A Strategic Logic of the Military *Fait Accompli*[*]

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Abstract

When trying to change the status quo in their favor, leaders sometimes launch sudden *faits accomplis* involving the costly but limited use of military force, and hope the potential defender accepts it. There has been relatively little work trying to explain the use of this strategy. I examine the logic for engaging in a *fait accompli* from within the bargaining/rationalist approach to understanding costly military conflict. The analysis identifies informational and commitment problems that can cause a leader to undertake a *fait accompli*, as well as an informational problem under which the *fait accompli* can trigger an unwanted war with the potential defender. The model can also be interpreted as a bargaining model of extended deterrence, and sheds some new insights into the problem of extended deterrence. The analysis provides an explanation for wars that are not preceded by crisis bargaining, a puzzle that some recent research has highlighted.

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1 Introduction

In September 1938, Hitler compelled Britain and France to force Czechoslovakia to cede the Sudetenland to Germany. Six months later, Hitler presented them with a military *fait accompli* by invading and occupying the rest of Czechoslovakia. Britain and France accepted this *fait accompli*. Six months after that, Hitler again presented them with a *fait accompli* by invading and occupying Poland. This time, however, Britain and France rejected the *fait accompli* and declared war on Germany, and World War II had begun.

Why do countries sometimes make threats and instigate crises to try to compel adversaries to make concessions, while at other times engage in military *faits accomplis* and hope that the adversary accepts it? Altman (2015) reports that for the 1918-2014 time period, there were 105 "land grab" *faits accomplis*, compared to only 12 coerced territorial transfers (but many attempts). What explains this empirical trend? In addition, what explains when *faits accomplis* are accepted, but at other times lead to all-out war between the initiator and potential defender?

In this article, I address these questions by incorporating the *fait accompli* option into a rationalist model of crisis bargaining. Game-theoretic models of crisis bargaining typically only allow one type of use of military force, namely all-out war modeled using the standard costly lottery assumption. In addition to all-out war, I also allow for the more limited use of force of a *fait accompli* against the disputed good. The potential defender can accept this or go to war to try to undo it. In contrast to Fearon (1995), who describes the take-it-or-leave-it proposal in his ultimatum crisis bargaining model as being a *fait accompli*, I assume that a *fait accompli* is at least somewhat costly to engage in, with the cost increasing in the amount of territory seized. This is because a *fait accompli* typically involves at least a limited

mobilization and deployment of military forces, and often the actual use of force against a relatively weak target as well. For example, Hitler's invasions of rump Czechoslovakia and Poland involved actual combat, whereas his earlier unresisted invasions of the Rhineland and Austria were *faits accomplis* that only involved the deployment of military force. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and Argentina's invasion of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) in 1982 were *faits accomplis* that involved some combat.

But instead of engaging in a somewhat costly *fait accompli*, a dissatisfied leader also has the option of trying to coerce the other side into making concessions. This is captured in the standard crisis bargaining approach of interpreting proposals as being verbal proposals that carry no inherent cost (e.g., Powell 1999). The question then becomes when we will see a dissatisfied leader achieving concessions via coercion, versus when it engages in a somewhat costly *fait accompli* instead.

I identify two explanations for a costly *fait accompli* occurring, an informational explanation and a commitment-problem explanation. In the informational explanation, a dissatisfied leader initiates a crisis by threatening to use force unless the status quo is revised. The dissatisfied leader has two outside options of using force, all-out war and a limited *fait accompli*. Under complete information, the satisfied leader offers the larger of these two reservation values, and the use of military force is avoided. When the satisfied leader is uncertain about the dissatisfied leader's cost of engaging in a *fait accompli* (i.e., the *fait accompli*'s feasibility), however, it may offer too little, which the dissatisfied leader rejects by engaging in a *fait accompli*. This is an informational account for how a costly *fait accompli* can rationally occur in the midst of crisis bargaining.

However, I then argue that the mere act of initiating a crisis by making threats often

causes the potential defender to engage in military preparations that eliminate the option of a quick *fait accompli*. For example, the US routinely sends warships to the Taiwan Strait when tensions between China and Taiwan flare up. To capture this, I analyze a model in which the dissatisfied leader begins the interaction by either engaging in an immediate *fait accompli* or instead making threats to initiate a crisis. If the dissatisfied leader initiates a crisis, the potential defender then has the option of engaging in military preparations that eliminate the *fait accompli* option. In this model, a costly *fait accompli* can occur even under complete information. In particular, it occurs when (i) the defender finds such military preparations sufficiently low-cost as to be worthwhile, and (ii) the dissatisfied leader anticipates a better settlement from the *fait accompli*, even accounting for its cost, than from crisis bargaining. The *fait accompli* shifts bargaining power from the defender to the dissatisfied leader by essentially allowing the latter rather than the former to make a take-it-or-leave-it "proposal". But this comes at a cost, and if the cost is sufficiently low then the *fait accompli* is worthwhile. In this scenario, the costly *fait accompli* ultimately occurs due to a commitment problem (Fearon 1995; Powell 2006). This is because it is the defender's inability to credibly commit to not engage in those military preparations that causes the dissatisfied leader to engage in an immediate *fait accompli* rather than initiate a crisis in which a bargain would be reached.

Thus, the analysis provides two explanations for Altman's (2015) empirical observation that territorial gains much more commonly occur via *fait accompli* than coercion. First, the informational explanation suggests that when the defender is uncertain about the dissatisfied leader's marginal cost of engaging in a *fait accompli*, then in crisis bargaining it typically makes a risky offer that low-cost types reject by engaging in a *fait accompli*. Second, the

commitment problem explanation suggests that when the defender's military preparations to eliminate the *fait accompli* option are not too costly and the dissatisfied leader's marginal cost of engaging in a *fait accompli* is relatively low, then the dissatisfied leader chooses to engage in an immediate, "out of the blue" *fait accompli* without even initiating a crisis first, i.e., without even attempting coercion. These two conditions under which the commitment problem kicks in are easily satisfied, suggesting that empirically, most *faits accomplis* will be sudden commitment-driven ones rather than informational-problem ones due to insufficient offers being made during crisis bargaining.

The analysis also identifies an informational problem that explains why *faits accomplis* sometimes inadvertently lead to all-out war between the dissatisfied country and defender. When the dissatisfied leader chooses to engage in a *fait accompli* and is uncertain about the defender's cost of war, then under some conditions it engages in a large, risky *fait accompli* that low-cost types of defender reject, leading to an all-out war that the dissatisfied leader wished to avoid. I argue that the model can also be interpreted as a bargaining model of extended deterrence, and sheds some new insights into the extended deterrence problem. Finally, as discussed further in the conclusion, the analysis provides an explanation for wars that are not preceded by crisis bargaining, a puzzle that Schultz (2012), drawing on Downes and Sechser (2012), brings attention to.

2 The Military *Fait Accompli*

The notion of what a military *fait accompli* is seems so obvious that analysts who have theorized about its use fail to explicitly define it. For example, the closest that George (1991:383; emphasis added) comes to a definition is: "This, then, is the logic or rationale for

choosing a *fait accompli* strategy for altering a status quo in one's favor. The policy dilemma of crisis management is to be resolved by a *quick, decisive transformation of the situation* that achieves the challenger's objective and avoids the risk of unwanted escalation." In a similar vein, Snyder and Diesing (1977:227) write: "As argued by the air strike advocates in the Cuban case, the preferable course may be the *fait accompli*, which resolves the issue swiftly and summarily and provides no time for the opponent to make counterthreats and commitments. The game is over, he has lost, and he had best accept it." Although these descriptions are not quite definitions, they convey the intended meaning: "a quick, decisive transformation of the situation" before the other side can immediately react. The other side is then put in the position of either accepting the new status quo, or going to war (or at least threatening war or some other punishment) to try to undo the transformation.

What is the rationale for the *fait accompli* in existing works that discuss the topic? Three works that theorize (albeit relatively briefly) about the purpose of the *fait accompli* are George and Smoke (1974), Snyder and Diesing (1977), and George's (1991) edited volume on crisis management. George and Smoke (1974:537; emphasis in original) describe the purpose of the *fait accompli* as follows:

> The *fait accompli* strategy, it may be noted, *is* the most "rational" way to initiate an effort to change the status quo when the initiator believes that a strong potential defending power has written off the territory in question altogether or has made what appears to be a firm decision to limit his aid to military and economic assistance and diplomatic support. A maximum effort by the initiator to achieve his objective quickly confronts the potential defending power with a *fait accompli*, giving him little or no time to reconsider and reverse his policy of

noninvolvement. From the standpoint of the initiator, the *fait accompli* strategy may well appear the least risky way in these circumstances to change the status quo.

Like George and Smoke, my analysis will identify an important role for the initiator's belief that the potential defender has low resolve on the disputed issue and will therefore accept a *fait accompli*. However, from the bargaining/rationalist approach to conflict (Fearon 1995), it is not clear why a military *fait accompli*, involving the somewhat costly use of military force, will be the most "rational" way to change the status quo even if the potential defender is likely to accept it, rather than going to the negotiating table and trying to avoid the costs of conflict altogether. The early crisis bargaining literature does not address this inefficiency puzzle of costly military conflict.

In a chapter in George's (1991) edited volume, Rogers (1991:416) argues that a *fait accompli* will not be attempted if the initiator believes that it will be difficult militarily. He writes: "If, in their estimation, there is little or uncertain probability that their preferred military action will be successful, the Type A policy maker will tend to favor strong, dramatic coercive actions rather than a *fait accompli*." My analysis will also identify an important role for the military difficulty or cost of engaging in a *fait accompli*. But like George and Smoke, Rogers does not address the inefficiency puzzle of costly military conflict and explain why negotiations (possibly accompanied by "dramatic coercive actions") will not be resorted to even when a *fait accompli* is likely to be successful, thereby avoiding the costs of conflict altogether.

Finally, Snyder and Diesing (1977:26,227) provide a third ingredient that my analysis incorporates: the bargaining leverage that can accrue from a military *fait accompli*. They

write:

> ...even a short-term change established by *fait accompli* may be difficult to reverse; the *fait accompli* shifts the burden of the initiative for coercion or violence to those who would reverse it, and this, as Schelling has pointed out, is a source of bargaining weakness...An advantage of the *fait accompli* strategy is that it brings about a switch in roles: the former challenger is now the defender of a new status quo with the bargaining advantage that usually comes with that role; the former defender is now the potential challenger, carrying the burden of having to initiate the risks of a further confrontation. The *fait accompli* is at the high end of the start low vs. start high continuum. If it does not resolve the crisis it at least sharply increases the bargaining power of the party accomplishing it, but at the risk of war with an opponent who either is already committed or who becomes committed by the provocative effect of the *fait accompli*.

In my analysis, a bargaining leverage role for a *fait accompli* will also emerge.

In a related vein, Mearsheimer (1983) discusses the "limited aims" military strategy. This closely resembles the *fait accompli* strategy in that the initiator's goal is to capture a limited amount of territory while minimizing direct military conflict with the opponent, and hoping the opponent accepts it. But a significant difference is that Mearsheimer's analysis is in the context of direct deterrence between two disputants, where one side considers capturing a slice of the opponent's territory with the limited aims strategy. In contrast, the works discussed above analyze the *fait accompli* strategy primarily in the extended deterrence context, in which the initiator considers capturing some or all of a third party such as an ally or colony of the defender. My analysis will also focus on the extended deterrence

context. Because he focuses on direct deterrence, Mearsheimer argues (1983:63-64) that a potential initiator will almost always prefer a blitzkrieg (if possible/feasible) strategy over a limited aims strategy. This is because the defender will rarely accept the loss of even a limited amount of its own territory and hence a limited aims strategy will almost always result in a war of attrition, which is less preferable than a blitzkrieg strategy. Nevertheless, a limited aims strategy will generally be preferred to an attrition strategy, with its guaranteed overwhelming costs. Mearsheimer concludes that direct conventional deterrence is likely to fail when either (i) the initiatior believes it can implement a blitzkrieg strategy, or (ii) it does not believe this but believes that the defender is likely to accept a limited loss of territory via the limited aims strategy (similar to George and Smoke's emphasis on the defender's resolve).

3 A *Fait Accompli* Due to an Informational Problem

Consider the following standard crisis bargaining setting, as in Fearon (1995) and Powell (1999). There are two countries, a dissatisfied country (initiator) and a satisfied country (potential defender). Henceforth, I will refer to the dissatisfied country as D with pronoun "he", and the satisfied country as S with pronoun "she". There is some disputed good such as an ally or colonial possession of S, that is treated as divisible, and whose value to both sides is normalized to 1. Let $(q, 1-q)$ denote the status quo division of the disputed good, where $q \in [0,1]$ is D's share and $1-q$ is S's share. I will henceforth assume that $q = 0$, meaning that in the status quo the disputed good entirely "belongs" to S.

In the bargaining/rationalist approach to studying the outbreak of war, it is typically assumed that if D and S go to war over the disputed good, then the war is treated as a game-

ending costly lottery over who wins all of it. D wins with probability $p \in (0,1)$ and S wins with probability $1-p$. The costs of war for D and S are $c_D > 0$ and $c_S > 0$, respectively.[1] Then, country D's expected utility from war is $EU_D(war) = (p)(1)+(1-p)(0)-c_D = p-c_D$ and country S's expected utility from war is $EU_S(war) = (p)(0)+(1-p)(1)-c_S = 1-p-c_S = 1-(p+c_S)$. Thus, as seen in Figure 1, the interval $[p-c_D, p+c_S]$ is the set of agreements that both sides prefer to war. Also, $p-c_D$ is D's reservation value, i.e., the smallest share it prefers over war. The assumption that D is dissatisfied means that $p-c_D > q = 0$, i.e., D strictly prefers war over the status quo.

It can be argued that the costly lottery assumption reasonably well captures not only the effect of each side's military infrastructure such as equipment and troop levels, but also each side's military strategy for fighting a war whose goal is to decisively defeat the opponent's military and hence capture all of the disputed good. For example, a number of works argue and find evidence that blitzkrieg (maneuver) strategies lead to a higher probability of winning and lower costs of war than attrition strategies (e.g., Bennett and Stam 1996; Mearsheimer 1983; Stam 1996). In the costly lottery formulation, this could be captured by assuming that if D has a blitzkrieg (maneuver) strategy, then p will be higher and/or c_D will be lower than if he has an attrition strategy. Hence, his expected utility for war (and reservation value) $p-c_D$ will be higher. Of course, there are important strategic interdependencies and informational problems that are being ignored here, e.g., that p should depend on *each*

[1] A number of works allow bargaining to continue after a war begins rather than adopting the costly lottery assumption, with the goal of examining issues pertaining to war termination (Filson and Werner 2002; Powell 2004; Slantchev 2003; Smith and Stam 2004; Wagner 2000; Wittman 1979; Wolford, Reiter, and Carrubba 2011). Powell (2004) argues that the costly lottery assumption is reasonable if the focus is on war-outbreak choices.

side's strategy. Also, if D has a blitzkrieg (maneuver) strategy that he expects to be very effective, he has a disincentive to reveal this to prevent S from taking countermeasures that will negate its effectiveness (Fearon 1995:398,400; Reiter 1999:384). Useful work remains to be done to address these issues, but in this article my focus is on the *fait accompli* strategy rather than the tradeoff and strategic dynamics of blitzkrieg versus attrition.

I assume that in addition to this standard outside option of engaging in a war modeled as a costly lottery over total control of the entire disputed good, D has an additional outside option. Namely, of engaging in a sudden military *fait accompli*: capturing some or all of the disputed good and hoping that S will accept it. The game tree is shown in Figure 2. I assume that if D is dissatisfied with the status quo and hence initiates a crisis, then S makes a take-it-or-leave-it offer $(y, 1-y)$ where $y \in [0,1]$ is D's proposed share. If D does not accept the offer, he can either (i) initiate a costly lottery war with parameters as given above, or (ii) suddenly seize the amount $x \in [0,1]$ of the disputed good. D endogenously chooses the magnitude of x if he opts for this military *fait accompli* option. If D engages in a military *fait accompli*, then S can either accept this or go to war to try to recapture all of the disputed good. This war is modeled as the same costly lottery as above; for simplicity, I assume that any territory D captures in a *fait accompli* does not provide him with a military advantage (i.e., increase p) if S refuses to accept it. This alternative rationale for a *fait accompli* (increasing military power) might be usefully explored in future work.[2]

It is now worth considering in more detail how this model relates to previous models of crisis bargaining. In Fearon (1995:394), one side is given the opportunity to engage in an action that Fearon refers to alternatively as a "*fait accompli*", a "demand", and a "grab",

[2]I discuss the possibility of negotiations after a *fait accompli*, before S opts for war, later.

and whose rejection by the other side results in war. In Fearon's model, the location of the status quo q, and each side's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the status quo, play no crucial role in the analysis. One side is simply given the opportunity to engage in a land grab whose rejection by the other side results in war. If in Figure 1 D is given this opportunity, he captures $p + c_S$, which S accepts. Powell (1999) analyzes a model in which D and S take turns making offers and counteroffers on how to divide the disputed good. The status quo remains in place and is a source of utility as an "inside option" until an offer is accepted or war occurs. In Powell's model, the location of q and each side's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the status quo turn out to be crucial for the analysis. In the unique subgame-perfect equilibrium (SPE) when D is dissatisfied, agreement is reached at (or very close to, depending on who makes the first proposal; Leventoğlu and Tarar 2008) $p - c_D$.

In Figure 2, I essentially incorporate Fearon's option of a *fait accompli*, as well as Powell's notion of crisis bargaining as a verbal offer that does not entail making facts on the ground, into a single model. Motivated by Powell (1999), I assume that in verbal crisis bargaining, the satisfied country will generally have most of the bargaining leverage in that she just needs to make the smallest concession that leaves D just as well off as engaging in his optimal outside option. D cannot credibly make a verbal demand of "let's revise the status quo to $p + c_S$ or else I will engage in my optimal outside option". This is because his optimal outside option always provides a payoff of less than $p + c_S$ (see below) and hence he is always willing to accept less. That lesser amount is all that S needs to concede. This is captured by allowing S to make a take-it-or-leave-it offer.[3]

[3]This is also consistent with Snyder and Diesing's (1977) notion, as represented in the passage quoted earlier, that the defender of the status quo will generally have most of the bargaining leverage in a crisis.

In contrast to Fearon, I assume that engaging in a *fait accompli* or land-grab is inherently costly. As discussed in the Introduction, even if it does not result in all-out war with S, at a minimum it at least involves a mobilization and deployment of military forces. And it often involves the actual use of force against the disputed good (which is typically a small/weak ally or colony of S), and possibly against a limited number of S's troops as well.

More specifically, I assume that engaging in a *fait accompli* is militarily costly for D, and the more he captures (i.e., the higher x is), the more costly it is. For simplicity, I assume that the cost is linear in x, and is simply $\alpha \cdot x$, where $\alpha > 0$ is a fixed constant that indicates how costly it is to capture a given amount of the disputed good. The higher α is, the more costly it is. For example, if the technology/geography of war favors the defense (e.g., Jervis 1978), α will be higher than if it favors the offense. Similarly, the militarily stronger the target is, the higher α will be. Thus, if D captures the amount x and S accepts this *fait accompli*, D's payoff is $x - \alpha \cdot x$ and S's payoff is $1 - x$. If S refuses to accept the *fait accompli* and goes to war to try to undo it, then D's payoff is $p - c_D - \alpha \cdot x$ and S's payoff is $1 - p - c_S$.

3.1 Complete Information

The following is the result when D is dissatisfied.

Proposition 1 *Suppose that $p - c_D > q = 0$. Define the following threshold for α: $\alpha_{crit} \equiv (c_S + c_D)/(p + c_S) \in (0, 1)$. Then the following is the unique subgame-perfect equilibrium (SPE) outcome of the game, depending on the value of α relative to α_{crit}.*

(i) If $\alpha_{crit} < \alpha$ (α is large), then D's reservation value, based on an optimal outside option of going to war, is $p - c_D$. S offers $y = p - c_D$, which D accepts.

(ii) If $0 < \alpha < \alpha_{crit}$ (α is small), then D's reservation value, based on an optimal outside

option of a fait accompli *of* $x = p+c_S$*, is* $(p+c_S)-\alpha(p+c_S)$*. S offers* $y = (p+c_S)-\alpha(p+c_S)$*, which D accepts.*

In this crisis bargaining scenario in which D has two different outside options, his reservation value in a crisis (the minimal deal he is willing to accept) is either $p - c_D$ or his payoff for his optimal *fait accompli*, whichever is higher. It turns out that if $\alpha > 1$, then his optimal *fait accompli* is $x = 0$ (i.e., no *fait accompli* at all). If $\alpha < 1$, then his optimal *fait accompli* is $x = p + c_S$, the largest that S is willing to accept. This gives him a payoff of $x - \alpha \cdot x = (p + c_S) - \alpha(p + c_S)$. Thus, when $\alpha > 1$ then D certainly prefers war to the optimal *fait accompli* of $x = 0$ and hence his reservation value is $p - c_D$. When $\alpha < 1$ then D prefers the optimal *fait accompli* to war when $(p + c_S) - \alpha(p + c_S) > p - c_D$. This simplifies to $\alpha < \alpha_{crit} \equiv (c_S + c_D)/(p + c_S) \in (0, 1)$, i.e., capturing territory in a *fait accompli* is not too costly.

As for comparative statics on when D's optimal outside option will be a *fait accompli* rather than all-out war with S, obviously this is increasingly likely to be the case as α decreases (i.e., as the cost of quickly capturing disputed territory decreases). In addition, note that the threshold α_{crit} is strictly decreasing in p. The higher D's probability of winning a war with S, the smaller the range of values of α for which (and hence the less likely it is to be the case that) his optimal outside option is a *fait accompli* instead. Similarly, note that α_{crit} is strictly increasing in c_D: the higher D's cost for a war with S, the more likely he prefers a *fait accompli* instead. Finally, note that α_{crit} is strictly increasing in c_S: the greater S's cost of war, the bigger the *fait accompli* that S is willing to accept, and hence the more likely D is to prefer a *fait accompli* over all-out war.[4]

[4]This follows from $\partial\alpha_{crit}/\partial c_S = (p - c_D)/[(p + c_S)^2] > 0$.

But regardless of whether D's reservation value is based on war with S or a *fait accompli*, S makes an acceptable offer and the use of force is avoided. Adding a *fait accompli* option to a standard crisis bargaining model may mean that D demands more than he otherwise would, but S still prefers satisfying D's minimal demand over inducing D to engage in his optimal outside option.

Note that when D has the additional outside option of a *fait accompli* in addition to the usual outside option of engaging in all-out war with S, then even if D prefers the status quo to war with S and hence is satisfied in the conventional sense (Powell 1999), it is possible for him to prefer a *fait accompli* to the status quo and hence to be dissatisfied via this alternative route. D strictly prefers his optimal *fait accompli* to the status quo $q = 0$ if and only if $\alpha < 1$. Thus, when D has two options for using military force, all-out war with S as well as engaging in a *fait accompli*, there are four possibilities for satisfaction/dissatisfaction: (a) D is dissatisfied through both routes ($p - c_D > q = 0$ and $\alpha < 1$; this is case (ii) of Proposition 1, as well as case (i) when $\alpha_{crit} < \alpha < 1$), (b) D is satisfied through both routes ($p - c_D \leq q = 0$ and $\alpha > 1$), (c) D is only dissatisfied through the war-with-S route ($p - c_D > q = 0$ and $\alpha > 1$; this is essentially the scenario that standard crisis bargaining models with no option of a *fait accompli* consider, and is also considered in case (i) of Proposition 1 when $1 < \alpha$), and (d) D is only dissatisfied through the *fait accompli* route ($p - c_D \leq q = 0$ and $\alpha < 1$).

Suppose D is satisfied through the war-with-S route, so that he has no credible threat to engage in all-out war. Then we have the following result.

Proposition 2 *Suppose that $p - c_D \leq q = 0$. Then the following is the unique subgame-perfect equilibrium (SPE) outcome of the game, depending on the value of α.*

(i) If $1 < \alpha$*, then* S *offers* $y = 0$*, which* D *accepts. The status quo is not revised.*

(ii) If $0 < \alpha < 1$*, then* S *offers* $y = (p + c_S) - \alpha(p + c_S)$*, which* D *accepts.*

When D is satisfied through both routes (case (i)), then obviously no revision of the status quo occurs. When D is only dissatisfied via the *fait accompli* route (case (ii)), then his optimal outside option is definitely a *fait accompli*, and S makes the smallest offer that deters D from engaging in this outside option. The more important point is that introducing a *fait accompli* option into a standard model of crisis bargaining makes the status quo more prone to being challenged than in Powell (1999). Even if D is satisfied via the war-with-S route, if $\alpha < 1$ then he is dissatisfied via the *fait accompli* route and hence S has to revise the status quo to prevent an even worse revision by means of a *fait accompli* attack. When the two outside options are available, to maintain the status quo S has to ensure that not only $p - c_D \leq q = 0$ constantly holds, but $\alpha > 1$ as well.

3.2 Incomplete Information

So far, the analysis has explored how adding the outside option of a *fait accompli* can affect the agreement that is reached under complete information, and can create additional room for D being dissatisfied and demanding a revision of the status quo. However, under complete information an agreement is always reached and a *fait accompli* is never actually resorted to.

To examine how incomplete information can lead to a costly *fait accompli* actually occurring, let us return to the situation where D is dissatisfied via the war-with-S route (i.e., $p - c_D > q = 0$) and hence has a credible threat to engage in all-out war. But now suppose that S is uncertain about what D's optimal outside option is, and hence is uncertain about

his reservation value. In particular, suppose that S is uncertain about the size of α. "Nature" chooses α from the interval $[\alpha_l, \infty)$, where $0 < \alpha_l < \alpha_{crit}$ and α_{crit} is the same as in Proposition 1. Thus, types of D for whom $\alpha_l \leq \alpha < \alpha_{crit}$ prefer the optimal *fait accompli* of $x = p + c_S$ to war and hence have reservation values of $p + c_S - \alpha(p + c_S)$. On the other hand, higher-α types for whom $\alpha_{crit} \leq \alpha$ prefer war and hence have a lower reservation value of $p - c_D$. S does not observe nature's move and hence does not know D's type, but knows the probability distribution of types. Assume that this distribution has probability density function $f(\cdot)$ that is positive everywhere on $[\alpha_l, \infty)$, and cumulative distribution function $F(\cdot)$. Also assume a non-decreasing hazard rate $f(\cdot)/[1 - F(\cdot)]$ (this is satisfied for many common distributions; Fudenberg and Tirole 1991:267).

Proposition 3 *Suppose that $p - c_D > q = 0$. Define the following threshold for α: $\alpha_{crit} \equiv (c_S + c_D)/(p + c_S) \in (0, 1)$. Then the following is the unique perfect-Bayesian equilibrium (PBE) outcome of the game.*

(i) If $f(\alpha_l) \geq 1/\alpha_l$, then S makes the large, risk-free offer of $y = p + c_S - \alpha_l(p + c_S)$.

(ii) If $f(\alpha_l) < 1/\alpha_l$, then S makes the smaller, risky offer of $y_{optimal} \in [p - c_D, p + c_S - \alpha_l(p + c_S))$. $y_{optimal} \in (p - c_D, p + c_S - \alpha_l(p + c_S))$ is the unique solution to $f[(p + c_S - y)/(p + c_S)]/\{1 - F[(p + c_S - y)/(p + c_S)]\} = (p + c_S)/(p + c_S - y)$ if $f(\alpha_{crit})/[1 - F(\alpha_{crit})] > 1/\alpha_{crit}$, and $y_{optimal} = p - c_D$ if $f(\alpha_{crit})/[1 - F(\alpha_{crit})] \leq 1/\alpha_{crit}$.

S generally engages in a "risk-return tradeoff" (Fearon 1995; Powell 1999) by making a limited offer that not all types accept. Low-α types reject the offer and carry out their optimal *fait accompli* of $x = p + c_S$, which S accepts. Under incomplete information about α and hence the feasibility of the *fait accompli* option, S's optimal offer generally entails a

positive probability of rejection and hence a risk of a costly *fait accompli* being carried out.[5]

Now return to the situation where D is satisfied via the war-with-S route (i.e., $p - c_D \leq q = 0$). Suppose S is uncertain about α, which comes from the interval $[\alpha_l, \infty)$, with $0 < \alpha_l < 1$. Types for whom $\alpha_l \leq \alpha < 1$ are dissatisfied via the *fait accompli* route and hence have reservation values of $p + c_S - \alpha(p + c_S)$. Types for whom $1 \leq \alpha$ are satisfied via both routes and hence have reservation values of 0.

Proposition 4 *Suppose that $p - c_D \leq q = 0$. Then the following is the unique perfect-Bayesian equilibrium (PBE) outcome of the game.*

(i) If $f(\alpha_l) \geq 1/\alpha_l$, then S makes the large, risk-free offer of $y = p + c_S - \alpha_l(p + c_S)$.

(ii) If $f(\alpha_l) < 1/\alpha_l$, then S makes the smaller, risky offer of $y_{optimal} \in [0, p + c_S - \alpha_l(p + c_S))$, where $y_{optimal} \in (0, p + c_S - \alpha_l(p + c_S))$ is the unique solution to $f[(p + c_S - y)/(p + c_S)]/\{1 - F[(p + c_S - y)/(p + c_S)]\} = (p + c_S)/(p + c_S - y)$ if $f(1)/[1 - F(1)] > 1$, and $y_{optimal} = 0$ if $f(1)/[1 - F(1)] \leq 1$.

Again, S's optimal offer generally entails a risk of rejection and hence a risk of a costly *fait accompli* being carried out. Whether or not D is dissatisfied via the war-with-S route, when S is uncertain about α and hence the feasibility of the *fait accompli* option, her optimal offer generally entails a positive probability of rejection and hence a risk of a costly *fait accompli* being carried out. This is an informational explanation for how a costly *fait accompli* can rationally occur during crisis bargaining. But note that in contrast to other models of informational problems leading to war, this is a case of an informational problem leading to a limited use of force that avoids war with S. This is because D only captures

[5]For $\alpha_l > 0$ small enough, the risk-free offer condition $f(\alpha_l) \geq 1/\alpha_l$ will definitely not hold.

$x = p + c_S$, which S accepts. (Later, I analyze a scenario in which D is uncertain about c_S and hence may mistakenly seize "too much" of the disputed good in a *fait accompli*, triggering an unwanted war with S.)

Also note that an incentive to misrepresent one's private information that is a core part of the informational explanation for costly conflict (Fearon 1995) applies here. First, high-α (weak) types have an incentive to bluff and claim to be low-α types if this gets S to increase her offer. Second, even low-α (strong) types have incentives to not reveal this because if they do, rather than increase her offer, S might instead take counter-measures to negate the feasibility of a *fait accompli*. This would reduce low-α types' reservation values to $p - c_D$ (or 0, if D is satisfied via the war-with-S route). These counter-measures could include sending arms and/or troops to the disputed territory, which could have the effect of (i) making a *fait accompli* more difficult to carry out (i.e., increase α), a military effect, and/or (ii) ensuring that S would have to respond to even a limited attack (Schelling's 1960 "tripwire" effect), a political effect.

4 A *Fait Accompli* Due to a Commitment Problem

4.1 Complete Information

In fact, this line of thought leads to an alternative explanation for observing a costly *fait accompli*, namely it occurring due to a commitment problem, and even under complete information. If D initiates a crisis by threatening to use force unless the status quo is revised (i.e., attempts compellence), then that alone might cause S to engage in military preparations such as sending troops and equipment to the disputed territory. These measures could largely preclude a *fait accompli* option, whether that is S's explicit intention or not (i.e.,

mere prudence in a crisis). For example, the US routinely sends warships to the Taiwan Strait when tensions between China and Taiwan flare up. Mearsheimer (1983:53-58) argues that achieving strategic surprise ("catching the defender unprepared... overwhelm the defender's forces that are at hand before the defender can mobilize his main forces") is crucial for the success of the "limited aims" strategy, which is very similar to the *fait accompli* strategy but focuses on direct deterrence rather than extended deterrence.

To capture this, I now assume that if D intends to try to revise the status quo, he has two options. He can (i) engage in an immediate *fait accompli* without even verbally demanding a revision of the status quo first, or (ii) initiate a crisis by threatening to use force unless the status quo is revised. The game-tree is shown in Figure 3. I assume that if D initiates a crisis, the *fait accompli* option will be ruled out due to S's military preparations (the precise condition under which S will engage in such military preparations is discussed below). Hence, his reservation value will be $p - c_D$ (> 0) if he is dissatisfied via the war-with-S route, and 0 if he is satisfied through this route. In addition, when D is dissatisfied via the war-with-S route I introduce flexibility in the bargaining protocol by assuming that if D initiates a crisis, he expects agreement $(y, 1-y)$ to be reached, where $y \in [p - c_D, p + c_S]$ is D's share. That is, I do not require that $y = p - c_D$. (But when D is satisfied via the war-with-S route, there can be no basis for assuming other than $y = 0$, i.e., no revision would occur.) I argued earlier that $y = p - c_D$ is the most reasonable expected agreement (captured earlier by allowing S to make a take-it-or-leave-it offer), but I do not insist on this and hence leave the bargaining protocol unspecified. We can then do comparative statics on how an increase in y affects the likelihood of a *fait accompli* occurring.

Proposition 5 *When $p - c_D > q = 0$ (D is dissatisfied through the war-with-S option) and*

hence $y \in [p - c_D, p + c_S]$*, define the following threshold for* α*:* $\alpha'_{crit} \equiv [(p + c_S) - y]/(p + c_S) \in [0, 1)$*. Then the following is the unique subgame-perfect equilibrium (SPE) outcome of the game, depending on the value of* α *relative to* α'_{crit}*.*

(i) If $\alpha'_{crit} < \alpha$ *(*α *is large), then* D *chooses to negotiate (initiate a crisis) and the disputed good is peacefully divided with* D *getting the share* y*.*

(ii) If $0 < \alpha < \alpha'_{crit}$ *(*α *is small), then* D *engages in a military* fait accompli *and captures the amount* $x = p + c_S$*, which* S *accepts.*

If the disputed good is a tough target and the cost of capturing a given amount of it, α, exceeds a certain threshold (case i), then D opts to negotiate and the status quo is peacefully revised via compellence. But if the cost coefficient is lower than the threshold (case ii), then D engages in a sudden, "out of the blue" *fait accompli* and captures the exact amount that makes S indifferent between accepting it and going to war. S accepts this *fait accompli*.

Thus, when the *fait accompli* is modeled as a "use it or lose it" option, then it can occur even under complete information, essentially due to a commitment problem (Fearon 1995; Powell 2006). If D's expected compellence payoff of y is less than his optimal *fait accompli* payoff of $fa \equiv (p + c_S) - \alpha(p + c_S)$,[6] which simplifies to $\alpha < \alpha'_{crit}$, then D prefers to engage in a sudden *fait accompli* rather than initiate a crisis and begin bargaining. If S could credibly commit to not take countermeasures that negate the feasibility of a *fait accompli* upon D initiating a crisis (i.e., announcing that he is dissatisfied and is willing to use force to revise the status quo), then D would prefer to initiate a crisis and get an offer at least as good as fa. But if these countermeasures are not too costly for S (discussed in more detail below),

[6]Note that since $y \geq p - c_D$, a necessary condition for this to be possible is that $fa > p - c_D$, i.e., the *fait accompli* is more attractive to D than war with S.

then she would violate her promise and take those countermeasures so that she could then get away with making a smaller offer than fa. Knowing this, D chooses to engage in a sudden *fait accompli* rather than initiate a crisis. Thus, this is complete-information costly (but limited) conflict due to a commitment problem.

Also note that the condition under which a *fait accompli* occurs, $y < fa$, can be rewritten as $(p+c_S)-y > \alpha(p+c_S)$. This is the standard condition (Fearon 1995; Powell 2006) under which a power-shift leads to costly conflict due to a commitment problem, namely the shift in bargaining power, $(p + c_S) - y$, exceeds the total cost of the conflict, $\alpha(p + c_S)$.[7]

From Proposition 5 it is clear that α, the cost coefficient for engaging in a *fait accompli*, is a crucial determinant of whether a *fait accompli* occurs. The expected agreement from negotiations, y, is also crucial. To see this, note that the critical threshold α'_{crit} is a strictly decreasing function of y. As D's expected share through negotiations y increases, the range of values of α for which a *fait accompli* occurs ($0 < \alpha < \alpha'_{crit}$) becomes smaller. This means that a *fait accompli* is less likely, other things equal. The better D expects to do in negotiations, the less his incentive to undertake a military *fait accompli* instead. In the limit, if D has *all* of the bargaining leverage in negotiations, namely $y = p + c_S$, then the range disappears altogether. This is because it makes no sense to engage in a military *fait accompli* that will result in the same amount of territory as negotiations but that will incur

[7]Note that a *fait accompli* due to a commitment problem would more resemble a "surprise attack" than when it occurs due to an informational problem, because in the latter case S is at least aware that the use of force is being contemplated (i.e., that a crisis is underway). "Surprise attacks" have elicited some scholarly attention, although primarily in a direct deterrence context (e.g., Betts 1982; Hybel 1986) rather than the extended deterrence context being considered here, where the analogous concept is typically called a *fait accompli* (George 1991; George and Smoke 1974; Snyder and Diesing 1977).

military costs. But for any lower amount of bargaining leverage, engaging in a military *fait accompli* is a rational strategy as long as the cost coefficient is low enough. In fact, I have argued that the most reasonable expected agreement is $y = p - c_D$ (S just conceding enough to make D satisfied), in which case α'_{crit} is at its maximum value. Although S benefits distributionally by making minimally-acceptable offers in negotiations, the risk is that this tempts D to engage in a military *fait accompli* instead to achieve greater gains. The *fait accompli* is a costly way for D to improve his bargaining leverage and achieve the "agreement" of $x = p + c_S$ rather than the smaller deal of $y = p - c_D$.

Note that when $y = p - c_D$, then $\alpha'_{crit} = (c_S + c_D)/(p + c_S)$, the same α_{crit} as in Proposition 1. Hence, all of the comparative statics discussed there apply. Namely, a *fait accompli* is more likely (i.e., α'_{crit} is higher) as (i) p decreases, (ii) c_D increases, and (iii) c_S increases. This last comparative static captures George and Smoke's (1974) intuition that a *fait accompli* is more likely when the potential defender has low resolve.

Next, note that if we assume that S makes a take-it-or-leave-it offer in crisis bargaining ($y = p - c_D$), then we can precisely determine the condition under which S would mobilize against a *fait accompli* and hence the commitment problem would kick in. Specifically, assume that if D initiates a crisis, then S can *choose* whether or not to mobilize enough forces to rule out the *fait accompli* option, and the cost of this mobilization is $m > 0$. If S does not mobilize against a *fait accompli* then she will have to offer $y = (p + c_S) - \alpha(p + c_S)$.[8] This leaves her with a payoff of $1 - (p + c_S) + \alpha(p + c_S)$. If she mobilizes against a *fait accompli* at cost $m > 0$, then she would offer $y = p - c_D$. This leaves her with a payoff of $1 - (p - c_D) - m$.

[8]This is assuming that $\alpha < \alpha_{crit}$ so that D's optimal outside option is a *fait accompli* rather than war. If this is not the case, then obviously S has no incentive to mobilize against a *fait accompli* no matter how low the cost m is.

Thus, she would mobilize against a *fait accompli* if $1-(p-c_D)-m > 1-(p+c_S)+\alpha(p+c_S)$. This simplifies to $m < c_D + c_S - \alpha(p+c_S)$ (> 0 when $\alpha < \alpha_{crit}$), i.e., the cost of mobilization is not too high. Essentially, I have been assuming and will continue to assume in the commitment-problem analysis that m is low enough that S would mobilize against a *fait accompli* upon D initiating a crisis. This is a reasonable assumption because the condition can be rewritten as $m + \alpha(p + c_S) < c_D + c_S$, i.e., the sum of the cost of mobilizing and D's cost for engaging in a *fait accompli* is less than the total cost of war. This would indeed be the case in most empirical instances. This suggests that the commitment problem will usually be present, and hence when we empirically observe *faits accomplis*, they will typically be sudden commitment-driven ones rather than informational-problem ones in the midst of crisis bargaining.[9]

The following is the analogous result when D is satisfied via the war-with-S route.

Proposition 6 *When $p - c_D \leq q = 0$ (D is satisfied through the war-with-S option) and hence $y = 0$, then the following is the unique subgame-perfect equilibrium (SPE) outcome of the game, depending on the value of α.*

(i) If $1 < \alpha$, then D does not engage in a military fait accompli *and the status quo remains in place ($y = 0$).*

(ii) If $0 < \alpha < 1$, then D engages in a military fait accompli *and captures the amount $x = p + c_S$, which S accepts.*

What is interesting here is that a *fait accompli* occurs under a broader range of values of α than when D is dissatisfied via the war-with-S route. When he is satisfied through that route, then the *only* way that he can revise the status quo is through a *fait accompli*.

[9]My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for making this point.

On the other hand, when he has a credible threat to engage in war with S, then he has an alternative route of compellence. This reduces the incentive to engage in a *fait accompli*. This suggests a paradox of deterrence: if S is so strong that D certainly prefers the status quo to war with S, then a limited *fait accompli* attack on the disputed good is actually *more* likely.

Also note that when D engages in a sudden *fait accompli* when preferring the status quo to war with S, it might appear to observers to be an "opportunistic" *fait accompli* by a low-resolve D. However, Proposition 6 indicates that this can be a rational choice with no bluffing involved. This reinforces the earlier point that introducing a *fait accompli* option makes the status quo more prone to being challenged, by allowing an additional route for being dissatisfied with the status quo.

4.2 Adding Incomplete Information: A *Fait Accompli* Triggering War

So far, the analysis has shown that a costly *fait accompli* can rationally occur under incomplete information when it is modeled as an additional outside option in crisis bargaining, and under complete information when it is instead modeled as a "use it or lose it" option and hence a commitment problem is potentially present. However, in both cases when a *fait accompli* occurs it does not trigger war between D and S. This is because D captures the maximum amount that S is willing to accept, $x = p + c_S$, and not more.[10] But a number of

[10]Note that this means that none of the previous results depend on the assumption that S cannot negotiate after a *fait accompli*, before going to war to try to undo it. That is, whenever D engages in a *fait accompli* he only captures the amount $x = p + c_S$. This leaves S (minimally) satisfied and hence not in a position to credibly demand a revision of the new status quo even if she could negotiate.

prominent historical instances of *faits accomplis* have triggered war between the initiator and potential defender, such as Hitler's invasion of Poland, Argentina's invasion of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. To model this possibility, I now introduce incomplete information about S's cost of war c_S, as in Fearon's (1995) analysis of costless *faits accomplis*. I focus on the current commitment-problem model (Figure 3) rather than the earlier informational-problem model. However, the basic logic, that when D chooses a *fait accompli* he might mistakenly capture too much of the disputed good, thereby triggering an unwanted war with S, applies to both settings.

As in Fearon (1995), I assume that c_S is distributed on the interval $[0, \infty)$, with probability density function $f(\cdot)$ that is positive everywhere on this interval and cumulative distribution function $F(\cdot)$. Also assume a non-decreasing hazard rate $f(\cdot)/[1 - F(\cdot)]$. Assume that "nature" chooses S's type. D does not observe nature's move but knows the probability distribution of types. If D is dissatisfied via the war-with-S route, then for flexibility I again do not impose a bargaining protocol and simply assume that D expects agreement $y \in [p - c_D, 1]$ to be reached if he initiates a crisis.

Proposition 7 *When $p - c_D > q = 0$ (D is dissatisfied through the war-with-S option) and hence $y \in [p - c_D, 1]$, then the following is the unique perfect-Bayesian equilibrium (PBE) outcome of the game, depending on the value of α relative to certain thresholds.*

(i) If $1 < \alpha$, then if D were to opt for a fait accompli*, he would choose $x = 0$. He opts for negotiations instead.*

(ii) If $1 - f(0)c_D \leq \alpha < 1$, then if D were to opt for a fait accompli*, he would choose the risk-free, limited one of $x = p$, that all types of S accept. He opts for this* fait accompli *if $p - \alpha p > y$ or $\alpha < (p - y)/p$, and opts for negotiations if $\alpha > (p - y)/p$.*

(iii) If $0 < \alpha < 1 - f(0)c_D$*, then if* D *were to opt for a* fait accompli*, he would choose the risky, large one of* $x_{optimal} \in (p, 1]$*, that low-*c_S *types reject.* $x_{optimal} \in (p, 1)$ *is the unique solution to* $1-\alpha = F(x-p)+f(x-p)[x-(p-c_D)]$ *if* $\alpha > 1-F(1-p)-f(1-p)[1-(p-c_D)]$*, and* $x_{optimal} = 1$ *if* $\alpha \leq 1 - F(1-p) - f(1-p)[1-(p-c_D)]$*. He opts for this* fait accompli *if* $EU_D(x_{optimal}) > y$*, and opts for negotiations if* $EU_D(x_{optimal}) < y$*.*

If $\alpha > 1$, then D obviously has no incentive to engage in a *fait accompli*, and chooses negotiations instead. When $\alpha < 1$, then there are two sub-ranges to consider. In the larger sub-range $\alpha \in [1 - f(0)c_D, 1)$, if he were to choose a *fait accompli* he would choose the safe, risk-free one of $x = p$. He chooses this if $p - \alpha p > y$, which simplifies to $\alpha < (p - y)/p$. In the smaller sub-range of $\alpha \in (0, 1 - f(0)c_D)$, if he were to choose a *fait accompli* he would choose a larger, risky one of $x_{optimal} \in (p, 1]$. He chooses this if $EU_D(x_{optimal}) > y$.

Thus, when the commitment problem is present and D is uncertain about c_S, then D's optimal *fait accompli* can (in case iii) entail a risk of rejection and hence of unwanted all-out war with S. This is a sequential commitment-informational pathway by which a costly *fait accompli* can rationally occur and can also inadvertently trigger a costly all-out war. The commitment problem causes D to engage in a *fait accompli* instead of initiating a crisis. The informational problem causes him to capture "too much" of the disputed territory through a standard risk-return tradeoff, triggering war with S. And this is a difficult informational problem to overcome, because high-c_S (weak) types have incentives to bluff and pretend to be low-c_S (strong) types. In addition, if D were to ask S about her cost of war, this could alert S that D intends to engage in a *fait accompli*, which would allow S to take the countermeasures that trigger the commitment problem.[11]

[11] If D chooses a risky *fait accompli* and S ends up being a low-cost type, one might ask why

But note how this differs in a significant way from Fearon's (1995:411) conclusion about the risk of war under uncertainty. In Fearon's model, a *fait accompli* carries no inherent cost. If there is a cost, it is an indirect one, due to the risk of all-out war that it creates. Thus, it is risky rather than costly. Under the assumption of no cost, he derives that the optimal *fait accompli* is the risk-free $x = p$ when $f(0) > 1/c_D$. Since this is unlikely to hold when c_D is small, he writes (Fearon 1995:394) that "Under very broad conditions, if A [D] cannot learn B's [S's] private information and if A's [D's] own costs are not too large, then state A's [D's] optimal grab produces a positive chance of war". This has been taken to imply that the optimal *fait accompli* (or proposal) under uncertainty generally entails a positive probability of war (Powell 2004:348; Powell 2006:170,174). However, this conclusion depends on the assumption that the *fait accompli* (proposal) carries no inherent cost.

To see this, note from part (ii) of Proposition 7 that D's optimal *fait accompli* is the risk-free $x = p$ when $1 - f(0)c_D \leq \alpha$. This can be rewritten as $f(0) \geq (1 - \alpha)/c_D$, which is less restrictive than Fearon's condition that $f(0) > 1/c_D$ (and which simplifies to his

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she cannot simply demand that D withdraw his troops back to some point $x' \in [p, x_{optimal})$ or else she will go to war, with the goal of trying to avoid the costs of war (this would be what George (1991:384) calls coercive diplomacy, or compellence for restorative as opposed to revisionist purposes). That is, would the results change if we allow for negotiations after a *fait accompli*, before going to war? The answer would seem to be no, because high-cost types of S have an incentive to make the same demand if it gets D to withdraw. Hence, the well-known incentive to bluff (Fearon 1995) means that D will not accept S's demand unless it is accompanied by a credible signaling mechanism, which may or may not work. That is, the well-known signaling difficulties come into play. Following Argentina's invasion of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) in 1982 and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the potential defenders (Britain and the US, respectively) were unable to compel the invading side to withdraw, and war resulted.

condition when $\alpha = 0$, which he effectively assumes). No matter how small $c_D > 0$ is, for α close enough to 1 the condition $f(0) \geq (1-\alpha)/c_D$ will be satisfied, and hence D's optimal *fait accompli* will be risk-free. (But in contrast to Fearon, over here the attractiveness of compellence/negotiating can cause him to engage in no *fait accompli* at all.)

Thus, Fearon's conclusion that the optimal proposal under uncertainty generally entails a positive probability of war depends on the assumption that the proposal carries no inherent cost.[12] When making a proposal is inherently costly, with the cost increasing in one's own proposed share, then that cost can cause the initiator to make a limited, risk-free proposal even when its cost of war is low. This suggests that the risk of war under uncertainty is not as high as Fearon's analysis indicates. Also, as D's expected utility from negotiations y increases, the likelihood of a *fait accompli*, whether risk-free or risky, decreases.

When D is satisfied via the war-with-S route and hence $y = 0$, we have the following result.

Proposition 8 *When $p - c_D \leq q = 0$ (D is satisfied through the war-with-S option) and hence $y = 0$, then the following is the unique perfect-Bayesian equilibrium (PBE) outcome of the game, depending on the value of α relative to certain thresholds.*

(i) If $1 < \alpha$, then D does not engage in a fait accompli *and the status quo remains in place ($y = 0$).*

(ii) If $1 - f(0)c_D \leq \alpha < 1$, then D opts for the risk-free, limited fait accompli *of $x = p$, that all types of S accept.*

(iii) If $0 < \alpha < 1 - f(0)c_D$, then D opts for the risky, large fait accompli *of $x_{optimal} \in$*

[12]Note that Fearon's conclusion holds in my Propositions 3 and 4, where S's proposal is a verbal one that carries no inherent cost.

$(p, 1]$, *that low-*c_S *types reject.* $x_{optimal} \in (p, 1)$ *is the unique solution to* $1 - \alpha = F(x - p) + f(x - p)[x - (p - c_D)]$ *if* $\alpha > 1 - F(1 - p) - f(1 - p)[1 - (p - c_D)]$, *and* $x_{optimal} = 1$ *if* $\alpha \leq 1 - F(1 - p) - f(1 - p)[1 - (p - c_D)]$.

The results are similar to Proposition 7, but now when $\alpha < 1$ D engages in a *fait accompli* for sure, and the only question is whether he adopts a risky one or a safe one. As under complete information, being satisfied via the war-with-S route makes D more prone to engaging in a *fait accompli* because it is his *only* avenue for revising the status quo. And again, the *fait accompli* may appear to outsiders to be an "opportunistic" one by an unresolved D, but in fact D is genuinely dissatisfied, but through the *fait accompli* route. Finally, note that if war occurs here, D will regret that he ever challenged the status quo at all, because that was preferable to the resulting war with S. In Proposition 7, on the other hand, if war occurs D will regret that he overreached in his *fait accompli*, but still prefers the resulting war to living with the original status quo.

5 Relation to Extended Deterrence

By incorporating a *fait accompli* option into a model of crisis bargaining, the model can also be interpreted as a bargaining model of extended deterrence. In contrast to Yuen (2009), the bargaining is between the aggressor and potential defender rather than between the aggressor and target. That is, models of extended deterrence typically treat the disputed good as indivisible, and the main questions of interest are (i) whether the initiator attacks the target (i.e., does deterrence succeed or fail), and if it attacks, (ii) does the potential defender come to the aid of the target (i.e., does the failure of extended deterrence result in war). Models of crisis bargaining allow for bargaining (dividing the disputed good) and thus

provide a richer treatment of when crises will result in war, but do not really capture the extended deterrence problem. This is because the only type of military force allowed is a direct clash between D and S (typically modeled as a costly lottery over total control of the entire disputed good), whereas we think of the extended deterrence problem as S wanting to deter a military attack on the target while not necessarily being committed to responding to a use of force by D. That is, models of crisis bargaining are essentially models of direct deterrence that allow for bargaining.

When models of crisis bargaining are interpreted this way, we see the new insights they bring to the study of direct deterrence. For example, in his study of direct conventional deterrence, Mearsheimer (1983) argues that the main determinant of whether direct deterrence fails is whether one side believes it can implement a blitzkrieg strategy, i.e., a strategy that is highly likely to achieve complete military victory quickly and at relatively low cost. In the crisis bargaining approach, under complete information such a strategy would simply be incorporated into the bargain reached, providing the side with the effective blitzkrieg strategy a better deal than what it would otherwise get. Deterrence would thus succeed and war would be avoided. However, the side with an effective blitzkrieg strategy would be reluctant to reveal it to the other side if the latter could take countermeasures to negate its effectiveness. Hence, it may be true that having an effective blitzkrieg strategy is conducive to the failure of direct deterrence (and hence to war), but due to an informational problem and associated incentive to misrepresent one's private information (Fearon 1995), rather than simply due to the attractiveness of the strategy.[13]

[13]Note that when a strong type has an incentive to hide its private information, as in this scenario, it is ultimately due to a commitment problem. Namely, the other side's inability to credibly commit to not exploit information-revelation by taking countermeasures that shift

By incorporating a *fait accompli* option into a model of crisis bargaining, i.e., by allowing for limited uses of force to which S is not committed to responding to, the model of this article can be interpreted as a bargaining model of *extended* deterrence. That is, D engaging in a *fait accompli* attack can be interpreted as the failure of extended deterrence. When there is no uncertainty about c_S, then a *fait accompli* attack never results in war because D only captures $x = p + c_S$. This is similar to Werner's (2000) model of extended deterrence in which the aggressor can preclude outside intervention by strategically limiting its war aims. Like Werner, my analysis allows the aggressor to endogenously choose its war aims if it decides to attack the target, and I obtain an analogous result. Unlike Werner, my analysis also allows bargaining between the aggressor and potential defender: S can in principle buy off or "appease" D to deter an attack, as in Chamberlain's bargain with Hitler regarding Czechoslovakia. In this bargaining framework, a failure of extended deterrence, even if it does not result in war between D and S, still involves a costly use of military force and hence needs to be explained as a bargaining failure. When the extended deterrence problem is interpreted this way, then the same informational and commitment problems that explain war (the failure of direct deterrence) in the rationalist/bargaining approach to conflict (Fearon 1995) also explain failures of extended deterrence. And an informational problem explains failures of extended deterrence leading to all-out war.

In the informational explanation for the *fait accompli*, extended deterrence fails because S is uncertain about the feasibility of the *fait accompli* option and hence does not make a sufficient offer in crisis bargaining. In standard treatments of extended deterrence (e.g., Huth 1988; Zagare and Kilgour 2000), D's (the initiator's) uncertainty about S's (the potential defender's) resolve certainly plays an important role in whether he attacks. When bargaining

bargaining power.

is allowed, S's uncertainty about D is also important because it may cause her to make an insufficient offer to deter an attack. Also note that in the informational explanation, general deterrence (Morgan 1977) fails when D initiates a crisis upon becoming dissatisfied with the status quo. Immediate deterrence then fails when D engages in an attack during the crisis due to an insufficient offer being made.

In the commitment-problem explanation for the *fait accompli*, extended deterrence fails because D is dissatisfied and S would take military preparations in a crisis that would preclude the *fait accompli* option. Interestingly, this is a failure of deterrence in which the immediate deterrence phase is skipped altogether, as D attacks "out of the blue" without initiating a crisis first. The commitment-problem explanation suggests that some of the measures that are typically considered to be conducive for achieving immediate deterrence success, such as military preparations by the potential defender in a crisis, are conducive to deterrence *failing* via this alternative route, with the aggressor choosing to attack right away without even initiating a crisis first. Also, the commitment-problem explanation suggests that incomplete information is not necessary for the failure of extended deterrence.

Next, note that the important role of y (the expected agreement from negotiations) in Propositions 5 and 7 is new to the extended deterrence literature, because that literature does not typically allow for bargaining. When the commitment problem is potentially an issue, the analysis suggests that S can increase the likelihood of extended deterrence success by increasing D's expectation that he will get a relatively favorable deal at the negotiating table rather than just a minimally-acceptable offer. However, D has good reasons to doubt such claims and expect the minimally-acceptable offer of $y = p - c_D$ if he initiates a crisis.

Finally, this analysis reinforces a thorny issue that Fearon (2002:20-23) raises for empirical

studies of deterrence, namely the ambiguity of coding deterrence success when bargaining is allowed. If no attack occurred but concessions were made to avert an attack, did deterrence succeed or fail? By explicitly allowing for bargaining, this analysis formalizes many of the issues that he informally discusses.

6 Conclusion

Schultz (2012:374) writes that Downes and Sechser (2012):

> ...argue that some non-trivial set of wars does not belong in a data set on threats because those wars are "not preceded by coercive demands." How common is this, and how would we understand wars that are not preceded by crisis bargaining? The most likely answer is that states forgo explicit demands in order to catch an adversary unprepared, a strategy that is most attractive when the advantages of surprise attack are high and the chances that a threat alone will succeed are low. To incorporate this possibility into our models would be useful.

In this article, I have incorporated the option of a *fait accompli* attack into a standard crisis bargaining model, and it turns out that costly wars that are not preceded by crisis bargaining can indeed rationally occur. In the extended deterrence setting analyzed in this article, a war not preceded by crisis bargaining occurs due to a sequential commitment-informational problem. The commitment problem causes the initiator to engage in a sudden *fait accompli* attack rather than make a coercive demand that would cause the potential defender to engage in military preparations. The informational problem causes the initiator to "overreach" in his *fait accompli* and seize too much of the disputed good, triggering an

unwanted war with the potential defender. Examining whether wars that are not preceded by crisis bargaining can rationally occur in a direct deterrence setting would also be useful.

The analysis has a number of potential policy implications. First, because the conditions under which the commitment problem exists, namely the initiator perceives a *fait accompli* to be relatively low cost and the defender's military preparations to preclude a *fait accompli* are relatively low cost, are both likely to be met in most empirical instances, the analysis suggests that initiators wanting to change the status quo will usually engage in sudden *faits accomplis* rather than attempt coercion through threats. Thus, deterrence will usually be best achieved through permanently stationing military forces in forward positions as to be able to repel an attempted *fait accompli* (deterrence by denial; Snyder 1961), rather than relying on the initiator's fear of all-out war with the defender (deterrence by punishment). For example, the US's heavy military presence in South Korea undoubtedly plays this role. However, permanently stationing troops in forward positions will generally be considered too costly except for the most crucial of interests. In other cases the defender needs to cultivate the impression that it will respond to even a limited *fait accompli*, and a smaller "tripwire" military presence may aid in this (Schelling 1960).

Second, some of the very measures that are considered to be conducive to immediate deterrence success in a crisis, such as military preparations that rule out a *fait accompli* option, are conducive to deterrence *failing* via the commitment-problem route, with the initiator choosing to attack without even initiating a crisis first. For example, if the US's strategy is to always send warships to the Taiwan Strait when tensions between China and Taiwan flare up, at some point in the future China might decide that its optimal strategy is to engage in a sudden *fait accompli* without even making a coercive demand first.

Third, the defender leader can decrease the likelihood of a sudden commitment-driven *fait accompli* by giving the impression that he is willing to bargain generously at the negotiating table rather than making minimally-acceptable offers. However, this could invite accusations of appeasement by domestic critics, and perhaps opportunistic crisis initiations by satisfied opponents pretending to be dissatisfied. The analysis identifies strategies for deterring *fait accompli* attacks, but all of these strategies come with significant difficulties that will challenge leaders.

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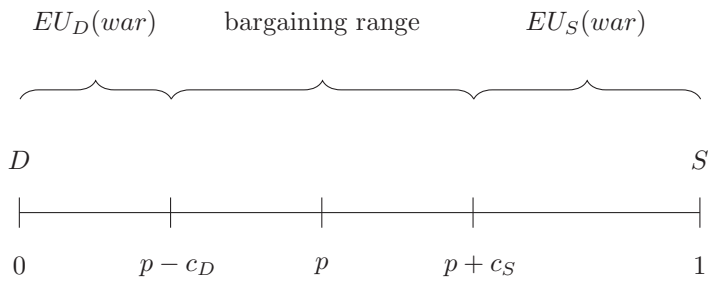

Figure 1: The Standard Bargaining Range

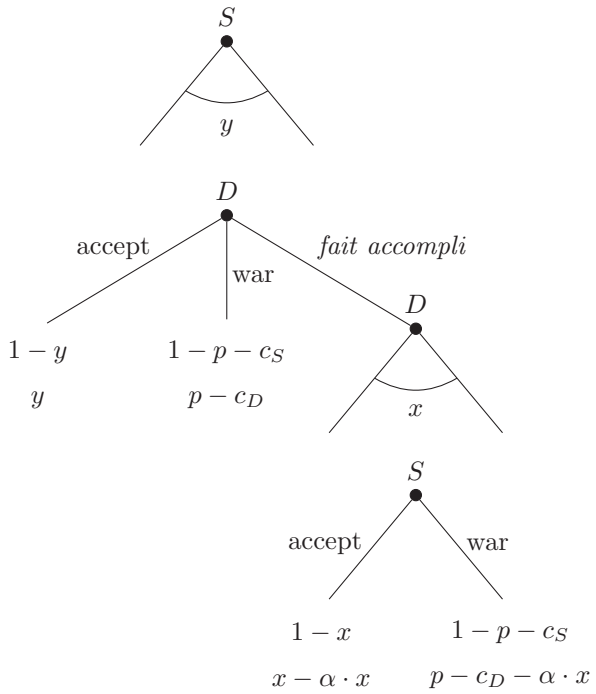

Figure 2: The *Fait Accompli* Modeled as an Additional Outside Option in Crisis Bargaining

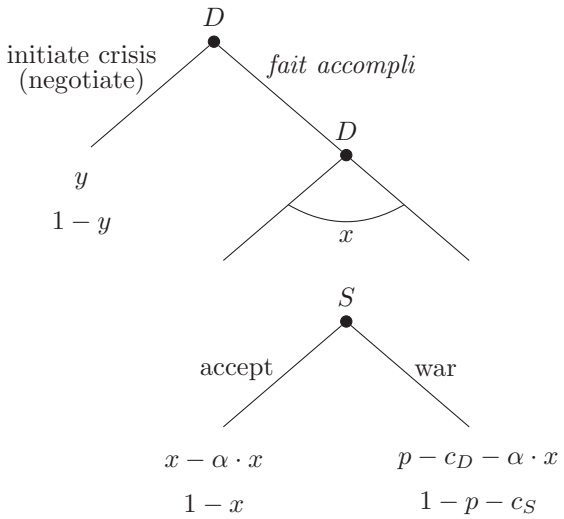

Figure 3: The *Fait Accompli* Modeled as a "Use It Or Lose It" Option