

# Gird Your Loins?

The Biden Prophecy, President Obama & Foreign Policy Crises

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# Outline

Biden Prophecy

Political Implications

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## Sen. Biden's "Gird Your Loins" Remarks

- On campaign trail (Oct. 19, 2008), Biden makes remarks about whether Sen. Obama is prepared for foreign policy challenges
- **Biden:** "Mark my words. Mark my words. It will not be six months before the world tests Barack Obama like they did John Kennedy. The world is looking. We're about to elect a brilliant 47-year old senator president of the United States of America. Remember I said it standing here if you don't remember anything else I said. Watch, we're gonna have an international crisis, a generated crisis, to test the mettle of this guy. And he's gonna have to make some really tough—I don't know what the decision's gonna be, but I promise you it will occur. As a student of history and having served with seven presidents, I guarantee you it's gonna happen."

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# Policy Implications

- **Sen. Obama is inexperienced**
- Foreign leaders will test a new Pres. Obama by challenging the United States with a foreign policy crisis
- Republican response:
  - Why elect an inexperienced leader, when an experience candidate (i.e., Sen. McCain) is available?
  - Why endanger the United States?
- Sen. Clinton's "3am telephone call" & Sen. Obama's foreign policy inexperience. . .
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# Generalize Problem

- How much does the *age* of new presidents influence the occurrence of foreign policy crises?
- How much does the *political experience* of new presidents influence the occurrence of foreign policy crises?
- Sought to answer these questions via short study with UNT Political Science graduate student, Chris Williams

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# Design

- Sample of 43 Presidents (Washington (1789) to Bush (2000))
- For each president, record time (in days) to first foreign policy crisis, or until term ends
  - 29 of 43 (67%) Presidents experience a foreign policy crisis
  - *Example:* For Pres. George Bush, the *air collision incident with China* (March 31, 2001)
  - Mean time to foreign policy crisis in the sub-sample of 29 that experience a crisis: 710 days

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  1. Vice President
  2. Congress
  3. Foreign Policy Experience (e.g., ambassador)
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  6. State Legislature
- *Important Control*: Age of United States

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## Simulations

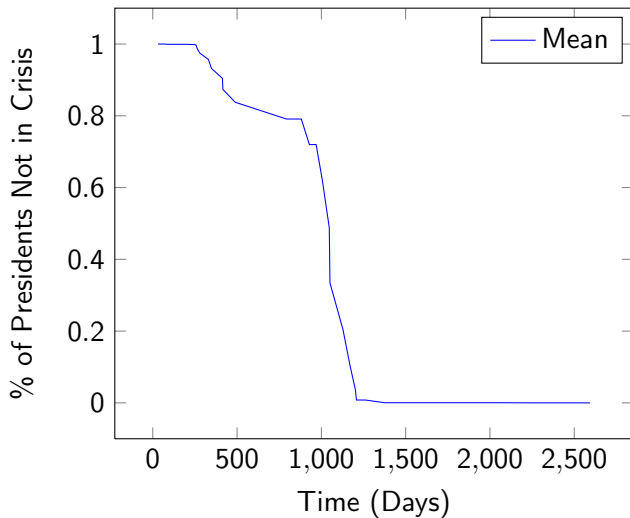


Figure: Time to Foreign Policy Crisis (Mean in Sample).

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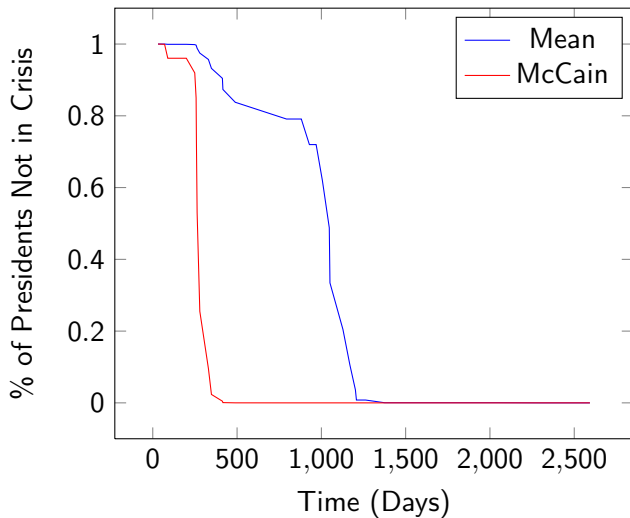


Figure: Time to Foreign Policy Crisis (Mean & McCain).

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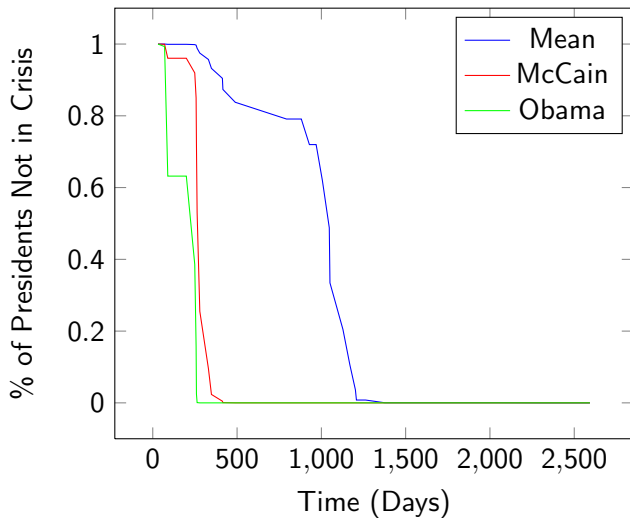


Figure: Time to Foreign Policy Crisis (Mean, McCain & Obama).

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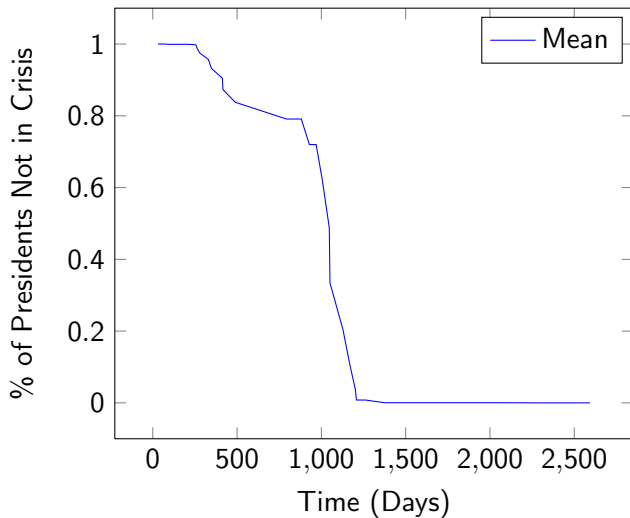


Figure: Time to Foreign Policy Crisis (Mean).

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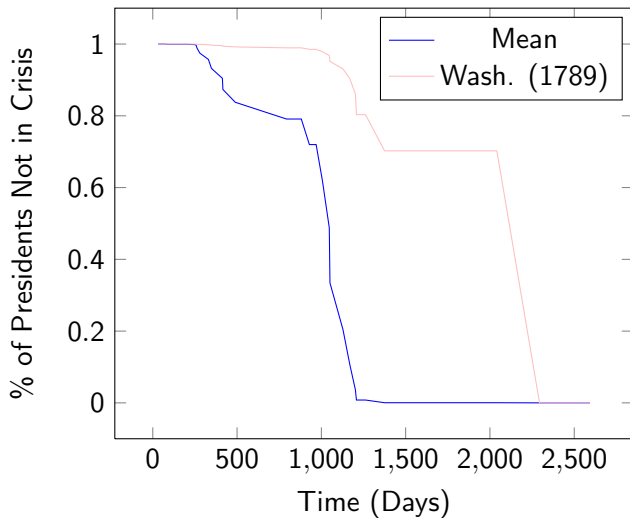


Figure: Time to Foreign Policy Crisis (Mean & Washington).

# Conclusion

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- Measuring Experience
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