Why do some leaders stay in wars they are unlikely to win? Why do other leaders give in to their adversaries’ demands when continued fighting is still possible? Peace at What Price? answers these questions by offering a new theoretical concept: leader culpability. Culpable leaders – those who can be credibly linked to the decision to involve the state in the war – face a significantly higher likelihood of domestic punishment if they fail to win a war than nonculpable leaders who do the same. Consequently, culpable leaders will prosecute wars very differently from their nonculpable counterparts. Utilizing a large-N analysis and case illustrations, this book’s findings challenge the conventional wisdom regarding the relationship between war outcomes and leader removal and demonstrate the necessity of looking at individual leader attributes, instead of collapsing leaders by regime type. The book also offers new insights on democracies at war and speaks to the American experience in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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Peace at What Price?

Leader Culpability and the Domestic Politics of War Termination

SARAH E. CROCO
University of Maryland
To my family.

Especially Ed and Suzanne Croco

&

Ian, Lacey, and Natalie.
You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word. It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival.

– Winston Churchill

Fact is, we went to war, and now there ain’t no going back. . . . Once you in it, you in it.

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Having now completed my first book, I have a newfound appreciation for the opportunity to write an acknowledgments section. Although my name is the only one on the spine, several others belong there in spirit. Because it would require writing a tome longer than War and Peace to get a spine that could accommodate all of the names of the people who deserve recognition, I opted for this route instead. What follows is my attempt to thank the many people who helped in many ways, and at many different points, over the many years this book was in progress.

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