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SPECIAL
DATA
FEATURE

Military Intervention by Powerful States, 1945–2003*

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The Military Intervention by Powerful States (MIPS) project develops a rigorous, generalizable measure of the effectiveness of military force as a policy instrument and applies the measure to code the outcomes of all military interventions conducted by five major powers since the termination of World War II. The MIPS dataset provides detailed data on US, British, Chinese, French, and Russian uses of military force against both state and non-state targets between 1946 and 2003. In particular, this project focuses on the political objectives strong states pursue through the use of force, the human and material cost of their military operations, and measures of intervention outcomes relative to the intervening states' objectives. The dataset also includes extensive data on factors commonly hypothesized to be associated with war outcomes, such as the nature of the target, the type of force used by the intervening state, and military aid and assistance provided to each side.

Introduction

Blainey (1973) observes that we cannot understand war initiation without understanding what determines war outcomes. However, despite recent advances, systematic studies of how violent conflicts end and what is gained or lost in the fighting are relatively rare within the field of political science. There are many possible explanations for the lack of attention to the determinants of war outcomes among political scientists. But one particularly imposing barrier to a proliferation of literature in this area is the difficulty of operationalizing concepts like 'winning' and 'losing' in war and the consequent lack of data on war outcomes. Baldwin (2000: 178) makes a forceful argument for more systematic scholarship on the effectiveness of various tools of foreign policy. In particular, he maintains that 'neither the costs nor the benefits of military statecraft have received the scholarly attention they deserve'. A key issue, he notes, is the challenge of defining 'success'.

The data project described in this article develops a rigorous, generalizable measure of the effectiveness of military force as a policy instrument. We apply the measure to code the outcomes of all 126 foreign military interventions conducted by five major powers since the termination of World War II. The Military Intervention by Powerful States (MIPS) dataset provides detailed data on US, British, Chinese, French, and Russian uses of military force against both state and non-state targets between 1946 and 2003. While other datasets with broader spatial and temporal coverage exist, this dataset is unique in the depth and comprehensiveness of the data provided for each of the cases. In particular, this project focuses on the political objectives strong states pursue through the use of force, the human and material cost of their military operations, and measures of intervention outcomes relative to the intervening states' war aims. The dataset also includes extensive data on factors commonly associated with war outcomes, such as the nature of the target, the type of force used by the intervening state, and military aid and assistance provided to either the intervening state or the target.

After a short introduction to the unique features of this data collection, we explain how we measure the objectives, costs, and outcomes of military interventions. We also briefly explore whether the data provide any empirical support for common assertions about the determinants of armed conflict outcomes and discuss the types of research questions for which the data might be particularly useful.

Why Create a New Dataset?

Most previous efforts to collect data on states' use of military force are much broader in scope but do not include detailed or precise information about states' objectives or whether they were successful at attaining those objectives. Larger datasets necessarily sacrifice detail and specificity for the sake of breadth. The Correlates of War Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) dataset (Jones, Bremer & Singer, 1996) has tremendous temporal and spatial coverage, but the MID project codes only four broad revision-type categories – territory, regime, policy, and 'other' – and over 56% of the disputes in the dataset are coded as ending in stalemate. The International Military Interventions (IMI) dataset, created by Pearson & Baumann (1993) and updated by Pickering & Kisangani (2009), is comprehensive and draws on an impressive breadth of primary and secondary sources, but does not identify the intervening states' primary objectives or evaluate whether the states attained these objectives. Even the ambitious study by Blechman & Kaplan (1978) specifies an 'operational objective' and outcome for only 33 of 215 political uses of force by the United States.

As Schelling (1966: 31) notes, 'victory inadequately expresses what a nation wants from its military forces'. The MIPS project defines military intervention success in Clausewitzian terms. Because states use military force to attain political objectives, the key focus of this effort is on identifying the primary political objective for which a state employed military force and evaluating whether that objective was attained. We also collect and code extensive data on the *cost* of using military force in terms of both intervening state and target casualties, the number of troops committed, the type of force employed, and intervention duration.

The Military Intervention by Powerful States (MIPS) dataset aims for a balance between breadth and depth. The goal is to provide researchers with enough data to draw generalizable conclusions, as well as a descriptive richness not possible in much larger data collections. Data on many variables are available in both narrative and quantitative formats. At least two independent coders coded

each case using at least three different sources. The codebook contains a full bibliography of sources, and the dataset indicates which of the over 200 primary and secondary sources were used to code each case.

The Data

Operational Definition

The MIPS project defines *military intervention* as a use of armed force that involves the official deployment of at least 500 regular military personnel (ground, air, or naval) to attain immediate-term political objectives through action against a foreign adversary.

- To qualify as a 'use of armed force', the military personnel deployed must either *use* force or be prepared to use force if they encounter resistance (see Tillema, 2001, for a similar definition of 'combat-readiness').
- To be 'official', a state's political leaders must authorize the deployment of national troops (Pearson & Baumann, 1993).
- The deployment must be intended to attain immediate-term political objectives through military action, or the imminent threat of military action, against another actor. We exclude routine military movements and operations without a defined target, such as training exercises, non-combatant evacuation operations, and disaster relief.
- Foreign adversaries can be either state or non-state actors, such as insurgent groups and terrorist organizations. Military operations that target a state's own citizens and are conducted within a state's internationally recognized borders (e.g. China's use of force against Tiananmen Square protesters in 1989) are excluded *unless* both citizenship and borders are in dispute by an armed independence movement in territory claimed

as national homeland by a distinct ethnic group (e.g. China in Tibet).[1]

We tried to identify all military interventions by the five states that are currently permanent members of the UN Security Council (hereinafter referred to as the 'major powers') between April 1945 and March 2003. In order to compile an exhaustive list of all possible major power military interventions, we identified potential cases from Pearson & Baumann (1993; updated by Pickering, 1999; Pickering & Kisangani, 2009); Tillema (2001); Regan's (2002) data on interventions in civil conflicts; the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch et al., 2002; Eriksson, Wallensteen & Sollenberg, 2003); and the Correlates of War datasets (Jones et al., 1996; Sarkees, 2000; Singer & Small, 1994). We then looked for additional cases that met our case selection criteria in reference books including Butterworth (1976), Clodfelter (2002), and Jessup (1989), as well as *Keesing's Contemporary Archives/Record of World Events*. A more detailed discussion of the case selection criteria and a complete bibliography of sources used to identify and code the data are available in the codebook provided as a web appendix.

Britain, China, France, Russia/USSR, and the United States conducted 126 military interventions between 1945 and 2003. The United States undertook 35 military interventions, about 28% of the total. France is the second most militarily active major power with 29 operations (23%). China conducted the fewest military interventions, only 17 in the six decades covered by the dataset.

The primary target is a non-state actor in 61 (48%) of the major power military interventions in the post-World War II period. Of these, 31 operations are conducted against insurgents, 16 against civilian rioters, and

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[1] Other researchers may wish to exclude colonial wars, which are identified in the dataset as operations to 'Maintain Empire' by the variable *objcode*.

4 against terrorist organizations. In addition, 10 military operations target an insurgent movement and state military forces concurrently. Examples include the French operations against Libya and GUNT rebels in the 1980s and the US intervention in Vietnam (1962–73) which targeted the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong. Four military operations target military leaders who attempted to remove and replace state leaders in a coup. France, for example, intervened in Gabon (1964) and Comoros (1995) to restore those regimes after military coups.

Political Objectives

Several scholars have noted the importance, and difficulty, of identifying and measuring the issues at stake in a dispute (e.g. Diehl, 1992). Similar to the study conducted by Blechman & Kaplan (1978), we focus on the political objectives of each military intervention, rather than policymakers' personal, domestic political, or grand strategic motivations for employing force. Domestic political and personal motivations include a leader's desire to maintain office or increase personal political power. Grand strategic objectives are goals such as maintaining the credibility of a country's commitments to allies, preventing the spread of an ideology, sending a message about foreign aggression, and similar overarching, long-term foreign policy aims. In contrast, the primary political objective of a military operation is a concrete, observable, immediate-term outcome to be attained through the employment of military force. Blechman & Kaplan (1978) make a strong case for focusing on objectives rather than motives, noting that 'Motivation is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to determine in any situation' (p. 59), but 'operational objectives tend to be expressed in relatively tangible and specific terms and their satisfaction or non-satisfaction can be judged much more easily. There is much greater agreement among public documents, memoirs, and

scholarly studies of incidents as to what the decisionmakers' operational objectives were than as to either fundamental strategic objectives or personal motives' (p. 65).

While larger strategic goals and personal political agendas often motivate the use of force, once national leaders decide to employ force they must operationalize these goals by giving their armed forces a directive. President Bush and other decisionmakers had a multitude of motives and rationales for responding to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Nevertheless, each military operation had a primary political objective; Operation Desert Shield was intended to deter an invasion of Saudi Arabia, and Operation Desert Storm was to restore Kuwait's sovereignty over its territory. The removal of Saddam Hussein's regime, destruction of the Republican Guard, and elimination of the Scud missile threat to Israel were only secondary objectives, as evidenced by the lack of consensus that existed among civilian and military leaders on the time and resources to devote to them (Clodfelter, 2002; Gordon & Trainor, 1995; US Department of Defense, 1992).

The MIPS project defines a *political objective* as the allocation of a valued good (e.g. territory, political authority, or resources) sought by the political leaders of a state or of a non-state organization. Examples of political objectives typically pursued in military operations include: the defense of territory, seizure of political authority, and maintenance of political authority. Political objectives contrast with *military objectives*, which we define as the operational goals to be accomplished by the armed forces of a state or opposition movement as a means to achieve the desired political outcome. Examples include the attrition of enemy combatants, destruction of enemy military capacity, disruption of enemy lines of command and control, and demoralization of enemy soldiers and/or civilians. Under some circumstances, an actor's political objective

and military objective are the same. A state may, for example, seek only to reclaim a piece of land along its border with another state. In this case, seizing territory is both the political objective and the military objective, although the state is likely to pursue other military objectives simultaneously as a means to the desired end.

Common wisdom, particularly within professional military circles, holds that ambiguous civilian war aims are a common cause of defeat for otherwise capable states (Hess, 1986). However, we have found that while there are myriad personal, domestic political, and grand strategic motivations for using force, the desired political outcome of a military operation is frequently unambiguous. What is more often unclear is the connection between the *military* objectives of an operation and attainment of the desired *political* outcome. During the US intervention in Indochina, for example, the political objective was explicit: the United States fought to maintain an independent, non-communist South Vietnam (Herring, 1996; Karnow, 1983; US Department of Defense, 1971). The relationship between achieving military objectives, such as the attrition of Viet Cong, and attaining that political outcome was much less clear. The question for the United States was not 'What is the desired *outcome*?' but 'How do we use our military capability to achieve the desired outcome?'

To facilitate rigorous coding of the political objective of each intervention, we followed the following procedure. First, the principal investigator created six political objective categories based on a preliminary historical analysis of approximately 30% of the cases (Sullivan, 2004). The six categories are: Maintain/Build Foreign Regime Authority, Remove/Replace Foreign Regime, Policy Change, Acquire/Defend Territory, Maintain Empire, and Social Protection/Order. Next, we assigned two independent student coders to each intervention case. These coders

worked separately to identify the primary political objective (PPO) for which the intervening state employed military force using a Boolean logic decision procedure and a codebook with operational definitions of the political objective categories. Each coder consulted at least three approved sources including scholarly studies, newspapers, chronologies of international events, and government and military records. To assess the reliability of data coded with this procedure, we assigned a random sample of 25% of the cases to two sets of student coders: a first set of student coders at the University of Georgia and a second set of student coders at Texas A&M University (Rothman, 2007). The primary political objective category (1–6) coded by the first (UGA) coder and the second (A&M) coder were identical in 23 of 29 cases. When the full dataset was coded, a third coder was assigned whenever the primary political objective category assigned by the first coder did not match the category assigned by the second coder. In every case, the third coder assigned a category score that matched the score assigned by one of the first two coders, and this was the score recorded in the dataset.

The codebook contains the decision algorithm, operational definitions, and a bibliography of sources. The dataset identifies the sources used to code each case. Table I displays the number of cases in each political objective category.

Table I. Primary Political Objective of Major Power Military Interventions, 1945–2003

Political objective	Freq.	Percent
Maintain foreign regime authority	36	28.57
Remove foreign regime	12	9.52
Policy change	16	12.70
Acquire or defend territory	35	27.78
Maintain empire	16	12.7
Social protection and order	11	8.73
Total	126	

Intervention Outcomes

Intervention success and failure are measured with respect to whether the major power was able to achieve its primary political objective (PPO).[2] For each case, the coders determined whether or not the major power attained its PPO, and, if so, how long that objective was sustained after military operations ended. Five measures of success are available in the dataset. *Attain* is a dichotomous variable that equals 1 if the intervening state attained its PPO by the intervention termination date. *Maintain* records the number of months (to a maximum of 60) that the primary political objective was maintained after the intervention was terminated. Three dummy variables indicate whether the intervening state achieved its PPO and maintained that objective for at least six months (*attain6mos*), one year (*attain1yr*), or three years (*attain3yrs*) following intervention termination. Average interrater agreement between the UGA student coder and A&M student coder was 86% for *attain1yr*.

Measures of Effort and Cost
Troop Levels, Type of Force, and Casualties
The number of troops deployed and the type of force employed in post-WWII major

power military interventions varies greatly. Both continuous and categorical troop commitment level variables capture the maximum number of major power military troops deployed to the combat zone at any one time during the intervention. While 26% of the cases involve deployments of fewer than 3000 troops, in 31% the intervening state committed more than 30,000 troops. The largest troop deployments, involving over 500,000 troops, occurred during the US intervention in Vietnam and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

The dataset includes a short narrative description of the manner in which the intervening state employed force and a categorical variable which codes only the highest level of force used. The intervening state deployed combat-ready military personnel but did not engage in combat operations in only 12% of interventions. The major power deployed at least 500 troops to serve as advisers in combat and/or to conduct small unit raids or commando operations in 18% of the cases. In 19% of interventions, the intervening state conducted airstrikes, naval bombardment, and/or fired long-range missiles, but did not commit significant ground troops to the fight. Fifty-five percent of major power military interventions involved the deployment of at least 2000 ground combat troops.

Table II contains statistics on troop levels, intervening state and target casualties, the percentage of interventions in which the major power committed ground troops to combat, and intervention duration by primary political objective type. The most costly military interventions were the major powers' attempts to maintain their own political authority in territories they claimed as colonies. Attempts to maintain empire involved the largest median number of troops, extracted the highest toll in both intervening state and target casualties, and always involved ground combat. After operations to

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[2] Although it happens less frequently than one might expect, the primary political objective of a military intervention can change during the course of an intervention. When the major power attains the original objective and then decides to pursue another objective (as the United States did during the Korea War in the 1950s) the intervention is treated as two operations and the first operation is coded a success. For the Korean case, the US military intervention to maintain the South Korean regime is one operation. The push North to the Yalu river to 'liberate' North Korea (i.e. to remove and replace the North Korean regime) is considered a second operation. Without such a distinction, whether the state achieved operational success or failure is ambiguous and factors contributing to the success of the first operation cannot be distinguished from factors contributing to the failure of the second. If, however, the major power changes its PPO because it cannot attain its original objective, the intervention is treated as one case. The outcome is coded as a failure if it terminates and the major power failed to attain its original political objective.

Table II. Commitment Levels by PPO

Primary political objective	Median number of troops	Median MP casualties	Median target casualties	Interventions involving ground combat	Median duration in days
Maintain foreign regime	3,600	17	600	50%	309
Remove foreign regime	24,750	15	208	83%	184
Policy change	26,500	1	300	31%	195
Acquire or defend territory	10,000	50	746	60%	118
Maintain empire	30,500	509	2378	100%	890
Social protection and order	4,000	20	312	55%	296
All	14,000	34	681	60%	211

maintain empire, military interventions to remove a foreign regime were most likely to involve ground combat, but these interventions tended to be short and result in few casualties. The major powers also devoted considerable effort to operations to coerce an adversary into changing its foreign or domestic policies; the median number of military personnel committed to these operations exceeded the number committed to defend territory or overthrow foreign governments. However, only 31% of these interventions involved ground combat and intervening state casualties tended to be low. On average, major power states committed the fewest troops to social protection and order operations. Only half of these operations involved ground combat troops, but human losses in peacekeeping interventions were slightly higher than those in interventions to remove a foreign regime. In the population of post-WWII major power military interventions, the median loss exchange ratio (LER) is .05, indicating that the targets of major power interventions suffered about 100 deaths for every 5 major power troops killed.

Intervention Duration Intervention duration is measured in days from the date that major power troops begin military operations on location to the date that (1) a peace treaty or other agreement between the parties terminates the intervening state's combat role; (2) the intervening state's combat troops are withdrawn to less than 30% of their maximum strength; or (3) the intervening state decisively attains its PPO and begins to pursue a different objective. On average, major power military interventions last just over two years, but the median intervention is less than seven months long. The shortest interventions last only a few days. These include a day-long Russian intervention in response to rioting in East Germany (16 June 1953) and a French intervention to restore order in the Congo that took only four days (August 1963). The longest interventions last more than a decade. Examples include the British intervention in Northern Ireland (1969–98), Chinese operations to maintain regime authority in Tibet (1954–73), and the Russian involvement in Angola (1975–88).

The Correlates of Success

The major power terminates its military operations without ever attaining its primary political objective in 29% of our cases. In 69% of the cases, the major power attains and maintains the objectives for at least six months. The intervening state maintains its PPO for at least one year after intervention termination in approximately 63% of cases and maintains its objective for three or more years in only

52% of the cases. Although there is only space for a brief, preliminary analysis of the data, in this section we explore whether the data provide any empirical support for common assertions about the determinants of armed conflict outcomes as a way of demonstrating how this new data might be employed.

Variations in the Success Rate among Major Power States

The major power states differ in the strength of their military-industrial capabilities, their domestic political institutions, military doctrine and war-fighting strategies, the nature of threats to their national interests, and in many other ways that could plausibly have an effect on their success rate in the interventions they undertake. Military analysts and historians frequently suggest that the US 'way of war' is particularly ill-suited to fighting 'small wars' or insurgencies and point to the British Army's superiority in this regard (Campbell, 2005; Cassidy, 2005; Gray, 2006; Nagl, 2002; Weigley, 1973). Some scholars have argued that democracies are more effective militarily (Reiter & Stam, 2002). Others argue that democratic states are especially prone to losing in asymmetric

wars because weak adversaries can exploit their casualty sensitivity or humanitarian sensibilities (Byman & Waxman, 2002; Merom, 2003).

Are some states more likely than others to attain their objectives when they use military force abroad? Table III displays the results of a cross-tabulation of major power states and intervention success (political objective attained and maintained for one year). A Pearson chi-square test provides no evidence that intervention success rates vary significantly among major power states. Although Britain appears to succeed in a higher proportion of its interventions, the difference is not statistically significant even when the UK is contrasted with all other states. Moreover, British performance is no better than US performance in wars against non-state actors such as terrorist groups and insurgents. The last two rows of Table III compare the success rates of the democratic major powers to those of non-democratic major powers. Democracies appear slightly more likely to attain their objectives overall, but somewhat less likely to prevail when the target is a non-state actor. However, the differences are not statistically significant.

Table III. Intervention Success Rate by State and Regime Type

	US	Britain	France	Russia	China	
Success rate in all interventions	23/35 66%	19/25 76%	16/28 56%	9/18 50%	10/17 59%	$Chi^2(4) = 3.7427$ $Pr = 0.442$
Success rate in interventions vs. non-state actors	7/11 64%	11/16 69%	11/23 48%	6/11 55%	2/2 100%	$Chi^2(4) = 3.3851$ $Pr = 0.496$

	Democracies	Non-democracies	
Success rate in all interventions	54/83 65%	23/40 58%	$Chi^2(1) = 0.6591$ $Pr = 0.417$
Success rate in interventions vs. non-state actors	27/47 57%	10/16 63%	$Chi^2(1) = 0.1258$ $Pr = 0.723$

The Success Rate over Time

Scholars have also argued that strong states have become less likely to prevail over weak opponents over time because domestic publics have become more sensitive to casualties and both international and domestic opinion has turned against the use of brutality and killing noncombatants in war (Arreguín-Toft, 2005; Merom, 2003). On the other hand, some analysts have expressed optimism about the utility of military force for the most militarily capable states as a result of a technological revolution in warfare (Dunn, 1992; Keaney & Cohen, 1993; Krepinevich, 1994; Odom, 1993).

Have major power states become any more or less likely to attain their objectives through the use of military force in the six decades since World War II? Our data indicate that intervention outcomes have remained remarkably stable over the last 60 years, with the probability of success (defined as attaining the primary objective and maintaining it for at least one year post-intervention) hovering around 60%. Although there appears to be a slight increase in success rates in the 1960s and 1970s, the difference does not approach statistical significance. These results are important because they cast some

doubt on claims about revolutionary changes in warfare or in civilian sensitivity to the costs of war. At the same time, the data provide no evidence that the Cold War significantly affected the ability of the major power states to attain their foreign policy objectives through the use of military force abroad. Neither success rate nor the frequency of interventions varies significantly across Cold War and non-Cold War years.

Success Rate by Primary Political Objective and Target Type

Table IV presents the proportion of successful interventions by PPO and target type. While differences in the proportion of successful interventions across target types are not statistically significant, a Pearson chi-square test indicates that the relationship between intervention outcome and intervening state PPO is statistically significant at $p < .01$. Major power states are most likely to be successful when they use military force to overthrow a foreign regime (92%) or defend an allied government against a threat posed by another state (100%). Major power states are least likely to be successful when they attempt to coerce a foreign government into changing its foreign or domestic policy (29%).

Table IV. Rate of Success by PPO and Target Type

	All		State target		Non-state target	
	N	Successful	N	Successful	N	Successful
Maintain regime authority	34	74%	5	100%	29	69%
Remove foreign regime	12	92%	12	92%	n/a	
Policy change	16	25%	14	29%	2	0%
Acquire or defend territory	35	71%	28	71%	7	71%
Maintain empire	16	44%	n/a		16	44%
Protection and order	10	50%	2	50%	8	50%
All		63%		67%		59%

Test 1: Intervention Outcomes are independent of Political Objective type.
Pearson chi^2(5) = 19.9986, p = 0.001.
Test 2: Intervention Outcomes are independent of Target type.
Pearson chi^2(1) = 0.8268, p = 0.363.

Conclusion

While the MIPS dataset was developed to explore questions about the determinants of military intervention outcomes, the breadth and depth of data collected should be useful to scholars studying many other important questions. To make the dataset as useful as possible for other scholars, several variables are available in both narrative and numeric format and the sources used to code each case are carefully documented. For researchers interested in the factors that affect public support for military operations, the collection provides extensive data on troop deployment levels, casualties, target characteristics, contributions from allies, and the nature of states' political objectives. In addition to intervention outcome, several other variables in the dataset would make good dependent variables. Under what conditions do states pursue regime change rather than concessions from an adversary's regime? What factors determine the manner in which force is employed after the decision to intervene has been made? How do domestic political conditions affect the timing of intervention termination and the terms of settlement? Future work can also use this data to compare the effectiveness of military force, diplomacy, economic sanctions, and other tools of statecraft for the pursuit of various political objectives.

This dataset does have limitations. Currently the dataset is restricted to major power military interventions and contains only intervention-level data. But the project is ongoing and future releases will contain intervention-month data as well as data on military operations conducted by other states. Some scholars may disagree with our coding of intervention objectives. More importantly, our measures of intervention success, while not necessarily dichotomous, do not fully capture degrees of success or consider alternative goals and motivations.

We have coded intervention outcomes strictly in relation to the intervening state's primary political objective. Nevertheless, the project begins the difficult work of answering Baldwin's (2000) call to provide rigorous, systematic data on how effective the use of military force is likely to be, with respect to which goals and targets, and at what cost.

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