accessible/cost efficient techniques to test my theories about political interactions.

Most broadly, my research examines the relationship between international and domestic politics. I am interested in political behavior related to accountability and public opinion. My research agenda seeks to improve our understanding of the relationship between international and domestic politics by providing more nuanced theories concerning the way members of the public evaluate leaders and policies. This approach has been fruitful for studying various forms of conflict and cooperation. Concerning cooperation, I recently published a co-authored article forthcoming in *International Interactions* with Tobias Heinrich and Timothy Peterson examining whether the local effects of foreign policy instruments change the way people evaluate efforts to promote democracy abroad. In respect to my interest in conflict and security, my dissertation research examines how leaders behave during international conflicts and the processes by which voters hold leaders accountable for their actions related to conflicts. My work implies that the public is attentive to the local benefits a given foreign interaction provides and relies upon the characteristics of individual leaders and context a policy's implementation to determine whether a given actor is responsible for policy outcomes.

The central theoretical argument of my dissertation is that the background (i.e what they do before entering office) of political leaders (e.g. prime ministers, presidents, dictators) influences the way they behave during conflicts and the way they are evaluated for their actions by voters after conflicts end. In terms of how leaders are evaluated, these backgrounds (e.g military experience, educational achievement) insulate leaders from blame when states lose conflicts and attract praise when they win. Concerning the behavior of leaders during conflict, backgrounds can condition leaders to accept more costs (e.g. casualties) during conflict while also increasing their abilities to avoid them. My results demonstrate that

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leaders with strong backgrounds are shielded from blame when conflicts end poorly and that leaders with educational achievement are correlated with lower amounts of casualties in militarized interstate disputes. In addition to my dissertation research, I have multiple projects extending the application of my dissertation and broadening my area of expertise. Most prominently, I am developing a project examining why the public chooses to blame policymakers as opposed to intelligence communities when a state suffers a surprise attack. I argue that the contextual attributes of both the conflict and the actions of intelligence organizations influence the way voters assign blame for the costs of an attack. I am also interested in measuring latent and complex concepts. Currently, I am applying Bayesian factor analysis to construct measures capturing how experienced leaders are prior to elected office and how prevalent vote-purchasing is by leaders in society.

In addition to developing my research agenda during graduate school, I have taught several classes as an instructor of record and am very passionate about teaching. After serving as a teaching assistant my first year in graduate school, I have served as an instructor for courses related to Foreign Policy, National Security, International Political Economy, International Law/Organizations, and Comparative Politics. Additionally, I have taught undergraduate research methods (both online and in person) and senior seminars during my time as an Instructor at Virginia Commonwealth University. I use a variety of mediums to cater to the diverse pool of students instructors often find themselves working with. I approach each course by centering the major assignments around each student's interests in the course. I find that this motivates students to take an active role in the course. My love for experimenting with research methods and theoretical frameworks directly enhances my abilities in the classroom.

I believe that my unrelenting curiosity as a researcher and passionate approach as a instructor make me an excellent candidate for this position. My record shows that I am an active member of the academic community I operate within and that I love working with my colleagues. All of this makes me confident of my ability to succeed if offered this position.

Thank you for your consideration,

William Christiansen
Doctoral Candidate (ABD)
University of South Carolina