

International Conflicts

POLS -335

Week 4 (September 7, September 9)

- Territory

■ Why do countries engage in militarized disputes and war against each other?

- In the last week, we discussed about the role of “power”
- **Geography** is one of the elements of power
- **Contiguity** could be a necessary for conflict to occur
- We can recognize the importance of “**territory**”
- Conceptualization of territorial disputes and how it works

■ Contiguity and Territorial Disputes

- France – Germany
Israel – Syria
India – Pakistan
India – China
Greece – Turkey
South Korea – Japan
- What do these dyads have in common?
- **Contiguous, sharing border, and *disagreement* on border or territory exists**

■ Territorial Claim

- The international system since the **Peace of Westphalia** in 1648 has been based on **sovereign states**
- **Sovereign states are territorial units, and exercise control over life (including their population) within their borders**
- However, if there exists disagreement about border line and territory, this can be a cause of militarized conflict

■ Territorial Claim

- Territorial Claims

: If the official representatives of a state makes explicit statements claiming sovereignty over a specific piece of territory that is claimed or administered by another states

■ Territorial Claim

- Territorial claim as being present when 3 conditions are met
 - 1) **There must be explicit competing claims to territorial sovereignty**
 - demands for the independence of a secessionist's territory rather than its transfer to the demanding side, and demands over usage of territory (e.g. use of water) do not qualify
 - 2) **Statements must concern specific territory**
 - 3) **Statements must be made by official government representatives, not by private citizens or legislators**

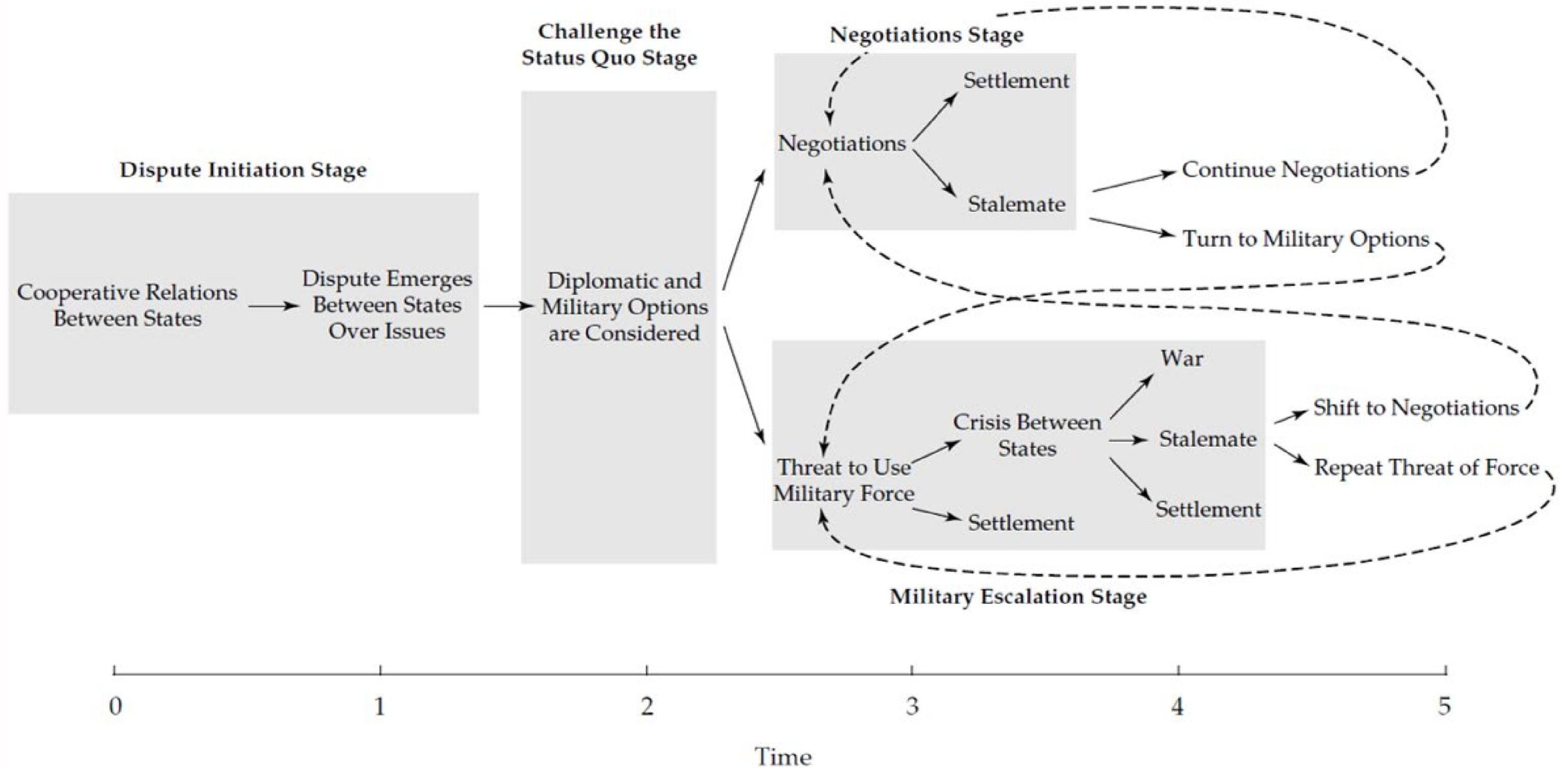
■ Territorial Disputes

- In a dyadic setting (state A and state B)
- Assume state A as **challenger** and state B **target**
- If a challenger state A seeks to alter the prevailing status quo over territory (target state B's possession of territory), and if target state B rejects the challenger's claims, then a **“territorial dispute”** exists

■ **Territorial Militarized Conflicts and War**

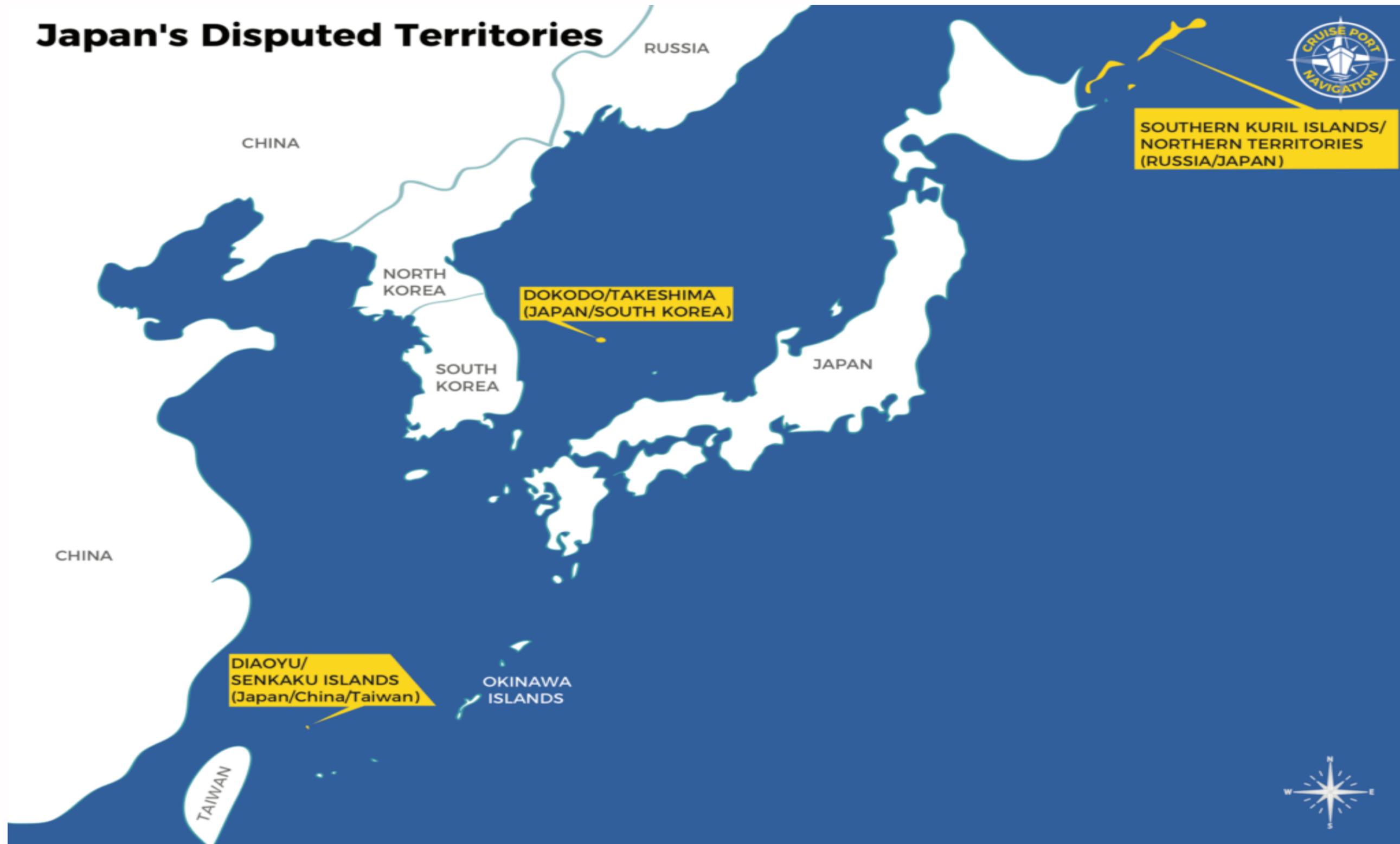
- If challenger state A uses armed forces to acquire territory, and target state B reciprocates this militarized attempt with the use of armed forces, **territorial militarized conflicts or wars occur**
- The sequence of territorial militarized conflicts
 - **Territorial Claims → Territorial Disputes → Territorial Militarized Conflicts**

■ The sequence of territorial militarized conflicts



- **Border Settlement and Territorial Agreement exist**
 - When neighboring states agree upon their respective sovereign (land) jurisdictions under international law
 - Border / Territorial settlement require international border agreement (e.g. between challenger A and target B)
 - UK transferred Hongkong to China through negotiation and agreement

■ South Korea – Japan



What Makes Territorial Issues So Conflict Prone?

Table 1. Territorial Issues and Militarized Conflict and War

TERRITORIAL ISSUE?	1816–1945	1946–2001	1816–2001
<i>Militarized interstate disputes</i>			
Yes	253 (26.4%)	455 (26.6%)	708 (26.5%)
No	706	1,257	1,963
Total	959	1,712	2,671
<i>Interstate wars</i>			
Yes	41 (45.1%)	20 (54.1%)	61 (47.7%)
No	50	17	67
Total	91	37	128

■ 1) The utility aspect (tangible aspect)

1. Strategic reason

- States place a high utility on controlling disputed territory for the **national defense**
- For example, Israel considers controlling the Golan Heights on their border with Syria to be very important because it provides ideal terrain to defend invasion; the flat, open terrain behind the heights is much harder to defend

The Valley of Tears Battle in the Yom Kippur War in the 1973

(the 4th Arab-Israeli War)

: Although massively outnumbered, the Israeli forces managed to hold their positions and succeeded in fending off attack by Syrian army

1 Israeli armored brigade (~100 tanks) vs. 1 Syrian Infantry division (~500 tanks and vehicles)

■ According to CIA report on the assessment of the war

- Both Egyptian and Syrian armor attempted rigid textbook execution of Soviet doctrine without adjustment for *terrain or circumstance*
- Egyptian armor *utilized terrain poorly*



October 9, 1973, Tank Battle (The Last day of War)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U13wuqNrYmU>

In an important engagement, Spartans took advantage of the location of strategically significant mountain passes that Persian forces needed to advance.



- - **Empirical examination** (Carter, 2010, *American Journal of Political Science*)
- **Argument:** The targets of territorial claim can consolidate their control over disputed territory to improve their ability to fight effectively on it
- **Finding 1:** When territory is strategically located, target states are more likely to consolidate their position, while challenger states are less likely to escalate militarily
- **Finding 2:** When a strategic location makes consolidation an effective strategy, target states are increasingly likely to consolidate as they face stronger challengers

■ 1) **The utility aspect (tangible aspect)**

2. Acquiring territory is effective way to resolve the disagreement on other issues

- States can bomb or launch some other kind of quick strike trying to convince the opponent to change their policy (Kosovo War)
- But, if the issue salience is high (if the regime change is required), occupation and controlling the territory is necessary
- For the very reason, territory can be seen as a **tool**, not a final **goal**

■ 1) The utility aspect (tangible aspect)

3. Economic reason

- Some territory is highly valuable for economic reasons, such as being endowed with important natural resources

- Oil and Minerals: direct revenue for the states

Especially, for authoritarian regimes who have a weak economy and taxation capacity

- Trade route: Panama Canal, Suez Canal, Singapore Strait

■ 1) The utility aspect (tangible aspect)

3. Economic reason

- Empirical examination (Caselli et al. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 2015)
- The most dangerous dyads are the ones where only one country of the pair has oil and **oil is close to the border**
- When both countries have oil, conflict risk is maximal when the location of oil fields is maximally asymmetric

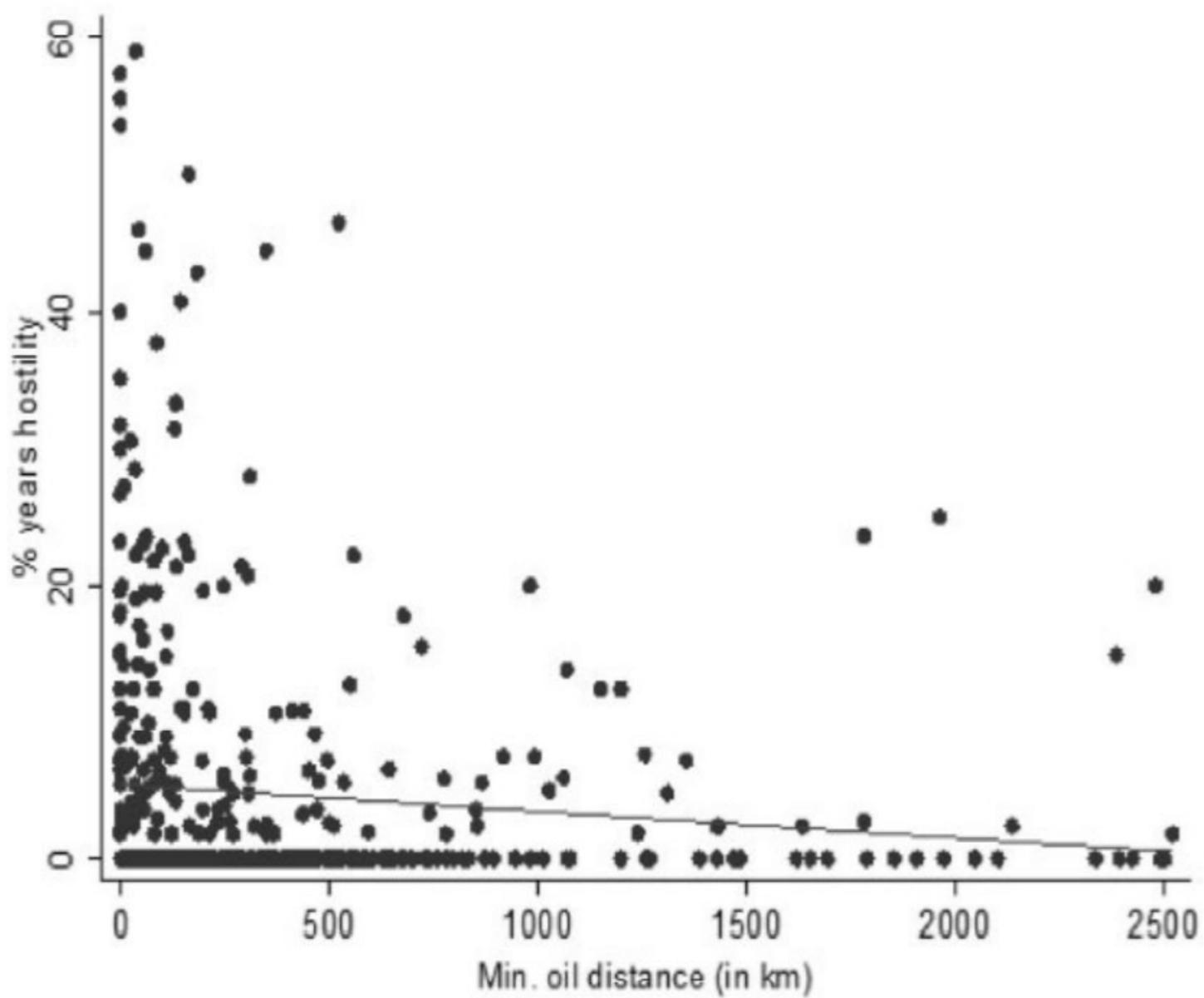


FIGURE I
Oil Distance from the Border and Bilateral Conflict

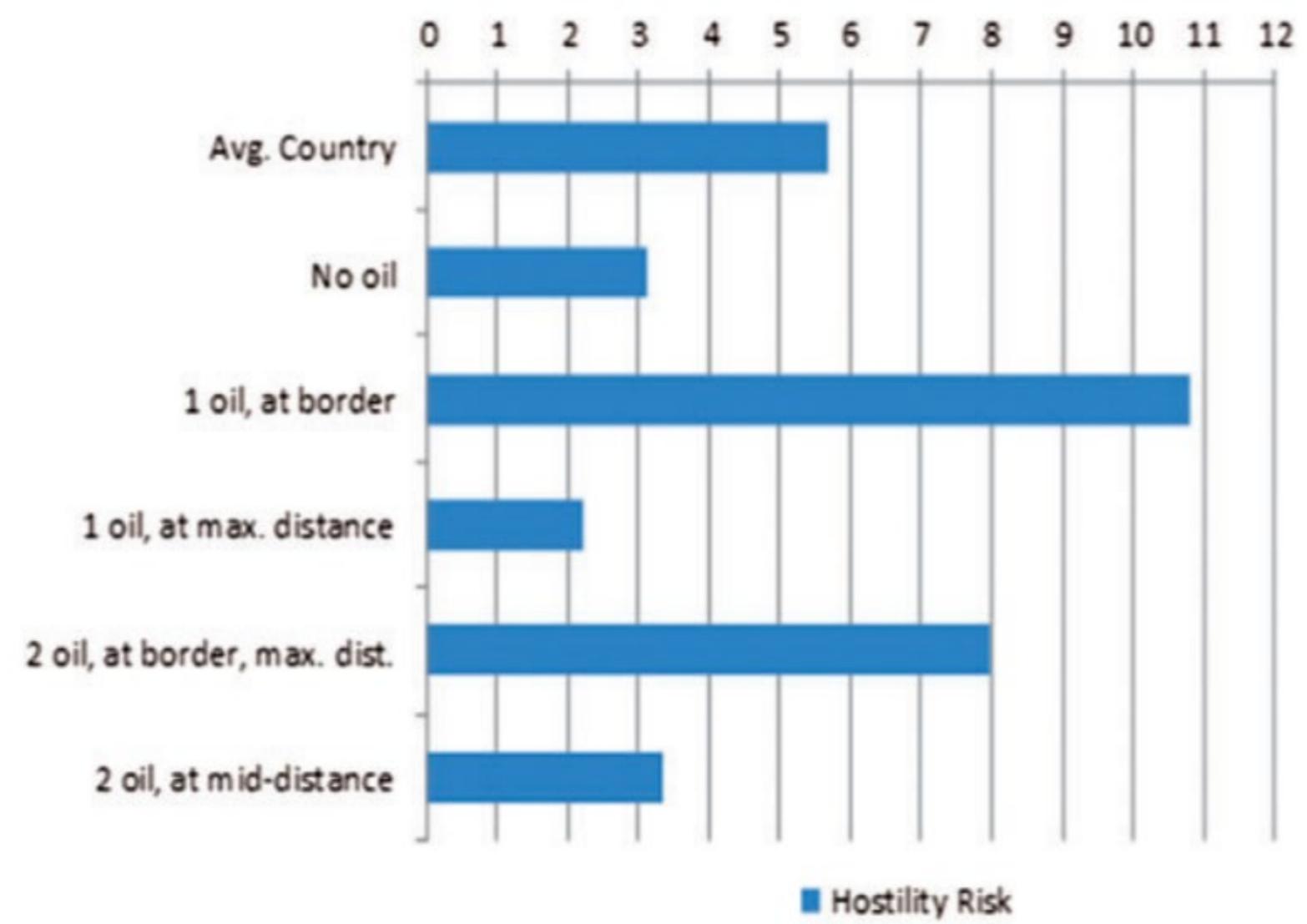


FIGURE II
Quantitative Effects

Risk of bilateral conflict based on the coefficients in column (4) of Table 1. “No oil” is when One = Both = 0. “1 oil, at border” (“1 oil, at max. distance”) is when One = 1 and Dist = 0 (Dist = 1). “2 oil, at border, max. dist.” (“2 oil, at mid-distance”) is when Both = 1, MinDist = 0, and MaxDist = 1 (MinDist = MaxDist = 0.5).

■ 2) Symbolic aspect (intangible aspect)

1. History and Nationalism

- **Territory is a symbol of restoring national sovereignty and independence**

: For Chinese, the loss of Taiwan and Hongkong is a humiliation

- **And, territory constitutes a grandiose vision of an ambitious leader**

: Putin spoke about the importance of Russia's national identity

and its territorial sovereignty (Make Russia Great Again!)

■ 2) Symbolic aspect (intangible aspect)

1. History and Nationalism

- Actually, many current territorial disputes are the legacy of colonial rule
- Borderlines were drawn arbitrarily by former colonial rulers, thus the latent conflicts arise when newly independent countries make claims about their territory (international court exists, but no / weak enforcement mechanism)

■ 2) Symbolic aspect (intangible aspect)

1. History and Nationalism

- Abramson and Carter (2016) suggests that the presence of historical border precedents offers national leader incentive to make territorial claims
- Carter (2017) argues that historical precedents of the border provide leaders with a justification of territorial claims to persuade domestic and international audience

■ 2) Symbolic aspect (intangible aspect)

1. History and Nationalism

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■ 2) Symbolic aspect (intangible aspect)

2. Ethnical and Religious reason

- Goemans and Schultz (2017) suggests that historical border segments that were partitioned to certain ethnic groups are more likely to become targets of territorial challenge. Why?
- Domestic political reason: a leader has the greatest incentive to advocate for unification of his or her own ethnic kin
- If the unification succeeds, it can increase the number of co-ethnics who become citizens in the event that the border is changed

■ 2) Symbolic aspect (intangible aspect)

2. Ethnical and Religious reason

- Even if the attempt to take the territory is not successful, making a claim increases the salience of ethnicity relative to other political / economic cleavages, thereby the incumbent leader can reinforce his/her group's political cohesion
- By contrast, leaders are unlikely to advocate for the inclusion of groups to which they do not belong because it may be costly to increase ethnical heterogeneity and fractionalization within the state

India – Pakistan over Kashmir



Administered by	Area	Population	% Muslim	% Hindu	% Buddhist	% Other
 India	Kashmir Valley	~4 million (4 million)	95%	4%*	–	–
	Jammu	~3 million (3 million)	30%	66%	–	4%
	Ladakh	~0.25 million (250,000)	46%	12%	40%	2%
 Pakistan	Azad Kashmir	~4 million (4 million)	100%	–	–	–

■ 2) **Symbolic aspect (intangible aspect)**

3. Mobilize domestic support behind territorial claims

- Diversionary theory (scapegoat hypothesis)

- : Leaders are aware of the cohesive effects of external conflicts and sometimes deliberately create or maintain external conflict to serve their internal purpose
- : confrontation with **external enemy** can create a “rally round the flag” effect than enhance popular support for political leaders especially when leaders are expected to lose in an election and when economic crisis occurs

■ 2) **Symbolic aspect (intangible aspect)**

3. Mobilize domestic support behind territorial claims

- **Here, the question is, who is most attractive target for the divisionary attempt?**
- Long-standing regional rivalry and territorial disputants
- Because territorial issue is salient to domestic audience

■ Discussion Question

- Paul D. Senese (2005, *American Journal of Political Science*) examines two prominent explanations of international conflict; 1) contiguity 2) territory.

What is the main argument of this article, and what are the main empirical findings of this article? Briefly summarize.

And, do you find the author's approach plausible and / or scientifically convincing as an explanation for conflict? Why or why not?

■ Example Exam Question

Paul D. Senese (2005, *American Journal of Political Science*) suggests two prominent explanations of international conflict.

What are *two prominent components* of international conflict in Senese's study?

And, the study also indicates that "Opportunity" and "Willingness" are associated with those two prominent components.

Which component is associated with "Opportunity"?
Which component is associated with "Willingness"?

Please answer the above questions in order.