

An “Invitation to Struggle”? The Use of Force Against “Legislatively Vulnerable” American Presidents

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Recently, international relations scholars have posited that, though economically unsuccessful American presidents may have incentives to divert via international conflict, their potential adversaries are also privy to their plight and may seek to avoid fighting them at such junctures. However, this “strategic conflict avoidance” (SCA) perspective offers relatively few insights concerning the impact of a potentially important source of leadership weakness in the American case: legislative opposition to presidential policy. Indeed, scholars seem uncertain about whether general legislative opposition actually drives American presidents to divert or leads them to refrain from international ventures. This article seeks to develop and test a general theory concerning the targeting of presidents who face legislative opposition to their foreign policies. The article predicts that economic distress increases “conflict avoidance” on the part of potential adversaries, whereas overt legislative opposition to presidential foreign policy decreases the utility of diversion and creates transparent elite divisions that invite targeting. Negative binomial generalized estimating equations (GEE) models of the U.S. foreign policy experience from 1949 to 2001 support these predictions, in that the U.S. is less likely to be the target of incident initiation by other states when the economic misery index increases, but is more likely to be targeted when members of Congress voice displeasure with presidential foreign policy. Further analyses show that these findings are generally strongest during periods of high American inflation, in the context of enduring rivalries, and during the Cold War.

Though researchers have devoted much effort to determining how domestic weakness influences international conflict behavior, few underlying theoretical debates have been resolved in a satisfactory fashion. Indeed, the most persistent perspective on this relationship, the diversionary hypothesis, has failed to receive support in many studies of the American case (e.g., Meernik 1994; Meernik and Waterman 1996; Gowa 1998), leading scholars to develop several alternative explanations. Perhaps the most appealing of these reformulations centers on the strategic incentives of potential adversaries to avoid military engagement with weakened presidents at precisely the times when diversion is most useful. Works

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comprising this "strategic conflict avoidance" (SCA) perspective (e.g., Smith 1996; Leeds and Davis 1997; Fordham 2005) have posited and/or found that such behavior on the part of potential adversaries constrains the opportunity of weakened democratic leaders (including presidents) to divert, thereby decreasing the amount of conflict observed.

An important indicator of executive standing that has yet to receive systematic attention by the SCA perspective is legislative opposition to presidential policies. Although it is plausible to assume that presidents who face congressional opposition to their policies are domestically weakened and thus more likely to engage in conflict, works in the American diversionary tradition (Wang 1996; Howell and Pevehouse 2005) stipulate that general congressional–presidential disunity is not an incentive to divert. Instead, they posit that presidents derive greater "foreign policy latitude" from legislative support (measured by the degree of co-partisan representation in the Congress), and thus may be more likely to "look" for international conflict when supported. If this is the case, adversaries might be most likely to avoid conflict when legislative–executive unity prevails. Moreover, other academic work addressing the impact of elite divisions on the strategic targeting decisions of adversaries (e.g., Schultz 1998, 2001a) indicates that democratic leaders who engage in militarized crises with other states are hamstrung in their capacity to signal resolve to their adversaries when the legislature is unresponsive of the venture, thereby inviting those opponents to press their interests more forcefully.

This article seeks to develop and test a unified theory of conflict avoidance and engagement in the American case that is predicated in part on the approaches outlined above. As economic distress is likely to signal increased incentives for diversion, the theory expects targeting to diminish when economic conditions are in decline. However, although general congressional support may result in greater general policy latitude for presidents, potential opponents are likely to base their targeting decisions on more specific clues about the likelihood of legislative support for presidents' foreign policy endeavors. Vocal congressional opposition to foreign policy specifically signals elite disapproval of presidential activity in the very "domain" in which diversion is conducted, thereby both decreasing others' assessments of resolve and increasing presidents' domestic costs and risks of international action. Faced with a priori indication that their foreign policy actions are unpopular among some elites, and weakened in their capacity to resolutely employ diversion, presidents facing overt legislative foreign policy opposition are therefore more likely to be challenged by other states. The theory thus predicts that, as general legislative–executive unity provides few specific clues about foreign policy support, it is largely unrelated to targeting decisions. On the other hand, legislative opposition that is concerned with foreign policy clearly signals the prospect of disunity and is likely to increase targeting.

The results of negative binomial generalized estimating equation (GEE) analyses of the factors correlated with states' targeting decisions against the United States from 1949 to 2001 offer strong support for these hypotheses. Presidents facing lagging economic conditions (as measured by the raw misery index) are significantly less likely to be the targets of militarized incidents than those presiding over a growing economy. Conversely, presidents facing vocal opposition to their foreign policies by members of Congress (as measured by Mayhew's [2000] list of foreign-policy-opposition acts) are significantly more likely to be targeted. Unified government has no statistically significant impact on targeting behavior. Further analyses reveal that these relationships are strongest in the context of enduring rivalry, which recent work (e.g., Mitchell and Prins 2004) considers to be a useful delimiter of the "international opportunity" crucial to the use of force for domestic political purposes. Moreover, additional tests show that decreases in targeting given poor economic performance are being driven by high American inflation, a result which differs from those of other tests of the SCA perspective (Fordham 2005). Finally,

analyses of several time periods within the dataset indicate that the targeting of “legislatively vulnerable” presidents was largely a Cold War phenomenon.

The article proceeds as follows. First, I review existing literature concerning the domestic factors that influence targeting. Next, I develop the “invitation to struggle” perspective and attendant hypotheses about targeting decision-making, derived in part from several extant perspectives. Third, I lay out the empirical research design. Fourth, I present and address the findings of various statistical analyses, including marginal effects. Finally, I conclude by offering suggestions for the expansion and cross-national application and testing of the theory.

The “SCA” Perspective on Domestic Weakness and Targeting

The diversionary hypothesis stipulates that leaders seeking to lessen domestic discord can foster internal unity by engaging in conflict with external enemies (Simmel 1955; Coser 1956). Scholars relying upon this perspective have posited that democratic leaders regularly enjoy increased levels of electorate satisfaction and approval while engaging in conflict abroad (the so-called “rally effect”); it is thus likely that leaders seeking to improve popular perceptions of domestic conditions and job performance can do so by using force internationally (Waltz 1967; Mueller 1973). To determine the precise nature of the domestic dissatisfaction–force association, numerous scholars have tested the empirical relationship between conflict involvement abroad and the following factors: economic weakness (e.g., Russett 1990; Hess and Orphanides 1995; Wang 1996; Gelpi 1997; Fordham 1998b, 2002; Heldt 1999; Bennett and Nordstrom 2000; Meernik 2000; Davies 2002; Mitchell and Moore 2002; Mitchell and Prins 2004), election cycles (Stoll 1984; Gaubatz 1991; Nincic and Hinckley 1991; Yoon 1997), and public approval (Ostrom and Job 1986; Morgan and Bickers 1992; Meernik 1994, 2000; DeRouen 1995, 2000).

Despite its intuitive appeal and repeated tests of its applicability, general empirical support for the diversionary hypothesis has been mixed at best (Levy 1989). Although some results indicate that declining economic factors (especially unemployment; see DeRouen 1995, 2000; Fordham 1998b, 2002) and some measures of election cycles (Stoll 1984; Gaubatz 1991; Fordham 2002) are positively correlated with the use of force in the American case, these findings are inconsistent across studies and countries (e.g., Russett and Barzilai 1992; Miller 1995), and very few have found evidence that declining public approval spurs force usage (see Morgan and Bickers 1992, for a qualified exception). In fact, within the American case, some studies have found that domestic factors are less important than international factors in determining (and are even unrelated to) conflict involvement (Meernik 1994, 2000; Meernik and Waterman 1996; Gowa 1998).

How can we explain this inconsistent evidence of systematic conflict initiation by presidents who have apparent incentives to divert? Many scholars propose that the hypothesis itself is incorrectly or incompletely specified, especially concerning the likely payoffs and/or successful prosecution of diversion. For instance, the domestic payoff from diversionary activity may consistently not be worth the risks associated with international conflict. Lian and Oneal (1993) find that the mean change in American presidential approval from before to after all uses of force is 0%. Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson (1995) find general evidence that war involvement is negatively related to democratic leadership tenure, reinforcing the notion that conflict engagement could cause more domestic harm than domestic good for presidents.

Another alternative explanation is that the incentive to divert exists but is inconsistent across different types of dissatisfaction and/or ideological orientations. Eichenberg (1989), Klingemann, Hofferbert, and Budge (1994), Schultz (2001b), and Palmer, London, and Regan (2004) all posit that conservative leaders are generally more likely to use force than liberals because doing so resonates with their

constituency. In the American case specifically, Fordham (1998a) theorizes that presidents will seek to use means other than diversion to address dissatisfaction, when those means are amenable to their constituent bases. Using this reasoning, he finds that Democratic presidents are more likely to divert when faced with high inflation and Republicans are more likely to divert when faced with high unemployment.

Perhaps the most intriguing systematic explanation for the limited empirical support for the diversionary hypothesis, which has been termed the SCA argument (Fordham 2005), pays careful attention to the strategic interaction among states. In essence, though presidents may have valid diversionary incentives, potential diversionary targets recognize these incentives and are apt to steer clear of military engagement. Thus, at the very points at which presidents are most willing to divert, there may be little opportunity to use force abroad, because other states recognize that engaging those presidents in conflict both "obliges" them domestically and increases their resolve to see the conflict through to a favorable conclusion. Smith (1996) models the decision to initiate conflict as being predicated in part on the domestic pressures facing potential adversaries, citing leadership unpopularity as a key mitigating factor with respect to estimates of the success of militarized action (see also Enterline and Gleditsch 2000; Meernik 2000; and Clark 2003). Leeds and Davis (1997) explicitly test the regularity with which economic weakness coincides with external targeting, as measured by militarized interstate dispute (MID) initiation. Their study of eighteen advanced industrialized countries from 1952 to 1988 reveals a positive and significant correlation between economic growth and dispute targeting, a finding that supports the conclusion that states practice "prudent restraint" in foreign policy when diversion is most profitable to others. Most notably, Fordham (2005) examines the amount of "cooperative" and "conflictual" behavior directed toward the U.S. by its enduring rivals from 1948 to 1992 (as measured by the WEIS and COPDAB data) and finds that states are generally "nicer" to the U.S. when American unemployment is high.

Congressional Opposition: A Cause for Avoidance or Resolve?

Given the mixed findings pertaining to the diversionary hypothesis, the development of and burgeoning support for the SCA perspective seems to represent a promising avenue for research. However, the SCA perspective has only begun to address other key indicators of leadership "standing" that might impact both diversionary and targeting incentives. Perhaps most notable among these indicators is elite (in the U.S., legislative) opposition to leadership policies.¹ It is not unreasonable to speculate that, insofar as legislative opposition to executive policy indicates presidential weakness, it can be a cause for diversion; from the SCA perspective, it is thus possible that other states are likely to avoid conflict with legislatively unsupported presidents. Indeed, Meernik and Waterman (1996), though finding little evidence that domestic political factors are important determinants of conflict initiation, find that general congressional support for presidential policy (as measured by all roll-call votes) is negatively associated with force usage, leading to the conclusion that presidents may have incentives to divert from legislative unpopularity.

¹ Recent work regarding the effects of legislative signaling on strategic conflict activity, though closely identifiable with the SCA perspective, has largely been conducted in the context of countries other than the U.S. and has focused mainly on latent divisions among top-level legislative elites. Sprecher and DeRouen (2005), in their study of Israeli-Arab relations, posit that potential enemies can construe "surplus government" cabinets comprised of ministers from several parties as indicating decreased foreign policy latitude (thus decreased resolve) on the part of the prime minister (see Stinnett 2000, for a contradictory view). Though conducted in the same theoretical spirit as these works, this article seeks to refine their notions by examining the impact of overt opposition among all legislators on perceived resolve, as well as to tailor expectations to the American case specifically.

Despite this somewhat intuitive assessment, a perusal of diversionary and other literature reveals a different view of the impact of general congressional support on the presidential propensity to use force. Although some scholars believe that the impact of Congress on presidents' decisions to engage in international conflict is minimal (e.g., Morgan and Bickers 1992; Hinckley 1994; DeRouen 1995; Gowa 1998; see especially Fisher 1994, regarding presidents' circumvention of the War Powers Act), several researchers maintain that general congressional support should be positively correlated with force usage. In this view, because hostile Congresses can "dismantle" presidents' military activities by withholding support for them or other policies, and because presidents and legislators of the same political party share "electoral fortunes," presidents are likely to enjoy greater "foreign policy latitude" when the congressional majority is from their party. Put differently, majority co-partisan representation in the Congress eases the way for executive-preferred policy, thereby translating into "political capital" for presidents, who can then expend that capital in international ventures.² Wang (1996), arguing that general support in the Congress is more important than either partisan or overall approval ratings (as presidents are likely more concerned with elite opinion than with public opinion),³ finds that presidents choose more militaristic responses in crises when their parties control Congress than when they do not. Howell and Pevehouse (2005) extend Wang's argument by reasoning that the cohesiveness of presidential co-partisans is an important indicator of support; their findings in the post-World War II period confirm that presidents who enjoy cohesive, co-partisan majority representation are more likely to use force.⁴

In the same vein, still another perspective speaks to the impact that *crisis-specific* legislative opposition to leadership policy can have on leaders' capacities to signal resolve to their adversaries. Schultz (1998, 2001a), extending an argument originally propounded by Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman (1992), posits that strategic opposition⁵ to military engagements by parties not in power generally increases the electoral risks to the government (especially if the conflict goes badly), because such actions can "cue" portions of the electorate to also oppose the engagement. Moreover, as the internal workings of democracies are "transparent," legislative opposition in crises can signal to adversaries that the domestic costs of conflict to leaders are likely to be higher than normal. In fact, "such a signal can increase the probability of resistance by [the adversary] by raising doubts about the government's willingness to carry out its threat" (Schultz 2001a:101). Finally, when public elite dissent to the use of force is likely, leaders are likely to be restrained. From this "legislative signaling" perspective, then, actions taken by legislators in explicit opposition to a leader's crisis position—aside from any measure of overall legislative support—are most likely to diminish the amount of elite unity that is signaled to the adversary, thereby emboldening that state to choose harsher responses. Schultz's (2001a) case studies of the British Liberal Party's and Labour Party's opposition to governmental force usage in the Boer War and Suez Crisis (respectively) provide support for these hypotheses.

Overall, though the SCA perspective provides clear and somewhat well-supported expectations regarding conflict avoidance in response to declining American

² Ostrom and Job (1986) and James and Oneal (1991) both posit that indicators of political strength give presidents foreign policy latitude.

³ Indeed, Stoll (1987) finds that presidents can usefully employ diversionary conflict to rally congressional support.

⁴ The importance of elite consensus to leaders' foreign policy latitude has even been addressed in the realist framework. Schweller's (2004:171) study of domestic politics and power balancing contends that, when elites disagree about the existence and extent of international threats and the viability and costs of policies to ameliorate them, "intense political constraints on . . . government actions" are generated.

⁵ Schultz (2001a) makes clear that this opposition is not a foregone conclusion; opposition parties may often have incentives to support leaders' crisis positions to enhance their own domestic standing.

economic conditions, the perspective's treatment of the impact of congressional opposition to presidential policies on targeting decisions is minimal. Moreover, related literature regarding the influence of Congress on the American use of force offers multiple expectations. Do presidents (as implied by Sprecher and DeRouen 2005 in the Israeli case) derive more "foreign policy latitude" from general congressional support, such that adversaries will avoid conflict given general support? Are they more likely to divert if there is a general lack of congressional support, leading other states to avoid targeting given that condition? Does congressional opposition specifically aimed at foreign policy actions embolden adversaries? In the following section, I develop a theory of avoidance and targeting that seeks to resolve some of these puzzles, while integrating the expectations of the SCA perspective.

A "Unified" Theory of Targeting: Congressional Opposition as an "Invitation to Struggle"

Like the SCA perspective, this theory starts from the assumption that presidents have incentives to divert popular attention from domestic political problems via the use of force. In general, in order to choose diversion as a response to domestic difficulties, presidents must determine that the use of force will be more effective in addressing domestic dissatisfaction than other options (Clark 2000). Economic difficulties can be especially problematic because presidents have few economic policy "fixes" at their disposal to directly address those problems in the short term.⁶ Among these are tax cuts to mitigate the effects of unemployment, interest rate changes by central banks to spur investor confidence, and fiscal austerity programs to help curb inflation. However, some of these measures generate externalities whose detrimental effects can be worse than existing problems (e.g., fiscal austerity programs limiting growth or loss of tax revenue diminishing the funds available for other programs). What is more, long-term economic "fixes," such as wholesale change in economic policy, are unlikely to sit well with the constituencies upon which leaders' political support rests. As such, presidents might expect immediate benefits—diversionary rallies—to accrue from the use of force internationally, benefits that might not accrue by implementing ameliorative economic measures. However, insofar as other states can observe these economic downturns and are aware of increased incentives to engage in conflict at such junctures, they are likely to avoid "obliging" vulnerable presidents in their endeavors to rally support. Thus, in this reformulation of the theory, the empirical expectation regarding the targeting of economically weakened presidents is the same as that derived by the SCA perspective: indicators of economic weakness should have dampening effects on militarized targeting by other states.

In regards to the international ramifications of general legislative–executive unity, the expectations are less clear. As noted in the literature review, it is possible that overall unity may embolden presidents, embolden adversaries, or have no influence on conflict involvement. The first of these possibilities seems most viable in deriving expectations for targeting behavior. First, history is replete with examples of the political difficulties and dangers to presidents who seek to implement any sort of policy that is generally unpopular in Congresses held by the opposing party; one need look no further than the experiences of the Clinton Administration in its attempts to implement domestic programs after the "Republican Revolution" of 1994.⁷ Second, the notion that legislative involvement is minimal in foreign affairs

⁶ For a contradictory view of the American case specifically, see Miller (1995).

⁷ Inherently, the argument concerning legislative–leadership unity is inapplicable to many parliamentary democracies, as the government and prime minister are of the same party. However, in institutional structures where executive power is nominally shared by a prime minister and a president (as in the French case), partisan affiliation

runs counter to some of the most widely held theoretical perspectives of international politics. Clark's (2000) critique of the diversionary hypothesis posits that such a notion blatantly ignores the structural dimension of the democratic peace argument. If democratic leaders can use force without considering the likely responses of legislatures, then the same norms and structural arrangements which seemingly eliminate war between democracies must be considered operative only some of the time, a prospect which seems unlikely. In sum, then, there are compelling reasons to assume that presidents who are generally supported in the Congress enjoy greater "foreign policy latitude" than those who are not. In the context of targeting, we might thus expect potential opponents to be marginally less likely to press their interests militarily when such general support exists.

But is general legislative-executive unity the only "clue" that foreign governments can use to gauge presidents' resolve? Moreover, is it particularly informative? As militarized conflict is fraught with risks and costs, state leaders would ideally wish to minimize their uncertainty about resolve when at all possible. General unity, insofar as it indicates the ease with which executive policies can be advanced, might diminish this uncertainty and give potential opponents pause; but, then again, it might not or might at least fail to do so with regularity. One can identify at least three interrelated reasons why this is so. First, as Schultz (2001a) implies, opposition parties that are steadfastly opposed to leadership policies may, even when they are "out of power," spur or identify with enough popular opposition to those policies to threaten a leader's tenure. Thus, general co-partisan representation may simply be an insufficient indicator of a president's overall domestic political strength. From this perspective, opposition to presidential policies by parties "out of power" (in the U.S. case, in the congressional minority) can be popular enough in the electorate to at least influence upon presidential activity.

Second, members of Congress (MCs; terminology from Mayhew 2000) have a considerable capacity to popularize their opposition to executive policy. As MCs themselves are eminently public figures, their official and unofficial activities are highly visible and noteworthy to domestic and international audiences. MCs pass laws or resolutions whose contents can stand in opposition to administration policies; they can use committee settings to stage attacks on such policies and the administration figures that represent them; and they can even engage the public directly to reveal and mobilize opposition to what presidents do (e.g., Zaller 1992). Insofar as these activities indicate that important MCs or legislative blocs are against presidential policies, they can serve as credible signals to audiences (domestic and international alike) that presidential policies are likely to be opposed by those individuals in the future.⁸

Finally, even presidents who enjoy majority support in the Congress often find that that support does not translate into policy- or issue-specific support. Indeed, such leaders may find staunch co-partisan opposition that renders their efforts to implement specific policies problematic or even futile. For instance, Democratic opposition to the substance of the SALT II treaty with the USSR worked to neutralize President Carter's attempts to extend the scope of existing agreements (Strong 2000). In fact, the expectation of co-partisan opposition can, despite (or, perhaps, because of) the presence of co-partisan majorities, actually deter

between these leaders is likely to be a source of executive latitude (e.g., Sodaro 2004). Overall, it seems reasonable to conclude that general legislative-leadership unity "greases the wheels" for leadership-preferred policy with some regularity. See the final section for further discussion of the application of this theoretical perspective to other democratic states.

⁸ Box-Steffensmeier, Arnold, and Zorn (1997) indicate that position-taking is likely to have important political ramifications for MCs. By taking a position, MCs constrain their capacity to disavow those positions in the future, because general acknowledgment as a "flip-flopper" will harm their standing with colleagues and constituents. Thus, by the mere act of position-taking, MCs essentially send a "costly signal" to audiences that their stance is likely to be persistent.

presidents from even attempting to advance their agendas. In 1938, despite the gathering war clouds in Europe and the Pacific, popular indication that a more internationalist foreign policy might be acceptable to the electorate, and a vast bipartisan legislative majority, Franklin Roosevelt made only half-hearted attempts to foist his preferred internationalist agenda on a decidedly isolationist Democratic Congress (Beard 1946).

Given these aspects of legislative–executive relations, general unity appears to provide inconsistent or ambiguous signals regarding the likely resolve of presidents to stand firm to military challenges. I argue that, instead of general indicators, potential adversaries who are looking for “clues” regarding likely resolve would prefer to focus on *policy- or issue-specific indications* of congressional support or opposition, if they are available. Specifically, those actions by MCs or legislative blocs that indicate satisfaction with presidents’ foreign policies are likely to provide relatively clear indication of unified resolve regarding foreign affairs. Likewise, actions by MCs or legislative blocs that indicate dissatisfaction with presidents’ foreign policies are likely to provide relatively clear indication of opposition that can work to erode unity regarding the affairs of state and, by extension, resolve. This conclusion largely parallels the “legislative signaling” perspective’s (Schultz 2001a; see also Sprecher and DeRouen 2005) contention that leaders facing opposition concerning their crisis policies are viewed as weaker by their adversaries, and finds anecdotal support in recent American history (e.g., congressional opposition to the Vietnam War likely invited harsher responses by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong).

Sometimes, congressional opinions concerning actor- or crisis-specific policies are, for any number of reasons, limited or unavailable. But vocal foreign policy opposition can be a useful indicator of diminished resolve even if this is the case. Congressional opposition to certain types of foreign policy more broadly can provide credible clues that speak to the general likelihood of resolute response. At minimum, the clues provided by such opposition are much more specific and useful than the more general indicators of legislative–executive unity discussed previously. As a limited example, consider the effects of the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion on both congressional attitudes concerning President Kennedy’s foreign policy and Nikita Khrushchev’s estimate of Kennedy’s overall resolve. Despite Democratic majorities in the House and Senate, the Bay of Pigs failure stirred popular and congressional concerns regarding the overall solvency of Kennedy’s foreign policy. In his only face-to-face meeting with Kennedy at Vienna in June 1961, Khrushchev sought to exploit this and other apparent weaknesses by “push[ing] the American leader around” on the Berlin question and other issues (Allison and Zelikow 1999:89). Likewise, the continuing general isolationist attitudes of a Democratic Congress after the onset of World War I (including intense opposition by some Democratic senators to President Wilson’s preparedness programs) worked to convince at least some German decision makers to discount resolute American opposition to their planned 1917 resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare (Tuchman 1966). In these instances as in others, potential targeters can predicate their decisions to test resolve not on an estimate of unity based on general partisanship affinity, but on indications that certain *types* of foreign policy or general foreign policy approaches are congressionally and/or popularly unsupported.

Moreover, congressional foreign policy opposition can invite targeting for another reason: it is probably less likely to be alleviated by the diversionary use of force. In their seminal work, Ostrom and Job (1986) develop a “cybernetic” theory of presidential activity based upon the notion that presidents act (and are affected by events) in two domains of activity: the international and the domestic. Although presidents can occasionally act in one domain without much concern about how those actions will affect their standings in the other, the two domains are generally not mutually exclusive. Actors in one domain often have incentives to pay attention

to presidential actions in the other domain, either because the president is representing them there (domestic) or because the president's standing in the other domain can impact his bargaining stance or power (international). Indeed, the importance of this duality to leadership action is itself the basis for both the diversionary hypothesis' and the SCA perspective's intuitive appeal.

By the same token, this state of affairs can impact presidents' estimates of the ease with which they can undertake successful endeavors in one domain or the other. If a president's previous actions in one domain are unpopular, it is possible that his future actions taken in that domain will be unpopular or at least constrained or affected by that unpopularity. This means both that (a) as the diversionary hypothesis stipulates, the president might seek to employ actions in the other domain that can redirect attention from the "unpopular" domain; but also that (b) presidents are probably less likely to continue acting in the "unpopular" domain, at least insofar as those actions will spur further unpopularity or validate the stances of detractors. The main implication of this "flip side" to the diversionary argument means that presidents wishing to divert popular attention from congressional opposition to their international actions might find it difficult to do so by using force, as further international actions that could draw attention to or intensify the unpopularity of their foreign policies may cause more harm than good. In other words, presidents whose foreign policies are unpopular are probably less likely to enjoy the rallies associated with the use of force, because conflict may not successfully divert attention from (and may bring more attention to) the issues underlying their unpopularity.⁹

For these reasons, I contend that general indicators of American legislative-executive unity are unlikely to be systematically associated with the military targeting decisions of other states. However, vocal congressional opposition to presidents' foreign policies, because it provides specific clues as to likely foreign policy divisions and marginally decreases the benefits of the diversionary use of force, is likely to provide international opponents with an "invitation to struggle"¹⁰ over contentious issues. Presidents who face such opposition are thus predicted to experience more military targeting by other states than presidents who do not. A summary of the relevant expectations of the SCA, Schultz's "legislative signaling," and the "invitation to struggle" perspectives is presented in Table 1.

Research Design and Data

In order to test the hypotheses derived in the preceding section, I employ directed-dyadic, negative binomial analyses of the factors associated with the propensity of states to militarily target the U.S. in the period 1949–2001. The directed-dyadic research design is superior to the monadic designs normally employed to study the interaction between domestic indicators and force usage, as it allows for the inclusion of domestic, strategic contextual, and systemic factors that can influence decisions to engage in conflict (Mitchell and Prins 2004). Functionally, the unit of analysis reflects the amount of conflict activity other states "direct" toward the U.S.

⁹ This explanation might rest uneasily with proponents of the diversionary argument who assume that the rallies resulting from diversion are at least possible irrespective of the type of unpopularity. However, the explanation offered here is implicitly supported in previous diversionary work. In addition to the logic of Ostrom and Job's cybernetic explanation, *no* empirical studies of systematic diversion have, to date, explicitly considered the impact of vocal foreign policy opposition on diversionary behavior, ostensibly because leaders are expected to use force exclusively to divert from domestic political failings. Also, Ostrom and Job and James and Oneal (1991) both find that popular aversion to war has a dampening effect on American conflict initiation. As such, there is reason to believe that the adverse externalities associated with previous foreign policy activities can diminish leaders' expected returns from diversion.

¹⁰ This phrase was first used in the context of American politics by Edward Corwin (1940:200), who claimed that the U.S. Constitution provides Congress and the president with "an invitation to struggle for the privilege of directing American foreign policy."

TABLE 1. Comparison of Predictions Concerning the Targeting of "Politically Vulnerable" Presidents

<i>Variable Influencing Targeting</i>	<i>Predictions of "Strategic Conflict Avoidance" Perspective</i>	<i>Predictions of "Legislative Signaling" Perspective</i>	<i>Predictions of "Invitation to Struggle" Perspective</i>
Economic weakness	Economic weakness increases presidents' willingness to divert, leading potential initiators to refrain from using force against U.S. (Leeds and Davis 1997; Fordham 2005)	Generally unaddressed	Economic weakness increases presidents' willingness to divert, leading potential initiators to refrain from using force against U.S.
Legislative opposition to leadership foreign policy	Minimally addressed; numerous parties decrease foreign policy latitude, leading adversaries to increase force usage (Sprecher and DeRouen 2005)	Legislative opposition to presidents' military ventures emboldens adversaries, leading them to escalate existing crises (or at least stand firm) (Schultz 1998, 2001a)	Legislative opposition to presidential foreign policy, generally decreases potential initiators' estimates of elite unity and decreases likely benefits of diversion, increasing the likelihood of the use of force against U.S.

(i.e., all observations take the form State_{a...n} → U.S.) in a given quarter during this period.

The dependent variable is an event count of the number of escalatory militarized interstate incidents¹¹ initiated against the U.S. by a given state in each quarter. This measure is derived from the MID 2.1 and 3.02 data sets, which code the threat, display, and use of force by each member of the interstate system against other members from 1816 to 2001 (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996; Bremer, Ghosn, and Palmer 2004). The official version of the MID 2.1 data provides information only on militarized disputes from 1816 to 1992, which are temporally proximate sets of escalatory militarized incidents between specific states. However, though not officially released, those involved with the collection of the MID 2.1 data compiled a relatively comprehensive list of the incidents used to construct the disputes. This list represents not only a temporal extension of the original data set but also a more complete treatment of conflict between states than the first effort, as collectors consulted newer and more inclusive historical sources.¹² The use of the incident component of the MID variable in an event count format allows for the minimization of previously identified problems associated with both dependent variable aggregation bias in use of force studies (Mitchell and Moore 2002) and the coding of military actions in the context of MIDs that may not reflect actual force usage decisions of other states (Fordham and Sarver 2001; Fordham 2002).¹³ The MID

¹¹ The escalatory incident initiation variable is used to facilitate consistency between the MID 2.1 and MID 3.02 measures while extending the data set. The most important divergence between the two efforts is that MID 2.1 includes only the incidents that begin or escalate MIDs, whereas MID 3.02 includes all interstate incidents. For these analyses, I include only those incidents in MID 3.02 that represent the initiation of MIDs or the escalation of existing MIDs. Though some may take issue with this method, the results of additional analyses reveal no differences between tests of the full time period that include only escalatory 3.02 MIDs and those including all 3.02 MIDs. See Table 4 for analyses involving only the 3.02 data.

¹² The MID 2.1 variable is used in Morgan and Anderson's (1999) analysis of British diversionary behavior and by Palmer, London, and Regan (2004). One of the primary concerns about the use of this unofficial collection is the possibility that at least some of the component incidents involving less prominent disputes are missing. There is reason to believe, however, that ample information about individual incidents was available concerning disputes in which the U.S. was involved.

¹³ This is perhaps the most damaging of the several difficulties identified by Fordham and Sarver (2001) with the use of MIDs to test theories of foreign policy decision making. There are two distinct aspects to this problem. First,

3.02 data set, an extension of the 2.1 data, provides an official set of variables regarding the incidents that comprised disputes occurring from 1993 to 2001. This work uses both datasets to construct a continuous measure of the military targeting of the United States.

Diagnostic analyses of the data and several time-series techniques lead to the conclusion that the use of population-averaged negative binomial GEE models are most suitable. First, monadic tests of the raw data reveal evidence of dependent variable “overdispersion” in the period under investigation, which renders the use of Poisson event-count models inefficient and makes analysis based on the negative binomial distribution more preferable (Long 1997).¹⁴ Second, population averaged GEE modeling allows analysts to control for within-group temporal dependence in the dependent variable in cross-sectional time series analysis, and represents an improvement over lagged dependent variable controls, random effects models (when error terms are serially correlated in cross-sectional time-series data), or fixed-effects models (when the dependent variable is invariant within several groups) (Wooldridge 2000; Zorn 2001; Mitchell and Prins 2004). As several countries initiate no incidents against the U.S. in the period 1949–2001, and analyses of the association between the dependent variable and several of its within-group temporal lags reveal significant correlations, negative binomial GEE analyses likely provide the best methodological fit.¹⁵

The three central explanatory variables are the raw American misery index (as a measure of American economic weakness), a count of foreign policy opposition actions taken by members of the U.S. Congress (as a measure of legislative opposition to leadership foreign policy), and unified government (as a measure of general legislative-executive unity). The raw misery index, variations of which have been used in several studies (Ostrom and Job 1986; Meernik 1994; DeRouenv, 1995; Yoon 1997), is simply an additive composite of inflation (change in the mean consumer price index) and unemployment levels, which both the SCA and “invitation to struggle” perspectives expect to be negatively related to targeting. The foreign policy opposition acts variable, derived from Mayhew (2000), codes explicit actions taken by members of Congress in opposition to presidential foreign policy both inside and outside their chambers of deliberation. Included in the data set are foreign policy opposition actions as varied as notable votes against executive-supported legislation (e.g., Senators Greuning and Morse’s votes against the Tonkin Gulf Resolution), attacks on executive personnel in the normal conduct of congressional activity (Senator Joseph McCarthy’s diatribes against Truman State Department officials), and public speeches or stances (McCarthy’s Wheeling, WV, speech in 1950, generally considered to represent the beginning of the McCarthyite

the use of force may be the result of battlefield exigencies or the on-site decisions of military leaders and may not be reflective of leaders’ desires to employ force at particular times for domestic purposes. Fordham and Sarver claim that their data clearly reflect such decisions by American presidents; since there is no such compendium for force usage against the U.S., I rely on data that are currently available and which allow for the most robust test of the “invitation to struggle” perspective as it is postulated. Second, using MIDs to test force usage is only feasible if one employs the variable measuring MID initiation (as opposed to involvement); otherwise, MIDs that do not reflect any decisions to use force against the U.S. would be included. Even if one relies on the initiation variable (as do Mitchell and Prins 2004), he or she is ostensibly missing numerous uses of force against the U.S. that occur within disputes. The use of the incident initiation variable, which codes actions initiated within the context of MIDs, fairly mitigates both aspects of this problem.

¹⁴ The results of these monadic analyses reveal no substantive deviation from the dyadic results, and the α coefficient is significant (indicating dependent variable overdispersion). Moreover, the presence of overdispersion is corroborated by the fact that the unconditional variance of the dependent variable is greater than its mean. Finally, random effects and Poisson GEE models (the latter of which is appropriate when overdispersion is absent) produce results nearly identical to the population averaged negative binomial models.

¹⁵ The initiation of incidents against the U.S. is a decidedly rare event given the unit of analysis: incidents are observed in only 133 of the 29,408 directed-dyad quarters. However, monadic zero-inflated negative binomial models yield results that do not differ in any substantial way from the GEE model.

challenge). This measure of congressional foreign policy opposition, although not directly reflecting the sentiments of any majority of legislators, represents an improvement over roll-call voting (e.g., Meernik and Waterman 1996; Cronin and Fordham 1999) as an indicator of opposition, because the measure is not confined to only those issues upon which legislators vote and includes potentially important non-legislative activity in the public realm that can signal elite divisions to other states.

Mayhew's original data set runs only through 1988; to extend the analysis, I have coded additional foreign-policy-opposition actions occurring from 1989 to 2001.¹⁶ Moreover, Mayhew identifies the year in which each opposition action took place; in some instances, the opposition activity of individual members spans more than one year. In order to reformulate the data in a fashion that allows for the testing of dyad-quarter conflict involvement, I have consulted historical sources, including many of those used by Mayhew, to identify the quarter in which the action was actually (or can be reasonably assumed to have) begun; I do not include subsequent quarters in which the same activity was continued by the same member. Commensurate with the "invitation to struggle" perspective, this count variable is expected to be positively associated with targeting.

As noted earlier, previous work has found at least one measure of general congressional-presidential unity, unified government, to be positively associated with American force usage (Wang 1996; Howell and Pevehouse 2005). If other states avoid conflict during periods of unified government because of increased presidential "foreign policy latitude" (or, alternatively, if presidents see divided government as a source of weakness from which to divert), a measure of unified government should be significantly associated with targeting decisions. However, if the "invitation to struggle" perspective is correct in positing that measures of general unity provide no significant clues regarding resolve, then unified government should be statistically unrelated to targeting behavior. This dichotomous variable takes on a measure of one if majorities in the House and Senate and the presidency are held by the same political party, and zero otherwise.¹⁷

In addition, I include several dyadic control variables in the analysis: relative capabilities, preference similarity, initiator democracy, and geographic contiguity. The relative capabilities measure is a ratio of another state's correlates of war (COW) CINC score to the combined CINC scores of that state and the U.S. ($CINC_{Other}/CINC_{Other} + CINC_{US}$). As do Mitchell and Prins (2004:950), I expect "the effect of this variable to be positive because stronger states will attack when the probability of success is high and they have a clear power advantage." To measure preference similarity, I employ Signorino and Ritter's (1999) *s* score, which captures the presence and type of shared alliances between states, as well as providing a rank order correlation of states' alliance portfolios. States with preferences similar to those of the U.S. are expected to be less likely to initiate conflict against them. The democracy measure uses the Polity IV regime type categorization for potential initiators. As the U.S. has a democracy score of seven (the highest) throughout the period, I consider higher levels of this variable to represent "joint democracy" between that state and the U.S., a condition consistently found to mitigate conflict (e.g., Russett and Oneal 2001). To measure geographic distance, I utilize EUGene's

¹⁶ Recently, Mayhew (2005) compiled a non-systematic and unofficial list of foreign opposition activities since 1988, which served as the basis for my extension of his original variable. I additionally consulted the Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe database of news material, the *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, and other sources, focusing specifically on those MC foreign policy acts that clearly appeared "directed toward thwarting the aims or impairing the standing of a presidential administration" (Mayhew 2000:108–109). Detailed consultation with Mayhew revealed no disagreements regarding the extended coding of the variable (author's telephone discussion with David Mayhew, August 15, 2005), and a list of the updated coding is available upon request. Nevertheless, as with the incident initiation variable, I conduct a separate analysis of the pre-1988 data (Table 4).

¹⁷ None of these three key variables are correlated above 0.25 (unified government-opposition acts).

six-category indicator of spatial relation. The raw indicator generated by the data generation program is based on the COW Project's distance measure, and assigns the following numeric codes to each dyad: (1) states contiguous by land; (2) contiguous for up to 12 miles of water; (3) contiguous for 13–24 miles of water; (4) contiguous for 25–150 miles of water; (5) contiguous for 151–400 miles of water; and (6) no contiguity (or contiguous over more than 400 miles of water) (Bennett and Stam 2000). States that are geographically closer to the U.S. are expected to target it with more frequency than those distant.

Finally, I include a control variable coded one in the two quarters preceding U.S. presidential elections and zero otherwise. Given that reelection is a top priority, presidents might have increased incentives to take actions that favorably shape public assessments of their performance in the periods leading up to elections. Thus, presidents who associate an expected surge in popularity from the use of force may be especially inclined to engage in conflict in periods preceding elections (MacKuen 1983; Stoll 1984; Gaubatz 1991). From the SCA perspective, we might thus expect states to avoid targeting the U.S. (and presenting presidents with the opportunity to use force for domestic political gain) in such periods.

Empirical Analysis

Table 2 presents the findings of several negative binomial GEE models. In order to control for the maximum amount of within-panel correlation, the correlation structure in the post-estimation syntax is specified as “exchangeable.”¹⁸

The first column of Table 2 reports the findings of a model analyzing the correlates of incident initiation against the U.S. by all states in the international system from 1949 to 2001. Although states are significantly less likely to target the U.S. in quarters characterized by higher levels of economic misery, they are significantly more likely to do so in quarters characterized by the incidence of congressional foreign policy opposition acts. However, the most widely accepted measure of general legislative-executive unity, unified government, is not significantly related to targeting at the incident level.¹⁹ As such, there is substantial evidence that more general indicators of unity provide fewer systematic clues to potential targeters regarding decreased resolve than vocal congressional opposition to presidents' foreign policies. The results of the full model also indicate, as expected, that a relative capability advantage on the part of other states is positively associated with incident initiation, and that increasing geographic distance and shared democracy are negatively associated with incident initiation. Interestingly, *s* is not significantly associated with incident initiation. However, as the democracy and preference similarity measures are correlated to a moderate degree (0.38), their effects when jointly included in the model may be somewhat complicated. Indeed, separate analyses including either one or the other of these indicators reveals a significant negative correlation between both and the dependent variable. Finally, the variable measuring impending presidential elections is not significantly associated with incident initiation against the U.S., indicating that states are neither more nor less

¹⁸ The models are estimated using Stata 8.2. Two post-estimation commands were employed in addition to the within-panel correlation specification. “pa” is the population-averaged model command. “Robust” specifies that robust standard errors are produced by the model (or, rather, “semi-robust” standard errors, as Stata produces valid standard errors for the GEE model even if within-group correlations are irregular). See Zorn (2001) for further information regarding the utility of these commands and the GEE method more generally.

¹⁹ A similar measure of unity employed by Howell and Pevehouse (2005), the percentage of the Senate held by the president's party, is found in other analyses to be statistically insignificant, with nearly identical results regarding the other coefficients. Moreover, two unreported analyses utilizing the unified government and foreign policy opposition measures find, respectively, no significant relationship between unified government and targeting and a positive and significant relationship between opposition acts and targeting.

TABLE 2. Quarterly Directed-Dyadic Incident Initiation Against the U.S., 1949–2001 Negative Binomial GEE Model Results

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Full Model</i>	<i>Enduring Rival Dyads</i>	<i>Non-Rival Dyads</i>
Relative capabilities (state <i>J</i> : U.S.)	4.04** (4.50)	1.51** (2.64)	4.26** (2.80)
S score	- 1.29 (- 1.62)	0.06 (0.16)	- 1.07 (- 1.14)
Democracy score (state <i>J</i>)	- 0.07* (- 1.88)	- 0.06** (- 3.48)	- 0.08 (- 1.39)
Contiguity	- 0.39** (- 5.02)	- 0.21** (- 2.75)	- 0.29* (- 2.28)
Period preceding U.S. election	0.03 (0.11)	0.29 (1.47)	- 0.61 (- 0.94)
Unified government (U.S.)	- 0.09 (- 0.34)	0.20 (0.96)	- 0.59* (- 1.69)
Misery index (U.S.)	- 0.07* (- 1.74)	- 0.08** (- 3.91)	- 0.07 (- 0.85)
MC foreign policy Opposition acts (U.S.)	0.16* (2.33)	0.20** (3.35)	- 0.01 (- 0.07)
Constant	- 2.97** (- 5.61)	- 1.79** (- 3.51)	- 3.92** (- 3.86)
<i>N</i>	25960	1259	24701
Number of groups	164	8	163
Wald χ^2	369.47**	1603.23**	36.31**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ (one-tailed tests). Z-scores in parentheses.

Dependent variable is MID 2.1 and MID 3.02 escalatory incident initiation.

GEE, generalized estimating equations; MID, militarized interstate dispute; MC, members of Congress.

likely to target the U.S. before presidential elections. In general, these findings clearly bear out the general predictions of the "invitation to struggle" perspective.²⁰

Enduring Rivalry, the Components of the Misery Index, and the Cold War

In this section, I address three potential issues that might require delimitations of or caveats to the findings of the full model listed in the first column of Table 2.²¹ The first of these regards a more thorough treatment of the contingency of diversionary activity and avoidance on force usage opportunity. The importance of the opportunity of states to use force against others for domestic political purposes is an underlying theme of the SCA perspective and is recognized by earlier diversionary works (James and Oneal 1991; Meernik 1994, 2000; Meernik and Waterman 1996). In essence, though leaders may have incentives to use diversionary force when facing domestic difficulties, they may not have available international opportunities to do so. In their attempt to identify such opportunities in strategic settings, Mitchell and Prins (2004:945) posit that the existence of an ongoing rivalry between states breeds mistrust and animosity, increasing the likelihood that further

²⁰ The inclusion of threats and displays of force may be objectionable to those who consider these lower-level activities to constitute "cheap talk" (and thus to not be associated with any substantial efforts to test American resolve). However, separate analyses of just uses of force, which constitute about 75% of all incident initiations, reveal significant relationships regarding the misery index and foreign policy opposition acts, in the predicted directions, at the 0.05 level (one-tailed).

²¹ I would like to thank three anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions regarding these issues. Another suggested robustness check involved the interactive effect of economic misery and opposition actions on incident initiation. Additional tests revealed no significant association between such an interaction and the dependent variable.

conflict will be observed. Moreover, “leaders can more easily manipulate foreign affairs to satisfy their own personal and political needs” in the context of rivalry, thereby allowing them a greater capacity to identify diversionary targets, justify violence, assign blame, and provide pretexts for conflict in rivalry settings. On the basis of this reasoning, they hypothesize and find that diversionary activity is most regularly observed among rivals. Along the same lines, Fordham (2005) claims that conflict avoidance given economic difficulty should be greatest on the part of America’s rivals, as such states are likely convinced of increased incentives and opportunities for presidents to resolutely employ military force against them. The “invitation to struggle” perspective echoes this expectation, but would also add that the same mechanisms would be operative for elite foreign policy opposition. The existence of conflicts of interests that have become militarized in the past, mistrust of the rival government, decreased domestic obstacles to the employment of military force, and the likelihood that states are especially attuned to the domestic conditions of their rivals might all make rival targeting more likely given indications of decreased foreign policy unity/resolve.

Given this potentiality, the second column of Table 2 reports the findings of a model analyzing the correlates of incident initiation against the U.S. by its enduring rivals (as identified by Diehl and Goertz 2000; Klein, Goertz, and Diehl 2004) from 1949 to 2001, and the third column reports findings of a model analyzing non-rival dyads for that period. The most important findings of the full model—that economic misery decreases targeting, foreign policy opposition acts increase it, and general legislative-leadership unity has no significant effect on it—are shown in the second column to hold only for America’s rivals. Thus, the results largely bear out Fordham’s (2005) expectations regarding rivalry targeting and economic conditions, and they provide at least some evidence that only the states with longstanding conflicts with the U.S. pay consistent attention to specific legislative indicators of resolve when making their targeting decisions.²² The attractiveness of this explanation is bolstered by the finding that unified government has a dampening effect on targeting only in regards to non-rivals (column three) and by the fact that the average severity of the incidents initiated by non-rivals is significantly higher than that of rivalry incidents. We may therefore conclude that non-rival states appear more apt to base their estimates of U.S. resolve on quite general indicators of legislative–executive unity. This may be because these states are not particularly attuned to more specific indicators of increased diversionary incentives or decreased resolve and may generally be more likely to target the U.S. severely enough to invite a violent American response, irrespective of nuanced domestic indicators.

The second issue involves the component variables of the misery index. Although the central innovation of the “invitation to struggle” perspective relates to the effects of congressional foreign policy opposition on targeting, it should be noted that the generality of the theory’s predictions about economic difficulties (and, therefore, the use of the raw misery index) might obscure important variations in the effects of unemployment and inflation on incident initiation against the U.S. As mentioned, although there are numerous inconsistencies across the body of findings produced by scholars on American diversionary behavior, several works using variations of the Blechman and Kaplan (1978) dataset have found a general positive association between unemployment (though not inflation) and the postwar American use of force (e.g., DeRouen 1995, 2000; Fordham 1998b, 2002).²³ However, Fordham (2005), using COPDAB and WEIS data, produces evidence that rival

²² One might question whether these findings are driven by systematic difference in the frequency of incidents initiated by rivals and non-rivals. However, only 51% of incidents in this dataset are initiated by rivals, indicating that any methodological “bias” toward rivalry is minimal.

²³ Indeed, separate analysis reveals a positive and significant correlation between unemployment and American MID incident initiation against other states, indicating that this finding is robust across multiple measures of conflict.

behavior toward the U.S. in the postwar era generally becomes more cooperative given higher levels of American unemployment (though not given higher levels of inflation).

These results, taken together, are rather confusing. Given that the studies above address different aspects of the diversionary question, can we consider the SCA perspective viable if, even though other states are more conciliatory toward the U.S. during periods of high unemployment, the U.S. is still able to "successfully" prosecute diversionary conflict against them at exactly the same times? Also, why is high unemployment consistently associated with U.S. force usage (irrespective of the party of the president; see Fordham, 1998a, 2002) whereas high inflation is not—and high unemployment is associated with cooperation whereas high inflation is not—if both enhance the diversionary incentive? These questions, although clearly important, are best left to future research. At minimum, however, given that past studies have found variations concerning the impact of inflation and unemployment on diversion and avoidance and that this work uses a different measure of targeting than Fordham (2005), an exploration of the differential impact of inflation and unemployment on the propensity of other states to target the U.S. for militarized incident initiation is warranted.

Table 3 reports the findings of three negative binomial GEE analyses in which the raw misery index is disaggregated into its component inflation and unemployment variables. As is evident, Table 2's findings concerning the relationship between economic misery and the targeting of the U.S. for incident initiation are being driven by increases in American inflation. The coefficients for inflation are negative and significant in the full and rival models. Conversely, the coefficients

TABLE 3. Quarterly Directed-Dyadic Incident Initiation Against the U.S., 1949–2001: Disaggregating the Misery Index (Negative Binomial GEE Model Results)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Full Model</i>	<i>Enduring Rival Dyads</i>	<i>Non-Rival Dyads</i>
Relative capabilities (state <i>J</i> : U.S.)	3.86** (4.13)	1.49** (2.48)	3.62** (2.64)
S score	- 1.52* (- 1.79)	0.05 (0.13)	- 1.36 (- 1.37)
Democracy score (state <i>J</i>)	- 0.07* (- 1.79)	- 0.06** (- 3.37)	- 0.08 (- 1.30)
Contiguity	- 0.38** (- 5.61)	- 0.20** (- 2.78)	- 0.25* (- 1.94)
Period preceding U.S. election	0.08 (0.28)	0.31 (1.44)	- 0.52 (- 0.75)
Unified government (U.S.)	- 0.01 (- 0.04)	0.23 (1.05)	- 0.50 (- 1.45)
Inflation (U.S.)	- 0.11* (- 2.25)	- 0.09* (- 2.20)	- 0.17 (- 1.63)
Unemployment (U.S.)	0.07 (0.89)	- 0.02 (- 0.43)	0.20* (1.79)
MC foreign policy Opposition acts (U.S.)	0.17** (2.53)	0.21** (3.48)	0.01 (0.04)
Constant	- 3.73** (- 6.33)	- 2.06** (- 7.65)	- 5.47** (- 5.37)
<i>N</i>	25960	1259	24701
Number of groups	164	8	163
Wald χ^2	401.13**	1996.28**	47.88**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < 0$ (one-tailed tests). Z-scores in parentheses.

Dependent variable is MID 2.1 and MID 3.02 escalatory incident initiation.

GEE, generalized estimating equations; MID, militarized interstate dispute; MC, members of Congress.

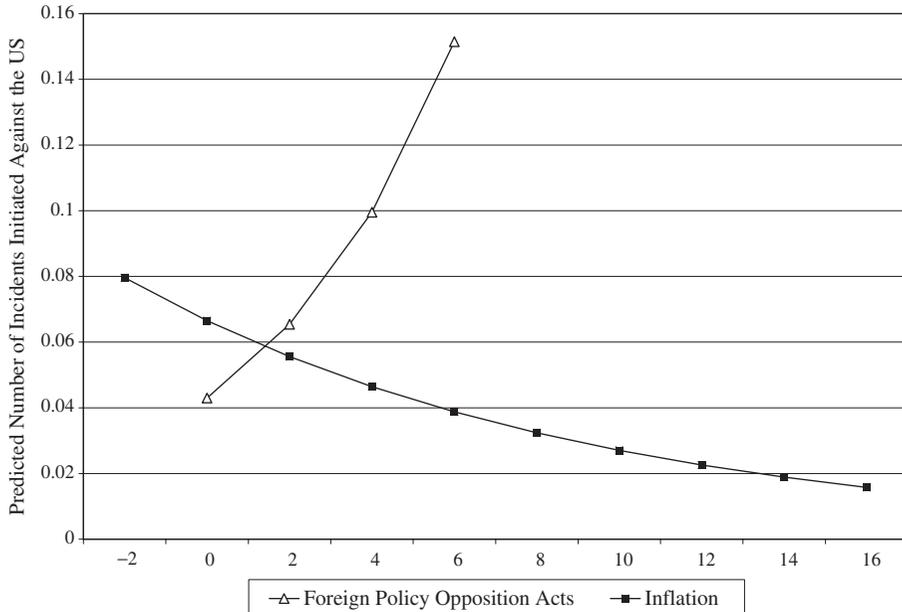


FIG. 1. Inflation, Congressional Foreign Policy Opposition Acts, and Predicted Incident Initiation Against the United States, 1949–2001 (Enduring Rival Dyads)

for unemployment are insignificant in the full and rival models, and *positive* and significant in the non-rival model, indicating that non-rivals are more likely to target the U.S. when American unemployment is high; the last of these findings stands in contrast to those produced by Fordham (2005) using the COPDAB/WEIS data. Finally, the coefficient for unified government in the non-rival model drops to insignificance. Overall, the results reported in Table 3 reveal an important delimitation to economic predictions of the “invitation to struggle perspective,” indicate that there is significant variability in empirical support for the SCA perspective across various measures of both American economic distress and conflict/cooperation, and reinforce the notion that there are anomalies concerning apparent American diversionary behavior and strategic avoidance that remain unaccounted for by the SCA perspective.

To observe the conditional impact of inflation and foreign policy opposition acts on targeting, I conduct marginal effects analyses of predicted incident initiation against the U.S. by enduring rivals. The results of these analyses are tracked in Figure 1.²⁴ Overall, an increase of one foreign policy opposition action increases the expected number of incidents initiated against the U.S. by an average magnitude of 0.0181. Conversely, an increase in one inflation point decreases the expected number of incidents by an average magnitude of 0.0036. Although seemingly infinitesimal in an absolute sense, one must recognize that the mean expectation of rival incident initiations produced by the model is 0.0471. Thus, each additional opposition action leads to an average 38% increase in the expected

²⁴ The procedure for determining the marginal effects in a population-averaged count model is identical to that of “garden variety” count models. The formula $E(y_i|x_i) = \exp(x_i\beta)$ gives the expected magnitude of the occurrence of the dependent variable in a negative binomial model given any value of a particular covariate, while holding the values of all other covariates constant (here, at the mean for continuous variables and zero for dichotomous variables) (Long 1997:232).

amount of initiation, whereas each additional inflation point leads to an average 8% decrease.

Finally, the decision to extend the period under analysis to 2001 deserves further evaluation. Although the inclusion of only initial and escalatory MID 3.02 incidents likely minimizes inconsistency between the two versions of the dependent variable, the updated opposition acts variable was constructed using only Mayhew's (2005) rough estimates of post-1988 opposition and news sources. Moreover, the conclusion of the Cold War undoubtedly shifted the general focus and scope of U.S. foreign policy. Of greatest interest to this work, the Cold War may also have had an important impact on how potential targeters viewed the effects of congressional foreign policy opposition on administrations' resolve. Many scholars (e.g., Destler 2001) have argued that the Cold War rivalry with the USSR spurred bipartisan consensus regarding the spirit (if not the actual conduct) of American foreign affairs. However, as public debate over involvement in Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo indicated, that consensus had likely eroded by the early 1990s. Thus, opposition activity during the Cold War may have signaled to these states that exploitable "cracks" existed in the bedrock of congressional support for the president's conduct of foreign policy, whereas opposition activity after the Cold War might have presented a less clear signal of likely resolve.²⁵ Conversely, other states may have viewed opposition activity during the Cold War as aberrational, thus leading them to discount the acts of dissatisfied MCs. As no works have yet tested the SCA argument against the American foreign policy experience past 1992, there is additional reason to look at the pre- and post-Cold War periods separately.

Table 4 is comprised of the results of analyses of three different periods: 1949–1988 (representing the period covered by Mayhew's original coding of the opposition acts variable); 1949–1992 (the period covered by the MID 2.1 escalatory incident initiation variable); and 1993–2001 (the period covered by the MID 3.02 escalatory incident initiation variable).

The first and second columns of Table 4 show that the general findings presented here clearly apply to the Cold War period using the 2.1 measure and are not being driven by the extension of the MC opposition acts variable to 1992. However, the third column reveals that, though the general results hold for the entire post-1949 period, the MID 3.02 escalatory measure is not significantly associated with any domestic politics variable in the period 1993–2001.²⁶ Leaving aside the possibility that coding inconsistency is at the heart of these differences, we may thus conclude that the predictions of the "invitation to struggle" and the SCA perspective are applicable only to the Cold War. Speculatively, this may indicate that the existence of a rather clear consensus regarding the general direction of American foreign policy could work to amplify the effect of opposition actions on perceptions of American resolve, while a lack of consensus may mitigate or obscure such perceptions.

²⁵ One might suggest that President Clinton was subject to particular hostility, indicating broadly that general congressional attitudes toward individual presidents are a central determinant of foreign policy opposition. Although this view is applicable in some respects, a compelling argument can be made that most congressional opposition to Clinton's foreign policy resulted from philosophical differences—especially within the Democratic Party—regarding America's post Cold-War international role rather than a general distaste for Clinton himself. On this score, see Deibel (2000).

²⁶ As with the other analyses, tests using the full 3.02 measure (i.e., all incidents initiated against the U.S.) reveal nearly identical results to those using the escalatory measure. The analyses of Table 4 do not employ the rival/non-rival distinction, as model convergence cannot be achieved for rival dyads in the period 1993–2001. However, the key differences between the findings regarding rival and non-rival initiation for the full period are also found, in unreported analyses, to hold in 1949–1988 and 1949–1992.

TABLE 4. Quarterly Directed-Dyadic Incident Initiation Against the U.S.: Tests of Various Time Periods (Negative Binomial GEE Model Results)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>1949–1988</i>	<i>1949–1992</i>	<i>1993–2001</i>
Relative capabilities (state <i>J</i> : U.S.)	4.57** (4.43)	4.58** (4.19)	1.59 (0.68)
S score	-1.37* (-1.79)	-1.37* (-1.79)	-4.53 (-1.28)
Democracy score (state <i>J</i>)	-0.06 (-1.45)	-0.07* (-2.03)	-0.09 (-1.03)
Contiguity	-0.32** (-4.45)	-0.33** (-3.74)	-0.68** (3.38)
Period preceding U.S. election	0.13 (0.41)	0.12 (0.40)	-0.13 (-0.09)
Unified government (U.S.)	-0.18 (-0.63)	-0.15 (-0.49)	1.58 (1.26)
Inflation (U.S.)	-0.11** (-2.61)	-0.11** (-2.46)	0.14 (0.18)
Unemployment (U.S.)	0.05 (0.55)	0.03 (0.43)	-0.39 (-0.56)
MC foreign policy Opposition acts (U.S.)	0.19** (2.42)	0.19** (2.50)	0.13 (0.38)
Constant	-3.78** (-5.76)	-3.84** (-4.77)	-0.13 (-0.05)
<i>N</i>	18552	20904	5056
Number of groups	140	160	158
Wald χ^2	421.73**	396.91**	83.28**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (one-tailed tests). Z-scores in parentheses.

The period 1949–1988 represents range of Mayhew's (2000) original coding of MC opposition acts variable.

The period 1949–1992 represents range of MID 2.1 escalatory incident initiation variable.

The period 1993–2001 represents range of MID 3.02 escalatory incident initiation variable.

GEE, generalized estimating equations; MID, militarized interstate dispute; MC, members of Congress.

Conclusion and Implications

The “invitation to struggle” perspective of targeting and avoidance offers a useful means by which to incorporate the effects of congressional foreign policy opposition into the study of foreign policy signaling, and general tests of the postwar American experience bear out its predictions in large measure. This theory's view of the differential impact of various conditions and signals on the targeting propensity of states is based on a theoretical approach that focuses specifically on clues likely to provide more valuable information to potential targeters than mere indicators of general legislative-executive unity. In doing so, the “invitation to struggle” perspective extends the general, intuitive logic of the SCA perspective by constructively employing the logic underlying prior work by scholars studying the strategic impact of position-taking by actors in democratic institutions. Although providing substantial support for the “invitation to struggle” approach, this article points to important variations concerning the effects of different types of economic distress on targeting behavior, ones identified by the diversionary literature but which remain insufficiently addressed by the SCA perspective. In particular, the theoretical underpinnings of perspectives that center on conflict avoidance must be more thoroughly reconciled with the fact that diversionary activity is observed in certain contexts. Finally, the results suggest significant dissimilarity between Cold War and post-Cold War targeting and corroborate earlier notions that there are systematic differences between the avoidance and targeting actions of rivals and non-rivals.

This article has also made some reasonable arguments concerning the ascendancy of the MID 2.1 and 3.02 incident initiation and foreign-policy-opposition acts

variables over the dispute initiation and roll-call votes variables, respectively. Though the MID 2.1 variable has been used in very few tests of targeting to date (see Palmer, London, and Regan 2004), the findings here indicate that its utility is considerable. Nevertheless, as this work and Fordham (2005) imply, there may exist significant variations in support for the "invitation to struggle" perspective between studies using the MID incident initiation variable and those using the COPDAB/WEIS data (which includes conflictual acts that are below the threshold of military action identified by the MID data). The use of this alternative measure of the dependent variable would go a long way in determining the extent and nature of this variability and, by extension, the breadth of overall support for the "invitation to struggle" perspective.²⁷

Additionally, the article has implied that, since vocal congressional opposition to presidents' foreign policies can be damaging to resolve whether or not it comes from members of the party that holds a congressional majority, we might expect few differences regarding the impact of opposition from either "type" of legislator. However, the veracity of this prediction is not directly tested here. Moreover, it is possible that, because the president shares "electoral fortunes" with his co-partisans and relies upon them for support, resolve is most regularly eroded when foreign policy opposition is vocalized by co-partisans. Future work may thus also be helpful in determining whether the theory's assumptions about legislators whose party is in the congressional minority are valid in the context of targeting, and whether co-partisan foreign policy opposition is more likely to invite targeting than opposition from non-partisan members of Congress. Further, the theory supposes that congressional actions taken explicitly in support of presidential foreign policy can work to bolster outside perceptions of unity and likely resolve. Although his study coded all actions taken by members of Congress, Mayhew (2000) only explicitly identifies those actions that are taken in obvious opposition to presidential foreign policy; he does not explicitly identify those actions taken in obvious support. Any tests of this important adjunct to the "invitation to struggle" perspective would need to make this distinction.

Though there are some potentially important issues that must be considered, I believe that the postulates of the "invitation to struggle" perspective are at least generally applicable to targeting expectations concerning other democratic states. The largest hurdle to cross-national testing involves data availability: any test of the theory's expectations would necessitate the collection of systematic foreign-policy-opposition data from members of governments and oppositions, which would be a daunting task. Nevertheless, because such actions should erode potential targeters' estimates of likely resolve, I would expect them to be positively associated with targeting. Moreover, it is not clear that all democratic states possess sufficient power on the international stage for their leaders to regularly consider diversionary force (e.g., James and Hristoulas 1994), a possibility that could alter diversionary opportunity and, by extension, conflict avoidance on the part of potential targeters (see Mitchell and Prins 2004 for a contradictory view).

One must also consider variations in democratic institutional structure in determining the theory's broader applicability. Certainly, the potential targeters of most parliamentary democracies do not have available to them a general measure of unified government, as opposition parties in those systems are by definition outside of the government. Aside from whether such general measures are useful

²⁷ Fordham (2005) claims that COPDAB/WEIS data are more suitable to the testing of SCA arguments than the MID data, as they include conciliatory actions taken toward other states. However, they would be less suitable to tests of the "invitation to struggle" perspective. Specifically, as foreign policy opposition is predicted to decrease estimates of resolve and thus increase military targeting, targeters might find it counterproductive to increase "non-cooperative" behavior before moving directly to militarized activity, as doing so could result in a lost opportunity to forcefully press the issue while the probability of resolute response is low.

indicators of resolve from the perspective of potential targeters (and the theory and findings presented here indicate it is not, at least for rivals), is the foreign policy opposition of such legislators less important than that of members of the government? The “legislative signaling” perspective expects (and the “invitation to struggle perspective” implies) that vocal opposition by legislators whose party is out of power might still undermine perceptions of crisis resolve if indicative of widespread popular and opposition dissatisfaction to the government’s stance. But since the continued tenure of prime ministers in many parliamentary governments rests almost entirely on their standing among their co-partisans, and because some of those co-partisans are likely to have designs on the leadership position, it is at least possible that foreign-policy-opposition actions from co-partisans could indicate a more serious erosion of likely resolve than in co-partisan opposition in presidential democracies. Taken together with the suggestions for further empirical testing in the American context, such a distinction could provide some important extensions and caveats to the applicability of the theory as it now stands.

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