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Introduction

“Some countries’ leaders play chicken because they have to, some because of its efficacy.”

—THOMAS SCHELLING, *ARMS AND INFLUENCE*

In August 2012, an armed rebellion against the Syrian government escalated into civil war. Reporters quizzed President Barack Obama about whether he would deploy military force to prevent chemical weapons in the hands of the Syrian military from being used against the rebels or stolen by extremist groups. The president famously replied that use or transport of chemical weapons by the Assad government would constitute “a red line” for the US government.¹ A year later, a neighborhood in Damascus was attacked with sarin gas, killing more than fourteen hundred civilians. The US government had evidence of the Syrian government’s responsibility.² President Obama reportedly ordered the Pentagon to prepare an attack on the Syrian military’s chemical weapons facilities but then had second thoughts. In an unexpected move, Obama sought congressional authorization for the strike, knowing full well that in the gridlock of Washington, such authorization would not be forthcoming. According to one analyst, “the president having drawn that red line realized that he had no appetite for direct military engagement in Syria.”³ Having engaged the United States’ reputation for resolve, the president was unwilling to use military force and stand firm.

In the end, Russia brokered a deal with the regime of Bashar al Assad whereby the latter would hand over its chemical weapon stockpiles to an international agency. Although Washington proclaimed this outcome a victory, the episode invited strong criticism of the US president from various domestic and international quarters. In March 2015, when the Syrian government

used chlorine gas against civilians, many were quick to point out that Assad had been emboldened by Obama's failure to follow through on the "red line" declaration two years prior.⁴ In recent decades, even when the United States has not made commitments or drawn any explicit red lines, it has faced criticism for weak responses to crises, such as Putin's intervention in Crimea or China's provocative actions in the South China Sea.⁵

Without access to primary documents that detail Obama's decision making, we should be prudent in our assessments about the role reputation for resolve played in his decision making during the crisis with Syria.⁶ In an interview with Jeffrey Goldberg in the *Atlantic*, published in April 2016, President Obama offered readers a glimpse into his thinking when he dismissed the importance of fighting for face. As Goldberg notes, Obama would argue within the White House that "dropping bombs on someone to prove that you're willing to drop bombs on someone is just about the worst reason to use force."⁷ And yet, the contrast between Obama's reasoning and that voiced by other Democratic presidents is stark: in 1993, when President Clinton attempted to bolster public support for the military operation in Somalia, he did so on reputational grounds, arguing that if the United States were to "cut and run,"⁸ its "credibility with friends and allies would be severely damaged," and "our leadership in the world would be undermined."⁹ The United States must leave only "on our own terms," he argued, and show the world that "when Americans take on a challenge, they do the job right."¹⁰ Similarly, in the midst of the Vietnam War, President Lyndon Johnson responded to the private pleas of George Ball and other advisors to withdraw the troops by stating, "But, George, wouldn't all these countries say that Uncle Sam was a paper tiger?"¹¹

Leaders in other countries and other eras have differed in their concerns about saving face. British leaders in the interwar period, for example, were deeply divided over whether their country should oppose the growing encroachments of Germany and Japan. While some, such as Neville Chamberlain, rarely raised concerns about Britain's reputation for resolve in the mid-1930s, other members of his cabinet, as well as Winston Churchill, often raised such concerns when debating policy choices. The historical record suggests, too, that leaders and their closest foreign policy advisors often hold divergent views about whether reputation for resolve is worth fighting for.

What explains such variations in concern about reputation for resolve? Most existing explanations have focused on features of the strategic environment or the specific crisis situation.¹² This book provides an alternative analytical framework that focuses on psychological dispositions and beliefs of national leaders.¹³ Importantly, by attributing variation in willingness to fight for reputation to variation in individuals' self-monitoring—a stable trait with both genetic and early childhood environmental influences—I show that fighting for reputation has prepolitical origins. Leaders and publics, I argue, take

foreign policy personally. International relations constructs, such as the inclination to fight for face, are built on this foundation.¹⁴

Explaining variations in willingness to fight for reputation for resolve is not a mere academic exercise, but one that has important implications for understanding US conflict history as well as contemporary policy debates about military interventions and the application of military coercion. A leader-level theory on the psychology of leaders also has some predictive value: it allows us to form expectations about the crisis behavior not only of acting leaders but also of presidential candidates and lower-level policy makers who might assume that position in the future. Such expectations about which leaders will fight for reputation could significantly affect their opponents' decisions about whether and when to challenge them. Moreover, as a function of the psychological nature of the theory, it can be easily applied to understanding what segment of the electorate cares about reputation for resolve and would therefore impose costs on leaders who fail to fight for reputation. The theory and its findings thus allow us to identify more precisely which types of citizens are likely to be successfully mobilized to support "contests of face"; it thereby yields a richer understanding of how reputational considerations shape public opinion toward the use of force.

Scholarly work in international relations has long debated the question of whether a nation's reputation for resolve *should* matter. But in so doing, scholars have failed to reconcile the answers they offer with the equally important observation that leaders vary in their concern for reputation for resolve. Thus, a better understanding of the sources of such variation sheds important light on when reputation would matter, and in whose eyes. The novel theory I offer, grounded in individual dispositions, is thus an attempt to revisit the psychological roots of reputation, while focusing on the actors that matter most in international crises.

How Leaders Matter

At the core of this book is the claim that the dispositions or psychological traits of individuals significantly shape their understanding of "the logic of images" in international relations, as Robert Jervis laid out in his seminal work.¹⁵ Consequently, their dispositions also affect the willingness of those individuals to fight for "face." This book is a part of the renaissance of the study of the psychology of leaders in international politics, but it also diverges in important ways.¹⁶

Tracing policy preferences back to leaders and their decision making is not a new exercise in the field of international relations.¹⁷ Individual leaders have always played a central role in the work of historians of diplomacy, foreign policy, war, and international crises. Scholarly work has long established that leaders are especially influential during international crises where there is a

strong role for authority at the highest levels of government.¹⁸ In such times, choices are likely to be made by the key decision makers and are likely to be less affected by bureaucratic compromise or by the preferences of mass publics and special interests.¹⁹ During crises, the latitude with which a leader can make decisions grows as the institutional and normative restraints that usually operate in a democracy wane. A leader's behavior during a crisis, then, aligns more closely with his or her own dispositions, beliefs, and perceptions of the nature of the crisis.²⁰ This is not to argue that other actors or organizations are irrelevant to the crisis decision-making process, but that they are best seen as moderating the effect of a leader's own preferences. Hermann and Kegley write that, "[as] even a cursory reading of diplomatic history will attest, leaders' personal characteristics can reinforce or downplay the effect of formal governmental institutions or cultural norms in crises."²¹ In the case of the United States, which is the focus of this book, strong informational advantages coupled with the unique ability to act unilaterally in the international arena make the president "the most potent political force in the making of foreign policy."²²

Still, for many years scholars have treated individual-level explanations of international politics as "reductionist," while leaving open the question of the extent to which leaders can explain the foreign policy of states.²³ Political scientists, though writing about the importance of leaders during the 1970s and 1980s, only recently began to find a new appreciation for the role of leaders, delving deeper into the psychology of leadership to understand the microfoundations of first-image explanations of international politics. While there is a growing consensus that leaders can play a decisive role in foreign policy outcomes, the manner in which they affect these outcomes remains contested.²⁴ Byman and Pollack set the stage for the most recent wave of scholarship on leaders by arguing that "the goals, abilities, and foibles of individuals are crucial to the intentions, capabilities, and strategies of a state."²⁵ Scholars have sought to unpack *how* leaders' beliefs have shaped the strategic choices of states. For example, Kennedy examines the individual-level sources of "bold leadership" among states, using the examples of Nehru and Mao;²⁶ Saunders demonstrates how presidential causal beliefs about the nature of threats have shaped the contours of US military interventions.²⁷ My own work demonstrates how leaders' beliefs shape their selection and interpretation of interstate signals of intentions.²⁸ More recently, Horowitz and colleagues look at a much larger set of cases to find how leaders' backgrounds affect their behavior in international conflict.²⁹

Rather than focus on a leader's background, causal beliefs, psychological biases, or bargaining skills, as many do in the recent scholarship, I set forth an argument here that draws a causal link between a particular psychological trait called self-monitoring and foreign policy behavior. Numerous other psychological traits might also be associated with certain types of decision

making. Similarly, there is likely more than one characteristic that can affect the foreign policy behavior of a president. Indeed, much of the earlier work on leadership styles has focused on how the interactions of several characteristics of leaders³⁰—such as openness to information, sensitivity to political contexts, and underlying motivation—or their background³¹ or formative experiences³² shape a range of foreign policy behaviors³³ and processes.³⁴ Yet, as significant as those studies have been in establishing leaders as authoritative decision units that should be taken seriously, they were limited by the methodology and research designs they employed to test the theory.³⁵ In trying to build on these studies' core insights, the researcher's task, as Jervis aptly puts it, is to develop careful theoretical expectations about which particular trait or characteristic should influence a particular outcome; derive hypotheses about how it should affect a leader's decision making; and measure it carefully and independently of the outcome we wish to explain.³⁶

With those guidelines in mind, this book sets out to explain why some leaders fight for face while others do not. Importantly, this book is utterly agnostic about whether leaders were correct to worry about reputation for resolve or whether their policies were effective in shaping others' beliefs about their resolve.

What Is Reputation for Resolve?

In international relations, reputation refers to the belief that others hold about a particular actor. A state's reputation for *resolve* is the belief that during crises, the state's leaders will take actions that demonstrate willingness to pay high costs and run high risks, and will thus stand firm in crises.³⁷ Leaders who project or protect a reputation for resolve signal that they are willing to use military instruments in order to affect others' beliefs about their willingness to stand firm. Reputation for resolve is important in crisis bargaining because it portrays an image of toughness and strength that, in and of itself, can help the leader to be more effective at coercing or compelling the other side into submission.

As conceived in this book, the primary audience to which a leader signals resolve is his or her country's adversaries, potential challengers, and allies. Other audiences are important as well. Maintaining a good reputation for resolve should also bolster the credibility of the leader in the eyes of allies who are looking for evidence that he or she will stand firmly in their favor in a crisis that affects their interests.³⁸ Finally, prior research has shown that domestic audiences are likely to punish leaders who seem to undermine their country's reputation for resolve under particular circumstances. At the heart of the theory of audience costs—defined as “the domestic price that a leader would pay for making foreign threats and then backing down”—is the notion

that by backing down, they put at stake the nation's reputation for resolve.³⁹ While recent literature has called into question the premise that domestic audiences punish leaders for being inconsistent, there is also plenty of evidence that domestic audiences care about national honor and reputation for resolve, and that domestic audiences are willing to impose costs more generally on incompetent or inconsistent leaders.⁴⁰

For all those reasons, maintaining “face” or a “reputation for action,” according to Thomas Schelling, is “one of the few things worth fighting over.”⁴¹ Thus, the United States committed to the defense of Berlin, for example, to avoid losing face with the Soviets—in other words, to avoid the “loss of Soviet belief that we will do, elsewhere and subsequently, what we insist we will do here and now” because “our deterrence rests on Soviet expectations.”⁴² Defending this reputation, according to Schelling, is more valuable than the strategic value of any particular territory. “We lost thirty thousand dead in Korea,” as Schelling put it, “to save face for the United States and the United Nations, not to save South Korea for the South Koreans, and it was undoubtedly worth it.”⁴³

Signaling one's willingness to fight for purely reputational reasons can, however, be costly and risky, and it requires some degree of deception. This is because contests over “face” in their purest form are conceptually different from struggles over things that have intrinsic material value, such as territory, natural resources, or economic interests. The two can coexist: fighting for a particular piece of territory could be important both for its intrinsic material value and for the signaling value inherent in the act of displaying resolve. But conceptually, at least, contests that are purely about reputation for resolve would arise even when strategic or material interests have little importance.

The existing literature offers three main insights about the conditions that raise concern about reputations for resolve and that can generate reputation-building behavior.⁴⁴ I treat those as scope conditions for my theory. The first refers to the idea of observability. For reputation to be a plausible concern, there needs to be at least one target audience (preferably more than just one such audience) that can observe the present actions (or nonactions) of the country in order to determine how it might behave in the future.⁴⁵ Second, reputation becomes a concern only if leaders believe that they will engage in a future interaction that would be informed by past behavior. A third necessary condition for reputation-building behavior is that some degree of uncertainty must exist about the preferences of the country. Without this uncertainty about how the government is likely to react, governments would not have incentives to invest in reputation for resolve. I argue that even in the presence of all these necessary conditions, we still observe significant variations in leaders' willingness and likelihood to fight for reputation.

This book diverges from traditional studies about reputation building by starting from the premise that fighting for “face” is most likely under a leader

who believes strongly in the importance of his or her own and his or her country's image, leading the leader to be a more resolute actor who will risk escalation or war even over nonvital issues. The history of US foreign policy suggests that most leaders see value in actually fighting for reputation for resolve. However, we still lack an explanation for what it is about these leaders that makes them willing to take these costly or risky actions, often against the judgment of their advisors. Conversely, why we do occasionally encounter leaders who are reluctant to fight for reputation even when their advisors think they should?⁴⁶ The political science literature currently lacks the microfoundations for understanding what it is about leaders, and individuals more generally, that makes them willing to take risks or support policies not to achieve intrinsic material value, but rather purely for the sake of demonstrating resolve.

Fighting for reputation for resolve is akin, but not identical, to fighting for "credibility," although I use the terms interchangeably, as decision makers often do. Analytically, however, one way to think about the relationship between the two is to follow Shiping Tang's formulation in which credibility is defined as a combined assessment based on perception of capabilities, perception of interests, and a reputation for resolve.⁴⁷ Viewed in this manner, a loss of reputation for resolve affects overall credibility. Importantly, however, fighting for reputation is *not* just about fighting in situations where the credibility of one's explicit commitments or verbal threats are at stake.⁴⁸ Rather, to fight for a reputation for resolve, as I operationalize it in this book, is *to threaten, display, or use military force* in situations where a leader believes his or her actions will affect the beliefs formed by international audiences about his or her firmness.

The Reputation Debate in International Relations and Its Limits

For many decades, owing to the prominence of systemic approaches to the study of international politics, the field of international relations has resisted treating leaders as the central unit of analysis. There are important exceptions, and in many ways this study is built on the shoulders of these inspirational works.⁴⁹ In recent years there has been a resurgence in the study of psychology in international relations. Scholars have demonstrated how leaders' emotions, causal beliefs, cognition, experience, and background, to name but a few attributes, shape the conduct of their foreign policy decision making. This study highlights another way in which a leader's attributes play a critical role in his or her conduct of intentional crises. By showing why some leaders may fear being seen as irresolute, while others put much less value on reputation for resolve, this study provides evidence of reputation and its effect on states' actions in foreign policy crises.

Why is a reputation for *resolve* important? This concept can be traced back to the writings of Thucydides and beyond, but it gained momentum during the Cold War in the context of deterrence theory, which argued that it was necessary for the United States to respond to Soviet probes around the world in order to prevent further aggression.⁵⁰ A similar logic applies in crisis bargaining situations. That is, according to this view, a state must consistently demonstrate that it is willing to stand firm and fight in order to credibly signal its commitments and deter future challengers. If a state backs down, adversaries will infer that it would be likely to do so again in the future, and, hence, they will be more likely to challenge it. In addition, allies will infer that the state would be less likely to uphold its commitments to stand by them in a crisis. As a result, theoretical arguments have emphasized the central role of creating a reputation for resolve, based on the assumption that actors perceive commitments as interdependent.

At the same time, a debate has emerged about the empirical importance of reputation, and whether observers draw inferences about reputation for resolve based on past actions.⁵¹ Most of these criticisms, however, are based on the examination of historical records and focus on specific crises. During a crisis, leaders will focus mainly on new information revealed by actions at the time, such as military mobilization or crisis negotiations.⁵² The information on reputation gained from observing past behavior prior to the crisis would already have been available and incorporated into existing assessments of the adversary. These shared beliefs and common knowledge will not usually be stated explicitly, leading to an underrepresentation bias in historical records.⁵³ An absence of references to past actions in documents or statements does not necessarily mean that reputation is irrelevant.⁵⁴ Indeed, a more recent empirical study finds that reputation for resolve still matters. Weisiger and Yarhi-Milo show that countries that backed down in the past are significantly more likely to be challenged in the future, whereas countries that stood firm in previous crises were significantly less likely to be challenged subsequently.⁵⁵

Studies on human behavior and psychology also point to the importance of reputation—not just that for resolve, but also for violence, honesty, keeping commitments, and so on—in many aspects of social life.⁵⁶ Economic models of reputation as well as experiments also support the relationship between reputation building and behavior under particular conditions. In particular, scholars have noted that reputation-building actions tend to emerge when there is uncertainty about intentions and when individuals deal with each other repeatedly in similar circumstances.⁵⁷ Applying this logic to civil wars, Walter argues that reputation becomes more important when facing a greater number of adversaries.⁵⁸ In the context of interstate coercive bargaining, Sechser shows that when facing an adversary that will likely pose future coercive threats again,

namely, those that are geographically close, militarily powerful, or have a history of aggression, states will not capitulate in the face of compelling threats because they wish to protect their reputation for resolve when facing such an adversary.⁵⁹ Using laboratory experiments, Tingley and Walter find that in later iterations of the game, participants invested more in reputation building and that reputations also had stronger effects.⁶⁰ Some recent large-N studies suggest that state behavior is influenced by the interaction between reputation and interests. States with both “strong” and “weak” reputation for resolve face higher rates of resistance to their threats when they have low strategic interests at stake. Thus, the enhanced credibility from having a strong reputation for resolve exists only when there are greater strategic interests at stake. Furthermore, states with a weak reputation for resolve are more likely to issue threats when their strategic interests increase, because they are likely to incur fewer costs for bluffing behavior than would states with a strong reputation for resolve. This is because states with higher reputation for resolve would incur costs to both reputation and strategic interests if caught bluffing, which is a higher cost than that borne by states with weaker reputation.⁶¹

Recent work has also started to look at how concerns for reputation can vary as a function of culture or strategic environments. For example, Lebow suggests that different countries have had different propensities for conflict, owing to the varying cultural importance of values such as honor and “spirit.”⁶² Morgan describes the United States as having a culture of reputation, stemming from a “pervasive insecurity over what to do if one’s important commitments are challenged.”⁶³

Despite the proliferation of studies on reputation building, three important challenges remain to our understanding of how reputation for resolve affects crisis decision making. First, there has been little development of theory on the variation in concern for reputation at the individual level, and on the *sources* of such variation. Dafoe theorizes that leaders earlier in their tenure will be more concerned about their reputations as they face longer time horizons and their reputations are less well formed.⁶⁴ In addition, US presidents from the South, who are born into a “culture of honor,” may be more concerned about reputation for resolve.⁶⁵ Zhang argues that US presidents have varying concerns for reputation due to differing individual beliefs about types of reputation and also due to the effects of different war aims.⁶⁶ In an experimental work on whether reputations are attached to states or to individual leaders, Renshon, Dafoe, and Huth find that reputations are associated most closely with the actors who are most influential in the relevant decision-making process, that is, the leaders.⁶⁷ Recent experimental work also provides new empirical evidence that a threatened loss of status spurs low-powered subjects to escalate commitments over a given task.⁶⁸ Finally, using a creative bargaining game

based on the market-entry deterrence game, Tingley and Walter find that there is considerable variation in how participants play: many participants invest in reputation even when existing argument tells us that they should not, and others are underinvested in reputation even when the model tells us that they should invest.⁶⁹ All this suggests that individuals and states are actively drawing differing linkages between reputation, status, and fighting. Moreover, the revealed variation in agents' responses suggests that conventional theories at the level of the international system or strategic environment are indeterminate and inadequate in explaining when reputation will constitute a driving concern. The theory I advance here turns to the individual level to help explain this variation.

A second limitation of much of the recent wave of scholarship on reputation for resolve is that it has narrowly focused on the context of audience cost models. However, such models specifically explore the reputation costs imposed on leaders by domestic audiences only when they back down from public threats.⁷⁰ Yet presidents from Kennedy to Nixon to Reagan to Clinton, and others, frequently and publicly invoked reputational costs in instances where no public threats had been previously made, a phenomenon outside the purview of audience cost theory. By looking at the degree to which reputational considerations affect leaders' decision making, this study moves beyond the audience cost framework and provides a broader understanding of how reputation matters in international politics. Moreover, unlike audience cost models that identify the public as the key audience deterring leaders from backing down, the framework developed here focuses on how the perception of *external* audiences motivates some leaders, but not others, to fight for face. While domestic audiences are, of course, important, I show that they play a secondary role in leaders' calculus of whether to fight for reputation during international crises.

Finally, it has long been acknowledged that reputational concerns are ultimately *beliefs about others' beliefs*, and thus that leaders' assessments about when reputations form are inevitably rooted in psychology.⁷¹ Indeed, the role of psychology has been prominent in earlier studies on reputation: in Mercer's study, the fundamental attribution bias explains leaders' beliefs about when states form reputations;⁷² for Tang, the "cult of reputation" is a "belief system" that shapes the behavior of many leaders;⁷³ and for Snyder and Diesing, it is the "hard-liner" bias that leads hawks to care about reputation and credibility.⁷⁴ Much of the recent scholarship, however, has bracketed the role of psychology in explaining reputation building, focusing instead on more tractable variables or proxies such as geographic distance, length of tenure, or the number of adversaries. This study is thus an attempt to revisit the psychological roots of reputation building; at the same time, it departs from earlier work through

novel instrumentation that studies more precisely the effect of these predispositions on a willingness to “fight for face.”

The Argument in Brief

Under what conditions will leaders be willing to use military instruments to project a reputation for resolve? The greatest willingness to fight for face should be seen among leaders who hold the following four beliefs: First, fighting for reputation is most likely when leaders care about how other leaders perceive them. Without the belief that the perceptions of international actors affect their behavior, fighting for reputation is meaningless. Second, willingness to fight for reputation requires leaders to believe that they can manipulate their own state’s reputation. Leaders who think that they do not have the ability to change others’ beliefs about them will be reluctant to risk war over nonvital interests for reputational reasons. Third, leaders must be prepared to “misrepresent their interests” in ways that make nonvital issues seem vital to observers. Crisis bargaining often involves actors who are capable of manipulating or misrepresenting their interests and resolve to the adversary in order to coerce or deter. Finally, leaders must want to appear “resolute,” steadfast, or strong in the eyes of others during international crises. In order to be driven to fight to project a reputation for resolve, leaders must seek to maximize their image of being firm more than other possible images (such as appearing reasonable, moral, or honest). Leaders who fail to hold these beliefs should be markedly less likely to fight for face than a leader who ascribes to them.

In psychology, individuals who fit the above description are called “high self-monitors,” and those individuals are inclined to modify their behavior strategically in order to cultivate status-enhancing images. Low self-monitors, on the other hand, are individuals who, in their everyday lives, are less likely to change their behavior in response to status-based social cues. Other-directedness inclination, a prominent feature of high (but not low) self-monitors, makes high self-monitors significantly more likely to care about their reputation in general compared to low self-monitors. Low self-monitors rather than being concerned about their image, are motivated by a need to establish congruence between their inner beliefs and outer behavior.

While high self-monitors are more prone to care about reputation in general, I argue that in the context of *international crises*, the focus of this book, high self-monitors will be particularly concerned about *reputation for resolve*.⁷⁵ This is because the primary motivation of high self-monitors, according to the literature, is to enhance their social status. Different domains feature different social currencies (and hierarchies) of status. For example, high self-monitors will gain status at a cocktail party by being the funniest, most gregarious guest.

In diplomatic meetings, high self-monitors will give a different performance, also strategically designed to establish an image that they believe will enhance their status. High self-monitors are capable of this shift because of their innate ability to control their outward expressions. When high self-monitors are faced with crisis on the world stage—whether in real life or in an experimental setting—the dominant social currency is their image as resolute actors who will not back down, and are even willing to escalate, in order to protect their standing in the eyes of allies and adversaries. In subsequent chapters, I also demonstrate the validity of this claim both experimentally and empirically using historical case analysis. Furthermore, as I show in chapter 3, high self-monitors' desire to appear resolute stems less from tangible or instrumental benefits that reputation for resolve offers, and more from an intrinsic psychological benefit such an image confers in their mind.

Finally, the ability and inclination of high self-monitors to mask their inner beliefs and strategically manipulate their behavior in their everyday life makes them more inclined to use coercive military signals and misrepresent their interests (as well as their willingness to fight). Resolve, more so than honesty or moderation or any other attribute, is the dominant social currency in crises, and reputation for resolve can be cultivated most dramatically in crises without important material interests, so we should expect high self-monitors to intuitively understand the logic of coercive signals designed to manipulate an opponent's inferences about one's willingness to stand firm in these crises. Low self-monitors, in contrast, do not seek to enhance status and are less able and willing to control their outward expressions. Seeking consistency between their beliefs and behavior, they thus will be significantly less motivated to fight primarily for the sake of image when material or vital interests are not at stake.

Self-monitoring is a stable trait among adults, with some genetic origins. The implication of self-monitoring and its effect on a variety of image-related social behaviors has been established in other work.⁷⁶ This is the first study, however, that uses self-monitoring dispositions to study the willingness of political leaders to fight for reputation in international relations.⁷⁷ Since self-monitoring is intimately linked to the strategic use of impression management, this study thus builds on the insights of the sociologist Erving Goffman that were introduced into international politics through the work of Robert Jervis in his seminal work on the logic of images.

The theory seeks not only to explain concerns about reputation for resolve during crises, but also to explain willingness to apply military instruments to that end. I argue that the effect of self-monitoring is conditioned by an individual's overall attitudes toward the use of force, which, following Herrmann, Tetlock, and Visser, I refer to as hawkishness or military assertiveness.⁷⁸ Hawkishness affects the baseline expectations about the overall likelihood a leader will use military force in international crises for any reason. While hawks are

expected to use force more frequently than doves overall, I argue that when it comes to fighting for reputation, there are important differences between high and low self-monitor doves, as well as between high and low self-monitor hawks. Unlike the conventional literature, I argue that hawks do not necessarily care more about reputation than doves; although hawks may want to fight more than doves, reputational considerations do not affect all hawks, and certainly not hawks alone. Thus, relying on the hawk-dove dichotomy can mask important variation between leaders.

There are several observable implications that follow from the theory, which I test in subsequent chapters. Most generally, they can be summarized as follows: High self-monitor doves will act more assertively than low self-monitor doves during international crises when they believe their reputation for resolve is at stake. In fact, high self-monitor dove leaders will at times actively seek opportunities to show resolve in order to improve their reputation for resolve. High self-monitor dove presidents are thus more likely to use military instruments overall compared to low self-monitor doves. Yet, given their overall reluctance to see military force as an effective instrument of foreign policy, they are more likely to first seek nonmilitary means to demonstrate resolve such as economic sanctions. Moreover, in explaining their decision to use force in private or in public, high self-monitor dove presidents will likely invoke reputational considerations, such as the importance of demonstrating credibility, strength, and resolve to allies and adversaries. Such considerations are less likely to be salient in the discourse of low self-monitor doves, as they will perceive fighting for face as doubly dishonest and unnecessary. These presidents are likely to resist pressures from their advisors to fight for issues without material implications simply to save face, and they will resist sending signals in crises that are intended to deceive the adversary into believing they will stand firm.

When we turn to the hawks, the difference between low and high self-monitors is perhaps less pronounced in terms of their overall willingness to fight, which could be already very high. Still, we should expect to see systematic differences between the two groups in terms of *what they will fight for*. Both low and high self-monitor hawks view military instruments as important and effective tools in the conduct of foreign policy. Thus they are likely to view high levels of defense spending, modernization and augmentation of one's deterrent forces, and even the use of force when vital interests are at stake, as important and justified policies. But because high self-monitor hawks also believe that standing firm in crises enhances their social standing on the world stage—and because such considerations are known to motivate high self-monitors, but not low self-monitors—high self-monitor hawks are more likely to use military force to demonstrate resolve and enhance that type of reputation, *even when vital or material issues are not at stake*. Moreover, unlike

low self-monitor hawks, in explaining their decisions to use military force, high self-monitor hawks will emphasize considerations of reputation, credibility standing, and image in the eyes of adversaries and allies; while low self-monitor hawks will have a different rationale for the use of force, one that emphasizes material stakes and strategic-instrumental logics. High self-monitor hawks can therefore be thought of crusaders, leaders who are far more likely and eager to fight for face compared to all other groups, including high self-monitor doves, who might be more reluctant to use force and escalate in comparison.

Taken together, when we control for hawkishness, we should expect high self-monitor leaders to be more likely to use military instruments during international crises to demonstrate their resolve (as I show in chapter 4). Moreover, we should see that high self-monitor leaders seek to fight for very different reasons compared to their low self-monitor counterparts (as I empirically demonstrate in chapters 3, 6, 7, and 8).

I test my theory on the American presidents during and after the Cold War. Finding variation in concern about reputation for resolve among American presidents poses a hard test for my dispositional theory. Although individuals may differ in their inclination to use force, conventional wisdom would suggest that the foreign policy institutional framework, as well as Cold War concerns, may minimize the effect of individual differences on the use of force. Not only might we expect leaders to exert less control over policy making in democracies than in nondemocracies, but also the particular style of American political campaigning might lead us to assume that all individuals who have come to hold the position of a president are high self-monitors, and thus this trait cannot be used to explain variation in the behavior of American presidents. Moreover, alternative explanations, such as those pointing to the structure of the international system, would expect to see continuity rather than variation in concerns about reputation within the strategic environment of the Cold War period, and then within the post-Cold War period. And yet, in the following chapters, I show that those assumptions are wrong: while more American presidents since 1945 were high self-monitors—an observation that can explain why many of our leaders did fight for reputation for resolve—there still exists important variation in the self-monitoring dispositions of this population of presidents. Moreover, I find that US presidents have exerted strong influence over policy making during international crises, and they have varied in their willingness to fight for reputation.

Testing the Theory: A Layered Methodological Approach

Assessing the causal effects of leaders' traits on their crisis reasoning and foreign policy behavior poses some challenges, but it also provides an opportunity to improve on past attempts to trace the effects of leaders' characteristics

on their foreign policy behavior rigorously and systematically. To that end, I use several methods to measure the theory's key variables, trace their causal effects, and evaluate the theory's generalizability. Any single methodological approach I use—experimental and nonexperimental surveys, computerized text analysis, large-N statistical analysis, and qualitative analysis of historical case studies of presidential crisis decision making—comes with its own set of tradeoffs. One method might shed important light on one aspect of the theory, but it might contribute very little to testing other aspects; one method might be rigorous in some dimensions, but more vulnerable in others. The empirical testing of the theory is thus layered, stacked in a logical way to test the theory from the ground up, while recognizing the strengths and drawbacks of each approach. Importantly, *because of data constraints, each method tests different observable implications (although overlapping to some degree) that follow from the theory.* Taken together, these layered methods increase confidence in both the internal and external validity of my theory.

Empirically, I begin with cross-national survey experiments to test the microfoundations of the theory in a controlled setting (see chapter 3, coauthored with Josh Kertzer). Because of the psychological nature of the theory, we should observe support for the theory within the general population. I fielded the experiments in two countries: the United States and Israel. By testing my theory on citizens in two different cultures, geopolitical environments, and domestic political systems, I explore both the replicability of my findings and the generalizability of the theory. Israel also serves as a hard test case, because the presence of a hostile security environment with multiple adversaries should make it more difficult to detect variation in willingness to fight for reputation.

Experimental approaches offer a much clearer window into the microfoundations and causal mechanisms underlying the theory by allowing us to construct controlled crisis scenarios that engage reputational concerns, thereby avoiding the selection problems that can often arise in the study of international crises in the historical record. Survey methods offer important measurement advantages, enabling us to borrow instruments developed by social psychologists and public opinion scholars to capture individual variation in self-monitoring and hawkishness, our dispositional variables of interest. The power of random assignment intrinsic to experimentation allows us to study the causal effects of reputation in a manner that would be difficult with observational data.⁷⁹ More broadly, these cross-national survey experiments can help make substantive contributions to the study of public opinion about foreign policy. Political elites routinely “prime” members of the public with reputation arguments, and yet we have little sense of which segments of the public are the most receptive to such priming. The results of these surveys show that hawks are more willing to fight for reputation compared to doves and, consistent with our theoretical expectations, that high self-monitoring doves become significantly more willing

to fight when reputation for resolve is at stake. These results strongly suggest that varying levels of self-monitoring among citizens are important predictors of their support for “face-saving” wars.

Chapters 4 through 8 turn to test the theory against the primary population whose behavior the theory seeks to explain—national leaders. To increase our confidence in the validity of the theory, the two key explanatory variables—leaders’ self-monitoring dispositions and their beliefs in the efficacy of force—are coded and measured independently of the outcome variable, which is the application of military instruments to project an international reputation for resolve. While I could test experiment participants’ level of self-monitoring and attitudes toward the use of force directly, by asking them to take well-established tests that directly measure those factors, it is impossible to do the same with deceased (or even living) American presidents.

Thus, I employ two alternative analytic strategies to measure the key explanatory variables of my theory. First, I use an original survey of sixty-eight presidential historians to obtain a measure of the self-monitoring levels of all American presidents from 1945 to 2008. This research design leverages a propitious property of the self-monitoring scale: that self-ratings and peer-ratings on the self-monitoring scale are intercorrelated.⁸⁰ For example, parents can score the self-monitoring tendencies of their children, and colleagues can assess the self-monitoring levels of their coworkers. The judgment of the experts who spent years studying these presidents—their personalities before entering office, leadership styles, historical backgrounds, and so on—thus allows me to measure self-monitoring in a manner that diminishes coding bias and tautological inference. Second, the book uses a variety of proxies to measure a leader’s belief in the effectiveness of use of force in international affairs, including party affiliation of the president and computerized and dictionary-based text analysis program (WordScore) of all their foreign policy speeches while in office, excluding those made during all international crises.⁸¹

In chapter 4, I use the variations in presidents’ self-monitoring by turning to a statistical analysis to establish the external validity of the theory. Here, I test the theory on a data set of all militarized interstate disputes in which American presidents have engaged between 1945 and 2008.⁸² Using different model specifications and measurements, and by controlling for a host of potential confounding variables including hawkishness, I probe whether the self-monitoring disposition of a US president is a significant predictor of his likelihood to employ and initiate military instruments to demonstrate resolve during international conflicts. Low self-monitor presidents, I argue, should rely less on such instruments compared to their high self-monitor counterparts. Moreover, I probe whether high self-monitor presidents are also more likely to prevail in militarized interstate disputes, owing to their determination to demonstrate resolve.

The statistical analysis provides extremely robust and consistent support for the theory in showing the strong predictive value of leaders' self-monitoring on their international crisis behavior. I find that high self-monitoring presidents engage in and initiate about twice as many militarized interstate disputes that involve coercive military instruments per year, compared to their low self-monitoring counterparts. I also uncover evidence indicating that high self-monitor president presidents are more likely to prevail in such disputes compared to low self-monitor ones. Finally, I show that the effect of self-monitoring is larger among the doves than the hawks, as the theory expects. This chapter concludes with a battery of robustness checks, as well as some observations about the relationship between self-monitoring and the selection of US presidents.

Unfortunately, however, this previous analysis cannot shed light on an important link in the causal "chain" of my theory—leaders' *beliefs* in the importance of reputation for resolve, and the role of reputational considerations in motivating decision making and crisis behavior, compared to other contextual variables such as the preferences of domestic audiences or the leaders' belief in the severity of the threat. In chapter 5, therefore, I develop the observable implications of the theory for contemporary documents and secondary literature on past presidents' crisis decision making. I develop alternative explanations against which I test my theory, as well as additional contextual explanations for the crisis behavior that should be evaluated. They include systemic explanations that explain variation in concern for reputation by reference to the polarity of the international system or the advent of nuclear weapons; differences in material cost-benefit calculations shaping the behavior of the president; various domestic political arguments that trace the president's policies to public opinion or his core constituency, or congressional support; and other leader-level alternative explanations. The case analysis allows me to augment the classification of leaders along the dimensions of self-monitoring and hawkishness with several qualitative indicators. Finally, I specify my selection criteria for the international crises studied.

To test the predictions of my theory, I study the crisis decision making of three presidents: Jimmy Carter, a low self-monitor dove (chapter 6); Ronald Reagan, a high self-monitor hawk (chapter 7); and Bill Clinton, a high self-monitor dove (chapter 8). Those presidents were selected for their significant variation in their self-monitoring dispositions and their levels of hawkishness.⁸³ For each president, I select three or four international crises where material stakes were moderate or low; reputation for resolve could have been at stake; and the use of military instruments and the outcomes varied. The qualitative analysis relies on thousands of primary documents (for Carter and Reagan) as well as memoirs, biographies, oral histories, and other secondary literature.⁸⁴ Using such evidence, I process trace the observable implications of monitoring dispositions on the presidents' crisis discourse and behavior, paying

particular attention to the extent to which reputational considerations played a role in decision making. In addition to the testing the theory against the crisis behavior of the presidents, I also code the self-monitoring and hawkishness of Carter's and Reagan's main foreign policy advisors, to establish how well the theory can explain their positions about whether to fight for reputation during those crises. Taken together, I am able to show how dispositional differences among the presidents and advisors shape inner-circle debates about the importance of face in international politics.