# How Time Horizons Shape Policy Selection in Conflict?

Rotem Dvir

Texas A&M University

## Study Contribution

- Demonstrate how time horizons shape the decision making process in conflict
- How some policy options remain outside the evaluation process
- Research design captures multiple aspects of latent concept and operationalize a dual phase process with multiple measures

## Introduction

- Leaders select policy in conflict from a fixed set of options
- Foreign Policy Substitution (Clark et al. 2008, Oakes 2012)
- Main gap: how choice set of options is constructed? How choice set impacts (observed) policy selection?

### TIME HORIZONS

- The weight given to present versus future outcomes and willingness to sacrifice present utility for future gain (Krebs and Rapport 2012)
- Tradeoffs in policy implications

### MAIN ARGUMENT:

- Time horizons shape choice set formation and policy selection by rejecting options that do not accommodate the decision maker's temporal view.
- As a result, variations in time horizon generate different composition of choice sets (both size and preferred options)
- The reduced choice sets affect the (observed) selection of policy.

## Contact Information

- Web: https://rotemdvir.wixsite.com/mysite
- Email: rdvir@tamu.edu
- Twitter: @RotemDvir1

## Theory

### A Dual phase Decision Process (Beach 1990)

#### PRE-CHOICE SCREENING

- Policy evaluation focuses on limited number of options
- Screening: compatibility test (Ordonez et al. 1999)
- Time Horizons - a screening mechanism

*H1: Short time horizon → Smaller Choice set*

#### POLICY SELECTION

- Policy selected: net benefit within choice set
- Choice set and selection: preference reversal (Tsetsos et al. 2010)

*H2: Changes in choice set composition triggers preference reversal*

## Research Design

- Two phase experiment (2x2 design): policies screening and selection
- Relevant context: military conflict
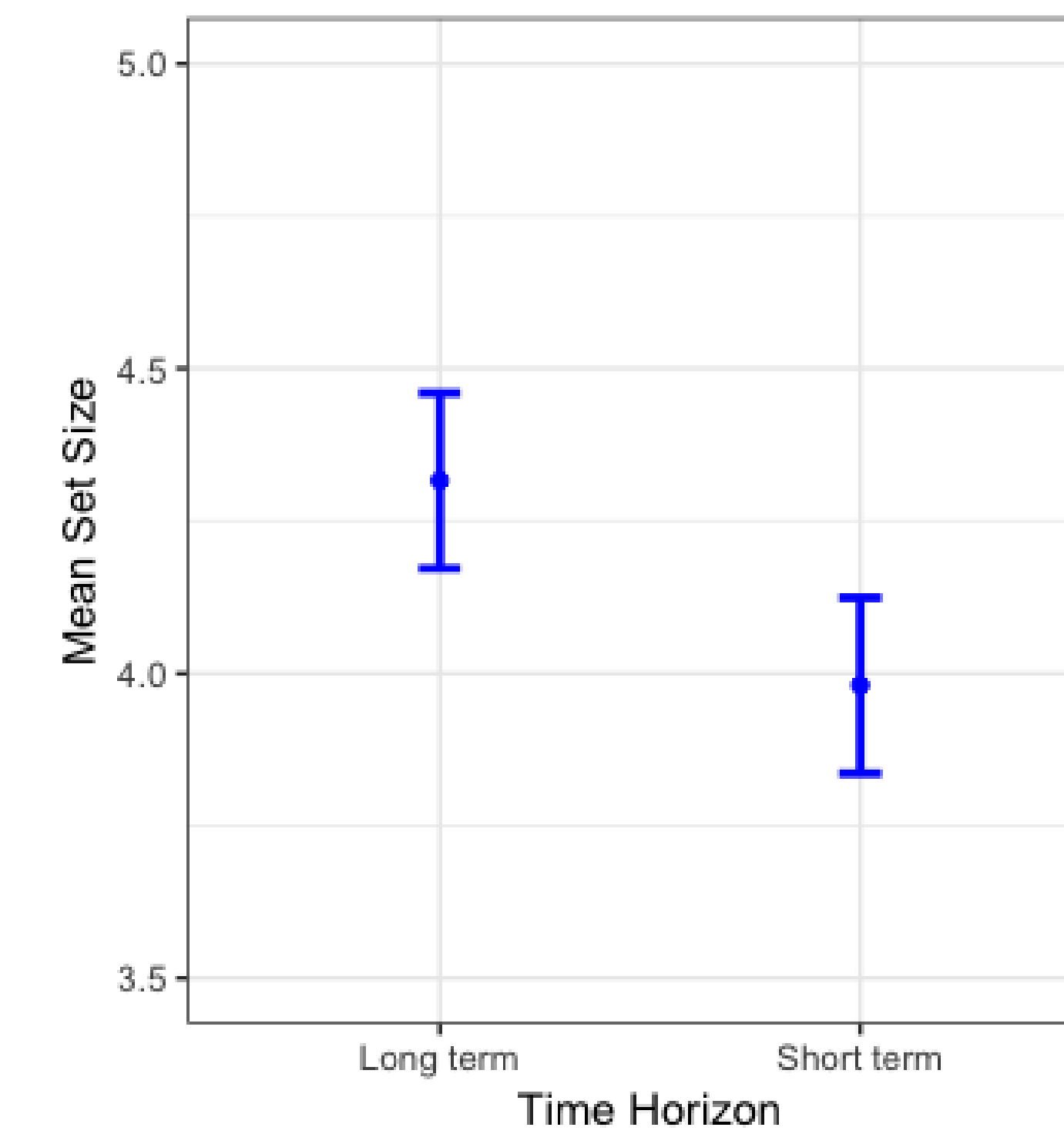- Embedded experiment testing selection and preference reversal



## Results: Screening Phase

### TIME HORIZON AND CHOICE SET SIZE



- Decision makers are sensitive to temporal tradeoff - prefer positive outcomes over time
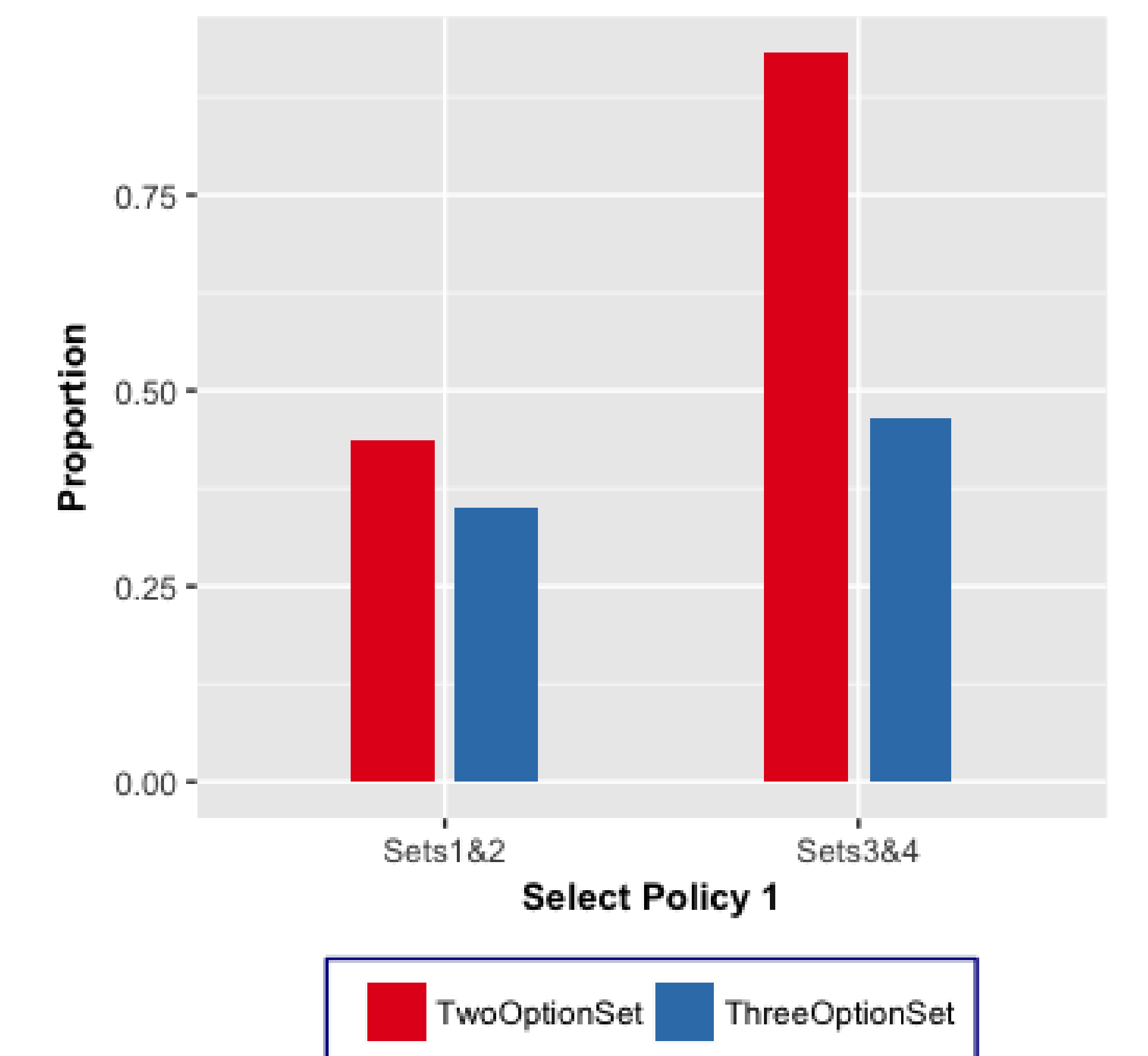- Long term view more powerful in screening options in conflict



## Results: Policy Selection Phase

Policy Selection: Multinimial Logit Model

|  | *Policy Selected* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | Policy 2 | Policy 3 | Policy 4 |
| Time Horizon | −0.482*** | −0.882** | −0.972* |
|  | (0.202) | (0.414) | (0.562) |
| Reciprocal Outcomes | 3.696*** | 2.73*** | 1.176** |
|  | (0.217) | (0.400) | (0.542) |
| Casualties | −0.801*** | −0.568 | −0.104 |
|  | (0.197) | (0.377) | (0.486) |
| Set Size | 0.218*** | 0.609*** | 0.478*** |
|  | (0.075) | (0.142) | (0.172) |
| Age | −0.024*** | −0.091*** | −0.013 |
|  | (0.008) | (0.026) | (0.022) |
| Gender | 0.205 | −0.432 | −0.381 |
|  | (0.206) | (0.433) | (0.547) |
| Partisanship | −0.012 | 0.100 | 0.068 |
|  | (0.050) | (0.105) | (0.135) |
| Education | 0.203* | 0.120 | −0.126 |
|  | (0.124) | (0.280) | (0.328) |
| FP knowledge | 0.194 | 0.398 | 0.045 |
|  | (0.129) | (0.260) | (0.334) |
| Constant | −5.591*** | −6.027*** | −5.304*** |
|  | (0.755) | (1.457) | (1.665) |

*Notes:* N = 1,020; Pseudo R$^2$ = 0.342; Base category is select Policy 1
*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01; Standard errors in parenthesis

### CHOICE SETS AND PREFERENCE REVERSAL



## Conclusions

- Time horizons - a screening mechanism of policy options
- Long term view - a larger choice set
- Changes in choice set composition (size and alternatives) influence selection