

From Territorial Claims to Identity Claims

Paul R. Hensel

Department of Political Science
University of North Texas
1155 Union Circle #305340
Denton, TX 76203-5017
phensel@unt.edu

This paper discusses the expansion of the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) research project from its initial focus on territorial claims through expansion to river and maritime claims, and ultimately to a new data set on identity claims. It begins by discussing the nature of each of the four data sets, indicating how they are defined and how the data sets differ. While data collection on identity claims is not yet complete, the paper concludes by discussing what this new data set can contribute to the field of conflict research, as well as laying out future directions for ICOW research.

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The Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) research project began in 1997 with the collection of data on territorial claims in South America, 1816-1992. Over the years since then, the project has expanded in spatial and temporal scope (with data on territorial claims around the world from 1816-2001 being released in 2013) as well as substantive focus (with data on river claims and maritime claims being added). This paper reviews the progress of the project so far and introduces the next major expansion of the data set, which involves the collection of data on identity claims.

Territorial Claims

The ICOW project began with the long-term goal of collecting data on multiple contentious issues, in a way that would allow scholars to study the similarities and differences in how these issues have been managed (Hensel 2001, Hensel et al. 2008). Scholars had previously speculated on differences between issues (e.g. Rosenau 1966, Mansbach and Vasquez 1981), but there were no data sets that included many decades or centuries of interaction over issues. Recognizing that the task of collecting data on numerous issues at the same time would be impractical, the project began by focusing on territorial issues, which had been receiving the most scholarly attention in research on issues.

The key to collecting data on contentious issues is to design a research strategy that is not tied to certain behaviors that might be considered dependent variables in issue-based studies, such as armed conflict. One of the reasons for the amount of scholarly attention to territorial issues was the observation that territory seemed to be the most frequent issue in interstate wars (e.g. Luard 1986, Holsti 1991), along with the finding that militarized disputes over territory seemed to be more escalatory than disputes over other issues (e.g. Hensel 1996, Vasquez and Henehan 2001). Yet these analyses did not allow study of how many territorial issues (or issues of any other type) did NOT lead to militarized conflict.

The ICOW project's solution was to define territorial claims as involving explicit contention between official government representatives regarding sovereignty over a specific piece of territory. This rules out situations where observers "know" that a leader's "true"

motivation was probably to acquire territory but s/he never explicitly indicated this, as well as situations where the claim was stated by citizens who are not authorized to make foreign policy (as in the case of a Canadian legislator's claim to the Turks and Caicos in 2004: USA Today 2004) or where a vague claim is made to "a route to the sea" or "Lebensraum" that could be obtained in numerous possible territories. As it turns out, only 41.7% of territorial claims in the ICOW data set engage in even a single threat to use military force, and only 27.3% produce a single fatality from militarized conflict.

Most proponents of an issues framework also argue that issues vary in salience, or importance, both between issues (e.g. with territorial claims being more salient overall than most other issues) and within issues (with certain claimed territories being more salient than others). The ICOW project addressed this by developing a salience index to measure the value of the claimed territory, with six attributes that might be present in the territory for each of the two claimant states (Hensel and Mitchell 2005). This includes three tangible attributes (a permanent population, economic resources, and a strategic location) and three intangible (claiming the territory as part of the national homeland rather than as a dependency, an identity connection to the territory or its residents due to ethnic or religious ties, and a history of sovereignty over the territory). Each attribute that is relevant for each claimant state contributes one point to the index, producing a range from 0-12. While one might argue that more precise measures would be useful (say, measuring the dollar value of natural resources believed to be there), such precision would be essentially impossible to collect over the two-century span of the ICOW data set, and the resulting measure has high face validity.

The territorial claims data set has been useful for a number of purposes. Claim salience greatly increases the risk of militarized conflict over the claim, while also increasing the likelihood of peaceful attempts to settle the claim through bilateral negotiations or third party activities (e.g. Hensel 2001, Hensel et al. 2008). A history of recent armed conflict and a history of failed negotiations over the claim also increase the likelihood of both future conflict and future efforts to settle peacefully, particularly involving third parties that seek to manage or end the threat to regional stability (e.g. Hensel 2001, Hensel et al. 2008). Other scholars have found similar results, sometimes using alternative data sets (e.g. Huth 1996, Huth and Allee 2002), and

settling territorial claims appears to reduce the risk of future conflict between the claimants (e.g. Gibler 2012, Owsiak 2012, Owsiak and Rider 2013).

River and Maritime Claims

It is important to recognize that, from the very beginning, the ICOW project was meant to collect data on multiple types of contentious issues in a way that would allow empirical comparison of issue management. This, of course, was the reason the project was called the *Issue Correlates of War* rather than something more one-dimensional like *Territorial Correlates of War*. Hensel et al. (2008) presented a simple typology of contentious issues, based on whether the issue in question typically has relatively high or low values for both tangible and intangible salience. This produces the following table, adapted from Hensel et al. (2008):

Table 1: Typology of Contentious Issues by Claim Salience

	<i>Relatively Low Intangible Salience</i>	<i>Relatively High Intangible Salience</i>
<i>Relatively High Tangible Salience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River (Turkish dam projects on Euphrates River) • Maritime (Cod Wars) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Territory (Golan Heights, Alsace-Lorraine)
<i>Relatively Low Tangible Salience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firms or industries (Airbus subsidies, shrimp imports) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity (Germans in South Tyrol, Russians in Ukraine)

The first issue type to be studied, territorial claims, is seen as having relatively high values on both tangible and intangible salience. While this helps to make territorial claims the most interesting cases to study, and it may account for their earlier observations that territory seems to be the most conflictual issue, a systematic issues approach requires the study of less salient issues as well as the most salient. ICOW data collection expanded to include river claims and maritime claims under a National Science Foundation grant in 2002, adding two issue types that have relatively high levels of tangible salience (due to the importance of fresh water and perhaps such resources as fish or undersea oil) but relatively low levels of intangible salience (as

the water and fish in question do not have strong symbolic or psychological value to most citizens beyond their tangible benefits).

River and maritime claims follow the same basic definition as territorial claims, requiring explicit contention between official government representatives. The only difference lies in the nature of the contention, which for river claims requires disagreement over the usage of a shared river (typically pollution, large-scale irrigation projects, or dam construction), and for maritime claims requires disagreement over access to or usage of a maritime zone (typically for fishing rights, access to undersea resources such as oil, or navigation rights). Saliency for each is also comparable to territorial claim saliency, with a 0-12 index that considers six attributes of the claimed river or maritime zone for each claimant. For river claims, this includes such attributes as whether the river is used for irrigation, navigation, or hydroelectric power generation. For maritime claims, this includes such attributes as whether the waters include fisheries, undersea oil or gas deposits, or strategic locations.

The first paper to compare these issue types systematically found that there are important similarities in the ways that territorial, river, and maritime issues are managed (Hensel et al. 2008). In particular, regardless of the issue type, higher levels of issue saliency increase the likelihood of both militarized conflict and peaceful negotiations over the issue, as do recent histories of either militarized conflict or failed negotiations. Controlling for issue saliency, maritime claims are somewhat less likely than territorial or river claims to experience armed conflict overall, but this difference disappears when recent conflict is included in the model -- indicating that once any of these three issues becomes militarized it is difficult to resolve without future conflict. Maritime claims are also less likely to experience peaceful negotiations than are territorial claims, while river claims are significantly more likely to see peaceful efforts -- consistent with a longstanding argument in the freshwater literature that rivers are natural engines of cooperation rather than conflict, as well as with the notion that the river is a shared resource while maritime issues more closely resemble the zero-sum nature of territorial sovereignty.

Besides showing similarities in issue management across issue types, the river and maritime claims data sets have generated important findings about the specific issues being addressed. For example, Hensel, Mitchell, and Sowers (2006) find that greater water scarcity in

the river basin -- which is not included in the measure of river claim salience -- increases the likelihood of both militarized conflict and peaceful negotiations, but that river institutions reduce armed conflict and increase the effectiveness of peaceful management. Brochmann and Hensel (2009, 2011) find that greater water scarcity in the basin generally increases the risk of a new river claim, but also increases the likelihood and effectiveness of peaceful settlement attempts (as both sides need access to the shared resource), and that the existence of treaties over the river increase the likelihood of peaceful management. With respect to maritime claims, Nemeth et al. (2014) find that institutionalization and legalization matters; membership in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) reduces the likelihood of new maritime claims and increases third party involvement when such claims begin, while legally declared exclusive economic zones (EEZs) increase the success of peaceful settlement attempts.

Identity Claims

As discussed above regarding Table 1, territorial claims typically have relatively high values of both tangible and intangible salience, while river and maritime claims typically have relatively high tangible salience but relatively low intangible salience. That still leaves two cells from Table 1 open, so the ICOW project is now moving on to fill another cell by collecting data on identity claims with the help of a Minerva Research Initiative grant from the U.S. Department of Defense.

As with the other issues, an identity claim requires explicit contention between official government representatives. The substantive nature of these issues is the treatment or status of an ethnic group that is shared by the challenger and target states in the claim. In such a claim, the challenger might be supporting or demanding better treatment or equality for its ethnic kin in the target state, or may go further to demand regional autonomy, secession, or even unification with the challenger state itself. Examples include Austria's interest in protecting ethnic Germans in the former province of South Tyrol since it was transferred to Italy, Hungary's interest in protecting ethnic Hungarians in neighboring Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia since the post-World War I Treaty of Trianon, and Russia's interest in protecting ethnic Russians in former Soviet republics since the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Ethnic groups are more difficult to identify or measure than are international borders, rivers, or maritime zones. We follow Moore's (2002: 78) definition of an ethnic/identity group as a collection of individuals that share "cultural, linguistic, racial, and religious boundaries." We identify these groups using the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) data set (Cederman et al. 2010) and the related Transborder Ethnic Kin (TEK) data set (Cederman et al. 2013). These data sets are widely used in scholarly research on ethnic conflict and civil war, and their identification of ethnic groups that both identify themselves as distinct from their countrymen (EPR) and share ties across international borders (TEK) offers an ideal starting point for identifying potential identity claims.

Consistent with the first three ICOW data sets, we will use the EPR and TEK data sets to identify each pair of states that share a specific ethnic group, as a list of potential identity claims. Some dyads will share numerous groups, and some groups are shared by numerous dyads, so we will investigate each group-dyad relationship to determine whether or not the two governments in the dyad had an explicit disagreement over the treatment or status of the group in one or both states. This will be done using a combination of news sources (notably the New York Times, Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe, Keesing's, and Facts on File), historical books and journal articles, and reference sources focusing on ethnic groups such as Levinson's *Ethnic Groups Worldwide* and the *Ethnic Groups of the World* volumes.

We are still finalizing our research procedures that will be used once the Minerva grant begins in September 2015, but the measurement of identity claim salience will be similar to the first three data sets, producing a range from 0-12. The measures to be included will likely involve such factors as the size of the ethnic group in both the challenger and target state, the political power of the group in each state, the socioeconomic status of the group in each state, and the length of time in the recent past when the group has resided in each state.

One obvious benefit of collecting the identity claims data set is the extension of research on contentious issues. Of the three issue types that have been collected so far, both river and maritime claims have relatively high tangible salience but relatively low intangible salience, while territorial claims are relatively high on both dimensions. One study that has compared the tangible and intangible dimensions of territorial claims has found that greater levels of both dimensions of salience increase the likelihood of armed conflict, while greater levels of

intangible salience increase the success of peaceful settlements and greater levels of tangible salience have the opposite effect (Hensel and Mitchell 2005). It remains to be seen, though, whether this is also true of entire issue areas that typically have higher or lower levels of intangible salience.

There are also many unique questions that can only be addressed once this new identity claims data set has been collected. For example, some have suggested that the international system has increasingly accepted a territorial integrity norm (Zacher 2001, Hensel et al. 2009), which should reduce the onset of new territorial claims and promote the settlement of ongoing claims. If this is correct, then we might expect identity claims to become increasingly frequent as states find the international system opposing irredentist efforts to annex territories where their kinsmen live, and instead focus their efforts on improving the lives of their kinsmen abroad. Similarly, if this norm matters, states that lose territory through territorial claims may be more likely to try to improve the lives of their ethnic kin through identity claims rather than through new territorial claims for the recovery of the lost territory as the norm has strengthened.

On a related note, a preliminary study (Hensel and Macaulay 2015) has examined the conditions under which states sharing an ethnic group are likely to begin an irredentist territorial claim that includes an identity element for the challenger state. A greatly revised version of the EPR and TEK data sets used in this paper has recently been released, but based on the preliminary results reported at this spring's ISA conference with the previous versions of these data sets, such claims are most likely when the shared ethnic group makes up a majority of the population and at least part of the ruling political coalition in the challenger state, when the group is involved in an ethnic war or has recently lose political status in the target state, and when less states support the global territorial integrity norm. Future research should investigate the conditions under which states are more likely to pursue non-irredentist identity claims rather than such overt territorial demands, as well as the ways that these different types of claims are managed.

Another example is the relationship between international disagreements and domestic sovereignty. Territorial questions between states have often been managed through international courts, but identity claims would seem to be fundamentally different. The status of an ethnic group within a given state would seem to fall under the heading of sovereignty, as a domestic

political question that should be left for the sovereign state to decide without any foreign interference. If this is so, then states should be much less likely to submit their identity claims questions to the jurisdiction of any external third party, which would effectively remove one of the options that has been found to be most effective at settling territorial, river, and maritime claims (e.g. Mitchell and Hensel 2008).

Future Directions

In coming years, the ICOW project will continue to finish and extend the first three issue types, while carrying out data collection on identity claims. Data collection on peaceful settlement attempts in territorial claims has been completed and just awaits cleaning and double-checking before it can be released. Similarly, data collection on river and maritime claims for the remaining regions of the world has largely been completed and awaits cleaning and checking. These are time-consuming but important tasks, but fortunately, the end is in sight for all three data sets through 2001.

After all three original data sets have been collected, and the data through 2001 has been released, we will work to extend them temporally. Because of our reliance on the COW Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) data set for identifying armed conflicts, the first extension of each data set will run through 2010, which is the time frame for the current version of the MID data. We do plan to keep all three data sets reasonably up to date, though, and we may eventually start doing our own coding of militarized conflict for years that are not yet available in the MID data (and then updating this once the next version of the MID data set has been released). We also plan to release additional details of each territorial claim, most notably lists of the specific resources, identity groups, and/or strategic value (if any) involved in each claim. Just as our salience index has produced strong confirmation that not all territorial claims are equally likely to see armed conflict or peaceful negotiations, we suspect that there will also be differences between resources or strategic attributes of territory that influence the way the claim is managed.

Finally, the proposed schedule under the Minerva grant calls for data collection on identity claims to take two calendar years, from Fall 2015 through Summer 2017. We anticipate that the initial version of the data set will run through 2014, although that will depend on the

availability of 2014 data from several data sets that we rely upon (most notably the Ethnic Power Relations data, which currently runs through 2013, and the MID data that currently runs through 2010).

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