

CUSTOMS vs. SMUGGLER GAME WITH A RANDOM AMOUNT OF CARGO

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ABSTRACT. Customs vs. Smuggler (player I and II, respectively) game where the amount of cargo is a random variable is discussed. II wants to cross the strait a motorboat carrying illegal cargo during one of n nights. I wants to stop it, and can patrol at most k nights. The amount X_i of cargo in the i -th night is supposed to be $U_{[0,1]}$ -distributed random variable. We suppose that the realized value of X_i in each night is, by some information agent, communicated to I. Payoff to I is $X_i(-X_i)$, if patrol-go (no=patrol-go) are chosen. I (II) wants to maximize (minimize) the expected payoff to I. This game G_k^n is formulated and solved by deriving the triangular recursion of values $V_k^n = \text{Val}(G_k^n)$, $1 \leq k \leq n, n = 1, 2, \dots$. It is shown that $V_k^n \downarrow -1$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$, for every fixed k .

1 Customs vs. Smuggler Game with a Random Amount of Cargo. Let $X_i, i = 1, 2, \dots, n$, be *i.i.d.* random variables each with uniform distribution on $[0, 1]$. As each X_i comes up, each player I and II must choose simultaneously and independently of other player's choice, either to accept (A) or to reject (R) it. If the choices are R-A (A-A), then player I gets the amount zero (X_i), and the game terminates. If the choices are R-R or A-R, then the X_i is rejected, the next X_{i+1} is presented and the game continues.

(*) Player $\left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{II} \\ \text{I} \end{matrix} \right\}$ must choose A $\left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{just once} \\ \text{at most } k \text{ times} \end{matrix} \right\}$ during the n stages, where $1 \leq k \leq n$. Player I (II) aims to maximize (minimize) the expected payoff to I.

Let v_k^n be the value of the n -stage game (Γ_k^n , say). Then the Optimality Equation is

$$(1.1) \quad v_k^n = E \left[\text{val} \left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{R} & \text{A} \\ \text{A} & \left(\begin{matrix} v_{k-1}^{n-1} & 0 \\ v_{k-1}^{n-1} & X \end{matrix} \right) \end{matrix} \right\} \right]$$

with the boundary conditions

$$(1.2) \quad v_0^n = 0, \quad \forall n \geq 0,$$

$$(1.3) \quad v_n^n = \nu_n \quad (n \geq 1, \nu_1 = 1/2),$$

where the sequence $\{\nu_n\}$ is determined by the recursion

$$(1.4) \quad \nu_n = \nu_{n-1} - \frac{1}{2}\nu_{n-1}^2 \quad (n \geq 1, \nu_1 = 1/2).$$

There is another closely related game, G_k^n , say. The only one difference from the game Γ_k^n is : If the choices are R-A, then player I pays player II the amount X_i (insted of zero).

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So, denoting by V_k^n the value of the game G_k^n , the Optimality Equation is

$$(1.5) \quad V_k^n = E \left[\text{val} \left\{ \begin{array}{cc} & \begin{array}{cc} \text{R} & \text{A} \end{array} \\ \begin{array}{c} \text{R} \\ \text{A} \end{array} & \begin{pmatrix} v_k^{n-1} & -X \\ v_{k-1}^{n-1} & X \end{pmatrix} \end{array} \right\} \right]$$

with the boundary conditions

$$(1.6) \quad V_0^n = -\mu_n \quad (n \geq 1, \mu_1 = 1/2)$$

$$(1.7) \quad V_n^n = \nu_n \quad (n \geq 1, \nu_1 = 1/2)$$

where $\{\mu_n\}$ is so-called Moser's sequence determined by the recursion

$$(1.8) \quad \mu_n = \frac{1}{2} (1 + \mu_{n-1}^2) \quad (n \geq 1, \mu_0 = 0).$$

The solutions to the games Γ_k^n and G_k^n are given in Sections 2 and 3, respectively, together with the proofs of the boundary conditions (1.2)-(1.3) and (1.6)-(1.7) for these games.

These games correspond to the scene found in the Customs vs. Smuggler game, where Player I (Customs) : A=patrol, R=no patrol.

Player II (Smuggler) : A=go, R=don't go.

II wants to cross the strait by a motorboat carrying illegal cargo during one of n nights. I wants to stop it, and can patrol at most k nights. The amount of II's cargo is supposed to be $U_{[0,1]}$ -distributed random variable. We suppose that its realized value in each night, by some information agent, communicated to I.

Or, another interpretation for Γ_k^n is ; X_i is the probability that I catches II, if I patrols and II goes in the same i -th night. It randomly changes depending of the weather, *etc.*

2 Solution to the Game Γ_k^n . We define state $(n, k|x)$ to mean that (1) the game still continues, n random values remain to be observed, and player I can choose A at most k times, and (2) the first random variable has just been observed with value x .

lemma 1.1 *Game Γ_k^n has the boundary conditions (1.2) and (1.3).*

Proof. If I cannot choose A during the whole stages, (1.1) becomes

$$v_0^n = v_0^{n-1} \wedge 0 = 0, \quad \forall n \geq 1,$$

since we have evidently $v_0^n \geq 0, \forall n$. Player II chooses A in the first stage, for any $x \in [0, 1]$, terminating the game. This proves (1.2).

If $k = n$, I doesn't choose R in the first stage, since the second row in the payoff matrix in (1.1) dominates the first row. It then follows that choosing A is optimal for I. Hence I chooses A during the whole stages. Therefore $\nu_n \equiv v_n^n$ satisfies

$$\nu_n = E(\nu_{n-1} \wedge X), \quad (\forall n \geq 2, \nu_1 = EX = 1/2)$$

which gives the recursion (1.4). Note that $\nu_1 = 1/2$ is derived from the condition (*) of the game. Player II chooses A as soon as the stage $(n, n|x)$ satisfying $x < \nu_{n-1}$ appears. This proves that (1.3) is true. \square

We find that $\nu_n \downarrow 0$, as $n \rightarrow \infty$, since (1.4) is rewritten as

$$\nu_n = T(\nu_{n-1}), \quad \text{with } T(y) = y - \frac{1}{2}y^2,$$

and $T(y), 0 \leq y \leq 1$, is concave and increasing with $T(0) = 0$ and $T(1) = 1/2$.

In Table 1 we show $\{v_k^n\}$ values computed from (2.1). The first row is derived from the recursion

$$v_1^n = a - a^2 \log(1 + a^{-1}), \quad (a = v_1^{n-1} \text{ and } b = 0 \text{ in (2.1)})$$

and the unit of the figures is 0.001. They are under rounding errors.

For example, $v_3^{10} = 0.103$, and the optimal play in stay $(10, 3|x)$ is ;
Both players choose A, if $x < v_2^9 = 0.073$;

I and II employ the mixed strategies $\left\langle \frac{x - 0.073}{x + 0.031}, \frac{0.104}{x + 0.031} \right\rangle$ and $\left\langle \frac{x}{x + 0.031}, \frac{0.031}{x + 0.031} \right\rangle$,
resp., if $x > 0.073$ (since $a - b = v_3^9 - v_2^9 = 0.031$).

The result in Theorem 1 is well compared with the case where the cargo has the fixed amount $EX = \frac{1}{2}$. Denote this game by $\tilde{\Gamma}_k^n$. The equation corresponding to (2.2) is

$$w_k^n = \text{val} \begin{pmatrix} w_k^{n-1} & 0 \\ w_{k-1}^{n-1} & 1/2 \end{pmatrix} = \frac{\frac{1}{2}w_k^{n-1}}{w_k^{n-1} - w_{k-1}^{n-1} + 1/2},$$

with $w_0^n = 0$, and $w_n^n = 1/2$. This gives the very simple solution

$$w_k^n = k/(2n)$$

and the optimal strategy-pair in state (n, k)

$$\langle 1 - k/n, k/n \rangle \text{ for I, and } \langle 1 - n^{-1}, n^{-1} \rangle \text{ for II.}$$

We find, for example, $\text{Val}(\tilde{\Gamma}_3^{10}) = \frac{3}{20} = 0.15$, whereas $v_3^{10} = 0.103$.

3 Solution to the Game G_k^n .

Lemma 2.1 *Game G_k^n has the boundary condition (1.6) and (1.7).*

Proof. If I cannot choose A during the whole stages, (1.5) becomes

$$V_0^n = \mathbf{E}[V_0^{n-1} \wedge (-X)],$$

and hence $W_0^n = -V_0^n$ satisfies $W_0^n = \mathbf{E}(W_0^{n-1} \vee X)$, ($n \geq 1, W_0^0 = 0$), implying that $\{W_0^n\}$ is identical to the Moser's sequence (1.8). Note that $V_0^1 = -EX = -\frac{1}{2}$ is derived from (*). Player II chooses A as soon as the state $(n, 0|x)$ with $x > \mu_{n-1}$ appears. This proves (1.6).

The proof of (1.7) is the same as in the proof of (1.3) made in Lemma 1.1. \square

Theorem 2 (i). *The value V_k^n of the game G_k^n is given by (3.4)-(3.5), where $-1 < b \equiv V_{k-1}^{n-1} < a \equiv V_k^{n-1} < 1$.*

(ii). *As $n \rightarrow \infty, V_k^n \downarrow -1$, for every fixed k .*

(iii). *The optimal play in state $(n, k|x)$ is ; In Case 1 (i.e., $a + b < 0$),*

Both players choose R, if $x < -a$;

I and II employ the mixed strategies $\langle \bar{\alpha}(x), \alpha(x) \rangle$ and $\langle \bar{\beta}(x), \beta(x) \rangle$, resp., where $\alpha(x) = \frac{x+a}{2x+a-b}$ and $\beta(x) = \frac{a-b}{2x+a-b}$, if $x > -a$,

and in Case 2 (i.e., $a + b > 0$),

Both players choose A, if $x < b$;

Players employ the same mixed strategies as in Case 1, if $x > b$ (See Figure 1).

Proof. (i) : Induction on n gives

$$-1 \leq V_{k-1}^n \leq V_k^n \leq 1 \quad \forall n \geq 1.$$

So, from (1.5), we have

$$(3.1) \quad V_k^n = E \left[\text{val} \begin{pmatrix} V_k^{n-1} & -X \\ V_{k-1}^{n-1} & X \end{pmatrix} \right] = -\frac{1}{2} + 2E \left[\text{val} \begin{pmatrix} \frac{1}{2}(a+X) & 0 \\ \frac{1}{2}(b+X) & X \end{pmatrix} \right],$$

where $a = V_k^{n-1}, b = V_{k-1}^{n-1}$ and $-1 \leq b \leq a \leq 1$.

Let $M(x) = \begin{pmatrix} \frac{1}{2}(a+x) & 0 \\ \frac{1}{2}(b+x) & x \end{pmatrix}$, then

$$\text{val } M(x) = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{2}(a+x), & \text{if } x < -a, \\ x, & \text{if } x < b, \\ \frac{x(a+b)}{2x+a-b} (\equiv g(x), \text{ say}), & \text{if otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

We consider the two cases ; Case 1. $a + b < 0$, and Case 2. $a + b > 0$. (see Figure 1)

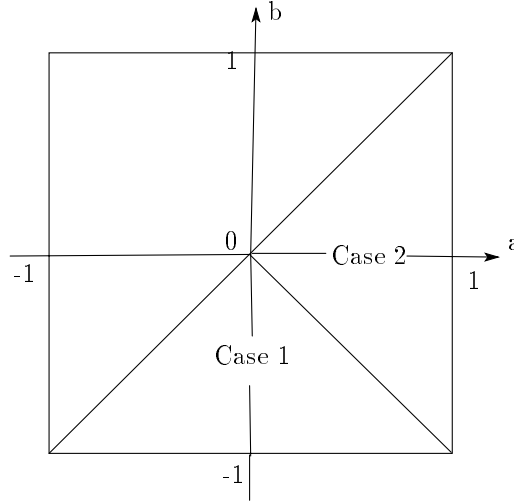


Figure 1. Domain of two cases.

Then we find that

$$(3.2) \quad \text{val } M(x) = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{2}(a+x), & \text{if } x < -a \text{ (R-R is optimal)} \\ g(x), & \text{if } x > -a, \end{cases}$$

in Case 1 (since A-A is not optimal), and

$$(3.3) \quad = \begin{cases} x, & \text{if } x < b \text{ (A-A is optimal)} \\ g(x), & \text{if } x > b. \end{cases}$$

in Case 2 (since R-R is not optimal).

By performing the integration and considering (3.1), we find that ; In Case 1,

$$E \text{ val } M(x) = \begin{cases} \int_0^{-a} \frac{1}{2}(a+x)dx + \int_{-a}^1 g(x)dx, & \text{if } a < 0 \text{ (i.e., } 0 < -a < 1) \\ \int_0^1 g(x)dx, & \text{if } a > 0. \end{cases}$$

and hence

$$(3.4) \quad V_k^n = \begin{cases} -a^2 + \frac{1}{2}(a+b)(1+a) - \frac{1}{4}(a^2 - b^2) \log \frac{2+a-b}{-(a+b)}, & \text{if } a \leq 0, \\ \frac{1}{2}b + \frac{1}{4}b^2 \log \frac{2-b}{-b}, & \text{if } a = 0, \\ \frac{1}{2}(a+b) - \frac{1}{4}(a^2 - b^2) \log \frac{2+a-b}{a-b}, & \text{if } a \geq 0. \end{cases}$$

In case 2, the analogous computation gives the result ;

$$\text{E val } M(x) = \begin{cases} \int_0^1 g(x) dx, & \text{if } b < 0, \\ \int_0^b x dx + \int_b^1 g(x) dx, & \text{if } b > 0 \end{cases}$$

and hence

$$(3.5) \quad V_k^n = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{2}(a+b) - \frac{1}{4}(a^2 - b^2) \log \frac{2+a-b}{a-b}, & \text{if } b \leq 0, \\ \frac{1}{2}a - \frac{1}{4}a^2 \log \frac{2+a}{a}, & \text{if } b = 0, \\ \frac{1}{2}(a+b-ab) - \frac{1}{4}(a^2 - b^2) \log \frac{2+a-b}{a+b}, & \text{if } b \geq 0. \end{cases}$$

For the bordering case of Cases 1 and 2 *i.e.*, $a+b=0$, both of (3.4) and (3.5) give the same value 0.

(ii) : We want to prove that V_k^n is decreasing in n for fixed k .

In Case 1, we have, from (3.4),

$$(3.6) \quad \begin{aligned} V_k^n - V_k^{n-1} &= V_k^n - a \\ &= \begin{cases} \frac{1}{2}(1+a)(b-a) + \frac{1}{4}(a^2 - b^2) \log \frac{-(a+b)}{2+a-b}, & \text{if } a \leq 0, \\ \frac{1}{2}(b-a) + \frac{1}{4}(a^2 - b^2) \log \frac{a-b}{2+a-b}, & \text{if } a \geq 0. \end{cases} \end{aligned}$$

Using the universal inequality $\alpha \log(\alpha/\beta) \geq \alpha - \beta$, we have

$$\frac{1}{4}(b-a)(-(a+b)) \log \frac{-(a+b)}{2+a-b} \leq \frac{1}{4}(b-a)(-2)(1+a) = \frac{1}{2}(a-b)(1+a),$$

$$\frac{1}{4}(a+b)(a-b) \log \frac{a-b}{2+a-b} \leq \frac{1}{4}(a+b)(-2) = -\frac{1}{2}(a+b).$$

Thus $V_k^n - V_k^{n-1} < 0$, for $\forall a \in (-1, 1)$.

In Case 2, we have, from (3.5),

$$(3.7) \quad \begin{aligned} V_k^n - V_k^{n-1} &= V_k^n - a \\ &= \begin{cases} \frac{1}{2}(b-a) + \frac{1}{4}(a^2 - b^2) \log \frac{a-b}{2+a-b}, & \text{if } b \leq 0, \\ \frac{1}{2}(b-a-ab) + \frac{1}{4}(a^2 - b^2) \log \frac{a+b}{2+a-b}, & \text{if } b \geq 0. \end{cases} \end{aligned}$$

Here, $a^2 - b^2 = (a+b)(a-b) > 0$, and

$$b-a-ab < 0, \text{ if } (-a) \vee 0 < b < a.$$

Therefore all four terms are negative. So, $V_k^n < V_k^{n-1}$ follows. $\{V_k^n\}_n$ converges. The limit α_k satisfies the recursion $D_k = 0, (k \geq 0, \alpha_0 = -1)$, where D_k is given by the r.h.s. of (3.6)-(3.7), with a, b replaced by α_k, α_{k-1} . Suppose that $\alpha_{k-1} = -1$. Then $\alpha_k + \alpha_{k-1} = \alpha_k - 1 < 0$. So, Case 1 applies, and

$$D_k = \begin{cases} -(1 + \alpha_k) \left\{ \frac{1}{2}(1 + \alpha_k) + \frac{1}{4}(1 - \alpha_k) \log \frac{1 - \alpha_k}{3 + \alpha_k} \right\}, & \text{if } \alpha_k \leq 0, \\ -(1 + \alpha_k) \left\{ \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4}(1 - \alpha_k) \log \frac{1 + \alpha_k}{3 + \alpha_k} \right\}, & \text{if } \alpha_k \geq 0. \end{cases}$$

Then $D_k = 0$ gives a unique root $\alpha_k = -1$, since the equation $(1 - t) \log \frac{1 + t}{3 + t} = -2$ has no root in $t \geq 0$. It follows by induction arguments, that $\alpha_k = -1, \forall k \geq 0$.

(iii) : Evident from (3.1)~(3.3) in the proof of part (i).

Thus we have completed the proof of Theorem 2. \square

Table 2. $\{V_k^n\}$, for $k, n = 1(1)10$.

		→ n									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
↓ k	0	-500	-625	-695	-742	-775	-800	-820	-836	-850	-861
	1	500	0	-172	-268	-334	-385	-427	-460	-487	-513
	2		375	123	-17	-103	-166	-215	-256	-291	-321
	3			305	161	56	-43	-87	-127	-162	-193
	4				258	172	94	21	-28	-66	-99
	5					225	171	114	58	13	-23
	6						200	164	123	81	42
	7							180	155	125	93
	8								164	145	123
	9									150	136
	10										

In Table 2, we show the values of $\{V_k^n\}$, computed from (3.4)-(3.5). They are decreasing in n , for every fixed k , and increasing in k for every fixed n . The figures are in 0.001 unit, and subject to rounding errors. The upper(lower) part of the bold line in the table corresponds to Case 1(Case 2). $V_1^2 = 0$ is on the bordering case.

We see that, for example, $V_3^{10} = -0.193$, and the optimal play in state $(10, 3|x)$ is : Both players choose R, if $x < -V_3^9 = 0.162$;

$$\begin{cases} \text{I} \\ \text{II} \end{cases} \text{ employs the mixed strategy } \begin{cases} \langle \bar{\alpha}(x), \alpha(x) \rangle, & \alpha(x) = \frac{x-0.162}{2x+0.129} \\ \langle \bar{\beta}(x), \beta(x) \rangle, & \beta(x) = \frac{0.129}{2x+0.129} \end{cases}, \text{ if } x > 0.162,$$

(since $a - b = V_3^9 - V_2^9 = 0.129$)

The result in Theorem 2 is well compared with the case where the cargo carries the fixed amount 1. Then the equation corresponding to (1.5) is

$$(3.8) \quad V_k^n = \text{val} \begin{pmatrix} V_k^{n-1} & -1 \\ V_{k-1}^{n-1} & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

with $V_0^n = -1$, and $V_n^n = 0$. Let $W_k^n = \frac{1}{2}(1 - V_k^n)$. Then (3.8) becomes

$$(3.9) \quad W_k^n = \text{val} \begin{pmatrix} W_k^{n-1} & W_{k-1}^{n-1} \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

with $W_0^n = 1$ and $W_n^n = \frac{1}{2}$. Baston and Bostock [1], Garnaev [3] and Sakaguchi [5] suggest that

$$(3.10) \quad W_k^n = s_k^{n-1}/s_k^n, \quad \text{where } s_k^n = \sum_{j=0}^k \binom{n}{j}$$

is the solution of (3.9) which satisfies the two boundary conditions. Proof is as follows : Equation (3.9) gives

$$W_k^n = \frac{W_{k-1}^{n-1}}{1 - W_k^{n-1} + W_{k-1}^{n-1}},$$

which is rewritten as

$$(3.11) \quad \frac{1}{W_k^{n-1}} \left(\frac{1}{W_k^n} - 1 \right) = \frac{1}{W_{k-1}^{n-1}} \left(\frac{1}{W_k^{n-1}} - 1 \right).$$

By using the identity $s_k^n = s_k^{n-1} + s_{k-1}^{n-1}$, we find that both sides of (3.11) substituted by (3.10) are equal to the same s_{k-1}^{n-1}/s_k^{n-2} .

Summarizing the above we arrive at : The solution of the equation (3.6) is

$$V_k^n = 1 - 2W_k^n = 1 - 2s_k^{n-1}/s_k^n = - \binom{n-1}{k} / \sum_{j=0}^k \binom{n}{j}.$$

Denote by \tilde{G}_k^n the game G_k^n with X_i replaced by a fixed constant $\frac{1}{2}$. Then

$$\text{Val } \tilde{G}_3^{10} = -\frac{1}{2} \binom{9}{3} / \sum_{j=0}^3 \binom{10}{j} \cong -0.2386,$$

whereas $\text{Val } G_3^{10} = V_3^{10} \cong -0.193$.

4 Final Remarks.

1. As $n \rightarrow \infty$, $\text{Val } \Gamma_k^n \downarrow 0$, and $\text{Val } G_k^n \downarrow -1$ for every fixed k . The same is true for non-random version, *i.e.*, $\text{Val } \tilde{\Gamma}_k^n \downarrow 0$ and $\text{Val } \tilde{G}_k^n \downarrow -\frac{1}{2}$.

2. Multistage games discussed in the present paper has some variants. One of the open problem is the case where Smuggler must cross the strait twice (or more generally $m \geq 2$ times). Let $(1 \leq) \tau_1 \leq \tau_2 (\leq n)$ be II's "go" stages. Payoff to I is $\sum_{i=1,2} X_{\tau_i}$. The games $\tilde{\Gamma}_k^n$ along this line of extension are investigated in [2, 4, 5].

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