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Labor Power in Times of Crisis

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Abstract

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen numerous instances of extreme overwork, workplace safety concerns, and the changing of labor markets to attempt to meet unique circumstances. Struck by the abnormality of these conditions, I sought to examine the effects of crises on labor power as an answer to my research question: **What explains variation in labor power and behavior over time?** I hypothesize that different types of crises, specifically international, which in this paper will be limited to wars and major military actions, and domestic, such as economic recessions, depressions, and pandemics, will have different effects on the potency of labor in the United States. I argue that international crises will hinder labor efforts to exact concessions from employers, while domestic crises will strengthen them. To test this, I use a regression analysis to examine the different traditional expressions of labor power in the workplace during these crises, specifically work stoppages, worker involvement in stoppages, and the percentage of workers in unions. The results of these regressions are mixed, providing some support for my hypotheses, but primarily serving as a guidepost for future research, specifically a need for more precise studies, and in varying contexts.

Introduction

In September of 2022, president Biden personally involved himself in labor negotiations between rail workers and their employers, for the express purpose of stopping a strike. Several months later in December, the president would sign a bill restricting the rail workers' rights to strike, as well as imposing a contract only eight of twelve unions had ratified which still did not include sick leave, a primary concern of the unions. The president's reasoning is simple: the country is already in the midst of several sizable disruptions to supply lines for food, water, fuel, and chemicals due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. To allow a strike in the rail industry, which transports 30% of the nation's freight, would have significant negative effects on Americans, the economy, and the odds that president Biden's party retains power. In different circumstances, such as a year of economic growth and stability, or one of peace instead of conflict, would president Biden, and the government at large, feel this same pressure to act?

With this question in mind, I ask the more general question: What explains variation in labor power and behavior over time? This question is important for the simple fact that the United States runs on labor, and any disruptions at a national scale would in turn be nationally disruptive. To be able to anticipate and account for these disruptions may help a party stay in power, prevent further damage from a crisis, or aid a struggling demographic. In a country where the strength of labor has been in a nearly constant downward spiral for almost a century, any rise or fall in labor power may be significant, especially if that power exerts itself or is attacked in new ways. Additionally, while the efforts and mobilizations of labor may be less relevant to some politicians than others, no labor activism is undertaken without cause, and being able to understand when such causes are more plentiful, even without the express evidence of labor activity, may highlight new and useful policy avenues for future legislators and regulators.

To address this, I argue that times of crisis affect labor power and behavior, but that different crises have different effects. The first of these is domestic crises, which I expect to have a beneficial impact on labor power due to the more universally felt effects and favorable environment for worker solidarity. My second category of crisis is international, which I expect to be more detrimental to the interests of labor due to the prevalence of certain defensive conservative tendencies in popular American thought. To test these hypotheses, I use regression analyses and account for several control variables. The results are somewhat mixed, but may provide greater insight into how we study both labor and crisis in the future.

In what follows, I will look at past answers to my research question, and will cover some of the existing schools of thought with regards to labor strength. From there, I will expand on my own assumptions and arguments about the relationships between labor and crises, as well as those who interact with and have similar effects in the same spheres. Next, I will outline my data collection and research methods, as well as how I plan to test my results, what controls and variables I include, and some basic statistical information to give readers a better understanding of the data landscape I will be evaluating. After that, I will display and interpret the results of each of my three regressions, with special attention to real world implications and effects. Finally, I will summarize and interpret the results of my analysis, address any shortcomings that may be present, and discuss how future research and policy may be improved from the results contained herein.

Literature review

Up to this point in the literature, explanations as to the varying power of labor have fallen into three primary categories: systemic, ground level, and exogenous. At times these explanations may overlap, or be ignored in favor of others, but they are still the most common and often referenced answers on the matter.

Systemic explanations of the power of labor generally focus on government involvement, as effected by court cases and legislation, or shifting landscapes of employment. Both of these are covered by Farber (2005), who points to legal duties to bargain on the part of employers and different structural factors of public vs. private employment as effective indicators on the prevalence and power of unions. Other researchers, such as Wallace (2007), focus more singularly on the government's involvement in labor issues, paying special attention to "pro-labor laws, National Labor Relations Board unfair labor cases filed, use of antilabor injunctions, labor mediation, and labor arbitration" as determinants of the frequency of certain types of strikes, as well as the perceived legitimacy of certain labor activity (Wallace 2007, 769). Clawson and Clawson (1999) follow a similar line of thinking as Farber, but go much further, pointing first to contradictory legal landscapes that enshrine both the right of workers to unionize and an employer's right to tamper with that process, then to globalization and neoliberalism as decidedly negative factors in the power of unions as time went on (Clawson and Clawson 1999).

Where the systemic school of thought focuses more on government and law, ground level explanations of union power focus more on how unions themselves may be affecting their own strength and prevalence in the workplace. While Tabb (2007) makes allusions to the inadequacies of unions as a factor in the weakening of labor power, the primary and most convincing advocates we see for this school of thought are Clawson and Clawson (1999) and McAlevey (2015). The former argue that unions have failed to meet the changing demographics of the workplace as women and workers of color have become more common, and workers found employment in different sectors. Additionally, Clawson and Clawson (1999) note the adaptive nature of employers in the offensive against labor unions, and the need to respond accordingly. McAlevey (2015), writing at a later date, argues that the tactics of unions have changed too much, no longer relying on worker-centered organizing, but instead on top-down, organization-first methods that fail to account for the needs and capabilities of workers. Voss (2015), in response to McAlevey (2015), counters that labor unions are faced with a changing capital structure, requiring new tactics that may not have worked as well in the past. One thing that all these authors agree on, however, is that the environment workers organize in is almost invariably hostile to their interests, and will seek to dissuade them one way or another.

The final school of thought I will address here is somewhat less connected to the others, who interact often and complement each other. The exogenous school of thought focuses more on the effect of outside influences on the popularity and power of labor activism. For Tabb (2007), this means political and social commentary about how the working class is turned against its own interests by the cultural conservatism and individualism propagated by politicians and organizations beholden to the wealthy, even though the working class has the most to gain from organization and unions. For Kane and Newman (2019), this means a more direct scrutiny of the effects of negative media portrayals on the public acceptance of unions and union activity.

These schools of thought are somewhat dominant when discussing the variable power of labor, but often fail to pay any significant attention to the effects of specific events or circumstances on the labor landscape as a whole. The theory I propose here may yet serve to highlight the importance of specific contexts in future labor research.

Theory

In order to elaborate on how labor power varies over time, I start with some assumptions as to the motivations of the primary actors. The primary motivation for the government, and those in it, is the retention and exercise of power. To achieve this, being re-elected is a necessity. Since we already know perceived competence in handling a crisis positively affects executive approval (Lee et. al. 2022), it stands to reason that the government, including the executive branch, would seek to head off any further complications stemming from these crises, such as those caused by labor stoppages, at the pass.

Employer motivations align most consistently with maximizing profits, but not to the degree that they may incite the government's ire, as it regulates them, or such that it alienates their consumers, as a steady supply of consumers is key to the maintenance of their profits. The goal of the employer, then, is to maximize their profits without offending these other two actors.

Union interests are twofold, as they seek both to bolster their ranks and to exercise what power they have to the benefit of their members. Like employers, unions will have to be conscious of public perception, not only as a deterrent, but as a source of political power to be exercised in the pursuit of their goals. As acting without sufficient support or members would likely backfire, I assume that unions will not engage in fights they don't think they can win, or fights where they stand to lose far more than they might gain. That is to say, they will act strategically. Finally, I assume that workers are motivated by better wages and working conditions, and will join a union if they think it can assist them in the pursuit of those ends. Unless a union can exercise power effectively, workers will have limited cause to join.

Building from this, I argue that international crises can negatively affect labor strength. During times of war and other international crises, attention will necessarily be drawn away from issues at home by sheer density of media coverage, bipartisan cooperation, and official messaging that contribute to a "rally around the flag" effect among the public (Baker and Oneal 2001). This leads to a groundswell of support for the government and industries involved in resolving the crisis. These institutions, enjoying greater than usual support from the public, will necessarily have more power at the bargaining table as well, which will, in turn, disadvantage unions. Unions, being rational and strategic, will know that attempting any of the traditional means of worker bargaining, such as work stoppages, will carry a greater risk than usual, perhaps even drawing negative attention from the public, and as such will be less likely to take the gamble. This seemingly reduced vigor by unions will then portray to workers that they have less to gain by joining, which will further perpetuate the cycle of union weakness until the end of the crisis in question. As such, I hypothesize:

H1: Union and worker strength will decline during international crises.

For domestic crises, however, I argue that the inverse is more likely. For starters, unlike an international crisis, virtually every part of the domestic population will feel the effect of a domestic crisis to some degree. This may breed a sense and depth of solidarity not seen under normal circumstances (Libal and Prakash 2020). Furthermore, it stands to reason that should a government fail to act in a way perceived as sufficient during a domestic crisis, public support for that government will decrease. This drop in support may inspire citizens to take matters into their own hands, or to support non-governmental organizations, such as unions, in their efforts to remediate the effects of the crisis. Indeed, this exact phenomena was exhibited across the country, and in a number of fields, during Covid, to the point that *Time Magazine* addressed it in January of 2021 (Abrams). Further contributing to this effect, domestic crises often cast into stark relief the severity of inequality between different classes of the population, leading to further solidarity between those more directly affected, who often feel the exploitation of those in power more intensely during domestic crises. This more natural groundswell of public support would be immensely beneficial to the activities of unions, who now find themselves with greater stakes, but much more to gain as well. Adding to the power on the union side of the table is the fact that any work stoppages under the government in a domestic crisis will at least partially reflect upon those in power, incentivizing the government to step in and attempt to resolve labor disputes faster, and with greater concessions to labor, lest they suffer the penalty in public perception. This increase in government and public support will, in turn, discourage employers from putting up as much of a fight in these disputes, as the government holds a greater degree of power over them than unions, and public support informs the success of their business. With all these factors stacked in favor of unions, they will be much more likely to aggressively pursue their goals, and workers in turn will recognize the benefit and effectiveness of joining with said unions. Finally, and especially in the instance of public health crises, the workplace itself may become more dangerous to workers, convincing them that joining a union could literally be a matter of life or death, or at least sickness and health. As such, I expect that:

H2: During domestic crises, worker and union strength will increase.

Research Design

To evaluate my hypotheses, I take a statistical approach, with the year as my unit of analysis. My dependent variable, labor strength, is measured in three ways. The first measure of labor strength is the number of worker stoppages, also known as strikes, per year. This data, taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, provides information on stoppages of more than one thousand workers from 1947 to 2021. This data covers what could be considered the modern era of labor, and provides a simple but reliable measure of labor power in the form of labor's power to stop work, usually for bargaining purposes. On average, this data comes out to about 154 stoppages per year, reaching its peak with 470 in 1952 and an all time low of 5 in 2009.

My second measure of labor strength is the number of workers involved in stoppages per year, from the same time period and source as the first. This measure serves as an indicator of the number of people invested in work stoppage efforts, which speaks to the effect that work stoppages may have on employers. On average, worker involvement in stoppages came out to about 778,000 people per year, coming to an all time high of 2,746,000 in 1952, and a low of 12,500 in 2009. My first two measures of labor strength are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

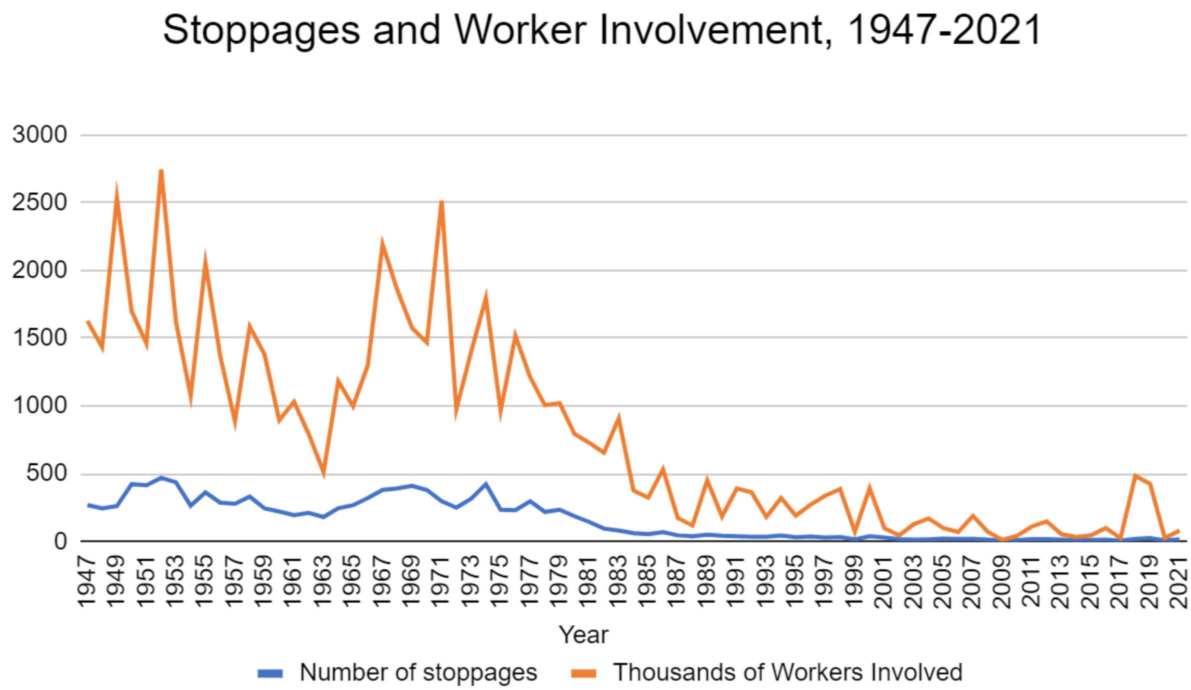

Figure 1: This figure shows the number of worker stoppages and worker involvement in stoppages between 1947 and 2021. Consistent with my expectations, the average number of worker stoppages in years with domestic crises is 180.9, and 87.9 in years with international crises. Similarly, the average of the worker involvement variable was 835.9 in domestic crisis years, compared to 499 in international crisis years.

My third and final measure for my dependent variable is the unionization rate, or the percentage of workers who are in a union, in a given year. This data, while also from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, is different from the previous two measures in the time period available to us. Unfortunately, unionization has only been measured consistently since 1983, limiting the reliable data available. That said, unionization should still serve as a good measure due to its use as an indicator of worker faith in, and the general availability of, unions. Unionization as measured by the BLS peaked at 20.1% in 1983, reached twin lows of 10.3% in 2019 and 2021, and came out to about a 13.67% average. Further illustration of this can be found in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2

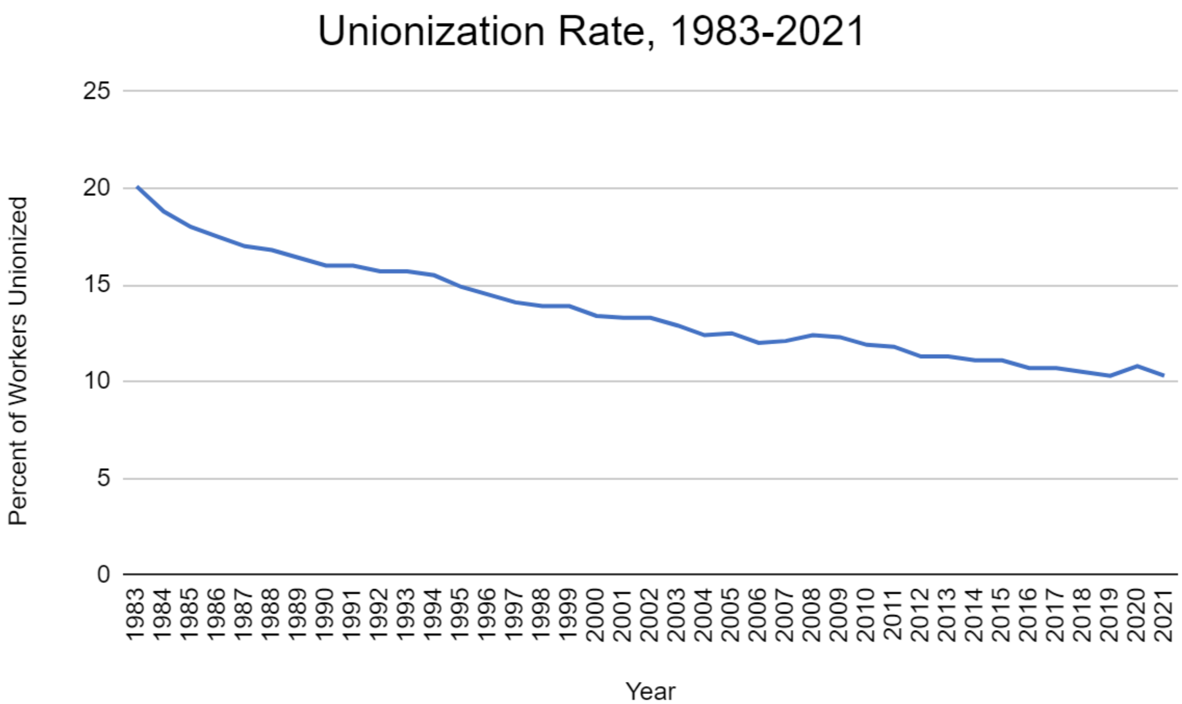

Figure 2: This figure shows the unionization rate in the US between 1983 and 2021. The maximum is 20.1% in 1983, with a minimum of 10.3% in 2019 and 2021. The average rate in this time period was 13.67%. The average was 14 percent In years with domestic crises, and 13.4 percent in years with international crises.

My independent variables attempt to capture the state of crisis in a given year. My first, domestic crises, capture primarily economic crises and recessions, such as the Great Recession in 2008 and 2009. Also included in these are pandemics, though only the COVID-19 pandemic has occurred at the national scale required to be included. While these crises may occur internationally as well, the driving consideration here is whether or not they are primarily addressed by domestic policy, and are felt widely across the country. In the data, a year is coded as a one if a domestic crisis is in process for most of the year, and a zero if not. This data comes from the Federal Reserve, and shows seven such crises from 1983 to 2021, but nineteen from 1947 to 2021.

My next independent variable, international crises, consists exclusively of wars or major military operations, such as those in Korea or Vietnam. This variable serves to investigate the veracity of my rally round the flag argument with regards to labor power, and as the most readily obvious example of an international influence on U.S labor. Conflicts that were not on the public's radar, were not widely considered significant at the time, or were not covered sufficiently, such as the United States' intervention in the Dominican Republic's leftist revolt in 1965, are not counted, as the phenomena of interest is the public's reaction to the existence of these events, not the events themselves. Additionally, even if a war lasted longer than two years, only the first two years were coded as crisis years, as the rally round the flag effect is not expected to last the duration of the conflict. One example of this is the War on Terror, which is only coded as an international crisis for 2002 and 2003. With these considerations in mind, the first two years of any significantly covered major U.S military operation were coded as a one, unless the operations ended prior to the two year limit, and all other years were coded as zeros. This added up to 21 such crises from 1947 to 2021, but sixteen from 1983 to 2021.

Finally, I introduced controls to more accurately explore the dynamics of interest. The primary point of interest for these controls is whether Democrats hold positions that may allow them to assist in the efforts of labor, thus encouraging certain tactics or granting more favorable results in disputes. These controls are included based on the Democratic party's historic, if inconsistent, support of the labor movement. The first of these is whether or not Democrats have control of both houses of Congress, as indicated by the Senate and House of Representatives websites, as this may allow them to pass more labor-friendly laws, or shift the conversation towards more labor-centered issues. This control is coded as a one if both houses of Congress are under Democratic control, and a zero if not. My second control, the party of the president, operates and is coded in a similar fashion, as the president is often able to set policy concerns to some degree, and may similarly aid labor in negotiations. My final control is the partisan makeup of the board members of the National Labor Relations Board, the federal organization responsible for enforcing and upholding labor law in the United States, as well as adjudicating labor disputes and ensuring union votes are held fairly. The board of this organization typically consists of five members appointed by the president, barring vacancies, and as such is coded from one to five depending on how many sitting board members were Democrats in a given year. The makeup of the NLRB's board is of interest because the board members determine the policy and practices of the agency, and the degree to which they are performed. This number averages at about two members being Democrats, and never dropped below one, but all five members were Democrats in 2013. The data for this control can be found on the NLRB's website.

Data Analysis

To evaluate my hypotheses, I use regression analysis. In my first regression, I use the number of worker stoppages per year as the dependent variable. The results can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Worker Stoppages Results

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	P - Value
Intercept	-18.59	44.38	0.68
Domestic Crisis	8.14	33.68	0.81
International Crisis	-64.06	31.96	0.05
Democratic Control Of Congress	133.14	28.92	<0.01
Democratic President	-60.60	36.99	0.11
Democrats on the NLRB Board	59.60	19.27	<0.01

Pictured above: Effects of different variables on worker stoppages from 1947-2021. All of the variables of interest have the effects expected, save for the party of the president. Additionally, the asymmetry of severity in the effects of crises on worker stoppages may indicate a difference in relative importance between the two varieties listed.

As an interesting first point of observation, it would seem that the default state of worker stoppages, at least when not affected by the variables listed here, is one of general depression, a trend that may not be surprising to those who have tracked worker stoppage rates since as far back as the Taft-Hartley Act. While not quite statistically significant, the y-intercept estimate should certainly give pause to those who are interested in protecting the rights of workers, or increasing wages, two things stoppages have been instrumental in since this nation’s founding. On the other hand, this effect has never had the chance to manifest itself, as there has always been at least one Democrat on the NLRB board to offset it. My first variable of interest is domestic crisis. While not statistically significant, the coefficient on this variable does have a positive effect on the number of worker stoppages, in line with my hypothesis. The results with regard to worker stoppages indicate that we should expect 8.14 more stoppages during a domestic crisis. This effect, while comparably modest, can still affect the welfare of a large number of workers. My next independent variable, international crisis, has a far stronger effect, falling just within bounds to be statistically significant, as well as providing support for my hypothesis. I find that there are likely to be 64.06 fewer stoppages during years marked by international crises. This effect is both sizable and meaningful. In a nation with already dwindling numbers of worker stoppages, this effect could be exceedingly damaging to workers and unions.

The control variables also affect stoppages. My first, Democratic control of Congress, proves to have a striking effect, increasing expected worker stoppages by more than 130, while also being highly significant statistically. This effect is quite large, almost reaching the same level as the national average for worker stoppages since 1947. While expected, this effect is nonetheless very significant, showing that worker stoppages do seem to have a Democratic bias, and as such may be increased or decreased depending on the party in control of Congress. On the other hand, we have a less expected result, with the party of the president seemingly having a sizable but not statistically significant negative effect on the number of worker stoppages that occur. Frankly speaking, this result is surprising, especially considering the robust effect of Democratic control of Congress on worker stoppages. It is possible that the more direct, local nature of Democratic representation is the most reliable effect the party may have, but this still does little to explain the president's negative effect. The best explanation I can muster is that with more complete control of the government, that is to say at least two branches, the president can preempt further worker stoppages by appeasing those organizing them or trying to corral the machinations of labor to preserve party image. Further research is warranted. In terms of Democratic control of the NLRB, results indicate that there will be 59.60 more stoppages for each additional Democratic member of the NLRB. This is a large, statistically significant effect, and illustrates one way Democratic presidents may indirectly strengthen workers in spite of their own negative tendency.

My second regression analysis utilizes the number, in thousands, of workers involved in stoppages as the dependent variable to measure the same effects. The results can be found below.

Table 2: Results for Worker Involvement in Stoppages

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	P - Value
Intercept	167.72	234.79	0.48
Domestic Crisis	-43.07	178.22	0.81
International Crisis	-264.25	169.12	0.12
Democratic Control of Congress	588.29	153.02	<0.01
Democratic President	-201.09	195.70	0.31
Democrats on the NLRB Board	191.36	101.95	0.06

Pictured above: Effects of different variables on the involvement of workers, measured in thousands, in work stoppages from 1947-2021. Again, many of the variables behave as expected, save for the effect of the presidency continuing its puzzling negative trend, and the effect of domestic crises, which does not behave as my theory would indicate.

The y-intercept for worker involvement, contrary to stoppages themselves, indicates a positive baseline, though this only adds up to about one tenth of a percent of the total number of workers in the country, and more than double that if including the established minimum of one Democrat on the NLRB. My first variable of interest, domestic crisis, does not behave as expected in this analysis, showing a negative effect rather than a positive one, of 43,070 workers involved in stoppages. This effect, while not remotely statistically significant, may still serve to challenge the overall veracity of my second hypothesis, as well as having a slight effect on the work stoppage patterns of the U.S during domestic crises. This shift from the previous regression may be in part due to the more reflexive nature of worker involvement in stoppages, which exhibits a less consistent downslope than stoppages themselves. My next variable of interest is international crisis, which does behave as expected, showing approximately 246,250 fewer workers involved in stoppages while underway. This result, while not statistically significant, is certainly larger than that of domestic crises, and an effect of more than 200,000 workers is still worth considering, even if it is relatively small when compared to numbers nationally. Additionally, if these effects are felt more severely by certain industries than others, they may be magnified by scale.

My control variables for this regression analysis exert similar effects to the last, but are all less statistically significant, and only Democratic control of Congress meets the requirement, predicting 588,290 additional workers involved in stoppages. Having a Democratic president still predicts a negative effect, with 201,090 fewer workers expected to be involved in stoppages. Finally, membership on the NLRB predicts 191,360 more workers involved in stoppages for each additional Democratic board member, but falls just short of being statistically significant. Considering the decreased statistical significance of the results in this analysis, it may be less reliable than simply measuring worker stoppages on its face, but still contributes to a larger picture. I would contend that worker involvement may be more locally determined, and as such national considerations of cause may be less appropriate for measurement.

My final regression analysis uses the percentage of the national unionization rate as the dependent variable which, as mentioned previously, only extends back to 1983. The results can be found below in Table 3.

Table 3: Unionization Rate Results

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	P - Value
Intercept	15.01	1.16	<0.01
Domestic Crisis	-1.90	1.12	0.1
International Crisis	0.38	0.83	0.65
Democratic Control of Congress	1.57	0.91	0.1
Democratic President	-0.91	1.05	0.39
Democrats on the NLRB Board	-0.57	0.55	0.30

Pictured above: Effects of different variables on the United States unionization rate from 1983-2021. Neither of the variables of interest follow expectations, and only one of the control variables has a positive effect.

The y-intercept for this regression is the most statistically significant yet seen, and estimates a baseline of about 15.01% unionization without the effects of any of the variables listed. My first variable of interest is domestic crisis, which while not statistically significant, challenges my hypothesis by exhibiting an inverse effect. This effect, a 1.9% reduction in the unionization rate, is fairly large for a country where unionization only just breaks the 10% mark, and can be expected to drop further if trends persist. My next variable of interest, international crisis, also goes against expectations, for the first time in my analysis, predicting a more modest 0.38% increase in unionization during an international crisis. This effect is far from statistically significant, but does challenge my hypothesis, and may be a sign of a less causal relationship than previously expected.

The controls for the final regression start with Democratic control of Congress, which follows expected results with a 1.57% increase in unionization predicted but does not meet the requirements to be considered statistically significant, another first in this analysis. My next control is the party of the president, which follows the puzzling trend of having a negative effect when the president is a Democrat, in this case a 0.91% reduction in unionization. My final control, much like international crisis, does not behave as expected for the first time, predicting a 0.57% reduction in unionization for each member of the NLRB board that is registered as a Democrat. Given the limited scope of time available for this regression, and the abnormality of the data, it may be prudent to scrutinize the results given and relationships indicated to a greater degree than the other two regressions. This does not, however, mean that the data is without meaning. It may yet provide an illustration of unionization as a sort of delayed effect, or of the “Rally around the Flag” effect as encouraging non-contentious organizing, like simple union membership, which does not necessarily denote an increase in strikes or worker involvement in them.

Conclusion

To review, my hypothesis in this paper was that the effects of domestic crises on labor power and organization would be positive, and that international crises would exhibit the opposite effect. The results as presented previously do not totally discount these hypotheses, but only one of my regressions shows exactly the results I expected, while the other two show varying degrees of support. The unionization rate analysis in particular showed no support for my hypotheses. Admittedly, as unionization rates are the most limited data set I draw on, it is possible that certain events in the more recent past have had a dramatically increased weight on the results, but to discount these results out of hand would be careless. Instead, it would be prudent to further examine the relationship between crisis and labor, and how the three different dependent variables I selected, stoppages, involvement, and unionization, may behave differently during a crisis. Additionally, drawing my data only from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and only from the three measures selected, may have limited the scope of my research too severely, reducing access to data on non-traditional organizing or modes of labor activism that may not be measured as thoroughly as stoppages or unionization rates. It is possible that as the labor market changes into ever more nontraditional forms, traditional labor activism is less relevant, and occurs less often. On the other hand, it is possible that basing my expectations of domestic crises on a pandemic unlike anything this country has seen in almost a century may have been impractical, as the crises actually measured, recessions, had far less of a public health aspect, and as such were likely much less personally dangerous to workers and the public who might support them, as well as less mobilizing for the government. This difference in stakes may explain the more subdued results when measuring the effects of domestic crises. Finally, as this study fails to control for the declining power of labor, which is unfortunately a given for many of the years sampled, it is possible that the expressions of the data may be skewed or suppressed. As labor’s decline is the result of a myriad of factors, from more aggressive employers to unfavorable Supreme Court cases, and wages cannot be measured as a reliable measure of labor’s influence, it is actually somewhat difficult to get an accurate view of the national labor landscape for a study such as this, at least with the financial and academic limitations that being a student brings.

With these shortcomings and results in mind, it may be wise to adjust the scope of future research to better understand the more specific contexts of different workplaces, localities, and demographics. For instance, to expect the same results from a crisis in Hawaii, which may suffer a typhoon, has tourism as its primary income, and has a unionization rate of over 20%, as you would from an oil spill in South Carolina, which focuses heavily on manufacturing, and has a unionization rate of less than 2%, would be unwise. This is without including the increased unionization rates of certain demographics, such as men of color, educational, training, and library services, protective services, and utilities workers. The statistical differences in these demographics may belie the effectiveness of studies conducted at a national scale. As such, the future research on this topic may be most effective by taking something of a microbrew approach, analyzing the data from each locality and the effects of both local and national crises in attempting to understand the effects they may have on labor, its power, and its patterns.

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