

POLS 318: Theories of IR  
Lecture 18 (10.20.2020):  
Audience Costs

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# Overview

- 1 Quick review
- 2 Audience Costs theory
- 3 Observing AC
- 4 Beyond Democracies
- 5 Extra Material

# Review

## WHAT WE COVERED LAST MEETING?

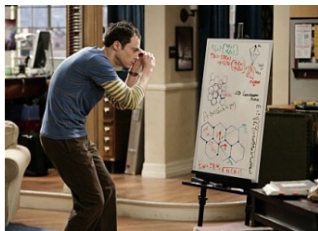
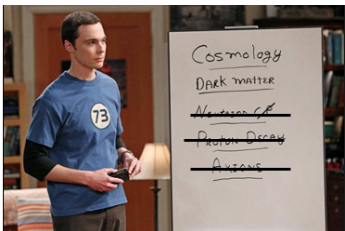
- Democratic peace theory - public angle.
- Experiments to measure individual views.
- Democracies - less threatening!
- At war - benefits and limitations.
- Effort and resources vs. selection effect.
- Duration of wars.
- Strategies to minimize conflict costs.

Questions?? Email me!

# Introduction

## Audience Costs

- The "dark matter" of IR (Schultz 2012).
- Political accountability and leaders' behavior in IR.



# Audience Costs

## Fearon (1994)

- The electoral costs of not keeping promises.
- Inconsistency → political price.
- Failed foreign policy and removal from office.
- What matters most?
- Political institutions → regime type.
- Democratic leaders versus dictators and audience costs.

# Audience Costs

## Fearon (1994)

- The strategic element - International crisis/conflict.
- How audience costs affect rivals behavior?
- Democratic leaders → credible threat.
- Signal of actual intention to follow-through...
- International factors internalized when threat issued.
- Domestic concerns dominate the decision to escalate (threat).

# Audience Costs

## REPUTATION, HONOR AND BACKING-DOWN

- Backing down after a threat.
- Damage to reputation, honor, credibility.
- Critics - public, opposition, allies...
- Domestic criticism ≫ international incident.
- Threat → leaders are 'all-in'.
- But, credibility matters... [▶ JFK](#)

# Audience Costs

## What help creating audience costs?

- (1) Means and incentives to coordinate and punish leader.
- (2) Backing down is worse than conceding.
- (3) Outsiders can observe this dynamic.

## Why punish the leader?

- Bluff → damages to reputation and future bargaining.
- Bluff → display of leader's incompetence.



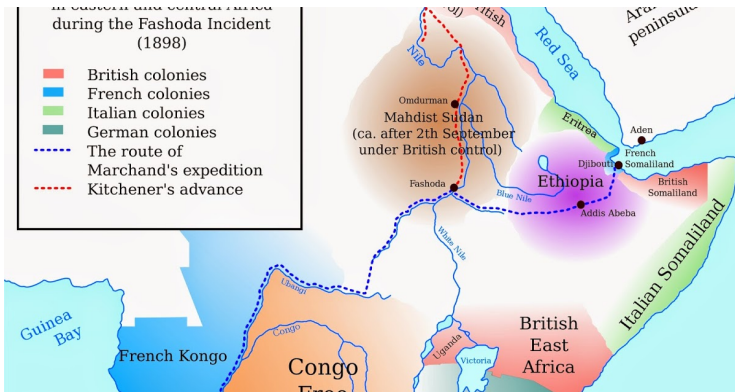
# The issue of visibility

## Schultz (2001)

- Conflict behavior → strategic calculations.
- Observed actions → low domestic costs.
- **Partial observability**
- International outcomes involve *Low audience costs*.
- Strategic selection into conflicts.

# Invisible Audience Costs

## FASHODA INCIDENT (1898)



# Observing Audience Costs

## Past work challenges and solution

- Indirect assessment of mechanism.
- Democracy and war outcomes correlate, yet...
- Is it really audience costs?
- Need to show direct effect → political costs of backing-down in crisis after threat.
- A formal model. [▶ CrisisBargain](#)

# Finding audience costs

## Simulated data - Schultz (2001) ▶ CrisisAbadan

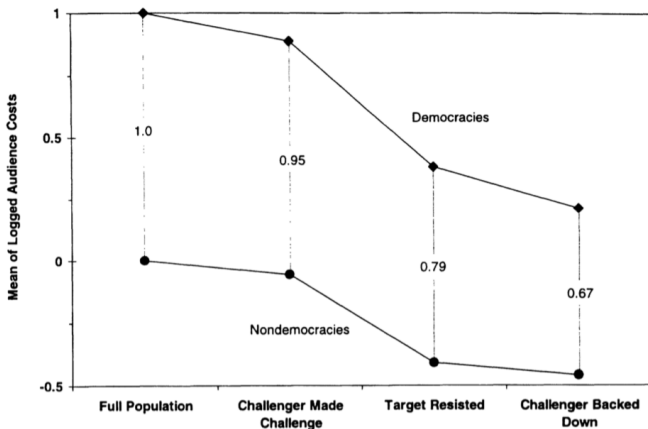


Figure 4: The Distribution of Challengers' Audience Costs along the Game Tree

# Finding audience costs

## Potter and Baum (2014)

- Observe AC → public aware of government actions.
- Conflict information flow shapes public opinion.
- Unpack process leading to credible threat.
- Account for democratic regime heterogeneity:
  - ① Whistle-blowers: opposition parties and failed policy.
  - ② Access to information - free media.

# Finding audience costs

## Potter and Baum (2014)

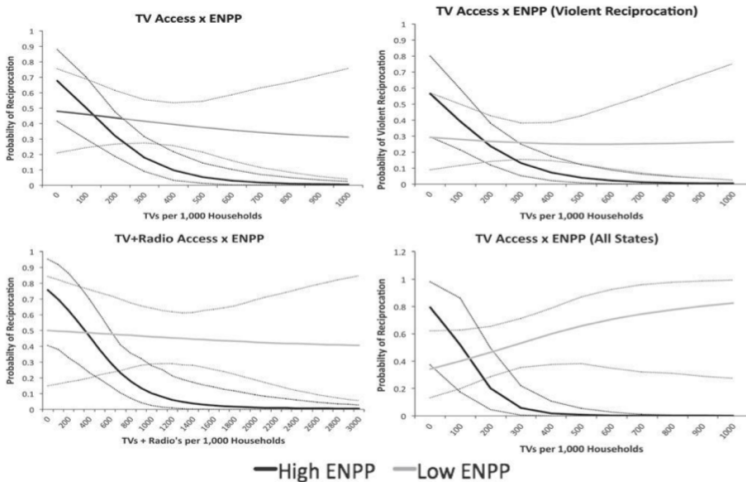
- Create AC → independent opposition parties and access to information through the free media.
- Close the 'knowledge gap': civilian and policymakers.
- Public pays little attention to foreign affairs.
- Require unpacking democratic regimes - variation on main factors to uncover hidden audience costs.

## Method and data:

- What do we measure? Reciprocation in crisis.
- Factors: media (TVs distribution); political opposition.

# Finding audience costs

## Second order indication for audience costs



# Unique democratic mechanism?

- Dictators are not as safe as we think.
- Most at risk and must cater to supporting elites.
- Audience costs → *possible* in autocracies.
- How?
- Elites coordination to sanction leader for failure.
- Is this process observable to outsiders?
- Coordination and visibility - requires less rigid approach.
- Unpack autocracies...



# Autocracies and Audience costs

## Weeks (2008)

- Dictators' challenge to create AC - stronger control over tenure.
- Democracy → coordination does not face risk of punishment.
- Autocracy → leader and elite collude to prevent participation and limit coordination.
- Still, dictators do not have full control.
- How can they limit opposition?
  - ① Control over intelligence services for inside information on resistance (Stalin/Saddam).
  - ② Punish opposition with secret police.
  - ③ Co-opt elites and recruit them as informants (private goods).

# Unpacking Dictatorships

## Weeks (2008)

- An exception - new and unstable democracies (invisible for outsiders).

## Coordination & visibility - 3 types of regimes:

- (1) *Single party*
- Limited influence over policy, control political power.
- Elections are somewhat competitive.
- Elites rise through party → no personal connection to leader.

# Unpacking Dictatorships

## Coordination & visibility - 3 types of regimes:

- (2) *Military regimes*
  - Governed by high ranking officer.
  - Mechanism for officers to influence policy.
  - No personal connection to leader.
  
- (3) *Personalist regimes*
  - Extensive control over political and security institutions.
  - Prevents coordination and opposition.
  - Strong ties of elites to leader.
  - Keep incompetent leader → 'lesser of two evils'.

# Audience costs across regimes

**TABLE 1.** *Target reciprocation rate by regime type of challenger*

| <i>Challenger</i>         | <i>1816–99</i> | <i>1946–99</i> |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| DEMOCRACY                 | .38<br>(574)   | .41<br>(358)   |
| NONDEMOCRACY              | .49<br>(1,967) | .51<br>(1,224) |
| <i>Total</i>              | .46<br>(2,541) | .49<br>(1,582) |
| <i>Chi-square p-value</i> | 0.001          | 0.001          |

*Note:* The number of observations is in parentheses.

# Audience costs across regimes

**TABLE 3.** *Target reciprocation rates by regime type of challenger, 1946–99*

| <i>Challenger regime type</i> | <i>Reciprocation rate</i> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| DEMOCRACY                     | .41 (358)                 |
| SINGLE-PARTY                  | .44 (272)                 |
| HYBRID MILITARY/SINGLE-PARTY  | .44 (9)                   |
| MILITARY                      | .55 (44)                  |
| DYNASTIC MONARCHY             | .53 (15)                  |
| MIXED NONDEMOCRACY            | .33 (206)                 |
| NONDYNASTIC MONARCHY          | .58 (38)                  |
| NONDEMOCRATIC INTERREGNA      | .57 (259)                 |
| PERSONALIST                   | .61 (335)                 |
| NEW DEMOCRACY                 | .65 (46)                  |
| <i>Total</i>                  | 0.49 (1,582)              |

*Note:* The number of observations is in parentheses.

# Audience costs across regimes

**TABLE 5.** *Predicted probability of reciprocation by regime type of challenger*

| <i>Initiator regime type</i> | <i>Predicted probability of target reciprocation</i> | <i>95 percent confidence interval</i> |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| DEMOCRACY                    | .27  | (.21, .34)                            |
| SINGLE-PARTY                 | .26  | (.18, .35)                            |
| MIXED NONDEMOCRACY           | .27  | (.20, .37)                            |
| MILITARY                     | .37  | (.23, .53)                            |
| CYNASTIC MONARCHY            | .28  | (.11, .52)                            |
| NONDYNASTIC MONARCHY         | .36  | (.21, .54)                            |
| AUTOCRATIC INTERREGNA        | .37  | (.29, .46)                            |
| NEW DEMOCRACY                | .44  | (.29, .60)                            |
| PERSONALIST                  | .48  | (.40, .55)                            |

## Recommended readings

More studies on audience costs theory:

- 1 Trachtenberg, Marc. (2012). "Audience costs: An historical analysis." *Security Studies* 21, 1, 3-42.
- 2 Crisman-Cox, Casey, and Michael Gibilisco. (2018). "Audience costs and the dynamics of war and peace." *American Journal of Political Science* 62, 3, 566-580.
- 3 Chiozza, Giacomo. (2017). "Presidents on the cycle: Elections, audience costs, and coercive diplomacy." *Conflict management and peace science* 34, 1, 3-26.

# Regimes and credible threats



"All the News That's Fit to Print" **The New York Times.** LATE CITY EDITION

VOL. CXLII, No. 148,111 \*SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1964 NEW YORK, YULIANG, OCTOBER 16, 1964

## U.S. IMPOSES ARMS BLOCKADE ON CUBA ON FINDING OFFENSIVE-MISSILE SITES; KENNEDY READY FOR SOVIET SHOWDOWN

**U. S. JUDGES GIVEN POWER TO REQUIRE VOTE FOR RESOURCES**  
High Court Holds Order Raising the Possibilities of 54 in Missouri County

**Chinese Open New Front; Use Tanks Against Indians**  
Other Action Planned if Big Rockets Are Not Dismantled

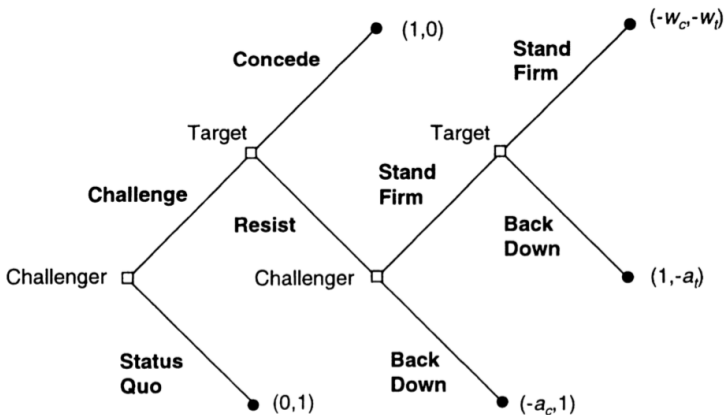
**SHIPS MUST STOP**  
Other Action Planned if Big Rockets Are Not Dismantled

**PRESIDENTY GRAVE**  
Reports Russians Lied and Put Hemisphere in Great Danger



# Finding audience costs

## CRISIS BARGAINING - A FORMAL MODEL



# Finding audience costs

## Abadan Crisis 1951

