Collusion Among Adversaries

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PSSI Annual Meeting
University of Central Florida
14 November 2025

Slides: `mattmalis.github.io/slides`

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- A wants conflict, but wants B to make the first move
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- How can it be both in A's interest to *provoke* B...
  - ...and in B's interest to *be provoked*?
- How can costless communication between adversaries influence conflict behavior?

Overview

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$\Longrightarrow$ the adversary leaders collude to manipulate the third party's behavior

Overview

Outline:

- Model setup
- Benchmark: no communication
- Private communication
- Public communication
- Cases

Model Setup

Players L (she), D (they), F (he):

- leader L and domestic actor D within Home country H
- foreign leader F (unitary actor)

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- L and F (simultaneously): take aggressive action ($a_i = 1$) or not ($a_i = 0$)

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- Each side wants the other side to not attack

	$a_F = 0$	$a_F = 1$
$a_H = 0$	0, 0	
$a_H = 1$		

	$a_F = 0$	$a_F = 1$
$a_H = 0$	$0,\ 0$	$-\alpha + w_i(\theta, r),$
$a_H = 1$	$\alpha + w_i(\theta, r),$	$w_i(\theta, r),$

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- private types $\theta_L,\ \theta_F$, with $\theta_i \sim G_i(\cdot)$ on $\left[\underline{\theta}_i, \overline{\theta}_i\right]$:
  - each leader's willingness to take the aggressive action (or, dissatisfaction with SQ)
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- Assume $\delta_i > \alpha > 0$:
  - better to prepare in advance than catch your opponent off-guard

Interpretations of L/D relationship

L (agent)	D (principal)
Leader	Voter / domestic constituency

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Military leadership	Civilian government

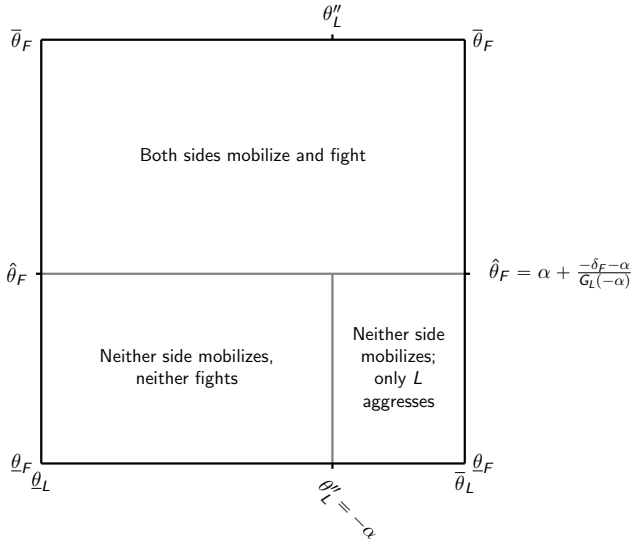
Plan for analysis

At the conflict stage, the (fight, fight) eqm, $a = (1, 1)$, is always supported

- if players anticipate $a = (1, 1)$, then both want to prepare, $r = (1, 1)$

Goal: characterize the most cooperative eqm that can be supported

Non-Communication Equilibrium



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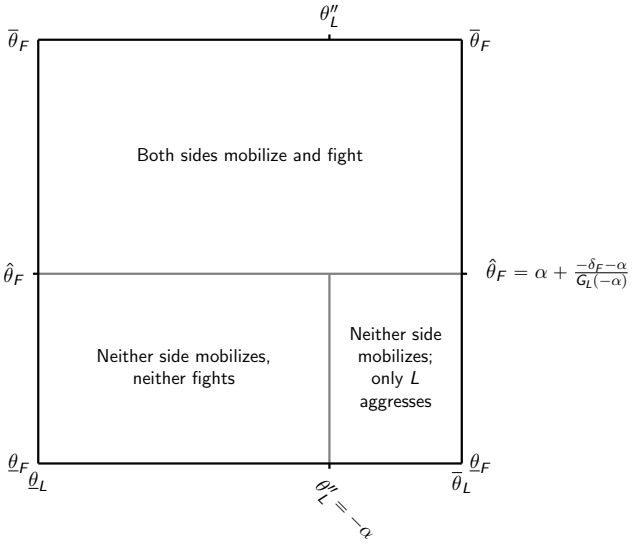

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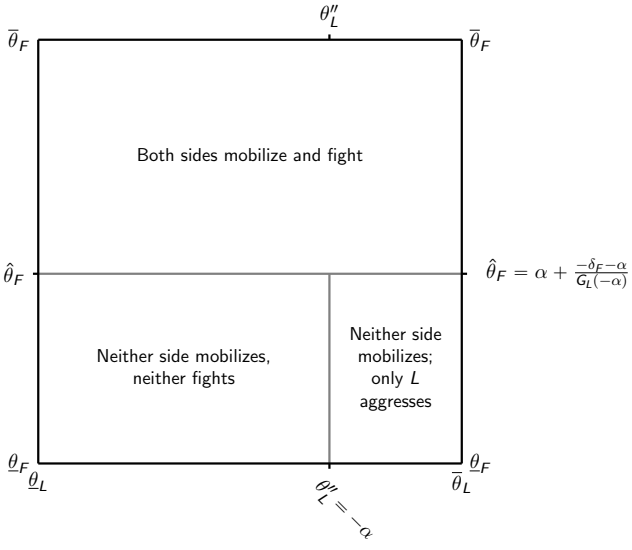

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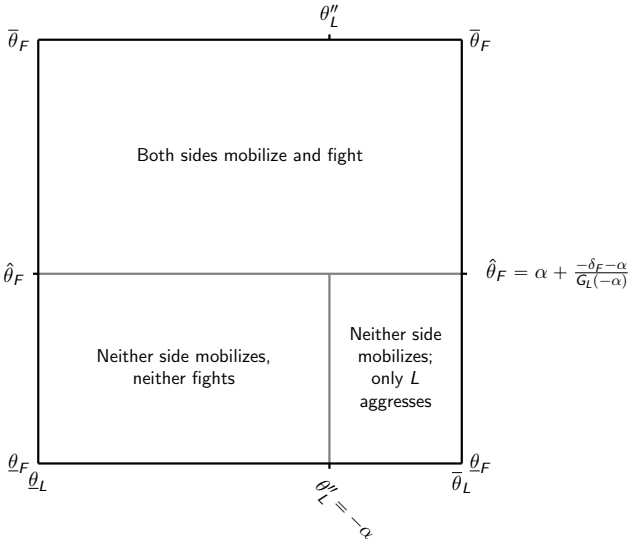

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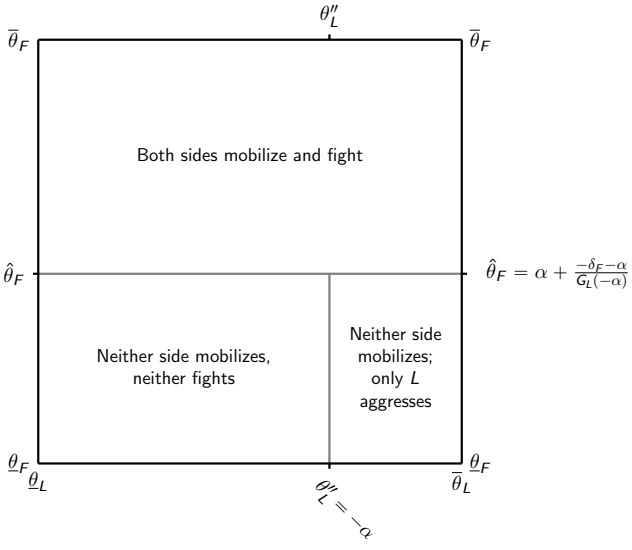

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- L: $a_H = 0$ only if:
  - $r_F = 0$ and $\theta_L < \theta''_L$

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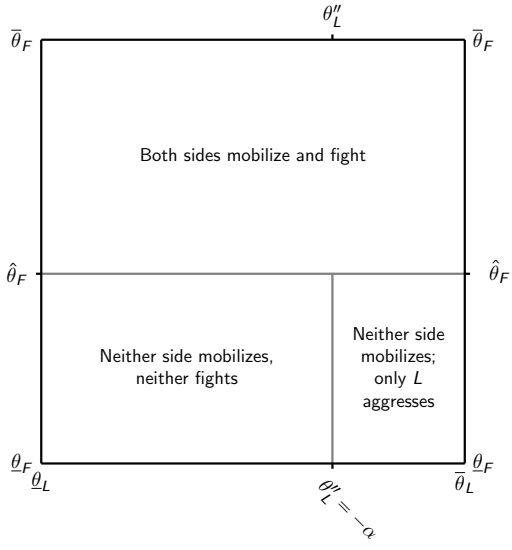

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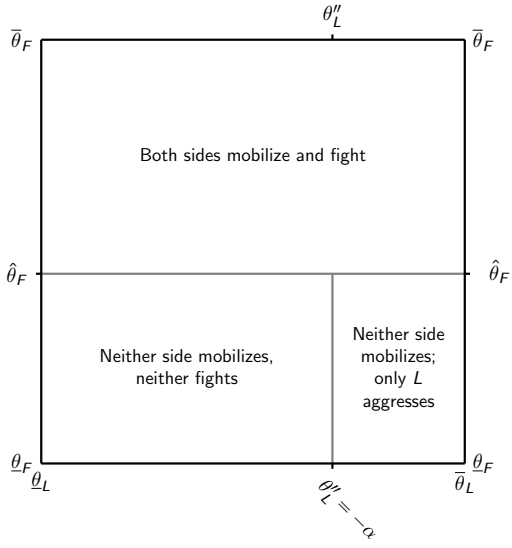

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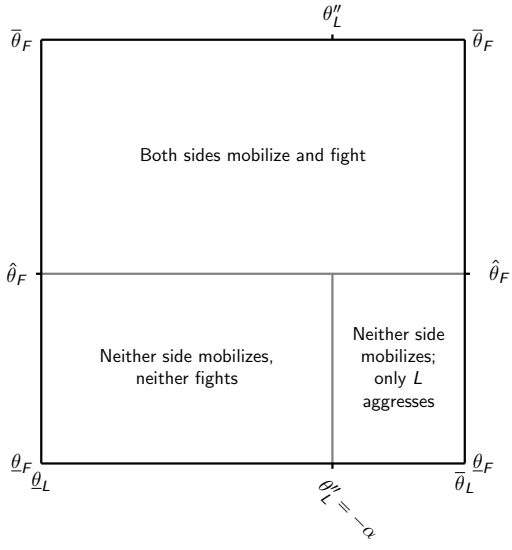

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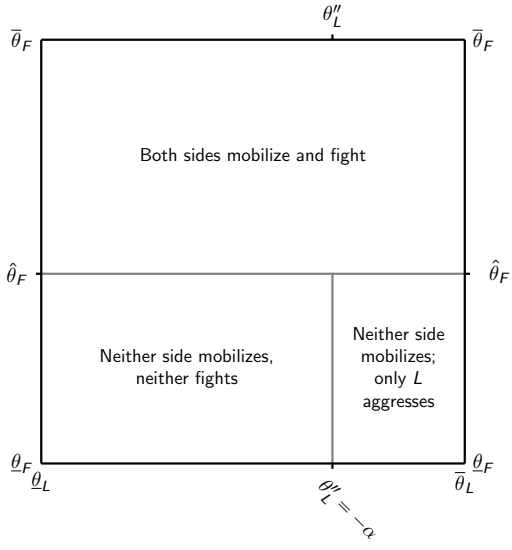

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  - but F doesn't prepare
  - and L doesn't get D's support

Private Communication Equilibrium

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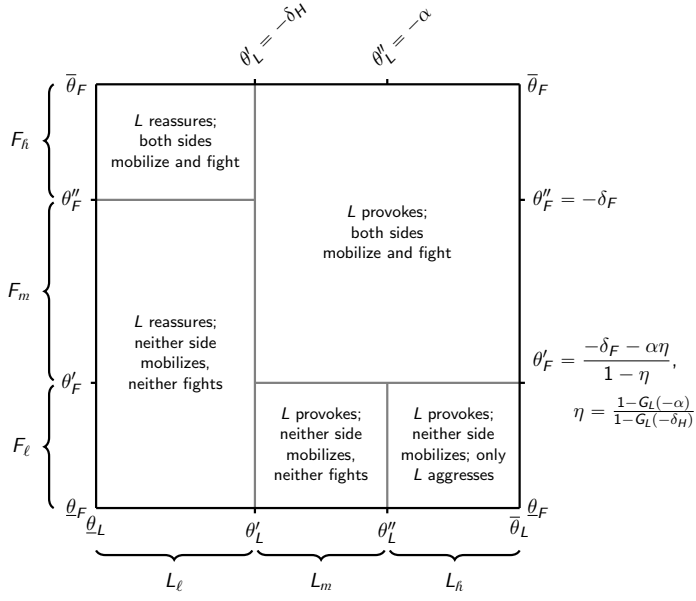
- D matches F's action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$\overline{\theta}_F$
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F_h
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F_m
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θ'_F
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- D supports conflict iff F mobilizes
  - even though they know F may just be reacting to L's provocation

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Summary:

- L can enlist F's help in getting D's support for conflict
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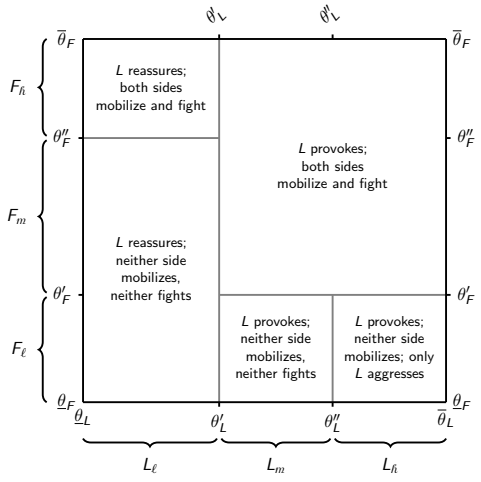
- Corollary: if L can *provoke* F, then L can also *reassure*
  - cheap-talk message can prevent F from attacking

Comparative Statics



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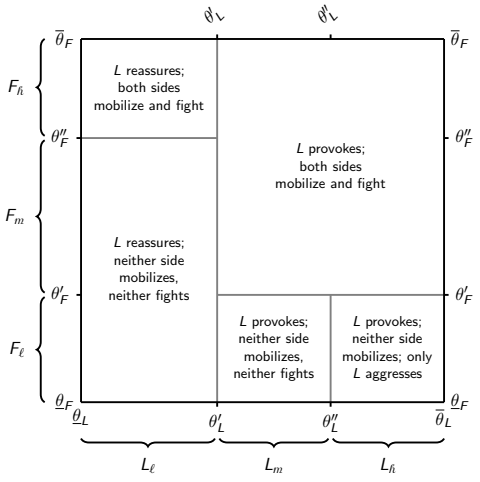

Consider increasing δ_H:

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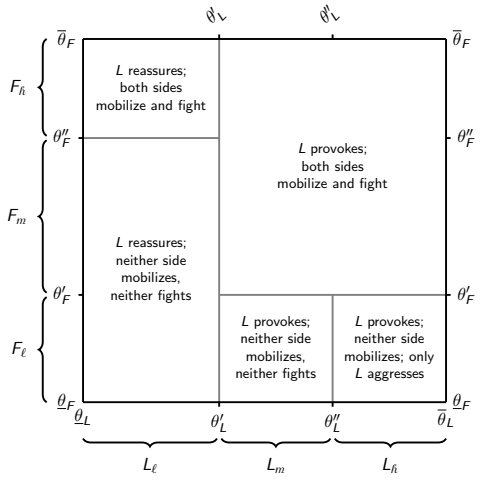

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  - more democratic, or more concerned with international legitimacy

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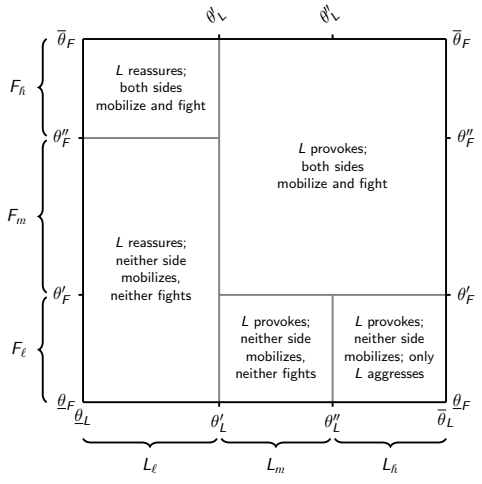

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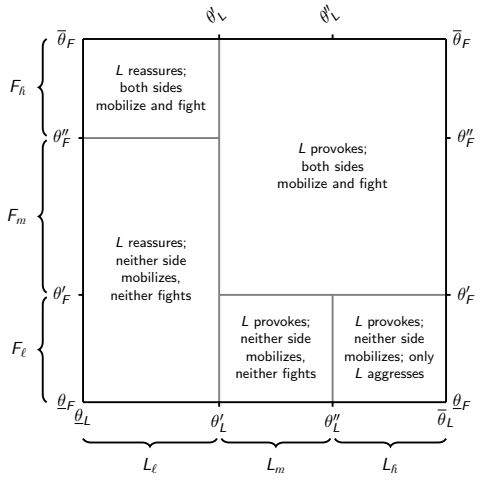

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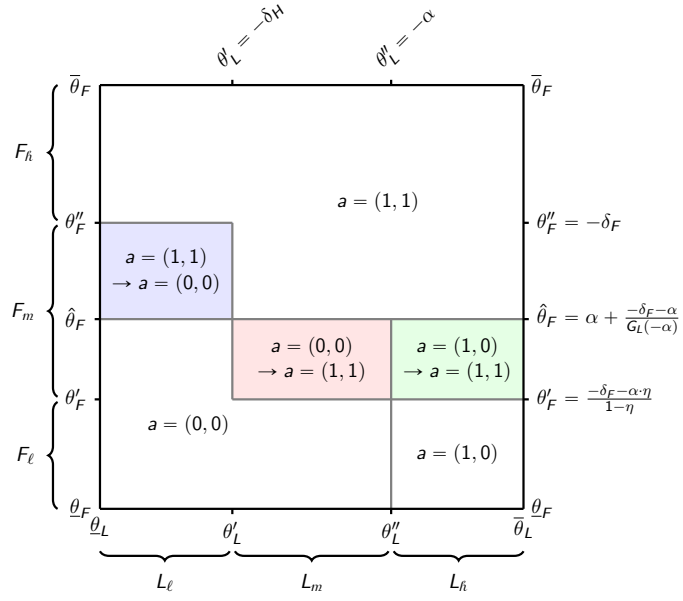
$\Longrightarrow$ contrary to standard audience cost result

Comparing Private Communication vs. Non-Communication



Public Communication

Alternative setup:

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Result:

- Either the same behavior (if $\phi < \hat{\phi}$)
- or the message is strictly *more* effective
  - (creates more separation in F's mobilization strategy, and thus conflict
- reason: provocative message increases D' belief that conflict is inevitable

Interpretations of L/D relationship

L	D
Leader	Voter / domestic constituency
Executive	Legislature
Protegé state	Patron state
State	International community
Military leadership	Civilian government

Cases

Franco-Prussian War, 1870:

- Bismarck (L) wanted smaller German states (D) to unify under Prussia ($r_H = 1$)
  - needed to demonstrate that French Emperor Napoleon III (F) had hostile intent

Cases

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- France "mobilizing" ($r_F = 1$):
  - initiating war on its own timeline, rather than waiting
  - advantageous for France — power shifting towards Prussia

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Gulf of Tonkin incident, Jul-Aug 1964:

- U.S. taking provocative actions toward North Vietnam
  - ineffective covert activities (34A), commando raids, subversion attempts
  - Navy destroyer, Maddox, on radar harassment patrols
  - North Vietnamese boats attack Maddox ($r_F = 1$)
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- Resolution substantially reduced Johnson's domestic political cost of future military escalation (δ)

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- Provocation unsuccessful; Kim Jong Un did not mobilize
  - Yoon's martial law attempt was overwhelmingly rejected by SK public ($r_H = 0$)
    - did not perceive external threat

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Novel mechanism of cheap-talk diplomacy between adversaries:

- coordinating action to collude against a third party