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Bringing the Troops Back Home: A Strategy Adaptation Under Adverse Conditions

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One of the crucial questions of the study of military interventions is when and under what conditions tend the leadership change its mind and end the foreign military operation. The recent track record is not exactly encouraging. The French-led operation Barkhane ended with little success after eight years and the same applies for twenty years of the Western military involvement in Afghanistan. There are many other examples in which governments and its leaders failed to adapt their strategies despite many years of military engagement with a lack of results. Arguably the least likely case of strategy adaptation is when the same leader makes a complete U-turn and decides to withdraw troops shortly after the initial deployment. Identifying key factors contributing to strategy adaptation in such cases might offer important insights into conditions under which military interventions are more likely to end. The U.S. Marines pull-out from Lebanon in 1984 under the Reagan administration represents a perfect case for such an analysis. An archival research of declassified documents allows us to track down key frictions and enablers at the individual, domestic, and international level, which jointly led to a withdrawal decision. The findings might then also tell us important things about the ongoing war in Ukraine and chances that the Russian government will change its course over time.

Are you a PhD student or early-career researcher?

No

What discipline or branch of humanities or social sciences do you identify yourself with?

International Relations / History

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