

**The Evolution of Territorial Claims  
and Armed Conflict between Neighbors**

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## **The Evolution of Territorial Claims and Armed Conflict between Neighbors**

**Abstract:** While geographic proximity is widely regarded as making armed conflict more likely, I argue that the impact of proximity depends on the status of the border between two states. Conflict should be most likely between two states (holding proximity constant) while they have unresolved territorial claims. But once those claims are resolved, conflict -- even over non-territorial issues -- should be less likely than before, particularly when the claims were resolved definitively through an agreement or military action. These expectations are supported by the conflict behavior of states in the Americas and Western Europe.

*"We can change history but not geography. We can change our friends but not our neighbors. We have seen hostility for years. Now friendship must be given a chance."*

*--Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India (22 February 1989)*

International relations scholars have long recognized a connection between borders and armed conflict. Research in the 1960s and 1970s showed that states with more borders tend to experience more conflict, and more recent work on individual borders shows that neighbors are much more conflict-prone than more distant states. Yet a nation-state's neighbors change only infrequently, which makes it difficult for borders to explain such time-varying phenomena as militarized conflict.

This paper explores the changing relationship between borders and armed conflict, focusing on contention over the border itself. While the border itself is under contention between two neighbors, they should be relatively more likely to experience high levels of conflict, but conflict levels should be reduced greatly once the border is resolved. This paper investigates this expectation using nearly two centuries of history in the Americas and Western Europe, and finds strong support. Armed conflict between neighbors is most likely while territorial claims are ongoing; once all territorial claims are resolved, states generally experience a sharp dropoff in conflict over even non-territorial issues. The paper concludes with a number of suggestions for improvements or extensions beyond these admittedly preliminary analyses.

### **Theoretical Development**

International borders have been recognized as contributing to armed conflict

systematically at least since Lewis Fry Richardson's (1960) *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels*. Scholars have emphasized the connection between geographic proximity and conflict, often focusing on the level of international interactions (e.g., Richardson 1960; Starr and Most 1976, 1978). States are likely to interact much more with nearby states than with more distant states, along both the cooperative side of interaction (such as trade) and the conflictual side (such as armed conflict). A second explanation for a proximity-conflict relationship builds on Boulding's (1962) "loss of strength gradient," which suggests that states' effective power diminishes with distance; to Starr and Most, this suggests that more distant states should be less threatening overall, while more proximate states should create greater risk and uncertainty for leaders (with a much higher perceived risk of being threatened or attacked by neighbors than by more distant states). These general arguments about proximity increasing interactions, risk and uncertainty, and conflict are thought to be even more relevant for states that share a border. Furthermore, there is a very real risk that events in neighboring states can diffuse across the border, which is not possible with more distant states.

Empirically, Richardson (1960) and Starr and Most (1976, 1978) report a strong correlation between a state's number of borders (homeland, colonial, or total) and its war involvement. More recent research on the impact of individual borders reveals that borders significantly increase the outbreak of militarized disputes or wars, the escalation of disputes to war, and the diffusion of wars to new participants (e.g., Bremer 1992; Diehl 1985; Siverson and Starr 1990). Bremer (1992) went so far as to recommend contiguity as a standard control variable in the quantitative study of conflict, and many scholars treat neighbors as "politically relevant dyads" for the study of other hypothesized causes of conflict (Lemke and Reed 2001).

While the evidence supports a linkage between borders and conflict, though, there are shortcomings with this perspective, particularly concerning the relatively unchanging nature of international borders (Vasquez 1995, Hensel 2000). While the exact course of a given border may be altered over time, states' neighbors change only rarely; two states that share a border in one year are likely to do so ten, twenty, or fifty years later.<sup>1</sup> This relative invariance makes it

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<sup>1</sup> Colonial borders have frequently been replaced through the process of decolonization. Where land borders between nation-states have been created or terminated, though, the changes have generally involved the absorption of states by larger states (as with the unification of Germany or Italy) or secession (as with the breakup of the Soviet Union). Few borders simply disappear, as the historical Brazil-Ecuador border did through a series of territorial changes. Note that this is

difficult to associate borders with phenomena that change much more rapidly such as international conflict (or, for that matter, international trade or cooperation).<sup>2</sup> An important answer that has been proposed is a focus on the political status of borders, specifically emphasizing territorial claims.

Studying territorial claims is part of a concern with the issues over which nation-states disagree, defined as "the stakes over which two or more parties contend" (Holsti 1991: 18) or "what states choose to fight over" (Diehl 1992: 333). Numerous issues arise between states. Luard (1986) and Holsti (1991) identify dozens of issues that have been at stake in modern wars, ranging from territory to navigation, changing (or defending) governments, protecting nationals or commercial interests abroad, protecting ethnic or religious kinsmen, and enforcing (or revising) treaty terms. To many scholars, territory is the most salient (important) and most conflict-prone issue (Diehl 1991; Vasquez 1993; Hensel 2000; Hensel et al. 2008). Among other things, territory often has tangible value to the participants in the form of strategic military positions or valuable economic resources, as well as intangible value in the form of historical importance to one's state or ties to one's ethnic, religious, or linguistic kinsmen. Few other issues can match this volatile combination of both tangible and intangible value, and as a result, territory has the added importance of reputational value -- whereby showing weakness over one territorial claim may be perceived as a signal of weakness over other issues (territorial or otherwise).

Research suggests that territory is the most frequent issue in interstate war and a common issue in militarized disputes, although advanced democracies are generally able to avoid fighting over territorial issues (Luard 1986; Holsti 1991; Mitchell and Prins 1999; Hensel 2000). Other research shows that disputes over territorial issues are more likely to reach high levels of escalation and to be followed by recurrent conflict between the same adversaries (Hensel 1996, 2000; Senese 1996, 2005; Senese and Vasquez 2003, 2008; Vasquez and Henahan 2001). Finally, several studies have examined interactions over territory, examining conditions under

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not to argue that the course of borders rarely changes -- there have been hundreds of territorial changes along interstate land borders -- but that the borders themselves rarely disappear.

<sup>2</sup> To be fair, most work on borders does not make an explicit causal argument. For example, Starr and Most (1976: 588) emphasize that borders do not necessarily *cause* either conflict or cooperation: "The argument is only meant to imply that a border creates a certain structure of risks and opportunities in which various interactions appear to be more or less likely to occur."

which states are able to manage their territorial issues peacefully as well as those under which states are most likely to fight (e.g., Goertz and Diehl 1990, 1992; Kacowicz 1994; Huth 1996; Hensel 2001; Huth and Allee 2002).

While most research on territorial issues has focused on contention over the territory itself, here I examine the impact of territorial claims on conflict of any type. In particular, I am interested in how the settlement of perhaps the most salient question between two states affects their overall relationship and the likelihood of future conflict over any issue, not just over the same territorial claim. I now present specific hypotheses about this relationship.

### **Hypotheses**

This paper's theoretical approach begins with the issues approach to world politics (Hensel 2001; Hensel et al. 2008), which suggests that foreign policy is issue-directed: state leaders make foreign policy decisions in order to achieve their goals over specific issues, and a variety of cooperative and conflictual foreign policy tools are available to leaders for pursuing these issue-related goals. States -- at least those with any regular level of interaction -- almost always disagree over at least one contentious issue. Some issues seem unlikely to lead to militarized conflict, such as disagreements over the arrest of a foreign national, over the actions of a corporation in one state that may affect citizens in the other state, or over agricultural subsidies that may give one state's farmers an unfair advantage. Other issues may be more dangerous, as when one state seeks to overthrow the other's government or the states disagree over territory that is believed to contain vast deposits of oil, that contains large populations of both states' ethnic or religious kinsmen, or that is viewed as an integral part of both states' history or national identity.

Whatever the issues under contention between them, states need to choose appropriate techniques to manage or settle their issues, which could range from bilateral negotiations to seeking the binding or non-binding assistance of third parties or employing militarized threats or actions. The present study focuses on the decision to use militarized conflict to achieve issue-related goals, but future work could also benefit from consideration of other techniques.

A variety of past research suggests that territorial issues are more likely than other issues to lead to armed conflict, and that the resulting conflicts are more likely to escalate to serious levels. Research on territory has not directly examined the way that territorial claims affect other

interactions between two states, though. If territory is as salient and dangerous an issue as scholars suggest, then it is possible that contention over this issue should also affect other issues between the same states, particularly to the extent that these other issues relate to the territorial issue. For example, problems concerning migration or fishing rights along disputed borders would seem to be more salient (and more conflictual) than similar problems between neighbors whose borders have been accepted for decades or longer. Even problems over seemingly unrelated issues -- such as trade policy or support for rebels -- would seem to take on added importance when the opponent is also involved in a territorial claim at the same time.

This possibility suggests a partial explanation for some of the variation in conflict behavior that relatively unchanging borders can not explain. Even if neighbors are more likely to engage in conflict overall, as suggested by a variety of previous research, they may be much more likely to do so while they are involved in territorial claims than after their border has been settled. That is, even though they continue to share a border (and thus most issues between them should generally take on greater salience than similar issues with more distant states), they would be much less likely to choose militarized techniques to manage their issues once their border is accepted by both sides.

Vasquez (1993: 147) makes this point clearly: "So long as there is a struggle over contiguous territory, then world politics is a struggle for power, but once boundaries are settled, world politics has other characteristics. Conflict and disagreement are still present, but violence is less likely and power transitions no longer war producing." Similarly, he argues (Vasquez 1993: 152), "for most neighbors, once territorial issues are resolved, peaceful relations eventually ensue. They learn to live with each other." Gibler (1996, 1997, Gibler and Vasquez 1998) investigates this possibility by studying territorial settlement alliances (alliances with explicit territorial provisions, either transferring territory or recognizing the territorial status quo), finding that armed conflict is less likely after such alliance treaties. These findings are instructive, although there are only 27 such alliances since 1816, and it is not clear how many of these ended active territorial claims rather than simply formalizing an already accepted status quo.

The first hypothesis concerns the impact of territorial claims on conflict. Beyond the well-known research on conflict over territory itself, territorial claims may alter the entire relationship between the claimants, increasing the risk of conflict while they are underway -- and

potentially offering a basis for better cooperation once they are resolved. This hypothesis addresses changes in conflict behavior between the same adversaries when they are engaged in territorial claims with this same behavior when they have no such claims; comparing these two periods essentially allows the analysis to control for the impact of proximity and interactions by limiting analysis to a set of cases that clearly have frequent interactions with each other. Evidence that these states are especially conflict-prone while their claims are underway and then become much less conflict-prone after they are resolved would be consistent with this paper's suggestion that the territorial claim is a central influence on conflict behavior, while the absence of such evidence would indicate that proximity and/or interactions are likely more responsible.

*Hypothesis 1: Armed conflict between states is much more likely when they disagree over territorial sovereignty than before or after such disagreements, particularly when the claimed territory is more salient.*

Although conflict may be much more likely while territorial claims are ongoing than after they have ended, how claims end may have an important impact. A variety of research suggests that how two nation-states resolve their differences affects the likelihood of renewed conflict afterward. Although this research has focused almost exclusively on the aftermath of militarized disputes or wars between states, the general principle seems likely to apply to the settlement of territorial claims as well, and this may help to explain some of the variance in conflict behavior after the end of territorial claims.

Research on recurrent conflict generally argues that the settlement of one conflict makes the outbreak of another conflict between the same adversaries either more or less likely. Maoz (1984: 228-229), for example, begins with the assumption that armed conflict occurs because the two sides disagree over the status quo and at least one seeks to change it. He then suggests that how a conflict is terminated affects subsequent relations between the adversaries: "The outcomes of disputes reflect to a large extent the degree to which the objectives of each party have been satisfied," whether by a victory that allows the winner to impose its preferred settlement unilaterally, a compromise that settles the issue through bilateral agreement, or a stalemate that fails to resolve the issue to either side's satisfaction.

Such studies have generally found evidence that conflict outcomes affect post-conflict stability (Maoz 1984; Hensel 1994, 1999; Werner 1999; Fortna 2003; Senese and Quackenbush 2003). Settlements where both sides agree to a compromise tend to reduce the likelihood of renewed conflict. Settlements where one side decisively defeats the other in battle also seem to reduce the likelihood of conflict in the immediate aftermath, although this may be at least partly because of the need to rearm and prepare for a future challenge. More dangerous are conflicts that ended in stalemate, where neither side was able to achieve most of its goals, and neither side was decisively defeated.

Similar processes also seem likely to influence territorial issues. Indeed, the ending of territorial claims -- where the issue under contention is resolved through imposed settlements, negotiated compromises, or other techniques -- might fit the general theoretical story better than the outcomes of militarized conflict, which may end the fighting without resolving the underlying issue. With respect to borders, Vasquez (1993: 147) suggests that "there is a curvilinear relationship between the use of war to establish a border and the recurrence of disputes, with settlement by the two extremes of overwhelming victory and diplomatic accommodation both associated with peace, but the use of force short of overwhelming victory associated with recurring disputes." He later expands on this point, arguing (1993: 149, 151) that "settling territorial disputes non-violently should lead to a long-term peaceful relationship" and that "How neighboring states deal with their concerns shapes the relationship they will have and helps construct the world in which they live." Once states manage their fundamental questions of territorial sovereignty, then, they should be able to address the other issues between them in a more constructive way. This discussion suggests the second hypothesis:

***Hypothesis 2:** Armed conflict between states that were previously engaged in a territorial claim is less likely if the claim was resolved through peaceful (bilateral or third party) or military techniques than if the claim was resolved some other way (e.g., by being dropped unilaterally).*

### **Research Design**

These hypotheses will be evaluated using logistic regression (logit) analysis. These



analyses cover the period from 1816-2001, which is the length of time covered by the needed data sets. Although some of these data sets are available for the entire world, the territorial claims data set is still being collected and is not complete for every region. This data set currently covers the Western Hemisphere and Western Europe, so the analyses are limited to these regions.

### **Dependent Variable**

The primary dependent variable to be examined in these analyses is the outbreak of a militarized interstate dispute, as collected in version 3.1 of the Correlates of War (COW) project's Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) data set (Ghosn et al. 2004). Militarized interstate disputes are conflicts between nation-states that involve the explicit threat, display, or use of military force. Two groups of MIDs are considered, in order to provide as fair a test of the hypotheses as possible. The first set of analyses considers all MIDs between two particular states, regardless of the issues at stake in any given MID. This should provide a good general overview of the impact of territorial claims on armed conflict between the claimants, whether this conflict involves the claimed territory directly or addresses unrelated issues.

But because a variety of research has suggested that militarized disputes over territory are especially frequent and dangerous, and that territorial claims are especially likely to produce armed conflict over the territory in question, a second set of analyses focuses only on MIDs that the COW project identifies as involving non-territorial issues. This will allow us to observe the impact of settling territorial issues on armed conflict over other issues, without the chance that the results will be distorted by comparing a period with an especially high risk of conflict over territory against a period without any such risk.

### **Independent Variables**

The main independent variable involves the occurrence of territorial claims, as measured by the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) project (Hensel 2001, Hensel et al. 2008). Briefly, there are three requirements for a territorial claim to exist between two nation-states: there must be explicit statements demanding permanent sovereignty over territory, these statements must be made by official government representatives who are authorized to make foreign policy, and the statements must address a specific piece of territory.

The impact of territorial claims on conflict behavior is measured by several dummy variables. One indicates whether at least one territorial claim is currently underway between the states; the other indicates whether at least one claim has already occurred between them but all such claims have ended. Analyses of conflict during ongoing territorial claims will also consider the salience of the claimed territory, as past research (e.g. Hensel 2001) suggests that armed conflict is much more likely over highly salient territory than over territory with less value. The ICOW project has created a measure of salience that incorporates six attributes that increase the value of territory, with each contributing one point to the salience index for each claimant that qualifies -- producing a scale from 0-12 (Hensel 2001; Hensel and Mitchell 2005).

Hypothesis 2, on the impact of claim resolution, will be tested with several dummy variables indicating how the claim ended. Corresponding to work on decisive conflict outcomes, one variable will indicate whether the last claim between two states ended through organized violence, which could mean either that the claim ended immediately after a military victory or that a military victory led to the imposition of an agreement that confirmed the outcome. Corresponding to work on peaceful settlements, additional variables will indicate whether the last claim between two states ended peacefully through either a bilateral agreement or a third party decision that both sides accepted (including cases that ended through plebiscites in the claimed territory). The final category includes all other ways that territorial claims can end, which generally means that the claim ended without any military victory or peaceful agreement; examples include claims that were dropped unilaterally or that are no longer relevant (e.g., because an island disappeared beneath the sea or because the claimed territory was transferred to a third state).

### **Control Variables**

The analyses control for the impact of democracy and relative capabilities, several of the "usual suspects" that are commonly included in quantitative analyses of conflict. Armed conflict is considered much less likely between two democracies, and much more likely between relatively evenly matched states. Joint democracy is measured here by the Polity 4 index of institutionalized democracy; a given pair of states is considered jointly democratic when both states receive scores of at least six out of a possible ten on this index, and nondemocratic when at

least one of the two states does not. Two states' relative capabilities are measured using the COW National Material Capabilities data set, which calculates a Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC) score that indicates each state's share of world power averaged across six indicators: military personnel, military expenditures, iron/steel production, energy consumption, total population, and urban population. The specific measure used here indicates the percentage of the two states' total capabilities held by the stronger side, which can range from .50 (exact equality) to 1.0 (the stronger state has all of the capabilities).

I also control for the proximity between the states using contiguity, based on the COW Direct Contiguity and Colonial Contiguity data sets (Stinnett et al. 2002). Following typical international conflict research, "borders" are measured by both land borders (where the two states' territories directly adjoin each other) and sea borders (where their territories are separated by less than 400 miles of open sea, which would mean that their 200-mile exclusive economic zones directly adjoin each other). Homeland borders are those that separate two independent states' homelands, while colonial borders have a colony or dependent possession on at least one side.<sup>3</sup>

### **Empirical Analyses**

Hypothesis 1 suggests that armed conflict is more likely between two states while they are involved in an ongoing territorial claim than before or after the claim, and Hypothesis 2 suggests that the aftermath depends on how the claim was settled. Table 1 presents the results of a logit model that evaluates these hypotheses, and Table 2 helps interpret these results by showing the predicted probability of conflict in certain theoretically important situations.

[Tables 1 and 2 about here]

Table 1 presents two models with different ways of measuring the impact of settling a territorial claim. Model I simply includes a dummy variable to distinguish the years after the last territorial claim in a dyad ended, while Model II replaces this with a series of dummy variables to capture the different ways that the claim might have ended. Both models generally produce similar results, with conflict being reduced significantly both by joint democracy and by a greater

<sup>3</sup> When states share multiple types of borders, homeland borders take precedence over colonial borders; states are only coded as sharing a colonial border if they do not also share a homeland border. Similarly, land borders are considered to take precedence over sea borders, so states are only coded as sharing a sea border if they do not also share a land border.

capability imbalance, but neither type of contiguity having a systematic effect.<sup>4</sup>

In both models, Hypothesis 1 is supported by a positive and statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) effect for the salience of an ongoing claim, indicating both that conflict is more likely while a claim is ongoing and that this effect is even stronger for more salient claims. As Table 2 indicates, even the lowest salience value in the data set produces a higher risk of conflict compared to the years before a claim began, and the risk of conflict is roughly four times as great for the highest possible salience value.

Turning to the impact of settling territorial claims, Model I reports an insignificant effect ( $p < .73$ ), but it becomes clear from Model II that this lack of significance is because different types of outcomes cancel each other out. As suggested by Hypothesis 2, Model II shows significantly decreased risks of conflict after claims that ended by bilateral negotiations ( $p < .01$ ), third party activity ( $p < .07$ ), and militarized action ( $p < .03$ ), and a significantly increased risk after claims that ended in any other way ( $p < .001$ ). As the predicted probabilities in Table II make clear, the annual probability of conflict before claims is .038, with this risk being halved to .019 after the ending of claims through bilateral negotiations or armed conflict, and falling by roughly one-fourth to .026 after the ending of claims through third party activity. The risk of future conflict rises substantially to .058, though, for claims that end in any other way.<sup>5</sup>

Tables 1 and 2 provide general support for each of the hypotheses being evaluated. As noted earlier, though, they may not provide the fairest test of the aftermath of territorial claim settlements. The period when a territorial claim is ongoing clearly produces a higher risk of armed conflict when compared to earlier or later periods in the same states' relationship, but much of the observed conflict during that time involves the territorial issue itself. As noted earlier, a better test of the impact of settling territorial claims on the claimants' conflict patterns would exclude these conflicts over the territorial issue itself and examine just conflict over non-territorial issues. This is presented in Tables 3 and 4.

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<sup>4</sup> This lack of a significant result for contiguity is probably not too meaningful. It must be remembered that every dyad in this analysis had enough overlapping interests and close enough proximity to be involved in a territorial claim. As a result, there may not be enough meaningful variation in interactions or reachability to see much of a difference from proximity in this table.

<sup>5</sup> This result is quite intriguing, although more detailed analysis of the involved cases needs to be done before we can draw any conclusions about how such claim terminations produce so much conflict in their aftermath.

[Tables 3 and 4 about here]

The first finding of interest in Table 3 is that there is no systematic impact of the salience of ongoing claims on the outbreak of non-territorial conflict during the claim, in either Model I ( $p < .28$ ) or Model II ( $p < .99$ ). During a territorial claim, then, the risk of non-territorial conflict between the claimants seems to be largely unchanged from the time before the claim started, and claim salience does not seem to affect this systematically.<sup>6</sup> The control variables also perform much like they did in Table III.

More interesting (and important), though, the results for the method of claim termination show that how a border is settled has an important impact on the prospects for conflict over even non-territorial issues. Non-territorial conflict is significantly less likely after claims that ended by bilateral negotiations ( $p < .01$ ), third party activity ( $p < .09$ ), and militarized action ( $p < .04$ ), and significantly more likely after claims that ended in any other way ( $p < .01$ ). The predicted probabilities are also very similar to those reported in Table II. This suggests strong support for the notion that territorial issues are fundamental to interstate relationships, and that when such issues are settled to each side's satisfaction (perhaps grudgingly in the case of military defeat), their overall relationship can improve greatly even over questions that have no direct relationship to the territorial issue itself.

Finally, it is worth considering the issues over which states fight after their territorial claims are ended. The dyads in this study became involved in a total of 170 militarized disputes after the end of their last claim(s). I have not yet undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the issues that led to conflict after territorial issues were resolved, but some preliminary observations emerge from a brief examination of these cases. Most common seemed to be disputes that involved either efforts by one state to overthrow the other's regime, to end its neighbor's support for such efforts, or to pursue rebels across the border. Also common were disputes involving the spillover of domestic or interstate conflict across borders, typically as one side targets a neighbor's citizens or companies (whether because it believes that the neighbor supports its

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<sup>6</sup> If the salience measure in Model I is replaced by a simple dummy variable indicating whether or not a claim is ongoing, there is a significant increase in non-territorial conflict ( $p < .06$ ). This effect disappears once the type of claim termination process is considered as in Model II, though ( $p < .48$ ). The apparent significance of the ongoing claim from this dummy variable, then, seems to relate to its difference from the overall average of the different types of claim aftermath; when the positive and negative aftermaths are disaggregated, the claim period returns to insignificance.

opponent, to attract attention to its cause, or as collateral damage). A few involved questions of river navigation, fishing rights, cross-border surveillance (violations of airspace or territorial waters), or minority rights. Finally, some disputes involved distant issues unrelated to the border, such as the Munich Crisis that involved France and Germany but concerned Czechoslovakia. Neighbors clearly have many reasons to fight after resolving their territorial issues, although the likelihood of conflict is much lower in any given year after borders are settled.

### **Discussion**

This study has been a preliminary effort to investigate the relationship between borders and armed conflict, emphasizing the role of contention over the border itself. Hypothesis 1 suggests that armed conflict should be more likely between states while they are involved in territorial claims. Hypothesis 2 then suggests that conflict between former claimants should be much less likely afterward if their claim ended through either peaceful or violent techniques, consistent with research on recurrent conflict and rivalry.

Both hypotheses received empirical support. Armed conflict is much more likely while a territorial claim is ongoing, which is consistent with a variety of research on the conflict propensity of territorial issues. This increase seems to stem largely from conflict over the territory itself, though, with a strong effect in Table 1's analysis of all conflict but no systematic impact in Table 3's analysis of non-territorial issues only. The way that territorial claims are settled has a large impact on future conflict propensity, both overall and when examining only non-territorial issues. Once a claim is resolved through peaceful bilateral or third party techniques or through military threats or action, future conflict between the claimants is much less likely than before or during the claim.

These findings are consistent with past research on both borders and territorial issues, and offer a new twist on conflict management or settlement -- complementing work on conflict outcomes with similar findings focused on the settlement of territorial issues. These findings also suggest general insights into international borders. Other papers at the *Lineae Terrarum* international borders conference where this paper was first presented covered topics that range from migration to economic integration, from cross-border crime to cultural assimilation, and from health policy to environmental challenges. Each subject has caused serious disagreements

between local or national officials across borders, and some have led to armed conflict. While armed conflict is always possible, though, this study's findings suggest that the risk is greatly reduced once territorial claims are resolved. While the U.S. and Mexico may disagree over everything from trucking regulations to immigration or the flow of the Rio Grande, for example, the fact that their territorial claims have ended suggests that there is little chance of these disagreements erupting into armed conflict.

Finally, this paper has left plenty of room for future research. This study's analysis of the impact of ongoing territorial claims has focused only on the most salient claim that is ongoing between the states at any given point in time, and the analysis of ended claims has focused only on the ending of the last claim between two states. Many adversaries have multiple claims at the same time, and future work could benefit from examining how the ending of one such claim can affect the management of the others.

The only variation in territorial claim management that has been studied in this preliminary research has been the salience of the claimed territory, in order to allow this paper to investigate the basic patterns that are at work. Much more detail could be added, perhaps involving the duration or militarization of claims; a claim that lasted longer and led to repeated armed conflicts might have a very different aftermath than a short claim that ended without any threat or use of force. The length of time elapsed since the end of a past claim may also have an important impact, potentially reducing the risk of future conflict even more as time passes without territorial contention.

Another potential improvement would be a more detailed investigation of what happens after claims have ended. It is possible that the same territorial claim could be restarted, perhaps with the losing state seeking to recover its previous territory, or one of the states could begin a claim over another territory held by its former adversary. Even if the border remains settled, the ending of contention over territory might affect the likelihood or militarization of other issues. Such possibilities could easily be studied using the ICOW data on territorial, river, and maritime claims, potentially from the perspective of longer-term relationships like "issue rivalries" that incorporate contention over multiple issues between the same states (e.g. Hensel, Mitchell, and Thies 2010).

Finally, beyond focusing on the management of other contentious issues or the possibility

of additional militarized conflict, future research could also benefit from a variety of other possible consequences of settling territorial claims. Gibler (2007) and Gibler and Tir (2010) suggest that the ending of territorial threat creates the conditions for democratization to flourish, and their work might profitably be extended through the use of territorial claims data. Other forms of interstate interaction might also be examined, such as international trade; it seems reasonable to expect that the tension and distrust that characterize highly salient territorial claims should reduce trade between the claimants, and that settling the border should produce a corresponding increase in trade. Simmons (2005) has shown that territorial claims can reduce bilateral trade well below the levels that would otherwise have been expected, and a useful followup would involve studying the extent to which ending these claims can reverse these reductions and potentially create grounds for much greater levels of trade and cooperation.

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**Table 1: Militarized Conflict in Territorial Claim Dyads**

Variable	Model I	Model II
	Coefficient (Robust S.E.)	Coefficient (Robust S.E.)
Constant	- 2.02 (0.31)***	- 1.86 (0.31)***
<i>Ongoing Territorial Claims</i>		
Salience of ongoing claim	0.13 (0.02)***	0.11 (0.01)***
<i>Ended Territorial Claims</i>		
Post-claim dummy	0.05 (0.14)	---
Ended via bilateral negotiations	---	- 0.68 (0.21)***
Ended via 3rd party action	---	- 0.38 (0.20)*
Ended via militarized action	---	- 0.70 (0.32)**
Ended some other way	---	0.46 (0.14)***
<i>Control Variables</i>		
Joint democracy	- 0.70 (0.14)***	- 0.67 (0.14)***
Capability imbalance	- 1.67 (0.30)***	- 1.88 (0.31)***
Homeland contiguity	0.01 (0.13)	0.16 (0.14)
Colonial contiguity only	0.01 (0.15)	0.09 (0.15)
N:	12,419	12,419
LL:	- 2239.92	- 2223.58
X <sup>2</sup> :	267.38	281.91
Prob.:	p<.001 (6 d.f.)	p<.001 (9 d.f.)

\*\*\* p < .01; \*\* p < .05; \* p < .10

**Table 2: Predicted Probability of Conflict**

<u>Status of Territorial Claim(s) in Dyad</u>	<u>Model I</u>	<u>Model II</u>
No previous or ongoing terr. claim:	.032	.037
Ongoing terr. claim (salience=1):	.037	.041
Ongoing terr. claim (salience=7):	.078	.079
Ongoing terr. claim (salience=12):	.140	.132
After claim(s) ended:	.034	---
Ended via bilateral negotiations	---	.019
Ended via 3rd party action	---	.026
Ended via militarized action	---	.019
Ended some other way	---	.058

*Notes*

- Predicted probabilities computed for each variable with the MFX command in STATA 11.1, with all other variables are held at their mean or modal values.

**Table 3: Militarized Conflict over Non-territorial Issues in Territorial Claim Dyads**

Variable	Model I	Model II
	Coefficient (Robust S.E.)	Coefficient (Robust S.E.)
Constant	- 2.35 (0.38)***	- 2.15 (0.38)***
<i>Ongoing Territorial Claims</i>		
Salience of ongoing claim	0.02 (0.02)	.000 (0.02)
<i>Ended Territorial Claims</i>		
Post-claim dummy	0.07 (0.15)	---
Ended via bilateral negotiations	---	- 0.67 (0.22)***
Ended via 3rd party action	---	- 0.36 (0.21)*
Ended via militarized action	---	- 0.67 (0.32)**
Ended some other way	---	0.41 (0.15)***
<i>Control Variables</i>		
Joint democracy	- 0.70 (0.16)***	- 0.65 (0.17)***
Capability imbalance	- 1.22 (0.38)***	- 1.47 (0.39)***
Homeland contiguity	- 0.06 (0.15)	0.12 (0.15)
Colonial contiguity only	0.02 (0.17)	0.10 (0.17)
N:	12,419	12,419
LL:	- 1724.77	- 1710.41
X <sup>2</sup> :	41.67	68.98
Prob.:	p<.001 (6 d.f.)	p<.001 (9 d.f.)

\*\*\* p < .01; \*\* p < .05; \* p < .10

**Table 4: Predicted Probability of Conflict**

<u>Status of Territorial Claim(s) in Dyad</u>	<u>Model I</u>	<u>Model II</u>
No previous or ongoing terr. claim:	.031	.037
Ongoing terr. claim (salience=1):	.032	.037
Ongoing terr. claim (salience=7):	.036	.037
Ongoing terr. claim (salience=12):	.040	.037
After claim(s) ended:	.034	---
Ended via bilateral negotiations	---	.019
Ended via 3rd party action	---	.026
Ended via militarized action	---	.019
Ended some other way	---	.055

*Notes*

- Predicted probabilities computed for each variable with the MFX command in STATA 11.1, with all other variables are held at their mean or modal values.