

# PS 0500: Intervention

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<https://williamspaniel.com/classes/ps-0500-2017/>



# Outline

- Why care about civil wars?
- Commitment problems
- Civil war settlement
- The critical barrier



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In a state of civil war since forever.





In a state of civil war since 2003.



# A Festering Problem

- Terrorists can thrive in the absence of a strong centralized government
- Civil wars create (or are evidence of) weak governments
  - Also creates the potential for grievance



# The Solution?

- If you want to stop terrorism, you might also have to stop civil wars and insurgencies
- How?



# The Solution?

- If you want to stop terrorism, you might also have to stop civil wars and insurgencies
- How?
  - We need to know the cause of ongoing civil conflict to stop it
    - We already know why wars happen
    - But what issues are problematic in civil war?



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**You can either let me do a quick search, or we can wait a half hour for the K-9 unit to arrive. It's hot. Waiting would be worse for both of us.**





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Heck no! Have you ever heard of illegal search and seizure?

You can either let me do a quick search, or we can wait a half hour for the K-9 unit to arrive.

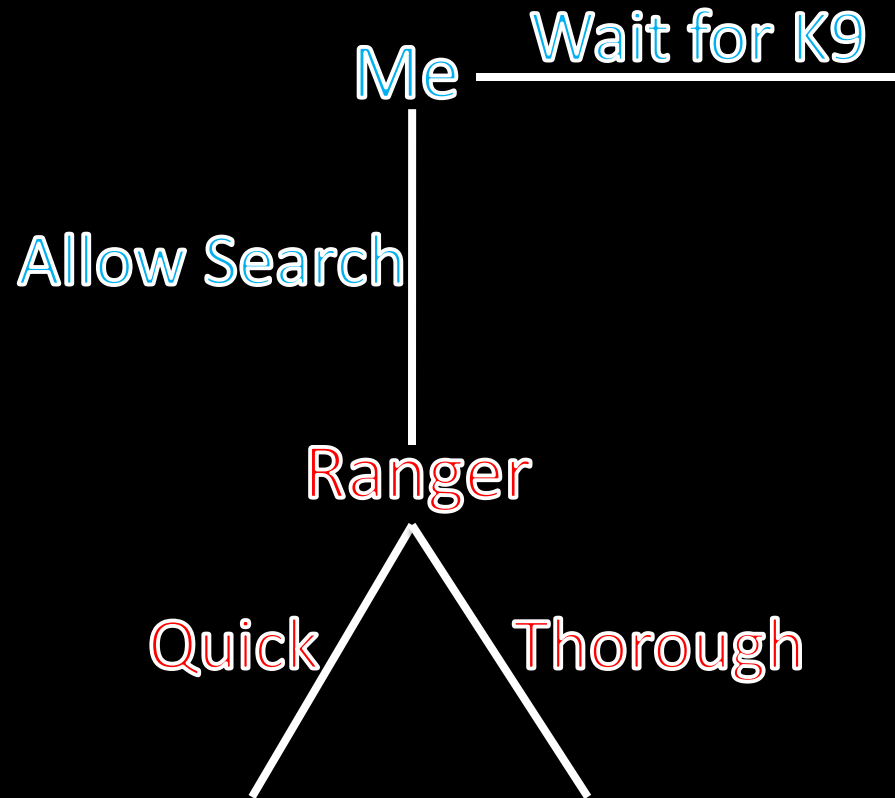
It's hot. Waiting would be worse for both of us.

Trust you? Ha! I'll wait.



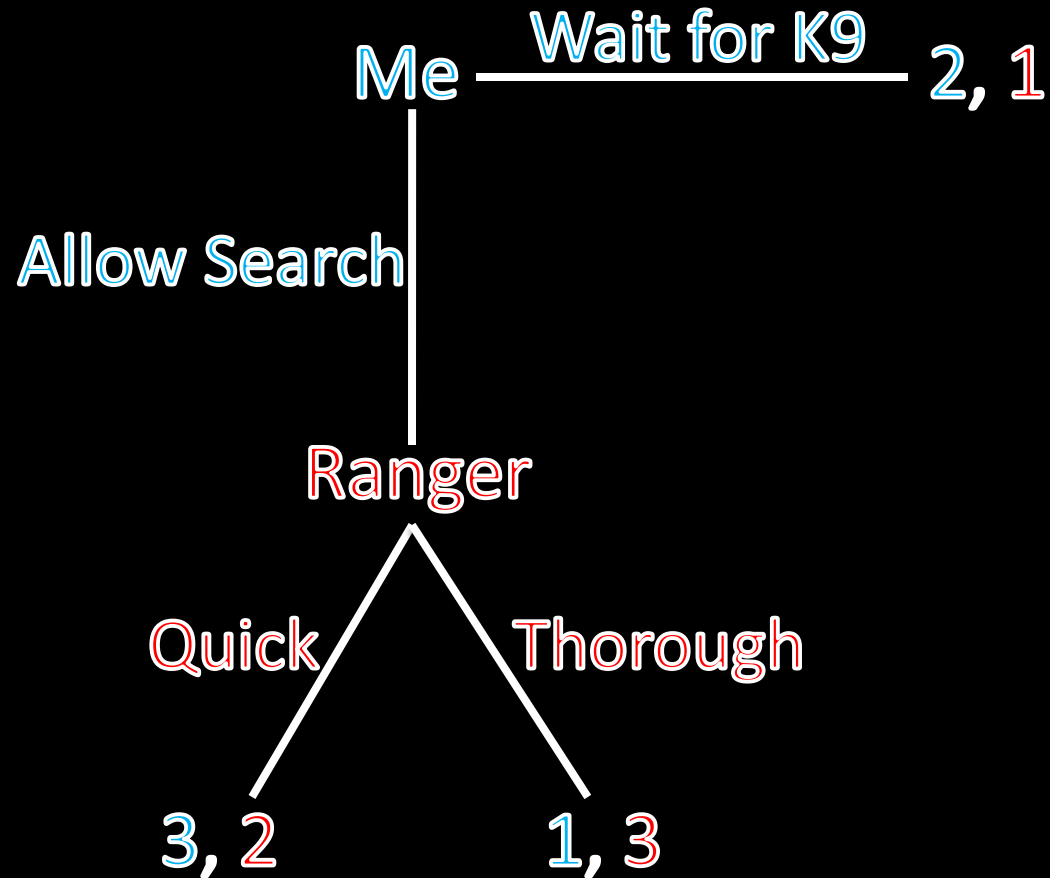


## A Commitment Problem



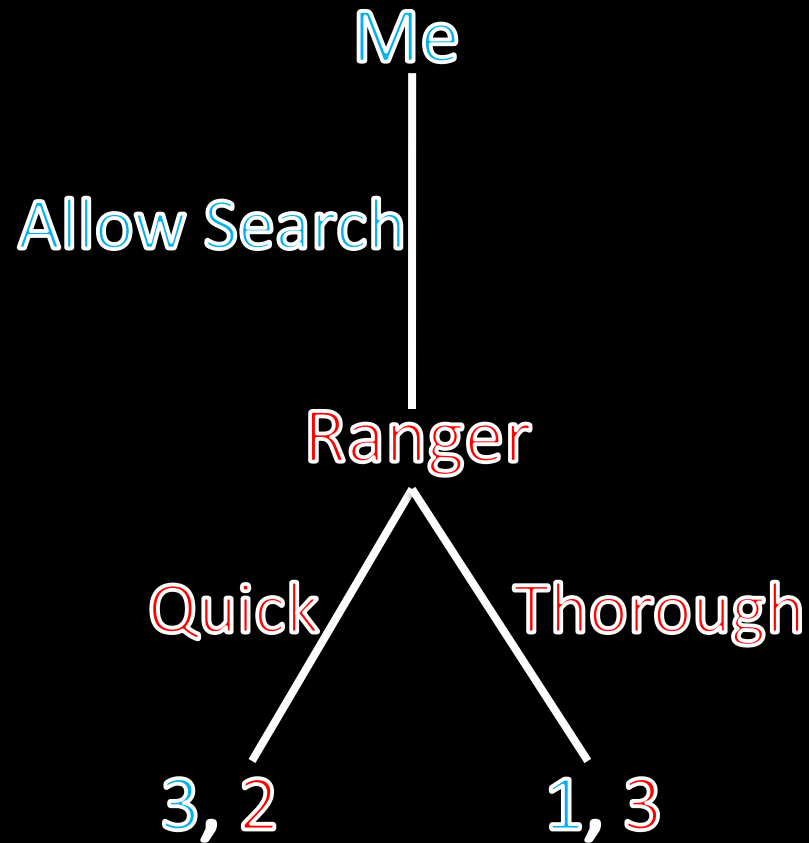


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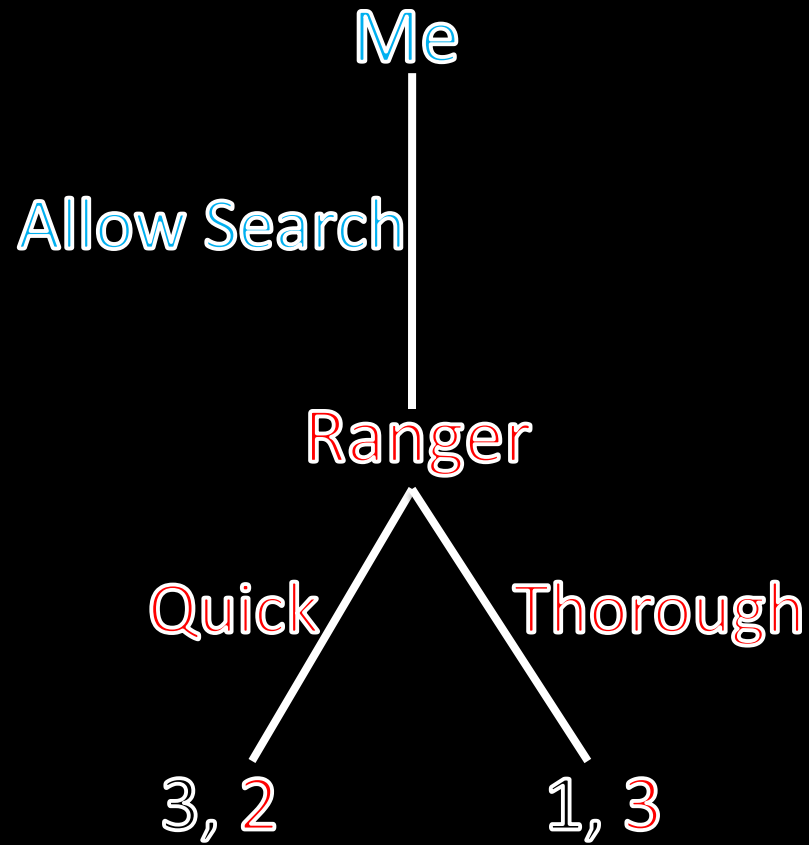


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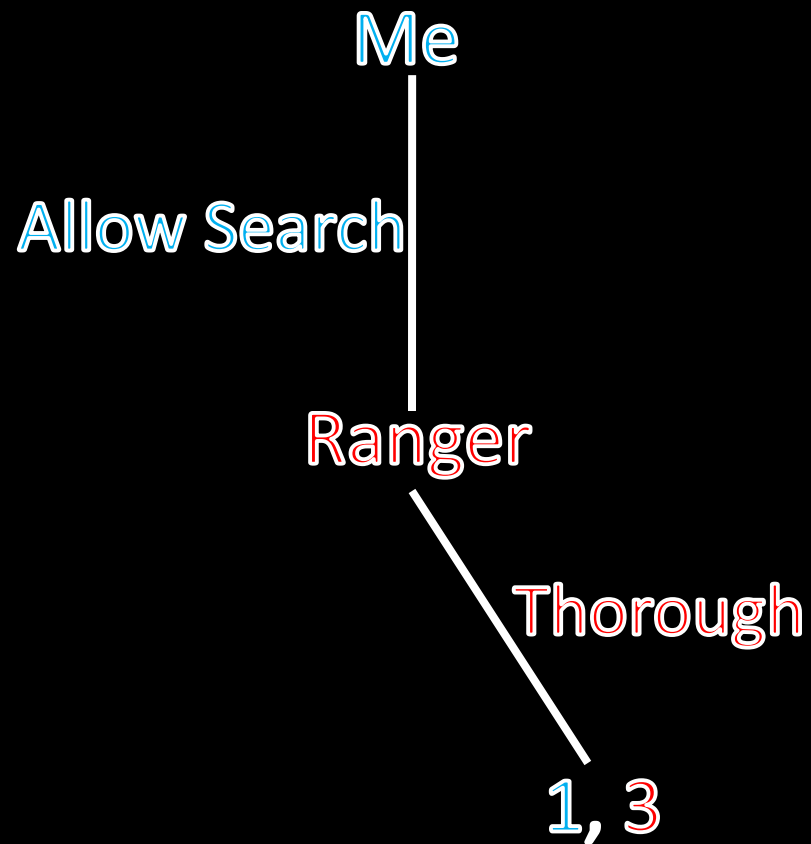


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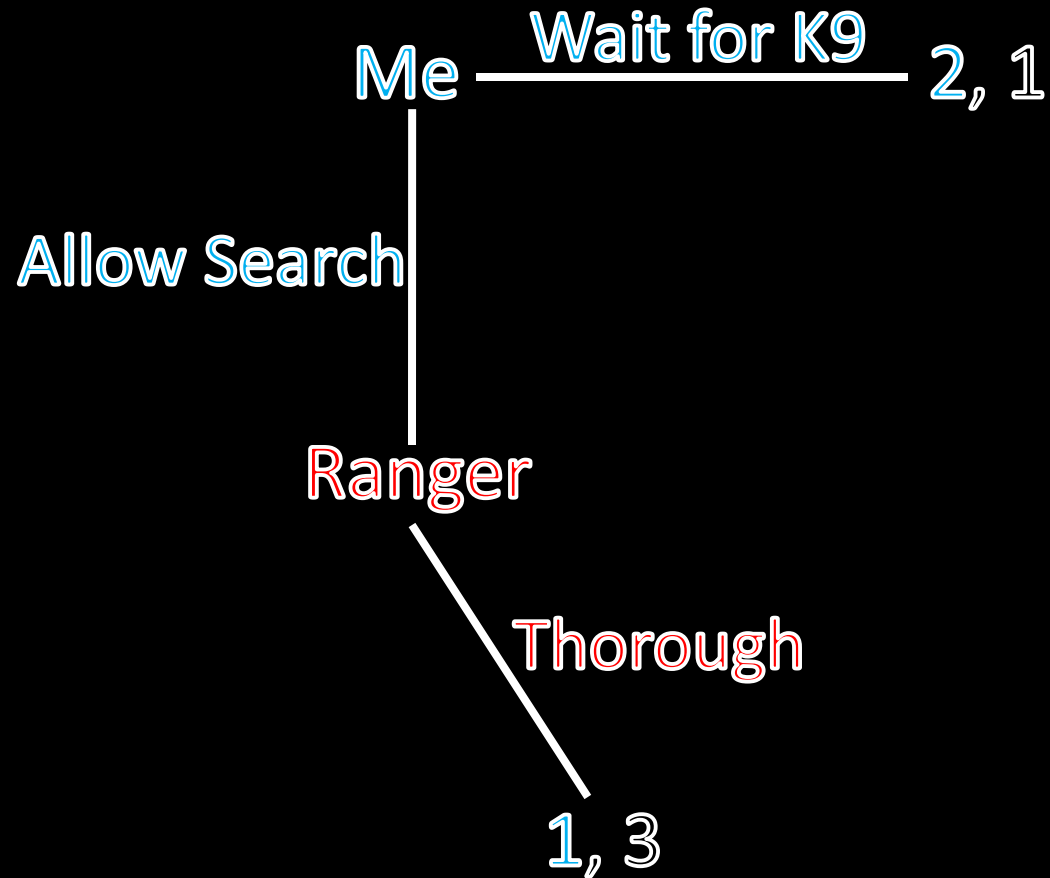


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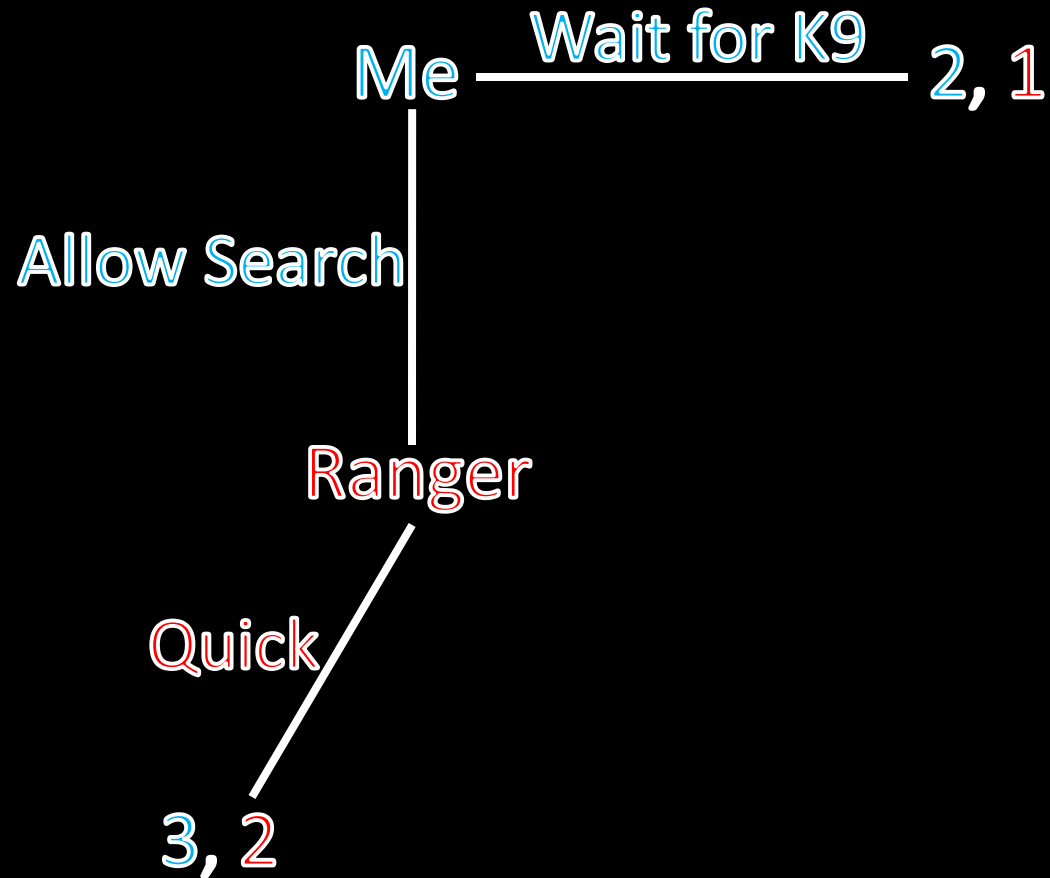


## A Commitment Problem

Me Wait for K9 2, 1

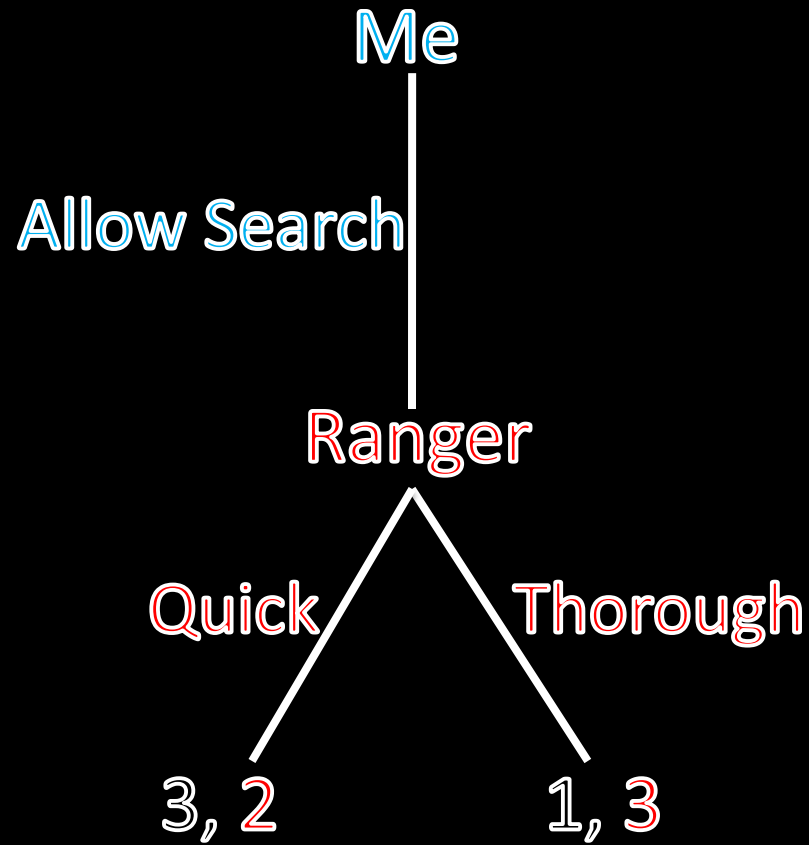


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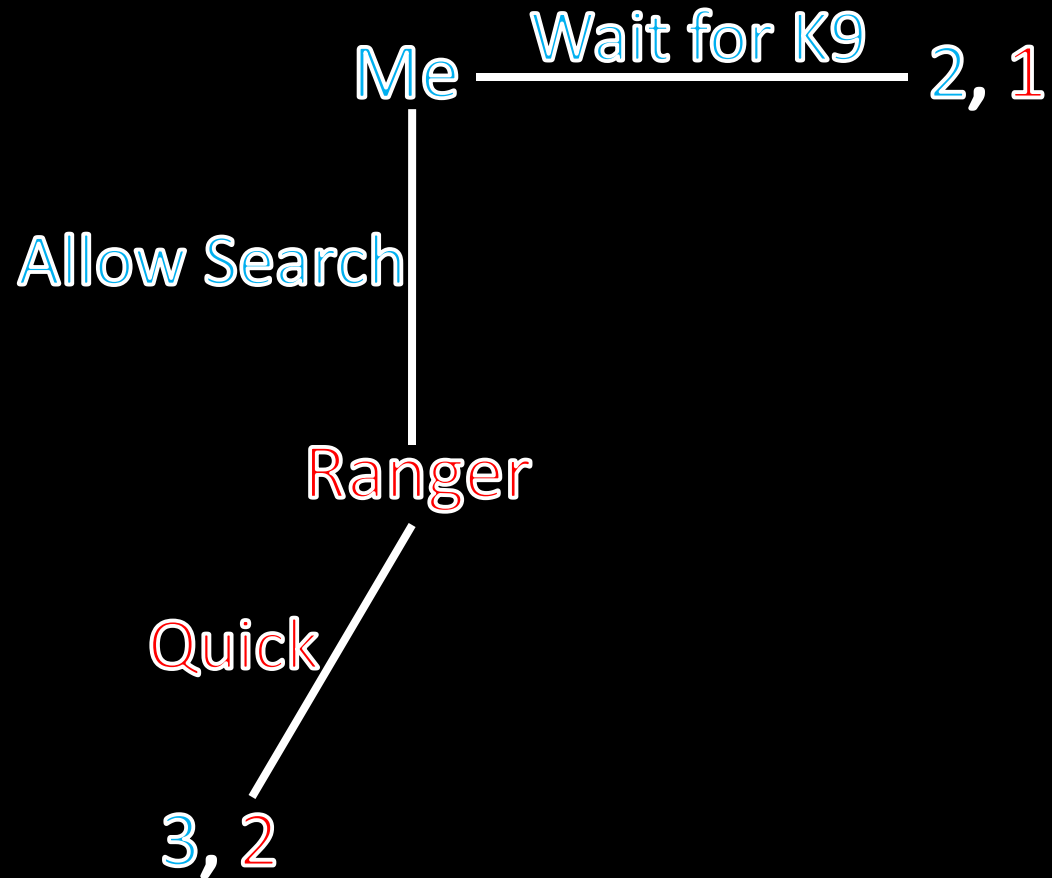


## A Commitment Problem





## A Commitment Problem





# What is a time-inconsistency commitment problem?

1. There exists an outcome that is better for both parties than the outcome that actually occurs.
2. If one player could credibly commit to a certain action in the future, the players would reach the mutually preferable outcome.

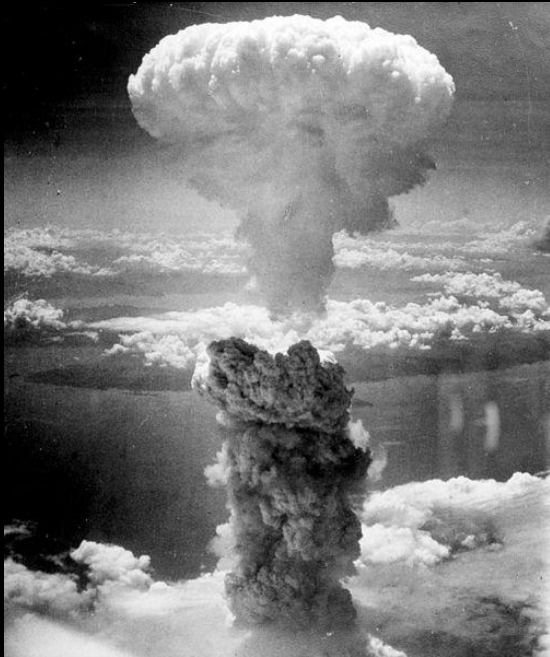


# Outline

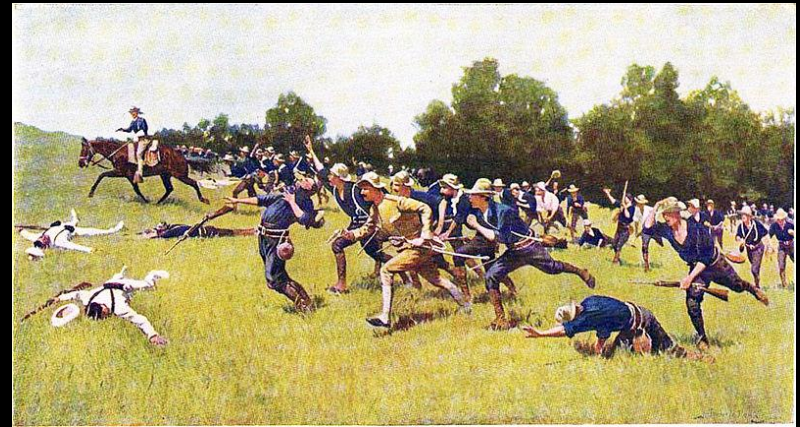
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# Absolute versus Limited War



World War II



Spanish-American War



Question: Are absolute or limited interstate wars more common? Why?



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About 2/3rds of wars are limited.



# Why Limited War?

- Wars are costly (dead people, destroyed buildings)
- If we knew what the outcome of war would be, we could just implement that outcome without fighting



# Why Limited War?

- Thus, one reason states might start fighting is due to disagreement over what the outcome would look like
- But war acts as a learning process
  - States will eventually converge their expectations of war and be willing to negotiate a settlement



The opposite is true of civil war.

Only 1 in 5 civil wars ends in  
negotiated settlement.



Why? Commitment Problems.



# Enforcing the Peace

- After a limited interstate war ends, both sides maintain their weapons
  - Treaty is enforceable because breaking it reverts to costly conflict

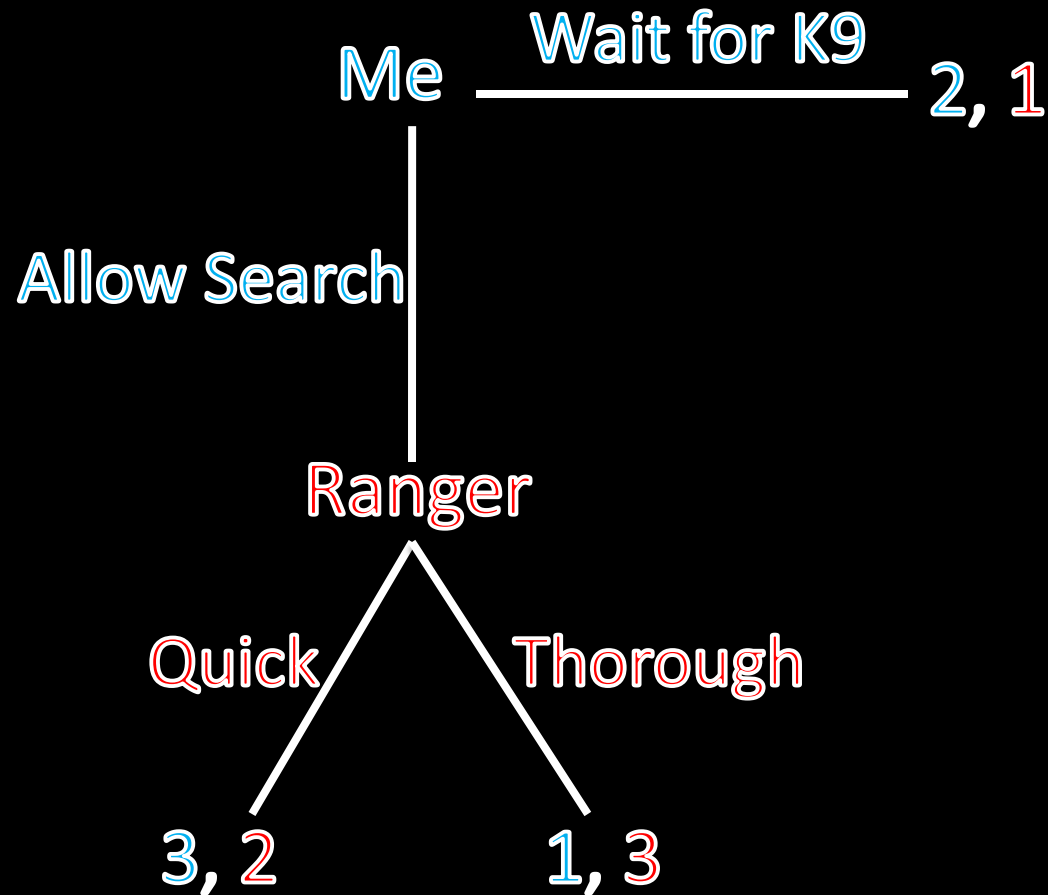


# Enforcing the Peace

- After a limited interstate war ends, both sides maintain their weapons
  - Treaty is enforceable because breaking it reverts to costly conflict
- After a limited civil war ends, one side gives up its arms to reintegrate

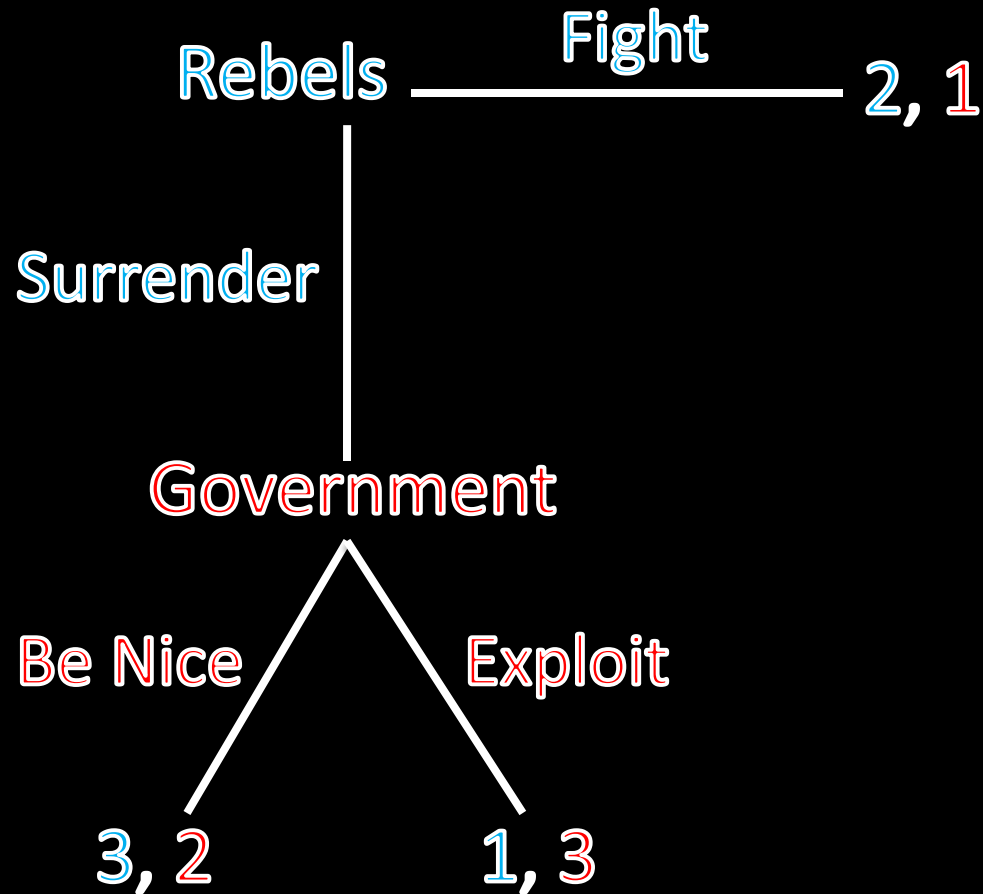


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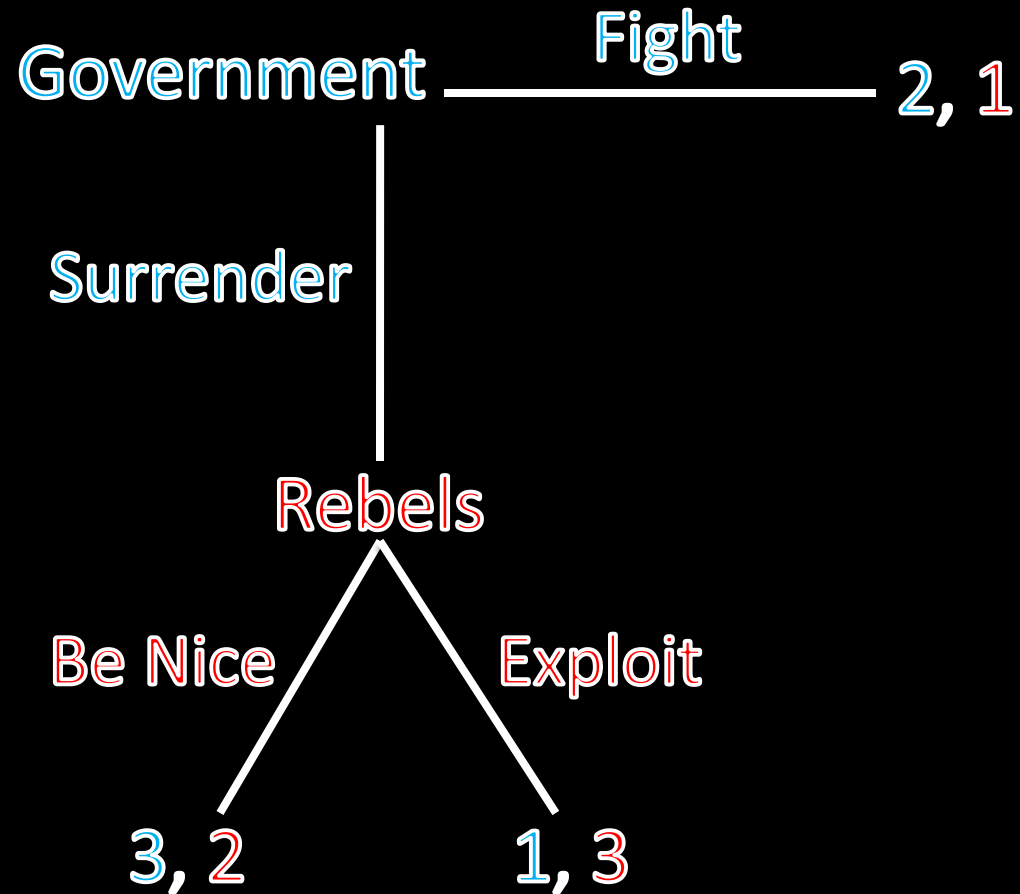


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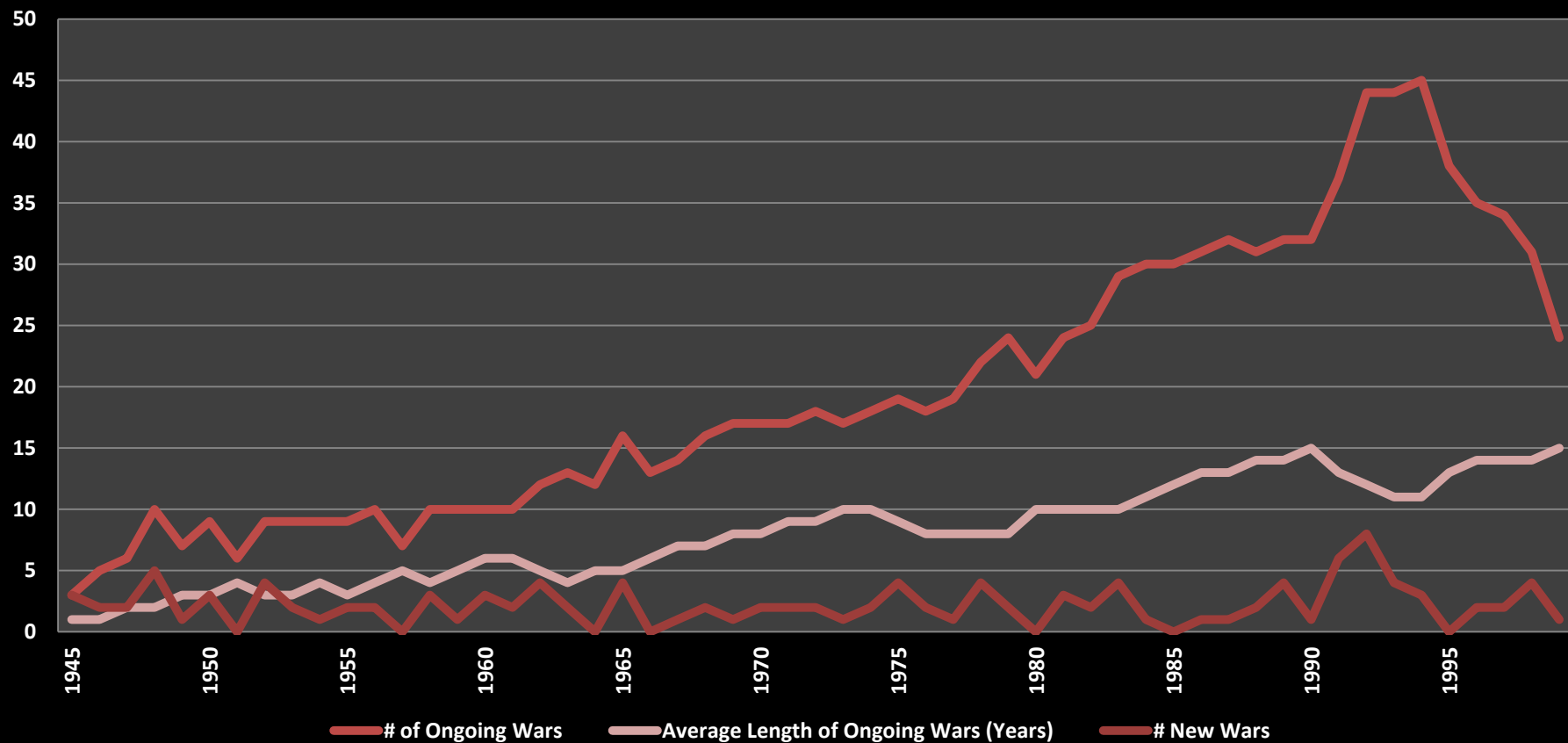




## A Commitment Problem









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What resolves the civil war  
settlement commitment  
problem?





**Walter**





**Walter**

**Walters**







It's all about third  
party enforcement.

**Walter**

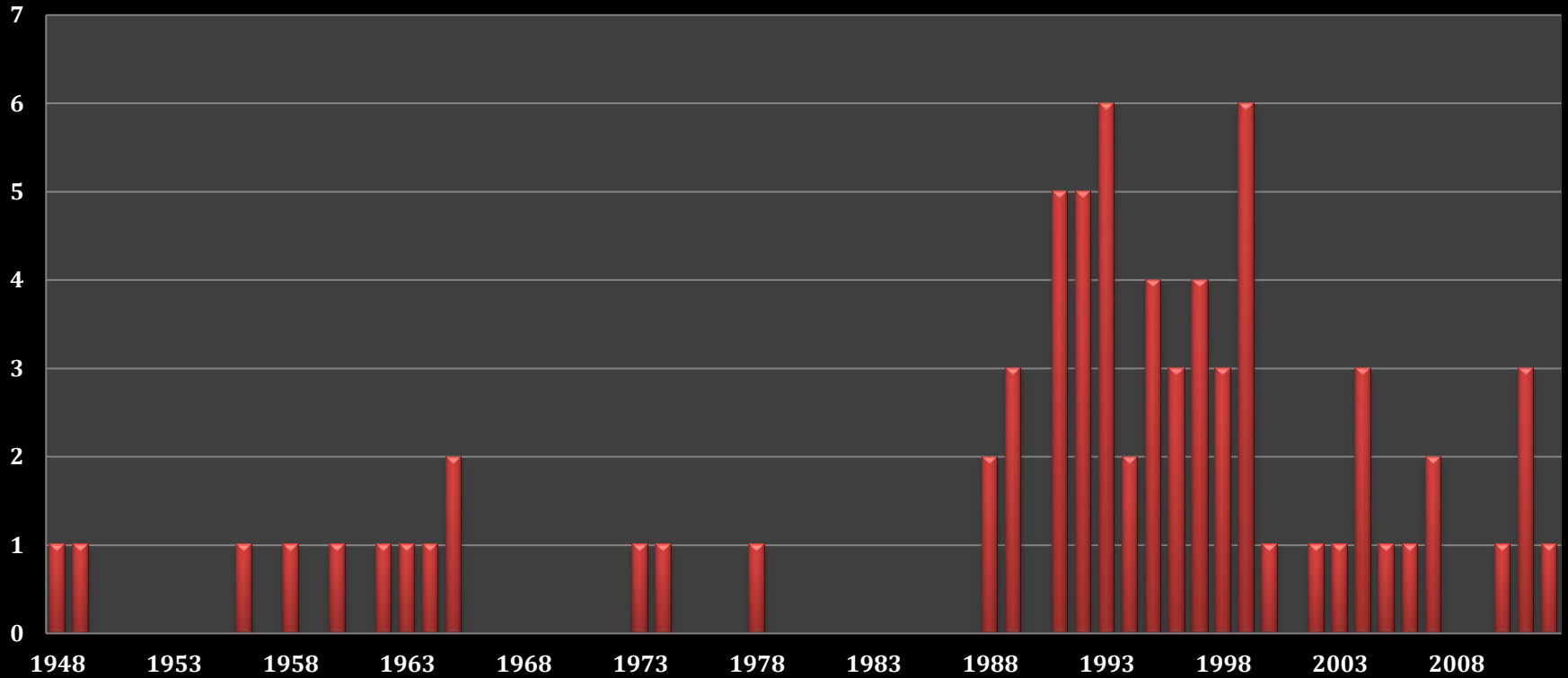


# Third Party Enforcement

- A third party can monitor and enforce a treaty
  - If the government steps out of line, the third party can protect the former rebel group
  - Deters the government from exploiting the vulnerable surrendering group

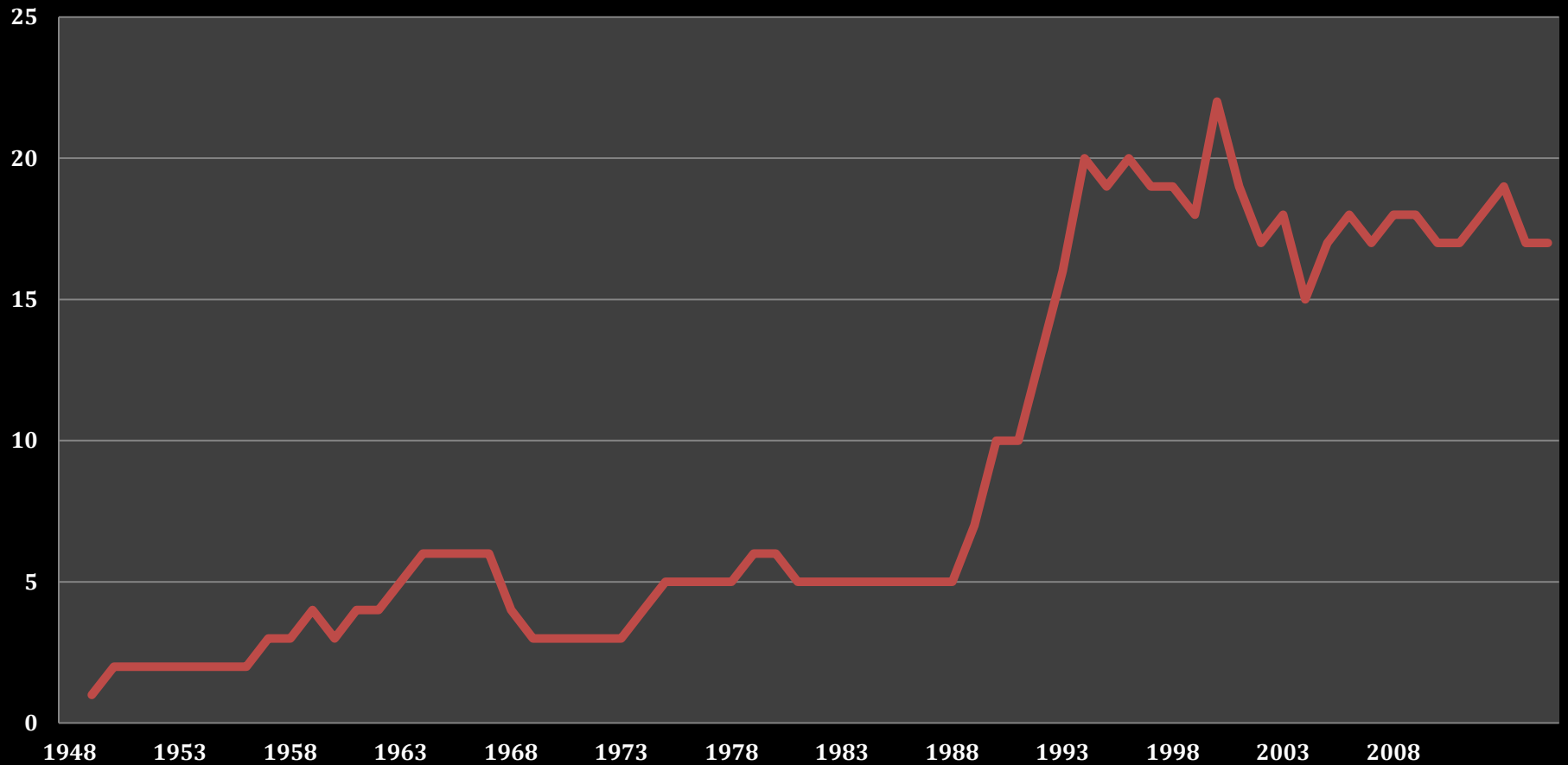


## New UN Peacekeeping Missions By Year





## Ongoing UN Peacekeeping Missions





# Necessary Qualities of an Enforcer

1. Interest in the peace
2. Militarily competent
3. Costly signal



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# Do You Care?

- Enforcers only work if they will actually intervene when push comes to shove
  - The U.S. in Somalia
- Economic self-interest or old colonial ties are a good start



# Necessary Qualities of an Enforcer

1. Interest in the peace
2. Militarily competent
3. Costly signal



# Are You Weak?

- If the government can kick your butt, the rebels won't surrender
- The third party needs to actually be an enforcer, otherwise there is nothing stopping the government from exploiting the defenseless



# Necessary Qualities of an Enforcer

1. Interest in the peace
2. Militarily competent
3. Costly signal



# Who Do You Want to Defend You?

1. We are willing to enforce this peace treaty.  
To prove it, we have dispatched 100  
observers to your country.
2. We are willing to enforce this peace treaty.  
To prove it, we have dispatched 10,000  
dudes with semi-automatic assault rifles.



# Third Party Enforcement

- A third party can monitor and enforce a treaty
- But finding a third party that meets the three critical requirements is not easy