

# Causes of War

**Uncertainty about  
Resolve**

February 24, 2015

# Today's Agenda

- 1. Tips for presentations and critical response papers.**
- 2. Bargaining and uncertainty about resolve.**
- 3. Presentation on "Crises and the Unexpected."**

# Tips

- **Critical response papers**
  - **Argue, don't summarize**
  - **Clarity and simplicity**
- **Presentations**
  - **Focus on main argument of paper**
  - **Keep slides simple**



# Reorientation

## War as a Bargaining Problem

- What brings states to the bargaining table?**
- Why does bargaining fail?**

# Recap: Components of Bargaining

- **Two or more actors**
- **Valuable object at stake**
- **Settlement outcome**
  - **Division of the object**
  - **All must agree**
- **Disagreement outcome**
  - **If a settlement isn't reached**
  - **Each actor gets their *reservation value***

# Bargaining and War

**Disagreement outcome = war.**

**Reservation values depend on:**

- 1. Capabilities: expected share after war.**
- 2. Resolve: costs of fighting.**

# Resolve and Bargaining

**Greater resolve → higher reservation value**

- More bargaining power**
- Better settlements**
- Fewer concessions**

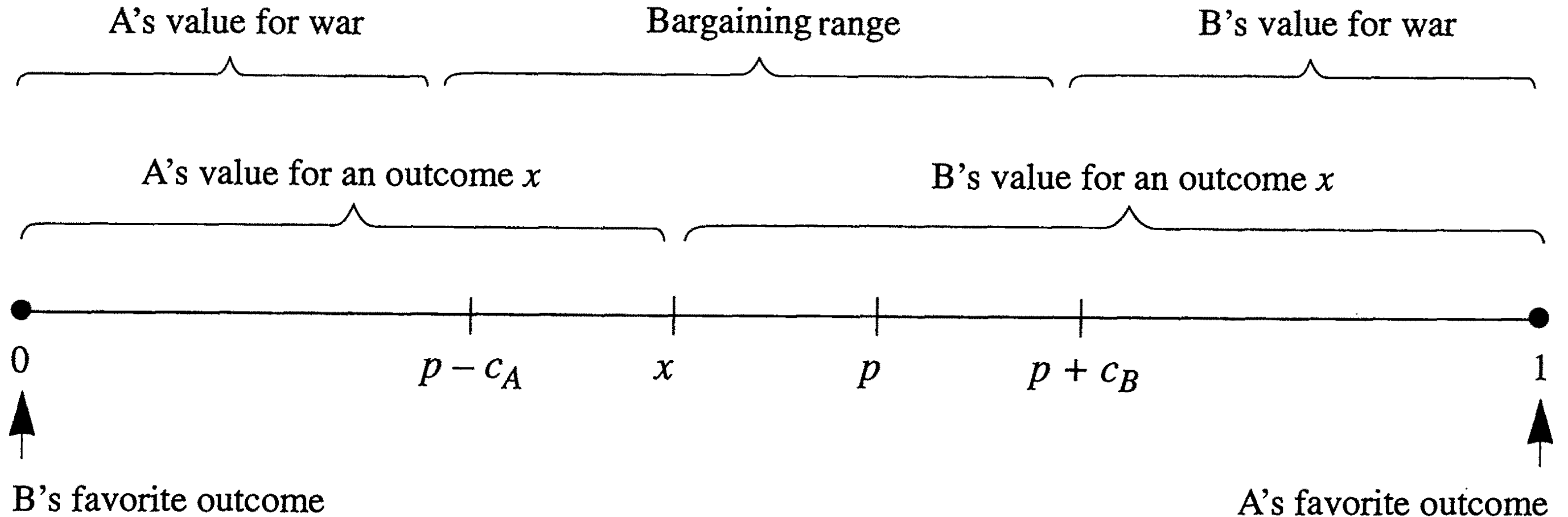
**What makes a state more  
or less willing to fight?**



# Components of Resolve

- **Importance of the issue at stake**
- **Domestic politics**
- **Culture**
- **Leader personality**

# The Puzzle of War



**FIGURE 1.** *The bargaining range*

# Fearon's Argument

***Uncertainty about resolve* is one reason why bargaining fails.**

# Risk-Reward Tradeoff

- **Enemy's resolve  $\uparrow$  concessions needed to avoid war**
- **Lower concessions: the tradeoff**
  - **Risk: greater chance of war**
  - **Reward: more favorable settlement if no war**



## Why Take the Risk?

### An Extreme Illustration

**Imagine North Korea threatens to bomb California.**

- 25% chance it's bluffing**
- 74% chance it'll back down for \$1 billion**
- 1% chance it'll only back down for \$100 billion**

**What do you offer?**

# Resolve and Diplomacy

**Why don't I just tell you how resolved I am?**

**Fearon: *incentives to misrepresent.***



# Incentives to Misrepresent

## An Extreme Illustration

**Imagine you expect North Korea to be honest.**

- "We're bluffing" → concede nothing**
- "We need \$1 billion" → concede \$1 billion**
- "We need \$100 billion" → concede \$100 billion**

**So what will they say?**

# Incentives to Misrepresent

## Rational expectations:

**In long run, expectations must match reality.**

- I prefer to lie → you expect me to lie**
- Why diplomacy doesn't prevent war**

# How to Signal Resolve

**Do things only a highly resolved country would do.**

**(i.e., things that raise the risk of war)**

## For Next Time

- **Fun<sup>1</sup> game! With a prize!**
- **Read Levy, "Misperception and the Causes of War" (JSTOR)**
- **Presentations on "War Is in the Error Term" and "Does Private Information Lead to Delay or War in Crisis Bargaining?"**

<sup>1</sup> Maybe.

# Image Sources

- **Poker game:** V1LL14N, via [Flickr](#)
- **Bargaining range:** Fearon (1995)
- **Kim Jong-Un with saxophone:** HarryCane, via [Wikimedia Commons](#)