

The Politics of Victimhood: The Benefit of Playing Victim in International Relations and How
the U.S. Can Enhance the Effectiveness of its Coercive Threats

Connor Peter James
Miami, Florida
B.A. Political Science, George Washington University, 2019

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Committee Members:
Dr. Philip B.K. Potter
Dr. Dale C. Copeland

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I. Introduction and Background

Could there be a benefit to appearing as a victim in international relations? Conventional logic notes that stronger states should prevail in conflict. Audience costs literature spurred by the work of James Fearon¹ and furthered by Jessica Weeks² puts forward that leaders can make credible threats by utilizing audience costs to backing down for their own leadership tenures. If this is the case, then why aren't U.S. threats more successful? Previous research has shown that U.S. efforts at coercive diplomacy succeed about 30% of the time.³ Literature addressing the failure of threats focuses on information and reputation problems, without acknowledging the role that threats have in the domestic populace of the target state.⁴ The purpose of this paper is to identify whether U.S. threats serve a counteracting purpose by strengthening domestic support in the target state, thereby propping up the struggling regime through rallying the target population around the flag and mobilizing regional and global opinion against the bully. Perhaps there is a benefit to being the victim of the bully in the playground of global affairs.

In 2019, the U.S. sought to defend the Venezuelan people through threatening Nicolás Maduro's regime out of power. Public statements from then-President Trump on behalf of opposition leader Juan Guaidó were commonplace,⁵ with tensions escalating to the threat of

¹ James Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *The American Political Science Review*, 88, no. 3 (1994): 577-592. doi:10.2307/2944796.

² Jessica Weeks, "Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve," *International Organization*, 62, no. 1 (2008): 35-64, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40071874>.

³ Todd Sechser, "Goliath's Curse: Coercive Threats and Asymmetric Power," *International Organization*, 64, no. 4, (2010): 627-660. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40930451>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Statement from President Donald J. Trump Recognizing Venezuelan National Assembly President Juan Guaido as the Interim President of Venezuela," The White House, January 23, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-donald-j-trump-recognizing-venezuelan-national-assembly-president-juan-guaido-interim-president-venezuela/>.

sending troops to nearby Colombia,⁶ intervention,⁷ and ultimately a standoff on the delivering of aid on the border of Venezuela.⁸ Maduro played victim by pinning U.S. efforts as measures undertaken by a bully, tweeting that the Trump administration, “intends to turn my Homeland into a ‘Vietnam War’ in Latin America. Don’t allow it!”⁹ Despite the overwhelming efforts by a comparatively stronger power, the previously seen as weak and declining Maduro regime has continued to persist.

The hypothesis proposed is that as the U.S. issues threats, the target state may consolidate its political support and validate its objectives, strengthening the state at which the threat was aimed. This galvanizing effect is tied to the state’s reputation for interventionism. Given the substantial lack of international public opinion data, this study utilizes the strengths of the Military Coercive Threats database in order to trace domestic responses to U.S. post-Cold War coercive threats.

While rallying effects have been studied with respects to the impact of military violence on regime stability and public opinion, this research focuses on the issuing of coercive threats in order to demonstrate how simple words can rally the target and impact the subsequent likelihood of military success. If the hypothesis is demonstrated, then policymakers must be thoroughly tactful in their oratory, using their words wisely to create positive change over lasting conflict. Threats are difficult to succeed as they are just words, powerful words, but words nonetheless.

⁶ Deirdre Shesgreen, “John Bolton’s notes on ‘5,000 troops to Colombia’ spark speculation about military intervention in Venezuela,” USA Today, January 28, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2019/01/28/john-bolton-notepad-troops-colombia-venezuela-military-intervention/2705957002/>.

⁷ Jonathan Marcus, “Venezuela crisis: Defiant Maduro claims victory over Guaidó ‘coup’,” BBC, May 1, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-48117238>.

⁸ Clare Seelke, et al. “Venezuela: Background and U.S. Relations,” Congressional Research Service, March 12, 2020, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R44841.pdf>.

⁹ Kim Hjelmgaard, “Venezuela’s Nicolas Maduro says any US invasion would be worse than ‘Vietnam,’” USA Today, February 12, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2019/01/31/venezuela-nicolas-maduro-says-u-s-invasion-would-worse-than-vietnam/2729781002/>.

Threats are contingent upon the likelihood of states following through on them; it's easy to speak, harder to act. As will be seen in the subsequent sections, resolve of the challenger is often resoundingly high, yet targets, despite their weaker military capabilities, continue to challenge threats. Leaders seem to be irrationally willing to challenge strong resolved threats of military action, without further explanation. I will seek to examine how leaders are actually incredibly rational in their resistance to threats, despite the challenger's high level of resolve. Examining the domestic political conditions in target countries helps to identify how leaders can even manipulate this rally effect. Previous research has underestimated the difficulty and complexity of threat making.

The process of demonstrating this logic is threefold: First, U.S. coercive threats may counter its own interests by strengthening the regime in the target state. Second, U.S. coercive threats may encourage conflict through a "rally around the flag" effect in the target country, whereby U.S. threats towards target states where regimes hold anti-American values may damage the U.S.' ability to coerce. The implications of this research offer tangible consequences for policymakers, who can more effectively adjust their issuing of threats to prevent deadly and costly conflict. As will be seen, more effective coercive threats may have helped to prevent humanitarian catastrophe and significant military confrontations.

II. Literature Review

Existing literature on the topic of failed threats focuses on three primary explanations: information and bargaining problems, audience costs, and reputations for resolve. In "Rationalist Explanation for War," Fearon notes that war is costly, and there should be a mutually agreeable

outcome that risky states prefer to war.¹⁰ States may miscalculate relative power and resolve due to private information and the incentive to misrepresent this information in bargaining.¹¹ Sechser expands on this logic to note that military strength can contribute to informational problems that make challengers especially likely to underestimate their targets. Sechser uses game theoretic models to identify how military power activates unique information problems that hinder challengers' abilities to locate demands that targets would accept.¹²

The logic of audience costs is perhaps the most salient explanation to the failure of coercive threats towards weaker powers. The audience costs logic demonstrates that certain states can make more credible threats than others, and when leaders fail to demonstrate their willingness to carry through, then their threats are less credible and are more likely to fail. While authors including Trachtenberg¹³ have demonstrated the weaknesses of the audience costs framework, it remains a critical explanation of gauging a state's resolve. Fearon¹⁴ notes that audience costs can be an effective way for leaders to credibly communicate amidst private information and incentives to misrepresent. Finding that the historical norm is that domestic audiences can punish leaders for backing down after escalating confrontations, audience costs can be an effective learning mechanism for the opponent to determine the willingness of a state to use force.¹⁵ Weeks¹⁶ expands Fearon's analysis to demonstrate that both autocratic and democratic states can credibly signal their resolve through audience costs. Using the Militarized Interstate Dispute database, Weeks concludes that democratic threats are no more credible than

¹⁰ James Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization*, 49, no. 3 (1995): 379-414. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706903>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² "Goliath's Curse: Coercive Threats and Asymmetric Power."

¹³ Mark Trachtenberg, "Audience Costs: A Historical Analysis," *Security Studies*, 21, no. 1 (2012): 3-42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2012.650590>.

¹⁴ James Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes."

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Jessica Weeks, "Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve."

autocratic threats. Using an experimental approach, Tomz¹⁷ identifies how domestic audiences may value leaders who do not break commitments in order to safeguard foreign reputations in international relations. While these articles discuss the impact that audience costs can have on credibility of threats tied to the short-term reputations of leaders, it fails to acknowledge why threats often fail *despite* their credibility.

A strong reputation is often seen as highly valuable in demonstrating the likelihood of a state's long-term resolve. Schelling¹⁸ notes that a state's reputation for action impacts the expectation that other states have of their behavior. Weisiger and Yarhi-Milo¹⁹ challenge conventional logic that reputations for resolve do not form, arguing that past action is connected to subsequent dispute initiation. Weisiger and Yarhi-Milo identify through statistical analysis that states who back down in previous conflicts were substantially more likely to face subsequent challenges. Lupton²⁰ identifies the importance of the target state in generating reputations for resolve, finding that those targets who employed relatively stronger responses in past disputes were less likely to be a target. While the strength of reputations for resolve are questioned by many,²¹ this mechanism has been widely thought to have extended policy implications.

The existing literature is notably missing insight into how threats directly impact the domestic political environment in target states. The perception of domestic support among the target state offers clues into the puzzle of failed threats surrounded with high audience costs,

¹⁷ Michael Tomz, "Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach," *International Organization*, 61, no. 4, (2007): 821-840, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4498169>.

¹⁸ Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), Pg. 124.

¹⁹ Alex Weisiger & Keren Yarhi-Milo, "Revisiting Reputation: How Past Actions Matter in International Politics," *International Organization*, 69 no. 2, (2015): 473-495, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24758122>.

²⁰ Danielle Lupton, "Reexamining Reputation for Resolve: Leaders, States, and the Onset of International Crisis," *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 3 no. 2, (2018): 198-216, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogy004>.

²¹ Jonathan Mercer, "Reputation and International Politics." Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1996, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctv5rf1n9> & Joe Clare & Vesna Danilovic, "Reputation for Resolve, Interests, and Conflict. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*," 29 no.1 (2012): 3-27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894211430190>.

reputations for resolve, and insignificant information dilemmas. Information problems, audience costs, and reputations are all aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of threats and disputes.

However, the literature is lacking an explanation as to why threats do not illicit the response that the challenger intends. If resolve is clear, and leaders face costs for backing down, why are target states particularly effective in resisting these threats? The subsequent section will discuss the logic of this new theory towards the effectiveness of threat making and its causal salience, before examining how often states face regime change or political backlash upon the issuing of U.S. threats.

III. The Theory of Victimhood: Rallies and Reputations

Domestic political conditions in the target country of threats have been neglected as an explanation for a state's response to threats. I will argue that threats can be particularly useful for adversarial states to stabilize their nation and offer an opposing effect of what the threat intended to accomplish. The U.S. has issued a considerable number of threats, many of which are unsuccessful, despite its resolve, relative power, and ability to generate highly visible audience costs.²² Look no further than President Obama's visible threat of the use of force in response to the potential use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime on civilians in Syria. Despite an already strong reputation for being resolved in the Middle East,²³ the Assad regime challenged the threat, weaponizing chemical weapons on civilians.²⁴ The proposed "Theory of Victimhood" offers an alternative identification of threat calculation by identifying two factors that may be

²² Kyle Haynes, "Lame Ducks and Coercive Diplomacy: Do Executive Term Limits Reduce the Effectiveness of Democratic Threats?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 56, no. 5, (2012): 771–798, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002712445739>.

²³ Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic*, April 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

beneficial in the target state: domestic political consolidation and the coercer's reputation for interventionism.

States that are the targets of coercive threats can receive a "rally around the flag effect" that consolidates the regime's domestic political support. Threats are intended to send a signal that the state should back down or conform to the challenger state's wishes. As noted by Sechser, the goal of coercive threats is to attain compliance by the target to challenger's demands.²⁵ However, the reverse may occur.

The rally around the flag effect may strengthen the target's resolve and result in an unwillingness to back down. Mercer explains this effect as a boost to popularity ratings of the chief executive associated with an international conflict that is specific, dramatic, and sharply focused.²⁶ In identifying the role of the rally effect among U.S. presidents, Lee found that a President can, "count of increased popularity after a salient international event."²⁷ This evidence is seen clearly through George W. Bush's record Gallup approval rating of 90% in September 2001.²⁸ Oneal and Bryan have found that the U.S. being in the headlines of a publication regarding a crisis in which the U.S. is involved resulted in an 8% rally in favor of the president.²⁹ This effect is not unique to the U.S., with identification of this unique trend internationally.³⁰ For example, in an analysis on the impact of terrorist attacks on populations in France, Spain,

²⁵ Todd Sechser, "Militarized Compellent Threats, 1918–2001," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 28 no. 4, (2011): 377–401, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894211413066>.

²⁶ John Mueller, "Presidential Popularity from Truman to Johnson," *The American Political Science Review*, 64 no. 1, (1970): 18–34, doi:10.2307/1955610.

²⁷ Jong Lee, "Rallying around the Flag: Foreign Policy Events and Presidential Popularity," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 7, no. 4, (1977): 252–256, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27547364>.

²⁸ "Presidential Approval Ratings – Gallup Historical Statistics and Trends," Gallup, 2020, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116677/presidential-approval-ratings-gallup-historical-statistics-trends.aspx>.

²⁹ John Oneal & Anna Bryan, "The Rally 'Round the Flag Effect in U. S. Foreign Policy Crises, 1950–1985," *Political Behavior*, 17 no. 4, (1995): 379–401, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/586592>.

³⁰ Ronit Porat, Tamir, Maya, et al., "Motivated Emotion and the Rally Around the Flag Effect," *Cognition and Emotion*, 33 no. 3 (2019): 480–491, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2018.1460321>.

Germany, and the U.K., it was found that rallying effects were the rule.³¹ Explanations for the cause of this rallying effect include desire for security, the role of anxiety, and perhaps most important for this theory, the instigation of anger. As Lambert, Schott, and Scherer note, attacks against the ingroup can instigate anger and lead citizens to look to the leader of a country as a way of, “addressing concomitant motives of retaliation and retribution.”³² While U.S. threats are meant to push a weaker state to conform to the expectations of the challenger, domestic political conditions may strengthen the target’s interest in non-conformity. Being able to exemplify that a rally effect can occur from the mere *threat of action*, furthers the explanatory power of rallying effects.

The condition that is driving this rally effect in the theory of victimhood is a state’s reputation for interventionism. This is a logical causal process by which a state builds a reputation for interventionism and issues a coercive threat against a target, only to be labeled by the target as an interventionist that is on its next expedition. A modern example of this process in action can be seen in Venezuela where U.S. threats triggered Maduro to characterize the U.S. as interventionist and aggressive, reminding the public of the U.S.’ experiences in intervening in Vietnam.³³ The backlash of intervening in prior conflicts is highlighted by Larry Diamond, noting that, “In today’s world, the principles and impulses of nationalism and anticolonialism run very deep, and gratitude for international protection or liberation can quickly turn into anger against the intervening force.”³⁴

³¹ Christophe Chowanietz, “Rallying around the flag or railing against the government? Political parties’ reactions to terrorist acts,” *Party Politics*, 17 no. 5, (2011): 673–698, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068809346073>.

³² Alan Lambert, J.P. Schott, & Laura Scherer, “Threat, Politics, and Attitudes: Toward a Greater Understanding of Rally-’Round-the-Flag Effects,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 20 no. 6, (2011): 343–348, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721411422060>.

³³ Kim Hjelmgaard, “Venezuela’s Nicolas Maduro says any US invasion would be worse than ‘Vietnam.’”

³⁴ Larry Diamond, “Building Democracy After Conflict: Lessons from Iraq,” *Journal of Democracy*, 16 no. 1, (2005): 9-23, doi:10.1353/jod.2005.0004.

The U.S. has engaged in various interventionists efforts throughout the globe since World War II, making it likely that this reputation has been built.³⁵ A study conducted by Jamal, Keohane, Romney, and Tingley demonstrated that Arabic-language political discourses have been, “permeated with anti-Americanism, particularly when issues of intervention arise.”³⁶ Glas and Spierings attempted to identify the root cause of anti-Americanism in the Arab region through analyzing the Global Attitudes Project and the Arab Barometer surveys of 60,000 respondents from 2005 to 2016, finding that American interventions fueled both “political and societal anti-Americanism.”³⁷ According to the Congressional Research Service, the U.S. has intervened with armed force abroad over 100 times between 1945 and 2003.³⁸ Bosnia, Liberia, Panama, the Philippines, Egypt, Lebanon, Chad, and Iran are just a few of the regionally diverse states in which the U.S. has used force.³⁹ In states where regimes perpetuate interventionist reputations of the coercer, U.S. threats may validate and normalize these regimes’ opinions. The hypothesis proposed is that as the U.S. issues compellent threats, the target state will consolidate its political support citing U.S. interventionism, strengthening the state in which the threat was aimed.

Considering the conditions under which the theory of victimhood plays out adds value to the explanation. In this theory, when the U.S. is seeking to use a coercive threat in a region in which the U.S. has a reputation for interventionism, a rally effect is likely to build in response to the U.S. rather than the governing regime. If the conditions under which the U.S. issues a

³⁵ Amaney Jamal, Robert O. Keohane, David Romney & Dustin Tingley, “Anti-Americanism and Anti-Interventionism in Arabic Twitter Discourses,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 13 no. 1, (2015): 55-73, doi:10.1017/S1537592714003132.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Saskia Glas & Niels Spierings, “Connecting Contextual and Individual Drivers of Anti-Americanism in Arab Countries,” *Political Studies*, (2020), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0032321720923261>.

³⁸ Barbara Torreon & Sofia Plagakis, “Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2020,” Congressional Research Service, July 20, 2020, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R42738.pdf>.

³⁹ Ibid.

coercive threat that demonstrates resolve in a region where the U.S.' reputation for interventionism is weak and the target state has an unpopular government, the threat should be ripe for success. As will be seen in the cases of Yugoslavia 1994 and Iraq 1997, the counterfactual of the U.S. succeeding in achieving demands through a compelling threat despite a reputation for intervention and the occurrence of a rally, were short lived and merely an episode in the context of a longer conflict.

IV. Data, Variables, and Analysis

The trouble in conducting a quantitative analysis for this study is twofold. First, comprehensive annual public opinion data is rarely collected internationally. Second, the U.S. has issued a very low number of coercive threats in the time after the Cold War, lowering the effectiveness of a statistical quantitative analysis. The aim of the study here is to take advantage of clear cases of compelling threats and trace the public's response through assessing domestic unrest and the head of state's response following the issuing of the threats and the outcomes of the disputes.

The data used for this analysis is from the Militarized Compellent Threat (MCT) database. The MCT database offers numerous advantages in identifying cases of interest. First, the definition best fits the causal factor of interest. A militarized compellent threat is defined as an, "explicit demand by one state (the challenger) that another state (the target) alter the status quo in some material way, backed by a threat of military force if the target does not comply."⁴⁰ As Sechser notes, the Militarized Interstate Dispute and International Crisis Behavior datasets do not distinguish between a compellent and deterrent threat, reducing the ability to identify highly

⁴⁰ Todd Sechser, "MCT Coding Document," Harvard University, January 2, 2013, <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/VDJQ1E>.

coercive threats that seek to change the status quo.⁴¹ Second, the MCT database's compliance measures offer clear insight into the targets willingness to meet the demands of the challenger. This variable can assist in demonstrating whether the regime caved to demands or stood stronger in the face of a foreign threat. The low case number of compellent threats issued is an unfortunate weakness of this analysis, however, if trends can be identified from these clear uses of compellent threats, then conclusions may provide insight into trends and offer policymakers a glimpse into alternative factors to consider in making effective coercive threats. The 10-year time period of analysis offers a post-Cold War, but pre-War on Terror window in which power oscillations were minimal and the U.S. role in the world remained relatively stable.

The independent variable in this analysis is the use of a compellent threat from the United States from 1991 to 2001. Uses of compellent threats are highly visible and work to alter the status quo, rather than maintain the status quo as deterrence seeks to accomplish. In Sechser's language, deterrent threats are successful when nothing happens, whereas compellent threats are successful when something happens.⁴² It is unlikely that a solely deterrent threat that focuses on preserving the status quo of leadership and policy would galvanize the domestic population. What is unique about compellent threats is that the U.S. is working to *bring about change* utilizing the threat of military power. In addition, focusing on compellent threats adds value to an under-researched element in security studies literature.⁴³ Sechser sets the bar high for registering compellent threats, making it clear when one is used. According to the MCT dataset, a compellent threat must contain a demand for material change in the status quo, must involve the assurance of future military action if the demand is not met, and must be made from one state to

⁴¹ Todd Sechser, "Militarized Compellent Threats, 1918–2001."

⁴² Ibid, 381.

⁴³ Ibid, 378.

another.⁴⁴ This narrow definition leaves little room for interpretation as to U.S. intentions towards the target state.

The dependent variable in this analysis is domestic political consolidation, or the rally around the flag effect discussed prior. Two indicators already existing in the MCT dataset offer insight into this mechanism, and one measure that is not. First, the dichotomous variable “Force” is used to determine whether the violent use of force was used by a challenger at any time during the threat episode. This provides an indicator of the effectiveness of the compellent threat as if the use of force was necessary to compel the target, then the threat failed. The “Compliance” variable measures the voluntary compliance of the target to meet the challenger’s demands. In the MCT dataset, this variable is coded with three options: non-compliance with no demands met, partial compliance with some demands met, and full compliance with all demands met.⁴⁵ The “Compliance” variable offers further indication of the effectiveness of the coercive threat. If demands are met, it would point to no rallying effect and appeasement amongst the domestic populace. To offer an argument on behalf of the theory of victimhood, demonstrating that this rallying effect is evident is necessary. In order to do so, the cases of interest will be analyzed qualitatively. Public protests and unrest permeated with anti-American language followed by a failure of the target government to back down after the issuing of a coercive threat would offer support for the theory of victimhood. A null finding in this literature is just as valuable as a demonstration of the theory, indicating that U.S. coercive threats are indeed successful and should perhaps be used more often to put public pressure on regimes.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 380.

⁴⁵ Todd Sechser, “MCT Coding Document.”

V. Overview of MCT Cases

A total of eight cases were utilized for this analysis and are provided in Table #1 below. Cases selected relied on two factors, the U.S. needed to be the challenger and the compellent threat had to have been issued after the Cold War. All cases that met these two requirements are recorded in the table below.

Table #1 U.S. Compellent Threats (1991-2001)⁴⁶

Challenger:	Target:	Year:	Force:	Compliance:
U.S.	Yugoslavia	1993	No	No
U.S.	Yugoslavia	1994	No	Full
U.S.	Haiti	1994	No	Full
U.S.	Iraq	1997	No	Full
U.S.	Afghanistan	1998	Yes	No
U.S.	Yugoslavia	1998	Yes	No
U.S.	Iraq	1998	Yes	No
U.S.	Afghanistan	2001	Yes	No

In the eight cases listed above, a few trends can be identified. About 63% of the time, there was no compliance to U.S. demands and the status quo was not altered. In four out of five

⁴⁶ Todd Sechser, "Replication data for: Militarized Compellent Threats, 1918-2001," Harvard University, 2011, <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/VDJQ1E>.

of these cases, the U.S. resorted to force, demonstrating the seemingly ineffectiveness of the compellent threat. In every instance that the U.S. resorted to force following a compellent threat, they failed to achieve compliance. In the Yugoslavia 1998 case as well as the Afghanistan 2001 case, over 100 military fatalities were reported as a result of this use of force, further indicating the difficulty that the U.S. had in attaining compliance. In three cases, full compliance was achieved without the use of force. As will be seen, two of these three cases the compliance achieved without force was temporary, further demonstrating the ineffectiveness of these threats.

Effectively addressing the research question requires tactically using cases for qualitative analysis that offer particularly strong demonstrations of the counterarguments. By utilizing cases that alternative arguments would propose are effective in their explanations, yet still fail, this analysis will offer a rivaling explanation as to why the supposedly foolproof threats did not work as intended *despite* the conditions being desirable. Two factors are used to select cases based on the counterarguments. First, to account for the audience costs argument, cases should have a high level of public coercive display. Second, to account for the reputational argument, cases should have a high level of expected resolve. When leaders have a high level of public coercive display and a high level of expected resolve, compellent threats should be particularly effective. The cases that will be analyzed demonstrate those in which should be most successful based on the preexisting literature. While every case from 1991-2001 is discussed in this analysis, Yugoslavia 1994 & 1998, Haiti 1994, Iraq 1998, and Afghanistan 1998 are chosen for in depth discussion as they should be highly successful based on the criteria above.

VI. Iraq 1998: A Failed Coercive Threat and Regional Uproar

The 1998 Iraq case offers insight into the theory of victimhood and how U.S. compellent threats can galvanize a population to resist. The analysis of this case not only demonstrates how those within Iraq rallied around the flag, but populations in neighboring states also reacted in a similar manner. As will be seen, the information, audience costs, and reputation logics fall short in explaining the failed compellent threat.

What would result in missile strikes across Iraq began as a change in the status quo. From 1993 to 1996, Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq had allowed for United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) to inspect Iraqi weapons. This changed in 1997 when Iraq worked to complicate efforts for UNSCOM to conduct its weapons inspections.⁴⁷ Iraq blamed the U.S. for pressure from the U.N. Security Council (UNSC), demanding the departure of U.S. personnel and U.S. reconnaissance aircrafts involved in the inspections on October 29, 1997.⁴⁸ On November 13, 1997, Iraq ordered all American weapons inspectors to leave the country. The Revolutionary Command Council stated that, "All American inspectors should leave Iraq immediately until the American administration and the Security Council decide to review their irresponsible policy and their dealing with Iraq."⁴⁹ In January of 1998, amidst American and British investigators conducting inspections into Iraqi efforts to conceal weapons of mass destruction programs, Iraq asserted that the U.N. team was unbalanced and called for an expulsion of inspectors if sanctions against Iraq were not removed.⁵⁰ In a letter from the Permanent Representative of Iraq regarding the matter, it was stated that, "the team will not be

⁴⁷ Alfred Prados, "Iraq: Post-War Challenges and U.S. Responses, 1991-2008," Congressional Research Service, March 31, 1999, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/98-386.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Peter Arnett, "Iraq Expels American Weapons Inspectors," CNN, November 13, 1997, <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9711/13/iraq.expel/>.

⁵⁰ Alfred Prados, "Iraq: Post-War Challenges and U.S. Responses, 1991-2008."

permitted to undertake any activities inside Iraq until such time as its composition is reviewed and made more balanced by the equal participation of the permanent members of the Security Council.”⁵¹

Clinton’s Compellent Threat

On February 17, 1998, Clinton gave an internationally televised speech at the Pentagon addressing an audience of military and civilian Department of Defense personnel, threatening Saddam with future military action.⁵² This speech was exclusively on the topic of Iraqi weapons and UNSCOM inspections. In this speech, Clinton made a clear and distinguished credible threat stating that:

The inspection system works. The inspection system has worked in the face of lies, stonewalling, obstacle after obstacle after obstacle. The people who have done that work deserve the thanks of civilized people throughout the world. It has worked. That is all we want. And if we can find a diplomatic way to do what has to be done, to do what he promised to do at the end of the Gulf War, to do what should have been done within 15 days of the agreement at the end of the Gulf War, if we can find a diplomatic way to do that, that is by far our preference... If Saddam rejects peace and we have to use force, our purpose is clear. We want to seriously diminish the threat posed by Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program. We want to seriously reduce his capacity to threaten his neighbors... But Saddam Hussein could end this crisis tomorrow simply by letting the weapons inspectors complete their mission. He made a solemn commitment to the

⁵¹ “Security Council Deplores Iraq’s Decision to Halt Work of UNSCOM Inspection Team,” United Nations, January 14, 1998, <https://www.un.org/press/en/1998/19980114.SC6468.html>.

⁵² “President Bill Clinton Addresses the American People from the Pentagon,” Department of Defense, February 17, 1998, <https://www.defense.gov/observe/photo-gallery/igphoto/2002016925/>.

international community to do that and to give up his weapons of mass destruction a long time ago now. One way or the other, we are determined to see that he makes good on his own promise.⁵³

This highly visible compelling threat sought to change the status quo of Iraq's position on UNSCOM inspections. This case would be exactly what the audience costs logic points towards as a clear example of credible threat from which Saddam should have backed down. Clinton made this speech on international television in front of the military that would be deployed if Saddam did not cooperate. Not only would Clinton's international *and* domestic reputation be harmed if Clinton failed to follow through, but so would his reputation as Commander-in-Chief of the military amidst an impeachment trial that was impacting Clinton's reputation already.⁵⁴ According to a CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll, 2/3rds of Americans approved of Clinton's handling of the Iraq crisis.⁵⁵ As will be seen, taking domestic contexts of the *other* into account offers valuable insights into the reactions that occurred after the compelling threat was issued.

A Pro-Iraq Rallying Cry

Both in Iraq and across the Middle East, post-threat protests illustrate a rallying effect around the Saddam's regime in Iraq after this threat was issued. Criticism of the U.S. as cruel and aggressive quickly spread throughout the Middle East.⁵⁶ The day after Clinton's threat, protesters gathered for a Popular Islamic Conference marched through Baghdad, setting fire to

⁵³ "Text of Clinton Statement on Iraq," CNN, February 17, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1998/02/17/transcripts/clinton.iraq/>.

⁵⁴ "President Clinton's Impeachment Trial Begins," History, January 7, 1999, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/clinton-impeachment-trial-begins>.

⁵⁵ Craig Staats, "Clinton Faces Rocky Path in Iraq Crisis," CNN, February 18, 1999, <https://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1998/02/18/iraq.political.analysis/>.

⁵⁶ Daniel Williams, "Pro-Iraqi, Anti-U.S. Demonstrations Grow in Mideast," Washington Post, February 22, 1998, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/iraq/stories/mideast022298.htm>.

American and Israeli flags outside the UN headquarters and called for an end to “aggression against Iraq and its people.”⁵⁷ Expressions of disapproval were evident across the Middle East. Observers noted that these demonstrations were even more intense than that of the 1991 Gulf War.⁵⁸ In Jordan, days after Clinton’s threat, pro-Iraqi demonstrators gathered for several days in the town of Maan, chanting slogans in support of Iraq and Saddam’s regime.⁵⁹ Protesters reportedly shouted, “Saddam, unleash your chemical weapons. Free us from this repression.”⁶⁰ In Egypt, students demonstrated for multiple days calling Americans, “new tartars,” signaling spurred disapproval of the U.S. further involving itself in the Middle East.⁶¹ This quote is particularly clear in substantiating that the U.S. had created a reputation for intervention, with this reference relating to Mongols conquering territory in the Middle East.⁶² In Iran, thousands of students organized in protest at Tehran University.⁶³ In Turkey on February 20th, hundreds of protesters chanting anti-U.S. slogans were dispersed by police.⁶⁴ Even in the U.S., thousands of protesters rallied outside of the White House to denounce the threat.⁶⁵ As one demonstrator at the White House noted, “bombing only seems likely to rally support for him (Saddam).”⁶⁶ The U.S.

⁵⁷ Samuel Helfont, “Saddam and the Islamists: The Ba’thist Regime’s Instrumentalization of Religion in Foreign Affairs,” *Middle East Journal*, 68 no. 3, (2014): 352-366, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43698590>.

⁵⁸ Daniel Williams, “Pro-Iraqi, Anti-U.S. Demonstrations Grow in Mideast.”

⁵⁹ Daniel Williams, “Violent Protests in Jordan Signal Region’s Unease,” *Washington Post*, February 23, 1998, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1998/02/23/violent-protests-in-jordan-signal-regions-unease/b9910df8-2ecc-4092-b580-202bf22daf74/>.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Daniel Williams, “Pro-Iraqi, Anti-U.S. Demonstrations Grow in Mideast.”

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ “Pro-Iraq Turks Clash with Riot Police,” *UPI*, February 20, 1998, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1998/02/20/Pro-Iraq-Turks-clash-with-riot-police/3084887950800/>.

⁶⁵ Michael Powell, “About 2,000 Protest at White House,” *Washington Post*, February 22, 1998, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1998/02/22/about-2000-protest-at-white-house/c9d0b49e-433e-4087-9e80-d5e1a84edc99/>.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

had cultivated a reputation for intervention, using force in the Middle East and North Africa region over 20 times from 1945 to 1997.⁶⁷

Iraq did not concede to the compelling threat, which resulted in the subsequent U.S. air strikes ordered on December 16th, 1998. Operation Desert Fox was a U.S. and U.K. led four-day bombing campaign aimed at military targets throughout Iraq.⁶⁸ The strikes ultimately failed to compel Hussein to allow weapons inspectors full access to Iraq's weapons facilities.⁶⁹ Amidst the airstrikes, Saddam stated that he wouldn't "compromise or kneel in the face of injustice. We will not let evil triumph over virtue."⁷⁰ Similarly, Saddam took advantage of the strikes to play victim, exclaiming to Iraqi's that, "you are representing justice and all the great characteristics against injustice... you, great Iraqi people, you have raised high the Iraqi flag and you have proved again that you are heroic."⁷¹

During and after these strikes occurred, further backlash broke out in the region. In half a dozen Arab capitals, pro-Iraq demonstrations continued.⁷² Thousands of Palestinian protestors waved Iraqi flags and threw stones at Israeli soldiers in Hebron, while others in the Gaza town of Rafah burned U.S. and British flags.⁷³ In Damascus, tens of thousands protested resulting in stoning of American and British embassies in response to the airstrikes. Protesters even scaled the U.S. embassy's wall to pull down and burn the U.S. flag.⁷⁴ In Damascus, a quoted protestor

⁶⁷ Barbara Torreón & Sofia Plagakis, "Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2020."

⁶⁸ Andrew Glass, "Clinton Orders Airstrike on Iraq," Politico, December 16, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/12/clinton-orders-airstrike-on-iraq-dec-16-1998-232571>.

⁶⁹ "President Clinton Orders Air Attack on Iraq," History, December 16, 1998, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/clinton-orders-air-attack-on-iraq>.

⁷⁰ Louis Meixler, "Saddam: Resist U.S. Injustice," Associated Press, December 18, 1998, <https://apnews.com/article/65abf22e5b8c3c987f8da6a1b22068bd>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ "Syrians, Palestinians, violently protest airstrikes in Iraq," CNN, December 19, 1998, <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/meast/9812/19/iraq.demos/index.html>.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

echoed Saddam's speech, stating that, "the Americans are trying to make us kneel down and surrender."⁷⁵ Thousands of protesters took to the streets, burning American flags, and chanting anti-American slogans in Egypt, South Africa, Lebanon, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Netherlands, and India.⁷⁶

The rest is history. Saddam ultimately refused to back down from U.S. demands, the regime remained strong, and continued to defy demands to back down in the face of U.S. threats that led to his capturing about five years later.⁷⁷ In a letter to President Clinton six months after Operation Desert Fox, members of Congress noted that since the operation there have been no inspections at all and little political support for Saddam's opposition in Iraq.⁷⁸ While this letter is aimed at Clinton, it offers insight into a larger story: Saddam stood resolute in the face of substantial credible U.S. compellent threats and subsequent military action to the point where Saddam's regime may have been stabilized by the threat and subsequent action.

Looking to comparable counterarguments, the theory of victimhood offers a valuable contribution to the analysis of this case. While the audience costs logic would assert that the U.S. threat failed due to the incredibility of this threat, Clinton made the compellent threat in a particularly credible manner in front of the nation's top military officials. Clinton would have seriously damaged his reputation and U.S. credibility by backing down at this point. Arguing that this case provides evidence of "cheap talk" would be an uphill battle. Perhaps Clinton also had the most to lose by backing down, further damaging his domestic standing amidst impeachment trials and would face accusations of diverting attention through foreign action.⁷⁹ The reputation

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ "Saddam Hussein Captured 10 Years Ago," CNN, December 13, 2013, <https://www.cnn.com/2013/12/13/world/gallery/saddam-hussein-captured/index.html>.

⁷⁸ "8/11/99 Congress Letter to Clinton re: Iraq Policy," NCI, August 11, 1999, <https://www.nci.org/c/c81199.htm>.

⁷⁹ Andrew Glass, "Clinton Orders Airstrike on Iraq."

for resolve argument offers more insight than the audience costs case, however weaknesses are still apparent. The Clinton administration had shown resolve in Somalia in 1993, Baghdad in 1993, and Haiti in 1994.⁸⁰ Clinton's failure to intervene in the Rwandan genocide may be the best demonstration of Clinton being unresolved, however, Clinton's demonstration of resolve elsewhere, including in the state of interest, Iraq in 1993, may outweigh this event. Finally, it is unlikely that private information impacted the effectiveness of Clinton's compelling threat. Saddam made his position on U.S. weapons inspectors resoundingly clear, and Saddam had been met with U.S. military force during the invasion of Kuwait in 1991 and Clinton's attacks on Baghdad in 1993.

Iraq 1997 vs. Iraq 1998

The Iraq 1997 case offers a puzzle as to why under similar conditions and leaders, opposing results ensued. Clinton issued a compelling threat roughly three months prior to the Iraq 1998 case in which the U.S. received full compliance without the use of military force. On October 29, 1997, Iraq prevented U.S. UNSCOM inspectors from participating in inspections and called for their departure from Iraq within seven days.⁸¹ Clinton's threat was publicly issued on November 13th of 1997 after a meeting with the National Security Council where Clinton stated to reporters that Iraq's decision was, "clearly unacceptable and a challenge to the international community" in which Clinton, "intend(ed) to pursue this matter in a very determined way."⁸² The threat issued in this case was less clear and less public than the 1998 threat, yet Iraq backed down without U.S. force (for now) on November 20th. Clinton even

⁸⁰ "Bill Clinton- Key Events," Miller Center, 2020, <https://millercenter.org/president/bill-clinton/key-events>.

⁸¹ Alfred Prados, "Iraq: Post-War Challenges and U.S. Responses, 1991-2008."

⁸² "U.S. inspectors leave Baghdad," CNN, November 13, 1997, <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9711/13/iraq.update/index.html>.

mentioned in a statement prior to Iraq's agreement to back down that military force was not being ruled out, as Clinton stated that "I want to achieve it diplomatically, but we're taking every step to make sure we are prepared to pursue whatever options are necessary."⁸³

The 1997 and 1998 cases are most likely the same dispute, in which Saddam gives in momentarily, before expelling U.S. weapons inspectors just two months later. This begs the question, what is unique about the 1997 case that may have led Saddam to acquire hope and double down on efforts to rid Iraq of American inspectors? The theory of victimhood offers a compelling explanation to Saddam's escalatory actions. In response to UN efforts to condemn Iraqi actions on November 10th, thousands joined in protest in Baghdad chanting, "down with America!" and "Long live President Saddam Hussein!" According to CNN, members of the public were organizing around the presidential palaces to act as human shields for Saddam in the case of American military action.⁸⁴ Women, children, and teachers joined to protest U.S. threats against Iraq.⁸⁵ Just two days later, after the UN Security Council voted to condemn the action, an estimated 4,000 protesters marched through the capital shouting anti-American and pro-Saddam language.⁸⁶ Perhaps Saddam realized that by poking the tiger, he could bolster his own reputation and coalesced support for the regime. Saddam's regime began playing victim in 1997 after Clinton's initial threats, with the Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz stating, "Those who create the crisis... are Americans."⁸⁷ As will later be seen in the cases of Yugoslavia, leaders can be calculated in how they respond in multi-threat crises, and looking to the issuer of the threat is

⁸³ Steven Erlanger, "Albright Says Iraq Agrees to Let U.S. Inspectors Back," New York Times, November 20, 1987, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/11/20/world/albright-says-iraq-agrees-to-let-us-inspectors-back.html>.

⁸⁴ Brent Sadler & Ben Wedeman, "Thousands of Iraqis stage anti-U.S. protests," CNN, November 10, 1997, <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9711/10/iraq.rally/index.html>.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Peter Arnett & Jamie McIntyre, "Iraqis greet U.N. action with rhetoric, demonstrations," CNN, November 12, 1997, <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9711/12/iraq.resistance/>.

⁸⁷ Brent Sadler & Ben Wedeman, "Thousands of Iraqis stage anti-U.S. protests."

insufficient to demonstrate why alternative results occur under similar circumstances. While the Iraq cases appear disconnected in the dataset, this is an escalating dispute in which Saddam tactfully rallied the public not once, but twice, to protect his regime in the face of foreign opposition.

Conclusion

The Iraq case offers evidence of the theory of victimhood's response to U.S. coercion, providing initial support for the hypothesis that the target state will strengthen in the face of U.S. threats as a result of consolidating political support amidst calls of U.S. interventionism. Perhaps the evidence best builds on Lambert, Schott, and Scherer's work on the instigation of anger and the tendency of citizens to point to the leader for the next steps. Saddam is mentioned throughout the protests and pro-Iraq demonstrators throughout the region even went as far as attacking U.S. embassies and burning American flags. The U.S. was portrayed as the bully, perceived as cruelly and unjustly asserting its interventionist interests abroad. The theory of victimhood offers explanation to a largely unexplained case of Iraq's irrational resolute behavior and failure of U.S. coercion.

VII. Afghanistan 2001: The Taliban's Use of America's Threat to Defy Demands

When U.S. national security has been threatened, it is of the utmost importance to make credible coercive threats to maintain a dominant position in conflict. After the September 11th attacks on the U.S., the Bush administration worked to prevent further action and hold those responsible for the attacks accountable. While information problems may have contributed to Afghanistan's resistance to U.S. demands, audience costs, information, and reputational factors

likely had no impact on the effectiveness of the U.S.' coercive threat. The theory of victimhood offers a more cohesive explanation as to how and why Afghanistan was willing to resist the U.S. threat of military action.

On September 11, 2001, the U.S. was attacked by al-Qaeda operatives resulting in the loss of nearly 3,000 American lives.⁸⁸ After discovering that the controlling regime of Afghanistan, the Taliban, had given Osama bin Laden sanctuary and allowed for the use of terrorist training camps to be located in the country, the U.S. began to craft a response strategy to neutralize the terrorist threat to prevent further attacks. Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda had been the target of U.S. military force previously during the Clinton administration after the group bombed two American embassies in Africa. Clinton ordered cruise missile attacks in 1998 against the group's training camps in Afghanistan, however, these strikes did not impact Bin Laden.⁸⁹ Following the embassy attacks, the Taliban refused U.S. demands to extradite Bin Laden from Afghanistan. The United Nations decided to put sanctions on Afghanistan as a result.⁹⁰ After the September 11th attacks, the U.S. sought to make these demands clear, with no interest in negotiations. Just nine days after the attack, Bush addressed Congress.

Bush's Compellent Threat

On September 20th, 2001, Bush addressed a joint session of Congress to reassure Americans and to threaten the Taliban with military action if U.S. demands were not met. The

⁸⁸ Gary Gregg, "George W. Bush: Foreign Affairs," Miller Center, n.d., <https://millercenter.org/president/gwbush/foreign-affairs>.

⁸⁹ "A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan," PBS, December 31, 2014, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan>.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

public and televised speech among Members of Congress addressed the American people and the international community. Within this speech, Bush stated that:

By aiding and abetting murder, the Taliban regime is committing murder. And tonight the United States of America makes the following demands on the Taliban. Deliver to United States authorities all of the leaders of Al-Qaeda who hide in your land. Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens you have unjustly imprisoned. Protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers in your country. Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan. And hand over every terrorist and every person and their support structure to appropriate authorities. Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating. These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. The Taliban must act and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists or they will share in their fate.⁹¹

This speech makes clear what was necessary of the Taliban to avoid U.S. military power. Not only did Bush make the speech publicly, but the demands were laid out to the point where if the Taliban failed to meet them, Bush would be questioned as to why he did not follow through.

This speech should point definitively to a high-audience costs scenario. Of the case studies, this case demonstrates the highest audience costs that a leader would face in backing down from the threat.

⁹¹ “Text: President Bush Addresses the Nation,” Washington Post, September 20, 2001, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html.

Global Anti-American Rally

Post-threat protests exemplify a rallying effect around the Taliban and Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan after this threat was issued. As with Clinton's threat towards Iraq, Bush's compelling threat elicited worldwide outrage. Unlike Saddam's Iraq, this case differs in the fact that the target of the threat was the Taliban, but Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda were seen as synonymous with the existing governing regime in Afghanistan. Just one day following the threat, protests in Pakistan broke out where many engaged in strikes and demonstrations after Pakistan pledged to assist the U.S. in response if the demands were not met.⁹² In Peshawar, Pakistan, thousands protested and chanted anti-American slogans stating, "We will fight until the death and destruction of the United States," and "Long live the Taliban and Osama bin Laden. Death to America."⁹³ The idea that the U.S. was searching to oppress innocent Afghans was widespread at these protests.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, in Karachi, Pakistan, 1,500 Afghan refugees attacked vehicles and clashed with police and 70 demonstrators were arrested for related demonstrations and confrontations with police.⁹⁵ In addition to the noted protests, thousands of protesters came out across Pakistan to demonstrate in Islamabad, Quetta, and Lahore.⁹⁶ The international demonstrations took place in Bangladesh as well, where 10,000 took part in protests in its capital, Dhaka. In Dhaka, protesters burned an effigy of President Bush and touted images of Osama Bin Laden. Anti-American chants such as, "Down with America. We are justice and protection of Muslims and their faith Islam" were spoken during these demonstrations.⁹⁷ In

⁹² "Protests rock Afghanistan," *The Guardian*, September 21, 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/21/september11.usa23>.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ "Violence may follow Pakistan protests," *CNN*, September 21, 2001, <https://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/central/09/20/ret.pakistan.peshawar/index.html>.

⁹⁵ "Protests rock Afghanistan."

⁹⁶ "Protests spread in Muslim Asia," *CNN*, September 21, 2001, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/south/09/21/ret.protests/index.html>.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Indian Kashmir, hundreds of demonstrators burned and trampled an American Flag and vowed to defend Afghanistan.⁹⁸ In Jakarta, Indonesia, fifty students burned American flags and protested outside of the American Embassy.⁹⁹

While the international outcry demonstrates the rally around Afghanistan and Bin Laden, a protest in Kabul, Afghanistan, five days after Bush's announcement served as the largest protest yet. On September 26, 2001, thousands of protesters gathered in Kabul, lighting U.S. flags on fire in addition to burning an effigy of President Bush.¹⁰⁰ Protesters then proceeded to attack the old abandoned American Embassy, setting vehicles on fire and removing the U.S. seal at the entrance.¹⁰¹ Demonstrators could be heard yelling, "long live Osama. Down with America... Anyone who supports America is a traitor."¹⁰² Similarly, some shouted, "death to Bush. We support Islam and bin Laden."¹⁰³ Men with machine guns were seen on television and protesters stoned the chancellery. Three days after this demonstration, hundreds of protesters throughout the U.S. marched with banners noting, "Destroy imperialism, not Afghanistan."¹⁰⁴ The U.S. has a long history of involvement in Afghanistan, playing a role in countering the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.¹⁰⁵ After the Soviet's invasion in Afghanistan, al-Qaida was formed, and Bin Laden saw the U.S. as a major obstacle to the establishment of an Islam-

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ "Kabul protesters attack US embassy," The Guardian, September 26, 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/26/afghanistan.terrorism8>.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² "Former U.S. embassy in Kabul torched," CNN, September 26, 2001, <https://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/central/09/26/gen.embassy.fire/index.html>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ "Anti-war rallies in Washington, New York," CNN, September 29, 2001, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/29/ret.antiwar.protests/>.

¹⁰⁵ "Soviet invasion of Afghanistan," Britannica, May 11, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Soviet-invasion-of-Afghanistan>.

based state.¹⁰⁶ As previously noted, from 1945 to 1997, the U.S. had used armed force 20 times in the MENA region, by 2001, this number was up to 30.¹⁰⁷

By the end of September, the Taliban had rejected Bush's demands, defying U.S. threats and were preparing for war.¹⁰⁸ Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar states that, "it is unacceptable that America issues ultimatums to the Islamic world either to listen to American's message or accept destruction." Omar noted that the U.S. could only avoid conflict by leaving Islam and Muslims alone.¹⁰⁹ A statement attributed to Bin Laden calling for Muslims to resist, "American crusader forces."¹¹⁰ Omar also alluded to the U.S. seeking to undermine Afghan independence through intervening as the Soviets did. Omar stated that, "The U.S. should let the Afghan people choose their independence... a future puppet government supported by America may be able to take cities and airports, but never the minds and hearts of people in rural areas."¹¹¹ The days following the U.S. threat towards Afghanistan were filled with protests, demonstrations, anti-Americanism, and efforts by the Taliban to paint the U.S. as crusading aggressors.

On October 7th, 2001, President Bush announced the first strike on Afghanistan, beginning the nearly 20-year war that has only recently started the process of pursuing peace.¹¹² Bush announced the strikes on national television, stating that, "On my orders the United States military has begun strikes against al-Qaeda terrorist training camps and military installations of

¹⁰⁶ "A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan."

¹⁰⁷ Barbara Torreon & Sofia Plagakis, "Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2020."

¹⁰⁸ "Taliban leader: U.S. demands 'unacceptable,'" CNN, September 30, 2001,

<https://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/central/09/24/ret.afghan.taliban/index.html>.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ "'Think again' Taliban warns U.S.," CNN, September 30, 2001,

<https://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/central/09/30/ret.taliban.omar/index.html>.

¹¹² Lyse Doucet, "Afghan Conflict: US and Taliban Sign Deal to End 18-Year War," BBC, February 29, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-51689443>.

the Taliban regime and Afghanistan.”¹¹³ What was called, “Operation Enduring Freedom,” began as a bombing campaign against Taliban forces, with conventional ground forces arriving just under two weeks later.¹¹⁴

Considering the competing arguments for failed threats, the theory of victimhood offers a persuasive explanation. As mentioned, prior, it is highly unlikely that this was a case of cheap talk. Bush was faced with one of the largest tragedies in American history, with all eyes on him to hold those responsible accountable. Bush made an incredibly public demand in which he would be held to fulfillment by the American public. The audience costs logic continues to falter due to bipartisan political support, with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle uniting behind Bush.¹¹⁵ Questioning U.S. reputation for resolve seems largely irrational given the U.S. involvement in Iraq in 1998, President Clinton’s cruise missile attacks against al-Qaeda training camps in 1998, and while Bush’s term was young, Bush had already attacked Iraqi radar sites in February of 2001, and riskily backed military support for Taiwan in the event of an attack by China.¹¹⁶ After the initial U.S. threat Taliban leader Omar stated that the U.S. was just, “saber-rattling,”¹¹⁷ and that Americans don’t have the “courage to come here (to Afghanistan).”¹¹⁸ In hindsight, this seems to fit a rallying cry assessment painting the U.S. as a bully stirring the pot, rather than an honest assessment of U.S. resolve. It is unlikely that private information played a

¹¹³ “Oct. 7, 2001: President George W. Bush Announces First Strike on Afghanistan,” ABC News, October 7, 2001, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/video/oct-2001-president-george-bush-announces-strike-afghanistan-49337131>.

¹¹⁴ “The U.S. War in Afghanistan,” Council on Foreign Relations, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

¹¹⁵ Alison Mitchell. & Katharine Seelye, “A DAY OF TERROR: CONGRESS; Horror Knows No Party As Lawmakers Huddle,” September 12, 2001, [nytimes.com/2001/09/12/us/a-day-of-terror-congress-horror-knows-no-party-as-lawmakers-huddle.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/12/us/a-day-of-terror-congress-horror-knows-no-party-as-lawmakers-huddle.html).

¹¹⁶ “George W. Bush – Key Events,” Miller Center, n.d., <https://millercenter.org/president/george-w-bush/key-events>.

¹¹⁷ “‘Think again’ Taliban warns U.S.”

¹¹⁸ Luke Harding, & Duncan Campbell, “Taliban admit sheltering Bin Laden,” The Guardian, September 30, 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/oct/01/afghanistan.terrorism>.

dominant role in the ineffectiveness of the U.S. threat to achieve its goals. Bush was clear, precise, and public regarding what was expected of the Taliban, and while the Taliban did not have information on the willingness of the U.S. to invade, there was no secret that the U.S. had the military power and international coalition to do so. The preponderance of power that the U.S. had in comparison to Afghanistan was stark and evident.

The theory of victimhood offers explanation to a largely irrational explanation of the Taliban's resistance to the coercive U.S. threat by President Bush. In this case, anti-American demonstrations and protests followed the threat, and the Taliban used the threat to its advantage. By painting the U.S. as an aggressor, Afghanistan was able to ignite the long-standing hatred associated with the U.S. in order to consolidate support in Afghanistan and the region. Whether the reason for rallying the population was to make the U.S. question its likelihood of success if it decided to invade, or to prepare the population for an inevitable invasion, the Taliban resisted American threats and managed to avoid compliance with U.S. demands as the theory of victimhood predicts.

VIII. Haiti 1994: The Lonesome Enduring Successful Threat

The case of Haiti in 1994 offers a promising look at an example of a successful compellent threat without resorting to the use of force. In Haiti, the opposite effect of the rally occurs, in which public discontent with the status quo and regime weakness leads to a rally effect for change. This case brings up propositions including the public support for invasion and how an extremely clear and resolute threat of force plays a role in conflict termination.

In February of 1991, Haiti's first democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was overthrown in a military coup that led to a reversion from democracy.¹¹⁹ Aristide had won the December 1990 election with 68% of the vote.¹²⁰ The coup was met with international condemnation, with the U.S., France, Canada, and the European Community suspending aid to the government. Similarly, the Organization of American States pushed for Aristide's reinstatement and imposed a trade embargo.¹²¹ As none of these measures led to Aristide's reinstatement, in October of 1991, the U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution for member states to impose a trade embargo. In July of 1993, the military chief in power, General Cedras, and Aristide signed an agreement to oversee Aristide's return to power by the end of October of 1993 in what was known as the Governors Island Accord.¹²²

Just a week after the Somalian failure in which the U.S. intervention in Mogadishu led to the death of 18 U.S. soldiers, the U.S. sent military police to Haiti to oversee the transition of power, but the ship carrying troops decided against intervening due to fear of violence in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, in October of 1993.¹²³ The U.N. took further action by imposing a naval blockade, and the Clinton administration worked to pass UNSCR 940, authorizing the use of force to restore democracy in Haiti on July 31, 1994.¹²⁴ After this resolution was passed, the U.S. began preparing for an invasion that was to be known as "Operation Uphold Democracy."

¹¹⁹ "Haiti: Efforts to Restore President Aristide, 1991-1994," Congressional Research Service, May 11, 1995, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/19950511_95-602_6c19769dbf2c82c7a1d4458d505c45cfa9990234.pdf.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² "Haiti: Efforts to Restore President Aristide, 1991-1994."

¹²³ "Intervention in Haiti, 1994-1995," State Department, n.d., <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1993-2000/haiti>.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Clinton's Clear and Evident Compellent Threat

Analyzing a small number of cases across a limited time period offers benefits of control. Under the Clinton administration, failed and successful threats can be seen under very similar conditions. As with Clinton's compellent threat in 1998 Iraq case, Clinton took to national television to publicly threaten the government. On September 15, 1994, President Clinton appeared in a 25-minute Oval Office address to the nation regarding the coup in Haiti. Within this speech, Clinton threatened the military-led government in Haiti stating:

The message of the United States to the Haitian dictators is clear: Your time is up. Leave now, or we will force you from power... Let me say again, the nations of the world have tried every possible way to restore Haiti's democratic government peacefully. The dictators have rejected every possible solution. The terror, the desperation, and the instability will not end until they leave. Once again, I urge them to do so. They can still move now and reduce the chaos and disorder, increase the security, the stability and the safety in which this transfer back to democracy can occur. But if they do not leave now, the international community will act to honor our commitments to give democracy a chance, not to guarantee it; to remove stubborn and cruel dictators, not to impose a future.¹²⁵

Clinton took to national television, not only outlining the demands to the dictators who had taken control over Haiti the past three years, but also outlining the use of force that would accompany a failure to comply. Clinton noted that, "Earlier today, I ordered Secretary of Defense Perry to call up the military reserve personnel necessary to support United States troops in any action we might undertake in Haiti. I have also ordered two aircraft carriers -- the USS Eisenhower and the

¹²⁵ Bill Clinton, "Military Options in Haiti," C-SPAN, September 15, 1994, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?60210-1/military-options-haiti>.

USS America -- into the region.”¹²⁶ The public threat was furthered by Clinton’s order of preparation to launch military intervention with Operation Restore Democracy two days after the speech.¹²⁷

Amidst the threat of military force, on September 17th Clinton sent a diplomatic team including former President Jimmy Carter to Haiti to negotiate a peaceful resolution seeking the avoidance of military intervention. The military-led government ultimately caved to U.S. demands after hearing of the launching of Operation Restore Democracy, deciding to avoid intervention. On September 18th, Clinton addressed the nation from the Oval Office to announce the agreement stating that, “My fellow Americans, I want to announce that the military leaders of Haiti have agreed to step down from power. The dictators have recognized that it is in their best interest and in the best interest of the Haitian people to relinquish power peacefully, rather than to face imminent action by the forces of the multinational coalition we are leading.”¹²⁸ Aristide was reinstated as President on October 15, 1994.¹²⁹

A Publicly Welcomed Threat and a Reversed Victim

In comparison to the failed threats discussed prior, Clinton’s threat in Haiti benefitted from a weaker history of intervention that served as the roots for a public that was willing and interested in U.S. assistance to preserve democracy. It has been demonstrated thus far that compelling threats failed in Iraq and Afghanistan, both in a region where the U.S. had recently involved itself and where anti-American sentiment had been built. Upon the U.S. issuing threats,

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ “Haiti: Restoring Democracy,” Clinton Presidential Library, n.d., <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/haiti-topic-guide>.

¹²⁸ Bill Clinton, “U.S. Occupation of Haiti,” C-SPAN, September 18, 1994, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?60272-1/us-occupation-haiti>.

¹²⁹ “Intervention in Haiti.”

violent and aggressive language that referred to American intervention and anti-Americanism perpetuated a resistance towards an American response that allowed for the regime to stand resolute in the face of a coercive threat from a state with massive relative power advantages.

The Caribbean's experience with U.S. interventions has been relatively limited and mostly successful, with Cuba being the most substantial modern failed use of force. In the 20th century, only Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Haiti experienced U.S. military intervention. Among those interventions, only the quick and successful invasion of Grenada ordered by President Reagan in 1983 after the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States asking the U.S. to restore order occurred within 25 years of this case.¹³⁰ In comparison, the Middle East had experienced over 15 uses of U.S. military force from 1975 to 1991, including five uses of armed force in Iraq alone from 1975 until Clinton took office in 1994.¹³¹ In the case of Afghanistan, military force had been used three years prior to Bush's invasion in 2001.¹³²

Haiti's military coup did not receive the same rally effect after U.S. threats largely as a result of popular support for their prior governing regime. An overwhelming majority of 67% of Haitians casted their vote for Aristide in 1991.¹³³ There were also popular protests in favor of the Aristide regime following the coup that were continually repressed by the military leaders who took control of Haiti leading up to U.S. involvement.¹³⁴ For example, in May and June of 1992, students who engaged in protests were shot at, beaten, arrested, and tear gassed.¹³⁵ Comparing this case to others, a reverse effect occurred where the protests and resistance was in *opposition*

¹³⁰ Dionne Sinclair, "US Military Interventions in the Caribbean from 1898 to 1998 Lessons for Caribbean Leaders," December 16, 2011, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a556486.pdf>.

¹³¹ Barbara Torreon & Sofia Plagakis, "Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2020."

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ "Human Rights Watch, Human Rights Watch World Report 1993 – Haiti," Human Rights Watch, January 1, 1993, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/467fca651f.htm>.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

to the government. Many states called for Americans to intervene and sought out their help, with Security Council Resolution 940, permitting the U.S. to restore President Aristide in Haiti, passing with broad support.¹³⁶ Similarly, protests in the U.S. proclaimed support for Aristide and the potential for intervention. In Miami, over 7,000 protesters turned out noting that, “there’s a new policy for Haiti: Aristide is in and violence is out,” and protesters telling Clinton to, “Remember your promise.”¹³⁷ Rather than the anti-Americanism that was fostered elsewhere, many Haitians tried to seek asylum in the U.S.¹³⁸ CARICOM, the Caribbean Community and Common Market, joined the U.S. in expressing the necessity of helping Haiti.¹³⁹ Upon the U.S. military arriving in Haiti after the coup leaders had backed down, it has been noted that, “there (was) a whole sea of Haitians looking into [the American soldiers’] eyes, just glad that they’re here.”¹⁴⁰

The theory of victimhood offers a strong explanation as to why Clinton’s threat worked. Aristide and democracy were seen as the victims, with the military regime serving as the perpetrators and occupiers who violated human rights and intervened in their own country’s government affairs. Given the relatively uncontroversial and successful involvements in the Caribbean over the almost three decades prior to Clinton’s threat, the U.S. avoided being labeled as a perpetrator, and instead was called out by the international community for not intervening sooner. This case is valuable as it offers a comparison to Clinton’s failed 1998 threat in Iraq in

¹³⁶ Julia Preston, “U.N. Authorizes Invasion of Haiti,” *Washington Post*, August 1, 1994, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1994/08/01/un-authorizes-invasion-of-haiti/395ff392-0788-4f62-b516-436c8fa35f37/>.

¹³⁷ K. Kaye, “Miami Rally Hits Policy on Haitians,” *Sun Sentinel*, February 8, 1993, <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/fl-xpm-1993-02-08-9301080381-story.html>.

¹³⁸ “Haiti: Efforts to Restore President Aristide, 1991-1994,” Congressional Research Service, May 11, 1995, https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/95-602.html#TOC2_2.

¹³⁹ Walter Kretchik, Robert Baumann, & John Fishel, “A Concise History of the U.S. Army in Operation Uphold Democracy,” 1998, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a528265.pdf>.

¹⁴⁰ “Mood on the Streets... Euphoria Downtown, Fear in the Countryside,” *Time Magazine*, September, 19, 1994, <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1794,00.html>.

which was issued under similar audience costs and a similar reputation for resolve. While the U.S. had a preponderance of power that Haiti could not match, it was the rally behind the U.S. and western intervention that led to the peaceful resolution of the conflict. The regime in Haiti managed to typify themselves as the *perpetrator rather than the victim*. This case offers clear clues for the use of coercive threats, advising the U.S. to look deeply at their reputation within the region, who might be seen as the victim, and the popular opinion of the regime they seek to threaten.

IX. Yugoslavia 1994 & 1998: Strategic Manipulation of U.S. Threats

The cases of Yugoslavia in 1994 and 1998 under the Clinton Administration provide a rare example where two threats were made across the same crisis eliciting one successful response in which full compliance was achieved without the use of force, and an unsuccessful threat where compliance was not met and force was applied. These compelling threats followed a 1993 compelling threat against Yugoslavia in which there was no compliance and no force used. For a reminder, Yugoslavia 1998 is among the only two cases where force led to over 100 military fatalities. This case offers a valuable contribution to the case studies offering an example of a successful threat that was really a manipulative denial in order to poke the tiger and rally the public for the next U.S. and NATO efforts to end the conflict and ethnic cleansing.

The Yugoslav Wars were a group of related ethnic conflicts and civil wars including the Bosnian War and the Bosnian genocide lasting from 1991 to 1999.¹⁴¹ After World War II, Yugoslavia was a federation of six republics including Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia bringing together ethnicities such as Serbs, Croats, Bosnian

¹⁴¹ “Balkans war: a brief guide,” BBC, March 18, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17632399>.

Muslims, Albanians, Slovenes, and others.¹⁴² While independence calls amidst the six republics were controlled under President Tito, when Tito passed away, the republic began to separate. Bosnian Muslims and Croats tried to push for independence, resulting in Bosnian Serbs threatening war. What ensued was a major ethnic cleansing where over a million Bosnian Muslims and Croats were driven from their homes under Serbian President Milosevic.¹⁴³

The First Successful Compellent Threat?

On February 5, 1994, the UN reported that Serb forces had led a mortar bomb attack in Sarajevo which killed 68 people and led to increasing calls for international intervention.¹⁴⁴ Clinton stood before the American people and reporters in nationally aired remarks on February 20th, 1994, from the Oval Office two weeks after the attack stating that:

Two weeks ago, in a murderous attack, a single shell killed 68 people in the city's market. And last week with our NATO allies, we said that those who would continue terrorizing Sarajevo must pay a price. On that day, NATO announced it was prepared to conduct air strikes against any heavy weapons remaining after 10 days within 20 kilometers of Sarajevo, unless such guns are placed under United Nations control. That 10-day period ends tomorrow night. If the U.N. and NATO authorities find the deadline has not been met, NATO stands ready to carry out its mission. American pilots and planes stand ready to do our part.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ "The Yugoslav Crisis in International Law," (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. July 28, 1997: Pg. liii).

¹⁴⁵ "The President's Radio Address and an Exchange with Reporters," UCSB, February 19, 1994, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-radio-address-and-exchange-with-reporters-2>.

In this high-profile statement, Clinton makes the threat amidst high costs for backing down after the public had been critical of his previously weak responses to the conflict. Similarly, this NATO coordinated action offers an example of a highly credible threat in which multilateral action was authorized and would be used. On February 21, it was concluded that sufficient progress had been made which allowed for the calling off of the air strikes.¹⁴⁶ While this episode seemingly was solved from the compelling threat and ultimatum on behalf of Clinton and NATO, the conflict was far from over, calling into question the true successfulness of the threat. Just one year later, on August 30th, 1995, NATO launched a series of precision strikes against Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This was known as Operation Deliberate Force and was NATO's first air campaign, playing a critical role in bringing the Bosnian War to an end.¹⁴⁷

The Second Threat

The Kosovo War could be seen as a re-ignition of the war prior in which began in 1998. Similar tensions remained between ethnically Serbian leaders of Yugoslavia and the Albanian population.¹⁴⁸ President Milosevic undertook substantial persecution of Kosovo Albanians throughout the war, killing hundreds of mostly ethnic Albanian civilians and displacing over 200,000 more.¹⁴⁹ As the conflict came to a peak, Clinton pushed Milosevic through a U.S. envoy

¹⁴⁶ "The Yugoslav Crisis in International Law."

¹⁴⁷ Ryan Hendrickson, "History: Crossing the Rubicon," NATO Review, 2005, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2005/issue3/english/history.html#:~:text=The%20NATO%20key%20was%20held,civilians%20and%20injuring%2085%20others>.

¹⁴⁸ "Kosovo Conflict," Britannica, May 12, 2008, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Kosovo-conflict/additional-info#history>.

¹⁴⁹ Jamie McIntyre, "Milosevic: NATO air strike would be 'criminal act,'" CNN, October 5, 1998, <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/9810/05/kosovo.05/>.

to end the crackdown peacefully.¹⁵⁰ After the negotiations were unproductive, Clinton made public international remarks at an International Monetary Fund conference on October 6th, 1998.

Clinton stated that:

President Milosevic is primarily responsible for this crisis. The United Nations has made clear the steps we must take to end it – declare an immediate cease-fire, withdraw Serb security forces, give humanitarian relief groups full and immediate access to Kosovo, begin real negotiations with the Kosovar Albanians to find a peaceful and permanent solution to their rightful demand for autonomy. As we meet here my special envoy, Dick Holbrooke, is meeting with President Milosevic to reiterate what he must do, and make clear that NATO is prepared to act if President Milosevic fails to honor the United Nations resolutions. The stakes are high - the time is now to end the violence in Kosovo. I hope all of you will do whatever you can to that end.¹⁵¹

After failing to permanently comply with demands, NATO launched air strikes beginning on March 24, 1999 in an attempt to stop the ethnic cleansing by Serbian forces.¹⁵² The 78-day operation consisted of 38,000 combat missions that ended in a peace accord agreement.¹⁵³

Why Poke the Tiger?

The Yugoslavia cases offer an interesting puzzle in which the target continually and manipulatively defies U.S. and multilateral threats of action. Not only were these coercive threats

¹⁵⁰ Brent Sadler, "NATO strike prospect raised as Milosevic refuses to back down," October 6, 1998, <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/9810/06/kosovo.04/>.

¹⁵¹ Bill Clinton, "Remarks by the Hon. William Clinton, President of the United States," IMF, October 6-8, 1998, <https://www.imf.org/external/am/1998/speeches/pr04e.pdf>.

¹⁵² "NATO Bombs Yugoslavia," History, July 21, 2010, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/nato-bombs-yugoslavia>.

¹⁵³ Andrew Glass, "NATO begins bombing Serbia," Politico, March 24, 1999, <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/03/24/this-day-in-politics-march-24-1231269>.

clear and public, but the threats were made amidst little private information with comprehensive military power and clear statements of what force would follow noncompliance. The theory of victimhood fills in the inconsistent holes in this quandary. Rather than analyze the rally in a state-centric manner, this dynamic should be understood on an ethnic basis as Milosevic was defending the state on behalf of Serbians. Interestingly, post-World War II, the U.S. had not involved itself through force in the Balkans at all. Evacuating Americans from Cyprus was the closest that the U.S. military came to intervening in or near the Balkans.¹⁵⁴ This case is troubling in that it is possible that reputations for interventionism in a region can potentially build rapidly as disputes linger on.

The question as to why Milosevic and Serbian leaders caved in 1994 but stood defiant in 1998 can be answered quite simply: follow the momentum of the rally. Immense international outrage followed the February 1994 mortar bomb attack in Sarajevo. This outcry met Clinton¹⁵⁵ as well as the greater international community, with UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali formally asking NATO for confirmation that NATO would immediately execute air strikes.¹⁵⁶ When the issue went to a vote before NATO ambassadors four days after the attack, all member states agreed to the use of air strikes, aside from Greece who abstained. Prior to the attack, there were growing demonstrations in the summer of 1993 that were violently repressed by police.¹⁵⁷ All of a sudden, Serbians were realizing that they perhaps had generated the reputation for being the bullies met with an international climate that was ready to intervene. By temporarily halting

¹⁵⁴ Barbara Torreon & Sofia Plagakis, "Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2020."

¹⁵⁵ John Goshko, "In the Foreign Service, Complaints Grow About Clinton's Team," Washington Post, June 20, 1994, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1994/06/20/in-the-foreign-service-complaints-grow-about-clintons-team/305de25b-291c-463c-945a-7cd9f0a9e649/>.

¹⁵⁶ "Yugoslav Crisis in International Law."

¹⁵⁷ "Human Rights Watch World Report 1994-Yugoslavia," Human Rights Watch, January 1, 1994, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/467fca94c.html>.

the fight, Serbian leaders were able to let the rally against their rule recede before doubling down after the tensions settled.

Four years later, as Clinton stepped out before the world to threaten Kosovo and Milosevic, a different response was elicited. Upon the 1998 Clinton threat, Milosevic called the potential of NATO air strikes to be a criminal act and gained the support of Russia in countering NATO initiatives.¹⁵⁸ After Clinton's threat, Serbian President Milan Milutinovic played the victim stating that, "we do not want war...we are seeking a peaceful resolution. But if someone attacks us, or if someone imposes, then of course we will fight for our homeland."¹⁵⁹ Prior to NATO's intervention, the Serbian parliament condemned NATO for "placing terrorists on the same level as the legal authorities of a sovereign country."¹⁶⁰ While there is little documentation of domestic unrest as the threats were made, likely due to the repressive actions of the Milosevic regime in Kosovo, the responses following the air strikes help to demonstrate the immediate shift in anger from the Milosevic regime to the U.S. and NATO. After NATO airstrikes began, protests broke out across the region and the world. Throughout the last week of March, protesters in Chile peacefully demonstrated out front of the U.S. Embassy against NATO actions. The same types of protests against the U.S. and NATO took place throughout the world occurring in Honduras, Panama, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Russia, Italy, Ukraine, Latvia, Netherlands, Hungary, Austria, Turkey, and many more.¹⁶¹ To highlight some examples, on April 4th, thousands of protesters took to the street in Rome and 4,000 protested in the capital of Cyprus

¹⁵⁸ Jamie McIntyre, "Milosevic: NATO air strike would be 'criminal act.'"

¹⁵⁹ Steven Erlanger, "U.S. Issues Appeal to Serbs to Halt Attack in Kosovo," New York Times, March 23, 1999, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/europe/032399kosovo-rdp.html>.

¹⁶⁰ "Chronology for Kosovo Albanians in Yugoslavia," Minorities at Risk Project, 2004, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/469f38f51e.html>.

¹⁶¹ Andrew Corsun, "Political Violence Against Americans 1999," State Department, 2000, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/24968.pdf>.

demanding NATO end its air strikes.¹⁶² On April 27th, a Greek terrorist group bombed the Inter-Continental Hotel in protest of Western policy in Kosovo.¹⁶³ On April 30, anti-NATO protesters in Greece stopped a shipment of military equipment and troops as well as diverted further equipment through deception.¹⁶⁴ After NATO accidentally struck a Chinese embassy in Kosovo killing Chinese journalists, China stepped up their dissent including protests outside the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. The Chinese government shared stark criticism of the NATO mission through the Chinese Communist Party's news organ stating that, "what the West calls media freedom is actually hegemonism and the most important tool of power politics... the basis of Western media is to first demonize their opponents and then cloak hegemonism and armed infringement in legality."¹⁶⁵

While at first glance, this case seems perplexing given its humanitarian nature and the seemingly disconnected episodes within the conflict, the theory of victimhood offers a powerful explanation as to the actions that the government took in the Yugoslav wars and the Kosovo conflict. Rather than simply looking at the actions of the coercer, examining the target's incentives created from domestic factors such as the rallying effect provides a deeper explanation to puzzling reactions from the targets. In what is an unsettling explanation, especially as there was a humanitarian crisis related, it can be seen that the target government strategically *used* public opinions' response to U.S. and NATO actions as a means to remain in power. Whether the strategy is to ease off of conflict and come to the negotiating table with no intention of honoring obligations or doubling down on efforts in the face of threats to rally the public and remain in

¹⁶² "Chronology for Kosovo Albanians in Yugoslavia."

¹⁶³ Andrew Corsun, "Political Violence Against Americans 1999."

¹⁶⁴ "Chronology for Kosovo Albanians in Yugoslavia."

¹⁶⁵ Conor O'Cleary, "Beijing demands an end to NATO bombing of Serbia," Irish Times, May 19, 1999, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/beijing-demands-an-end-to-nato-bombing-of-serbia-1.186406>.

power, poking the tiger can be rewarding. This is a game that the target plays, and the coercer must pay further attention to its own reputation and the public opinion surrounding the target's regime closely.

X. Implications & Conclusions

This paper has worked to demonstrate the benefit that appearing as a victim can have in international relations. Investigating the failure rates of U.S. coercive threats, the theory of victimhood offers a largely different explanation than previous literature in the field. By focusing on domestic political factors in the target states and regions in which threats are issued, this research has sought to demonstrate the ways in which coercive threats are perceived matters. spo In the case of Iraq 1998, the U.S. issued a compelling threat that triggered unrest throughout the region, ultimately resulting in a more stable Saddam regime even after military force was used. In Afghanistan 2001, the U.S. quickly became labeled as the bully, despite being the initial victim, resulting in the Taliban resisting U.S. threats in contrary to what conventional wisdom would have predicted. In Haiti 1994, the U.S. benefited from the labeling of the ruling regime as the bully, where a rally was generated on behalf of intervention in Haiti and the international community, resulting in an effective threat that led to a peaceful regime transition. Haiti offers an example of domestic political conditions ripe for U.S. intervention, with the population holding favorable opinions of the U.S. in a region where the U.S. had a more limited reputation for interventionism. The protests in opposition to General Cedras' coup represents a key factor that set up the U.S. coercive threat for success. Finally, in the cases of Yugoslavia 1994 and 1998, it can be seen that the target manipulatively backs down initially, in order to label itself as a victim, attempting to resist western intervention later. Reputations for interventionism underly the rally

effect that is elicited upon the issuing of a threat and the use of force. As seen through Yugoslavia, the U.S. may be able to generate this reputation in a concerningly quick manner. As the United States continues to hold a particularly strong reputation for interventionism after the use of force in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, the implications of this theory are important for future conflicts.

Three main implications follow from this research. First, policymakers should consider setting high standards for the issuing of compellent threats. In states that hold anti-American values, the threat or use of military force may counter U.S. policy goals by strengthening regimes. Under these conditions, the U.S. may want to work on building broad and diverse coalitions that include both defense partners and regional partners where the target is located, allowing the U.S. to redistribute its role as the primary challenger. Second, this study raises the question of how *not* to trigger the spiral of U.S. disdain that has been shown. Investing in public information campaigns as well as continuing to support civil society development programs that are passive in their pursuits to democratize states may offer a subtle alternative to undermining the actions of aggressive regimes. Third, if playing the victim in international relations matters, then so does *appearing* as the bully. The importance of building a reputation of public respect and morality is just as important, if not more, as building a reputation for resolve. U.S. policymakers should watch how domestic groups perceive the U.S.' appearance before issuing compellent threats. The field would benefit greatly from further research into domestic political responses to threats issued by major powers, and this research will continue to be of interest to policymakers as the U.S.' role in the world evolves.

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