A Time to Speak:

When Do Leaders Choose to Make Statements of Resolve?

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Obama on the Islamic State, 10 Sep 2014:
- “Evil,” a “cancer”
- Will be “vanquished from the earth”

Obama on the Islamic State, 7 Jan 2014:
- “jayvee team”

Why make tough statements in one case and a dismissive statement in another?
Benefit of tough statements: Convey resolve, may persuade the adversary to back down

Drawbacks

- Domestic punishment or reputational damage
- Getting locked into fighting
- Danger of hostile adversary reaction

Generally more likely to make statements if care more about the issue

Makes sense, but hard to test
Observable Factors

- Observable factors that might affect when statements are made
  - Ability to follow through
  - Diversionary incentives
  - Level of international tension
Statements are likely to be more effective if the leader has more ability to follow through
- Therefore, making statements is more attractive

H1: More statements will be made when a country has greater relative military power
H2: More statements will be made when a leader has more hawkish veto players
H3: More statements will be made when a leader has greater domestic support
Resolved statements might create a “rally around the flag” effect
  - Therefore, making them might be more attractive when domestic popularity is weak

H4: More statements will be made when a leader has less domestic support
International Tension

- Sometimes statements cause tensions
- If tension already exists, there is less danger that statements will adversely affect relations or create much higher audience costs
- Norms and public expectations demand statements in tense times

H5: More statements will be made in times of higher tension
Empirical Analysis

- Analyzed level of US presidential statements of resolve in five long-term rivalries:

- Also analyzed level of US presidential statements of resolve in MIDs, 1950-2005
Rivalry Analysis

- **Dependent variable**
  - Level of resolve in US presidential statements directed at rival, measured with content analysis

- **Independent variables**
  - Percentage of Republicans in Congress
  - US presidential approval
  - Level of tension, measured with event data

- All variables measured monthly
US-Soviet Union

![Graph showing statement and event scores over time with rep. in congress & net approval (%)]
US-Iran
Analysis of US MIDs, 1950-2005

- Dependent variable
  - Level of resolve in US presidential statements directed at MID adversary
- Independent variables
  - Percentage of Republicans in Congress
  - US presidential approval
  - Relative military capabilities
  - Identity of the president
  - MID characteristics
## Tobit Predicting MID Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republicans in Congress</td>
<td>-0.141</td>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>0.602*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Approval</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>0.083</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relative Capabilities</td>
<td>-2.898***</td>
<td>Nixon</td>
<td>-0.103</td>
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<td>US Hostility</td>
<td>0.255***</td>
<td>Ford</td>
<td>1.507**</td>
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<td>Rival Hostility</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>Carter</td>
<td>2.489***</td>
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<td>Sanctions</td>
<td>0.693</td>
<td>Reagan</td>
<td>1.327***</td>
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<td>Fatal</td>
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<td>Bush, G.H.W.</td>
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<td>Territory Revision</td>
<td>0.665</td>
<td>Clinton</td>
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<td>Regime Revision</td>
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<td>Bush, G.W.</td>
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<td>Policy Revision</td>
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<td>Defense Pact</td>
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<td>Affinity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rivalry</td>
<td>0.529**</td>
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</table>

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01
Conclusions

- No evidence that the ability to follow through or diversionary incentives matter much
- The most important predictor of when resolved statements are made is the level of tension
- More recent presidents also make more statements
  - Suggests an important role of norms
Backup Slides Begin
Measuring Statements of Resolve

- Statements obtained from the *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*
  - Searched to identify relevant statements
- Developed content analysis dictionary by reading statements and consulting colleagues
- Counted words and added weights using Yoshikoder program
“Any hostile move anywhere in the world against the safety and freedom of peoples to whom we are committed – including in particular the brave people of West Berlin – will be met by whatever action is needed.”

*President Kennedy, 22 Oct 1962*
“Any **hostile** (+1) move anywhere in the world against the safety and freedom of peoples to whom we **are committed** (+2) – including in particular the brave people of West Berlin – will be met by **whatever action** (+3) is needed.” *President Kennedy, October 22, 1962*

Total Score = 6
Aggression
Strong*
Threat
Strength*
Stand
Threaten*
Enem*
Promise*
Brutal*
Violat*
Determined
Firm*
Defend*
Violen*

Determination
Expect
Mistake*
Demand*
Prevent
Stake*
Condem*
Obligat*
Doubt
Totalitarian*
Repress*
Reject*
Stead*
Pledge*