

**CHARTING A COURSE TO CONFLICT:  
TERRITORIAL ISSUES AND INTERSTATE CONFLICT, 1816-1992**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Contentious issues have frequently been overlooked in the study of international relations and interstate conflict. This chapter explores the influence of territory and territorial issues on processes of interstate conflict. I begin by reviewing existing approaches to the study of territory, and existing theoretical efforts to understand the role of territory. I then offer an empirical investigation of the effects of territory on conflict, using the Correlates of War Project's data on militarized interstate disputes. Disputes in which territorial issues are at stake tend to be much more escalatory than disputes over less salient issues. Disputes over territorial issues are less likely to end in stalemates than disputes over other issues, and more likely to end in decisive outcomes. Furthermore, adversaries are more likely to become involved in recurrent conflict following disputes over territorial issues, and this future conflict is likely to recur sooner than after disputes over other issues. Territorial issues thus seem to be especially salient to state leaders, producing more escalatory confrontations and being difficult to resolve through militarized means without triggering recurrent conflict in the future. I conclude by discussing the implications of these findings for future research on conflict and on contentious issues, and by offering some implications for policy-makers.

**Charting a Course to Conflict:  
Territorial Issues and Interstate Conflict, 1816-1992**

The scholarly literature on interstate conflict has, for the most part, paid very little attention to the impact of contentious issues, or the "disputed points or questions" that are "the subject of a conflict or controversy" (Diehl 1992). Scholars generally recognize that militarized conflict happens for some reason, usually developing out of some conflict of interest or underlying tension between states (e.g., Snyder and Diesing 1977; Lebow 1981; Vasquez 1993). Despite this recognition, though, few scholars have incorporated contentious issues into their studies of interstate conflict and war. Mansbach and Vasquez (1981), for example, called for the development of an issue-based paradigm to challenge *realpolitik* -- but as Diehl (1992: 337) noted, "despite initial positive reviews and more than a decade of time, the issue paradigm approach has not germinated such that its use is seriously evident, much less widespread, in the discipline." This lack of explicit attention to the issues at stake in relations between states may constitute an important limit on our ability to explain and predict conflict behavior. That is, decision-makers might be expected to behave in fundamentally different ways when dealing with an issue that they consider highly salient instead of a less salient concern. Leaders would seem likely to respond quite differently to the incarceration of one of their state's citizens abroad than to the seizure of a strategic piece of land.

Territory is widely seen as a type of issue that is especially salient to decision-makers. Vasquez (1993: 123-124), for example, suggests that "In the modern global system, and long before then, it has been territorial issues, particularly issues involving territorial contiguity, that are the source of conflict most likely to end in war." Yet the general lack of scholarly attention to contentious issues

is mirrored by the absence of serious study of territorial issues and interstate conflict. Most of the existing research on geography and conflict has treated geography as a "facilitating condition for conflict," rather than a "source of conflict" in the sense of contentious issues (Diehl 1991). Examples of work on geographic factors as a facilitating condition for conflict include Boulding's (1962) loss of strength gradient and studies of proximity and the initiation, escalation, or spread of war (e.g., Bremer 1992; Diehl 1985; Lemke 1995; Most and Starr 1980; see also Diehl 1991).

In the present research I study territorial issues as a source of conflict. I briefly review the relevant literature on territorial issues. I then present and test several hypotheses on the effects of territory on interstate conflict. As will be seen, territorial issues produce very different forms of conflict behavior than less salient issues. Confrontations involving territory are more escalatory than non-territorial confrontations, and territorial disputes are also more likely than non-territorial disputes to be followed by renewed conflict between the same adversaries in the future. In this sense, territorial questions between states can be seen as setting the stage for serious conflict between them, essentially charting a long course of potential conflict if the questions are not resolved quickly and peacefully.

### **Theoretical Development**

A number of scholars' descriptions of interstate conflict processes begin with conflicts of interest between two or more states. Snyder and Diesing's (1977) model of interstate crises, for example, begins with a conflict of interest and mild conflict behavior between the adversaries, potentially developing into a crisis if the two sides should begin to employ more coercive means to pursue their interests. Lebow (1981) offers a model of crisis and war

that begins with underlying hostility between the adversaries, which may lead to manifestations of tension and eventually the outbreak of a crisis between them. Holsti (1991) also describes a "peace and war cycle" where contentious issues can generate conflicts between adversaries, possibly leading to war. To each of these scholars, interstate conflict begins with a disagreement over one or more contentious issues.

Contentious issues can involve a wide variety of disagreements. Holsti (1991), for example, identifies 24 specific types of issues that have produced conflict since 1648, ranging from national unification to supporting an ally to maintaining a balance of power. For the purposes of the present study, though, I focus on territory as an issue that is considered by many scholars and policymakers to be especially salient.<sup>1</sup> Hill (1945: 3), for example, argued that "International relations, in their more vital aspects, revolve about the possession of territory." Territorial issues have been described as "conspicuous among the causes of war" (Hill 1945: 3) and "perhaps the most important single cause of war between states in the last two or three centuries" (Luard 1970: 7).

Territory can be seen as important for nation-states for several reasons (e.g., Diehl 1991). In the most basic sense, territory may be important because of what it contains. Many disputed territories have contained (or have been thought to contain) valuable commodities or resources, such as strategic minerals or oil. A territory may be seen as important because of the population that it contains, particularly when this population includes members of an ethnic or religious group that inhabits a neighboring state. Territory may also be important to states as a way to increase their perceived security by providing advance warning of an impending attack and contributing to national defense, particularly to the extent that the territory in question contains defensible geographic features like rough terrain or mountains.

Territory in this tangible sense contributes to a state's power and security, which are important elements in a realist world view (e.g., Morgenthau 1978).

Beyond any physical elements that it may contain, territory is also seen as important to states for less tangible reasons. Territory is argued to lie at the heart of national identity and cohesion, with the very existence and autonomy of a state being rooted in its territory (e.g., Murphy 1990: 531). Similarly, Bowman (1946: 177) argued that there is a "profound psychological difference" between the transfer of territory and other types of interstate interactions or treaties:

Territory is near and plain and evokes personal feelings and group sentiments. To a people conscious of its individuality, "how sweet the silent backward tracings." Such people endow the land itself with a mystical quality, hearing revered ancestors, the authors of past grandeurs and the doers of heroic deeds, speak from their graves in its soil. (...) It is title to sentiments like these, and not merely to so-and-so many square miles of land, that is transferred when there is a change of boundaries and rule.

In short, territory is argued to have "a psychological importance for nations that is quite out of proportion to its intrinsic value, strategic or economic," and territorial disputes seem to arouse sentiments of pride and honor more rapidly and more intensely than any other type of issue (Luard 1970: 7; see also Vasquez 1993).

Hastings and Jenkins (1983: 9) demonstrate the symbolic or intangible importance of territory in discussing Argentina's claim to the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands:

The islands were of no economic and only limited strategic significance. (...) Nevertheless, all Argentine schools were instructed to teach "The Malvinas are Argentine," a cry which was even set to music. A generation of Argentinians thus grew up regarding the British occupation as an affront to their nationhood. Repossession was not a matter of legal or diplomatic nicety. It was a challenge to national honor.

Levy and Vakili (1992: 130-131) note the importance that Argentina's President Galtieri attached to the Malvinas as

"a national symbol shared by nearly all segments of society," which made the islands seem to be an ideal tool for increasing the unity and legitimacy of the ruling regime. After Argentine forces invaded the islands in 1982, the Argentine news media and political parties -- even those that had vigorously opposed Galtieri's regime in the past -- rallied behind Galtieri in celebrating the end of what *La Prensa* termed "an intolerable insult to Argentine independence and nationhood" (Lebow 1985: 114).

Similar sentiments appeared on the British side after Argentina's invasion, despite the limited economic and strategic value of the islands themselves. British public opinion blamed Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher for what was considered a serious blow to national honor and prestige. A Gallup survey shortly after the invasion found that 48 percent of the British public saw Thatcher as the worst prime minister in British history. Only 12 percent saw Neville Chamberlain -- the traditional "winner" whenever the question was asked -- as the worst prime minister, despite the seemingly much lower importance of the Falklands compared to Chamberlain's losses in Central Europe (Lebow 1985: 116-117).

Other territorial disputes also offer plentiful examples of the symbolic importance of territory (Hensel 1996: Chapter Five). During the war between Bolivia and Paraguay over the Chaco Boreal territory, Bolivia's minister to the United States (Finot 1934: 23) wrote that "Perhaps if the Chaco dispute has been merely a territorial controversy, Bolivia... might have resigned herself to the loss of her patrimony in order to preserve peace... But the question involved is not only the possession of territories more or less valuable, but also the right to life, the necessity of breathing and of recovering the attributes of an independent and sovereign nation." The Bolivian and Paraguayan media and opposition parties pressured their respective governments to take a firm stance on the Chaco question, criticizing any hint of accommodation that might be seen as surrendering national

territory to the enemy (even if these opposition parties had tried to reach similar accommodations while previously in power). Paraguay's National Council of Education even adopted an official textbook with the title *The Chaco Boreal Was, Is, and Will Be Paraguayan* (Rout 1970; Warren 1949). Similarly, France and Germany both came to view the disputed territory along the Rhine River as a national symbol or "deity," leading to patriotic literature and songs with lyrics like "they shall not have it, the free German Rhine" (Mann 1968: 43, 72-73).

Beyond the tangible and intangible reasons that have just been discussed, territory can also be important for reasons of reputation. That is, if a leader gives in to an adversary on territorial issues despite the tangible and intangible importance of the territory, other adversaries might be encouraged to press their own demands on other issues. Huth (1988) and Fearon (1994), among others, discuss similar notions regarding the impact of reputation on deterrence crises. There is evidence, for example, that reputational considerations affected the British reaction to Argentina's invasion of the Falklands. Lebow (1985: 117-118) notes concerns by the British defense ministry and the *Economist* about the risks to British interests in Gibraltar, Belize, Guyana, Diego Garcia, Hong Kong, and Antarctica if Britain were to back down over the Falklands. Even if behavior in previous crises against other adversaries may not have much overall impact on deterrence (Huth 1988), behavior in crises over such highly salient issues as territory might be expected to produce important reputational effects.

These examples, along with the observations about the tangible and intangible importance of territory that were presented above, suggest a series of implications for the study of interstate conflict. That is, if territorial issues are treated differently from other issues because of their physical or psychological importance, then conflict over territory should be different from conflict over other



issues. I now consider some of the ways that territory might be expected to affect interstate conflict behavior, before attempting to test these differences empirically.

### **Conflict Severity**

One important potential impact of contentious issues lies in the severity or escalation level of confrontations. It has been suggested above that territory is considered to be an especially important type of issue, and that territory has a special psychological dimension that distinguishes it from other issues. Similarly, Vasquez (1993: 133, 151) suggests that territorial issues are unusual among contentious issues in their proneness to violence, with disagreements over territorial issues being more likely than disagreements over other issues to end up in crisis or war. If this is so, then we should expect conflict behavior in disputes over territory to differ from disputes over other types of issues. In particular, we should find that territorial disputes tend to reach higher levels of conflict severity than disputes where policymakers are not pushed by the territorial imperative.

Interstate disagreements over non-territorial issues might not be expected to dominate the relationship between the adversaries to the same extent as territorial disagreements. That is, disagreements over economic relations or treaty ratification do not seem likely to lead to all-out war, and disagreements over the disposition of one state's citizen in another state's prison rarely lead to serious conflict or war. Even when one state threatens to use force to resolve such issues, the resulting disputes would seem likely to end quickly, with little escalation and little perception that war is likely. Neither side in such a confrontation would seem likely to accept the risks and potential costs inherent in violent conflict over issues that are of such low salience for both sides.

Disagreement over territorial stakes, though, might be

expected to produce greater levels of conflict and escalation. Policy makers might be expected to be more active in pursuing and protecting their states' vital interests, because the risks or costs of losing the disputed stakes to the enemy might be too great. As Brecher (1993: 153) argues, the more basic the values at stake in a crisis situation, "the higher the cost crisis actors are willing to incur to protect them, and the more extreme will be their crisis management (value-protecting) technique." Given the above suggestions about the importance of territory and the centrality of territorial issues to states and their populations, territory seems to be an extremely important type of stake, and the loss of a piece of territory is likely to be seen as potentially devastating. As a result, leaders are expected to be less likely to ignore escalatory moves by the adversary, and more likely to take escalatory actions of their own in order to protect their territorial interests.

***Hypothesis 1:*** *Militarized disputes involving territorial issues will reach higher severity levels than disputes over other types of issues.*

Several recent studies have supported similar hypotheses. In a study of conflict behavior in Latin American dyads, Hensel and Diehl (1994) find that militarized disputes involving territorial issues were much more likely to feature a militarized response by the target state than disputes over less salient issues. Gochman and Leng's (1983) study of 30 interstate crises finds that crises involving "vital issues" -- i.e., issues of territory or national independence -- typically showed higher levels of escalation than crises over less salient issues. Senese (1996) also finds that disputes over territorial issues have typically produced a greater number of fatalities than disputes over other issues.

This study examines two dimensions of dispute

escalation, at both the low and high ends of the escalation spectrum. The first dimension involves the target state's response to a militarized challenge by a dispute initiator. That is, once one state threatens, displays, or uses force in pursuit of its interests, does the target of that action respond with military threats or actions of its own? As Hensel and Diehl (1994) note, the general category of "non-militarized response" by the target state in a dispute includes a wide variety of possible diplomatic or economic activities, as well as the complete absence of any response to the initiator's provocations. Nonetheless, the threshold between militarized and non-militarized responses is an important one, because the risks and costs of interstate war can be avoided by a simple refusal to employ militarized means in pursuing one's goals -- even if this refusal risks losing one's interests by not standing firm militarily. If territorial issues are indeed different from other types of contentious issues, then we should expect to find that target states in disputes over territorial issues are much less likely than targets in non-territorial disputes to refrain from a militarized response when challenged militarily, because the territorial stakes are likely to be seen as important enough to justify the risks of escalation.

Just as non-militarized response represents the low end of a conceptual scale of conflict escalation, interstate war represents the high end of this scale. The second dimension of conflict severity examined in this study is the escalation of militarized disputes to war, or a protracted clash between two states' military forces leading to substantial loss of life among the combatants. If territorial issues are involved in a confrontation, we would expect that the adversaries should be more likely to take violent actions in support of their (territorial) interests than in a confrontation over less salient issues -- even if this leads them to full-fledged interstate war. Examining several dimensions of conflict escalation allows the present study to

reach a more detailed understanding of the impact of territorial issues, including the impact of these issues at both the low and high ends of an escalation scale.

### **Conflict Outcomes**

If territorial issues are as important (physically or psychologically) as suggested earlier, then we might expect militarized confrontations to be more likely to end in decisive outcomes when territorial stakes are involved than otherwise, and less likely to end in stalemated or compromise outcomes. In a dispute over territorial issues, I have already suggested that decision-makers should be more likely to employ military means in pursuit of their interests, and less likely to allow an adversary's moves to go unchallenged. One consequence of this escalatory tendency would be that stalemates should be less likely in disputes over territorial issues, because each side would be more likely to take serious action and less likely to let the matter drop without some resolution (albeit temporary, because -- as will be suggested shortly -- the resolution of one dispute may lead to the outbreak of another).

If stalemates are expected to be less likely in disputes over territorial issues and if the adversaries are expected to be more likely to push for some type of resolution to the dispute, I also expect that most of these resolutions will involve decisive outcomes (i.e., a victory for one side and a defeat for its adversary) instead of negotiated compromises. To the extent that territory is seen as a vital part of a nation-state's self-identity or psychological being, as suggested above, leaders would seem to be less likely to be able to reach satisfactory concessionary agreements with their opponents, because of the difficulty of trading away part of the national soul. France and Germany were unwilling to pursue a negotiated settlement over Alsace and Lorraine, for example, and the territory in question changed hands several times through military conquest (a decisive outcome,

if only temporary). Although compromise outcomes may be possible or even likely in disputes over less salient issues, such outcomes would seem to be unlikely in disputes over highly salient issues such as territory.

***Hypothesis 2:*** *Militarized disputes involving territorial issues will be more likely to end in decisive outcomes and less likely to end in stalemated or compromise outcomes than disputes over other types of issues.*

### **Conflict Recurrence**

Dyads that contend over issues with the importance attributed to territory are arguably more likely to become involved in recurrent confrontations in the aftermath than are dyads that contend over less inflammatory issues. If an early confrontation fails to resolve an issue of relatively low salience, the adversaries may be prone to drop the matter entirely without pursuing further conflict over the issue, because the costs and risks of conflict might exceed the value attached to the issues at stake. Such issues may be one-time problems, which might be resolved quickly in a single confrontation, or which might be abandoned without any type of formal resolution if the involved issues are sufficiently unimportant. Where territorial issues are involved, though, the adversaries might be expected to keep pursuing the issue until they have achieved their goals. And when one side manages to achieve its goals over territorial issues, the other side may then have a powerful incentive to try to regain its lost territory and to overcome some of the damage to its national pride or honor, should the opportunity arise in the future.

Bowman (1946: 178), for example, noted that any territorial solution -- no matter how fair it may seem -- carries with it the risk of future attempts to regain lost territory. Arguments may always be raised in the future about past historical claims to the lost territory,

especially in border zones of mixed ethnic or linguistic composition, and subsequent incidents may always be used to re-focus attention on such historical claims. Bowman (1946: 180-181) further suggested that two or more states can often have irreconcilable claims to the same piece of territory, and that in some territorial disputes there may be no logical solution that each side will ever find acceptable. It is thus reasonable to expect that recurrent conflict will be more likely when territorial issues were involved in the dispute.

***Hypothesis 3:*** *Militarized disputes involving territorial issues will be more likely to be followed by recurrent militarized conflict than disputes over other types of issues.*

In a study of conflict recurrence in Latin American dyads, Hensel (1994) finds that territorial issues have seemed to make recurrent conflict more likely than other issues; the present study offers an opportunity to examine whether this same relationship holds for the remainder of the world as well. Another factor that Hensel (1994; see also Maoz 1984, Brecher 1993) finds to be important in the recurrence of militarized conflict involves dispute outcomes. Specifically, Hensel (1994: 283) suggests that recurrent conflict would be more likely after a stalemate than after either a decisive outcome or a negotiated compromise, because "neither side was able to produce the desired changes in the status quo, neither was defeated and rendered unable or unwilling to mount another serious challenge, and no mutually satisfactory settlement was reached to resolve the two sides' differences." Similarly, Brecher (1993) expects that crises ending in (formal or semi-formal) voluntary compromise agreements are more likely to produce mutual satisfaction in their wake than crises ending in other outcomes, and that crises ending without such agreements are likely to be

followed by greater levels of tension and instability between the adversaries.

The effects of outcomes may also be influenced by the issues at stake in a dispute. I suggested above that disputes involving issues of relatively low salience would be less likely to be followed by recurrent conflict than disputes over territorial issues; these differences between issue types may be compounded by certain types of outcomes. Vasquez (1993: 147) agrees, arguing that unless one side is able to achieve an overwhelming victory over the other or the two sides are able to reach a diplomatic accommodation, territorial issues will tend to fester and will often produce long-term adversarial relationships. The possible interaction between the effects of dispute outcomes and contentious issues forms the basis for this study's final hypothesis.

***Hypothesis 4:*** *Militarized disputes involving territorial issues will be more likely to be followed by recurrent militarized conflict than disputes over other types of issues, while controlling for the differences between decisive, stalemate, and compromise outcomes.*

## **Research Design**

### **Spatial-Temporal Domain**

This study's analyses cover the years 1816-1992, which is the period currently included in the Correlates of War (COW) Project's Militarized Interstate Dispute data set. The basic unit of analysis is the militarized interstate dispute, which is a confrontation that involves the explicit threat, display, or use of militarized force between the regular forces of two or more nation-states (Gochman and Maoz 1984). The 2035 militarized disputes in the data set are disaggregated into the individual pairs of states that confronted each other on opposite sides of the same dispute, in order to allow us to examine the conflict behavior of

dyadic adversaries.<sup>2</sup> Breaking down the data set into conflictual dyads produces a total of 3043 dyadic adversaries in the data set's 2035 disputes.<sup>3</sup>

It should be noted that this dyadic breakdown of the data set does not alter the direction or strength of the results presented in this chapter, despite possible concerns about the statistical independence of cases when several dyadic disputes are extracted from the same original militarized dispute case. In fact, this dyadic breakdown allows a more detailed study of the effects of territorial issues than might otherwise be possible. In multilateral disputes, not all participants necessarily contend over territorial issues, so a dyadic breakdown allows us to distinguish between those participants in the dispute that did contend over territory and those that did not. This study's analyses of dispute escalation and outcomes are conducted at the level of the aggregated militarized dispute as well as the disaggregated dyadic dispute, and -- as the reported results indicate -- the results do not change in strength or direction. Furthermore, this dyadic breakdown allows us to study whether or not each pair of adversaries in the dispute confronted each other in a recurrent dispute after the conclusion of their first dispute, which is not possible if the data are not broken down dyadically to indicate which states are involved in disputes against each other and when.

### **Methodology**

This study's analyses are presented in the form of contingency tables, which offer a cross-tabulation of the issues at stake in a given dispute with the severity, outcome, or aftermath of that dispute. Beyond the tables themselves, these analyses include both a chi-square test statistic and the odds ratio associated with the table. The chi-square ( $X^2$ ) statistic offers a conventional indicator of the statistical significance of the results, or the



likelihood that the distribution of cases in the table could have arisen by chance if the two variables in the table are actually statistically independent. The value of the  $X^2$  statistic is limited, though, particularly because of the statistic's vulnerability to the size of the sample being tested in the table. If the number of cases is increased but the proportion of cases in each cell does not change, the  $X^2$  statistic will increase in value, although the strength of the observed relationship has not been altered (Reynolds 1984).

The odds ratio offers insight into the "practical" or "theoretical" substantive significance of the results, or the strength of the relationship between two variables, as opposed to the statistical significance measured by the  $X^2$  statistic (Reynolds 1984). The odds ratio gives us the ratio of the statistical odds of a certain value of the dependent variable, given the value of the independent variable. In this study's analyses, an odds ratio of 1.0 would tell us that the odds of the dependent variable -- e.g., dispute escalation to war -- are identical for disputes involving territorial issues and disputes involving other types of issues. An odds ratio greater than 1.0 indicates how much greater are the odds of the dependent variable for one value of the independent variable than for the other. For example, the odds ratio of 3.19 found in Table 2 indicates that the odds of escalation to war are over three times as high for disputes involving territorial issues as for disputes involving other issues. The odds ratio is not affected by the number of cases presented in a table, and offers an easily interpretable comparison of the strength of the differences between territorial and other issues in interstate conflict.

## **Operationalization of Variables**

### *Territorial Issues*

The recently updated COW Militarized Dispute data set

includes a variable that indicates the primary issue at stake for each dispute participant, based on the type of alteration to the status quo ante (if any) being pursued by the participant. Four types of issues are coded. Territorial issues involve explicit contention over territory, ranging from the demarcation of a mutual border (such as questions arising from rivers that change course over time) to the ownership of an entire piece of territory (such as Alsace-Lorraine or the Chaco Boreal). "Regime" issues involve the disposition of a state's government or regime, which typically involves covert or overt attempts to remove a government from power. "Policy" issues deal with government policies, ranging from economic activities to the detention of a foreign national. The final issue type is a residual category that captures issues not included in these first three.<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this study, these different types of issues are collapsed together, producing a dichotomous indicator of whether or not the dispute involved territorial issues for at least one of its participants.

### *Conflict Severity*

This study's measures of dispute escalation are derived from the COW dispute data's "level of hostility" variable, which reflects the highest level of militarized action employed by each participant in a militarized dispute (Gochman and Maoz 1984). Two dichotomous escalation measures are used, based on thresholds of militarized activities by the dispute participants. The first indicator, non-militarized response, is based on the actions taken by the target state in the dispute. If the target state does not respond militarily to the dispute initiator's actions, that state is considered to have made a non-militarized response to the initiator's actions. The other measure indicates whether or not a dispute escalated to full-scale interstate war, which involves sustained combat between regular military forces leading to at least one thousand battle deaths (Small

and Singer 1982).

### *Conflict Outcomes*

The COW militarized dispute data includes a coding for the outcome of each dispute. For my purposes, I have narrowed the eight-category COW outcome coding to three categories of interest. "Decisive" outcomes are those in which there was a clear winner in the dispute, in terms of either a battlefield victory or the clear ability to alter the status quo ante at the end of the dispute. "Compromise" outcomes are those in which the two sides were able to reach a mutually agreeable settlement in the dispute. "Stalemate" outcomes are those in which neither of the above conditions apply, with neither a victory for one side nor a mutual settlement.<sup>5</sup>

### *Conflict Recurrence*

The recurrence of militarized conflict is measured dichotomously, by whether or not the same two adversaries engaged in at least one more militarized dispute within fifteen years of the conclusion of their previous dispute.<sup>6</sup> Longer periods of stability reach into times when the next dispute may not be related closely to the previous dispute. Analyses run without such a cutoff also risk a serious skewing of the results because some disputes in the early nineteenth century have had 150 years or more to be followed by further conflict, while more recent cases have had a much shorter time period in which recurrent conflict could arise.

## **Frequency of Territorial Issues**

I begin by examining the relative frequency of territorial issues as a cause of conflict in the modern interstate system. Few scholars have attempted to classify the overall prevalence of territorial issues in the form of opposing territorial claims, short of classifying cases of militarized conflict by the types of issues involved in the

conflict itself. A recent exception is the work of Huth (1996), who identifies 129 cases of opposing territorial claims since 1945 and studies the effects of these claims on the conflict propensity of the involved states. Similarly, Kocs (1995) identifies 21 contiguous territorial disputes in the 1945-1987 period that have never been resolved, as well as 20 more that had been resolved previously but were reopened as the result of subsequent events.

Territorial claims thus seem to have been common in the modern interstate system. Beyond their frequency, though, we might consider how territorial issues affect relations between the involved states, or how frequently such issues give rise to militarized conflict. Kocs (1995) finds that interstate war has been much more likely between adversaries with territorial claims against each other than between other adversaries, accounting for 18 of the 29 wars included in his study. Huth (1996) notes that territorial disputes were a primary cause of the armed conflict in fourteen of the twenty-one interstate wars fought during the 1950-1990 period. Holsti (1991) finds that territorial or border-related issues were the most common source of warfare in four of the five historical periods in his study of war since 1648, with 47 to 77 percent of the wars in each period involving territorial issues. Furthermore, as Vasquez (1993) notes, when territoriality-related issues are added to the list of explicitly territorial issues in Holsti's study, the proportion of wars in each historical period involving territory ranges from 79 to 93 percent. Territorial issues have thus been prominent as a source of interstate conflict and war, both over the past five centuries (in Holsti's study) and in the post-World War II period (in the Kocs and Huth studies).

Using the COW militarized dispute data on contentious issues, we find that under one-third of all militarized interstate disputes involve primarily territorial issues. The COW Militarized Interstate Dispute data set includes 2035

disputes from 1816-1992. In 28.7 percent of these disputes (585 of 2035), at least one participant sought to alter the territorial status quo ante. Furthermore, although Luard (1986) and Holsti (1991) have suggested that -- especially since 1945 -- territory is becoming less prominent as an issue leading to conflict or war, the proportion of all disputes involving contention over territory has not changed significantly over time ( $X^2 = 1.23$ , 1 d.f.,  $p < .27$ ). Territorial concerns were involved in 30.1 percent of all disputes from 1816-1945, and 27.8 percent of all disputes since 1945.

Using the dyadic disaggregation of the militarized dispute data, 795 (or 26.1 percent) dyadic disputes featured one or both parties contending over primarily territorial issues in the dispute, while 2248 are limited to non-territorial issues.<sup>7</sup> As with the aggregated dispute-level data mentioned above, these dyadic disputes show no appreciable difference in the frequency of territorial issues over time ( $X^2 = 0.01$ , 1 d.f.,  $p < .92$ ). Territorial issues were involved in 26.0 percent of all dyadic disputes from 1816-1945, and 26.2 percent of all the disputes since 1945.

Territory is certainly not at stake in all militarized disputes, then, which allows this study's analyses to produce meaningful results. If territorial issues were coded as being involved in nearly all militarized confrontations, then a territory-conflict relationship would be tautological; we could learn little by studying the escalatory effects of territorial issues because there would be few non-territorial disputes or wars to use for comparison. Using the COW dispute data, though, under one-third of the militarized disputes and -- as will be seen shortly -- less than two-thirds of the interstate wars examined in this study feature explicit contention over primarily territorial issues, leaving us with a large number of both territorial and non-territorial confrontations. The identification of territorial issues in the militarized dispute data thus was not done

tautologically, as would be the case if all serious disputes or wars were coded as territorial because of some prior theoretical bias. As a result, we can interpret this study's results with greater confidence that the findings result from real differences between territorial and non-territorial disputes, rather than resulting from poorly-coded data.

## **Empirical Analyses**

### **Conflict Severity**

Table 1 examines the impact of territorial issues on the likelihood of militarized response by the target state in a dispute. The target state failed to respond militarily in 186 of 795 disputes involving territorial issues (23.4 percent), and in 1146 of 2248 disputes involving other types of issues (51.0 percent). Non-militarized response is thus over twice as likely in disputes that do not involve territorial issues, and this difference is highly significant ( $X^2 = 181.54$ , 1 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ).<sup>8</sup> The odds ratio of 3.41 also indicates that the odds of a militarized response are nearly three and one-half times greater when territorial issues are at stake than when other types of issues are at stake.

[Table 1 about here]

The results presented in Table 1 offer strong support for the importance of territorial issues in interstate conflict. Target states were much more likely to respond by militarized means when provoked militarily in disputes over territorial issues than in disputes over other issues. This result supports my hypothesis, indicating that decision-makers are much more willing to risk dispute escalation in order to protect their interests on issues of high salience than when less salient issues are at stake. Even if threats over less salient issues can be ignored, the tangible and intangible importance of territory seems to be great enough that a challenge over territorial issues is almost always met with a militarized response.

[Table 2 about here]

Table 2 presents the impact of territorial issues on the escalation of militarized disputes to full-scale interstate war. Whereas Table 1 examined a low threshold of severity, Table 2 examines the highest threshold of severity. Militarized disputes that escalate to war represent the most severe, most escalatory confrontations identified by the COW Project, and this analysis allows us to tell whether territorial issues affect this last threshold of escalation as well as the lower thresholds identified earlier.

It should be noted that Table 2 employs the aggregated dispute-level data rather than the dyadically disaggregated data that are examined in the remainder of this study's analyses. This was done to minimize the effects of multilateral wars involving dozens of participants, which have been found to obscure the effects of other conflictual phenomena such as arms races (e.g., Siverson and Diehl 1989). The aggregated dispute-level data set (as presented in Table 2) includes 80 disputes that escalated to interstate war, or 3.9 percent of the 2035 disputes. In contrast, the dyadic disaggregation results in 342 dyadic disputes where both participants reach the level of full-scale war, or 11.2 percent of the 3043 dyadic disputes. This inflation of the number of disputes escalating to war results in large part from the world wars and the Korean War, each of which involved numerous combatant dyads. The results presented in Table 2 do not change substantially when the dyadic disaggregation is used, but the absolute likelihood of dyadic escalation to war would be misleadingly high when compared to the overall proportion of all disputes that escalate to war (as presented here).<sup>9</sup>

As Table 2 reveals, militarized disputes are nearly three times as likely to escalate to war when territorial issues are involved as when only non-territorial issues are at stake. Forty-three of 586 disputes over territorial issues (7.3 percent) escalated to war, compared with 36 of 1456 disputes over other issues (2.5 percent). This

difference is highly significant in the statistical sense ( $X^2 = 26.59$ , 1 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ). The odds ratio of 3.19 indicates a strong substantive difference as well, with the odds of escalation to war over three times higher for disputes involving territorial issues than for disputes over other types of issues. In absolute numbers, there also appears to be a close connection between contention over territorial issues and escalation to interstate war. Forty-four of the eighty wars included in the dispute data set (55 percent) involved contention over territorial issues, which is disproportionately high when we consider that only 28.7 percent of the 2035 disputes involved territory. These results of Table 2 complement the finding from Table 1, with both suggesting that contention over territorial issues increases dispute escalation.

These first two tables together paint a consistent picture of the impact of territorial issues on dispute escalation. Militarized disputes involving territorial issues tend to reach higher severity levels than disputes over other issues, using either militarized response or interstate war as an indicator of severity. Disputes involving territorial issues are more likely than disputes over other issues to involve militarized actions by both sides, as well as to escalate to full-scale interstate war. Territory thus seems to be seen by leaders as highly salient, justifying the risks of escalation in order to protect or advance one's interests much more than other types of issues. Another dimension of conflict behavior that should be affected by contention over territorial issues involves the outcome of confrontations, to which we now turn.

[Table 3 about here]

### **Conflict Outcomes**

Table 3 examines the relationship between territorial issues and dispute outcomes. As this table shows, disputes in which territorial issues are at stake are much less likely



to end in stalemated outcomes, with the proportion of stalemates declining from 1268 of 1792 (70.7 percent) to 417 of 715 (58.3 percent) when territorial issues are present. Similarly, disputes in which territorial issues are at stake are more likely to end in decisive outcomes, with the proportion of decisive outcomes increasing from 22.7 percent to 32.0 percent for territorial disputes. Both of these results are in the expected direction, although compromises show an unexpected increase in likelihood when territorial issues are at stake, from 6.6 percent to 9.7 percent of the dispute outcomes. These differences between outcome frequencies in territorial and non-territorial disputes are significant at the .001 level ( $X^2 = 35.92$ , 2 d.f.).

Further analysis with individual 2x2 tables for each outcome type also showed these differences to be significant at the .001 level for all three outcome types. Decisive outcomes are much more likely in disputes over territorial issues, both statistically and substantively ( $X^2 = 23.73$ , 1 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ; odds ratio = 1.61), with the odds of a decisive outcome being over one and one-half times greater in disputes over territorial issues. Compromise outcomes are also more likely in territorial disputes than disputes over other issues ( $X^2 = 6.96$ , 1 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ; odds ratio = 1.52), with the odds again being one and one-half times greater in disputes over territorial issues. Finally, stalemates are much less likely in territorial disputes ( $X^2 = 35.87$ , 1 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ; odds ratio = 0.58). The odds ratio of 0.58 for stalemates indicates that the odds of a stalemate are .58 as high in disputes over territorial issues as compared to disputes over other issues, or (inverting the figure) the odds of a stalemate are 1.72 times higher for disputes over non-territorial issues.

The results from Table 3 offer further support for the earlier characterization of territorial issues as highly salient, and as important influences on conflict behavior. The outcome results complement the above findings on dispute

escalation, where states were found to be unlikely to ignore territorial threats and conflict behavior was found to be more escalatory when territorial issues are involved. The decreased likelihood of stalemates and increased likelihood of decisive outcomes in territorial disputes seem to be related to this tendency not to ignore threats over territorial stakes, with each side attempting to achieve its goals (or protect its interests) by force and appearing unwilling to let matters fade away without some type of resolution (even if that resolution comes in a form that sets that stage for renewed conflict in the future).

The observation that negotiated compromises are more likely over territorial questions than over other issues appears surprising at first, given the characterization of territorial issues as difficult to settle to both sides' satisfaction. Nonetheless, further reflection suggests an explanation, based on leaders' reasons for agreeing to the compromise solution. Leaders may agree to a compromise under domestic or international pressure, in order to avoid losing political support or economic backing by continuing an unpopular confrontation. They may also see a compromise as a temporary stopgap measure, particularly if they are faring poorly in the current dispute or -- as has been common in territorial disputes, given the findings from Tables 1 and 2 -- the current dispute is becoming too costly. A compromise outcome meant as such a temporary measure could minimize the state's losses in the current confrontation, and might perhaps buy valuable time to help achieve a better outcome in the future. In either of these situations, a compromise outcome would not necessarily reflect a desire to settle the state's long-term territorial questions amicably, and it may actually be meant as a short-term ploy to end one confrontation while planning or preparing for another. Goertz and Diehl (1992) suggest that territorial changes occurring by treaty may be seen as less legitimate than changes that occur through other means, for similar reasons.

The results from Tables 1 through 3 suggest that contention over territory affects both the outcome and escalation level of a confrontation between states. As hypothesized earlier, disputes involving territorial issues were significantly less likely to end in stalemates than disputes over other issues, and significantly more likely to end in decisive outcomes. In combination with the results presented above for dispute escalation, then, it seems clear that contention over territorial issues is significantly different from contention over other types of issues. The next question to be dealt with involves the impact of contentious issues on subsequent relations between two adversaries -- i.e., beyond affecting the severity and outcome of one confrontation, do the issues at stake affect the likelihood of future conflict between the same states?

[Table 4 about here]

### **Conflict Recurrence**

Table 4 presents an analysis of conflict recurrence after disputes over territorial and non-territorial issues. Regardless of the type of issues involved, over half of all militarized disputes -- 1859 of 3043, or 61.1 percent -- are followed by another dispute between the same adversaries within fifteen years. Nonetheless, the issues at stake in a confrontation also make a substantial difference in the likelihood of recurrent conflict. When territorial issues are at stake, nearly three-fourths of all disputes are followed quickly by another dispute (567 of 795, or 71.3 percent), as compared to 1292 of 2248 disputes over non-territorial issues (57.5 percent). This difference is statistically significant ( $X^2 = 47.38$ , 1 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ), and the odds ratio of 1.84 indicates that the odds of a recurrent dispute are nearly twice as great for disputes involving territorial issues. These results from Table 4 offer further support for the important impact of contentious issues on conflict behavior. A oneway ANOVA also revealed that the

next militarized dispute tends to happen sooner after a dispute over territorial issues than after a non-territorial dispute, with territorial issues producing almost two years less "stability" before the outbreak of the next dispute than other types of issues (5.56 years versus 7.22;  $F = 39.85$ ,  $p < .001$ ).<sup>10</sup>

The final set of analyses expands on the relationship between contentious issues and dispute recurrence by adding in the effects of dispute outcomes. Both territorial and non-territorial disputes produce similar relationships between outcomes and recurrence, and both effects are statistically significant ( $X^2 = 66.25$ , 2 d.f.,  $p < .001$  for territorial issues;  $X^2 = 111.45$ , 2 d.f.,  $p < .001$  for non-territorial issues). For both territorial and non-territorial issues, stalemated outcomes are the most likely to produce recurrent conflict in their aftermath, followed by compromises and decisive outcomes.

[Table 5 about here]

Nonetheless, there are important differences between territorial and non-territorial issues, as revealed in Table 5. In particular, for each type of outcome, disputes over territorial issues are more likely to be followed by recurrent conflict than disputes over other issues that ended in the same type of outcome. These differences are most notable after decisive outcomes, where the likelihood of recurrence increases from 36.2 percent to 52.8 percent when territorial issues are involved, and stalemates, where the likelihood of recurrence jumps from 65.9 percent to 82.7 percent. These differences between territorial and non-territorial disputes with the same outcome are statistically significant at the .001 level for both stalemates and decisive outcomes in Table 5, and the odds ratios indicate that the odds of recurrence after each of these outcomes are roughly twice as great when territorial issues were at stake. Compromises produce very little change when territorial issues are involved; the likelihood of recurrence only

increases from 57.6 percent to 65.2 percent, which is not statistically significant ( $p < .31$ ) and which produces a relatively low contingent odds ratio of 1.38. Nonetheless, compromises see a somewhat higher likelihood of recurrence when territorial issues are involved than when the adversaries are contending over non-territorial issues, even if the differences are not great.

Tables 4 and 5 suggest that both contentious issues and dispute outcomes exert important influences on relations between adversaries in the aftermath of a confrontation. The differences between decisive outcomes, stalemates, and compromises that have been identified by earlier studies (e.g., Hensel 1994) hold up for both territorial and non-territorial issues. Similarly, for each type of outcome the likelihood of recurrence is greater for disputes over territorial issues than for disputes over other issues, particularly for decisive and stalemated outcomes. Future conflict is almost assured after a stalemate over territorial issues, and even decisive and compromise outcomes are followed by recurrent conflict over half the time when territory was involved -- although the latter two outcome types are more effective at avoiding recurrence when non-territorial stakes are involved.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

Even though territorial issues account for the primary issues at stake in under one-third of all interstate disputes in the past two centuries, they have been shown to exert an important impact on conflict behavior. Adversaries engaged in a confrontation over territorial issues have been shown to behave much differently from adversaries engaged in confrontations over other types of issues. For example, disputes over territorial issues were shown to be much more escalatory than non-territorial disputes. Territorial disputes were less than half as likely to see non-militarized responses by the target state, with under one-fourth of all

targets responding without military means, compared to half of all target states in disputes over non-territorial issues. Similarly, territorial disputes were nearly twice as likely to escalate to the level of full-scale interstate war. Disputes over territory were also much more likely to end in compromise or -- particularly -- decisive outcomes than were non-territorial disputes, and were found to be much less likely to end in stalemates.

These findings suggest some serious implications for future studies of interstate conflict. The empirical importance of territorial issues in this chapter and other studies suggests that many studies of interstate conflict could benefit by incorporating the effects of contentious issues. Including the effects of territorial issues helped Gochman and Leng (1983), Hensel and Diehl (1994), and Hensel (1994, 1996) to account for the escalation of crises, the likelihood of non-militarized response in militarized disputes, and the recurrence of conflict. Even though these studies did not focus exclusively on territory, incorporating the effects of territorial issues helped to strengthen their findings and to increase their resulting understanding of the phenomena being studied.

This study's findings also offer some direction in the question of whether contiguity or contention over territorial issues is largely responsible for conflict between neighbors (Vasquez 1995). Few studies have been able to examine the impact of territorial issues directly, so most research in this area has been forced to draw inferences from the occurrence of conflict between bordering states -- some of which involves territorial issues, and some of which does not. The findings of the present study suggest that territorial issues do seem to make a great deal of differences in conflict behavior, beyond the effect of contiguity. Using a distinction between territorial disputes (some of which involved non-contiguous adversaries) and non-territorial disputes (some of which involved contiguous

adversaries), the present study identifies substantial differences in patterns of conflict escalation and recurrence. We would not expect to find such striking differences between territorial and non-territorial disputes if contiguity, rather than territorial issues, were largely responsible for militarized dispute escalation or recurrence.

Additionally, this study's findings -- along with those of other recent work on territory and territorial claims -- suggest that further work should be devoted to contentious issues such as territory. The studies of Kocs (1995) and Huth (1996) suggest that unresolved territorial claims are a fairly common feature in the interstate system, and that states with competing claims are more likely than other states to become involved in militarized disputes or wars. The present study and Senese (1996) also suggest that confrontations involving territorial issues tend to be more escalatory than confrontations over other issues, as well as being more likely to be followed by recurrent conflict between the same adversaries. Given this greater escalation and greater likelihood of conflict recurrence, then, it would seem especially important to understand how territorial claims lead to conflict over territorial issues -- and to attempt to manage or prevent such confrontations if at all possible.

One important direction for future research involves the study of how territorial issues lead to the initial outbreak of militarized conflict, beyond the effect of territory on conflict escalation or recurrence. That is, following the example of Huth (1996), it would be useful to study the differences between states that turn to militarized means to resolve their territorial differences and states that are able to manage their territorial questions peacefully. Huth has assembled a valuable data set for studying such questions in the post-World War II era, identifying 129 cases of territorial claims. He finds that around half of these 129 cases saw the outbreak of militarized conflict at least once

between 1950-1990, featuring aggressive diplomatic and political behavior in 32 percent of those years and militarized confrontations in about eleven percent (Huth 1996: 103, 106). It would be useful to extend the collection and analysis of territorial claims data to a longer time frame, perhaps going back to the traditional starting point for most empirical work on world politics in 1816, which would allow us to study the impact of territorial questions over a longer historical period.

Research on territorial issues could also be improved by developing a finer distinction between different territorial issues. Empirical research on territory has tended to treat all territorial issues as similar, focusing on the distinction between territorial and other issues but overlooking differences between different types of territorial claims. It is doubtful that all territorial issues are equally salient, and it is not even certain that each side in a single territorial dispute views the dispute as equally salient. Goertz and Diehl (1992) and Huth (1996) make some progress along these lines, distinguishing between different territorial claims or territorial exchanges on the basis of the size, population, economic value, and location of the involved territory. Future research could benefit from the identification of additional components of territorial salience, as well as from the collection of data on these factors for a larger set of cases (beyond those cases where territory actually changed hands, as with Goertz and Diehl, or the past fifty years as in Huth's work).

Another useful extension of research on contentious issues and interstate conflict would involve the collection of data on additional types of issues separating states. Most of the existing work on issues has focused on territorial issues, as with the present study, Goertz and Diehl (1992), Kocs (1995), Senese (1996), and Huth (1996). Research on contentious issues could benefit from the identification and study of other types of issues, as well,



which could greatly increase our understanding of the general role of issues in world politics. It may prove to be difficult or impossible to construct a single scale of issue salience that would be meaningful for most (or all) issue types and spatial-temporal domains (Diehl 1992: 341-342), but any movement in this direction would represent a potential improvement in the study and understanding of conflict processes.

With regard to policy implications, this study's findings also suggest that statesmen need to be careful in their dealings with each other over territorial issues. Confrontations over territorial issues were found to be more escalatory than confrontations over less salient issues. Disputes involving territory were also found to be more likely than other types of disputes to be followed by renewed conflict between the same adversaries in the future. Policymakers must exercise special caution in their dealings with adversaries over territorial questions, both to manage their confrontations short of escalation to war and to avoid becoming trapped in lengthy strings of recurrent confrontations afterward.

As suggested earlier, territory is an important element of states' identity and cohesion. For this reason, leaders may see territorial issues as a useful way to try to rally domestic support in times of political or economic trouble. Nonetheless, the high salience of territorial issues to both participants in a territorial dispute makes this a very dangerous path to tread. As noted earlier, Argentine President Galtieri attempted to use the Malvinas Islands to increase support for his leadership and for the military regime as a whole. Argentina's invasion of the islands led to a costly defeat for the Argentina military, though, and quickly led to Galtieri's removal from power. Similarly, Bolivian President Daniel Salamanca was overthrown by the Bolivian military as the Chaco War turned against Bolivia and Paraguay occupied most of the disputed Chaco Boreal.

Even where a territorial dispute does not lead to military defeat or the overthrow of a political leader, territorial disputes can create political obstacles to peace. Israel is now seeing the negative political consequences of three decades' occupation of the Golan Heights, which were captured from Syria in the 1967 Six Day War after being used for decades as a staging ground for Syrian attacks on Israel. Syria has refused to consider any peace settlement with Israel that would not return the entire Golan Heights to Syrian control, but large segments of Israeli society (encouraged by opposition political parties) oppose any attempt to trade "Israeli" land on the Heights for peace. Before his 1995 assassination, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had promised that any withdrawal from the Heights would be preceded by a popular referendum -- but even after Rabin and his advisors had apparently decided to negotiate over the future of the Heights, a large majority of the Israeli public opposed evacuation, constraining the government's efforts to reach a lasting peace (e.g., Economist 1995: 12). These examples help to demonstrate the risks inherent in pressing territorial demands, ranging from the outbreak of war (which can be costly even for the victors) to the growth of political opposition and perhaps the loss of political power.

On a more optimistic note, though, this study's findings reveal that territory and territorial issues alone do not determine the course or outcome of international relations. Territorial issues have been shown to increase the likelihood of recurrent conflict between the same adversaries, and Vasquez (1993) suggests that most pairs of enduring interstate rivals have clashed over territorial issues during their rivalries. Nonetheless, not every territorial dispute has been followed by the recurrence of militarized conflict, and not all adversaries that fought over territorial issues have ended up in an enduring rivalry. Similarly, territorial issues were shown to increase the likelihood of militarized response in interstate disputes, and to increase the

likelihood of escalation to full-scale war. Not every dispute over territorial issues escalated to war, though. Many territorial disputes have remained limited to low levels of severity, and some territorial issues have been resolved or managed without a single militarized confrontation between the involved states. Further research, along the lines of Huth (1996), should attempt to understand the factors that lead some territorial questions to violence while others are resolved peacefully.

Successful management of territorial issues may be a difficult proposition, as shown by the effects of territorial contention on escalation and conflict recurrence, but it is certainly possible. Vasquez (1993: 150-151) and Huth (1996: 189-192) offer some suggestions about how territorial disputes might be resolved or managed, ranging from the de-territorialization of disputes or the conclusion of explicitly defined diplomatic settlements of territorial questions to preventive diplomacy or intervention by external actors. As Vasquez (1993: 146-152) argues, territorial conflict need not continue for the entire relationship of two states, and former adversaries can learn to live with each other peacefully once their territorial concerns have been resolved. It is to be hoped that further scholarly research will be able to help increase our understanding of how territorial differences can be settled peacefully, and that future policymakers will be able to apply this understanding when they deal with potentially explosive territorial issues.

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**Table 1: Non-Militarized Response in Militarized Disputes**

Territorial Issues at Stake?	Response by Target State:		Total
	Non-Militarized	Militarized	
No	1146 (51.0%)	1102	2248
Yes	186 (23.4%)	609	795
Total	1332 (43.8%)	1711	3043

$\chi^2 = 181.54$  (1 d.f.,  $p < .001$ )

Odds Ratio = 3.41

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**Table 2: Militarized Dispute Escalation to War**

Territorial Issues at Stake?	Non-War Disputes	Interstate War	Total
No	1414	36 (2.5%)	1450
Yes	541	44 (7.5%)	585
Total	1955	80 (3.9%)	2035*

$\chi^2 = 28.02$  (1 d.f.,  $p < .001$ )

Odds Ratio = 3.19

\* This table reports results for the aggregated dispute-level data (2035 cases), rather than the dyadically disaggregated data (3043 cases).

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**Table 3: Militarized Dispute Outcomes**

Territorial Issues at Stake?	Decisive Outcome	Stalemate Outcome	Compromise Outcome	Total
No	406 (22.7%)	1268 (70.7)	118 (6.6)	1792
Yes	229 (32.0%)	417 (58.3)	69 (9.7)	715
Total	635 (25.3%)	1685 (67.2)	187 (7.5)	2507

$\chi^2 = 35.92$  (2 d.f.,  $p < .001$ )

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**Table 4: Militarized Dispute Recurrence**

Territorial Issues at Stake?	No Dispute within 15 Years	Followed by Recurrent Dispute	Total
No	956	1292 (57.5%)	2248
Yes	228	567 (71.3%)	795
Total	1184	1859 (61.1%)	3043

$\chi^2 = 47.38$  (1 d.f.,  $p < .001$ )

Odds Ratio = 1.84

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**Table 5: Militarized Dispute Outcomes and Dispute Recurrence**

**A. Decisive Outcomes**

Territorial Issues at Stake?	No Recurrent Dispute	Followed by Recurrent Dispute	Total
No	259	147 (36.2%)	406
Yes	108	121 (52.8%)	229
Total	365	268 (42.2%)	635

$\chi^2 = 16.60$  (1 d.f.,  $p < .001$ )

Odds Ratio = 1.97

**B. Stalemate Outcomes**

Territorial Issues at Stake?	No Recurrent Dispute	Followed by Recurrent Dispute	Total
No	433	835 (65.9%)	1268
Yes	72	345 (82.7%)	417
Total	505	1180 (70.0%)	1685

$\chi^2 = 42.61$  (1 d.f.,  $p < .001$ )

Odds Ratio = 2.49

**C. Compromise Outcomes**

Territorial Issues at Stake?	No Recurrent Dispute	Followed by Recurrent Dispute	Total
No	50	68 (57.6%)	118
Yes	24	45 (65.2%)	69
Total	74	113 (60.4%)	187

$\chi^2 = 1.05$  (1 d.f.,  $p < .31$ )

Odds Ratio = 1.38

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Many of Holsti's specific issue types can be combined into similar categories, in order to simplify analysis. For example, territorial issues are directly involved in Holsti's issues of "territory," "strategic territory," "territory (boundary)," as well as more indirectly in his issues of "national unification / consolidation," "secession / state creation," "empire creation," "commerce / navigation," "commerce / resources," and perhaps others.

<sup>2</sup> The militarized dispute data set, as currently distributed, is not organized dyadically; rather, it is organized by the entire dispute and by the individual actor in the dispute. To achieve the dyadic breakdown I matched up each actor on side A of each dispute with each actor on side B of the same dispute. I then discarded those dyadic adversaries that could not have confronted each other in the dispute because their dates of participation did not overlap or because they both had a "level of hostility" score of one, which indicates that neither side initiated any militarized action in the dispute (and is thus a participant only because it was the target of another state's militarized action). Further details about this dyadic breakdown procedure are available from the author.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that this chapter uses version 2.10 of the militarized dispute data. Previous versions of this paper employed an earlier version of the data set, with a slightly different number of cases in each table, but none of the results or conclusions have changed.

<sup>4</sup> Where several issues are at stake in the same militarized dispute, the issue that is most central to that particular dispute is coded as the primary issue.

<sup>5</sup> My "decisive" category includes four of the eight COW outcome codings: victory for side A, victory for side B, yield by side A, and yield by side B. These four categories are essentially the same type of outcome, with a clear winner and loser in each, and I have no theoretical reason to separate them. Furthermore, the small number of cases in some of these categories would make separate analysis more difficult. For the purposes of this set of analyses, I have also removed several other categories of outcome codings, because of problems in interpretation. The removed categories include "released" outcomes, in which a seized individual or ship is released during the dispute, as well as "unclear" and "missing" outcomes. A total of 536 outcomes have thus been removed from the 3043 dyadic disputes, leaving 2507 decisive, compromise, and stalemated outcomes.

<sup>6</sup> Conflict occurring many years after the end of an earlier dispute may be unrelated to the first dispute, so limits must be set on the amount of time that can elapse between disputes for the second dispute to be considered to be "recurrent" conflict. Following Hensel (1996) and similar work on the gaps that can occur between disputes for a relationship to be considered a rivalry, I limit this analysis to the first fifteen years after the conclusion of a given dispute. It should be noted that disputes ending after 1977 have not yet had a full fifteen-year period in which conflict could recur; in statistical terms these cases are considered "right-censored." Removing these censored cases from analysis does not change this study's results appreciably, though, suggesting that this censoring does not pose a major problem for these analyses.

<sup>7</sup> The proportion of dyadic disputes involving territorial issues is slightly lower than the proportion of all disputes because of the multiparty disputes in the data set. A number of disputes involved more than two participants, not all of which sought status quo alterations

over the same issues. As long as at least one of the participants on either side of a dispute sought changes in the territorial status quo, the dispute is coded as involving territorial issues, but not every dyad involved in that dispute necessarily involved territorial issues as well.

<sup>8</sup> Additional analysis reveals that this difference does not depend on the nature of my dyadic disaggregation of the militarized dispute data. Using the aggregated dispute-level data, 31.3 percent of disputes over territorial issues involve non-militarized responses by the target side of the dispute, whether this includes only one state or several. Non-militarized response remains over twice as likely using this aggregated data, with 61.3 percent of all disputes over non-territorial issues involving non-militarized responses; the difference also remains highly significant ( $X^2 = 150.78$ , 1 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ).

<sup>9</sup> Using the dyadic data instead of the aggregated data presented in Table 3, 17.1 percent of all disputes involving territorial issues escalate to war, as compared to 9.2 percent of all non-territorial disputes. The likelihood of escalation thus remains substantially higher when territorial issues are involved, and these results remain highly significant ( $X^2 = 36.64$ , 1 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ).

<sup>10</sup> Post-dispute “stability” is the time (in years) elapsed between the end of one dispute and the outbreak of the next dispute between the same two adversaries (Maoz 1984, Hensel 1994). As with the analysis of dispute recurrence, I limit this analysis to a maximum stability period of fifteen years. For those right-censored cases where this study’s temporal domain ends (at the conclusion of 1992) without the outbreak of renewed conflict, but with less than fifteen years of stability, post-dispute stability is measured as lasting through 1992. I ran separate analyses while leaving out these cases, in order to see whether these cases affected the overall results, but there was no appreciable change in the results without these cases.