POLS 318: Theories of IR
Lecture 20 (03.29.2021):
Deterrence, reputation and resolve

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Overview

Review

WHAT WE COVERED LAST MEETING?

- Audience costs: Citizens care about empty threats.
- Unpacking audience costs - elite consensus.
- Justification for backing-down and public views.
- Backing-In?
- Belligerence costs?

Questions?? Email me!

Strategies of Power

Introduction

- Power $\rightarrow$ realist theory.
- Deterrence: prevent rival from taking action.

- How?
- Threats of military retaliation when adversary uses military to promote goals.

Deterrence

Scenarios/types

- Direct - immediate.
- Direct - general.
- Extended - immediate.
- Extended - general.

Deterrence

Success: Military

- General deterrence:

    - No threats issued.
    - No escalation of peacetime competition

- Immediate deterrence:

    - Crisis/threat emerged.
    - Prevention of all-out war.

Deterrence

Success: Political

- A failure of deterrence when:
  - Security crises emerges.
  - Crisis escalate to war.
  - Offer max concessions to prevent conflict.

Deterrence theory

Foundations/Logic

- Rational choice → costs and benefits.
- Utility of force ≫ refrain from military challenge.
- Deterrent threat and rational choice.
- What is an effective deterrence?
- Increased utility for **not using force**.
- Backlash → incentives for preemptive attack.

Deterrence theory

Credibility and Signaling

- Deterrence $\rightarrow$ a credible threat.
- Having the military power to inflict costs on rival.
- Issue a deterrent threat? must be *resolved*.
- Everyone can **appear** resolve, how can we tell?
- A bluff? or a credible threat?

Deterrence theory

A credible threat?

- *Costly signal* - actions that increase the risk of war.
- Costly - high costs for 'backing-down'.
- Reveal true intentions behind the threat.
- Simple right? not so fast...
- Main risk $\rightarrow$ provoking preemptive attack:

  1. Domestic politics and support for the threat (audience costs?).
  2. Unintended actions by allies after issuing a threat.
  3. Strategic - credible threat and an adversary who cannot back-down.

Credible threats and costly signals

SOLUTION?

Balanced signals - encourage reciprocity and conditional cooperation.

Reputation

Background

- A fundamental aspect of deterrence.
- What is reputation?
- Does reputation matter?
- Empirical evidence: US and USSR in cold war.
- Situational factors drive behavior, not reputation.
- Conciliatory action $\rightarrow$ higher odds to face threats.

Reputation in crisis

Falkland War - 1982

Reputation

The driver of deterrence?

- Strong interdependence of commitment.
    - Past behavior matter (deterrence credibility linked over time).
    - What about the context?

- Case specific credibility.
    - Reputation have limited effect.
    - Contextual factors: military balance, interests.

- Qualified-interdependence-of-commitments.
    - Reputation matter under certain conditions.
    - Behavior deviate from attacker's expectations.
    - The importance of individuals and their views.

Reputation and deterrence

Testing reputation - Weisiger and Yarhi-Milo (2017)

- Mixed evidence on reputation - past resolve and future threats.
- Strategic perspective - game theory model.
- The role of learning (updating in rational choice).
- So past actions do matter. Yet...
- No resolve in the past $\rightarrow$ more aggressive rival in future.

Method and data

- Militarized disputes (1816-2001).
- Directed-dyads.
- Measure for reputation: outcome of past conflict.

Testing reputations in conflict
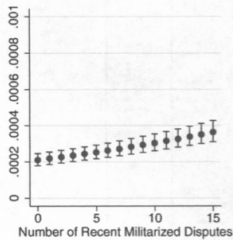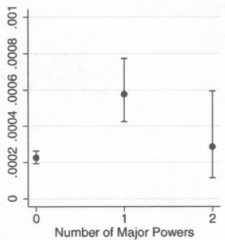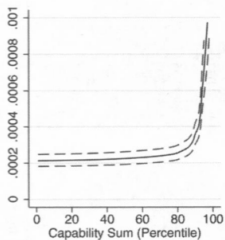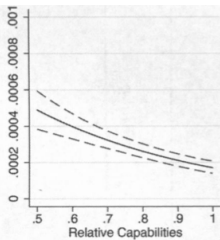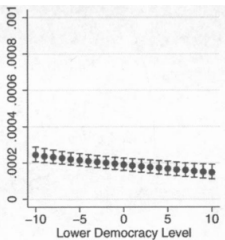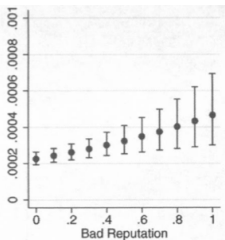
Probing Reputation

Whose reputation?

- Separate leader and state?
- Recent research focus on individuals.
- How the reputation of a leader emerge and develop during her/his tenure?

Parsing reputation

Leaders and Reputation (Lupton 2018)

- Enter office $\rightarrow$ adversaries' information gap.
- Building reputations, how?

  - Early in tenure.
  - Statements and behavior.
  - Act with resolve based on prior statements.

- Signal reputation?

Parsing reputation

Signaling reputation

- How new leaders show their (developing) reputation?
- Position on different policies in crisis/conflict.
- Crisis bargaining: closing the 'information gap'.
- Early interactions and future reputation:
  - Statements and actions $\rightarrow$ expectations for future.
  - Early perceptions condition future assessments (complicating reputations).

Statements, actions and reputation

JFK: Berlin and Bay of Pigs crises

Reputation over time

Testing

- Experiment - process tracing.
- Formation of reputation, view over time.
- Factors: leader statements, action and personal traits.

Results

- Early statements matter for reputation.
- Past actions drive perceptions of reputation/resolve.
- Contextual factors. ▸ Reputations
- Statements and behavior interactions. ▸ Interaction

Reputation - for resolve

What is resolve?

- Expectation of behavior.
- *Resolve*: individual valuation of stakes and costs for fighting.
- An individual disposition?
- Observe variations over time and across topics.

Probing resolve

Expanding the view of resolve (Kertzer 2017)

- Behavioral definition: firmness, steadfastness.
- Maintain behavior despite temptations to back-down.
- Psychological traits: willpower, self-regulation and self-control.

Why a disposition?

- Unclear observation and measures - tautology.
- Where does resolve comes from?
- Makes more sense (resolute - persistent).
- An interdisciplinary research (IR, Economics, Psychology).
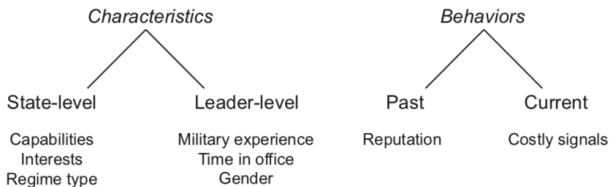
Probing resolve

What constitutes resolve?

- An interactionist approach - situation and individual.
- Conflict costs - human, reputation.
- Individual time preferences - patience.
- Individual risk preferences - fighting or backing-down.

What constitutes resolve?

Probing resolve

How do we assess resolve? (Kertzer et al. 2021)

- An information question - cues to assess resolve.
- Heuristics to form opinion.
- Two broad categories.

Probing resolve

How do we assess resolve? (Kertzer et al. 2021)

- A conjoint experiment.
- Assess multiple factors at the same time. ▶ Experiment

Results

- How we assess resolve? (Very big figure link)
- Past behavior and sending costly signal.
- State characteristics: regime, capabilities and stakes.
- Leader characteristics: military service.

Recommended readings

More studies on deterrence, reputation and resolve:

1. McManus, Roseanne W. (2018). "Making it personal: The role of leader-specific signals in extended deterrence." *The Journal of Politics 80*, 3, 982-995.

2. Zhang, Ketian. (2019). "Cautious Bully: Reputation, Resolve, and Beijing's Use of Coercion in the South China Sea." *International Security 44*, 1, 117-159.

3. Brutger, Ryan, and Joshua D. Kertzer. (2018). "A dispositional theory of reputation costs." *International Organization 72*, 3, 693-724.
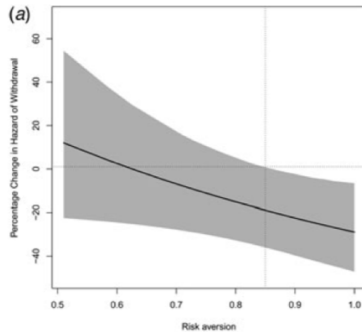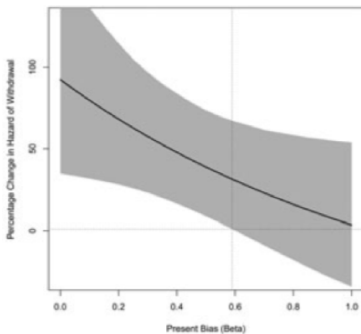
What effect the formation of reputations? An experiment
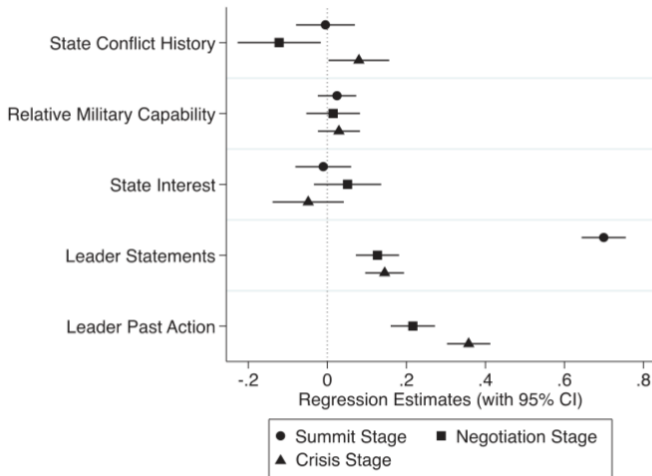
Reputation - statements and behavior
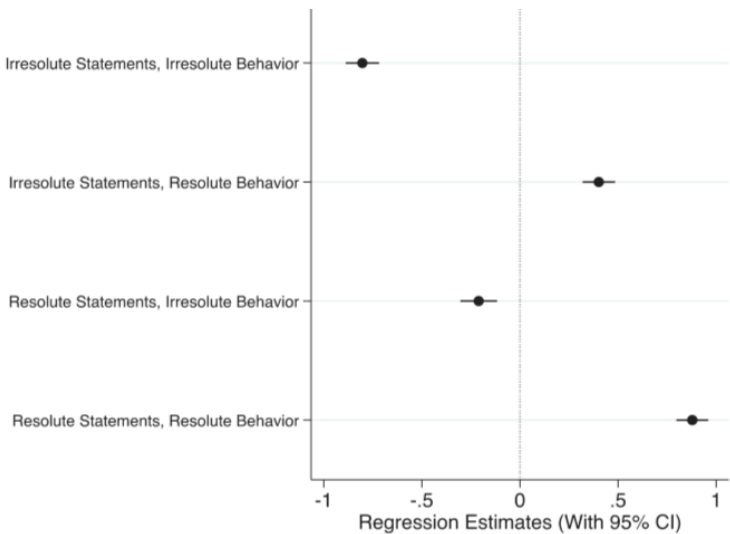
Resolve - individual dispositions

Resolve - a conjoint experiment

Example Vignette

	Country A	Country B
Government	The country is a democracy	The country is a democracy
Interests in the dispute	Experts describe the country's stakes in the dispute as high.	Experts describe the country's stakes in the dispute as high.
Leader background	The leader recently took office; he has served in the military briefly.	The leader recently took office; she had a long career in the military.
Foreign relations	The country is an ally of the United States.	The country is an adversary of the United States.
Previous behavior in international disputes	The last time this country was involved in an international dispute, it initiated the crisis by issuing a public threat to use force against an adversary of the United States, but ultimately backed down. At the time, the country was led by a different leader than the one in the current dispute.	The last time this country was involved in an international dispute, it initiated the crisis by issuing a public threat to use force against an adversary of the United States, and stood firm throughout the crisis. At the time, the country was led by a different leader than the one in the current dispute.
Current behavior	In the current crisis, the country has yet to make any statements or carry out any actions.	In the current crisis, the country has made a public threat that they will use force if the other country does not back down.
Military Capabilities	The country does not have a very powerful military	The country has a very powerful military

In disputes like theses, countries either back down or stand firm.
If you had to choose between them, which of the two countries is more likely to *stand firm* in the current dispute?

                 Country A   Country B

                    ○   ○