

## War Games<sup>1</sup>

### **Purpose:**

The goal of this exercise is twofold: First, to illustrate the realist IR perspective on state power and anarchy (competition, misinformation, arms build-up). TAs should note that the exercise is best done immediately following a review of IR theories. Second, to have a little fun with students.

### **Supplies needed:**

- 4 envelopes containing the state memo and supplies. Envelopes should include the following:
  - RED envelope should contain one tank, no coins
  - BLUE and YELLOW envelope should contain 2 coins, no tanks
  - GREEN envelope should contain three coins, no tanks
  - Each envelope should also have cards with the words: TRADE, WAR, and DEFEND
- Extra money and tanks
- 4 paper 'name stands' with GREEN, YELLOW, BLUE and RED on them

### **Instructions to be explained to students:**

1. This is an unequal, anarchic world. You must look out for your own safety and development. States begin with different, and unknown to each other, material conditions.
2. "TRADE" option earns participating states 1 coin of profit if both states agree to trade.
3. "WAR" option earns the winning state 2 coins of profit (paid by the losing state). "DEFEND" option blocks "WAR" option successfully if the defending country has at least half the arsenal of the attacking country. "DEFEND" has no monetary benefit for either attacker or defender.
4. 1 tank costs 2 coins. Tanks can be bought from your friendly local arms dealer (ie. the TA). Other states are aware that a state is buying tanks but not how many tanks.
5. Tanks have no monetary value once bought and do not count as wealth at the end of the game.
6. **The winner of the game is the richest country to survive.**
7. ***The goals of the game are twofold (TA should write this on the board before the game starts):***
  - I. SURVIVE***
  - II. Get rich, or die tryin'***

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<sup>1</sup> Developed by Yana Gorokhovskaia for POLI 100 tutorials using existing templates created by Prof. Arjun Chowdhury, Jen Allan, Sam Slota-Newson and Yunnan Chen.

**Instructions for TA:**

- Your role is arms dealer and time-keeper.
- Divide the students into three groups and tell them to physically separate themselves from other groups. (Suggest that secrecy is important.)
- Let the students know that material power has been distributed unevenly (do not tell them specifics about other countries.)
- The game works best if played in four rounds (3-4 minutes of decision time allowed for each round). The first three rounds each state faces off against one other state.
  - Round 1: RED v. BLUE / GREEN v. YELLOW
  - Round 2: RED v. YELLOW / GREEN v. BLUE
  - Round 3: RED v. GREEN / BLUE v. YELLOW
- The final (fourth) round is the sudden death round. The option to DEFEND is eliminated. Each state must decide between WAR and TRADE. The groups should discuss what they want to do together and then elect one person to go outside the classroom and negotiate with the other groups. (They can, and will, form alliances.) They come back and reveal what their choices are.
- At the end of the game you may want to ask students what countries they think they are (ie. which colour stands in for what country).

**Country Memos (to be given to groups along with supplies):**

## **Country BLUE**

You are a former colonial power. After suffering a costly military defeat fifty years ago you have rebuilt yourself into a regional economic powerhouse.

Your goals: limit RED's power and influence; buy natural gas you desperately need from GREEN.

What you know: RED has overtaken BLUE as the world's second largest economy. YELLOW seems to be aligning with RED.

What you don't know: what are RED's intentions? Do they want to expand their power as they have been doing - through trade? Or do they want to expand their power through the use of force (i.e. is their military buildup offensive or defensive in nature)?

**Country RED**

Until recently you have been underdeveloped. But over the last 20 years you have made yourself into a sizable economic power.

Your goals: You feel that your role in the world is less than it should be according to your might. But fighting wars is costly, because of the opportunity cost of losing trade links (your rivals are your trading partners). So, ideally, you want to increase RED's power and influence without fighting a war.

This means reducing YELLOW's role in North Asia so RED can be a regional hegemon.

What you know: you are getting stronger relative to your rivals and neighbors. You own a lot of YELLOW's debt.

What you don't know: how the other states perceive your rise? Do they see you as a military threat, in which case they may ally with YELLOW? Or do they see you as a potential partner in an Asian order that will limit YELLOW's influence?

## **Country YELLOW**

You are the world's oldest democracy.

Your goals: limit RED's power and influence without fighting a war, and maintain your role as regional hegemon in North Asia.

What you know: RED is expanding its military forces, particularly navy. RED has overtaken BLUE as the world's second largest economy. RED's neighbors are getting worried about this increase in power.

What you don't know: RED's intentions. Do they want to expand their power as they have been doing, through trade? Or do they want to expand their power through the use of force (i.e. is their military buildup offensive or defensive in nature)?

### **Country GREEN**

You are a relatively small landlocked country. You discovered natural gas deposits twenty years ago and have finally built the infrastructure to develop them fully. Congrats! You're in the money.

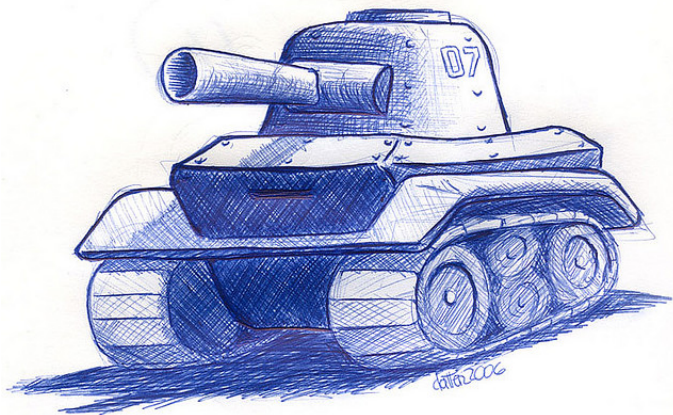
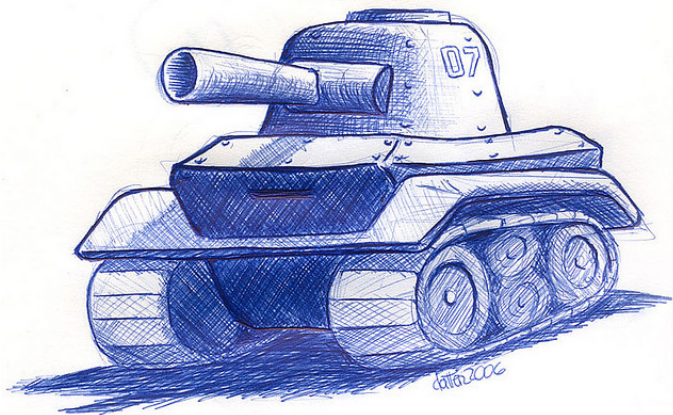
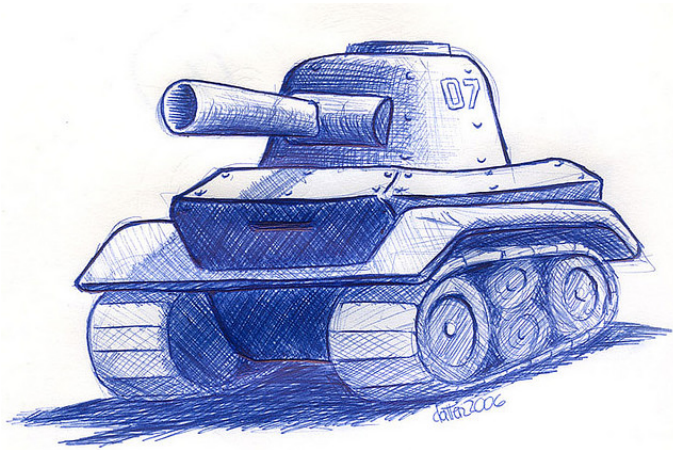
Your goals: You'd like to sell gas to RED but need to build a pipeline through BLUE in order to do it.

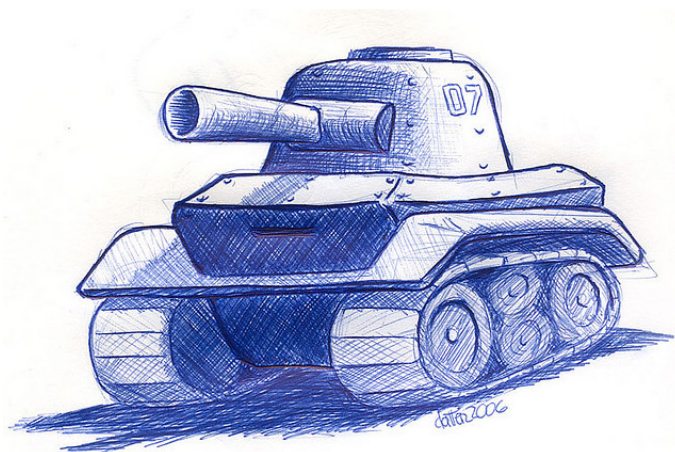
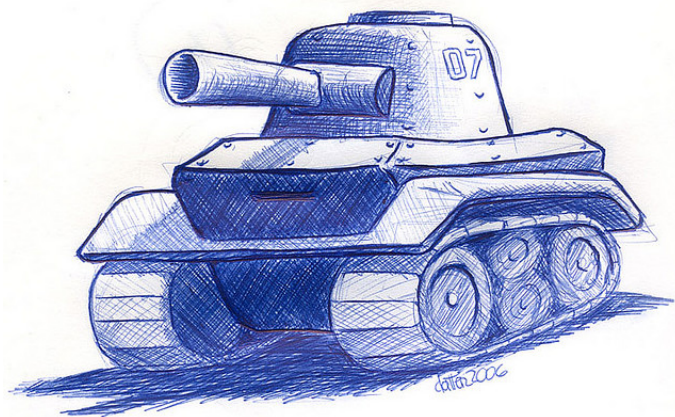
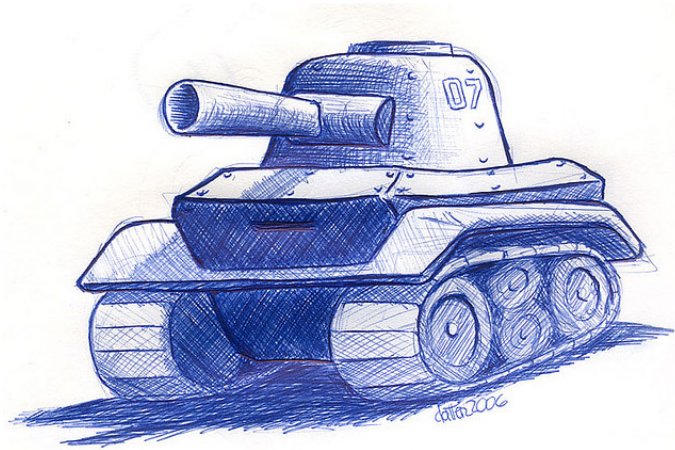
What you know: RED and BLUE seem to be heading toward war. There is evidence that RED is building up militarily.

YELLOW is not paying a fair price for the natural gas you provide, but attempts at renegotiation have been difficult because the companies that extract natural gas in your country, and are therefore responsible for the upkeep of infrastructure, are owned in and based by YELLOW.

[illegible]







**WAR**

**TRADE**

**DEFEND**

