



Professionals and Praetorians

International Threats and the Military's Political Power in non-Democracies

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Abstract

Why does international conflict sometimes lead to an increase in military political power in non-democracies, and sometimes to military withdrawal from politics? My answer to this puzzle is that moderate threats lead to military surrender of political power due to increased divisions inside the officer corps. In contrast, severe threats give the military leverage over the leader, leading to s/he ceding increased power to the military. In the long term, however, severe threats lead to a reduction in the military's role in politics as the junior officers who served during the threat rise to positions of leadership, bringing with them a preference for professionalization. I test these propositions on a global dataset of non-democracies from 1946 to 1999 and find strong support for the differential short and long-term impacts of severe international threats, while finding weak support for the negative impact of moderate threats on military political power.

Motivation and Research Question

- The literature says that international threats lead to government control of the military, and military withdrawal from politics.
- But this broad generalization does not reflect reality:**
- We see heavy military involvement in politics during international threats
 - Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand: 1950s-1970s, Pakistan 1970s
- But also military withdrawal from politics...
 - South Korea 1980s, Egypt 1970s, China 1990s, Brazil 1980s

•**Q: Why do international threats sometimes lead to military withdrawal from politics and at other times, greater intrusion into politics?**

•**A: Because of variation in the severity of the threat and the time since the threat!**

Assumptions



Assumptions:

- In non-democracies, military and leader are engaged in (contentious) bargaining over military's share of political power.
- Within non-democratic militaries there are **Loyalists** (cronies of the leader), **Praetorians** (those seeking more political power for the military), and **Professionals** (those that are oriented towards war-fighting).
- There is an inherent tension between Professionals and Praetorians.
- International threats affect this tension and the degree of unity the military has in its confrontations with the leader.

Theory/Hypotheses

Preferences of the military factions on the military's political power



H1: In the short-term, severe threats increase military's political power.

- When a threat threatens the regime or state's existence, leader needs the military for protection.
- Leader has to give more resources to the military.
- This increases military unity. Placated by the increased resources, Professionals will tolerate more political activity from the Praetorians.
- Military leverage + military cohesion → better bargaining position for military → more political power.

H1B: In the long term, severe threats decrease military's political power.

- Time passes, old leadership retires, new officers replace the old.
- Junior officers who trained and fought in shadow of the severe threat have preferences for combat effectiveness and professionalization.
- They rise to command the military → long-term preference shift in the military towards professionalization and withdrawal from politics.

Officer cohort k at t ... and $t+30$



H2: Moderate threats decrease military's political power.

- A moderate threat—one that does not threaten the leader or state's existence—*does not* give military leverage over the leader.
- The leader is not compelled to give resources to the military.
- The threat worsens Professional-Praetorian divisions.
- No military leverage + intra-military divisions → better bargaining position for the leader → withdrawal from politics.

Research Design

•Country-year analysis of international threats and military's political power in non-democracies 1946-1999.

•**DV: "Military power" dummy using Geddes (2003) expert survey questions for autocratic regime features used in Weeks (2012, 2014)**

- Coded 1 if "yes" answers to any of the following : military has majority of cabinet or politburo, holds non-security positions, or is routinely consulted on policy matters.
- 0 if none are "yes" (and at least 1 is non-missing).
- 0 if Geddes data indicates "officer corps marginalized", leader personal control of "security apparatus," large-scale purges of the officer corps, or promotion based on loyalty to the leader.

•**IVs: Indicators for severe and moderate threats using ICB crisis-years.**

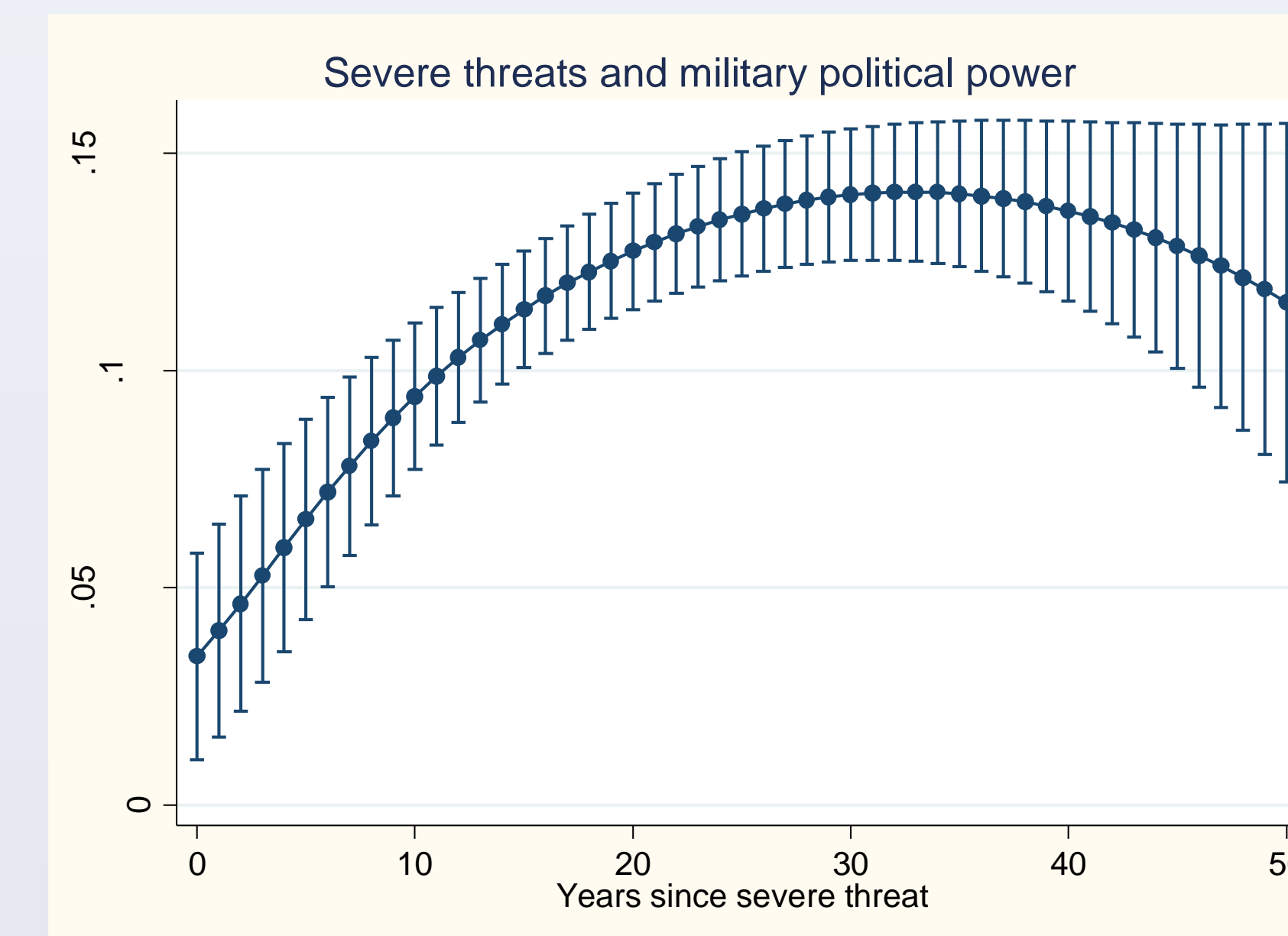
- Severe threat dummy: if threat perception "grave" or "existential."
- Moderate threat dummy: any other type of threat that occurred ≥ 20 years after a severe threat.
- "Peace years" for both, squared term also for time since severe threat.

Results Summary

•**Strong support for H1/H1b: severe threats have a strong, positive short-term impact on military political power, and an inverted u-shaped effect in the long term.**

•Weak support for Hypothesis 2: sign is in the expected direction, but weak significance in all models.

The long-term effect of severe threats



Is this plausible?

- The inflection point of the parabola is 32.579 years after the threat ~ the time it takes a Lieutenant or Captain to become a general in most armies.
- Ex: PLA "divestiture" from the economy and politics occurs in late 1990s: ~30 years after the Sino-Soviet conflict .
- Ex: Civilianization of South Korean politics occurs ~30 years after end of the Korean War.

Regression Results

Variables	Military Power
Severe threat	2.585** (0.865)
Time since severe threat	0.214** (0.053)
Time since severe threat ²	-0.003** (0.001)
Moderate threat	-0.714 (0.441)
Time since moderate threat	0.001 (0.020)
Constant	0.718 (1.779)
Observations	2,734

•Standard errors clustered on country.

•All IVs lagged by one year.

•Not shown: cubic polynomial of time since military power, controls for leader change (Archigos), regime duration (GWF), GDPPC, internal armed conflict (UCDP), non-violent protest (Navco).

•Results are robust to dropping juntas, including contemporaneous leader changes and coup attempts, and specifying *time since severe threat* as a cubic polynomial.

•Wald Tests show that time since severe threat and its squared term are jointly significant at the .001 level in all models.

Conclusions

•Strong support for the theory regarding the effect of severe threats.

•Weak support for moderate threats hypothesis.

•Strongly suggests that the general assumption that international threats are good for government control needs to be reconsidered. Studies whose DVs are coups are problematic--**the absence of a coup is not the same as government/civilian control of the military!**

Ongoing Research

•**The results presented here represent a first test of the theory**

•With the support of an NSF Dissertation Improvement Grant, data collection is in progress to create a more complete dataset of government control of the military and the military's role in politics across *all* states from 1960-2014.

•Using a range of secondary sources, I (and several undergraduate coders) are **creating a dataset of ratio measures of the military's share of power in national decision-making bodies in both the security, non-security, and political areas:**

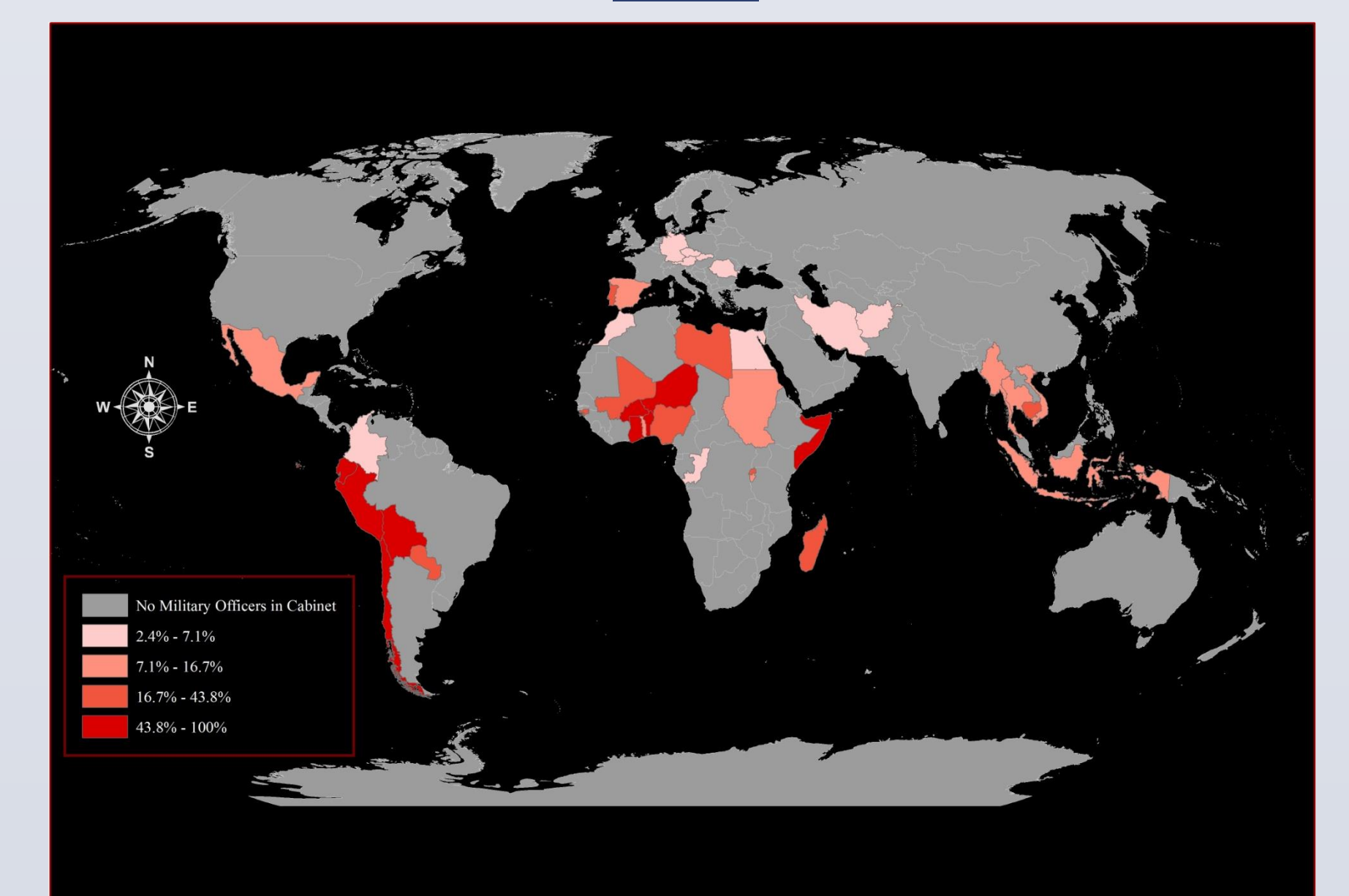
•This will capture much greater variation in government-military relations and allow for more nuanced theory-testing.

•**Variables being coded:**

- **Military officer share of:**
 - national cabinets
 - security cabinet positions
 - non-security cabinet positions
 - politburos in dominant-party states

Example: Military officer cabinet shares in 1975 and 2013

1975



2013

