

Domestic Politics and War

POSC 1020 – Introduction to International Relations

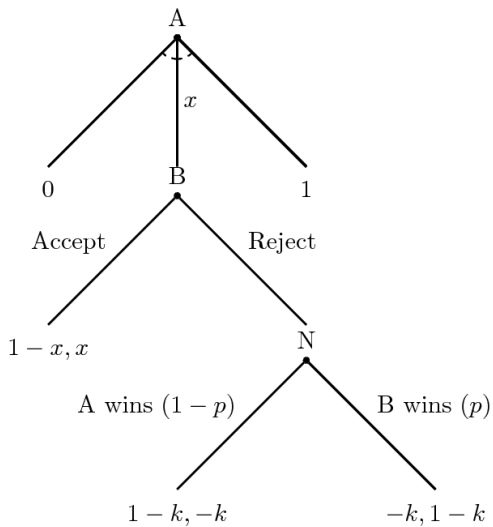
Steven V. Miller

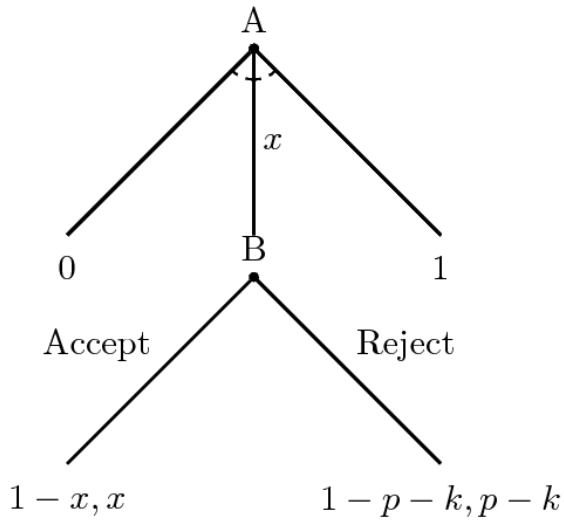
Department of Political Science



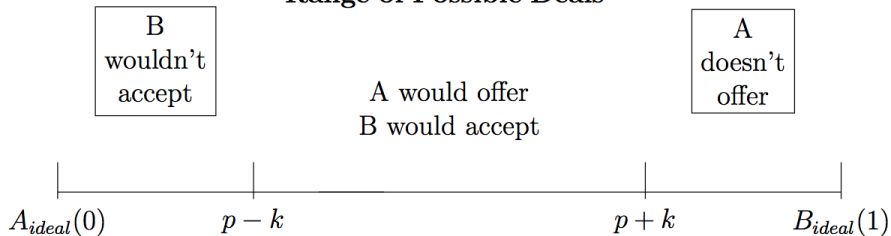
Puzzle(s) for Today

It's usually more rational to bargain than go to war, but is that true for "everyone" or just "states?"





Range of Possible Deals



War With Complete and Perfect Information

War generally never happens with complete and perfect information, except for:

1. Issue indivisibility
2. Asymmetric/incomplete information (i.e. uncertainty)
3. Commitment problems

Plaza de Mayo (Argentina), March 30, 1982



Plaza de Mayo (Argentina), April 2, 1982

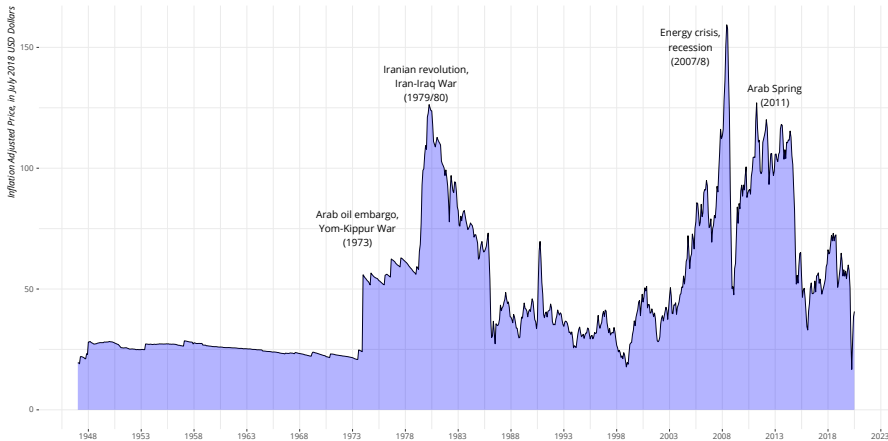


Domestic Politics and War

- Interests
- Leaders
- Groups

Average Crude Oil Price, 1947-2018

We observe prominent spikes that coincide with the Arab oil embargo, Iran-Iraq War onset, and the worst consequences of the Iraq War and corollary financial crisis.

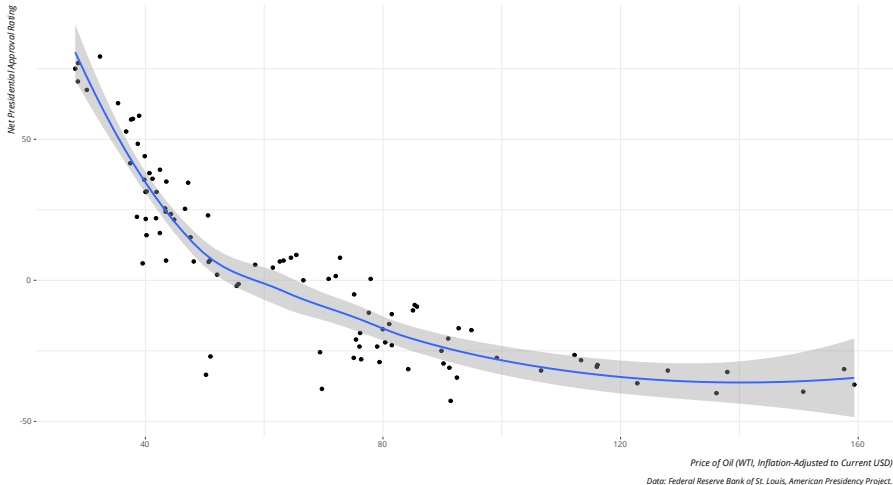


Note: prices are for West Texas Intermediate (WTI), manually converted from nominal to real prices with the consumer price index for urban consumers for all items. Open to suggestions of better price indices.

Data: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

Few Presidents Exemplify a Negative Relationship Between Gas Prices and Presidential Approval as George W. Bush

Bush's approval rating sank amid a slew of problems, especially the energy crisis.



Leaders and War

Do leaders ever spark war to keep power at home?

- Evidence is mixed, but we've seen it before.

How does the “rally around the flag” effect alter the bargaining range?

- A rally incentive increases the value of one side for war, decreasing size of bargaining range.

What Can We Say About “Rallies?”

The Falklands War is the classic case of the diversion and the rally.

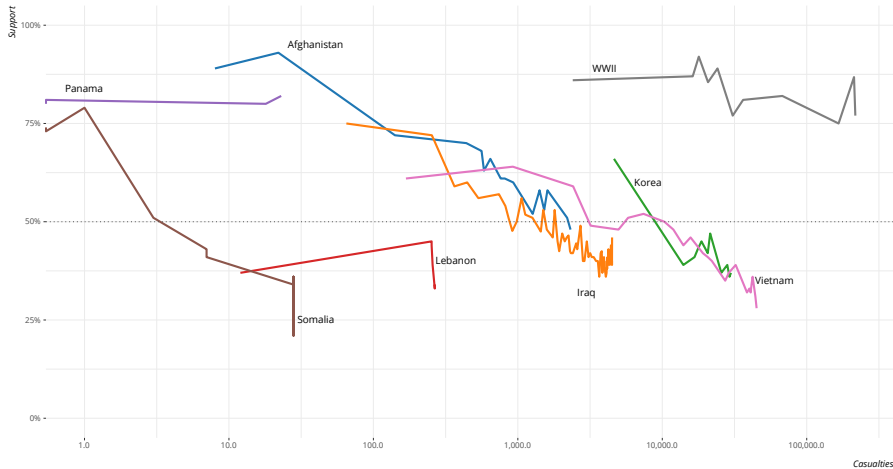
- Diversion applies to domestic troubles for both sides.
- Rally applies to both sides as well.

However, general evidence in support of rallies and diversions are mixed.

- Generally, secure leaders are more likely to start a crisis.
- Most of our evidence is anecdotal.

The American Public's Support for Conflict Generally Wanes as American Casualties Mount

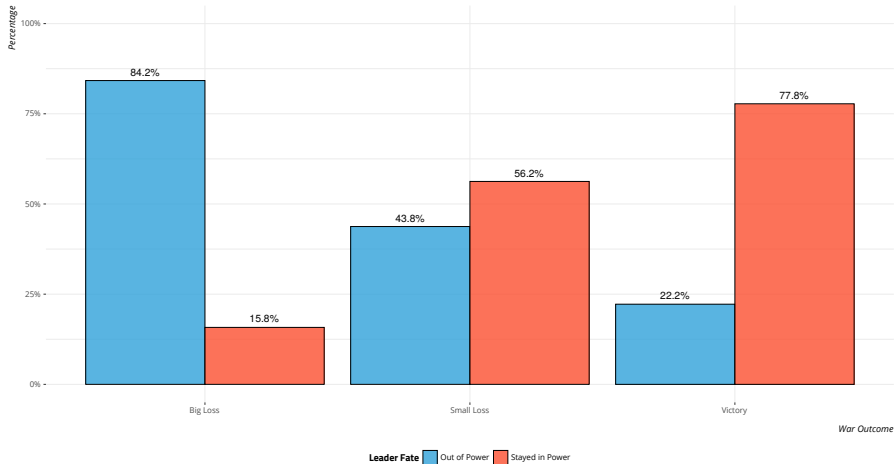
'Support' is variously defined, contingent on the particular survey question, so the trends should be read as more illustrative.



Data: Larson (1996) for WWII-Somalia. Gallup/Casualties.org for Afghanistan and Iraq.

War and the Fate of Leaders

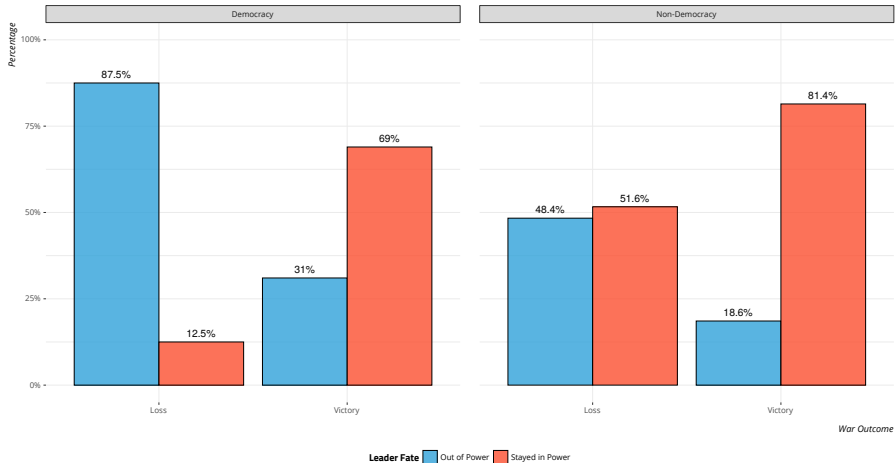
Leaders are more (less) likely to be replaced from office following defeat (victory) in war.



Source: Goemans, Hein. 2000. "War and Punishment : The Causes of War Termination and the First World War". Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [Table 3.2, p. 58]

Democratic Leaders Fare Worse than Non-Democrats in Their Post-War Tenure

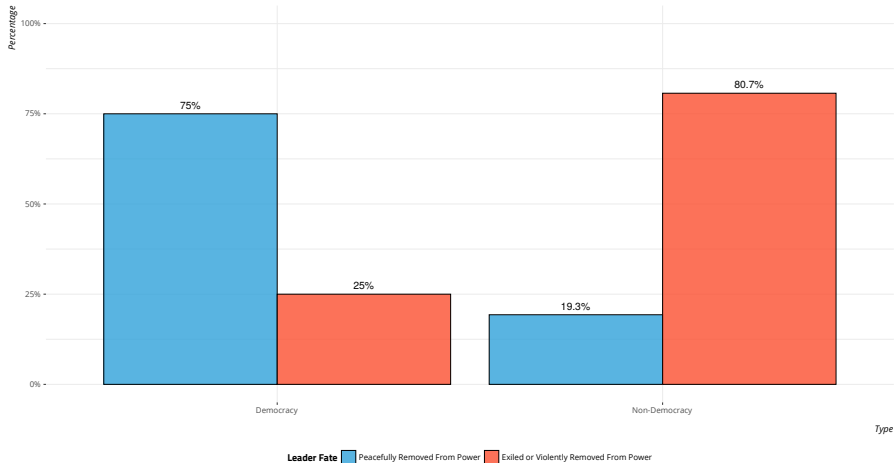
Democratic leaders are more likely to be replaced after losing a war and are less likely to stay in office after winning a war.



Source: Goemans, Hein. 2000. "War and Punishment : The Causes of War Termination and the First World War". Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [Table 3.2, p. 58]

"Democrats Leave Office in Limousines. Autocrats Leave Office in Body Bags."

Democratic leaders are more likely to lose office after war, but their means of removal are generally much more benign.



Source: Goemans, Hein. 2000. "War and Punishment : The Causes of War Termination and the First World War". Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [Table 3.2, p. 58]

Domestic Groups and War

- War may serve the interests of some domestic groups.
- Groups may have selfish interests contrary to national interests.
- Different group types may have different vested interests.

How Do Groups With Invested Interests Prevail?

Collective action

- Smaller groups tend to be better organized.
- Larger groups suffer from free riding.
- Groups may shape policy to support their narrow interests

Domestic Groups and War

The military is the most important bureaucratic actor re: war.

- Has best information about capabilities and resolve.

We generally think military is too optimistic about war.

- Its purpose is to wage war.
- War leads to increased budgets and promotion opportunities.

This varies with key intuition: civilian leadership/oversight matters a lot.

Domestic Groups and War

For simplicity's sake, war generally cleaves people into two groups.

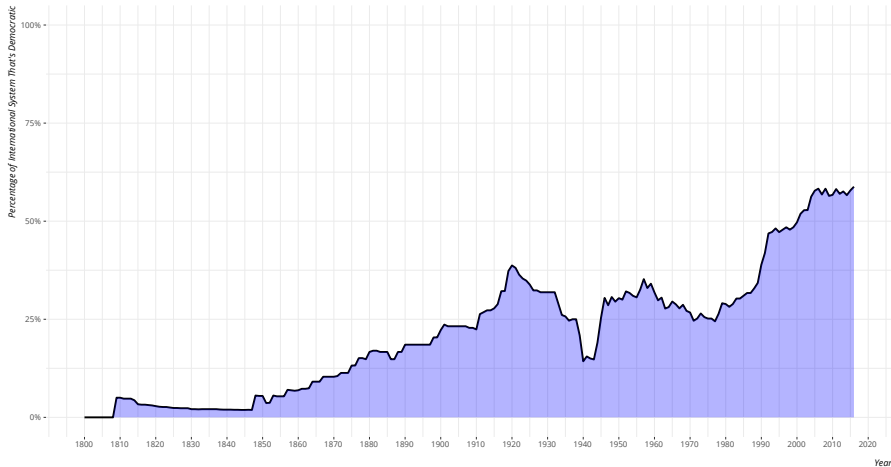
- Hawks
- Doves

The prevalence of hawks generally shrinks the bargaining range for A and B.

- Like rally incentives: they increase value of war.

The Proliferation of Democracies in the International System (1800-2016)

States coded with `polity2` value at or above 6 are coded as democratic.



Data: The Polity Project (Center for Systemic Peace)

Institutions and War

Democratic institutions may discourage war.

- Forces consensus between elite and masses
- Leaders accountable
- Masses bear costs
- Promotes norms of negotiation

The democratic process is slow, and leaves time for interstate bargaining.

Some Findings About the Democratic Peace

Mature liberal democracies do not fight each other.

- They are also more transparent than other forms of government.
- This helps actors overcome information problems that can lead to war.
- This helps democracies avoid war with each other.

In nondemocratic states, a small group of leaders typically makes foreign policy behind closed doors.

- This limits what can be reported to the media and the public.
- Lack of transparency can make it harder for foreign states to gauge the state's capabilities and resolve.

Generally: democracies are peaceful with each other, but not other state types.

Conclusion

War may happen because domestic actors want it to happen.

- Narrow interests may push leaders to war.
- Diversionary and rally incentives are real.
 - Evidence for these hypotheses are weak relative to the anecdotes.
- Groups form around hawkish preferences.
- Hawkish interests are not sufficient to cause war on their own.
- Free and fair elections, party competition, and free media can (but need not) dampen hawkish interests.

All have real implications for the bargaining between A and B in a crisis.

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