

## An Overview of Game Theory and its Applications in Network Routing

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### Abstract

In telecommunication networks, users can, in many cases, make decisions concerning routing. The term routing alludes to selecting paths in a computer network along which to send data, in computer networking. Routing directs forwarding, the passing of logically addressed packets from their source toward their last destination through routers. Game theory can be defined as a mathematical framework consisting of models and techniques analyzing the behavior of individuals concerned about their own benefits. It has been applied to a wide range of fields including economics, political science, biology, psychology, linguistics, and computer science. This paper presents the detailed overview of the Game Theory concepts and its applications in the Network Routing, both from cooperative and non-cooperative perspectives with their some solution concepts. In addition, the network simulators which are used for examining the performances in the studies are given, too.

### Keywords

Network; Game Theory; Nash Equilibrium; Solution Concepts; Network Simulators.

## Oyun Teorisine Genel Bir Bakış ve Ağ Yönlendirmesindeki Uygulamaları

### Abstract

Telekomünikasyon ağlarında, kullanıcılar birçok durumda yönlendirmeye ilişkin kararlar alırlar. Yönlendirme, bilgisayar ağındaki verilerin gönderileceği yolların seçiminde kullanılmaktadır. Yönlendirmedeki akış yönlendiriciler aracılığıyla kaynaktan hedefe doğru gerçekleşir. Çalışma kapsamında; oyun teorisi, kendi yararları hakkında ilgili bireylerin davranışlarını analiz eden model ve teknikleri içeren bir matematiksel çerçeve olarak tanımlanabilir. Oyun teorisi, her oyuncunun kendi faydalarını maksimize etmeye çalıştığı ya da kendi maliyetini en aza indirmeye çalıştığı çok oyunculu sistemlerde karar verme durumları için kullanılır. Oyun teorisi; sosyal bilimler, ekonomi, psikoloji, siyaset ve telekomünikasyon gibi karmaşık sorunları çözmek için kullanılmaktadır. Bu çalışma Oyun Teorisi ve çözüm konularıyla ilgili olarak kapsamlı bir bilgi vererek, hem işbiriksiz hem de işbirlikçi Oyun Teorisi kısımları çerçevesinde detaylı bir bakış sunmaktadır. Ayrıca, çalışmalardaki performans değerlendirmeleri için kullanılan ağ simülatörlerinde verilmiştir.

### Anahtar Kelimeler

Ağ; Oyun Teorisi; Nash Dengesi; Çözüm Kavramları; Ağ Simülatörleri.

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### 1. Introduction

Network routing refers to the ability of an electronic communication network to send a unit of information from point A to point B by determining a path through the network, and by doing so efficiently and quickly. Network routing can be broadly divided into three basic fundamental categories: packet routing, circuit-switched routing, and transport routing; certainly, a combination is possible. The evolution over the past quarter-century has brought to the foreground the need to understand and examine where and how different dimensions of routing, from algorithms to protocols to architectures, can differ for different types of networks, where they

intersect. We can see that packets are to be routed from a source to a destination. Such packets may need to traverse many cross-points, similar to traffic intersections in a road transportation network. Cross-points in the Internet are known as routers and a router's functions are to read the destination address marked in an incoming IP packet, to consult its internal information to identify an outgoing link to which packet is to be forwarded, and then to forward the packet (Orda et al., 1993).

The broad scope of network routing is to address routing algorithms, routing protocols, and

architectures, with architectures encompassing several different aspects for efficient routing.

In this paper, we consider Network Routing literature in the framework of Game Theory concept.

## **2. Game Theory**

Game Theory (Owen, 1995; Rosenthal, 1973) is the study of mathematical models, which are used in a situation when multiple entities interact with each other in a strategic setup. The theory in its true sense deals with the ability of an entity or individual (player) to take a certain decision keeping in view the effect of other entities decisions on him, in a situation of confrontation. A wage negotiation between a firm and its employees can be considered as a game between two parties, where each party makes a decision or move in the negotiation process based on other party's move. Similarly, a business run by a group of people can be considered as a game played against its competitors or customers.

The concept of modern Game Theory was introduced by John Von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern in 1944, who described the word 'game' for the first time by systematically specifying the rules of the game, the move of players, the information they possess during their moves and the outcome for each player at the end of the game (Wang and Li, 2006). The progress of Game Theory continued since its inception and later on and was used in many other fields other than economics. Game Theory has now become an important mathematical tool, which is used in situations that involves several entities whose decisions are influenced by the decisions of other entities playing with them.

Game Theory is useful for acting and predicting behavior of others and designing systems with multiple participants. Also games are strategic interaction between rational entity and players. Game normally defines by the players, a set of

strategies for each player and a preference relation for each player over possible outcomes. A player gives the set of strategy or action for every player in the game. In Game Theory, there is a basic and crucial assumption of the rationality that says every player is the utility optimizer or maximizer, in order to minimizing the cost or maximizing the utility and player has a payoff function for optimizing the payoff function (Kontogiannis and Spirakis, 2005; Shah, 2012).

Depending on the player's knowledge about each other's strategies, payoffs, and past histories; games can be subdivided into different categories. Depending upon the number of players, a game can be classified as 2-player game or n-players where  $n > 2$ . Depending upon the cooperation level, information available and the occurring of moves of the individual players the games can be broadly categorized as follows (Shah, 2012).

In non-cooperative games, each participant player acts in his own interest and the unit of analysis is always the individual player instead of group of players. In these types of games, the players are always selfish – i.e., they always try to increase their own individual payoffs without taking care of other player's payoffs in the game. So, non-cooperative game theory studies the competitive nature of individual players where players come into contact with the sole aim to increase their own benefits from the strategic situation (Economides and Silvester, 1990; Shah, 2012).

In cooperative games, the groups of players are the unit of analysis and the players tend to increase their group payoffs as well as their own. A cooperative game can be considered as a competition among the groups in a game rather than individual players. The applications of cooperative game theoretical models are in the situations where players form groups, called coalitions, and the individual or group of player's contribution towards the game depends on the actions of other agents in the game (Banner and Orda, 2007; Shah, 2012).

Most of the problems in Communication Systems have been modeled as non-cooperative games, where each node is considered to be a selfish self-maximize without taking care of the benefit of other nodes in a conflicting situation. However, there are some studies where the coalition games have been modeled to study the individual nodes behavior in a network each contributing to a coalition (Banner and Orda, 2007).

### 3. Applications of Game Theory in Network Routing

Game Theory has been extensively used in networking research as a theoretical decision-making framework, e.g., for routing, congestion control, resource sharing, and heterogenous networks. We limit our discussion to game theory models as cooperative and non-cooperative game theory in network routing.

From 1983 to 2016, about 626 research papers with topics on or closely to Game Theory (GT) for Network Routing (NR) were published. Figure 1 shows the yearly distribution of these published papers.

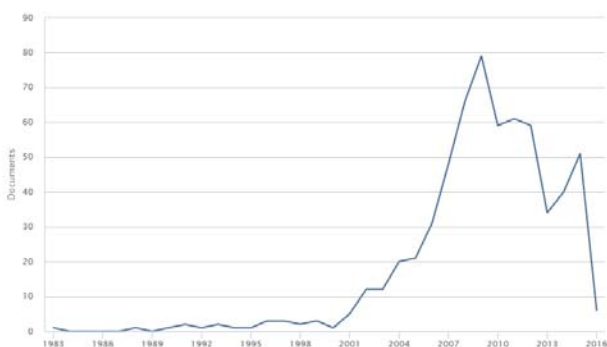


Fig. 1. Yearly publications on GT for NR

Most applications of GT and NR involve in the areas of computer science, engineering, mathematics, decision sciences, biochemistry, genetics, social sciences, business, management, physics, astronomy, chemical engineering, material science, energy, earth and planetary sciences, environmental science, chemistry, economics, medicine, multidisciplinary, neuroscience, etc.

Figure 2 shows the documents by subject area distribution.

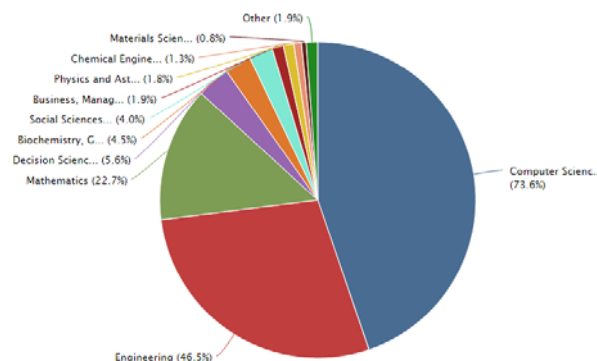


Fig. 2. Documents by subject area

If we want to see which countries study in these fields, Figure 3 will help us.

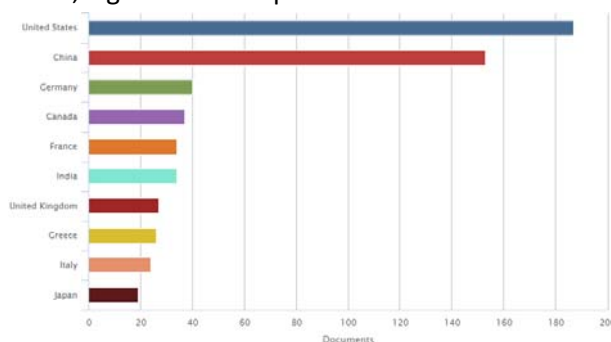


Fig. 3. Documents by country/territory

Similarly, routing and routing algorithms are studied as a combined problem in various studies. Routing algorithms have to keep routing table reasonably small, choose best route for given destination (this can be fastest, most reliable, highest throughput, cheapest route, etc.), keep table up-to-date when node dies, moves or joins, require small amount of messages/time converge.

About 238 research papers with topics on or closely to GT for routing algorithms were published between 1983 and 2016. The distribution is similar to the years and the subject areas according to Figure 1 and Figure 2, respectively. However, China is has also published more paper than United States. The other countries' sort is the same.

The variety of network simulators are used in about 133 paper such as NoC, OPNET, NS-2, NS-3, BookSim, Exata, CINSIM, MATLAB, J-Sim,

GloMoSim, Tossim, AncLes, OMNeT++, etc.

The routing layer problems have been solved in many contexts, initially taking the concept of the application of non-cooperative game theory in transportation system and then extending the same findings to the network routing (Altman et al., 2006). Thus, the aim of applying the game theoretic models for routing solves the path finding problem, where routing and resource allocation problems have been solved as a joint game formulation. The non-cooperative routing games aim to solve the 'path' problem where a path is the route established inside a network from a source to destination, both aim to maximize the route benefit for themselves and compete with other source, destination pairs in the network.

The studies of (Blum et al., 2006; Economides and Silvester, 1990; Fotakis et al., 2002) have addressed network routing games in general.

A class of game theoretical model for routing in transportation networks has been presented by Rosenthal (Rosenthal, 1973). The author has considered  $n$  players in a competitive environment, each wants to ship one unit from source to destination while minimizing its transportation

cost. The existence of pure strategy Nash Equilibrium has been proven in this model.

Routing in general wired networks has been studied as a non-cooperative game in (La and Anantharam, 2002; Orda et al., 1993; Kameda, 2002; Altman et al., 2002; Roughgarden, 2001), where conditions for the existence of Nash Equilibrium has been derived. Banner et al. (2007) have extensively studied the non-cooperative routing problem in wireless networks based on split-able and unsplitable flows.

There exist several main terminologies in GT (Table 1). The Nash Equilibrium for non-cooperative games, The Shapley value and the Core for cooperative games. They can be found as solution concept in the literature. Some papers use both of solutions in cooperative and non-cooperative games.

**Table 1.** Common Terminologies in Typical GT in NR

Terminology	Typical GT Methods in NR		
	Cooperative	Non-Cooperative	Cooperative, Non-Cooperative
The Nash Equilibrium	(Coimbra et al, 2010)	(Abbad et al., 2006; Altman et al., 2002; Anderegg and Eidenbenz, 2003; Anshelevich et al., 2008; Barth et al., 2005; Borges et al., 2010; Boulogne and Altman, 2001; Busch and Magdon-Ismail, 2009; Caragiannis et al., 2005; Chang et al., 2012; Coimbra et al., 2010; Correa et al., 2004; Correa et al., 2005; Costa-Requena et al., 2005; Coucheney et al., 2010; Erçetin and Tassioulas, 2003; Gairing et al., 2006; Georgiou et al., 2006; Hespanha and Bohacek, 2001; Huang and Jiao, 2008; Kabranov et al., 2003; Kesselman et al., 2005; Kontogiannis and Spirakis, 2005; Koutsoupias et al., 2003; Kuruc and Lója, 2005; La and Anantharam, 2002; Liu et a., 2005; Lója et al., 2005; Lownes et al., 2011; Lukyanenko and Gurtov, 2009; Nimbar et al., 2012; Otrók et al., 2008; Rocha et al., 2006; Roughgarden, 2001; Sahin and Simaan, 2004; Siddiqi et al., 2014; Wang and Li, 2006; Wang et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2008; Xiao et al., 2008; Yang et al., 2013; Yoo and Agrawal, 2006; Yuan et al., 2006)	(Gairing et al., 2006; Sagduyu and Ephremides, 2006; Yan and Hailes, 2008; Yan et al., 2008)
Shapley Value	(Anshelevich et al., 2008; Bianzino et al., 2011; Jain and Vazirani, 2001; Javadi and Jamalipour, 2009; Javadi and Jamalipour, 2011; Wu and Shu, 2005; Yan, 2009; Yan et al., 2008; Zhong et al., 2007)		(Gairing et al., 2006; Sagduyu and Ephremides, 2006; Yan and Hailes, 2008; Yan et al., 2008)
The Core	(Eido et al., 2009; Markakis and Saberi, 2005)		

This paper has summarized the recent developments in Game Theory for Network Routing. Game Theory has the capability to

**3. The Conclusion**

examine a larger amount of possible scenarios before performing the action. Game Theory can make a decision process more sophisticated while routing. The potential of applying Cooperative Game Theory to Network Routing is prospective. Some researchers have already explored the game-theoretic approach to non-cooperative game theory in routing scenarios or problems. However, studies towards cooperation has not become widespread as non-cooperative games. Representative contributions are listed to give a general overview. This paper appears to be a promising avenue for future development in the network routing, routing protocols and routing algorithms.

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