GAME THEORY & DETERRENCE THEORY

Ch. 9: What Causes War? International Interactions
Notes by Denis Bašić
Come, Watson, come. The game is afoot.  
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

More nations can back themselves into war through retreat and appeasement rather than by standing up for what they believe.  
Ronald Reagan
What is the Game Theory?

- Interaction between nations can be seen as a game in the sense that nations compete with each other to attain certain rewards.

- Game theory has been developed from the disciplines of logic and mathematics to provide a way of understanding certain types of gamelike situations and to assist in the development of strategies for making actual decisions.

- Game Theory purposes are twofold.
  - One is practical and normative - to help decision-makers cope with certain situations in the real world by developing strategies for rational behavior.
  - The other is theoretical and empirical - to help explain why certain actions occur in certain situations.

- Game theory might be useful in helping us understand a variety of international interactions in which strategies are developed by one side to counter the actions and strategies of others: crisis interactions, diplomatic bargaining, arms races, deterrence, prewar mobilizations, colonial competition, and many others.
The Assumptions of Game Theory?

1. Mankind is rational (or at least most men are rational most of the time), and governments may be thought of as single, rationally calculating entities. Rationality in this sense means that each party seeks to maximize his or her own interests.

2. The utility (worth or payoff) of each outcome can be calculated and quantified on either an interval scale or an ordinal scale of relative desirability. This provides a standard by which strategies can be rationally compared according to their ability to contribute to the maximization of one's interests.
Zero-Sum Game

Zero-Sum Game is a game of pure conflict. One player always wins and the other player always loses. There are no chances for mutual gain or mutual loss. Further, what one player wins corresponds exactly to what the other player loses, and the sum of the numbers in each cell of the matrix is therefore zero.

Game Matrix 7–1: Guerrilla Warfare
Zero-Sum Game cont’d

Player I is a police force and player II is a rebel guerrilla unit. The police can choose either (A) to enter the jungle in pursuit of the rebels, a dangerous strategy since this is the rebels' home territory, or (B) to protect the cities, areas where they presumably have more support.

The guerrillas have a choice of (C) full-scale, open battles or (D) small-scale skirmishes fought with unorthodox techniques.

From the perspective of the police, city protection is the preferred strategy. If they pursue the rebels into the jungle, they lose whether in open battle or in skirmishes - it's just a question of how much.

The guerrillas also have a dominant strategy. Whether in the jungle or in the cities, they stand to win more and lose less if they restrict the battle to skirmishes. Thus, both sides have a dominant strategy - a strategy that they should try to play consistently given the structure of the situation, the choices available to them, and the payoffs.

The interests of each side therefore converge in the cell B,D in the lower right quadrant. The police will stay at home and protect the cities and the rebels will attack with skirmish techniques.
The Best Strategy

The B,D solution represents a *saddle point*, an *equilibrium point* at which the strategies of each side logically converge. If a game has a *saddle point* (not all do), it usually denotes a *minimax (or maximin) solution*.

A *minimax solution* represents the best each player can do against a *fully rational opponent*.

It is a general axiom in two-person zero-sum games that the *best strategy* for each is based on the *minimax principle*: each player should try to maximize his minimum gain or minimize his maximum loss.

This is a conservative strategy and applies only to zero-sum games.
Non-Zero-Sum Games

Not all situations are zero sum in nature; in fact, most political situations include elements of cooperation as well as conflict.

Players may seek mutual gains or may suffer mutual losses. Players have common interests as well as an interest in besting the other.

Some common interests among nations might include the avoidance of mutual negative payoffs (such as nuclear annihilation and the cost of an arms race) as well as the achievement of mutual benefits (such as increased trade and mutual access to the wealth of the seabed).

Let us look at some non-zero-sum games, games in which the sum of the payoffs in each cell do not add up to zero. Game Matrix 7.2 (9.2) is illustrative of a game commonly called chicken.
Chicken

For the full text that relates to the diagram below, read Cashman, pp. 321-323.

Game Matrix 7.2: Chicken

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Player II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C (drive straight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Player I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A (drive straight)</td>
<td>-20 (-20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (swerve)</td>
<td>-5 (+5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to win a chicken-like confrontation?

In order to have a chance of winning a chicken-like confrontation, you must pursue a strategy designed to ensure that your opponent will believe beyond any doubt that you will not swerve and that therefore the only logical action for your adversary is to get out of your way.

A winning strategy therefore depends on your establishing your credibility [as a non-rational person]. Winners of the game of chicken are successful because they succeed in persuading their opponents into believing they are committed to a strategy of suicide and that they are absolutely inflexible in this strategy.

In a sense, success depends on demonstrating that you are not rational, but irrational—that death (-20) is more preferable to you than humiliation (-5). If this belief can be generated, then the choice is purely up to your opponent to choose life or death for both of you.

(Could this be the strategy of the former Iranian president Ahmadinajad?)

The success of this strategy depends on two things:
1. you must establish your credibility as a non-rational person;
2. you must establish your credibility before your adversary steals your strategy and does exactly the same thing.
Chicken situations among nations

If the best way to win a crisis confrontation is to make an iron-clad commitment and charge ahead, then it is reasonable to assume that this posture will be adopted simultaneously by both sides! The strategy then becomes an iron-clad rush to destruction.

Snyder and Diesing find that coercive (competitive) tactics are frequently effective in real-world chicken situations among nations, especially against weaker opponents. But, such tactics run serious risks against rivals with relatively equal capabilities and interests.

In continuous or indefinitely repeated (iterated) chicken games, each driver may choose to drive straight (defect) rather than swerve (cooperate) on the assumption that this will coerce the adversary into swerving in the future. Each may seek to acquire a reputation as a hard-charging, non-swerving player.
Chicken games & deterrence relationships

Chicken games have been seen as applicable to *deterrence relationships* and to crisis confrontations, including “brinkmanship” crises.

[brinkmanship - practice of pursuing a dangerous policy to the limits of safety, to the brink of war, before stopping.]

We have seen previously that chicken-esque confrontations frequently lead to war, especially if leaders in one state perceive the rival's no-swerve strategy to be a *bluff* rather than a real commitment. In such cases the saddle point of swerve/swerve cannot be reached owing to a misperception of the opponent's commitment.

Of course, the saddle point may also be unattainable if one side sees the payoffs for swerving to be so severe that death is seen as equal or preferable to humiliation.

(Think of Japanese kamikazes and Islamic suicide-bombers)
Cuban Missile Crisis

It might be argued that some of the interactions between the United States and Soviet Union during the Cuban Missile Crisis took on aspects of a chicken game.

The United States signaled that it was willing to use force (including the use of nuclear weapons) against the Soviet Union if the latter's missiles were not removed from Cuba, thus establishing a firm no-swerve position.

The Soviets could choose to proceed full steam ahead, but the United States had already demonstrated the credibility of its willingness to act rashly if pushed. This credibility had been conveyed through words (Kennedy's public statements) and deeds (the naval blockade of Cuba and the alert of U.S. forces).

Although American credibility to fight over the issue had been established, according to Cashman, Soviet credibility to fight on behalf of her Cuban ally was lacking and the Soviets probably realized this. The best they could do was to minimize their loss and retreat gracefully.
End of Cuban Missile Crisis

Cashman states that Kennedy's promise to refrain from attacking Cuba, along with the possibility of American missiles being removed from Turkey, made the payoff for backing down (swerving) more palatable than it would otherwise...

In reality, it appears that both sides were bold at one point, and chickened at the other. Such is the nature of “brinkmanship.”

Hence, the results of the Cuban Missile Crisis are:
• Withdrawal of the Soviet Union's nuclear missiles from Cuba
• Withdrawal of the United States' nuclear missiles from Turkey and Italy
• Agreement with the Soviet Union that the United States would never invade Cuba
• Creation of a nuclear hotline between the United States and the Soviet Union
• Fidel Castro's position as Cuban leader strengthened
Prisoners’ Dilemma

For the full text that relates to the diagram below, read Cashman, pp. 323-326.
Why are mutual cooperation and mutual gain so hard to achieve?

1. To achieve mutual cooperation each player has to renounce the higher payoff he can attain by unilateral defection. Although there are rewards for mutual cooperation in the game of prisoners' dilemma, unilateral noncooperation gives the highest reward.

2. The players have no advance knowledge of the other's choice; they cannot communicate prior to their decision. This makes it extremely difficult to forge a mutual strategy of cooperation.

3. Trust, an important ingredient for mutual cooperation, is presumed to be absent. Thus, in the absence of trust and in the absence of communication that might generate such trust, each party is compelled to act in a manner injurious to both.
Iterated (repeated) game

Finally, the ability to cooperate depends on the number of times the game will be played. In the classic example the two suspects will get only one chance to play.

However, in an *iterated game*, in which play is continuous, competitors are able to learn from each other's moves. If the game is only played once, players don't have to worry about which option their rivals will choose the next time. But the knowledge that numerous interactions will appear between them in the future will quickly make them realize that neither has anything to gain from continued noncooperation.

Realizing that the choices one makes today will influence one's rival's moves tomorrow, players learn to signal their willingness to cooperate through their moves. A cooperative choice in the present may induce reciprocal cooperation in the future.
Prisoners’ Dilemma Game in International Relations

Prisoners' dilemma games are widely applicable to all sorts of situations in international relations. For instance, prisoners' dilemma might be applied to the prewar mobilization of armies, to the formation of alliances, to imperialistic competition for colonies, or to free trade versus protectionist policies.

The structure of these situations is analogous to prisoners' dilemma games in that they are all situations where mutual restraint is preferable, but where the best policy is to forgo restraint and avoid being a sucker if others refuse to restrain themselves.

Robert Axelrod identifies an other interesting prisoners' dilemma example. He claims that soldiers in World War I developed a tacit "live and let live" policy in the trenches in western Europe. Army battalions avoided action to damage the enemy under certain circumstances in return for mutual restraint. The important point for Axelrod is that in trench warfare:

“...small units faced each other in immobile sectors for extended periods of time. This changed the game from a one move prisoners' dilemma in which defection is the dominant choice, to an iterated prisoners' dilemma in which conditional strategies are possible.”
Arms Race as a Prisoners’ Dilemma

For the full text that relates to the diagram below, read Cashman, pp. 326-330.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Player II</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C (arm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A (arm)</td>
<td>-10 (-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (don't arm)</td>
<td>-20 (+20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Game Matrix 7–4: Arms Control
Arms Races as “iterated games”

1. Luckily, arms acquisition processes are not constrained by the formal restraints placed on prisoners' dilemma games. Real-world players may communicate with each other with words and deeds; this greatly improves their understanding of the future moves of their rivals.

2. arms races are not "one-shot" games. Instead, they are made up of a series of many decisions over many years - decisions about testing, research and development, and deployment of many different weapons systems and modifications of those systems. In a sense, it is a continuous game with an infinite number of interactions, that is, an "iterated" game.

3. Knowledge that the "game" will continue indefinitely has a significant impact on the way in which players approach the game.

4. In such situations both parties have knowledge of their adversary's past behavior and understand that their own present behavior will affect the future behavior of their rival.
Solving the Prisoners’ Dilemma TIT-FOR-TAT

Game theorists from many countries and from a variety of academic disciplines were invited to submit "decision rules" - computer programs that embody a strategy or rule that determines which move to make in each successive turn of the game. Each entry was paired against every other entry (as well as with itself and with a program representing a random series of choices). The winner would be the decision rule with the most total points accumulated in all the matches. Two computer tournaments were held. The same program won both tournaments, TIT-FOR-TAT, a rule submitted by Anatol Rapoport.

TIT-FOR-TAT (TFT) is a very simple rule. Its first move is to cooperate, and thereafter it does exactly what the other player did on the previous round. It rewards cooperative behavior and punishes antagonistic behavior. What makes TFT so successful? Axelrod has suggested that TFT and the other successful tournament rules had several similar properties:
Solving the Prisoners’ Dilemma TIT-FOR-TAT - part 2

1. it paid to be **nice**. A nice rule is one that will never be the first to defect. Nice rules did very well in both tournaments.

2. the best rules were also **provocable**. That is, they immediately punished rivals after an uncalled - for defection. Provocable rules immediately defect after the defection of an opponent. If a rule does not retaliate in this manner, it will frequently be taken advantage of by rules that are not nice. It pays to be nice, but it doesn't pay to be too nice.

3. the best rules were also **forgiving** - defined as the propensity of the rule to cooperate in the moves after the other defected. If the other program resumes cooperation after its defection, TFT is willing to let bygones by bygones and will immediately resume cooperation in response. In other words, it engages in short-term punishment, but is willing to return to cooperation if this is signaled by the opponent. **TIT-FOR-TAT** represents a perfect illustration of the concepts of niceness, forgiveness, and provocability.

"It is never the first to defect, it forgives an isolated defection after a single response, but it is always provoked by a defection no matter how good the interaction has been so far."
4. TFT benefits from its own simplicity and clarity. It is easily recognized by its opponents. It is usually quite clear early in the encounter that TFT is offering cooperation in return for reciprocity, but will also reciprocate **defection**.

Since TFT's strategy is clear, it is evident to the opponent that the best way to respond to TFT is with mutual cooperation.

**TIT-FOR-TAT** represents a good strategy for dealing with iterated prisoners' dilemmas because, as **Axelrod** states,

"Its niceness prevents it from getting into unnecessary trouble. Its provocability discourages the other side from persisting whenever defection is tried. Its forgiveness helps restore mutual cooperation. And its clarity makes it intelligible to the other player, thereby eliciting long-term cooperation."

**TFT proves to be a good strategy against bullying.**

Although TFT is generally recognized as the single best strategy for playing iterated games of prisoners' dilemma. It is probably applicable as well to iterated chicken games. For instance, Kenneth aye notes that a strategy of reciprocity in such situations can offset the perverse effects of no-swerve strategies designed to establish reputations for roughness."
danger of locking in

A strategy sometimes called tFT (small tit-For-Tat) responds to the opponent's defection by retaliation one degree less than the opponent's original move.

In fact, this modified strategy won a computer tournament constructed by Theodore To, with TFT coming in second.

A tFT strategy permits opponents to get away with a little more defection, but it prevents the escalation of punishment that leads to a locking in of mutually competitive moves. It is therefore better able to restore mutual cooperation when the interactions begin with mutual noncooperation.

Other researchers also find that when an adversary attempts exploitation, the most effective method of inducing cooperation is the use of mild retaliation rather than strong retaliation or no retaliation." These experimental findings lend support to Axelrod's recommendation to reciprocate "only nine-tenths of a tit for a TAT."
tFT Strategy - against many opponents

The goal in Axelrod's tournaments was to score as many points as possible; TFT did this admirably. But if the goal is changed to winning against as many opponents as possible, TFT fails miserably.

In a tournament of this type staged by Behr, TFT was unable to win over any opposing strategy. The winners were FELD and JOSS, two strategies that were not nice - they attempted to exploit the opposition through unprovoked defections a certain percent of the time.

Clearly, in order to score more points than the opponent, one must be willing to defect more than the opponent; TFT can therefore never win in this sense. (And, of course, a strategy that defects in every round can never lose in this sense.)

Behr's point is that there are times when defeating an opponent is more important than maximizing one's own payoff, and TFT is inappropriate for these situations.
TFT in WWI

Steven Van Evera studied how *misperceptions* among European leaders in the 1914 crisis twisted the payoff structures so perversely that a TIT-FOR-TAT strategy would not have worked to prevent World War I.

Generally, beliefs of European leaders about the effectiveness of bullying strategies to get others to back down, beliefs about the necessity of rapid mobilization and of the necessity of offensive strategies, beliefs about the positive benefits of war and perceptions of the hostility of others resulted in a payoff matrix unlikely to induce cooperation. Specifically,

(a) by enlarging the rewards of Defect/Cooperate outcomes and the penalties of a Cooperate/Defect outcome, the attractiveness of opportunistic defection and defensive defection were increased;

(b) by narrowing the difference between Cooperate/Cooperate and Defect/Defect outcomes, the attractiveness of Cooperate/Cooperate was diminished;

(c) by raising fear that Cooperation would be answered by Defection, a greater incentive was given to Defection; and

(d) by raising hopes that Defection would be answered by Cooperation, they made Defection more attractive.

Under such conditions, the price of using a nice strategy was too high, and it would probably have been incapable of eliciting cooperative behavior from the opponent as well.
TFT vs. GRIT - similarities

It might be argued that the attributes that make TFT a success - niceness, provocability, forgiveness, and clarity - also describe the strategy of GRIT. In fact, TIT-FOR-TAT and GRIT constitute similar strategies for dealing with prisoners' dilemma situations.

Both are designed to conduce cooperative behavior through the communication of conciliatory intentions.

Both combine a carrot-and-stick approach to reward cooperation and punish defection.

There are, however, several important differences between them.
TFT vs. GRIT - differences

1. while TFT relies on nonverbal communication, GRIT has the advantage of being able to use explicit communication in attempting to induce cooperation.

2. aside from the cooperative cue that it gives on the first move, TFT lets the other party take the initiative and simply follows suit. However, players using the GRIT strategy take the initiative themselves. (Leng and Wheeler found that the most successful strategies used by international rivals were not ones of pure reciprocity, such as TFT, but ones that included unilateral initiatives of conciliation.)

3. both TFT and GRIT retaliate in response to defection. However, GRIT players always take the lead in returning to cooperation, while the TFT strategy requires defection as long as the opponent defects, leading to the possibility of a prolonged retaliatory spiral.

4. in GRIT the initial reciprocation is not expected immediately. The initiator must be prepared to risk some exploitation without retaliating. TFT, on the other hand, lets no defection go without retaliation.

5. the GRIT strategy is basically for games involving sequential choice by rivals. TFT is usually seen as applicable to games involving simultaneous choice. GRIT thus probably reflects more precisely the real world of political decision making.
Which strategy is more successful TFT or GRIT

Several tests of the comparative effectiveness of TFT and GRIT have been performed. In experimental simulations with human subjects, GRIT has proved to be more effective in eliciting cooperation than TFT. The ability of GRIT players to use explicit verbal communication accounts for much of GRIT's superiority over the TFT strategy in such experiments.

Goldstein and Freeman performed computer simulations on four decades of Soviet-American interaction data to test the relative effectiveness of TFT and three versions of GRIT in inducing reciprocal cooperation. They conclude that while all four strategies were somewhat successful, TFT was the least effective.

Progressive GRIT (PGRIT) and extended GRIT (EGRIT) were the most successful. The potency of these strategies was due to their willingness to persist in continued unilateral concessions without reciprocation as a way of inducing mutual cooperation. Since the TFT strategy calls for only one such unilateral initiative, it was less able to overcome the reluctance of the target to cooperate.

What ultimately makes humans responsive to kindness? The feeling of shame? Some moral/ethical obligation to respond with fairness to fairness? Is the sense of fairness/justice universal?
1. one might question the assumptions on which the theory is based. As we have seen from the literature on decision-making, it is questionable:

✦ whether policy makers are capable of engaging in rational decision processes all the time;
✦ whether meaningful values can be placed on alternative sets of goals;
✦ whether hypothetical outcomes can be assigned precise numerical weights according to their desirability;
✦ whether one can successfully guess the opponent's evaluation of the expected outcomes, given the general difficulty of reading others' minds as well as the common problems of misperception of the opponent's goals and strategies.
2. Most importantly, it is debatable whether game theory can be said to actually "explain" why certain events and behaviors occur - whether it is actually capable of explaining the cause of behavior.

For instance, it is probably stretching Game Theory too far to say that arms races occur because the structure of the situation two nations find themselves in is a prisoners' dilemma structure.

(The right question to ask would be why the states get into such a situation. What did essentially put prisoners into the situation in which they are?)

Likewise, it would be difficult to say that wars are caused because of the chickenlike situations that may precede them.

(The right question to ask would be why states persists in nourishing such a situation, consequently causing war.)

* For this reason, there is no "game theory of war" in international relations. Game theory is a heuristic device rather than an empirical theory.
Game Theory - Conclusions

Let us recall that neither the decision making models (Rational Actor Model, Bureaucratic Politics Model, Groupthink, Incrementalism, Organizational Process Model) were theories of wars. They just taught us how the decision making process works. Equally, Game theory is just a device, one of the devices, used in the decision making process.

Finally, the problem of Game Theory is in its very game. It leaves people feeling insecure. Who would like to have a “game,” regardless how sophisticated, be applied in a decision as important as initiating war? And who would like to have a computer program decide about or even just have an influence on such a crucial political step of a leader as it is the decision to initiate war?
Deterrence Theory

The essence of the Deterrence Theory is contained in the ancient Roman proverb "Si vis pacem, para bellum" [if you desire peace, prepare (for) war] ascribed to Roman military writer, Flavius Vegetius Renatus.

The concept of deterrence refers to one's ability to prevent another person or country from doing something that is undesirable or harmful to one's own interests.

Defense comprehends readiness to defend one’s own territory while waiting for attackers to physically come to one’s territory and attack.

Deterrence assumes the threat to attack the attackers on their own territory.

Defense and deterrence are not mutually exclusive.

Deterrence is, hence, based on the psychological principle of a threat of retaliation.
Successfulness of Threat

For a threat to be successful, the threatening state has to demonstrated to the threatened state that

(1) it has the **capability to retaliate** effectively, and
(2) it has the **will or intention to retaliate**.

(Remember the Chicken Method?)

The **difference between deterrence and defense** is that the goal of deterrence is not to kill the enemy when he invades; the goal is to convince him that he will be killed if he does invade.

* Deterrence theory, put very simplistically, argues that peace is kept through maintaining credible threats against one's opponents. **War is prevented by the threat of war.** Conversely, **war occurs because the threat fails to be received credibly.** (sic! The failure of threat is not the cause of war, *per se*. It just points at the time when the war will occur, not at the cause of war.)

What is the cause of war then? Imposing one’s own will on the other side? Escalation of arguments? Conflict of interests? Misperception of other party’s intentions?
The American Threat

Perhaps the most compelling argument for deterrence theory and a foreign policy based on it has been constructed by James Payne in his book *The American Threat*.

Payne argues that a state's most important instrument for inhibiting aggression is the threat of war, but threats must be communicated in ways that make them credible to the opponent. Threats are typically conveyed through words, but "words are cheap. Formal treaty agreements are somewhat better, but the best way to communicate one's deterrent threat is through past actions - especially through the execution of threats.

While Hans Morgenthau argues that nations should never put themselves in a position from which they cannot retreat without losing face, Payne argues just the opposite that it is necessary precisely to put yourself in a position from which you cannot retreat gracefully. It is only then that the opponent will be absolutely sure of your threat. If you can retreat gracefully, then you might not keep your word, and if you *might* not, then the opponent will believe you *will* not. Threats become credible, Payne contends, to the extent that you can deprive yourself of freedom of action and choice. If this can be achieved, your opponents will believe you are automatically bound to carry out your commitment.
The Game of Chicken & Deterrence Strategy

The game of chicken: convince your opponent that you are incapable of choosing to swerve, that you are committed to driving straight ahead even if it means destruction. This leaves the choice in your opponent's hands, and the rational thing for him to do is to back down.

Deterrence strategy is similar to the chicken strategy in important ways:

✦ both require a clear enunciation of a threat, and
✦ both require that the threat be conveyed to the opponent in a highly credible manner.

Of course, the problem with treating deterrence as a game of chicken is that both sides may make irrevocable commitments and freeze themselves into incompatible stances, producing the disaster each wanted to avoid.
The Game of Prisoners’ Dilemma & Cooperation Strategy

In an interesting insight into the relationship of individual-level factors and dyadic (bilateral) interaction factors, Charles Lockhart has made the observation

- that "hard-line" or hawkish statesmen are predisposed (perhaps by their operational codes) to see conflicts with rival states as chicken contests that require strong actions to signal one's commitment and credibility.

- and that "soft-line" or dovish leaders are more predisposed to view these encounters as prisoners' dilemma games that call for the development of cooperative and conciliatory strategies.
Munich Crisis Revisited

One of the central paradigms of Deterrence Theory (and of Payne's work) is the Munich Crisis of 1938 and the outbreak of World War II a year later. A brief historical review might be in order here.

+ In 1936 Hitler began a remilitarization of the Rhineland in violation of the Versailles Treaty. Britain and France objected, but took no action beyond this.
+ In March 1938 Hitler’s Germany annexed Austria. Once again France and Britain took no action.
+ In the fall of 1938 Hitler pressured the government of Czechoslovakia for the cession of the Sudetenland to Germany. Although the Czechs had defense pacts with both France and Russia, they were unwilling not ready to fight Germany over Czechoslovakia, and at the Munich Conference in October Britain agreed that the Czechs must cede the Sudetenland.
+ In March 1939 German troops marched unopposed into the remainder of Czechoslovakia. The British and French refused were still militarily unprepared to take immediate action, but threatened Hitler that if he attacked Poland, they would come to her defense.
+ In the fall of 1939, not dissuaded by the allied threat, Hitler attacked Poland. Britain and France declared war and the second great conflagration of the twentieth century began.
Notes on Munich Crisis

The assumption of the deterrence strategy supporters (or we may call them “pro-interventionists”) is that UK, France, and Russia were “unwilling” to stop Hitler. They make the pre-WWII leaders of these three states look and sound like naive or careless politicians, which is hard to believe.

What the historical data is actually telling us is that the leaders of UK and France, as well as Russia, were very much aware of Hitler’s military power and of their own inability to challenge him, keeping in mind that their countries still had not recovered fully from WWI. They were just trying to buy time by playing cooperation with Hitler. Besides, UK and France did not trust Stalin and without his support they could not defeat Hitler. Stalin, on his end, did not mind capitalist imperialists fighting and weakening each others.

Finally, France and UK tried the chicken strategy and threatened Hitler to not attack Poland. The chicken strategy in this case did not work, for Hitler very much knew that they were bluffing and that they were not able to match his military power. Hitler made a very quick and significant progress on the Western front, completely defeating France within 43 days after the attack, and seriously threatening survival of the UK. One may say that the English Channel (La Manche) saved the Queen.
Lessons of Munich according to Payne

Having twisted the historical data regarding the Munich Crisis, Payne, as a supporter of pre-emptive war, concludes that the major lesson of the Munich Crisis of 1938 was that nations that permit their opponents to commit aggression are likely to experience even more aggression. The policy of appeasement lessens the coerciveness of a state's threat.

Tolerance of aggression causes several unfortunate effects to occur simultaneously:

✧ The opponent feels a sense of "exhilaration" - his first acts of defiance and aggression have been successful and he is tempted to believe that further moves will meet with similar inaction.

✧ The warning signals of other nations begin to be discounted by the aggressor.

✧ Additionally, the fact that aggression has initially been successful will strengthen the hawkish faction internally against the doves who have cautioned restraint in the past.

For all these reasons there is a high probability that aggression by the opponent will increase rather than abate.
Further Effects of the Appeasement Strategy

Payne continues by stating that the toleration of aggression has effects within the appeasing country as well. Appeasement cannot be sustained indefinitely. The cries of shame and cowardice by internal critics of the regime will eventually force a change in either government policy or personnel or both. Hawks will be brought to power as part of the reaction to the failed policies of the past. Eventually, a new policy of peace through strength will be implemented and new threats will be issued. Consequently, war becomes much more likely. On the other hand, the aggressor is predisposed (on the basis of past performances) to discount the appeaser's threats as empty rhetoric. But internal politics in the appeaser have now forced it to take a hard-line approach. The aggressor will make one more move and this time it will be met by force.

* Payne concludes, therefore, that war occurs because a nation's threat has not been credible enough to deter its opponents.

* Payne’s opponents might say that the threat of war may indeed deter an attacker from starting war at a given point in time, but it does not remove the root cause of the war, i.e., the reason for why the attacker wants to initiate war and may initiate it in the future. That reason that makes a leader start considering the attack is the true cause of war. We have to find it.
Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited

Payne also discusses a more contemporary situation in which the lack of a credible threat induced aggressive action - the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

The question for Payne is "Why did the Soviets decide to pursue such a risky gambit as placing nuclear weapons in Cuba?" His answer is that the United States failed to keep its threat in good working condition,

✦ First, the new American president, John F. Kennedy, let himself be bullied by Khrushchev at the Vienna Summit in 1961.
✦ Second, the United States suffered a humiliating defeat in the Bay of Pigs Crisis when it failed to take risks and make sacrifices to assist anti-Castro guerrillas in a plot it had set in motion.
✦ Third, Kennedy chose to negotiate a compromise with the Communists in Laos rather than use military force to defend the government.
✦ Fourth, the United States did not attempt to reverse the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961.
✦ Fifth, the United States declined to send ground troops to South Vietnam, refusing at this point to make a major commitment to an ally.
✦ Sixth, we had permitted the Soviets to contribute to a weapons buildup in Cuba itself.

Through a series of weak responses to challenges to our interests, according to Payne, we therefore permitted the Soviets to think that we would not respond to further provocations. The result was that the two superpowers came very close to war.

(Once again, Payne selectively reviews historical events. He forgets that the US might have provoked the Soviets significantly by installing nuclear missiles in Turkey and Italy.)
Stimulus-Response Theory vs. Deterrence Theory

* The Stimulus-Response Theory portrays war as an inadvertent result of miscalculation and misunderstanding. The true intentions of the two sides are peaceful, but through a conflict spiral that escalates out of control, war breaks out even though neither side wanted it or planned it. The implication is that war is caused by a failure of one side to break the upward spiral of violence, a break that could best be brought about by cooperative and conciliatory acts in response to a pattern of provocation by the other.

Payne dismisses the Stimulus-Response Theory as empirically unfounded and as a dangerous guide for policy. Cooperation and conciliation are simply fancy words for appeasement to Payne. And appeasement doesn't lead to peace, but to an even higher probability of war. In his first edition, published in 1970, Payne ridicules the excitation (stimulus-response) theory by stating,

The excitation theory advises us to turn the other cheek rather than respond firmly... Communist China, for example, appears to be warlike and dangerous. The excitation theory suggests that the Chinese are belligerent because they are suspicious of us. They feel encircled and threatened... To reduce Chinese hostility, therefore, we should abrogate collective defense treaties, withdraw from Vietnam, bring China into the United Nations, and the 7th Fleet home.
US-China Relations & Deterrence or Stimulus-Response Theory of International Relations

Payne hides another peace of evidence, namely, that the Nixon & Carter administrations pursued the **Stimulus-Response Theory**, instead of the **Deterrence Theory** and made some significant political achievements for the US side.

Thus, the **Nixon (R) administration** extricated U.S. soldiers from Vietnam and signed the Paris Peace Treaty (1973), made it possible for the People's Republic of China (PRC) to enter the United Nations and take a seat on the Security Council (1971), and arranged a triumphal summit with Chinese leaders in Peking (1972).

The **Carter (D) administration** solidified this new relationship by abrogating its Mutual Defense Pact with the Republic of China (Taiwan) and by granting official recognition of the PRC (1978). The result has been a much closer and more cooperative relationship between the United States and China - including efforts at joint military and intelligence cooperation aimed at the U.S.S.R.!

* (Sic! So, do you think that there is any true love or hate in politics, any true ideological clashes? Look at this question in the light of good relationships between “communist” China and “capitalist” America in their common struggle against the “communist” Russia? Also, notice that the party affiliation does not necessarily predict whether a president will be a “hard-liner” or a “soft-liner.” Where does then his attitude come from? Do democrats and republicans have something in common?)
Deterrence Theory & Status Quo

A second problem with the stimulus-response theory, as Payne sees it, is that it implies that no one is to blame for war and that no country consciously desires war or plans for it.

However, traditional deterrence theorists such as Payne see states as "gain maximizers" who constantly seek "windows of opportunity" through which they may take advantage of others. It is only credible threats of retaliation by defenders of the status quo that are able to keep these windows shut.

In Payne's theory (now outdated by the demise of the Soviet bloc and of the Cold War itself), it was assumed that there were good guys and bad guys and that it was clear who was who. The United States and the "Free World" were the good guys - defensive, status quo nations that sought a peaceful world. The Soviet Union and the "Communist Bloc" countries were the bad guys - aggressive, expansionist states that were desirous of upsetting the status quo.

Payne also assumes the existence of a clearly defined international status quo, which represents a mutually perceived distribution of rights and territories between states. [Marxists would say that this latter statement exactly proves their point that the cause of war is (neo)imperialism.]
The meaning of “Status Quo” & “Sphere of Influence”

The “status quo” is primarily spatial and geographic, but it is also based on ideology. Essentially, it refers to a distribution of territories that are "ours" and "theirs," including nations within our and their "sphere of influence."

In the field of international relations, a sphere of influence (interest) (SOI) is a spatial region or conceptual division over which a state or organization has significant cultural, economic, military, or political influence, or a combination of them.

A newspaper cartoon highlighting the United States' influence in Latin America following the Monroe Doctrine (1823.)
The status quo is an important concept in Payne's general theory of deterrence. A violation of the status quo provokes war; stopping short preserves peace. The threshold is crystal clear. Hostile states know exactly where and when to stop if they don't want war. But if a nation is determined to have a war, it can have it - by challenging the status quo. There can be no miscalculation.

Wars are not accidental; they are conscious decisions made by the leaders of aggressive states who dare to challenge the status quo.

Therefore, the United States must respond with force in order to defend nations that are strategically valuable. Strategic value might be based on the presence of any attribute that would contribute significantly to the military capability of a superpower opponent if it were to fall into his hands, thus changing the balance of military power. The implication is, of course, that states that do not possess any of these strategic resources may be safely sacrificed; they do not necessarily have to be defended.
Payne suggests an alternative policy. He contends that the United States should oppose any moves by the other superpower or its friends to alter the status quo, not because it would result in an alteration of the military balance of power, but because failure to act would decrease the credibility of our threat.

From this perspective the American involvement in Vietnam was laudable. Although South Vietnam possessed no real strategic value, it was necessary for the United States to defend it in order to defend the credibility of our threat to resist aggression against ourselves and our allies.

* The resulting irony, if Payne is correct, is that war is needed to prevent further war. War itself becomes an instrument of peace. Deterrence requires credibility, and credibility ultimately requires a nation to demonstrate its ability and willingness to engage in armed conflict.
Remember that deterrence is in part a psychological concept: its success depends substantially on the target's perception of the threats that have been made against it. This lands us squarely in the individual level of analysis.

Morgan wisely points out that threats may have different effects on different individuals, depending on their personalities. In fact, threats (psychological war) may provoke extreme, non-rational responses in some individuals. If this is so, threats may not be compatible with prompting governments to remain sensible and rational. (Consider the inability of threats to persuade Saddam Hussein to order his army out of Kuwait.) We also know that crisis situations tend to reduce human rationality. And, of course, we have frequently referred to the pervasive inability of individuals to correctly perceive the attitudes and actions of others. Under such circumstances, the probabilities for the success of deterrence are relatively small.
Deterrence Theory: Weaknesses: Conclusions
Counter-productivity of Pressure on the Small Group Level

Since deterrent threats are intended to affect government decision-makers, small-group decision processes come into play as well as factors at the individual level of analysis.

What might be the effect of a deterrent threat on national leaders under the sway of the "groupthink syndrome?"

Morgan suggests that the operation of groupthink does not bode well for the success of deterrence. The receiving group would be operating under the illusions of invulnerability and moral superiority, they would be overly optimistic in their assessment of their ability to manage the conflict through brinkmanship, and they might have a tendency to take risks they would ordinarily shun as individuals.

One ought to be aware also of the effects of bureaucratic politics on the receptivity of the government to threats. Threats normally strengthen the influence of those who take a hard line against the threateners. And, as we have seen, domestic political considerations play an important role in a potential attacker's calculations.
Deterrence Theory: Weaknesses: Conclusions
Influence of the International System

Deterrence is of course also affected by factors at higher levels of analysis such as the nature of the international system.

Clinton Fink's analysis of Russett's study of deterrence points out that most of the cases of successful deterrence in Russett's study are to be found after World War II. The fact that seven of the eleven cases of attack occurred before 1940 suggests that the nature of the international system may be an important factor. World War II marks a watershed.

At the WWII's end the international system had made the transition from multipolarity to one characterized by tight bipolarity - split primarily between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies. This bipolar environment, as opposed to the multipolar environment, presumably made deterrence easier.

With this last observation, it is appropriate that we turn our attention to the nature of global politics as a whole. In the next two chapters we devote our attention to the fifth and final level of analysis, the international system.