

POLS 318: Theories of IR
Lecture 21 (10.31.2021):
Coercion, compellence and military power

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Overview

- 1 Quick review
- 2 Using Military Power
- 3 Coercion and Military power
- 4 Airpower and nonstate actors
- 5 Extra Material

Review

WHAT WE COVERED LAST MEETING?

- Deterrence, Reputation, resolve.
- Success in deterrence - military or political?
- Credible threat and costly signals in deterrence.
- Reputation - does it matter in IR?
- Whose reputation - leaders and early interactions.
- Resolve - willingness to persist in action.

Questions?? Email me!

Introduction

Using military power

- A foreign policy tool common for most states.
- Can be more useful for some goals than others.
- 4 general categories: defense, deterrence, compellence and swaggering.
- Few can implement all these goals with their military.

Military Power

(1) Defense

- Deployment of military to accomplish:
 - ① Ward-off and attack.
 - ② Minimize damages to oneself.
- Target rival military.
- A preventive attack - sustain capabilities advantage.

Military Power

(2) Deterrence

- Deploy military forces to prevent adversary from taking a certain action.
- The threat of retaliation.
- Threat of military power → primary tool of deterrence.
- Carry-out the threat → failure of deterrence.

Military Power

(3) Compellence

- Deployment of military to accomplish:
 - ① Stop adversary actions.
 - ② Force rival to an action she has yet to initiate.
- Active → use military power.
- Passive → display costs for rival who ignores demand.
- Deterrence = Compellence??
- Challenge of achieving successful compellence.
- Demand has intangible implications.

Military Power

(4) Swaggering

- Limited use.
- Enhance national pride or leader personal ambitions (global or domestic incentives).



Military Power

Coercion (Pape 1992)

- Alter behavior by manipulating a rival's costs and benefits from attack decision.
- Coercion using various tools:
 - Economic sanctions.
 - Diplomatic pressure, isolation.
 - Use military force.
- Failed coercion:
 - 1 Halt coercion prior to securing concessions.
 - 2 No concessions despite persistent coercion.
 - 3 Imposing demands after military victory.

Coercive Air Power

Gulf war (1991); Balkans (1999); Afghanistan (2001); Iraq (2003)



Coercive Air Power

MAIN PUZZLE:

Does air power help accomplish political objectives?

- Useful against military targets, not civilians.
- Aerial attacks persist until coercive demands met.

Horowitz and Reiter (2001)

- A political angle - target regime and demands presented.
- Democratic regime:
 - Coercion is more effective → sensitive to casualties.
 - Use air power - less risk for military forces.

Air Power - Successful Coercion

(1) AERIAL CAMPAIGN TYPE

- Denial → target military forces.
- Success: destruction of means to muster military resistance.
- Punishment → target civilians and infrastructure.
- Pressure public to influence politicians to accept coercive demands.
- Challenges to punishment strategy:
 - ① Economic and political system adapt (substitution and stockpiling).
 - ② Morale shift to 'rally around the flag'.

Air Power - Successful Coercion

(2) REGIME TYPE

- Aerial attacks → pressure public to push government to alter behavior.
- The role of domestic institutions - democratic leaders are more sensitive to public pressure.
- Autocrats → not beholden to public demands.
- Yet...
- Public 'rally' behind the leader (especially in democracies once conflict began).

Air Power - Successful Coercion

(3) COERCER DEMANDS

- Type of demands and success of coercion.
- High demands - overthrow gov't, unconditional surrender.
- Costs of high demands \gg costs of air attacks.



Coercion and Air power

Horowitz and Reiter (2001)

- Data: Coercive attacks with airpower (1917-1999).
- Main results:
 - 1 Success rate of 36%.
 - 2 Success more likely facing military vulnerability.
 - 3 High demands → lower success odds.
 - 4 Successful coercion versus democracies.

Coercive Air power

A duration question (Allen 2007)

- Identify the conditions to end the aerial campaign.
- Domestic institutions - constrain leaders.
- How?
 - 1 Political competition, survival and public opinion.
 - 2 Information flow -expose misuse of military force

Coercive Air power

Democracies and air coercion

- Shorter aerial campaigns than autocrats.
- Why?
- Pressure from rising costs (human, financial, political).
- Democratic target → concede faster, why?
- 'Rally effect' is short-lived, pressure to end conflict.
- Democracy → more resolved, so attacker concede and conflict is shorter.

Coercive Air power

Duration (Allen 2007)

- Denial strategy → Shorter conflict.
- Attacks on democracy → shorter (resolved and attacker concedes).
- Attacks by democracy → shorter (leaders concern about rising costs).
- Success in coercion → diverse military tools (beyond aerial power).

Airpower prominence

Background

- Expanded use of air power facing nonstate actors.
- Inefficiency of targeting civilians.



Insurgency Warfare

Main features

- *Asymmetry*: state has clear material advantage.
- Rebels avoid large-scale direct conflict with the state.
- Importance of civilian population:
 - Organize civilians in countryside for support and recruitment.
 - Support network for insurgents.
 - Hiding locations, supplies, recruits.
- How insurgents control population?
- Violence and threats ensure compliance.

Airpower and fighting insurgents

Kocher and Pepinsky (2011)

- Aerial bombardments as counterinsurgency tactic.
- Coerce insurgents in Vietnam.
- The challenge of measuring success.
- Does aerial attacks affect insurgents ability to consolidate power?

Airpower and fighting insurgents

- Discriminate and indiscriminate attacks.
- Aerial attacks → indiscriminate.
- Success is more likely using discriminate/selective strategy.
- Extended violence (indiscriminate) → civilians cannot 'separate themselves' from militant and stay safe.
- Reduce incentives to join rebels.

Context - Vietnam

- Focus on Vietcong forces, not North Vietnam army.
- Target South Vietnam and Ho-Chi Minh trail.

Airpower and fighting insurgents

Kocher and Pepinsky (2011)

- Data: micro-level geographic location and bombing sorties.
- Civilian population proximity - 23% live 3km of strike areas.

▶ MapVietnam

Results:

- Aerial bombing was counterproductive.
- More attacks → downstream control by Vietcong.
- Negative effect on government or rebel controlled areas.

Airpower and fighting insurgents

Toft and Zhukov (2012)

- Coercion of rebel forces using air power.



Airpower and fighting insurgents

Toft and Zhukov (2012)

- Assess common strategies (denial and punishment).
- Succeed in preventing diffusion of violence.
- Data: strategy employed and insurgents attacks (2000-2008).

Results

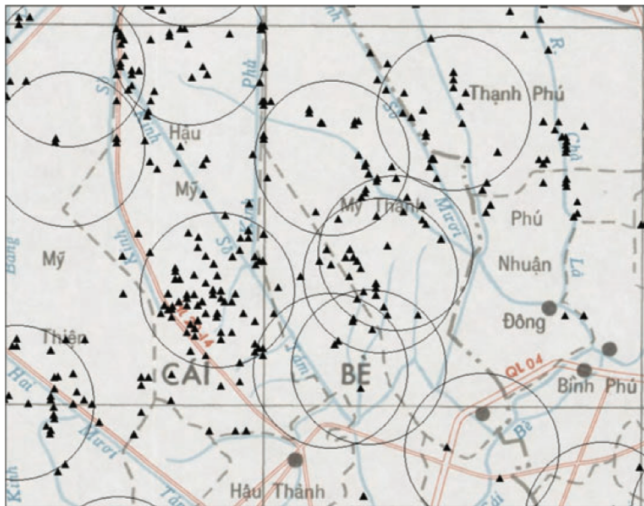
- Denial strategy suppress new cases of violence.
- Punishment has a strong inflammatory effect. [▶ SimulatedAnalysis](#)

Recommended readings

More studies on deterrence, reputation and resolve:

- 1 Allen, Susan Hannah, and Carla Martinez Machain. (2019). "Understanding the impact of air power." *Conflict management and peace science* 36, 5, 545-558.
- 2 Shield, Ralph. (2018). "The Saudi air war in Yemen: A case for coercive success through battlefield denial." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, 3, 461-489.
- 3 Hultman, Lisa, and Dursun Peksen. (2017). "Successful or counterproductive coercion? The effect of international sanctions on conflict intensity." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61, 6, 1315-1339.

Aerial Bombing - South Vietnam 1969



Airpower strategies - Simulated data

