



Causes of War

Mobilization and War

March 19, 2015

Today's Agenda

- 1. Mobilization and war.**
- 2. Presentation on "Inventing the Railroad and Rifle Revolution."**
- 3. Presentation on "Surprise Attack and Disarmament."**

Recap: Sinking Costs

- **Resolve = willingness to pay war costs**
- **Potential challenger doesn't know if you're resolved**
 - **Resolved → Don't challenge**
 - **Unresolved → Challenge**
- **Sinking costs = burn money to show you're willing to pay war costs**

Tying Hands

Instead of paying the cost of war up front, make it more costly to back down later on.

Tying Hands: How It Works

- **Resolved → Tie hands**
 - **Challenger knows you won't back down**
 - **Less likely to challenge**
 - **If challenged, you fight**
- **Unresolved → Don't tie hands**
 - **Challenger knows you will back down**
 - **Challenges you**
 - **You back down**

Tying Hands and the Risk of War

Tying your hands is a good deal!

- No upfront costs**
- Reduces risk of challenge**

So why don't unresolved states do it too?

- Have to fight if challenged**
- Greater risk of war**

Mobilization Serves Both Purposes

- **Sinks costs**
 - **Expensive**
 - **Public, visible to opponent**
- **Ties hands**
 - **Fighting less costly than before**
 - **Chance of victory greater than before**

Mobilization and the Risk of War

- **Unresolved → don't mobilize**
 - **Opponent challenges, you back down**
 - **No war**
- **Kinda resolved → mobilize a bit**
 - **Opponent only challenges if resolved**
 - **Chance of war**
- **Highly resolved → mobilize a lot**
 - **Opponent never challenges**
 - **No war**

So Does Mobilization Cause War?

In individual cases? Yes.

On the whole? Probably not.

The Price of Peace and the Puzzle of War

- **When peace prevails**
 - **Low mobilization**
 - **High mobilization**
- **Settlements not always efficient**
- **Moving forward the puzzle of war?**

For Next Time

- **Read Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics" (JSTOR)**
- **Presentation on "International Conflict and the Tenure of Leaders"**
- **Presentation on "Political Bias and War"**

Image Sources

— **Italian soldiers mobilizing:** [**Wikimedia Commons**](#)