

Ending the Korean War

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The Role of Domestic Coalition Shifts in Overcoming Obstacles to Peace

Throughout history, shifts in governing coalitions have critically affected war termination. For example, the execution of the Athenian democratic ruler Cleophon and the ascendancy of the pro-Spartan oligarchs in b.c. 404 led to Athens' surrender to Sparta and ended the twenty-seven-year Second Peloponnesian War. Similarly, the death of Russian Empress Elizabeth in January 1762 led her Prussophile successor, Peter III, to immediately recall Russian armies that were occupying Berlin and conclude the Treaty of Saint Petersburg by May—ending the fighting between Russia and Prussia in the Seven Years' War. During World War I, riots in Germany ushered in a new government that then negotiated the final war armistice, as Kaiser Wilhelm II fled to Holland. Likewise, during World War II, France and Italy surrendered shortly after changes in their governing coalitions, in 1940 and 1943, respectively. Most recently, on his first full day in office, U.S. President Barack Obama summoned senior officials to the White House to begin fulfilling his campaign promise to pull combat forces out of the war in Iraq.¹

Scholars working on issues related to war termination have noted this phenomenon, albeit anecdotally. For example, H.A. Calahan observes that “it seems fair to conclude that a change of regime for the vanquished comes close

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1. This phenomenon extends to noninterstate wars as well. For example, the leader of the rebel group National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, Jonas Savimbi, was killed in an ambush by government troops in February 2002; six weeks later, a cease-fire was signed, ending the twenty-seven-year-long Angolan civil war. Similarly, in Sierra Leone, both sides reached a settlement after Foday Sankoh, the leader of the rebel group Revolutionary United Front, was arrested. Comparable patterns can be observed in extrasystemic wars, such as Charles de Gaulle and Mikhail Gorbachev coming to power in France and the Soviet Union and ending their wars in Algeria and Afghanistan, respectively.

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to being a condition precedent to the making of peace.”² Robert Rothstein concludes that “because it is unlikely that the officials currently in charge can make the necessary changes in policies with which they have become identified, new personnel seem imperative.”³ Michael Handel suggests that “the termination of a long and stalemated war is frequently preceded by a drastic political change in leadership in the country of one of the belligerents.”⁴ Finally, in the landmark study of this phenomenon, Fred Iklé classifies elites in each belligerent state as “hawks” and “doves” and asserts that the hawks may need to leave the government before the state can settle.⁵

In short, the empirical record includes numerous examples of domestic governing coalition shifts leading to war termination, and many scholars from different theoretical perspectives have noted this tendency. Few scholars, however, have attempted to explain the causal mechanisms of this phenomenon in a rigorous and generalizable manner.⁶ In this article, I introduce a new theory about shifts in domestic governing coalitions, a state’s elite foreign policy decisionmaking group, and explain their role in the war termination process. I outline three obstacles to peace, as well as coalitional dynamics, that can lead incumbent governing coalitions to be unable to end the war—even when such a change is necessary or desirable. As a result, ending the war may only be possible by replacing some or all of the coalition’s members.

As bargaining models of war suggest, wars can only end once all belligerents develop similar expectations about the war. Whereas most bargaining models assume that this change in expectation occurs with an attitude change among incumbent leaders, my theory suggests that it may result from a change in the foreign policy leadership itself. Thus, my argument refines the

2. H.A. Calahan, *What Makes a War End?* (New York: Vanguard, 1944), p. 209.

3. Robert Rothstein, “Domestic Politics and Peacemaking: Reconciling Incompatible Imperatives,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 392, No. 1 (November 1970), p. 74.

4. Michael I. Handel, *War Termination—A Critical Survey* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1978), p. 26.

5. Fred Charles Iklé, *Every War Must End* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

6. One recent exception is Sarah Elizabeth Croco, who tests the argument that culpable leaders will feel more pressure to stay in the war than nonculpable leaders. Her argument, however, only applies to heads of state and not to governing coalitions. See Croco, “Peace at What Price? Domestic Politics, Settlement Costs, and War Termination,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2008. Similarly, in a parallel study of interstate rivalry termination from 1816 to 1992, D. Scott Bennett found that a change in the leadership or political system of one of the rivals led to a decrease in the duration of the rivalry. See Bennett, “Democracy, Regime Change, and Rivalry Termination,” *International Interactions*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (April 1997), pp. 369–397; and D. Scott Bennett, “Integrating and Testing Models of Rivalry Termination,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (October 1998), pp. 1200–1231.

domestic-level mechanisms that lead to the international bargains that end war. As such, this analysis builds on a much wider literature within international relations about “two-level games,” one level being domestic and the other international.⁷

I assess this theory in a plausibility probe of the Korean War, a quintessential example of stalemated war. Unlike most other empirical studies of interstate war duration and termination, which focus only on wars that ended with a clear-cut victor,⁸ my model theorizes explicitly about stalemates. The irony of the Korean War is that the final armistice terms accepted in July 1953 were little different from those proposed at the start of negotiations in July 1951. Given that the battlefield situation remained relatively constant throughout those two years, yet casualties continued to mount,⁹ why did the belligerents wait so long? From a strategic viewpoint, continuing the war made no sense—but from a domestic viewpoint, it did. As my analysis makes clear, the end of the war was preceded by shifts in the domestic governing coalitions of the three major belligerents, which permitted the war to end.

The rest of this article is divided into four sections and a conclusion. The first section briefly reviews the existing war termination literature and shows how previous approaches are incomplete. The second section outlines my theory about domestic coalition shifts in war termination. The third section examines

7. Robert D. Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Summer 1988), pp. 427–460; George Tsebelis, *Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); James D. Fearon, “Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 3 (September 1994), pp. 577–592; Alastair Smith, “International Crises and Domestic Politics,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 92, No. 3 (September 1998), pp. 623–638; and Kenneth A. Schultz, “Domestic Opposition and Signaling in International Crises,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 92, No. 4 (December 1998), pp. 829–844.

8. D. Scott Bennett and Allan C. Stam III, “The Duration of Interstate Wars, 1816–1985,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 90, No. 2 (June 1996), pp. 239–257; H.E. Goemans, *War and Punishment: The Causes of War Termination and the First World War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, *Democracies at War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Dan Reiter, *How Wars End* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, forthcoming). Important exceptions include D. Scott Bennett and Allan C. Stam III, “The Declining Advantages of Democracy: A Combined Model of War Outcomes and Duration,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (April 1998), pp. 344–366; and Branislav L. Slantchev, “How Initiators End Their Wars: The Duration of Warfare and the Terms of Peace,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (October 2004), pp. 813–829.

9. U.S. statistics show that 45 percent of U.S. casualties—22,000 killed and 63,200 wounded—occurred while negotiations were in progress. See Rosemary Foot, *A Substitute for Victory: The Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 208. UN forces overall suffered 125,000 casualties during the fifteen-month period in which voluntary repatriation was debated. See Walter G. Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1966), p. 500. China and North Korea lost 234,000 men during the last two years of the war. See Ike Hatchimonji, “The Korean War,” April 7, 1997, <http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/8548/ikeswar.htm>.

the domestic causal mechanisms in detail in the United States, China, and the Soviet Union during the Korean War. The fourth section briefly examines the war-terminating strategic interaction among these states while also addressing some potential objections.

The Theoretical Context

Existing literature about war termination can be grouped into three categories—realpolitik, domestic politics, and bargaining models. Of these, bargaining models have made significant inroads into scholarly understanding, because they can account for the strategic interaction between sides in ending war. I build on this literature by refining the domestic mechanisms implicit in bargaining models to explain why each side decides to come to the bargaining table. Specifically, I advance a key variable—the effect of domestic coalition shifts—that the literature has mostly ignored and remains largely underdeveloped.

The oldest theoretical approach to war termination, realpolitik arguments, suggests that war has only two outcomes—victory or defeat. War ends when one side gives up and accepts the more powerful side's demands;¹⁰ the arguments assume, however, that the “winner” will not raise his demands once he realizes his advantage. In contrast, domestic politics arguments examine various mechanisms within one state to explain war termination. These arguments emphasize (1) public opinion,¹¹ (2) elite behav-

10. See, for example, Calahan, *What Makes a War End?*; Karl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Paul Paret and Michael Howard (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976); Robert F. Randle, *The Origins of Peace: A Study of Peacemaking and the Structure of Peace Settlements* (New York: Free Press, 1973); Paul Kecskemeti, *Strategic Surrender: The Politics of Victory and Defeat* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1958); Richard Hobbs, *The Myth of Victory: What Is Victory at War?* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1979); Francis A. Beer and Thomas F. Mayer, “Why Wars End: Some Hypotheses,” *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (April 1986), pp. 95–106; and Lewis A. Coser, “The Termination of Conflict,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (December 1961), pp. 347–353.

11. Scholars who have examined public opinion's role in war termination have focused mostly on democratic regimes, especially in the United States. The dominant view is that the collective public is “rational” and will support the war if the benefits outweigh the costs. Some scholars even argue that in democracies, public support declines monotonically with battle deaths. See John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985); Scott Sigmund Gartner and Marissa Edson Myers, “Body Counts and ‘Success’ in the Vietnam and Korean Wars,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Winter 1995), pp. 377–395; Scott Sigmund Gartner and Gary M. Segura, “War, Casualties, and Public Opinion,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (June 1998), pp. 278–300; Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1996); Croco, “Peace at What Price?”; and Christopher Gelpi, Peter D. Feaver, and Jason Reifler, “Success Matters: Casualty Sen-

ior,¹² or (3) bureaucratic politics,¹³ based on their view about which domestic institution or group monopolizes the policy process and thus can catalyze a change in attitudes to bring about peace. While these scholars focus on domestic mechanisms for peace, they tend to overlook international factors. As a result, most realpolitik and domestic politics arguments generally ignore the strategic interaction inherent in settling with the enemy.

Addressing this theoretical gap, a third group of scholars argues that a change in the international bargaining space brings peace.¹⁴ These rationalist

sitivity and the War in Iraq," *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Winter 2005/06), pp. 7–46. In contrast, other scholars argue that the public cues on elite views about the war in order to evaluate war performance. See John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Adam J. Berinsky, "Assuming the Costs of War: Events, Elites, and American Public Support for Military Conflict," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (November 2007), pp. 975–997. Alternatively, other scholars argue that public opinion is prone to elite manipulation. See Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); Michael D. McGinnis and John T. Williams, *Compound Dilemmas: Democracy, Collective Action, and Superpower Rivalry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001); Ben D. Mor, "Peace Initiatives and Public Opinion: The Domestic Context of Conflict Resolution," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (May 1997), pp. 197–215; Michael P. Colaresi, *Scare Tactics: The Politics of International Rivalry* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Matthew A. Baum, *Soft News Goes to War: Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy in the New Media Age* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 44–45; and Dominic D.P. Johnson and Dominic Tierney, *Failing to Win: Perceptions of Victory and Defeat in International Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 67–75.

12. These scholars generally argue that elite disagreement about war policy leads to war's end. See Iklé, *Every War Must End*; Rothstein, "Domestic Politics and Peacemaking," pp. 62–75; James D.D. Smith, *Stopping Wars: Defining the Obstacles to Ceasefire* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1995); Paul Bracken, "Institutional Factors in War Termination," in Stephen J. Cimbala and Sidney R. Waldman, eds., *Controlling and Ending Conflict: Issues before and after the Cold War* (New York: Greenwood, 1992), pp. 183–195; Gary T. Armstrong, "The Domestic Politics of War Termination: The Political Struggle in the United States over the Armistice, 1918," Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1994; and Sarah E. Mendelson, *Changing Course: Ideas, Politics, and the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

13. These scholars argue that the struggle to end war is subordinated to a country's internal politics. See Leon V. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish: The Politics of War Termination in the United States and Japan, 1945* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988); Gideon Rose, "Victory and Its Substitutes: Foreign Policy Decision-Making at the Ends of Wars," Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1994; and Morton H. Halperin, "War Termination as a Problem in Civil-Military Relations," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 392, No. 1 (November 1970), pp. 86–95.

14. These scholars include Goemans, *War and Punishment*; James Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Summer 1995), pp. 379–414; James D. Morrow, "Capabilities, Uncertainty, and Resolve: A Limited Information Model of Crisis Bargaining," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (November 1989), pp. 941–972; Paul R. Pillar, *Negotiating Peace: War Termination as a Bargaining Process* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983); R. Harrison Wagner, "Bargaining and War," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (July 2000), pp. 469–484; Suzanne Werner, "Negotiating the Terms of Settlement: War Aims and Bargaining Leverage," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (June 1998), pp. 321–343; Donald Wittman, "How a War Ends: A Rational Model Approach," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (December 1979), pp. 743–763; Bennett and Stam, "The Declining Advantages of Democracy"; Darren Filson and Suzanne Werner, "A Bargaining Model of War and Peace: Anticipating the Onset, Duration, and Outcome of War," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (October 2002), pp. 819–837; Darren Filson and Suzanne Werner, "Bargaining and Fighting: The Impact of Regime Type on War Onset, Duration, and Outcomes," *American Journal of Political Science*,

bargaining models highlight the interactive nature of war, that it takes two or more sides to end it. Moreover, they address the theoretical problem of enforcement in an anarchic realm: agreements will be self-enforcing at terms where both sides perceive the marginal benefits of additional demands to be less than the marginal costs of fighting to achieve those demands.¹⁵ Most bargaining models of war focus on information dynamics. In this view, war is caused by uncertainty about the distribution of power between the belligerents, the costs of fighting or the enemy's resolve, and the war itself is an important source of information for overcoming this uncertainty. War ends when both sides' expectations converge enough to create an overlapping bargaining space.¹⁶

In these models, belligerents continuously update their expectations throughout the war, based on observed battle outcomes and the diplomatic offers that are made (or not made). For example, winning a battle will lead a belligerent to believe he is more powerful than the other side, causing him to incrementally increase his demands. In contrast, a battlefield defeat will lead him to incrementally lower his demands. Many bargaining models conceive of this updating process in mathematical terms, in accordance with Bayes's theorem.¹⁷ In practice, this Bayesian updating process may not be as precise as these models predict, and information dynamics cannot provide a complete account of war termination behavior. Although Bayesian models accept that this updating process can take time, the reasons for this "lag" are undertheorized.¹⁸

Few scholars have theorized about domestic politics as a source of this

Vol. 48, No. 2 (April 2004), pp. 296–313; Robert Powell, "Bargaining Theory and International Conflict," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 5 (June 2002), pp. 1–30; Robert Powell, "Bargaining and Learning while Fighting," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (April 2004), pp. 344–361; Dan Reiter, "Exploring the Bargaining Model of War," *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (March 2003), pp. 27–43; Reiter, *How Wars End*; Slantchev, "How Initiators End Their Wars"; Branislav L. Slantchev, "The Power to Hurt: Costly Conflict with Completely Informed States," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (February 2003), pp. 123–133; and Alastair Smith and Allan C. Stam, "Bargaining and the Nature of War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 48, No. 6 (December 2004), pp. 783–813.

15. The presence of potential intervening parties can make agreements self-enforcing even for the stronger state, because it can anticipate intervention and its consequences. See Goemans, *War and Punishment*, p. 32.

16. Morrow, "Capabilities, Uncertainty, and Resolve"; Slantchev, "How Initiators End Their Wars"; Slantchev, "The Power to Hurt"; Powell, "Bargaining Theory and International Conflict"; Powell, "Bargaining and Learning while Fighting"; Filson and Werner, "A Bargaining Model of War and Peace"; and Filson and Werner, "Bargaining and Fighting."

17. For more information about Bayesian updating, see James D. Morrow, *Game Theory for Political Scientists* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), chap. 6.

18. Scott Sigmund Gartner argues that states may choose to change their military strategy rather than offer concessions. Gartner, *Strategic Assessment in War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997). Reiter argues that fears of adversary noncompliance with an agreement can account for the inefficiency in Bayesian updating. Reiter, *How Wars End*, chap. 11.

inefficiency, even as Bayesian formal theorists have flagged it as a possible cause. For example, Darren Filson and Suzanne Werner admit their model assumes that an attacker can “effortlessly revise upward or downwards her demands”; a “leader responsive to domestic political concerns, however, is likely much less flexible.”¹⁹ The domestic politics version of the Bayesian argument filters battlefield conditions through cost-sensitive democratic constituencies, which then pressure leaders to change war policy. In turn, this pressure causes leaders to change their expectations about the war.²⁰ This argument, however, does not model the lag in the Bayesian updating process that one often sees empirically; rather, it assumes that political leaders update as soon as they perceive a change in their constituency. In contrast, Hein Goemans begins to account for lags in Bayesian updating, but only in losing “semi-repressive and moderately exclusionary” regimes (i.e., oligarchies). Goemans argues that oligarchs’ expectations about personal punishment after the war serve as a brake on updating their expectations during it. If accepting settlement terms appears to have nasty personal consequences, these leaders as individuals can rationally prefer to continue fighting if there is a chance they can obtain terms that prevent their punishment. Thus, losing oligarchs can prevent the state from updating war expectations and creating an overlapping bargaining space to end it.²¹

Even though including regime type is an improvement on bargaining models that exclude domestic politics, this emphasis focuses attention on the differences between regime types and away from variation within regime types. In the process, such arguments conceal important domestic political explanations for lags in Bayesian updating. For example, by treating all democrats as similarly cost-sensitive and all oligarchs as similarly afraid of political survival, these arguments ignore that different leaders within each regime type face different constraints, based on their governing coalition’s particular obstacles to peace. By ignoring variation within the same regime type, these arguments miss domestic constraints that can explain lags in Bayesian updating. They also ignore the effect of leadership changes in overcoming such lags.

This project addresses these weaknesses by elucidating the underspecified causal mechanism about when and how the overlapping bargaining space opens up. Accordingly, I look more carefully at the lag in the Bayesian updating process and theorize about how states get beyond it. In contrast to

19. Filson and Werner, “A Bargaining Model of War and Peace,” p. 832.

20. Filson and Werner, “Bargaining and Fighting”; Bennett and Stam, “The Declining Advantages of Democracy”; and Slantchev, “How Initiators End Their Wars.”

21. Goemans, *War and Punishment*.

Bayesian models, which assume that this change in expectations occurs when incumbent leaders change their minds, my research suggests that in many wars, it results from a change in the foreign policy leadership itself. In the process, my theory addresses two other shortcomings in these models.

First, most bargaining models do not allow for actors' goals or interests to evolve during the settlement process. If preferences are given, why do actors' views change during war? Instead, as I argue, preferences during war appear to shift over time in response to several issues, including a state's "sunk costs" and the information gained from the process of fighting and negotiating. Moreover, new leaders often come to power with different preferences and policy goals, which can lead to a new calculation of the costs and benefits of continuing the war.²²

Second, my model addresses an entire class of wars—protracted stalemates—that most bargaining models cannot explain and typically exclude from analysis. Leaders update their preferences as information is revealed through fighting, as long as the battlefield provides clear information. On stalemated battlefields, however, this information may be limited or ambiguous. Alternatively, clear information may be present, but for reasons I explain below, leaders may be unable to absorb it or act on it. These wars are empirically too common to be ignored as irrelevant: recent scholarship on war termination documents an increasing number of stalemates in the post-World War II period.²³ Thus, my model adds breadth to the current literature by theorizing more explicitly about lags in the updating process that can lead to protracted stalemates.

Domestic Coalition Shifts in Interstate War Termination

As bargaining models about ending war suggest, belligerents will settle a conflict only when they develop an overlapping bargaining space.²⁴ Bayesian models appear to best explain wars with a large power imbalance between the opposing sides, where updating occurs rather quickly. In contrast, Bayesian

22. For example, Croco argues that "culpable" leaders—those whom the public can clearly link to the decision to go to war—face "settlement costs," whereas "nonculpable" leaders can distance themselves from the original war decision and thereby become immune to such costs. Thus, culpable and nonculpable leaders face different utility functions and preferences about continuing or ending the war. See Croco, "Peace at What Price?"

23. Pillar, *Negotiating Peace*; Smith, *Stopping Wars*; and James F. Dunnigan and William Martel, *How to Stop a War: The Lessons of Two Hundred Years of War and Peace* (London: Doubleday, 1987).

24. The theory presented here pertains to interstate war termination but could easily be extended to civil war termination, because civil war leadership factions operate similarly to a state's domestic governing coalition.

models are less effective for explaining longer wars, where realpolitik factors may not be enough to manifest clear battlefield outcomes and where war policies become “sticky.” Here, leaders find it more difficult to shift policies and strategies related to prosecuting and ending the war as quickly as the Bayesian approach would suggest; thus, war does not necessarily end when decision-makers want it to. Instead, belligerents must invest political capital in prosecuting the war, and these war policies can become stuck in a positive feedback loop. Thus, in longer wars, failure of realpolitik factors to produce a bargaining space and the sunk costs of expending political capital to wage the war make it increasingly difficult to end.

COALITIONS AND COALITION SHIFTS

Many different domestic interests influence the decision to enter, prosecute, or end a war. Thus, rather than characterize each belligerent state as a unitary actor, it is useful to model it as a domestic governing coalition. All states—regardless of regime type—are led by a domestic governing coalition. A “domestic governing coalition” is the elite foreign policy decisionmaking group in each belligerent government, comprising the actors who “if they agree, have both the ability to commit the resources of the government in foreign affairs and the power to prevent other entities within the government from overtly reversing their position.”²⁵

The actors who make up a state’s domestic governing coalition are constrained by broader societal interest groups and other political “patrons,” such as (1) dissenting actors in the regime’s ruling group or party, (2) other political parties in the legislature, (3) military and paramilitary groups, (4) groups reflecting regional or ethnic interests, (5) economic sectors, (6) military-industrial-scientific complexes, (7) public opinion, (8) the media, and (9) other interest groups and nongovernmental organizations.²⁶ These constituencies vary by regime type: public opinion, the media, and opposition groups may have more effect in democracies, whereas the military, party apparatus, or

25. Margaret G. Hermann, “How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy: A Theoretical Framework,” *International Studies Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Summer 2001), pp. 47–81, at p. 56. Hermann names three authoritative decision units that could be responsible for foreign policy decisions: predominant leader, single group, or coalition of autonomous actors. Unlike Hermann, I believe that predominant leaders are extremely uncommon. Almost all leaders make decisions through consultation with a small group of close advisers, and very few—if any—have the ability to stifle all dissent and opposition by themselves.

26. Snyder, *Myths of Empire*; Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, “Democratization and the Danger of War,” *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Summer 1995), pp. 5–38; Joe D. Hagan, *Political Opposition and Foreign Policy in Comparative Perspective* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1993); and Benjamin O. Fordham, *Building the Cold War Consensus: The Political Economy of U.S. National Security Policy, 1949–51* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

some external ally may be the relevant audience in authoritarian regimes.²⁷ All leaders will depend upon some constituency to stay in power, and different coalition members may answer to different constituencies. Even apparent dictators can be removed if they no longer promote the interests of their selectorate.²⁸

A governing coalition's ability to commit to or change policy depends heavily on the effective number of veto players, "a person, group or faction who, through their control of an office, post, or branch of government, can reject any proposed changes to existing policy."²⁹ The larger the number of veto players and the greater the distance between their policy positions, the more difficult it can be to change policy.³⁰ Furthermore, the greater the number of veto players, the more policies will benefit targeted groups or constituencies, instead of the general public. This occurs when veto players are able to demand—and receive—side payments in the form of narrowly targeted policies.³¹ Such side payments can lead to contradictory policy positions or log-rolling, where each veto player gets what it most wants in return for tolerating the unpleasant effects of policies backed by other coalition members.³²

27. Mark Peceny and Caroline C. Beer, with Shannon Sanchez-Terry, "Dictatorial Peace?" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 96, No. 1 (March 2002), pp. 15–26. For more on how authoritarian leaders can rely on groups with special loyalties to the regime, see Stanislav Andreski, "On the Peaceful Disposition of Military Dictatorships," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (December 1980), pp. 3–10; James T. Quinnlivan, "Coup-proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East," *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Fall 1999), pp. 131–165; and Risa Brooks, "Civil-Military Relations in the Middle East," in Nora Bensahel and Daniel Byman, eds., *The Future Security Environment in the Middle East: Conflict, Stability, and Political Change* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2004), pp. 129–162.

28. T. Clifton Morgan and Sally Howard Campbell, "Domestic Structure, Decisional Constraints, and War: So Why Kant Democracies Fight?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (June 1991), pp. 187–211. This extends Zeev Maoz and Nasrin Abdolali's and Hagan's argument that all regimes share some features in terms of the ability of other actors to influence the decisions of the head of state. See Maoz and Abdolali, "Regime Types and International Conflict, 1816–1976," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (March 1989), pp. 3–35; and Hagan, *Political Opposition and Foreign Policy in Comparative Perspective*.

29. Stephan Haggard and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Presidents, Parliaments, and Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 5. For more information about veto players, see Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, "The Institutional Determinants of Economic Policy Outcomes," in *ibid.*, pp. 21–63; George Tsebelis, "Decision Making in Political Systems: Veto Players in Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, Multicameralism, and Multipartyism," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (July 1995), pp. 289–325; George Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Joe D. Hagan, Philip P. Everts, Haruhiro Fukui, and John D. Stempel, "Foreign Policy by Coalition: Deadlock, Compromise, and Anarchy," *International Studies Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Summer 2001), pp. 169–216.

30. Cox and McCubbins, "The Institutional Determinants of Economic Policy Outcomes"; Tsebelis, "Decision Making in Political Systems"; and Tsebelis, *Veto Players*.

31. Cox and McCubbins, "The Institutional Determinants of Economic Policy Outcomes"; and Alan C. Lamborn, *The Price of Power: Risk and Foreign Policy in Britain, France, and Germany* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1991), p. 63.

32. Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, p. 44; Mansfield and Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of

These coalitional dynamics help explain policy inertia and highlight the obvious relationship between policy stability and domestic coalition shifts. When a policy is functioning because of a coalition agreement, changing the policy requires renegotiating that agreement.³³ Likewise, the less control a coalition member has over policy choice and implementation, the less willing he is to take political risks to change it. Thus, larger coalitions with more veto players are unlikely to take political risks to change policy.³⁴ For these reasons, policy stability may make governments unable to change the status quo, even when such changes are necessary or desirable. In fact, a government with policy stability may become so immobile that policy change is only possible by replacing the incumbent government.³⁵

I define a “domestic coalition shift” as either (1) a consequential change in the identity of the decisionmakers or (2) a substantive change in the type of government. The first definition includes changes in the actual or nominal head of state, cabinet membership, political parties in a parliamentary governing coalition, and junta membership.³⁶ The latter definition resembles the comparativists’ “regime change” (i.e., a change in the type of regime). Either type of shift can produce a significant change in policies as new members bring new resources, constituencies, perspectives, interests, and preferences to the leadership coalition.

OBSTACLES TO PEACE

There are many reasons why a war, once entrenched, is difficult to end. I argue that these reasons fall into one of three categories—preference, information, and entrapment obstacles. These three obstacles make it more likely that belligerents will need a domestic coalition shift before the war can end. By removing these obstacles, domestic coalition shifts may produce the necessary conditions for ending war. These three obstacles to peace can occur in tandem, although they may not all be present at the same time or have an equally powerful effect. The preference obstacle is already well documented in bargaining models of war; even in rationalist models, if decisionmakers do not want to end the war, a bargaining space cannot develop. In contrast, the information

War,” p. 32; Hagan et al., “Foreign Policy by Coalition”; and William H. Riker and Steven J. Brams, “The Paradox of Vote Trading,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (December 1973), pp. 1235–1247.

33. Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decisionmaking, and System Structure in International Crises* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 351.

34. Lamborn, *The Price of Power*, pp. 63–66; and Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 29.

35. Tsebelis, “Decision Making in Political Systems,” p. 321.

36. Notably, this definition excludes changes that involve only military leaders, unless a military leader also serves in a political role in the decisionmaking process.

and entrapment obstacles interfere with the Bayesian updating process critical to making decisions about continuing or ending a war.

THE PREFERENCE OBSTACLE. Leaders in a domestic coalition may not want to end the war, for four reasons. First, leaders' personal stakes may be very high, because their personal reputation, domestic political standing, or physical or financial security is attached to continuing the war.³⁷ Alternatively, most war benefits—including career advancement, protection from foreign economic competition, operational autonomy, larger budget slices, or boosted revenue streams—are disproportionately concentrated in specific groups, such as the military and military-industrial-scientific complexes.³⁸ Second, fighting the war may help leaders stay in power, especially when nonconstituents are the ones bearing the war's costs. Such "diversionary wars" can occur when the state is experiencing democratization or when leaders face domestic political problems (i.e., unrest or economic downturn). Here, the governing coalition may want to continue fighting to enhance its legitimacy, demonstrate strong leadership, deflect attention away from divisive domestic problems, or discredit domestic opponents.³⁹ Third, leaders may perceive that the costs of military inaction are higher than the probable costs of fighting, such as when the country has been invaded and the only alternative to fighting is losing sovereignty. Finally, continuing the war may help leaders in a broader conflict by providing information about the adversary's military or draining its resources in a tangential fight—as the Soviet case illustrates below.

THE INFORMATION OBSTACLE. Leaders in a domestic coalition may not know they should end the war. In this case, the rational updating process does not occur, for any of the following reasons. First, coalition members may receive information about the war that is ambiguous, incomplete, biased, conflicting, or faulty.⁴⁰ This can lead them to prolong the war to reduce uncertainty⁴¹ or to assume that their current war policy is having the desired effect and thus encourage them to continue fighting. Second, different coalition members may

37. Goemans, *War and Punishment*; and Croco, "Peace at What Price?"

38. Mansfield and Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," p. 25; and Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, pp. 32–35, 49–52.

39. Jack S. Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique," in Manus I. Midlarsky, ed., *Handbook of War Studies* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 259–288; Mansfield and Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War"; Diana Richards, T. Clifton Morgan, Rick K. Wilson, Valerie L. Schwebach, and Garry D. Young, "Good Times, Bad Times, and the Diversionary Use of Force: A Tale of Some Not-So-Free Agents," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (September 1993), pp. 504–535; and Alastair Smith, "Diversionary Foreign Policy in Democratic Systems," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (March 1996), pp. 133–153.

40. Von Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 191; and Iklé, *Every War Must End*.

41. Slantchev, "How Initiators End Their Wars"; Powell, "Bargaining and Learning while Fighting"; Filson and Werner, "A Bargaining Model of War and Peace"; and Filson and Werner, "Bargaining and Fighting."

be exposed to different information, because there is rarely perfect information flow inside the government.⁴² This can lead coalition members to manipulate others to their policy position by sharing information selectively,⁴³ or it can generate inefficiencies that can delay a war-ending decision. Third, different coalition members may use different indicators to assess the war and thus reach different conclusions, which can lead to policy gridlock.⁴⁴ Finally, coalition members may have individual cognitive, affective, or learning biases or organizational or group decisionmaking biases that prevent them from processing war information. For example, coalition members often take data that support their expectations at face value, while ignoring, discounting, or rejecting information that does not fit with favored or well-established beliefs.⁴⁵ Likewise, organizations' formal and informal power structures, standard operating procedures, and internal culture can affect how information is processed and filtered,⁴⁶ and groups are subject to decisionmaking biases as

42. George W. Downs and David M. Rocke, "Conflict, Agency, and Gambling for Resurrection: The Principal-Agent Problem Goes to War," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (May 1994), pp. 362–380; Halperin, "War Termination as a Problem in Civil-Military Relations"; and Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

43. Snyder, *Myths of Empire*; Mansfield and Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War"; McGinnis and Williams, *Compound Dilemmas*; Mor, "Peace Initiatives and Public Opinion"; Colaresi, *Scare Tactics*; Baum, *Soft News Goes to War*, pp. 44–45; and Johnson and Tierney, *Failing to Win*, pp. 67–75.

44. Gartner, *Strategic Assessment in War*; Johnson and Tierney, *Failing to Win*; and Jerel A. Rosati, "The Power of Human Cognition in the Study of World Politics," *International Studies Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Fall 2000), pp. 45–75.

45. Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 181–187; Richard E. Nisbett and Lee Ross, *Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgment* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980), pp. 167–191; Susan T. Fiske and Shelley E. Taylor, *Social Cognition*, 2d ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991); and Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations*, pp. 310–329. Other war-lengthening biases may include reading intent into others' behavior; furthering the spiral of suspicion and reinforcing hawkish tendencies to escalate or continue the war; or weighing battlefield victories more heavily than defeats, leading to overly optimistic evaluations of war performance. See Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (New York: Random House, 2008), pp. 7, 212; Robert Jervis, "War and Misperception," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 688–690; Daniel Kahneman and Jonathan Renshon, "Why Hawks Win," *Foreign Policy*, No. 158 (January/February 2007), pp. 34–38; Johnson and Tierney, *Failing to Win*; Irving L. Janis and Leon Mann, *Decisionmaking: A Psychological Analysis of Conflict, Choice, and Commitment* (New York: Free Press, 1977), pp. 81–106; Smith, *Stopping Wars*, p. 22; and Chaim D. Kaufmann, "Out of the Lab and into the Archives: A Method for Testing Psychological Explanations of Political Decision Making," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (December 1994), pp. 557–586.

46. For more about organizational and bureaucratic biases, see Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*; Morton H. Halperin, with Priscilla Klapp and Arnold Kanter, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1974), chap. 3; Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2d ed. (New York: Longman, 1999); Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*, 2d ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982); James G. March and Herbert A. Simon, *Organizations*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993); Richard M. Cyert and James G. March, *A Behavioral Theory of the Firm*, 2d ed.

well.⁴⁷ Individual and group biases become particularly potent during “effort justification,” when leaders become so personally invested in a policy that they cannot change expectations.⁴⁸

Thus, whereas Bayesian models predict a relatively linear function between actors receiving new information and changing their expectations or beliefs, the information obstacle would suggest that information updating occurs according to a step function, if it occurs at all. Although information-updating pathologies are usually associated with authoritarian leaders, these dynamics also exist in democracies, as the U.S. case illustrates below.

THE ENTRAPMENT OBSTACLE. Leaders in a domestic coalition may want to end the war but cannot. Entrapment can occur when the leaders’ hawkish constituencies want to continue the war, and the leaders must acquiesce to remain in power. If leaders know they will likely lose power if they end a war now, they can rationally choose to continue it.⁴⁹ Leaders can face this political entrapment from a domestic constituency or from external allies.

Internally, entrapment may be the result of having to answer to hawkish

(Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1992); Alexander L. George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1980); Yaacov Y.I. Vertzberger, *Risk Taking and Decisionmaking: Foreign Military Intervention Decisions* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998); Charles Perrow, *Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay*, 3d ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1986); and Karl E. Weick, *Sensemaking in Organizations* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1995).

47. Two examples include “groupthink” and the “risky shift.” For more about groupthink, see Janis, *Groupthink*; and Paul ‘t. Hart, Eric K. Stern, and Bengt Sundelius, eds., *Beyond Groupthink: Political Group Dynamics and Foreign Policy-Making* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997). Experimental research has provided mixed results about the “risky shift,” with the effect more often observed in small or predominantly male groups. See, for example, David G. Myers and Helmut Lamm, “The Polarizing Effect of Group Discussion,” *American Scientist*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (May/June 1975), pp. 297–303; Paul E. Spector, Stephen L. Cohen, and Louis A. Penner, “The Effects of Real vs. Hypothetical Risk on Group Choice-Shifts,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1976), 290–293; John K. Butler Jr. and Michael D. Crino, “Effects of Initial Tendency and Real Risk on Choice Shift,” *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (October 1992), pp. 14–35; and Richard Ronay and Do-Yeong Kim, “Gender Differences in Explicit and Implicit Risk Attitudes: A Socially Facilitated Phenomenon,” *British Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (June 2006), pp. 397–419.

48. Kaufmann, “Out of the Lab and into the Archives”; Jervis, “War and Misperception,” p. 693; Allan I. Teger, *Too Much Invested to Quit* (New York: Pergamon, 1980); and Thomas W. Milburn and Daniel J. Christie, “Effort Justification as a Motive for Continuing War: The Vietnam Case,” in Betty Glad, ed., *Psychological Dimensions of War* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1990), p. 238.

49. Downs and Rocke, “Conflict, Agency and Gambling for Resurrection”; Goemans, *War and Punishment*; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alastair Smith, “Testing Novel Implications from the Selectorate Theory of War,” *World Politics*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (April 2004), pp. 363–388; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Randolph M. Siverson, “War and the Survival of Political Leaders: A Comparative Study of Regime Types and Political Accountability,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (December 1995), pp. 841–855; Giacomo Chiozza and H.E. Goemans, “International Conflict and the Tenure of Leaders: Is War Still Ex Post Efficient?” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (July 2004), pp. 604–619; and Croco, “Peace at What Price?”

constituencies or, more benignly, from having “spun up” the population to mobilize for war.⁵⁰ Unless the war ends quickly, leaders must expend political capital to enact policies—such as demonizing the enemy and mobilizing the armed forces—to ease the process of waging war. The more political capital leaders expend, the more they convince their constituents that fighting the war is the right thing to do. But while manipulating perceptions helps to sustain the war effort, it hampers peacemaking. The leader is likely to pay a domestic political price—a domestic audience cost—if he backs down.⁵¹ Even if the governing coalition wants to de-escalate, other political challengers can capitalize on enemy stereotypes and accuse the coalition of “being soft” on the adversary.⁵²

Externally, entrapment results from having hawkish allies or patrons. If an ally intervenes on a belligerent’s behalf, it is difficult to de-escalate after that intervention without disappointing the ally. Leaders may decide that they value the ally’s support during or after the war enough to stay in the war for the ally’s sake—as the Chinese case illustrates below. Finally, parallel to the unintended consequences of domestic mobilization, demonizing the enemy and mobilizing allies can make it harder for leaders to back down without losing international stature.⁵³

In both cases, although the governing coalition may have realized it is not going to obtain its initial goals, a radical change in strategy is not politically possible without admitting failure—which politicians are loathe to do. Because a sudden departure from a previous policy raises serious questions about the wisdom of having pursued it for so long, political entrapment puts decision-makers into a no-win situation. They realize that they cannot win, but they cannot afford to quit at once. This can lead the governing coalition either to adopt a high-risk strategy for prosecuting the war (i.e., “gamble for resurrection”)⁵⁴ or to succumb to the “sunk cost paradox,” effort justification, and other psychological aspects of entrapment.⁵⁵ The result in both situations is the same: decisionmakers may want to settle but cannot because they feel trapped.

50. Bruce Russett, *Controlling the Sword: The Democratic Governance of National Security* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990); and Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*.

51. Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics”; Baum, *Soft News Goes to War*; Schultz, “Domestic Opposition and Signaling in International Crises”; Fearon, “Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes”; and Smith, “International Crises and Domestic Politics.”

52. Michael Colaresi, “When Doves Cry: International Rivalry, Unreciprocated Cooperation, and Leadership Turnover,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (July 2004), pp. 555–570; Colaresi, *Scare Tactics*; Snyder, *Myths of Empire*; and John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

53. Jervis, “War and Misperception.”

54. Downs and Roche, “Conflict, Agency, and Gambling for Resurrection”; Goemans, *War and Punishment*; and Croco, “Peace at What Price?”

55. Zeev Maoz, *Paradoxes of War: On the Art of National Self-Entrapment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990); Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, pp. 393–439; Randle, *The Origins of*

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO PEACE

Regardless of the length of the war, the overlapping bargaining space necessary to end it can develop only when at least one side changes its expectations about the costs and benefits of fighting. This change in expectations could theoretically occur if one (or more) of the belligerents' existing governing coalitions either (1) changes its attitudes about the war or (2) changes its composition to include members with more appropriate expectations. The former is the Bayesian updating model. A change in attitudes is unlikely, however, because of coalition dynamics and the three obstacles identified above.

For example, where coalition members place different values on policy priorities, a coalition shift allows one faction to remove the members whose preferences created gridlock. Where the rational-updating process is not even among all of the coalition members because of information obstacles, a coalition shift allows one faction to be removed or replaced, hopefully facilitating information flow and removing biased inputs. Where coalition members face entrapment, a coalition shift removes the entrapped element. In this manner, domestic coalition shifts can help to overcome the obstacles to peace and bring an overlapping bargaining space within reach.

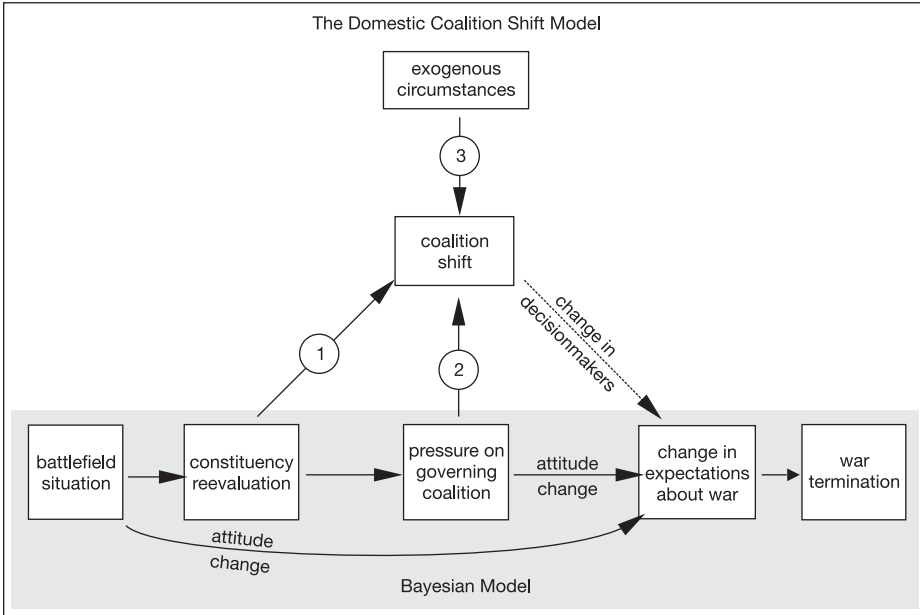
Thus, unless a war's battlefield situation compellingly shows the belligerents' relative strengths quickly, it is unlikely that the governing coalition that started and invested significant political capital in prosecuting a war can end an unsuccessful one. Policies that a state enacted to better wage the war become sticky and will often require a coalition shift to get them unstuck. A coalition shift allows different political actors—with different interests, assessments of the war, and constituencies—to take power. This, in turn, can lead to a change in the war policy (e.g., from continuing it to ending it). The new leaders may have not only a new calculation of the costs and benefits of the war, but also a new conceptualization of them. Because it introduces new actors, a coalition shift may overcome the obstacles to peace and thus permit the war to end.⁵⁶

Figure 1 summarizes the domestic coalition shift theory. The gray rectangle delineates the standard Bayesian model: the change in expectations occurs when incumbent leaders change their minds ("attitude change"). In many wars, however—41 percent since World War II, for example—this change in

Peace, p. 440; Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1957); Charles Kiesler, Barry E. Collins, and Norman Miller, *Attitude Change: A Critical Analysis of Theoretical Approaches* (Malabar, Fla.: Krieger, 1983); Teger, *Too Much Invested to Quit*; and Milburn and Christie, "Effort Justification as a Motive for Continuing War," p. 238.

56. There are four other practical effects as well. A coalition shift could (1) allow scapegoats to be identified and removed; (2) provide the previous leaders with a "golden parachute" to avoid physical or political harm after the settlement; (3) help stabilize the domestic political scene after the settlement; or (4) help the state rebuild its international reputation.

Figure 1. Paths to War Termination



expectations results from a shift in the domestic governing coalition (“change in decisionmakers”).⁵⁷

Domestic coalition shifts may be produced in a number of ways, both endogenously to the war and exogenously. Although endogenous shifts are influenced by the battlefield situation, this does not mean they have no causal weight in explaining war termination. In some wars, the necessary updating of war aims cannot happen without an endogenous shift, which makes the shift a necessary intervening variable to ending the war. Importantly, my model excludes domestic coalition shifts that are forced upon a state by its external enemies. Excluding these “victor-imposed” shifts helps guard against the possibility that the causal arrows are reversed—that the end of the war is leading to coalition shifts, rather than vice versa.

Theoretically, there are two kinds of endogenous shifts (labeled as arrows 1 and 2). Endogenous shifts may be a response to changes in the domestic constituency’s perceptions about the progress of the war that are not shared by the existing domestic coalition (arrow 1). These may be cases where the coalition

57. See Stanley, *Paths to Peace*, chap. 9.

has become so immobile that policy change is possible only by replacing the incumbent government. Such shifts often include changes to the head of state through political processes such as coups, revolutions, regime changes, or elections that replace the governing coalition from the outside. An example of an arrow 1 shift is the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. The new communist leader, Vladimir Lenin, subsequently accepted the harsh terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk to make a separate peace and end Russia's participation in World War I.⁵⁸

Alternatively, endogenous shifts may be a response to changes in part of the existing coalition's perceptions about the progress of the war and constituent pressures (arrow 2). These endogenous shifts are likely to result from heads of state recalibrating their governing coalitions to remove veto players who are stuck by the three obstacles. A common arrow 2 shift among losing states is to remove hawks in the existing domestic coalition to allow the remaining doves to make a "bad" peace. For example, Menachem Begin and other Gahal Party ministers opposed to peace resigned from the Israeli national unity government on August 6, 1970, thereby allowing Prime Minister Golda Meir to accept a negotiated settlement to end the seventeen-month War of Attrition the next day.

Finally, exogenous shifts (labeled as arrow 3) may include the death, illness, or incapacitation of a coalition member or changes in the coalition composition for purely domestic political reasons, such as economic crises or political scandals. For example, Joseph Stalin's death in March 1953 allowed the communist states to offer crucial concessions necessary to end the Korean War. Although exogenous coalition shifts occur for reasons that have no relationship to the war, their effect on war policy can be the same as endogenous shifts.

The box around the domestic coalition shift model highlights how this alternative causal pathway to war termination builds on the Bayesian model. Domestic coalition shifts can explain how states get beyond the lag and stickiness of long wars. These shifts, however, are neither necessary nor sufficient for getting beyond these lags, because we cannot know a priori how much each shift will change the belligerents' expectations and what effect the strategic interaction with the opposing side will have. How many coalition shifts are necessary

58. Arrow 1 shifts do not necessarily require that all domestic constituencies are ready to end the war. Domestic constituencies are likely to have their updating impeded by obstacles to peace, as well. Some constituents, such as the military or industrial groups, may be gaining private benefits from continuing the war (preference obstacle). Other constituents will lack access to information about the war and come to believe the elite's interpretation of events (information obstacle). Finally, many constituents will have internalized negative enemy stereotypes and be intensely distrustful of the adversary (entrapment obstacle). Thus, updating among the different domestic constituencies is likely to be as uneven as among the coalition members themselves.

to create the overlapping bargaining space depends on how much distance exists between the two sides' demands. If their demands are not very far apart, then a coalition shift on one side may lead it to lower its demands enough to bring an overlapping bargaining space within reach. If the distance between the two sides is greater, however—such as during sticky wars that endure for many months or years—multiple coalition shifts may be necessary to dislodge the obstacles to peace and create the overlapping bargaining space.

The Korean War

This section examines the mechanisms of the coalition shift theory in the Korean War, which is a hard case for standard bargaining models. Not only was there power symmetry between the two sides—the United Nations (UN) Command and the communists—but the final armistice terms accepted in July 1953 were virtually the same as those proposed in July 1951. Why did the belligerents wait so long to make the peace, given that the battlefield situation was stalemated throughout those two years while casualties continued to mount? I argue that peace was not possible until domestic coalition shifts in the three “primary” belligerents—the United States, China, and the Soviet Union—produced the necessary overlapping bargaining space. Most important, the Soviet shift with Stalin's death in March 1953 was exogenous to the war yet critical for precipitating the crucial communist concession on voluntary repatriation of prisoners of war (POWs).

For this plausibility probe, I have limited my analysis to the three primary belligerents, as they were the most important in making decisions about prosecuting and ending the war. Given the importance of strategic interaction in understanding how an overlapping bargaining space develops in the war termination process, it is critical to examine belligerents in the same war. Furthermore, the Korean War has abundant values on the independent variables of interest—the three obstacles to peace and domestic coalition shifts. Each primary belligerent had a different predominant obstacle to peace, which allows me to explore the dynamics of each obstacle more carefully.⁵⁹ Such “extreme value” cases are well suited for plausibility probes, because the variables' effects should stand out sharply against the case background and are unlikely to be produced by measurement error or other causes.⁶⁰ As a result, the Korean

59. Because of space constraints, I explore only one obstacle for each state, although other obstacles were also present. For additional discussion, see Stanley, *Paths to Peace*, chaps. 4–6.

60. Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 79–80.

War provides a “most likely” test for the domestic coalition shift theory and a “least likely” test for the alternative standard bargaining models of war.⁶¹ As a stalemated war, the Korean War meets the scope conditions for the theory, making it likely on a priori grounds that the case will support it. Therefore, it would be easy to discard the theory if it did not explain this case.

Although the war was fought on their soil, neither North nor South Korea had much influence in decisions about when and how the war ended. Not only were they materially powerless, as their forces were incapable of waging war without their larger patrons’ help, but the way the primary belligerents viewed them as client states rendered them politically powerless as well. Their respective powerlessness provides an ironic parallel: whereas North Korea wanted to end the war much sooner,⁶² South Korea wanted to fight on much longer,⁶³ but both were overruled by their respective side’s more powerful primary belligerents. Thus, even though both Korean states experienced domestic coalition shifts during the war, there was almost no relationship between these shifts and the international bargaining process.⁶⁴ Both Kim Il-sung and Syngman Rhee used the ongoing war to affect their domestic political scenes, but changes in their governing coalitions were intended to provide cover for consolidating their rule and sidelining rivals—not to enhance fighting or end

61. Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 209–220; and Harry Eckstein, “Case Study and Theory in Political Science,” in Fred Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science*, Vol. 1: *Political Science: Scope and Theory* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), pp. 79–138.

62. The North Koreans began indicating their readiness to end the war by January 1952, but North Korea was consistently bypassed in tactical and strategic decisions on the battlefield and in negotiations. See Stanley, *Paths to Peace*, chap. 3; Kathryn Weathersby, “New Russian Documents on the Korean War,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Nos. 6/7 (Winter 1995), doc. 102; Stanley Sandler, *The Korean War: No Victors, No Vanquished* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), p. 246; Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao’s Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950–1953* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), p. 209; Shen Zhihua, “Sino-North Korean Conflict and Its Resolution during the Korean War,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Nos. 14/15 (Winter/Spring 2003/04), p. 19; and Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (New York: Anchor, 2006), p. 362.

63. Syngman Rhee and the South Korean government consistently pushed to reunify the peninsula under Rhee’s government by force. As an armistice looked likely in 1953, on June 18 Rhee unilaterally ordered South Korean guards to release 25,000 North Korean POWs in a last-ditch effort to undermine the negotiations, which postponed the armistice by several weeks and allowed Rhee to extract concessions from the United States. See Stanley, *Paths to Peace*, chap. 3; William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 338–339; William Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 191–193; Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, pp. 186–87; and John Kotch, “The Origins of the American Security Commitment to Korea,” in Bruce Cumings, ed., *Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943–53* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), pp. 239–259.

64. North Korea experienced three domestic coalition shifts, while South Korea experienced six. For more information, see Stanley, *Paths to Peace*, chap. 3.

the war. For this reason, these coalitions are omitted from this plausibility probe.

BACKGROUND ON THE KOREAN WAR, 1950–53

The first year of the Korean War was marked by a rapidly shifting battlefield, as different states entered the war and changed the balance of power. The fluid front line moved south to the “Pusan perimeter” after North Korea’s initial invasion, back north to China’s border on the Yalu River after UN Commander Gen. Douglas MacArthur’s amphibious landing in Inchon, and then back south of Seoul again after Chinese forces entered the war. By June 1951, however, the battle line had more or less stabilized near the 38th parallel, the former border between North and South Korea, and both sides began to realize that moving beyond a stalemate would be extraordinarily costly.⁶⁵

What followed were two years of armistice negotiations where both sides fought deadly but static battles near the 38th parallel while facing off in the negotiating tent. Negotiations began in July 1951, and by the end of the month, the belligerents agreed on an agenda for the armistice talks. By March 1952, all items were resolved except for agenda item 4, repatriation of prisoners of war.⁶⁶

In effect, POW repatriation stalled the talks for an additional fifteen months. In January 1952, the UN Command had proposed voluntary POW repatriation,⁶⁷ but the communists insisted that all prisoners must be returned, even those who did not want repatriation. By March, Chinese negotiators had hinted that they might accept some compromise solution: a UN screening of the prisoners and subsequent removal from the lists of those who would violently resist repatriation.⁶⁸ This concession came after the UN team had suggested that such a screening would result in the return of 116,000 communist prisoners—including almost all Chinese POWs. In early April, therefore, the UN screened prisoners. The results shocked everyone: only 70,000 of the 132,000 agreed to return, including only 5,000 of the 21,000 Chinese prisoners. When the UN presented these figures on April 19, the communists were outraged and moved to recess.⁶⁹

There was no movement on negotiations until March 30, 1953—three weeks

65. For good introductions to the Korean War, see Stueck, *The Korean War*; and Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*.

66. Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, pp. 53, 74–6.

67. Allan E. Goodman, *Negotiating while Fighting: The Diary of Admiral C. Turner Joy at the Korean Armistice Conference* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987), p. 178.

68. Sydney D. Bailey, *The Korean Armistice* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1992), p. 94.

69. Barton J. Bernstein, “The Struggle over the Korean Armistice: Prisoners of Repatriation?” in Cumings, *Child of Conflict*, pp. 281–284.

after Stalin died—when the communists conceded on the principle of voluntary repatriation of POWs. Armistice negotiations resumed on April 26, and the armistice was signed on July 27, 1953. The rest of this section explains why the war lasted so long, in terms of the theory's three obstacles.

THE PREFERENCE OBSTACLE: THE SOVIET UNION UNDER STALIN

The Soviet Union under Stalin provides strong evidence of the influence of the preference obstacle in ending the Korean War and thus allows me to explore preference obstacle dynamics.⁷⁰ Although the Soviet Union did not fight on the ground in Korea, it bankrolled the communist forces, providing massive quantities of armaments and supplies, significant numbers of military advisers to the Chinese and North Koreans, and air support as the backbone of the communist air war. It also wrote the North Korean invasion plan, arbitrated between North Korea and China, and played a central role in formulating decisions about the war.⁷¹

Although Stalin had initially been surprised by U.S. entry into the war, he was able to avoid direct Soviet ground involvement by urging the Chinese to deploy to Korea. Once the battlefield stalemated, however, Stalin quickly realized it was in his interest for the war to continue, as long as UN forces did not advance again into North Korea. Russian documents indicate that Stalin's main concern regarding negotiations was to ensure that the communists did not give the impression of weakness, because the Soviet Union could only benefit from a stalemated war.⁷² A stalemated war provided the Soviets with

70. Because the Soviet Union was not a declared participant in the war, skeptics might wonder how useful the Soviet case is for theorizing about war termination: how often does a state have almost complete control over war decisions, reaping benefits without incurring the costs of fighting? Four actors in other interstate wars since World War II had this dynamic operating to some degree: France and Britain in the Sinai War (1956), Greece in the Cyprus War (1974), and Syria in the Lebanon War (1982). Thus, 15 percent of post-WWII interstate wars involved states controlling war decisions without committing many ground forces. This dynamic is also common in civil wars, where an outside patron to one of the belligerent factions supplies arms and effectively controls war decisions. For example, Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević played a central role in Bosnian Serb decisionmaking during the 1990s Bosnian civil war. Likewise, the United States used its role providing arms to the mujahideen to influence war policy during the Soviets' war in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

71. For more information about the Soviet role in starting and supporting the war, see Stanley, *Paths to Peace*, chap. 3; Richard C. Thornton, *Odd Man Out: Truman, Stalin, Mao, and the Origins of the Korean War* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2000), pp. 110–111; Jon Halliday, "Air Operations in Korea: The Soviet Side of the Story," in William J. Williams, ed., *A Revolutionary War: Korea and the Transformation of the Postwar World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 149–170; Zhihua, "Sino-North Korean Conflict and Its Resolution during the Korean War"; and Weathersby, "New Russian Documents on the Korean War."

72. Kathryn Weathersby, "Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War," in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945–1963* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), p. 102; William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy: From En-*

four benefits.⁷³ First, it tied down U.S. forces, which hindered U.S. efforts to engage militarily in Europe, drained U.S. economic resources, and caused domestic political problems for President Harry Truman.⁷⁴ Second, it created a rift between the United States and its allies over tactics in the Korean War.⁷⁵ Third, it provided the Soviets with an excellent opportunity to gather intelligence on U.S. technology and military organization. Not only could it field-test its new equipment against American technology, but it could gain information from U.S. POWs.⁷⁶ Finally, it created hostility between China and the United States and tied China more firmly to Moscow through dependence on Soviet military and economic assistance.⁷⁷

Because the Soviets were not deployed in the ground war, Stalin was able to push the human costs of the war onto his allies, China and North Korea. As a result, from Stalin's perspective, there was no reason to end the war. He was receiving a number of benefits from the prolonged conflict, yet assuming very few of its costs. Given this cost-benefit calculation, it was clearly Stalin's preference to delay the war's end, and he consistently took steps to ensure that this preference prevailed. Although beyond the scope of this article, it is important to note that information obstacle dynamics in the Soviet regime exacerbated this preference obstacle.⁷⁸ Not only was Stalin able to keep those who might disagree with him in the dark, but much of the information Soviet leaders received was tailored to support Stalin's known preferences, rather than to provide an accurate picture about the war.

tente to Détente to Cold War (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), p. 221; and John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 108–109.

73. These four reasons were Stalin's beliefs about the war, but they may not have been objectively true. For example, the war also galvanized the United States into approving National Security Council Paper 68 (NSC-68), dramatically increasing military spending, strengthening NATO, and starting to rearm Germany—all of which arguably imposed costs on the Soviet Union in terms of the wider bipolar superpower conflict.

74. Chang and Halliday, *Mao*, p. 353; and Vladislav M. Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 70.

75. Joseph L. Nogee and Robert H. Donaldson, *Soviet Foreign Policy since World War II*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), p. 107.

76. The Soviets were particularly interested in gaining information on U.S. command and control and U.S. aircraft from U.S. Air Force prisoners of war. See Weathersby, "Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War," n. 4; Laurence Jolidon, "Soviet Interrogation of U.S. POWs in the Korean War," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Nos. 6/7 (Winter 1995); and Chang and Halliday, *Mao*, p. 353.

77. Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p. 70; Thorton, *Odd Man Out*; and Carol Lee Hamrin, "Elite Politics and the Development of China's Foreign Relations," in Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh, eds., *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p. 97.

78. For more information about the interaction between the information and preference obstacles under Stalin, see Stanley, *Paths to Peace*, chap. 4.

THE INFORMATION OBSTACLE: THE UNITED STATES AND VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION OF POWS

The U.S. decision to adopt the voluntary repatriation policy provides evidence of an information obstacle. Truman adopted the policy in October 1951, without considering its wider effects. Subsequently, his coalition became “too invested to quit” and thus systematically ignored unpalatable information suggesting this policy would conflict with more important policy preferences. By the time the coalition became aware of the policy’s full implications, it was too late to back down without signaling “weakness” to the communists or incompetence to the domestic audience. Elements of the entrapment obstacle were at work as well, but for the purposes of this plausibility probe, this section focuses on the information obstacle dynamics.⁷⁹

The United States began armistice negotiations with a one-for-one prisoner exchange policy, which was strongly supported by Secretary of State Dean Acheson and opposed by the Department of Defense.⁸⁰ Although defense officials, especially the U.S. Army’s chief of psychological warfare, argued instead for voluntary repatriation, because of its alleged propaganda benefits, it does not appear they had any evidence of communist prisoners wanting to defect.⁸¹ After bilateral debate between the State and Defense Departments, defense officials agreed to support the one-for-one exchange, until all UN prisoners were released, and then a return of remaining communist POWs in the UN Command’s possession.⁸² (In effect, they argued for a staggered all-for-all exchange.)

On October 29, 1951, Truman told Acting Secretary of State James Webb that he was against the one-for-one policy because it was “not an equitable basis.”⁸³ Webb pointed out there might come a time when voluntary repatriation would be the last outstanding issue and thus could hold up settlement. Truman acknowledged this fact, but said he would agree to the staggered all-for-all POW swap only if the UN Command received “some major concession that could be obtained no other way.”⁸⁴ There is little indication from this conversation that

79. For more information about the interaction between the entrapment and information obstacles in the Truman coalition, see *ibid.*, chaps. 5–6.

80. U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1951*, Vol. 7: *Korea and China*, Pts. 1 and 2 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), p. 600; Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, pp. 87–88; Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 136–137; Stueck, *The Korean War*, pp. 244–245; Rose, “Victory and Its Substitutes,” p. 307; and Bernstein, “The Struggle over the Korean Armistice,” p. 276.

81. Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, pp. 87–88; and Stueck, *The Korean War*, pp. 244–245.

82. U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1951*, Vol. 7, pp. 857–858.

83. Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), pp. 250–251.

84. U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1951*, Vol. 7, p. 1073.

Truman had reflected on the POW policy's ramifications—both its first-order effects on the armistice negotiations and second- and third-order effects on his other policies. The conversation highlights Truman's natural inclination to make decisions rapidly, leading to premature cognitive closure.⁸⁵ There is evidence, however, that Truman placed the Korean War in the context of the "struggle between freedom and communist slavery," and this context may have motivated his hasty decision. For example, the previous month, arguing faith and ethical action were integral to any victory in the Cold War, he explicitly called for an international religious campaign against communism—the Campaign of Truth.⁸⁶ Voluntary POW repatriation was certainly in line with these ideals.

Truman's interest in the issue reopened the debate in his administration. During this debate, most uniformed and civilian defense officials argued for the all-for-all POW exchange. Most of the State Department—including Acheson, who reversed his views after hearing about Truman's comments in October—argued for voluntary repatriation. There were four State Department officials, however, who bucked their colleagues' support of voluntary repatriation. These officials raised some serious objections to the policy, including that the administration (1) did not know the full size of the POW problem; (2) had not considered the impact of additional casualties on allied and domestic opinion if negotiations broke down over the issue; (3) could not tell which POWs would want to be returned, because of internal POW camp politics; and (4) had refused to consider whether the communists would seek reprisals against U.S. POWs if the United States refused to return communist prisoners.⁸⁷ Acheson, now knowing Truman's preference on the issue, disregarded his subordinates' objections to voluntary repatriation. Instead, he effectively defined voluntary repatriation as an irrevocable moral principle.⁸⁸ As a result of Acheson's organizational bias against using all available information, Truman never fully considered the policy's implications and possible trade-offs.

Truman's intervention and Acheson's reversal on POW policy catalyzed a

85. Deborah Welch Larson, *Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 146–147; Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 211; and Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, p. 89.

86. Elizabeth Edwards Spalding, *The First Cold Warrior: Harry Truman, Containment, and the Remaking of Liberal Internationalism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), pp. 213–217.

87. Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, p. 90; Stueck, *The Korean War*, pp. 259–261; Bernstein, "The Struggle over the Korean Armistice," pp. 279–280; and U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1952–1954*, Vol. 15: *Korea*, Pts. 1 and 2 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 38.

88. U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1952–1954*, Vol. 15, pp. 43–45.

consensus; all key members of the Truman coalition except the chief of naval operations, Adm. William Fechteler, fell in line behind it. In the United States, all major newspapers and most congressmen supported the policy, but it is important to note that contemporary polls suggest that public opinion permitted but did not require adoption of this policy.⁸⁹ At the February 27 meeting to approve the policy, the Truman coalition swept aside possible evidence that its decision could significantly prolong the war. For example, Acheson told Truman that he consulted key allies and “none . . . indicated any disagreement with our position on this question.”⁹⁰ Actually, most Western allies had mixed feelings about the policy but lacked enough confidence in opposing arguments to argue forcefully against Truman.⁹¹ Even more important, two days before the meeting, two U.S. officials returned home from a trip to Korea to estimate the number of communist prisoners unlikely to elect to go home. These officials told Truman that 116,000 would elect to return home. In fact, this also meant 15,900 prisoners—including 11,500 (more than half) of the Chinese POWs—would resist repatriation, but the implications of this evidence were not adequately considered.⁹²

In March 1952, as POWs became the last contentious issue in armistice negotiations, U.S. negotiators used those February estimates to propose that POWs unwilling to return home be removed from the lists and all others be repatriated. This proposal would have allowed the United States to achieve its aims while protecting the communists from having to endorse the voluntary repatriation principle.⁹³ When U.S. negotiators made this offer, however, the February estimates were no longer accurate, and more recent information was ignored. This more recent information suggested that those numbers were at best wildly inaccurate and at worst too optimistic, because it would be virtually impossible to get an accurate screening and allow prisoners to make a genuine choice about repatriation. It also suggested that many more than 15,900

89. Gideon Rose argues that had the Truman coalition wanted to, it could have generated support for forcible repatriation instead. See Rose, “Victory and Its Substitutes,” pp. 330–331; Bernstein, “The Struggle over the Korean Armistice,” p. 283; Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, p. 92; and Ronald J. Caridi, *The Korean War and American Politics: The Republican Party as a Case Study* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), pp. 179–180.

90. Quoted in Bernstein, “The Struggle over the Korean Armistice,” p. 281.

91. Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, p. 92.

92. U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1952–1954*, Vol. 15, pp. 58–59.

93. The communists disagreed with voluntary repatriation on the grounds that it (1) violated the Geneva Convention, which called for the exchange of all prisoners of war immediately at the cessation of hostilities; (2) was an attempt to retain prisoners and coerce them to stay in South Korea or go to Taiwan; and (3) was a political issue and thus should not have been brought up at the military armistice negotiations. See Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, pp. 96–97. More generally, the communists were concerned about the illegitimizing effects on their regimes, both domestically and internationally, if communist POWs did not choose to return home.

POWs would resist repatriation. This information, however, from at least four sources, was ignored.

First, since January, officials at the State Department's Policy Planning Staff had argued that UN camps embodied a "reign of terror," especially for Chinese POWs, implying it would be impossible to get an accurate count among them.⁹⁴ Second, since early February, the U.S. embassy in Korea had reported to U. Alexis Johnson, the deputy assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs, that it would be impossible to count POWs accurately for organizational and political reasons. These reports noted fear among prisoners intimidated by brutal pro-Chinese Nationalist (KMT) gang leaders in the camps and implied the number of nonrepatriates would be very large.⁹⁵ Third, the UN camps had already observed much violence, starting with disturbances in September 1951 and escalating to full-scale riots in February 1952 in the Kojedo Island compound. Although these riots were not publicized, the UN Command, Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), and Johnson knew about them. These riots reinforced the embassy reports that communist prisoners were afraid and would probably not respond accurately in the repatriation screenings.⁹⁶ Most important, UN Commander Gen. Matthew Ridgway argued in mid-March that at least 73,000 POWs would resist repatriation (not 15,900 as had been estimated in February).⁹⁷

Hearing Ridgway's numbers, the JCS proposed reopening the whole question of voluntary repatriation. In a State-JCS meeting on March 19, State Department officials disagreed and argued instead that Truman considered the February 27 decision to be "the final position on the POW question."⁹⁸ Then, in another State-JCS meeting two days later, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg specifically asked about using Ridgway's newer estimate in the negotiations. In reply, Johnson consciously ignored the newer numbers and directed the JCS to use his February estimates in negotiations instead.⁹⁹ In his memoirs, Johnson admitted receiving in March information about camp conditions from the U.S. embassy in Korea and revised repatriation figures from Ridgway. He did not acknowledge, however, having any opportunity to reopen discussions about the POW policy. Instead, Johnson argued that even though the military largely ignored the embassy reports "because they came

94. Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, p. 125.

95. U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, Vol. 15, pp. 98-99.

96. Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 237-240, 245-250; Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, pp. 110-112, 118-119; and Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War: How We Met the Challenge* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 208-209, 211.

97. U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, Vol. 15, p. 92.

98. *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 100.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

from outside the chain of command," he was "able to make good use" of them in "private talks with Chiefs."¹⁰⁰ It is unclear from the documentary evidence whether Acheson and Truman knew at this time about Ridgway's numbers or Johnson's unilateral decision to use the February numbers instead.

On April 1, UN negotiators used the February numbers to tell the communists they expected 116,000 of the 132,000 communist prisoners would return home. The communists assented, and polling began. As Ridgway had predicted in March, the 116,000 estimate was too high. Instead, of the roughly 104,000 polled, about 75,000 (including 14,126 Chinese) said they would resist repatriation.¹⁰¹ The screening process also reinforced earlier information that most POWs refused repatriation because of the violent tactics of pro-KMT gang leaders before and during the screening. Thus, while the Truman administration and its UN negotiators were making righteous statements about the morality of its voluntary repatriation policy, it was clear—up to the level of Acheson—that the official POW screening was severely compromised and perhaps even conducted unethically.

When the UN delegation informed the communists on April 19 that only 70,000 prisoners could be returned, the communists were outraged and charged the United States with a breach of faith.¹⁰² When the talks broke down on May 7 over the issue, Truman addressed the American people, saying, "To agree to forced repatriation would be unthinkable. It would be repugnant to the fundamental moral and humanitarian principles which underlie our action in Korea. To return these POWs in our hands by force would result in misery and bloodshed to the eternal dishonor of the United States and the United Nations. We will not buy an armistice by turning over human beings for slaughter or slavery."¹⁰³ Reiterating the moral stance he first expressed in October, Truman drew a line over the POW issue that did not change for the rest of the war.

The Truman administration's adoption of voluntary POW repatriation provides ample evidence of the information obstacle to ending war. The POW issue single-handedly held up negotiations for fifteen months, and the result was that Truman staked his—and the nation's—reputation on voluntary repatriation, which led to entrapment dynamics, as well. Beleaguered by partisan

100. U. Alexis Johnson, *The Right Hand of Power* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1984), p. 148.

101. U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1952–1954*, Vol. 15, p. 144.

102. Bernstein, "The Struggle over the Korean Armistice," p. 284; Goodman, *Negotiating while Fighting*, pp. 367–369; and Rose, "Victory and Its Substitutes," p. 292.

103. Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs of Harry S. Truman: Years of Trial and Hope, 1946–1953*, Vol. 2 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1956), p. 489.

attacks and political crises—many resulting from the Cold War mobilization effort he embarked on as a result of the Korean War—Truman could neither abandon the POW policy nor escalate the war to force the communists to settle. Once aware of the POW policy's full implications, it was too late for Truman to back down without signaling "weakness" to the communists or incompetence to the domestic audience.

THE ENTRAPMENT OBSTACLE: CHINA AND ITS HAWKISH EXTERNAL ALLY

The Chinese case during the Korean War provides evidence of the entrapment obstacle, because although China was willing to settle in August 1952, it was prevented from doing so by its ally and patron, Stalin.¹⁰⁴ While China used the war to elicit Soviet patronage, its growing dependence on Soviet military and economic assistance locked it into a war policy from which it could not disengage. It was not until after Stalin's death that China was able to make concessions regarding the voluntary repatriation policy it had been advocating since the previous summer.

The Chinese decision to intervene in the Korean War had initially not been unanimous among the Chinese governing coalition. Indeed, the majority of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Politburo had believed it was unwise to deploy troops. Opponents included Premier and Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai; CCP Vice Chairman Liu Shaoqi; Finance Minister Chen Yun; Chen's deputy, Li Fuchun; East China region leader Rao Shushi; Northeast region leader Gao Gang; and Central-South region leader Lin Biao. Most of these leaders were logical opponents to intervention, given their responsibilities for balancing the national budget, controlling inflation, demobilizing the Chinese military, and building regional economies.¹⁰⁵

Opponents to intervention listed four reasons for their position, including: (1) China's need for rehabilitation and economic reconstruction after decades of war; (2) the 1 million KMT troops and bandits that threatened internal secu-

104. As noted, after January 1952 North Korea also faced entrapment by its patrons. See Stanley, *Paths to Peace*, chap. 3; Weathersby, "New Russian Documents on the Korean War," doc. 102; Sandler, *The Korean War*, p. 246; Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, p. 209; Zhihua, "Sino-North Korean Conflict and Its Resolution during the Korean War," p. 19; and Chang and Halliday, *Mao*, p. 362.

105. Vladimir Petrov, "Mao, Stalin, and Kim Il Sung: An Interpretative Essay," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Summer 1994), pp. 3–30, at p. 26; Yufan Hao and Zhihai Zhai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War," in Chull-baum Kim and James I. Matray, eds., *Korea and the Cold War: Division, Destruction, and Disarmament* (Claremont, Calif.: Regina, 1993), p. 154; Lawrence Weiss, "Storm around the Cradle: The Korean War and the Early Years of the People's Republic of China, 1949–1953," Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1981, pp. 80–82; and Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 281 n. 78.

rity; (3) the fact that Chinese forces were inferior to UN forces and the United States had more industrial resources for a long war; and (4) the reality that forces from the People's Liberation Army were exhausted from decades of fighting and too depleted to fight another major war.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, when China intervened in Korea, the communist regime had accomplished little with its reconstruction programs. China's domestic situation was dire, because it was still recovering from its civil war and faced a long list of domestic challenges. Nevertheless, Chairman Mao Zedong eventually convinced them that the Korean War was inextricably linked to China's internal security, because not fighting would increase "reactionary" uprisings at home and encourage the KMT to resume fighting and invade the mainland. Moreover, Mao argued, if war with the United States was inevitable, Korea was geographically and logistically best suited of the possible battlegrounds.¹⁰⁷

The war effort was very costly, both in economic and human terms, and the Chinese populace paid dearly. About 3 million Chinese troops and laborers entered Korea to fight and provide logistical support for the war—suffering as many as 1.5 million casualties, including more than 300,000 dead.¹⁰⁸ At home, about 3 million people died during the ruthless domestic mobilization campaigns, initiated in large part to support the war effort.¹⁰⁹ The Korean War's financial costs were staggering as well, with military expenses related to the war making up 44 percent of the Chinese government's budget in 1950, 52 percent in 1951, and 28 percent in 1952.¹¹⁰ (While military expenses were a smaller fraction of the 1952 budget, that budget was larger, as economic development finally took root. Thus, the absolute magnitude of war expenses increased.)

106. Ronald C. Keith, *The Diplomacy of Zhou Enlai* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Macmillan, 1989), p. 46; Melvin Gurtov and Byong-Moo Hwang, *China under Threat: The Politics of Strategy and Diplomacy* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 31, 55; Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, pp. 7, 11, 80–81; T.V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 103; Hao and Zhai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War," p. 154; Weiss, "Storm around the Cradle," p. 81; Zhihai Zhai, "China's Decision to Participate in the Korean War," in Chull-Baum Kim, ed., *The Truth about the Korean War: Testimony Forty Years Later* (Seoul: Eulyoo, 1993), pp. 188–189; Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, pp. 182, 185; and Jennifer Milliken, *The Social Construction of the Korean War: Conflict and Its Possibilities* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 151.

107. Milliken, *The Social Construction of the Korean War*, p. 151; Thornton, *Odd Man Out*, p. 343; Hao and Zhai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War," p. 152; and Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*, pp. 92–93.

108. *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, trans. and ed. Xiaobing Li, Allan R. Millett, and Bin Yu (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), pp. 6, 246; and Chang and Halliday, *Mao*, p. 372.

109. Chang and Halliday, *Mao*, pp. 318–319; and Stuart Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-Tung* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1976), p. 247.

110. "Record of Meeting between Comrades I.V. Stalin and Zhou Enlai, September 3, 1952," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Nos. 6/7 (Winter 1995), p. 14; and Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, p. 163.

Military spending and arms-related industries beyond the war effort accounted for 61 percent of the budget during this time, whereas education, culture, and health care shared only 8.2 percent.¹¹¹

CCP leaders met this need with stiff agricultural taxes, mass mobilization campaigns, and a policy of “total mobilization.” By the spring of 1952, Chinese forces possessed sufficient arms and equipment to sustain the stalemate, but economic distortions, missed industrial production targets, rural unrest, and a famine demonstrated the inherent weaknesses in China’s mobilization strategy.¹¹²

Given these tremendous war costs, the Chinese governing coalition decided in the summer of 1952 to focus on economic reconstruction and began working on its first Five-Year Plan along the lines of Soviet-style centralized planning. It established new economic ministries in Beijing and transferred senior party leaders there from regional posts to carry the increasingly heavy administrative workload. As a result, key CCP members—including Deng Xiaoping, Deng Zihui, Gao Gang, Rao Shushi, and Xi Zhongxun—moved to Beijing and became important members of the decisionmaking group.¹¹³

The new emerging leadership was concentrated institutionally and organizationally in the sphere of economic management. These rising leaders—together with Finance Minister Chen Yun; Chen’s deputy, Li Fuchun; and Premier Zhou Enlai—cooperated closely.¹¹⁴ These economic decisionmakers formed the core of China’s new coalition making decisions about the war. Assembled together in Beijing, with a new mandate for economic growth and government centralization, they became increasingly influential in the Chinese governing coalition. Some—Deng Xiaoping, Deng Zihui, and Xi—had not participated in the original decisions to enter the war and thus were new members of the coalition. Others—Chen, Gao, Li, Rao, and Zhou—had been included in the initial debates but had opposed intervention.

These leaders brought an interesting mix of personal perspectives and pro-

111. Chang and Halliday, *Mao*, p. 374.

112. For more information about these mobilization efforts, see Weiss, “Storm around the Cradle,” pp. 94–95, 101–103, 125, 147–149, 180; Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), pp. 533–539, 545; Zhang, *Mao’s Military Romanticism*, pp. 200–202, 223; Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and the Decline of Party Norms, 1950–1965* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), p. 85; Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations, 1949–1958* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 131; Stueck, *The Korean War*, p. 275; and Hamrin, “Elite Politics and the Development of China’s Foreign Relations,” p. 85.

113. Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics at Mao’s Court: Gao Gang and Party Factionalism in the Early 1950s* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), pp. 20–21; and Fang Zhu, *Gun Barrel Politics: Party-Army Relations in Mao’s China* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1998), pp. 61–62.

114. Teiwes, *Politics at Mao’s Court*, p. 30.

fessional expertise to the problem of the Korean War. On the one hand, having spent time in key regional leadership posts, they understood the human and societal costs imposed by prolonged participation in the war. On the other, their expertise in managing economic recovery and industrialization showed them the opportunity costs of waging war instead of rebuilding and modernizing the nation. As a result, they had a different vision of the war's costs and benefits. Their increasing influence in Mao's decisionmaking coalition helped spur China toward ending the war.

During August–September 1952, China's top economic officials trekked to Moscow to negotiate massive Soviet support for Chinese industrial development and expansion, while seeking to end the costly Korean War. An armistice would naturally liberate domestically generated revenue for industrial development, and China was ready to divert funds in that direction. During this trip, Zhou met with Stalin twice to discuss China's proposed strategy for ending the war. Russian transcripts of these conversations reveal that China was more eager to reach an armistice agreement than it had been before. Zhou's dual aims were to achieve an armistice in Korea as quickly as possible while maximizing Soviet economic and military assistance to his ravaged country. In contrast, Stalin continued to press for extending the war, implicitly linking Soviet economic assistance to China continuing the war. Providing Soviet arms and economic assistance was a means to manipulate the Chinese into advancing Soviet interests.¹¹⁵

In his first conversation with Stalin, Zhou suggested the communists "sign an armistice agreement by putting off the POW question and resuming its discussion afterwards." Without reaching any decision, however, the discussion moved toward Soviet military assistance to China.¹¹⁶ In the second conversation, Zhou returned to this theme, suggesting that both sides send the POWs to India, a neutral country. When Stalin failed to agree, Zhou persisted and argued that they "cease fire and resolve the issue of POWs later." But Stalin would not commit.¹¹⁷

Zhou was unable to gain Stalin's support for China's interest in compromising on POWs, neither by transferring nonrepatriates to a neutral country nor by concluding the armistice first and settling the POW question later. The in-

115. Charles R. Shrader, *Communist Logistics in the Korean War* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1995), p. 66; and John Gittings, *The Role of the Chinese Army* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 126–127.

116. "Record of Conversation between I.V. Stalin and Zhou Enlai, August 20, 1952," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Nos. 6/7 (Winter 1995), pp. 12–14.

117. "Record of Conversation between Comrade Stalin and Zhou Enlai, September 19, 1952," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Nos. 6/7 (Winter 1995), pp. 17–18.

conclusive outcome of both conversations was a victory for Stalin, which may be why he agreed to equip sixty more Chinese divisions and provide ammunition, artillery, and new fighter jets. Zhou's visit concluded without clear agreement on a war-terminating strategy. Ultimately, China's need for Soviet economic assistance to prosecute the war and develop its industrial base outweighed China's willingness to implement a war-ending strategy without its ally's support. As Pingchao Zhu argues, "It was Stalin's desire to continue the war and Mao felt pressured to comply with it."¹¹⁸ Or as Vojtech Mastny argues, "Despite the appearance of Beijing's agreeing with Moscow in taking an intransigent position against [an armistice], Stalin was the one who stalled, while the Chinese were seeking ways to achieve it."¹¹⁹ Trapped by its patron, China wanted to end the war but could not.

After these meetings, China tried once more to end the war. On October 31, 1952, Zhou publicly signaled Chinese interest in an Indian resolution at the UN to end the war by transferring prisoners to India or some other "neutral zone," but the Soviet UN delegation stepped in and rejected the plan. Soon after, China told India that it agreed with Moscow that the resolution was unacceptable. Indian diplomats believed that the Chinese had been subjected to Soviet pressure and that, had they been left to themselves, they would have endorsed the resolution.¹²⁰

Ending the Korean War

This section argues that the timing of the Korean War's end depended on the strategic interaction of three domestic coalition shifts—Stalin's death in March 1953, the Chinese shift described above, and the inauguration of U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower in January 1953.

THE SOVIET DOMESTIC COALITION SHIFT: OUTLASTING STALIN'S PREFERENCES

Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, prompted a radical change in the Soviet approach to the Korean War. As Kathryn Weathersby argues, "Despite the great uncertainty and anxiety within which the new collective leadership operated, it nonetheless moved immediately to bring an end to the war in Korea."¹²¹ Indeed, it is remarkable that the leadership took such decisive action within ten

118. Pingchao Zhu, "The Road to an Armistice: An Examination of the Chinese and American Diplomacy during the Korean War Cease-Fire Negotiations, 1950–1953," Ph.D. dissertation, Miami University, 1998, p. 209.

119. Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 148.

120. Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, p. 156; Stueck, *The Korean War*, p. 303; and U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1952–1954*, Vol. 15, p. 590.

121. Weathersby, "Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War," p. 108.

days of Stalin's funeral. When Stalin died, the question of succession had not been on the agenda; the leadership troika that emerged was an awkward, dysfunctional structure prone to infighting and power grabbing.¹²² That these new leaders could agree to act decisively to end the Korean War only reinforces the high priority they assigned to a settlement.

The new Soviet leadership was led by a troika of Lavrentii Beria, Georgii Malenkov, and Vyacheslav Molotov, with help from Nikita Khrushchev.¹²³ Beria and Malenkov led the Politburo's moderate faction, which advocated more conciliation toward the West and had supported a negotiated settlement toward Korea.¹²⁴ Although militant Molotov had always supported a hard line toward the West, even he "believed that Stalin should never have approved of the North Koreans' plan to reunify their country."¹²⁵ Moreover, the troika worried that the new Eisenhower administration might escalate the war, and they looked differently at information about U.S. potential use of atomic weapons in Korea.¹²⁶ Their major foreign policy goal was to avoid a Soviet-American conflict, and they quickly expressed interest in disarmament and détente with the United States.¹²⁷ They wanted to curtail military and industrial programs to free resources for neglected domestic programs and agriculture,¹²⁸ and they were more focused toward Europe and the growing crisis in the German Democratic Republic.¹²⁹

Because of these other policy priorities and their different conceptualization

122. Vladislav M. Zubok, "CPSU Plenums, Leadership Struggles, and Soviet Cold War Politics," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, No. 10 (March 1998), pp. 28–33.

123. Malenkov became the chairman of the Council of Ministers and Communist Party first secretary, but soon thereafter, the first secretary position was formally abolished. Beria assumed control of the interior ministry and merged it with the Ministry of State Security. Molotov returned to his earlier post as foreign minister. Khrushchev controlled the central party apparatus. See Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, pp. 154–155; Noguee and Donaldson, *Soviet Foreign Policy since World War II*, p. 115; Raymond L. Garthoff, *The New Soviet Leadership* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1953), pp. 17–19, 32; James G. Richter, *Khrushchev's Double Bind: International Pressures and Domestic Coalition Politics* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 31; Deborah Welch Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust: U.S.-Soviet Relations during the Cold War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 42, 57; and Uri Ra'anan, "Sic Transit: Stalin's Heirs," in Ra'anan, ed., *Flawed Succession: Russia's Power Transfer Crises* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington, 2006), pp. 1–56, at pp. 15–28.

124. The moderates had emphasized that Soviet conciliatory moves would make it more difficult for the United States to consolidate the Western alliance. For more detail about foreign policy debates in the Soviet Politburo early in the war, see Ronald L. Letteney, "Foreign Policy Factionalism under Stalin, 1949–1950," Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1971, pp. 336–339.

125. Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust*, p. 45.

126. Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, pp. 149, 155; and Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, p. 164.

127. Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust*, p. 45.

128. David Allan Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith: U.S. Policy against the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949–1955* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), p. 113; Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p. 148; Stueck, *The Korean War*, p. 327; and Richter, *Khrushchev's Double Bind*, pp. 35, 37.

129. Stueck, *The Korean War*, p. 327.

of the war's costs and benefits, the new Soviet leaders moved immediately to end it. First, at Stalin's funeral on March 9, Malenkov emphasized "the possibility of the prolonged coexistence and peaceful competition" between capitalism and socialism.¹³⁰ Then, in a March 15 speech to the Supreme Soviet, Malenkov unveiled a "peace initiative," declaring "there is not one disputed . . . question that cannot be decided by peaceful means on the basis of mutual understanding" and naming the United States as a country to which this statement applied.¹³¹ Finally, on March 19, the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution to end the war with attached letters to Mao and Kim Il-sung.¹³² The resolution outlined statements that the three communist governments should make to indicate their willingness to resolve outstanding issues and reach an armistice agreement.

Chinese and North Korean leaders also saw Stalin's death as the opportunity finally to end the war. Zhou traveled to Moscow for Stalin's funeral, and on March 21, he met with the new Soviet leadership to discuss a war-terminating strategy. This produced a communist consensus that "the Chinese and North Korean side was now in a position to conclude the war on the basis of reasonable compromises with the enemy."¹³³

On March 27, the communists agreed to a UN suggestion to exchange sick and wounded prisoners. Three days later, Zhou publicly proposed that POWs unwilling to be repatriated should be transferred to a neutral state "as to ensure a just solution to the question of their repatriation."¹³⁴ This statement mirrored the proposals Zhou had put forward to Stalin in August 1952. In making this substantial concession, Zhou expressed Chinese willingness to "take steps to eliminate differences on this question so as to bring about an armistice in Korea."¹³⁵ Following the same script, on April 2, Molotov talked about the need for peace in Korea and associated the Soviet Union with the actions of its allies.¹³⁶ Zhou's statement was the largest concession made during the negotiations, and it reopened the door to an armistice. Negotiations resumed in late April, and the armistice was signed in July.¹³⁷

130. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 308.

131. "Speech by Malenkov, March 15, 1953," in Denis Folliot, ed., *Documents on International Affairs, 1953* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 12–13.

132. Weathersby, "New Russian Documents on the Korean War," doc. 111.

133. Quoted in Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, p. 112. See also "On the Korean War, 1950–1953, and the Armistice Negotiations," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, No. 3 (Fall 1993), pp. 15–17.

134. Quoted in Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 112.

135. Quoted in Zhu, "The Road to an Armistice," p. 234; and Stueck, *The Korean War*, p. 309.

136. Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, pp. 172–173.

137. Dmitrii A. Volkogonov argues that Stalin had decided to end the war on February 28, but that

STRATEGIC INTERACTION IN ENDING THE WAR

Less apparent than the coalition shifts in the Soviet Union and China may be how much President Eisenhower's inauguration in January 1953 affected communist cost-benefit calculations about the war. After successfully campaigning on a platform to end the Korean War, Eisenhower came to office less constrained about expanded military options than his predecessor. Although a complete discussion of this dynamic is beyond this article's scope, it is useful to note that Eisenhower was thus able to make credible threats that affected communist calculations.¹³⁸

Casual observers might point to the hawkish U.S. coalition shift in January 1953 and the Eisenhower coalition's subsequent nuclear threats as the reason for the war's end. This explanation—made by the Eisenhower administration itself—is that Eisenhower's nuclear threats caused the communists to agree to the armistice terms. There has been great debate about the effectiveness of Eisenhower's nuclear coercion in bringing about the end of the Korean War.¹³⁹

night, he suffered the stroke that killed him on March 5. Stalin had dinner that evening with Malenkov, Beria, Khrushchev, and Nikolai Bulganin. To recount Volkogonov's entire argument: "As usual, they discussed a wide range of topics. Bulganin gave an account of the war in Korea, confirming Stalin's view that the situation had reached a stalemate. He decided he would tell Molotov the next day to advise the Chinese and North Koreans to 'try to get the best deal they could in the talks,' but in any event to try to bring the armed conflict to a halt." See Volkogonov, *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy*, trans. and ed. Harold Shukman (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), p. 570. Although Volkogonov conducted detailed archival research, he does not offer any references for the assertion in this paragraph. Moreover, besides this passage, he includes only two paragraphs about the Korean War in the entire 600-page biography. See *ibid.*, pp. 540–541. Thus, not only is it impossible to assess whether Stalin actually said this, but the miniscule role the Korean War plays in Volkogonov's account makes it difficult to evaluate the merits of this assertion. Without a reference, we cannot know for sure how Volkogonov knows this "fact" he reports. Presumably, it must have come from the other men present at the dinner—and these men were precisely the ones who wanted to end the war. It is certainly possible that these men, who assumed power after Stalin's death, claimed that Stalin said this. Having it appear that Stalin wanted to end the war was in their interest, because it provided them justification for enacting their own long-held but dormant preferences for ending the war.

138. For additional information about the Eisenhower coalition shift and its role in strategic interaction with the communists, see Stanley, *Paths to Peace*, chaps. 6, 8.

139. Those who believe that nuclear coercion was responsible for ending the Korean War include Eisenhower, John Foster Dulles, Adm. C. Turner Joy, and Sherman Adams. As Dulles told British and French allies in December 1953, "The principal reason we were able to obtain the armistice was because we were prepared for a much more intensive scale of warfare" using atomic weapons. See Robert J. Donovan, *Eisenhower: The Inside Story* (New York: Harper, 1956), p. 116. See also Sherman Adams, *Firsthand Report: The Story of the Eisenhower Administration* (New York: Harper, 1961), p. 48; C. Turner Joy, *How Communists Negotiate* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 161–162; David Rees, *Korea: The Limited War* (New York: St. Martin's, 1964), pp. 418–420; and Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953–1956* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963), pp. 179–180. For more recent, scholarly interpretations of Eisenhower's nuclear policies and the end of the Korean War, see Gaddis, *We Now Know*, pp. 107–108; Caridi, *The Korean War and American Politics*, p. 270; Roger Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy during the Korean War," *International Security*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Winter 1988/89), pp. 50–91; Daniel Calingaert, "Nuclear Weapons and the Korean War," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (June 1988), pp. 177–202; Rosemary

The Eisenhower administration did discuss the possibility of using nuclear weapons, as part of its endorsing a shift in U.S. strategy for ending the war. It also tried two diplomatic channels in late May and early June to signal a growing willingness to escalate the level of violence.¹⁴⁰ In retrospect, however, the nuclear threat could not have caused the crucial March 30 communist concessions about the voluntary POW repatriation policy that paved the way for an armistice. In fact, the only signal that the Eisenhower coalition had sent by this date was Eisenhower's February 2 State of the Union announcement to move the Seventh Fleet from the Taiwan Strait—a move widely regarded as designed to appease the pro-KMT U.S. Republican right wing. Moreover, it appears that Chinese leaders neither believed that U.S. nuclear threats were credible in general,¹⁴¹ nor received the threats via the diplomatic channels later that spring.¹⁴²

A careful tally of events, however, suggests that the communist leaders were paying attention to the Eisenhower domestic coalition shift and the possible escalation that might result. Chinese documents suggest Beijing monitored Eisenhower's campaign statements for more aggressive strategies in Korea and started making military preparations in response.¹⁴³ The new Soviet coalition also acknowledged the hawkish U.S. shift and made a number of gestures toward conciliation (detailed above). In other words, the U.S. hawkish shift influenced the communists' cost-benefit calculations, and they responded by lowering their demands—eventually conceding on POW repatriation.

There appear to be three reasons why the United States chose not to profit from its bargaining "advantage" after the shift. First, the Eisenhower coalition recognized the shift and subsequent communist behavior as signaling peaceful

J. Foot, "Nuclear Coercion and the Ending of the Korean Conflict," *International Security*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Winter 1988/89), pp. 92–112; Rosemary J. Foot, "Making Known the Unknown War: Policy Analysis of the Korean Conflict in the Last Decade," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (July 1991), pp. 411–431; Edward C. Keefer, "President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the End of the Korean War," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (July 1986), pp. 267–269; McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices about the Bomb in the First Fifty Years* (New York: Random House, 1988), pp. 239–243; and Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948–1972* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 88–89.

140. U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1952–1954*, Vol. 15, pp. 977, 1068, 1103.

141. Mark A. Ryan, *Chinese Attitudes toward Nuclear Weapons: China and the United States during the Korean War* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1989), p. 156; Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, p. 111; and Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*, pp. 132–137.

142. Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p. 108; Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*, pp. 133, 150; Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, pp. 177–178; and Stueck, *The Korean War*, p. 329.

143. Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*, pp. 132–137; Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, pp. 233–236, 317–318; Stueck, *The Korean War*, pp. 306–307; and Mao to Stalin via Semyonov (the chief Soviet military adviser in Korea), ciphered cable, December 17, 1952, quoted in Weathersby, "New Russian Documents on the Korean War."

intentions.¹⁴⁴ Second, it expected that continuing the conflict was likely to be costly, and it no longer wanted to bear these costs.¹⁴⁵ Finally, because Eisenhower had built up the expectation during his campaign that he would end the war soon, the public both looked for and expected decisive action. Eisenhower believed he had a “mandate from the American people to stop this fighting,” but he also knew that he did not have a blank check.¹⁴⁶

Interestingly, the peace Eisenhower eventually won was “indistinguishable” from what Truman could have probably garnered, “except that it was achieved without the accompanying howls of the GOP.”¹⁴⁷ While Eisenhower retained the same war aims that Truman had espoused, including the voluntary POW repatriation policy, politically he could agree to terms that Truman could not. He was less vulnerable to Republican right-wing attacks and could placate hard-liner critics in other issue areas, such as domestic mobilization policy. In other words, it was only with a domestic governing coalition shift in the United States that Truman’s entrapment and information obstacles were lifted, as well.

Conclusion

Whereas bargaining models of war suggest that war ends when an overlapping bargaining space develops, my argument suggests how, when, and why it develops. My approach offers insights about the timing of war termination, including the undertheorized category of protracted wars, which Bayesian models have had little success in explaining. Its major theoretical contribution is its attention to domestic coalition shifts as an important mechanism for why states come to the bargaining table to end interstate war. Ending war requires settling at home as well as settling with the enemy.

This article has suggested three reasons why an entrenched war is difficult to end. A preference obstacle occurs in situations when belligerents’ leaders do not want to end the war—as Stalin’s ability to push costs onto his allies while drawing abundant benefits demonstrates. An information obstacle occurs in situations when belligerents’ leaders do not know they should end the war—

144. Stueck, *The Korean War*, p. 311; and Foot, *A Substitute for Victory*, p. 182. For further analysis, see Stanley, *Paths to Peace*, chap. 8.

145. Eisenhower, *The White House Years*, pp. 109–110; and Rosemary Foot, *The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict, 1950–1953* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 223.

146. Quoted in Foot, *The Wrong War*, p. 219.

147. David W. Reinhard, *The Republican Right since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), p. 107.

as U.S. decisions about voluntary POW repatriation show. An entrapment obstacle occurs in situations when belligerents' leaders want to end the war but cannot—as China's experience with Stalin suggests. This plausibility probe has illustrated each of these different mechanisms separately, but they often can occur in tandem. For example, a more complete discussion of the Soviet case would show that Stalin's strong preferences led his government to fall victim to information-processing biases to reinforce his preexisting beliefs. Similarly, a fuller treatment of the U.S. case would demonstrate how entrapment and information obstacles interacted in the Truman administration. By focusing on these obstacles, this article has explained domestic-level impediments to the international bargains that end war.

An interesting extension of this research is modeling more explicitly the strategic interaction of coalition shifts on opposing sides of a war and the effect these shifts have on creating overlapping bargaining space between belligerents. Such a model would probably need to introduce coalition shift directions (i.e., in a hawkish or dovish direction). For example, the interaction between the U.S. hawkish and communist dovish shifts was obviously crucial for ending the Korean War. Further study is needed to determine what effect coalition shift directions might have on the strategic interaction between opposing sides in ending other wars.

The domestic coalition shift model presented here has at least three wider theoretical implications. First, my argument suggests that regime type may not be as important for explaining war termination as previously assumed. All states, regardless of regime type, are governed by domestic coalitions and answer to some constituency to stay in power. Regime type may influence the baseline frequency of coalition shifts. Certainly, democracies are more likely to experience relatively frequent coalition shifts by nature of their institutional structure. Democracy is not the underlying mechanism driving coalition shifts during war,¹⁴⁸ however, and variation in democratic institutions leads to variation in the likelihood of democratic leaders being replaced.¹⁴⁹ When taken together with the argument that democracies select into wars they expect to be short,¹⁵⁰ this suggests that democracies are unlikely to experience coalition shifts in war—unless the war becomes protracted. Overall, we could expect

148. Kurt Taylor Gaubatz, *Elections and War: The Electoral Incentive in the Democratic Politics of War and Peace* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999); Joanne Gowa, "Politics at the Water's Edge: Parties, Voters, and the Use of Force Abroad," *International Organization*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Spring 1998), pp. 307–324; and Benjamin O. Fordham, "Another Look at 'Parties, Voters, and the Use of Force Abroad,'" *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (August 2002), pp. 572–596.

149. Croco, "Peace at What Price?"; and Colaresi, "When Doves Cry."

150. Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War*; Bennett and Stam, "The Declining Advantages of Democracy"; Filson and Werner, "Bargaining and Fighting"; and Slantchev, "How Initiators End Their Wars."

that states in which coalition shifts are more difficult and less frequent—generally, authoritarian regimes—are more likely to engage in more protracted wars. The relationship between regime type and coalition shifts during war remains a fruitful question for extending this model. Nonetheless, these initial findings suggest that it is the domestic coalition shift—not the regime type *per se*—that explains war termination: regime type may be a correlative, not causative, factor in war termination.

Second, although this article has not systematically examined civil war termination, an important extension would apply the theory developed here to such conflicts. Civil wars involve multiple substate warring factions—one of which might be the government—each with its own leadership (“governing”) coalition. Nonetheless, in terms of making decisions to prosecute and end war, warring factions operate like a state’s domestic governing coalition. Just like a domestic governing coalition, factional leaders answer to some internal constituency or external patron. And just like a domestic governing coalition, factional leaders are less likely to end the war by changing their expectations about the war than by rotating leadership or splintering the faction. The greatest difference between civil and interstate war termination seems to be the magnitude of the obstacles to peace. All three obstacles seem to be more severe in civil war, implying that civil wars are more likely to become sticky and thus last longer than interstate wars—and empirically, this is indeed the case. Although the coalition shift dynamics in civil war factions probably follow the same logic as those in interstate war belligerents, the explicit comparison remains an issue for future research.

A third extension of this model would be its applicability to international coalitions or alliances. An international coalition often comprises members (states) that are actually coalitions themselves (domestic governing coalitions). This implies that the three obstacles to policy change can become nested and even stickier. While each state is subject to its own obstacles domestically, the international coalition is subject to additional obstacles as well. Theoretically, there are two ways that coalition shifts could manifest themselves in an international coalition. First, one of the states in the international coalition could experience its own domestic coalition shift, bringing new perspectives to the international coalition’s policies and bargaining positions—which is what occurred after the Chinese and Soviet domestic coalition shifts in the Korean War. Alternatively, the international coalition could gain or lose state members. For example, during World War II, when Italy surrendered to the Allies in 1943, the Axis coalition shifted in a hawkish direction, as the remaining members no longer felt constrained by Italy’s desire for settlement. Obviously, the nested obstacles in domestic governing and international coalitions impede the ability to create an overlapping bargaining space and significantly

complicate the analysis. Delineating these nested effects is another area for future research.

The transitions from war to peace are neither as inscrutable nor as senseless as they may at first seem. There are identifiable obstacles and processes at work in the ending of any war. Although protracted wars may make no sense from a strategic viewpoint, they do from a domestic one. Ending interstate war requires that belligerents make peace with each other, but they cannot embark on that process until their domestic governing coalitions are ready. As this study has shown, understanding belligerents' domestic politics is crucial to explaining what makes interstate wars continue and what finally makes them end.