

Demonstrating Credentials?:

Female Executives, Women's Status, and the Use of Force

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ABSTRACT

Prior research has found that though higher levels of women's equality is associated with more peaceful interstate relations, female executives have been found to be significantly more hawkish than their male counterparts. We argue that this paradox can be explained by considering the gender environment in which those executives are operating. First, in contrast to prior quantitative findings that female-led states are more conflictual, we find that after distinguishing between initiation and being targeted, female executives only seek to "demonstrate their security credentials" when governing countries with very poor women's status. Female-led states are increasingly more peaceful when women's rights improve. Second, we find that male leaders also respond to the domestic gender environment and are significantly more likely to initiate disputes against states with female executives, but are also increasingly less likely to do so as women's rights in their state improve.

Keywords: gender, conflict, role congruity, civil-military relations

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INTRODUCTION

In his *A History of Warfare*, John Keegan covers the practice of warfare across timeframes and cultures as diverse as the ancient Greeks, Romans, Persians, Mongols, and the 20th Century's world wars. Among his observations is his infamous conclusion that "If warfare is as old as history and as universal as mankind, we must now enter the supremely important limitation that it is an entirely masculine activity" (Keegan 1993, 76). Keegan's quote is informative for scholars of international relations in two ways. First, the quote offers demonstrable dismissiveness of a number of immeasurably important roles that women have played in the history of warfare. Going well beyond famous warriors such as Joan of Arc, adventurer-warriors such as Gertrude Bell, and wartime heads of state such as Golda Meir, scholars have made stronger efforts to understand the relationship that gender more broadly has with international relations and conflict in particular, including in those investigated by Keegan (Enloe 1989; Sjoberg 2014).

Gender, of course, refers to more than the biological sex of a conflict participant. It is more than distinguishing the male soldiers commonly viewed as those that fight and die from the female citizens that are widely portrayed solely as conflict victims, and it is far more than the women that actually fight and die on the frontlines. Mere attitudes toward the role of women in war is expected to have important real-world consequences, leading us to the second contribution of Keegan's quote. Aside from its inaccuracy, his acceptance that warfare is "an entirely masculine activity" reflects a wider belief about conflict and those that are competent to deal with it, and it is this very belief that has inevitably and inextricably tied war and gender.

In this article we argue that attitudes toward the ability and appropriateness of women acting as chief executives has important implications for international conflict. We make two innovative contributions to this literature. First, we respond to prior studies that find a positive relationship between female heads of state and international conflict. Specifically, we theorize that the influence of a head of state's gender on conflict will be conditioned by the domestic gender environment in which the executive operates. We argue a heightened conflict proclivity of female chief executives will be driven by cases in which they govern states with poor women's status. Second, we also consider how the gender environment can influence the conflict behavior of states led by male executives. Prior efforts have speculated that men will be averse to compromising with women, as they will be seen as weak. We agree that this incentive does lead male executives to be less cooperative with female counterparts. However, we again argue that this tendency is not invariable across states and instead is conditional on the gender environment in which the executive operates. So while a man governing a country with abject women's status will face constraints when bargaining with a woman, we do not expect those constraints to be as strong for men that govern more egalitarian countries.

We empirically test these expectations for a global sample and identify five broad themes. First, in line with prior literature, we find that the empowerment of women makes states led by either men or women generally less likely to initiate a dispute. Second, again in line with previous scholarship, states with female leaders are statistically more likely to initiate militarized interstate disputes than those led by men. Third, we find this tendency subsides as the domestic gender environment improves, and there is limited evidence suggesting that gender egalitarian countries actually see a negative relationship between female leadership and conflict initiation. Fourth, countries with male heads are statistically more likely to initiate disputes against states

led by women. Again, we find this tendency subsides when the initiating state has higher levels of women's status. Finally, the evidence suggests that these trends are particularly strong for militarized interstate disputes that reach the status of war.

PRIOR LITERATURE

Bolstered by pivotal contributions by scholars such as Enloe (1989) and Tickner (1992), social science has seen a marked increase in studies exploring gendered aspects of international security in recent decades (Reiter 2015; Sjoberg et al. 2016). This growing literature covers an exhaustive range of conflict dynamics, including issues as disparate as terrorism, wartime sexual violence, rebel organization, and peacekeeping (Cohen 2013a; 2013b; Hudson et al. 2009; Karim and Beardsley 2013; 2016; Parkinson 2013; Thayer and Hudson 2010; Thomas and Bond 2015; Wood 2006). More directly relevant to this discussion, Caprioli has found that improved women's status limits hostility level in militarized interstate disputes, makes states less likely to be the first party to utilize force, and are even less likely to have civil war (Caprioli 2000; 2003; 2005; see also Stearns 2006, Regan and Paskeviciute 2003). These findings echo Marshall and Ramsey's (1999) earlier suggestion that gender empowerment will reduce interstate conflict. More recently, Bjarnegard and Melander (2011) called into question aspects of the monadic democratic peace, finding that democracies are only more peaceful insofar as they have moved toward gender equality.

Though there is a considerable and growing literature that attests to the pacifying influence of improved women's status, we have also seen the rise of a paradox. Though women's empowerment was found to reduce the severity of international crises, the presence of a female leader was found to make them worse (Caprioli and Boyer 2001). This counterintuitive finding

was reaffirmed by Koch and Fulton (2011), who, using events data, found states led by female leaders to be significantly more conflictual than those led by men, despite higher women's status having a negative influence on conflict. Though the former speculated that this finding could be due to either female leaders needing to prove themselves or male leaders wanting to avoid "losing" to a woman, this went untested. We believe that this speculation is merited since a considerable amount of literature across a range of disciplines has demonstrated that women face more obstacles and are evaluated more critically when holding positions of power. These obstacles, combined with a particularly critical environment, are especially likely to contribute to more hawkish foreign policy.

First, management studies indicate that female managers are likely to be more negatively judged in their competence regardless of actual performance. Though female managers have been found to be evaluated only slightly less well in some studies, the gender gap grows when operating in traditionally male-dominated leadership roles or "masculine organizational contexts" (Eagly 2007; Eagly and Carli 2003; Eagly et al. 1992). This "role congruity" theory was furthered by Garcia-Retamero and López-Zafra (2006), whose experiments with industry found females were far less likely to get positive evaluations in the auto industry than in the clothing. More relevant to this study, Biernat et al. (1998) found such gender bias in evaluating commanding officers at a nine-week leadership training course in the US Army, while Archer (2012) found similar dynamics in the Marines. In line with "masculinization" as military indoctrination, these tendencies grew worse over the time of the course. In addition to organizational context, respondents with less "egalitarian" gender attitudes tend to give female candidates less favorable ratings as well (Alexander and Anderson 1993; Hershey 1977).

Second, aside from direct attitudes toward female leaders, there is also evidence that leadership styles are perceived to be associated with sex. Men, for example, are seen as more “agentic” in style, women as “communal” (Eagley and Johnson 1990). Leadership desires more agentic qualities, and survey respondents suggest “masculine” leadership styles are more likely to be equated with good managers (Powell et al. 2002). As a result, an effective leader is expected to be direct, dominant, aggressive, and self-confident (Hackman et al. 1992). In contrast, the traditional stereotype of femininity includes attributes that are negatively associated with leadership, including being emotional, passive, submissive, intuitive, nurturing, and indecisive. Most political institutions and organizations are structured by a traditional and stereotypical masculine culture that values and rewards leaders who exhibit these stereotypical traits. Culturally embedded images about gender division surely impact what traits people expect to see in the effective political leader. Accordingly, individuals who possess feminine traits are not viewed as strong leaders.

These dynamics have also been recognized in politics. For example, female political candidates generally see less coverage of their policy positions, and more negative coverage overall. These trends have been identified in subnational, national, and cross-national studies (Kahn 1994; Kahn and Goldenberg 1991; Kittilson and Fridkin 2008). Scholarship in social psychology, meanwhile, finds that male leaders are both preferred and are evaluated more favorably than females when confronting intergroup competition (Van Vugt and Spisak 2008). Experiments assessing voter preferences also point to female leaders being significantly less favored during war time, in part because of perceptions they will be at a disadvantage against males who use more aggressive tactics (Kyl-Heku and Buss 1996; Little et al. 2007). As Tickner (1992, 39) notes in her assessment of international relations theory, the worst threat to a state “is

to be like a woman because women are weak, fearful, indecisive and dependent.” This echoes role congruity theory’s general emphasis on women being less favored in leadership and more likely to be evaluated negatively (Eagly and Karau 2002). Such tendencies have even been noted in experimental settings when respondents are provided evidence of the effectiveness of the female leader (Heilman et al. 1995).

GENDER AS A BARGAINING CONSTRAINT

Prior literature tells us that female leaders will be criticized more heavily, these criticisms grow stronger in more masculine organizational contexts, are stronger among people with less egalitarian gender attitudes, and a dominant and aggressive personality is generally favored in a leader. Each of these trends will be especially strong for female chief executives that must deal with important security issues. Regardless of the veracity of Keegan’s claim that warfare is “an entirely masculine activity,” the mere perception that it is a masculine activity is expected to critically influence perceptions of the ability of female executives to operate on security matters. And indeed, survey respondents see men as “more competent at legislating around issues of national security and military crises” (Lawless 2004, 480) and women are in fact less likely to gain office when a state faces more pronounced security challenges internationally (Barnes and O’Brien 2018; Schroeder 2017).

These dynamics have important implications for our understanding of interstate conflict, particularly for the commonly invoked bargaining model of war. Bargaining theory views conflict largely as a breakdown of resource allocation in which at least one side of a dyad makes the decision that fighting will lead to a more favorable allocation of that resource than accepting the status quo (Reiter 2003). We believe gender dynamics will present a problem for the

bargaining environment, and will directly impact the level of allocation that the executive is expected to pursue.¹ We point to three reasons.

First, in any bargain, the executive must consider both their foreign adversary and their domestic audience (Putnam 1988). Female executives are likely to be evaluated more negatively than their male counterparts by their constituents, particularly on security matters. This suggests that the bar will be set higher for the performance of female executives internationally. In a bargaining perspective, the implication is that female executives will need to walk away with a more favorable allocation of resources than a male who operates under similar conditions. This will result in a reduced opportunity to reach a compromise with a potential foreign adversary—that is, the win-set is smaller—and conflict becomes more likely.²

We see numerous hints of such aggressiveness in history, for both domestic and transnational security challenges. As Prime Minister of Turkey, Tansu Ciller was undeniably a hardliner against the Kurds and was particularly aggressive in her dealings with historical rival Greece, having even threatened to march on Athens. Corazon Aquino was threatened with a coup after merely suggesting a negotiation with communist guerrillas in the Philippines (Hoogensen and Solheim 2006, 59). This was a better outcome than that faced by Argentinian President Isabel Peron, whose military did unseat her after deciding a “weak-willed and inexperienced woman” was not the person to lead Argentina through a time of uncertain security (Hoogensen and Solheim 2006, 116). Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf faced strong opposition in rising to the Liberian

¹ For a more explicit discussion of gendered aspects of within-crisis bargaining, see Post and Sen (2018).

² Our discussion focuses on direct interactions between potentially adversarial executives. Our argument is also applicable to “joiners” in conflict. In this case, the same theoretical processes that drive female executives to “demonstrate their credentials” via the initiation of a dispute can also drive female executives to act as “joiners” in a conflict initiated by a different dyad. An obvious example would be Margaret Thatcher in the lead up to the Gulf War (1990-1991). Though the US would be seen as the primary initiator, Thatcher actively supported the effort and directly lobbied President Bush, even telling him in late August 1990 it “was no time to go wobbly” (Thatcher 1990).

presidency due to the perception that “only a man” would be strong enough to deal with the challenges of demobilizing former civil war combatants (Hoogensen and Solheim 2006, 59). Even Golda Meir faced intense criticism for not showing enough aggression in the lead up to Israel’s 1973 war.

It is unsurprising, then, that there would be an incentive to demonstrate one’s resolve on security matters by being more belligerent than what may otherwise be required. Evidence also suggests, however, that some leaders do not equally share these incentives. For example, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike actually credited her country’s previous movements toward gender equality as having allowed her to avoid the challenges faced by other female executives. Not all female executives face the same domestic environment, and the characteristics of that environment will have important implications for their foreign policy behavior. Specifically, we argue that female executives will be more aggressive when governing states in which their performance is more likely to be negatively evaluated. In other words, the bargaining constraints placed on a female leader are expected to be more pronounced when governing a state with lower levels of women’s status, and less pronounced when women’s status is higher.³ This leads us to the first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The conflict propensity of female executives will decrease as women’s status improves.

Second, similar dynamics play out on the other side of the dyad. Previous investigations of the relationship between gender and interstate conflict have considered the role of executive gender and the domestic gender environment in which leaders operate. Our first hypothesis

³ See Schroeder and Powell (2018) for a larger discussion of gender and civil-military relations.

predicts that these dynamics should be treated as conditional. Our second hypothesis ultimately focuses on another neglected aspect of this dynamic. Specifically, prior studies have not directly considered how male executives will change their behavior both as a consequence of their domestic gender environment *and* the gender of the head of state with which they interact.

First, male executives will wish to avoid being seen as weak, just as a female leader would. In the words of Caprioli and Boyer, “this macho image...makes them unwilling to ‘lose’ to a woman, lest their masculinity be questioned” (2001, 508). We also see historical evidence of such behavior. Domestically, Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos made no effort to conceal his embarrassment in being opposed by Corazon Aquino, as in his opinion women “belong in the bedroom” rather than in politics (Richter 1990, 535). Internationally, South Korea’s Park Guen-hye was met with similar ire by her northern rival. Amidst cancelling the armistice signed at the close of the Korean War, and the South’s engagement in joint training exercises with the US, the North’s army stated, “This frenzy kicked up by the South Korean warmonger is in no way irrelevant with the venomous swish of skirt made by” Park (Sang-Hun 2013). A reference to a skirt in this context is more than just a comment regarding one’s gender. This particular phrase is used in Korean parlance to describe women seen as overly aggressive or otherwise stepping beyond their traditional gender role. Perhaps most obvious to the context of war, Pakistani President Yahya Khan strongly intimated the role of gender in his dealings with Indira Gandhi, having stated his adversary “is neither a woman nor a head of state by wanting to be both at once” and “if that woman thinks she is going to cow me down, I refuse to take it” (Bahtia 1974, 242; Malhotra 1989, quoted in Caprioli and Boyer 2001, 508).

With his own constituents viewing his adversary as less competent and lacking resolve, he too is incentivized to pursue a less accommodating bargaining position. The win-set is again

lessened, making the prospects of a peaceful compromise less likely. Further, beyond the embarrassment associated with such a “loss,” dynamics of sexism can also lead many male leaders, and their constituents, to genuinely believe their female counterparts are weak negotiators (or fighters) and will lead them to make larger demands during negotiations. Fearon (1995), for example, speaks at length regarding states’ assessments potential war outcomes. Prevailing biases toward the abilities of female executives suggests that female-led states will likely be seen as less competent on military affairs and, consequently, less capable in a fight. The resulting expectation is that biases could result in a further diminishing of the win-set.

Such dynamics suggest a potential adversary will be less cooperative when interacting with female executives than when they are interacting with other males, all else being equal. Returning to the plight of Pakistani president Kahn, a *Sunday Times* correspondent, present at his early boast, noted “To a tough man like Yahya...helplessly waiting for the next turn of the screw is bad enough...the idea that the screw is being turned by a Hindu in a sari is clearly agonizing (quoted in Rajamani 2016). Within weeks, Kahn’s army commenced the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 with airstrikes against Indian targets. Though acting preemptively, Pakistani forces were overwhelmed and the war came to a humiliating close for Pakistan in under two weeks.

Gender dynamics could play a role in overconfidence, but this should again vary in severity depending on the gender environment in the male executive’s country. If our male executive is operating in a gender egalitarian environment, we expect them to be less constrained in their efforts at finding a peaceful resolution. Sex stereotypes are perhaps less pronounced in the executive himself, and—perhaps more importantly—are less pronounced amongst his constituents that will evaluate his performance. If our male executive leads a state that is

particularly discriminatory against women, he is expected to be particularly averse to compromise, lest being seen as having his hand forced by a woman.

Hypothesis 2: Male chief executives will be more likely to target female executives than male executives when governing states with poor women's status.

DATA AND METHODS

One of our goals in this article is to utilize data that more accurately captures anticipated causal processes. We believe we offer a number of improvements over prior studies. The closest quantitative approach to our theory was conducted by Koch and Fulton (2011), who similarly investigated leader gender and the role of domestic women's status. We feel that their innovative study can be furthered in a number of ways. First and foremost, we are specifically investigating *militarized* conflict. Koch and Fulton utilized events data to determine an "average conflict score." The World Events/Interaction Survey (WEIS) data capture a variety of aspects of international relations, ranging from a military attack, to breaks in diplomatic relations, refusals to comment, providing military assistance, etc. (Goldstein 1992; McClelland 1978). An average weighted scale will obviously provide an overview of an exhaustive array of relations, but it inevitably conflates a number of behaviors. We are interested in military disputes, making the data invalid for our study. We instead utilize Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs) (Ghosn et al. 2003) for the dependent variable, ultimately employing logistic regression given the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable.

Utilizing the MID data provides a second advantage in that we can determine which side initiated the dispute. Prior studies (Caprioli and Boyer 2001; Koch and Fulton 2011) have theorized that female leaders will behave differently than male leaders but utilize monadic or

dispute-level data that makes it impossible to distinguish the aggressor. So while Koch and Fulton (2011) find that female-led states tend to have a higher average conflict score, the analysis is ultimately unclear as to whether the state with a female executive is either the belligerent side or the target. To their credit, Caprioli and Boyer's (2001) assessment indicated that case histories suggest female leaders were generally not the first to use force within a conflict, although their quantitative models indicated female-led states would be more conflict prone. Given we both expect female leaders to be more belligerent and male leaders to more frequently target females, it is absolutely imperative that we distinguish the initiator from the target in order to indicate whether either trend is present. We thus utilized directed dyads as our level of analysis and use *MID initiation* as our primary dependent variable. MID initiation occurs when, in a given directed dyad, state A at a minimum issues a threat of military force against state B (Ghosn et al. 2003). We also include additional specifications for MIDs that reach the level of war, defined as those that reach at least 1,000 conflict-related deaths.⁴

Our independent variables come in four forms. First, we account for *female chief executive* by using data from the Archigos Dataset of Political Leaders (Goemans et al. 2009), which is also used to determine *female target* if a female is the chief executive of the potential target state. Second, we begin to account for women's status by accounting for *percent women in parliament* utilizing data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2015) and the World Bank (2015). Parliamentary representation is a key component of a variety of aggregate indices, though high values do not necessarily reflect "women's empowerment" (see Arat 2015). However, the measure does capture an important part of the executive's domestic audience and could work

⁴ Our argument typically receives stronger substantive support by the war models. However, given the very low joint probability of both female leaders and war, we are hesitant to draw wide conclusions. For example, the MID dataset points to only nine instances of female-led states initiating a war-level MID within a dyad, these instances are actually limited to only three female executives (Thatcher, Meir, and Bhutto), and five of these instances refer directly to Arab-Israeli conflicts.

through similar processes. For example, the presence of larger numbers of women in the legislature could shift perceptions regarding the leader's performance from other members of the government. In other words, whatever the measure lacks in validity as a general measure of women's empowerment, it does reflect the presence of women in the government and can capture the theoretical dynamics described above.

We next consider the women's empowerment index, provided by the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. Defined as "a process of increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency, and participation in societal decision-making," it is primarily a measure of political empowerment (Sundström et al. 2015, 4). Finally, we consider women's *social rights* and *economic rights* as determined by the Cingranelli-Richards Human Rights Dataset (CIRI) (Cingranelli and Richards 2008). These concept-specific variables tell us if women's social or economic rights were not guaranteed by law (0), if rights were legally guaranteed but severely prohibited in practice (1), if rights were legally guaranteed but moderately prohibited in practice (2), or rights were guaranteed in both law and practice (3). Social rights include dynamics such as the right to inheritance, marriage and divorce, freedom of movement, and education, among other factors. Economic rights consider factors such as equal pay for equal work, equality in hiring and promotion, freedom to work without family permission, right to work in "dangerous" fields, etc.⁵

To account for alternative explanations of conflict we incorporate a number of controls that are common to quantitative assessments of interstate conflict. The natural log of *GDP per*

⁵ We exclude the CIRI political rights measure for two reasons. First, women in parliament and V-Dem's empowerment index already include the primary political factors being considered and offer a greater temporal and geographic scope. Powell and Schroeder (2016) also point to the measure having little variation and less empirical utility, given some of its main components—based on law—were widely adopted globally by the time the data are available (1981).

capita is derived from the World Bank's *World Development Indicators*. *Growth* refers to the year-to-year percent fluctuation in GDP per capita. Joint democracy considers whether both members of the directed dyad were democracies, with states being considered a *democracy* if their Polity score was above +5 (Marshall and Jaggers 2000). *Power Ratio* refers to the proportion of the combined scores from the Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC) that is possessed by the initiating side of the directed dyad. States are considered to be *allies* if they possess a "formal agreement...to cooperate militarily in the face of a potential or realized military conflict," as coded by the Alliance Treaty Obligations, and Provisions (ATOP) project (Leeds 2005). We also include the log of the distance between states. Finally, *peace years* captures the years since a dispute was last initiated in the dyad. We include squared and cubed polynomials of peace years to capture temporal dependence at the suggestion of Carter and Signorino (2010).⁶

We include a global sample of cases encompassing over 160 countries, representing a considerable expansion over Koch and Fulton (2011), who relied on a sample of only 22 western democracies. Not only do we feel a global sample is more appropriate, we feel that it is necessary for the theory. We argue that the tendencies of leaders will fluctuate in accordance with the domestic gender environment. Given that long tenured democracies are noted to have higher levels of women's rights (Beer 2009), it is necessary to have variation on these variables of interest.

RESULTS

⁶ Additional models considering region dummy variables and region fixed effects yield results consistent with those reported here.

We anticipate that 1) female leaders will be statistically more likely to initiate a militarized interstate dispute at low levels of women's status, 2) female leaders will be statistically more likely to be targeted in a militarized interstate dispute at low levels of women's status, and 3) these tendencies will subside as women's status improves in the potential initiating country. We begin by considering the behavior of states led by female executives in Table 1. The table begins with models considering the initiation of any level of militarized interstate dispute (models 1-4). Models 5-8 report the same findings when limiting the dependent variable to MIDs that reached the level of war.

[Table 1 about here]

The coefficient for female executive is positive and significant in each of models 1-4. Due to the use of an interaction, these coefficients suggest that countries led by female executives are significantly more likely than countries with male executives to initiate disputes when the other constitutive term (empowerment, women in parliament, social rights, or economic rights, respectively) equals zero. Holding other variables at their median values, and empowerment at the 10th percentile, model 1 reports that female-led countries initiate disputes at a predicted probability of 0.030, while males see a rate of 0.007 under the same circumstances. Similar trends are seen for the other models. When women's parliamentary representation is at 0, for example, women are over 70% more likely to initiate disputes than male executives (0.007 vs. 0.004). Women are around 270% more likely when women's social rights are 0 (CIRI, 0.019 vs. 0.005), and 180% more likely when economic rights are 0 (0.016 vs. 0.006). Though we feel parliamentary presence could have an impact on perceptions, the measure's inability to act as a more general measure of women's status could reflect its weaker (but still statistically significant) substantive effect.

Our theory predicted that this influence should diminish at higher levels of women's status. Directly interpreting the influence of interaction terms can be incredibly misleading (Ai and Norton 2003). Following the advice of Brambor, Clark, and Golder (2006), we present a graphical representation of the relationship in Figure 1. The left column illustrates the conditional influence of executive gender on conflict initiation for all MIDAs, while the right column captures war-level MIDAs. The first row illustrates the interaction between female executive and women in parliament, followed by the interactive models for social, economic, and political rights. For each figure, the vertical (Y) axis reports the coefficient for the gender of the executive, while moving along the horizontal (X) axis reports how the coefficient changes at respective values of the women's status indicator. The full line represents the observed coefficient for female executive at that particular level of women's status, while the dashed line represents the confidence interval.

[Figure 1 about here]

The left column of row 1 indicates two important trends. First, the figure reveals a statistically significant decline in the coefficient for female executive. Second, the effect of female executive is positive and significant at lower to mid-levels of the empowerment index, and is insignificant when above 0.65. This suggests the conflict propensity of female leaders remains positive until just above the median value of empowerment (0.61). To illustrate the decline, we also report the predicted conflict probabilities for female executives at different levels of women's empowerment. Countries at 0.30, corresponding with the 10th percentile, see conflict initiated at a rate of 0.041. Moving that value to the 0.60, roughly the 50th percentile, leads to a drop to 0.008.

These findings are further supported by the other women's status indicators. The probability of conflict in states with female executives is positive and significant when women's parliamentary representation is below 8%. It might be easy to assume that some of these values are little more than theoretical, as one could speculate that female executives are unlikely to gain power in countries with lower levels of women's status, or representation specifically. However, 8% actually corresponds with the sample mean for the measure, and a proportion of means test indicates that states led by females (6.62%) typically had *lower* levels of women in parliament than those led by men (8.82), a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$). Though the coefficient for female executive does not itself significantly drop, its insignificance when states are above the mean of women's parliamentary representation is still suggestive of important gender dynamics.

We also see a pronounced relationship when considering the CIRI social rights indicators. The probability of conflict significantly drops from 0.02 to 0.003 when a female executive's state increases from 0 to 2 on social rights. At the highest levels of social rights (3), the sign for female executive actually becomes *negative* and significant. Specifically, male executives are two and have times more likely to initiate disputes when women's social rights are at 3 (0.0035 vs. 0.0014). Finally, in line with these prior findings, the probability of dispute initiation in female led states drops from 0.016 to 0.004 when women's economic rights are increased from 0 to 2. Each of these measures consistently show that being below the sample mean on women's status is associated with a higher conflict proclivity among female heads of state. When above the mean, any difference is insignificant, with some support given to female executives being less conflict prone.

We see similar tendencies for war-level MIDs, reported in models 5-8 in Table 1 and in the right column of Figure 1. However, there are a few notable points. First, women's empowerment typically sees an insignificant relationship between executive's sex and war initiation at lower levels of women's empowerment, and a positive relationship at higher levels. Second, for parliamentary representation, women's social rights, and women's economic rights, we see the expected relationship at low levels of women's status, and an insignificant relationship at high levels. Third, though the coefficient for female executive becomes insignificant, the coefficient does not experience a statistically significant drop. Fourth, the coefficient remains statistically significant into higher levels of women's status than previously seen. Fifth, the magnitude of the sex coefficient is far stronger in the war models, being at least twice the size in three of the four models. For example, though there was no meaningful difference at 10% parliamentary representation for any MID, female executives are over 330% more likely than male executives to initiate war level MIDs. In all, the first hypothesis received strong support.

[Table 2 about here]

We also find evidence that female-led states are significantly more likely to be targeted when women's status is lower in the initiating state (hypothesis 2). Again, these trends are especially strong when considering war-level MIDs. Our regressions for these models are reported in Table 2, with the interactive effect illustrated in Figure 2. In the models capturing any level of MID, female executive, this time referring to the head of state of the targeted side of a dyad, is only significant in the parliamentary representation model (model 10). This indicates that states with no women in parliament are significantly more likely to target states led by females. The interaction term in the model is also negative and significant, meaning that the

effect is meaningfully reduced when women's parliamentary representation improves in the initiator. Specifically, the models indicate that states with no women's representation are around 65% more likely to target female-led states when representation is 10%. The coefficient indicates an insignificant effect beginning at 12% women's representation.

[Figure 2 about here]

Figure 2 generally reveals a less impressive influence for any level of dispute. Female executive displays a positive coefficient between 0.4 and 0.65 on the empowerment index, and is positive and significant when women's social rights equal 1. It is otherwise insignificant. The results, however, are much more pronounced for war-level MIDs. Each of the war models indicate a significantly higher likelihood for the targeting of female led-states. Three of the four models also display a significant and negative interaction term, indicating that the positive influence significantly decreases when women's status improves. All four models indicate an insignificant association between female leadership and targeting when the male-led initiating side of the dyad has high levels of women's status. Specifically, the positive executive effect disappears above 0.75 on the empowerment index, above 9% in women's parliamentary representation, and above 0 on each of the CIRI measures. As with the initiation models, the substantive effect is also stronger (as indicated by the much higher coefficients). However, as noted earlier, we are hesitant to draw definitive conclusions from such rare events.

CONCLUSION

Building on prior scholarship on the perceptions of leaders, we argued that gender dynamics would have an important conditioning influence on the conflict proneness of states. The preceding analysis shows that the sex of the executive and women's status in society are

both important parts of the conflict story, and should be considered simultaneously. Countries led by female executives are generally more likely to initiate an interstate dispute, as found in prior studies. However, this trend is only true for countries with lower levels of women's empowerment. When women's status in society is stronger, we see no statistical difference between states led by either men or women, and when considering social rights there is limited evidence that female leaders tend toward being more peaceful when women approach parity in society. Further, we find some evidence that male executives disproportionately initiate MID's in states led by women, particularly when governing states with low levels of women's status.

This offering supports earlier findings that showed increases in women's empowerment would lead states to be more peaceful. We similarly supported earlier studies by finding that female executives were more prone to initiate conflict than male executives. However, we discovered a very important condition to this tendency, thereby offering a solution to what has become a bit of a paradox in quantitative studies of conflict. This effort also went beyond prior studies by considering the influence of gender dynamics on male executives. We found that male executives were more conflictual when interacting with female executives, though these tendencies again were limited to poor gender environments. We believe that these trends can be attributed to constraints placed on executives, particularly when considering a bargaining framework. We hope this effort will encourage scholars to more carefully consider gender as a conditioning influence in future work. In all, the results provide additional evidence that promoting the empowerment of women can have important and positive contributions to international relations.

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Table 1: Females Executives, Domestic Gender Dynamics, and Interstate Dispute Initiation

	Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs)				War-Level MIDs			
	Empower 1	Parliament 2	Social 3	Economic 4	Empower 5	Parliament 6	Social 7	Economic 8
Female Executive (Initiator)	2.271*** (0.637)	0.530* (0.264)	1.290*** (0.330)	0.982* (0.396)	0.422 (2.280)	1.442** (0.551)	3.094+ (1.651)	4.017* (1.870)
Women's Status	-1.363*** (0.317)	0.005 (0.007)	-0.764*** (0.207)	-0.477+ (0.261)	-1.918* (0.901)	-0.002 (0.022)	-0.943 (0.946)	-1.467 (1.144)
Executive * Status	-2.980** (1.028)	-0.039 (0.035)	-0.130 (0.080)	-0.202* (0.094)	1.675 (3.187)	-0.001 (0.040)	0.042 (0.186)	0.168 (0.252)
GDP/Capita	0.136* (0.069)	-0.045 (0.059)	0.036 (0.068)	0.039 (0.066)	0.230 (0.221)	0.137 (0.145)	0.389* (0.198)	0.390* (0.198)
Ch. GDP/Capita	-1.540* (0.643)	-1.433* (0.685)	0.613 (0.723)	0.506 (0.733)	-1.720 (2.172)	0.969 (3.073)	-2.249 (2.340)	-2.243 (2.409)
Joint Democracy	-0.860*** (0.178)	-0.925*** (0.184)	-0.829*** (0.189)	-0.830*** (0.187)	-2.388** (0.730)	-2.461*** (0.740)	-2.629** (0.962)	-2.662** (0.883)
Democracy	0.147 (0.137)	0.136 (0.132)	-0.087 (0.162)	-0.046 (0.158)	0.673+ (0.373)	0.383 (0.342)	-0.572 (0.586)	-0.676 (0.567)
Power Ratio	0.214 (0.130)	0.200 (0.134)	0.211 (0.149)	0.212 (0.149)	-0.361 (0.364)	-0.532 (0.348)	-0.045 (0.403)	0.003 (0.396)
Allies	-0.341** (0.108)	-0.288* (0.113)	0.032 (0.126)	0.041 (0.127)	-0.417 (0.334)	-0.416 (0.351)	0.520 (0.393)	0.532 (0.392)
Distance	-0.344*** (0.034)	-0.359*** (0.036)	-0.376*** (0.043)	-0.379*** (0.043)	-0.258*** (0.078)	-0.263*** (0.080)	-0.175* (0.085)	-0.171* (0.084)
Peace Years	-0.383*** (0.026)	-0.401*** (0.027)	-0.370*** (0.034)	-0.366*** (0.034)	-0.534*** (0.091)	-0.566*** (0.092)	-0.454*** (0.136)	-0.458*** (0.136)
Constant	-2.125*** (0.484)	-1.267** (0.444)	-1.648** (0.516)	-1.607** (0.495)	-5.093*** (1.499)	-5.041*** (1.153)	-7.843*** (1.706)	-8.023*** (1.702)
Observations	69,690	65,320	42,027	42,383	69,690	65,320	42,027	42,383

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, +p<.1 (two-tailed)

Table 2: Female Targets, Domestic Gender Dynamics, and Interstate Dispute Initiation

	Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs)				War-Level MIDs			
	Empower 9	Parliament 10	Social 11	Economic 12	Empower 13	Parliament 14	Social 15	Economic 16
Female Executive (Target)	0.553 (0.577)	1.028*** (0.306)	0.650 (0.448)	0.572 (0.594)	3.107*** (0.722)	3.063*** (0.672)	1.367+ (0.779)	1.956* (0.890)
Women's Status	-1.420*** (0.329)	0.008 (0.008)	-0.129 (0.084)	-0.209* (0.098)	-1.564+ (0.945)	-0.006 (0.017)	0.102 (0.226)	0.362 (0.303)
Executive * Status	-0.295 (0.963)	-0.055* (0.027)	-0.198 (0.290)	-0.145 (0.444)	-2.454* (1.185)	-0.159 (0.105)	-0.478* (0.230)	-0.920*** (0.289)
GDP/Capita	0.153* (0.068)	-0.011 (0.064)	0.056 (0.069)	0.073 (0.068)	0.235 (0.247)	0.182 (0.215)	0.597*** (0.180)	0.580*** (0.182)
Ch. GDP/Capita	-1.916** (0.674)	-1.772* (0.723)	0.369 (0.730)	0.217 (0.739)	-4.282+ (2.355)	-1.120 (4.172)	-2.670 (2.379)	-2.742 (2.494)
Joint Democracy	-0.999*** (0.191)	-1.122*** (0.194)	-1.123*** (0.208)	-1.121*** (0.203)	-3.198** (1.061)	-3.414** (1.069)	NA NA	NA NA
Democracy	0.122 (0.147)	0.117 (0.140)	0.003 (0.165)	0.030 (0.161)	0.992* (0.406)	0.775+ (0.418)	-1.461* (0.639)	-1.635** (0.609)
Power Ratio	0.320* (0.140)	0.299* (0.146)	0.276+ (0.159)	0.268+ (0.157)	-0.260 (0.427)	-0.459 (0.439)	0.322 (0.353)	0.390 (0.336)
Allies	-0.255* (0.108)	-0.201+ (0.112)	0.084 (0.130)	0.091 (0.132)	-0.132 (0.345)	-0.129 (0.351)	0.467 (0.420)	0.518 (0.402)
Distance	-0.326*** (0.035)	-0.343*** (0.037)	-0.349*** (0.044)	-0.350*** (0.044)	-0.238** (0.087)	-0.243** (0.088)	-0.133 (0.093)	-0.124 (0.092)
Peace Years	-0.387*** (0.027)	-0.407*** (0.028)	-0.377*** (0.037)	-0.372*** (0.037)	-0.587*** (0.109)	-0.630*** (0.112)	-0.479** (0.153)	-0.481** (0.155)
Constant	-2.301*** (0.505)	-1.625** (0.494)	-1.849*** (0.537)	-1.913*** (0.521)	-5.544** (1.708)	-5.637*** (1.675)	-9.910*** (1.521)	-10.111** (1.532)
Observations	59,693	55,884	35,594	35,905	59,693	55,884	35,594	35,905

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, +p<.1 (two-tailed)

Figure 1: The Marginal Impact of Female Executives on Conflict (left) and War (right) Initiation

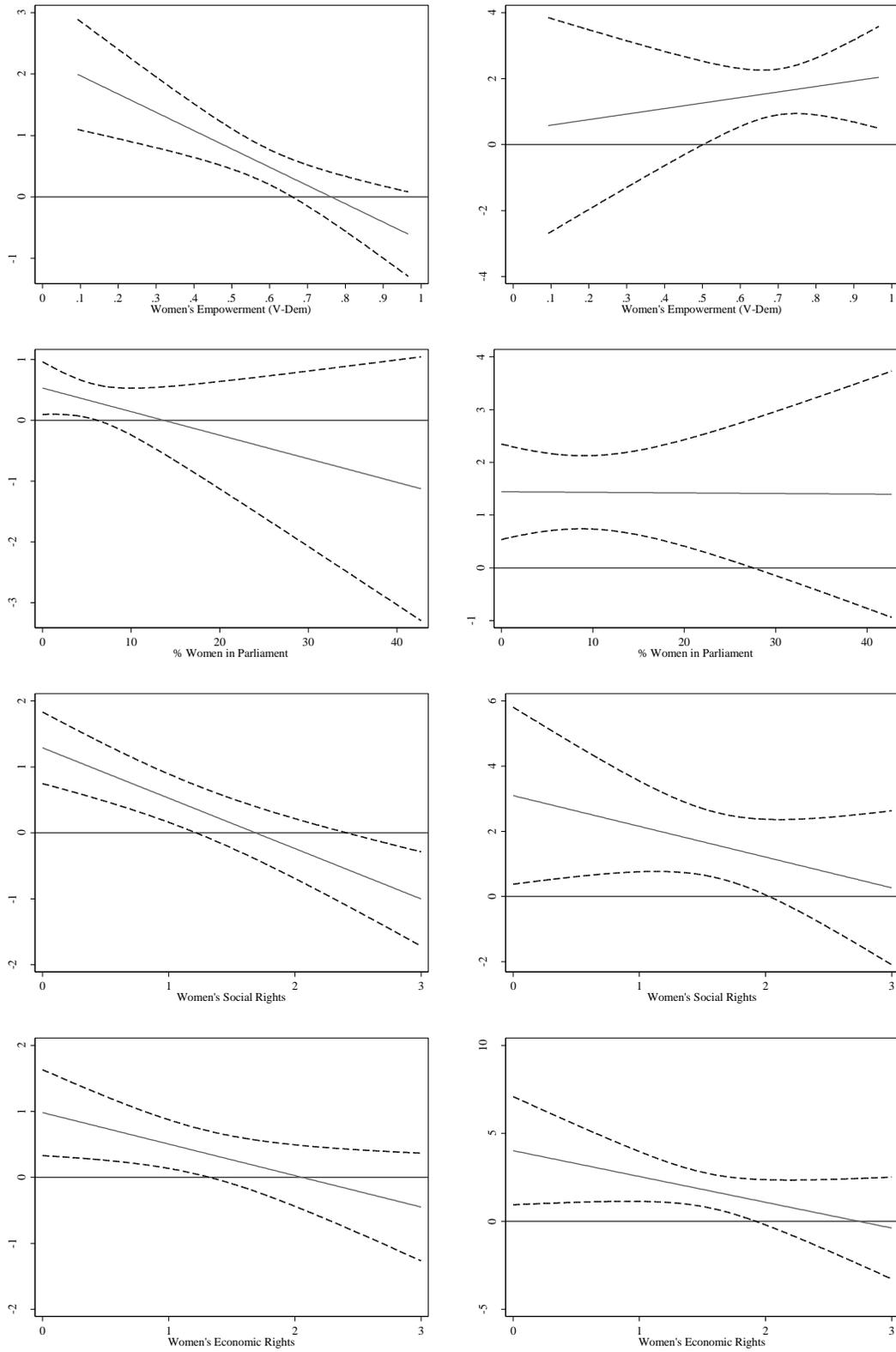


Figure 2: The Marginal Impact of Female Executives on Conflict (left) and War (right) Targeting

