Showing Restraint, Signaling Resolve

Coalitions, Cooperation, and Coercive Diplomacy

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Research Agenda

Question (general). How do coalitions bargain?

- Unilateral v. multilateral coercion
- Threats and signaling (today)
- Maintaining cooperation
- Survival and death after victory

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Research Question

Question (specific). How do coalitions signal?

- Third parties (partners) often blamed for "weak" signals
  - Fearon 1997, Russett 1963
  - Christensen 2011, Byman & Waxman 2002
- Maintaining military cooperation critical
  - Berlin 1961
  - Kosovo 1999

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Defining concepts

What *are* military coalitions?

- ≥ 2 states that make a joint threat of war
- Formal or informal
- Must agree on threats, demands
- Must cooperate in carrying out threats

Open questions...

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Motivation

The problem of "skittish" partners

- Uneven distribution of the costs of war
- Different preferences over threats/demands
- Affects incentives for cooperation

How does this affect

- signaling dynamics with a target?
- the probability of war?

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Assumptions

Threats (signals), bargaining, military cooperation

- Leader, (potential) partner, target
- T uncertain over L's resolve
- Mobilization (m_L) affects military balance and costs of war

$$-m_L + \frac{m_L + m_P}{m_L + m_P + m_T} v_L - c_L(m_L + m_P + m_T)$$

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Assumptions

Threats (signals), bargaining, military cooperation

- Leader, (potential) partner, target
- T uncertain over L's resolve
- Mobilization affects military balance and costs of war
- Partner can refuse cooperation in event of war
  - (endogenous coalition formation)

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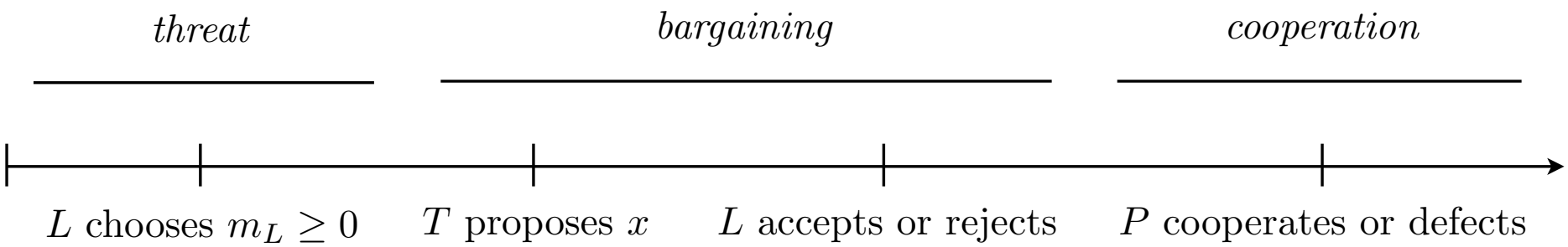
Sequence of Moves



Equilibria

When P cooperates iff low mobilization (skittish)...

- Coalitions form around moderated threats
- When target is strong,
  - preserving cooperation is disincentive to bluff
  - partner's presence *reduces* probability of war
- When target is weak,
  - preserving cooperation is disincentive to separate
  - partner's presence *increases* probability of war

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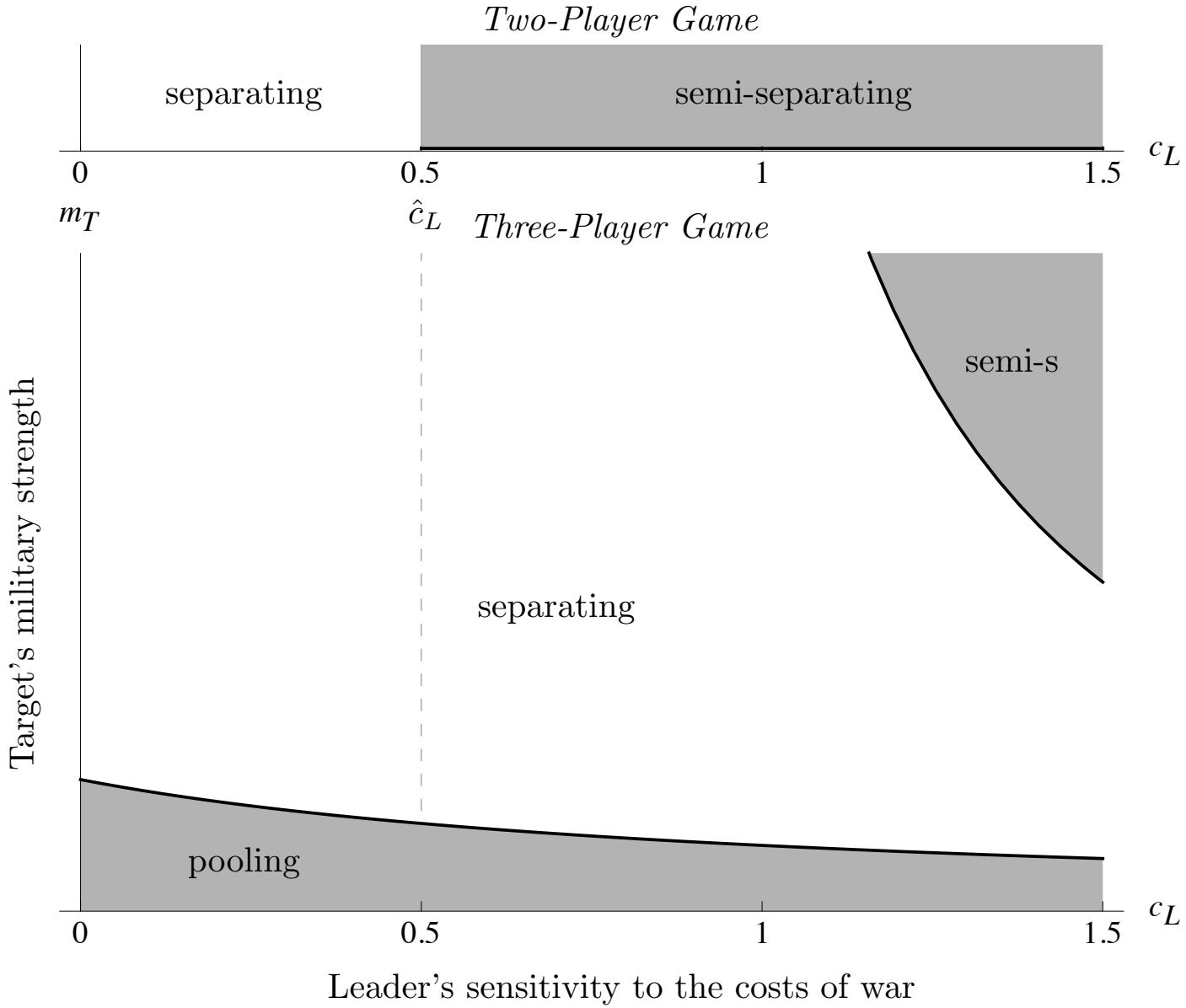
Two- and Three-Player Equilibria



Summary

- Partners can increase or decrease the probability of war
  - Raise Pr(War) vs. weak targets
  - Lower Pr(War) vs. strong targets
- Acting unilaterally as a signal of resolve
- When resolute types send weak signals,
  - Wars less costly
  - Coalition less likely to win

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Conclusion

The tradeoff: signaling resolve, showing restraint

- Coalitional politics affect the probability of war
  - intra-coalitional politics. . . *and* the target
- Microfoundations for conjectures about third parties
  - Not always "bad". . . nor always "good"
- Logic behind coalition formation
  - "Weak" threats can tie hands against risky bluffing

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Conclusion

Questions?

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