CRISIS BARGAINING AND NUCLEAR BLACKMAIL

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(Published: Winter 2013)

January 29, 2018

INTRODUCTION

Question: Do nuclear weapons offer coercive advantages in international crisis bargaining?

- Lots of research on nuclear deterrence, not so much on nuclear weapons and their ability to compel states to change behavior

<u>Difference between deterrence and compellence</u>

- *Deterrence*: the threat intended to keep an adversary from **starting** something
- *Compellence*: the threat to an adversary to **do** something

Argument: While nuclear weapons carry coercive weight as tools of deterrence, these effects do not extend to compellence

MISCONCEPTIONS AND ARGUMENTS

There is a long-held belief (especially in US) that nuclear weapons can compel as well as deter

- Examples: negotiations with Soviet Union before WWII, crises in Azerbaijan and Taiwan Strait, idea that Iran, Iraq, and North Korea could "blackmail" the US if they possessed nuclear weapons
- Nuclear weapons believed to be especially powerful when the challenger possesses nuclear power but the target does not
- Empirical evidence shows nuclear superiority being associated with coercive success, but **not** causing it

<u>Arguments to be tested</u>

- The possession of nuclear weapons helps states to succeed in their confrontations with other states even when they do not "use" or mention these weapons
- Compellent threats from nuclear states will succeed more often because of the looming shadow of nuclear punishment

HYPOTHESES

H1A:

Compellent threats from nuclear states are more likely to succeed, on average, than Compellent threats from nonnuclear states.

H1B:

Compellent threats from nuclear states are more likely to succeed, on average, than Compellent threats from nonnuclear states only if they are issued against nonnuclear states.

LIMITATIONS AS TOOLS OF COMPELLENCE

Nuclear weapons are not useful for seizing objects

- Compellent threats often center on disputed cities and territories that a challenger seeks to obtain from the target state
- Nuclear attack would destroy the very object that prompted the dispute in the first place

The costs of executing nuclear punishment would most likely be immense

- A launched nuclear attack to achieve compellent objectives could provoke international backlash and isolation, trigger economic sanctions, encourage nuclear proliferation…
- Difficult to threaten nuclear punishment credibly

DEVELOPED HYPOTHESIS

H2:

Compellent threats from nuclear states are no more effective, on average, than threats from nonnuclear states

INFERENTIAL PROBLEMS IN EXISTING STUDIES

Indeterminate Research Designs: there is a general assumption that in order to understand political effects of nuclear weapons, the main focus should be nuclear crises.

- This approach fails to assess if coercive threats from nuclear states are more effective than threats from nonnuclear states.
- Too many studies focus on well-known crises that had unsuccessful threats involved.
- Studies of nuclear compellence tend to emphasize situations where nuclear weapons played an important role because nuclear attack was hinted at or nuclear forces were alerted.

INFERENTIAL PROBLEMS IN EXISTING STUDIES

Inappropriate Quantitative Data: The use of quantitative data developed and used within the studies of nuclear coercion have several issues.

International Crisis Behavior (ICB set)

Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID set)

- These sets do not contain many coercive threats
- Do not distinguish between victories achieved by brute force from those achieved through successful coercive diplomacy

RESEARCH DESIGN

Militarized Compellent Threats (MCT set)

- The structure of the MCT data set helps resolve the two inferential problems
- Each case in the data set contains a compellent threat, defined as a demand to change the status quo that is backed by the threat of military force
- Not restricted to nuclear crises only; contains threats made by nuclear and nonnuclear challengers alike

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

COMPELLENCE SUCCESS

- Measures the target's level of compliance with the challenger's demands

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS / INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

NUCLEAR CHALLENGER: coded 1 if the challenger in a dyad possesses at least one nuclear weapon in a given year, 0 if otherwise.

NUCLEAR CHALLENGER X NUCLEAR TARGET: included to test H1B.

CAPABILITY RATIO: measures the proportion of non-nuclear material capabilities controlled by the challenger in each dyad

STAKES: Issues related to territory and leadership tend to be more important to states than policy or ideology. Therefore, challengers might have a harder time succeeding when they demand disputed land or regime change, compared to threats over policy or ideology. Stakes are coded 1 if the challenger made a demand over territory of leadership, 0 if otherwise.

RESOLVE: coded 1 if the challenger employed demonstrations of force or conspicuous military mobilizations during a threat episode, 0 if otherwise.

DISPUTE HISTORY: measures the total number of militarized interstate disputes that the challenger and target experienced over the previous fifteen years.

TABLE 1. *Probit estimates of compellent threat success*

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*
NUCLEAR CHALLENGER	−0.290	−0.459†					−0.758†
	(0.252)	(0.253)					(0.398)
NUCLEAR TARGET		−0.505					
		(0.840)					
NUCLEAR CHALLENGER × NUCLEAR TARGET		1.547					
		(1.146)					
CHALLENGER ARSENAL SIZE			0.002				
			(0.035)				
NUCLEAR SUPERIORITY				−0.274			
				(0.251)			
NUCLEAR RATIO					−0.537		
					(0.464)		
DIFFERENCE IN ARSENAL SIZE						0.001	
						(0.035)	
STAKES	0.022	0.002	0.037	0.019	0.024	0.036	−0.112
	(0.200)	(0.203)	(0.202)	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.202)	(0.226)
NUCLEAR CHALLENGER × STAKES							0.693
							(0.436)
CAPABILITY RATIO	−0.311	−0.374	−0.476	−0.322	−0.304	−0.473	−0.281
	(0.397)	(0.398)	(0.393)	(0.396)	(0.398)	(0.393)	(0.399)
DISPUTE HISTORY	−0.032	−0.044*	−0.038†	−0.032	−0.032	−0.038†	−0.029
	(0.023)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.024)
RESOLVE	1.108**	1.110**	1.073**	1.101**	1.096**	1.074**	1.111**
	(0.250)	(0.254)	(0.254)	(0.249)	(0.250)	(0.254)	(0.252)
Constant	−1.029**	−0.919*	−0.932*	−1.018*	−0.766†	−0.935*	−0.966*
	(0.399)	(0.395)	(0.399)	(0.399)	(0.441)	(0.399)	(0.406)
N	236	236	236	236	236	236	236
Wald χ^2	23.78**	30.31**	21.34**	23.99**	24.18**	21.34**	24.82**
Log pseudolikelihood	−128.675	−126.800	−129.304	−128.749	−128.731	−129.305	−127.731

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by dyad. ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; † $p < .10$.

Depicts the change in the predicted probability of compellence success—against both nuclear and nonnuclear targets—that results from increasing NUCLEAR CHALLENGER from 0 to 1.

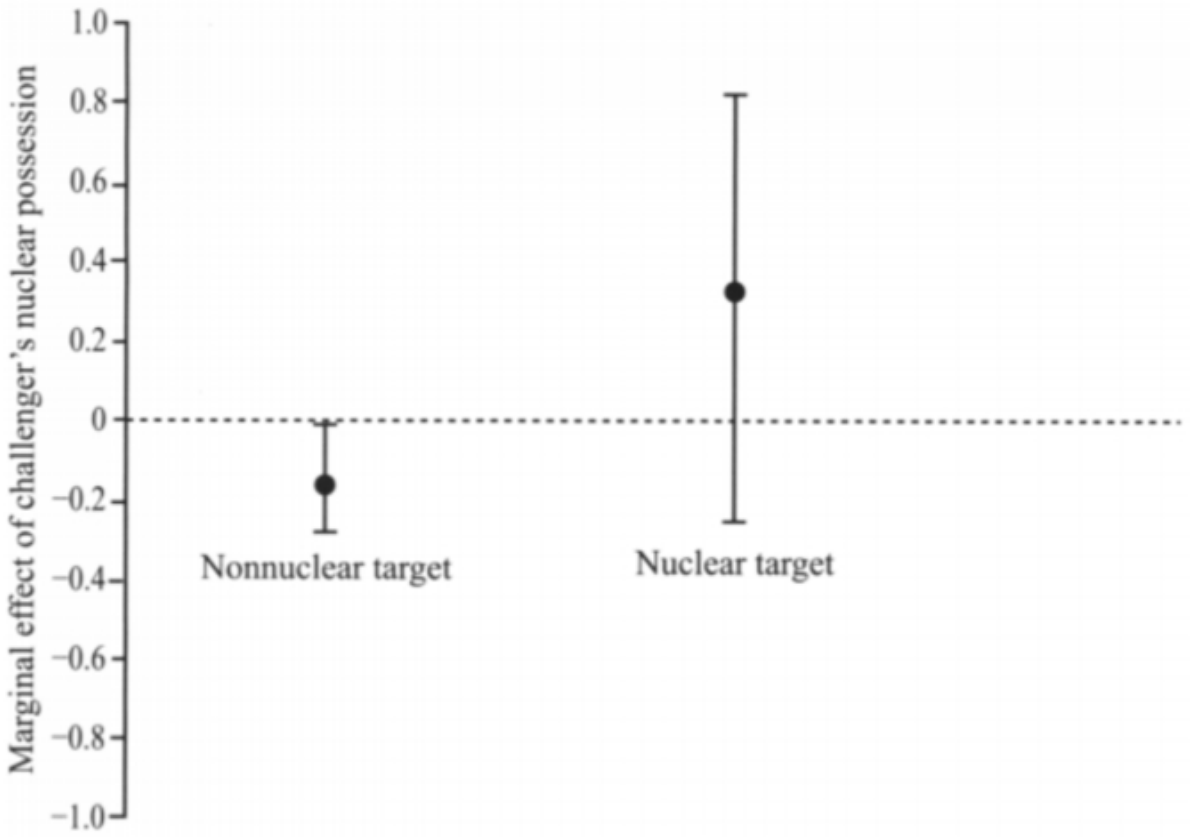

FIGURE 1. *The marginal effect of* NUCLEAR CHALLENGER$_{0\rightarrow1}$ *on the probability of successful compellent threats (Model 2 estimates; 90% confidence intervals shown)*

OTHER FINDS

- Challengers who conduct military demonstrations or mobilizations during a crisis are more likely to succeed
- Challengers to signal their willingness to use force during a threat are nearly five times as likely to succeed as states that do not
- Threats within long lasting, high-conflict dyads may be less likely to succeed

SELECTION EFFECTS

The results found suggested that neither nuclear possession nor nuclear superiority are associated with more effective compellent threats, but this could be a result of nuclear states issuing threats over more valuable issues, in which case a threat is less likely to work.

- Coercive benefits of nuclear weapons may be obscured in the observed crises..

ALTERNATIVE EVALUATION (I)

Examine cases in the data set to determine whether failed compellent threats from nuclear states indeed tend to be over high-stake issues.

This list provides support for the selection effects hypothesis: most cases on the list are not high-stakes crises, but rather crises in which the target could have acquiesced without significantly harming its national security.

- Example: the issue at stake was considerably more important to the challenger than the target, so nuclear superiority did not make the challenger's compellent threats effective.
- Nuclear powers are less likely to make compellent demands over high-stake issues; 53% of demands made by nuclear challengers in the estimation sample are related to territory or leadership, compared to 71% for nonnuclear challengers.

TABLE 2. *Partially or completely unsuccessful compellent threats from nuclear-armed challengers, 1945–2001*

Challenger	*Target*	*Year*	*Demand*
China	India	1965	Withdraw from outposts in Kashmir
China	India	1965	Destroy military structures along Chinese border
China	Vietnam	1979	End occupation of Cambodia
France	Serb Republic	1993	Accept Bosnian peace plan
France	Serbia	1998	Stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo
Great Britain	Saudi Arabia	1952	Withdraw from Buraimi Oasis
Great Britain	Egypt	1956	Open Suez Canal
Great Britain	Argentina	1982	Withdraw from Falkland Islands
Great Britain	Iraq	1990	Withdraw troops from Kuwait
Great Britain	Serb Republic	1993	Accept Bosnian peace plan
Great Britain	Serbia	1998	Stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo
Great Britain	Iraq	1998	Readmit weapons inspectors
Great Britain	Afghanistan	2001	Extradite al Qaeda leaders
India	Pakistan	2001	Suppress terrorist organizations
Israel	Lebanon	1972	Expel PLO guerrillas
Israel	Syria	1978	Stop shelling Beirut
South Africa	Mozambique	1980	Stop supporting ANC rebels
Israel	Syria	1981	Remove surface-to-air missile batteries
South Africa	Lesotho	1985	Stop supporting ANC rebels
South Africa	Botswana	1985(×2)	Stop supporting ANC rebels
South Africa	Zimbabwe	1985	Stop supporting ANC rebels
South Africa	Zambia	1985	Stop supporting ANC rebels
Soviet Union	Yugoslavia	1949	Stop repression of Soviet nationals
Soviet Union	Czechoslovakia*	1968	Reverse political reforms
Soviet Union	China	1969	Withdraw from Zhenbao Island
Soviet Union	China*	1969	Participate in territorial dispute negotiations
Soviet Union	China	1979	Withdraw from Vietnam
United States	Vietnam	1964	Stop supporting Viet Cong
United States	North Korea	1968	Release *USS Pueblo*
United States	Cambodia	1975	Release *USS Mayaguez*
United States	Iran	1979	Release American embassy hostages
United States	Panama	1989	Remove Manuel Noriega from power
United States	Iraq	1990	Withdraw troops from Kuwait
United States	Serb Republic	1993	Accept Bosnian peace plan
United States	Serbia	1998	Stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo
United States	Afghanistan	1998	Extradite Osama bin Laden
United States	Iraq	1998	Readmit weapons inspectors
United States	Afghanistan	2001	Extradite al Qaeda leaders

Note: Targets denoted with asterisks complied after minor military combat. These cases are recoded as successful threats under a looser definition of COMPELLENCE SUCCESS.

ALTERNATIVE EVALUATION (II)

Assess whether the coercive effects of nuclear weapons depend on the stakes of a crisis.

- Model 1replicated with an interaction term between NUCLEAR CHALLENGER and STAKES in Model 7.
- The insignificance of the term, however, indicates that the effect of NUCLEAR CHALLENGER in high-states crises is statistically indistinguishable from its effect on low-stakes crises.
- This implies that nuclear states do not have a consistent advantage in high-stakes, nor low-stakes, crises.

ALTERNATIVE EVALUATION (III)

Explicitly model selection effects by using the Heckman Selection Model

- After re-estimating the models in Table 1 with the Heckman selection model, findings are that states possessing nuclear weapons are **not** more likely to issue successful compellent threats.

LIMITATIONS

- This analysis does not contest the view that nuclear weapons can be important tools of deterrence
  - The dynamics of deterrence and compellence may be very different
  - The utility of nuclear weapons in one coercive text therefore may not necessarily apply to other forms of coercion
- One could argue that the design of this study precludes a fair test of the nuclear compellence hypothesis because nuclear weapons were not explicitly invoked in most of the crises contained in the MCT data set
- The right conditions for successful nuclear compellence simply have not yet occurred
- The MCT data set does not include intra-war threats, so while nuclear states enjoy no extra compellent leverage when threatening to initiate war, they have an advantage in being able to threaten nuclear escalation once a war has begun

CONCLUSION

TABLE 3. *Successful compellent threats from nuclear-armed challengers, 1945–2001*

Challenger	*Target*	*Year*	*Demand*
France	Serb Republic	1994	Withdraw heavy artillery from Sarajevo
Great Britain	Serb Republic	1994	Withdraw heavy artillery from Sarajevo
Soviet Union	France	1956	Withdraw forces from Suez Canal region
Soviet Union	Great Britain	1956	Withdraw forces from Suez Canal region
United States	Dominican Republic	1961	Permit elections following assassination of Rafael Trujillo
United States	Soviet Union	1962	Withdraw missiles from Cuba
United States	Soviet Union	1970	Cease construction of submarine base in Cuba
United States	Serb Republic	1994	Withdraw heavy artillery from Sarajevo
United States	Haiti	1994	Restore Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power
United States	Iraq	1997	Readmit weapons inspectors

CONCLUSION

Across seven decades of the nuclear age and a wide variety of interstate crisis conditions, nuclear weapons have rarely, if ever, helped compellent threats succeed.

- Despite their power, nuclear weapons cannot seize an item or place in dispute without destroying it and causing major damage, and the costs of nuclear attack to the challenger may end up harming them more than helping them.
- The article's analysis explicitly compares success rates for nuclear and nonnuclear states and distinguishes victories achieved by force from victories achieved by fear. This study paints a more accurate picture of the coercive political effects of nuclear weapons.
- The historical records indicate that nuclear states have not tended to issue successful compellent threats—even against nonnuclear adversaries.
- Nuclear proliferation may be dangerous, but records suggest that nuclear blackmail is not one of them.