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Time Pressure and War Initiation: Some Linkages*

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Introduction

United States President George Bush's decision to launch an offensive against Iraq in January 1991 exemplified the importance of time pressure as a variable in the war initiation process. The statements by the US before and after the war suggested that President Bush and his key advisors were under intense time pressure to launch a military offensive against Iraq because of their expectation of a decline in alliance support and domestic backing for military action. President Bush reportedly told Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell, who had argued for a containment policy based on economic and military strangulation against Iraq, "I don't think there is time politically for that strategy."¹ Obviously, President Bush was referring to the favourable short-term alliance configurations and domestic support for military action by the US-led coalition which he feared would dissipate as time passed. This instance is not unique, however, as decision makers in many historic cases experienced similar types of time pressure during periods prior to war.

This article deals with the medium-term time pressures that decision makers can experience, and the impact such pressures may have on war decisions. Specifically, I examine the linkages of intermediate time pressure (pertaining to an initiator) and war, with respect to each of the

* An earlier version of this article was presented at the International Studies Association Convention at Atlanta, Georgia, 1992. I thank Baldev Raj Nayar, Patrick James, Mark Brawley, Chris Manfredi, Laura Neack and Rachel Paul for their comments.

1 Powell reportedly told Bush that the force level needed to contain Iraq, about 230,000, would be reached by December 1, 1990. Powell thought a strategy of containment would grind the Iraqi leader down, although it might take a year or two (Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991], 42).

following independent factors: belligerents' relative strike capability, alliance relationships and the challenger's strategic calculations and military doctrine. These independent variables have been selected from a number of factors that are associated with war initiation because they, in combination with time pressure, are presumed to exert the maximum influence on national decisions in favour of war.² These variables have also been chosen because they have generated enduring interest among scholars of international politics. For instance, balance of power as well as power transition theorists consider power concentrations and alliance fluctuations as key factors in explaining wars.³

Changes in power concentrations of the type that balance of power and power transition theorists discuss have occurred in international politics with war breaking out only sometimes. Similarly, alliances have existed throughout history, yet only certain alliance configurations have led to war. Likewise, offensive military doctrines and strategies such as blitzkrieg and limited aims have characterized the defence policies of many states, but have caused wars only in some instances. The argument here is that the three variables become activated chiefly when time considerations intervene in the calculations of decision makers.

Evidence for this study is drawn from several historical instances of war initiation prior to which decision makers experienced time pressures relating to changing capabilities and alliance commitments as well as short-term effectiveness of strategies and doctrines. This method of drawing lessons from differing historical cases, rather than a single crisis or war, helps to strengthen the validity of the arguments and to link historical insights with hypotheses generated in deductive theories.⁴

- 2 Domestic political factors can also be associated with war initiation when impelled by time pressure. An example is the Argentine military junta's decision to invade the Falkland Islands. The regime was under intense time pressure, as it feared inaction would undermine its survival. For different domestic sources of war, see Jack S. Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18 (1988), 653-73. On the internal sources of external crisis behaviour, see Patrick James and Athanasios Hristoulas, "Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy: Evaluating a Model of Crisis Activity for the United States," *Journal of Politics* 56 (1994), 327-48.
- 3 For example, see Inis L. Claude, *Power and International Relations* (New York: Random House, 1964); and A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). These variables have attracted attention in aggregate studies as well. See J. David Singer, ed., *Research Origins and Rationale*, Vol. 1 of *The Correlates of War* (New York: Free Press, 1979); and John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- 4 The methodological approach parallels closely the one used by Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (New York: Free Press, 1973). Selected historical cases are cited to exemplify the hypothetical relationship between time pressure and war initiation. Case studies are used to illustrate or elucidate particular relationships.

Abstract. This article examines the linkages by which time pressure influences national decision makers to initiate wars. It is argued that time pressure matters most significantly as an intervening variable at the decision-maker level in conjunction with system and subsystem level variables, such as changes in relative strike capability and alliance relationships, and state level variables like military strategy and doctrine. Most studies treat time pressure as having relevance during an acute crisis; in this article, time pressure is viewed as having an intermediate-term significance, that is, prior to the escalation phase or during the early phase of a crisis. It is shown that independent variables such as relative capability, alliance relationships and military doctrines are most likely to be associated with war initiation when they are mediated by time pressure. The article also distinguishes between immediate time pressure—that occurs during the escalation phase of a crisis—and intermediate time pressure, which can happen prior to, and at the onset phase of a crisis.

Résumé. On cherche dans cet article à analyser les liens grâce auxquels la variable temporelle influence les dirigeants nationaux dans leur décision de déclarer la guerre. On constate que le temps est une importante variable d'intervention au niveau décisionnel, en conjonction avec d'autres systèmes ou sous-systèmes de variables, tels que le potentiel d'attaque et les alliances, ainsi que des variables au niveau de l'État comme la stratégie militaire et les idéologies. La plupart des études antérieures considèrent la variable temporelle comme étant de toute première importance pour les décisions prises lors de crises aiguës, tandis que cet article fait du temps une variable intermédiaire. On montre que des variables indépendantes comme les ressources, les alliances ainsi que les stratégies militaires, sont associées aux préparatifs guerriers par l'intermédiaire du temps. On essaie aussi de distinguer entre les pressions temporelles immédiates—celles qui surgissent lors de l'escalade de la crise—et les pressions intermédiaires qui précèdent la crise ou coïncident avec son émergence.

Time Pressure in Previous Studies

The intermediate dimension of time pressure has not received adequate attention in theories of crisis and war. Bargaining theorists have long recognized the impact of time pressure on decision making, especially when the status quo is rapidly deteriorating for a state. The other state in the bargaining process can use time to gain a better outcome and, therefore, the bargainer has to press for an agreement by coercive tactics, by making concessions or by employing a combination of the two strategies.⁵ Time becomes a crucial element for a country that wants to alter the status quo, as it may fear that the perceived value of an issue in contention may change over a period of time in favour of the state that is defending the status quo.⁶ Thus, negotiations that do not bear any major fruit would increase the time pressure that a state may experience in conflict situations. As Cross suggests: "Time can influence a negotiation process," especially when the "players discount future benefits,"

5 Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 77.

6 It is recognized that in some situations status quo states could also experience time pressure mainly because of pressure from the challenger and uncertainty regarding its actions. An example would be the pressures the Entente Powers felt in 1914. However, time pressure is usually felt more intensely by challengers, as war avoidance is often in the interests of status quo states.

and when the "utility of an agreement may change with a calendar date," while "there is a fixed cost of bargaining which recurs in each time period."⁷

Theories of crisis behaviour have also highlighted the significance of time pressure as a variable. In the context of crisis, time pressure has been treated in three ways: as a defining characteristic, as a consequence of the stresses that decision makers experience along with a crisis and as a factor which influences the process by which decisions are made and the "nature of the resulting policies."⁸ However, the first dimension has attracted the most attention in crisis studies. Many key definitions of crisis incorporate time pressure as an important distinguishing factor. Hermann defines a crisis situation as one that threatens the high priority goals of a country's leadership, restricts the amount of response time available before the situation is transformed and takes the national leadership by surprise when it occurs.⁹ The International Crisis Behavior (ICB) project treats the perceptions held by the highest level decision makers on a threat to basic values, the high probability of involvement in military hostilities and time pressure (the finite time for response to the external value threat) as the three necessary and sufficient conditions of a crisis situation.¹⁰ In this conceptualization, time pressure also becomes the factor that magnifies the first two conditions. This definition replaces "short" time with "finite" time in order to take into account "pressure from the scope of the objectives desired as well as clock time."¹¹

Major studies on crises have attempted to analyze the impact of time pressure on decision making during an intense crisis. To Holsti, perceptions of time pressure form crucial elements in describing a crisis situation. These pressures can result from the high stress that decision makers undergo during an intense crisis. In a comparative study of the period immediately prior to the outbreak of the First World War and of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Holsti finds strong evidence to support the hypothesis that time pressure acts as an increasingly salient factor in decision making during an intense crisis. Under heightened stress, decision makers tend to be more concerned with the immediate rather than

7 John G. Cross, *The Economics of Bargaining* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 13. For a set of essays on different dimensions of bargaining, see Oran R. Young, ed., *Bargaining: Formal Theories of Negotiation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975).

8 Ole R. Holsti, *Crisis, Escalation, War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), 120.

9 Charles F. Hermann, *Crises in Foreign Policy: A Simulation Analysis* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 29.

10 Michael Brecher and Patrick James, *Crisis and Change in World Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 26.

11 Patrick James, *Crisis and War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 26.

the distant future. He concludes that time pressure is probably the “most pernicious attribute of a crisis.”¹²

Intermediate Time Pressure

These studies have highlighted the importance of time pressure in one context of interstate interactions, that is, during an acute crisis involving two or more states. A second dimension of time that seems crucial for understanding international conflict is the focus of this article: the medium-term pressures that decision makers may experience even when they do not confront a major crisis, or even before the crisis has reached its acme of tension. The time pressure that occurs during the peak or escalation phase of a crisis may be termed “immediate time pressure,” while that which occurs during the pre-crisis and early crisis phase may be called “intermediate time pressure.”¹³

Brecher has identified four interrelated phases of a crisis—pre-crisis (or onset), escalation, de-escalation and impact—the first two of which are important for this study. In this conception, during the pre-crisis period, the non-crisis norm of no or low perceived value threat by decision makers gives way to low or higher threat from an adversary: “It is characterized by a change in the intensity of disruption between two or more states and of threat perceptions by at least one of them, e.g., a statement by A threatening to attack B unless it complies with some demands by A.”¹⁴ The escalation phase is characterized by a “much more intense disruption than onset and a qualitative increase in the likelihood of military hostilities.”¹⁵

Immediate time pressure operates during the escalation phase of a crisis, when decision makers believe they have only a finite time to respond to their adversary, and while war has high probability in their expectations. In other words, immediate time pressure is induced by crisis at its peak, when leaders have to make choices under time constraints.

12 Ole R. Holsti, “Time, Alternatives, and Communications: The 1914 and Cuban Missile Crises,” in Charles F. Hermann, ed., *International Crises: Insights from Behavioral Research* (New York: Free Press, 1972), 58-80; and Holsti, *Crisis, Escalation, War*, 228.

13 Although the duration of intermediate time pressure varies from case to case, a three-year period is roughly the maximum such pressures can have strong influence. After that, if war has not occurred, time pressure may have dissipated. The rationale is that the independent variables that generate intermediate time pressure tend to be highly salient for roughly two to three years. These variables can change, affecting time pressure itself. However, the duration of time pressure depends largely on the duration of a crisis. Its intensity is most evident during the height of a crisis, usually lasting days or weeks.

14 Michael Brecher, *Crisis in World Politics: Theory and Reality* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1993), 25-26.

15 *Ibid.*, 26.

However, the time required for a decision may vary.¹⁶ As Oneal suggests, in a “particular decision making problem, time should be considered short when the period needed for implementation of a preferred course of action is nearly equal to or greater than the time available for this action. The smaller the ratio of available time to what is needed, the greater is the severity of the crisis, all other factors being equal.”¹⁷

Intermediate time pressure can occur before the onset of a crisis as well as during the pre-crisis phases. However, the intensity of time pressure may be higher during the former than the latter phase. To define more clearly: intermediate time pressure occurs during periods of no crisis or the onset phase of a crisis when decision makers in a conflict with another state believe that they have only a finite time to make use of a military opportunity (with respect to themselves) or a military vulnerability (with respect to their adversaries) before the situation turns to their disadvantage. Intermediate time pressure is associated with “now or never” belief among decision makers in terms of opportunity and vulnerability. When a crisis reaches its escalation phase this time pressure is transformed into immediate time pressure.¹⁸ Crisis escalation is, therefore, the condition that links these two types of time pressures. Before the onset of a crisis, time pressure is more visible in terms of its medium-term significance. During the crisis phase, short-term considerations are magnified as decision makers experience threatening stimuli arising from their interaction with the opponent. Crisis escalation thus transforms intermediate into immediate-term time pressures. The choice for war could be taken at this stage, although in some instances the choice may already have been made before the occurrence of crisis, that is under intermediate time pressure.

Time pressure is treated here not just as a distinguishing characteristic of crisis, but as a factor at the decision-making level that, in combination with other independent variables at the systemic and state levels, can significantly increase the probability of war. I argue that time pressures of this nature can have an important bearing on decisions for war, regardless of whether the initiators are weaker or stronger states. However, it is recognized that time pressure becomes more acute during the

- 16 Thus short-time need not be equal to actual time. This is because some decision makers require a short amount of time to work on a task while others may need longer (James A. Robinson, “Crisis,” in David L. Sills, ed., *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. 3 [London: Collier-Macmillan, 1968], 510-14).
- 17 John R. Oneal, *Foreign Policy Making in Times of Crisis* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 43.
- 18 The trigger or the catalyst for the onset of a crisis could be “an act or an event: a threatening statement, oral or written; a political act, like a trade embargo; a non-violent military act, such as the movement of troops; an indirect violent act, that is against an ally or client state; or a direct military attack” (Brecher, *Crises in World Politics*, 3).

peak period or the escalation phase of a crisis when intermediate time pressure is transformed into immediate time pressure.

Time Pressure as an Intervening Variable

Intervening variables “represent the process or mechanism underlying the relationship between antecedent and consequent variables.”¹⁹ They condition the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Essentially, they are linking or mediating variables, and they occupy an intermediate position in the causal chain. The “value attained by intervening variables can affect the strength and direction of relationships between other variables.”²⁰ Thus it can be argued that changes in relative strike capability and alliance relationships, as well as strategies and doctrines, could, when mediated by time pressure, lead to war. If time pressure is low, the relationship of these independent variables to war initiation would likely be low. On the other hand, if time pressure is high, the relationship between independent and dependent variables would likely be strong. The rationale for this position is that the three aforementioned independent variables do exist in peacetime as well. But they matter in the causal chain leading to war initiation in specific instances if mediated by time pressure.

Time Pressure and Relative Strike Capability

Among the three independent variables selected, relative strike capability is of particular significance, since changes in relative capability have been viewed as a cause for dyadic and systemic wars, especially of a preventive nature.²¹ Favourable fluctuations in capability also make decision makers optimistic regarding military success.²² Yet, such changes would most likely cause wars only when time pressure intervenes between them and war. The non-crisis attribute of intermediate time pressure is that it occurs to a country’s leadership even during periods of calm that changes in relative capability would take place over time, benefiting an adversary. This is the pressure that generates the “preventive dilemma” that decision makers can experience in an enduring conflict situation. In an enduring or protracted conflict relationship, one state’s

19 Dean G. Pruitt and Richard C. Snyder, eds., *Theory and Research on the Causes of War* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 2.

20 J. B. Manheim and R. Rich, *Empirical Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1981), 27.

21 Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 191; and Jack S. Levy, “Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War,” *World Politics* 30 (1987), 82-107. Dyadic wars are fought between two states, while systemic war involves a majority of major powers.

22 Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 36, 123.

achieving unilateral advantage could lead to a dilemma for the other state: to attack or not to attack. Attacking could prevent the opposing state from becoming preponderant, although it entails costs. In simple rational choice terms, if the benefits from attacking are higher than the costs, a state would launch a preventive war.

In enduring conflicts, decision makers may perceive that an increase in the capabilities of their adversaries would tempt the latter to engage in war, or to employ coercive bargaining in the future. They could also believe that, in such a prospective war, the strengthening power will win on its own terms. The state may fear that in future diplomatic bargaining, the militarily superior power will have an advantage, translating its military superiority into diplomatic benefits. Leaders of the declining states could be under pressure to arrest their decline. Thus time pressure intervenes between the perceptions of declining relative advantage and the choice for war. "Attack now or never" can thus be the dilemma that states confront when they experience a deterioration in their relative strike capability vis-à-vis that of their opponents. "Attack now" offers a chance for victory on one's own terms, while "attack later" may result in one's defeat.

The concern of the initiator of war in this context is not necessarily the actual strength of the opponent, but its prospective strength. This fear may not be confined to superior powers, who may worry about a loss of superiority over time, but may also occur among marginally superior and marginally inferior powers. The latter states may fear that the disparity in capability would become wider as time passes, thus benefiting their opponents, if they do not militarily prevent it from happening. This fear could be the result of a conviction that parity in power capabilities or superiority vis-à-vis the opponent is currently preventing a war. The opponent's military preponderance would result in a bandwagon situation, forcing the declining power and its allies to accept the dictates of the militarily superior state.

In many historic instances, decision makers have feared that such a change in relative capability would adversely affect their position vis-à-vis that of their opponents. The perceptions of such change, compounded by time pressure, contributed to their decision to go to war. Thucydides ascribes the origins of the Peloponnesian War to the growth of Athens' power, and the fear that this caused in Sparta.²³ The Athenian buildup of a defensive wall, its assumption of the leadership of the Delian League and its declaration of military equality with Sparta caused considerable alarm among the Spartan leadership.²⁴ From this

23 Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. by Richard Crawley (New York: The Modern Library, 1982), 14.

24 Donald Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 35-37.

account, one can conclude that the rulers of Sparta feared an impending decline in their power position, with the consequence that their long-term adversary would become indomitable if they waited too long.

In the twentieth century, preventive motivation combined with time pressure has been a major cause of many wars. The Japanese oligarchic leadership felt this type of time pressure for over a year before launching its surprise attack against the Russian forces stationed at Port Arthur in 1904. In the Japanese leadership's calculation, Japan had amassed a short-term advantage in its newly acquired whitehead torpedoes, first-class battleships and armoured cruisers. However, this advantage was viewed as transitory, since the Russians were increasing their strength in the Far East. By 1905, the Russian fleet in the Pacific would have had at least 12 modern battleships, compared to Japan's seven. The Russian naval programme at the end of the nineteenth century would have made its Navy more powerful than even the British Navy, east of the Mediterranean.²⁵ Russia was also planning to establish an army of 96 battalions and a rapid advancement force for the region, to be completed by 1906-1907, making it overwhelmingly preponderant on both the sea and the land.²⁶

Thus, perceptions of change in Japan's relative advantage vis-à-vis Russia, added to time pressure, gave a major incentive to the leadership to launch the attack in February 1904. On the other hand, although many Japanese decision makers among the oligarchic leadership wanted to launch an attack in 1895 and 1902, they refrained from it, fearing that Japan's military capability was not sufficient to engage in war with Russia. In other words, the time pressure associated with transitory power balances was not present during these periods as strongly as in 1904.²⁷ Whereas in 1904 the decision became "now or never," as Japan had procured sufficient offensive military capability to wage a limited war against Russia.

The German leaders felt a similar time pressure during the early 1910s, prior to the First World War, with respect to an increase in Russia's capabilities. They experienced intermediate time pressure from 1912 to 1914 as they became increasingly aware of the changing relative capabilities. At a conference of top naval and army officers on December 8, 1912, Chief of Staff Helmut von Moltke argued that war was inevitable and "the sooner the better for Germany."²⁸ The reorganiza-

25 G. A. Ballard, *The Influence of the Sea on the Political History of Japan* (London: John Murray, 1921), 188.

26 General A. Kuropatkin, *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, Vol. 1, trans. by Captain A. B. Linsay (New York: Dutton, 1909), 123.

27 Ian Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Longman, 1985), 27, 105.

28 Cited in V. R. Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 169.

tion of the Russian Army further increased the pressure on German leaders. They feared that by 1916 Russia, with the completion of its rail network, would have easy access to Central Europe, and that by 1917 would have increased its existing military power by 40 per cent. For Germany, the Russian rearmament would have created a formidable threat to its security and to its imperial ambitions.²⁹

The strategic advantage that Germany had achieved would have been lost by 1916 at the latest, when the balance of power would once again shift in favour of the Triple Entente. Both Moltke and his Austrian counterpart, Franz Conrad von Hötzendorff, expressed the fear of losing a future war. In a letter written on February 24, 1914, Moltke warned of the threat posed by Russia's armament buildup. Similarly, Conrad feared that waiting would result in France and Russia invading jointly at a later date. The two met at Karlsbad in mid-May 1914 and reinforced each other's conviction that time was running out. According to Moltke, "to wait any longer meant a diminishing of our chances; as far as manpower is concerned, one cannot enter into a competition with Russia."³⁰ The intermediate time pressure that the German leaders experienced was transformed into immediate time pressure during the July 1914 crisis, when the perceived need to mobilize became more acute. Moltke expressed the time pressure in these words: "Every hour of delay makes the situation worse, since Russia gains advantage."³¹

Several other instances since the Second World War support the contention about the relationship between relative capability and war stated here. Prior to the 1956 War, the Israeli leadership feared that arms acquisitions by Egypt from the Eastern bloc would make it a formidable adversary, and therefore sought to make use of the opportunity provided by the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt. The September 1955 Soviet-Egyptian arms deal, and Israel's own unsuccessful requests to Western countries for military hardware to balance the Egyptian acquisition had increased the Israeli leadership's fear of an impending decline in relative advantage. Thus, when the Anglo-French invitation for a joint attack on Egypt came in 1956, the Israeli leadership viewed war as better now than later; they believed that holding back from the opportunity would have "given time to the Egyptians to assimilate more fully the vast amounts of weapons they had received and to avail themselves of the great strategic advantage to be derived from effective control of the forces in Syria and in the Jordanian bulge."³²

29 Richard Rosecrance, "Deterrence and Vulnerability in the Pre-Nuclear Era," *Adelphi Paper* 160 (1980), 25.

30 Cited in Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War*, 171.

31 Alfred Vagts, *A History of Militarism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), 338.

32 Nadav Safran, *From War to War: The Arab-Israeli Confrontation, 1948-1967* (Indianapolis: Pegasus, 1969), 52.

Similarly, in 1965 the Pakistani leadership feared that the Indian defence modernization plan would make their adversary indomitable by the late 1960s. Following its defeat in the war with China in 1962, India had embarked on a five-year defence modernization programme, which envisioned raising an 825,000-strong army of 21 divisions, a major upgrading of equipment, creation of a 45-squadron air force and the establishment of significant domestic arms manufacturing facilities. The programme was expected to cost over a billion dollars.³³ This Indian programme exerted pressure on the Pakistani leadership for military action, since it feared that India would achieve preponderance in the near future. By 1965, Pakistan had received some high performance weapons, such as M-47/48 Patton tanks and F-104A Starfighter aircraft, that gave it a temporary qualitative edge over its adversary. President Ayub Khan and his military advisors feared that this window of opportunity would close in the near future as India was halfway through the five-year defence modernization programme. Additionally, the Indian Air Force was yet to integrate completely its newly acquired Soviet built MiG-21s into service.³⁴ Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the chief protagonist of military action in Kashmir in September 1965, especially felt the time pressure when he said Pakistan had to act because the “ordnance factories which India had established had not gone into full production and once they did, India would have been too strong to be beaten.”³⁵

The Pakistani case shows how decision makers of a challenging nation might experience time pressure to act militarily, especially when they have a short-term advantage in offensive capability. Analysts have argued that offence dominance of a given state can cause war, as such a state may react more strongly to interstate tensions.³⁶ Quester notes the possible thinking of a state that holds transitory offensive advantage: “If a weapon can be potent only for temporary durations, it favors taking the initiative, rather than waiting until sometime when the weapon will have lost its impact, when the enemy’s similar weapon will have grown to full strength.”³⁷

Time pressure of this nature may be felt more intensely by a weaker state in an asymmetric dyad that has obtained short-term offensive capability but still has disadvantages vis-à-vis its stronger opponent in aggregate power resources. Marginally inferior states may also feel

33 Raju G. C. Thomas, *The Defence of India* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1978), 3.

34 T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 116.

35 Kuldip Nayar, “Pakistan Provoked the 1965 War,” *Sunday Magazine* (Bombay), July 10-16, 1983.

36 Robert Jervis “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30 (1978), 167-214.

37 George Quester, *Offense and Defense in the International System* (New York: John Wiley, 1977), 3.

the same pressure when they acquire short-term offensive capability. A weaker state that is in conflict with a stronger adversary may experience pressure to exploit a temporary window of opportunity, believing that a particular weapon system has only a short-term advantage in a small theatre of operations. If the war can be limited to a specific area of operations, this capability would determine who would gain tactical as well as political benefits. In this sense, decision makers may feel that it is better to exploit the temporary advantage than to wait until that marginal advantage may be lost. For the stronger opponent may acquire more powerful countervailing systems, or may take defensive and offensive measures that would curtail the effectiveness of the weaker state's capability.³⁸

Intermediate time pressure is evident in the pre-escalation phase of the US-Japanese conflict in 1941. Japan's short-term advantage in the Pacific, in terms of aircraft, aircraft carriers, torpedoes and battleships, has been considered a key factor in Tokyo's calculations prior to the Pearl Harbor offensive in 1941. Both the Japanese navy and the army feared that their advantage in the Pacific was of short duration, and that by March 1942, US reinforcements in the Philippines would reach such a high level that the Allied powers would greatly augment their defences of Malaya and the Philippines, making Japan's southward expansion virtually impossible.³⁹ By 1941, the US was about to commission several weapon systems, including 17 battleships, 12 aircraft carriers, 48 cruisers and 160 destroyers.⁴⁰

At the 40th Liaison Conference on July 21, 1941, Navy Chief Nagano argued:

As far as with the US, although now there is a chance of achieving victory, the chances will diminish as time goes on. By the latter half of next year it will already be difficult for us to cope with the US, after that the situation will become increasingly worse. The United States will probably prolong the matter until her defenses have been built up, and then try to settle it. Accordingly, as time goes by, the empire will be put at a disadvantage.⁴¹

With the crisis reaching its escalation stage in October 1941, when the hard-line Tojo regime came to power, followed by the Japanese rejection of the Hull memorandum in November, this intermediate-level time pressure was transformed into the primary level. The Japanese decision makers became increasingly confronted with a "now or never" situa-

38 Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*, 30.

39 Louis Morton, "Japan's Decision for War (1941)," in Kent Roberts Greenfield, ed., *Command Decisions* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 82.

40 *The Statesman's Yearbook* (London: Macmillan, 1941), 510.

41 Nobutaka Ike, *Japan's Decision for War: Records of the 1941 Policy Conferences* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 106.

tion as their short-term relative advantage in military capability in the Pacific was about to be overtaken by the US and Britain.

The decision makers of Egypt experienced intermediate time pressure in 1973 before they launched the offensive to liberate Sinai. In September 1973, President Sadat told his spokesman, Mohammed Heikal, that Egypt faced its last chance to regain control of Sinai and that "if we did not seize it, we would have finally missed the bus. For one thing Egypt was not going to receive any more arms than it already had and was at the peak of its military capacity."⁴² With the acquisition of SAM and SCUD missiles, as well as MiG-21 FMs and MiG-23 aircraft, the Egyptian leadership saw a window of opportunity and came to the conclusion that it had to take military action without further delay as it could gain limited objectives in a short war. The SCUD missiles especially seemed to have played a major role in Sadat's calculations, as he reportedly made his final decision to go to war in April 1973 when the first SCUD arrived in Egypt.⁴³

The Egyptians had planned a war in 1971, "the year of decision," which President Sadat had designated as the time to find a military solution to the problem. They chose not to do so largely because the weapons that the Soviet Union had promised had not arrived by then. Both President Sadat and Minister of Defence General Sadek stated that the Soviet refusal to provide offensive weapons sufficient to liberate Sinai was the major reason for not undertaking an offensive in 1971.⁴⁴ But by 1973, the Soviets had accelerated their supply of offensive and defensive systems sufficient for a limited war. The Egyptian leadership feared that this capability was of a limited and transitory nature and that it was beneficial only if used before Israel acquired countervailing weapons systems.

The cases discussed in this section confirm to a great extent the contention that the variables, short-term offensive advantage and impending changes in opponent's relative strike capability, when linked with time pressures, can exert a significant effect on decision makers of the declining power undertaking offensive action. It could also be argued that the factor of changing capabilities alone need not result in war, but when it is combined with time pressure there is a more positive association between it and war initiation.

42 Mohammed Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975), 10.

43 Chaim Herzog, *The War of Atonement* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), 24-25.

44 *Le Monde*, "Excerpts from Sadat's Interview," reprinted in *New York Times*, January 23, 1975, 4.

Time Pressure and Alliances

A second interstate context in which time pressure acts as an intervening variable pertains to the relationship between alliances and the outbreak of war. The contention here is that perceived fluctuations in the positions of allies, mediated by time pressure, can increase the propensity of decision makers to launch military offensives. The type of allies and their stance matter to a state that is in conflict with another state.⁴⁵ As Blainey contends: "every war is preceded on both sides by predictions of how outside nations will behave; and these predictions form one of the causes of war and similarly of peace."⁴⁶

As in other bargaining situations, the type and number of allies may affect the probability of success or defeat in a war for a belligerent. Allies, especially great-power allies, not only may provide material support, but could assure defensive cover against massive punitive attacks or could help prevent the adversary from expanding the theatre of operations. Although alliance relationships are conceived as independent variables having causal links to war initiation, it is not apparent whether the mere presence of alliances would cause wars. It could be argued that alliances matter most significantly for the outbreak of war when they are linked to time pressure. Thus, the favourable position of an ally could encourage a state to go to war, especially when it expects that waiting would change the congenial alliance configuration. Moreover, fear that over time the tightness of the alliance may loosen, or that the ally may switch sides could influence the calculations of a potential war initiator.

Decision-makers of a given nation may feel this type of time pressure when: (1) they have the support of a great power ally; (2) their opponents have fewer allies; (3) their opponents are about to gain allies; (4) their allies are likely to change positions in the future by remaining neutral or expressing opposition to offensive military operations; and (5) they fear that changes in the global alliance pattern, a systemic factor, may adversely affect their interests, mainly because the political and military utility of the alliance would decline for the aligning great power.⁴⁷ Such pressures are likely to be perceived intensely in subsystemic as well as dyadic conflicts, as each ally may contribute directly or

45 Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 78-79.

46 Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 66.

47 It is, however, recognized that some alliances can prevent wars. Alliance partners can be contained through a tight network of relationship in which the allies' plans and actions can be constrained or controlled by the patron state. During the Cold War, members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact were under the ambit of such alliance relationships with their respective superpower patron.

indirectly to tilting the regional balance and thereby the overall strategic objectives of a challenger and its opponent.

The pressure to engage in war may be felt more by a regional power aligned with a great power during the early stages of an alliance.⁴⁸ This may be partly due to the belief among the leaders of a challenging state that has the support of an ally that their alliance would not last too long and, therefore, they must utilize the short-term opportunity before it disappears. Periods of intense bipolar and multipolar competition tend to produce time pressures and incentives to strike, especially among client states of superpowers and other great powers. This shows that systemic patterns of competition have implications at the dyadic level as well. During such periods, smaller powers aligned with superpowers or great powers may initiate wars with their adversaries, anticipating support from their great-power patron. However, if the great-power patron credibly communicates its unwillingness to support any possible military action, a smaller ally may not engage in war initiation. For instance, US President John F. Kennedy's strong opposition to Pakistan taking military action in Kashmir during the Sino-Indian War of 1962 prevented President Ayub Khan from launching an offensive against India.⁴⁹

The historical record suggests that there are ample cases of war initiation by states out of fear of fluctuations in alliance relationships. Thucydides states that the decline of the Hellenic League and the increasing number of smaller allies that joined the Delian League under Athens caused considerable alarm in Sparta. These changes, combined with time pressure, seemed to be a major cause for Sparta's leadership to launch the Peloponnesian War. The withdrawal of Corinth from the Spartan-led alliance and its joining with Athens as an ally seemed to have increased the pressure on Sparta for military action.⁵⁰ In modern times, the anti-Prussian alliances, especially the May 1756 defence treaty between France and Austria and the increasing Russian support for the anti-Prussian coalition, imposed time pressures on Frederick the Great who launched the Seven Years War in August, even when he was fighting a preponderant coalition against Prussia.⁵¹

In 1904, the Japanese decision makers felt that British defensive support was going to be short-lived, and that Japan had to make use of the opportunity that the alliance support provided. The Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902 had promised Britain's intervention in case third parties,

48 Charles W. Ostrom and Francis W. Hoole, "Alliances and Wars Revisited: A Research Note," *International Studies Quarterly* 22 (1978), 215-36.

49 Shirin Tahir-Kheli, *The United States and Pakistan: The Evolution of an Influence Relationship* (New York: Praeger, 1982), 16.

50 Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War*, 41, 80.

51 Gerhard Ritter, *Frederick the Great: A Historical Profile*, trans. by Peter Paret (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 102-08.

such as France and Germany, joined with Russia against Japan.⁵² Britain had offered full diplomatic and political support to Japan, in addition to being a generous source of weapons and credit. Furthermore, the US had also declared its moral and diplomatic support, as evident in President Theodore Roosevelt's declaration of "benevolent neutrality" in favour of Japan.⁵³ The Anglo-American support provided Japan with a unique opportunity to wage a limited war with Russia in the Far East, unhampered by the possibility of interference from other great powers. Such an obstacle to Japan's military objectives had occurred in 1895 during the Triple Intervention by a formidable coalition of Russia, Germany and France, which had virtually denied Japan the fruits of its victory over China in the Sino-Japanese War. The lack of a great-power ally prevented war on this occasion, as well as in 1901, when Japan contemplated war with Russia.⁵⁴

The state of alliance structure, together with time pressure, was also a factor in the outbreak of the First World War. The changes in alliance relationship prior to the war generated pressures, especially for Germany. The Anglo-Russian naval talks that began in April 1914 contributed to Germany's fear of an increased possibility of losing a future war. In May 1914, during a visit to Conrad, his Austrian counterpart, the German Army Chief Moltke said, referring to war, that from that point onwards, "any adjournment will have the effect of diminishing our chances of success."⁵⁵

In the post-Second World War period, one case stands out as a crucial example of how changing alliances, added to time pressure, can encourage decision makers to go to war. In 1973, President Anwar Sadat felt that the impending US-Soviet detente would curtail Soviet support to his struggle against Israel to repossess the Sinai and, therefore, he felt that Egypt should launch an offensive without delay. During the May 1972 superpower summit at Moscow, the US and the USSR pledged their support for a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict and agreed to "prevent situations causing a dangerous exacerbation of their relations."⁵⁶ President Sadat sensed a tilt in the Soviet position away from the Egyptian stand towards the Middle East. In a speech to the Egyptian National Security Council, he stated that "the two super

52 Alfred L. P. Dennis, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance* (Berkeley: University of California Publications, 1923).

53 Tyler Dennett, *Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War* (Gloucester, Maryland: Petersmith, 1959), 27-30.

54 Frank W. Iklé, "The Triple Intervention, Japan's Lesson in the Diplomacy of Imperialism," *Monumenta Nipponica* 5 (1967), 122-30.

55 Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1962), 43-44.

56 William B. Quandt, *Decade of Decisions: American Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967-1976* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 150-51.

powers appear to be reaching agreements on all subjects, including the Middle East, which made this the last chance for action.”⁵⁷ In response to the concern of his advisor, Mohammed Heikal, that the “detente will set conditions for the Middle East problem instead of the Middle East problem setting conditions for detente,” Sadat said: “Maybe we will just be able to catch the last part of the tail of the detente.”⁵⁸

The discussion so far points to an association between alliances and war when mediated by time pressure. The positions of allies, especially of great powers, affect the choices that decision makers may have vis-à-vis their opponents. The relationship between fluctuating alliances and war initiation can be made more explicit and positive if we add time pressure as an intervening variable.

Time Pressure, Military Doctrines and Strategies

Another significant area where time pressure may act as an intervening variable is with respect to particular military doctrines and strategies that states hold at a given time, and their propensity to go to war because of them. Military doctrines and strategies are examples of state-level factors that can have a causal effect on war initiation.⁵⁹ The contention here is that the mere presence of these independent variables need not result in war, but, when mediated by time pressure, they may substantially increase the probability of war.

A state may hold an offensive, defensive or deterrent doctrine as part of its military planning and force posture. Striking first to achieve tactical or strategic gains is a main characteristic of an offensive doctrine. A defensive doctrine, on the other hand, would encourage a state not to take military initiative, but to establish a defensive position, with the object of defeating or denying the objectives that an opponent seeks. A deterrent doctrine would require a state to threaten retaliation in order to prevent an adversary from taking a military offensive. The expectation of the holder of this doctrine is that the potential initiator would refrain from launching an attack, since the possible costs of doing so would outweigh the possible benefits. States that subscribe to offensive doctrines may experience the need to go to war more intensely than those who hold the latter two doctrines. While a defensive doctrine does leave the initiative to the opponent, a deterrent doctrine does not entail mounting an attack until the opponent shows signs of taking the offensive. The holder of an offensive doctrine may be tempted to go to war

57 Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan*, 16-17.

58 *Ibid.*, 210.

59 See, for example, Stephen Van Evera, “The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War,” *International Security* 9 (1984), 58-107; and Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

whenever an opportunity arises, as an effective first strike can successfully conclude a war quickly and cheaply.⁶⁰

States that hold offensive doctrines would view defence as disadvantageous. Such states may believe that the side that takes the initiative would gain its objectives in quick, fait accompli, wars. Thus, an offensive strategy, coupled with time pressure, could cause the state to initiate a war, even under the pretext of a small crisis. Time pressure could be higher if several states hold such doctrines, since when "war appears possible, all will begin contemplating first strike, and all will know that everyone else is doing so."⁶¹

Offensive doctrines mediated by time pressure could lead to war, even under conditions of uncertainty or when there is moderate misinformation or hostility, as an attack may be "encouraged in the manner of shoot first, ask questions later."⁶² Holders of offensive doctrines may feel more pressure to act under conditions of worsening status quo than states that hold defensive doctrines, as defence does not require immediate mobilization or other military actions to exploit opportunities. In this respect, the level of time pressure that a potential war initiator could experience may be higher during an intense crisis. Decision makers may magnify a limited disequilibrium in the balance of power between antagonists or a small crisis, if offensive doctrines dominate national defence policies. The doctrines themselves may require states to mobilize and engage in war initiation during the early stages of a crisis as striking first is essential for their successful execution.

Thus the offensive doctrines that the European states held before the First World War "not only defied the constraints of time, space and technology, they also heightened the perceived advantage of preventive attacks and placed time pressures on crisis diplomacy."⁶³ This "cult of the offensive" gave states incentives to engage in more aggressive foreign policy, competitive diplomacy and brinkmanship, as well as encouraging them to use opportunities for preventive and pre-emptive warfare.⁶⁴ The doctrinal basis of Germany's Schlieffen Plan was "the concept of a great offensive in the west—an offensive which would annihilate the entire French Army at a single blow and achieve quick and total victory on the western front."⁶⁵ Once France was defeated, the plan had called for a rapid offensive in the east against Russia.

60 Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 18.

61 *Ibid.*, 20.

62 Quester, *Offense and Defense*, 11.

63 Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision-making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 199.

64 Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive."

65 Gerhard Ritter, *The Schlieffen Plan: Critique of a Myth* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), 17.

After 1912, the German leaders were under increasing time pressure with respect to a perceived strengthening of Russia and France. "They saw a closing window of opportunity for a preventive war and, not accidentally, had an offensive war plan to carry it out."⁶⁶ The reported achievement of the Russians in reducing their mobilization timetable by five to seven days added to the pressure on Germany. Each day gained by the Russians endangered the Schlieffen-Moltke Plan, as it was designed around the expectation that Russia would take more than six weeks to mobilize.⁶⁷ Other major powers (France, Britain, Russia and Austria-Hungary) also held offensive doctrines before the First World War.⁶⁸ This fact, in turn, caused a rapid escalation of the conflict, as they all believed that striking first would yield quick results.

Military Strategies and War

Apart from doctrines, particular military strategies in association with time pressure can influence decision makers to consider war initiation. States may adopt strategies such as attrition, blitzkrieg or limited aims in order to confront their adversaries. The objective of an attrition strategy is to overwhelm the opponent's forces in a series of set-piece battles, often in a long drawn-out war. Blitzkrieg allows the initiator to use tanks and aircraft for a lightning war, in which the attacker "attempts to pierce the defender's front and then to drive deep into the defender's rear, severing his lines of communication and destroying key junctures in the network."⁶⁹ The objective of a limited-aims strategy is the acquisition of a piece of territory or something of value which is not equivalent to the total destruction or defeat of the opponent.

The effect of each strategy combined with time pressure on war initiation varies. An attrition strategy would exert the least impact, while a blitzkrieg would produce the maximum. Since success is generally the result of a drawn-out confrontation, the state that holds an attrition strategy would have little interest in launching an attack. Blitzkrieg and limited-aims strategies are, by definition, opportunity-driven. These are predicated on short, quick wars and on seizing the initiative in striking. The expectation that such strategies would determine a favourable outcome in a war may increase the temptation to strike, as decision makers may fear that with the passage of time they may not succeed.⁷⁰ The adoption of blitzkrieg as the dominant strategic posture by a nation can

66 Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*, 23.

67 Samuel R. Williamson, "The Origins of World War I," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18 (1988), 795-818.

68 Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive."

69 John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 33-36.

70 Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*, 24-29.

increase the chances of its leadership going on the offensive when an opportunity arises. Part of the reason for this is that states that hold blitzkrieg strategies would feel pressured to engage in a lightning strike before the adversary could react, since victory depends upon the effective use of aircraft and tanks in piercing deeply into an opponent's territory. The success of this strategy requires making use of an opportunity provided by geography, short-term capability and surprise.

A limited-aims strategy requires quick military action, often in a surprise attack, followed by adopting defensive positions to preserve limited tactical gains until favourable political settlements can be achieved. Limited-aims strategies presage limited wars that are confined to small areas. A condition for a successful limited-aims strategy is that the defender not escalate the conflict beyond the original boundaries of the war. States may feel under pressure in expectation that these strategies not work in the long term. War is a tempting option if an initiator believes that a massive retaliatory attack is improbable, and that a controlled pressure strategy could result in territorial or political gains.⁷¹ Such strategies are also based on short-war expectations, that a rapid operation might achieve the politico-military objectives of the initiating state.⁷² Furthermore, the initiator expects that the war can be concluded on favourable terms before it escalates, partly due to anticipated diplomatic intervention by third parties.

Before the February 1904 attack on Russia, military planners in Tokyo were under pressure to apply their strategic concepts, which entailed imposing irreparable damage on the Russian fleet at Port Arthur, so that they could launch a limited attack on the Russian forces occupying Manchuria and Korea.⁷³ The Japanese decision makers were cognizant of the fact that they could not defeat the Russians in a long, protracted war. However, the Russian weakness in mobilizing quickly meant that Japan possessed a short-term advantage and, therefore, could employ a limited-aims strategy.

In some post-Second World War cases, limited-aims strategy mediated by time pressure contributed to war initiation. Time pressures of this type played a role in the Pakistani offensive in Kashmir in 1965, the Egyptian offensive in Sinai in 1973 and the Argentine invasion of the Falklands in 1982.

The linkage between military doctrines/strategies and war has received a fair amount of attention in recent years. However, the association between these variables and war seems to be more pronounced if time pressure mediates them. Leaders whose states hold offensive doc-

71 Ibid., 28.

72 L. L. Farrar, *The Short-War Illusion* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio Press, 1973), 7.

73 J. N. Westwood, *The Illustrated History of the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973), 10.

trines and strategies can, when impelled by time pressure, be tempted to exploit windows of opportunity. Successful application of such a strategy or doctrine entails taking the initiative before the opponent mobilizes its forces. In that sense, time pressure acts as a contributing and an intervening variable between military doctrine/strategy and war initiation.

Conclusion

This article is a preliminary effort to identify the specific theoretical links through which independent variables such as changing relative capability, alliance relationships and military doctrines and strategies, when compounded by the intervening variable of time pressure, lead to war initiation. Intermediate time pressure is used as an intervening variable that increases the effect of an independent variable on the dependent variable, in this case, war initiation. The article also links variations at the decision-maker level with those that occur at the system and state levels of analysis.

The article has presented a dimension of time pressure that has been neglected in studies on crisis and war, the intermediate term pressures that decision makers may experience before deciding to wage war. Time pressure has salience not only during the escalation phase of a crisis, but during the pre-crisis and the onset phases as well. This way of linking separately the independent variables with war initiation could provide a deeper understanding of the incentive structures of decision makers. The case studies suggest that when combined with time pressure, the independent variables greatly increase the chances of war initiation, especially in an enduring conflict.

An attempt has also been made to find preliminary answers to the following questions: First, under what conditions does war initiation occur among rivals engaging in enduring rivalries or protracted conflicts? Second, under what conditions is a window of opportunity exploited by one of these states? Do national leaders faced with threats or opportunity engage in warfare, fearing future vulnerability? It is hoped that the preceding discussion has shed more light on the type of situations that are conducive to war initiations among states in long-standing conflict relationships. The cases point out that a war initiator's calculations are not simply driven by objective military or political conditions, but subjective factors as well. Time pressures resulting from perceptions of change can act as a mediating factor in the war calculations of states.

Future research could look more closely at how time pressure acts as a mediating factor in non-crisis contexts of interstate interactions. Other independent variables, especially of domestic politics, could be studied separately or as part of a larger model of war initiation. This study has shown that the existing frameworks of analysis on these fac-

tors and their relationship to war are not sufficient. Greater specification of independent variables, and their mediation by intervening variables such as time pressure, is needed to understand fully the complexities of decision making for war. Aggregate and case study approaches need to incorporate time pressure to produce better explanations. A clearer understanding of the war initiation process in enduring rivalries may also allow us to discern ways to prevent wars, especially by not allowing conditions identified in this study to occur if they are controllable.

The arguments presented here and the historical illustrations used also have policy implications. Decision makers facing changing conditions may experience sustained time pressures and may not explore diplomatic alternatives to war. Sudden changes in relative capabilities in a region of enduring rivalry, or protracted conflict, can have dangerous consequences. Introduction of new weapons into a region can create unsettling conditions and thereby escalation of a conflict into war. Therefore, arms transfers need to be examined for their implications for war and peace. Similarly, how and when alliances are formed could determine whether some war initiations occur or not. The study suggests that alliances have to be formed with great care and that some alliances can have negative implications for regional peace. Expected alliance support and fear of shifts in such support could increase the time pressure on leaders to act militarily. Great-power behaviour in regional conflicts needs more attention, especially on the conditions under which their alliance support to regional rivals can cause or prevent wars. Finally, states should avoid offensive doctrines and quick-war strategies, and instead develop defensive and deterrent strategies and doctrines so that escalation of regional conflicts into crises or into wars can be avoided.