

War Termination

POSC 3610 – International Conflict

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Puzzle for Today

Some wars end with the occupation of the capital. Others end because both sides agree to stop fighting. Why?

Why Wars End

Let's contrast two wars involving Russia.

- WWII: ended with the USSR advancing on Berlin and occupying the Reichstag.
- Russo-Japanese War: ended with Russia suing for peace.

Both are major power wars but ended quite differently (beyond the outcome difference).
Why?

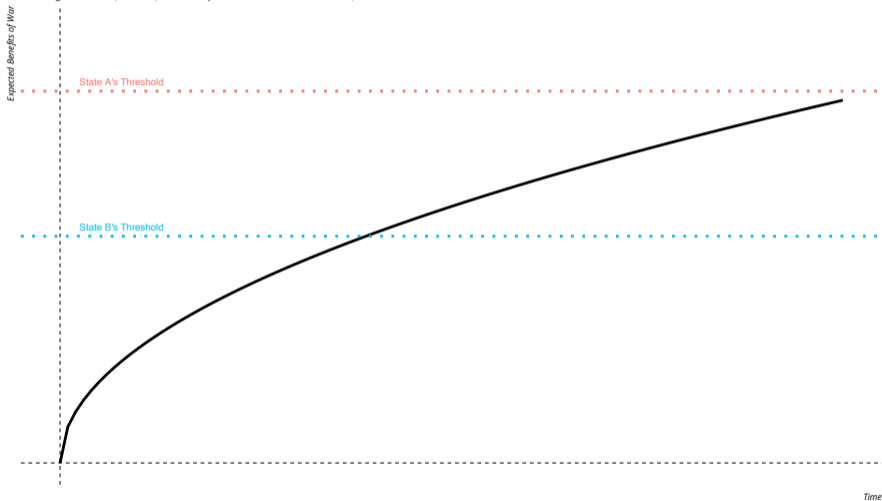
Types of War Termination

Scholars generally assume one-sided termination to wars.

- i.e. war continues until one side no longer sees the benefit of war.
- The side that gives up loses; the other side is the victor.

War as Coercion Between State A and B, Over Time

The rising costs of war (black line) rise and surpass the threshold of benefits for B, but not A in this illustration.



The Limitations of One-Sided Termination

Importantly: it assumes the stakes in the war are fixed.

- States have a priori cost thresholds and fixed aims they pursue.
- The first past the threshold loses.

But this doesn't make a lot of sense from a bargaining perspective.

- The “losing” side should drop some of its war aims under these conditions.
- The “winning” side should demand more as well.

The Stylized Case of World War I

Consider the exogenous shock of the Bolshevik revolution in WWI.

- Russia desperately wanted out of WWI.
- Germany (not exactly in the best shape) should've been eager to accept.

What happened instead: Germany launched a new offensive on 16 February 1918.

- End result: Germany acquires the Baltic states, separates Ukraine from Russia, and gets Kars for the Ottoman Empire.

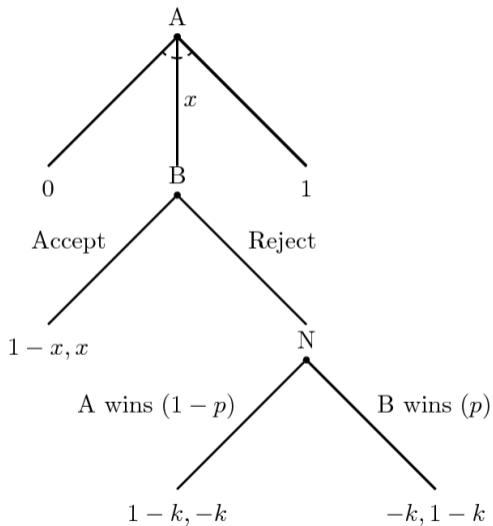
Two-Sided Termination?

This leads to an interest in two-sided termination, but this is incomplete.

- What makes states at war prefer peace?
- If they preferred peace, why are they at war?

Ultimately, we need to return to the familiar problem of bargaining.

A Reminder About Bargaining



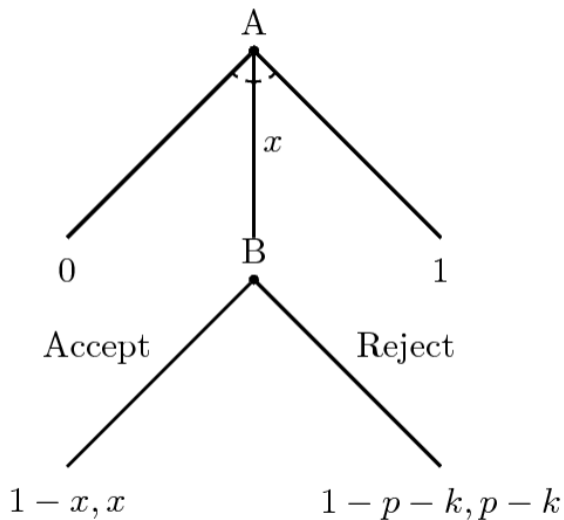
Expected Utility for A of the War

$$\begin{aligned}EU(A|B \text{ Rejects Demand}) &= (1 - p)(1 - k) + p(-k) \\ &= 1 - k - p + pk - pk \\ &= 1 - p - k\end{aligned}$$

Expected Utility for B of the War

$$\begin{aligned}EU(\text{B}|\text{B Rejects Demand}) &= (1 - p)(-k) + p(1 - k) \\ &= -k + pk + p - pk \\ &= p - k\end{aligned}$$

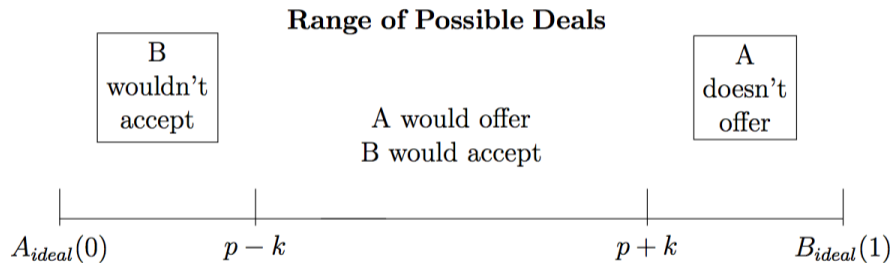
What's the Next Step in our Backward Induction?



Now How Do We Proceed from Here?

- When does B accept A's offer?
- What does A offer to B?
- Would A ultimately make that offer to B?

The Bargaining Space



Bargaining Failure

When bargaining fails, war follows and generally for three reasons.

1. Issue indivisibility
2. Asymmetric (incomplete) information
3. Commitment problems

Incomplete Information

War as result of incomplete information is a convenient explanation.

- i.e. states disagree about terms of the model (e.g. p and k)

War necessarily results from when $p + k < p - k$.

- War can end when battles result in $p + k \geq p - k$.

Russo-Japanese War (1904-05)



Russo-Japanese War (1904-05)

The Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) is a nice illustration of the **principle of convergence**.

- Issue: Port Arthur (Korea).

No one thought Japan stood a real chance at war's onset.

- Not even Japan did, actually.

The onset of war happened when negotiations were still on the table.

Russo-Japanese War (1904-05)

No one thought Japan could win, but Japan fared better in each battle.

- Battle of Port Arthur: stalemate, both sides claiming victory.
- Battle of Yalu River: Japanese victory
- Siege of Port Arthur: Japanese victory
- Battle of the Yellow Sea: indecisive
- Battle of Sandepu: indecisive
- Battle of Mukden: major Japanese victory
- Battle of Tsushima: decisive Japanese victory

After this, Russia had lost Manchuria, Korea, Port Arthur and the Sakhalins. Russia sued for peace.

Russo-Japanese War as Real War

It's not that Russia could not have sent more troops.

- A variety of problems made this impractical.

A march on Moscow (or Tokyo) was never at stake in this war.

- However, Japan's victories updated Russia's prior beliefs about what would happen if it came to that.

Japan waged a real war against Russia to influence Russia's expectations about a potential fight to the finish.

- War results in a relatively quick disclosure of information.

Problems With Information Convergence

Ramsay (2008) finds only a little support for the information convergence argument.

- intuitively: “quick disclosures” will struggle to explain longer wars.

Instead, we'll look at two other factors for how wars end.

1. Regime type
2. Commitment problems

Regime Type and War Termination

Goemans (2000) has a general argument about regime type and war. Factors:

- Level of repression
- Level of exclusion

Findings:

- Mixed regimes (semi-repressive, moderately exclusionary): worst of both worlds, mostly likely to “gamble for resurrection.”
- Democracies, strong non-democracies are more likely to lower their demands to end a war.

Commitment Problems and War Termination

Concerns for commitment might prove more important.

- i.e. states don't adjust demands because they doubt the commitment on the other side is durable.

Reiter (2009) uses case studies to make this case:

- States with commitment concerns and hope for victory actually increase their demands in war despite discouraging information.
- States with same concerns and *no* hope for victory will adjust demands.
- Importantly, domestic politics don't seem to be as important.

Conclusion

Most wars end because both sides agree to stop fighting. General explanations:

- Incomplete information, and information convergence
- Regime variation
- Commitment problems

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