GOV2020 Extension Comments, Fall 2024
Paper by Cerny, Henderson, and Koo

Comments

Overall, well done folks. This seems like solid progress for the time you have been working on it, and in using only data that Mattingly compiled. I particularly enjoyed the discussion around the instrument validity (and learned alot).

- The files replicated per the draft paper. No issues were encountered. See below the table, while the plots that were outputted are in the folder.
- For your theory, I do wonder why the focus is on symbolic legitimacy of those officers with pre-revolutionary combat experience, rather than (also) on, say, organizational capacity of officers. Would you expect that your hypotheses would be different? I might imagine, for example, that organizational capacity is not enough without some kind of symbolic legitimacy that could rally people, and so officers who did not serve in combat, but were still tasked with organizationally demanding tasks (logistics support, planning, etc), might not face the same "experience penalty" when it comes to being promoted. It might be worthwhile to engage with this a little when you go about drafting the full paper. Perhaps some analysis of propaganda/war memorials/rhetoric around remembrance of past conflicts might help add additional evidence on this symbolic legitimacy being bestowed upon people with actual combat experience.
- Your theory takes promotion to general as the dependent variable. I think it might be worthwhile to mention, theoretically, why the general rank is the most relevant here. Perhaps it has to do with the powers and symbolic legitimacy that a general holds, and that middle ranks are not able to tap into to launch a potential coup. Could you also test this out in the data, since there is also a 中将 variable?
- I did play around and use the 中将 variable empirically for Models 2 and 3, and the results are the same. Check the R code to see if what I did was comparable to what you did.
- I assume that Mattingly only has data on promotions to 上将 pre-1955 and post 1988. I think it might be worth narrating why the data only encompasses those time periods. Was it a data collection limitation when Mattingly compiled the data? You mentioned that the rank system was suspended under Mao from 1965 onwards, up until reinstatement in 1988. What about data for the 1955 to 1965 time period?
- Even as there is no official general rank from 1965 to 1988, I think this is certainly one place where qualitative, in-depth case studies, to the extent that you can find this data, would be really helpful to tease out what the dynamics are in those intervening years. For example, even if there are no official military ranks, I would imagine there is still some data on who Mao allowed to take the reins of the upper echelons of military command.
- If your theory is that statebuilding is the key periodization, why and in what sense was there little statebuilding between 1949, when the KMT was ousted, and 1955 (or 1965)? It would be helpful theoretically to point out where you think the inflection point is when combat experience started being penalized, and what brought that about. This also touches on my point above about looking, even if very roughly, at what happened in the years without military ranks.

- I think this is where I might diverge from Gary's advice a little, and encourage you to spend a paragraph or two to explicitly compare your results with Mattingly's. If I recall, his main contention is that times of foreign threat lead to competence being rewarded with promotions. How do these time periods compare to your analysis? Is your analysis a mix of these "foreign threat" time periods and other times periods, which, when pooled together, results in a negative relationship between post-1988 promotions and pre-1955 combat experience? If you restricted your analysis to non-foreign threat years, as Mattingly defined them, would you still see a negative relationship?

- I don't know enough methodologically to see if this would be relevant (I only ever applied it in other contexts) but would clustered standard errors be relevant here, since the dataset tracks individuals across time? Defer to you on this though.

- Same as above, but I was wondering if your IV models would also benefit from the same set of control variables as Models 11 to 12.

- It might be worth a footnote that combat experience before 1955 does not have a negative effect on promotions simply because those officers were too old by the post-1988 period. You could mention the median age in each war. I also ran Models 11 and 12 with birth year as a control, and while it had a significant effect, combat experience also still had significant effects.

- Small stylistic note: I think in the research design section, you can be a little clearer what age range you are using as the instrument, just so the reader can quickly get this information.

- The hypotheses wording was a bit confusing. Perhaps you can rephrase as something like "Combat experience increases an officer's chance of promotion in the period before statebuilding" or something like that. The current phrasing sounds like "before statebuilding" and "after statebuilding" refers to the officers' time of combat experience.

Table 1: Logit Regressions on Pre- and Post-Statebuilding Promotions

	Dependent variable:							
	Pre-1955	1988+	Pre-1955	1988+	Pre-1955	1988+	Pre-1955	1988+
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Pre-1955 Combat exp.	1.256***		1.255***		1.344***		1.303***	
	(0.214)		(0.219)		(0.299)		(0.324)	
Any combat exp.		−0.523***		−0.476***		−0.337***		−0.385***
		(0.077)		(0.078)		(0.090)		(0.102)
Education			−0.021	0.697***	−0.284	0.682***	−0.402	0.713***
			(0.403)	(0.155)	(0.442)	(0.163)	(0.456)	(0.167)
Parental CCP history			−13.864	−0.086	−16.400	0.384	−16.631	0.280
			(950.017)	(0.429)	(4,182.381)	(0.461)	(4,039.704)	(0.466)
Constant	−6.421***	−1.165***	−6.367***	−2.431***	−23.182	−3.141***	−22.932	−3.162***
	(0.701)	(0.101)	(0.920)	(0.308)	(7,134.773)	(1.064)	(7,197.500)	(1.066)
Birth province fixed effects					✓	✓	✓	✓
Leader networks							✓	✓
Observations	1,070	1,070	1,070	1,035	1,070	1,035	1,070	1,035
Log Likelihood	−119.998	−433.976	−119.599	−421.308	−98.543	−394.255	−95.241	−384.531
Akaike Inf. Crit.	243.996	871.952	247.197	850.616	267.087	858.511	268.482	847.062

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01