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## Training Foreign Militaries for Peace – U.S. IMET and Militarized Interstate Disputes 1976-2007

Sandor Fabian

University of Central Florida, sandor.fabian@knights.ucf.edu

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## **Training Foreign Militaries for Peace - U.S. IMET and Militarized Interstate Disputes 1976-2007**

### **Abstract**

How do U.S. International Military Education and Training programs affect the recipient states' behavior in militarized interstate disputes? While the relationship between U.S. military aid in the form of arms and equipment transfer and MID involvement has been studied extensively in international relations literature the effects of U.S. IMET programs on the same phenomena has been largely ignored. This study intends to fill some of this gap. This paper proposes that American educated and trained foreign military personnel return home with a better understanding about the role of the military as an instrument of national power, civil-military relations, and the cost of war. These military personnel advise their political masters against the use of military force during international disputes leading to a decreased probability of both MID initiation and escalation. To test this argument the analysis employs a merged dataset from the Correlates of War Projects and the most prominent U.S. IMET and coups data. Using logistic regression analysis this study finds that more U.S. IMET support a country receives the less likely it initiates MIDs. The analysis also finds that countries that receive U.S. IMET support are less likely to escalate ongoing MIDs to higher levels of hostility.

## Introduction

How do U.S. International Military Education and Training (U.S. IMET) programs affect the recipient states' behavior in Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs)? While many international relations scholars have studied the relationship between U.S. military aid in the form of arms and equipment transfer and MIDs the effects of U.S. military aid in the form of foreign military education and training on the same phenomena is scant. Besides leaving this less tangible, but important variable out from previous studies this research agenda requires further exploration due to the contradicting results of prior research. While theoretically all previous studies agree that U.S. military aid improves the military capabilities of the recipient states, some studies argue that this improvement is associated with higher probability of interstate conflict initiation while others find the opposite relationship.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, some studies even suggest that there is no relationship between U.S. arms and equipment transfer and armed conflict involvement.<sup>2</sup>

This article intends to contribute to this ongoing debate about the relationship between U.S. military aid and conflict involvement by systematically assessing how U.S. military aid in the form foreign military education and training programs influence the probability of recipient states becoming interstate conflict initiators and escalators. The scope of this investigation focuses only on MIDs and one of the fourteen U.S. foreign military education and training programs, the International Military Education and Training programs.<sup>3</sup> The U.S. IMET programs are the focus of this investigation because they are the largest in size and budget; have the most clearly defined goals and being subject to continuous scrutiny from policymakers and the U.S. Congress. Additionally, since one of the goals assigned to the U.S. IMET programs by the U.S. Congress is to support regional stability and decrease the likelihood of armed conflict between countries the results of this investigation provide direct policy feedback as well.<sup>4</sup>

To be able to answer the research question and provide policy feedback related to the effectiveness of U.S. IMET programs this analysis builds on the general theoretical frameworks of the previously listed studies and suggests that military aid in the form of U.S. IMET programs also improves the military capabilities of the recipient states. However, this article proposes that while military aid in the form of arms and equipment transfer improves the more tangible, hardware related

elements of the recipient states' militaries, the U.S. IMET programs improve a less tangible factor, the military human capital. This article argues that the improvement in the military human capital is due to the foreign military personnel's exposure to the professional norms and values of the U.S. military during the U.S. IMET programs. This study theorizes that the more education and training foreign military personnel receive in the U.S. IMET programs the better understanding they will have about the professional military norms and values, the role of the military as an instrument of national power, appropriate civil-military relations, the value of cooperation and the human and financial costs of war. Based on this improved understanding returning graduates of the U.S. IMET programs advise their civilian masters against the offensive use of military force in case of an interstate dispute, which reduces the probability of interstate conflict initiation. Empirically the analysis finds that indeed the more U.S. military aid countries receive in the form of U.S. IMET participation the less likely that they initiate interstate conflicts. Additionally, the results of the statistical models also show that more U.S. IMET participation is also associated with a decreased probability of escalating ongoing MIDs to the higher levels of hostility. The study proceeds in six parts.

To establish a strong foundation this article starts with a review and discussion of the most significant previous literature that explores the causes of conflict initiation. Next, the article proceeds with the development of a theoretical argument explaining how participation in the U.S. IMET programs improves the military human capital of the recipient states and why this improved military capability is associated with a decreased probability of interstate conflict initiation and escalation. Next, the study discusses the research design, the data sources, and the empirical strategy. Then, the study presents the empirical analysis and discusses the main findings. Finally, the article concludes with a short summary of the findings and contributions alongside with some potential policy implications and ideas for further research.

## Literature Review: Theories of MID Involvement

Militarized interstate disputes are military conflicts among two or more sovereign states involving non-accidental, government-sanctioned, overt, and explicit threats, displays, or uses of military force, with the potential of escalating to war.<sup>5</sup> Many international relations scholars have investigated the question of why some countries become involved

in such conflicts. Some scholars suggest that the variation in this phenomenon is due to the difference in countries' regime types.<sup>6</sup> Others argue that alliances play a crucial role in states' international conflict behavior.<sup>7</sup> While according to the findings of several studies membership in alliances increase the probability of countries becoming aggressive others suggest that certain types of alliances prevent its members to become instigators of MIDs. Additionally, several researchers find that military capabilities that states possess determine whether a country becomes involved in MIDs.<sup>8</sup> In relation to the military capabilities argument several studies also investigate the effects of foreign military aid on MIDs.<sup>9</sup> This study intends to contribute to this latter literature by exploring their theoretical arguments from a different angle and expanding on their empirical methods and findings.

The studies that assess the relationship between foreign military aid and probability of the recipient countries' international conflict involvement divide into two groups: The encouragement and the discouragement arguments. Those studies that belong to the former group argue that more foreign military aid in the form of arms and equipment transfer increases the probability of MID involvement.<sup>10</sup> Contradictory to these arguments the restraint literature proposes that military arms and equipment transfer reduces the probability of MID involvement of the recipient states.<sup>11</sup> These studies suggest that this type of military aid improves the recipient countries' military capabilities and this improved capability enables the recipient states to deter potential foreign aggressors. Furthermore, they suggest that military aid increases the recipient states' perception of security, which reduces their incentives to initiate MIDs.

Although all these studies make significant contributions to the overall research, agenda they also leave some room for potential improvement and expansion. This study suggests that the contradicting results of the previous studies are due to their different research designs (case studies versus large-N analysis) and their use of different proxies for measuring foreign military aid. Furthermore, the authors' limited regional scopes and the small number of cases compared to worldwide large-N studies might also contribute to the contradicting empirical findings. Besides these challenges, all of these studies only assess the relationship between foreign military aid in the form of arms and equipment transfers and MID involvement, while systematically ignore the potential effects of U.S. military aid in the form of foreign military

education and training. The inclusion of this variable into this research agenda is important for several reasons.

First, the U.S. foreign military education and training effort makes up quite a substantial part of the overall U.S. military aid efforts since for example in fiscal year 2015 the United States provided \$876.5 million worth of U.S. IMET training to about 76,400 students from 154 countries.<sup>12</sup> Second, several previous studies argue that without well trained and educated military personnel the availability of complex modern weapons or large military budget are not sufficient to increase a country's military capabilities.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, other scholars suggest that state military capabilities do not only depend on tangible factors such as number of military personnel, number of major weapon systems (tanks, airplanes, ships), possession of nuclear capability, but also on less tangible elements including the availability of well trained and educated military personnel. Finally, some studies also suggest that without highly trained and educated military personnel states' military forces cannot be successful in modern conflict.

Through the introduction of the U.S. IMET programs into the investigation of the relationship between U.S. military aid and MID involvement and focusing on the effects of military human capital this article establishes a new approach within this research agenda. Finally, the introduction of a different type of military aid might also help decide the debate between the encouragement and the discouragement literature.

## Theory of U.S. IMET and MID involvement

The United States delivers military aid to the recipient states in two forms: Arms, equipment transfers, foreign military education, and training programs. One of the main goals of both types of U.S. military aid is to improve the military capabilities of the recipient states so they can deter foreign aggression and defend themselves in case of an armed conflict.<sup>14</sup> While U.S. military aid in the form of arms and equipment transfer improves the recipient states' military capabilities through better hardware the U.S. IMET programs improve the recipient states' military human capital.<sup>15</sup> Since without well trained and educated military personnel the availability of complex modern weapons is not sufficient to increase a country's military capabilities countries that rely on U.S. foreign military aid are incentivized to also improve their military human capital through U.S. IMET participation. The different

U.S. IMET programs provide a unique framework for foreign militaries to improve their military human capital for several reasons.

First, the U.S. military is currently the best military force in the world and possess the best military educational and training programs.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the U.S. IMET programs are unique because the U.S. military accumulated decades of war experiences. Furthermore, the size and modernity of the U.S. training infrastructure, the availability of an experienced and combat focused training cadre, and the size of the budget available for education and training purposes cannot be compared to any other country's similar programs. Besides these factors, foreign military also send their military personnel to the U.S. IMET programs, because militaries around the world admire the professional norms, values, and procedures of those foreign militaries that have won victories in recent wars or have gone through major technological developments.<sup>17</sup> Military organizations emulate the norms and procedures of those victorious examples even if those norms and procedures do not fit the strategic interest of the given countries.<sup>18</sup> The author argues that the implementation of an American style military, following the dramatic victory in the Gulf Wars, in countries like Botswana, Monaco or Micronesia are clear examples of such norm emulation.<sup>19</sup> Based on this argument this article proposes that most foreign militaries admire the recent victories and technical advancement of the U.S. military and want to emulate its norms and values.

Foreign military personnel who participate in the U.S. IMET programs absorb the U.S. military's distinct and highly professional identity as well as its core values, which significantly improves the professionalism of the recipient states' military as a whole.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, several scholars argue that the more professional a military considers itself, the higher the temptation to be involved in state affairs both domestically and internationally. Furthermore, the U.S. IMET programs teaches participants about the role of the military as an instrument of national power, about appropriate civil-military relations and the potential cost of an interstate war. Additionally, as a part of their training U.S IMET graduates learn about the importance of quality military advice in the foreign policy making process and how even low or mid-level military leaders can indirectly affect high level decisions.

Based on these arguments this study theorizes that U.S. IMET program graduates return home as more professional and more capable soldiers

with the ability and willingness to influence political leaders directly or indirectly. Due to their participation in the best and most respected military education and training programs U.S. IMET graduates improve the military's respect within their home society and increase the military's role in government policy determination.<sup>21</sup> Other scholars suggest that the graduates of the U.S. IMET programs do not only become more professionals, but also senior military leaders with significant political influence and responsibility.

The article also suggests that recipient states' political leaders listen more to the military advice of the U.S. IMET graduates than those military leaders who have never attended American education and training. This is the case because the political leaders send military personnel to the United States with the goal to obtain better educated and trained military human capital. They understand that the U.S. IMET programs are the best military education and training opportunity in the world and because of that, they listen to the advice of the U.S. IMET graduates more than those who were never educated or trained in the United States. U.S. IMET graduates base their military advice on the norms and values they learn in these programs. They return home with a better understanding about the role of the military as an instrument of national power, about appropriate civil-military relations, the importance of diplomacy and international cooperation, and the potential cost of an interstate war. Due to these factors when time comes to advise political leaders regarding the potential use of military force in an international dispute U.S. IMET graduates are more likely to caution their political masters against such aggression than those military leaders who has not participated in such U.S. education and training programs. These assertions lead to the first two testable hypotheses:

H1: In comparison of countries, those receiving U.S. IMET support are less likely to initiate MIDs.

H1a: In comparison of countries, the more U.S. IMET support a country receives the less likely it initiates MIDs.

If the U.S. IMET graduates are less likely to promote the use of military in case of an international dispute than it is also logical that they will advise against escalating ongoing MIDs to higher levels of hostility. According to the Correlates of War (COW) dataset MIDs have five categories based on the level of hostility in an ongoing conflict. These



five categories include no militarized action, the threat of use of force, display of force, use of force and full war. This article argues that U.S. IMET graduates provide military advice based on the norms and values they learn in the U.S. IMET programs and due to these they advocate for the use of military force only as the last resort in international disputes. Furthermore, if the political leaders of the recipient states indeed listen to the advice of the U.S. IMET graduates than U.S. IMET participation must be associated with a decreased likelihood of conflict escalation. Based on this argument two additional hypotheses arise:

H2: In comparison of countries, those receiving U.S. IMET support will be less likely to escalate interstate conflicts to the higher levels of hostility.

H2a: In comparison of countries, the more U.S. IMET support a country receives the less likely it escalates interstate conflicts to the higher levels of hostility.

## Research Design

To assess the effects of U.S. IMET programs on the recipient states' international conflict behavior and to ensure to include many potential alternative explanations presented in the previous studies the author generated a new dataset by the merging of four frequently used existing datasets. The analysis uses the Correlates of War (COW) Militarized Interstate Dispute data set version 4.3, the COW National Material Capabilities dataset version 5.0, the COW Formal Alliances dataset version 4.1, and the U.S. IMET and coups dataset.<sup>22</sup> The new dataset contains 3,558 observations. The unit of analysis is country-year.

The study utilizes two dependent variables: MID initiation and MID escalation. To operationalize the first dependent variable the analysis employs the COW MID dataset initiator variable. This is a dichotomous variable, which is coded 0 if a country did not initiate the given conflict within a given year and 1 if it did initiate the MID. The second dependent variable is COW MID dataset's levels of hostility ranges from 1 through 5, according to the following scale:

- 1 = no militarized action
- 2 = the threat of use of force
- 3 = display of force
- 4 = represents the use of force

5 = full war.

The key explanatory variable of this article is U.S. military aid in the form of U.S. IMET programs. The article derives three versions of this variable from the U.S. IMET and coups dataset. The first independent variable is a binary variable coded 0 if the country does not receive any U.S. IMET and 1 if the country does receive military education and training from the United States. The second version of the independent variable is the number of U.S. IMET students. Since increasing a country's military capacity through the improvement of its human capital takes time the analysis uses the logged five-year sum of U.S. IMET students measuring the total number of U.S. IMET participants of a given country during the five years prior before the actual MID started. Finally, since the U.S. IMET programs are different in both its content and its duration, the analysis employs a third version as well to account for this variance. The study also employs the logged sum of 5-year total U.S. IMET spending to ensure the robustness of the findings.

Next, the analysis aggressively controls for potential confounding variables and derive the controls from the most widely cited literature addressing the potential causes of militarized interstate dispute initiation and escalation. The first control variable is U.S. military aid. The study uses the military aid variable from the U.S. IMET and coups dataset to account for the effects of U.S. military aid in the form of arms and equipment transfer. This variable measures the amount of U.S. military aid as a percentage of the recipient country's GDP. The next control variable is regime type. This binary variable is coded as 1 if the regime qualifies as democracy based on the authors' requirements and 0 if it does not.<sup>23</sup>

The analysis derives the next control variable from the literature that argues that alliances play a crucial role in states' international behavior.<sup>24</sup> To account for the potential effects of different alliances this analysis employs three alliance variables (defense, nonaggression, and entente) from the COW Formal Alliances dataset version 4.1 and accounts for neutrality. Since many scholars have argued in previous literature that U.S. affiliation might improves states' security perceptions and reduces their incentives to initiate interstate conflict this article also controls for this potential effect.<sup>25</sup> This variable is continuous and measured on a scale between -1 and +1 where, -1 means no U.S. affiliation in a form of bilateral military agreement, while +1 means U.S. security guarantee for the given state.

The next variable controls for the possession of nuclear capabilities. The variable is coded 0 if the country does not have nuclear weapons and 1 if the country possesses such capabilities. Additionally, following the controls used in previous studies this analysis controls for the potential effects of national capabilities. The article uses the GDP, the iron and steel production ability, the total population size, the military expenditure, and military size data from the Correlates of War National Material Capabilities dataset version 5.0. Last, but not least to address potential endogeneity problem the analysis includes a variable to account for the potential effects of ongoing conflicts. This variable is coded 0 if a country is not involved in a civil war and 1 if it does.

## Results and Discussion

Table 1 and Table 2 exhibit the findings from eleven logistic regression models assessing the effects of the U.S. IMET programs on the probability of becoming the initiator of MIDs. The analysis interprets the results simply as variables with negative coefficients are associated with a decreasing probability of becoming an interstate conflict initiator. The results of the models provide evidence for the proposed theory and support H1 and H1a. All three forms of U.S. IMET variables show the expected negative relationship with MID initiation and all results are statistically significant. This means that those countries that receive U.S. IMET support are less likely to become the initiators of MIDs. Besides demonstrating that U.S. IMET participation is associated with a decreasing probability of interstate conflict initiation the models also show some additional interesting empirical findings.

First, across all the models the other U.S. military aid variable demonstrates a statistically significant positive relationship with interstate conflict initiation. These findings provide support for the arguments of the encouragement literature and suggest that U.S. military aid in the form of arms and equipment transfer indeed associated with a higher probability of MID initiation.

Table 1. U.S. IMET Participation and MID Initiation, 1976 - 2007

| VARIABLES | (1)<br>IMET<br>Binary | (2)<br>IMET<br>Students | (3)<br>IMET<br>Spending | (4)<br>Other Aid | (5)<br>IMET<br>Binary | (6)<br>IMET<br>Students |
|-----------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| IMET      | -0.722***<br>(0.121)  |                         |                         |                  | -0.745***<br>(0.178)  |                         |

|                 |                        |                      |                      |                      |                              |                          |
|-----------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| IMET (stud.)    | -0.105***<br>(0.0183)  |                      |                      |                      | -0.133***<br>(0.0276)        |                          |
| IMET (spend.)   | -0.0708***<br>(0.0135) |                      |                      |                      |                              |                          |
| Other Aid       | 2.948***<br>(1.132)    |                      |                      |                      |                              |                          |
| Defense         |                        |                      |                      |                      | -0.182<br>(0.191)            | -0.201<br>(0.191)        |
| Non-aggression. |                        |                      |                      |                      | 0.173<br>(0.161)             | 0.177<br>(0.162)         |
| Entente         |                        |                      |                      |                      | -0.179<br>(0.155)            | -0.143<br>(0.156)        |
| Neutrality      |                        |                      |                      |                      | -0.325*<br>(0.191)           | -0.347*<br>(0.192)       |
| Military Exp.   |                        |                      |                      |                      | 1.52e-08**<br>(6.68e-09)     | 1.29e-08*<br>(6.69e-09)  |
| Army size       |                        |                      |                      |                      | -<br>0.000639*<br>(0.000345) | -0.000626*<br>(0.000348) |
| Iron/Steel      |                        |                      |                      |                      | 1.25e-05<br>(8.25e-06)       | 1.54e-05*<br>(8.31e-06)  |
| Total Pop.      |                        |                      |                      |                      | 4.58e-06***<br>(1.70e-06)    | 4.56e-06**<br>(1.79e-06) |
| GDP             |                        |                      |                      |                      | -0***<br>(0)                 | -0***<br>(0)             |
| Democracy       |                        |                      |                      |                      | -0.0973<br>(0.198)           | -0.0377<br>(0.199)       |
| Civil war       |                        |                      |                      |                      | 0.856***<br>(0.161)          | 0.960***<br>(0.165)      |
| Nuclear Cap.    |                        |                      |                      |                      | -0.437<br>(0.328)            | -0.526<br>(0.330)        |
| U.S. Affinity   |                        |                      |                      |                      | -0.922***<br>(0.218)         | -0.997***<br>(0.220)     |
| Constant        | 2.705***<br>(0.0947)   | 2.431***<br>(0.0654) | 2.493***<br>(0.0720) | 2.115***<br>(0.0730) | 2.305***<br>(0.238)          | 1.972***<br>(0.209)      |
| Observations    | 3,558                  | 3,558                | 3,558                | 2,863                | 2,696                        | 2,696                    |

Source: Author

Notes: Parentheses include Standard Errors in all tables: \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Furthermore, since variables employed to account for different alliances do not demonstrate any clear and significant association with MID initiation the results do not seem to support those arguments suggesting that alliances play a crucial role in a state becoming a MID initiator. Additionally, the results of this article do not seem to support the regime type related arguments because the regime type variable

shows mixed results. From those variables that account for the effects of states' national capabilities all seems to have some significant effects on the probability of MID initiation. The analysis suggests that as a country's military expenditure, population size and iron and steel production capability increase the likelihood of being a MID initiator also increases. At the same time countries with larger army, size seems to be less likely to become the instigators in interstate conflicts. Additionally, while the results of the models do not support those arguments suggesting that the possession of nuclear weapons effects whether a state becomes the instigator in interstate conflicts they do provide support to the findings of prior research suggesting that ongoing civil wars make it more likely that countries become involved in MIDs. Finally, the result suggests that close U.S. affiliation is associated with a decreased probability of MID initiation because close relationship with the United States might improve the security perception of the countries.

Table 2. U.S. IMET Participation and MID Initiation, 1976 - 2007

| VARIABLES      | (7)<br>IMET<br>Spending   | (8)<br>Other Aid          | (9)<br>IMET<br>Binary     | (10)<br>IMET<br>Students  | (11)<br>IMET<br>Spending  |
|----------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| IMET           |                           |                           | -0.821***<br>(0.180)      |                           |                           |
| IMET (stud.)   |                           |                           |                           | -0.144***<br>(0.0278)     |                           |
| IMET (spend.)  | -0.0765***<br>(0.0202)    |                           |                           |                           | -0.0847***<br>(0.0204)    |
| Other Aid      |                           | 3.634**<br>(1.533)        | 4.801***<br>(1.664)       | 4.980***<br>(1.715)       | 4.735***<br>(1.684)       |
| Defense        | -0.181<br>(0.191)         | -0.287<br>(0.192)         | -0.278<br>(0.195)         | -0.299<br>(0.195)         | -0.273<br>(0.195)         |
| Non-aggression | 0.189<br>(0.161)          | 0.177<br>(0.161)          | 0.107<br>(0.162)          | 0.113<br>(0.163)          | 0.128<br>(0.162)          |
| Entente        | -0.162<br>(0.155)         | -0.231<br>(0.153)         | -0.192<br>(0.156)         | -0.151<br>(0.156)         | -0.170<br>(0.156)         |
| Neutrality     | -0.342*<br>(0.191)        | -0.391**<br>(0.187)       | -0.274<br>(0.191)         | -0.302<br>(0.192)         | -0.294<br>(0.191)         |
| Military Exp.  | 1.39e-08**<br>(6.60e-09)  | 1.73e-08***<br>(6.39e-09) | 1.45e-08**<br>(6.76e-09)  | 1.19e-08*<br>(6.75e-09)   | 1.29e-08*<br>(6.66e-09)   |
| Army size      | -0.0006*<br>(0.0004)      | -0.0006*<br>(0.0003)      | -0.0007**<br>(0.004)      | -0.0007**<br>(0.0004)     | -0.0007**<br>(0.0004)     |
| Iron/Steel     | 1.31e-05<br>(8.25e-06)    | 1.04e-05<br>(8.10e-06)    | 1.88e-05**<br>(8.45e-06)  | 2.20e-05***<br>(8.53e-06) | 1.92e-05**<br>(8.45e-06)  |
| Total Pop.     | 4.51e-06***<br>(1.74e-06) | 3.92e-06**<br>(1.52e-06)  | 5.02e-06***<br>(1.76e-06) | 5.01e-06***<br>(1.88e-06) | 4.93e-06***<br>(1.81e-06) |

|               |                      |                      |                      |                      |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| GDP           | -0***<br>(0)         | -0**<br>(0)          | -0***<br>(0)         | -0***<br>(0)         | -0***<br>(0)         |
| Democracy     | -0.0914<br>(0.198)   | -0.108<br>(0.201)    | 0.0391<br>(0.206)    | 0.111<br>(0.208)     | 0.0445<br>(0.206)    |
| Civil war     | 0.887***<br>(0.162)  | 0.786***<br>(0.157)  | 0.895***<br>(0.164)  | 1.008***<br>(0.168)  | 0.928***<br>(0.164)  |
| Nuclear Cap.  | -0.425<br>(0.326)    | -0.146<br>(0.303)    | -0.530<br>(0.328)    | -0.608*<br>(0.328)   | -0.507<br>(0.325)    |
| U.S. Affinity | -0.948***<br>(0.217) | -0.880***<br>(0.217) | -0.811***<br>(0.221) | -0.900***<br>(0.222) | -0.849***<br>(0.220) |
| Constant      | 2.045***<br>(0.214)  | 1.638***<br>(0.221)  | 2.061***<br>(0.250)  | 1.677***<br>(0.229)  | 1.778***<br>(0.231)  |
| Observations  | 2,696                | 2,696                | 2,696                | 2,696                | 2,696                |

Source: Author

Next, the analysis employs another 11 models (Model 12 to 22) to assess the relationship between U.S. IMET participation and MID escalation. Table 3 and Table 4 depict the results of these models. Besides the hostility level as the dependent variable the eleven ordered logistic regression models, contain the same explanatory and control variables as the models in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 3. U.S. IMET Participation and MID Escalation, 1976 - 2007

| VARIABLES      | (12)<br>IMET<br>Binary | (13)<br>IMET<br>Students | (14)<br>IMET<br>Spending | (15)<br>Other Aid | (16)<br>IMET<br>Binary     |
|----------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| IMET           | -0.127**<br>(0.0618)   |                          |                          |                   | -0.130<br>(0.0806)         |
| IMET (stud.)   |                        | -0.0390***<br>(0.00966)  |                          |                   |                            |
| IMET (spend.)  |                        |                          | -0.0215***<br>(0.00697)  |                   |                            |
| Other Aid      |                        |                          |                          | 0.519<br>(0.441)  |                            |
| Defense        |                        |                          |                          |                   | 0.0124<br>(0.0934)         |
| Non-aggression |                        |                          |                          |                   | 0.138<br>(0.0903)          |
| Entente        |                        |                          |                          |                   | -0.0624<br>(0.0828)        |
| Neutrality     |                        |                          |                          |                   | -0.385***<br>(0.0959)      |
| Military Exp.  |                        |                          |                          |                   | -1.62e-08***<br>(2.69e-09) |
| Army size      |                        |                          |                          |                   | 0.001***<br>(0.0002)       |
| Iron/Steel     |                        |                          |                          |                   | -1.52e-05***<br>(2.45e-06) |

|               |                     |                     |                     |                     |                         |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Total Pop.    |                     |                     |                     |                     | -1.45e-07<br>(2.71e-07) |
| GDP           |                     |                     |                     |                     | 0***<br>(0)             |
| Democracy     |                     |                     |                     |                     | -0.0628<br>(0.108)      |
| Civil war     |                     |                     |                     |                     | 0.254***<br>(0.0842)    |
| Nuclear Cap.  |                     |                     |                     |                     | -0.0857<br>(0.149)      |
| U.S. Affinity |                     |                     |                     |                     | -0.0409<br>(0.116)      |
| Constant      | 2.045***<br>(0.214) | 1.638***<br>(0.221) | 2.061***<br>(0.250) | 1.677***<br>(0.229) | 1.778***<br>(0.231)     |
| Observations  | 3,558               | 3,558               | 3,558               | 2,863               | 2,696                   |

Source: Author

Once again, the results reflect the expected negative relationship between U.S. IMET participation and escalation, which provide support to H2 and H2a. The models show that the other U.S. military aid variable does not have significant effects on conflict escalation and the results are mixed. Furthermore, while alliance membership has no effect on whether a country escalates on going MIDs to higher levels of hostilities neutral countries are less likely to escalate interstate disputes. The same relationship seems to exist between the size of military expenditure, iron, steel production capability, and total population size and MID escalation. At the same time states with larger armies and higher GDPs seems to be more likely to escalate MIDs once they are involved in a conflict. Finally, those countries that are involved in civil wars are also more likely to escalate MIDs. The results of the two sets of models provide strong support to the proposed theory. U.S. IMET participation consistently and significantly decreases the probability of MID initiation as well as conflict escalation.

Table 4. U.S. IMET Participation and MID Escalation, 1976 - 2007

| VARIABLES     | (17)<br>IMET<br>Students | (18)<br>IMET<br>Spending | (19)<br>Other Aid | (20)<br>IMET<br>Binary | (21)<br>IMET<br>Students | (22)<br>IMET<br>Spending |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| IMET          |                          |                          |                   | -0.128<br>(0.0806)     |                          |                          |
| IMET (stu.)   | -0.0730***<br>(0.0133)   |                          |                   |                        | -0.0729***<br>(0.0133)   |                          |
| IMET (spend.) |                          | -0.0379***<br>(0.00965)  |                   |                        |                          | -0.0378***<br>(0.00965)  |
| Other Aid     |                          |                          | -0.526<br>(0.541) | -0.507<br>(0.543)      | -0.509<br>(0.549)        | -0.503<br>(0.547)        |

|                    |                                |                                |                                |                                |                            |                                |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Defense            | 0.0237<br>(0.0936)             | 0.0239<br>(0.0936)             | 0.0137<br>(0.0935)             | 0.0189<br>(0.0936)             | 0.0301<br>(0.0939)         | 0.0302<br>(0.0938)             |
| Non-<br>aggression | 0.121<br>(0.0906)              | 0.128<br>(0.0904)              | 0.156*<br>(0.0908)             | 0.148<br>(0.0910)              | 0.131<br>(0.0912)          | 0.139<br>(0.0911)              |
| Entente            | -0.0508<br>(0.0829)            | -0.0548<br>(0.0828)            | -0.0623<br>(0.0828)            | -0.0614<br>(0.0828)            | -0.0497<br>(0.0829)        | -0.0538<br>(0.0828)            |
| Neutrality         | -0.333***<br>(0.0960)          | -0.349***<br>(0.0961)          | -0.420***<br>(0.0956)          | -0.397***<br>(0.0967)          | -0.344***<br>(0.0967)      | -0.360***<br>(0.0969)          |
| Military Exp.      | -1.99e-<br>08***<br>(2.76e-09) | -1.86e-<br>08***<br>(2.76e-09) | -1.54e-<br>08***<br>(2.65e-09) | -1.62e-<br>08***<br>(2.70e-09) | -1.98e-08***<br>(2.76e-09) | -1.85e-<br>08***<br>(2.76e-09) |
| Army size          | 0.00142***<br>(0.000165)       | 0.00137***<br>(0.000164)       | 0.00131***<br>(0.000164)       | 0.00132***<br>(0.000164)       | 0.00141***<br>(0.000165)   | 0.00137***<br>(0.000165)       |
| Iron/Steel         | -1.40e-<br>05***<br>(2.38e-06) | -1.45e-<br>05***<br>(2.41e-06) | -1.55e-05***<br>(2.48e-06)     | -1.53e-<br>05***<br>(2.47e-06) | -1.42e-05***<br>(2.40e-06) | -1.46e-<br>05***<br>(2.43e-06) |
| Total Pop.         | -3.07e-07<br>(2.72e-07)        | -2.21e-07<br>(2.71e-07)        | -1.33e-07<br>(2.71e-07)        | -1.31e-07<br>(2.71e-07)        | -2.93e-07<br>(2.72e-07)    | -2.07e-07<br>(2.72e-07)        |
| GDP                | 0***<br>(0)                    | 0***<br>(0)                    | 0***<br>(0)                    | 0***<br>(0)                    | 0***<br>(0)                | 0***<br>(0)                    |
| Democracy          | -0.00740<br>(0.108)            | -0.0330<br>(0.108)             | -0.0864<br>(0.108)             | -0.0708<br>(0.108)             | -0.0153<br>(0.108)         | -0.0410<br>(0.108)             |
| Civil war          | 0.361***<br>(0.0865)           | 0.312***<br>(0.0856)           | 0.228***<br>(0.0827)           | 0.252***<br>(0.0842)           | 0.359***<br>(0.0865)       | 0.311***<br>(0.0856)           |
| Nuclear Cap        | -0.128<br>(0.149)              | -0.0953<br>(0.149)             | -0.0853<br>(0.149)             | -0.0969<br>(0.149)             | -0.139<br>(0.149)          | -0.106<br>(0.149)              |
| U.S. Affinity      | -0.0907<br>(0.116)             | -0.0696<br>(0.116)             | -0.0455<br>(0.116)             | -0.0510<br>(0.116)             | -0.101<br>(0.117)          | -0.0793<br>(0.117)             |
| Constant           | 1.972***<br>(0.209)            | 2.045***<br>(0.214)            | 1.638***<br>(0.221)            | 2.061***<br>(0.250)            | 1.677***<br>(0.229)        | 1.778***<br>(0.231)            |
| Observations       | 2,696                          | 2,696                          | 2,696                          | 2,696                          | 2,696                      | 2,696                          |

Source: Author

## Potential Criticism and Alternative Explanations

Some critics of this study might suggest several potential limitations regarding the analysis. First, some might argue that the results of the statistical models are simply statistical artifacts, or the United States simply provides more aid in the form of U.S. IMET programs to countries that are less conflict prone. In other words, states might not be less aggressive because they are getting US military aid in the form of U.S. IMET programs, but rather they are getting U.S. IMET support because they are less likely to initiate conflict anyway. However, this explanation does not seem to be plausible, because a thorough analysis of the U.S. IMET recipients found in the dataset clearly demonstrate that there is no clear pattern in the allocation of U.S. IMET support.



Historically, the United States has provided U.S. IMET support to both aggressive countries and states that have never initiated interstate conflicts.

Other critics might argue that U.S. IMET recipient countries simply do not initiate or escalate MIDs because they do not want to lose the free and the best military education and training available to them. This argument indeed seems appealing, however if one looks at the number of students of these programs even in case of the largest recipient only a small percentage of its military personnel goes through the U.S. IMET programs. The same is true when one compares the dollar value of the U.S. IMET programs to the recipient states' overall military expenditure. These factors make it highly unlikely that countries would not pursue their foreign policy goals in fear of losing some seats in the U.S. IMET programs. However, this argument brings up another challenge. If indeed, only several officers and non-commissioned officers attend the U.S. IMET programs from the recipient countries than how realistic it is to claim that U.S. IMET programs have significant effects on the recipient countries' political decision-making process.

This article suggests that U.S. IMET program participation can potentially have effects on the recipient countries' political decision-making process and through that their international conflict behavior for several reasons. First, the idea behind the U.S. IMET programs is the so-called, train-the-trainer concept. This concept focuses on training people who can train and educate additional personnel when they return to their home countries about the norms and values they learn in the U.S. IMET programs. This process is similar to the spread of a disease. One contract the virus spreads it to others and soon many people are infected. Second, a major part of the U.S. IMET programs is focusing on professional military education for senior level military decision makers. The U.S. IMET programs graduates frequently return to their home countries to assume key policy positions (senior advisors to politicians, Chief of Defenses, Service Commanders) which enables them to inject themselves into foreign policy related decision-making processes. Finally, there is a selection process preceding U.S. IMET participation. Countries usually send participants who are candidates of key positions upon their returns, which once again allow U.S. IMET programs to influence foreign militaries and through them the behavior of countries.

Since this study is the first among much needed analyses assessing the relationship between U.S. military aid in the form of foreign military education and training programs and recipient states' international conflict behavior there are numerous questions it does not address efficiently or at all. Stronger theoretical foundations for military norm transmission, better discussion of casual mechanisms, qualitative analysis of specific cases and better data are just some elements that need significant efforts from scholars to help better understand the investigated relationship.

## Conclusion

United States has been using foreign military aid programs for decades to influence recipient states' behavior in support of U.S. foreign policy goals. Understanding the effects of U.S. military aid has attracted some scholarly attention but this interest has been mostly limited to the exploration of how military aid in the form of arms and equipment transfers influence the behavior of recipient states' international conflict behavior. This article contributes to the literature of U.S. military aid but approaches the question from a new angle. It assesses the effects of U.S. military aid in the form U.S. IMET programs on recipient states' international conflict behavior.

The findings of this analysis provide support to the proposed argument that U.S. IMET support is associated with decreasing probability of both MID initiation and escalation. Additionally, the findings provide some support to several prior studies' arguments while refuting the findings of others. While the analysis shows that U.S. military aid in the form of arms and equipment transfers is indeed associated with an increased probability of recipient states becoming the instigators of MIDs the analysis did not find support for the potential role that alliances play in conflict initiation. The results of the analysis provide support to those earlier works arguing that there is a positive relationship between national capabilities and the presence of civil conflicts, and the probability of becoming MID initiator. The findings of this analysis also show that wealthier countries are less likely to start interstate conflicts. In addition to these contributions to the ongoing scholarly debate, the findings of this analysis also have some significant policy implications.

The study provides direct feedback about the effectiveness of the U.S. IMET programs and with that make, some initial contributions to the

requirement codified in 2017 Defense Authorization Act directing the U.S. Department of Defense to assess all foreign military aid programs. The results of this study provide strong evidence that the U.S. IMET programs fulfill their goals by contributing to regional security and reducing the likelihood of interstate conflicts. The findings of this article might urge policy makers to consider paying more attention to this less tangible form of U.S. military aid and invest more efforts and resources to support and to improve these programs further.

## Endnotes

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