

Abstracts

Oftentimes, states have multiple active territorial disputes with several adversaries. In this context, what do domestic audiences learn from territorial disputes, and how does it update their beliefs about peaceful settlement or war? I argue that the peaceful settlement of a territorial dispute or the onset of violence has spillover effects on public opinion towards other active claims. Peacefully resolving a dispute can improve trust in neighboring states and increase dovish attitudes toward territorial disputes. Conversely, exposure to violence in disputes damages the reputation of neighboring states and bolsters hawkish public opinion. I test these ideas using two original experiments in India. I first examine the spillover effects of peace with a pre-registered face-to-face survey experiment ($n=2,513$). I find that informing respondents of a prior peaceful resolution that India negotiated increases their support for peaceful settlement and compromise with any of India's neighbors, conditional on the pre-treatment levels of dispute salience. Second, I leverage a natural experiment ($n=1,113$) during the fielding of my survey to test the spillover effects of violence. I find that violence in the disputed territory of Kashmir increases hawkish attitudes and sharply reduces the favorability of neighboring states. This study contributes to a larger literature on the public opinion of territorial disputes and conflict. While the benefits of peaceful settlements in disputes are limited, the costs of violence dramatically change individual support for peaceful settlement and military action.