

A risk-return trade-off is the idea that...

- I. states can get the best deal by threatening all-out war with another state.
- II. states can minimize the chance of war by exchanging diplomatic missions.
- III. states have to minimize the chance of war while at the same time getting the best deal they can.

Why do states use *brinkmanship*?

- I. States can signal a high level of resolve by making a threat that appears likely to trigger extraordinary costs.
- II. States know that there is no possibility of a crisis escalating into a devastating nuclear war.
- III. States can make significant threats but know they will always be able to hold back from starting a war.

Why might *audience costs* affect the possibility of war?

- I. The states in a dispute may decide to hold secret negotiations so that privileged information will not become public.
- II. An elected leader may make a threat and be compelled to carry it out in order to get re-elected.
- III. Third-party countries observing a conflict may decide to become involved.

War from Commitment Problems

- States may have difficulty in making credible promises *not* to revise the terms of a deal/treaty later.
 - This is called a **commitment problem**
- Commitment problems are common in the absence of any enforcement mechanism.

Bargaining Over Goods That Are A Source of Future Bargaining Power

- Examples: strategically important pieces of territory and weapons programs.
 - States will be reluctant to make concessions if the adversary, who is made stronger by the deal, might press for more concessions in the future
- A threatened state may choose to fight today rather than face a future in which it is weaker.

Prevention: War in Response to Changing Power

- A problem arises if the balance of military capabilities is expected to change because of factors external to the bargaining process.
- Anticipated shifts in economic and military capabilities may present dilemmas in crisis bargaining.

Prevention: War in Response to Changing Power

- This logic works only if war will halt or significantly delay a shift in power.
 - If the shift will happen anyway, then there is nothing to be gained by fighting now
- **Preventive war:** a war that is fought with the intention of preventing an adversary from becoming stronger in the future.

Preemption: War in Response to First-Strike Advantages

- **First-strike advantage:** when there is a benefit to being the first to launch an attack.
 - Arises when technology enables a state to launch a blow that disarms the other state's military or renders it incapable of responding effectively

Creates a commitment problem unless each state can credibly promise not to act first.

Preemption: War in Response to First-Strike Advantages

- There are two different war outcomes depending on which state lands the first blow.
 - Each state expects to do better in a war that it starts
 - There exists a set of deals that both states prefer to a war started by State A and a set of deals that both prefer to a war started by State B
- But there is no deal that is mutually preferable to both possible wars.

Preemption: War in Response to First-Strike Advantages

- Neither state will make concessions to the other at the bargaining table; both will try to beat the other to the punch.
 - Negotiations may be seen as nothing more than a ploy to delay the other side from mobilizing
- A war that arises in this way is a **preemptive war**.

Preemption: War in Response to First-Strike Advantages

- Preemption and prevention both arise from the difficulty of making credible commitments not to use one's military power.
 - Preemption is a response to an imminent threat
 - Prevention is a response to anticipated threats in the more distant future
- The difference between the two revolves around timing and the inevitability of war.

Prevention and Preemption

- Common root of commitment problems:
 - The difficulty of committing not to use one's power in the future
- War is more likely to occur when:
 - The good in dispute is a source of power
 - Dramatic changes in military balance are likely
 - The military-strategic situation creates substantial advantages for first-strikes

War is more likely when...

- 👉. leaders effectively communicate their resolve to their opponents.
- ✌️. there are rapid changes in the military balance between two countries.
- ✌️. military technology makes defensive fortifications extremely effective against attack.

Is Compromise Always Possible? War from Indivisibility

- **Indivisible good:** a good that cannot be divided without destroying its value.
 - An example; the difference between 100 pennies and a \$1 bill
- Compromise solutions are impossible to reach.
 - Bargaining becomes “all or nothing”

Is Compromise Always Possible? War from Indivisibility

- It is important not to exaggerate indivisibility as a source of bargaining failure:
 - There are ways of dividing goods that do not involve physical division
 - States may have strategic incentives to claim they cannot compromise on a particular issue
- A claim of indivisibility may simply be a bargaining position used for strategic reasons.

Is Compromise Always Possible? War from Indivisibility

- What goods are truly indivisible?
 - Indivisibility is usually not a physical property, but rather due to the way it is valued
- An example: The city of Jerusalem.
 - Contains some of the holiest sites of Christianity, Islam and Judaism
 - How to divide the city has defied resolution

Why might an apparently indivisible good actually be divisible?

- 👉. States are willing to ruin an indivisible good by splitting it rather than allow another state to win the whole good.
- ✌️. Sometimes states falsely claim that a desired object is indivisible in order to strengthen their bargaining position.
- ✌️. Sometimes leaders think an asset like territory is indivisible because of misperception.

Discussion Question:

How Can We Make War Less Likely?

How Can We Make War Less Likely?

- Raising the costs of war
- Increasing transparency
- Providing outside enforcement of commitments
- Dividing apparently indivisible goods