

Summary

Foreign Politics of Caveats in Coalition Operations: Empirical Research Program

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Restrained national participation in coalition operations comes in two shapes, short of nonparticipation. One is the provision of a limited number of personnel in non-combatant functions, such as military medics and staff officers. Miniscule and symbolic contributions may also be expressed in modest logistical or financial support from governments that want to demonstrate some degree of political support.

For the risk-averse, lukewarm, or skeptical ally, another option for restrained coalition participation is the attachment of conditions – "caveats" – concerning when, where, and how its substantial military contingent is to be used by the coalition Force Commander in the theater of war. Caveats, then, are national reservations on the use of force in a coalition context. This phenomenon is the focal point of the present study.

Why do states make substantial military contributions to coalition operations while at the same time applying reservations, caveats, to how the coalition can use the national military contributions? Caveats often signal reluctant coalition participation. Such behavior is a challenge to the effective use of coalition forces and implementing mission mandates. That said, the reserved use of national military contingents in coalition operations may also allow states to participate in coalitions when they otherwise would have abstained. Thus framed, inconvenient caveats may be a blessing in disguise for multinational military operations – if fighting alone is not a viable option for the coalition-leading state

The use of caveats on coalition contributions is probably as old as organized warfare and alliance politics. The issue of national reservations on the use of force rose to political prominence in defense and policy circles with NATO's campaign in Afghanistan. Research on the politics of caveats jumpstarted in the context of UN, NATO, and "coalition of the willing" operations after the Cold War. For several reasons, the political study of caveats in coalition warfare cannot be considered a mature field of research. Against this backdrop, the study of the politics of caveats is fertile ground for a contribution with a programmatic purpose, arguing directions for future research.

The dissertation's main contribution is elaborating an empirical research program – a roadmap – for the political study of national reservations on the use of force in coalition warfare. Imre Lakatos' conception of an "empirical research program" describes a problem-solving approach to research that sheds light on a phenomenon or a

limited set of phenomena. The purpose of empirical research programs is to provide reasoned advice on conceptualizing, analytically approaching, theoretically arguing, and analyzing empirical patterns and causal relationships. Also, we assess research programs on their capacity to generate research questions and attract a following.

As a guide to research (not a recipe), an empirical research program may be helpful and provide epistemological traction in emerging research fields where more conventional approaches show their limitation. The politics of caveats is still a nascent field of research, as, e.g., expressed in disagreement on how caveat phenomena are defined and measured. This situation translates into failure to build comparable data sets that adequately support generic research ambitions. Also, Comparative Politics (CP) and International Politics (IP) approaches dominate the study of the politics of caveats.

The approach almost absent from the study of reserved coalition behavior is one that considers the use of caveats from the perspective of the foreign policy-making government. To rectify this situation, we base our approach to the politics of caveats on the assumption that national reservations on the use of force in coalition operations are an instrument serving some political purpose in foreign policy-making. Only a handful of studies approach the instrument of national reservations on the use of force in coalition operations in terms of how caveats contribute to solving policy-making problems regarding (i) the balancing of the security dilemma in alliance politics, (ii) the building of cross-party domestic consensus for coalition participation, and (iii) the political control of military implementation in the theater of war. To better grasp the foreign politics of caveats, we have chosen the multi-level and decision-making approach of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) as a cornerstone in building the current research program.

Arguably, the FPA approach is more realistic than the systemic IR approach because FPA, since its inception in the 1950s, has gravitated toward traveling several levels of analysis, including governmental politics, where many caveats relevant decision-making is going on. In contrast to the systemic "top-down" approach of IR, where caveats are theorized primarily as a phenomenon making international collaboration and the implementation of mission mandates more complicated, we argue that the "bottom-up" approach of FPA is tailor-made to shed light on caveats as a problem-solving instrument within the limits of what the foreign policy-making state deems politically feasible.

While the CP approach already has brought valuable contributions to the emerging field, we consider the FPA approach better equipped to unravel the causal mechanisms at work in-between framework conditions and outputs/outcomes in the politics of caveats. In CP, such mechanisms are theoretically argued but rarely actually traced and confirmed in the empirical study of policy-making processes. We need the FPA approach to study caveats behavior to capture the interplay between domestic and global politics in the decision-making process mainly, but not entirely neglected in IR and CP approaches to the politics of caveats. That said, we do not claim that the choice of approach to caveats is a question of one or the other. Instead, it is a question of complementarity. Still, an empirical research program built

on the ontological foundation of the FPA approach may attract new scholars to research the politics of caveats and produce novel insights from angles not adequately covered by IR and CP approaches.

While FPA can provide direction and inspire research questions, the approach is not a fully-fledged theory with the ontological content necessary to deduce empirical propositions on the back of theoretical arguments. For FPA to become more than a descriptive and systematizing framework for analysis, we need to infuse middle-range theory into the approach that can explain what is going on in policy-making and implementing processes and account for what external forces might influence such processes and impact caveats related outcomes.

The approach of FPA is thus exceptionally ambitious in urging the application of theory from several levels of analysis. In explaining decision-making outputs and implementing outcomes, FPA directs us to include theoretical input that explains caveats from the levels of global politics, domestic politics, and the institutional and individual levels of decision-making and implementation. The FPA approach invites us to investigate how domestic and global politics interplay in influencing foreign policy-making processes that produce decisions on how governments participate in coalition operations. This is not to say that we are to include all these analysis levels and phases of decision-making in every research project. Realistically, the holistic ambition of the FPA approach is a collective invitation to push the epistemological envelope.

At its most thorough, the empirical tracing of decision-making and implementing processes may run as follows: How do this or that structural and motivational factor in the global and domestic environments of the decision-making process influence this or that decision-maker and decision-making institution, in what phase of the decision-making and implementing processes, through what mechanisms, to impact the formulation of preferences and the choice of policy instruments, and to what effect on foreign policy behavior? FPA can detect inconsistencies in the relationships between perceived foreign policy maneuvering space, goals, means, and implementation and considers it an empirical question whether such discrepancies are due to political mismanagement, political design, or the fog of war.

The final contribution of the dissertation advises on practical research strategies related to the gathering of data, theory building, and causal inference. We argue that the choice of research strategies needs to consider the attributes of the policy domain, the degree of maturity of the research field, and the framework for analysis chosen.

Regarding hypotheses testing, we argue that the combination of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and single-case process tracing is likely to give more epistemological traction in the empirical study of the foreign politics of caveats at the present research stage. QCA is a powerful pattern-matching technique capable of revealing paths of multiple causations, that is, several different sets of causal conditions that may lead to the same outcome. As such, QCA responds to the multi-level explanatory ambition of FPA.

However, the multiple case design of QCA cannot empirically trace within-case decision-making and implementing processes, the second tenet of the FPA approach. The means necessary to register the "how"-mechanisms at work in the causal chain in-between causal inputs and outcomes, we must seek in the single case process tracing design. This technique may map the political, institutional, and psychological mechanisms at work in molding and translating external and domestic input impulses in foreign policy-making and implementing processes that eventually produce some coalition behavior outcomes and caveats patterns.

It is significant in what sequence we combine QCA and process tracing methodologies. For theory-testing purposes, we are better served by first executing QCA to uncover the extent and patterns of multiple paths of causation. If we were to find that three different clusters of pattern combinations are involved in producing the same outcome, we would subsequently conduct one process-tracing study at the level of the single case for each one of the three groups of cases identified in the preceding QCA to trace the three distinct causal paths in question. Conducting a single case process tracing procedure before any QCA would risk overlooking alternative causal paths to the same outcome.

The best practice would be to use QCA to get a simple overview of the causal landscape and then apply process tracing at the level of the single case to get a high-resolution picture of the process mechanisms at work in each one of the causal paths that connect the input factors to the outcome. For our purposes, the tracing procedure would include the detailed study of the several phases of the foreign policy-making and implementing processes, to the extent theoretical arguments direct and as far as access to data allows.