

Why American Presidents Use Military Force

James Meernik^{*}

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Analyses of the use of military short of war by the United States have been legion in recent years, but one vital question has too often been neglected in our empirical research. What foreign policy goals cause presidents to dispatch the men, women and machines of the armed forces about the globe? I see two fundamental weaknesses in the extensive research on the use of force. First, rather than investigating to what extent U.S. foreign policy goals were engaged in particular crises, we have almost exclusively focused on the nature of the domestic and international environment at the time force was used. Second, too often we test our hypotheses using Cold War era data. Now that the Cold War is over, economic, ideological and political explanations for the use of force may exercise a greater impact on presidential decision making than security concerns. After outlining the basic theoretical propositions of four explanations of the use of force (security, economic, ideological and domestic political), I deduce specific predictions regarding the types of crisis conditions that would engage the foreign policy goals relevant to each. I find that security and ideological goals are related to the use of force, while economic and domestic political conditions are not.

Key words: military force, United States foreign policy, international crisis, security, ideological, economic and domestic political conditions, cold war era.

^{*} Professor and chairperson, Department of Political Science, University of North Texas.

Analyses of the use of military short of war by the United States have been legion in recent years, but one vital question has too often been neglected in our empirical research. Toward what end do presidents dispatch the men, women and machines of the armed forces about the globe? Why do presidents use military force in some international crises and not others? Certainly, scholars working in a variety of traditions have speculated about the motivating forces behind U.S. foreign policy. Some reason the United States is seeking to maintain its global hegemony and security (Gilpin, 1987; Huntington, 1993; Morgenthau, 1973; Waltz, 1979). Some have suggested that presidents use force to advance and protect American economic interests (Dos Santos, 1970; Frank, 1969; Galtung, 1971; Kolko, 1969; Odell, 1974; Rosen, 1974; Wallerstein, 1974, 1988). Others note the frequency of references to ideological aims, such as promoting democracy (Fossedal, 1989; Hermann and Kegley, 1998; Meernik, 1996; McDougall, 1997; Peceny, 1996, 1999; Smith, 1994; Whitcomb, 1998). And of course, many authors have written about the importance of domestic political factors and the diversionary use of force (DeRouen, 1995, 2000; Fordham, 1998a, 1998b; Gelpi, 1997; James & Hristoulas, 1994; James & Oneal, 1991; Leeds & Davis, 1997; Meernik, 1994; Meernik & Waterman, 1996; Miller, 1995; Morgan & Bickers, 1992; Ostrom and Job, 1986; Richards et al., 1993; Smith, 1996a, 1996b 1998, 1999; Yoon, 1997; Wang, 1996). A great deal of ink has been spilled theorizing about these questions and attempting to infer what motivates presidents to use force, but to date we have not systematically and empirically sought to answer this most essential of questions.

Why have we not succeeded in this enterprise despite the research devoted to it? I argue that our research designs make it difficult to answer these questions. I see two fundamental weaknesses in many of our analyses. First, rather than investigating to what extent U.S. interests were engaged in particular crises, we have almost exclusively focused on the nature of the domestic and international *environment* at the time force was used. We often overlook the simple truism that while periods of tension or times of

economic retraction may make an environment more conducive to the use of force, they can neither, *sui generis*, create the crisis to which the president responds nor the threats that he must confront. Such explanations may tell us *when*, but not *why* U.S. presidents use force. Rather, we must structure our research designs to test theories of U.S. foreign policy goals, not the timing of uses of force.

Such an approach necessitates that we bring together the disparate strands of research on United States foreign policy goals described above. Each offers a compelling, and to some extent, competitive explanation of the rationale behind the use of force. I advocate testing these models alongside each other to develop a more comprehensive understanding of foreign policy behavior and to assess the explanatory power of each, in the presence of the others. Thus, I am interested in individual, rather than relative, model performance. Accordingly, we should identify what goals are the central focus of each theory and then determine the extent to which an international crisis creates either a threat to such interests and/or an opportunity to advance them. Therefore, the international crisis should be the unit of analysis. For example, we can only determine if the foreign policy goal of advancing democracy leads to the use of force if we know whether or not this goal was central to a crisis, not by measuring the amount of democracy in the international environment. After outlining the basic theoretical propositions of the four explanations of the use of force (security, economic, ideological and domestic political), I deduce specific predictions regarding the types of crisis conditions that would engage the foreign policy goals relevant to each. I discuss the data used to measure these conditions and then test whether their presence increased the probability of a use of force.

Another problem, albeit not as serious, with our analyses is that too often we test our hypotheses using only Cold War era data (there are notable exceptions [DeRouen, 2000; Fordham, 1998a; Fordham, 1998b]). It is popular wisdom that the United States used this contest as a lodestar to guide its actions in international crises (i.e., assist Soviet adversaries and oppose Soviet allies). If this explanation is reasonably approximate, Cold

War presidents would have found it extremely difficult to perceive a crisis without the zero-sum implications of superpower competition. And therefore, if bipolarity did act as a constant in foreign policy, our dependent variable, the use of force, is over determined to the extent that each use is explained by Cold War politics. Fear of and obsession with communism should have suppressed the impact of factors unrelated to the superpower rivalry. Now that the Cold War is over, economic, ideological and domestic political explanations may exercise a greater impact on presidential decision-making. This is especially noteworthy given the increasing interest in promoting foreign policy goals that do not fit nicely in the security rubric, such as advancing democracy and human rights. The only way we can evaluate the true depth of concern for security during the Cold War and the apparent increase in salience of non-security interests is by testing the models across a broad expanse of time. Accordingly, I explain the use of military force short of war in international crises from 1948 through 1998.

I . The Goals of American Presidents

1. External Interests, Security and Hegemony

Traditional realist theories of international relations (Morgenthau, 1973), as well as neo-realist theories (Waltz, 1979) hold that the anarchic international environment forces states to be primarily and consistently driven by the need to protect their interests. States must be concerned with their territorial integrity, sovereignty and the relative power position of their adversaries. As many foreign policy researchers have written, states employ different strategies to protect and advance these interests depending on their capabilities (Mastanduno, Lake and Ikenberry, 1989; Morgan and Palmer, 1997; Rosati, Sampson and Hagan, 1994; Snyder, 1991; Zakaria, 1998). A hegemon, like the United States strives to preserve an advantageous political and economic order in the world (Gilpin, 1987; Kennedy, 1987; Waltz, 1979). A hegemon's superior capabilities allow for a wide range of foreign policy options to sustain its dominion. While the use of

force may be just one of these tools, hegemonic powers have acquired and kept their status because they possessed and used superior, military capabilities. It is the ultimate check on rivals and disruptions to the hegemonic order and military force is often the most efficient method of exploiting the weaknesses and mistakes of other states.

General theories of international relations and research on the political use of military force by the United States have identified numerous rationales behind military interventions. While the objectives identified by the general theories tend to be rather broad and deductively derived, those tested in the empirical literature are usually narrow and inductively derived. I believe, however, that the two schools of thought can be reconciled. Both stress the importance of international or external factors (as opposed to business interests, domestic politics and ideologies that are internally determined). And both emphasize threats posed to US dominance in the world as crucial in the decision to use force. Therefore, we must identify what types of threats are likely to engage the United States' vital interests. I argue that these threats emanate from 1) U.S. rivals, 2) developments that threaten to disrupt the international equilibrium upon which the U.S. hegemony depends, 3) concern for U.S. credibility, and 4) attacks on American citizens. These are by no means a comprehensive test of all or any one theory pertaining to international relations and security. Rather, they represent enduring concerns both in U.S. history and foreign policy theorizing.

First, the United States has viewed with alarm threats posed by its primary, international adversaries—those states that have posed the most serious or chronic challenges to its global or regional dominance. Few would dispute that presidents have viewed with grave concern Soviet and Communist Chinese involvement in many international crises. But the United States has also clashed repeatedly with other states it has viewed as international pariahs. While individual presidents all seem to have contended with their own personal international bogeymen, a few “rogue nations” have occupied a special place in the pantheon of international troublemakers. North Korea,

Cuba under Fidel Castro, Iraq under Saddam Hussein and Yugoslavia under Slobodan Milosevic have continually threatened American dominance, American allies, and American conceptions of good international behavior. Some observers may contend that presidents have exaggerated the true danger posed by these states, but that argument proves the point—the U.S. has repeatedly sought to punish these states by using force against them. Whenever a primary (USSR, PRC) or “secondary” challenger (North Korea, Cuba, Iraq, Serbia) is the principal antagonist in a crisis, American presidents will more likely perceive a threat to U.S. hegemony.¹ Since these states pose a political/military threat to U.S. interests, presidents will more likely opt for a military response. Therefore, *I hypothesize that U.S. presidents will be more likely to use force in an international crisis when 1) the Soviet Union, 2) the People’s Republic of China, 3) North Korea, 4) Cuba, 5) Iraq, or 6) Yugoslavia is the principal adversary.* I construct separate variables to measure the participation of each nation in international crises.²

Second, hegemony is preserved not just by meeting challenges, but by sustaining an international political/economic order. Threats to the legitimacy or viability of this system may occur whenever international actors undermine the norms upon which it is based. The hegemon’s interests are especially likely to be engaged when the threat is to the

1. I make these determinations based on U.S. behavior, so to some extent there is circularity of reasoning in the operationalization and hypothesis. Few would dispute, however, that the USSR and PRC have been the primary U.S. adversaries, while the pariah states I have listed have posed occasional, rather than enduring challenges to U.S. dominance.

2. The Soviet Union variable ends with the collapse of the USSR in December of 1991. All instances of involvement by the People’s Republic of China from 1949 onward are included in the PRC variable. The “North Korea” variable begins in 1950, the “Cuba” variable begins in 1959, the “Iraq” variable begins in August, 1990 and the “Yugoslavia” variable begins in June 1991. Data on state involvement in crises was taken from Blechman and Kaplan (1978), Zelikow (1984), Job and Ostrom (1986), The Center for Naval Analyses: “The Use of Naval Forces in the Post-War Era: U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps Crisis Response Activity, 1946-1990” the Department of Defense web site on force at <http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/ops/#post>, *Facts on File*, *Keesings Contemporary Archives*, the *New York Times Index*, *Statesman’s Yearbook*, and the *Political Handbook of the World*.

security regime it seeks to uphold. When states and other international actors engage in either inter-state or intra-state conflict that may upset the “Pax Americana” upon which so much else rests, the United States has an interest in stopping or dampening the violence. Why would conflict, per se, threaten American interests? Conflicts may not always remain confined within a nation, but escalate and spill over into other nations (e.g., the wars in Yugoslavia in the 1990s). Conflict may destabilize important allies (Central America in the 1980’s); they may involve major regional wars (e.g., the wars between India and Pakistan) and threaten local balances of power (the Iran-Iraq war). And most fundamentally, conflict anywhere, may lead to conflict elsewhere. If international actors perceive that aggression/war is “acceptable” to the hegemon, it will decrease the risks associated with initiating conflict. Therefore, *I hypothesize that, in order to maintain equilibrium in the international environment, U.S. presidents will be more likely to use force when the actors in an international crisis are involved in either a civil or international conflict.*³

Third, a hegemon’s status is as much dependent upon perceptions of its power and will as it is on its true capabilities. To the extent that other nations trust the threats and commitments the hegemon makes, the hegemon can often dispose of challenges to its supremacy with verbal warnings or shots across the bow. A dominant power that fails to protect its reputation may find itself under suspicion from uncertain allies and under assault by probing adversaries. Some have argued that the United States has been especially prone to concern for its international credibility (Gaddis, 1982; Johnson, 1985; Schell, 1976). Presidents have feared that a failure to uphold U.S. commitments would encourage Hitlerian behavior (the Munich syndrome and domino theory), and lead allies

3. The aforementioned sources were used to identify crises characterized by internal and international war. Internal conflicts involve fighting where at least one party to the conflict is an intra-state group, while external conflicts must involve at least two sovereign states. It is possible that a conflict could be characterized as both intrastate and interstate, as for example, many of the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

to make peace with America's enemies. Whether the commitment is a formal alliance (e.g., NATO) or a prior, military intervention (e.g., the continual use of force against Iraq throughout the 1990's), American presidents and their advisers have asserted that U.S. credibility, and hence its hegemonic status, has been engaged. As Johnson (1985) argues, presidents have perceived an interdependence of these commitments—a threat to a commitment anywhere is a threat to commitments everywhere. *I hypothesize that 1) when an international crisis involves a principal U.S. ally or 2) when an international crisis occurs where the United States has used force in the previous twelve months, U.S. presidents will be more likely to use force in the present situation.*⁴

Finally, attacks on American citizens pose severe challenges to U.S. influence abroad and presidential leadership at home (Brands, 1987; Tillema, 1973). A failure to retaliate against such behavior might lead other states to question the hegemon's strength and commitment. If a hegemon will not protect its own, who would it protect? When two U.S. servicemen were killed while pruning a tree in the Korean DMZ, Richard Nixon responded by sending the aircraft carrier Midway from Japan and alerting squadrons of B-52's while the offending tree was cut down. Thus, more so than any other kind of threat, except to its territory, an attack upon its citizens will publicly and deeply engage the hegemon's foreign and domestic political interests. *I hypothesize that when an international crisis involves threats or violence to American citizens, U.S. presidents will be more likely to use military force.*⁵

2. Economic Prosperity

Many international relations scholars have argued that global economic policies and regimes are central to a hegemon's primacy (Gilpin, 1987; Keohane, 1984; Keohane and

4. The aforementioned sources are used to measure prior uses of force. I define principal U.S. allies as the nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Japan, and South Korea.

5. The aforementioned sources are used to measure anti-American threats and violence.

Nye, 1989; Krasner, 1983). While not denying the potency of military capabilities and the utility of force, their concern has been with economic relations and agreements. According to Keohane (1984: 139), postwar American prosperity has been dependent on three factors: “1) a stable international monetary system designed to facilitate liberal international trade and payments, 2) provision of open markets for goods, and 3) access to oil at stable prices.” While military power may not be fungible across all these issue areas, it is essential to the stability of the international economic order. And force has been used occasionally to ensure the elements of American prosperity, most notably, access to oil.

Scholars who take a more ideologically oriented approach to the study of world politics have charged that capitalism heavily influences, if not governs a hegemon’s foreign policy (Dos Santos, 1970; Frank, 1969; Galtung, 1971; Kolko, 1969, 1988; Odell, 1974; Rosen, 1974; Wallerstein, 1974, 1988). Kolko argues (1969: 26) “At every level of the administration of the American state, business serves as the fount of critical assumptions or goals and strategically placed personnel”. Many dependency and world system theorists argued that during the Cold War the U.S. was seeking to impose an economic order on the world to ensure its primacy at the expense of poor countries consigned to exporting raw materials needed for the West’s prosperity. U.S. interventions in Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), and Chile (1971: 193) did reveal close ties between U.S. business interests and the national security establishment. Despite the end of the Cold War, U.S. politicians from the right (Patrick Buchanan) and the left (Ralph Nader) continue to assert that big business reigns supreme, while others outside the U.S., like former United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali, charge that the West is more interested in “rich man’s wars” in Europe than conflicts raging elsewhere.

While the former group of scholars argues that military power is not a fungible foreign policy tool, and the latter claim the military act as an international police force for the capitalist elite, I believe there is a degree of convergence between the two theories that can explain why U.S. presidents may use force for economic objectives. According

to Krasner (1978: 29) if business interests are important in the conduct of foreign policy, "...it implies that the state should strive for an international economic order free of restraints on the movement of goods and capital". The maintenance of a global free market system is mostly dependent upon economic relations among industrialized nations. Interdependence and neo-Marxist scholars would both agree that force is of limited utility in relations among wealthy states because they accept and prosper from the economic system. Force tends to be targeted at the developing world because, among other reasons, these states have not prospered, and so are more likely to question the legitimacy of the system and suffer conflict as a result of economic adversity. Therefore, *I hypothesize that the U.S. should be less likely to use military force when an international crisis occurs in one of the nations belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.*

Specific threats to the international economic order occur not just at the systemic level, but at the local level (e.g., war in the Middle East). We would expect that when regimes or rebels physically attack American businesses overseas, are taken over from within (i.e., nationalization such as in Cuba and Chile), or from without (Kuwait in 1990), the president of the United States will authorize military action. *I hypothesize that when an international crisis involves attacks against specific, economic interests, U.S. presidents will be more likely to use military force.*⁶

3. Promoting Democracy

If peace and prosperity are the long-term goals of U.S. foreign policy, and military might, the ultimate guarantor, democratic liberalism is the philosophy under girding the Pax Americana. As Tony Smith (1994: 144) argued in his extensive treatise on the promotion of democracy in U.S. foreign policy, "...liberal democratic internationalism has been the American way of practicing balance-of-power politics in world affairs." Cities,

6. The aforementioned sources are used to identify actions taken against American businesses.

states and empires have long built their hegemony on the basis of political and economic frameworks. Conquering nations have exported their religions, legal codes and administrations, but the United States has done so more as proselytizer than as conqueror. From the ratification of the Constitution through the present, presidents have believed that as the community of liberal, democratic nations grows so too does the nation's safety (McDougall, 1997; Whitcomb, 1998). These assumptions are increasingly grounded in the knowledge that not only do democracies rarely if ever war on each other (Maoz and Russett, 1993; Owen, 1994; Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman, 1992), they are more pacific in general toward all nations (Benoit, 1996; Leeds and Davis, 1999). That the United States does not always seek to promote such polities in every nation should come as no surprise; security and economic gain have often trumped the desire to see democracy spread. Nonetheless, we do continually see those in charge of its policies injecting the rhetoric of liberalism into foreign policy debates, justifying US actions on liberalist grounds and seeking to remake the world in the US liberalist image.

For example, the flyover by U.S. Air Force planes in December of 1989 in the Philippines was a not so subtle reminder of US power to elements of the Filipino military that were threatening the democratically elected government of Corazon Aquino. The United States sent a massive invasion force into Panama in December of 1989 to help oust Manuel Noriega from power and ensure the installation of a democratically elected government. Indeed, one of the five major objectives of US military strategy in the Annual Defense Report 2000 is fostering an international environment in which "Democratic norms and respect for human rights are widely accepted."⁷ To what extent has military force been applied to further the cause of democracy? We would expect that if presidents have used force as a tool in this ideological crusade, they would be more likely to use force in crises when a democratic government can be created or is in danger

7. This portion of , "The Annual Defense Report" is found at <http://www.dtic.mil/execsec/adr2000/chapl.html>

of being overthrown.

Nations that are in a period of governmental transition, where one polity is changing to another, yet to be defined regime, represent prime opportunities to advance democratization. When international crises occur in such states, a timely use of military force may bolster pro-democracy advocates and dissuade anti-democratic elements from sabotaging the process. Therefore *I hypothesize that when international crises occur in nations undergoing regime transitions, U.S. presidents will be more likely to use military force.* Gurr and Jagers Polity 1998 data measures three types of regime transitions. Nations may be undergoing peaceful transitions that are largely planned, interregnums characterized by a collapse of political authority, or periods of “interruption”, usually associated with war time conquest.⁸ I measure the first two situations as binary variables, but exclude the third since it almost never occurs in the use of force data set.

Opportunities to advance and protect democracy are also present when challenges are mounted from within against an established regime. Coups led by military forces or other disaffected elites often create short-term power vacuums and a loss of governmental legitimacy that may be exploited by military action. Given the prevalence of coups throughout the world, however, we would not expect presidents to seize upon all such opportunities to promote democratization through force. Rather, we would expect presidents to be most concerned with international crises in which democratic regimes are threatened from within. The setback to democratic liberalism in these nations is likely to be viewed with greater alarm than in nations with no tradition of democracy. *I hypothesize that U.S. presidents will be more likely to use military force during international crises when democratic states undergo some type of non-regular transfer of power, or attempted transfer of power.* Further, *I hypothesize that presidents will be less likely to use military force during international crises when non-democratic states*

8. These are coded as “-66”, “-77”, and “-88”, respectively in the Polity 1998 data set.

*undergo some type of non-regular transfer of power, or attempted transfer of power.*⁹

4. Domestic Politics and the Use of Force

Domestic political explanations of the use of force by American presidents have been at the forefront of scholarly research on the diversionary use of force (DeRouen, 1995, 2000; Fordham, 1998a; Fordham, 1998b; Gelpi, 1997; James & Hristoulas, 1994; James & Oneal, 1991; Leeds & Davis, 1997; Meernik, 1994; Meernik & Waterman, 1996; Miller, 1995, 1999; Morgan & Bickers, 1992; Ostrom and Job 1986; Richards et al., 1993; Smith, 1996a, 1996b 1998, 1999; Wang, 1996). Beginning from the premise that presidents seek to rally support for their leadership by engaging in conflict overseas, researchers have reached many diverse conclusions regarding presidential propensity toward diversionary behavior. Many do find evidence (DeRouen, 1995, 2000; Fordham, 1998a, 1998b; James and Hristoulas, 1994; James and Oneal, 1991; Morgan and Bickers, 1992; Ostrom and Job, 1986); others argue there is either little evidence (Meernik, 1994; Meernik and Waterman, 1996; Miller, 1995, 1999); and some find very qualified evidence (Leeds and Davis, 1997; Richards et al., 1993).

Most scholars who study diversionary behavior, however, use as their unit of analysis, the month, the quarter or the year and predict whether American presidents will take military action in a given time period. As I have already argued, one problem with such models is that they only allow us to use variables that measure environmental conditions at particular points in time, but not crisis specific factors. I would argue models that do not take into account conditions relevant to the crisis at hand are under-specified and so may be overestimating the impact of domestic, political conditions. There are also likely to be model misspecification problems resulting from the failure to

9. I measure the occurrence of coups and attempted coups using data described in footnote #2. Democratic regimes are those states that score “6” or higher on the Gurr and Jagers Polity 1998 data set. Non-democratic states are all those nations that score below “6” on that scale.

account for the crisis occurrence process. The resulting selection effects may have biased the estimates of models of the use of force based on domestic conditions within the United States. I address this issue in more detail below. Therefore *I hypothesize that 1) presidential approval ratings, 2) change in presidential approval ratings 3) the unemployment rate, 4) the inflation rate, and 5) presidential election periods at the time of an international crisis will not be related to the use of force.*¹⁰

5. Wars and Cold Wars

Finally, most scholars seem to agree that the political use of force declines during wartime as the president's attention; military personnel and funds are directed elsewhere. Therefore, *I hypothesize that U.S. presidents will be less likely to use force during an international crisis in the period 1) June 1950 through July 1953 and 2) August 1964 through January 1973.* I measure the impact of each war by the logged, cumulative number of battle deaths per month. From a theoretical standpoint, however, the end of the Cold War is a more interesting issue. A hegemon uses its military capabilities to fend off threats to its dominance. If the end of the Cold War signals a reduction in the frequency and significance of threats to American hegemony, we would expect that the need to use military force would decline. Even if economic and ideological purposes motivate the use of force on occasion, it is doubtful that the United States would continue using force at the same rate it did during the Cold War. *I hypothesize that U.S presidents will be less likely to use force since the end of the Cold War.*¹¹

10. I use presidential approval ratings obtained from the Gallup organization web site at <http://www.gallup.com> for all years to create a monthly average. Data on unemployment were downloaded from the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics webpage at <http://stats.bls.gov/top20.html>. The inflation rate was calculated from Consumer Price Index data downloaded from the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis webpage at <http://www.bea.doc.gov/>. Electoral periods occur during the months of July, August, September and October during presidential election years.

11. I measure the post Cold War period as beginning in January of 1990 with the fall of communism in Eastern Europe.

II . The Data

The criteria used for identifying international crises likely to be perceived as sufficiently threatening to the United States to cause the president to consider using military action are borrowed from Job and Ostrom (1986) and Meernik (1994). Job & Ostrom (1986: 9) justify this operationalization of opportunities because the search criteria constitute a ‘syndrome of characteristics commonly found in use of force situations.’ To determine which international crises would come to the attention of the president, I reviewed several yearly almanacs of important, international events, including *The Statesman’s Yearbook*, and *Political Handbook of the World* in search of situations that resembled the types of crises to which presidents had at other times responded with force. Having compiled a list of potential opportunities, I examined more detailed event summaries for further validation and information including: *Facts on File*, *Keesings Contemporary Archives* and the *New York Times Index*. Those events that did meet these specifications were added to the list of opportunities compiled by Job and Ostrom (1986) and Meernik (1994).¹²

Data on the political use of force were gathered from Blechman and Kaplan (1978), Job and Ostrom (1986), Zelikow (1984), The Center for Naval Analyses: ‘The Use of Naval Forces in the Post-War Era: U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps Crisis Response Activity, 1946-1990’, and the Federation of American scientists web site.¹³ For each

12. One possible data set on international crises I considered but chose not to use was Brecher, Wilkenfeld & Moser’s International Crisis Behavior project. While these data do contain extensive information on international crises, U.S. participation as a crisis actor occurred in only 44 crisis-months (a month in which at least one crisis occurred). In contrast, when I expressly search for events likely to capture the attention of U.S. foreign policy makers (as opposed to the importance of the crisis to the international environment), I find 311 crisis-months. Thus, these data, which were gathered for purposes other than the study of U.S. foreign policy, were judged not inclusive enough for my purposes.

13. <http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/ops/#post>

international crisis/opportunity to use force I predict whether a president used the military for political purposes short of war. Table 1 provides a brief summary of the propensity of each president to use force in a crisis. Overall, in the period 1948-1998 I found that there were 585 crises and that presidents used force in 310 of these events.

Table 1 Presidents and the Use of Force

President	Opportunities	Use of Force	Frequency
Truman	40	11	27.5%
Eisenhower	80	50	61.7%
Kennedy	54	35	64.8%
Johnson	64	39	60.9%
Nixon	51	16	31.4%
Ford	23	8	34.8%
Carter	41	19	46.3%
Reagan	105	69	65.7%
Bush	51	24	47.1%
Clinton	39	75	52.0%
Total	585	310	53.0%

Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Reagan were most likely to use force. Indeed, the period between the end of the Korean War and the beginning of the Vietnam War averaged 8.6 uses of force per year. We might expect as much in an era when the battle for superpower supremacy was at its height, crises were still occurring in Europe and the Cold War battleground was extending into the third world. Protracted U.S. involvement in Korea and Vietnam appears to have dampened presidential willingness to use force elsewhere during those years. Uses of force averaged roughly four per year across both wars. President Reagan's propensity to use force is fairly high as we might expect with the renewed escalation of the Cold War in the 1980s. However, President Carter before him like Presidents Bush and Clinton after, used force at levels close to the overall average.

III . Methodology

Many scholars have argued that international crises are not randomly occurring events, but are endogenously determined (Fearon, 1994; Leeds and Davis, 1997; Morrow, 1989; Smith, 1996b). States' crisis strategies determine not just their crisis behavior, but the onset and escalation of conflict. For example, Leeds & Davis (1997) have shown that crises are less likely to occur during economic downturns because other states realize the incentives some leaders have for using force at these times—making potential diverters' threats to use force more credible—and so are dissuaded from initiating crises. Therefore, it is important to account for crisis initiation since their occurrence is not random, but determined by state strategies. If we fail to explain when crises occur, our models may be misspecified. According to Morrow (1989: 559), "Conclusions about crisis behavior can be drawn from sets of crises only if empirical studies account for this selection bias."

By not modeling this selection process, we run many risks. First, as Berk (1983: 388) notes by not taking selection bias into account, the correlation between the exogenous variables and the disturbance term (when predicting the use of force) may lead the researcher to attribute causal effects to the exogenous variables that actually result from the error disturbances (coefficients may switch signs as well). These error disturbances arise when one does not model the selection process (e.g., the occurrence of a crisis). This may explain in part why researchers have often found statistically significant relationships between domestic conditions and the use of force. Crises may often correlate with domestic, political conditions associated with the diversionary use of force. Researchers who have not taken selection effects into account in models of the use of force may have generated biased estimates of the impact of domestic conditions.

The issue of selection bias has been widely addressed in the econometrics literature and its consequences have been well documented. We assume in both regression and probit models that the disturbance term is uncorrelated with the exogenous variables.

When this obtains, our estimates of the slope and intercept should be unbiased and consistent. But, when one systematically excludes from estimation a subset of the sample or population of the endogenous variable, one is in effect omitting a variable that explains the nature of the selection or censoring process. Thus, we are confronted with the traditional consequences of an omitted variable—a form of specification error. The expected values of the disturbance term are no longer zero and tend to be correlated with the exogenous variable.(Berk, 1983: 390) Here the omitted variable is the crisis generation process.

Heckman (1976) originally proposed a two-stage estimation procedure involving a probit selection mechanism and OLS estimation of the substantive variable of interest to take account of these problems. From the first-stage, probit estimates one derives an indication for each observation of the likelihood that it will be excluded from the substantive model. This likelihood is derived from the predicted values of the probit model to create what is known as the hazard rate—“for each observation the instantaneous probability of being excluded from the sample conditional upon being in the pool at risk.”(Berk, 1990: 391) The hazard rate, or selection term, is then used to control for the expected non-zero value of the disturbances and avert over or under-estimation of the parameters.

Accordingly, the first step in an analysis of the use of force should be to model selection effects. I estimate a model of crisis occurrence using domestic, political conditions in the U.S. to predict whether or not an international crisis/opportunity to use force occurs in any given month from 1948 through 1998. From these results I save the estimates of the hazard rate. I use the hazard rate in the model predicting the use of force in order to control for the bias associated with selection effects. Since the unit of analysis in the crisis occurrence model is the month, the hazard rate indicates the probability of being excluded from the sample of crises on a month-by-month basis. Because the unit of analysis in the use of force model is the crisis, the two models cannot

be estimated simultaneously. Therefore my measure of the hazard rate in the force model is not case sensitive. When there are two or more crises per month, the hazard rate is the same for each.

IV. Analysis

Table 2 provides estimates of the probit model of crisis occurrence. Briefly, we see that presidents are more likely to be confronted with opportunities to use force as U.S. unemployment increases and as their popularity increases, although the coefficient for the latter variable is statistically insignificant. These results differ somewhat from Leeds and Davis (1997), who find that as economic conditions deteriorate in one state, leaders in other states are dissuaded from provoking international incidents because of the heightened probability of a diversionary use of force. Their differing sample and time period may account for this discrepancy.

Table 2 Probit Estimates of Crisis Occurrence

Variable	Coefficient	Z Score
Presidential Popularity	.0062	1.378
Unemployment	.0908	2.685
Inflation	.0099	.532
Election	-.0061	-.029
Constant	-.6175	-1.818

N = 612

Likelihood Ratio = 9.72, p. < .05

Table 3 Explaining U.S. Use of Force, 1948-1998

Variable	Coefficient	Z Score	Marginal Effect	Impact of Standard Deviation Change
USSR	-.3601	-1.709	-.1431	-.0429
PRC	-.1013	-.351	-.0402	-.0081
North Korea	-.3739	-1.054	-.1486	-.0243
Cube	.6471	2.243	.2571	.05959
Iraq	.9284	2.283	.3689	.05958
Serbia	1.1477	2.836	.4560	.0796
International War	.0645	.407	.0256	.0113
Civil War	-.2606	-1.788	-.1035	-.0478
Credibility	.2426	1.675	.0964	.0436
Anti US Violence	.7903	5.388	.3140	.1275
Economic Interests	.0830	.207	.0330	.0050
OECD	.1146	.365	.0455	.0088
Government Interruption	.6281	2.906	.2496	.0741
Government Transition	-.0365	-.168	-.0145	-.0041
Coup in Democracy	.0319	.089	.0126	.0020
Coup in Autocracy	-.5868	-3.300	-.2332	-.0880
Presidential Approval	-.0420	-.741	-.0167	-.2069
Unemployment	-.5616	-.703	-.2231	-.3213
Inflation	-.1109	-1.227	-.0441	-.1399
Election	-.1348	-.681	-.0535	-.0164
Korean War	-.2150	-.525	-.0854	-.0155
Vietnam War	-.2137	-1.139	-.0849	-.0304
Post Cold War	-.4970	-2.596	-.1975	-.0771
Hazard Rate	-12.0689	-.771	-4.795	-.3667
Constant	13.5655	.760		

N = 585

Twice Log Likelihood Ratio - 134.06, p. < .0001

Percent Correctly Predicted - 71.2%

Proportionate Reduction of Error - 38.8%

Joint Significance Tests

Security Variables - 66.6, p. <.0001

Economic Variables - .17, p. > .9

Democracy Variables - 23.7, p. < .001

Domestic politics Variables - 7.23, p. > .1

War Variables - 7.25, p. > .05

The estimates of the four models of US foreign policy goals are presented in Table 3. The results, while generally in conformity with the hypotheses, reveal some unexpected findings as well. Many of the diverse indicators of threats to U.S. security interests are statistically significant, but there are a surprising number which are not. I predicted that as a hegemon, the U.S. would be especially interested in fending off challengers to its dominance, but it would appear presidents are far more likely to do so when the challenger is a “pariah” state rather than a major power. When the Soviet Union or the People’s Republic of China is involved in a crisis, presidents are less likely to use force, although neither variable is statistically significant. This supports Meernik (1994) who found that when the USSR initiated a use of force, presidents were less likely to respond.

When the American adversary is Cuba, Iraq or Serbia, however, presidents are quite likely to take military action. The marginal probability of a use of force in crises involving Cuba is 25% (holding other variables constant at their mean value), Iraq—38%, and Serbia—48%. A longstanding U.S. enmity toward these nations’ leaders, as well as the availability of troops nearby (Guantanamo in Cuba, the Persian Gulf, and the Adriatic), has encouraged presidents to respond militarily when Castro, Hussein or Milosevic challenge U.S. leadership. The coefficient for North Korea, however, is statistically insignificant. A closer examination of crises involving North Korea reveals that presidents used force in only 6 of 16 incidents. Notwithstanding many provocations, including the test firing of missiles over Japan and the occasional killing of US forces in the DMZ, presidents do not automatically shoot back.

Despite these diverse findings, one clear pattern does emerge. While presidents are certainly mindful of the need to ward off challenges to US hegemony, their responses vary with the type of threat to U.S. security and peace. When presidents perceive a challenge could escalate into large-scale war, as in the case of the USSR, PRC and North Korea, they may tread cautiously to avoid the destabilization a military response may

entail. Diplomacy may be the preferred option. When the threat emanates from adversaries who do not possess the ability to immediately overwhelm the US or its allies with force, presidents are more likely to respond in kind. Probably all challenges to US hegemony are taken seriously, but not all are appropriately met with military retaliation.

Contrary to my hypotheses, presidents are not more likely to use force in crises characterized by civil or international war. In fact, presidents are distinctly less likely to deploy the armed forces into internal conflicts. The likelihood of a use of force in these cases decreases by 9.9%. The Vietnam syndrome, which inspired skepticism about the wisdom of U.S. intervention in intrastate violence, may be responsible for this reluctance. I find that in the period 1948 through 1972, presidents used force 43% of the time when the situation involved a civil war (30 out of 69 crises). From 1973 onward, however, I find that presidents used force 51% of the time (56 out of 109 crises). Indeed, presidents have not shied away from using force in Lebanon, Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia, all of which involved internal conflicts.

American presidents apparently do not believe the United States, regardless of its power and leadership, should act as a global policing force. There may be norms against conflict among democracies and in the United Nations charter, but this has not prompted presidents to intervene in war as a matter of principal. Diplomacy, economic sanctions and other less violent measures are probably better suited to resolve these disputes.

Nor are presidents more likely to use force where they have used force previously or when the crisis involves a U.S. ally. The first result contradicts Meernik (1994) and Meernik and Waterman (1996). If we remove the variables for Cuba, Iraq and Serbia, however, the prior use of force variable becomes statistically significant. In fact, when the pariah state variables are excluded from the analysis, the prior use of force variable exercises the second largest impact of any variable in the model. I also tested to determine if collinearity between the U.S. ally and OECD variables may have affected their statistical significance, but both remained insignificant in the absence of the other.

Finally, as others have found (Meernik, 1994; Meernik and Waterman, 1996), presidents usually retaliate when foreign adversaries target American citizens. Ignoring such violence may well invite future challenges and attacks.

Economic imperatives exert little influence on presidential decision-making. Neither the variable measuring threats/attacks on US economic interests, nor the OECD variable was statistically significant. While presidents have occasionally used force to defend economic interests (e.g., the Persian Gulf), these deployments have been relatively rare and explained equally as well by other factors. Crises involving OECD nations, especially after the erection of the Berlin Wall, have been fairly rare, which may explain why we do not observe any special aversion to involvement in such incidents.

Presidents intervene in some situations where there is potential for democratic growth, but not others. When a crisis involves a nation undergoing a relatively peaceful transition period between regimes, presidents refrain from using force. If a crisis occurs in the context of a complete break between regimes—where there is no central authority—presidents are more likely to intervene. Situations like these where there is a power vacuum might be more amenable to a use of force than transitions where there is some legitimate authority. When democratic regimes undergo a coup, presidents are unlikely to take action. In a bare majority (8 of 15) of cases presidents did respond with military force, but this propensity is not very different from the overall propensity to use force. When autocratic states are threatened from within, presidents are significantly unlikely to take action.

The impact of domestic, political conditions inside the United States is not substantial. The only variable that is statistically significant is the monthly inflation rate, but its coefficient is negative. This would suggest that as inflation increases, the likelihood of force decreases. Presidential popularity, change in popularity, the unemployment rate and electoral periods apparently have little to do with presidential use of force. Rather, when we include measures of threats to security, economic prosperity,

and ideological aims, which few researchers do, their influence washes away. Indeed, while many scholars acknowledge that we risk omitted variable problems when we model the use of force without a selection bias term, few have recognized that a similar problem exists when we omit international and crisis-specific variables from our models. Omitted variable problems are probably far more severe when we neglect the multitude of international factors that affect foreign policy behavior.¹⁴ A rigorous and unbiased understanding of the political use of military force can be achieved only when our models and methods reflect the diversity of explanatory factors at work.

Lastly, we see that presidents are less likely to use force in the post-Cold War era. From 1948 through 1990 they used force 53.4% when given the opportunity, while after the collapse of communism, presidents used the military 51.4% of the time. While not a vast disparity, this difference does suggest that with the demise of the major challenger to US hegemony, presidents have found somewhat less cause to respond with military force in crises. We can debate endlessly about whether the Cold War or the post-Cold War era is more dangerous or unstable, but as long as there is a hegemon, there will be challengers. As long as there is anarchy in the international system, balances of power will arise and conflicts will result. Force will matter.

V. Conclusions

I analyzed 585 crises from 1948 through 1998 and advanced a comprehensive model of U.S. foreign policy interests and behavior to predict presidential decision-making. I tested hypotheses derived from security, economic prosperity, ideological, and domestic political theories of US foreign policy. I find that security concerns best explain the decision to use force. Presidents are more likely to deploy the

14. While multicollinearity does exist among some of the domestic political variables, removing some (like change in popularity), and combining others (like inflation and unemployment) does not materially affect the results.

military against secondary challengers to U.S. hegemony, when American citizens are threatened or harmed, and where force has been used previously. They are not likely to use force when economic interests are threatened or against OECD nations. Nor do we find that approval ratings, unemployment, or elections make a difference in the decision to use force. We do see that presidents are less likely to use force in the context of civil wars, when non-democratic regimes are threatened with coups, and after the Cold War. They are more likely to use force when a target state is in a period of transition characterized by an interruption in central political authority. Perhaps the most important conclusion is that there is a diversity of reasons why presidents use force.

We have long studied *when* American presidents use force, but not *why* they have used force. We have focused almost exclusively on the study of domestic conditions and have largely neglected the impact of international factors in the use of force. As a result, our findings have accumulated in an additive, rather than an integrative manner. I have argued that research is better served by the testing of diverse models of US foreign policy interests. Furthermore, I have argued that the best method for testing and integrating theories is to focus on the international crisis as the unit of analysis. This allows us to examine the nature of the threats to United States foreign policy interests as well as the president's domestic political standing. By utilizing this integrative research design we can speak to each other, rather than past each other. We can direct our attention to theoretical issues rather than responding to each new finding.

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為何美國總統使用武力

James Meernik^{*}

近幾年有許多關於美國在使用武力但尚未形成戰爭狀態的研究，但一個極重要的問題卻常在實證分析中被忽略，即是怎樣的外交政策目標會促使總統派遣軍力、武力？在眾多對於武力使用的研究當中，我發現了兩個基本的缺點：第一，當武力被使用時，我們幾乎只將焦點放在美國國內及國際環境的本質，而非研究美國外交政策目標在特定危機下被牽涉到的程度。第二，我們太常使用冷戰時期的資料來檢定我們的假設，而冷戰現已結束，對總統的決策而言，經濟、意識形態，及政治因素對於武力使用或許比安全的考量發揮了更大的影響。經由安全、經濟、意識形態與國內政治等四項武力使用的解釋因素所組成的基本理論命題，我發現，安全及意識形態與武力使用相關，而經濟及國際政治情勢則否。

關鍵字：軍事武力、美國外交政策、國際危機、國家安全、意識型態、政經情勢、冷戰時期。

^{*} 美國北德州大學政治系教授、系主任。
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