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CHAPTER 1.
Resolve in International Politics

Desire, wish, will, are states of mind which everyone knows, and which no definition can make plainer.

—William James (1950 [1890], p. 486)

On January 12, 2010, an earthquake struck the island nation of Haiti, reducing much of the capital city of Port-au-Prince to rubble. In the days afterward, as the casualty estimates grew by the hundreds of thousands and the international community turned its attention toward rebuilding the ravaged country, pundits pontificated on the uphill battle faced by a country that had suffered as many man-made disasters as natural ones. Bob Herbert, writing in the *New York Times*, struck an optimistic note: the Haitians would succeed, he argued, because they had shown "resolve among the ruins."[1]

Herbert is not alone in positing resolve and its synonyms—willpower, self-control, dedication, tenacity, determination, drive, and so on—as a solution to political problems. The collapse of the Mubarak regime in Egypt has frequently been attributed to the resolve of the protesters in Tahrir Square ("their determination is unshakeable," noted the editor of the *Egyptian Daily News*), while the same attribute has been used to account for the opposite event in neighboring Libya, where Moammar Qadaffi clung to power despite months of NATO airstrikes and armed insurrection ("War is largely about willpower," wrote an analyst for the DC-based Washington Institute for Near East Policy, "and Qadaffi currently holds the upper hand on this front").[2] When militants from the Islamic State regained control of Ramadi in May 2015 despite being outnumbered by Iraqi Security Forces, American Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter blamed the Iraqis' defeat on their lack of a "will to fight."[3] Writing several years prior in T*he Weekly Standard*, Charles Krauthammer dismissed prophecies of American decline by arguing that "decline is a choice" rather than "a condition," and that the slide toward multipolarity can therefore

1 Herbert 2010.
2 Michaels and May 2011; White 2011.
3 Williams 2015.

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be reversed through "moral self-confidence and will."[4] Similarly, when the Canadian government was deliberating over whether to renew its deployment in Afghanistan in 2008, the independent panel it convened to issue recommendations released a report arguing that Canadians must exhibit "sustained resolve" in order to allow the mission to succeed.[5]

This is a book about resolve in international politics. Sometimes, scholars of world politics write books to draw attention to a crucial concept or phenomenon that has been problematically ignored by policymakers, or prematurely neglected by political scientists, showing us how we gain a much more vivid understanding of the world once we bring this concept "back in" to our models of world affairs. This is not one of those books, and resolve is not one of those concepts.

After all, resolve is already a ubiquitous ingredient in the study of international relations, used to explain everything from why states win wars to how they prevail at the bargaining table during foreign policy crises, thereby preventing conflict from breaking out.[6] Rationalist approaches to the study of international conflict revolve around resolve: in a dispute between two actors, if both sides can be made aware of each others' levels of motivation to fight, the less resolute side backs down before a crisis can even take place.[7] Likewise, it is motivation, not muscle, that is used to explain why great powers fare so poorly in asymmetric conflict, and why the United States was never able to push the North Vietnamese to their "breaking point" during the Vietnam War.[8]

These types of arguments about resolve are made not just by those who study war, but also by those who wage it. Napoleon Bonaparte famously declared that "in war, the moral is to the physical as three to one," while Marshall Foch, the commander of the French Ninth Army at the Battle of the Marne in 1914, went even further, proclaiming in his lectures at the École de Guerre that "in a material sense no battle can be lost."[9] This belief in the power of resolve formed a major part of the "cult of the offensive" that reigned supreme in military academies across Europe by the time of the First World War: prewar British training manuals pronounced that "moral force in modern war preponderates over physical force," while in Germany in 1916, Paul von Hindenburg, then Chief of the German General Staff, declared that "victory will go to him who has the best nerves."[10]

4 Krauthammer 2009. The article, influential in conservative quarters, was later cited by the Republican Congressman (and later, Vice Presidential nominee) Paul Ryan in his June 2, 2011 speech to the Alexander Hamilton Society. See Warren 2011.

5 Manley et al. 2008, 8.

6 Maoz 1983; Pape 1996; Schelling 1966; Snyder and Diesing 1977; George and Simons 1994.

7 Powell 1987; Morrow 1989; Fearon 1995.

8 Mack 1974; Mueller 1980; Arreguín-Toft 2001.

9 Chandler 1966, 155; Recouly 1920.

10 Van Evera 1984, 61; Travers 1979, 274; Watson 2008, 1.

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Given that exhortations of resolve routinely punctuate politicians' press conferences, and invocations of resolve drive many of our theories of world politics, the aim of the book is not to "bring resolve back in," but rather, to *lend it microfoundations*, to help us understand what resolve is, and how—and whether—it works. At its broadest level, the book is motivated by three puzzles: one conceptual, one methodological, and one theoretical.

First, what *is* resolve, conceptually? Is it related to an actor's capabilities, as it was for the classic international relations theorists who wrote about the "national will" as a source of power?[11] Is it equivalent to an actor's intentions or preferences, as in rational choice approaches that equate resolve with utility?[12] And if resolve is the same as capabilities or intentions, why should we go to the trouble of using the term in the first place? Building on a diverse array of literature across the social sciences, I sweep the conceptual minefield and suggest that resolve is something different altogether: a state of firmness or steadfastness of purpose, a "second-order volition" that is neither reducible to an actor's intentions, nor isomorphic with its capabilities.[13] Akin to the idea of willpower, resolve is not *what* an actor wants, but rather, the extent to which she maintains this intention despite contrary inclinations or temptations to back down.

Second, how should we study resolve? How do we know resolve when we see it? Precisely because resolve is not directly observable, I suggest that IR scholars have ended up in a paradoxical position, where although many of us would agree that resolve matters, we have had less success marshaling empirical evidence to test whether this assumption is true. As a result, although resolve is perhaps one of our favorite explanatory variables in our theoretical models, we tend to either explicitly avoid measuring it, or implicitly risk tautology by inferring it from the same outcomes we use it to explain: we assume, for example, that because the United States lost in Vietnam, it must have been less resolved than the North Vietnamese, and attribute the Iraqi Security Forces' defeats at the hands of militants from the Islamic State to the absence of a "will to fight." Studying resolve in this manner problematically turns the concept into a catchall residual category used ex post to explain outcomes we were unable able to explain ex ante, making it difficult to subject our theories about resolve's effects to rigorous empirical testing. The problem is not that resolve has no explanatory power in these cases, but that we would not be able to tell either way.

In an era when politicians and pundits routinely posit a kind of "Green Lantern" theory of foreign policy in which every geopolitical challenge can be overcome with a sufficient application of willpower, this methodological

11 E.g., Wright 1964.
12 E.g., Fearon 1994.
13 Frankfurt 1971.

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challenge bears real political consequences. If we merely infer resolve from victory and irresolution from defeat, it becomes difficult to argue against the axiom that to win wars, one needs to be more resolved, or to push back against the claim suggested at General Mark Milley's confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services committee in July 2015, that "one of the most central tasks that the new army has" is the question of how the United States can "teach the will to fight" to the foreign troops it supports.[14]

Third, where does resolve come from? In the context of military interventions, why do some leaders and publics display remarkable persistence—the British in the Malayan emergency, for example—while others cut and run, like the United States in Somalia in 1993? Although we often explain behavior and outcomes in international politics by pointing to variation in actors' levels of resolve, we have trouble explaining this variation itself. In short, we lack microfoundations, and with them, a *theory of resolve*. The task I take up in this book is how to address these three lacunae, which are, course, interconnected: as long as we disagree on what resolve is, we will not be able to agree on how to measure it, and by gaining leverage on the determinants of resolve, we are better able to explore its consequences.

In this book, I address these challenges by offering a behavioral theory of resolve, suggesting that variation in time and risk preferences, honor orientation, and self-control shape how actors respond to the situations they face. In this sense, I argue we should think about resolve as an interaction. Contrary to its usual portrayal in IR, resolve is neither a simple cost-benefit calculation nor an invariant "type" of actor, but a contingent state, a function of both dispositional and situational causes, both traits and stakes, both mind and matter. Importantly, the dispositional characteristics I focus on here are among the traits that social scientists turn to when trying to explain willpower in our daily lives. Building on a growing body of research on willpower and self-control from elsewhere in the social sciences, I suggest that "political will" is more than just a metaphor or figure of speech, in that the characteristics that behavioral decision-making scholars turn to when modeling our tendencies to choose carrots over cheesecake, take gambles, and pick fights with people who bump into us, also spill over into the political domain, and can tell us something about why certain types of actors are more or less sensitive to different types of costs of war. In fact, it turns out that dispositions matter so much that it is difficult to understand how we respond to conflict without them: how we think about time and risk, how we feel about honor, and how much perseverance we display in our daily lives all shape how much resolve we display in political contexts.

14 C-Span 2015.

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In this sense, this is a book about the political psychology of international politics, showing how we gain a richer understanding of global affairs when we focus not just on the macro-structural forces "shaping and shoving,"[15] but also on the properties and characteristics of actors themselves. In positing that characteristics or attributes from our daily lives spill into the political domain and can tell us something about international affairs, the book is also part of a broader movement in IR scholarship pushing back against the notion of international politics as an autonomous sphere of inquiry.[16] Perhaps paradoxically, much of the progress in IR theory over the past 40 years has come from the discipline chipping away at its own distinctiveness: just as earlier work showed that politics does not stop at the water's edge and that domestic politics bleeds into the international realm, my aim here is to go a step further, and illustrate some of the ways in which the personal spills over into the political.

Like the structural realists they sought to supplant, the rationalist approaches that have been prominent in mainstream IR over the past several decades have tended to privilege structure over agency, based on a "methodological bet" that greater theoretical progress can be made in International Relations by focusing on environmental features rather than actor-level characteristics.[17] Although this tendency has fostered many rich and remarkable contributions, it has also stymied our attempts to understand phenomena like resolve, frequently reducing it to an actor's costs of war, and leading to a number of both empirical and conceptual conundrums. Looking at how dispositional features moderate the effects of situational factors is critical in explaining how two actors can face the exact same situation, but respond in strikingly different ways. As the British historian James Joll put it when reflecting on the causes of the First World War, "it is only by studying the minds of men that we shall understand the causes of anything," and it is in this tradition that the book is situated.[18] While couched in a different language, the motivating premise of the book—that structural theories of action are indeterminate unless we also have a theory of how actors come to define their situation and make sense of their environment—is thus also one to which many constructivists would likely be sympathetic.[19] Although the discussion in the following chapters is often critical of how resolve has been studied in rational choice approaches—in particular, the tendency to reduce resolve to the cost of war—I should note that there is little about the framework I advance here that is inherently antithetical to rationalism, particularly if

15 Waltz 1986, 343.
16 See Morgenthau 1985; Wight 1966.
17 Lake and Powell 1999.
18 Joll 1968, 24.
19 Wendt 1999.

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rationality is understood simply as actors making choices under constraints.[20] As pioneering work by McDermott, Mercer, and others has shown, rationalist approaches rest on particular sets of psychological assumptions, which are often left unarticulated.[21] The book is thus intended less as a riposte to rationalism, and more as a reimagination: turning to insights from the behavioral sciences about the systematic ways that actors differ from one another affords us the opportunity to revisit some of the classic assumptions that animate our theories, show that the constraints shaping choices are not simply external, and improve our explanatory power in the process.

Just as the book builds on theoretical frameworks from elsewhere in the behavioral sciences, it also borrows methodological tools. To try to avoid some of the pitfalls that ensue from inferring the presence or absence of resolve from the same outcome I am using it to explain, I employ a two-stage research design, at multiple levels of analysis, that studies resolve first as *explanandum* and then as *explanans*. Each half of the research design asks and answers a different question. First, I employ a series of original laboratory and embedded survey experiments to probe the individual-level microfoundations of resolve in the context of public opinion about military interventions. By manipulating the costs of war, these experiments offer control and the ability to engage in causal inference, model strategic choices directly, and avoid the concerns about endogeneity that plague the use of observational data. They also confer critical measurement advantages, measuring the resolve displayed by the studies' participants in a manner that would not be possible in a natural setting. Moreover, the controlled nature of the studies enables me to borrow instruments from social psychology and behavioral economics to measure participants' dispositional characteristics in domains unrelated to that of military interventions, therefore letting me test how these characteristics spill over into politics. Altogether, these experiments offer a chance to build theoretical microfoundations and explain individual-level variation in resolve, all while enriching our understanding of the dynamics of public opinion toward the use of force.

The experiments show that there is considerable variation in how much resolve individuals display, that this variation can be explained theoretically as a function of situational and dispositional factors, and that these factors interact in coherent ways. In the lab experiment, more patient individuals are more sensitive to casualties, and more risk-averse individuals are more sensitive to both the human costs of fighting and the reputational costs of backing down. These results not only remind us of the importance of disaggregating the costs of war and indicate the public is less beholden to casualties than cynics often assume, but also suggest we can turn to

20 Snidal 2002.
21 McDermott 2004; Mercer 2005.

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dispositional characteristics to explain why certain types of costs of war loom larger for certain types of actors.

Having employed experiments as theory-building exercises to study resolve as a dependent variable, I then shift both the focus and the level of analysis to study resolve as an independent variable. The chief difficulty political scientists face in studying resolve in the historical record is that it is not directly observable, which makes it difficult to subject our theories of its effects to empirical testing without tautologically inferring it from the same outcomes we are using it to explain. Rather than infer resolve from its consequences, I do so based on its causes, using the experimental findings to build composite situational and dispositional measures of resolve at the leader- and country-level for the great powers from 1945 to 2003. This novel analytic move allows me to test whether resolve has the effects we often claim, without lapsing into tautology. Using Boolean statistical models, I investigate whether resolved great powers were indeed more likely to prevail in their military interventions in the postwar era and explore the interplay between leader- and country-level factors. The results suggest that resolve matters: great powers who are more resolved are indeed more likely to attain their desired objectives in their military interventions. The effect of resolve is less than its boosters might hope—contrary to Napoleon's proclamation, for example, the moral does not outweigh the material by a ratio of three to one—but more than its skeptics might assume. In addition to presenting a novel strategy for studying unobservable phenomena, I also find different patterns of effects for the dispositional and situational sources of resolve: for situational variables, the most relevant level of analysis appears to be the country- rather than the leader-level, whereas for dispositional variables, leaders matter more than the country as a whole, and overall, these dispositional factors outweigh situational ones. Assessing resolve in military interventions thus requires paying attention to leader-level dispositional features, country-level situational ones, and the interactions between them.

As Sartori argued, "concept formation stands prior to quantification," so before proposing or testing a theory of resolve, it is important to clearly specify why we need one in the first place, and discuss the problems confronting the field.[22] Thus, in this first chapter, I begin by defining resolve, discussing the variegated manner in which it has been understood in international affairs, and arguing that we have built many of our theories of world politics around a phenomenon that has been inconsistently theorized. I then offer a conceptual architecture I return to throughout the book, connecting the IR literature to a growing body of work on willpower from elsewhere in the social sciences to suggest that there have typically been two types of "stories" social scientists tell

22 Sartori 1970, 1,038.

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about resolve: an inside, dispositional account that understands resolve to be a kind of trait, and an outside, situational one that perceives resolve to be a function of the costs or stakes an actor faces. Finally, I conclude by outlining the proceeding chapters of the book.

DEFINING RESOLVE

Any study of a phenomenon has to begin with a definition. I follow the *Oxford English Dictionary* in defining resolve as "firmness or steadfastness of purpose," maintaining a policy despite contrary inclinations or temptations to back down. In its emphasis on determined, sustained effort despite temptations to the contrary, resolve can therefore be considered synonymous with willpower, as well as related forms of self-regulation like self-control (the deliberate use of willpower to avoid undesirable actions) and self-discipline (the deliberate use of willpower to achieve desirable goals), and the opposite of weakness of will, irresolution, incontinent action, and other such antonyms.

Defining resolve in this manner has two advantages. First, it reflects the way we use these words in ordinary language: to describe an actor as "resolute" intuitively means the same thing as to argue the actor is persistent, motivated, committed, determined, and so on. Indeed, in his discussion of resolve, O'Neill notes that scholars seem to use a wide variety of terms, which "appear to be manifestations of one unnamed central quality."[23]

Second, it allows the analysis that follows to be grounded in an interdisciplinary fashion. The past several decades have witnessed a *Risorgimento* of resolve throughout the social sciences, most notably in the psychological literature on self-regulation and the economic literature on intertemporal choice and self-command, but also in fields as varied as the philosophy of action, education research, law and public policy, organizational theory, criminology, and even animal psychology.[24]

23 O'Neill 1999, 107.

24 On self-regulation in psychology, see Baumeister and Vohs 2004; Ryan and Deci 2006; Baumeister, Vohs, and Tice 2007; Galliot et al. 2007; Ackerman et al. 2009; Morsella, Bargh, and Gollwitzer 2009. For economists' growing interest in self-control and intertemporal choice, see Thaler and Shefrin 1981; Schelling 1984; Jolls, Sunstein, and Thaler 1998; Gul and Pesendorfer 2001; Bénabou and Tirole 2004; Fudenberg and Levine 2006. Philosophers of action have long been interested in weakness of will or *akrasia*; for recent developments in the literature, see Stroud and Tappolet 2003; May and Holton 2012. Beyond these approaches, we see similar interest in willpower in education research (e.g., Kohn, 2008), law and public policy (Posner, 1997; Fennell, 2009), criminology (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Tittle, Ward, and Grasmick, 2003; Pratt, Turner, and Piquero, 2004; Boutwell and Beaver, 2010), animal psychology (Tobin and Logue, 1994; Miller et al., 2010), as well as work on hardiness and resilience in military psychology (King et al., 1998; Bartone, 2006), gerontology (Ong et al., 2006; Trivedi, Bosworth, and Jackson, 2011), and a fertile interdisciplinary literature operating at the nexus of multiple fields (Logue, 1988; Ainslie, 1992; Elster, 2000; Ainslie, 2001; Kalis et al., 2008).

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This growth has occurred in tandem despite each literature retaining its own nomenclature: IR theorists tend to favor "resolve," social psychologists typically adopt "self-regulation," economists choose "self-command," criminologists refer to "self-control," and philosophers invoke "willpower." Similarly, each discipline has predominantly applied the concept to different domains: political scientists frequently restrict resolve to military contexts by defining the term as "willingness to fight," whereas economists tend to define self-control purely in terms of consumption decisions, and developmental psychologists and criminologists focus on self-control in the realm of refraining from socially undesirable actions.[25] Despite these differences, however, if theorizing is about following Rosenau in asking "of what is this an instance?," I argue that the underlying construct remains the same in all cases: a resolute actor is engaged in what Young called "an intensity of feeling": a firmness or steadfastness of purpose, resisting temptations to the contrary.[26] In this sense, resolve is a *second-order* volition, in that it refers not to the substance or content of an actor's desire—whether to fight, quit smoking, save money, and so on—but to the steadfastness, dogged persistence, or "sticktoitiveness" with which it is being pursued.[27]

RESOLVE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Resolve is a frequent protagonist in IR theory, arising in a wide variety of camps. The first is deterrence theory, whose advocates have long argued that it is essential for states to maintain "reputations for resolve" so that other actors will not try to take advantage of them.[28] While this line of argument has come under increased scrutiny since actors may not have as much control over their reputations as they think, its critics do not downplay the importance of perceptions of resolve so much as suggest that these perceptions are usually outside one's control.[29] The perception of resolve is an "emotional belief," such that there may be little that the United States can do to convince al Qaeda that it is not a "paper tiger"; for the same reason, despite the fears of US

25 E.g., Sartori 2002; Ameriks et al. 2007; Finkenauer, Engels, and Baumeister 2005.

26 Rosenau 1980; Young 1968, 33.

27 Frankfurt 1971. Because of the association between self-mastery and virtue in classical philosophy (Baumeister and Exline, 1999) the philosophy of action literature has traditionally viewed resolve in the context of upholding better judgments (Dunn, 1987), but if resolve merely refers to a firmness of purpose irrespective of its content, one can be as resolved to indulge as one is to abstain (Kivetz and Simonson, 2002; see also Rosen, 2005, 154). For more on this point, see the discussion of the "dark side of resolve" in chapter 6.

28 Jervis 1976, 1979; Powell 2003.

29 Mercer 1996; Tang 2005. For a potential exception, see Press 2005, although even here, the "current calculus" theory of credibility argues not that perceptions of resolve are irrelevant, but that they are more likely to stem from what I call situational.

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policymakers, American defeats in the developing world during the Cold War did little to weaken Soviet perceptions of American determination.[30] Concerns about reputation for resolve have thus long outlasted the Cold War context in which early waves of deterrence theory were conceived.[31]

The second camp is the crisis bargaining literature more broadly, which argues that states embroiled in crisis negotiations are partaking in games of risk that are won not by strength, but by "nerve."[32] Crisis bargaining models rely on the same payoff structure as the game of Chicken, in which each side prefers to stand firm and induce its opponent to back down, but also prefers retreating over a situation where neither side relents and war emerges. As bargaining is a competition in risk-taking, an actor that is able to credibly signal its resolve—usually by taking risks that an irresolute actor would be unwilling to tolerate—will successfully avert war on its desired terms.[33] Since, however, resolve is an actor's "private information," and there are incentives to misrepresent resolve in order to secure advantages in negotiations, actors often have to rely on commitment mechanisms such as domestic audience costs to signal their resolve.[34] Thus, although rationalist models typically invoke incomplete information and commitment problems as two distinct causes of conflict—the former to be rectified by signaling (sinking costs), the latter via commitment devices (tying hands)—resolve figures prominently in both camps, not only because commitment devices are often used to draw inferences about resolve, but because, as will be argued below, it is precisely because of weakness of will that many commitment problems arise in the first place.[35]

In the third camp, international security scholars argue that resolve explains military outcomes.[36] Writing in the shadow of the Vietnam War, Rosen suggests that to understand which side wins the war, we need to pay attention to each party's "willingness to suffer," and Mueller points to the importance of the "breaking point" in determining who accepts defeat.[37] Similarly, Maoz finds that a "balance of resolve" model better explains outcomes of military interstate disputes than a balance of capabilities model does, while Stam points

30 Mercer 2010; Shannon and Dennis 2007; Hopf 1991b.

31 Lupovici 2010.

32 Schelling 1960; Iklé 1964; Schelling 1966; Young 1968; Snyder and Diesing 1977.

33 Jervis 1972; Morrow 1985; Powell 1987; Morgan 1990.

34 Fearon 1995; Becker 1961; Elster 1979, 2000; Fearon 1994.

35 Fearon 1997.

36 Recent rationalist scholars of conflict—what Powell (2004, 345) calls "the second wave of formal work on war" would reject this distinction between crisis bargaining models and models of military outcomes, envisioning war not as something that happens when bargaining fails, but rather, as a continuation of the bargaining process (Goemans, 2000; Wagner, 2000; Filson and Werner, 2002; Smith and Stam, 2004).

37 Rosen 1972; Mueller 1980.

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to several domestic political factors that affect each side's sensitivity to costs and lower the war's net benefits, thereby making belligerents less resolute and more willing to settle for a draw.[38] Just as crisis bargaining theorists argue that war can be prevented if the parties recognize the true balance of motivation, military scholars suggest that wars will end once the combatants learn each others' levels of resolve, frequently inferred via events on the battlefield.[39] A similar mechanism is posited in the literature on conflict mediation as well, as third parties can prevent conflict from breaking out either by making their own resolve as a mediator known, or by providing information about the resolve of one of the potential belligerents.[40]

Finally, theories of conflict also give resolve a role at lower levels of analysis by examining the resolve of military units and the public at large. Reiter and Stam, for example, find that levels of troop morale are positively correlated with military victory, similar to classic findings in military sociology.[41] Similarly, although Schultz argues democracies are often able to avoid war because they are better at signaling their resolve, scholars of counterinsurgencies and asymmetric conflict frequently inquire as to whether democratic publics are too "soft"—John F. Kennedy called it "the slow corrosion of luxury"—or cost-intolerant to be resolute, and so are doomed to suffer what Morgenthau called a "paralysis of will."[42] Even if the public is not casualty-phobic, what makes the "rally around the flag" effect significant is that rallies end just as quickly as they begin, and support for conflict decays over time as the public loses heart.[43]

WILLFUL NEGLECT? CAPABILITIES, INTENTIONS, AND RESOLVE

As the preceding discussion illustrates, references to resolve permeate the international security literature, and are especially prominent in rationalist models of conflict. Indeed, a content analysis of three central pieces in this research tradition by James Fearon finds that resolve and willingness are invoked nearly 170 times, making it the sixth-most popular term across the

38 Maoz 1983; Stam 1996.

39 George and Simons 1994; Goemans 2000; Smith and Stam 2004; Ramsay 2008.

40 Walter 1997, 340–341; Kydd 2003; Rauchhaus 2006.

41 Reiter and Stam 1998a; Shils and Janowitz 1948; Baynes 1967.

42 Schultz 1998; Pape 2003, 349; Mueller 1971; Mack 1974; Merom 2003; Lyall 2010; Morgenthau 1951, 222.

43 Gartner and Segura 1998; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2005/06; Baum 2002; Kam and Ramos 2008; Reiter and Stam 2002, ch. 7; Sullivan 2008. Beyond the study of war, scholars of governance and state-building are increasingly interested in "resilience," the extent to which communities and institutions are able to "bounce back" in response to stresses and risks—a concept I set aside for most of the discussions that follow, but to which I return in chapter 6. See Joseph 2013; Chandler 2013.

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three articles.[44] When rationalists talk about war, resolve is the language they use.

However, despite the popularity of resolve, it is not clear that rationalist models of war in fact need resolve at all, not just because many incomplete information models of war do not directly model resolve,[45] but also because, as Sartori notes, the term has been used in a variety of different ways by different scholars, such that it is unclear that many of the models that invoke resolve are in fact referring to the concept as properly understood.[46]

Realist approaches to international security often argue that states have three pieces of private information: capabilities, intentions, and resolve, yet resolve is often presented in a manner that renders it analytically indistinct from the other two. This definitional ambiguity is all the more surprising given that capabilities and intentions mean rather different things.[47] Capabilities refer to the material resources—military might, a population base, territory, economic clout, and so on—from which an actor's relative power is drawn. Intentions, in contrast, refer to an actor's goals and desires, and therefore, govern how capabilities are used: whether a state is revisionist or status-quo-seeking, for example. Thus, while capabilities dictate what an actor *can* do—you cannot fight wars if you cannot afford to pay for them—intentions refer to what an actor *wants*.[48] Historically, capabilities and resolve were thought of as conceptually distinct: during the French Succession Crisis in the sixteenth century, for example, Queen Elizabeth's advisor Lord Burghley calculated the threat posed by Philip of Spain by evaluating his regime on the dimensions of "potestas," or power, on the one hand, and "voluntas," or will, on the other.[49] Many IR theorists, though, lump in resolve with capabilities, an approach that comes in three variants. First are those who

44 Fearon 1994, 1995, 1997. For more details, see appendix A.1.

45 Filson and Werner 2002; Fey and Ramsay 2007. These works are notable not because they are bargaining models of war that do not invoke resolve, but because they are incomplete information bargaining models of war that make no direct mention of the concept. In a complete information game, uncertainty about the other player's level of resolve cannot be a cause of war—Fearon (1994, 583) shows that when states have complete information about resolve, no foreign policy crisis occurs— so it is therefore unsurprising that models of bargaining in war that do not rely on incomplete information (e.g., Wagner, 2000) would have no need for resolve. It should be noted as well that while these models do not feature references to resolve, they do model the cost of war—a concept some rationalists treat as equivalent to resolve, but which I argue below is distinct.

46 Sartori 2005, 7.

47 Tang 2008.

48 Schweller 1994; Kennedy 1987. Although these attributes are conceptually distinct, scholars of folk psychology note that we frequently draw inferences about one of these attributes based on our perceptions of the others. For example, if we know a task is difficult and that someone's capabilities are low, we assume that their resolve is high; likewise, if we see actors give up easily, we not only make inferences about their lack of resolve, but also revise our initial assumptions about their intentions. See Heider 1958, ch. 4.

49 Owen 2010, 107.

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view resolve as a source of capability—for example, the classic IR theorists who wrote about "national morale" or "national will" as a component of power.[50] Second are those who invert the relationship and propose that capabilities are a source of resolve.[51] These two approaches are less definitional than causal, although the fact that the causal arrow points in different directions in each approach invites further attention toward resolve's relationship with capabilities, causal or otherwise.[52] Finally, another common approach is to use the terms indistinguishably: Slantchev's argument about when strong states will feign weakness treats resolve and strength interchangeably (a resolute state is a "strong type"), while Smith and Stam discuss Saddam Hussein's view of the US public as casualty-sensitive during the Gulf War as an instance of "Iraqi beliefs about US *capabilities*."[53] The very idea of will*power* in ordinary language similarly captures the extent to which resolve and capabilities are often seen as intertwined.

For others, resolve is used synonymously with aims or intentions: Jervis suggests the two cannot be separated from one another, and Fearon uses the terms interchangeably, referring to audience costs both as a device for signaling resolve and as a tool for signaling intentions, as do Rosato and Trager.[54] Schultz, Walter and Snyder and Borghard treat resolve as synonymous with "preferences," and although Starr', notion of "willingness" has been operationalized any number of ways, it tends to be treated less about will as a second-order volition and more about first-order intentions or preferences, a distinction similarly blurred by Morrow, who makes an offhand reference to "national preferences (i.e. the political will)."[55] Indeed, uncertainty about an actor's resolve is often framed as ambiguous or misperceived intentions: whether Berlin knew if St. Petersburg wanted war or not in 1914, the veracity of Saddam Hussein's assumption that the United States would stand idly by during the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the United States trying to convince Argentina that Great Britain's threats of war in the Falklands Crisis were not bluffs, and so on.[56]

Ultimately, if resolve is the same as intentions or capabilities, it is unclear why we should go to the trouble of using the word "resolve" in the first place.

50 Wright 1964; Organski 1968; Cline 1975; Morgenthau 1985; Cline 1994.

51 Snyder and Diesing 1977; Morrow 1989; Meirowitz and Sartori 2008, 329, fn. 4. Recent debates about nuclear crisis outcomes between the "brinksmanship" and the "nuclear superiority" schools similarly hinge on whether we think of capabilities as a source of resolve or not. See Kroenig 2013; Sechser and Fuhrmann 2013.

52 For example, it is also possible that the two properties are in a constitutive relationship. On causation and constitution, see Wendt 1998.

53 Slantchev 2010; Smith and Stam 2004, 808, emphasis added.

54 Jervis 1976, 48; Fearon 1994, 578, 587; Rosato 2003, 598–599; Trager 2011, 469–472.

55 Schultz 1999, 327; Walter 1997, 341; Snyder and Borghard 2011, 3; Starr 1978; Morrow 1988, 82.

56 Copeland 2000, 90–91; Mearsheimer 2001, 38; Kydd 2003. See also Yarhi-Milo 2014.

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Yet the issue goes beyond lexical inconsistency, as innovative work by Smith and Stam illustrates.[57] In their model, war consists of a series of negotiations: if a round of negotiations fails, then the two sides fight a battle in which the victor takes a "fort" from the opposing side, the two parties update their beliefs, and negotiations resume; the cycle repeats itself until one side's supply of forts has been depleted, or their beliefs have sufficiently converged that they are able to reach a negotiated agreement. Their approach is innovative, particularly because it permits belligerents to have heterogeneous beliefs even when exposed to the same information.[58]

However, resolve in their game is operationalized as the supply of forts, one of which changes hands at the end of each battle. In this respect, there is nothing here that sets resolve apart from any other resource exchanged or depleted in war—as the authors acknowledge in their assessment that forts in modern war represent "units of resolve or strategically important pieces of land," but could be "any particular form of military resource that is necessary for the two nations to continue to fight and that can trade hands."[59] Indeed, the "fort" metaphor is derived from an earlier work that never directly mentions resolve, referring to forts instead as "a discrete approximation of what nations are fighting over."[60] Since resolve functions in their approach as a generic type of resource, it is unclear what the model gains from labeling the resource "resolve" rather than cannonballs or horses, both of which are also subtractable resources that can change hands, but which actors need in order to continue to fight.[61] After all, the strength of formal theoretical approaches is the extent to which they force scholars to clearly define their concepts and specify the assumptions needed for a theory's predictions to hold.[62] Even outside the realm of rational choice, if resolve is simply doing the work that capabilities or intentions can do, then our theories of world politics are less parsimonious than they otherwise could be. Instead of portraying states as grappling with uncertainty over others' capabilities, intentions, and resolve, we could simply substitute the last property with the first two. To answer this question, I step back and adopt a broader view, contextualizing resolve in light of how the phenomenon is understood elsewhere in the social sciences.

57 Smith and Stam 2004.

58 For a critique, see Fey and Ramsay 2006.

59 Smith and Stam 2004, 788–789.

60 Smith 1998, 303.

61 In this sense, like it does in many models, resolve functions here as what Alfred Hitchcock called a "MacGuffin": the object that motivates all of the action, but whose intrinsic properties are irrelevant (the microfilms in *North by Northwest*, the statue in the *Maltese Falcon*, the briefcase in *Pulp Fiction*, and so on).

62 Bueno de Mesquita 1985; Martin 1999.

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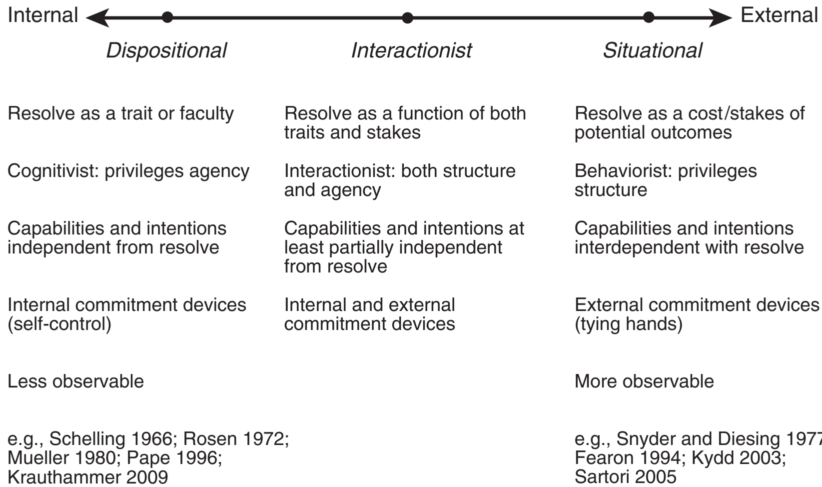

FIGURE 1.1. A spectrum of theories about resolve.

TWO STORIES ABOUT RESOLVE

There are two types of stories social scientists have told about resolve: an inside story, and an outside one.[63] The outside or situational story, popular in behaviorist branches of psychology and economics, understands resolve as the costs or stakes that an actor faces in a particular situation; the inside or dispositional story, more common in philosophy and social psychology, views resolve as something internal to the actor itself. As a heuristic device, I array these two poles on a spectrum shown in figure 1.1, with an interactionist perspective in between. The poles are ideal types, and many IR scholars adopt positions that veer away from these two extremes,[64] but as demonstrate, it is notable just how much of the IR literature can be characterized as residing at one of the two ends of the spectrum. In the section that follows, I briefly introduce each perspective and show how they differ from one another, both in terms of second-order questions of ontology and first-order substantive questions in IR theory. One of the reasons why our understanding of resolve in IR is so muddled is because we have borrowed assumptions from various

63 I borrow this framing device from Hollis and Smith (1990), but whereas their two sets of stories are epistemological—referring to how we know of or come to understand social phenomena—mine are ontological, referring to assumptions about what the phenomena *are*.

64 For example, Powell (1987) and Morgan (1994) treat resolve as a function of both situational features (e.g., cost-benefit calculations about the stakes) and dispositional ones (risk orientation), although they do not incorporate them into the kind of thicker interactive framework I describe in chapter 2.

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points across the spectrum, making it difficult to produce a coherent account of what resolve is and how it works.

Situational Theories of Resolve

Starting at the right-hand side of the spectrum, one can imagine a situational theory of resolve, which argues that actors will display resolve when the stakes are high, and will be irresolute when the stakes are low. Situational theories of resolve were briefly ascendant in economics and experimental psychology during the movement toward behaviorism: operant conditioning studies with pigeons and early delayed gratification studies with young children emphasize the importance of *external reinforcement*, observing the extent to which people and pigeons alike respond predictably to external stimuli.[65] Behaviorists argue that self-control is primarily a function of two phenomena: the magnitude of the reinforcement, and the delay involved; by manipulating the size of the reinforcer and the length of the delay, actors will display self-control problems, and reverse their choices.[66] In the behaviorist paradigm, self-control is therefore situational rather than dispositional: the higher the level of abstraction a reward is, the greater we discount it, and what philosophers refer to as "weakness of will" is a consequence not of a lack of character, but of intersecting hyperbolic discounting curves.[67]

Hyperbolic discounting has yet to make much of an impact on IR,[68] but situational conceptualizations of resolve should nonetheless be easy to imagine for a political science audience, particularly amongst rational choice scholars. Consistent with rationalism's "methodological bet" that greater theoretical progress can be made in IR by focusing on structural features than actor-level heterogeneity, much of the IR literature has defined resolve situationally in terms of costs and benefits, especially in the study of crisis bargaining: an actor will be resolved in a crisis bargaining situation when the stakes are high relative to the costs, and irresolute when they are low, such that actors are systematically more resolute about some issues than about others.[69] As can be expected, there is some conceptual ambiguity here: as Pape notes, some approaches fully reduce the "balance of resolve" to the "balance of interests," thereby treating an actor's resolve as its cost of conflict.[70] Others treat an actor's

65 Herrnstein 1970; Rachlin and Green 1972; Mischel and Grusec 1967.
66 For a review, see Logue 1988, 1998.
67 Gifford 2002; Trope and Liberman 2003; Stroud and Tappolet 2003; Elster 2006; Hoffmann 2008; Green and Fisher 1988, 684; Ainslie 1992, 2001; Frederick 2006.
68 Although see Streich and Levy 2007; Krebs and Rapport 2012.
69 Snyder and Diesing 1977; Betts 1980; George and Simons 1994; Powell 2003; Trager 2011.
70 Pape 1996; Lebow 1998; Arreguín-Toft 2001; Snyder and Diesing 1977; Gartzke, Li, and Boehmer 2001; Kydd 2003; Rauchhaus 2006; Fey and Ramsay 2011; Lake 2010/11.

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costs as one of several *determinants* of resolve.[71] Alternately, others model an actor's cost of war and level of resolve as distinct types of private information altogether.[72] These distinctions are not just semantic, especially for deterrence theorists: why bother maintaining a general reputation for resolve if resolve is merely a by-product of the particular interests at stake in a situation?[73]

Situational theories of resolve in IR raise an additional theoretical issue: how do actors weigh the different types of costs at stake? IR scholars have focused heavily on military fatalities as the "human cost" of war, but war also has economic costs, and is rife with opportunity costs as well.[74] After all, although fighting imposes a considerable burden, so too do defeat and withdrawal, which may bear reputational costs that will long outlast the immediate physical consequences of the conflict.[75] In this sense, one can imagine a wide range of situational theories of resolve based upon the particular types of costs that matter, whether reputational, economic, or otherwise. What all of the theories at this portion of the spectrum share, though, is the sense that it is more theoretically useful to explain variation in outcomes by pointing to variation in the strategic situations actors face, rather than to properties or characteristics of actors themselves.[76] Situational theories of resolve thus posit an automaticity through which these costs translate into action: sufficiently raise the costs, and all actors will back down, irrespective of political ideology, regime type, or any other internal factor inside the actor that might affect how they respond to these external stimuli.[77]

Dispositional Theories of Resolve

Situational theories of resolve carry many advantages: they are parsimonious, base their predictions on observable and manipulable factors (a point to which I return below), and correspond with much of what ordinary intuition tells us about how actors behave when the stakes are high. Ultimately, though, if we think of resolve as maintaining a policy *despite* contrary inclinations or temptations to back down, it implies that resolve involves resisting situationally induced pressures to retreat or reverse course; to reduce resolve to utility or a cost-benefit calculation is to purge it of its second-order quality, collapsing resolve into preferences or intentions. Moreover, when we talk about someone being resolved, we are usually referring to something that

71 Morrow 1985, 1987; Mattes and Morgan 2004.
72 Goemans 2000.
73 Jervis 1979. See also Press 2005.
74 Mueller 1971; Gartner and Segura 1998; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2005/06; Caverley 2009/10; Geys 2010.
75 Filson and Werner 2007b; Sullivan 2008.
76 Lake and Powell 1999.
77 Pape 1996; Sullivan 2007.

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emanates from within rather than being dictated from without, a property of the actor itself rather than a feature of the situation. Foch and Napoleon contrasted resolve with material factors out of the assumption that resolve involves being unmoved by material disadvantages, and in the historical cases we associate with resolve—for example, the French persisting at the Battle of Verdun despite suffering nearly a third of a million dead, injured, or missing, the Guomindang's long and grueling fight against the Japanese during the second Sino-Japanese War, the Paraguayans pressing on in the devastating War of the Triple Alliance, and so on—we know that the French, Chinese, and Paraguayans were resolved not because they acted in accordance with the costs inherent in the situation, but because they persisted *despite* these costs. Our lay theories about resolve, then, are dispositional in nature.

This dispositional intuition is bolstered both by much of the literature on willpower and self-control throughout the social sciences as well as by work in IR itself. Sociologists and psychologists have tended to treat self-control or willpower as an "individual difference" similar to a personality trait, and like other such traits, possibly genetically inherited.[78] The ego-depletion model of willpower recently popular in psychology treats self-control as a trait activated in multiple spheres: attention control, emotion inhibition, thought suppression, volition and choice, and so on.[79] Regardless of whether the specific task at hand requires stifling emotional reactions, maintaining handgrip stamina, or eating radishes while facing a plate of freshly baked cookies, the findings suggest that the same psychological processes are at work, consistent with folk intuitions about willpower as a trait better developed in some individuals than others, which is depleted over time, strengthened through training, and so on.

Although these psychological findings are all at the individual level, IR scholars have made similarly dispositional arguments about resolve at the collective level. Sartori, for example, notes that although some deterrence theorists have viewed resolve solely as a function of the issues at stake in a particular crisis, others "maintain that it is an enduring, dispositional quality, that some states generally are more willing to fight than others."[80] Similarly, both formal theorists and empirical IR scholars have noted that collective actors vary in their sensitivity to costs: Mueller suggests that one of the American strategic failures in the Vietnam War was the assumption that sufficient costs would push the North Vietnamese past their "breaking point"; Pape similarly notes that states vary in their vulnerability to coercion, Jervis

78 Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Caspi 2000. On the inheritance of self-control, see Beaver et al. 2010; Boutwell and Beaver 2010.

79 Baumeister, Vohs, and Tice 2007; Galliot et al. 2007; Hagger et al. 2010. For a critique see Job, Dweck, and Walton 2010.

80 Sartori 2005, 45.

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refers to states varying in their "willingness to pay," while Rosen argues that states vary in their "willingness to suffer."[81] Two of the dominant research traditions in the democracies in war literature—the "selection effects" work that predicts that democracies are more likely to win their wars because they are more cautious in choosing which wars are worth fighting, and the literature investigating whether the advantages of democracy in battle decline over time because democratic publics are too casualty-shy to sustain lengthy combat operations—both acknowledge the importance not just of costs, but of cost sensitivity.[82] In much of the literature, the issue is not whether democracies have higher costs of war than autocracies, but how tolerant they are of the costs.[83] Some states have more elastic demand curves for war than others: cost-sensitive actors will lose their appetite for conflict if the price is high, while other actors have relatively inelastic demand curves and will continue to support the conflict despite the raised costs. A recent wave of game theoretic work in IR has explicitly incorporated cost sensitivity into their models, which, even if relying on perhaps overly simplistic assumptions about the relationship between regime type and cost sensitivity, is nonetheless useful for our purposes, since cost sensitivity is portrayed in a manner that makes it inversely related to resolve.[84] Thus, like situational theories of resolve, dispositional theories of resolve are well represented in both IR theory and the social sciences more broadly.

81 Mueller 1980; Pape 1996; Jervis 1976, 51; Rosen 1972. Stam (1996, 19) suggests this variation occurs cross-temporally as well: France lost hundreds of thousands of troops at the Battle of Verdun yet remained in the First World War, but surrendered in the Second World War after having lost 50,000 soldiers over the course of five weeks.

82 On democratic selection into war, see Siverson 1995; Reiter and Stam 1998b; Valentino, Huth, and Croco 2010. On democratic discomfort with lengthy combat operations, see Bennett and Stam 1998; Gartzke 2001; Reiter and Stam 2002; Sullivan 2007, 2008; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2009; Lyall 2010.

83 Although see Schultz 1999. This literature varies as to where democratic cost-sensitivity comes from: some accounts point to a free press and open information environment (Johnson et al., 2006), others emphasize institutions promoting foreign policy accountability (Koch and Gartner, 2005), and others suggest that cost-sensitivity stems from political ideology, with left-leaning political parties being more sensitive to the costs of war than right-leaning ones (Palmer, London, and Regan, 2004; Koch and Sullivan, 2010). It may seem counterintuitive to characterize institutional explanations as being dispositional—particularly from the perspective of comparative politics, which characterizes domestic political institutions as contextual factors—but in the context of inter-*national* politics, "inside," dispositional accounts are those that refer to characteristics or attributes of states, while "outside," situational accounts involve the environment or context in which the state is operating. Thus, what Waltz (1959) called "second-image" accounts are dispositional rather than situational; *innenpolitik* is very much an inside story rather than an outside one. I return to this point in the discussion of the large-N analyses in chapter 6. The question of where we locate agency in collective actors like states is an interesting one (Wendt, 2004), but outside the scope of this project.

84 Stam 1996; Slantchev 2003; Filson and Werner 2004; Mattes and Morgan 2004; Filson and Werner 2007b; Maoz and Siverson 2008.

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Comparing the Two Stories

As discussed above, dispositional and situational theories of resolve differ in the extent to which they conceptualize resolve as an internal or an external phenomenon. Dispositional theories of resolve treat it as an internal trait—part of the actor itself—whereas situational theories of resolve treat it as an external phenomenon—a feature of the environment in which the actor is operating. To a certain extent, the division between these two sets of approaches is merely analytic rather than theoretical, reflecting a disagreement over whether it is more interesting to demonstrate situationally induced convergence (very different actors responding to environmental features in exactly the same way: there are no atheists in foxholes) or dispositionally induced divergence (different actors responding to the exact same environmental features in very different ways: *de gustibus non est disputandum*).[85] Nonetheless, the two sets of theories offer strikingly different implications both in terms of second-order questions of ontology and first-order questions in IR theory.

The Agent-Structure Problem

First, they offer divergent approaches to the agent-structure problem.[86] Whereas situational theories treat resolve as a structural phenomenon, dispositional theories of resolve privilege agency instead. Perhaps reflecting the language of levels of analysis, the relationship between agents and structures has typically been portrayed in IR through the use of vertical metaphors in which agents are understood to be embedded in, but nonetheless, "below" structures that constrain and enable agents' choices, such that Wendt writes about "bottom-up" versus "top-down constitution."[87] This external vision of structure is the one adopted by situational theories of resolve, in which actors are impeded or encouraged to pursue particular goals by the costs or benefits imposed by the strategic environment. Structures, though, are not just external to the agent, and we can imagine agents constrained or enabled both externally and internally, in that agents also have interior organizational structures, internal dynamics of agency that mirror what psychologists call self-regulation—not just regulation of the self, but regulation of certain parts of the self by

85 This distinction is different from the traditional divide between theories emphasizing agency and theories emphasizing structure, because it is analytic rather than ontological, as suggested in the discussion below.

86 Wendt 1987. As Dessler (1989, 443) writes, the agent-structure problem "emerges from two uncontentious truths about social life: first, that human agency is the only moving force behind the actions, events and outcomes of the social world; and second, that human agency can be realized only in concrete historical circumstances that condition the possibilities for action and influence its course."

87 Singer 1961; Onuf 1995; Wendt 1999.

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other parts of the self.[88] Dispositional theories of resolve focus on these internal moving parts: we call it "self-control" out of the assumption that the concept refers to a feature or faculty independent from the environment.[89] Studies of resilience in development and ecology treat it as an emergent systemic-level process rather than a fixed individual-level quality, but nonetheless adopt a similarly internal vision of structure.[90]

Commitment Problems

It is for this reason that advocates of dispositional and situational theories of resolve also have such opposing views of commitment problems, instances where actors are unable to maintain behavioral consistency over time.[91] The same rationalist IR theorists who define resolve situationally in terms of the costs an actor faces also perceive commitment problems through a situational lens: actors will experience commitment problems when a plan or agreement that was in their interests ex ante is no longer in their interests ex post due to changes in the environment in which an actor finds itself.[92] Thus, for situationalists, commitment problems are resolved through the use of external commitment devices—"tying hands," like Ulysses instructing his crew to bind him to the mast of his ship so that he will be unable to act on the Sirens' call—that render behavioral consistency incentive-compatible.[93] The dispositional accounts of resolve popular in psychology and parts of economics, on the other hand, lead to an understanding of commitment problems from an internal perspective, in which commitment problems involve a failure to resist temptation and engage in self-regulation, but can be rectified by internal commitment devices—the exercise of willpower or self-control.[94]

88 Todd and Gigerenzer 2003; Wendt 1987, 359; Baumeister and Vohs 2004.

89 Kuhl 1988. Philosophers from Plato onward called this feature the "will," a volitional faculty of the mind that translates thought into action (Arendt, 1971; Davenport, 2007). In this sense, resolve is central to many of the aspects we associate with agency: the sense of action being guided autonomously (Ryan and Deci, 2006), the ability "to have acted otherwise" (Doty, 1997, 372), and the capacity for second-order volitions (what Frankfurt (1971, 15) called the freedom for an individual "to want what he wants to want").

90 Bourbeau 2013.

91 Becker 1961.

92 Kydland and Prescott 1977; Powell 2006; Beardsley 2008.

93 Fearon 1997; Walter 1997; Elster 2000. This is also reflected in language suggesting that actors "create" resolve (Morgan, 1990, 283–284) through commitment devices; if resolve truly was purely dispositional, it would not need to be created in the first place.

94 Gifford 2002; Bénabou and Tirole 2004; Benhabib and Bisin 2005; Hofmann, Friese, and Strack 2009. See also Fessler and Quintelier 2013, on the distinction between objective versus subjective commitment, which mirrors the situational versus dispositional account I discuss here.

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The Interdependence of Resolve, Capabilities, and Intentions

Similarly, the two bodies of theories espouse very different predictions about the relationship between (i) resolve and capabilities, and (ii) resolve and intentions. Dispositional theories of resolve see all three concepts as distinct: like in force activation models, actors can have sophisticated capabilities but lack the will to fully apply them, while weakness of will means that actors can intend to do something—commit to a war, push the other side to the brink in a crisis bargaining scenario—but lack the resolve to follow through.[95] As Sheeran notes, there is often a marked gap between our intentions and the actions in which we actually engage.[96] The three concepts may not be entirely independent of one another in dispositional accounts, but the automaticity found in the outside story is not present in the inside one.

Situational theories, on the contrary, see the concepts as highly interrelated, causally if not definitionally. First, as actors' relative capabilities increase, their cost of fighting will decrease, effectively rendering them more resolved, such that increases in relative capabilities produce increased resolve.[97] Second, if actors are self-interested utility maximizers, then inasmuch as we can overcome the problem of other minds and study motivations at all,[98] we can derive actors' intentions from the costs and benefits of particular policies: if the cost of a policy increases, actors will be less interested in pursuing it, and will act accordingly. For the outside story, then, cost, capabilities, intentions, and resolve all become highly intertwined.

The (Un)observability of Resolve

Dispositional and situational theories of resolve differ in another dimension as well, since situational features are generally observable to an extent that dispositional ones are not. Even if actors routinely get situational features wrong—e.g., British and German decision-makers miscalculating the offense-defense balance during the First World War, American concerns about the "missile gap" at the tail end of the Eisenhower administration, and so on—these situational features are nonetheless more easily observed than their dispositional counterparts. It is easier to know whether an adversary is likely going to be facing high costs of war, for example, than to overcome the problem of other minds and access some interior attribute belonging to decision-makers or domestic constituencies. Indeed, one of the main attractions of situational theories is the relative discernability of the factors they emphasize, which allow us to focus on observable causes rather than force us to wrestle

95 March 1966.
96 Sheeran 2002.
97 Snyder and Diesing 1977; Morrow 1985.
98 Morgenthau 1985, 5.

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with "the ghost in the machine."[99] In contrast, although even relatively intangible dispositional features can have observable causes (as I suggest in chapter 6), they are still likely to be inferred with a great deal of noise. In the realm of cross-cultural psychology, for example, scholars have found that distributions of dispositional characteristics indeed vary across countries and regions, but our perceptions of these characteristics tend to be inaccurate; even when groups do differ from one another, the stereotypes they have about the way they differ tend to be wrong.[100]

This observability question raises some interesting conceptual issues—can resolve truly be "private information" if it does not implicate some component specific to the actor itself?—but two important substantive ones as well. First, the further we slide toward the dispositional side of the spectrum in figure 1.1, the less observable resolve is, and the greater the uncertainty actors should possess about each others' resolve. The character of international politics should therefore be different at this end of the spectrum than at its situational antipode. At the dispositional end of the spectrum, because of the difficulty in directly observing resolve, leaders should spend considerable efforts sending and deciphering signals of it. If resolve is dispositional, international affairs become characterized by an emphasis on perception and misperception; politics becomes more obviously psychological.[101] If resolve is strictly situational, on the other hand, we need not go to lengths to cultivate reputations for resolve, since our allies and adversaries should simply be able to infer it from features of the world around them, such as the balance of capabilities or the level of intrinsic interests at stake.[102]

Second, if we believe that decision-makers are strategic actors, they should take observable features into account when calculating and calibrating policy decisions, a "selection effect" that means that those features should play less of a role in shaping actual conflict and bargaining outcomes, because leaders already acknowledged them in their prior decision to escalate to crisis in the first place. The more dispositional resolve is, then, the more it should matter in crises. Rational choice treatments that reduce resolve to the "cost of war" therefore also reduce its potential explanatory power in the process.

99 Ryle 1949. Though, as I discuss in chapter 2, the aggregation problem posed by multiple types of costs of war may force us to wrestle with the ghost after all.

100 McCrae and Terracciano 2005; Rentfrow, Gosling, and Potter 2008; Terracciano et al. 2005.

101 Jervis 1976. Alternately, one might also imagine that the further we slide to the dispositional side of the spectrum, the more international politics becomes characterized not by uncertainty, but by *misplaced* certainty, as actors unable to directly access the inner attributes of others turn to schema and heuristics that lead them to make judgments with unwarranted confidence (Mitzen and Schweller, 2011). Note, however, that while distinct mechanisms, both uncertainty and misplaced certainty in this context, lead to similarly dour consequences, a point to which I return in chapter 6.

102 Press 2005.

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CONCLUSION

It was argued in this chapter that although resolve is one of the most central concepts in the study of international politics, the term is often used in imprecise and incompatible ways. Yet the cost of this neglect goes beyond the usual slings and arrows of polysemy: resolve has been turned into a catchall residual category used to explain everything that our traditional theories cannot, threatening to reduce the concept to a set of "post-hoc explanations for otherwise perplexing conflict outcomes."[103] For resolve to be a theoretically useful construct, however, it cannot simply be a magic ingredient we turn to after the fact to explain events that our theories otherwise cannot. The motivating puzzle of the book, then, is to see whether it is possible to purge resolve of this magic—and, if successful, whether it has any explanatory power left. Integrating the IR literature on resolve with its counterparts in other fields, I argued that social scientists traditionally have told two types of stories about resolve: an inside, dispositional account in which resolve is treated as a trait, and an outside, situational account in which resolve is understood as the costs and stakes an actor faces.

The two stories differ not just in terms of metatheoretical assumptions, but also in their political implications. A world where resolve is dispositional looks very different than one in which it is situational. The neoconservative rhetoric of resolve evident in Krauthammer's declaration that "decline is a choice" understands resolve dispositionally, such that liberals who show a lack of resolve are displaying a kind of weakness of character to be rectified by self-discipline. Indeed, just as a lack of resolve is typically understood as a character flaw in the domestic realm, a lack of political will is typically understood as a sin in the political arena, responsible for genocides, defeats, and disappointments.[104] This dispositional understanding of resolve looms especially large in American political culture, in which wars are seen as won abroad but lost at home, exemplified by Lyndon Johnson's concern in 1967 that "If we lose the war, it will be lost here—not in Vietnam," and repeated American failures overseas are attributed to the premise that "the United States has more power; its foes have more willpower."[105] Indeed, this kind of dispositional explanation is frequently put forward whenever pundits are compelled to explain "why the US can't beat an army the size of a junior college."[106] The liberal pundit Matthew Yglesias goes so far as to suggest that contemporary American conservative foreign policy discourse is marred by a "Green Lantern theory of geopolitics," where all military obstacles can

103 Sullivan 2007, 497; March 1966, 61; Baldwin 1979; Jervis 1979, 316; Rummel 1975b, 275; Ray and Vural 1986.

104 Baumeister and Exline 1999; Power 2002.

105 Cited in Hilfrich 2004, 69; French 2015.

106 Rothkopf 2014.

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be overcome with sufficient willpower, and the journalist Jonathan Chait, writing in *The New Republic*, argues that "in the neoconservative world, mighty declarations of willpower always trump puny arithmetic."[107] It is not coincidental that Senator Joseph Lieberman's retrospective on the tenth anniversary of the September 11th attacks published in *Foreign Policy* was entitled "A Decade of Resolve."[108]

If, on the other hand, resolve is purely situational, then it is less like a switch that can be flipped by "digging deep," and is instead more closely tied to the stakes, costs, and benefits that actors find themselves facing. Decline is no longer a choice, but the product of broader forces beyond any one actor's control, "the will to fight" is inconsequential, and the Churchillian romanticization of the heroic will overcoming structural constraints ("I believe in personality," he thundered in his 1934 "penny-in-the-slot" speech) is misguided.[109] As is the case with any structural theory, situational views of resolve leave less room for agency: actors may try to transform their cost-benefit calculus by engaging in various commitment devices to change the stakes, but these may come with other political costs attached. Leaders should spend less time worrying about maintaining reputations for resolve, since these judgments should stem not from innate traits of actors, but the situational features of individual crises. The "cult of reputation" should be disbanded, and decision-makers should focus more on the intrinsic stakes and less on the extrinsic ones. In the current-day political climate, then, situational arguments about resolve in the context of international security tend to be made by the political left, and dispositional ones by the political right.

Situational and dispositional theories of resolve therefore not only come to very different understandings of what resolve is, but also different beliefs about how it functions. Although each account offers some insight into how resolve operates, neither offers a satisfactory explanation by itself. If we intuitively believe that some actors are more resolute than others in general, but also acknowledge that an actor's level of resolve will vary based on the situation it finds itself in, then resolve seems to have both dispositional and situational components. This is the challenge I explore throughout the rest of the book.

Thus, in chapter 2, I suggest that neither dispositional nor situational theories of resolve are satisfactory by themselves, and that taking resolve seriously requires us to think about the concept in an interactionist manner that connects the two. After discussing the merits of interactionist theories, I point to four dispositional variables (time preferences, risk preferences, honor orientations, and trait self-control) and two situational variables (casualties,

107 Yglesias 2006; Chait 2011.
108 Lieberman 2011.
109 Churchill 1934.

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and the costs of backing down), interactions between which can explain why certain types of costs of war loom larger for certain types of actors.

In chapter 3, I turn to experimental methods to engage in theory-building, exploring individual-level microfoundations of resolve using a novel laboratory experiment that models both the selection into, and duration of support for, military interventions. The experiment manipulates situational features of the military intervention while measuring dispositional variables using techniques developed in experimental work in behavioral economics and social psychology. Because of its two-stage structure, I can measure resolve cleanly as a dependent variable by focusing specifically on the extent to which participants who originally supported an intervention continue to do so in the face of mounting costs. In chapter 4, I further extend the experimental findings, employing a national survey experiment that borrows many of the features of the laboratory study from chapter 3 while also modifying others to probe the robustness of the results on a nationally representative sample. Studying resolve as a dependent variable, these experimental analyses offer further evidence of the interactionist nature of resolve.

In chapter 5, I switch the focus of the analyses. The long-standing obstacle to studying resolve with observational data is that resolve is not directly observable; political scientists have thus largely been unable to adequately test whether resolve has the effects we often claim, because we have been forced to infer resolve from the outcomes we also use it to explain. I propose a novel solution: rather than infer resolve via its consequences, we study resolve via its causes. Having already established evidence for situational and dispositional determinants of resolve with experimental data at the individual-level, I use these same variables with observational data at the country- and leader-levels to construct composite situational and dispositional measures of resolve for the great powers in the post–Second World War era. I then employ a set of Boolean statistical analyses to study the impact of situational and dispositional pathways of resolve on the probability of victory of great power military interventions from 1946 to 2003. These Boolean analyses with resolve as an explanatory variable allow me to test whether resolve has the positive effects on conflict outcomes that military practitioners and IR scholars often claim, but doing so using measures of resolve derived independently of the behavior and outcomes I am using them to explain. The results suggest that the situational and dispositional determinants of resolve also predict the probability of victory, but at different levels of analysis: conflict outcomes appear to be primarily a function of situational determinants of resolve at the country-level, and dispositional determinants of resolve at the leader-level, and the dispositional characteristics outweigh the situational ones. Finally, chapter 6 concludes by examining the ramifications of the findings, paving the way forward for future analyses.

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