Domestic Opposition and Signaling in International Crises

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This article explores the effect of domestic political competition on the escalation of international crises. It combines an incomplete information model of crisis bargaining with a simple model of two-party electoral choice. One state has two strategic actors—a government and an opposition party—both of which declare openly whether they support the use of force to alter the status quo. The rival state updates its beliefs and selects its strategy in response to both signals. The parties' payoffs depend upon a retrospective evaluation by the domestic electorate. The model shows that the inclusion of a strategic opposition party decreases the ex ante probability of war by helping to reveal information about the state's preferences. This finding has important implications for research on democracy and international conflict, since it suggests a mechanism through which democratic states can overcome informational asymmetries, which have been identified as a central obstacle to negotiation.

The claim that democracies rarely, if ever, fight wars against one another has generated a great deal of research on how democratic institutions and practices affect the outcomes of international crises. Work generally falls into two categories, one emphasizing the role of democratic norms favoring nonviolent conflict resolution (e.g., Dixon 1994; Doyle 1986; Maoz and Russett 1993; Russett 1993) and the other focusing on the constraining effect of institutions that promote accountability and competition (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1992; Lake 1992; Morgan and Campbell 1991; Rummel 1979). Though they rely on different causal arguments, both schools maintain that democratic leaders prefer to settle disputes through negotiation and compromise rather than through force.[1]

Despite its emphasis on negotiation, however, much of this research has developed in isolation from the large and growing body of literature on international crisis bargaining (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, and Zorick 1997; Fearon 1992, 1994, 1995; Kilgour and Zagare 1991; Morrow 1989; Powell 1990). This shortcoming is particularly troubling because work in this area has generated two insights that are problematic for the democratic peace literature. First, the costs associated with war mean that all states—regardless of regime type—have incentives to reach efficient bargains that avoid violence. Thus, democratic states are not distinctive in their preference for negotiated outcomes. Second, the mutual desire for a negotiated settlement does not ensure that an efficient bargain will always be reached. If information about the states' expected value for war is distributed asymmetrically, then bargaining can fail. Hence, peaceful relations depend not only on a mutual preference for peace but also on the ability of states to overcome informational asymmetries that can cause war in spite of such preferences.

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[1] For recent reviews of these arguments see Chan 1997 and Rousseau et al. 1996.

The primary danger associated with asymmetric information is that actors uncertain about their rivals' preferences will mistakenly take actions that bring about an unwanted war. Under conditions of incomplete information, a state may be unsure whether a challenge will lead to war or to a profitable revision of the status quo, whether rejecting an offer will bring about conflict or a more favorable offer. In such cases, states face a gamble that sometimes favors actions entailing a risk of war. Though war is suboptimal ex post, actions that lead to war can be optimal ex ante.

This situation is compounded by the fact that states engaged in international disputes generally have incentives to misrepresent their willingness to fight through bluff and bluster (Fearon 1992, 1995; Morrow 1986). Absent such incentives, a condition of asymmetric information would be trivial to overcome through simple communication. Yet, the conflict of interests inherent in a crisis situation makes communication difficult. Since each state expects its rival to engage in strategic misrepresentation, distinguishing genuine threats from bluffs is problematic. Under these circumstances, sending credible signals of resolve often requires states to take actions that entail a risk of war (Fearon 1992, 1994; Powell 1990; Schelling 1960). Such actions can separate states that have high value for war from those with low value for war, since the latter should be less willing to approach the "brink." Unfortunately, while risky actions can serve to reveal information, they also may have the effect of making war more likely. The act of signaling can thus lead to the very outcome that the signals were intended to prevent.

This logic suggests that further work must be done on whether and how domestic political institutions can help overcome the problems associated with asymmetric information. This article addresses that question by focusing on one institutional feature generally associated with democracy: regular and public competition between political parties. It combines a standard crisis bargaining game with a simple model of two-party electoral choice. In doing so, it moves away from the unitary state assumption that underlies most deterrence models by breaking down one of the rival states into two strategic actors: a governing party and an opposition party. These parties vie for the support of

the electorate through their public actions in the international crisis—in particular, the government's decision whether to threaten force and the opposition's decision to support or oppose such a threat. Because these actions are observable, they reveal to the rival state information about the government's underlying political incentives and, hence, its willingness to wage war.

The model shows that the probability of war is lower when informative signals can be sent by both parties than when the government is the lone voice of the state, as it is in polities in which competition is poorly developed or actively suppressed. Introduction of an opposition party creates two reinforcing effects. First, the opposition party can lend additional credibility to a government's threats by publicly supporting those threats in a crisis. The decision to support the government reveals that there are political incentives to carry through on a threat to wage war. Hence, the opposition can bolster the government's signal with a "confirmatory signal" of its own. Second, the existence of an opposition party forces the government to be more selective about the threats it makes. When there is weak political support for war, the opposition can reveal this fact by deciding to oppose the government's threat. Because the rival state is more likely to stand firm in the face of an opposed threat, outright bluffing is inherently riskier. As a result, a government with a domestic competitor has less opportunity to misrepresent its preferences, and the dangers associated with asymmetric information are consequently lower.

The model developed here builds on two works dealing with the informational properties of political institutions. Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman (1992, chapter 5) argue that democratic institutions help signal a state's preferences by revealing that the government faces above-average costs for using force. In this view, democracy facilitates the mobilization of opposition, meaning that democratic leaders face generally higher costs in the event that they fight a losing or costly war. The state's preferences are thus revealed not by a conscious act of the government but by the very nature of the institutions, which cannot be concealed.

This argument represents a useful first step, but it stops short of actually modeling domestic politics.[2] Opposition parties are not strategic actors but a passive source of costs. This assumption obscures the fact that opposition politicians can and do make choices about whether to support the government in a threat or use of force. U.S. experience, for example, offers the contrast between the Spanish-American War, in which the opposition party helped push the government toward an intransigent stance, and the crisis leading up to the Gulf War, in which many Democratic representatives publicly opposed the use of force (e.g., Offner 1992; Zaller 1994). Similarly, British history provides a contrast between the Fashoda crisis, in which opposition parties supported the government and helped convince France of the latter's resolve, and the Suez crisis, in which Labour opposition emboldened Egypt to resist British threats (e.g., Epstein 1964, 74–87; Wright 1951). The model presented here thus improves on that of Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman (1992) by letting the opposition party choose a policy position in response to its political incentives.

The second work on which this model builds is by Fearon (1994), who argues that states can send credible signals of their resolve if they face a powerful domestic audience that can punish them for bluffing. In this framework, political leaders expose themselves to "domestic audience costs" when they make public threats in a crisis, and they incur these costs if they back down. The costliness, and hence credibility, of threats depends on the magnitude of the punishment that can be imposed by the domestic audience. If electoral institutions provide an effective mechanism for sanctioning state leaders, then democratic leaders should be able to generate higher audience costs and thus send more credible signals of their resolve.

The model developed here goes farther by introducing a more complete framework of political competition. It shows that a domestic competitor can decrease the dangers inherent in costly signaling. In Fearon's model, exposure to sufficiently high audience costs can "lock" the government into a war that it would rather not fight. Indeed, it is the government's willingness to court this danger that makes its threats credible. An opposition party which can independently confirm the government's resolve makes it possible to reveal information in a less risky manner. Moreover, the introduction of a second signaler can lead to informative behavior even if the government's threats generate no audience costs.

The article proceeds as follows. The first section discusses the main assumptions about political competition that underlie the model. The second section lays out the game, which is then solved in section three. The fourth section discusses the model's implications for the democratic peace and the larger research program on democratic distinctiveness. Some conclusions follow.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT ACTORS AND INSTITUTIONS

Since the purpose of the model is to capture the effects of democratic competition on international bargaining, we first need to consider the basic form this competition takes. The theory developed here rests on three broad assumptions about the actors and the nature of the political institutions.

[2] Furthermore, the underlying argument that democracy makes war more costly for political leaders can be questioned. As Gowa (1995) points out, nondemocratic leaders also face the prospect of removal; even if the probability of their removal is relatively lower, the associated costs can be much higher, that is, death or exile rather than early retirement (see also Goemans 1995). Moreover, democratic leaders may face larger political gains from winning wars, so even if the costs of losing are greater, their expected value for war need not be systematically lower. This implies that war may be riskier for democratic leaders—in the sense that the variance in potential payoffs is higher—but not necessarily costlier ex ante.

Political Parties Seek Office

The first assumption is that political parties value holding office and therefore choose strategies designed to maximize their probability of election. This assumption means that parties are concerned with how voters evaluate their performance in international crises, since this evaluation affects their chances of holding office in the future. In basing the parties' payoffs on the electorate's response, it is not necessary to assume that foreign policy performance is the sole, or even most important, determinant of electoral outcomes. Such an assumption would fly in the face of considerable evidence to the contrary. Instead, it is only necessary to assume that parties' handling of international disputes is one factor that influences electoral fortunes. Unless voters ignore these events entirely, office-seeking behavior should carry over into the realm of crisis decision making.

On this point, there is both systematic and anecdotal evidence suggesting that political outcomes are influenced by international crisis outcomes and that politicians care about how voters assess their handling of these situations. Bueno de Mesquita, Siverson, and Woller (1991) and Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson (1995) show that losing a war or winning a costly war decreases the likelihood that a government will retain office. Cotton (1986) confirms this finding in the case of the United States. With respect to opposition parties, Regens, Gaddie, and Lockerbie (1995) show that members of Congress who voted against U.S. entry into the Mexican-American War and World War I were less likely to be reelected than those who voted in favor of those wars.[3] This finding suggests there are political costs to opposing a war that voters consider successful.

There is less systematic evidence regarding the electoral effect of nonwar crisis outcomes. Nevertheless, several studies of the United States show that voters' evaluations of foreign policy performance influence their overall assessment of candidates (Aldrich, Sullivan, and Borgida 1989; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; Nincic and Hinckley 1991). Moreover, crisis situations with the potential for use of force have a greater effect on voter perceptions than do other areas of foreign policy, which are generally less visible and salient (Almond 1950, 70–1).

Finally, anecdotal evidence suggests that politicians take into account the expected reaction of voters when deciding to support or oppose the use of force. Zaller (1994), for example, provides an illuminating account of how U.S. politicians weighed the political ramifications of their actions before the Gulf War. This was true not only of President Bush but also of congressional Democrats, who agonized over whether to vote in favor of military action. The perception that this decision would have electoral implications was nicely expressed by one congressional aide, who called the vote "a potential career-killer" (Zaller 1994, 262). Even though we now know that the 1992 elections were more heavily influenced by other factors, politicians concerned about reelection clearly could not and did not ignore the potential voter reaction to their performance.

The assumption that parties seek office generates a conflict of interest between the government and the opposition. If we envision competition as an interaction between two parties or two cohesive coalitions, then whatever increases the probability of election for one will decrease the probability for the other.[4] Hence, government and opposition are locked in a zero-sum game for political office.[5]

This conflict between the parties plays a crucial role in ensuring that their signals are informative. The underlying intuition is straightforward: Two information sources are better than one, especially when they have competing interests (Krehbiel 1991, 84; Milgrom and Roberts 1986). Competition between two signalers constrains the ability of both to misrepresent what they know and increases the credibility of certain signals. While one actor may have incentives to engage in misrepresentation, it is unlikely that two actors with competing interests will collude in such an act. Thus, a given signal will have greater credibility if it is sent by multiple actors with competing interests than if it is sent by one actor with known incentives to lie—a phenomenon known as confirmatory signaling. Moreover, if there are penalties for lying or bluffing, the existence of another actor with incentives to expose a bluff can increase the risks of opportunism.

Opposition Parties Have Access to Relevant Information

The second assumption is that opposition parties have access to information relevant to the crisis—in particular, information about the political ramifications of war. In general, an actor's expected value for war is a function of the probability of different war outcomes

[3] In the case of the Gulf War, Regens, Gaddie, and Lockerbie (1995) find no evidence that Democrats who opposed the use of force against Iraq paid at the polls. They attribute this finding to the length of time between the war and the 1992 election and the influence of intervening factors, such as the economy. Nevertheless, it is clear that Democrats suffered a prolonged period of low poll ratings as a result of their opposition to the war. Moreover, Senator Sam Nunn has said that his vote against the use of force scuttled whatever chances he had for the presidential nomination (see Pace 1996).

[4] Introducing multiple parties would be a natural extension of this model. In principle, the conflict of interest is less stark in such a setting, since two parties could attempt to collude to the detriment of a third. This modification would only affect the logic presented here if there were opportunities for collusion between a party in the governing coalition and a party in opposition. Collusion within government or opposition coalitions is essentially assumed already by treating them as unitary actors.

[5] It should be recognized that, by basing the payoffs entirely on the probability of election, the model may overstate the conflict of interest between opposing parties. From the perspective of its electoral chances, the opposition would like nothing better than for the government to engage in a disastrous and costly war. There is a point at which unfavorable international outcomes may be undesirable even to the opposition, however. For example, a war that results in destruction of the state or its annexation by foreign powers would deprive opposition politicians of their chance to hold office—and possibly of their lives. At that extreme, then, the relationship between the international outcome and the opposition's payoff gets more complicated.

and the relative values of winning and losing. Assume that states fight a winner-take-all war over some good, whose value we normalize to one, and that all sides incur costs of fighting a war. If state i's probability of victory is p_i, and its expected costs of war are c_i, then its expected value for war is given by

$$w_i = p_i - c_i. \quad (1)$$

Notice that, in this formulation, the c_i term captures the costs of war *relative to* the value of the disputed good.

Though any or all factors in this expression may be sources of uncertainty, the model assumes that actors hold private information about the costliness of war relative to the value of the disputed good—a factor often termed "resolve."[6] Whereas p_i depends heavily on the balance of military capabilities, resolve rests in large part on the configuration of domestic political interests. How much is the good in question worth? What costs are we willing to pay? What risks are we willing to take? From the perspective of foreign states, the answers to such questions are harder to observe than, say, the number of tanks and airplanes each side possesses.

These are also questions for which the opposition party is likely to share the government's informational advantage over the rival state. Opposition parties have relevant information due to previous experience in office and access to legislative institutions. Moreover, parties out of power are still in a position to make inferences about the configuration of domestic interests. Political parties exist to aggregate information about political preferences, to anticipate the likely electoral consequences of their actions, and to choose their public strategies appropriately.[7] If they do not, then they will not last long. We thus assume that opposition parties take advantage of their resources to gauge the expected political ramifications of war, and especially how the likely costs compare with the stakes.

Competition Is Public and Unrestricted

It is crucial for this analysis that parties compete in public. Open political debate means that foreign states can "overhear" the policy statements used to build electoral support. These statements reveal information about the parties' underlying political incentives. For this communication to be meaningful, of course, there must be no legal sanctions against public dissent during international crises. Opposition parties must be able to choose their strategies based on political considerations, rather than on any normative or legal constraints. After all, support for a government's policies conveys no meaning if that support is coerced. Competition should be based on the concept of "loyal opposition," meaning that dissent over government policies does not imply disloyalty to the state.

Together, these assumptions imply a polity that has many attributes of democracy, but they do not require strict adherence to some ideal definition of democracy. Though competition is a sine qua non of democratic government, many nondemocratic polities also experience forms of competition. What is crucial for this analysis is that competition takes place in public, so that the positions of contending parties are observable to foreign states; that it is unfettered by restrictions on dissent; and that parties out of power are not so excluded from the political process that they have no access to relevant information. In terms of Dahl's (1971) classic definition of polyarchy, this model places primary importance on "public contestation" but imposes no requirements on the level of participation or inclusiveness.

A BARGAINING MODEL WITH A STRATEGIC OPPOSITION

The model considered here describes an international interaction between two states, one of which permits public competition of the kind posited above. This competitive polity is composed of two strategic actors—a governing party and an opposition party—and a nonstrategic actor—the domestic electorate. The parties take actions that both the electorate and the rival state can observe. These strategies, and the corresponding response of the rival state, determine the outcome of the international game. Since the parties are assumed to be office-seeking, their payoffs depend upon how the voters evaluate their performance in the crisis. This evaluation is based on the public positions taken by the parties in the crisis and the realized outcome.[8] This section provides a formal description of the game and the voters' evaluation of the parties.

The International Crisis

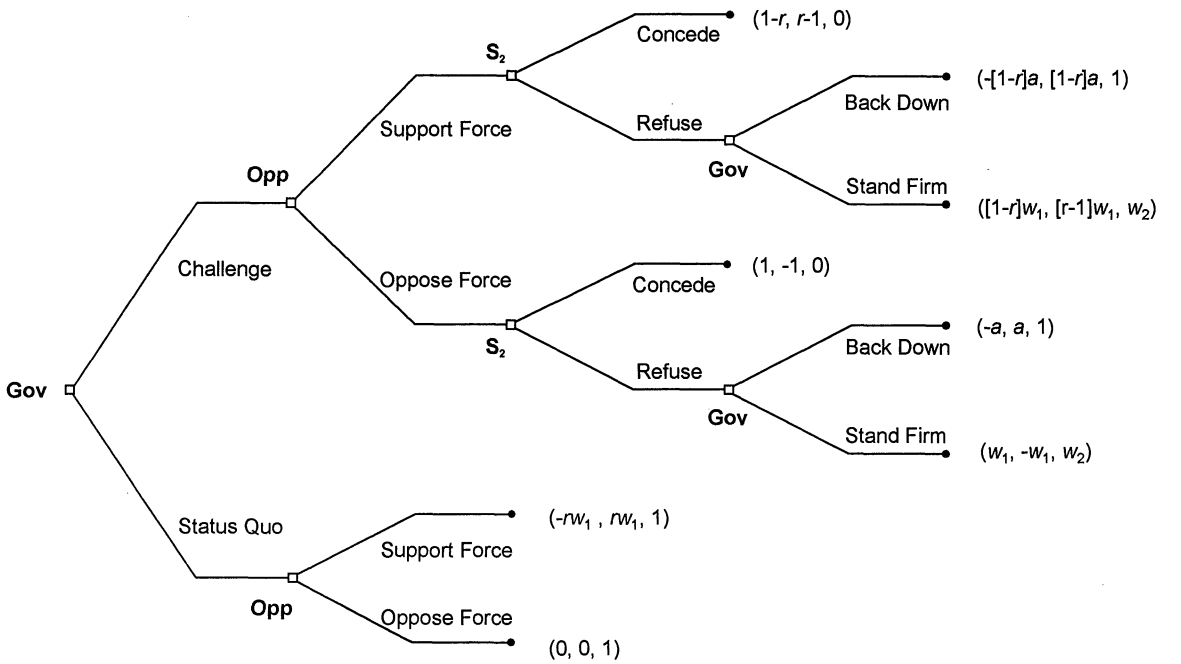
The crisis game presented here is based on deterrence and crisis bargaining models (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, and Zorick 1997; Fearon 1992, 1994; Kilgour and Zagare 1991; Morrow 1989; Powell 1990). Two states compete over the possession of some good. The exact nature of the good is not important and can be thought of as anything states may value: territory, a source of wealth, a policy, an institution, and so on. A crisis occurs when one state challenges the other for possession of the good. Each then has an opportunity

[6] Fearon (1992) interprets the c_i term in equation 1 as the state's resolve.

[7] Indeed, this feature is what makes the action of political parties particularly informative. Domestic political preferences in a democracy can be expressed in any number of ways by many actors. Opposition can take the form of newspaper editorials, protests, demonstrations, strikes, and so forth. From the perspective of foreign states, the plethora of political activities observable in a democracy may seem confusing, but the existence of parties whose job it is to aggregate all this information provides foreign decision makers with a way to differentiate politically relevant signals from noise. The former should be reflected in the strategies of office-seeking parties; the latter should not.

[8] In its basic structure, the model presented here is similar to that of Gaubatz (1998). In his model, government and opposition parties choose foreign policy positions in response to both international conditions and electoral incentives. In Gaubatz's model, however, there is complete information about the preferences of the domestic actors, so their policy positions do not serve as signals.

FIGURE 1. Crisis Bargaining Game with a Strategic Opposition



Note: Gov = Government, Opp = Opposition Party, S_2 = Rival State.

to stand firm or back down, thus conceding the good to the other side. When both states choose to stand firm, the result is war.

The main innovation here is that one state is decomposed into two strategic actors: the government and the opposition. Though the state itself is not an actor, it will be convenient at times to refer to this two-actor entity as S_1. The government is assumed to have full control over the foreign policy decisions of S_1. Thus, the decision to make a challenge and the decision to go to war are both made by the party in power. The opposition party cannot veto the choices of the government, but it can make a public declaration of its policy position—in particular, whether it supports the use or threat of force in order to change the status quo.[9] The rival state chooses its strategy after viewing the actions of the government and the policy statement of the opposition.

Sequence of Moves. The game begins with the government's decision either to maintain the status quo (SQ) or to issue a public challenge (CH). We assume that any challenge includes an explicit threat to use force in the event that the demands are not met. Following the government's move, the opposition party chooses its policy stance. It selects either to support (SUP) or oppose (OPP) the use of force. Notice that SUP and OPP represent the opposition's stance regarding the use or threat of force to alter the status quo, not its position relative to the government's policy. Thus, if the government chooses SQ, an opposition strategy of SUP does not imply support for the government but for the use of force.

If the government chooses to accept the status quo, then the game ends after the opposition's move. In the event of a challenge, and after the opposition makes its policy declaration, the rival state, S_2, decides either to concede the good (CD) or to refuse the challenge (RF). If the former, then the game ends peacefully, with S_1 getting the entire good. If the latter, then the government faces a choice between backing down (BD) and standing firm (SF). The former implies that S_2 gets the good and the game ends peacefully, while the latter leads to war. Figure 1 presents the extensive form of this game.

Payoffs. There are four possible outcomes at the international level: status quo, S_2 concedes, S_1 backs down, and war. Without loss of generality, assume that the value of the good is one and that S_2 possesses the good in the status quo; concession by S_2 implies that the entire good is transferred to S_1. In the event of a war, let p_i and c_i represent state i's probability of victory and expected costs, respectively.[10] Given these assumptions, the international outcomes can take on a value of zero (if the state ends up without the good), one (if the state gets or retains the good), or w_i, as defined in equation 1 (in the event of war). Since the government and opposition are assumed to be office-seeking, they do not value the international outcomes directly; instead, their payoffs are determined by the

[9] In a presidential system with divided government, the opposition party may have some veto power over the government's decisions. Since this situation is not the norm among democratic states, I choose not to examine it here.

[10] Obviously, since there are only two players and no draws, $p_1 = 1 - p_2$. Nevertheless, it will simplify the notation if these two terms are kept distinct.

electorate's evaluation of their performance, which will be described below. S_2 is treated as a unitary state, so its payoffs depend solely on the international outcome. Thus, S_2 gets a payoff of one if the government chooses SQ or backs down from its challenge, zero if S_2 concedes in response to a challenge, and $w_2 = p_2 - c_2$ if the game ends in war.

Information Structure and Beliefs. The game involves two-sided incomplete information: Each state is uncertain about the other's expected costs from war. To generate this condition, assume that nature randomly selects c_1 and c_2 from independent distributions over the ranges $[0, C_1]$ and $[0, C_2]$, respectively. Both the government and the opposition in S_1 observe the selection of c_1, and S_2 observes the selection of c_2. The distributions from which these terms are drawn are common knowledge. As it will simplify notation to express things in terms of w_i, these assumptions imply that the w_i are distributed over the range $[p_i - C_i, p_i]$. Let F_1 and F_2 represent the cumulative distribution functions of w_1 and w_2, respectively.

Notice that, with these assumptions, it is possible for both w_i to be greater than zero simultaneously. When this is the case, there exists no peaceful solution that both sides prefer to war, since the state which backs down gets no more than zero. This possibility arises because the good is treated as indivisible: One side gets all; the other, none. In bargaining models with a continuously divisible good, both states can always be satisfied by some peaceful division even if their payoffs from war are both greater than zero (Fearon 1995). Nevertheless, treating the good as indivisible makes the game more tractable and does not affect the main results, with one exception. In the equilibria discussed below, the probability that $w_2 > 0$ is assumed to be relatively low. If this probability exceeds a certain threshold, then S_2 is highly likely to refuse a challenge regardless of what the government and opposition do. As a result, the government only makes challenges that it is serious about carrying out, and the opposition's strategy adds no additional information. Since this result is largely an artifact of the indivisibility of the good, its treatment is left to the Appendix.

The Electorate's Evaluation

Since the parties in this model are assumed to be office-seeking, their payoffs from the crisis game depend upon the ex post response of the electorate in S_1. A complete model of how voters use public statements and observable outcomes to weigh the relative merits of opposing candidates is beyond the scope of this work. Instead, we rely on a simple set of assumptions that seem reasonable given the empirical patterns described above. The first is that voters prefer governments which deliver favorable outcomes to those which deliver unfavorable outcomes. Hence, the government's payoff should improve as the outcome it achieves in the international crisis improves. With respect to the opposition, it makes sense to assume that voters reward opposition parties which either support successful policies or oppose unsuccessful policies, and they punish parties which oppose successful policies.

The result is a simple retrospective voting framework, which can generate payoffs in a straightforward manner.[11] Assume a homogeneous electorate whose utility from the international game increases with the amount of the disputed good received by S_1 and whose expected payoff from war is given by w_1. The assumption of a homogeneous electorate implies that the disputed good is a public good with equal value to all voters and that the costs of war are distributed evenly. Obviously, this need not always be the case, and a possible extension of this work would be to explore the implications of a heterogeneous electorate. Since the electorate is not a strategic actor, it is not necessary to assume that it knows S_1's expected value for war. For reasons that will be clear shortly, however, we assume the electorate has unbiased expectations: Its beliefs about war are systematically neither too high nor too low. Formally, if we let w_v denote the voters' expectations about war, we require that $E(w_v) = w_1$.

Now consider the four possible outcomes of the international game. When the government makes a challenge and the rival state backs down, the government receives a favorable evaluation from the voters for having acquired the good without a fight. If V_{gov} denotes how favorably the voters respond to the government, then we assume that $V_{gov} = 1$ in this case. The corresponding evaluation of the opposition, V_{opp}, depends upon that party's announced position. If the opposition supported the successful threat, then it can plausibly claim that it, too, would have generated the same outcome and should share some of the credit. Since the opposition did not actually manage the crisis, however, and we know that the government gets most of the credit or blame for foreign policy outcomes, it is sensible to assume that voters discount the credit they give to the opposition for supporting a successful outcome. Following Fiorina (1981, 73), we let the parameter r denote how much the voters discount the policy statements of the opposition due to the fact that it was out of power, with $0 \leq r \leq 1$. Thus, if the government gets a credit of 1 when the rival state concedes, then an opposition party that supported the government gets a credit of r.

If the opposition party opposed the government's successful threat, then it should incur political costs. A natural way to generate such costs is to assume that voters make the following inference from the opposition's stand: If the opposition was against the use of force, then its announced strategy would have generated the status quo as the outcome. Since voters get a payoff of zero from the status quo, they assign a credit of zero to the opposition in this case. The result is as desired: V_{opp} is higher when the opposition supports a successful policy (r) than when it opposes that policy (0).

Similar logic generates voter responses in the event of a war. The electorate's ultimate evaluation of the

[11] Hurwitz and Peffley (1987, 238–9) argue that retrospective voting models seem particularly appropriate in the area of foreign policy.

TABLE 1. Party Payoffs

Outcome	Opposition's Stance	V_{gov}	V_{opp}	$U_{gov} = V_{gov} - V_{opp}$	$U_{opp} = V_{opp} - V_{gov}$
Status quo	Support force	0	rw_1	$-rw_1$	rw_1
	Oppose force	0	0	0	0
Government backs down	Support force	$-a$	$-ra$	$-(1 - r)a$	$(1 - r)a$
	Oppose force	$-a$	0	$-a$	a
Rival state concedes	Support force	1	r	$1 - r$	$r - 1$
	Oppose force	1	0	1	-1
War	Support force	w_1	rw_1	$(1 - r)w_1$	$-(1 - r)w_1$
	Oppose force	w_1	0	w_1	$-w_1$

government depends on the outcome of the war. While the government does not know ahead of time precisely what this outcome will be, in expectation, $V_{gov} = w_1$. If the opposition supports the threat that led to war, then it shares some credit or blame for the outcome; the expected evaluation of the electorate is thus w_1 discounted by r, or $V_{opp} = rw_1$. If the opposition opposed the threat, then the voters again assume that the opposition would have delivered the status quo, or $V_{opp} = 0$. These assumptions imply that, when the war outcome is favorable (i.e., $w_1 > 0$), the opposition is better off having supported it than having opposed it.

In the event that the government backs down after making the challenge, the coding has some ambiguity. Following Fearon (1992, 1994), we assume that the government incurs audience costs for failing to carry through on a threat. The evaluation of the government thus reflects the electorate's unfavorable response to this outcome; in this case, we let $V_{gov} = -a$, with $a \geq 0$.[12] As before, it makes sense for voters to ascribe the status quo payoff to the opposition party in the event that it opposed the threat, or $V_{opp} = 0$. What is unclear is how the voters should react when the opposition supports a threat that the government fails to carry out. One possibility is that the voters punish the opposition just as they punish the government; in this case, V_{opp} would equal $-ra$. An alternative is to assume that the voters ascribe to the opposition their expected value for war, w_v, which, in expectation (and minus discounting), equals rw_1. This assumption implies that, if voters are sufficiently optimistic about their chances in war, the opposition derives some benefit from having supported the use of force when the government backs down.[13] As it turns out, the solution does not depend at all on which assumption we make. To keep the payoffs parallel, then, we will let $V_{opp} = -ra$ when the opposition supports a threat from which the government backs down.

The final possible outcome is the status quo. As before, the voters' evaluation of the government is tied to the value of the actual outcome, meaning $V_{gov} = 0$. In the event that the opposition opposes the use of force, we assume that V_{opp} likewise equals zero. There is some ambiguity as to how the voters should respond in the event that the opposition calls for the use of force after the government has selected the status quo. We observe empirically that opposition politicians may criticize governments which fail to take forceful action in a crisis. Bill Clinton's criticism of President Bush during the 1992 campaign over nonintervention in Bosnia is an obvious recent example (Gow 1997, 207–8). Given that the government has decided not to use force and the opposition has no control over foreign policy, such statements are rather cheap to make. Consequently, it is not clear why the voters should attribute much meaning to them. If the voters simply read such criticism as cheap talk, then the opposition should be indifferent between its strategy choices at this node, and any observed mix of opposition or support is understandable but ultimately has no effect on the game. An alternative possibility is that when the opposition supports force, the voters ascribe to it their expected payoff from war (minus discounting), which in expectation equals rw_1. This means that, if the electorate believes it can do well in war (i.e., $w_1 > 0$), the opposition can score political points by criticizing the government's inaction. As it turns out, we will not observe this outcome in equilibrium since, whenever w_1 is sufficiently high that choosing the status quo would generate opposition criticism, the government would want to make the challenge anyway. This issue is addressed at greater length below.

We thus have a plausible set of assumptions for how the voters evaluate the two parties based on their performance in the crisis game. Since the parties are assumed to be office-seeking, their primary concern is how these evaluations will ultimately affect their probability of election at some future date. That electoral choice depends, in turn, not on the absolute evaluations, V_{gov} and V_{opp}, but on the relative assessment, or what Downs (1957, 40) refers to as the "party differential." Thus, to complete the payoffs, we assume that the government seeks to maximize $U_{gov} = V_{gov} - V_{opp}$, while the opposition seeks to maximize $U_{opp} = V_{opp} - V_{gov}$. Table 1 summarizes these payoffs as a function of the different possible outcomes. The payoffs corresponding to each terminal node are also shown in Figure 1.

[12] We assume that the audience costs are small relative to the maximum possible costs from war, so that $p_1 - C_1 < -a \leq 0$.

[13] In the Fashoda crisis, for example, the opposition Liberal Party came out strongly in support of the Conservative government's intransigent stance against France. Liberal leader Lord Rosebery made it clear that he would try to capitalize politically should the government soften its stance: "No Government that attempted to recede from or palter with [the current] policy would last a week" (Wright 1951, 41).

Clearly, the voters in this model are not fully rational; at best, they are boundedly so. Fully rational voters use retrospective evaluations as guide to future payoffs, and so they only pay attention to past outcomes if these reflect on the parties' expected future performance. For example, in Smith's (1996) work on the diversionary use of force, voters attempt to discern the government's foreign policy "competence" from past international outcomes in order to gauge the government's likely performance in the next term. In the model presented here, the electorate's war payoff, w_1, is not a function of the governing party's characteristics but of the state's capabilities and the costs and benefits of war to the voters. Consequently, it is not fully rational to evaluate the parties based on the outcome of the crisis game, since the government and opposition would have acted the same way if their roles were reversed. Technically, nothing can be learned of the parties' relative "fitness" for office.

Nevertheless, the simple framework employed here represents a useful simplification and is consistent with other recent models that involve retrospective voting on international crisis outcomes (i.e., Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995; Fearon 1994; Gaubatz 1998). Introducing a fully rational electorate would require a fourth strategic actor and would greatly complicate the information structure of the game. The simple voting scheme employed here is a compromise for the sake of tractability. Moreover, the payoff orderings generated fit the empirical findings cited above. Thus, the payoffs describe a plausible rule-of-thumb decision criterion that meshes with the empirical regularities we have.

SOLUTION TO THE BARGAINING MODEL

This section presents the solution and main results of the bargaining model. Since the goal of this article is to explore how the introduction of a strategic opposition affects the dynamics of crisis bargaining, the central focus is on comparing the equilibria of the game proposed above with those of a game without an opposition party. We can thereby see how behavior and outcomes change when S_1 shifts from a polity in which competition is suppressed to one in which opposition parties openly compete for political support. In practice, capturing the former does not require solving an entirely new model. Setting the parameter r equal to zero while keeping all other assumptions as given generates a game in which the opposition party effectively does not exist.[14] Thus, the core result that interests us is the effect on the game when r shifts from zero to some number greater than zero. The formal solution to the model is presented in the Appendix. Here we present the main results.

Characterization of Equilibrium Strategies

The equilibrium strategies of the government and the opposition are described by a set of cutpoints along the continuum of possible types. The government's strategy is defined by two such cutpoints, which partition the possible types into three ranges. Let k_{gov} and b denote values in the range $[p_1 - C_1, p_1]$, with $k_{gov} \geq b$. A government of type w_1 uses the following decision rule.

(1) If w_1 exceeds k_{gov}, then the government makes the challenge and stands firm at the final node. Since types in this range will carry through on the threat to use force, their challenges can be said to be genuine. It is shown in the Appendix that this cutpoint always equals $-a$, meaning that the government makes genuine challenges whenever the payoff from war is preferable to incurring the audience costs.

(2) If w_1 falls between k_{gov} and b, the government makes the challenge but backs down in the face of a refusal. Since these types will not enforce the threat, their challenges are bluffs.

(3) If w_1 is lower than b, the government selects the status quo. Though types in this range never have to make a choice between standing firm and backing down, their off-the-equilibrium-path strategy is to back down.

When the game includes an opposition party, there is an additional cutpoint describing its strategy. Let k_{opp} denote a value in the range $[p_1 - C_1, p_1]$, such that an opposition of type w_1 uses the following decision rule in response to a government challenge:

(1) If w_1 exceeds k_{opp}, the opposition supports a threat to use force, and

(2) if w_1 is less than k_{opp}, the opposition opposes a threat to use force.

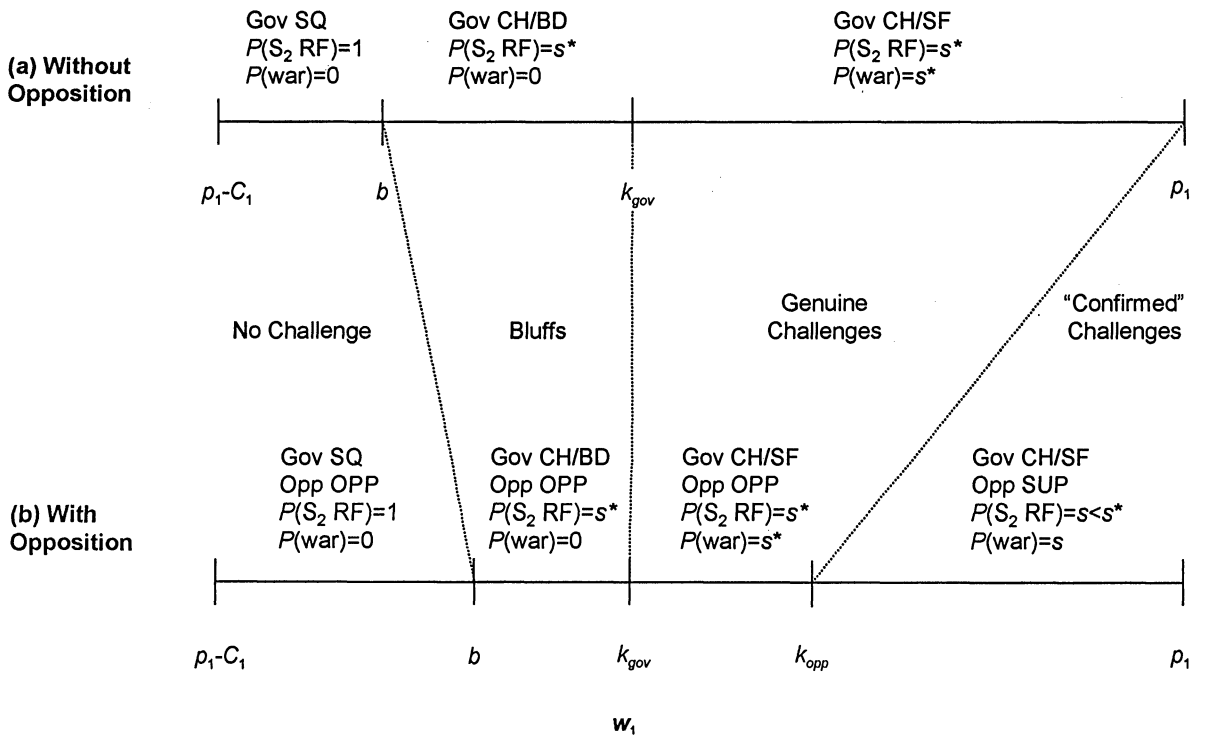
It is shown in the Appendix that $k_{opp} \geq k_{gov}$, implying that the opposition supports only genuine challenges but not all such challenges. When the government chooses the status quo, the opposition supports force if and only if $w_1 \geq 0$. Since the government always makes a challenge in these cases, however, we never see Gov SQ/Opp SUP in equilibrium.

As can be seen in Figure 2, these cutpoints divide the continuum of possible types into three or four regions, depending on whether the game includes an opposition party. When there is none (2a), the government's two cutpoints partition the continuum into three ranges: Types which make genuine challenges, types which bluff, and types which select the status quo. The inclusion of an opposition party (2b) introduces an additional cutpoint, which partitions genuine challenges into those supported by the opposition and those opposed. For reasons that will be clear shortly, we can refer to the former as "confirmed" challenges.

The intuition behind these strategies is straightfor-

[14] Alternatively, we could assume that an opposition party or faction exists but that it cannot publicly dissent from the government. In this interpretation, the opposition can oppose or support the challenge, but it does so privately, so that the rival state cannot observe its position. Formally, this can be captured by assuming that S_2's two decision nodes comprise a single information set, meaning that S_2 does not know which strategy the opposition selected. This interpretation would generate the same predictions as assuming $r = 0$, so the discussion will concentrate on the latter interpretation, since it is simply a special case of the general solution. Moreover, while there is some appeal to assuming that nondemocratic states experience private competition, it is not clear that the voting rule, derived from observations of democratic electorates, is appropriate in this context.

FIGURE 2. The Effect of the Opposition Party on Strategies and Outcomes



Note: BD = Back Down, CH = Challenge, Gov = Government, OPP = Oppose Force, Opp = Opposition Party, RF = Refuse, S_2 = Rival State, SF = Stand Firm, SQ = Status Quo, SUP = Support Force.

ward. As S_1's expected value for war increases, the government's expected payoff from making a challenge also increases. Thus, higher types are more likely to threaten force than lower types. Notice, though, that the government may sometimes bluff in equilibrium. This is a natural result of asymmetric information: There are often incentives for actors to misrepresent their types in hopes of getting a higher payoff. Only when the government's expected payoff from war is very low does it choose to forswear a challenge altogether.

Once the government has made a challenge, the choice of the opposition boils down to a decision either to "match" the government by supporting the threat—thereby sharing credit or blame for the eventual outcome—or to oppose the threat and advocate the status quo. Clearly, as the expected payoff from war goes down, the attractiveness of the former decreases; the opposition prefers to distance itself from a threat that could result in either an unpromising war or a humiliating retreat. As the payoff from war increases, the opposition would rather support the threat and get some credit for the (expected) favorable outcome.

The fact that the opposition's cutpoint, k_{opp}, is higher than the government's cutpoint, k_{gov}, implies that the opposition will sometimes oppose a threat to use force even though the government is willing to make and carry out such a threat. This does not reflect greater dovishness on the part of the opposition but a reluctance to match the government unless the credit from doing so is sufficiently high. We will see shortly that, by supporting the challenge, the opposition can increase the probability that S_2 will concede. As long as $r < 1$, however, the government gets most of the credit for such a success. Thus, the opposition has some incentive to pursue an "irresponsible" strategy: Oppose the threat and gamble that the international outcome will be unfavorable (Gaubatz 1998). This incentive goes away when the state's expected payoff from war is relatively high; in this case, all possible outcomes from the government's challenge are sufficiently attractive to the electorate that the opposition prefers to hop on board.

S_2's equilibrium strategy is a function of its beliefs, which in turn depend upon the signals sent by the government and opposition. Since S_2 only gets to move if the government makes a challenge, two possible signals are of interest: Gov CH/Opp SUP and Gov CH/Opp OPP.[15] From S_2's perspective, the important question upon viewing these signals is: What is the probability that the government will stand firm in response to a refusal? In other words, what is the probability that the challenge was made by a government of type $w_1 \geq k_{gov}$?

As noted above, the opposition only supports genuine challenges. Thus, the support of the opposition unambiguously signals that the government will fight in the event of a refusal. Given this, S_2 knows that it faces a choice between conceding the good or waging war;

[15] It is trivial to show that S_2 plays RF off the equilibrium path if the government plays SQ.

there is no chance that the government will back down. Since conceding leads to a payoff of zero, S_2 refuses only if the costs of fighting are so low that its expected payoff from war, w_2, is greater than zero. Let s denote the probability that this condition holds.

If the opposition opposes the challenge, then S_2 is left uncertain about whether the threat is genuine or a bluff. Recall from Figure 2b that both kinds of threats may be opposed by the opposition. If $k_{opp} > w_1 \geq k_{gov}$, then an opposed threat is still genuine: Governments in this range will stand firm in response to a refusal. Governments for which $k_{gov} > w_1 \geq b$ also make opposed threats, however, and these are bluffs. As a result, S_2 faces some ambiguity regarding the government's true type. The rival state can always concede the good and ensure a payoff of zero. Refusing the challenge is a gamble: There is some chance that the government is bluffing and will back down, but there is also some chance that the threat is genuine and a refusal will lead to war. Because war is only a possibility and not a certainty, even an S_2 that prefers concession to war—that is, for which $w_2 < 0$—may find it optimal to take the gamble and refuse the challenge. The uncertainty generated by the opposition party's strategy thus means that more types of S_2 are willing to refuse the challenge than are willing to do so when the opposition supports the government. The probability with which S_2 refuses when the opposition opposes the threat is consequently greater than the probability with which S_2 refuses when the opposition supports the threat. If we let s^* denote the former, then this intuition implies that $s^* > s$.

The Effect of the Opposition Party

We can now address the central question of this article: How do behavior and outcomes change as a result of the public competition in S_1? What happens to the equilibria when we go from a game without an opposition party to one in which an opposition makes informed public statements? As noted above, we can answer this question by determining how strategies and outcomes change when we move from $r = 0$ to the general case in which r is some value greater than zero. Theoretically, of course, the model can make precise predictions across the entire range of r. Yet, because of how r is defined (the degree to which voters discount policy statements from the party out of power), it is unclear how small variations in this parameter map into real-world variation among political systems. The empirically relevant question is the difference between polities that do and do not suppress competition, a difference which can be captured by comparing the $r = 0$ case with the $r > 0$ case.[16]

The shift from a game without an opposition to one with an opposition entails two important changes. First, the opposition party can increase the credibility of some challenges by publicly supporting the use of force. When S_1's expected value for war is sufficiently high (i.e., $w_1 > k_{opp}$), a strategic opposition has political incentives to back the government's threat to use force. In doing so, the opposition essentially confirms that the government is serious about carrying through on the challenge. The effect of this signal derives from the fact that the opposition is engaged in a competition with the government and supports it only if the expected value for war is sufficiently high. *Thus, while the government may have incentives to bluff, the opposition has no incentive to collude in a bluff.* The rival state interprets a supported threat as a credible threat and will consequently back down, unless it has positive expected utility from war.

Because of this effect, the existence of an opposition party permits information to be revealed more reliably than when the government is the lone voice of the state. Interestingly, the opposition can play this role even when the government's challenge generates no audience costs. When $a = 0$, the government can costlessly make challenges regardless of its type, since the worst possible outcome, backing down and getting zero, is the same as choosing the status quo. Because of this, the government's strategy conveys no information. Yet, the Appendix contains a proof showing that the opposition party still sends informative signals in this case, as its decision to support or oppose still partially separates genuine threats from bluffs. This suggests that the existence of a second information source can compensate for the government's inability to send costly signals.

The second change when a strategic opposition is introduced is a decrease in the government's willingness to bluff. Notice from Figure 2 that cutpoint b shifts to the right when the opposition party is added to the interaction, meaning that the range of types which bluff in equilibrium shrinks. The intuition underlying this result is straightforward. Just as the opposition's support increases the credibility of a threat, the opposition's dissent casts doubt on whether the challenge is genuine. If the government were to leave its strategy unchanged, then the rival state would want to refuse opposed challenges more often. In equilibrium, however, the government compensates by bluffing at a lower rate; formally, b increases. As a result, domestic opposition does not increase the probability of a refusal relative to the case in which no opposition party exists. Instead, the adjustment is made by the government, which becomes more selective about making threats and less inclined to bluff.

What does all this imply for the probability of war? There are three ways to think about this question: the probability of war for different types of S_1; the probability of war ex ante, before the game even starts; and the probability of war given that a challenge has been issued. War occurs in the model whenever the government makes a genuine challenge—that is, a threat it is willing to carry out—and the rival state refuses. Hence, there is only a nonzero probability of war when $w_1 >$

[16] Technically, the changes discussed below do not automatically operate once r moves from zero to any positive number. There may be small but positive values of r for which the game is identical to the $r = 0$ case. In particular, the introduction of the opposition has no effect on the game until r is sufficiently high that $k_{opp} < p_1$. The exact threshold at which this happens can be determined using the specification of k_{opp} given in the Appendix.

k_{gov}, because any threats made by types falling below this cutpoint would not be carried out. Given that a genuine challenge has been made, the probability of war is the same as the probability that S_2 refuses. Using the notation introduced above, this probability is s when the opposition supports the threat and s^* when the opposition opposes the threat or when there is no opposition party. Because the opposition's support confirms the credibility of the threat, s is less than s^*. Thus, for types in the range $[k_{opp}, p_1]$, the probability of war is lower in the game with a publicly active opposition than in the game without such an opposition.

This result implies that the introduction of an opposition party decreases the ex ante probability of war, that is, the probability of war prior to nature's selection of w_1 and w_2. Because the danger of war is reduced in the highest range of w_1, the expected probability of war across the entire range also falls. This result is driven by the fact that the probability of a refusal by the rival state is the same (s^*) when an opposition party opposes the government's threat and when there is no opposition party. Thus, while types in the range $[k_{opp}, p_1]$ see their probability of war decline with the introduction of competition, those in the range $[k_{gov}, k_{opp}]$ have the same probability of war in both versions of the game.[17]

How does public competition affect the conditional probability of war given that a challenge has been made? On this point, the results are ambiguous because of two countervailing effects. Once a challenge is issued, a peaceful outcome can come about in one of two ways: Either S_2 concedes the good, or the government backs down from the challenge. On the one hand, adding an opposition party to the game increases the probability of the former, on average, since the rival state is less likely to refuse challenges publicly supported by the opposition. On the other hand, introducing competition also makes the government less likely to bluff. Given that a threat has been made, the probability that the government will back down in response to a refusal is lower in the game with an opposition than in the game without an opposition. Thus, governments that face domestic competition are less likely to have their challenges refused but more likely to stand firm in the event of a refusal; governments unconstrained by public competition are more likely to have their challenges refused, but they are also more likely to have been bluffing in the first place. Which effect dominates is unclear and depends upon the actual distribution of types.

All these comparative statics make use of the finding that the probability of S_2 refusing a challenge is the same when an opposition party publicly opposes the government's threat and when there is no opposition party. One potential modification to the game would alter this result. As noted earlier, the outcome in which the government selects the status quo and the opposition scores political points by advocating the use of force never happens in equilibrium. The reason is that the electorate's views about war are always correct in expectation. Hence, whenever w_1 is such that the opposition could profitably support the use of force, the government will always make the challenge. Likewise, whenever the government chooses the status quo, the voters' expectations about war are sufficiently pessimistic that they would punish, not reward, the opposition should it advocate force. If we were to assume, however, that the opposition could systematically gain by supporting force after the government has selected the status quo, then the effect on the game would be to increase the probability that S_2 resists after seeing an opposed challenge. The reason is that, if the status quo becomes less desirable to the government because of the opposition's criticism, then equilibrium can only be restored if the rival state refuses challenges at a higher rate, thus making challenges less desirable as well. In this case, the probability of war in the range $[k_{gov}, k_{opp}]$ would be higher when the game includes an opposition party than when it does not. The overall effect on the ex ante probability of war would be ambiguous, since the introduction of the opposition would lower the probability of war in one range and raise it in another.

This caveat is worth noting, but it begs the question of why the electorate would systematically reward the opposition in such a situation. This is not to deny that we do observe cases in which the opposition scores politically by criticizing a government's inaction. Yet, my sense is that this phenomenon would be better captured by moving to a model with heterogeneous voters—in which the government and opposition could play to different segments of the electorate—than by making ad hoc amendments to the current model.

One final comment should be made. In principle, nothing in the underlying logic requires S_1 to be the first mover. We could imagine inserting an additional step at the beginning of the game and permitting S_2 to decide whether to make a challenge. This game is more complicated because it introduces a third signaler. S_2 has no reason to misrepresent its type in the current version of the game, but it would now have a more complex set of incentives. There is no reason to think that the basic insights would be fundamentally affected.

It is worth recalling a caveat mentioned earlier, however: The equilibrium changes if the ex ante probability that S_2 is committed to refusing at its final node is quite high. Thus, if S_2 were to move first and face very large audience costs for conceding, this alternative equilibrium could operate. In this case, there is a good chance that S_2 has to refuse regardless of what the government and opposition do. As a result, the government has no incentive to bluff, and since all the government's threats are genuine, the opposition's decision to support or oppose conveys no additional information. This suggests that there are some condi-

[17] The relationship between the audience cost term, a, and the probability of war is less straightforward because of two countervailing effects. Since all types for which $w_1 > -a$ can and do make genuine threats, an increase in a increases the range of types willing to make the threat and go to war if refused. An increase in a, however, decreases the probability that S_2 will refuse, since the chance that a given challenge is genuine increases with a. The net effect on the ex ante probability of war is unclear.

tions under which the introduction of an opposition in S_1 has no effect on behavior and outcomes in the modified game. As I will suggest below, this claim might generate an additional empirical implication.

IMPLICATIONS

The model suggests that open domestic political competition can decrease the danger of war due to asymmetric information. An unfettered opposition party can enhance the government's ability to make credible threats in a crisis by creating a second information source that effectively confirms the government's resolve. At the same time, the opposition party can undermine the credibility of some challenges by publicly opposing them. Since this strategy threatens to increase the probability of resistance from the rival state, it forces the government to be more selective about making threats. A government has less leeway to engage in strategic misrepresentation when it faces a domestic competitor with political incentives to reveal its low expected value from war. Together, these effects ensure that more information is revealed when a state permits open competition than when it does not.

This argument has important implications for the research program on democracy and international conflict. The model developed here demonstrates a mechanism through which institutions associated with democracy can help states overcome the difficulties inherent in bargaining. Accordingly, we should expect democratic states to have enhanced ability to reach peaceful outcomes relative to states in which competition is restricted or takes place out of public view. Unlike other arguments about democracy, this finding does not require any assumptions about the relative pacifism of democracies. The democratic state in this model is not motivated by norms of nonviolent conflict resolution, nor does it necessarily have "dovish" preferences due to the existence of domestic competition, as Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman (1992) assume. Instead, the model permits a wide range of possible preferences over war and peace. The prediction of fewer wars derives solely from the democratic state's superior ability to signal its true preferences, *whatever those may be*. As a result, this argument is consistent with Layne's (1994) observation that democracies have, in a number of cases, behaved quite belligerently, even toward one another. Indeed, this model shows that one way democratic states can bring about peace is by convincingly demonstrating unanimous support for war.[18]

Because the rival state is treated as a unitary actor, the model stops short of capturing the interaction between two democratic states. As a result, its relevance to the democratic peace—which is primarily a claim about democratic dyads—is more suggestive than conclusive. We can surmise that, if both polities were to permit competition of the kind posited here, then the probability of war would be lower than in an interaction involving one democracy or none. Given that this situation is not explicitly modeled, and given the caveat that the effect of domestic competition may be attenuated when the state is the target of a challenge rather than the initiator, the main value of the model does not lie in rederiving the democratic peace.

Instead, the model's central contribution is in suggesting general processes and patterns associated with democracy. The core logic of the argument—that public contestation facilitates the revelation of information in crises—does not depend on the constitution of the rival state. Thus, these institutions should have effects that are not confined to democratic dyads. A common claim in the democratic peace literature is that there are no such monadic effects and, in particular, that democratic states are just as war prone as nondemocratic states (e.g., Maoz and Abdulali 1989). Recent results in this area have been mixed, however, and several studies suggest that democracy has a generally pacifying influence independent of the regime type of rival states (e.g., Benoit 1996; Gleditsch and Hegre 1997; Ray 1995; Rummel 1995). This model is consistent in spirit with these results. It may also explain why studies of crisis escalation have produced weak and inconsistent results when looking for the effect of democracy on the probability that a crisis will escalate once it begins.[19] As we saw, the relationship between S_1's regime type and the conditional probability of war given a challenge is ambiguous.

In addition, two specific hypotheses emerge from the discussion in the previous section. Two effects are associated with the introduction of an opposition party: A confirmatory effect results from the opposition's ability to strengthen the government's signal, and a restraining effect results from the government's decreased willingness to bluff. The first suggests that, relative to nondemocratic states, regimes that permit public contestation are better able to convince rivals of their seriousness about using force. As a result, the probability that the rival state refuses a challenge must decline.[20] Thus, an implication of the model is that, ceteris paribus, threats made by democracies are less likely to be resisted than those made by states which do not permit competition.

The restraining effect implies that the probability of S_1 making a challenge in the first place decreases with the introduction of an opposition party. Recall that all

[18] This counterintuitive result nicely complements the finding by Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman (1992, 158–60) that states with dovish preferences may, under certain circumstances, be more likely to get involved in wars. Both findings reinforce the need to think about the role of information in mediating between preferences and outcomes.

[19] For example, Morgan and Campbell (1991) and Rousseau et al. (1996) show no or weak monadic effects of democracy on crisis escalation. Inconsistencies also appear in studies that focus on democratic dyads. For example, Rousseau et al. (1996) and Dixon (1994) find that joint democracy lowers the probability that a crisis will escalate to force, whereas Senese (1997) finds that democratic dyads are just as likely, and perhaps even more likely, to escalate to the use of force once involved in a crisis.

[20] In the game without opposition, the probability that S_2 will refuse, conditional on having been challenged, is s^*. In the game with an opposition, the probability of a refusal is the average of s and s^*, weighted by the conditional probability that the opposition supports the challenge. Since $s < s^*$, this weighted average is less than s^*.

types for which $w_1 > b$ make the challenge in equilibrium. Since the shift from suppressed to open competition implies that b increases, the likelihood that w_1 will fall in the relevant range decreases. The government's decreased willingness to bluff means that, all other things being equal, the probability of a challenge from a democratic state is lower than the probability of a challenge from a nondemocratic state. Because both of these effects derive from an argument about democratic states, not democratic dyads, both should be evident at the unit level and not be dependent on dyadic or "joint" democracy. Elsewhere (Schultz 1996, 1998), I provide preliminary evidence in support of these hypotheses.[21]

There may also be empirical leverage in the claim that domestic competition affects the game under a more limited set of conditions when the democratic state is the target rather than the initiator. This implies that, while democracies should be more selective about initiating crises, they may not be significantly more selective when choosing to resist a challenge.

Finally, the model suggests some patterns which should be observed within historical cases. Democratic governments should be sensitive to how domestic competitors may affect their ability to make credible threats in a crisis. They should be particularly careful about making threats that have tenuous political support, since the opposition party can readily undermine those threats. At the same time, foreign states should take into account the signals that emerge from the competitive process and make appropriate inferences. The finding that domestic opposition casts doubt on the credibility of the government's threats squares with a conventional wisdom that democracies are hard to read when they send multiple, contradictory signals. It is precisely under these conditions that the rival state faces the greatest uncertainty and the danger of war is highest. Yet, the model also suggests that mixed signals are only one possible outcome. When the domestic actors can agree, the result is less uncertainty than if there were only one information source. In this sense, the model tells us when we should expect democracies to speak clearly (when the payoff from war is either very high or very low) and when we should expect them to send mixed signals (when the payoff from war is in some middle range).

CONCLUSION

This article fits in the tradition of what Putnam (1988) refers to as "two-level games"—broadly speaking, games in which domestic and international interactions are mutually dependent. It is part of a growing set of formal models with an international actor and multiple domestic actors, all of whose strategies and beliefs are in equilibrium simultaneously (e.g., Milner 1997; Mo 1995; Pahre and Papayoanu 1997; Siverson 1998). Such models are particularly useful in moving beyond the unitary state assumption of traditional realism without undue loss of parsimony. Moreover, they offer a way to formalize general propositions about the effect of domestic institutional arrangements on international outcomes.

As noted at the outset, much of the literature on democracy and war has developed in isolation from the literature on crisis bargaining. Indeed, with few exceptions (Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1992; Fearon 1994), research in this area has failed to embed explanations of the democratic peace within a deductive framework that explains the outbreak of war. This article addresses this shortcoming by combining a model of democratic politics with a standard model of international bargaining that can account for conflictual outcomes. The resulting game shows how the introduction of public competition and a credible opposition party can enhance a state's ability to resolve disputes peacefully.

APPENDIX: FORMAL SOLUTION TO THE BARGAINING GAME

PROPOSITION 1. *The following strategies and beliefs constitute a perfect Bayesian equilibrium to this game.*

(P1.1) The government plays

$$\begin{array}{ll} CH,\ SF & \text{if } w_1 \geq k_{gov}, \text{ where } k_{gov} = -a, \\ CH,\ BD & \text{if } k_{gov} > w_1 \geq b, \text{ and} \\ SQ,\ BD & \text{otherwise.} \end{array}$$

(P1.2) If the government makes a challenge, the opposition plays

$$\begin{array}{ll} SUP & \text{if } w_1 \geq k_{opp}, \text{ and} \\ OPP & \text{otherwise,} \end{array}$$

where $k_{opp} \geq -a$. *If the government plays SQ, then the opposition plays SUP when* $w_1 \geq 0$.

(P1.3) Let q *denote* S_2*'s posterior probability that* $w_1 \geq -a$ *after observing the strategies of the government and opposition. Then,*

$$\begin{array}{ll} q = 1 & \text{if } S_2 \text{ observes } CH \text{ and } SUP, \\ q = \dfrac{F_1(k_{opp}) - F_1(-a)}{F_1(k_{opp}) - F_1(b)} \equiv q^* & \text{if } S_2 \text{ observes } CH \text{ and } OPP, \text{ and} \\ q = 0 & \text{if } S_2 \text{ observes } SQ. \end{array}$$

(P1.4) S_2 *plays*

$$\begin{array}{ll} RF & \text{if } w_2 \geq -\dfrac{1-q}{q}, \text{ and} \\ CD & \text{otherwise.} \end{array}$$

Proof. Most of the elements of this equilibrium are straightforward to derive. The opposition's strategy after the government plays SQ and the government's strategy at its final decision nodes follow readily from the payoffs. The latter turns out not to depend on the opposition's strategy, since in both cases SF is preferred to BD whenever $w_1 \geq -a$. S_2's posterior beliefs, given in P1.3, are derived logically from the strategies and Bayes's rule. Given these beliefs, S_2's expected payoff from RF is a weighted average of its payoff from war and its payoff from getting the good, or

$$EU_2(\text{RF}) = qw_2 + (1 - q). \quad (2)$$

[21] It is interesting to note that Fearon (1994, 585) generates similar predictions based on the assumption that democratic governments can generate higher audience costs—an assumption that is not required here. Though the causal stories leading to these predictions are different, their similarity reflects common reliance on the logic of signaling.

Comparing this value to S_2's certain payoff from CD, zero, yields the decision rule in P1.4.

What remains is to show that the strategies given in P1.1 and P1.2 are sequentially rational and to derive expressions for k_{opp} and b. To do so, we need to derive the two parties' expectations about S_2's behavior. If the opposition supports the threat, S_2 knows that the government will stand firm in the face of a refusal, or $q = 1$. Given this, S_2 plays RF only if $w_2 > 0$—that is, if it prefers war to conceding the good. The probability of this is

$$s \equiv \text{Prob}(w_2 > 0) = 1 - F_2(0). \quad (3)$$

If the opposition opposes the threat, then S_2 updates as shown in P1.3 and plays RF if the condition given in P1.4 holds. The probability with which this condition holds is

$$s^* \equiv \text{Prob}\left(w_2 > -\frac{1-q^*}{q^*}\right) = 1 - F_2\left[\frac{F_1(b) - F_1(-a)}{F_1(k_{opp}) - F_1(-a)}\right]. \quad (4)$$

Since $b < -a$, the term in brackets is less than zero. It follows that s^*, the probability with which S_2 will refuse when the opposition opposes the threat, is always greater than s, the probability with which S_2 will refuse when the opposition supports the threat.

For the government's decision rule to hold, it must be the case that a government of type $-a$ is indifferent between CH and SQ. Since it was proposed that an opposition of type $-a$ will play OPP, the expected value of a challenge for a government of this type is

$$EU_{gov}(\text{CH}) = s^*(-a) + (1 - s^*). \quad (5)$$

The value for choosing SQ is zero. Setting equation 5 equal to zero, we find that

$$s^* = \frac{1}{1+a} \quad (6)$$

must hold for the government's cutpoint to be rational.

Note that S_2's strategy leaves all governments of type $w_1 \leq -a$ indifferent between CH and SQ. Because of this, the cutpoint b separating types that make the challenge from types that choose the status quo can be drawn anywhere in the range $[p_1 - C_1, -a]$. In equilibrium, b must be such that equations 4 and 6 hold simultaneously. Setting these expressions equal to each other, we find that

$$F_1(b) = [F_1(k_{opp}) - F_1(-a)]F_2^{-1}\left(\frac{a}{1+a}\right) + F_1(-a). \quad (7)$$

This expression need not be simplified further for now, since it is sufficient to conduct the comparative statics of interest to this article. It is necessary to point out, however, that for the cutpoint at b to be lower than the cutpoint at $-a$, it must the case that

$$F_2(0) > \frac{a}{1+a}.$$

This implies that the probability with which S_2 has negative expected utility from war must be sufficiently high relative to the audience cost term, a. Proposition 2 (below) considers the equilibrium that results when this condition does not hold.

The opposition's cutpoint must be such that the opposition is indifferent between OPP and SUP when $w_1 = k_{opp}$. For an opposition of this type, expected payoff from supporting the government is

$$EU_{opp}(\text{SUP}) = s(r-1)k_{opp} + (1-s)(r-1). \quad (8)$$

The expected payoff from opposing the government is

$$EU_{opp}(\text{OPP}) = s^*(-k_{opp}) + (1-s^*)(-1). \quad (9)$$

Setting these expressions equal to each other, we find that

$$k_{opp} = 1 - \frac{r}{s^* - s(1-r)}. \quad (10)$$

To check that k_{opp} is indeed bounded at the lower extreme by $-a$, we find that k_{opp} is decreasing in r, meaning that it is minimized when $r = 1$. Substituting $r = 1$ into equation 10 yields

$$k_{opp} = 1 - \frac{1}{s^*} = -a.$$

Both k_{opp} and b can be reduced to functions of the parameters, but the algebra is needlessly messy. The expressions in equations 7 and 10 are sufficient for the comparative statics. In particular, we note that b is a decreasing function of k_{opp} and, hence, an increasing function of r. *Q.E.D.*

PROPOSITION 2. *If* $F_2(0) < a/(1+a)$, *then the equilibrium derived in proposition 1 has the following characteristics.*

(P2.1) $k_{gov} = b = -F_2(0)/(1 - F_2(0)) > -a$.

(P2.2) $k_{opp} = k_{gov}$.

(P2.3) Keeping the definition of q *from above, then*

$q = 1$ *if* S_2 *observes CH (regardless of the opposition's strategy), and*

$q = 0$ *if* S_2 *observes SQ.*

(P2.4) S_2 *plays*

RF if $w_2 \geq 0$, *and*

CD otherwise.

Proof. Assume that the government's cutpoint, k_{gov}, is as given in P2.1. Because $b = k_{gov} > -a$, a threat by the government is always genuine. Hence, regardless of the opposition's strategy, $q = 1$ following a challenge. As before, when $q = 1$, S_2 plays RF only if its expected utility from war is greater than zero. The probability with which S_2 will refuse is thus equal to s, as defined in equation 3.

The government's cutpoint must be such that a government of type $w_1 = k_{gov}$ is indifferent between CH and SQ. Since $k_{gov} > -a$, a government of this type will go to war in the event of a refusal by S_2. Hence,

$$EU_{gov}(\text{CH}) = s(k_{gov}) + (1-s). \quad (11)$$

Setting equation 11 equal to zero, we find that the government is indifferent between SQ and CH if

$$k_{gov} = -\frac{F_2(0)}{1 - F_2(0)},$$

as proposed above. Moreover, $k_{gov} > -a$ whenever the condition stipulated in the proposition holds. Since all types for which $w_1 < k_{gov}$ strictly prefer the status quo, there is no bluffing in this equilibrium, or $b = k_{gov}$.

Finally, the opposition's cutpoint is derived as in equation 10. Since S_2 plays RF with the same probability regardless of the opposition's strategy, however, we derive k_{opp} by setting $s^* = s$. Doing so generates $k_{opp} = k_{gov}$. *Q.E.D.*

The final proposition demonstrates that this game can generate informative signaling in equilibrium even when the government's threat generates no audience costs, or $a = 0$. There are actually two such equilibria. The first is the same as that described in proposition 1, since there is nothing in the

above derivation which requires $a > 0$. In this case, both the strategies of the government and opposition are informative, since not all types of government make the challenge, and the opposition confirms some threats and not others. The second equilibrium takes a slightly different form, because, when there are no costs to backing down at the final node, all possible types of government may make the challenge in equilibrium. In this case, the government's signal is uninformative, but the opposition's signal still helps separate some genuine threats from bluffs.

PROPOSITION 3. *The following strategies and beliefs describe a perfect Bayesian equilibrium to this game when* a = 0.
(P3.1) The government plays

$$\begin{array}{ll} CH,\ SF & \text{if } w_1 \geq 0, \\ CH,\ BD & \text{otherwise.} \end{array}$$

(P3.2) The opposition plays

$$\begin{array}{ll} SUP & \text{if } w_1 \geq k_{opp}, \text{ and} \\ OPP & \text{otherwise, where } k_{opp} \geq 0. \end{array}$$

(P3.3) Let q *equal* S_2*'s posterior probability that* $w_1 \geq 0$ *after observing the strategies of the government and opposition. Then,*

$$\begin{array}{ll} q = 1 & \text{if } S_2 \text{ observes CH and SUP, and} \\ q = \dfrac{F_1(k_{opp}) - F_1(0)}{F_1(k_{opp})} \equiv q^* & \text{if } S_2 \text{ observes CH and OPP.} \end{array}$$

(P3.4) S_2 *uses the decision rule shown in P1.4.*

Proof. The beliefs given in P3.3 follow directly from the equilibrium strategies, and S_2's decision rule is identical to that derived in proposition 1. The strategy of the government follows from the fact that $a = 0$. Because there are no costs to making a challenge and then backing down, only types for which $w_1 \geq 0$ will stand firm at the final node, but all types are willing to make the challenge, since the worst possible payoff from making a challenge (0) is the same as the payoff from playing SQ. Thus, the signaling strategy of the government is uninformative.

To show that there is informative signaling in this equilibrium, we need to show that the opposition's cutpoint, k_{opp}, is greater than or equal to zero, so that the opposition's strategy separates at least some of the types that make genuine threats from those that are bluffing. Determining k_{opp} requires that we first calculate s^*, the probability that S_2 will refuse after the opposition plays OPP. Using the definition of q^* from P3.3, s^* is derived as in equation 4:

$$s^* = 1 - F_2\left[\frac{-F_1(0)}{F_1(k_{opp}) - F_1(0)}\right]. \qquad (12)$$

The calculation of k_{opp} follows exactly as in equations 8–10 above. Substituting equation 12 into equation 10 generates an unwieldy and recursive expression for k_{opp}. Nevertheless, it can be shown that there exists an equilibrium solution in which k_{opp} is greater than or equal to zero. To see this, we note that, if k_{opp} is nonnegative, then it is decreasing in r. It is equal to one when $r = 0$ and hits its minimum when $r = 1$. Thus, if we can show that $k_{opp} \geq 0$ when $r = 1$, it follows that this is true for all values of r.

We conjecture that, when $r = 1$, $k_{opp} = 0$ in equilibrium. If this is true, then the opposition's strategy perfectly separates genuine threats from bluffs: All the former receive support, and all the latter are opposed. In this case, S_2 interprets OPP as a sure signal that $w_1 < 0$, or $q = 0$. As a result, all types of S_2 have an incentive to refuse an opposed challenge, or $s^* = 1$. Substituting $r = 1$ and $s^* = 1$ into equation 10 confirms that $k_{opp} = 0$, as conjectured.

Since k_{opp}, at its minimum, equals zero, it follows that there is some nonnegative solution for k_{opp} for all values of r. Because of this, the opposition continues to send informative signals even when $a = 0$, since its strategy separates some genuine challenges from bluffs. *Q.E.D.*

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