

## **Implications of Issue Salience for Territorial, Maritime, and River Claims**

**Elizabeth A. Nyman**

Department of Political Science  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-2230  
ean05d@fsu.edu

**Paul R. Hensel**

Department of Political Science  
University of North Texas  
P.O. Box 305340  
Denton, TX 76203-5340  
phensel@unt.edu

Research on contentious issues has identified important differences between the conflict potential of different issues, with territory typically being seen as more conflictual than most if not all other types of issues. A recent study (Hensel et al. 2008) finds that the level of salience, or value, attributed to an issue has similar effects across territorial, maritime, and river issues, with issues of each type being significantly more prone to armed conflict when overall salience levels are higher. In this study we investigate the relationship between salience and conflict in greater detail, focusing on domestic political factors and distinguishing between three distinct components of salience that might be present to varying degrees in each of these issue types: economic, strategic, and intangible salience. We use selectorate theory to suggest which components of salience should be most important to leaders, and thus most conflictual, under specific conditions. We then test our hypotheses using ICOW data on territorial, maritime, and river issues since 1816. We find that, for territorial and maritime claims, both economic and strategic salience increase the probability of conflict, whereas for river claims, only strategic salience has this effect. Furthermore, only in territorial claims did intangible salience have any significant effect on the propensity of conflict. This indicates that salience can have differing effects on the likelihood of violence depending on the issue at stake.

## **Implications of Issue Salience for Territorial, Maritime, and River Claims**

States have many things to consider when they are faced with the potential for interstate violence. One of the foremost of these is the specific subject of their disagreement. Such disagreements can represent many different values. They can be strategically important, providing military benefits to the state; they could have economic value, endowing the state that controls them with important economic resources; or they may be seen as important parts of the state's very identity. This paper examines these different measures of value, or salience, in order to determine the impact that each has on the potential for military escalation.

Issue scholars have studied the value of states' disagreements in many ways. They have looked at the issue type, which is the broad category such as territorial or maritime claims, and determined that some issue types are more conflictual than others (e.g., Hensel 1996; Vasquez and Henehan 2001; Hensel et al. 2008). They have also looked within issue types, attempting to distinguish the relative salience of certain claims of one type compared to others of the same type (Hensel 2001; Huth and Allee 2002; Hensel et al. 2008).

This study is a preliminary attempt to combine these two ways of considering and comparing issues. It takes into account the different measures of value for three prominent issue types – territorial, maritime and river issues – and looks at three dimensions of salience that apply to all three. These dimensions -- strategic salience, economic, and intangible salience -- can be found to some extent in all three issue types. We examine whether any of the three dimensions is more important than the others in each issue type, using selectorate theory as a guide to domestic state reasoning. Our results suggest salience can have differing effects on the

likelihood of violence depending on the issue at stake. For territorial and maritime claims, both economic and strategic salience increase the probability of conflict, whereas for river claims, only strategic salience has this effect. Furthermore, only in territorial claims did intangible salience have any significant effect on the propensity of conflict.

Below, we first reflect on the distinctions between issue type and issue salience. We consider the scholarship on each of the three main types of issue as well as the various categorizations that have been made when considering salience. We then consider state behavior in the presence of each type of claim using selectorate theory to predict under what conditions of salience a leader derives the most benefit from conflict. We test the hypotheses derived from this consideration using data from the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) project, and conclude by discussing the implications of the results and the potential future avenues of research they suggest.

## **ISSUES AND CONFLICT**

States are not equally likely to fight over all types of disagreements. In reaching this conclusion, scholars have categorized contentious issues in two ways: by general issue type and by more specific measures of issue salience. What we call here issue type considers the general nature of the disagreement between the states that might lead them to armed conflict, distinguishing between (for example) territorial sovereignty and the usage of cross-border rivers. In contrast, what we call issue salience examines the relative importance of the particular issue, using a more detailed measure of the value of a given issue that can account for variation in the value of (for example) a particular piece of territory to claimants.

So far, issue type has been the focus of most quantitative research on issues. There are many different types of issues, ranging from the more tangible ones of territorial, maritime and river issues to the more intangible ones of influence and prestige. Even the more intangible types of issues, however, are often tied to those that are more concrete. That is, questions of economic influence or diplomatic prestige are often manifested in contention over more tangible objects such as sovereignty over specific territories. Because of this, we feel comfortable limiting our preliminary examination to the three largely tangible issue types of territorial, maritime and river issues, which capture and encapsulate the more elusive issues of security and dominance so often stressed by grand theorists of international relations. Future work would do well to investigate additional issue types, although massive data collection would be needed first.

### *Issue Type*

Territory is perhaps the most studied issue type. There has been a wide and diverse body of research linking territorial claims to the onset of disputes and war. Vasquez (1993) claims that disputes over territorial boundaries drive international conflict. His theory that territory is an especially conflict-prone issue type has been supported by many subsequent studies (Hensel 1996; Vasquez and Henehan 2001; Senese 2005). Valuable territory is more likely to see conflict, as are claims in the wake of recent militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) or failed peaceful settlements (Hensel 2001). Walter (2003) finds that states are more likely to conflict over territory in order to send a message that they will not compromise with other would-be claimants, a statement necessary by virtue of the fact that land is a finite resource. Territory is so contentious, it even outweighs the peaceful effects of the democratic peace (James et al 2006).

Studies of maritime claims are somewhat less prominent, but no less important. Maritime disputes have become more numerous and important in the latter half of the twentieth century. As deep sea mining became technologically possible and overfishing an all-too-common reality, states reacted by pushing further claims to their territorial seas and sea floors. These enhanced claims often overlapped with others or were simply ignored, leading to disputes. The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was established to help standardize and regulate these claims, but it has not put an end to the disputes.

Many maritime studies examine states' claims and considerations with regard to international law, especially in light of the UN Convention (Lee 1983; Sohn 1983; Clingan 1983; Charney 1994; Nemeth et al 2007). There is a reason for this: maritime claims are more likely to be subjected to international legal rulings and/or third party arbitration than any other type of issue (Charney 1994). However, this is not to say that maritime issues do not occasionally heat up into violence. Mitchell and Prins (1999) found that maritime issues made up a large bulk of the MIDs between democracies. However, these MIDs tended to be less violent than those over other issue types.

The last issue of interest concerns cross-border rivers. River issues vary widely from region to region, with rivers in some cases increasing the chance of MIDs between two states, and in other cases decreasing it (Sowers 2002). The likelihood of river issues becoming militarized is related to the relative scarcity of water in that region, as well as to the level of institutionalization developed to peacefully resolve disputes (Hensel, Mitchell and Sowers 2005). The nature of the river in question – whether it is a border river or flows from inside one state to inside another – also has implications for the likelihood of settlement (Tir and Ackerman 2004).

If it is the latter, then the upstream state has greater power in the relationship than the downstream state, a power that may or may not be balanced out by the capabilities of the downstream state (Tir and Ackerman 2004).

The knowledge of river issues also incorporates the wide body of work done on contiguity, as states that share a river tend to share borders as well. This is obviously true for the states that have a river as a border, as mentioned above. States that share borders face different conditions for conflict than those which do not. Bordering states have greater ability to inflict damage on each other, creating through geography a dyad which is capable of violence. But creating a situation where violence is possible is not the only way that contiguity influences the likelihood of conflict; it also can give states a reason to conflict (Diehl 1991). Likewise, contiguity can increase cooperation as well as conflict, depending on the nature of the relationship shared by the two states (Starr and Thomas 2002).

While much research has been done into each particular issue type, there is little comparing across issues. Territory seems to be the most important issue type to states, but river issues can be tricky due to their contiguous nature and maritime issues make up the largest portion of MIDs. The study of issue type alone is unable to explain these results in combination with each other.

### *Issue Salience*

These sorts of findings, however, can also be examined through the lens of salience. Identifying an issue's type is the first step to determining its salience (Diehl 1992: 335). The issue type, moreover, can determine how salient an issue can possibly be. One of the reasons

why territory is supposed to be more conflictual is because it is generally believed to be more salient than other types of issues (Vasquez 1998; Hensel 2001).

Past research has used two main approaches in measuring salience: first, measuring whether some issues are more important than others, such as territorial claims versus maritime claims, and second, measuring whether one claim in an issue area is more important than another, e.g. comparing within territorial claims. The idea that some issue areas are more important than others – more simply, that territory is more salient than other issues, due to its combination of tangible and intangible factors – is widely accepted. However, comparing high or low levels of salience across issue areas is more complicated. It is difficult to see how a high-within-territorial claim salience compares with a high-within-maritime claim salience.

One way this can be done is to compare tangible and intangible measures of salience (Hensel 2001). Tangible salience is a measure of what, if any, material resources of importance a particular area contains. Intangible salience is more psychological, and measures the relative emotional importance of a claim. However, applying the tangible/intangible salience measure across issue areas is problematic. Territorial issues, after all, are more likely to become violent because they capture both tangible and intangible salience. River and maritime issues are less likely to contain comparable levels of intangible salience, so considering this distinction as a way to compare across issues seems rather ineffective.

Therefore, rather than create a sliding scale of salience that can be applied to each issue in turn, we focus on the tangible measures of salience. While this may sound restrictive, examining tangible salience alone still allows for variance, as all tangible salience is not alike.

We divide tangible salience into two broad categories, strategic and economic, in order to examine the different components that comprise this measure of salience.

We define highly strategic claims as those most likely to affect a state's security; that is, claims with some particular offensive or defensive value. It is important to note here that a claim with any type of tactical value is coded as strategic, even if it contains other categories of salience. A claim with tactical value can have other valuable components, either tangible or intangible, but the inclusion of this strategic component is all that is necessary to consider it strategically salient.

Every issue type can have some strategic component to it. With territory, the possibility for a strategic claim is rather obvious – military strategists have known for millennia the value of certain geographic qualities. But the strategic potential of maritime and river claims are no less valuable, for all they are less apparent. Maritime claims could contain a chokepoint, an area which the controlling state could use to cut off sea travel through a particular body of water. For example, control of the Dardanelles, and thus access to the Black Sea, was seen as an important military goal from the times of Alexander the Great. Likewise, rivers gain their strategic value through their usefulness in navigation. The ability to transport men and goods by water has long been seen as an important strategic resource. An example here would be of Europe's Danube river, which was a militarily important waterway for the Romans, Charlemagne and more recently, Napoleon Bonaparte (East 1932).

Economic claims, in comparison, are those that only affect a state's economic well-being. There is some obvious overlap here with the strategic claims – territory can be militarily and economically valuable, control of a maritime chokepoint can be used to gain economic revenue,



and navigable rivers are as important for moving commercial goods as they are for military ones. However, each of these issue types has claims that *only* have economic value without the added strategic benefits in those detailed above, so it is important to consider this separately. Territory can contain resources, such as diamonds, useful for economic purposes, or support a large population that can be taxed. Maritime regions can have valuable fish stocks. Rivers can be used to irrigate farmland and support agriculture. These are benefits that only have economic value, and as such, they have a different form of tangible salience than those claims which contain a strategic element.

Following the power politics theories of realism, it seems reasonable to expect that the strategic claims are more important to a state, generally speaking, than the economic claims, since they can directly threaten the state's survival. Realist theories assert that states are most interested in survival, and as such, they most highly value strategic concerns (Waltz 1979). Economic concerns, while valuable, are thus less important.

Perhaps more convincingly, strategic claims have more of an immediate impact on states than economic ones. Failure to hold a key strategic area at the wrong time can have devastating consequences, which cannot necessarily be regained should the state assert ownership later. However, economic gains are not time-sensitive. Gaining an area that provides economic resources will potentially be as much a boon in the future as it is today, and thus there is less of an immediate pressure to control the area. This does not apply, of course, for exhaustible economic resources, as we discuss below.

## **ISSUES AND SELECTORATE THEORY**

This broad expectation that strategically salient claims are more important does not allow us much leverage over issue type. Does this relative importance mean that states are going to come into conflict *only* over strategic claims? This seems highly unlikely. We need a way to determine which issue types are more likely to lead to conflict and which are more likely to be settled peacefully, as well as their types of salience. In order to determine this, we consider state actions in the light of selectorate theory (Bueno de Mesquita et al 2003).

In selectorate theory, a number of residents of a state are also members of the selectorate, those who can affect who becomes the leader (Bueno de Mesquita et al 2003: 37). Within the selectorate, there exists a subset called the winning coalition, which is the group of supporters within the selectorate that keeps the leader in power. According to this theory, a leader is beholden to his winning coalition, as they are the source of his power. A leader must please his winning coalition in order to keep control.

This logic can be applied to conflict over issues as follows. A state's winning coalition is more likely to care about issues where they can directly feel an impact. Territory is most likely to be the most important issue then, as territorial changes are immediately reflected in a citizen's conception of what the state is. Territorial additions or losses are acutely reflected in a citizen's mental map of their state, regardless of their relative importance. Because of this, a state's leader is going to be less willing to give up territory, because they will not want to suffer the consequences of an acutely felt loss. This means, generally speaking, territorial issues are more likely to be conflictual than other issue types, a conclusion that matches that found by the issue scholars above.

But which types of territorial issues are more likely to be conflictual? This is a more difficult question, and here we turn to our two tangible salience indicators. Because state leaders are afraid of losing territory, they are unlikely to challenge every territorial claim militarily. They will be most interested in making a military challenge when the territory is more valuable; that is, when it is strategic. A strategic claim is more worth the risk of conflict because the gain from a win is more valuable to the state. Economic claims are also valuable, and some of those will be disputed as well, but it seems likely that strategic claims will be more conflictual.

**Hypothesis 1:** *Territorial claims with strategic salience will have a greater probability of militarized conflict than those with only economic salience.*

Maritime issues, however, face different conditions for conflict than territory. Maritime issues in general are less interesting to most citizens, and as such, do not pose either as large a cost on the leader, or as much of a gain in the case of victory. There is one exception to this general statement, though, and that is in the case of major seafaring states. Some states are highly dependent on the ocean for their economic survival, or have been historically dependent and thus culturally tuned in to maritime matters. In these types of states, maritime issues can become very prominent indeed – the Iceland/United Kingdom Cod Wars would be an example of this.

Because states are either inclined to relatively ignore maritime issues, or in the case of these oceanic states, only in tune with economic issues, we should expect very different causes of conflict for maritime claims as for territorial ones. Here economic claims should dominate. This may seem counterintuitive at first, but there are several reasons for such a hypothesis. First,

due to these oceanic states' increased emphasis on economic claims, they should be more likely to press such claims. As a corollary, due to the general indifference posed by the others, they will not be as pressed by public opinion or fear of reprisal should they lose the area in question. Leaders in these indifferent states know they will not pay a high penalty for losing a conflict over a maritime issue. Thus, they will initiate disputes in claims that provide them with the most gain. In the case of maritime claims, while strategic considerations are important, there is a reason for leaders of indifferent states to focus more on economic claims. These claims will highly please a maritime-dependent subset of the citizenry. If this subset is in the selectorate, this will provide a disproportionate gain to the leader, without worrying about the costs of a loss. If the subset is not, as potentially may be the case in autocracies, then their economic gain can be taxed and doled out in the form of rents, providing a disproportionate gain in this way. Lastly, it is a simple matter of the relative level of strategic importance of maritime claims. There are fewer maritime areas of supreme strategic importance, and thus fewer states to dispute them.<sup>1</sup> Comparatively, there are many states with active economic interests in maritime space, and they are, as explained above, unhindered in their ability to pursue these.

**Hypothesis 2:** *Maritime claims with economic salience will have a greater probability of militarized conflict than those with only strategic salience.*

The last issue type, river claims, is also the most complicated. While river claims are less important to citizens and thus leaders than territorial claims, it is difficult to evaluate them in

---

<sup>1</sup> Only 20% of the maritime cases we consider have a strategic component. Compare this with territorial claims, in which over 40% of the cases we consider have a strategically important location.

comparison to maritime claims. Just as maritime claims' importance differs by state, so too would we expect the importance of river claims to vary. Generally speaking, we would expect citizens to be less interested in river claims. Yet some states are highly dependent on a given river or rivers – Egypt and its historic dependence on the Nile River is an excellent example of such a state. These river states may feature citizens who are very interested in river claims.

This dichotomy of states with regards to river claims is more difficult to unpack, however, than the maritime dichotomy. There are many reasons why a state can be economically dependent on a river. It can provide irrigation and power at a relatively low cost to a state, and thus create this economic dependence. But states can be dependent on a river for more than just economic reasons. Transport/navigation is both a strategic and an economic issue for states, and is highly valuable to river states. Moreover, navigation, as it can affect the entire state's access to goods, is relatively more important to these indifferent states as well. This is true in democracies, obviously, where a large portion of the selectorate could be upset by the lack of access to goods, but is also true for autocracies. This is because generally the selectorate in autocracies is comprised of those responsible for the supply of goods – the elite. They would want to ensure that citizens would have access to their goods because such access meant profit. Because navigation is so valuable to both kinds of states, we expect that strategic river claims will be more conflictual.

**Hypothesis 3:** *River claims with strategic salience will have a greater probability of militarized conflict than those with only economic salience.*

Having dealt with our two main areas of tangible salience, what then of intangible salience? It is far more difficult to compare intangible salience across issues, due to the psychological nature of its value. But we can predict that intangible salience may have a different value depending on the issue type at hand. The value of intangible salience comes from the psychological attachment of citizens to the issue area in question. However, all citizens do not have equal opportunities to develop this attachment to all areas.

All citizens have ample opportunity to develop a psychological link to territory. This bond between citizens and their physical territory is a defining characteristic of the state. All citizens live on territory, with only minor exceptions, and so all citizens can take part in this essential bond of statehood. Therefore, it seems likely that leaders would be very interested in the fate of intangibly salient territory. This would be important to their selectorate, because it is important to all citizens. Because of this importance, states should be likely to fight for such areas.

However, all citizens do not form the same bond with river or maritime areas. Only citizens who live near these features have the opportunity to form an estimate of psychological value. Even states with important maritime and riparian areas, like the United States or China, have a multitude of citizens who do not live near these features and thus do not have a high interest in their ownership. Leaders should be less likely to fight over these areas, regardless of their intangible salience, because they are less likely to be important to their selectorate. It is entirely possible that such areas may not interest a leader's winning coalition at all.

**Hypothesis 4a:** *Territorial claims with intangible salience will have a greater probability of militarized conflict than those without this salience.*

**Hypothesis 4b:** *River and maritime claims with intangible salience will evince no greater probability of militarized conflict than those without this salience.*

## EMPIRICS

We use data from the Issue Correlates of War project to test our hypotheses.<sup>2</sup> The Issue Correlates of War project collects data sets on different issues in the international system. Currently data is available on issues in the Western Hemisphere from 1816-2001 for territorial issues, and from 1900-2001 for maritime and river issues.

Since we are interested in the escalation of a claim to violence, my dependent variable is the presence or absence of a *MID*. A MID is defined as a conflict with the threat, display or use of force by one state toward another (Jones, Bremer and Singer 1996). A MID only enters the dataset if it was directly as a result of a particular claim; MIDs between states that were not derived from a claim are not included, as discussed by Hensel et al. (2008).

We code *Strategic Salience* as the presence of a strategic aspect gained by the state controlling the location in question. For territorial and maritime claims, strategic salience is strongest in claim with a strategic location and for river claims, those with a high navigational value. The reasoning behind this is discussed above and seems relatively straightforward. For our combined model across all issue types, we convert this into a single binary measure.

---

<sup>2</sup> ICOW data can be found online at <<http://www.icow.org>>. For more information about the project, see Hensel (2001) and Hensel et al. (2008).

*Economic Saliency* captures whether a state gains a specific economic benefit from controlling the claim in question. For territory, this includes the presence of natural resources and/or a large population; for maritime, fish stocks and migratory fish stocks; and for rivers, resources and/or irrigational value. Note that this classification means that claims with strategic saliency can also have economic saliency as well. Having one does not preclude having the other. For territorial claims, the economic saliency scale ranges from 1 to 4; for river claims, it is 0 to 4; and for maritime claims, it goes from 0 to 3. Again, though, in the combined model across all issue types, we convert this into a single binary measure.

Our last independent variable of interest is *Intangible Saliency*. In the case of territorial claims, claims with intangible saliency are those which states have had historical sovereignty, homeland or ethnic kin. In maritime and river claims, it is whether or not the claim is part of the state's homeland territory. In territorial claims, intangible saliency can take on a value from 0 to 6; in maritime and river claims, it ranges from 0 to 2. As per the discussion above about intangible saliency, we would expect, all things considered, that maritime and river claims have less intangible saliency and thus a lower range on this measure.

We also control for *Joint Democracy*, as per the findings of the democratic peace theory which claims that democracies are less prone to violence (Dixon 1993; Maoz and Russett 1993). A dyad is considered to be democratic if both have a score of 6 or higher on the Polity IV scale. Also, *Relative Capabilities* are included as a control variable (Kim and Morrow 1992; Geller 1993).

[Table 1 about here]



Table 1 reports the results of separate logit models for each issue type. Only in river claims did one salience type affect the likelihood of conflict and not the other. As expected, strategic salience had a positive and significant coefficient, indicating that the presence of navigational elements to a river claim made states more likely to escalate to violence in the form of a MID. Conversely, economic salience had no significant effect on the likelihood of a MID over river claims, which is exactly what was predicted by Hypothesis 3.

For territorial claims, both the strategic and economic salience measures were positive and highly significant. The logit coefficients indicate that the presence of strategic salience has a greater effect on the likelihood of militarized disputes than the presence of economic salience.

This is only one way to interpret these results, however. We can consider the change from a 0 to a 1, as above, or we could consider the substantive difference when increasing each measure from a minimum to a maximum value. This might be a better way of considering these comparisons, as each composite variable has different values across issue areas. We use Clarify to generate first differences to compare the different effects from these increases in each variable (King et al 2000). These results indicate that there is no substantive difference in the magnitude of the effect of the change in the probability of militarized disputes. Both salience measures are equally positive.

For maritime claims, both economic and strategic salience were also positive and significant. However, considering a 0 to 1 change in each indicates that the effect of strategic salience has a higher magnitude than that of economic salience. Once again, however, using Clarify indicates that, considering the results in the light of a change from a minimum to a

maximum value, the magnitudes are not statistically different from each other. Again, both types of tangible salience are equally positive and significant.

With regard to intangible salience, Hypothesis 4b was partially correct in that the value of intangible salience has no effect on the propensity for armed conflict over maritime claims. However, Hypothesis 4a, which predicted a positive and significant value for intangible salience in territorial claims, received no empirical support. This last result is puzzling and needs further analysis. Perhaps there is a selection effect at work, where states are unlikely to escalate claims to others' intangibly salient territories because they know they will be vigorously defended.

[Table 2 about here]

We also present an aggregated model that combines all three issues. The results of this model can be seen in Table 2. The first model simply examines the effect of salience type on the propensity of conflict, and finds that both strategic and economic salience increase the likelihood of conflict. This is unsurprising, as strategic salience increases the probability of conflict across all issue types, and economic salience does the same for both territorial and maritime issues. The second model includes dummy variables for claim type, with river claims being the reference category. Territorial claims are significantly more likely to escalate to conflict than river claims, and maritime claims come close to being significantly more likely as well ( $p < .10$ ).

## **DISCUSSION**

Of the three hypotheses suggested by our analysis, only one was borne out perfectly. Only in the case of river claims did one form of tangible salience, strategic salience, positively

affect the likelihood of militarized interstate disputes. The others had mixed results, because both measures of tangible salience were positive and significant. This indicates that both kinds of tangible salience in territorial and maritime claims are valuable enough to states to be worth the risk of escalation.

This paper presents a way of considering and comparing salience across issues. We chose to consider one of the simplest ways of comparing these three issues, by separating measures of tangible salience into two broad categories, strategic and economic. Likewise, we grouped intangible salience into a broad comparative category. These measures are useful because they can be seen in all three issues to a similar degree. As such, this study is a useful extension of the approach presented by Hensel et al (2008), and provides one example of how salience can be compared across issue types.

This suggests a few interesting future routes of study. For territorial claims, the obvious next step would be to make a closer examination of the differences between tangible and intangible salience in the light of selectorate theory, and consider why our hypotheses on intangible salience receive little support (Nyman 2007). This sort of examination will shed further light on the relationship between all kinds of salience, including strategic and economic factors.

The implications for future maritime studies are slightly more complicated, as maritime claims generally do not have a high intangible value. Future maritime studies then could attempt to parse out this relationship between the oceanic states, who arguably are more inclined to conflict over maritime claims, and the indifferent states who are less likely to escalate. Is there a

measurable difference? What characteristics of a state make it more prone to militarized maritime disputes?

Maritime disputes in particular are interesting from a number of different angles. Maritime claims are important developmental resources, and so can have high salience for the states that possess them. However, they are also one of the issues most brought before international courts, so despite their value these issues are not seen as threats to sovereignty (Charney 1994). What can explain this? Does legal history affect this?

These questions are important to consider when looking at the causes of interstate violence. Knowing that states are inclined to fight in some cases but not others is useless without an understanding of why they make these choices. Each claim, no matter the issue type, contains a unique combination of qualities, and states are constantly forced to assess these qualities in light of their international standing. Knowing which qualities are seen as the most useful to a state will give scholars a better understanding of when we see conflict over a claim, and why.

### References

- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow. 2003. *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Charney, Jonathan I. 1994. "Progress in International Maritime Boundary Delimitation Law." *American Journal of International Law* 88: 227-256.
- Clingan, Thomas A., Jr. 1983. "Freedom of Navigation in a Post-UNCLOS III Environment." *Law and Contemporary Problems* 46(2): 107-123.
- Diehl, Paul F. 1991. "Geography and War: A Review and Assessment of the Empirical Literature." *International Interactions* 17(1): 11-27.
- Diehl, Paul F. 1992. "What Are They Fighting For? The Importance of Issues in International Conflict Research." *Journal of Peace Research* 29: 333-344.

- Dixon, William J. 1993. "Democracy and the Management of International Conflict." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37: 42-68.
- East, W.G. 1932. "The Danube Route-Way in History." *Economica* 37: 321-345.
- Geller, Daniel S. 1993. "Power Differentials and War in Rival Dyads." *International Studies Quarterly*, 37: 173-193.
- Hensel, Paul R. 1996. "Charting a Course to Conflict: Territorial Issues and Interstate Conflict, 1816-1992." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15(1): 43-73.
- Hensel, Paul R. 2001. "Contentious Issues and World Politics: The Management of Territorial Claims in the Americas, 1816-1992" *International Studies Quarterly* 45: 81-109.
- Hensel, Paul R., Sara McLaughlin Mitchell and Thomas E. Sowers II. 2006. "Conflict Management of Riparian Disputes." *Political Geography* 25(4): 383-411.
- Hensel, Paul R. , Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, Thomas E. Sowers II, and Clayton L. Thyne (2008). "Bones of Contention: Comparing Territorial, Maritime, and River Issues." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52, 1 (February): 117-143.
- James, Patrick, Johann Park and Seung-Whan Choi. "Democracy and Conflict Management: Territorial Claims in the Western Hemisphere Revisited." *International Studies Quarterly* 50(4): 803-817.
- Jones, D.M., S.A. Bremer and J.D. Singer. 1996. "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816-1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15: 163-213.
- Kim, Woosang and James D. Morrow. 1992. "When Do Power Shifts Lead To War?" *American Journal of Political Science* 36: 896-922.
- King, Gary, Michael Tomz, and Jason Wittenberg. 2000. "Making the Most of Statistical Analyses: Improving Interpretation and Presentation," *American Journal of Political Science*, 44(2): 341-355.
- Lee, Luke T. 1983. "The Law of the Sea Convention and Third States." *The American Journal of International Law* 77(3): 541-568.
- Maoz, Zeev and Bruce Russett. 1993. "Normative and Structural Causes of the Democratic Peace, 1946-1986." *American Political Science Review* 87: 624-638.

- Mitchell, Sara McLaughlin and Brandon Prins. 1999. "Beyond Territorial Contiguity: Issues at Stake in Democratic Militarized Interstate Disputes" *International Studies Quarterly* 43: 169-183.
- Nemeth, Stephen C., Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, Elizabeth Nyman and Paul R. Hensel. "UNCLOS and the Management of Maritime Conflicts." Presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, August 30-September 2, 2007.
- Nyman, Elizabeth. "Domestic Regimes, Saliency and Interstate Conflict." Presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, August 30-September 2, 2007.
- Senese, Paul D. 2005. "Territory, Contiguity, and International Conflict: Assessing a New Joint Explanation." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(4): 769-779.
- Sohn, Louis B. 1983. "Peaceful Settlement of Disputes in Ocean Conflicts: Does UNCLOS III Point the Way?" *Law and Contemporary Problems* 46(2): 195-200.
- Sowers, Thomas E. 2002. *The Politics of Freshwater Resources*. Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University.
- Starr, Harvey and G. Dale Thomas. 2002. "The 'Nature' of Contiguous Borders: Ease of Interaction, Saliency and the Analysis of Crisis." *International Interactions* 28: 213-235.
- Tir, Jaroslav and Lt. Col. John T. Ackerman. "To Share or Not to Share: Politics of Cooperation Between Riparian States." Presented at the International Studies Association Annual Meeting, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, March 17-21, 2004.
- Vasquez, John A. 1993. *The War Puzzle*. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press.
- Vasquez, John A. 1998. *The Power of Power Politics*. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press.
- Vasquez, John A., and Marie T. Henehan. 2001. Territorial disputes and the probability of war, 1816-1992. *Journal of Peace Research* 38:123-138.
- Walter, Barbara. 2003. "Explaining the Intractability of Territorial Conflict." *International Studies Review* 5(4): 137-153.
- Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. New York: Random House.

**Table 1:** The Determinants of a MID per Dyad Year Across Issue Type

Variable	Territorial Claims	Maritime Claims	River Claims
Strategic Saliency	.794*** (.181)	.890** (.327)	1.868*** (.532)
Economic Saliency	.389*** (.108)	.349** (.122)	-.020 (.189)
Intangible Saliency	.008 (.057)	-.068 (.197)	N/A <sup>†</sup>
Relative Capabilities	-2.703*** (.465)	-.962 (.725)	-5.948*** (1.599)
Joint Democracy	-.649** (.253)	.354 (.279)	-1.721 (.997)
Constant	-2.517*** (.512)	-3.852*** (.682)	.188 (1.288)
N	6021	3162	735
Log Likelihood	-803.281	-368.747	-72.788

<sup>†</sup> Variable could not be included in the model because it perfectly predicted the outcome.

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (two-tailed)  
(Robust standard errors are given in parentheses)

**Table 2:** The Determinants of a MID per Dyad Year Across Issue Type, Combined Model

Variable	Model 1	Model 2
Strategic Salience	.675*** (.125)	.624*** (.131)
Economic Salience	.828*** (.151)	1.046*** (.166)
Territorial Claim	---	.837*** (.260)
Maritime Claim	---	.450 (.266)
Relative Capabilities	-1.936*** (.370)	-1.831*** (.382)
Joint Democracy	-.268 (.149)	-.202 (.148)
Constant	-2.739*** (.358)	-3.620*** (.494)
N	9944	9944
Log Likelihood	-1289.790	-1281.632

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (two-tailed)  
(Robust standard errors are given in parentheses)