

**Who Cares?: Domestic Politics and the Management of Territorial Claims**

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## Domestic Politics and the Management of Territorial Claims

### **Abstract:**

Although territorial claims have been receiving an increasing amount of scholarly attention, most research has focused on militarized conflict over territory, with little emphasis on the peaceful management of territorial claims. In this paper we examine the impact of domestic political structures on the management of territorial claims through a variety of methods, ranging from bilateral negotiations and binding or non-binding third party assistance to militarized conflict. A variety of literature suggests that democratic states can make more credible international commitments, at least partly because they face greater audience costs at home, and that democracies share norms of peaceful conflict management. We examine whether these general observations apply to the management of territory, which has often been described as so salient to leaders (and presumably to their constituents) that it is difficult to compromise or to abandon one's claim.

We expect that – *ceteris paribus* – two democracies engaged in a territorial claim will be more likely to cooperate to resolve the claim than will other types of claimants, while mixed (democratic-authoritarian) dyads will be least cooperative. Importantly, though (and contrary to the conventional wisdom about democratic norms of peaceful conflict resolution), democratic dyads will be more likely to pursue their peaceful settlements through bilateral negotiations rather than third party assistance, as the domestic audience costs that they face make it difficult to reject a potentially unfavorable settlement awarded by the third party. Given these audience costs, we also expect that attempts to settle territorial claims may in turn affect domestic politics, with unsuccessful claim management increasing the probability that leaders will lose power.

We test these expectations using data on territorial claims in the Western Hemisphere from 1816-1992, and find extensive support. We find that democratic dyads are more likely than other types of claimants to attempt peaceful settlement of their claims, and that this difference is even more pronounced with respect to bilateral negotiations with no third party involvement. Democratic dyads are less likely to reach agreement in their settlement attempts than are other types of adversaries, but more likely to carry out the agreements that they do reach. Democratic leaders are also better able than authoritarian leaders to remain in political power after an unfavorable agreement, at least early in their term in office, although losing a territorial claim through violence increases the risk that a leader of any type will lose power. We conclude by discussing the implications of our analyses for future research.

## **Domestic Politics and the Management of Territorial Claims**

A great deal of research in world politics has been influenced by the assumptions of realism. In this model, the state is a single, unitary actor operating under a system of international anarchy. Because there is no supranational body to enforce laws and agreements, cooperation is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Instead, states must pursue their national security through the accumulation of power. At the same time that realism has come to dominate our understanding of international relations, it has also been challenged by those who argue that its parsimonious explanation of how states operate is too general to explain reality.

Realism has been challenged on several fronts, two of them which form the basis for this analysis. On the one hand, several international scholars have argued quite convincingly that the characteristics of states play a much more important role in determining how states act in the international system than is given by realist thought. Political leaders are simultaneously playing a two-level game (Putnam 1988). Leaders must be concerned with how the policies they pursue at the international level are received by their domestic constituents. At the most basic level, all state leaders must take into consideration how their foreign policies are evaluated by the domestic audiences responsible for their maintenance in office. Citizens evaluate their leaders' performance not only on domestic issues, but also on a variety of foreign policy issues. There is also reason to believe that the relationship between domestic leaders and their constituents has a very significant impact on the ability of leaders to pursue foreign policy options. At the international level, for two leaders involved in international negotiations over any issue, they must both come to an agreement that both find acceptable. If this were not difficult enough, both leaders must also be concerned with how the domestic political considerations figure into the resolution of the issue at stake. Basically, political leaders are constrained by two primary factors at the domestic level: policy ratification and leader selection (Putnam 1988; Hagan 1993).

Previous analyses have found that, in general, leaders of democratic states are more constrained in their foreign policy options than are nondemocratic leaders (e.g., Fearon 1994; Gaubatz 1996; Schultz 1998; Smith 1998; Leeds 1999). A leading explanation is that democratic leaders face greater audience costs than leaders in other types of political systems. A leader will incur audience costs if the agreements or policies she pursues at the international level fail to materialize or if they are deemed unacceptable by those upon which she ultimately relies to

survive in office – the voters. What does this mean if domestic audiences will hold political leaders accountable for less than desirable foreign policy outcomes?

We would expect to find that based upon the constraints leaders face and the potentially harmful audience costs of policy failures, both democratic and autocratic leaders will pursue vastly different foreign policy options. Several previous studies have noted the tendency of democracies to resolve their disputes peacefully, so that is not our primary goal (though it will be addressed to some extent). Instead, our interest lies with how political leaders, faced with different levels of political constraint and susceptible to audience costs, attempt to resolve the *issues* over which they disagree through a variety of conflict resolution mechanisms.

An issue-based approach to the study of world politics is the second challenge that realist thinking has confronted over the last several decades (O’Leary 1976; Mansbach and Vasquez 1981; Diehl 1992). Proponents of the issue-based approach argue that “world politics involves contention over many different types of issues, with very different implications for foreign policy decisions and interactions, and that an adequate understanding of interstate conflict and cooperation requires a focus on issues” (Hensel 2001:3). Though scholars have identified several issues over which states contend – maritime, economic, ethnic/nationalist, resource-based, and territory, among others – they have been less concerned with exploring how political leaders working under different levels of political constraint work to resolve their disputes. Instead, the main focus has been on the salience or the value which states assign to a specific piece of territory, and how that issue’s salience leads to the outbreak of armed conflict.

In particular, territorial issues have been argued to be more salient overall than most or all other issue types (e.g., Vasquez 1993; Hensel 1996, 2001). Territorial issues often involve contention over territory that is seen as valuable for both tangible and intangible reasons, and they may be seen by leaders as important to creating or maintaining a state’s reputation; compromising or backing down on such an important issue as territory may be seen as indicating even greater weakness over less salient issues.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, not all territorial issues are equally salient, nor are all non-territorial issues seen as possessing low salience. Hensel, Mitchell, and Sowers (2002) discuss within-issue variance in salience, and note that there are some issues of other types that take on higher salience than some territorial issues. Nonetheless, the general consensus in the literature appears to be that territorial issues on average are more salient than other types of issues.

Several notable findings have been produced by scholars employing an issue-based approach, notably the close association between the contentiousness of territory and the outbreak of armed conflict. Some of these advancements include the findings that international wars are fought over territorial issues more frequently than any other issue in world politics (Holsti 1991), disputes involving territory often lead to long periods of recurrent militarized disputes, and that militarized disputes involving territory escalate to war more often than disputes not involving territory (Vasquez 1993; Kocs 1995; Hensel 1996; Senese 1996). Although there is substantial evidence of a close connection between territorial issues and the militarization of interstate disputes, there has been less of a focus on identifying the conditions that lead to a successful resolution of territorial disputes.

Hensel (2001) has explored how states make use of several dispute resolution mechanisms (bilateral negotiations, binding third-party action, non-binding third party action, and military conflict) to attempt to manage or settle their territorial claims. Although Hensel's main focus is on how the salience within territorial claims affects their management, he also finds that political democracy significantly increases states' propensity to manage their claims bilaterally, while it somewhat weakly influences the use of non-binding third party settlement attempts and has no impact at all on submission of claims to binding third-party decisions.

We believe that a more explicit focus on domestic considerations in the management of territorial claims is needed by scholars working in the issue-based paradigm. In the remainder of this paper we develop a variety of hypotheses that link the relationship between political leaders, domestic political audiences and the salience of territorial issues on the level of cooperation and conflict between pairs of states. Three distinct sets of hypotheses are developed and tested. First, we explore what impact regime type has on the decisions of leaders to pursue various types of settlements. Is there a discernible difference between how democracies and nondemocracies make use of peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms or more escalatory policies (armed conflict) to resolve their contentious issues? Our second question centers on the effectiveness of different settlement attempts. Are democracies less likely to enter into agreements in general because of their reluctance to reach international agreements that they see as having a high likelihood of failure? Finally, we examine the political consequences of settling a territorial claim. Given the frequent suggestion that territorial issues may be the most salient issue between states to war, we

ask whether the manner in which such issues are resolved affects each leader's ability to remain in office.

### **Hypotheses on the Management of Territorial Claims**

In the following section, we develop several hypotheses related to how leaders managing their territorial claims are impacted by domestic factors. First, we address how domestic political factors affect the type of settlement leaders pursue while managing their disputes. Second, we develop a number of hypotheses about which settlement attempts are likely to be the most effective. And, finally, our last set of hypotheses are concerned with the impact of territorial claim management on political leaders. Territory has been found to be a very salient issue when it comes to determining whether two states' conflict will escalate to some militarized level of conflict and/or war. Given the highly visible nature of many territorial claims, we ask whether or not their management affects a leader's tenure in office.

### **Types of Settlement Attempts**

Several foreign policy options are available to political leaders as they pursue a favorable settlement to an outstanding territorial claim. At a very basic level, a leader can either do nothing or act to alter the status quo. If a leader chooses to pursue a policy altering the status quo, a state can either challenge its adversary through some type of nonviolent settlement attempt or pursue a change in the territorial status quo by escalating the dispute to some level of military confrontation.

Several findings on the tendency for democracies to resolve their differences peacefully lead us to expect regime type to play an important role in the management of territorial claims (or other contentious issues). Dixon (1994) argues that, within democratic states, there exists a "norm of bounded competition" whereby domestic conflict is typically managed through the use of a variety of nonviolent conflict resolution mechanisms (the courts, arbitration hearings, elections, votes in the legislature, and so on). A great emphasis is placed on political competition and compromise, rather than on the violent resolution of differences (Maoz and Russett 1993).

Democratic leaders accustomed to operating within these norms are argued by Dixon, Maoz and Russett, and others to externalize these same norms of peaceful conflict resolution

when negotiating with their counterparts from other democratic states at the international level. That is, at least when dealing with other democratic states that share the same fundamental norm of peaceful conflict resolution, democratic states are argued to prefer the peaceful settlement of interstate issues. Authoritarian states, or relations between democratic and authoritarian states, do not share these same fundamental norms in either their domestic politics or their international relations. As a result, relations between democratic leaders are expected to make use of nonviolent settlement techniques more often than relations involving one or more authoritarian leaders, who do not operate within the same norms either domestically or internationally.

**Hypothesis 1:** *Jointly democratic dyads will be more likely to cooperate on resolving territorial claims than either jointly autocratic dyads or especially, mixed dyads composed of one democracy and one autocracy.*

When it comes to resolving territorial claims, leaders are confronted with a more complex set of choices than the simple choice between violent or nonviolent means. A leader choosing to pursue the settlement of an issue peacefully has a range of policy choices from direct bilateral negotiations with the adversary to several types of third party actions involving either binding or non-binding conditions. We argue that democratic states' choices among peaceful settlement attempts will disproportionately involve bilateral negotiations rather than binding or non-binding third party assistance, because the involvement of third parties increase the risks and uncertainties of the claim's outcome (Leeds 1999). Democratic leaders are highly susceptible to audience costs whereby the perceived failure of managing territorial claims may lead citizens to evaluate the leader's performance negatively while at the same time holding the leader accountable at the ballot box. By submitting a territorial claim to a binding third party decision, or even by allowing the non-binding involvement of a third party in negotiations, a leader risks that the third party will hand down an unfavorable decision or will pressure the claimants to reach such a decision.

Democratic leaders suffer regardless of whether the judgment is binding or non-binding. On the other hand, nondemocratic leaders tend to suffer fewer costs than democratic leaders. Elections provide a regular outlet for citizens to evaluate their leaders' performance and hold

them responsible. Nondemocratic regimes tend to have fewer institutionalized mechanisms for holding a leader accountable for foreign policy failures so leaders are less concerned with losing a judgment before a third party because the likelihood that the public will be able to sanction her are much less. Therefore, democracies should be much less likely to pursue the settlement of their claims via third party actors because of the greater uncertainty and risks that they entail relative to bilateral negotiations.

**Hypothesis 2:** *Jointly democratic dyads will be much more likely to pursue bilateral negotiations to resolve territorial claims than to involve third parties.*

### **The Effectiveness of Settlement Attempts**

Settlement attempts are no guarantee that political leaders will be able to successfully resolve their dispute. One of the difficulties in moving beyond a settlement attempt to reaching an agreement is the reluctance of democratic leaders to enter into some type of settlement that has a high risk of failing. Democratic leaders tend to suffer greater audience costs from foreign policy failures than their nondemocratic counterparts. When settlements attempts fail or an agreed upon settlement is broken, these foreign policy failures do not reflect well on a leader's perceived ability to direct her country's foreign affairs. Therefore, democratic leaders will likely avoid reaching agreements that have a high risk of breaking down, because they risk potentially high political costs. Because of this reluctance to enter into risky agreements and because of the high audience costs they are likely to face for foreign policy failures, though, democratic leaders are likely to reach agreements only when they plan to carry out the agreement and they expect their partner to do so as well -- meaning that when leaders of democratic states enter into an agreement at the international level, their commitment is likely to be credible (Leeds 1999).

Though leaders of nondemocratic states are also prone to suffer costs as a result of failed foreign policies, it is much more difficult for domestic audiences to hold them accountable. Therefore, the costs an autocratic leader would incur as a result of failing to abide by an international agreement is less significant than those that a democratic leader would incur. An autocratic leader would then have greater flexibility to enter into an agreement with a high probability of failure because, if it does fail, they will likely suffer relatively few costs. For these reasons, democratic leaders will have difficulties coming to terms with autocratic leaders, who



are considered more likely to renege on international agreements. Likewise, democratic leaders will avoid involving a third party because of the risks and uncertainty involved in how a third party may come down on the issue. Both binding and non-binding third party decisions likely hold greater meaning to democratic leaders and citizens, who often make use of them in their domestic decisions.

We expect to find that joint democracy has a negative effect on the ability of democracies to reach agreements relative to their resolution of territorial claims. On the other hand, autocratic leaders are not bound by the same constraints as democratic leaders. Autocratic leaders will be more likely to enter into agreements even if there is a high probability that the agreement will eventually fail. Though joint democratic dyads should be less likely to reach agreements on the issue at stake because their commitments are more credible, settlements that are achieved between democratic dyads are more likely to be carried out.

**Hypothesis 3:** Joint democratic dyads are less likely to reach an agreement than are joint autocracies or mixed dyads.

**Hypothesis 4:** Once two democracies reach an agreement, they should be more likely to carry it out than other combinations of regimes.

### **The Political Consequences of Settlement Attempts**

In addition to explaining how domestic political factors influence attempts to manage or settle territorial claims, we are also interested in explaining how the management of territorial claims in turn affects political leaders. Our previous hypotheses are based on the contention that political leaders will face some sort of costs for their foreign policy failures. Costs may come in the relatively benign form of reduced decision-making authority or lower approval ratings, which weaken the leader's ability to achieve desired policy outcomes but leave the leader in power. Perhaps the most important cost, though, is the risk that a leader viewed as being unsuccessful will lose power (whether at the ballot box, through a coup or assassination, or through some other mechanism).

Along these lines, Bueno de Mesquita, Siverson and Woller (1992; Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995) argue that political leaders likely to be held accountable for the success or

failure of their foreign policies. Both studies find substantial evidence that poor results in war are likely to be held against the leader who is blamed for the outcome, or perhaps even the entire regime. We argue that performance in war is not the only source for evaluations of a leader's effectiveness. Given the frequent arguments about the importance of territorial claims, we believe that a leader's management of his or her state's territorial claims is likely to be another highly visible source of constituent evaluations of the leader's performance. While a leader who acquires a piece of disputed territory or succeeds in getting the adversary to drop its claims is likely to be viewed as a success in the foreign policy arena, a leader who loses a piece of territory to a rival or who drops a claim to disputed territory is likely to be judged a foreign policy failure.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that failing to manage territorial issues in one's own favor will have a negative impact on a leader's ability to remain in office, as when failure over the Falkland / Malvinas Islands in 1982 led to the removal of the Argentina military junta or when Egypt's Anwar Sadat was assassinated following the Camp David Accords with Israel. On the other hand, successful foreign policies over territorial issues can greatly enhance a leader's prestige and perceived capability increasing the likelihood that she will remain in office. For example, while Margaret Thatcher was first pilloried for failing to stop Argentina from seizing the Falkland Islands in 1982, her government was widely supported and praised after recovering the islands. Similarly, each successive territorial victory for Adolf Hitler in the 1930s seemed to increase the sense among the German people that he was the strong and effective leader they had been seeking (although in retrospect we now evaluate those events somewhat differently).

While we expect that losing territory will generally increase a leader's risk of losing office, it is likely that the specific risk will be influenced by details of the outcome. With wars, for example, Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson (1995) find that greater casualties suffered by the leader's state during a war increase his or her risk of losing office. With regard to territorial claims, we expect that the risk of losing office will be modified by the salience level of the territory in question, and by the presence or absence of violence in the loss of a territorial claim. While losing territory in general should decrease the leader's time in office relative to winning territory or reaching a relatively equal compromise, losing territory that is considered highly salient would appear likely to decrease time in office even more. It is one thing to lose (or to drop one's claim to) a small and worthless piece of territory, which may even be rationalized or hidden from public attention, but losing a valuable territory is difficult to explain or excuse

without casting doubt on one's effectiveness as a leader. Similarly, if territory is lost through organized violence (even at the sub-war level), a leader appears likely to be blamed for his or her inability to prevent the loss, much like Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson argue for evaluations of a leader's performance in a losing war effort.

**Hypothesis 5:** A leader's risk of losing office increases after his or her state loses a territorial claim while he or she is in office.

**Hypothesis 6:** A leader's risk of losing office increases with the salience level of lost territory.

**Hypothesis 7:** A leader's risk of losing office increases when territory is lost through organized political violence relative to the peaceful loss of territory.

The final hypothesis is drawn from Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson's research on political survival following war outcomes. Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson (1995: 846) argue that the odds of political survival increase with time in office for authoritarian leaders, while decreasing for democratic leaders. Authoritarian leaders benefit from a longer time in office before the war -- or, potentially, the ending of the territorial claim -- by building a reputation as a strong or successful leader who is able to provide for his or her people's needs. Democratic leaders, on the other hand, do not benefit from time in office (and may even face an increasing risk of losing power with greater time in office). Because we argue that territorial claim outcomes should have a similar effect to the outcomes of interstate wars, we do not propose any change to this hypothesis, which received substantial empirical support in the original study of leader tenure following interstate wars.

**Hypothesis 8:** A leader's risk of losing office is greatest shortly after taking power in authoritarian states and declines with increasing time in office, while the risk is lowest shortly after taking power in democratic states and increases with increasing time in office.

## Research Design

### Spatial-Temporal Domain

Our analyses are conducted using the population of territorial claims in the Western Hemisphere from 1816-1992. Although data on territorial claims are available for this region through 2000, the remainder of the variables to be used are not yet available past 1992. Data on territorial claims on this broad time frame are currently limited to the Western Hemisphere, although data collection is continuing for the remainder of the world.

### Operationalization of Variables

#### *Territorial Claims*

The set of territorial claims comes from the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) project, and is described by Hensel (2001). A territorial claim involves explicit contention between the leaders of two or more nation-states over a specific piece of territory. For the purposes of this study's analysis of the impact of claim termination, we focus on dyadic claims, which are distinct challenger-target relationships over the same piece of territory. A given territorial claim may involve numerous dyadic claims, each of which ends when the previous challenger abandons its claim to the territory. For example, a challenger may drop its claim to a territory unilaterally, it may sign a bilateral treaty or accept a third party award, or it may acquire the territory militarily. In each case, the claim in its previous form is considered to have ended, offering an important opportunity for the outcome to affect the relevant leaders' tenure in office (although a renewed claim could later be opened by the same challenger if it had been dropped, or if the challenger acquired the territory militarily, the losing state may begin a new claim of its own to try to reacquire its former territory).

In several analyses, we consider the salience of each territorial claim. The ICOW salience index is described by Hensel (2001), and draws from a variety of details of each territorial claim that might make the claimed territory more valuable to one or both governments.

#### *Settlement Attempts*

The ICOW territorial claims data set includes data on a number of different ways states can attempt to manage their claims, as described by Hensel (2001). Bilateral negotiations refer to direct talks between the claimants themselves over the territory. Non-binding third party

settlement attempts involve such procedures as good offices, inquiry, conciliation, or mediation, where a third party becomes involved in trying to produce a solution but without any authority to determine the outcome. Binding third party settlement attempts involve either arbitration or adjudication, and involve the claimants' prior agreement to accept whatever award is handed down by the arbitrator or adjudicator. Each of these types of settlement attempts may cover a wide range of potential topics, ranging from sovereignty over part or all of the claimed territory (a "territorial" settlement attempt) to the usage of the territory but not sovereignty (a "functional" attempt, such as talks over navigation of a disputed border river) or to future negotiations over the territory (a "procedural" attempt, such as agreement to send the case to an arbitrator or adjudicator or to meet again at a specific time for renewed negotiations). Militarized disputes are identified based on the Correlates of War Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) data set (Jones et al. 1996), and involve the threat, display, or use of militarized force; only disputes coded by COW as involving territorial issues are included in these analyses.

The peaceful settlement attempts -- bilateral negotiations and either binding or non-binding third party involvement -- are also coded for the effectiveness of the attempt. Because "effectiveness" is a complex and multifaceted concept, several dimensions of effectiveness are considered. The first is whether the settlement attempt produced an explicit agreement, which could take any form from a bilateral treaty to an award handed down by the International Court of Justice; an attempt that fails to produce an agreement has clearly been ineffective. The other dimension examined in this paper is compliance with the agreement, with the agreement being regarded as effective if the two claimants both carry out the terms of the agreement and ineffective otherwise.

### *Political Survival*

Our analyses of political survival following claim termination are based on the political leadership data set used by Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson (1995). This data set lists all leaders of each state from 1816-1992 with the dates that each entered and left office; we made only minor corrections based on historical sources (typically when a nineteenth-century leader was missing from their data set or when their data set left a gap between two leaders). We

measure political survival as the length of time that the leader remained in office continuously after the end of the claim.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to recognize that this is not a perfect measure, as we do not currently have data on the method by which each leader left power after the end of the claim. For example, leaving office due to term limits or due to death from natural causes should not be considered to reflect any impact of the territorial claim (or of any other policies or decisions made while in power). On the other hand, this paper's arguments are much more appropriate for leaders leaving office due to a coup, a lost reelection campaign, failing to run for reelection, or stepping down (or being removed) before one's term had ended. In future research we plan to examine each leader in our analyses to determine how he or she left power, and to consider this in our empirical analyses; survival analysis can easily handle this information without distorting the results by erroneously including leaders leaving office due to term limits as evidence supporting (or rejecting) our hypotheses.

### *Democracy*

Our measure of political democracy is based on the Polity IV data set. We follow Dixon's (1993, 1994) standard of considering states with values of six or greater on the Polity index of institutionalized democracy to be democratic. Where possible, we also ran analyses with the full zero-to-ten Polity index of institutionalized democracy and with the -10 to +10 index constructed by subtracting the Polity index of autocracy from the Polity democracy index, with very little change in results.

### *Other Independent and Control Variables*

In each multivariate analysis, we employ a variety of control variables that are believed to affect the dependent variable in question. For the analysis of settlement attempt effectiveness, this begins with characteristics of the territorial claim itself, all of which are described in more detail in Hensel (2001). Beyond claim salience (described above), we consider the number of militarized interstate disputes in the claim over the past fifteen years, expecting a more

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<sup>2</sup> Time is measured in years, with fractions to indicate the number of months (e.g., eighteen months is coded as 1.5 years); further detail beyond the monthly level was left out due to the ICOW data set's monthly emphasis (and due to the missing or incomplete data concerns that would arise).

militarized claim to be more difficult to resolve. We also consider the number of unsuccessful settlement attempts over the claim in the past fifteen years -- reflecting attempts that failed to lead to agreement, or that produced agreements that were unratified and/or not carried out by one or both claimants -- expecting that such a legacy of failure will make additional attempts less successful as well.

In studying settlement attempt effectiveness, we include a number of control variables related to the settlement attempt itself. We include dummy variables to distinguish between binding and non-binding third party settlement attempts, leaving bilateral negotiations out of the equation as the reference category. We include dummy variables to distinguish between procedural and functional settlement attempts, leaving out territorial attempts as the reference category. Also, in analyzing whether agreements are carried out, we include dummy variables to indicate whether the agreement involved some concessions or major concessions by one side, leaving out relatively balanced agreements as the reference category.

Finally, we control for the relative capabilities of the two adversaries, in order to determine whether dramatically unequal adversaries are more or less likely to reach effective settlements than are more equal adversaries. The specific measure used is the COW six-indicator "Composite Index of National Capabilities" (CINC) measure, reflecting the challenger state's CINC score as a percentage of total CINC scores in the challenger-target dyad. Values closer to zero indicate that the target state possesses more capabilities than the challenger, values close to 0.5 indicate rough parity, and values closer to one indicate that the challenger state possesses more capabilities than the target.

For the analysis of leader turnover after claim termination, we consider several variables beyond democracy. Following Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson's (1995) analysis of leader turnover after wars, we include variables measuring each leader's length of time in office up to the end of the territorial claim, as well as interacting this leader tenure variable with democracy. We also include three variables measuring details of claim termination that we hypothesized to affect leader tenure afterward. The first is a dummy variable measuring whether or not the claim's ending involved a loss of (claimed or actual) territory. The leader of a target state that lose territory to a successful challenger is considered to have lost territory, as is the leader of a challenger state that abandoned its claim unsuccessfully. The other two measures are interacted with this lost territory dummy, and are meant to capture variation in claim endings that are

expected to worsen a leader's prospects for remaining in office. The first of these interactive terms involves the salience of the claimed territory, as discussed above, while the second measures whether the claim ended through organized violence. A claim that ended with the physical seizure of territory is considered to have ended through violence, as is a claim that ended with a (bilateral or third party) settlement that legitimized or formalized an earlier seizure of territory.

## **Empirical Analyses**

### **Frequency of Settlement Attempts**

Our first set of analyses involves the frequency of settlement attempts, both overall and with respect to the different types of attempts that are made. We hypothesized that democratic dyads would be more likely than other dyads to become involved in settlement attempts overall, and that such dyads would focus on bilateral negotiations more than would other dyads. Table 1 presents a breakdown of settlement attempts by dyad type, which generally supports both of our expectations.

[Table 1 about here]

Table 1 reveals that joint-democratic dyads have engaged in a total of 110 settlement attempts in 501 dyad-years during Western Hemisphere territorial claims, for an average of .220 attempts per year. Mixed democratic-autocratic dyads have engaged in 202 settlement attempts in 2193 dyad-years, for an average of .138 attempts per year, and joint-autocratic dyads have engaged in an average of .193 attempts per year (433 attempts in 2245 dyad-years). If these figures are cross-tabulated, the resulting differences are statistically significant ( $X^2 = 35.41$ , 2 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ), supporting our expectation that joint-democratic dyads would demonstrate the greatest cooperative behavior overall.

The results reported in Table 1 can also be used to address our expectation that joint-democratic dyads would engage disproportionately in bilateral negotiations rather than involving third parties in their activities. Of joint-democratic dyads' 110 total settlement attempts, 82 (or 74.5 percent) involved bilateral negotiations. This is greater than mixed dyads' 67.7 percent (205 of 303 attempts), and substantially greater than joint-autocratic dyads' 55.2 percent (239 of 433 attempts). If these figures are cross-tabulated, the differences are statistically significant ( $X^2 = 20.00$ , 2 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ), again supporting our expectation.



These simple analyses suggest that joint-democratic dyads manage their territorial issues differently from other regime types. Similar results in more sophisticated multivariate analyses have been reported by Hensel (2001), although that study was not focusing on the role of political democracy and only treated democracy as a control variable. It is one thing to attempt a variety of negotiations over a territorial claim, though, and quite another to settle the claim successfully. The next analyses examine the extent to which joint-democratic dyads are able to manage their territorial claims more effectively than other types of dyads.

### **Effectiveness of Settlement Attempts**

Table 2 presents a simple appraisal of the effectiveness of territorial claim settlement attempts, measuring effectiveness both by whether or not the attempt produced an explicit agreement and by whether or not the agreement was carried out. This table is split by the extent of the settlement attempt, or by whether the negotiations primarily covered procedural, functional, or territorial dimensions of the issue. It is to be expected that these different types of negotiations would show different success rates, as it would appear to be much more difficult to agree to a final disposition of disputed territory than to agree to future talks over the question or to agree to demilitarize a neutral zone along the disputed border.

[Table 2 about here]

With regard to reaching an agreement, one result stands out from all three types of negotiations: joint-democratic dyads are less successful than are other types of dyads. These differences are quite substantial for procedural and functional attempts relative to either joint-autocratic or mixed dyads, and remain noticeable for territorial attempts relative to joint-autocratic dyads. In fact, slightly less than half of all procedural and territorial settlement attempts between democracies were able to reach agreements, and only around three-fifths of all functional attempts.

With regard to whether agreements are carried out, the final column of Table 2 indicates the opposite result. While negotiations between democracies may be less likely to produce agreements, agreements that are reached between two democracies are much more likely to be carried out by both parties than are agreements between other types of claimants. This difference appears to hold relative to joint-autocratic dyads for procedural and functional agreements, although there is no difference between joint-democratic and mixed dyads for these types of

agreements. Joint-democratic dyads are substantially more likely to carry out territorial agreements, though, than either mixed or joint-autocratic dyads.

Both of these results from Table 2 are consistent with our hypotheses, although admittedly this table has not presented the most methodologically sophisticated analysis. Table 3 presents a more sophisticated test, using logistic regression analysis to examine the effectiveness of settlement attempts while considering a variety of potentially relevant control variables.

[Table 3 about here]

As Table 3 reveals, the preliminary findings from Table 2 hold up after controlling for a variety of other factors that might be relevant. In particular, joint-democratic dyads are significantly less likely to reach agreements in their settlement attempts than are other dyad types ( $p < .001$ ), and are significantly more likely than other dyads to carry out their agreements ( $p < .03$ ). Many of the other variables in the models also produce significant results, although the most important from an issues perspective is that claim salience significantly decreases the effectiveness of settlement attempts. That is, when the specific territorial issue at stake is considered more salient, negotiations are much less likely to produce agreements ( $p < .001$ ), and any agreements that are reached are much less likely to be carried out by both parties ( $p < .001$ ).

These results from both Table 2 and Table 3 are consistent with our theoretical expectations. Perhaps because of their relatively high audience costs, dyads composed of two democracies are much less likely to reach agreements, knowing that they have less leeway for rejecting their agreements once accepted. As a result, agreements between democracies -- once accepted -- are much more likely to be carried out by both sides than are agreements between other types of actors, even considering a variety of other factors that might account for the success or failure of agreements. The final set of analyses in this paper now focuses on the next stage of relations: once an agreement has been reached to end a territorial claim, are there any domestic political repercussions?

### **Domestic Political Consequences**

The analyses up to this point have focused on the types of settlement attempts that are tried, and on the effectiveness of these attempts in terms of producing and implementing agreements. The final set of analyses focuses on a situation that comes only rarely, which is the end of a territorial claim. Even many agreements over territorial claims that are carried out by

both participants fail to end contention over the claim, whether because they were intended to cover a more limited procedural or functional goal, they only addressed part of the claim rather than tackling the entire problem at once, they were based on faulty understandings of the territory or otherwise failed to anticipate new information that would later arise, or they were subsequently rejected by leaders on one or both sides.

[Table 4 about here]

Table 4 summarizes the termination of territorial claims in the Western Hemisphere between 1816-2000. Of the 88 dyadic claims that have ended, 30 ended with a gain for the challenger state, 22 ended with a roughly equal settlement for both sides, and 36 ended in favor of the target state. Additionally, ten of these 88 have ended through organized political violence, while the other 78 ended through more peaceful means. Table 5 follows up by examining the impact of these different elements of claim termination on each involved leader's tenure in office after ending the claim.

[Table 5 about here]

Table 5 presents the results of a survival analysis of leader tenure following the termination of territorial claims in the Western Hemisphere, using a Weibull regression. The full model as fitted produces a significant improvement over the null model ( $p < .001$ ). The shape parameter for the model (1.24, with a standard error of 0.07) is greater than 1.0, indicating a decreasing hazard rate over time, similar to the result reported by Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson (1995); leaders who have survived any initial consequences of their policies are at a lower risk of losing power over time.

The general impact of political factors is quite similar to that identified by Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson (1995), although there are very few common cases shared by their analysis of leader tenure after wars and our analysis of leader tenure after territorial claims; almost every war in our data set was followed by at least one leader change on each side before the associated territorial claim (if any) ended. As with Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson, we find a significant negative impact for the leader's tenure up to the time of the claim ending; leaders with a longer history in office are better able to resolve territorial claims without losing power.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Positive and negative impacts refer to the impact on the hazard rate for leaders. A negative impact decreases the hazard rate, thereby prolonging leader tenure, while a positive impact increases the hazard rate and thus the risk of losing power.

Democracies overall have a significantly lower hazard rate than do other political systems, although the democracy-prior tenure interaction term that Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson proposed significantly increases the hazard rate. Thus, early in their tenure (when the positive interaction term is near zero and the democracy coefficient drives the relationship), democratic leaders have a greatly reduced hazard rate, although this advantage is reduced by the passage of time in office. Contrarily, authoritarian leaders -- with a negative coefficient, and lacking the positive interaction term -- encounter a greatly reduced hazard rate over time.

More relevant for the study of territorial claims are the last three coefficients in the table. The coefficient for losing territory is not statistically significant, indicating that simply losing territory does not significantly increase a leader's hazard rate. The interaction term between losing territory and violent claim termination, though, is significant ( $p < .05$ , one-tailed test) and positive, indicating (as hypothesized) that losing territory through violent means increases the risk of losing power. The biggest surprise comes from the loss-salience interaction, which is negative and significant ( $p < .001$ ). This suggests that losing a more salient territory actually prolongs a leader's time in office relative to losing a less salient territory, which is exactly the opposite of the relationship we had expected. Further analysis reveals, though, that this result comes almost entirely from autocratic leaders. A simple analysis of variance in post-claim leader tenure for authoritarian leaders is statistically significant ( $F = 4.68$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $N=109$ ), with the average tenure more than tripling for losing highly salient territory relative to losing territory of low salience; the result for democratic leaders is highly insignificant ( $F = 0.23$ ,  $p < .88$ ,  $N=65$ ) and shows very little difference based on the salience of the lost territory. It appears that this result is an artifact of entrenched authoritarian leaders, who are able to repress their opposition and retain power despite losing valuable territory (something that might almost be termed a "Milosevic effect"), although even democracies do not show evidence of the effect that we had originally expected.

It should be noted that these analyses should not be taken as providing the final word on the domestic political consequences of settling territorial claims. As suggested earlier, the data set used in this version of the analyses is unable to distinguish between leaders whose terms in office were shortened (whether due to the settlement of this claim or for other reasons) and those whose terms in office ended at the expected time. For example, many democratic political systems enforce term limits on the chief executive, such as the U.S. limitation of two four-year

presidential terms. A leader reaching the end of his or her mandatory term limit should not be counted as indicating an increased hazard of leaving office, nor should a leader who died in office from natural causes. In future research we plan to collect the necessary data to handle such situations appropriately, which would mean treating the leaders in question as at risk for a premature turnover until the moment when term limits or death remove them from the sample, at which point their removal should not count as equivalent to a leader who is voted out of office or removed through a coup, assassination, or other unusual means. Fortunately, survival analysis is well suited for handling just such methodological concerns, assuming the availability of appropriate data.

It is also important to note that this analysis has only focused on one leader in each state per territorial claim, which is the leader who was in office at the time the claim was considered to have ended. If one leader is to be chosen per claim per state, this is probably the most important one to examine, as it was under his or her leadership that the claim was finally ended. Yet it may be that this research design has excluded many of the cases that fit our theoretical expectations most closely. For example, earlier in this paper we mentioned the political impact of the Falklands (Malvinas) War on leaders in both Argentina and Great Britain, yet neither example shows up in the analyses reported in Table 5 because the Argentina claim to the islands did not end in 1982 (and, indeed, has not yet ended as of this writing). Similarly, the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 appears to have been motivated by his willingness to consider returning the Golan Heights to Syria -- but because the Golan Heights claim did not end during Rabin's tenure (and, like the Falklands/Malvinas claim, remains ongoing today), his case would not appear in this analysis. In future work we plan to consider other leaders before the one in power at the time the claim ended, in the hope of getting a more complete picture of the impact of territorial claim management on domestic politics.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

This study has examined the relationship between domestic politics and the management of territorial claims. We have argued that because democratic political systems typically constrain leaders through much higher audience costs, leaders will make decisions about their territorial issues in light of these constraints, and they will face appropriate political consequences for their decisions. Specifically, democratic leaders are expected to be more likely

to attempt peaceful settlement of their issues than are other types of leaders, and while democratic leaders should be less likely to reach successful agreements during these negotiations, they should be more likely to carry out any agreements that are reached. Furthermore, democratic leaders are expected to face greater political consequences for losing territorial claims than are their authoritarian counterparts, although the details of the settlement may mitigate or exacerbate this general effect. Empirical analysis of territorial claims in the Western Hemisphere since 1816 generally supported each of these expectations.

These results are important for a variety of reasons, and suggest several useful extensions of this line of research. The academic literature on territorial claims or on other contentious issues has focused almost exclusively on international factors. Domestic political factors have generally been limited to controlling for regime type in analyses, with very little theoretical development or specific empirical analyses focusing on domestic factors. This paper's analyses have suggested that very meaningful results can be obtained by studying domestic political influences and consequences, particularly with regard to the analysis of political survival after the ending of a claim. It is to be hoped that future work in this area can continue making additional progress in exploring the complex relationship between domestic politics and the management of territorial claims (or of other contentious issues).

These findings also contribute important lessons to our understanding of domestic politics and international relations. Much of the previous research on democracy and international relations has focused on primarily conflictual questions such as crisis escalation to war (e.g., Fearon 1994; Schultz 1998; Smith 1998) or the aftermath of war (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita, Siverson, and Woller 1992; Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995), or on primarily cooperative questions such as alliance behavior (e.g., Gaubatz 1996) or general patterns of cooperation across all issue areas (e.g., Leeds 1999). Territorial claims offer a topic of study that incorporates both conflictual and cooperative dimensions, generating a wide range of behavior that includes both militarized conflict and peaceful negotiations.

The results from this emphasis on territorial claim management complement and extend the findings from previous research. For example, Bueno de Mesquita, et al. have found strong evidence both that leaders who are unsuccessful in war are likely to be punished and that this impact varies with regime type, tenure office, and details of the war's outcome. This study shows that war is not the only dimension of foreign policy that can affect evaluations of leaders,

and thus political survival. Leaders who lose territorial claims are also more likely to lose power, particularly when the claim was lost through violent means, and regime type and tenure in office have the same general effect as in the earlier analyses of war and political survival. Similarly, Leeds (1999) examines the impact of dyadic regime type on general patterns of cooperation between states, although her theoretical discussion addressed forming and fulfilling agreements -- which could not be tested directly using a general measure of cooperation like the COPDAB measure used in that study. This study's data on attempts to settle territorial claims allows a test of Leeds' original propositions, and indicates that she was correct: joint democratic dyads are indeed more likely to carry out their specific agreements than are other types of adversaries.

Regarding future research, our results in this study represent only a preliminary first cut on a topic with many dimensions. One thing that must be done in the future is to test these propositions using a larger set of territorial claims beyond the Western Hemisphere. Although the Western Hemisphere has a long history of democracy -- if the Polity index of institutionalized democracy is compared across regions over time, the Western Hemisphere is the second most democratic region behind Europe -- it could be argued that the results are not representative of democracies around the world, or that they are in some way biased by the Latin American experience or by supposed U.S. domination of the region. We are currently engaged in data collection on territorial claims in Western Europe, which will soon allow us to examine the same questions in a European context as well.

A second direction for future research has already been mentioned, and involves the collection of data on the process by which each leader lost power. It may be that the increasing hazard rate for democratic leaders as their tenure in office increases can be traced to term limits; no U.S. president can remain in office for a third term, regardless of performance in foreign policy or in any other arena. Once this additional information is collected for each leader, it is a simple matter for survival analysis to handle such cases appropriately.

This study's analysis of the frequency and effectiveness of settlement attempts could also benefit from more careful consideration of specific domestic factors. While the simple categorical or dummy variables that have been used in the study's analyses have produced promising results, much more remains to be done. For example, our analysis of leader survival included data on previous leader tenure as well as simple data on democratic status, and also

included a variety of interaction effects that were thought to apply for democratic leaders. It is to be hoped that future research can apply similarly sophisticated measures in analysis of the other questions covered here, as well as of new questions. It is doubtful that most of the theoretical work on domestic political influences had a democracy-other dichotomy in mind, and we might expect more appropriate measures to produce better results.

Finally, in this preliminary study we have only focused on the tenure in office of the leader who was in power at the final termination of each territorial claim. A more meaningful analysis of the impact of territorial claims on leadership tenure requires consideration of all leaders in power during the claim, whether they successfully ended the claim or not. This would allow us to examine the impact of various methods of managing territorial claims, whether these methods are successful or not. Indeed, some of the research on audience costs argues that leaders are likely to be penalized for breaking agreements, which suggests additional hypotheses that can only be tested by including all leaders in office during territorial claims; by definition, the leader in power at the end of the claim must have carried out the agreement, or else it would not have been coded as ending at that time.



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**Table 1: Frequency of Settlement Attempts**

|                             | Frequency of Settlement Attempt (mean per year) |             |             |
|-----------------------------|---|-------------|-------------|
|                             | Democ-Democ                                     | Democ-Autoc | Autoc-Autoc |
| Bilateral Negotiations      | 82 (.164)                                       | 205 (.093)  | 239 (.106)  |
| Non-Binding                 | 8 (.016)  | 46 (.021)   | 77 (.034)   |
| Binding Third Party         | 7 (.014)  | 13 (.006)   | 17 (.008)   |
| Militarized Disputes        | 13 (.026)                                       | 39 (.018)   | 100 (.045)  |
| Total                       | 110 (.220)                                      | 303 (.138)  | 433 (.193)  |
| <i>Eligible Dyad-Years:</i> | <i>501</i>                                      | <i>2193</i> | <i>2245</i> |

**Table 2: Effectiveness of Peaceful Settlement Attempts**

| Extent of Attempt<br>& Regime Types | Reached<br>Agreement | Agreement<br>Carried Out |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Procedural                          |                      |                          |
| Autoc - Autoc                       | 100 / 137 (73.0%)    | 62 / 103 (60.2%)         |
| Democ - Autoc                       | 52 / 95 (54.7)       | 40 / 57 (70.2)           |
| Democ - Democ                       | 13 / 29 (44.8)       | 11 / 15 (73.3)           |
| Functional                          |                      |                          |
| Autoc - Autoc                       | 31 / 40 (77.5%)      | 23 / 32 (71.9%)          |
| Democ - Autoc                       | 15 / 21 (71.4)       | 18 / 21 (85.7)           |
| Democ - Democ                       | 13 / 22 (59.1)       | 12 / 14 (85.7)           |
| Territorial                         |                      |                          |
| Autoc - Autoc                       | 94 / 156 (60.3%)     | 61 / 90 (67.8%)          |
| Democ - Autoc                       | 70 / 148 (47.3)      | 42 / 59 (71.2)           |
| Democ - Democ                       | 22 / 46 (47.8)       | 18 / 19 (94.7)           |

\* Not all of these settlement attempts reached agreement on the original goal, whether functional, procedural, or territorial; some settled for a lesser agreement. As a result, the number of cases in each category of agreement in the “agreement carried out” column does not match the number of cases in each category that reached an agreement in the first column.

**Table 3: Logistic Regression Analysis of Settlement Attempt Effectiveness**

| Variable                  | Model I: Reach Agreement |       | Model II: Both Carry Out Agreement |      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|------|
|                           | Est. (S.E)               | O.R.  | Est. (S.E)                         | O.R. |
| Intercept                 | 2.28 (0.41)***           | ---   | 2.56 (0.55)***                     | ---  |
| Democ-Democ               | - 1.25 (0.29)***         | 0.29  | 1.45 (0.65)**                      | 4.27 |
| Democ-Autoc               | - 1.12 (0.21)***         | 0.33  | - 0.09 (0.28)                      | 0.91 |
| <i>Territorial Claim</i>  |                          |       |                                    |      |
| Claim Salience            | - 0.18 (0.05)***         | 0.83  | - 0.24 (0.06)***                   | 0.79 |
| Recent MIDs               | 0.06 (0.06)              | 1.06  | 0.05 (0.08)                        | 1.05 |
| Failed Attempts           | - 0.09 (0.04)**          | 0.91  | 0.04 (0.06)                        | 1.04 |
| <i>Settlement Attempt</i> |                          |       |                                    |      |
| Non-Binding 3rd Party     | - 0.83 (0.23)***         | 0.43  | 0.25 (0.37)                        | 1.29 |
| Binding 3rd Party         | 2.68 (0.76)              | 14.62 | 0.35 (0.53)                        | 1.42 |
| Procedural Attempt        | 0.73 (0.19)***           | 2.08  | - 0.08 (0.29)                      | 0.92 |
| Functional Attempt        | 0.91 (0.31)***           | 2.48  | 1.00 (0.43)**                      | 2.71 |
| Some Concessions          | ---                      |       | - 0.02 (0.34)                      | 0.98 |
| Major Concessions         | ---                      |       | 0.56 (0.54)                        | 1.76 |
| <i>Controls</i>           |                          |       |                                    |      |
| Relative Capabilities     | - 0.29 (0.30)            | 0.75  | - 0.83 (0.42)**                    | 0.44 |
| LL (full model):          | - 382.27                 |       | - 209.75                           |      |
| Improvement:              | 116.77                   |       | 42.34                              |      |
| Significance:             | p < .001 (10 d.f.)       |       | p < .001 (12 d.f.)                 |      |
| N:                        | 649                      |       | 379                                |      |

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

**Table 4: Termination of Territorial Claims in the Western Hemisphere**

| <u>Claim Winner*</u> | <u>Violent</u> | <u>Nonviolent</u> | <u>N</u> |
|----------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------|
| Challenger           | 6              | 24                | 30       |
| Roughly Even         | 0              | 22                | 22       |
| Target               | 4              | 32                | 36       |
| Total                | 10             | 78                | 88       |

\* This table and the subsequent empirical analyses exclude the ending of sixteen ongoing claims and ten claims that ended through either one state's loss of membership in the interstate system (typically Caribbean states undergoing protracted U.S. occupation) or through the replacement of a colonial power as a claim actor by a newly independent former colony (e.g., the replacement of the Guatemalan-British claim over British Honduras with a Guatemalan-Belizean claim over newly independent Belize).

**Table 5: Leader Turnover after Claim Termination**

| Variable                         | Coeff. (S.E.)     | Hazard Rate |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Shape Parameter                  | 1.24 (0.07)       |             |
| Constant                         | - 1.43 (0.24)***  | ---         |
| <i>Political Factors</i>         |                   |             |
| Leader Tenure<br>at Claim End    | - 0.13 (0.03)***  | 0.88        |
| Tenure*Dem                       | 0.35 (0.08)***    | 1.41        |
| Democracy                        | - 0.99 (0.27)***  | 0.37        |
| <i>Form of Claim Termination</i> |                   |             |
| Loss of Territory                | 0.54 (0.39)       | 1.71        |
| Loss*Claim Salience              | - 0.13 (0.06)**   | 0.88        |
| Loss*Violence                    | 0.66 (0.39)*      | 1.95        |
| LL (null model):                 | - 268.76          |             |
| LL (full model):                 | - 237.59          |             |
| Improvement:                     | 62.35             |             |
| Significance:                    | p < .001 (6 d.f.) |             |
| N:                               | 174               |             |

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