Causes of War

Mutual Optimism

February 26, 2015

Today's Agenda

1. Dice game.
2. Presentation on "War Is in the Error Term."
3. Presentation on "Does Private Information Lead to Delay or War in Crisis Bargaining?"

Let's Play a Game

— Two players each roll a dice
— Whoever rolls higher wins

A More Interesting Version

1. Each player rolls and *privately* sees own roll
2. Each player simultaneously:
   — Chooses "play" or "don't play"
   — Reveals roll

Both "play" → pay small cost, play game

Either "don't play" → no cost, no play

Each round: 20 points at stake

Playing costs 1 point each.

— **Don't play: +10 points each**
— **Play and win: +19 points**
— **Play and lose: –1 point**
— **Play and tie: +9 points each**

Actions

Player 1: ⚀ + "don't play"

Player 2: ⚅ + "play"

Outcome: No Play

Player 1: gain 10 points

Player 2: gain 10 points

Actions

Player 1: ⚀ + "play"

Player 2: ⚅ + "play"

Outcome: 2 Wins

Player 1: lose 1 point

Player 2: gain 19 points

Actions

Player 1: ⚃ + "don't play"

Player 2: ⚃ + "play"

Outcome: No Play

Player 1: gain 10 points

Player 2: gain 10 points

Actions

Player 1: ⚃ + "play"

Player 2: ⚃ + "play"

Outcome: Tie

Player 1: gain 9 points

Player 2: gain 9 points

Rules

— Play the game with 10 classmates
   — Different person each time
— Record outcome of each round on worksheet
— Whoever gets most points wins!

What Does This Have to Do with War?

Can mutual optimism cause mutual war?

Nope.[1]

[1] Dice game and application to war taken from Mark Fey and Kristopher Ramsay, "Mutual Optimism and War," *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 4 (2007): 738–754.

Image Sources

— **Dice photo: Curtis Perry, via Flickr**
— **Die faces: Wikimedia Commons**