

Does It Pay To Play? The Heterogeneous Effects of Militarized International Disputes on Electoral Support for the Incumbent

Shane Singh (University of Georgia)

and

Jaroslav Tir (University of Colorado Boulder)

Introduction

- Do incumbent leaders benefit electorally from militarized confrontations with other countries?
- Yes: rally 'round the flag / diversionary literatures
 - the feeling of threat, via the in-group, out-group mechanism (Coser 1956), translates into loyalty to the state and its leader, resulting in increased support for the leader at election time
 - e.g. DeRouen Jr. 1995; 2000; Fordham 1998a,b; James 1987; James and Oneal 1991; Levy 1998; Meernik 2004; Meernik and Waterman 1996; Mitchell and Prins 2004; Mitchell and Thies 2011; Oneal and Tir 2006; Ostrom and Job 1986; Russett 1990a,b
- No (implied): public opinion / voting behavior literatures
 - State of the economy is what matters in voting decisions
 - e.g. Fiorina 1981; Kiewiet 1983; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2007; Duch and Stevenson 2008; Lewis-Beck 1983; 1988; Singer 2013; Wilkin, Haller, and Norpoth 1997; Alvarez and Nagler 1995; 1998; Clarke et al. 2004

What about empirical evidence?

- Voting literature focuses on domestic variables
- Studies of rallies in the US
 - Rallies tend to be uncertain, small, and temporary
 - e.g. Lian and Oneal 1993; Mueller 1973; Russett 1990a,b; James and Rioux 1998; Oneal and Bryan 1995; Baum 2004; Cotton 1987; Mueller 1973
- Cross-national studies of executive office retention
 - Unhelpful to counter-productive
 - e.g. Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995; Bueno de Mesquita, Siverson, and Woller 1992; Chiozza and Goemans 2003; Gartner and Segura 1998;
 - Williams, Brulé, and Koch's 2010 (reduced incumbent vote share)
 - helpful
 - Miller and Elgün 2011; Boehmer 2007; Colaresi 2004

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Our approach

- Cross-national investigation of individual-level voting in wake of militarized interstate disputes (MIDs)
- Differentiate by whether the incumbent leader's country was the initiator or target of a MID
 - Diversionary literature focuses on MID initiation
 - But being targeted may mean that the sense of threat is "more real" to the voters
- Differentiate by whether or not the voter is a partisan ally of the incumbent
 - Partisanship's "perceptual screen" (cf. Bartels 2002; Campbell et al. 1960; Evans and Andersen 2006; Gomez and Wilson 2008; Malhotra and Kuo 2008; Monroe and Laughlin 1983; Tilley and Hobolt 2011).
 - But diversionary logic expects the threat to unify the society

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Research design highlights

- Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES)
 - 92K+ individuals, 75 elections, 41 countries, 2001-2011
 - ~29% vote for the incumbent
- MID dataset (Ghosn, Palmer, and Bremer 2004)
 - 23/75 elections within a year after a MID
- Method
 - Cross-sectional comparison utilizing multilevel analysis (Steenbergen and Jones 2002; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2005) with binary logistic link function

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Table 2: MID Participation, Incumbent Voting, and Copartisan Identification with the Incumbent

	Model 1	Model 2
<i>Individual Level</i>		
Unemployed	-0.152 *	-0.115 *
	(0.036)	(0.043)
Age	0.009 *	0.005 *
	(0.000)	(0.001)
Education	-0.042 *	-0.014
	(0.020)	(0.024)
Copartisan Identification with Incumbent		3.404 *
		(0.029)
<i>Election Level</i>		
MID Participation	0.198 *	0.149 *
	(0.018)	(0.026)
Unemployment	-0.024 *	-0.057 *
	(0.002)	(0.004)
Economic Growth	0.029 *	0.033 *
	(0.003)	(0.004)
Democratic Development	0.138 *	0.104 *
	(0.011)	(0.017)
<i>Interaction</i>		
MID × Copartisan Identification		-0.244 *
		(0.050)
Constant	-2.858 *	-2.828 *
	(0.108)	(0.165)
Number of individuals	92777	92777
Number of elections	75	75
ρ	0.069	0.084
$Pr > \chi^2$	0.000	0.000

Note: Multilevel logistic regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < .05$ (two-sided)

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Table 3: MID Initiation and Targeting, Incumbent Voting, and Copartisan Identification with the Incumbent

	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Individual Level</i>		
Unemployed	-0.149 *	-0.112 *
	(0.036)	(0.043)
Age	0.009 *	0.005 *
	(0.000)	(0.001)
Education	-0.033	-0.005
	(0.020)	(0.024)
Copartisan Identification with Incumbent		3.416 *
		(0.029)
<i>Election Level</i>		
MID Initiator	-0.025	0.194 *
	(0.024)	(0.032)
MID Target	0.387 *	0.639 *
	(0.037)	(0.030)
Unemployment	-0.008 *	-0.024 *
	(0.003)	(0.003)
Economic Growth	0.014 *	0.062 *
	(0.003)	(0.004)
Democratic Development	0.219 *	0.240 *
	(0.013)	(0.015)
<i>Interactions</i>		
MID Initiator × Copartisan Identification		-0.210 *
		(0.065)
MID Target × Copartisan Identification		-0.390 *
		(0.066)
constant	-3.715 *	-4.403 *
	(0.132)	(0.143)
Number of individuals	92777	92777
Number of elections	75	75
ρ	0.054	0.073
$P < \chi^2$	0.000	0.000

Note: Multilevel logistic regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < .05$ (two-sided)

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Findings summary

	All voters	Copartisans	Non-copartisans
MID effect on incumbent voting	+4 percentage points	- 1.5 pp	+1.7 pp
MID initiation effect on incumbent voting	n.s.	n.s.	+2 pp
MID targeting effect on incumbent voting	+7 pp	+3 pp	+9 pp

In comparison, effect of 1 s.d. increase in _____ on incumbent voting:

- unemployment → -1.5 pp
- econ growth → + 2 pp

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- **Pro rally and diversionary literatures**

- Rallies do exist and are sometimes sizeable
- Little evidence of MIDs being hurtful to the incumbent
 - With partisanship in the mix, a MID's effect is +3/5 pp for a typical incumbent facing 30% copartisan and 70% non-copartisan electorate
 - Break-even point is 47% copartisans, 53% non-copartisans
 - very rare that co-partisans approach $\frac{1}{2}$ electorate

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- **Anti rally and diversionary literatures**

- Not all voters rally behind the leader
 - partisanship matters, though in unexpected ways
- MID initiation not all that helpful
- Being targeted is quite helpful to the incumbent
 - 39/75 elections decided by margin < 7 pp
 - Better to be Thatcher than Galtieri!

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