Crises and Crisis Generations: Defeat and Military Political Power*

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Question

- How do international threats affect military involvement in politics?
The problem: Chronic vs. acute threat environment

- With many theories we get a good sense for why State A has a military involved in politics and State B does not (cross-sectional).
- But with slow-moving variables (e.g., rivalry, geography) we can’t really explain why in State A, military involvement in politics was much higher in year $t$ than in year $t+5$. (time-series)
A way forward: Crises

- Need to move from *chronic threat environment* to *acute threat environment*

- Important findings that crises/conflicts can reduce coups
  - E.g., Talmadge and Piplani 2015; Powell 2014; Belkin and Schoffer 2005

- But coups are rare, extreme outcomes—there is a lot of variation in the “0s.”

- Military political participation outside of coups?
Theory I: Poor outcomes in crises

- International crises create a functional imperative for the military to effectively defend the state.

- Poor outcomes engender soul-searching and learning in the military.

- A politicized military is a “jack of all trades but a master of none.”

- A poor outcome in a crisis leads to military withdrawal from politics.

- Short- and long-term effects
Theory II: Long-term effect

- The effect of a crisis with a poor outcome will persist years later.
- Threat persistence, but also *generational shifts*.
- When the “Crisis Generation” becomes generals, military preferences are shifted again towards professionalism and abstention from politics.

*Officer cohort k at t…*  
*And t+20*
New data : Military Participation in Government (MPG)

- Human coders consult *Europa World Yearbook* for rosters of national cabinets and state councils.
- Number and type of positions held by military officers.
Comparing MPG with regime-type data

Proportion of countries with at least one active military officer in cabinet/state council from 1964-2008

- Active military in government
- GWF military regime
Comparing MPG with regime-type data II

Proportion of countries with at least one active military officer in a non-security role in cabinet/state council from 1964-2008.
Research Design

- DV: Military Government Share: the proportion of cabinet/state-council level positions that are active military officers.
- IV: Poor outcome in severe international crisis (ICB/COW): 1918-2007
  - Defeat/stalemate
  - Inter-state war (COW), “major clashes” (ICB)
  - “Grave” or “existential threat” (ICB)
- IVs: Binary indicators for crisis-history
  - Coded at 5 year intervals
    - E.g., defeat/stalemate 1-5 years ago, 6-10 years ago….46-50 years ago.
Research Design

- OLS with country-level fixed-effects
- 1964-2008
- One-year lag of DV
- Cluster standard errors by country

Controls:
- Ongoing crisis/war (ICB/COW)
- Cumulative count of defeats/stalemates (ICB/COW)
- Minor int’l crises (ICB)
- Int’l rivalry (Thompson and Dreyer)
- Domestic conflict (UCDP/PRIIO, NAVCO)
- GDP per capita (log)
- Democracy (Polity/Gleditsch)
- New leader (Archigos)
- Cold War
Strong evidence that defeat or stalemate in a crisis reduces military participation in government in both the short- and long-term.

Long-term effect persists more than 20 years after the end of the crisis.
Results: Effect of a crisis over time
Including other outcomes (e.g., ties, victories)
Robustness checks

- Control for other time-trends
  - Year dummies
  - State age
  - Regime age

- Different constructions of IV
  - 4- and 6-year indicators
  - Include crisis-history indicators for other types of outcomes

- Other controls and samples
  - Exclude consolidated democracies, major powers, WW2 combatants
  - Control for coups; non-democratic regime-type.
  - Long-term impact of internal conflict

- Count models
Count models (conditional FE)
Conclusion

- Poor outcomes in crises exert a negative effect on military participation in government in both the short- and long-term.
- The timing of the long-term effect supports the generational hypothesis.
- Implications for SSR?
- Ongoing work related to security/non-security positions, domestic conflict, unpack “other outcomes.”
Four-year intervals
Six-year intervals
Count models (unconditional FE)