Crisis Bargaining and Nuclear Blackmail

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Research Question

Do nuclear weapons offer coercive advantages in nuclear crisis bargaining?

Are nuclear weapons useful tools of compellence?

(In political terms, are nuclear weapons useful to 'blackmail' other countries?)

Findings

"Our analysis finds that nuclear weapons carry little weight as tools of compellence. We find that ==states possessing nuclear weapons are not more likely to make successful compellent threats==, even in high-stakes crises. While nuclear weapons may provide leverage in a deterrent context, these effects do NOT extend to compellent threats."

Theory

According to existing research on the subject, we *should* find that

-Compellent threats from nuclear states will succeed more often because of the looming shadow of nuclear punishment AND

-The compellent leverage of a nuclear arsenal will be neutralized if the target also possesses nuclear weapons

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.

Theory

Authors argue that current research on the coercive ability of nuclear weapons is misguided.

Two inherent limitations as tools of compellence:

1. Nuclear weapons are not useful for seizing objects/territories

2. The costs of using nuclear weapons to achieve compellent objectives are too high (except under extreme circumstances)

H2: Compellent threats from nuclear states are no more effective, on average, than threats from nonnuclear states.

Inferential Problems in Existing Studies

1. Indeterminate Research Designs

   -No nonnuclear basis for comparison (exclusive focus on nuclear crises)

   -Focus on high-profile crises

   -Study only crises in which nuclear weapons were i*nvoked*

2. Inappropriate Quantitative Data

   -ICB, MID data sets do not contain coercive *threats*

   -don't distinguish between victory achieved by *military force* from victory achieved by *coercive diplomacy*

Research Design

-Addresses Inferential Problems in Existing studies by using a new data set, the MCT (Militarized Compellent Threats)

-210 Interstate compellent threats

-Both well known and lesser known disputes

-Both disputes in which nuclear weapons played central role and ones in which nuclear weapons were never explicitly mentioned

-Distinguishes coercive diplomatic success from military victories

-Contains threats made by both nuclear and nonnuclear countries

Research Design

Dependent Variable: COMPELLENCE SUCCESS (measures target's level of compliance with challenger's demands)

Independent Variables: NUCLEAR CHALLENGER NUCLEAR TARGET, and NUCLEAR CHALLENGER X NUCLEAR TARGET (both challenger and target are nuclear states)

Method

Use Probit Regressions to estimate the probability that a compellent threat will succeed

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 χ²	23.78**	30.31**	21.34**	23.99**	24.18**	21.34**	24.82**
Log pseudo likelihood	−128.675	−126.800	−129.304	−128.749	−128.731	−129.305	−127.731

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

Model 1

Empirical Findings

Model 1: statistically insignificant coefficient disproves H1A

H1A: Compellent threats from nuclear states are more likely to succeed, on average, than compellent threats from nonnuclear states.

indicates that there is no support for the argument that nuclear-armed challengers make more effective compellent threats

Model 2 (addition of NUCLEAR TARGET): statistically insignificant coefficient disproves H1B

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.

Findings

… indicates that possessing nuclear weapons does not improve the effectiveness of compellent threats, even when the target has no nuclear capability

Findings lead to accept H2

H2: Compellent threats from nuclear states are no more effective, on average, than threats from nonnuclear states.

CONTROL VARIABLES: all insignificant except RESOLVE

-statistically significant ($p<0.01$); indicates that challengers who signal their willingness to use force during a threat episode are FIVE times as likely to succeed as states that do not.

Limitations and Counterarguments

-Nuclear weapons were not explicitly invoked in most cases in the MCT data set, so could be case that explicit threats would be more effective

(cannot evaluate empirically as no leader has ever explicitly threatened use)

-Under certain conditions nuclear threats may be more effective compellent tools for example if a regime's survival depended on success

(right conditions to test this have not yet occurred)

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.

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

-The conditions favoring successful nuclear compellence are extremely rare

-Nuclear proliferation may carry dangers but nuclear blackmail is not one of them

-While nuclear weapons may carry coercive weight as deterrents these effects do not extend to compellence

-Results support the argument that nuclear weapons are NOT credible instruments for compellence in international politics