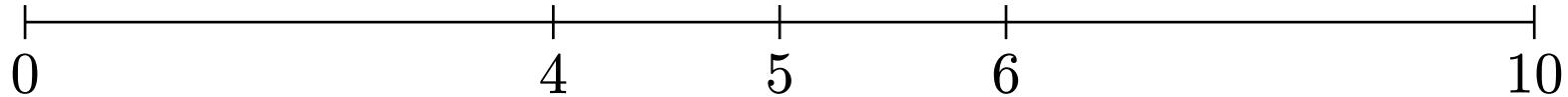


# Prospects of Peace

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**Question.** Is international relations conflictual? (Why so?)

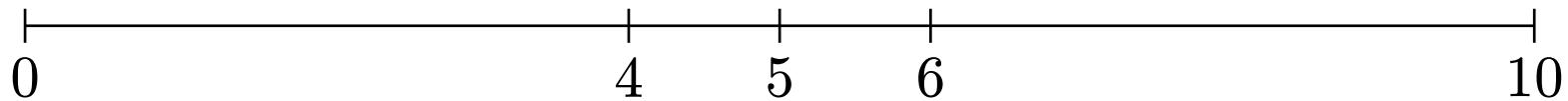
## War is Puzzling



A simple model of conflict between States  $A$  and  $B$ :

- $A$  and  $B$  are disputing over a island of value 10
- Each state chooses either to fight or to negotiate
  - **War** occurs if either one fights
  - **Peace** occurs if both negotiate
- $A$  and  $B$  are equally powerful
  - Both get half of the island (5) after a war
- War is costly:
  - Casualty, damage to infrastructure, trade disruption, etc.
  - Both  $A$  and  $B$  have to pay a cost 1 if war occurs

## War is Puzzling



So, if war occurs, both  $A$  and  $B$  get  $5 - 1 = 4$

What if  $A$  and  $B$  negotiate?

- They can divide the island in however way they like as long as they both agree
- **Both must get at least 4** to be better than war

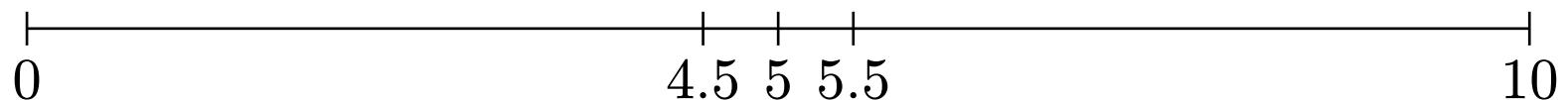
Can they agree to split half and half?

- Yes, they can, because they both get  $5 > 4$

Can they agree to split at 4?

- Yes, they can, because  $A$  gets  $4 \geq 4$  and  $B$  gets  $6 > 4$

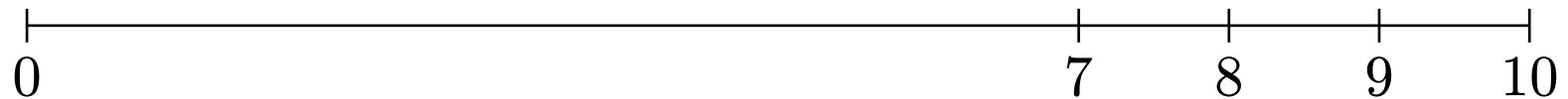
## War is Puzzling



What if the cost of war is very small (0.5)?

- They can still agree to split at anywhere between 0.45 and 0.55
- War does not occur as long as the cost of war is larger than 0

## War is Puzzling



What if  $A$  is much more powerful than  $B$  (now  $A$  can get 80%)?

- They can still agree to split at anywhere between 7 and 9
- War does not occur no matter how powerful  $A$  (or  $B$ ) is

## **Human Nature?**

People fight because they are bad – **Classical Realism** (Morgenthau 1985)

- Will to power & domination

### **Problems**

- Tautological: weak explanatory power
- Cannot explain temporal & spatial variations

## Structure?

The system forces states to fight – **Structural Realism** (Waltz 1979)  
(no matter whether people are good or bad)

- Anarchy (i.e., no enforcement by a central authority) → self-help  
→ balancing (e.g., arms race, alliances) → misperception
- Polarity & power distribution:
  - Bipolar v.s. multipolar systems: bipolar is more stable  
(balancing is easier → less misperception) (?)

## Problems

- Abstracts out domestic politics
- Is polarity really enough to explain misperception?
- Does anarchy really preclude cooperation?

## **Repetition Generates Cooperation?**

People/states can cooperate even under anarchy

**Repeated interactions** generate cooperation – **Neoliberalism**

(Axelrod 1984; Keohane 1984)

- Defection might give one-time gain, but closes the door to future cooperation
- States have incentive to invest to sustain cooperation:
  - e.g., creating **international organizations**
- Those institutions make cooperation even more likely and stable

## Repetition Generates Cooperation?

A B	Not Arm (Cooperate)	Arm (Defect)
Not Arm (Cooperate)	A gets 3, B gets 3	A gets 1, B gets 4
Arm (Defect)	A gets 4, B gets 1	A gets 2, B gets 2

When they play this game only once, both choose to Arm (Defect)

- No matter what the opponent does, defection is better

But, when they play this repeatedly, cooperation can last forever

- Both first cooperate, warning to defect if the other defects
- Cooperation gives  $3 + 3 + 3 + \dots$ ; defection gives  $4 + 2 + 2 + \dots$

Even under anarchy, **self-enforcing cooperation** is possible

→ Anarchy is not enough to explain conflict

## Obstacle to Self-Enforcing Cooperation 1: Relative Gains

Repetition does not help if states care about **relative gains** (Grieco 1988)

- States care not just about gaining by themselves, but also about gaining **more than the other** → they play a **zero-sum game**

A B	Not Arm (Cooperate)	Arm (Defect)
Not Arm (Cooperate)	3, 3	1, 4
Arm (Defect)	4, 1	2, 2

A B	Action 1	Action 2
Action 1	1, 0	0, 1
Action 2	0, 1	1, 0

## **Obstacle to Self-Enforcing Cooperation 2: Power Shift**

The repeated game doesn't represent one important aspect

- Defection (arming, military attack) can change the game itself
  1. Arming → better prospect for winning → better negotiation
  2. Military attack → enemy removed → no need for defense

→ One-time defection can largely improve one's future prospects

### **Power Shift** (Powell 2006)

- Preemptive strike: large first mover's advantage causes conflict (e.g., WW1, Pearl Harbor)
- Preventive war: the threat of a rising state causes conflict
  - ▶ A.J.P. Taylor: “every Great Power war started as a preventive war”
  - ▶ “Thucydides Trap (Allison 2017)”

## Obstacle to Self-Enforcing Cooperation 3: Costly Peace

**Costly Peace** (Coe 2018; Powell 2006)

- Containing a threat (without going to war) can be costly over time
  - War can be cheaper than peace (containment)

2003 Iraq War (Coe 2018):

- High costs of containment (anticipated by US)
  - Stable-seeming Saddam's regime
  - Heightening oil prices
  - Weakening support for sanctions due to humanitarian costs
  - Rising terrorism threats
- Low costs of war (anticipated by US)
  - Iraqi military severely degraded by sanctions
  - Improved US military capabilities (e.g., precision strikes)

## **Within-Realists Debate: How Severe is the Security Dilemma?**

Not all realists contend that anarchy always causes conflict

- When does it do so and when does it not?

### **Security Dilemma (Jervis 1976)**

- One's security-seeking undermines the others' security
- But its severity should depend on several factors

### **Offense-Defense Balance**

- Whether it's easier to attack or defend
  - Pre-WW1 Europe: railroads enabled fast mobilization
  - Nuclear era: huge "second strike" threat

## **Within-Realists Debate – Defensive v.s. Offensive Realism**

### **Defensive Realism** (Glaser 2010; Jervis 1976; Kydd 2007)

- Peace under anarchy is not so hard because:
  - defense is dominant today
  - states can credibly communicate their peaceful intentions

### **Offensive Realism** (Mearsheimer 2014)

- Peace under anarchy is hard because:
  - offense/defense distinction is ambiguous
  - states' intention is unknowable & doesn't matter because even security-seekers must maximize their own power

## Conclusion

All agree that **anarchy** is the fundamental impediment to cooperation

They disagree on how severe it is / when & how states overcome it

To understand / evaluate these debates, it is critical to:

- Figure out what set of assumptions each argument is based on
  - people often rely on hidden assumptions
  - formalization of arguments often helps a lot in doing so
- Consider how realistic / strong each of these assumptions is

Other strands of literature:

- **Domestic politics** – democracies are more likely to cooperate?
- **Gender** – female leaders are more likely to bring peace?

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