REVENGE, PROPORTIONALITY, AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

by

KAYCE MARIE MOBLEY

(Under the Direction of Brock F. Tessman)

ABSTRACT

Proportionality, or the balancing of response to trigger in the context of international conflict, has long functioned as a norm within the just war tradition and international law. Despite this standard of behavior, states still occasionally overreact to crisis triggers with disproportionate responses. Scholars have attempted to explain these overreactions through the lenses of strategy and domestic politics, but these varied efforts largely do not engage each other and, furthermore, do not engage the alternative lens of emotion. This dissertation addresses this dearth by exploring disproportionate responses through the concept of revenge. After the first chapter introduces the project, the second chapter reviews and critiques the existing literature, first accounting for the status of proportionality as a norm within international law and then assessing the existing explanations for disproportionate responses. It concludes by pointing towards the path forward in evaluating state overreactions in international crises – a cognitive explanation. The third chapter addresses this challenge by engaging the lens of revenge through theories of group identity and behavior; I argue that states are more likely to pursue revenge through disproportionate responses when the initial attacks to which they respond violate norms surrounding the conduct of war or trigger greater perceived threats

and fears. An exploratory quantitative analysis first introduces a new measure of proportionality and then provides preliminary support for this theory of revenge and proportionality. To test the theory further, I employ a most-similar-systems design with two case studies: the 1956-7 crisis over the nationalization of the Suez Canal; and the 2002-3 crisis regarding Iraqi regime change. Then, the fourth chapter uses the new quantitative measure of proportionality to address questions regarding the effect of disproportionate responses. The results show that, first, crises in which states engage in disproportionate responses are likely to elicit stronger US interventions. Second, the US is more likely to intervene *against* states that behave more disproportionately in crises than it is to remain uninvolved. Finally, the fifth chapter concludes the project by reviewing the findings from the earlier chapters and pointing to future avenues for research on proportionality and revenge in international relations.

INDEX WORDS: International relations, Conflict, Just war theory, Proportionality, Political psychology, Decision-making, Revenge

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For my family, friends, and teachers.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW:

HOW CRUEL AND HOW UNPRECEDENTED

My dissertation, "Revenge, Proportionality, and International Relations," examines the role of revenge within security crises. Specifically, I ask why states sometimes respond disproportionately to crisis triggers, and I use the lens of revenge – a non-strategic, emotional response – to explain these overreactions.

Disproportionate, or overly aggressive, responses are only tangentially considered in the existing literature. Within the field of international relations, the rational choice model is the dominant explanation for foreign policy behavior, meaning that states generally are described as behaving strategically. For some prominent theorists (Mearsheimer 2009), this supposed rationality indicates that mistakes, such as over-reacting in response to threats, simply can be disregarded as white noise. Others within the rational choice camp (Huth, Gelpi, and Bennett 1993; Braumoeller 2008) come closer to considering disproportionate responses through research on escalation, or the change from a peaceful (even if contentious) relationship between two states to a conflictual one. They often explain this development in aggression through predation; that is, two states escalate to a state of war when an imbalance in their military capabilities, for instance, leads one to pounce on the weakness of the other. These studies of escalation are problematic both empirically and theoretically, though. Empirically, many measurements

of escalation have proliferated in the literature, but few robust relationships exist among them (Braithwaite and Lemke 2011); that is, the different measures are not substantially correlated with each other, calling their validity into question. Additionally, most of these measures of escalation are dyadic rather than actor-specific; thus, they tell us that a crisis escalated, not which party escalated it or why. They also fail to account for the type of triggering event or how aggressively that trigger is reciprocated. Then, in terms of theoretical development, these conceptions of aggressive behavior fail to account fully for overreactions that occur seemingly without strategic cause.

Other authors turn to a menu of domestic political pathologies for why states sometimes are overly aggressive, including the following: changes in military doctrine (Posen 1984); military culture (Legro 1994); bureaucratic interests of militaries (Van Evera 1999); and industrial interest groups (Snyder 1991). These explanations are based on the notion that states behave strategically except when particular domestic variables intervene (Rosecrance 1995); essentially, they pick and choose when leaders behave strategically in order to complement their narratives of aggression or over-expansion. Instead of attempting to force disproportionate responses into a strategic narrative, the literature needs an objective consideration of the cognitive processes that lead to overly aggressive intentions (Rosecrance 1995; Lake 2011).

My dissertation research addresses the two major gaps in the disproportionality literature outlined here: the absence of an actor-specific measure that incorporates the role of the crisis trigger and the need for a non-strategic explanation. I concentrate on the first issue by creating a new quantitative measure of crisis proportionality. To do so, I have adapted two existing measures of actor-specific crisis triggers and crisis responses

so that they are comparable, and I measure their difference for each of 455 crises recorded from 1918-2007, as defined by the International Crisis Behavior Project (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 2010a; 2010b). In other words, for each crisis actor in a particular crisis, I measure the difference between the severity of the event that triggered that state's involvement in the crisis and the severity of its response to that trigger; if the difference is zero or close to it, then the state responded proportionately. If the difference is much larger than zero, then I consider the state to have responded disproportionately. For example, in 1937 Nicaragua unveiled a new postage stamp featuring a map of the country. This seemingly benign act triggered a crisis for Honduras because the miniature map in question labeled a large section of southeastern Honduras as "Territory in Dispute." In response to this bureaucratic insult, measured as a 2 on my scale of proportionality, Honduras mobilized on the border, a non-violent military act that measures as a 7. Thus, Honduras overreacted with a score of +5 according to my measure of proportionality, which ranges from -10 to +10 ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010).

To address the need for a non-strategic explanation for this type of dramatic overreaction, I turn to revenge. Some disproportionate responses are more emotional than strategic and respond to the psychological needs of the actor. These emotional impulses can be labeled as revenge, which is defined as "the attempt, at some cost or risk to oneself, to impose suffering upon those who have made one suffer, because they have made one suffer" (Elster 1990, 862). Aggrieved parties pursue revenge for their own emotional benefit, meaning that they are *looking backwards* and responding to *past* pain. Revenge is thus distinct from strategic deliberations (Elster 1990; Steinberg 1991; Uniacke 2000), which are inherently future-oriented. Returning to the example of the postage stamp crisis, Honduras did not act in pursuit of future benefits, as Nicaragua had

not displayed any immediate intention to act on its border claims. Instead, Honduras responded to the trigger itself – to the perceived injustice associated with the stamp. This constitutes revenge.

Despite the prevalence of revenge in literature, psychology, and popular culture, it is only tangentially considered in existing international relations literature. To address this deficiency, I draw upon fields ranging from neuroscience to philosophy to inform my theory regarding states' pursuit of revenge through disproportionate responses. I argue that states are more likely to pursue revenge through disproportionate responses in two circumstances: 1) when the initial attacks to which they respond violate norms surrounding the conduct of war; and 2) when the initial attacks trigger greater fear and perceived threat.

First, the cognitive mechanisms of group identity tell us that individuals process deviations from group norms as personal threats (Marcus et al. 1998) and that negative reciprocity in response to transgressions is fundamental to group behavior (Oldenquist 1988; de Quervain et al. 2004; McCullough 2008; Clavien and Klein 2010). Translated to the context of international relations, this indicates that states, as aggregated actors in the international community, also hold each other accountable for their transgressions. In this way, states respond to military attacks from their peers with proportionate retaliatory responses, just as individuals would respond to affronts to their community with negative reciprocity. The community of states strays from the model, though, in that armed aggression has become an expected form of behavior. However, the regulations of warfare pursued by the international community (defined by international customary and public law, as established by agreements such as the Geneva Conventions, etc.) have also

become expected behaviors. Thus, violations of these expectations – such as the targeting of civilians – may trigger responses stronger than standard, proportionate retaliatory responses; they may trigger intentionally *dis*proportionate responses.

Excessive or egregious violation of international customary and public law regarding warfare may lead to disproportionate responses from states, especially from those targeted by the violations. In addition to the targeting of civilians, other violations may include the use of indiscriminate weapons (namely chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons – all prohibited by international law) and the breach of an international agreement between states. For example, in October 1998, Iraq announced that it no longer intended to honor the "memorandum of understanding" brokered earlier in the year by Kofi Annan that allowed UNSCOM, the UN Special Commission tasked with overseeing the elimination of Iraq's chemical and biological weapons, to operate within Iraq. After Iraq made this announcement, the US and the UK responded by mobilizing in the Persian Gulf and, eventually, by engaging in a 72-hour bombing campaign against Iraq in December 1998. Thus, the US and the UK responded to the breach of an international agreement with acts of military violence – a disproportionate response ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010).

Second, the cognitive mechanisms of threat response tell us that strong threat and resulting fear cause individuals to ignore social norms in favor of personal interest (Li et al. 2009), to use emotional rather than cognitive reasoning (Mobbs et al. 2007), and to become more aggressive (Gadarian 2010; Healy et al. 2009). These effects can cause actors to respond disproportionately because the level of perceived threat can exist independently of the strength of the trigger that caused it. To use a colloquial example, a

poke to the eye elicits a radically different response than a poke of equal strength to the arm. The same is true for international crisis data; within the data of the ICB Project (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 2010a; 2010b), the raw correlation between gravity of threat and crisis trigger is approximately 0 (r=-0.04), indicating that the two exist independently.

To illustrate the notion that threat can exist independently of trigger, take two examples, both pulled from the International Crisis Behavior Project. First, in 1954 a political act triggered a crisis for Great Britain when US Secretary of State Dulles traveled to the UK and openly pressured the country to join the Indochina War. The war did not directly concern the UK, and so the political pressure only constituted a 'limited threat.' The UK responded in kind with a political act – issuing a joint statement with the US – making its response proportionate ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010). On the other hand, in 1964 a series of political acts triggered a crisis for the United States. After massive rioting brought about by a dispute over a flag in the Panama Canal Zone, the President of Panama broke diplomatic relations with the US and filed formal complaints with the OAS and the UN Security Council. Given that the US controlled the Panama Canal (and that, analogously, Egypt had nationalized the Suez Canal only eight years before), this political trigger constituted a 'threat of influence' to the role of the United States in the international system ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010). The US responded disproportionately (with a score of +8 on my proportionality scale) by declaring martial law in the Canal Zone, mobilizing tanks and armored vehicles, firing into crowds, and calling up the OAS Peace Committee to investigate (United Press International 1964; "ICB Data Viewer" 2010).

Drawing upon my new measurement of proportionality and existing data from the ICB Project, preliminary quantitative analyses provide support for this theory of revenge and proportionality; gravity of threat is a significant predictor of proportionality of response. In addition to the quantitative analyses that follow, I also test my theory through a most-similar-systems design for two case studies: the 1956-7 crisis over the nationalization of the Suez Canal; and the 2002-3 crisis regarding the American invasion of Iraq. Evidence from these two cases indicates that both norm violations and heightened fear can lead to the pursuit of revenge through disproportionately aggressive responses. After exploring the causes of disproportionate responses among states, my dissertation turns to certain effects associated with disproportionate responses. Specifically, I argue that disproportionate responses within crises in any part of the world increase the likelihood of intervention by the United States. Preliminary quantitative analyses support this claim.

Within the field of international relations, this dissertation bridges current gaps in the proportionality literature by creating a quantitative, actor-specific measure of proportionality that incorporates the role of crisis triggers. More broadly, this dissertation responds directly to the call in recent years to incorporate realistic models of human decision making into considerations of foreign policy behavior (Levy 1997; Hudson 2005). Doing so requires my dissertation to connect issues and measurements from political science to disciplines as varied as psychology, neuroscience, and philosophy, meaning that this project has substantial interdisciplinary significance. Furthermore, news headlines are inundated with talk of revenge – whether referencing policies of terrorist organizations or the American reaction to 9/11. Such a prominent subject in international

relations deserves systematic study. Understanding the cognitive processes that lead to revenge is the first step towards limiting disproportionate reactions and, with them, excessive aggression.

CHAPTER 2

ASSESSING DISPROPORTIONATE RESPONSES[1]

[1] Kayce Marie Mobley. To be submitted to *Security Studies*.

ABSTRACT

Proportionality, or the calibrating of response to trigger in the context of international conflict, has long functioned as a norm within the just war tradition and international law. Despite this standard of behavior, states still occasionally react disproportionately to crisis triggers and engage in disproportionate responses. Scholars have attempted to explain these overreactions through the lenses of strategy and domestic politics, but these varied efforts largely do not engage each other and, furthermore, do not engage the alternative lens of emotion. In this review article, I first account for the status of proportionality as a norm within international law and politics, and then I assess the existing explanations for disproportionate responses. I conclude by pointing towards the path forward in evaluating state overreactions in international crises – a cognitive explanation.

INTRODUCTION

Proportionality, or the calibrating of response to trigger in the context of international conflict, has long functioned as a norm within the just war tradition and international law. Despite this standard of behavior, states still occasionally overreact to crisis triggers and engage in disproportionate responses. Scholars have attempted to explain these overreactions through the lenses of strategy and domestic politics, but these varied efforts largely do not engage each other and, furthermore, do not engage the alternative approaches that are based on emotional rather than calculative models.[2] In this review, I first account for the status of proportionality as a norm within international law and politics, and then I assess the existing explanations for disproportionate responses. I conclude by pointing towards the path forward in evaluating state overreactions in international crises – a cognitive explanation.

WHY WE SEE PROPORTIONAITY AS A NORM

Just War Theory and International Law

Proportionality, or the return of like for like in conflict, has long functioned as a standard of law and warfare in the Western tradition. For example, even in 44 BC Cicero wrote of a "limit to retribution":

> Again, there are certain duties that we owe even to those who have wronged us. For there is a limit to retribution and to punishment; or rather,

[2] Within this study, the term "overreaction" does not connote a normative judgment on the reaction. "Overreactions" are not deemed as such because of their relation to justice; instead, "overreactions" are responses that are objectively more aggressive than their triggers, otherwise referred to here as "disproportionate responses." This study does not address responses that are less aggressive than their triggers ("underreactions").

> I am inclined to think, it is sufficient that the aggressor should be brought to repent of his wrongdoing, in order that he may not repeat the offence and that others may be deterred from doing wrong.
>
> (Cicero 2006, 5)

Here Cicero explains the expectation of proportionality as the balance between the original offense and the punishment sufficient to deter future crimes. This is the same interpretation of the concept that Thomas Aquinas employed regarding warfare in the *Summa Theologica* over a thousand years later, as he drew on elements from both the Christian tradition and classical philosophy:

> And yet, though proceeding from a good intention, an act may be rendered unlawful, if it be out of proportion to the end. Wherefore if a man, in self-defence, uses more than necessary violence, it will be unlawful: whereas if he repel force with moderation his defence will be lawful, because according to the jurists, *it is lawful to repel force by force, provided one does not exceed the limits of a blameless defence.*
>
> (Aquinas 2006, 32)

The writings of Aquinas and other early Christians later shaped the development of just war theory, which allows the pursuit of wars if their causes are just. In the 17th century, the philosopher Hugo Grotius drew upon Aquinas and others to outline seven formal rules for pursuing wars justly, one of which was proportionality (Stone 2001). General

acceptance of limitations on war through just war theory and, specifically, the idea of proportionality grew in the West over the next three hundred years, so that proportionality eventually evolved into a norm of both customary and public international law regarding conflict. Today proportionality finds an established place within both *jus in bello*, or the law regarding state behavior within conflict, and *jus ad bellum*, or the law regarding the decision to engage in conflict (Gardam 1993; Stone 2001).

The *jus in bello* reading of proportionality fits within contemporary international humanitarian law and requires that military tactics be chosen while balancing the expected utility of the attack against the possibility of civilian casualties (Gardam 1993; Stone 2001; Gardam 2004). Modern weaponry brought wars closer to civilians in the 19th century, and so this broader interpretation of proportionality evolved as a coda of state behavior (Stone 2001), so that today it is understood as both a general underlying principle of international humanitarian law and as a specific legal norm (Gardam 2004), as codified in the 1977 Protocol I to the Geneva Convention of 1949, among other documents (Stone 2001).[3]

The other modern interpretation of proportionality within international law is its place within *jus ad bellum*, or law pertaining to the decision to engage in conflict.[4] This is the interpretation engaged throughout the remainder of this review. Here proportionality requires a forceful response to be in balance with the belligerence that triggered the response. In other words, an attacked state may defend itself, but only in a manner

[3] Measuring the *jus in bello* conception of proportionality is one of the most challenging obstacles in applying this standard of political theory to practical behavior. The *jus in bello* conception requires the weighing of military objectives against the potential loss of civilian lives, and the conversion rate between the two is rarely if ever clear (Walzer 1977; Newton and May 2014).

[4] This conception of proportionality is older than its modern conception within *jus in bello*, as pertains to international humanitarian law. The *jus ad bellum* interpretation pertains to the lives of soldiers and arose in the context of wars fought far away from civilians (Stone 2001).

commiserate with the initial attack (Gardam 1993; Stone 2001; Newton and May 2014). This interpretation builds upon "the fundamental principle that belligerents do not enjoy an unlimited choice of means to inflict damage on the enemy" (Gardam 1993, 391), and, as a key element of customary international law, it restrains the legitimate use of forceful self-defense allowed by the United Nations Charter (Gardam 1993; Stone 2001).

Despite the normative weight attached to proportionality of response, Walzer (1977) writes that the reprisal is the most abused element of the war convention. He explains that the implicit understanding of the proportionality norm allows a state to engage in otherwise criminal or illegal activities with the justification that the enemy perpetrated them first. The allowance of forceful response is abused either by unending cycles of retribution between the belligerents (A attacks B; B attacks A likewise; A attacks B likewise, *ad infinitum*) or by overreactions (A attacks B; B obliterates A). In the instance of the retribution cycle, the reprisal clearly failed in one of its aims – deterrence. (The other aim is punishment.) Despite this shortcoming, Walzer (1977) affirms that customary international law limits reprisals to responses in proportion to their triggers, not in proportion to imagined future attacks they are meant to deter. In effect, this means that the nature of the proportionality norm, within the interpretation of the war convention, then is more "backward-looking" (211) and focused on punishment than forward-looking and focused on deterrence.

Strategic Explanations

The Cold War transformed the concept of proportionality from a component of esoteric political philosophy to a practical standard of foreign policy, and this strategic application

also asserted the merit of the norm for deterrence, rather than just for punishment. According to the idea of mutually assured destruction (MAD), states maintaining a nuclear second-strike capability could deter first strikes through the threat of reciprocal annihilation. This strategy of deterrence rested on the logic and simplicity of guaranteed proportional retaliation (Amster 1956; Sherwin 1956; McClelland 1959; Brody 1960).

Within game theory, this strategy of proportional responses came to be known as tit-for-tat. Through extensive testing with early computer tournaments, Axelrod (1980; 1981) shows that tit-for-tat is the most successful strategy in iterated rounds of the prisoner's dilemma. Specifically, this strategy requires a player to initially cooperate, then in subsequent rounds to mirror the last move of his opponent; if the opponent cooperated in the last round, then the player cooperates in this round, but if the opponent defected in the last round, then the player defects in this round.[5] Axelrod asked scores of economists and game theorists to submit strategies for his iterated prisoner's dilemma tournaments, but the simple tit-for-tat strategy was consistently the most successful.

Schelling (1966) sheds light on why proportionality is such an effective strategy in strategic scenarios, whether in the context of computer simulations or actual interstate wars. He examines conflict as an extension of bargaining. According to this lens, states fight limited wars in order to settle disputes, or to bargain. In addition to negotiating the terms of the settlement, states bargain over how the wars will be fought, also known as the norms of conflict. That is, each bomb dropped or hostage taken serves a double purpose – as a signifier of military strength and intent, and as a message about the limits or rules to be observed (or not observed) as the conflict progresses. This type of

[5] In addition to the reciprocity requirement, the tit-for-tat strategy also requires the player to not be the first player to defect, a quality that Axelrod (1980) deems "niceness."

conflictual bargaining, though, is largely tacit, as warring states typically do not communicate openly or fully. Instead, they communicate opaquely through actions, meaning that symbolically simpler actions are more desirable, as they are easier for the enemy to interpret. In this way, proportional responses become valuable as they clearly communicate purpose: because you killed my brother, I will kill your brother, as a personal example; because you attacked my submarine, I will attack yours, as a state example.[6] Since proportional responses are tied directly to the grievance to which they respond, their message is unambiguous (Schelling 1966).

Schelling (1966) argues that this clarity is paramount in limited wars primarily because the belligerents understand that they will continue to negotiate, bargain, and fight with each other for years to come, as neither state will be destroyed; thus, clarity of communication is paramount in limited wars but has little place in total wars. In essence, the shadow of the future highlights the importance of clear communication, and thus of proportionality. Secondarily, Schelling also argues that the proportionality norm is key because people are naturally drawn to its symmetry:

> There is something here in the psychology of communication – in people's sense of proportion, of justice, of appropriateness, in the symbolic retaliation of a response to a provocation, in the pattern that is formed by a coherent set of actions – that goes beyond the abstract military relation between enemies, beyond the economics of cost and damage, beyond the

[6] For a more colorful example, Schelling (1966, 145-146) also links proportionality of response to farm life. If a dog on a farm kills a chicken, the owners tie the dead chicken around the dog's neck to communicate its wrongdoing, as they cannot explain the norms of farm life to the dog with words. Punishing the dog through some other, unrelated means would not communicate their disappointment as directly.

> words that are used to rationalize a set of actions… There is an *idiom* in this interaction, a tendency to keep things in the same currency, to respond in the same language, to make the punishment fit the character of the crime, to impose a coherent pattern on relations.
>
> (146-147)

Both Schelling (1966) and Axelrod (1980), in reviewing the strategic logic of proportional responses, comment on the dangers of overreactions – of disproportionate responses. In the course of his computer simulations of iterated prisoner's dilemmas, Axelrod finds that the most successful strategies are those in which the player exhibits both niceness (the unwillingness to defect first) and forgiveness (the unwillingness to retaliate beyond one round). Those strategies that require players to retaliate beyond one move – to overreact – are less successful in the long-run, serving as "a warning against the facile belief that an eye for an eye is necessarily the best strategy" (1980, 20). Schelling argues that disproportionate responses are dangerous because, viewing war through the lens of extended bargaining, the message that the overreaction is meant to convey can be lost in the destruction, making it "harder to tell what was reprisal… and what was opportunistic military action," (1966, 145). Given these concerns and others about the costs of disproportionate responses, why do states sometimes overreact? The remainder of this article will review the existing explanations for disproportionate responses, and then it will suggest an avenue for future research.

EXPLAINING DISPROPORTIONALITY

Though proportionality is a well-established norm of conflict, states sometimes overreact when provoked. Many scholars have recognized this point, but fewer have done so explicitly, and even fewer have done so in a generalizable and empirically testable fashion. Instead, existing explanations of disproportionate responses tend to be oblique and idiosyncratic within subfields. This review will attempt to bridge some of these explanations for the sake of holistic analysis, and then it will point towards the most promising path for future research.

In considering existing explanations for disproportionate responses, this review will begin with systemic explanations that view disproportionate responses within the context of the balance of power in the international system. Then, it will move to dyadic explanations that account for overreactions of states within conflict pairs by considering the strategic characteristics of both states. Finally, the review will consider analyses focused on the influence of domestic politics on overly aggressive behaviors. Within all of these categories – systemic, dyadic, and domestic politics explanations – existing interpretations will be divided according to their view of overreactions as either strategic decisions or as reckless behaviors.

STRATEGIC EXPLNATIONS OF DISPROPORTIONALITY

Systemic Explanations

Overreaction as Strategic Behavior

According to the theory of offensive realism (Mearsheimer 2009), structural realist accounts of conflict behavior that begin with the rational actor assumption assert that

mistakes, such as over-balancing, are the exceptions instead of the rule. Assuming that disproportionate responses are akin to overbalancing as reckless and overly aggressive behaviors, we can then disregard cases of disproportionate responses as white noise, as they do not occur systematically. Furthermore, Mearsheimer (2001) argues that systemic theories, which analyze international behaviors as patterns within a broad system of states rather than as particular policies chosen by particular states, do not predict singular outbreaks of war – much less singular cases of disproportionate responses. He suggests that only state-level theories, such as deterrence models, can predict these types of foreign policies. Overall, then, structural realist accounts of war offer little explanation for disproportionate responses.

Overreaction as Reckless Behavior

On the other hand, defensive realism (Waltz 1979) suggests that mistakes are more common and, as such, should be incorporated into our theories of international outcomes. Waltz does not attempt to explain why states sometimes behave recklessly and overreact; like Mearsheimer (2001), he suggests that a separate theory of foreign policy is necessary to account for such state-level decisions. Unlike Mearsheimer, though, Waltz acknowledges that these aberrations occur often enough that theories of international relations should account for how other states react to them. Though Waltz does not account for disproportionate responses himself, presumably he would be open to their exploration in systemic theories.

Mearsheimer, on the other hand, would not be so open-minded. According to his (2009) critique, by accepting mistakes in great power behavior as routine, Waltz (1979)

necessarily builds a non-rational theory. In this way, according to Mearsheimer, Waltz's theory is closer to the psychological explanations of classical realists than the ideas of recent structural realists:

> By assuming that states do not act rationally, Waltz is effectively saying that it is clear to him from the sweep of history that the great powers have frequently behaved in ways that make no strategic sense. These are not cases of states miscalculating because of imperfect information. These are cases of states acting foolishly by ignoring relevant information or paying serious attention to largely irrelevant information.
>
> (Mearsheimer 2009, 244-245)

For Mearsheimer (2009), the non-rationality of Waltz's (1979) theory is problematic because it undermines the rest of the argument; if states do not behave rationally and instead make mistakes in systematic ways, then how could they reliably balance correctly against other powers? Instead, Mearsheimer (2009) points to several neoclassical realists, such as Posen (1984), Snyder (1991), and Van Evera (1999), all of whom assume a baseline rationality for states but who argue that states make strategic mistakes when particular pathologies of domestic politics intervene in the decision making process. All three of these neoclassical realists use aspects of domestic politics to explain types of disproportionate responses, as will be explicated. In sum, though defensive realists may allow structural accounts of disproportionate responses as mistakes, offensive realists

would point to the realm of domestic politics as the proper level of analysis for such pathologies.

Dyadic Explanations

Overreaction as Strategic Behavior

Before turning to the level of domestic politics, though, we must analyze the dyadic level, which examines pairs of conflicting states, and to do so we can momentarily revisit Schelling's (1966) account of dyadic military strategy from the Cold War. As mentioned previously, Schelling argues that war is an extension of bargaining. Within this context, disproportionate responses can be strategic if a belligerent wants to communicate a particularly strong message. Schelling (150-151) argues, essentially, that breaking the norm of proportionality conveys more anger or resolve, which may sometimes be desirable:

> This [disproportionate response] is still diplomacy: there are times to be rude, to break the rules, to do the unexpected, to shock, to dazzle, or to catch off guard, to display offense... And there are times when, though in principle one would like to conform to tradition and to avoid the unexpected, the tradition is too restrictive in the choices it offers, and one has to abandon etiquette and tradition, to risk a misunderstanding, and to insist on new rules for the game or even a free-for-all. Even then, the rules and traditions are not irrelevant: breaking the rules is more dramatic, and

> communicates more about one's intent, precisely because it can be seen as a refusal to abide by the rules.

Instead of teasing out elements of strategy as Schelling (1966) does, most contemporary dyadic explanations of conflict focus on measuring and testing the concept of escalation, or the change from a peaceful (even if contentious) relationship between two states to a conflictual one. Because the two states enter a period of open hostility, dyadic escalation also can be defined as the failure of deterrence (Huth, Gelpi, and Bennett 1993; Braumoeller 2008). Either way, one or both of the states in the dyad move from peaceful interactions to hostile ones, so one or both may be described as responding disproportionately. Thus, some may point to this concept of escalation as the concept closest to the disproportionate response that currently benefits from an active quantitative research agenda within international relations. Though the concepts are undoubtedly related, several problems arise from equating escalation and disproportionate response, as will be explicated.

As a starting place, Braumoeller (2008) attempts to bridge the divide between systemic and dyadic theories of conflict by creating a two-step theory for escalation involving great powers. First, at the systemic level, great powers attempt to manipulate their international relationships, and this maneuvering produces tension among the states. Second, relative levels of security activities between the two states in a dyad determine when that larger tension boils over to dyadic conflict. Braumoeller stipulates that either the deterrence model or the spiral model of conflict could explain why conflict erupts in the second step, and he tests the two models against each other. The deterrence model

holds that conflict erupts when State A is not deterred by State B; that is, State A aggressively pounces on the weakness of State B. The spiral model, on the other hand, relies on states acting defensively; State A feels threatened by the capabilities of State B and so builds up its own capabilities, triggering an arms race. Through data from 19th-century conflicts, Braumoeller finds that the deterrence model, in which conflict erupts from overly aggressive rather than overly defensive behaviors, better explains great power conflict initiation. An extension of his deterrence logic, then, would hold that states respond disproportionately when doing so will reap strategic benefit, acting out of aggressive opportunism rather than defensive paranoia. The caveat, of course, is that Braumoeller's analysis is limited to 19th century conflicts.

Huth, Gelpi, and Bennett (1993) also deal with both structural and dyadic approaches to escalation, but these authors attempt to compare them rather than combine them. The authors analyze 97 cases of deterrence episodes between great powers and test the power of both international and dyadic factors to explain conflict escalation. The authors find substantially more support for the dyadic explanations of conflict escalation; these dyadic factors leading to the outbreak of war include elements of deterrence such as second-strike capability with the dyad, the balance of arms between the two states, and the relative interests of the two states. The authors find considerably less evidence to support the power of traditional factors of structural realism, including the polarity of the international system, the number of great powers, and the number of alliance clusters. Despite the success of the dyadic factors in predicting escalation, though, even the best statistical model only correctly predicts 76% of the cases of great power deterrence

crises. Even within this narrow range of cases, something besides simply strategic dyadic factors is affecting conflict escalation.

Braithwaite and Lemke (2011) would argue that this is partially due to the ambiguity regarding prevailing measures of escalation. Their study compares six different measures of escalation found in the literature and finds few robust relationships among them; that is, the different measures of escalation, all taken from militarized interstate disputes (MIDs), are not substantially correlated with each other, which calls into question the validity of any of them. The six measures of escalation surveyed include the following:

1. Reciprocation of militarized action (either in kind or elevated);
2. Use of force by either state;
3. Use of force by both states;
4. Any fatalities (fatalities > 0) in the dyad;
5. More than 250 fatalities in the dyad;
6. More than 1,000 fatalities in the dyad.

Beyond not being correlated with each other, the major problem with these measures of escalation within the context of this study of disproportionate responses is that most of the measures are dyadic rather than actor-specific. Thus, they tell us that a crisis escalated, not which party escalated it, specifically how they escalated it, or why they escalated it, i.e., what initially triggered the crisis. Using the six different measures of escalation that Braithwaite and Lemke (2011) survey for examples, the fourth, fifth, and sixth measures all operationalize escalation as the occurrence of some number of

casualties on either side of the conflict. Though these may be valid indicators of the escalation to war, they provide no information about why the casualties occurred (Were they the trigger to the conflict or an overreaction to a non-fatal attack?) or which side is to blame. Thus, these indicators are not informative about disproportionate responses. Even more directly, the first measure of escalation surveyed by Braithwaite and Lemke overtly lumps together proportionate and disproportionate responses. Clearly, though conceptions of escalation can be related to disproportionate responses, they are not interchangeable.

Overreaction as Reckless Behavior

Other accounts of escalation at the dyadic level view the turn to war as non-strategic or non-rational. First, in a limited bending of strategic thinking, Fearon (1995) employs the concept of bounded rationality, which posits that states behave rationally given the information (however limited) they have. For Fearon, wars are inherently costly, and mutually beneficial agreements short of war always exist. If states are rational, as Fearon posits, then the outbreak in war can only be explained by informational limits that interrupt their rational decision making. For instance, if two states in crisis have private or asymmetric information and if one or both have incentives to misrepresent or conceal that information, then the two may mistakenly go to war. If only mistakes in information can explain the outbreak of any war, according to Fearon, then the question remains if only particularly dramatic informational mistakes could lead to (mistaken) disproportionate responses, as Fearon does not address overreactions directly.

An alternative explanation suggests that, perhaps in addition to the informational mistakes explored by Fearon (1995), another factor is responsible for heightening the likelihood of non-strategic overreactions – rivalry. A rivalry within international relations can be defined as a dyad in which conflict recurs (Goertz and Diehl 1993) and/or a dyad in which, because of their mutual history, the decision making processes of the states in the dyad are influenced largely by their negative attitudes towards each other rather than solely by strategic calculations (Vasquez 1996). These reckless propensities cause rivalries to behave differently than other conflict dyads (Goertz and Diehl 1993; Vasquez 1996; Colaresi and Thompson 2002a; Colaresi and Thompson 2002b), and some scholars have argued more specifically that rivalry makes dyads more likely to escalate to war (Goertz and Diehl 1993; Colaresi and Thompson 2002a; Colaresi and Thompson 2002b).

Vasquez and Leskiw (2001) argue that states that fight over territory are more likely to become rivals than states that fight over other issues. No matter how rivals emerge, though, many authors (Vasquez and Leskiw 2001; Colaresi and Thompson 2002a) agree that each subsequent conflict within a dyad increases the likelihood of future wars. In turn, rivals are much more war prone than states experiencing isolated conflicts (Goertz and Diehl 1993; Vasquez and Leskiw 2001). Goertz and Diehl (1993) contend that the logic of enduring rivalries implicitly challenges the rational choice model because of the superior role rivals give to the past in influencing their decisions; the rational choice model, in contrast, is firmly future-oriented.[7] By casting rivalries as backward-looking, Goertz and Diehl link rivals to the backward-looking strategy of tit-

[7] Of course, the caveat here, as Goertz and Diehl (1993) note, is that the rational choice model *does* account for preferences, which could be shaped by the past without harming the model. Their point, broadly speaking, is that the rational choice model typically takes preferences as given rather than focusing on preference formation, which may well vary from rivals to non-rivals.

for-tat (Axelrod 1984) and the backward-looking nature of the proportionality norm (Walzer 1977).

Despite these connections, two problems arise when attempting to explain disproportionate responses through rivalries. One is the dominant critique of the rivalry literature in general – that the propensity for two states to experience war and the likelihood of them becoming rivals both result from the same underlying conflict process, rather than one simply causing the other (Lemke and Reed 2001). More important in the context of this review, the second problem is that the rivalry literature only examines conflict escalation, not disproportionate responses. As explained earlier, these two concepts, though related, are not interchangeable. Though it may stand to reason that two rivals, more likely to go to war or to behave more aggressively, may also be more likely to overreact, the rivalry literature does not test this contention. Colaresi and Thompson (2002b) even go so far as to directly posit that benign triggers are more likely to elicit more aggressive responses within rivalries than within other dyads, meaning that rivals are more likely than other states to overreact. However, this proposition is not actually tested as part of their empirical analysis. Instead of testing for disproportionate responses, they test for dyadic escalation. Examining the proportionality of response as the dependent variable would require measuring the gap between the crisis trigger and the crisis response at the actor-level. Though this is possible with the International Crisis Behavior data that Colaresi and Thompson (2002b) use, they forgo this method and instead use a dyadic-level indicator of escalation as their dependent variable, effectively not testing one of their central claims regarding disproportionality.[8] True measures of

[8] Colaresi and Thompson (2002b, 269) do not use the terms "disproportionality" or "disproportionate response," but they certainly describe the concept: "The most dramatic implication of this argument is

disproportionate responses must occur at the actor-level rather than the dyadic- or systemic-levels. This would indicate that the realm of domestic politics would be fertile ground for explanations of overreactions, but existing accounts within this arena are also lacking, as will be shown.

DOMESTIC EXPLANATIONS OF DISPROPORTIONALITY

Overreaction as Strategic Behavior

Within strategic considerations of domestic politics as well, escalation is still the model through which theorists mostly closely connect to the idea of disproportionality. For example, Fearon (1994) engages the realm of domestic politics by examining the role of latent public opinion in escalation commitment. Fearon constructs the idea of audience costs, the price paid by decision makers when a domestic audience perceives that its leader has verbally or politically escalated a crisis but has then backed down from that commitment. Using formal modeling, Fearon argues that democracies face stronger audience costs than non-democracies because the constituents within democracies can more effectively punish their leaders. Because of these stronger costs, leaders of democracies are quicker to arrive at a point of escalation where the domestic political (i.e., audience) costs of backing down from a crisis outweigh the anticipated costs of fighting a war. By extension, this may mean that democratic leaders are more likely than

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that the action-reaction sequence of crises is likely to be different among rivals. Information passed between rivals must be processed within the conflictual setting of that relationship. Thus, crisis triggers such as verbal threats, sanctions, or military mobilizations are likely to lead to more violent and escalatory responses within rivalry as compared to non-rival interactions (Brecher, James & Wilkenfeld, 2000; Bremer, 2000; Goertz & Diehl, 2000b; Rioux, 1997; Vasquez, 2000)."

non-democratic leaders to follow through with threats of disproportionate responses to crises, though Fearon does not make this claim directly.

Overreaction as Reckless Behavior

In his broad consideration of "Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Theories of International Relations," Fearon (1998) also contributes to the consideration of overreactions as reckless, non-strategic behavior by analyzing the connections between systematic and domestic explanations of foreign policy. The first of the two types of domestic explanations that he describes ("D1") summarizes the assumptions of neoclassical realism, which is the theoretical school that most directly addresses disproportionate responses as mistakes produced by domestic politics. Neoclassical realism carries the assumptions of structural realism, including a baseline rationality of states, but then allows one or both of the states in a dyad to be described as non-unitary, meaning that elements of their domestic politics may be considered. Those elements of domestic politics analyzed are considered to inhibit the rationality of the leaders; that is, domestic politics push leaders to behave non-rationally and to make mistakes, such as responding disproportionately in crises.

Fearon (1998) was responding to a theoretical trend that had begun more than a decade before. For example, Posen (1984) argues that states operate according to the tenets of realism when under threat but that they are more likely to make mistakes (known within the literature as pursuing "sub-optimal policies") when not driven by threat; he argues more specifically that domestic differences in military doctrine influence foreign policies when states are not under threat. Similarly, Legro (1994)

argues that military culture can be responsible for the particular sub-optimal policy of conflict escalation, and Van Evera (1999) maintains that powerful militaries can drive states to pursue overly aggressive policies. Thus, though these authors do not engage disproportionate responses directly, their explanations of overly aggressive behaviors are in the same ballpark.

Instead of analyzing the influence of military culture and policies like the other authors, Snyder (1991) turns to the domestic factors of logrolling and industrial development to explain over-expansion. Though not the same as the immediate disproportionate responses of crises or the escalation to war, imperial overexpansion is akin to these behaviors in that it is excessively aggressive. Snyder (1991) argues that interest groups that would benefit from imperial expansion lobby the government and, by perpetuating the strategic myth that the state's security can only be guaranteed through expansion, also lobby public opinion; the influence of these interest groups is in turn moderated by the timing of industrialization for the state. In this way, though extreme expansion is non-rational for the state as a whole, it is rational for the driving interest groups and the complicit leaders, explaining why states over-expand despite the seemingly objective costs of doing so. Snyder's argument has been heavily criticized. Some critics allege that Snyder's argument depends on an overly complex causal mechanism, while others assert that his theory fails to explain under-expansion and that leaders savvy enough to logroll with industrial groups ought to be savvy enough to pull back from expansion once it becomes costly (Rosecrance 1995). Essentially, Snyder (1991) and other neoclassical realists pick and choose when leaders behave rationally in order to complement their narratives.

Kupchan (1994) also focuses on expansion, though unlike Snyder (1991) he considers the full range of values, from under-expansion to appropriate growth to over-expansion. This account focuses more perceptions, as Kupchan argues that leaders observe and in turn voice concerns to the public about strategic vulnerability. These appeals to public opinion shape a new strategic culture, as moderated by the position of the state in the international system, and this combination of factors influences imperial growth. In general, Kupchan (1994) argues that states with lower levels of perceived vulnerability are more likely to behave moderately. Rising powers with high vulnerability, on the other hand, are more likely to pursue overly aggressive policies both in the core and the periphery. Declining powers with higher vulnerability are more likely to pursue aggressive policies in the periphery but more likely to be overly cooperative with states in the core. In speaking to influences on aggression through expansion, Kupchan may indirectly speak to the propensity for overreaction. However, Rosecrance (1995) calls into question both Kupchan's measures and his overall theory. Specifically, Rosecrance expresses reservations about Kupchan's measures of vulnerability and power status, as both are assessed rather subjectively. Rosecrance (1995) makes his point by considering the cases of Germany and Japan during the interwar period. First, he contends with Kupchan's failure to include Germany as a case study, and then he questions the classification of interwar Japan as highly vulnerable. Instead, Rosecrance argues that both Germany and Japan experienced low vulnerability during this time but nonetheless pursued reckless overexpansion, calling into question Kupchan's theory. Rosecrance allows that perhaps the German and Japanese leaders *perceived* their states to be vulnerable, but even this concession creates problems for Kupchan. First, Kupchan

expressly contends that leaders generally perceive the vulnerability of their states correctly – that misperception is not typically the operative issue. Second, if Kupchan's argument actually boils down to the power of misperception, then his argument is closer to Jervis (1976) than to other works of neoclassical realism. The bigger problem then becomes the failure of this work and others to measure misperception or other operative cognitive factors. As Rosecrance (1995, 160-161) concludes in his critique, intentions and preferences are paramount in discussing overly aggressive behavior, but they are rarely considered objectively and they are not synonymous with capability, which is sometimes used as a proxy. As discussed previously, this is the point made by Goertz and Diehl (1993) at the dyadic level. Because disproportionate responses are past-oriented rather than future-oriented, understanding preference formation is key to understanding overreactions. We need objective consideration of the cognitive processes that lead to overly aggressive intentions. Thus, even at a level of analysis particularly ripe for considerations of disproportionate responses, existing explanations a) do not address the concept directly; and b) do not incorporate cognitive processes into their account of sub-optimal behaviors such as overreactions.

CONCLUSION

In surveying the escalation to war between Iraq and the US in 2003, Lake (2011) reaches the same conclusion regarding the value of a cognitive explanation. He begins by attempting to analyze the war through a bargaining lens, just as Schelling (1966), Fearon (1994), and countless others advocate. To do so, he reviews the assumptions of the bargaining model: namely, that states are rational, unitary actors involved in two-player

games (or dyads), and that war ends after settlement of the primary contentious issue. Lake (2011) then argues that none of these assumptions are met within the US-Iraq case. First, the war did not end after the US declared "Mission Accomplished" regarding the initial military invasion; if the US (referenced here as both the administration and public) had clearly understood costs of rebuilding after the initial military success, it may have proceeded differently. Second, the actors – both the US and Iraq – were not unitary, maneuvering in strictly two-player games, or acting only from strategic interests. Instead, domestic politics were important factors pushing towards war in both states, as special interests influenced the US push for war, and Hussein avoided backing down partially to impress his domestic audience. Because Hussein acted in reference to domestic politics, regional players, and the US simultaneously, the war cannot accurately be modeled as a two-player game. Finally, and most crucially for Lake, neither state behaved rationally because both were pushed to war by misperceptions. Yet, instead of the types of misperceptions described by Fearon (1995), the misperceptions did not result from honest misinformation or intelligence limitations so much as from "self-delusion" (Lake 2011, 45). Iraq willfully ignored the strong US intent to go to war, and the US radically underestimated the costs the war would bring in time and resources. Lake (2011, 45) concludes:

> Misrepresentation by the other side was far less of a problem than self-delusion. Neither side wanted to know about itself or the other information that would have challenged its prior beliefs or slowed the march to war.

> These motivated biases are inconsistent with rationality and suggest the need for a behavioral theory of war.

From a more limited scope, this case and all of the preceding arguments from this review suggest the need for a non-strategic and actor-specific theory of disproportionate responses. If we consider the invasion of Iraq as a disproportionate response on behalf of the US, then none of the existing theories covered in this review directly speak to why this overreaction occurred. Systemic accounts do not address disproportionate responses directly, or even really tangentially, as they skirt issues of foreign policy. Dyadic theories of escalation black-box the decision making process of individual states in favor of dyadic characteristics, in effect ignoring the role of triggering events and how responses to them arise. Finally, domestic politics theories favor the idea of over-expansion instead of overreaction, ignoring the realm of responses to crisis triggers. They also bend the definition of rationality and attempt to meld to it ideas of misperception without questioning their compatibility or generalizability.

Instead, future work should more fully incorporate "psychologically plausible assumptions about human decisionmaking" (Lake 2011, 45) from neuroscience and cognitive psychology. In short, we should pursue cognitive approaches to disproportionate responses in international relations, as the existing theories do not adequately explain their occurrence.

CHAPTER 3

SWEETER THAN LIFE ITSELF: REVENGE AS AN EXPLANATION FOR DISPROPORTIONATE RESPONSES TO SECURITY CRISES[9]

[9] Kayce Marie Mobley. To be submitted to *Diplomacy & Statecraft*.

ABSTRACT

Though proportionality is a norm of warfare, states do occasionally violate this principle and counter international aggression with *dis*proportionate responses. Within international relations, existing theories do not adequately address when or why such overreactions occur. In this article, I use the lens of revenge and existing theories of group identity and behavior to develop a cognitive explanation; I argue that states are more likely to pursue revenge through disproportionate responses when the initial attacks to which they respond violate norms surrounding the conduct of war or trigger greater perceived threats and fears. An exploratory quantitative analysis first creates a new measure of proportionality from the International Crisis Behavior dataset and then provides support for this theory of revenge and proportionality. To test the theory further, I use most-similar-systems design with two case studies: the 1956-7 crisis over the nationalization of the Suez Canal; and the 2002-3 crisis regarding Iraqi regime change.

INTRODUCTION

> *They then discussed what was to be done with the other prisoners and, in their angry mood, decided to put to death not only those now in their hands but also the entire adult male population of Mytilene, and to make slaves of the women and children.*
>
> *Next day, however, there was a sudden change of feeling and people began to think how cruel and how unprecedented such a decision was – to destroy not only the guilty, but the entire population of a state.*
>
> *(Thucydides 1954, 3.36)*

In 428 B.C., during the Peloponnesian War, the city of Mytilene on the island of Lesbos caught the attention of the Athenian Empire. Some of the wealthier, urban residents of Mytilene were attempting to unite the island against Athens by bringing rural citizens into the city and preparing to revolt. Upon learning of the uprising, Athens responded with a naval blockade of the island, while Sparta proved to be a fickle ally to the upstarts and did little to help them. After the Mytileneans surrendered, the Athenian assembly was faced with the decision of what to do with the traitors (Thucydides 1954, 3.36; Hanson 2005).

In its anger the assembly agreed to slaughter all of the Mytilenean men and to enslave the women and children. The order was sent forth, but remorse followed the next day; the Athenians questioned their judgment of condemning an entire island for the sins

of only part of its inhabitants. A great debate ensued, with Cleon urging the assembly to stick to their guns and carry out the previously agreed-upon punishment and Diodotus advising them to act prudently and only rebuke the guilty. Though the final vote was close, the assembly finally decided only to kill 1,000 leaders of the revolt and to spare the rest of the island (Thucydides 1954, 3.36-49; Hanson 2005).

That debate in Athens so many years ago concerned the application and limits of the *lex talionis*, or law of revenge. Greek culture in the time of the Peloponnesian War carried an understanding that one ought to return like for like - to "help one's friends and harm one's enemies," as Blundell (1989, 26) writes. According to her study of Greek ethics, this ancient idea carried over into Roman thought and from there rippled through Western history up to the present day, "especially in international relations." The common legal bedrock of the *lex talionis*, found in many civilizations over time, dictates that a criminal should be punished according to his crime – that like be paid for like in parallel retribution. For example, Hammurabi's Code demands that punishment follow the dictum of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth," as does the book of Exodus (21.23-25; Blundell 1989, 29). Though a contradictory principle of passivity has also influenced Western thought, particularly through non-violent social movements, the *lex talionis* still dominates the relations of states, as found in the just war norm of proportionality.

Despite its seeming simplicity of tit for tat, the *lex talionis* presents some inconsistencies in execution. Blundell (1989, 30) acknowledges that, at times, individuals in ancient Greece sought a sort of exaggerated revenge that went beyond retaliation in kind, adding an "element of retribution" to the previously established concept of "restitution." In other words, some pursuers of the *lex talionis*, in responding

to their own emotional desires, pursued revenge beyond the point of restoring the status quo. This overreaction influenced the debate in the Athenian assembly regarding the punishment of the Mytileneans, as recorded by Thucydides. Cleon, supporting the original judgment of putting to death all of the men and enslaving all of the women and children, *looked backwards* to the crisis and advocated for a disproportionate response:

> 'I urge you, therefore, not to be traitors to your own selves. Place yourselves in imagination at the moment when you first suffered and remember how then you would have given anything to have them in your power. Now pay them back for it, and do not grow soft just at this present moment, forgetting meanwhile the danger that hung over your heads then. Punish them as they deserve…'
>
> (Thucydides 1954, 3.40)

Diodotus, on the other hand, *looked forwards* and argued for a proportionate response:

> 'If we are sensible people, we shall see that the question is not so much whether they are guilty as whether we are making the right decision for ourselves.'
>
> (Thucydides 1954, 3.44)

Questions regarding the *lex talionis* and the proportionality of revenge in ancient Greece remain with us today. When addressing members of Congress about a possible invasion of Syria in September 2013, President Obama insisted:

> So the key point that I want to emphasize to the American people: The military plan that has been developed by the joint chiefs and that I believe is appropriate is proportional. It is limited. It does not involve boots on the ground. This is not Iraq and this is not Afghanistan.
>
> (Obama 2013)

On one hand, the concept of proportionality is a norm of international relations, as conceived by just war theory, practiced in customary international law, and formally recognized in international agreements. In his remarks, Obama played to this point, couching the proportionality of his plan as "appropriate." On the other hand, states do occasionally violate the principle of proportionality and counter international aggression with *dis*proportionate responses, pursuing revenge *beyond* the point of simply restoring the status quo. The possibility of this sort of lapse is evidenced by Obama's effort to contrast his plan for Syria with the American wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, implying that those conflicts were disproportionate responses. Within the field of international relations, existing theories do not adequately address when or why such overreactions occur.

In this article I argue that states are more likely to pursue revenge through disproportionate responses when the initial attacks to which they respond violate norms surrounding the conduct of war or trigger greater perceived threats and fear. I use the cognitive mechanisms of group identity and threat response to inform my theory and, in so doing, show an example of the influence of cognitive processes on the formation of foreign policy. An exploratory quantitative analysis builds upon data from the

International Crisis Behavior dataset and provides initial support for this theory of revenge and proportionality. To test the theory further, I apply it to two case studies through a most-similar-systems design: the 1956-7 crisis over the nationalization of the Suez Canal; and the 2002-3 crisis regarding Iraqi regime change. Evidence from these two cases demonstrates that disproportionate responses can be caused by revenge, a non-strategic, emotional factor that has been under-theorized in the discipline.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing Frameworks for Understanding Conflict

Existing theories of conflict initiation largely build on two divergent models: the deterrence model and the spiral model (Braumoeller 2008). The deterrence model holds that conflict occurs when the security activities of two states deviate. One state sees that the other is not as prepared for war, and this state pounces on the opportunity to gain at the weaker state's expense. The spiral model, on the other hand, focuses on matching capabilities. If one country perceives that another is increasing its security activities, then the lagging state wants to match those capabilities. The other country then observes the matching, feels threatened, and increases its activities again, resulting in a spiral that may well lead to war.

Braumoeller (2008) observes that these models oppose each other, as one predicts that conflict stems from *asymmetries* in security-building activities, whereas the other predicts that conflict stems from *matching* of security-building activities. Using 19th century conflicts as evidence with which to compare them, he argues that the deterrence model best explains conflict initiation and, by extension, disproportionate responses.

According to his logic, states respond disproportionately when they see the strategic benefit of doing so: i.e., taking disproportionately strong action *now* deters *future* attacks. This represents the standard strategic explanation of conflict escalation and disproportionate responses. In contrast, I argue in this article that strategy cannot account for all overreactions in international crises. Some result from the grind of domestic politics. Others are more reactionary than strategic and respond to the emotional or cognitive needs of the actor. These reactionary impulses can be labeled as revenge, and this is the explanation that I develop in this article.

Revenge

Though several authors from the fields of psychology, neuroscience, and political science have dealt with the concept of revenge tangentially, in recent decades some of the most direct analyses – and, therefore, the most explicit definitions – of this concept come from philosophy. Elster (1990, 862) describes revenge as "the attempt, at some cost or risk to oneself, to impose suffering upon those who have made one suffer, because they have made one suffer." This definition introduces several key ideas at once.

1. A response to some prior aggression

First, revenge is a form of retaliation, meaning that individuals seeking it were harmed personally by some Event A in the past and now wish respond to it with Event B (Elster 1990). See Figure 3.1.

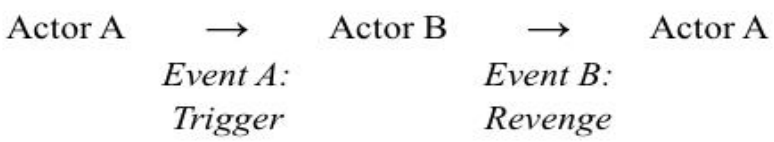

Figure 3.1. Revenge Sequence

2. Undertaken by the aggrieved party

The pursuit of revenge is undertaken by the aggrieved party of Event A, i.e. the target of the triggering attack (Elster 1990). Smith (1965) also defines revenge in this way by comparing it to punishment: whereas punishment of offenders is the work of authorities, victims themselves pursue revenge.[10]

3. Against the initial belligerent

Revenge (Event B) is aimed at the perpetrator(s) of the initial harm (Event A) (Elster 1990). Revenge-seekers may substitute proxies if the initial perpetrator(s) are unattainable.

[10] Jacoby (1983) similarly distinguishes between revenge and justice: revenge is undertaken by the aggrieved, whereas justice is undertaken by impartial third parties, especially through societal institutions. Jacoby argues that modern Western societies in this way have legislated revenge out of the hands of individuals and handed its only legitimate use over to states. I disfavor this distinction because I do not consider the two concepts to be parallel; revenge is a process, whereas justice is an end-state.

Uniacke (2000) also employs comparison by attempting to define revenge through its relationship to vengeance. Both are undertaken by the injured party, but they differ in their motivations: namely, vengeance stems from moral indignation (because the original crime is a moral offense), while revenge stems from resentment (because the original crime is personal). However, Uniacke wisely notes that the two motivations can easily overlap, complicating matters.

4. At some cost to the aggrieved party

Attempts at revenge come at some personal costs to those seeking it, whether those costs are in the forms of time, effort, or possible external consequences for their actions (Elster 1990).

5. For the emotional benefit of the aggrieved party

Crucially, revenge is undertaken for the emotional benefit of the aggrieved party. As Aristotle explains in *Rhetoric* (1954, 1.10), this motive acts as another distinction between revenge and punishment: punishment is assigned for the sake of the one being punished, while revenge is sought for the benefit of the one seeking it. See Figure 3.2 for a visual comparison of the two concepts.

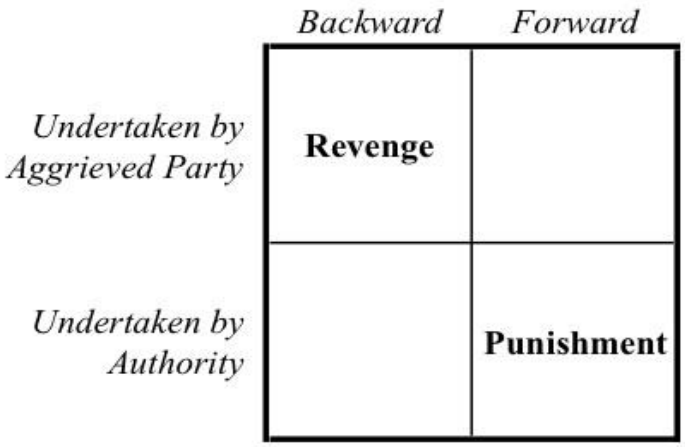

Figure 3.2. Comparing Revenge and Punishment

This distinction implies that *punishment hinges on the possibility of future benefit* to the one being punished, whether by reform or removal of temptation. Even if

authorities have little hope of reforming a criminal, they pursue his punishment for the promise of future benefit to society.

Conversely, *actors pursue revenge for their own emotional benefit*, meaning that they are *looking backwards* and responding to *past* pain. Because of this difference in perspective, several authors (Elster 1990; Steinberg 1991; Uniacke 2000) argue that revenge is incompatible with strategic deliberations.[11] Strategic thinking is inherently future-oriented, focused on the obtaining of utility in the future. Revenge, on the other hand, does not hold utility in terms of future benefits. Instead, as Uniacke (2000) argues, revenge is past-oriented – focused on responding to some perceived injustice. This is why literature often paints bloodthirsty characters willing to die in the pursuit of revenge; they do not seek future benefits, but instead are willing to sacrifice the possibility of *all* future benefits in response to past grievances. Juvenal warns us of the futility of past-oriented revenge in his Satire XIII (2004, lines 180-184): "'…vengeance is good, sweeter than life itself.' That's what the uneducated say."

As an example of a state responding to past pain rather than future benefit, in 1937 Honduras very nearly went to war over a stamp. In August of that year, Nicaragua unveiled a new postage stamp featuring a map of the country. This seemingly benign act triggered a crisis for Honduras because the miniature map in question labeled a large section of southeastern Honduras as "Territory in Dispute." In response to this

[11] Steinberg (1991), a psychoanalyst, notes that, fundamentally, the rational choice model does not account for the origin of preferences that influence utility calculations; desire for revenge, he argues, influences decision making as a potential origin of preferences and thus is ignored by rational choice. Elster (1990, 862) delves deeper by maintaining that revenge is 'irrational' in the schema of rational choice because it "involves only costs and risks, no benefits" – at least not the tangible or material benefits common to rational choice explanations of behavior. He argues further that "Rational individuals follow the principles of letting bygones be bygones, cutting their losses and ignoring sunk costs, whereas the avenger typically refuses to forget an affront or harm to which he has been exposed," (862). Proponents of the rational choice model, conversely, might argue that the pursuit of revenge is rational for an actor which has a preference for it.

bureaucratic insult, Honduras mobilized on the border – a clearly disproportionate response. Nicaragua refused to recall the stamp, and the two states only avoided violence after the mediation of Costa Rica, Venezuela, and the United States ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010). In this crisis, Honduras did not act in pursuit of future benefits, as Nicaragua had not displayed any intention to act on its border claims. Instead, Honduras responded to the trigger itself, to perceived injustice associated with the stamp. This constitutes revenge.[12] Because revenge is explicitly past-oriented, few authors have attempted to explain the pursuit of revenge as a strategic behavior.[13] This fifth qualification of revenge, the past-oriented pursuit of emotional benefit, is the concept that sets revenge apart from other forms of retaliation in international relations.

Defining Revenge

In summary, then, I define revenge as:

1) A response to some prior aggression;
2) Undertaken by an aggrieved party;
3) Against the initial belligerent(s) (or proxies);
4) At some cost to the aggrieved party;
5) For the emotional benefit of the aggrieved party (though the community may also benefit).

[12] Twenty years later, Honduras began to build governmental administrations in the disputed territory, including in areas that Nicaragua controlled. Nicaragua responded by invading Honduran territory. See "ICB Data Viewer" (2010).

[13] Only by expanding the definition of expected utility to include emotional and psychological motivations or preferences can we understand revenge as "rational" within the traditional rational choice model.

Proportionate and Disproportionate Responses

When the desire for revenge, typically understood as a personal emotion, influences state policies, or even grand strategies, many questions arise. Perhaps the most significant one is what determines whether the revenge sought will take the form of a proportionate or a disproportionate response.

Proportionate responses are those that, following the ancient dictum of the *lex talionis* ("law of revenge"), return "an eye for an eye"; the responses are proportionate to their triggers. At the societal level, MacCormack (1973, 80) argues that proportionate responses are a norm among most African communities surveyed in anthropological studies, as the groups maintain a "principle of equilibrium" regarding the pursuit of revenge.[14] This concept of equilibrium is also a norm of international relations. In his analysis of just war theory, Michael Walzer (1977, 129-133) describes the predominant role of proportionality in governing the behavior of states through his discussion of the "war convention" – the foundation of ideas accepted by the international community concerning the conduct of interstate conflict. The war convention operates via a double-headed rule against "excessive harm": in addition to using force only out of "military necessity" and not committing purposeless acts of violence, states agree to apply aggression proportionately. International acceptance of the ideal of proportionality flourished in the 19th century, and since then states have ratified it into public international law through protocols to the Geneva Convention, the Chemical Weapons

[14] MacCormack (1973), a comparative legal scholar, notes in his analysis of anthropological studies on revenge that the activity is highly controlled even in societies without high levels of central governance and untouched by European influence. Unarticulated norms imbue a "principle of equilibrium" (or proportionality) into revenge-seeking and also restrict appropriate targets of revenge to the perpetrator and his close kin; thus, even decentralized societies without legal traditions place limits on the legitimate pursuit of revenge.

Convention, and the Law of the Sea Convention. The International Court of Justice has also routinely cited the doctrine of proportionality, ruling in *Nicaragua vs. US* (1984) that it is "'well-established in customary international law'" (Stone 2001, 512). Using data that I have adapted from the International Crisis Behavior Project, Figure 3.3 shows that, on average, aggrieved states respond to crisis triggers proportionately. For example, in 1998 the US responded to violent attacks on its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania with limited air strikes against terrorist camps in Afghanistan and Sudan. Another example of a proportional response from 1998 is the Cyprus-Turkey missile dispute; Turkey triggered a crisis for Cyprus by *verbally* threatening to forcefully prevent Cyprus' use of Russian-made missiles, and Cyprus responded by *verbally* promising to cancel its plans ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010).

However, states do occasionally violate the principle of proportionality, as Figure 3.3 also shows. States sometimes under-react to triggers, as the US did after the sinking of the USS Panay in 1937; the Roosevelt administration responded to the violent attack with a diplomatic expression of outrage. Additionally, after Israel attacked Egypt amidst the Suez nationalization crisis of 1956, the USSR responded to the violent attack of its ally with threats of retaliation, rather than retaliation itself. At other times, states violate the principle of proportionality by overreacting. For example, the US responded to a political trigger (the declaration of Noriega as leader) in Panama in 1989 with a violent military intervention ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010).

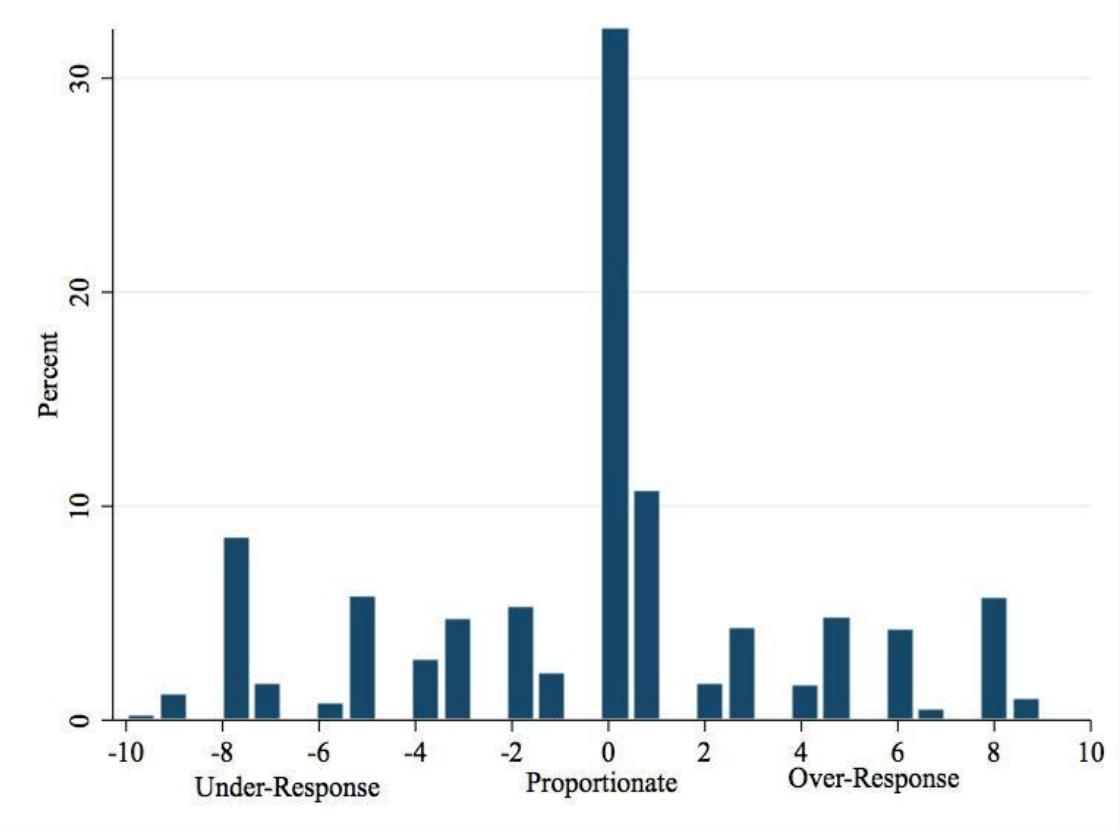

Figure 3.3. Proportionality of State Responses to Crisis Triggers
N=1000. Data from the International Crisis Behavior Project recoded by the author; see Fig. 3.6.

Determining why these sorts of over-responses sometimes occur is the focus of this article. From a psychological perspective, Healy et al. (2009) argue that aggressiveness of desired revenge can vary according to several variables, including the nature of the initial injury and the presence of a cognitive frame.[15] From a historical and cultural perspective, Blundell (1989) acknowledges that, at times, individuals harmed in

[15] In a natural experiment of sorts, Healy et al. (2009) tested individuals' responses to terrorism both before and after the 2001 attacks against the US. With the use of simulations, they argue that individual responses to terrorist attacks became more aggressive after 9/11 due to a framing effect. They also find through simulations that the site of the initial attack, here whether military or cultural/educational, affects the aggressiveness of response.

ancient Greece sought excessive revenge. However, within the field of international relations, existing theories do not address when or why this occurs.

THEORY

When states pursue revenge against military attacks, they may engage in disproportionate responses in two manners: unintentionally or intentionally. Unintentionally disproportionate responses may occur because of several factors, including: difficulties in measuring proportionality (e.g., a state attempting to respond proportionately to a terrorist attack with conventional tactics), error in estimation (of either the effects of the initial attack or of the scale of the response), and innumerable possible flukes of battle resulting from Clausewitz's "fog of war." I do not wish to address unintentionally disproportionate responses because they by definition do not vary systematically according to state motivations and preferences.[16]

Instead, I wish to address the intentionally disproportionate responses undertaken by states. When states respond to attacks, proportionate responses are the norm; however, sometimes states overreact.[17] Existing approaches in international relations may point to several reasons why this may occur (though I would argue that none explicate theories of disproportionate responses satisfactorily). For instance, realists of various stripes may explain intentional disproportionate responses as strategic attempts at deterrence – that, by overreacting to a crisis trigger, a state deters other actors from attacking in the future.

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[16] Teasing out when states intentionally or unintentionally overreact is difficult, but, in general, intentionality can be suggested by providing qualitative evidence demonstrating that leaders understand the severity of their responses.

[17] States also sometimes *underreact*. (See Figure 3.) Though my interest and theory for this project revolve around overreactions, I include underreactions in my quantitative work here and assume that the factors that contribute to overreactions, when reversed, contribute to underreactions. For future work, these negatively disproportionate responses will require more specific (and perhaps separate) attention.

Neoclassical realists may also point to domestic politics and argue that states sometimes overreact because of domestic pressures or incentives. I accept that both of these explanations are plausible and probably coexist, albeit at different levels of analysis.[18] Instead of focusing on these causal pathways, I argue that some cases of disproportionate responses cannot be readily explained by strategy or politics but rather result from psychological processes – resting at a third level of analysis.

To develop my psychological theory as to why disproportionate responses sometimes occur, first I analyze how revenge normally operates within smaller social groups; this understanding then helps explain where variations in international relations can occur.

Deviant Behaviors: Unmet Expectations and Violations of Norms

Andrew Oldenquist (1988, 464-465) argues that the normal operation of retribution can be explained by the social need of people to live in what he terms "moral communities." Citing studies of anthropology and evolution, Oldenquist observes that, even before the development of homo sapiens, our remote ancestors lived in communities. Thus, "we are innately social, not social by convention or a 'social contract,' and… we evolved the emotional equipment for cooperative social living" (Oldenquist 1988, 465). A key part of that "cooperative social living" is the "moral community," as Oldenquist defines it: a socially cohesive and stable group that serves as a source of identity for members, fosters in-group loyalty, and transmits social values across generations. This theory of group behavior is corroborated by neuroscience; Marcus et al. (1998) find that groups develop

[18] For a discussion of multiple causality (otherwise known as "plurality of causes" or "equifinality"), see Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, BCSIA Studies in International Security (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005).

internal norms and that individuals process deviations from those norms as personal threats.

In such a community, members hold each other liable for damages done to fellow members, with damage defined as either direct attacks or breaches of community expectations or norms. This sort of accountability for harm is only maintained through an understanding of retaliation for personal affronts. Negative reciprocity, then, is fundamental to group behavior and for community cohesion (Oldenquist 1988; de Quervain et al. 2004; McCullough 2008; Clavien and Klein 2010). At a personal level, members of moral communities understand that "we risk disapproval, or withdrawal of trust or privileges, when we disappoint normal expectations of cooperation, loyalty, and doing our fair share" (Oldenquist 1988, 469). Thus, in the time of our cognitive development, people learned to deal with violations of community living through retaliation. Indeed, many theorists today consider the early development of the practice of negative reciprocity as intrinsic to contemporary human cooperation (Chorvat and McCabe 2004; Fon and Parisi 2005; McCullough 2008).

States, as aggregated actors in a "community," also experience the desire for revenge (Scheff 1994; McCullough 2008; Löenheim and Heimann 2008). When translated into the modern context of international relations, though, the practice of negative reciprocity takes a different shape. States form a sort of moral community, as members have cultivated norms of behavior over many generations; in addition to shaping cooperation, these expectations shape the conduct of war among states (Huth et al. 2011; 2012). Thus, just as within a group of people, members of the international community hold each other accountable for their transgressions. In this way, states

respond to military attacks from their peers with proportionate retaliatory responses, just as individuals would respond to affronts to their community with negative reciprocity. However, the community of states strays from the model of a moral community in that armed aggression has become an accepted and expected form of behavior.

In a world of anarchy, realist theory maintains, aggression by states must be expected. Indeed, the states prove their resignation to this fact by the plethora of treaties and agreements by which they have attempted to regulate aggression without eliminating it (e.g., iterations of the Geneva Conventions). Even in their attempt to outlaw warfare after the Second World War, signatories to the UN Charter granted the right of self-defense to states, thus recognizing that war was entrenched in the system. Armed aggression has become an expected behavior within the community of states that is nonetheless met with proportionate retaliatory responses.

However, the regulations of warfare pursued by the community (defined by international customary and public law, as established by agreements such as the Geneva Conventions, etc.) have also become expected behaviors. Thus, violations of these expectations – such as the targeting of civilians – may trigger responses stronger than standard, proportionate retaliatory responses; they may trigger intentionally *dis*proportionate responses.

Violations of many expectations of international customary and public law regarding warfare may lead to disproportionate responses from states. In addition to the targeting of civilians, other examples include the use of indiscriminate weapons (namely chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons – all prohibited by international law) and the breach of an international agreement between states. For example, in October 1998, Iraq

announced that it no longer intended to honor the "memorandum of understanding" brokered earlier in the year by Kofi Annan that allowed UNSCOM, the UN Special Commission tasked with overseeing the elimination of Iraq's chemical and biological weapons, to operate within Iraq. After Iraq made this announcement, the US and the UK responded by mobilizing in the Gulf and, eventually, by engaging in a 72-hour bombing campaign against Iraq in December 1998. Thus, the US and the UK responded to the breach of an international agreement with acts of military violence – a disproportionate response ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010).[19]

Threat Perception and Fear

In addition to deviant behaviors, another causal path to disproportionate responses stems from sensitivity – specifically, sensitivity to, and perception of, severe threat. As Jervis (1992, 194) writes, "Fear is usually a more potent motivator than the desire for expansion… Wars are less frequently caused by aggression than by spirals of fear and insecurity."

As Jervis (1992) indicates, people behave differently when under threat. Li et al. (2009) push forward a "perception shift hypothesis," which indicates that social norms direct individual decision making in the absence of threats. When threats are present, though, personal interest dictates behavior. This "perception shift," when applied to states, indicates that in the absence of threat states will follow the norm of proportionality. When subjected to threat, though, they are more likely to follow personal interest (and emotion) – and thus more likely to respond disproportionately.

[19] Using the ICB data, the responses of the US and the UK in this crisis are both coded as 8 (or "disproportionate") on my proportionality scale, which ranges from -10 to 10. See Figure 3.5 for my recoding scheme for proportionality measurement.

Furthermore, Mobbs et al. (2007) find that distant threats are processed by the forebrain – the section of the brain responsible for cognitive reasoning – but that imminent threats are processed by the midbrain – the older, more reflexive and emotional region of the brain. This switch of processing indicates that more immediate threats are even more likely to be processed emotionally – and disproportionately – than more distant threats.

Gadarian (2010) finds support for disproportionate responses arising from threats through his study of citizens' responses to emotional media coverage. He presents the same factual information to participants through two different frames – one objective and the other with threatening images. The group who viewed scarier images with the news story reported more hawkish views afterward. Likewise, as mentioned before, Healy et al. (2009) find that American individuals responded more aggressively to simulated terrorist attacks after 9/11 than before; the real threat and salience of the exercise surely contributed to the increase in aggression.

In sum, strong threat and resulting fear cause individuals to ignore social norms in favor of personal interest, to use emotional rather than cognitive reasoning, and to become more aggressive. These effects can in turn cause actors to respond disproportionately because threat can exist independently of the type of trigger. To use a colloquial example, a poke to the eye elicits a radically different response than a poke of equal strength to the arm. The same is true for international crisis data; the raw correlation between gravity of threat and crisis trigger is approximately 0 ($r=-0.04$), indicating that the two exist independently. See Figure 3.4.

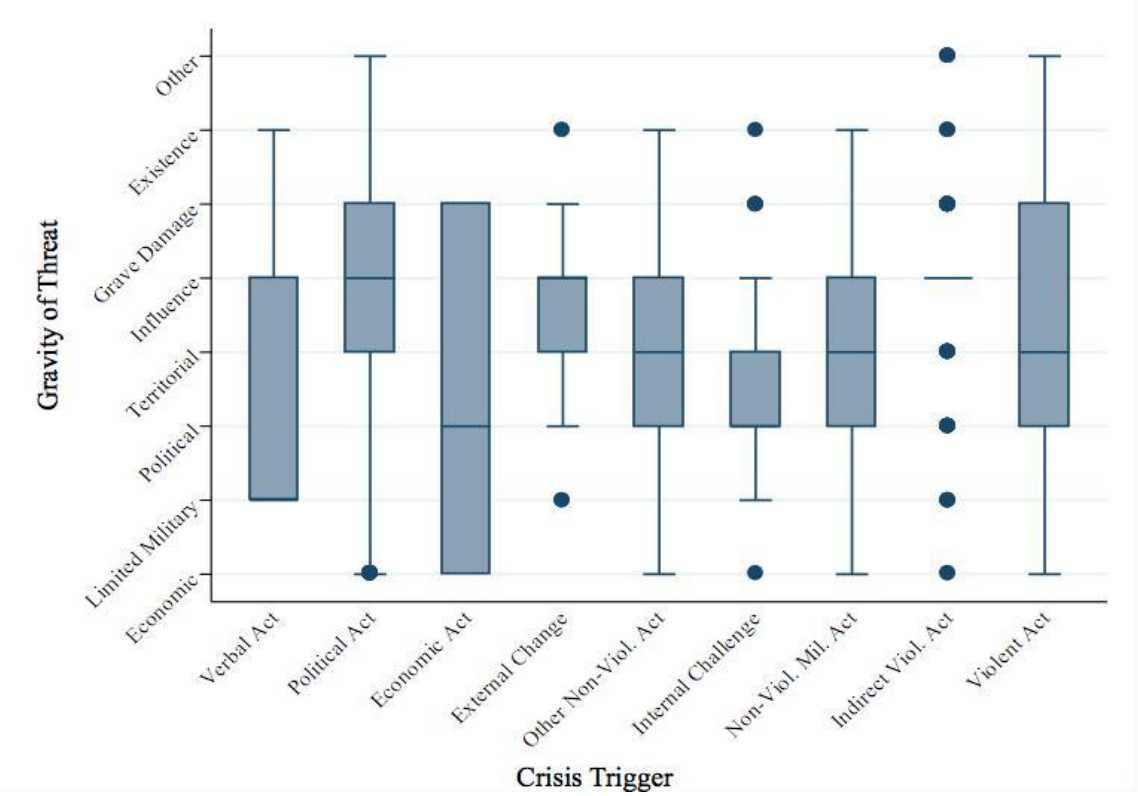

Figure 3.4. Gravity of Threat per Crisis Trigger
Data adapted from the International Crisis Behavior Project. N=1000.
See Figure 3.5 for recoding of crisis triggers.

To illustrate the notion that threat can exist independently of trigger, take two examples, both pulled from the International Crisis Behavior Project. First, in 1954 a political act triggered a crisis for Great Britain when US Secretary of State Dulles traveled to the UK and openly pressured the country to join the Indochina War. The war did not directly concern the UK, and so the political pressure only constituted a limited threat. The UK responded in kind with a political act, making its response proportionate ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010). (See Figure 3.5 for recoding scheme.)

On the other hand, in 1964 a series of political acts triggered a crisis for the United States. After massive rioting brought about by a dispute over a flag in the Panama

Canal Zone, the President of Panama broke diplomatic relations with the US and filed formal complaints with the OAS and the UN Security Council. Given that the US controlled the Panama Canal (and that, analogously, Egypt had nationalized the Suez Canal only eight years before), this political trigger brought a "threat of influence" to the role of the United States in the international system ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010). "Threat of influence" here essentially means a threat to relative power in the regional subsystem or international system. The US responded disproportionately (with a score of +8 on my proportionality scale).

HYPOTHESES

Two hypotheses arise from the literature and theory:

1. If Actor A initiates a crisis with State B through a trigger that exhibits deviant behavior, then State B is more likely to seek revenge through a disproportionate response than to act strategically through a proportionate response.

2. If Actor A initiates a crisis with State B through a trigger that exhibits a high-gravity threat, then State B is more likely to seek revenge through a disproportionate response than to act strategically through a proportionate response.

EXPLORATORY QUANTITATIVE DESIGN

To explore my theory of revenge and proportionality, I have designed an initial quantitative analysis that builds upon data from the International Crisis Behavior dataset, which details 455 international crises spanning from 1918-2007. The units of analysis for

this portion of the study are individual actors (states) within the crises, which total at 1,000.

Dependent Variable

The proportionality of responses serves as the outcome variable for this portion of the analysis. Proportionality is determined at the actor-level[20] by subtracting the score of aggression for the crisis trigger from the score of aggression for the actor's main response to the trigger. Thus,

$$Proportionality = Response - Trigger.$$

To do this, the scales for crisis triggers and major responses found in the ICB data must first be recoded. Within the original ICB data, response and trigger are both coded on scales ranging from 1-9, however these two scales substantively do not match. To match the scales substantively so that they may be compared directly, I recode triggers on a scale ranging from 1-10 and responses on a scale ranging from 1-11. Additionally, major responses are allowed to equal 0, indicating that the actor did not respond to the crisis trigger.[21] I have designed these two scales to match each other so that I may directly compare triggers and responses. Thus, subtracting the value of the trigger from the value of the response for each unit then creates a score of proportionality, which can then range

[20] Proportionality is measured at the actor-level because actors perceive crisis triggers differently; specifically, no crisis actor perceives *itself* to be the trigger for a crisis in which it is involved. Thus, within one crisis two actors may well blame two different triggering events and, thus, respond to two different events.

[21] Triggers cannot be coded as 0 because they must exist in order to be included in the dataset, but major responses can be coded as 0 because crisis actors can choose not to respond to triggers. In practice, only 5 of 1000 crisis actors identified in the ICB data are coded as not responding to their respective crisis triggers.

from -10 to 10.[22] See Figure 3.5 below for an illustration of the recoding scheme, and see Table 3.3 in the Appendix for a breakdown of its application to the data. For descriptive statistics regarding proportionality in the ICB dataset, see Figures 3.7-10 and the accompanying discussion in the Appendix.

Original	**Trigger**	**New Coding Scheme**	**Response**	Original
		0	No Response	1
1	Verbal Act	**1**	Verbal Act	2
2	Political Act	**2**	Political Act	3
3	Economic Act	**3**	Economic Act	4
4	External Change	**4**		
5	Other Non-Violent Act	**5**	Other Non-Violent Act	5
6	Internal Verbal or Physical Challenge	**6**		
7	Non-Violent Military Act	**7**	Non-Violent Military Act	6
		8	Multiple, Including Non-Violent Military Act	7
8	Indirect Violent Act	**9**		
9	Violent Act	**10**	Violent Military Act	8
		11	Multiple, Including Violent Military Act	9

Figure 3.5. Recoding of Trigger and Response Variables from ICB Data

Explanatory Variables

Deviant Behaviors

The deviance of the triggering event – in other words, the degree to which the initial aggression does not conform to expectations of contemporary international warfare –

[22] The new coding scheme "elongates" both trigger and response, stretching the scales beyond their original breadth. As a result, not all triggers/responses have direct corollaries on the other side, meaning that some individual responses (specifically, those following triggers of "external change," "internal verbal or physical challenge", or "indirect violent act") technically cannot be coded as proportionate. However, given that I use this scale only for a large-N statistical study, the average response across cases (which *can* be proportionate) matters more than individual cases.

serves as the first type of explanatory variable. Within this category, I include several factors:

- Non-state actors as triggering entities;
- Breaches of international agreements (e.g., targeting of civilians, cessations of diplomatic relations, violations of standing treaties, etc.);
- The degree to which triggering and responding actors are aligned.

These qualities are all included because they buck norms of contemporary international behavior: non-state triggers are surprising because states are the dominant actors within the international system; violations of international agreements deviate from previously agreed-upon behavior; and a trigger from an ally would deviate from past experience and expectations for the future.

The variable for identifying the triggering entities as states or non-state actors is included within the original ICB dataset; the other variables will need to be coded in future studies. I have included preliminary results below that only test the indicator for non-state actors.

Threat and Fear

The second type of explanatory variable is threat and fear. Within this category, I include several variables taken from the ICB project and from other sources. First, gravity of threat is an ICB variable that indicates the type of threat produced by the crisis and perceived by the crisis actor. The variable ranges from 0 (“economic threat”) to 6 (“threat to existence”). The variable can also be coded as 7 (“other”), but in practice only

1% of cases are coded in this way. See Figure 3.11 in the Appendix for further description of the variable and examples for each level of threat. As mentioned previously, Figure 3.4 shows that gravity of threat does not correlate with type of trigger; in other words, more serious crisis triggers do not necessitate higher gravities of threat, and vice versa. The two variables are coded independently. The second ICB variable included within the threat category is geostrategic importance; when crises occur in areas that are geostrategically more important, the crisis actors should perceive greater threat. The variable is measured in terms of the level and number of international systems affected and ranges from 1 ("one subsystem") to 5 ("global system").

The remaining threat variables come from outside datasets and pertain to the triggering entity within a crisis. From the National Material Capabilities dataset (version 3.02) of the Correlates of War project, I pull measures of triggering state power as ranked by the Composite Index of National Capability (CINC index).[23] Presumably, more powerful triggering states escalate the threat level perceived by a target state. Furthermore, I include a measure of the difference in power between the triggering state and the target state. If a stronger state attacks a weaker one, the weaker state should perceive a higher level of threat.[24] Finally, I account for the regime type of the trigger state via Polity2 scores from Polity IV Project. Attacks from more democratic triggering states should trigger higher levels of threat for the attacked states, whether because of higher audience costs, higher success rates, or both (Fearon 1994; Reiter and Stam 2002).

[23] For more information on the National Material Capabilities dataset, see Singer (1988).

[24] Because measures for the power of triggering state and responding state are also included in Models 2 and 3, collinearity prevents the inclusion of a directional difference. Instead, the absolute difference is of the two scores is used. Because the direction of the gap is absent, a large difference in power could indicate that either the responding state is more powerful than the triggering state or vice versa.

Because these three measures are only available for states, they are only used in Models 2 and 3.

Actor's Capability

The ability of a target state to respond to a crisis trigger – at all – necessarily influences its ability to respond disproportionately. The two variables that I use to account for a target state's capability are power and regime type. Again, power is measured through CINC rankings, and regime type is measured through Polity scores. Because these measures pertain only target states – and not to triggering entities – they appear in all three models.

Control Variables

A few control variables are also prudent to consider for the quantitative analysis. First, a basic categorical variable for the time period of each crisis is included. This measure ranges from 1 (1918-1939) to 5 (1990-2007) and is coded within the ICB dataset to account for the polarity of the international system. Second, the history of the crisis – whether or not it occurs within a war or within an otherwise protracted conflict – is included in the analysis. This measure accounts for historic rivals, which are more war prone than states experiencing isolated conflicts (Goertz and Diehl 1993; Vasquez and Leskiw 2001). Crises without protracted conflict are coded as 1, crises part of protracted conflict without long wars are coded as 2, and crises part of protracted conflict with long wars are coded as 3. This measure also comes from the ICB data.

RESULTS

Within the ICB dataset, some measures pertain to crises and others to actors within those crises. Because I include both levels of data in this analysis, I account for these groups with multilevel models with mixed effects (Models 1 and 2). For Model 3, I drop the two variables taken from the crisis-level (i.e., geostrategic importance and protracted conflict) and use an ordered logit with clustered standard errors to account for the crisis groups. See Figure 3.6.

The results of the multilevel models are found in Table 3.1, and the results of the ordered logit are found in Table 3.2. I will discuss the results in terms of the three types of explanatory variables.

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
Type	Multilevel Mixed-Effects	Multilevel Mixed-Effects	Ordered Logit with Clustered Standard Errors
Non-State Triggers Included?	Yes	No	No
Crisis-Level Data Included?	Yes	Yes	No
Actor-Level Data Included?	Yes	Yes	Yes

Figure 3.6. Explanation of Models

First, within the "deviant behavior" subset, the only variable for which I can immediately test – the indicator for non-state triggers – is not a statistically significant predictor of proportionality, as shown in Model 1. Once I have adapted additional indicators of norm violations in future studies, these results likely will change. Data

availability due to the structure of the original ICB dataset prevented their inclusion for this article.

Table 3.1. Multilevel Models
Model 1: N(actors)=880; Groups(crises)=433; Log likelihood=-2488.06; Wald (7)=26.76; Prob>=0.00.
Model 2: N(actors)=555; Groups(crises)=308; Log likelihood=-1581.61; Wald (9)=24.89; Prob>=0.00.

	Model 1			**Model 2**		
	Estimate *Std. Err.*	P>|z|	95% Conf. Interval	Estimate *Std. Err.*	P>|z|	95% Conf. Interval
Deviant Behaviors						
Non-State Trigger	0.17	0.65	-0.56	…	…	…
	-0.37		0.91	…		…
Threat and Fear						
Gravity of Threat	0.28	0.01	0.08	0.32	0.02	0.05
	0.10		0.49	*0.14*		0.59
Geostrategic Imp.	0.19	0.20	-0.10	0.11	0.60	-0.29
	0.15		0.47	*0.21*		0.51
Trigger's Power	…	…	…	-10.16	0.06	-20.57
	…		…	*5.31*		0.25
Power Gap	…	…	…	13.12	0.03	1.23
	…		…	*6.07*		25.01
Trigger's Polity	…	…	…	-0.03	0.29	-0.08
	…		…	*0.03*		0.02
Target's Capability						
Power	3.22	0.21	-1.76	-5.04	0.34	-15.35
	2.54		8.19	*5.26*		5.28
Polity	0.04	0.02	0.01	0.04	0.10	-0.01
	0.02		0.08	*0.03*		0.09
Controls						
Protracted Conflict	-0.05	0.84	-0.53	-0.18	0.57	-0.79
	0.25		0.43	*0.31*		0.44
Period	0.12	0.36	-0.13	-0.08	0.63	-0.40
	0.13		0.37	*0.16*		0.24
Constant	-2.03	0.00	-3.40	-1.36	0.12	-3.06
	0.70		-0.65	*0.87*		0.35

Table 3.2. Ordered Logit with Clustered Standard Errors
Model 3: N(actors)=555; Clusters(crises)=308;
Log pseudolikelihood=-1306.81; Wald (7)=22.42; Prob>=0.00.

	Model 3		
	Estimate *Std. Err.*	P>|z|	95% Conf. Interval
Deviant Behaviors			
Non-State Trigger	…	…	…
	…		…
Threat and Fear			
Gravity of Threat	0.14	0.02	0.03
	0.06		0.26
Geostrategic Imp.	…	…	…
	…		…
Trigger's Power	-4.57	0.02	-8.38
	1.94		-0.76
Power Gap	4.23	0.03	0.36
	1.97		8.10
Trigger's Polity	-0.01	0.58	-0.03
	0.01		0.02
Target's Capability			
Power	-0.94	0.66	-5.16
	2.15		3.27
Polity	0.02	0.10	0.00
	0.01		0.04
Controls			
Protracted Conflict	…	…	…
	…		…
Period	0.01	0.91	-0.14
	0.08		0.16

Second, indicators of threat and fear seem to be statistically significant predictors of proportionality. Gravity of threat is positive and significant at the .05-level across all three models, meaning that, as gravity of threat increases, a target state's likelihood of responding more aggressively relative to the trigger – in terms of proportionality – increases. The power of the trigger state is also significant in the models in which it is included; this measure is significant at the .1-level in Model 2 and at the .05-level in Model 3. These coefficients are negative, as expected; this means that triggers coming

from states with higher levels of power are less likely to result in over-responses from target states. The difference in power between triggers and targets is also significant across models, but unfortunately the interpretation of this result is not straightforward because the gap was measured with absolute values. Future research will attempt to rectify this problem. Finally, the regime type of the trigger state is not statistically significant.

Third, only one of the two indicators of target states' capabilities appears to be a significant predictor of proportionality. Power of the target state is not statistically significant in any of the models in which it is included. On the other hand, regime type of the target state does appear to matter; it is positive and statistically significant at the .05-level in Model 1 and at the .1-level in Models 2 and 3. This indicates that more democratic target states are more likely to react disproportionately to crisis triggers, perhaps because steeper audience costs (Fearon 1994) push democracies to follow through on threats of disproportionate responses. Future studies should investigate this finding further.

QUALITATIVE DESIGN

Thus far I have presented preliminary quantitative evidence supporting my theory of revenge and disproportionate responses. Partially because of the structure of the ICB dataset and partially because of the nature of the variables needed, all of the information necessary for my argument cannot be accessed through quantitative analysis. Thus, the next section of the article utilizes two case studies to present qualitative evidence supporting my theory. This portion of the analysis focuses on connecting security crises

to revenge (or backward-looking responses) and connecting the frame of revenge to disproportionate responses. I draw upon two case studies, including: a) the 1956-7 crisis over the nationalization of the Suez Canal; and b) the 2002-3 crisis regarding the Iraqi regime change pursued by the United States. Both of these cases were chosen within a most-similar-systems design. Within the Suez crisis, Great Britain, France, and the United States were similar actors (as all were Western democracies with mid- to high-levels of power and removed from the location of the crisis), but, according to the proportionality scale I have created, Great Britain and France overreacted to the crisis, whereas the United States did not. For the crisis with Iraq, the United States, France, and Germany were all similar actors (as all were, again, Western democracies with mid- to high-levels of power and removed from the location of the crisis); the US overreacted, whereas the two European states did not. Unfortunately, all of the actors for the case studies are Western, but this is a deliberate limitation made due to qualitative data availability.

CASE A: SUEZ CANAL NATIONALIZATION

On July 26, 1956, Egypt unilaterally nationalized the Suez Canal, in effect breaking the lease granted to the Anglo-French Suez Canal Corporation to operate traffic within the waterway. This economic act is ranked as a 3 on my trigger scale adapted from the ICB dataset. In response, the UK and France intervened militarily on October 31, making their responses rank as 10s on my scale. Thus, the two states overreacted with proportionality scores of +7 each. The United States, on the other hand, did not experience a full-blown crisis until the USSR threatened reprisal against the two Western European states. This

threat (ranked as a 5 on my scale) triggered the US response, which was to economically and diplomatically pressure the UK and France to withdraw. This response is ranked as a 7, giving the US a proportionality score of +2, fitting within the range of proportionate responses ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010). See Figure 3.12 in the Appendix for a visual presentation of these details. I argue that the UK and France overreacted to the nationalization of the Suez Canal because they perceived Egypt as flagrantly disregarding international law and because they both were experiencing decline in the region, which induced feelings of threat and fear.

Background

The tension among Egypt, the UK, and France that was palpable in the decade following World War II had its concrete beginnings a century before with the bid to build the modern Suez Canal. That bid was awarded in January 1856 to the Suez Maritime Company, an international consortium then composed chiefly of French stockholders. After confirming the contract a year later and then constructing the waterway for a decade, the Suez Canal finally opened in November 1869 (Fry 1992). By 1875, the British government bought into the consortium and became the principle stockholder (Bouvier 2014). This additional interest in the success of Egypt contributed to Britain's decision to claim the country as a protectorate in 1882, a development to which the French government only formally agreed in 1904 (Fry 1992). The takeover by Britain, as well as the continued interest of France and other European naval and trading powers, led to the gathering and signing of the Constantinople Convention in October 1888. By establishing clear rules of use, including freedom of passage except during wartime, the

crux of the convention was to internationalize and, thus, neutralize the canal (Gross 1957; Fry 1992). This shared status was not ideal for the UK, France, or Egypt, but it kept the waterway open and profitable until the middle of the twentieth century.

The strain of nineteenth century jockeying for the canal culminated into one of the major themes that Fry (1992) identifies in the run-up to the crisis of 1956: UK-French rivalry regarding the future of the Middle East. The other two themes are conflict between the UK and Egypt, particularly regarding the canal, and rising Egyptian nationalism. As anti-colonial movements arose around the world, the UK began to cede control out of necessity in fits and starts, further fueling the tension with Egypt. For instance, despite the UK's decision to remove Egypt from protectorate status in 1922, the UK contracted for its continued occupation of the canal zone through the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936; furthermore, the UK build an additional major military base in the zone during World War II and then kept it open and operational following the end of the conflict. Throughout the next decade, the UK attempted to maintain its dominance over the region through various means: the signing of more and more treaties to push political influence; the creation of more regional security agreements and military bases to guarantee defensive prominence; the deployment of resources to protect strategic holdings, such as oil fields and refineries; and, finally, the maintenance of communication and transportation routes, in particular the Suez Canal (Fry 1992). Fry (1992, 2) summarizes the critical value of the canal to the UK:

> The Suez Canal was the "jugular vein" of the system; maintenance of the base in the canal zone was vital. These critical interests were to be served

> despite economic strain, imminent insolvency, sharply diminished resources, and formidable challenges from within and outside the region, not excluding the United States. The Middle East was to remain a British sphere of influence, and no other power was to be allowed to intrude or challenge that position, let alone dominate. The British still regarded themselves as a leading world power.

Meanwhile, strong advocates for the end of colonial exploitation arose in the Middle East and North Africa after the end of World War II, resulting in the rise of many nationalist movements and uprisings. France, for instance, found itself facing independence movements in the North African colonies of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia; despite responding with violent tactics of repression, France was still losing its grip on power in the region. Great Britain faced resistance in the Middle East due to its continued military presence. In 1950, the Iranian government unilaterally nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, and the UK did not respond militarily, further weakening its credibility as an actor of consequence in the region. Within this climate, a nationalist movement also arose in Egypt (Verbeek 2003). Before its overthrow in 1952, the administration of King Farouk called for the UK to withdraw from Egypt, then the military junta that replaced it called for the same independence in 1953. For Egypt, the continued UK presence in the canal zone amounted to occupation, exploitation, and a violation of sovereignty; for reference, in the late 1940s and into the early 1950s, roughly 80,000 British troops patrolled the zone, even though the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty had only allowed for 10,000 (Fry 1992).

The UK, for its part, faced internal divisions regarding its future role in Egypt. Churchill, enjoying his second run as prime minister from 1951-1955 and driven by "imperial nostalgia, fears fed by the right wing of the Tory party of scuttling appeasement, contempt for Egypt's leaders, and a preference for confrontation – even a limited war," favored staying (Fry 1992, 3). His Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, thought that withdrawal would be the more prudent option. Extraction from India had gone well, leaving room for a continued relationship with Britain. Leaving peacefully seemed much more desirable than France's disastrous departure from Indochina, for example. Furthermore, Egyptian nationalism was rising, putting distaste for the British occupation into even sharper relief, and domestic forces were pushing for cuts to defense spending. Eden would have a marked reversal in position just a few short years later, after attaining the post of prime minister himself and witnessing Egypt's nationalization of the canal. For the time being, though, Nasser, who had ridden the wave of yet another uprising in 1954, seemed reasonable enough. In October 1954, the UK and Egypt signed a treaty providing for the retreat of British troops but allowing their return if a state in the region were attacked, thus allowing the UK to maintain a defensive position. By June of 1956, the last British troops withdrew from the canal zone, and only civilians remained behind (Fry 1992).

Besides contending with the continued presence of the UK through 1956, Egypt also had to deal with the creation of Israel. After the UK withdrew from Palestine in 1947 and Israel declared its independence, Egypt initiated the Arab-Israeli War. As part of its declaration of war, Egypt expanded the embargo it had already placed on Israeli ships by searching all the Israeli vessels passing through Egyptian ports and the Suez Canal and

seizing any identified war-related contraband (Gross 1957; Barak 2004). Though the two states signed an official General Armistice Agreement in 1949, Egypt continued to harass Israeli ships and to sponsor guerrilla attacks into Israel (Gross 1957; Verbeek 2003; Barak 2004). According to the armistice agreement, this Egyptian interference with international trade should have ceased, but Egypt argued that, because it continued to feel threatened, it retained "belligerent rights," specifically the right to search and seize cargo (Gross 1957, 531). Furthermore, in February 1950 Egypt declared its right to use force, including gunfire, if ship crews refused to cooperate (Gross 1957). In September1950, the UN Security Council formally required Egypt to end this behavior, declaring that the Armistice effectively curtailed Egypt's belligerent rights, but to no avail (Barak 2004). Into the 1950s, Egypt continued to harass not only Israeli ships, but also international vessels leaving or arriving in Israeli ports (Verbeek 2003; Barak 2004). Israel attempted for force the UN Security Council into action again in early 1954, but the measure was thwarted by the veto of the Soviet Union, which had abstained from the 1951 vote (Barak 2004). A year later, in February 1955, Israel took matters into its own hands with a raid into Gaza, which was controlled by Egypt. The attack killed 39 Arabs and injured 32. In response, Egypt sought an arms deal from the Soviet bloc; by September, the USSR approved an arms sale from Czechoslovakia to Egypt that seemed to shift the balance of power in the region. By December, Israel signed the first of several arms deals with France. Into 1956, conflict between Egypt and Israel simmered, with raids and attacks on both sides ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010).

Within this climate of tension and frustration, in mid-1956, Egypt, the US, the UK, and the World Bank found themselves in negotiations over an agreement to loan

Egypt funds for the building of a dam at Aswan (Verbeek 2003). For Nasser, the Aswan High Dam was a major symbol of progress and nationalism for Egypt. Thus, the decision from the US, announced on July 19, to deny the funding that it had previously promised was a major blow to prestige for Egypt (Smith 2005). The US decision to withdraw from the project erupted from several interests, including Egypt's budding relationship with the USSR (Fry 1992; "ICB Data Viewer" 2010), a desire to focus more regional attention on Saudi Arabia (Fry 1992), a hope of appearing neutral in the Arab-Israeli conflict in order to broker a deal (Fry 1992), domestic pressure from Southern cotton growers and the pro-Israel lobby (Verbeek 2003), and the perceived need to "bring Nasser to heel – cut him down to size – and reduce his status and influence in the region" (Fry 1992, 5). Regardless of the reason, the US bowed out, as did the UK the next day, leaving Egypt without the capital it had anticipated. In response, Egypt unilaterally decreed nationalization of the Suez Canal a week later, on July 26th, hoping to profit by collecting additional fees from passing ships (Fry 1992; Verbeek 2003). In doing so, it breached the lease that had been previously granted to the Anglo-French Suez Canal Corporation. This triggered a crisis for both the UK and France ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010).

Operant Factors: Deviant Behaviors and Heightened Fears

Egypt's decision to nationalize the canal amounted to a deviant behavior for the UK and France, and it triggered heightened fears for both states. First, in response to the nationalization of the canal in late July, the signatories of the 1888 Treaty of Constantinople met in London in mid-August 1956 to determine the legality of Egypt's actions and to discuss responses. The signatories accused Egypt of violating the 1951

UN Security Council resolution, which demanded freedom of passage for the canal, as well as the Treaty of Constantinople itself (Gross 1957). The treaty guaranteed free passage through the canal except in time of war. Gross (1957) argues that, though Egypt claimed the right to declare when it felt threatened and thus when it had aforementioned "belligerent rights," including the right to nationalize the canal, this line of reasoning does not hold up. Claiming wartime status would put Egypt in breach of the 1949 General Armistice with Israel. Furthermore, Gross argues that the Convention actually did not allow Egypt to determine actions regarding the canal by itself, but that it rather required multiple signatories to be involved. In addition to breaking some combination of the Constantinople Treaty, the General Armistice Agreement, and the UN Security Council Resolution, nationalizing the canal also breached the 99-year lease to the Suez Canal Corporation, which was set to expire in 1968 ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010). At the time, the majority of shareholders in the corporation were British and French.

Almost regardless of the particular laws broken, though, the UK in particular viewed Nasser's action as rogue because it violated British ideas regarding proper post-independence behavior for former colonies and protectorates. After World War II, the UK had transformed its Empire into the Commonwealth, an idealized community of states that would cooperate under the leadership of Britain. In his first few years in office, Nasser seemed to embrace this collegial march towards modernity (Smith 2005). The *Times* of Britain as late as June 22, 1956 referred to Nasser's Egypt as possessing "'a vivid new dynamism'":

> '[T]he boulevards are broad, white and expensive; the new government buildings are big and boastful bureaucratic, the new hotels are white and shining. Slums are slowly being destroyed. There are big new steel mills and fertilizer plants; the Aswan dam is being electrified; land reform is being implemented.'
>
> (*Times*, June 22, 1956, cited in Smith 2005, 77)

Throughout 1956, though, as Nasser began to more openly court Soviet attention, opinion of him in the UK began to sour. Then, with the unexpected nationalization of the canal in July, Nasser "destroyed the romance of the Commonwealth. He had failed to play cricket," (Smith 2005, 78). In other words, he had gone rogue. For the UK and France, then, Egypt's nationalization of the canal broke multiple international norms and thus constituted deviant behavior, encouraging a feeling of personal harm and engaging a lens of revenge.

In terms of threat, Egypt's nationalization of the canal stood to harm both states economically, as traditional strategic analyses would highlight. For example, at the time 48% of France's crude oil traveled through the Suez Canal (Smith 2005). However, such traditionally defined threats are not as convincing when examined more closely.[25] Egypt's takeover of the canal was completed without casualties, the Suez Canal Corporation was compensated for its losses, and Nasser kept the canal continually open

[25] Taking a long-term perspective, the Suez Canal's strategic role for Europe diminished in the following years anyways. Because of the crisis, major oil companies pursued alternative routes, hoping to avoid any possible future problems. Initially, the companies discussed building more pipelines, but these were seen as vulnerable to attack. International consensus eventually came to rest on ferrying the oil around the Cape of Good Hope. Thus, the Suez Crisis indirectly contributed to the rise of modern supertankers (Myhr 1997).

to international traffic (Fry 1992). In addition to traditional, more objective conceptions of economic and strategic threat, then, the UK and France also reacted to subjective fears regarding the nationalization. Specifically, both of these former colonial powers were actively losing control over the broader region, and this decline stoked fears of reduced power, as discussed previously. France had already lost Syria and Indochina, and unrest in Algeria, partially funded and supplied by Nasser, was growing (Fry 1992; Smith 2005). The French media vilified both the Egyptian public and Nasser, directly comparing him to Hitler (Smith 2005). On August 4, 1956, *Paris Match* drew that analogy with racist undertones:

> 'The burst of laughter which announced the confiscation of the Suez Canal was more primitive than any tone of hatred. The crowd listened to it as if it was listening to a tune of revenge, just as the Nazis listened to the *Horst Vessel Lied* in their collective delirium… The stupid masses, the flock of human sheep… bleated their support and mirth.'
>
> (*Paris Match,* August 4, 1956, as cited in Smith 2005, 89)

As for the UK, Holland (1998, 145) likewise argues that it experienced "a sense of national diminution" at this time more due to the subordinate behaviors of lesser powers like Egypt than due to the Cold War competition of the US and the USSR. Besides completing its formal military withdrawal from the canal zone a month before, the UK was also facing the simultaneous deterioration of its covert connections in the state and region (Lucas and Morey 2000). So, in addition to generalized threat regarding financial

loss, the states also feared loss of prestige from being taken down a few notches by a former colony. As Hansen and Jonsson (2013, 5) describe the situation, both states "insisted on teaching the uppity Nasser a lesson." As discussed in my theory, a poke to the eye elicits a radically different response than a poke to the arm; two different attacks carried out by different actors may cause different reactions. More specifically, the identity of the triggering entity, in this case the perception of a low-status former colony punching above its weight, can exacerbate the desire for revenge and the likelihood of a disproportionate response.

Revenge and the Disproportionate Response

A second conference was convened in London in September 1956. The United States proposed a solution to the problem through a Suez Canal Users Association, or SCUA. According to Verbeek (2003), the American tactic throughout the summer and fall of 1956 was to prolong diplomatic negotiations as long as possible so that the heightened emotions surrounding the crisis would cool, so that Egypt would not feel antagonized, and so that the UK and France would abandon their desires for military action. The US was unsuccessful in this effort.

After a few days of discussion at this second conference, the UK and France referred the issue to the UN Security Council. By October 10, UN negotiations resulted in an agreement for reconstituted international management of the Suez Canal (Verbeek 2003). If the UK and France only wished to restore international control of the waterway, this should have begun to dissipate the crisis. However, the two states were instead seeking revenge and a disproportionate response. In their anger over the specific situation

and their overall roles in the region, both felt a temptation to "destroy" Egypt for spite (Holland 1998, 145); as Holland (1998, 158) concludes, "the chief psychological purpose of the Suez campaign was to assert the British [and French] determination to maintain its stake in the region." As mentioned before, Prime Minister Eden of the UK had been willing to cooperate with Nasser in 1954 and 1955, but by 1956 Eden expressed an "irrational hostility" towards him, coupled with a desire "to cut [him] down to size, restrain his ambitions, and, if necessary, bring him down…" (Fry 1992, 1; 10). Thus, even after the agreement to return to international management of the Canal, the UK and France delved further into a collusion with Israel regarding taking back the area by force. That partnership had begun between France and Israel in September; the plan was for Israel to launch a full-blown international crisis by attacking Egypt, all so that France and the UK could *legitimately* intervene with force to protect the Suez Canal, with plans to occupy the zone again. The UK was brought into the loop by October, and the three states signed the Sevres-protocol on October 24th, sealing their fates (Verbeek 2003).

Because the two states were operating under the influence of a revenge mindset and not following strategic processes, they refused to entertain other, more proportionate options. In mid-October, US President Eisenhower sent one of his advisers to meet with the British Prime Minister about the simultaneous problem of turbulence in Cyprus, but the Prime Minister refused to meet with him; two weeks later, the Prime Minister again refused to meet, demonstrating a general unwillingness to cooperate that jaded the overall crisis (Holland 1998).

On October 29, according to plan, Israel attacked Egypt by invading the Sinai Peninsula and attempting to destroy the bases used by the Egyptian guerrillas in previous

years to conduct raids into Israel (Gross 1957; Fry 1992; Verbeek 2003). The next day, the UK and France, feigning to be neutral arbiters, called upon Egypt and Israel to pull back from either side of the canal by 10 miles, creating a buffer zone for them to police. Meanwhile, at a meeting of the UN Security Council, the UK and France vetoed two proposals from the US and USSR calling for a ceasefire. On the following day, October 31, the UK and France began attacking Egyptian airfields and moving troops to secure the canal (Verbeek 2003).

Overall, the international community was appalled. After the Security Council was thwarted by Anglo-French vetoes, an emergency session of the UN adopted a resolution calling for a cease-fire and the restoration of canal neutrality on November 2. (Gross 1957; Verbeek 2003). The two states refused to back down until after the Soviet Union threatened London and Paris with nuclear attacks on November 4 and after the US prevented further financial assistance from flowing to the states on November 6. Their advance halted on the evening of November 6, and a cease-fire was implemented the next day (Fry 1992; Verbeek 2003). Only such overwhelming strategic and financial pressure was able to drown out the desire for revenge in the UK and France. They withdrew their troops completely towards the end of December, and then the canal reopened the next April, according to the plan that had been reached back in October for international monitoring (Verbeek 2003).

All in all, the deviant behavior of Egypt and heightened fears regarding decline pushed the UK and France into overreacting to an economic trigger with military intervention, and this overreaction eventually hurt the two European powers a great deal. The two states wasted a great deal of money, brought about the resignation of the British

prime minister, suffered a humiliating dressing down by the US and USSR in a UN session, and received significant blows to international reputation and prestige that would last for years to come (Smith 2005; Hammond 2013; Reynolds 2013).

The Role of the United States

The United States responded more proportionately to Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal, despite sharing many interests in the region with the UK and France. Strategically, about ⅔ of the world's identified oil resources were in the Middle East at the time, and US-controlled companies claimed about ⅔ of those reserves (Smith 2005). Furthermore, in May 1950 the US, UK, and France together had issued the Tripartite Declaration, though which they attempted to control the arms flow and arms race in the Middle East and claimed the right to defend any victim of aggression in the region. Truthfully, though, in the post-war era the US understood that the UK and France no longer possessed the requisite resources to dominate the region; of the three, the US was the most well-positioned to take a strong stand against Egypt (Fry 1992). Furthermore, it also had incentive to do so, since the US was the most interested in solving the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict. What kept the US from horning in on Egypt, at least partially, were its alliances with the UK and France (Rubin 1982). The European states, on the other hand, had no problem breaking with the US over the canal crisis, meaning that additional factors must have also shaped their responses.

Ideologically, the US, UK, and France also found themselves in the same boat. Like that of the UK, American security culture painted Nasser as a progressive – a "romantic if mysterious and slightly immature man motivated by high ideals" that was

leading Egypt towards a "sacred state of freedom under modernity" (Smith 2005, 62). This conception likewise led the US to seek him out as an ally against the Soviet Union in the beginning of his reign. Unfortunately for the US, between 1950 and 1955 it only exported a little over $7 million in arms to Egypt, so the Arab state turned to the Soviet Union for support. Nasser also began attempting to overthrow pro-Wester regimes in the region and, as discussed previously, stoked the Arab-Israeli conflict (Rubin 1982). The US responded by distancing itself; in fact, the American withdrawal of aid for the Aswan High Dam project followed Nasser's diplomatic recognition of China (Smith 2005). Despite the ideological incentives, though, the US still did not overreact to the nationalization of the Suez Canal.

Finally, domestic politics from the time also misleadingly point towards the possibility of a disproportionate response from the US. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was considered by many at the time to be an ideologue with a binary reading of good/evil and a penchant for action (Smith 2005); this personal nature might logically be associated with disproportionate responses.[26] Furthermore, President Eisenhower faced reelection in the fall of 1956, and a rally effect resulting from an invasion of Egypt may have seemed appealing. Despite these incentives, the US responded proportionately in this crisis, even though doing so ultimately meant siding with the USSR over its allies during the Cold War (Smith 2005). Why?

First, the US did not judge Egypt's nationalization of the canal to be as deviant as did the UK and France. From a legal perspective, the issue is somewhat ambiguous. According to a variant interpretation, nationalization, though unilateral, does not violate

[26] Interestingly enough, this description of Dulles is not unlike a common psychological description of President George W. Bush. See Case Study B.

international law, particularly since Egypt offered compensation, kept the canal open, and would have obtained control over the zone anyways with the expiration of the Suez Canal Corporation's lease in 1968. Though most shareholders were international, the company was technically Egyptian and subject to Egyptian law. This was the viewpoint that Eisenhower adopted; he judged that Egypt had "acted legally, if badly" (Fry 1992, 12). The only issue was keeping the waterway open and neutral, and Eisenhower thought that issue could best be solved diplomatically (Fry 1992).

Second, Eisenhower was inclined to judge Nasser's action less harshly for the same reason that the dictator's increasingly communist leanings were not as problematic in American strategic culture: the US lacked the existential fear that the UK and France had in spades. In the era between the close of World War II and the launch of Sputnik, the US was secure. Of course, the arms race with the USSR was well underway, but policy decisions in developing countries did not (yet) completely revolve around those fears. At the time, the US was experiencing a surge of influence in the Middle East. Additionally, Eisenhower himself was secure, winning the 1956 election in a landslide (Fry 1992). Thus, with a lack of rogue behavior and a lack of fear, the US reacted proportionately to this particular crisis.

Implications and Conclusions

As a result of the fallout from their crisis response, the UK and France began to turn inward immediately. On the evening of November 6, UK Prime Minister Anthony Eden phoned French Prime Minister Guy Mollet to suggest that they withdraw from Suez because of the international pressures. After Mollet hung up the phone, West German

Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, who happened to be in the room, told him that France and England would have to refocus their vengeance, arguing specifically that, as follows:

> ‘France and England will never be powers comparable to the United States and the Soviet Union. Nor Germany either. There remains to them only one way of playing a decisive role in the world: that is to unite to make Europe. England is not ripe for it, but the affair of Suez will help to prepare her spirits for it. We have no time to waste; Europe will be your revenge.’
>
> (Hansen and Jonsson 2013, 6)

The French Prime Minister apparently took the advice to heart, as the Treaty of Rome founding the European Economic Community was signed only four months later, in March 1957 (Hansen and Jonsson 2013). However, the UK was not party the Treaty of Rome yet; France partially turned away from the UK as well, choosing to focus on continental Europe, partially because its relationship with the UK soured after putting its forces under British command during the crisis. Both states, though, turned inward somewhat following the Suez crisis because of the degradation they experienced externally. Both felt betrayed by the US, and both experienced a decline in power, legitimacy, and influence internationally (Myhr 1997; Reynolds 2013). As Reynolds phrases it, “For an Egyptian ex-colonel to twist the lion’s tail, and get away with it, was a palpable and lasting blow to national self-esteem and international prestige.” (Reynolds 2013, 193). Nasser, on the other hand, became a hero for the anti-colonial movements

sweeping the globe, and the US and USSR appeared, at least momentarily, to be reasonable and responsible world powers (Reynolds 2013).

CASE B: IRAQI REGIME CHANGE

In this section I employ the US-led effort at Iraqi regime change beginning in 2003 as a case study. According to the ICB dataset, the trigger for this crisis was the December 2002 determination from Hans Blix, the chief UN weapons inspector, that Iraq had failed to report any new information about its weapons programs, instead recycling language and reports from 1998. The US interpreted this malfeasance as a breach of UN Security Council Resolution 1441. According to the quantitative data, this political act scores the trigger as a 2, to which the US responded with a violent military act, scored at a 10. My proportionality measure then captures this response as a +8, a strongly disproportionate response. See Figure 3.13 in the Appendix for a visual presentation of these details. Though I view this categorization as accurate, this case reveals a problem with relying solely on quantitative data for studying revenge. As anyone living in the United States at the time of the 2003 invasion of Iraq can attest, the trigger to that crisis was not simply Iraq's refusal to provide weapons inspectors with new information, though this breach certainly played a role. Instead, filling out the full picture of the revenge sequence requires broader historical context, something that quantitative data cannot always provide on its own. By reaching back a bit to the legacy of the Gulf War and the effects of the 2001 terrorist attacks against the US, I provide a more satisfying explanation for the disproportionate response of the US regarding Iraq in 2002-3.

First, though, I will offer a brief note about two actors that attempted to balance the United States in its overreaction: Germany and France. Neither of these actors are coded as crisis participants within the ICB dataset, which indicates how little they reacted to the crisis trigger, Iraq's breach of UN Security Council Resolution 1441. Both condemned the supposed breach, but both also condemned military action by the United States. However, as smaller powers, neither could stand in the way of the determination of the US to respond disproportionately.

Background

By the time the US was ramping up to invade Iraq in 2003, Saddam Hussein had led Iraq for over 20 years. While in power, his brutality was infamous and included incredible acts of torture and mass murder; more than 200,000 Iraqis had been killed by his regime, and the country as a whole lived in fear. After pursuing a war with Iran that lasted nearly a decade, Hussein adjusted his sights on Kuwait. In 1990 he invaded the state with hopes of annexation and oil, but the international community almost unanimously condemned the action. An international coalition led by the US expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait, pushing them back across the border (Martin 2005). The US considered the possibility of invasion and regime change then, but abstained out of deference to the wishes of Europe and with a desire of keeping the coalition together (Mauer 2011).

Afterwards, Hussein stayed in power, but his regime had to contend with the UN weapons inspectors mandated by Security Council Resolution 687 of 1991. Despite Hussein's constant manipulation and defiance of the inspectors, throughout the 1990s they uncovered a nuclear weapons program that could have become operant within

several years, destroyed tens of thousands of chemical warheads, and exposed an emerging biological weapons program (Martin 2005; Mauer 2011). With the discovery of such an extensive cache, the UN mission came to be defined by the missions of disarmament and containment. Besides destroying weapons of mass destruction as they were found, the UN mission, led by the US and the UK, established sanctions, no-fly-zones, and naval monitoring (Mauer 2011).

Though the UN regime did succeed in containing Hussein and, to a great extent, disarming him (as would be confirmed years later, after the US invasion), it was not entirely successful. The sanctions failed to bend the will of the leader, but they instead just made the Iraqi people suffer. The government continued to resist and frustrate the weapons inspectors with stop-and-start tactics, causing them finally to leave in 1998 (Mauer 2011). The UN regime really was only upheld by American and British threats of force and actual force, such as Operation Desert Fox, in which the two states launched air strikes against presumed weapons facilities immediately following the withdrawal of inspectors in 1998 (Smith 2005; Mauer 2011). A few months before, the US Congress had passed the bipartisan Iraq Liberation Act, which supported toppling Hussein through efforts short of force. European allies agreed, at least in principle (Mauer 2011).

With a change in leadership in the US, the prospect of a change to this strategy arose. Upon entering office in January 2001, President George W. Bush was "'not happy'" with the types of quid pro quo interactions that he felt had marked the Clinton administration (Woodward 2004, 12). Bush lamented that, for the last few decades, whenever American forces had been targeted abroad, the American government generally responded with withdrawal, as with Lebanon in 1983 and Somalia in 1993, and/or

strategic, proportionate responses, as with the 1998 bombings of US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya (Bush 2010). He felt that the Clinton administration had been squeamish with its foreign policy, and he assumed the presidency with the notion of restoring respect for the American military on the international stage. However, in the first eight months of his presidency, Bush's official policies for response did not differ that much from those of Clinton. In August 2001, for example, US and British forces bombed three defense targets in Iraq as part of maintaining the no-fly-zone there; this simply added to the more than 150,000 times that Americans had entered Iraqi airspace in the past decade and perpetuated "'the Clinton-era pattern of hitting Iraqi air defenses every six months or so,'" as the *Washington Post* reported (Woodward 2004, 23).

The reason that Bush maintained Clinton's policies despite his own displeasure at their inefficacy was that, in all those years of flying sorties since the end of his father's war in the Gulf, no Americans had been killed. Furthermore, the threats of the last several decades had only affected American military, not civilians, and foreign lands, not American territory. As Bush told reporter Bob Woodward (2004, 12) in an interview a few years later, at that time "'…a president could see a threat and contain it or deal with it in a variety of ways without fear of that threat materializing on our own soil.'"

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 were soon to change that calculation in Bush's mind, leading him almost instantly into an emotionally charged lens of revenge, which then induced the administration to overreact to Iraq's 2002 breach of UN Security Council Resolution 1441, which had given Iraq a last chance to comply with UN inspection and disarmament procedures. Yet, terrorist attacks unfortunately occur often around the world, and they generally occur without causing leaders to pursue such an

expansive mission. Thus, the fact of aggression itself did not inherently lead to such a reaction. Instead, the particular nature of the attacks for the US opened the door to a revenge mindset and a strongly disproportionate response.

Operant Factors: Deviant Behaviors and Heightened Fears

The pattern of tit-for-tat interactions with Iraq regarding disarmament might have continued into the 2000s if American national security had not ruptured with the September 11th terrorist attacks (Smith 2005). After all, Iraq's triggering action in late 2002 – breaching UN Security Council Resolution 1441 – did not substantively differ from its behavior over the last decade. However, the shadow of 9/11 cast this deviant behavior in an entirely different light, making it seem even more rogue and threatening.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 were both astonishing and exceptional to American history in several ways. First, the continental United States had not been attacked on a large scale since the War of 1812. As a "quasi-island" nation, the country had grown accustomed to being sheltered from foreign assault. As a corollary, the country had not previously experienced foreign terrorism on its own soil. A handful of domestic terrorists had struck, and terrorists had attacked US soldiers and civilians abroad, but international terrorism brought to the American domestic audience was new.

The sheer intensity of the attacks also set them apart from other events in US history. All told, almost 3,000 people were killed in one morning, a massive number only comparable in recent American history to that of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Furthermore, the 2001 assault was carried out through visually striking, symbolic methods that were captured on camera and replayed on television for weeks. As Smith

(2005, 161) writes, the surprising and staggering violence was meant to inspire fear in the US, and in this it was successful:

> As the terrorists well knew in designing the event, the point was not simply to kill some 3,000 people, wreck some aircraft, and destroy some expensive Manhattan real estate. The terrorist incursion was intended to suggest that American hegemony was weak, that the social order was unstable, and that havoc and fear could and should exist at the very heart of the American empire. This message came through loud and clear and became keyed in turn to iconic visual images of jet airplanes smashing into the twin towers, the twin towers burning, the twin towers collapsing.

The deviancy of the attacks affected the American view of future international rogue behavior in two particular ways: first, the US would no longer tolerate deviant behavior; and second, the US would define deviant behavior itself, and this definition would be broader than in the past. The first perspective is perfectly encapsulated by Bush's assertion in an address to Congress on September 20, 2001 that "You're either with us or you're with the terrorists," (Bush 2001). The fear and sense of threat resulting from 9/11 led a surge in cultural binaries in American political rhetoric – good vs. evil, us vs. them, etc. – which appealed to Bush's personality and religious convictions (Martin 2005; Smith 2005).[27] This tendency to ignore gray areas left little tolerance for rogue behavior (Smith 2005).

[27] Regardless of the deep divides in public opinion regarding George W. Bush, a nearly perfect consensus regarding his personality exists among those who know him: he is an extreme extrovert. In fact a team of

The mounting notion of us vs. them, or in-group vs. out-group, also speaks to the second perspective on rogue behavior stemming from the 9/11 attacks. Because "[y]ou're either with us or you're with the terrorists," (Bush 2001), we claim the prerogative to sort all actors and behaviors into two groups – appropriate and inappropriate. Post-9/11, tolerance for deviant behavior dropped, and the definition of what constitutes deviant behavior expanded.[28] Thus, when in late 2002 Iraq chose to breach UN SC Res. 1441, the US was able to narratively connect this behavior to other undesirable actors/actions and to label it as "rogue." Specifically, the 2001 attacks had unleashed a wave of fear among Americans regarding future terrorist plots:

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psychologists who took it upon themselves to rank the American presidents according to personality traits rendered Bush as tied with Teddy Roosevelt and Bill Clinton in this regard (McAdams 2011). According to Dan McAdams (2011), a psychologist at Northwestern University who has studied Bush, this aspect of his personality has boons and banes, as it does for most extroverts. For Bush, the positive aspects include high degrees of sociability and optimism and ease with forming personal connections; for example, the latter characteristic is evident in his "personalistic approach" to politics noted by policy experts (Pfiffner 2004). The negative aspects of a high degree of extroversion include tendencies toward impulsiveness, risk-seeking behavior, and a quick temper (McAdams 2011); Bush's impulsiveness, for example, is shown through his decision to propose to Laura Welch (Bush) after knowing her for only a few months and his decision to quit drinking in one day (Bush 2010; McAdams 2011).

The same group of psychologists who ranked the presidents for extroversion also compared their levels of "openness to experience" (McAdams 2011, 39). This quality is not correlated with intelligence but instead is a sort of true measure of conservatism – a low openness to experience indicates an aversion to change and ambiguity and a dependence on routine and discipline. The psychologists ranked Bush last among the presidents according to this quality. His supporters would call it sticking to principles; his detractors would call it stubbornness and rigidity. Additionally, according to McAdams (2011, 213), a component often found in those with low openness to experiences is "cognitive essentialism." This is a tendency, stemming from an aversion to ambiguity, to boil all complex problems to their most base elements (McAdams 2011). Bush shows this trait as well; for example, as early as September 12 Bush began describing the upcoming war as a "'monumental struggle between good and evil'" (McAdams 2011, 45).

The combination of these two qualities – extreme extroversion and low openness to experience – clears the way for an emotional interpretation of the *lex talionis* because together they mean that Bush is prone to act quickly, be extremely confident in his decisions, and not second-guess himself (McAdams 2011; Pfiffner 2004).

[28] At the NSC meeting on the night of September 11, 2001, when discussing possible responses to the terrorist attacks, Tenet warned the president that, though al Qaeda was based in Afghanistan, its operations stretched worldwide – meaning that a true response to the organization need not be confined to one country. Bush's response to Tenet's conceptual "60-country problem" was to "'pick them off one at a time'"; the United States would have to "'force the countries to choose'" between the US and the terrorists (Woodward 2002, 33).

> [The attacks] unleashed discourses of conspiracy and narratives of doom to suggest that civilization, and in particular a tolerant, reasoning, democratic American civilization, was under attack from unreasoning, intolerant, totalitarian fanatics possessed of who knows what cunning and weapons.
>
> (Smith 2005, 158)

The narrative then became that terrorists would attempt to procure weapons of mass destruction and that a prime resource for them would be rogue states, which would want to support the extremists. To this idea attached the fear that the Hussein regime had continued developing WMDs after the inspectors left in 1998, for which the breach of UN SC Res. 1441 was a red flag (Martin 2005; Mauer 2005). Iraq had to be stopped, however containment and deterrence will not work because terrorists and rogue states are not strategic actors. Finally, terrorism and dictators thrive in the Middle East because of the lack of democracy, and the United States has a responsibility to spread democracy, and thus peace, throughout the world. Described here simplistically, these arguments represent the basic case that the Bush administration made to the American public and the international community in 2002 and early 2003 (Mauer 2011).[29] Each of these components relates to the claimed privilege of the US to determine appropriate and inappropriate behavior, a compulsion that rose from the fear resulting from 9/11.

[29] A British journalist interviewing Bush in April 2002 asked about the logic of targeting Iraq, and the president responded with a hypothetical: "'The worst thing that could happen would be to allow a nation like Iraq, run by Saddam Hussein, to develop weapons of mass destruction, and then team up with terrorist organizations so they can blackmail the world. I'm not going to let that happen,'" (Woodward 2004, 120).

The fear primed by the 2001 attacks and then triggered again by Iraq's refusal to cooperate with weapons inspectors divides into three levels of analysis. First, at the state level, the terrorist attacks suggested that American dominance might be faltering, i.e., that the state was in relative decline (Smith 2005). This panic swung the focus of the administration toward national security and away from diplomacy, and this organizational shift influenced both the determination of priorities going forward and the management of the bureaucracy. In particular, those departments associated with national security, such as Defense, the intelligence wing, the NSC, and the nascent Department of Homeland Security, were given weight over the State Department and diplomacy (Mauer 2011). Within that climate of increased focus on national security, Iraq's refusal to cooperate registered as a strategic challenge against the US.

At the second level of analysis, the 2001 attacks created an environment of fear, paranoia, and vengefulness among the American public. In the aftermath of the attacks, fears of domestic sleeper cells, tainted postal packages, and additional foreign plots plagued the public (Smith 2005). This heightened fear changed the civil discourse to one of "apocalypticism," a social shift which can, and in this instance did, sweep away norms against domestic aggressive action and foreign violence (Smith 2005, 158). The palpable desire for vengeance translated into heightened nationalism and unprecedented support for the president. As Smith writes, the attacks brought about "an episode of collective effervescence, patriotic solidarity, and righteous anger that has not been equaled in America in recent years" (Smith 20015, 158).[30] For example, a group of psychologists (Healy et al. 2009) tested individuals' responses to terrorism through simulations, both

[30] 82% of those Americans polled in the first week of October 2001 favored military action in Afghanistan (Dugan 2013).

before and after the 2001 attacks, in a natural experiment. They found, somewhat unsurprisingly, that Americans' responses to terrorist attacks were more aggressive post-9/11 than before.[31] Within this climate of fear and vengeance cultivated by the attacks, the Bush administration's rhetoric against Iraq triggered further fear and the desire for a disproportionate response among the public. Immediately before the US invasion, on March 14-15, 2003, 64% of the American public supported military action (Dugan 2013).

The third level of analysis is the personal one. Though several individuals within the administration influenced the decision to invade Iraq, Bush was the final arbiter.[32] For him, the 2001 attacks were both personal and fear-inducing, and they primed the leader to overreact to Hussein's impudence. First, the 2001 attacks were personal because of their nature; in this case, despite the professional state militaries that mark "civilization" (Hill 2010, 16), stateless individuals struck unarmed civilians; aggression by non-state actors and aggression against civilians (especially during times of peace) are both violations of norms, or rogue behavior. Instead of a normal state-to-state confrontation carried out by soldiers, individuals claiming allegiance only to an

[31] The study of revenge has gained relevance in the years following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. See Kaiser et al. (2004). These authors, also psychologists, were able to stage another "natural experiment" of sorts with data they collected both before and after the attacks. Early in 2001, they measured the strength of the "belief in a just world (BJW)" condition in 83 undergraduates as part of a different project. Two months after the terrorist attacks, the researchers were able to bring back the students for further surveys. According to their findings, those with stronger BJW were more likely to have higher levels of stress concerning the attacks and stronger desires for revenge.

[32] The Bush administration was full of political operatives with decades of experience in the policy realm, and most of them had strong opinions. Of note for the discussion of the Iraq invasion are those individuals often described as neoconservatives, or those whose personal ideologies combined the traditional realist concern for national security with a penchant for democracy promotion, under the belief that democratic peace could be imposed around the world, by force if necessary (Martin 2005). Though these individuals certainly influenced Bush's decision to invade Iraq unilaterally, their ideological influence, though perhaps *necessary*, was not *sufficient* to determine the final policy. Both President Bush and the general public had to accept the neoconservative logic in order to institute it as policy, and this reading only stuck because of the prevailing attitude regarding deviant behavior, the dominant culture of fear, and Hussein's trigger itself (Smith 2005). As Smith (2005, 165) concludes regarding neoconservative ideology, "Such unofficial doctrines, however well or ill we might think of them, cannot become widely legitimate policy unless connected to the broader narratives and codes that define their validity, necessity, and morality."

organization and an ideology struck unsuspecting civilians going about their daily lives. Thus, the outer barrier of civil society was breached, and the terrorists bypassed the protections of the state to attack "the family" directly. In response to a more routine attack against military personnel, the US president can respond as the "commander in chief," the more detached executor of strategy. However, in responding to an attack against civilians – against "the family" – the president, like any leader, is more prone to take up the mantle of *pater familias* and react more viscerally and more disproportionately. Given his personalistic approach to leadership (Pfiffner 2004; McAdams 2011), this was especially true for Bush. From his own recollection, after "watch[ing] more Americans die than any president in history" on September 11 and feeling "powerless to help them" (Bush 2010, 131), the president wanted to visit New York City as soon as possible. While touring Ground Zero on September 14, one particular conversation, as recalled by Bush, reflects the personalistic nature with which he responded to the disaster:

> One soot-covered firefighter told me that his station had lost a number of men. I tried to comfort him, but that was not what he wanted. He looked me square in the eye and said, 'George, find the bastards who did this and kill them.' It's not often that people call the president by his first name. But that was fine by me. This was personal.
>
> (Bush 2010, 148)

Thus, when Hussein challenged the US, Bush interpreted it personally. Bush's own father had been the president to square off against Hussein in the 1991 Gulf War. This personal connection to Hussein – the man who "'tried to kill my dad'" (Lake 2011, 27) – led Bush to view him in moralistic terms rather than objectives ones.[33] Whereas Clinton before him had seen Hussein as a punk opportunist who would bend to pressure, Bush saw him as an evil figure who could not be trusted (Lake 2011). The personal fear that Hussein triggered in Bush translated into a sense of duty. His rhetoric between the 2001 attacks and the invasion of Iraq demonstrates this sense of responsibility for action, as his words almost without deviation steered the nation away from fatalistic readings of the struggle with 'evil' and towards hopeful, heroic readings in which the US held the task of pursuing justice through punishing terrorists and their associates, including Iraq, through a disproportionate response (Smith 2005).

Revenge and the Disproportionate Response

As discussed previously, the nature of the 2001 attacks, particularly how they pushed the country toward a binary conception of rogue behavior and created a culture of fear, made the US more prone to revenge. When considering the overreaction to Iraq's unwillingness to cooperate with weapons inspectors, indeed, the US response is only explained through a lens of revenge. As Lake (2011) argues, traditional bargaining explanations cannot explain the escalation to war. Instead, he points to self-delusion on both sides and calls for an emotional explanation:

[33] After George H. W. Bush led the Persian Gulf War against Iraq, Hussein ordered his assassination, though this never came to fruition (Bush 2010; McAdams 2011).

> Misrepresentation by the other side was far less of a problem than self-delusion. Neither side wanted to know about itself or the other information that would have challenged its prior beliefs or slowed the march to war. These motivated biases are inconsistent with rationality and suggest the need for a behavioral theory of war.
>
> (2011, 45)

Regarding the US specifically, Lake (2011, 48) also blames some of the culprits outlined here, such as "some combination of fear and personal animosity," for increased risk tolerance and unwillingness to acknowledge the costs of invasion. The reason Lake calls for a behavioral explanation is that the behavior he observes – the incredibly destructive, incredibly expensive, incredibly harmful invasion of Iraq by the US – does not seem to square with traditional models of bargaining. According to Lake, if the US were behaving rationally, it would have stopped short of war due to the exorbitant costs and few strategic gains anticipated.

I argue, of course, that the US decision only makes sense within the context of revenge. The 2001 attacks made the US fall prey to this emotion, and the deviant behavior of Iraq then triggered an overreaction. First, the fear brought on by 2001 attacks caused the US to adopt a more aggressive foreign policy. For reference, compare the 2001-2003 era with somewhat similar events from a few years before. When al Qaeda bombed American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the Clinton administration responded only with limited air strikes, and talk of "further revenge" did not appear in the public space, despite Clinton's use of moralistic rhetoric very similar to that of Bush

(Smith 2005, 159).[34] Some even accused Clinton of carrying out those strikes to distract the public from his ongoing sex scandal. Because the attacks only killed 12 Americans, occurred abroad, and targeted government officials, rather than civilians (Smith 2005), they did not generate a desire for revenge. When Iraq kicked out UN weapons inspectors four months later, the US drew no connections between the two events; the attacks had not generated the fear necessary for the public to accept a narrative connecting and hyping the two rogue threats. Thus, the very different US reaction to Iraq's thwarting of weapons inspectors in 2002 can be connected to the wildly different terrorist attacks of the previous year.

In addition to a change in the approach to foreign policy at the state level, Bush himself adopted a more aggressive foreign policy after 9/11, as discussed previously. In the 2000 election, Bush had criticized the Clinton administration for its peacekeeping missions and the use of the American military for nation-building (Martin 2005; Bush 2010; Mauer 2011). However, little more than a year later, he began to engage US troops in even broader missions. Writing a decade later about those campaign statements, Bush concedes that, "At the time, I worried about overextending our military by undertaking peacekeeping missions as we had in Bosnia and Somalia. But after 9/11, I changed my mind," (2010). Regarding the invasion of Iraq more specifically, Bush again points to the 2001 attacks as shaping his approach to the country:

> Before 9/11, Saddam was a problem America might have been able to manage. Through the lens of the post-9/11 world, my view changed. I

[34] After the 1998 embassy attacks, Clinton urged, "'These acts of terrorist violence are abhorrent; they are inhuman. We will use all means at our disposal to bring those responsible to justice, no matter how long it takes,'" (Smith 2005, 159-160).

> had just witnessed the damage inflicted by nineteen fanatics armed with box cutters. I could only imagine the destruction possible if an enemy dictator passed his WMD to terrorists… The lesson of 9/11 was that if we waited for a danger to fully materialize, we would have waited too long. (Bush 2010, 229)

Second, through the lens of revenge the 2001 attacks made the US more prone to overreaction by encouraging intemperate threat inflation. Badie (2010, 278), for example, argues that the attacks caused a perception shift regarding Hussein; almost overnight, the administration went from seeing him as a "troubling dictator" to an "existential threat." Furthermore, members of the administration began to publicly promote extreme views of threat as the new savvy approach to the post-9/11 era. Journalist Ron Suskind coined the phrase "the one percent doctrine" to describe Vice President Cheney's idea that the US has to prepare for costly, yet unlikely events as if they are certain. This refers specifically to Cheney's 2001 example of the "'one percent chance that Pakistani scientists are helping al Qaeda build or develop a nuclear weapon'" (Zenko and Cohen 2012, 82). This type of blatant threat inflation encouraged the feeling of panic and revenge among the public, and it contributed to the ease of a disproportionate response.

Thus, when Iraq made the ill-fated decision in 2002 to challenge the US, the US viewed that defiance through (residual) revenge from the September 11th attacks; the vengeance stoked by 9/11 was only partially quenched by the invasion of Afghanistan. Bush had referenced the necessity of a disproportionate response often, telling his principals that the US needed to do more than put "'a million-dollar missile on a five-

dollar tent'" (Bush 2010, 135); telling a joint session of Congress that "Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated," (Bush 2001); and telling the CIA Director, George Tenet, that he US would spend "'[w]hatever it takes'" (Woodward 2002, 41).

The disproportionate response in Iraq ultimately bore enormous costs, of course. Besides the trillions of dollars spent, more than four thousand American soldiers and approximately half a million Iraqis died over more than a decade of war (Vergano 2013). Additionally, the largely unilateral overreaction of the US strained the transatlantic relationship (Mauer 2011).

The Role of Germany and France

In general, European states worried about the overreach of US power, developments in Middle Eastern politics, and their own domestic politics in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq. Though the UK stood with the US, Germany and France opposed the hegemon's action.[35] The US additionally courted the participation of Central and Eastern European states, not for their actual contributions or for added legitimacy, but so that France and Germany couldn't claim to speak for all of Europe (Mauer 2011).

[35] The UK public was skeptical about the Iraq invasion, strongly disfavoring acting without UN approval. Yet, Prime Minister Tony Blair, like Bush, drew a connection between the 9/11 attacks and the threat of Hussein's rogue actions (Martin 2005). Mauer (2011) argues that the UK drew upon its main lesson learned from the Suez crisis: never to wind up on the opposing side of the US regarding strategic issues. Blair's former Foreign Secretary reported that the Prime Minister "'found it easier to resist the public opinion of Britain than the request of the US president,'" (Mauer 2011, 32). Like the leaders of Germany and France, Blair wanted to shape US foreign policy, but he attempted to do so through loyalty and close connections. Blair felt a personal connection with Bush, and this caused him to overestimate his leverage over the American president (Mauer 2011).

At first glance, the US might have thought it could count on Germany's support. The country had generally been a strong ally within NATO, and it had recently even broken its taboo against sending its military abroad by engaging in peacekeeping efforts in Kosovo and Afghanistan (Martin 2005). The support in Afghanistan followed Chancellor Schröder's pledge to stand with the US in the wake of 9/11 (Mauer 2011). Furthermore, German intelligence had been among the most panicked regarding the possible existence of Iraqi WMD (Martin 2005). Germany had hoped that its show of solidarity with the US would give it a place at the table with the US; Bush had promised as much when he told Schröder in May 2002 that he would consult before deciding what to do about Iraq. Both sides engaged in deception, however; Germany had not intended for its support to mean that the US could do anything it wanted in the post-9/11 era, and Bush failed to consult before deciding to invade (Mauer 2011).

Strategically, Germany thought invading Iraq was a bad idea. Though Hussein was flaunting UN resolutions, he was not an imminent security threat. This meant that the costs of invasion would inevitably outweigh the benefits because Schröder assumed that invasion would lead to occupation and because occupation would be costly in terms of finances, reputation, and regional stability. Besides the broad concerns, Germany also had specialized worries pushing it to oppose the US. It found an expanding distaste for the direction of US foreign policy, particularly the growing unilateral streak. Perhaps just as importantly, Schröder was up for reelection in the run-up to Iraq, and the German public disfavored invasion, even if it were approved by the UN (Mauer 2011). Thus, weighing the many cons and few pros to siding with the US, Germany distanced itself with a hard position and provided little room for negotiation (Mauer 2011).

France, on the other hand, did not actually disagree with the US all that strongly; it concurred with the malevolence of Hussein's regime and with the notion that it probably still possessed weapons of mass destruction. However, France also did not want the US to act unilaterally or without authorization, and it did not want to join the invasion or authorize it (Martin 2005; Mauer 2011). Furthermore, France had long been critical of the UN regime over Iraq; it had abandoned its post in patrolling the no-fly-zone in 1998, and it had taken issue with the American goal of regime change, even before the idea of force was introduced (Mauer 2011). Like Germany, it worried about the financial costs, reputation, and regional stability (Martin 2005). Unlike Germany, though, France's disagreement with the US was more damaging since it held veto power in the UN Security Council (Mauer 2011).

President Chirac hoped that the US would take the issue to the UN, fail to find support, and drop the issue. In order to entice the US to take the matter to the international body, France had to feign at least a slight interest in compromise, i.e., using force if Hussein refused to cooperate with the inspectors. Chirac was successful in that the US took the matter to the UN in late 2002, resulting in UN SC Res. 1441. After Hussein breached the order, though, the US and UK excluded France from their developing plans. They moved quickly, deploying troops to the region and pressuring Hussein to capitulate. By late January, France openly threatened to veto if the US brought a second resolution; on March 5, it was joined by Germany and Russia. The threats mattered little, though, since by March 19th the US, UK, and the rest of the coalition had amassed 170,000 troops on the border, with air strikes staring the next day (Mauer 2011).

COOLING OFF PERIODS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF HIERARCY

> *…a feud is this way: a man has a quarrel with another man, and kills him; then that other man's brother kills him; then the other brothers, on both sides, goes for one another, then the cousins chip in – and by and by everybody's killed off, and their ain't no more feud. But it's kind of slow, and takes a long time.*
>
> (Twain 1927, 147)

Mark Twain reminds us that feuds, which in their tit-for-tat nature are built upon the logic of the *lex talionis*, or the law of revenge, are "kind of slow" and take "a long time." Indeed. In his speech at the National Cathedral on September 14, 2001, Bush declared that although this nation's feud with terror "'was begun on the timing and terms of others,'" it would "'end in a way, and an hour, of our choosing,'" (Bush 2010, 146). But, despite the doldrums of approval with which Bush exited office and general public fatigue with the war on terror, over ten years later the United States is still engaged in it. The country remains in the feud cycle through its military presence abroad, through the detainees still held in Guantánamo Bay, and through, among many other avenues, the seemingly constant threat of future terrorist attacks against the United States.

At times, America's continued engagement with the *lex talionis* is even more conspicuous. For instance, on May 1, 2011, President Barack Obama announced that US forces had finally located, and subsequently killed, Osama bin Laden, the founder of al Qaeda who had eluded American capture for nearly a decade. After Obama's

announcement, the "bloodlust" that Bush felt emanating from the crowd at Ground Zero in the week after the 2001 attacks and that he later described as "palpable and understandable" (2010, 148) returned to the country for a moment. Throngs of people gathered outside of the White House and the site of the World Trade Center to celebrate the death of a man halfway across the world. And though American attention soon began to drift back to the domestic matters that have largely marked Obama's presidency, that brief outpour of emotion by the American public further explains the particular strategy of the country's previous commander in chief.

Bush was predisposed to pursue a grand strategy wrapped up in a disproportionate interpretation of the *lex talionis* because of the nature of the 2001 attacks. However, another conditioning factor that led to this country's overreach after September 11th was the will of the public. Public opinion strongly supported the initial invasion of Afghanistan, and a majority even supported the initial invasion of Iraq. To the extent that the public paid attention to other Bush policies focused on terrorism – whether based domestically or abroad – relatively little protest was heard from the American public regarding them, at least during his first term. The public, like its president, responded to the September 11th attacks viscerally, and, in the heat of the moment, sought "interest" with its revenge.

Given time, though, the American people generally returned to their normal lives, and by the second term of the Bush presidency, the realities of the situation began to sink in. The public realized that the means for pursuing the elimination of terrorism were in fact not limitless – that efforts abroad often came at the cost of troops lost and public debt gained. Though the public as a whole had never entertained the option of *not* responding

to the 2001 attacks, in Bush's second term it began to question the desirability of responding with an emotional interpretation of the *lex talionis* instead of with a strategic one. Bush's diminished approval ratings in his second term reflected that change.

Long after his popularity declined and public fatigue with the war on terror set in, though, Bush continued to cite that September day in 2001 as the source for all of his actions and for his yet-to-be-determined presidential legacy. This consistency with which he explained his key decisions as stemming back to the 2001 attacks is an indicator that his own statements, interviews, and writings reflect his true pursuit of the end of terrorism through an emotionally-rendered strategy of revenge. Thus, though critics undoubtedly will question the wisdom of judging Bush's strategy based largely on his own public records – and though the answer to this quandary can only truly be answered by Bush himself – his willingness to stick with a message that increasingly fell on deaf ears during his presidency points to their veracity.

This constancy reflects the nature of the job, the nature of the event, and the nature of the man in office. The commander in chief, always on the clock, was never given the chance to "cool off" that the American public collectively enjoyed; he was never able to step back from the event. The gravity of the experience – of attacks perpetrated against thousands of American civilians – affected the American president personally and led him down a path of revenge without looking back. In his last day in office, Bush affirmed this idea through his Farewell Address, his last message to the American people as their president:

> ‘As the years passed, most Americans were able to return to life much as it had been before 9/11. But I never did.’
>
> (McAdams 2011, 230)

The importance of such a cooling-off period is echoed in the Mytilenean Debate as passed down to us by Thucydides and referenced at the beginning of this article. Cleon urged an angry Athenian assembly to slaughter all of the Mytileneans, and the assembly was ready to do so; only with the light of the next day did those gathered realize their petulance and turn to a more reasoned reaction. The effort to take time to let “cooler heads” prevail also surfaces in the Suez case through the efforts of the US to delay action by the United Kingdom and France against Egypt. The common belief seems to be that the emotion of revenge and its tendency to promote overreaction quickly follows the pain of an attack but fades in time, revealing the more temperate response. What becomes apparent, though, is that this cooling off period can only be effective if enforced by the existing hierarchy. For the ancient Greeks, this enforcement came through the reverence for the tradition of prolonged debate. In the case of the Suez crisis, a stronger power, the US, pushed the UK and France to wait in their reactions to Egypt’s nationalization of the waterway. Though the US was unsuccessful in preventing a disproportionate response, it was able, along with the other ranking power of the day, to end the crisis quickly. When the US overreacted to the terrorist attacks of 2001 and to Iraq’s breach of an international agreement regarding weapons inspectors, no higher power existed to push for a cooling-off period, thus allowing the hegemon to continue with its overreaction for years to come.

CONCLUSIONS AND EXTENSIONS

This article is devoted to explaining and demonstrating that disproportionate responses can be caused by revenge, a non-strategic, emotional factor that has been under-theorized in the discipline. After developing my theory, I have presented exploratory quantitative evidence and two case studies here to support it. Moving forward, these results can be corroborated with more extensive data and additional case studies.

Furthermore, extensions of this article should pursue not only the causes, but also the effects of revenge and disproportionate responses. One of the major effects of disproportionate responses may be an increased likelihood of third-party interventions. Because disproportionate responses violate a norm of international relations (and because they are likely to occur in crises in which other international norms are broken as well), third-parties, particularly the United Nations and the United States, as the hegemon, should be more likely to intervene to stop conflicts marked by them. Another major effect of disproportionate responses, I argue, is their subsequent manipulation in strategic cultures. States that trigger crises but then suffer from disproportionate responses sometimes incorporate those overreaches into their national mythologies to rally their publics. Key examples include the remembrance of the Boston Massacre in American history and the Irish memory of Britain's overreaction to the 1916 Easter Rising. These extensions will push us to consider further consider the dangers of the revenge mindset and the disproportionate responses that follow it.

CHAPTER 4

INTERVENING AT THE MARGINS:

US RESPONSES TO DISPROPORTIONATE CRISES[36]

[36] Kayce Marie Mobley. To be submitted to *Journal of Strategic Studies*.

ABSTRACT

Does proportionality of responses within crises influence US decisions to intervene? Does the US punish overly aggressive states, or does it act opportunistically to take advantage of weaker states? This article introduces a new quantitative measure of proportionality, a concept that is not systematically studied within the discipline, and uses it to address these questions. The results show that, first, crises in which states engage in disproportionate responses are likely to elicit stronger US interventions. Second, the US is more likely to intervene *against* states that behave more disproportionately in crises than it is to remain uninvolved.

INTRODUCTION

This article seeks to answer several questions. First, does the United States uphold the norm of proportionality through its actions as an intervenor in external international conflicts? More specifically, is the United States more likely to intervene in crises marked by disproportionate responses? Furthermore, if the US *is* more likely to intervene in disproportionate crises, what motivates it to do so? How does the hegemon balance both strategic and normative interests when considering how to intercede in international crises? All of these questions revolve around the influence of proportionality, a norm often cited but rarely studied systematically. Additionally, investigating whether the United States reacts differently to proportionate and disproportionate responses in external dyads will address disputes raised in the literature about the motivations behind American interventions (Schweller 1994; Watkins and Winters 1997). In order to address these questions, this research introduces a new quantitative measure of proportionality. This new measure, adapted by the author from the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) Project, will advance the conversation regarding the interactions of security and norms within international relations.

Proportionality is worthy of systematic study because it is simultaneously referenced in popular media as a principle perpetually violated by political actors and cited in the field as a norm of conflict behavior.[37] Recent evaluations of American foreign policy often describe the country's response to the terrorist attacks of 2001 as disproportionate, as those attacks from one morning triggered the creation of the Bush Doctrine, military strikes against Afghanistan and Iraq, decade-long occupations of those

[37] For proportionality as an international norm, see Walzer (1977).

states, significant changes to foreign policy towards other actors, an extensive expansion of the power of the executive branch over domestic affairs, and, ultimately, a grand strategy focused on eliminating terrorism itself.

Support for this sort of disproportionate response to an attack is actually atypical of the United States. Instead, as I argue, the United States conventionally upholds the *proportionate response* as a preferred international norm. See Figure 4.1. Though the US typically responds to crisis triggers proportionately, it also occasionally employs disproportionate responses. Given the rarity of direct attacks to American soil, though, uncovering what factors cause the United States to respond disproportionately to crisis triggers is challenging. Nonetheless, understanding the American interaction with proportionality can also be achieved by studying American reactions *as a third party* to proportionate and disproportionate responses undertaken elsewhere in the world. In this study, I argue that the United States in the last century generally has opposed disproportionate responses to military attacks and rather accepted proportionate responses as the international norm. I argue that this preference stems from two motivations: first, the hegemon's desire to maintain stability in the international system by thwarting aggressive over-responders; and second, its willingness to exploit the weakness of under-responders for its own gain. The US signals its preference by intervening more strongly when an attacked state responds to its crisis trigger disproportionately – whether by over-responding or under-responding – than when one responds in kind.

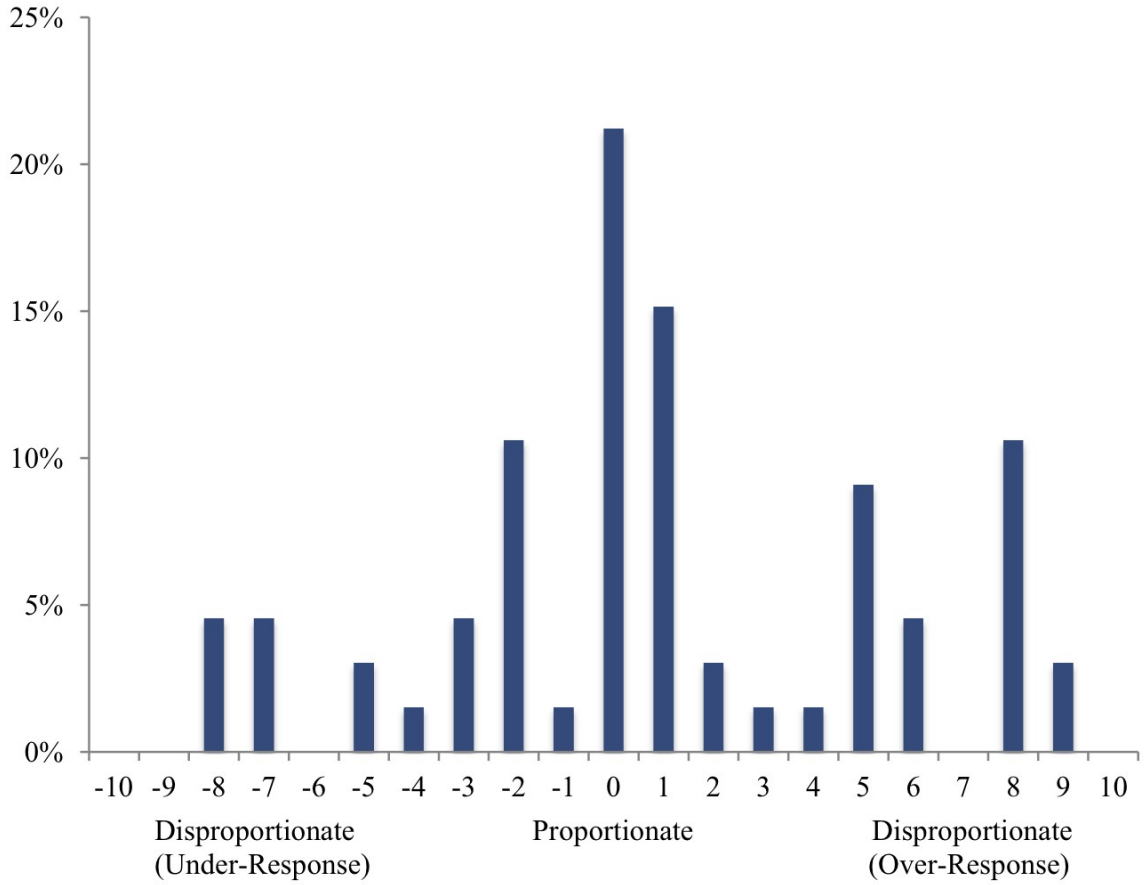

Figure 4.1. Proportionality of Major US Responses to Crisis Triggers.
N=66. Data adapted from the International Crisis Behavior Project.
See Fig. 5 for recoding scheme.

PROPORTIONALITY

The dictum of proportionality permeated ancient societies and then extended through cultural and legal traditions so that it is still observed as a norm in international relations today. This legal bedrock, common in many civilizations, was known in Latin as the *lex talionis*, or the law of revenge. It dictates that victims can punish the aggressors who transgress them and that those punishments should vary according to the original crime; in other words, the *lex talionis* prescribes that "like be paid for like" in parallel retribution

(Blundell 1989). For example, the Old Testament demands that punishment follow "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe," (Exodus 21.23-5; Blundell 1989). Though an opposing notion of submissiveness and non-violence has also shaped Western culture at times, proportionality still dominates considerations of retaliation in interstate relations.

Those considerations of retaliation largely stem from the veneration of proportionality by just war theory. In his tome on the subject, Michael Walzer (1977) explains that proportionality is a key component of the "war convention," the collection of international norms governing conflict behavior. In addition to applying force only when necessary, states generally agree to respond to aggression proportionally. For example, after attacks on its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the US responded with limited bombing campaigns against suspected training camps in Afghanistan and Sudan ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010; Brecher and Wilkenfeld 2010a; Brecher and Wilkenfeld 2010b).

Walzer (1977) argues that avoiding excessive harm – and thus engaging in proportionate responses – is the governing principle for interstate conflict because of the typically limited nature of modern war. At the close of a limited war, as opposed to that of a total war, the combating states both still exist in the international system; neither have been wiped from the map. Therefore, relations between the states must somehow resume, and some allowance for settlement of the conflict must be made. This return to cooperation (however limited) is only possible if the two states avoided excessive harm in the course of their war. Walzer uses the metaphor of a blood feud between two families to expound his point. The feud can continue without significantly disrupting life

for the Hatfields and McCoys so long as they go on killing individual men, back and forth, at a relatively slow rate. If one family begins killing women and children or commits a sudden massacre, however, the psychological and moral damage to the victimized family may be so great as to prevent a return to any sort of stable co-existence between the families. Walzer argues that this logic applies equally to states, meaning that the use of excessive harm generally is avoided because states assume long shadows of the future and the continued existence of their enemies.

However, states occasionally do violate the principle of proportionality. (See Figure 4.2.) Walzer (1977) argues that, though military necessity and proportionality together are accepted as the bedrock governing interstate conflict in theory, these concepts are not easy to identify in practice. Furthermore, policymakers and generals can stretch the limits of these concepts rhetorically to justify the use of force to fit any situation in which they wish to pursue it.[38] Again looking to the origins of the proportionality rule, Blundell acknowledges that individuals in ancient Greece sometimes overreacted to personal attacks, pursuing retribution beyond retaliation in kind. In our own time, US administrations have also acknowledged the existence of these sorts of *dis*proportionate responses. In September 2013, President Obama addressed the possibility of intervening in Syria by distinguishing it from past operations abroad:

> So the key point that I want to emphasize to the American people: The military plan that has been developed by the joint chiefs and that I believe

[38] This flexibility in definition is part of the impetus for laying more specific norms of conflict behavior, such as particular standards for human rights, on top of the bedrock of the war convention (Walzer 1977).

> is appropriate is proportional. It is limited. It does not involve boots on the ground. This is not Iraq and this is not Afghanistan.
>
> (Obama 2013)

Obama contextualizes the possible intervention in Syria as "appropriate" by defining it as "proportional" and by contrasting it to the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. This distinction implies that he perceives those older operations as disproportionate in scale and that such lapses in proportionality are undesirable. In addition to over-reacting at times, states sometimes under-react to crisis triggers, turning to other states or international bodies to air their grievances rather than responding directly to their aggressors. For example, in 2003 Syria responded to Israeli air strikes by complaining to the UN Security Council rather than by returning fire ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010).

Despite occasional aberrations, though, the dominant interpretation of the *lex talionis* – the proportionate response – remains a theoretical touchstone and behavioral norm governing interstate conflict. International law has codified the principle through protocols to the Geneva Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Law of the Sea Convention; additionally, the International Court of Justice has upheld proportionality as an established norm (Stone 2001).[39] Using a scale of proportionality that I have created from data within the International Crisis Behavior Project, Figure 4.2 illustrates the status of proportionality as a norm in crisis responses. On average, aggrieved states respond proportionately to crisis triggers, though aberrations sometimes

[39] The ICJ upheld proportionality in *Nicaragua vs. US* (1984). See Stone (2001).

occur. Furthermore, as a hegemon, the United States has generally upheld this principle as a desired international norm through its own behavior. See Figure 4.1.

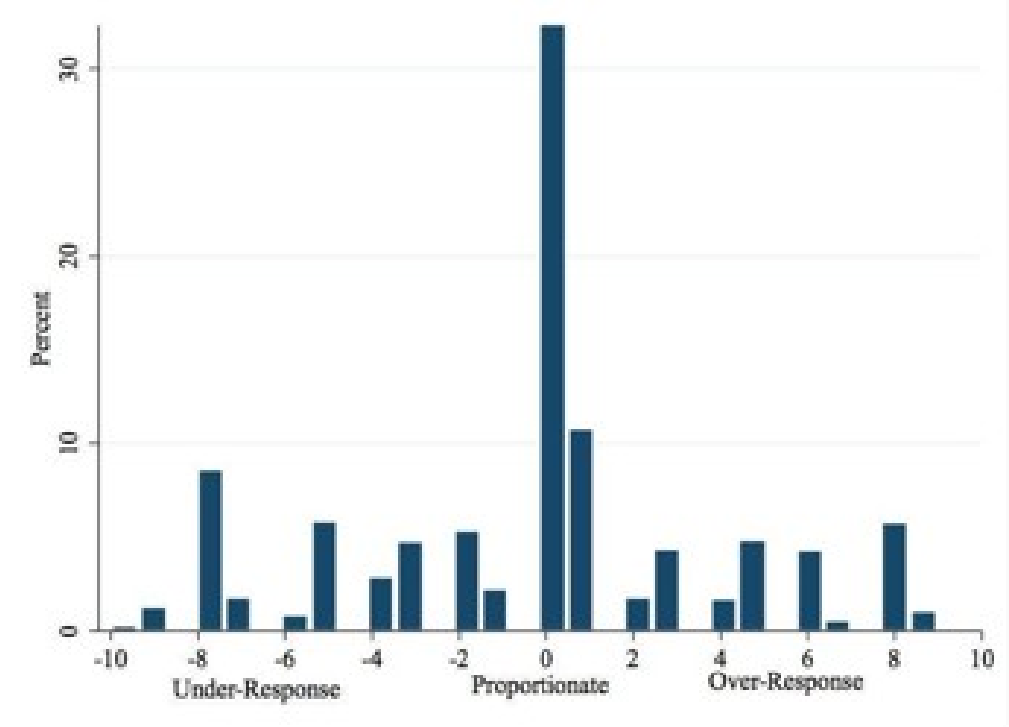

Figure 4.2. Proportionality of State Responses to Crisis Triggers
N=1000. Data adapted from the International Crisis Behavior Project.
See Fig. 5 for recoding scheme.

STATES AS INTERVENORS

American maintenance of the proportionate response is visible through its own international crises, as shown in Figure 4.1. However, in the postwar era interstate attacks against the American military have been rare, and interstate attacks on American soil have been even more unusual. Thus, demonstrating American reverence for the norm of the proportionate response is difficult to achieve by analyzing its responses to

direct international aggression against it. Instead, we can more thoroughly examine the American view of proportionality in war through its responses to conflicts between *other* states.

Because it regards the proportionate response as an international norm, I argue here that the United States reacts differently to proportionate and disproportionate responses in external dyads. This argument requires two assumptions: first, that the US has an interest in enforcing the norm; and, second, that it willing to use its leverage to do so as a third party. These assumptions both hinge on understanding the motivations of third parties to intervene in external conflicts.

When considering the United States as a third party, the clearest way for a major power such as this to reveal its preferences regarding the behaviors of other states is through demonstrable action as an "intervenor" (Watkins and Winters 1997). Intervenors wade into conflicts among other states in different ways (e.g., unilaterally or with invitation) and with different tools and powers. All of these actors share the goal of settling the external conflict in some manner, but Watkins and Winters divide intervenors into two camps according to their motivations for doing so. "Transactional" intervenors are outsiders to the conflict and have no prior or anticipated future relationships with the disputants. They attempt to settle the conflict because of their own values or goals concerning the conflict or the underlying issues. Though perhaps theoretically useful, the notion of transactional intervenors is unrealistic, as discussed below. "Embedded" intervenors, on the other hand, are party to the same system as the disputants and generally have *prior* relationships and anticipated *future* relationships with them. They live in the shadow of the future and for this reason attempt to settle the conflict for fear

that it will eventually affect them directly, if left unattended. Thus both transactional and embedded intervenors act in their own self-interest when they take actions as third parties (Touval and Zartman 2001). They differ instead according to the type of self-interest they follow: transactional intervenors, as an ideal type, are "neutral" because they have no interest in the disputed issues themselves, only in how they affect their own agendas; embedded intervenors have indirect interests in the disputed issues because they have relationships with the disputants (Princen 1992).

Arguably all state actors are "embedded." Though some states are certainly farther removed from some conflicts than others, states all reside in the same international system, and all fear that the actions of others will adversely affect them. This is especially true for the United States, which, as the hegemon, is deeply invested in interstate relations around the world. Thus, a discussion of the "neutrality" of intervenors is unrealistic and unconstructive; intervenors are always concerned with the outcome of the dispute itself, whether for defensive or offensive self-interests (Touval and Zartman 2001).

Though they all arise from self-interest, different types of interfering activities undertaken by intervenors can be distinguished. For example, Watkins and Winters (1997) argue that choices of third party behaviors differ because of the third party's preponderant type of power at that instance – whether facilitative, bargaining, or coercive. Hence, when states hold more coercive power, they are more likely to militarily intervene, but when they hold more facilitative or bargaining power, they are more likely to mediate. Thus, military intervention and mediation, which are typically discussed separately in the literature, can be viewed as parts of one continuum of self-

interested intervening activities. For example, in his overview of the roles of third parties and their possible conflict management techniques, Dixon (1996) includes both military intervention and mediation as different types of third party behavior. For this study I will also consider mediation (captured in my analysis here as political involvement) and military intervention together as two different reflections of one motivation – in this case, the self-interested preservation of a norm.

MEDIATION

Maintaining the traditional belief in mediators as disinterested, neutral parties leads to the assumption that mediators intervene whenever the conditions are most favorable for the conflict to be settled. However, many studies show that this assumption is false. Greig (2005), for example, finds no relationship between conditions of mutually hurting stalemates – which, according to prevalent theory (Zartman 2000), lead to mediation success – and when third parties offer to mediate between enduring rivals. As Greig (2005) argues, potential mediators offer their services not when it is likely to be most successful but when the violence is ongoing and thus most threatening to the third party. Thus, potential mediators are influenced by ongoing violence and the self-interested fear that those conflicts induce, not by the optimal, disinterested conditions for mediation.

The United States as a mediator fits this portrait of self-interest. Generally, Touval (1992) argues that superpowers offer to mediate more often than they wait for invitations to do so and that large states use mediation to pursue their own interests. Indeed, Touval characterizes mediation by superpowers as a continuation of their foreign policy by other means. According to this argument, superpowers are more likely to

mediate than smaller states because they are more involved globally and thus have broader-ranging international interests. Also, they are more likely to be successful as mediators because they have more leverage to wield (Bercovitch and Schneider 2000). Specifically, though, Touval (1992) notes that between 1945-1989 the United States mediated almost 90 conflicts, both alone and through international organizations, whereas the other superpower of the day, the Soviet Union, mediated less than 20. Clearly, then, something besides superpower status also contributes to the American penchant for mediation. Touval argues that the United States mediated more than smaller states and more than the Soviet Union during this time period because it had more leverage, access, and (non-nuclear) power than all other states. Added to this power disparity, American interests were far-flung, and its desire to keep Soviet influence from encroaching on warring, destabilized states was great. Thus, the US mediated as a self-interested actor. Also important to note is that throughout the Cold War the United States also generally involved itself more deeply in international crises as a third party – measured on a scale covering neutrality, diplomatic and economic involvement, and, finally, military intervention – than the USSR; See Figure 4.3.

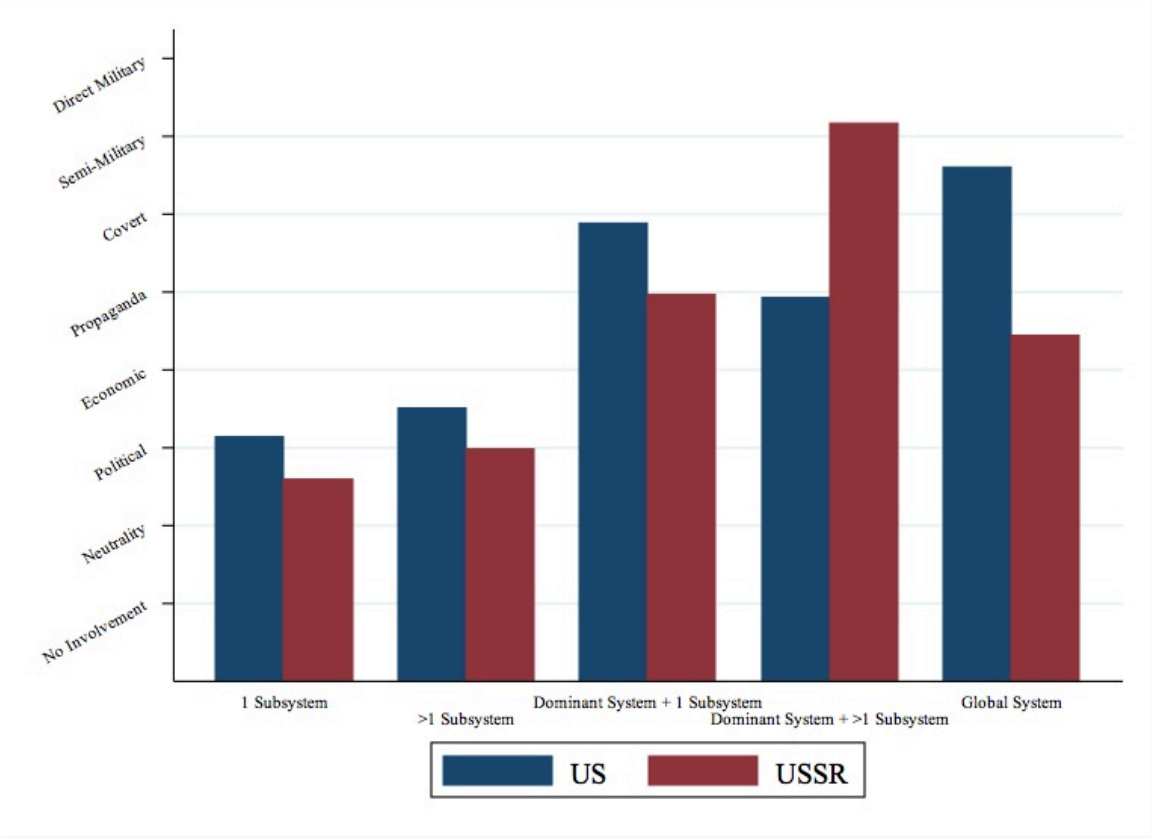

Figure 4.3. Average Levels of Cold War Third-Party Involvement by Geostrategic Importance of Crisis
N=535. Data from the International Crisis Behavior Project.
For descriptions of the levels of involvement and of geostrategic importance, see the Research Design.

INTERVENTION

States can also pursue their own interests, whether material or intangible, by intervening in external interstate disputes militarily. As Werner (2000) explains, though, traditional literature regarding military interventions by third parties only focuses on the motivations and reasonings of the belligerents, not of the third parties. Specifically, classic extended-deterrence theory holds that states' decisions over whether or not to attack another state

hinge partially on the credibility of third parties' threats to intervene, but does not explain why those third parties threaten intervention in the first place.

Werner (2000) counters that, instead, if a belligerent state chooses to attack another state, the nature of that attack then affects the decision of a third party to intervene or not: the more that the third party perceives that the attacks will change the status quo of the international (or even regional) system, the more likely the third party is to intervene. Arguably, this increased probability of intervention may stem from one of two sources: either a desire to maintain the status quo of the international system, or the opportunistic desire to gain from its unraveling. In this way, the discussion of third-party interventions mirrors the discussion of balancing vs. bandwagoning. As Schweller (1994) argues, the two behaviors stem from different motivations; siding with the weaker state in a dispute stems from a desire to defend the status quo, whereas siding with the stronger state stems from a desire to extend existing power. Both of these motivations reside within the United States, which as the hegemon has the strongest incentive to preserve the status quo of the international system, but which also still desires to extend its power and to aid its allies. In terms of this analysis, the increased likelihood of military intervention into conflicts perceived to change the status quo of the international system is especially pertinent because disproportionate responses disrupt the system more than proportionate ones, as I argue below.

INTERVENING AT THE MARGINS

I characterize the long-term response of the United States to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 as disproportionate, which is noteworthy because this extended crisis

so strongly influences the discussion of American proportionality. However, I view this extended response as an *aberration* from a norm, not as typical of American responses to military attacks. Instead, I argue that the United States in the post-World War II (or "modern") era *generally rejects disproportionate responses* and rather *accepts proportionate responses* to military attacks as an international norm and guiding principle for its own behavior.

Two conceptual components of the international system explain why the US views the proportionate response as a norm: anarchy and shadow of the future. In an anarchic system no superior power rules over the states, judging their actions and assigning punishments. In the absence of this oversight, though, states generally do not act haphazardly or without reason. Instead, they fall into predictable patterns of behavior known as norms. Norms arise because states understand that the international system will continue indefinitely, that they will continue to deal with the same other actors into the future, and that those other states do not have short memories.[40] These perennial conditions cause states to follow a set of norms governing behavior during war that Walzer (1977) collectively identifies as the war convention. The concept of proportionality is a major component of this institution because parity in aggression maintains the status quo of power in the international system and because maintaining the status quo generally is considered (at least by major states) to be the most *stable* goal to pursue in regards to the international system. Major states, of course, also have an incentive to maintain their own power and, thus, the status quo.

[40] The study of norm emergence has been dominated by constructivists such as Finnemore and Sikkink (1998). They focus on patterns of state behavior (such as granting female suffrage) that arise in clearly identifiable times and manners. This discussion is less helpful for analyzing what Walzer (1977) names the "war convention," which is ancient and more ambiguous in origin.

The norms of the war convention are ancient in origin; proportionality in particular finds its roots in sources such as Hammurabi's Code and the Old Testament. So, this pattern of behavior has long been an expected norm of warfare. Despite an ancient foundation, though, the concept of the proportionate response has been codified additionally in several instances in the 20th century. Both the United Nations Charter of 1945 and the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 provide that states may defend themselves in the case of armed attack; however, both also maintain that the purpose of such reprisals is to *return to the previous international status quo*. Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty holds that members of the alliance will act to "restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area." This phrase echoes the prerogative of the UN Security Council to take action to "maintain or restore international peace and security," according to Article 51 of the UN Charter. Both emphasize *restoring* the status quo of international security, not allowing armed aggression to change it; this focus alludes to the expectation of proportionate responses to aggression. Furthermore, the conceptualization of the proportionate response as a reasoned and measured interpretation of the *lex talionis* was embedded within the Covenant of the League of Nations (1924). Article 12 mandates that, if a conflict were to mount between Members, they should submit the dispute to legal review; signatories "agree[d] in no case to resort to war until three months after the award by the arbitrators or the judicial decision." This three-month cooling-off period suggests that the authors of the Covenant believed that, given time, aggrieved states would pursue less radical objectives of war. Again, this codified expectation of the conduct of war alludes to the norm of proportionate responses to attack. More directly, states have accepted the specific concept of *proportionality* into public international law

through protocols to the Geneva Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Law of the Sea Convention, as well as ICJ rulings, as mentioned previously (Stone 2001).

In its role as international hegemon in the modern era, the United States holds a great incentive to maintain this international status quo, which by definition sustains its relative power. Indeed, the institutions and laws created post-World War II that privilege restoring the status quo after conflict may well do so because the processes that shaped their language were strongly directed by the United States (Ikenberry 2001). Ikenberry, through his analysis of postwar institution-building, explains that victors in war have a strong incentive to tie themselves and their former opponents into institutions governing their behavior because their ability to lock in the immediate postwar balance of power outweighs their perceived loss of freedom to the institutions. Likewise, I argue that the US is willing to bear the costs of intervening in disproportionate crises because those costs are outweighed by its desire to maintain its hegemonic position. When the US intervenes against states that have over-reacted to crises, it does so to punish them for transgressing the norm of proportionality and to keep them from gaining relative power. For example, in 1956 the US intervened against both the UK and France, both of which had responded to Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal with military action ("ICB Data Viewer" 2010).[41] When the US intervenes against states that have under-reacted to crises, it does so opportunistically to gain from that state's show of weakness and to aid American allies. For example, in 2003 the US supported Israel and acted against Syria in the UN Security Council after Syria under-reacted to Israeli air strikes ("ICB Data

[41] The British and French responses are both ranked as +7 on my scale of proportionality. Both states perceived a crisis when Egypt announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal (an action that is ranked as a 3 on my scale). Both responded with violent military action (coded as 10). See Figure 4.5 for how I adapted the ICB measures of trigger and response to construct this measure of proportionality.

Viewer" 2010).[42] Both behaviors are consistent with the idea that disproportionate responses are stronger catalysts for US interventions than proportionate responses.[43]

My argument for this article assumes, first, that the United States has an interest in maintaining the norm of proportionality and, second, that it is willing to use leverage to do so. The first requirement is assured both because states in general have an inherent interest in ensuring that other states operate according to the same codes of behavior and because of the preferred position of the US in the international system. The second requirement is met because states understand that "talk is cheap" and that norms are only solidified and upheld if states interested in maintaining those norms signal that breaches against them will result in negative consequences.

Within the scope of this argument, the United States signals the importance of the norm of proportionality by acting as an intervenor in the conflicts of other states. Specifically, I first argue that the United States is likely to intervene more strongly – on a scale beginning with inaction, escalating through political and economic involvement, and capping at military intervention – when an international conflict is marred by an early disproportionate response on behalf of one of the disputants. This theory is plausible because the United States has frequently shown its willingness to intervene in the modern era and because, when it does intervene, it presumably acts in its own self-interest, as do other intervenors. Certainly, the United States is also compelled to intervene in external

[42] Syria's response is ranked as a -9 on my scale of proportionality. Syria's crisis was triggered by the Israeli air strikes (ranked as a 10 on my scale), and it responded by lodging a formal complaint with the UN Security Council (ranked as a 1 on my scale). See Figure 4.5 for how I adapted the ICB measures of trigger and response to construct this measure of proportionality.

[43] I argue that this norm-maintaining behavior of the United States has been under-explored empirically, despite renewed interest in recent years regarding the influence of just war principles on US decisions to intervene. See Butler (2003). This absence of attention is largely explained by the lack of an existing quantitative measure of proportionality in crisis behavior, a dearth that I fill with this article.

conflicts for other self-interested reasons, such as economic or ideological concerns. However, I argue that breaches of proportionality are an additional consideration that weighs on the United States when it decides to intervene in external dyads. Second, I argue that the US is more likely to intervene *against* an actor that behaves more disproportionately in a crisis, whether under-reacting or over-reacting. As discussed previously, over-reactions threaten the norm of proportional response and the relative position of the US, and under-reactions provide opportunities for relative gain.

HYPOTHESES

Two hypotheses arise from the literature and theory:

1. The United States will intervene more strongly in an ongoing conflict between two other states if the trigger to that conflict was met with a more disproportionate response (whether that response was disproportionately aggressive or disproportionately weak).

This first hypothesis predicts that the US responds to proportionality in crises. It predicts that the US is likely to intervene more aggressively when a state overreacts or underreacts than when the responding state acts proportionately. The theory previously presented explains that the U.S. responds to both normative and hegemonic interests; it intervenes after overreactions to enforce the norm of proportionality, and it intervenes after under-reactions to capitalize on the weakness of that state. Both motivations adhere to the overall goal of the hegemon to maintain its position of power.

2. The United States is more likely to intervene *against* a particular state in an ongoing conflict if that state responded disproportionately to the crisis trigger.

The second hypothesis addresses the motivation of the US in responding to a breach of proportionality and predicts that it intervenes against the state reacting disproportionately, either to punish it for overreacting (out of normative concerns) or to capitalize on its weakness shown by underreacting (out of realist interests).

RESEARCH DESIGN

Data and Unit of Analysis

I utilize data from the International Crisis Behavior Project, which analyzes interstate crises from 1918-2007. The data account for 1000 state actors in 455 international crises in that time period; however, the *n* is reduced to 907 actors (within 443 crises) because I drop all of the cases in which the United States is itself the crisis actor and all of the cases that are missing data, as coded by the ICB Project.

Dependent Variables: US Involvement and Favorability of US Involvement

This study uses two different dependent variables in order to address both the general decision to intervene and the choice of which side to support in the crisis. The first dependent variable is US involvement in external crises, as recorded by the International Crisis Behavior Project. This is measured within the ICB data at the level of the crisis-actor on an 8-point scale ranging from non-involvement or neutrality (1-2), to forms of political or economic involvement (3-5), to levels of covert or military involvement (6-8)

(Brecher and Wilkenfeld 2010b).[44] For example, during the 1956 Suez nationalization crisis, the US intervened in the activities of the UK and France with political action, urging the two states to stand down. This political involvement is coded as a 3 on the scale. The American intervention in the Gulf War, on the other hand, is coded as an 8, indicating direct military involvement. See Figure 4.4 for average levels of US involvement over time.

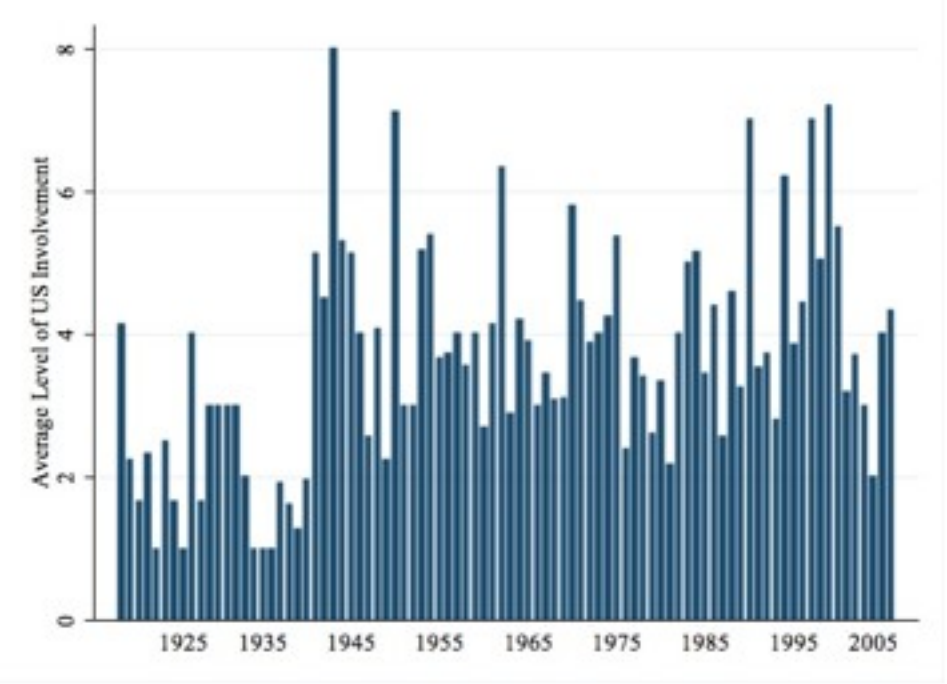

Figure 4.4. Average Levels of US Third-Party Involvement in International Crises

[44] As coded in the ICB project, the variable measuring US involvement in a crisis ranges from 1-9 at the level of the crisis actor. A 9 on the scale indicates that the crisis actor is the United States itself. For this article, I drop all instances in which the US is the direct crisis actor because otherwise the equation is tautological; the proportionality of a US response cannot be used to predict the level of US involvement. Thus, in this first model the dependent variable of US involvement ranges from 1-8.

The ICB dataset details crisis information at two levels of analysis – that of each security crisis (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 2010a) and that of each state involved in every crisis (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 2010b). Because I incorporate explanatory and control variables from both the actor- and the crisis-level, I use multi-level linear models with mixed effects to analyze US decisions regarding whether or not to intervene and at in what manner to intervene.[45]

The second hypothesis analyzes the motivation for US intervention when it occurs by using proportionality to predict on behalf of which side the US chooses to intercede. That is, Hypothesis 2 predicts that the US is more likely to intervene *against* an actor when it violates the norm of proportionality, rather than in its favor. In order to test this second hypothesis, I incorporate a second dependent variable from the ICB dataset. The dataset does not directly account for the side for which the US intervenes, but it instead measures the favorability with which each crisis actor views the level of US involvement. I use this variable and assume that positive favorability indicates that the US intervened on behalf of an actor, whereas negative favorability indicates that it intervened against an actor. For example, during the Gulf War, Iraq viewed US involvement in the crisis unfavorably, whereas Kuwait viewed it favorably. For both involvement and uninvolvement, the measure distinguishes among favorable, unfavorable, and neutral activity by the US. Thus, the measure at this stage takes six values.[46] Because the outcomes within this variable are not ordered, I treat it as a categorical dependent variable and use a multinomial logit model (with clustered standard errors to account for

[45] Because the first dependent variable, levels of US involvement in crises, can take eight values, I use a multi-level linear model with mixed effects. An ordered logistic regression returns similar results.

[46] The original measure US favorability from the ICB Project also records when the US is the direct crisis actor and when this measure is missing; I dropped all of these cases from this study.

the use of crisis-level data to predict actor-level outcomes). For ease of interpretation, I collapse the three categories of uninvolvement into one value and threat this as the base category for the multinomial logit. Thus, all of the coefficients regarding the favorability of US involvement (favorable=1, neutral=2, unfavorable=3) are judged separately in comparison to US uninvolvement (uninvolvement = 0).[47]

Explanatory Variable: Proportionality of Response

The proportionality of responses serves as the explanatory variable for this analysis; that is, I posit that the proportionality of response in a crisis influences both the American consideration of intervention and its choice of which side to support or harm. Despite renewed interest in recent years regarding the influence of just war principles on US decisions to intervene, proportionality has been largely ignored (Butler 2003). This absence of attention is largely explained by the lack of a standard quantitative measure of proportionality in crisis behavior. In response to that dearth, I create a measure of proportionality myself by adapting data from the ICB Project. I capture proportionality at the actor-level by calculating the difference between the degree of aggression for the crisis trigger from the degree of aggression for the actor's main response that trigger; i.e.,

$$Proportionality = Response - Trigger.$$ [48]

[47] As part of this study, I also estimated a multinomial logit using the measure of US favorability with expanded values of uninvolvement. This returns similar results, but it is more difficult to interpret, as the base category necessarily becomes 'neutral uninvolvement' rather than simply 'uninvolvement'.

[48] I construct the measure of proportionality at the actor-level because of individualized crisis perceptions. No actor perceives that it triggers a crisis; instead, invariably, actors perceive that they are reacting to a slight from another party. Thus, within the context of one crisis, all the actors involved may pinpoint different events and parties as the crisis trigger. The measure of proportionality, then, depends on the actor in question.

To create this measure, I first recode the scales for crisis triggers and major responses found in the ICB data. The original ICB data code both response and trigger on scales ranging from 1-9, but these two scales do not align substantively and so cannot be compared directly. To match the scales substantively, I then re-assign triggers to a scale ranging from 1-10 and responses to a scale ranging from 0-11. See Figure 4.5 below for an illustration of the recoding scheme. Major responses can be coded as 0 because, in theory, actors can choose not to respond to crisis triggers.[49] On the other hand, triggers cannot equal 0 because they must exist in order to be included in the dataset. On the other end of the scale, triggers can only reach a height of 10, "violent act," because triggers are conceptualized as singular; major responses, alternatively, can reach a maximum of 11 ("multiple, including violent act") because they are measured collectively. Within the range of 1-10, the new scales match substantively, stretching from "verbal act" at 1 to "violent act" at 10. Because the two new scales match each other substantively, I can directly compare crisis triggers and responses for each crisis actor.

[49] In practice, only 5 of 1000 crisis actors identified in the ICB data are coded as not responding to their respective crisis triggers.

Original	Trigger	New Coding Scheme	Response	Original
		0	No Response	1
1	Verbal Act	1	Verbal Act	2
2	Political Act	2	Political Act	3
3	Economic Act	3	Economic Act	4
4	External Change	4		
5	Other Non-Violent Act	5	Other Non-Violent Act	5
6	Internal Verbal or Physical Challenge	6		
7	Non-Violent Military Act	7	Non-Violent Military Act	6
		8	Multiple, Including Non-Violent Military Act	7
8	Indirect Violent Act	9		
9	Violent Act	10	Violent Military Act	8
		11	Multiple, Including Violent Military Act	9

Figure 4.5. Recoding of Trigger and Response Variables from ICB Data

Thus, subtracting the value of the trigger [1, 10] from the value of the response [0, 11] for each unit produces a score of proportionality that ranges from -10 to 10.[50] If the trigger matches the response in aggression, then the score is 0, indicating a perfectly proportionate response. For example, Pakistan perceived a crisis in May 1998 when India conducted several nuclear tests; this non-violent military action is coded as a 7 on my scale of crisis triggers. In response, Pakistan tested five nuclear weapons of its own two weeks later; this action is likewise coded as a 7 on my scale of crisis responses. Thus, the proportionality score for Pakistan's response is 0, or perfectly proportionate.

As the trigger and response for a crisis actor grow disparate, the proportionality score increasingly deviates from 0. For example, France's January 1981 announcement

[50] The new coding scheme 'elongates' both trigger and response, stretching the scales beyond their original breadth. As a result, not all triggers/responses have direct corollaries on the other side, meaning that some individual responses (specifically, those following triggers of 'external change', 'internal verbal or physical challenge', or 'indirect violent act') technically cannot be coded as proportionate. However, given that I use this scale only for a large-N statistical study, the average response across cases (which *can* be proportionate) matters more than individual cases.

that the Osirak reactor in Iraq would become active by July triggered a crisis for Israel. Israel responded to that external change (coded as a 4 on my trigger scale) with multiple violent attacks (coded as 11 on my response scale), making its proportionality score for that crisis be measured as a 7, or an overreaction. In sum, the difference between the measures of each trigger and response indicates the relative proportionality; the smaller the difference, the more proportionate the response, and the larger the difference, the more disproportionate the response.

For this study, I convert the raw proportionality scores to their absolute values because I theorize that (negative) under-responses and (positive) over-responses prompt US involvement in the same manner. Thus, proportionality has a non-linear effect on U.S. decisions regarding intervention.[51] The final proportionality score for the model thus ranges from 0 (perfect proportionality) to 10 (extreme disproportionality).[52]

In addition to allowing research regarding US interventions, this new measurement of proportionality permits objective, quantitative investigation of a principle that is typically only discussed abstractly. A glimpse at a few descriptive statistics lends face validity to the proportionality measurement. Figure 4.2, as discussed previously, shows that proportionality is in fact observed as a norm within international crisis behavior; a plurality of crisis-actors respond proportionately to their crisis triggers. Additionally, Figure 4.6 indicates that, as should be expected, capability influences

[51] As part of this study, I also tested the effect of the raw values of proportionality (ranging from -10 to 10) on U.S. decisions to intervene and decisions of which side to support. As expected, proportionality does not have a linear effect on these decisions; the variable is not a statistically significant predictor of intervention or intervention favorability. As theorized, proportionality instead has a *non-linear* effect on these decisions; Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show that absolute disproportionality (i.e., the absolute values of the variable) is a significant predictor.

[52] In addition to using absolute values of proportionality to demonstrate non-linearity, I also tested squared values. As Table 4.1 shows, the two measures yield similar results.

proportionality of response; stronger states are more able and thus also more likely to overreact than weaker states. The measurement of power status is taken directly from the ICB data. Figure 4.7 shows the average proportionality of response for each regime type measured within the ICB data; though all of the averages hover around 0, or proportionality, democratic regimes are the only type that trend positively, or towards over-responses. These snapshots of different facets of the new proportionality measure showcase the possibilities for future research.

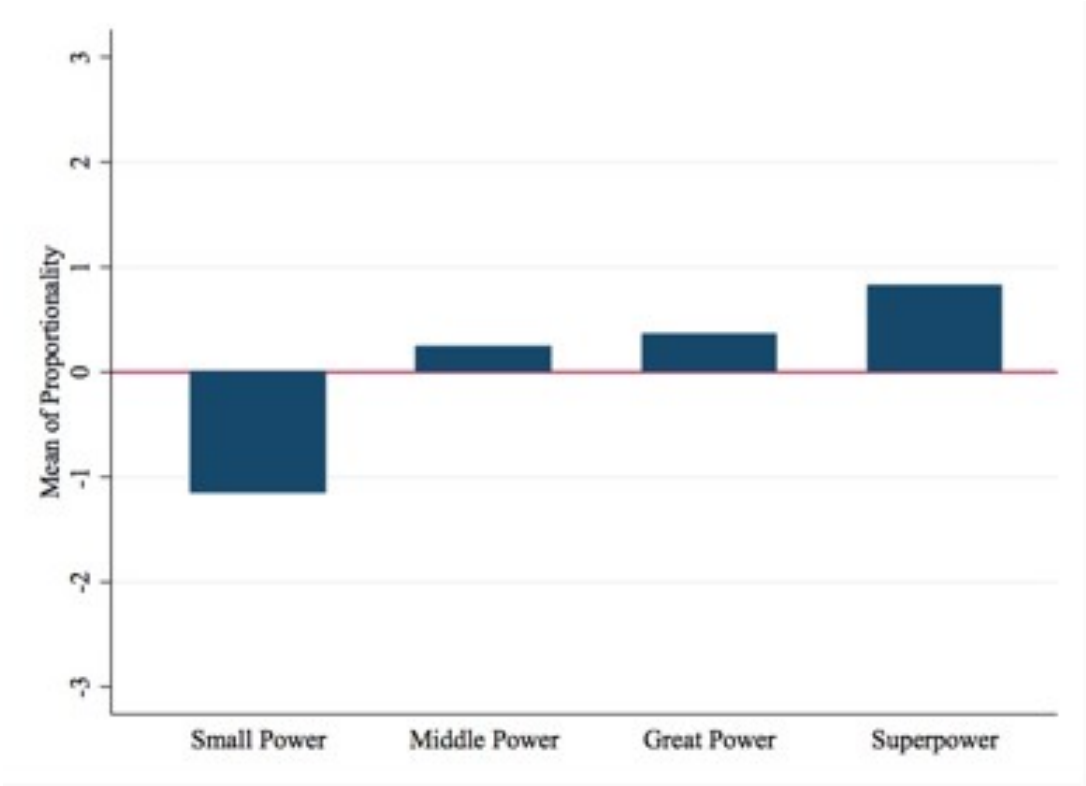

Figure 4.6. Power Status of Responding State

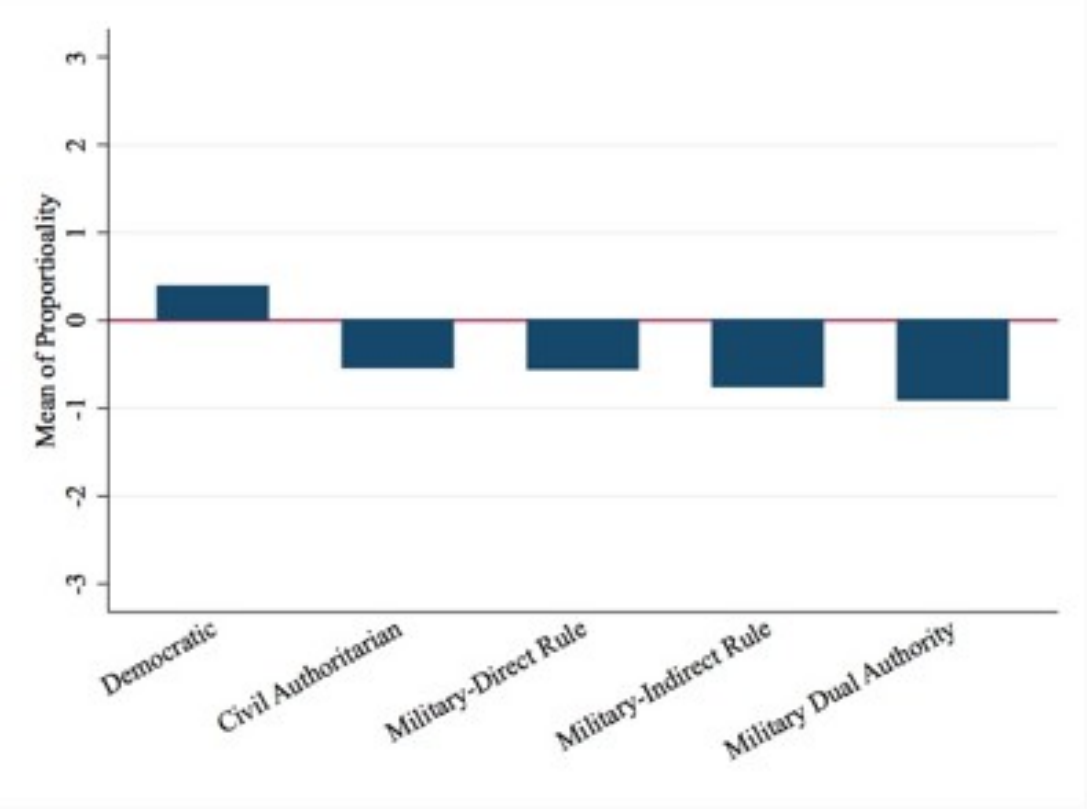

Figure 4.7. Regime Type of Responding State

Control Variables

Several control variables are also included in the analysis. I include the overall level of violence of the crisis because higher levels of violence increase the likelihood of foreign interventions (Greig 2005). Following Beardsley (2008), the conflict history of the crisis dyad, particularly whether or not the crisis is part of a larger protracted conflict, is also included because rivals are thought to behave differently than other conflict dyads and thus may be treated differently by the US. Previous literature finds that the heterogeneity of the adversaries within the crisis (James and Oneal 1991), the geostrategic salience of

the crisis location (James and Oneal 1991), and the level of involvement of the USSR/Russia (James and Oneal 1991; Butler 2003) are all significant predictors of US crisis intervention; these three indicators are thus also included in this model. Also, I include a crisis indicator for ethnicity-related disputes; this variable captures whether a conflict is ethnically secessionist (1), ethnically irredentist (2), or not related to ethnicity (3).

At a more fundamental level, I test several attributes of both the triggering actors and the responding actors for each crisis dyad. For the triggering actors of each crisis, I include indicators for identity (state or non-state) and number (one-state or multi-state). For the crisis actors, I include two conventional variables: power status and regime type. I include power status because logic assumes that the US would be less likely to intervene against stronger states. Power status ranges from 1-4 and indicates whether the actor is a small power (1), middle power (2), great power (3), or superpower (4). I recode the regime type variable so that non-democracies are coded as 0 and democracies are coded as 1; Butler (2003) finds that this dichotomous control is a significant predictor of US intervention decisions. All of the control variables for this study originate from the ICB dataset.

RESULTS

The results of the first two models are found in Table 4.1; both address the degree of US involvement in international crises. My explanatory variable, disproportionality of response to the crisis trigger, significantly predicts US involvement in crises when coded with absolute values in Model 1 and when coded with squared values in Model 2; the

coefficients of both versions of the disproportionality measure are correlated with the outcome variable in the expected manner and are statistically significant. Thus, as states' responses to crisis triggers grow more disproportionate, the degree of US third-party involvement in international crises increases; the US is likely to intervene more strongly in more disproportionate crises. The fact that proportionality, a variable rarely, if ever, included in analyses of conflict management, has a significant effect on the degree of US involvement, while controlling for several other crisis indicators, is notable.

Two of the variables supported by James and Oneal (1991) – involvement of the USSR/Russia and geostrategic salience – behave in the expected manner and are significant; the US is likely to be more involved in crises in which Russia also involves itself and crises in which the location has geostrategic importance. The third variable suggested by James and Oneal, adversarial heterogeneity, behaves in the expected manner and is significant. Additionally, the protracted nature of the conflict, as suggested by Beardsley (2008), is statistically significant; the US is likely to intervene more aggressively in crises that are more protracted. In contrast to Butler (2003), I find that the US involves itself more strongly in crises triggered by non-state actors than those triggered by states. Finally, the presence of ethnicity-related components to the crisis is also statistically significant; the US is likely to react more strongly to crises that have fewer ethnicity-related components.

Table 4.1. Impact of Disproportionality on Degree of U.S. Involvement in Crises
(Models 1-2: Results of the Mixed-Effects Multilevel Regressions)
Table 4.1 shows coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.
Model 1 uses the absolute values of the proportionality measure to estimate the variable's nonlinear effect on the likelihood of the US involving itself in international crises. Model 1: N (actors) = 907; Groups (crises) = 443; Log likelihood = -1606.90; Wald $X^2(12)$ = 134.94; Prob > X^2 = 0.00.
Model 2 uses the squared values of the proportionality measure to estimate the variable's nonlinear effect on the likelihood of the US involving itself in international crises. Model 2: N (actors) = 907; Groups (crises) = 443; Log likelihood = -1606.43; Wald $X^2(13)$ = 135.92; Prob > X^2 = 0.00.
*p<0.10. **p<0.05. ***p<0.01.

	1: Absolute Proportionality	2: Squared Proportionality
Disproportionality	0.03 **	0.00 ***
	(0.01)	(0.00)
[Unsquared Proportionality]		0.00
		(0.01)
Violence	0.07	0.06
	(0.04)	(0.05)
Protracted Conflict	0.53 ***	0.54 ***
	(0.15)	(0.15)
Adversarial Heterogeneity	0.14 *	0.14 *
	(0.08)	(0.08)
Soviet Union Involvement	0.14 ***	0.14 ***
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Geostrategic Salience	0.41 ***	0.41 ***
	(0.10)	(0.10)
Gravity of Threat	0.01	0.01
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Nonstate Trigger	0.19 *	0.20 *
	(0.11)	(0.11)
Multistate Trigger	-0.08	-0.08
	(0.16)	(0.16)
Ethnic Crisis	-0.55 ***	-0.55 ***
	(0.15)	(0.15)
Power Status of Crisis Actor	-0.03	-0.03
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Regime Type of Crisis Actor	0.10	0.10
	(0.08)	(0.08)
Constant	0.86 **	0.89 **
	(0.39)	(0.40)

Several variables are not statistically significant within the first model. First, two crisis descriptors are not significant: neither the degree of violence, as suggested by Greig (2005), nor the gravity of threat imposed by the crisis, as suggested by Butler (2003), impact the strength of US intervention. Also, the number of triggering actors to a crisis does not impact US intervention. Finally, and perhaps most surprisingly, two indicators of the crisis actor do not impact the strength of US intervention: the power status and regime type of the crisis actor are not statistically significant. These results may be different if measured at the crisis-level rather than the actor-level; i.e., the composition of the dyad in terms of power and regime type may matter more than the identity of individual actors. I will explore this possibility in future research.

The results of the third model, the multinomial logit with clustered standard errors, are shown in Table 4.2. This model tests the effect of disproportionality on the US decision to intervene in favor, against, or neutrally for particular crisis actors. US non-involvement is treated as the base or reference category, meaning that the coefficients for the three categories of involvement are analyzed in reference to it. As predicted, the US is more likely to intervene against a crisis actor that behaves disproportionately than it is to remain uninvolved; the coefficient is statistically significant and behaves in the expected manner. Disproportionality has no effect on the likelihood of the US to intervene on behalf of a state; disproportionality also has no effect on the likelihood of the US to intervene in a way that the crisis actor views neutrally, according to ICB coding. These findings support the theory that disproportionate responses in crises prompt the US to either intervene to punish an over-reactor or to take advantage of an under-reactor.

Table 4.2. Impact of Disproportionality on U.S. Decisions to Intervene Against or in Favor of Crisis Actors
(Model 3: Results of the Multinomial Logit with Clustered Standard Errors, Using a Collapsed Measure of U.S. Favorability of Involvement)
Table 4.2 shows coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. N (actors) = 907; Clusters (crises) = 443; Log pseudolikelihood = -1012.25; Wald X^2 (36) = 141.13; Prob > X^2 = 0.00. Pseudo R^2 = 0.09.
*p<0.10. **p<0.05. ***p<0.01.

	US Uninvolvement	Favorable US Involvement	Neutral US Involvement	Unfavorable US Involvement
Disproportionality	Base Outcome	0.05	0.06	0.06 **
		(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.03)
Violence	Base Outcome	0.26 **	0.57 **	0.28 **
		(0.11)	(0.28)	(0.12)
Protracted Conflict	Base Outcome	0.34	0.32	0.46 **
		(0.23)	(0.42)	(0.23)
Adversarial Heterogeneity	Base Outcome	0.02	-0.35 *	0.08
		(0.10)	(0.21)	(0.10)
Soviet Union Involvement	Base Outcome	0.16 ***	0.29 ***	0.20 ***
		(0.06)	(0.10)	(0.06)
Geostrategic Salience	Base Outcome	0.07	-0.23	0.14
		(0.14)	(0.26)	(0.13)
Gravity of Threat	Base Outcome	-0.06	-0.27	-0.17 **
		(0.07)	(0.17)	(0.08)
Nonstate Trigger	Base Outcome	0.34	0.02	0.30
		(0.27)	(0.50)	(0.30)
Multistate Trigger	Base Outcome	-0.30	-0.34	-0.41
		(0.74)	(1.23)	(0.67)
Ethnic Crisis	Base Outcome	-0.40 **	0.03	-0.34 *
		(0.17)	(0.32)	(0.18)
Power Status of Crisis Actor	Base Outcome	-0.07	0.09	0.23 *
		(0.15)	(0.24)	(0.13)
Regime Type of Crisis Actor	Base Outcome	0.72 ***	0.19	-0.43 *
		(0.22)	(0.46)	(0.25)
Constant	Base Outcome	-1.79 ***	-3.02 ***	-2.65 ***
		(0.51)	(0.81)	(0.52)

CONCLUSION

The self-branded "War on Terror" undertaken by the United States after the attacks against it in 2001 calls attention to a facet of international conflict behavior often only *assumed* in security studies: proportionality. The classical concept of appropriate behavior governing interstate reprisals, the *lex talionis*, typically has been overlooked

within the field of international relations, but this evasion has been detrimental to our understanding of American hegemonic behavior. Through this analysis I have shown that the US employs different interpretations of the *lex talionis* according to its self-interest. Though at times it responds disproportionately to attacks against its own territory, the US more commonly responds to disproportionality elsewhere through its behavior as a third-party intervenor in external international conflicts. The US is likely to intervene more strongly when actors behave more disproportionately in crises than when they behave more proportionately, and it is more likely to intervene against an actor that has responded disproportionately than it is to stay uninvolved in a crisis. Thus, the hegemon behaves both as a humanitarian and a guardian of the status quo by punishing states that overreact to crisis triggers, but it also acts opportunistically at times by bandwagoning against states that underreact. Understanding these patterns and interests in American crisis behavior further links the subfields of security studies and normative studies by intertwining just war theory and realist logic. This connection allows for a more comprehensive understanding of American foreign policy and hegemonic behavior, and it opens the door to new research regarding the influence of proportionality on crisis behavior.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has brought a fresh perspective to the ancient concept of proportionality, or the balancing of response to trigger, within the context of international conflict. In addition to introducing a new quantitative measure of actor-specific crisis proportionality, it has provided a needed cognitive explanation for disproportionate responses by demonstrating that the processes of revenge contribute to the likelihood of state overreaction. In this chapter, I will review the findings from the previous chapters and then illuminate avenues for possible future research on proportionality and revenge in international relations.

The first substantive contribution to understanding disproportionate responses comes from the second chapter, which reviews and critiques the literature before concluding that none of the existing theories directly speak to why interstate overreaction occurs. Systemic accounts of international conflict do not address disproportionate responses directly, or even really tangentially, as they skirt issues of foreign policy. Dyadic theories of escalation black-box the decision making processes of individual states in favor of dyadic characteristics, in effect ignoring the role of triggering events and how responses to them arise. Finally, domestic politics theories favor the idea of over-expansion instead of overreaction, ignoring the realm of responses to crisis triggers. They also bend the definition of rationality and attempt to meld to it ideas of

misperception without questioning their compatibility or generalizability. This review shows that the field lacks a strong, generalizable explanation for state disproportionate responses, and it then points toward the possibility of a cognitive explanation, a mantle that is picked up by the next chapter.

This, the third chapter, is devoted to explaining and demonstrating that disproportionate responses can be caused by revenge, a non-strategic, emotional factor that is often referenced but that has been under-theorized in the discipline. By engaging theories of group identity and behavior, I argue that states are more likely to pursue revenge through disproportionate responses when the initial attacks to which they respond violate norms surrounding the conduct of war or trigger greater perceived threats and fears. After developing the theory, I present exploratory quantitative evidence and two case studies to support it. The exploratory quantitative analysis first introduces a new actor-specific and trigger-specific measure of proportionality – currently missing from the literature – and then provides preliminary support for this theory of revenge and proportionality. Then, through a most-similar-systems design, the two case studies – the 1956-7 crisis over the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the 2002-3 crisis regarding Iraqi regime change – provide context and rich details regarding how the revenge process can take form in international exchanges. Overall, the quantitative and qualitative evidence presented here provide initial support for my theory of revenge and proportionality, and, moving forward, these results can be corroborated with more extensive data and additional case studies.

Then, the fourth chapter uses the new quantitative measure of proportionality to address questions regarding the effects of disproportionate responses. Specifically, I

argue that one of the major implications of disproportionate responses may be an increased likelihood of US intervention. As the hegemon, the US has interest in maintaining the status quo as well as increasing its own position when possible. According to that logic, I argue that the US is likely to intervene more strongly when actors behave more disproportionately in crises than when they behave more proportionately, and it is more likely to intervene against an actor that has responded disproportionately than it is to stay uninvolved in a crisis. Thus, the hegemon behaves as a guardian of the status quo by punishing states that overreact to crisis triggers, but it also acts opportunistically at times by bandwagoning against states that underreact. The quantitative results support this argument.

Overall, this dissertation contributes to the field in three distinct ways. First, it methodically analyzes proportionality, a concept that has long functioned as a concept within the just war tradition and international law, yet has generally resisted systematic actor-specific and trigger-specific analysis. By introducing a new quantitative measure for proportionality (and disproportionality), I open doors to future work regarding this ancient concept. Second, I answer the call issued by Lake (2011, 45) and others for a "psychologically plausible" explanation of abnormal conflict behavior. By utilizing revenge as a cognitive explanation for disproportionate responses, I contribute to the growing body of work that applies our best understandings of actual human decision making processes with conflict studies. Related to this, the third contribution of this dissertation is its insistence on bridging security studies and normative studies, two subfields of international relations that tend to stand alone. This connection allows for a

more holistic and thus realistic look at conflict behavior, and it will open the door to future avenues of integrated research.

Looking forward, I will work to further develop the substantive chapters presented here and to apply their theories and findings to the creation of additional articles. Specifically, I will develop more extensive quantitative data and case studies to corroborate the results of the third chapter, and I will develop more examples to contextualize the findings of the fourth chapter. Also, I will consider other implications of disproportionate responses. For example, in addition to increasing the likelihood of US interventions, I also will argue that disproportionate responses increase the likelihood of UN interventions; because the UN seeks to uphold the international system that supports it, the body is more likely to intervene when the norm of proportionality is broken. Turning away from interventions, I will also argue in future work that another major effect of disproportionate responses is their subsequent manipulation in strategic cultures. States that trigger crises but then suffer from disproportionate responses sometimes incorporate those overreaches into their national mythologies in order to rally their publics. Key examples include the remembrance of the Boston Massacre in American history and the Irish memory of Britain's overreaction to the 1916 Easter Rising. These extensions will push us to consider further consider the dangers of the revenge mindset and the disproportionate responses that follow it.

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APPENDIX

Table 3.3 shows the application of the ICB data to the recoding scheme described in the main text.

Table 3.3. Proportionality of Response According to Recoding of ICB Data

See Figure 3.3 in the main text for a graphic representation.

Proportionality	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
-10	2	0.20	0.20
-9	12	1.20	1.40
-8	85	8.50	9.90
-7	17	1.70	11.60
-6	8	0.80	12.40
-5	58	5.80	18.20
-4	28	2.80	21.00
-3	47	4.70	25.70
-2	53	5.30	31.00
-1	22	2.20	33.20
0	323	32.30	65.50
1	107	10.70	76.20
2	17	1.70	77.90
3	43	4.30	82.20
4	16	1.60	83.80
5	48	4.80	88.60
6	42	4.20	92.80
7	5	0.50	93.30
8	57	5.70	99.00
9	10	1.00	100.00
10	0	0.00	100.00
Total	1,000	100	

After recoding the triggers and responses for all units and creating the measure of proportionality, preliminary investigations show that traditional descriptors, such as location, power status, and polity, do not strongly drive the proportionality measure, though some correlations exist. Figure 3.7 shows the average proportionality of response as divided by geographic location of the responding state; all averages hover around the 0 mark of proportional responses.

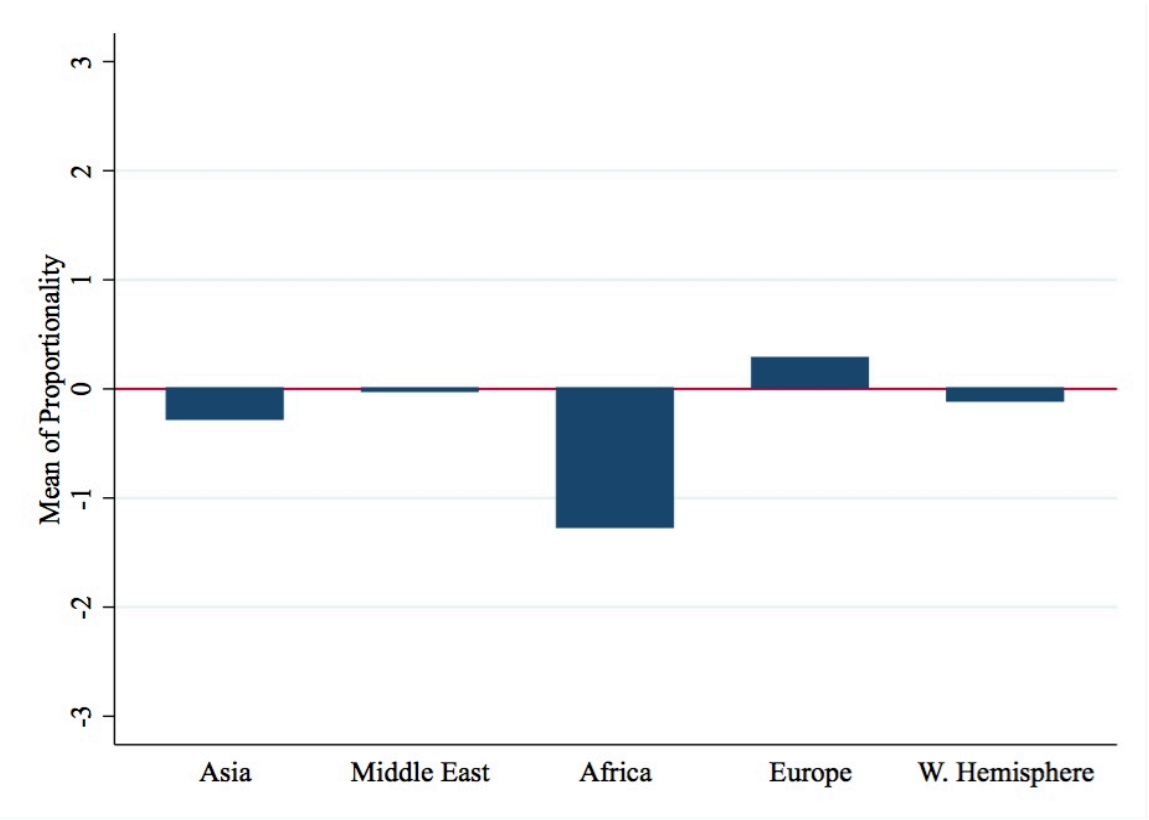

Figure 3.7. Geographic Location of Responding State

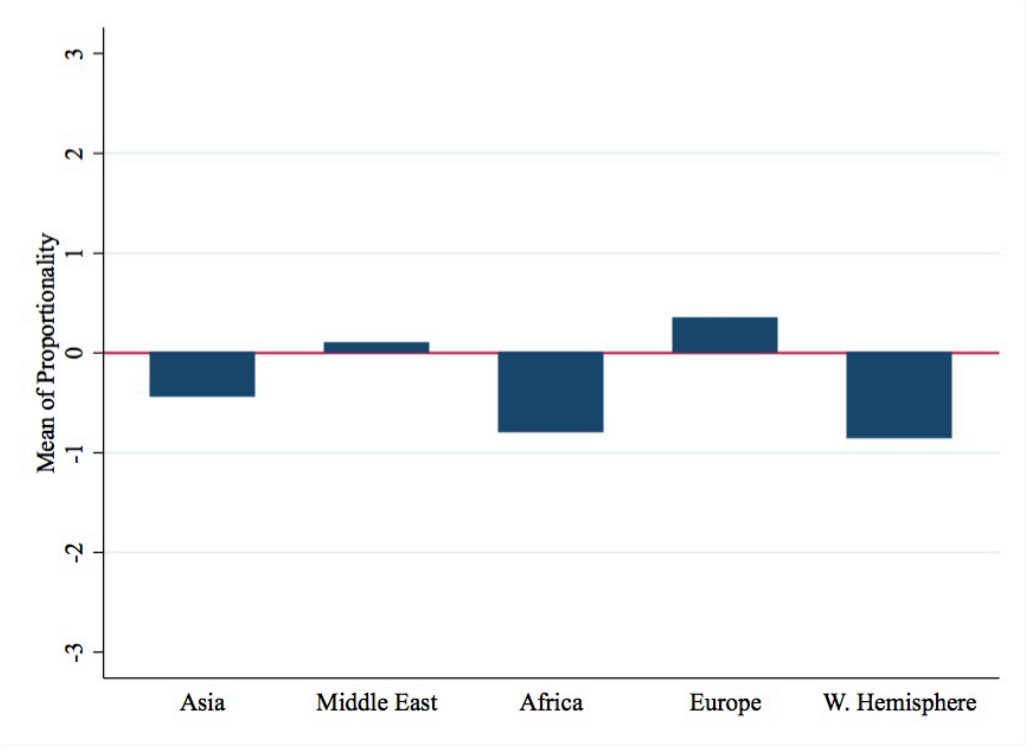

Figure 3.8. Geographic Location of Crisis

Figure 3.8 shows average proportionality divided by the geographic location of the crisis with similar results. Figure 3.9 shows average proportionality of response according to the regime type of the responding actor; regime type here is provided by the ICB data. Again, all of the measures hover around 0, but democratic regimes are the only category that trends positively, towards over-responses.

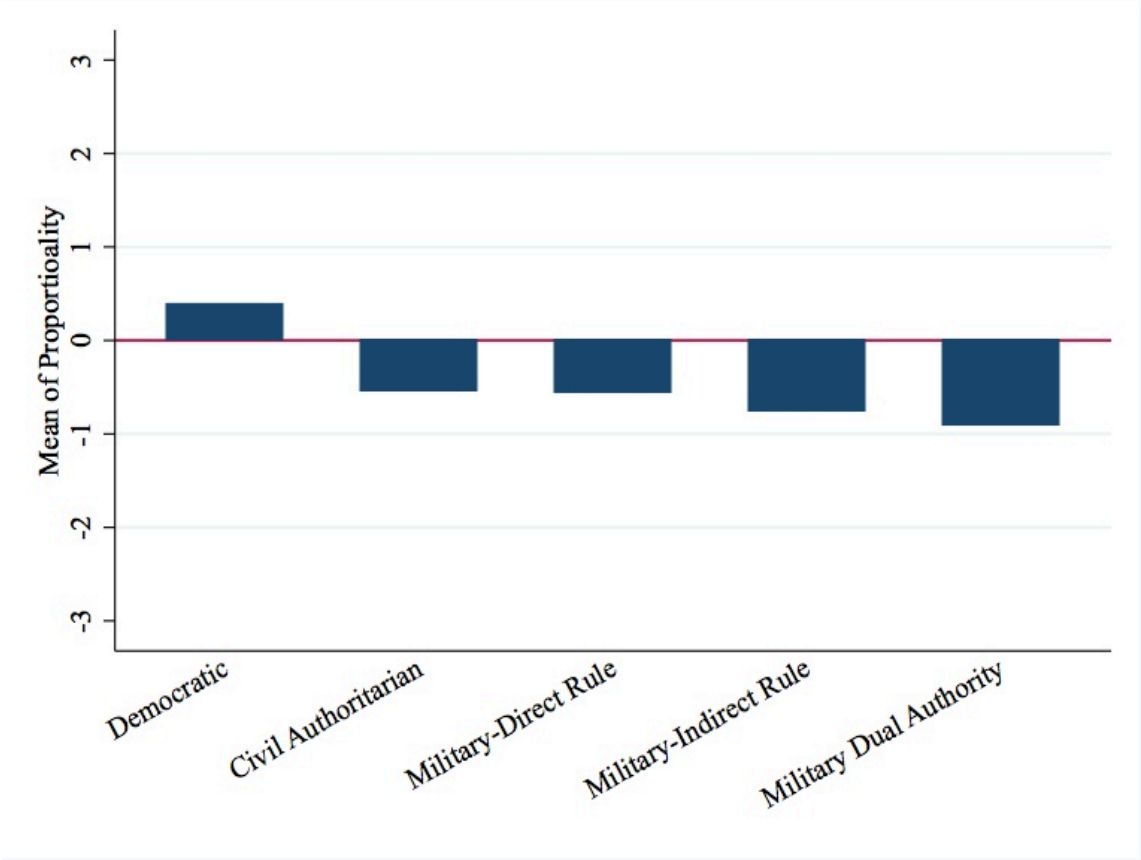

Figure 3.9. Regime Type of Responding State

Figure 3.10 illustrates the average proportionality of response according the power status of the responding actor, another measure also provided by the ICB data. This indicator shows the greatest variation of proportionality of the four; overreactions become more likely as power of the responder increases.

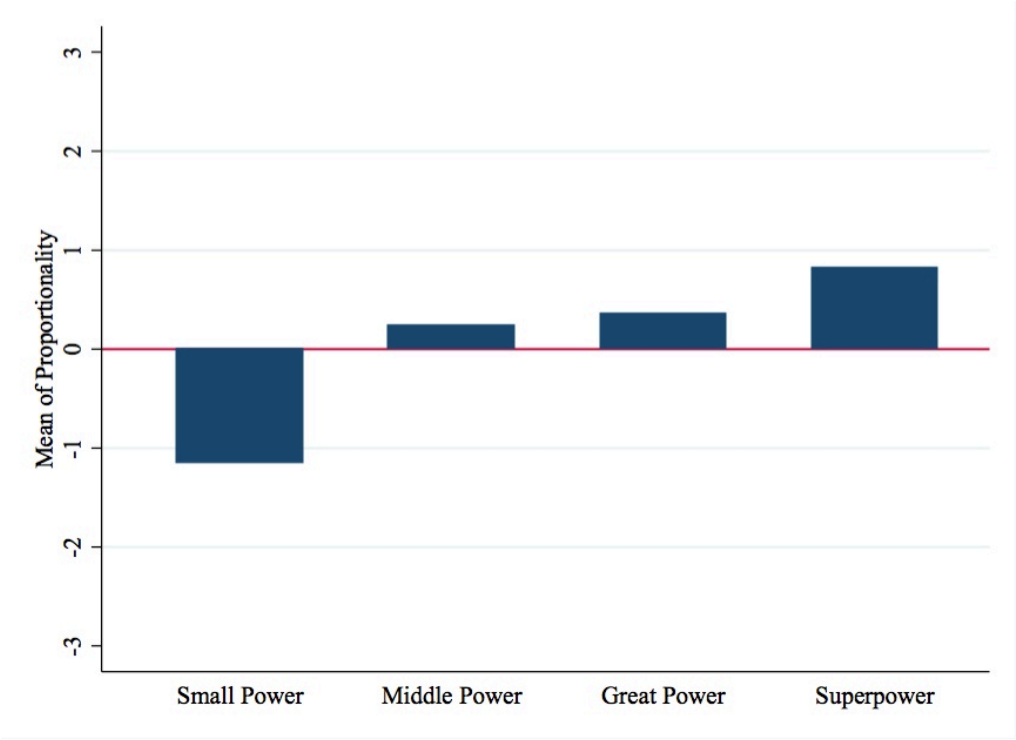

Figure 3.10. Power Status of Responding State

Figure 3.11 further explains the gravity of threat variable. The figure outlines descriptions and examples for each level of threat and fear (with language taken directly from the ICB Project Codebook), and it also lists the percentage of cases that fall under each level.

	Gravity of Threat	Further Explanation	Example	% of Cases
0	Economic Threat		A crisis for Egypt was triggered in January 1992 when Sudan granted a Canadian oil company a concession to explore for oil in Halaib, in the Egypt/Sudan Border II Crisis.	3.6
1	Limited Military Threat		Israel's raid on the airport in Entebbe on 3 July 1976 constituted a limited military threat for Uganda, in the Entebbe Raid Crisis.	8.8
2	Political Threat	Threat of overthrow of regime, change of institutions, replacement of elite, intervention in domestic politics, subversion	Nicaragua, Panama, the Dominican Republic and Haiti, perceived threats to their political systems, generated by Cuba-assisted invasions by exiles of these states, in the 1959 Cuba/Central America I Crisis.	16.6
3	Territorial Threat	Threat of integration, annexation of part of a state's territory, separatism	Japanese military operations in China as a threat to China in the Mukden Incident Crisis of 1931-1932.	25.0
4	Threat to Influence in the International System or Regional Subsystem	Threat of declining power in the global system and/or regional subsystem, diplomatic isolation, cessation of patron aid	Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 as a threat to the global and regional influence of the U.S. and USSR in the Suez Nationalization/War Crisis.	22.1
5	Threat of Grave Damage	Threat of large casualties in war, mass bombings	The PRC build-up of forces in the coastal areas around Quemoy and Matsu was perceived by Taiwan as a threat of grave damage in the 1958 Taiwan Straits II Crisis.	16.3
6	Threat to Existence	Threat to survival of population, of genocide, threat to existence of entity, of total annexation, colonial rule, occupation	Italy's invasion of Ethiopia and the war which ensued, 1934-36.	6.6
7	Other			1.0

Figure 3.11. Gravity of Threat
Text taken directly from the ICB Project Codebook.

Figures 3.12 and 3.13 showcase details of Case Study A and Case Study B. All details are taken from the ICB dataset except for the agreement break variable, which was coded by the author.

Suez Nationalization			**Crisis Context**										
			Year	Polarity	Geostrategic Salience	Protracted Conflict							
System-Level			1956	Bipolarity	Dominant System and Subsystem	>1 Non-Long-War, Protracted							
			Characteristics of the Responding State				**Characteristics of the Trigger**						
		Prop. Score		Response	Power Status	Regime Type	Trigger	Triggering Entity	Non-State Trigger	Power Status	Regime Type	Gravity of Threat	Agmt. Break
Actor-Level	UK	7		10	Great Power	Democracy	3	Egypt	No	Middle Power	Military-Direct	5	Yes
	France	7		10	Great Power	Democracy	3	Egypt	No	Middle Power	Military-Direct	5	Yes
	US	2		7	Superpower	Democracy	5	Soviet Union	No	Superpower	Civil Auth.	4	No

Figure 3.12. Case Study A: Suez Canal Nationalization

Iraq Regime Change			**Crisis Context**										
			Year	Polarity	Geostrategic Salience	Protracted Conflict							
System-Level			2002-2003	Unipolarity	Dominant System and 1 Subsystem	Non-Long-War, Protracted							
			Characteristics of the Responding State				**Characteristics of the Trigger**						
		Prop. Score		Response	Power Status	Regime Type	Trigger	Triggering Entity	Non-State Trigger	Power Status	Regime Type	Gravity of Threat	Agmt. Break
Actor-Level	US	8		10	Superpower	Democracy	2	Iraq	No	Middle Power	Civil Auth.	5	Yes
	France*				Great Power	Democracy							
	Germany*				Middle Power	Democracy							

Figure 3.13. Case Study B: Iraqi Regime Change