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November 4, 2019

## Research Statement

I believe that political science research has the most to offer when a diverse set of methodological approaches and substantive areas of inquiry are allowed to flourish. Individual projects are stronger when they employ a variety of methods to describe and identify political phenomena of importance to multiple sub-fields. My research agenda focuses on the relationship between international and domestic politics. I am broadly interested in political behavior related to accountability, public opinion, and political leadership. My recent work examines the interactions between political leaders and domestic populations resulting from international conflict and cooperation. While the assumption that leaders conduct foreign policy in a manner amenable to staying in power is well accepted, the field has less to say concerning the information voters to use determine whether foreign interactions are beneficial, if leaders should be held accountable, and why leaders from similar states with a common interest in retaining power often approach conflict and cooperation in different ways. My work examines two critical components of this area of specialization: (1) the factors that make a leader's foreign interactions costly and (2) the processes members of the public adopt to hold politicians accountable for their actions abroad.

My dissertation focuses on why leaders fight more costly wars than others and how voters hold them accountable when they do so. Specifically, I draw upon recent work examining the role of a leader's background (i.e. what they do before entering office) upon their propensity to accept casualties in international conflicts. I argue that a leader's background can condition leaders to be casualty adverse and efficient. When leaders enter conflicts, they are tasked with determining if the potential risks/costs of a conflict are acceptable. I theorize that leaders with strong education backgrounds are better equipped to critically analyze the possible outcomes of conflict. In line with these expectations, findings suggest that leaders with stronger educational achievement incur lower amounts of casualties in militarized interstate disputes.

Next, my dissertation seeks to explain why voters hold some leaders more accountable for these costs than others. I argue that the a leader's perceived ability or competence can act as a shield or magnet for blame when conflicts end poorly. I develop a theoretical model that explains variations in leader culpability conditional on the leader's background and the

outcome of the conflict. The results of a experimental survey suggest that leaders with weak backgrounds (i.e. no military/political experience, low educational achievement) are ‘soft’ or easy targets for blame when conflicts end poorly. Conversely, my research demonstrates that leaders with stronger backgrounds are more likely to be rewarded with increases in support when the conflicts they wage end in victory. These findings demonstrate that leader characteristics are important factors to consider when explaining both a leader’s behavior and resulting evaluations of their performance by domestic audiences. This project is important for understanding how the accountability government actors is conditional on how the public perceives those actors before a given crisis arises.

Following this theme, I am also interested in the contextual factors that voters use to determine whether a given foreign policy deserves support. In addition to the papers from my dissertation research, I have a forthcoming publication in *International Interactions* titled “Foreign Policy Begins at Home: The Local Origin of Support for Democracy Promotion”. The article argues that phenomenon referred to as ‘NIMBY’ or ‘Not in my back yard’ should apply to evaluations of foreign policy. More specifically, it examines whether support for foreign democracy promotion via aid/sanctions is contingent on whether the program bestows a local benefit or cost. Using an experimental survey design, we find that respondents are more likely to support policies that bestow local benefits and oppose policies that impose a local cost. This has important implications for how voters analyze the benefits of foreign policies. Most importantly, it shows that when voters care enough about a specific policy to learn about it, they pay particular attention to the location of benefits/costs when this information is available.

I have multiple projects extending the work in my dissertation that I intend to complete over the next year. First, I have a working paper utilizing Bayesian Factor Analysis to generate a continuous measure for how strong a leader’s background is. This paper utilizes a variety of leader level characteristics to generate scores of how ‘competent’ or ‘prepared’ a leader is based off of their experiences prior to office. This descriptive measurement should be important for a variety of project seeking to explain why some leader’s are more equipped to deal with the challenges their respective states face while they are in power. Next, I have a working paper “Bang then Blame” examining the contextual attributes of surprise attacks that influence the public’s decision to blame policymakers as opposed to intelligence organizations. I argue that multiple factors are important for explaining why voters choose to assign blame to one actor at higher rates than another. My theory focuses on how avoidable the attack is perceived to be based of the capabilities of the attacker, how certain policymakers could reasonably be that an attack might happen, and how much time the intelligence community provide policymakers to act. I utilize a simple survey experiment to demonstrate that policymakers are more likely to come under scrutiny when the strength of the opponent is lower, intelligence communities agree a threat exists, and intelligence reports give policymakers ample time to act. Additionally, I have developed a study related to the role international organizations and alliances plan in shielding a leader from public backlash for the costs of war. This study attempts to explain a tragic scenario where leaders are only that more risky with national resources when they wage multilateral wars with support of international organizations.

I love learning new approaches and methods and plan on continuing to do so for the rest of my career. During my graduate studies, I received extensive training in multiple methodological approaches. After completing my department's methods track, I took every methods course that did not conflict with a required course for the doctorate degree. Additionally, I attended the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research Summer Program on an EITM (Empirical Implications of Theoretical Models) Certification Scholarship receiving certificates in Applied/Advanced Bayesian Analysis and Introductory Game Theory. After this, I gained exposure and training to several cutting edge techniques at the EITM Institute's Summer Program in 2018 at the University of Michigan. As a result of this training, my work combines experiments and statistical analysis aimed at generating accurate descriptions of political phenomena (measurements) and isolating causal effects arising from political interactions. I am extremely interested in collaborations that involve applying recent advances in political methodology.

Looking forward, I would like to complete multiple research projects that are extensions of the agenda discussed above. My research shows that public support is often conditional upon key factors related to either the leader or policy in question. A growing literature related to the role of artificial intelligence and cyber-warfare is ripe for more nuanced theorizing concerning the process by which voters offer their support to such tactics. Additionally, in line with my interests in political economy, I plan to extend the implications of my dissertation to examine the role experience in business, banking, and finance plays in approval over economic policies and their respective outcomes. Both of these areas could lead to multiple publications with interest to political science scholars in a variety of sub-fields. I believe that this research agenda fills an important gap in the areas of conflict and cooperation. My experiences coauthoring proved how beneficial developing productive relationships with colleagues can be. My interests are flexible yet defined enough to make me an active and engaging member of any department seeking a political science researcher.