Crisis Diplomacy

Testing Deterrence Theory

February 26, 2015

Last Time

We had a crash course in empirical analysis.

1. State hypotheses
2. Collect data
3. Make inferences

Today's Agenda

How can we test hypotheses derived from rational deterrence theory?

— Huth and Russett's approach
— Lebow and Stein's objections
— Resolving debates like these

Deterrence — Definitions

— Target being defended
  — Direct: self
  — Extended: third-party "protegé"
— Time frame
  — General: all time
  — Immediate: imminent danger

Unit of Analysis

Extended immediate deterrence attempts:

— Attacker considers using force against protegé
— Defender recognizes the potential attack
— Defender makes threats—explicit or implicit—in protegé's defense

Sample: All such attempts, 1900–1980.

Dependent Variables

1. **Deterrence success**
   — **Did the attacker back down?**
   — **Observed for all deterrence attempts**
2. **Defender follow-through**
   — **Did the defender keep its promise?**
   — **Observed only when deterrence fails**

Operationalizing the Dependent Variables

— Deterrence failure
   — Armed engagement, 250+ battle deaths
   — OR attacker gets what it wants
   — OR attacker occupies protegé's territory
— Defender follow-through
   — Defender forces participated in fighting

Independent Variables

— **Balance of military capabilities**

— **Defender has nuclear weapons**

— **Defender's past behavior**

— **Defender–protegé relationship**

   — **Pre-existing alliance**

   — **Economic ties**

   — **Capability balance**

   — **Contiguity**

Results

Deterrence Success

✔ **Trade ↑ Success**

✔ **Power Preponderance ↑ Success**

✘ **Alliance Ties ↓ Success**

✘ **Nuclear Arms ↔ Success**

✘ **Past Behavior ↔ Success**

Results

Defender Follow-Through

— **Protegé's Power ↑ Follow-Through**
— **Alliance ↑ Follow-Through**
— **Past Behavior ↮ Follow-Through**

Objections to Huth and Russett
(by Lebow and Stein)

L&S challenge all of H&R's key operationalizations:

— Extended immediate deterrence attempts
— Deterrence failure
— Deterrence success

Operationalization Controversies
Extended Immediate Deterrence Attempts

H&R: overt threat and counterthreat

L&S: evidence of *intention* to attack/defend

Operationalization Controversies

Deterrence Failure

— <u>H&R:</u>
 — armed engagement, 250 battle deaths
 — attacker gets what it wants
 — attacker occupies protegé
— <u>L&S:</u>
 — challenger does what defender tried to deter
 — defender backs down from commitment

Operationalization Controversies

Deterrence Success

<u>H&R:</u> absence of failure

<u>L&S:</u> absence of failure directly traceable to threat

Resolving Operationalization Debates

1. Agree about assumptions
2. Stay close to those assumptions in data collection
3. Perform robustness checks

For Next Time

— Spring Break!
— Read Walt, "Explaining Alliance Formation" (Blackboard)

Image Sources

— "Duty Calls": Randall Munroe, XKCD #386