POLS 318: Theories of IR
Lecture 21 (10.29.2020):
Coercion, compellence and military power

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Overview

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.
- Behavioral angle - individual disposition.
- How do we assess resolve in others?

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 $\rightarrow$ primary tool of deterrence.
- Carry-out the threat $\rightarrow$ 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 $\rightarrow$ use military power.
- Passive $\rightarrow$ 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

Horowitz and Reiter (2001)

MAIN PUZZLE:

Does air power help accomplish political objectives?

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

- 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 $\rightarrow$ pressure public to push government to alter behavior.
- The role of domestic institutions - democratic leaders are more sensitive to public pressure.
- Autocrats $\rightarrow$ 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 ≫ 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 $\rightarrow$ 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 $\rightarrow$ concede faster, why?
- 'Rally effect' is short-lived, pressure to end conflict.
- Democracy $\rightarrow$ more resolved, so attacker concede and conflict is shorter.

Coercive Air power

Duration (Allen 2007)

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

Airpower prominence

Background

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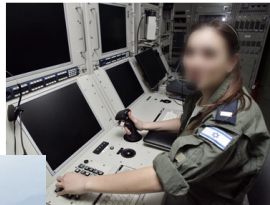
Insurgency Warfare

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 $\rightarrow$ indiscriminate.
- Success is more likely using discriminate/selective strategy.
- Extended violence (indiscriminate) $\rightarrow$ 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
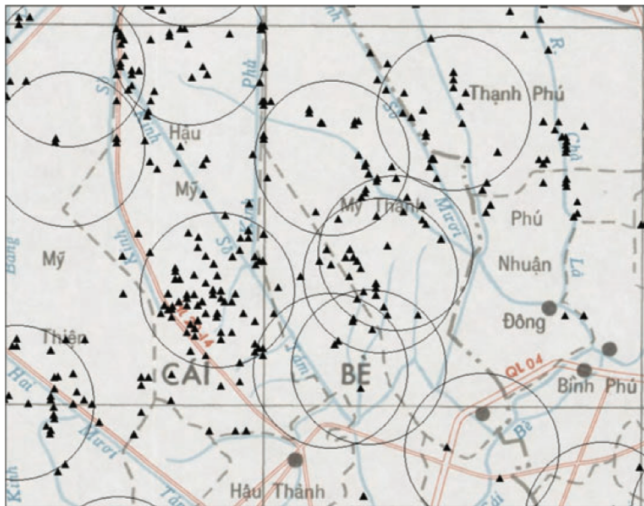
Airpower strategies - Simulated data