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Dedicated to the memory of the late  
Professor Kenneth Arrow,  
Former Chairperson of the Editorial Advisory Board





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## FOREWORD

The field of Peace Science was pioneered by Professor Walter Isard from the University of Pennsylvania. The growth of Peace Science as an interdisciplinary field integrates different fields such as Economics, Philosophy, Religious Studies, Spirituality, Political Science, Sociology, Psychology, Systems Science, etc. It addresses theoretical, mathematical and systems science approaches to peace research and public policy.

Peace Science borrows theories, methods and techniques from other social sciences and shows how co-operation rather than competition between individual decision making units can lead to the peaceful resolution of problems between individuals, communities, regional entities and governmental organizations. Some topics, such as Catastrophe Theory, Chaos Theory, Decision Science, Game Theory, and Coalition and Bargaining Theory, are widely used in this area. The tools of analysis in Peace Science usually involve probability theory and probability distributions, statistical inference, the analysis of variance and covariance, the non-parametric testing of hypotheses and the Chi-square test, multivariate distributions, and other tests of hypotheses.

Peace Economics is an important component of Peace Science, which addresses the subject from a purely economic point of view; for example, the macroeconomic impacts of reduced military expenditure. The research in Peace Economics involves numerous new approaches, including Macroeconomic Stability Analysis, Modern Growth Theory, Econometric Models, the Computable General Equilibrium Model (CGE), the Richardsonian Model of Action and Reaction in military expenditure, etc.

The study of conflict management involving mediation, negotiation, and arbitration often used in Industrial Relations is also important in Peace Economics. Conflict is different from purely having a dispute. Conflict can often exist without a specific focus. It may be expressed through a problem or a dispute. Sometimes, it may be difficult to eliminate conflict, but appropriate prevention and management techniques can lessen the negative impact of conflicts, such as turbulence and violence. Many theories in Psychology, Game Theory, the Cognitive Sciences, Sociology,

the Stepwise Conflict Management Procedure, etc., have been used in Conflict Management.

Peace Science and Peace Economics are relatively new fields of study, which also use different methods and techniques of Management Science, such as Strategic Management, Marketing, Operations Research, as well as Information Systems. This area is a new discipline of the Social Sciences and is different from Peace Studies, where cases are discussed without the application of sophisticated mathematics and theoretical methods. The key areas of this journal include *Arms Control, Nuclear Proliferation, Peace Science Methodology and Theory, Democracy and Conflict, the Linkage between Internal and External Conflict, Ethnic Conflict, Coalition Politics, Environmental Conflicts and Global Warming, Globalization and Conflict, International Trade and Financial Crises, Disaster Management, Terrorism, Conflict Management, Energy and Water Conflict, Military Institutions and Sociology, Defense, the Economics of Conflict and War, the Economics of the Arms Trade, Procurement and Offsets, the Economics of Security, Globalization and the Restructuring of Multinational Corporations, Security Sector Reforms, Arm Races and Alliances, Intervention, etc.*

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# RUSSIA'S DECISION TO PURSUE SYRIA'S CHEMICAL DISARMAMENT IN 2013: A POLIHEURISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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## Abstract

We apply the poliheuristic theory of decision making (Mintz 2004) to Russian president Putin's September 2013 decision to broker Syria's disarmament from chemical weapons. We claim that President Putin's decision followed the two-phase decision process proposed by this theory. In the first phase, Putin used a non-compensatory political loss aversion dimension and rejected *inaction*. In the second phase, President Putin minimized risks and maximized benefits to reach the decision, rejecting *diplomatic measures* and *threat of retaliation* while opting for *chemical disarmament*. As it turned out, this decision has had significant implications for the Syrian civil war and the chaos in the Middle East, as was proven by the April 2017 chemical attack of Syrian forces on rebels in Idlib Province.

## Introduction

This case study attempts to explain, using poliheuristic theory, the Russian decision to pursue a chemical disarmament of Syria in September 2013 in the face of the United States administration's inclination to attack forces of Syrian President Assad. It does so by maintaining that political considerations—manifested in three distinct yet corresponding levels: perceived Russian weakness geopolitically, regionally, and domestically—were non-compensatory for the Kremlin; alternatives that did not meet this non-compensatory criterion were eliminated from consideration. In the

second stage of the poliheuristic decision process, alternatives that “survived” the elimination process were put through rational cost-benefit evaluations, and the alternative with the highest net gain was implemented. The theoretical contribution of this study, therefore, is primarily in demonstrating a non-compensatory dimension operating in multiple levels rather than as a single, non-compensatory dimension. The case study provides empirical support for this theory.

On August 30, 2013, it became evident that President Assad used chemical weapons on his own people in the Syrian capital of Damascus days earlier, on August 21 (White House 2013). This act was in direct violation of the “red line” declaration by President Obama on August 20, 2012 on the use of chemical weapons in Syria (Obama White House Archives 2012). Consequently, there was an expectation that this violation of the president’s policy would evoke a military engagement by the United States in Syria. As is now known, the United States refrained from attacking Syria even though Assad crossed this red line and opted instead for chemical disarmament of Syria as pushed for by Russia (Obama White House Archives 2013). There are still on-going debates as to whether this decision, having led to the disarmament of Syria from the majority of its chemical arsenal without a single shot—as claimed by its proponents—was the right choice, or if inaction by the United States, despite staunch rhetoric declaring a red line on the use of chemical weapons, has been perceived as weakness, and subsequently led to the Russian intervention in Syria (Baker 2017).

## **Theory**

### ***Poliheuristic Theory***

The poliheuristic theory of decision making (PH) has been used extensively in analyzing decisions of world leaders (see Abelho 2017; Beckerman-Boys 2014; Below 2008; Brummer 2013; DeRouen 2003; Keller and Yang 2009; Kinne 2005; Oppermann 2014; Redd 2005; Taylor-Robinson and Redd 2003), and in statistical and experimental studies (see Christensen and Redd 2004; Geva et al. 2001; Keller and Yang 2008, 2016; Mintz 2004b; Mintz et al. 1997; Redd 2002, 2008). These studies provided a robust support for the theory, but they revealed that in most cases the non-compensatory dimension of decision making for political leaders is domestic politics, regime survival, and related considerations (see Mintz 2004).

Poliheuristic theory postulates a two-step process; in the first phase, a non-compensatory principle, typically a political dimension, leads to the elimination of alternatives that do not meet this dimension's threshold. Non-compensatory dimensions are non-additive; that is, a negative score cannot be compensated for by positive ratings on other dimensions and therefore leads to the elimination of the alternative. In contrast, compensatory calculations allow for negative scores to be offset by positive ones (Payne et al. 1993).

In the second phase of the decision, the decision maker uses rational or lexicographic calculus to arrive at a choice (see Mintz 1993; Mintz and Geva 1997; Mintz et al. 1997; Payne et al. 1993). As such, the theory combines elements of both rational and cognitive decision making (Mintz 1997).

At the core of the poliheuristic model is the claim that domestic politics are the “essence of decision” (Mintz and Geva 1997). Alternatives that bear a negative score on the political dimension are typically discarded from further consideration (*ibid.*). In the second stage, a more analytic process leads to the ultimate decision. Poliheuristic theory has been applied thus far to foreign policy decisions, national security decisions, environmental decisions, and foreign economic decisions.

### ***Vladimir Putin***

Research concerning Putin's statecraft has shown that his decision calculus largely fits the rational actor model of decision making (Glottman, forthcoming). Putin is a pragmatic leader, however, and his decision making will shift accordingly in the face of threats to his continued reign; for Putin, “there can be no compromises” if this non-compensatory political dimension is imperiled (*ibid.*).

Research has also demonstrated that Putin holds the reins of the Kremlin's decision unit with an iron grip, impressing upon his ministers that certain high-profile decisions “can only be taken by one person,” and that he exhibits an “eye for an eye behavioral pattern,” meaning a world view wherein both norms and anarchy coexist, each coming to the fore according to his subjective interpretation of a given political exchange's equity (Forsberg and Pursiainen 2017).

Taken together with Russia's policy in Syria—which, among other aims, strives to consolidate a posture rivaling that of the West and to conduct a

tour de force so as to annul any doubts regarding its might—we contend that in the case at hand Russia's actions were conducted poliheuristically in a political loss aversion manner, that is, negating a *perceived weakness of Russia in multiple levels*, and therefore tolerance of alternatives that placed this paramount dimension at risk was rejected outright (Adamsky 2015a). In the second stage of the decision task, the Kremlin evaluated the remaining alternatives and opted for the chemical disarmament of Syria due to rational, utility-maximizing calculations, which demonstrated that alternative's superior payoffs on compensatory dimensions, namely the *United States' stance, domestic Muslim minorities' potential unrest, and support at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)*, as well as on the non-compensatory dimension of *perceived weakness in multiple levels*.

### **Putin's Decision to Pursue the Chemical Disarmament of Syria**

After the egregious August 21, 2013 attack by the Assad regime on the opposition-held Damascus suburbs of Ghouta, and in the face of imminent punitive retaliation by the United States against Assad's forces in Syria, the Kremlin was faced with the following alternatives:

- 1) *Do nothing* and, ergo, tolerate US intervention in Syria.
- 2) *Use further diplomatic measures* and attempt to dissuade the US administration from striking.
- 3) *Threaten to retaliate against any attack of the US on Syria*.

On September 9, 2013, Putin's choice-set was expanded to include a fourth option: *chemical disarmament of Syria* (Kerry 2013).

### ***Dimensions (decision criteria)***

The *dimensions* affecting Putin's decision included the following:

- 1) *Perceived weakness of Russia:*
  - a. *Abasement of global posture*
  - b. *Abasement of regional posture*
  - c. *Abasement of domestic posture*
- 2) *Economic considerations*
- 3) *The potential for domestic Muslim minorities' unrest*
- 4) *Support at the UN Security Council*
- 5) *The United States' stance*



According to the Applied Decision Analysis (ADA) procedure (Mintz 2005), weights (or importance levels) are assigned to dimensions qualitatively or quantitatively (e.g., on a scale from 1–10). One can assign these values on the basis of factors such as subject-experts' opinions, datasets, content analysis, interviews, and analysis of transcripts, statements, and media coverage. In this paper, we based our assignment of qualitative weights on experts' analysis.

Based on the aforementioned alternatives and dimensions, the following table represents Putin's decision matrix (where columns depict alternatives, rows depict dimensions, and weights are assigned on the final column):

	<i>Do Nothing</i>	<i>Further Diplomatic Measures</i>	<i>Threat of Retaliation</i>	<i>Chemical Disarmament</i>	<i>Weights</i>
<i>Political</i>	-	+	+	+	Very Important
<i>United States' Stance</i>		-	-	+	Important
<i>Domestic Muslim Minorities</i>		-	-	+	Moderately Important
<i>UNSC</i>		Neutral	-	+	Low Importance

### *Non-Compensatory Considerations*

The preeminent non-compensatory political considerations, which the poliheuristic theory postulates are the cornerstone of foreign policy decision making, were embodied in concerns of a *perceived weakness of*

*Russia* (weighted “very important” due to factors delineated in this section) comprising three dovetailing levels, chief of which were the *abasement of its global posture* and *abasement of its regional posture*.

The rationale for this dimension lies as far back as the 17th century, when Russia had come to see itself as “a beleaguered outpost of civilization for which security could be found only through exerting its absolute will over its neighbors” (Kissinger 2014). This is a conviction that it continues to maintain. With respect to its *regional posture*, therefore, just as its inherent insecurities with regard to its stature among global powers prevented Russia from acceding to the Westphalian concept of order four centuries ago, so too do these insecurities emerge contemporaneously in Moscow's eschewal of any challenge to its post-Soviet era fiefdom. Concerning its *global posture*, the Kremlin perceives such a challenge from the United States and labels it a “usurper that has been unfairly exploiting the unipolar moment since the collapse of the Soviet Union” (Adamsky 2015b).

Syria's role in bolstering the Kremlin's posture in the Middle East is an historic one. It is derived from a Russian-Syrian camaraderie that can be traced back to Hafez al-Assad's reign, during which the Soviet Union consolidated its position as Syria's cardinal supplier of arms. At the same time, Syria cemented its own place as Russia's key ally in the Middle East—a position it still maintains, not least due to the pivotal Russian naval military facility at the port of Tartus, which anchors its presence in the Mediterranean, to its local SIGINT listening posts, and to profound societal bonds (*The Economist* 2015). Relations between the two regimes have thus flourished, not only due to economic based symbiosis but also to a great extent by virtue of similar geostrategic attitudes, as both leaderships view their states as bulwarks against Western expansionism.

The final element to this salient, non-compensatory dimension was a concern regarding *abasement of domestic posture*. It is clear that among Putin's objectives consolidating power and maintaining control of Russia are paramount; hence, conservation of his domestic posture is non-compensatory—so much so that domestic protests are practically illegal and public criticism highly frowned upon (Barbashin 2017). The Kremlin fears domestic upheavals and makes pervasive attempts at establishing a robust linkage between the regime and Russia's security, exemplified by the propaganda revolving around the notion that “while Putin is there, so is Russia; once Putin is gone, so is Russia” (Pavlovsky 2016).

### ***Compensatory Factors***

*Economic considerations* remained an important dimension for the Kremlin throughout the case at hand, as can be gleaned from the lucrative bilateral arms trade revenue during 2009–10, which the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute quotes at \$162 million per year, and from data pointing to its economy's stagnation due to a dependency on natural resources and an ageing society (*The Economist* 2013; Yan 2013). The aforementioned dimension was not non-compensatory, however, as Russia was not plagued hitherto by the punitive Ukraine-related sanctions, and due to Syria requiring an extension of credit to enable its purchase of armaments (Trenin 2012).

Another dimension affecting the Russian decision-making calculus is *potential unrest among its Muslim minorities*. Russia's Sunni Muslim minorities are compelled to commiserate with their Sunni kinfolk, and any perceived abetment or turning of a blind eye by the Kremlin to their plight would attenuate Putin's domestic support and risk rallying jihadists to turn on the motherland (Kalb 2015). Although it embodied a cause of concern for the Kremlin, we assert that the nature of this dimension was compensatory as Russia's Muslims do not tend to view Putin's policy in Syria as sectarian (Lazarev and Biryukova 2016). The factor influencing the decision was therefore limited in scope to the outliers who differ in their perspective on the matter, and as such it is weighted "moderately important."

The *UN Security Council*, wherein decisions on the use of force in Syria would be debated in accordance with its mandate to preserve international peace and security, constituted an additional compensatory dimension. To be sure, Russia views the Security Council as a platform for restoration of its former global power and tends to stress the importance of conforming to international norms and rules; however, if convinced that its actions are not reciprocated, it will break from this conduct and act in accordance with a perception of an anarchic zero-sum game (Forsberg and Pursiainen 2017; Nikitin 2012). The resultant weight for this dimension is evaluated as "low importance."

Finally, *the United-States' stance*, due to the red line put forth by President Obama and the prospect of unilateral US action in Syria, factored in as a prime consideration for Putin, as any such acts were bound to affect his political capital. In this one-shot strategic scenario, though, the aforementioned dimension was compensatory, as American reluctance to follow through

with limited punitive strikes was taken as a guarantee that Congress and the public would not call for escalation into a full-blown military campaign to oust Assad—a scenario which, in contrast, would indeed attain a non-compensatory standing with the Kremlin—(Chollet 2016). Due to the possible political repercussions of this dimension, it is weighted quite prominently as “important.”

## **Analysis**

### ***Phase 1: Eliminating the “Do Nothing” Course of Action***

We contend that allowing an attack by the United States on Assad's regime to go unchallenged would entail a loss of face for Putin domestically, regionally, and globally; in other words, it would constitute a perceived weakness in the global arena, in the Middle East and former Soviet satellites, and domestically due to permitting a key ally to face punitive strikes without providing Russian protection or riposte. Taken with its resultant implication of preventing the projection of an image of strength and invulnerability, Putin's decision calculus on September 9, 2013, was as follows:

At the first phase, *do nothing (inaction)* was eliminated, as this alternative could not possibly pass the threshold set by Putin's political loss aversion on the non-compensatory political dimension; the outcome of *inaction* would have meant unacceptable political loss on all three levels.

Conversely, each of the three surviving alternatives, namely *threat of retaliation*, *further diplomatic measures*, and *chemical disarmament*, promised to satisfy Putin's political requisites. The first would do so by signaling Russia's might and resolve to be unyielding when its core interests are threatened, while the remaining alternatives would prove Russia to be a key international player, leading and shaping the course of international politics—the latter among them being superior due to the high prospect of reaching an agreement, which would in large part be credited to Russian resourcefulness and shrewdness, contributing to Putin's political capital.

### ***Phase 2: Choosing the Course of Action with the Highest Net Gain***

Choice from among surfacing alternatives characterizes reactive decisions during international crises (Mintz 1994, 13). As such, the surfacing of the

*chemical disarmament* alternative due to Secretary Kerry's response to a query regarding Assad's available options to preclude the looming punitive strikes—"Turn [his chemical weapons] over, all of it, without delay, and allow a full and total accounting for that"—made for a dynamic decision-making scenario in which Putin's expanded choice-set resulted in renewed comparison of available alternatives (Kerry 2013).

Throughout the second phase, Putin evaluated the three remaining alternatives' costs and benefits, so as to maximize net gain, and formulated how best to bring about the chosen alternative's implementation (Mintz 1993, 610). The product of these cost-benefit ratio maximizations was UN Security Council Resolution 2118 and its counterpart in the joint UN-Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) mission to verify the disarmament's completion, based on the following compensatory calculations:

#### *Alternative 1: Further diplomatic measures*

With regard to the primary compensatory dimension—*the United-States' stance*—throughout 2011–12, the Kremlin had politicked its posture on Syria through the UN by blocking three Security Council draft resolutions condemning Assad's crackdown on Syrian dissidents, undermining plans for a political transition, and providing munitions, funding, and military guidance to the incumbent regime (Benammar 2013). These efforts bore fruit, as no resolution was approved and no stake-holders in the region resorted to unilateral action; however, though able to preclude a unanimous front at the Security Council, it was evident that the August chemical attack had cornered the US administration into unilateral action due to constraints imposed by Obama's red line. Continued diplomatic efforts, bilateral or multilateral, would not have been able to dissuade the administration, not least due to deteriorating relations between the respective administrations at the time (Associated Press 2013). *Further diplomatic measures* consequently ranked negatively on this salient dimension.

Similarly, this alternative would have reflected negatively on Putin on the *domestic Muslim minorities* front vis-à-vis the attempt to help Assad get away scot-free with the abhorrent chemical attack on Sunni dissidents. Furthermore, the inability to provide a long-term guarantee of preventing the recommencement of such attacks as a result of the deadlock at the Security Council contributed to its negative rank on this dimension.

Finally, this alternative would have indeed been viewed by the *UN Security Council* as a legitimate course of action, encouraging its use; however, due to the aforementioned deadlock and the US's constraints, it was not deemed attractive nor pragmatic to the Kremlin. This alternative therefore ranked neutral at best on this dimension.

### *Alternative 2: Threat of retaliation*

Concerning *the United-States' stance*, this alternative could not provide assurances of thwarting the punitive strikes. This foreign policy avenue had begun to be probed by the Kremlin just days earlier, on September 4; while the Obama administration was lobbying at the Hill to garner support for military engagement, President Putin ominously stated that should international norms on the use of force be violated in Syria, Russia had "ideas about what we will do and how we will do it...we have our plans." The statement was a precursor to Russia dispatching a missile cruiser, to be joined by a frigate and a destroyer in close proximity to Syria, and an implicit threat to break from its abstention from supplying air defense missile systems to Iran (Roberts et al. 2013). Exasperated by the US resolution to undertake punitive strikes despite Sino-Russian vetoing at the UN, Putin thus escalated his efforts and engaged in gunboat diplomacy. On September 9, however, it was evident that continued Russian bellicose actions in the Mediterranean would be ill equipped to prevent a US intervention, although further, more explicit warnings of retaliation would have projected Russian force on all levels of the non-compensatory political dimension. A likely failure to deter the Obama administration due to its determination to preserve the US's credibility by taking action in Syria would have curtailed any such short-term benefits.

As with *further diplomatic measures*, this alternative would have been frowned upon by any domestic Muslim who was prone to radicalization; as such, this alternative ranked negatively on the dimension of *potential domestic Muslim minorities' unrest*.

Lastly, and quite prosaically, the UN views disputes and brinkmanship negatively, causing *threat of retaliation* to likewise rank negatively on the dimension of *the support of the UNSC*.

### *Alternative 3: The chemical disarmament of Syria*

In contrast to the alternatives discussed heretofore, disarmament had embodied a potential to successfully preclude unilateral action by the United States in Syria. The fact that it was derived from Secretary Kerry's

explicit remarks attested to its viability; in other words, choosing this course of action would have satisfied the US administration's constraints and diminished damage to its credibility. Furthermore, in spite of the punitive strikes not embodying a concrete or dire threat to Assad's reign per se, to Russia, an attack would be an omen foreshadowing events analogous to the 2011 UN intervention in Libya. Russian apprehensions of a recurrence of such a scenario, wherein Assad would be unseated and the threat of terrorism on its flanks be escalated, meant prioritizing nipping in the bud the potential for such an unfolding of events (Adamsky 2015a). Unlike the aforementioned dimensions, *chemical disarmament* scored positively on *the United States' stance*.

In addition to the promising prospect of negating US unilateral action, the *chemical disarmament* of Syria would also involve Syria's signing of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC); the act holds additional psychological merit. Enabling continued verification and compliance inspections under an "anytime, anywhere" CWC principle amounts to alleviating concerns among *Russia's domestic Muslim minorities* about reoccurrences of chemical attacks by the regime on Sunni Syrians (OPCW, n.d.). This in itself maximizes this alternative's benefits concerning this dimension by garnering domestic support in Moscow due to Lavrov facilitating the undertaking and, more crucially, minimizing domestic tensions.

With respect to the *support of the UN Security Council*, once disarmament became feasible the Council's remaining members, namely the United Kingdom, France, and China, supported the venture (Bloomberg News 2013). As follows, presenting the Council, which is often derided for a lack of gumption, with the disarmament option to vote on enabled it to act in a troubled area of the world, which resulted in a maximization of this alternative's value on this dimension.

Parenthetically, we can also delineate how the Kremlin formulated this alternative's implementation so as to maximize its financial benefit with regard to *economic considerations*. The CWC requires that "each State Party shall meet the costs of destruction of chemical weapons it is obliged to destroy"; thus, although the actual destruction was not to be left to Assad independently, opting to transfer its costs onto Syria by making it a signatory of the convention allowed for a minimization of this alternative's toll on Russia (Freeman and Alikhan 2013). Moreover, destruction of the most potent components of the Syrian arsenal was entrusted to US soldiers

aboard a US vessel, negating the need for Russia to assign manpower for the task.

Other theories of decision making (such as rational actor and prospect theory) may also account for the alternative chosen by Putin, although not for the decision *process*, as outlined in our analysis.

## **Conclusion**

This paper utilized the poliheuristic theory of decision making to analyze President Putin's September 2013 decision to broker the chemical disarmament of Syria. We claimed that the decision followed a political loss aversion, non-compensatory principle: President Putin and the Russian leadership rejected alternatives that would have weakened his political standing. In the second phase, they discerned the alternative with the highest net gain and implemented a roadmap for the chemical disarmament of Syria. Our analysis provided further support for poliheuristic theory, using an important case study that has had very significant implications for the Middle East, and especially for the people of Syria, who were reassured that chemical stockpiles had been "100% eliminated," only to be disillusioned after an abhorrent attack on Khan Sheikhoun in April 2017 (Ensor 2017).

Moreover, the Kremlin's decision to suspend the US-Russian military deconfliction mechanism in Syria following the US's April 7 punitive attack serves to solidify our claims with regard to Moscow's decision calculus and make salient the importance of foreign policy analysis to pry open the "black box" of decision making by states' leaders (Hudson 2005; Pace et al. 2017).

Specifically, threats by Russia (and Iran) to retaliate against "any aggressor or any breach of red lines" in Syria fit the decision calculus and logic of Putin as uncovered in this article and other studies: projecting an image of strength, resilience, and invulnerability and discarding alternatives that are non-compensatory on these dimensions (Sharman 2017).



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# GREED OR GRIEVANCE, A CONTEXTUAL RECONCILIATION?

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## Abstract

We use a simple coordination game to suggest that rebels are more likely to use grievance to coordinate rebellion against strong states. The feasibility of conflict then matters more when explaining civil conflict in weaker states. We use Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner's (2009) data in the context of state power to indirectly test this hypothesis. We find, consistent with our theory, that their "significant" greed or feasibility variables matter more when explaining conflict in weaker states. We therefore suggest that a search for the universal correlates of war may be problematic. Moreover, even if these correlates exist, parametric point estimates of the marginal effect of such correlates of war may be misleading since the size of such an effect may differ contextually. Using such point estimates devoid of context to capture the potential effect of policy levers may, consequently, lead to erroneous policy.

## Introduction

In this paper, we investigate the relationship between state power, citizen grievances, greed, and conflict. Rather than explain why conflict happens, we focus on whether the correlates of conflict might be different in strong

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and weak states. We use a simple coordination game to model coordinated rebellion against a strong state; however, this sort of massive coordination may mean that rebel leaders will use grievance to overcome the free rider problem. This in turn suggests that the economic feasibility of conflict may matter less for rebellions against strong states. Conversely, rebels in weak states would not need to coordinate nearly as much as in strong states; thus, rebels in weak states would be more likely to defect from a coordinated rebellion united by grievance. Such rebels are therefore more likely to garner resources for their own groups in weak states; thus, we suggest that state strength changes the causes of conflict from motivation (grievance) to feasibility (greed). We then parse Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner's (2009) data to provide some evidence for our model. Our main finding here is that the "greed" (feasibility) correlates of conflict may matter more for weak states than strong states in terms of the magnitude of the marginal effects of the correlates of civil conflict. Our paper thus adds to the growing literature on "how competing groups form and why they cohere" (see Blattman and Miguel 2010, 15–17 for a review of this literature).

We assume a prior politicization of group identity and, thus, that some groups, such as a tribe, race, or ethnic group, have a preexisting grievance. This politicization is rooted in exclusion from the public provision of private benefits from a country's resources, which can include oil, diamonds, or even access to beaches. Some politicized groups have access to the state machinery to provide benefits from these goods to their own kind while others are excluded (Tilly 1978). Groups deprived of these goods can capture the state machinery to redress injustice. Alternatively, they can claim ownership of parts of a country's resources to provide private benefits for members of their group. Stronger, wealthier states are better able to provide access to these private benefits from the state (Miguel, Satyanath, and Sergenti 2004). It therefore seems plausible to suggest that politicized groups, namely groups with grievances, because they are excluded from private benefits provided by the state, will be more likely to challenge strong states to get these benefits. Moreover, a strong coordinated rebellion is particularly important for overthrowing a strong state. In this situation, a common grievance can help overcome the free rider problem (Collier and Hoeffler 2007). The economic feasibility of war may therefore matter less for conflict onset motivated by group grievance against injustice rather than the spoils of war. On the other hand, weak states have a harder time providing private benefits; for example, weak states may not be able to provide medical care, transportation, or even security (which is more a public good, although it allows people to retain