

# **Ritualized Hostilities in Territorial Disputes**

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## **Abstract**

Why are some provocative acts between states with territorial disputes more escalatory than others? Territorial disputes are the most likely cause of war. To understand why a territorial dispute escalates, most existing work focuses on the characteristics of the disputing parties and the dispute itself. However, these are far from the only conditions that explain territorial dispute escalation. In response to this observation, I introduce a new theory that focuses on the actual interactions between states and brings further clarity to the question by studying the stabilizing effect of “ritualization.” While a hostile provocation might deteriorate bilateral relations and escalate tensions, if the said provocation has been regularly repeated by the actors—a pattern I term “ritualized”—observers are less likely to feel threatened. As a useful analogy, if one views a territorial dispute as a pot of boiling water on the stove, the argument presented here is that ritualization is the equivalence of regularly letting the steam off.

The research design tackles how ritualization can stabilize a territorial dispute through a conjoint survey experiment and a time-series analysis of South Korea-Japan bilateral events in the context of the territorial issue (Dokdo/Takeshima) between the two

countries. South Korea and Japan constitute a useful case to understand ritualization due to the existence of both ritualized and non-ritualized provocations in their recent interactions and the possibility to collect fine-grained survey data for testing the theory's mechanisms. To externally validate the findings outside of South Korea and Japan, I develop a dispute-level measurement of ritualization to test the effect of ritualization across all territorial disputes in the international system.

This dissertation challenges the common assumption that repetition of hostile behaviors makes a territorial dispute more escalatory by showing how they are, in fact, part of the maintenance of a disputed international relationship. Instead of being a destabilizer that increases uncertainty and the chance of unintended escalation, these events stabilize adversaries by creating predictable patterns of interaction and perceptions of mutual understanding. The implication of this finding suggests that regions with ostensible hostilities between rivalries might not be as dangerous as they appear to be, and the United States should formulate its policy based on the pattern instead of the presence of provocations alone.

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To Yuan-Ning.

## Chapter 1 - Introduction

Given such a context of ritualized relationships, the use of bargaining weapons no longer produces escalation. What does arouse anxiety about renewed escalation is a deviation from the prescribed rituals.

– Murray Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action*, 22

Since the passage of an ordinance in 2005, Shimane Prefecture in Japan has held a ceremony every February 22 to celebrate the *Takeshima Day*. On this date, Japanese officials and parliamentary members arrive from Tokyo, deliver speeches, and restate their claims over the group of islands effectively controlled by South Korea (known as Takeshima by the former and Dokdo by the latter). These claims are then typically followed by protests and refutations from South Korean diplomats and activists, while South Korean politicians have issued threats to “fight to the end” if Japan ever attempts to take the islands. The political ritual—entering its seventeenth anniversary—marks a recent addition to the recursive pattern of hostilities in a conflictual relationship plagued by a territorial dispute that has remained unsolved for decades.

These observed hostilities—specifically, sovereign nations provoking territorial disputes with other sovereign nations—are puzzling because researchers and policymakers equivocally assess the danger associated with such provocations. On the one hand, many are deeply concerned about the possibility of escalation. For them, “tit-for-tat escalations” can rapidly deteriorate a bilateral relationship (Pollmann 2015). As nationalist sentiments tend to pressure the leadership into a hawkish position,<sup>1</sup> policymakers fear that the “unpredictable situation” might escalate into further disputes, and finally spiral out of control.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, if provocations take place every year with almost identical patterns, one might conclude that they will likely not be seen as provocative. Consider the sequence of events occurring every February in Japan: on

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<sup>1</sup> This is particularly the case for South Korea. To many South Koreans, the Takeshima/Dokdo matter is not simply an island dispute, but a national symbol and reminder of Japan's historical aggression (Nakajima 2007, 1).

<sup>2</sup> Koo (2009) categorizes three waves of escalations of the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute. In 2006, an unpredictable situation of confrontation between two Japan Coast Guard research ships and 20 South Korean Coast Guard ships would have happened without the extra time for diplomacy due to bad weather conditions. Immediately after the event, one Japanese Foreign Ministry official said that, in a situation in which Korean coast guard ships and Japanese research boats might encounter one other in that area, the events could become out of the control of both parties (Nakajima 2007, 4).

Takeshima Day every year, the public ceremony incites South Korean protests, which culminate in Japan's arresting of Korean activists. Although as isolated incidents such events might seem like politically charged "tit-for-tat escalations," their annual repetition renders these incidents as predictable and ceremonial.

What should be made of this? When trying to explain territorial dispute escalation, most existing research has focused on baseline conditions—such as the characteristics of involving parties' domestic regime type or the geography of the disputed territory—instead of on what countries with territorial disputes actually do to each other across time. To address this limitation, this dissertation introduces an alternative framework that focuses on the interaction patterns between countries with territorial disputes. Specifically, by focusing on "ritualized hostilities"—the type of interactions that occurs with a meaningful interval and a consistent pattern—I show that events such as Takeshima Day become less escalatory as actors repeat them over time. Ritualization, I argue, creates a perception of mutual understanding even between adversaries and eventually habituates the audience to the recurring hostile patterns. As a result, compared to a non-ritualized territorial provocation, a ritualized territorial provocation is less likely to invoke a sense of threat from its intended audience.

Understanding the role of ritualization is not merely an academic exercise, but one that has important policy implications on East Asian security. In Japan, Takeshima Day is not an isolated instance of ritualized provocations. Since 1981, people in Hokkaido have

been commemorating the “Northern Territory Day” every year and holding national summer meetings at Cape Nosappu denouncing Russia’s occupation of the four northern islands, territories it has held since the end of the Second World War. More recently, similar practices have reached the Ishigaki City at the southern end of the Ryukyu Island chain, where citizens and officials have commemorated the “Senkaku Reclamation Day.” It is also important to point out that Japan is not the only “ritualizing actor.” North Korea’s repetitive nuclear and missile tests satisfy certain conditions of ritualization (Huang and Woo 2017). The behavior of the Chinese Coast Guard in the Senkaku/Diaoyu territorial dispute also followed a consistent pattern (Burke et al. 2018, 9). In these cases, a theory of ritualized hostilities can be valuable to policymakers, as it can better predict the destabilizing effects of territorial provocations in a region that is likely to see its territorial issues persist and provocations continue in the near future.

The theory’s differentiation between ritualized versus non-ritualized provocations also has implications for American grand strategy. While territorial provocations are generally destabilizing, the theory and its findings allow us to identify which types of provocations tend to be less escalatory and hence do not require a more interventionist policy. In the debate over U.S. grand strategy—especially the discussion over whether East Asia is “ripe for rivalry” or relatively peaceful (See, for instance, Friedberg 1993; Fu, Gill, Hundman, Liff, et al. 2015; Kang 2017; Liff and Ikenberry 2014; Mearsheimer 2010)—this dissertation brings a more nuanced assessment and presents why future



research will benefit from paying more attention to the role of interaction patterns in international disputes.

This dissertation is not the first attempt to study patterned interaction in world politics, and scholars have shown that certain cooperative behavioral patterns can emerge even under a predominantly noncooperative environment (Axelrod 1984; Oye 1985). Yet, most research in this literature treats behavioral patterns as game-theoretic strategies that actors choose among alternatives and focuses mostly on the patterns' strategic merits. For instance, Axelrod's main research finding is that, in a computer-simulated tournament of iterated prisoner's dilemma, the reciprocal strategy of "tit-for-tat" did best compared to other strategies such as "grim-trigger". This project takes a different approach in treating patterned interactions as given and studying their effects. Rather than evaluating whether ritualization is an ideal strategy for states with territorial disputes, my goal is to understand how ritualization shapes subsequent behaviors of states and trace the underlying psychological mechanisms that give rise to such effects.

### **Dynamics of Territorial Disputes**

The clash between states over disputed territory is considered by many political scientists the most important underlying cause of war (Heldt 1999; Holsti 1991; Vasquez 1993) and is one of the enduring features of international politics (Huth 1996). While earlier studies of international relations have been driven by theoretical paradigms that

emphasize the role of power, recent work argues that scholars should pay more attention to the importance of territorial issues (Gibler 2012, 4). Following Fearon's (1995) rationalist framework that there always exists a set of negotiated settlements that both sides of an international dispute prefer to war, scholars argue that "sacred space" (Hassner 2003) and territorial interests (Toft 2006) can be effectively *indivisible* and subsequently prevent rational state actors from reaching a peaceful bargain to avoid wars (Hensel and Mitchell 2005). In other studies, scholars have also investigated how baseline conditions such as geographical characteristics (Goertz and Diehl 1996; Hensel 1996), domestic regime type (James, Park, and Choi 2006; Lektzian, Prins, and Souva 2010; Park and James 2015), international institutions (Schultz 2014; Simmons 2002), or a combination of these factors (Schenoni, Goertz, Owsiak, and Diehl 2020) can explain territorial dispute outcomes.

As significant as those studies have been in establishing a theory of territorial dispute escalation, they are not designed to study the escalation process within the same territorial dispute across time. While factors such as regime type can explain why disputes between joint-democracies are less likely to escalate compared to mixed dyads, they have little to say about why Japan-South Korea tensions surrounding Dokdo/Takeshima was higher in 2005 compared to 2009, or why the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute escalated significantly in 2012 compared to two years before, as there was no change in these parties' domestic regime type. Since previous studies tend to be more interested in explaining long-term territorial disputes outcomes such as settlement and war, they also have little to say

about territorial disputes that witnessed significant short-term changes in bilateral tensions without reaching a full settlement or escalating into war, which is the case of most existing territorial disputes today.

This dissertation takes the literature in a new direction by examining the role of ritualization. My argument starts with the observation that in hostile international relationships, actors have sometimes developed particular patterns in their interactions. While such interaction patterns remained relatively understudied,<sup>3</sup> I argue that they are substantively important. Variations in interaction patterns can lead to changes in international tension (O'Neill 1999), impacts on the international atmosphere (Wright 1957), and altered friendship between governments (Klingberg 1961). Focusing on ritualization also provides additional insight into cases where baseline conditions do not vary significantly over time. Like recent scholarship that focuses on “near crises” rather than crises or war (Iakhnis and James 2019), I argue that it is important to understand the dynamics of low-level conflictual events. Even without causing wars, territorial dispute provocations have led to flight cancellations, disturbance of economic activities, halts to

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<sup>3</sup> Some notable exceptions in the field of international relations are Shelling (2008) and Azar (1972). In addition, Dina Zinnes and Robert Muncaster emphasize the role of current hostilities when modeling dispute escalation (Muncaster and Zinnes 1982; Zinnes and Muncaster 1984). Yet, the two authors discuss more on the hostility level rather than the patterns of such hostilities.

people-to-people exchange, and threats of an all-out diplomatic war between major allies of the United States.

In adopting a provocation-based approach, this dissertation diverges from earlier studies that conceptualize international disputes as a process that moves across different “stages.” Huth and Allee (2002, 35), for instance, plot four dispute stages— Dispute Initiation Stage, Challenge the Status Quo Stage, Military Escalation Stage, and Negotiation Stage—along the time horizon in their analysis of the “evolution of international disputes.” The stage-based approach allows researchers to compare the escalation dynamics of international disputes in different stages, and does present a more fine-grained analysis compared to a dyad-based approach that implicitly assigns one escalation dynamic for each pair of states. However, as will be shown in Chapter 3, different types of provocations—some ritualized and others not—might take place within the same time frame or the same stage. In this project, therefore, treating territorial provocation (rather than dispute, dyad, or stages) as the central unit of analysis provides a more effective way to study ritualization and its causal effect.

This dissertation also diverges from research that uses a curvilinear term of “prior disputes” to evaluate how states with disputes might gradually learn to “manage their relations and even to a certain extent ritualize” their militarized international disputes (Mansbach and Vasquez 1981; Senese and Vasquez 2005, 613). Since curvilinear terms are capable of capturing non-linear relationships between variables, it is possible for researchers

to model the diminishing effect of repeated hostilities as theorized in my theory. However, while the number of prior disputes can potentially be a good proxy for previous hostile interactions, it is not always a good proxy for ritualization, which is based on both interaction *and* patterns. Indeed, if an interaction pattern is never established, there is no reason to believe that parties with a large number of prior disputes are in a ritualized relationship.

### **Reoccurring Hostilities and Escalation in International Disputes**

Despite the absence of a systematic demonstration of how ritualization can have an impact on a territorial dispute's propensity to escalate, research on democratic crisis bargaining and security dilemmas suggests that reoccurring hostilities may be theoretically tied to inadvertent escalations. For the former, as long as a threat is made in front of a democratic domestic audience (or a domestic audience in certain types of autocracy), it will generate an "audience cost" that makes backing down from a threat or moving towards a more conciliatory position in the future more costly. For spiral theorists, rational and security-seeking states must be prudent in their initiation of hostilities as hardline strategies are always risky and can lead to the adversary's retaliation and an action-reaction spiral. In the worst-case scenario, reoccurring hostilities can either lead to a *horizon* where both sides are locked-in and neither is willing to back down or even an unintended spiral into war.

Territorial disputes are not always international crises. However, scholars who study the two commonly conceptualize both as “wars of attritions” over a duration of time where leaders on both sides can choose different options at each time point.<sup>4</sup> In Fearon’s game-theoretic model (1994), a leader can initiate an attack, back down, or escalate an international dispute. The formulation of a dynamic game with discrete choices allows researchers to theorize how a choice at one point in time can influence a leader’s utility functions in the future. In particular, Fearon argues that because (1) previous escalations can generate domestic audience costs that punish leaders who choose to back down and (2) because democracies are better at generating audience costs compared to non-democracies, democratic countries are more capable of issuing threats without having to face reciprocal threats by its targets. How can this mechanism be connected to a protracted territorial dispute where both sides continue to exchange hostilities without backing down? For Fearon, “a crisis always has a unique horizon—a level of escalation after which neither side will back down because both are certainly locked in, making war inevitable.” Fearon quickly notes that “before the horizon is reached, the fear of facing an opponent who may become committed to war puts pressure on states to settle.” In cases where fear fails to

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<sup>4</sup> Fravel (2008), for instance, specifies that a leader in a territorial dispute can either choose a delaying, cooperating, or escalating strategy in his study of China’s territorial disputes with neighbors.

temper down the lock-in effect created by audience costs, however, reoccurring hostilities might lead to war (Leng 1983, 2004; Rapoport 1960).

Another lock-in mechanism comes from the study of how domestic political factors lead to imperialistic overexpansion. According to Snyder (1993), once the public accepts an “imperial myth,” domestic elites will face severe domestic blowback if they change their position even if the myth might have simply been opportunistic strategic rhetoric:

Even if elite avoids internalizing its own myths, it may nonetheless become politically entrapped in its own rhetoric. Insofar as the elite’s power and policies are based on society’s acceptance of imperial myths, its rule would be jeopardized by renouncing the myths when their side-effects become costly. To stay in power and to keep central policy objectives intact, elites may have to accept some unintended consequences of their imperial sales pitch (ibid., 42).

While the world today is less threatened by imperial myths compared to a century ago, leaders of countries with territorial disputes are still actively constructing domestic and international “territorial myths.”<sup>5</sup> In this situation, reoccurring hostilities between states with

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<sup>5</sup> The most prominent territorial myth is the claim that a disputed territory is an “inherent territory” to a disputing state. This rhetoric is used in China’s claim to Taiwan, Taiwan’s claim to Itu Aba, and Japan’s claim to Dokdo/Takeshima. These are “myths” not in the

territorial disputes can be dangerous as it allows actors to reify their territorial claims with their words and actions. A similar argument was made by Goddard in her study of Jerusalem and Northern Ireland, where she found that politicians' strategies to legitimize their territorial claims and the domestic coalitional change might jointly force an actor to "reject all other claims as illegitimate, and construct the conflict as indivisible" (2010, 33). Although this argument is convincing, it does not differentiate between types of hostilities and threats. Moreover, the simplistic design of audience cost model constrains a leader to choose between escalating or backing down, whereas in reality, a leader has more flexibility in maintaining a disputed relationship (Snyder and Borghard 2011).

Instead of arguing that an actor can paint herself into a corner with repetitive threats and public rhetoric, proponents of the spiral model argue that these hardline acts themselves might be negatively perceived by the adversary and trigger even more hardline reprisals. The theoretical logic begins from a group of rational states under international anarchy and security dilemma. Although it is possible that all states are security seekers rather than aggressors with territorial ambition, "the drive for security will also produce aggressive actions if the state either require a very high sense of security or feel menaced by the very presence of other strong states" (Jervis 1976b, 64). While

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sense of its factual or historical correctness, but in the sense that, similar to imperial myths, these claims make a bargaining solution unlikely to achieve because an "inherent territory" is by definition non-negotiable.



the most dangerous potential spiral was the U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms race during the Cold War, cases of unintended spirals in smaller scales are abundant in territorial disputes. For instance,

China's move into the region, occupation of six features, and clash with Vietnam threatened the position of other claimants, resulting in a spiral of hostility in the South China Sea. Between the March 1988 clash and 1991, Vietnam occupied seven additional features, controlling a total of twenty-five and further consolidating its position in the dispute (Fravel 2008, 296).

Because even originally defensive actions might trigger unintended and undesired consequences, for spiral model theorists, a "rational security-seeking state must constantly grapple with profound least-of-many-evils choices" (Copeland 2000, 36). Hence, reoccurring hostilities can be dangerous in a territorial dispute not because of the risk of self-entrapment, but because actions as such might menace the originally security-seeking adversary and make them resort to aggressive countermeasures. This is also a feasible argument with historical evidence. However, the argument itself cannot explain why, despite the presence of multiple exchanges of threats and hostilities, among all modern territorial disputes, only some escalated into war. Like the "lock-in" mechanism, the spiral mechanism is also limited because it does not theoretically differentiate between types of hostilities and

cannot answer questions such as “would a hostility still lead to unintended spiral if both parties have practiced it on the same day in the last 10 years?”

### **The Argument in Brief**

In introducing a novel theory of “ritualized hostilities,” I seek to address the theoretical limitations in the mentioned approaches. At the core of this dissertation is the argument that ritualized hostilities are in fact part of the maintenance of the relationship between countries with territorial disputes. Instead of being a destabilizer that increases uncertainty and therefore the chance of unintended escalation, these events stabilize adversarial tensions between disputing countries by creating predictable patterns of interaction and generating perceptions of mutual understanding; all the while, the repetition of ritual provocation lowers the audience’s perception of threat. As a useful analogy, if one views a territorial dispute as a pot of boiling water on the stove, the argument presented here is that ritualized hostilities are the equivalence of regularly letting the steam off. Although we still observe provocations between countries with territorial disputes, these provocations are qualitatively different from non-ritualized provocations, which are not anticipated by the audience and thus tend to make the situation volatile.

Why are ritualized provocations less likely to escalate compared to non-ritualized provocations? I argue that it is due to two underlying psychological mechanisms. First, ritualization helps states maintain a stable image of its adversary. Living under anarchy

and perennial uncertainty of their adversary's intention or resolve, states tend to develop an image of others and their intentions (Jervis 1968, 454). As hostilities with similar patterns occur and reoccur, the level of uncertainty and psychological stress of policymakers and observers decrease and prevent a dispute from unintended spirals. Human beings tend to use heuristics and analogical reasoning to reduce cognitive burdens during complex situations (Khong 1992) and identifying patterns in likely random events (Gilovich 1991).<sup>6</sup> “Bomb once across the Yalu, and the enemy will expect more bombs across the Yalu the next day; keep bombs this side of the Yalu for several months, and the enemy will suppose that, though you may change your mind at any time, the odds are against your bombing north of the Yalu tomorrow” (Schelling 2008, 132). Although this tendency could potentially lead policymakers to draw faulty comparisons or to ignore critical evidence that defies their cognitive framework, it can stabilize an otherwise hostile stand-off in a ritualized context by *biasing* both sides towards a common understanding.

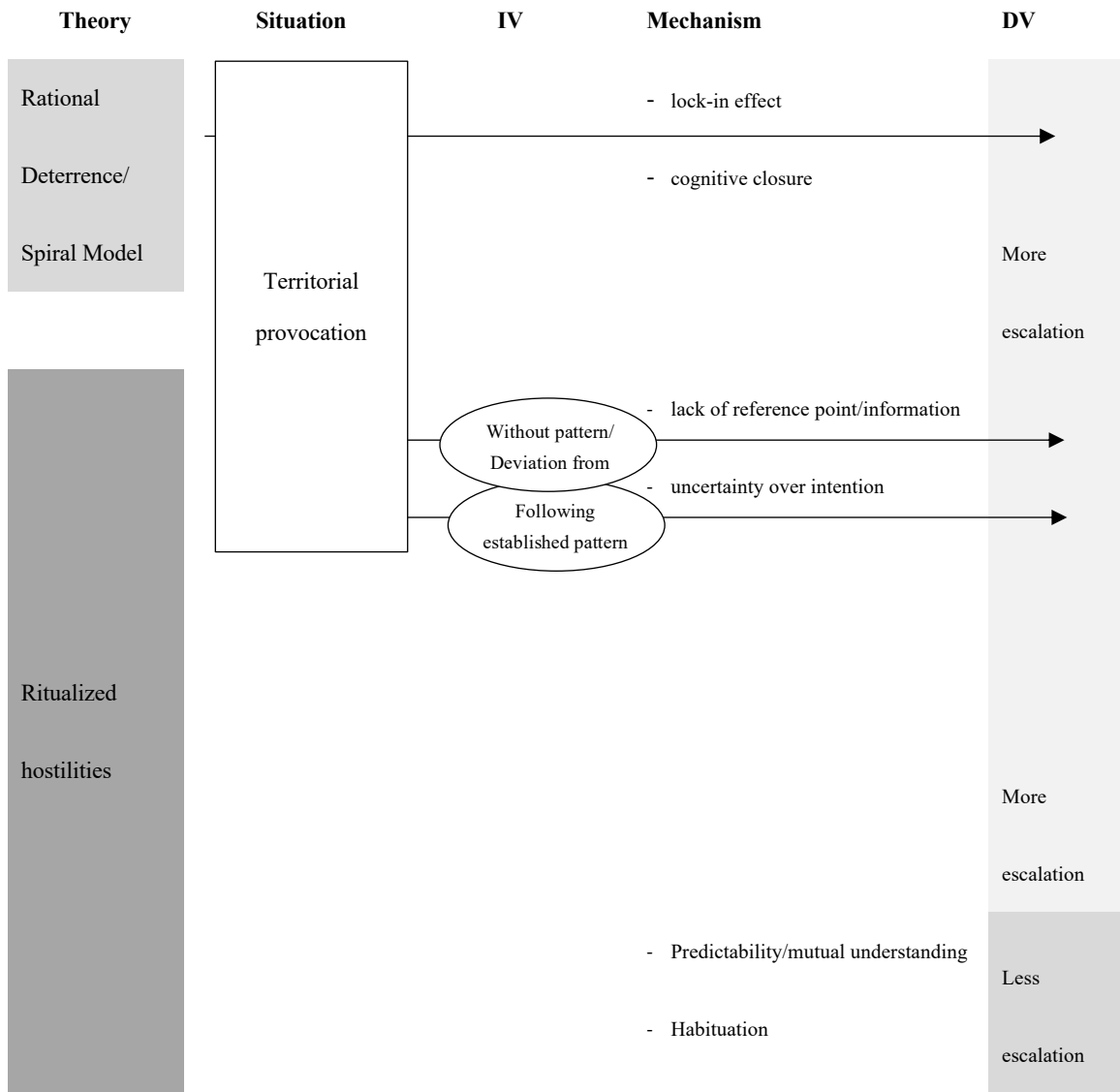
In addition to the cognitive process of identifying patterns and forming a stable image of the adversary, this dissertation argues that ritualization also stabilizes a disputed international relationship by eventually habituating actors to the repetitive shocks. In

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<sup>6</sup> Khong (1992) specifically focuses on the implication of heuristics in foreign policy decisions. For the general role of heuristics in the decision-making process, see Tversky and Kahneman (1974), Kuklinski and Hurley (1994), and Lau and Redlawsk (2001).

other words, after rounds of patterned hostile interactions with their adversaries, countries with territorial disputes will eventually “get used to” the political shocks from these hostile interactions, and territorial provocations that were initially threatening no longer produce the same effect. As suggested by the habituation literature from neurophysiology (Rankin et al. 2009; Thompson and Spencer 1966), a human can become habituated to natural stimuli such as heat and cold (Zimny and Miller 1966), or to new information such as in language acquisition. However, we are also able to become habituated with social phenomena such as violence (Mangelsdorff and Zuckerman 1975) and wars (Ziferstein 1967). In the context of territorial provocations, the habituation mechanism predicts a diminishing effect of repeated hostilities.

**Table 1 Summary of Theses**



Since ritualization arises through repetition, no provocations are *ex-ante* ritualized before actors bring them into practice. This implies a life cycle of ritualization: while provocations are most destabilizing when they first occur, their effects will gradually diminish through repetition. I test this hypothesis using a dataset of South

Korea-Japan bilateral events. While it is challenging to quantify ritualization and study its effect, Takeshima Day—the territorial ceremony which has taken place around on the same day each year with highly similar patterns —provides an opportunity to learn about ritualization by comparing their destabilizing impacts on South Korea-Japan relations as they became more ritualized. While the inaugural Takeshima Day is associated with more future conflictual events between the two countries, I find the effects of later ceremonies to be weaker. To explore the intervening psychological mechanisms, I then observe ritualization’s individual-level impact through a conjoint experiment in Japan. In the experiment, participants were asked to compare the threat level of two territorial provocations against their country with randomized characteristics. All else being equal, participants are less likely to view ritualized provocations as threatening. Together, the findings show how *interaction patterns* can influence state behaviors and individual perceptions in a way that cannot be captured by studying *interactions* alone.

These findings are substantively important for several reasons. First, they provide an empirical test for previous work on interaction patterns in the international security literature. Political scientists have long argued that countries with disputes can establish a “normal interaction range” through their interactions (Azar 1972) and that “idioms of military actions” can form even between adversaries (Schelling 2008). However, there is a lack of research that directly tests the effects of such repetitions. The results also expand to the literature on evolutionary cooperation. While cooperation theorists studied the merits

of patterned interactions such as “tit-for-tat” as survival strategies (Axelrod 1984), this dissertation shows how these strategies can also influence actors’ own understanding of the situation. Finally, the results show the importance to study the temporal dimension of social processes in international politics. While observers might view ritualized hostilities as dangerous, unstable, or volatile when considering it as a frozen moment in time, when we consider the same set of events as part of a process unfolding over time, the same evidence might provide indications of stability (see Pierson 2004).

### **Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation proceeds in five additional chapters. Chapter 2 builds the foundation of the theory of ritualized hostilities. I develop a theory of territorial dispute escalation that explains why, when provocation is made in the context of a territorial dispute, a ritualized provocation is expected to be less escalatory compared to a non-ritualized provocation. I also draw from psychological research to develop the theory’s microfoundation. Since ritualized provocations can lead to a perception of mutual understanding and to a certain level of habituation, the audience will have a lower perception of threat. As a result, ritualized provocations will lead to less future conflicts between states with territorial disputes. By contrast, because the audience is less used to non-ritualized provocations, they tend to be more escalatory and destabilizing. They are also more likely to be perceived as threatening by their audience. Chapter 2 also lays out a

research strategy that leverages both quantitative and experimental methods. To test my theory that ritualized provocations lead to less future conflicts, I take advantage of the annual nature of Takeshima Day and trace the effect of each ceremony as the provocation becomes increasingly ritualized. To test the microfoundation of this theory, I conducted a survey experiment that randomly assigns the characteristics of territorial provocations and record subjects' perception of threat.

Chapter 3 consists of the quantitative test of my theory of ritualized hostilities. I first provide a thorough background of the key case in this chapter: the Dokdo/Takeshima Dispute between South Korea and Japan. After presenting the case's historical context, I then show how Takeshima Day is an ideal case to study ritualization's effect. Specifically, the annual nature of the ceremony required by law allows researchers to sidestep certain concerns of reverse causality and provides near-identical provocations that are only different in their levels of ritualization. Testing ritualization's escalatory effect requires a metric of escalation. In this chapter, I develop two measurements of bilateral hostilities—verbal and material—using the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System data. Instead of treating ritualization as a variable and estimate its effect, I directly show the impact of each Takeshima Day ceremony from 2005-2015 on future verbal and material hostilities between South Korea and Japan. The advantage of this approach is that readers can see how changes in ritualization lead to different levels of shocks, even if each ceremony is sufficiently similar. Overall, the



results are consistent with my theory's prediction. While a territorial provocation is expected to be escalatory at first, as iteration increases, its escalatory effect will diminish.

Chapter 4 focuses on the role of ritualization at the individual level. Specifically, I test how the audience's threat perception towards a territorial provocation responds to a change in the ritualization level of the said provocation. In the real world, it is not possible to manipulate a provocation's level of ritualization and hold everything else constant. To address this empirical challenge, I designed a conjoint survey experiment in Japan that randomly assigns the characteristics of hypothetical territorial provocations from a neighboring country, and ask subjects to answer which of the two displayed territorial provocations is more threatening. Consistent with the results in Chapter 3, I find that all else being equal, survey subjects are on average less likely to find a ritualized territorial provocation threatening. Together with Chapter 3, the results support the psychological foundation of my theory—ritualized provocations are less escalatory, and are considered less threatening by its intended audience.

Chapter 5 concludes this work, rounding up the thesis that despite seemingly dangerous at first glance, once ritualized, some hostile interactions are not as escalatory as one might expect. By contrast, an unexpected break from the established hostile patterns of interaction might be more dangerous. After summarizing the main findings, I discuss the theoretical and empirical contributions of this dissertation and suggest

directions for future research. Finally, I conclude with some implications for policymakers. In particular, this dissertation suggests that regions with ostensible hostilities between rivalries might not be as dangerous as they appear to be, and the United States should formulate its policy based on the pattern instead of the presence of provocations alone.

## **Chapter 2 – A Theory of Ritualized Hostilities**

In a typical territorial dispute, both parties consider the disputed territories indivisible. Depending on the situation and political salience of the dispute, the two parties might also exchange provocations through holding controversial political events, fierce diplomatic rhetoric, issue official protests, or sometimes even mobilization of military units. In turn, these provocations lead to increased political tensions, disruption in economic activities, halt in people-to-people exchanges, and sometimes threat to peoples' lives and regional security.

Yet not all territorial provocations are the same. In some cases, these provocations can be highly ritualized. For years or even decades, the same actors might have repeated the same provocation for years. Moreover, every time the provocation occurs, it usually follows a consistent pattern established by previous interactions. In other cases, however, actors in a territorial dispute only engage in territorial provocation in a non-ritualized fashion. When one side starts a territorial provocation, such event is likely unseen in the two actors' previous interaction. Given the wide variation of how "ritualized" a territorial

provocation can be, what are the consequences of these varying interaction patterns, and how do they shape subsequent behaviors and the level of tension between states with territorial disputes?

To answer these questions, this chapter develops a framework for understanding the consequence of ritualization in international dispute escalation. Although a lot of studies sought to explain why international disputes escalate and yielded important insights, scholars and researchers on this topic usually see escalation from one of two theoretical lenses: the realist perspective and the psychological perspective. While those who adopted a realist perspective emphasize the role of rational deterrence, those who adopted a psychological perspective emphasize the role of cognitive limitation of human beings. Because both approaches to dispute escalation take “non-ritualization” as default, neither fully captures the dynamics of repetitive provocations with consistent patterns. To fill this theoretical gap, I propose a novel theory of ritualization in this chapter.

Ritualization, I argue, occurs through two related psychological mechanisms—formation of a mutual understanding and habituation after repeated shocks. When a provocation is ritualized, its audience is more likely to believe that such provocation will follow the existing pattern and is less likely to perceive the provocation as threatening. When a provocation is not ritualized, by contrast, its audience has no reference of how subsequent events will develop and is more likely to perceive the provocation as a threat. While my theory implies that ritualization has a stabilizing effect, it is important to note

that the comparison is one made between a ritualized versus non-ritualized provocation, not one made between a ritualized provocation versus a situation where no provocation is made at all. In other words, the observable implication is not that ritualized provocations are not provocative or destabilizing at all, but that ritualized provocations are less destabilizing compared to non-ritualized provocations.

### **Existing Explanations of Dispute Escalation**

#### *Escalation from the Rationalist Perspective*

Why do countries initiate provocations in their disputes with other countries? What is the connection between these provocations and escalation? One way to think about these questions is to begin with a unitary rationalist assumption—the assumption that all countries are strategic actors that make cost-benefit calculations of their actions to maximize their national interests. In a bilateral dispute where parties disagree over the distribution of an object such as territory, this assumption implies that both parties enter a bargaining process that will theoretically lead to a negotiated settlement based on their relative capability and resolve to fight. For example, if Country A is more willing to go to war with Country B over a disputed territory and is more likely to win if a war does occur, then A and B can reach a territorial settlement based on these anticipated outcomes without actually fighting the war—hence saving the valuable resources and lives in both countries that might have been lost on the battlefield. In this world, wars will never occur because

parties to a dispute can always find a set of bargaining outcomes they prefer to war (Fearon 1995).

Estimating the relative capability and resolve to fight a war, however, is not a trivial task. Since countries only have information of their own capabilities and resolves, they need to gather the same information on their adversaries to calculate the likely outcome of war. Additionally, each party to a dispute has an incentive to misrepresent its private information to achieve the most favorable bargaining outcome. Thus, even if one party decides to honestly reveal its own capability and resolve to its adversary, its adversary cannot rationally trust such information due to the risk of bluffing involved. To alleviate this information problem, it is necessary for both parties to find a way to credibly communicate. Instead of simply stating that it is more willing to go to war over a disputed territory, Country A can signal the same information to Country B through commitments such as building weapons, mobilizing troops, signing alliance treaties, or supporting troops in a foreign land. In order for a signal to be credible, it must be “costly in such a way that a state with lesser resolve or capability might not wish to send it” (Fearon 1995, 397).

Under this theoretical setting, provocations can be useful if they credibly communicate the initiating country’s private information to its target. By intentionally escalating its territorial dispute with Country B—or “rocking the boat”—Country A can more effectively convince Country B that it is willing to fight and manipulate Country B’s beliefs about Country A. In this sense, the provocations parties exchange in an international

dispute can be seen as a process of “probing, signaling, and influence” (Leng 2009, 67; Snyder and Diesing 1978). While these provocations carry risk of enlarging the original dispute and escalating into war, they are valuable because of the private information they reveal:

As the dispute escalates, each party gains more information through the process of signaling its intentions and probing the resolve of its opponent. Thus, the escalation occurring in a militarized crisis allows the parties to determine the bilateral balance of power without resorting to war. The dispute, of course, can escalate to war if at least one of the parties is overly optimistic when it comes to estimating its bargaining power (Leng 2004, 56).

Therefore, scholars with a rationalist perspective emphasize the manageable and informative aspects of dispute escalation and argue that such process provides “state decision makers with better understandings of the structure of the crisis” (Leng 2004, 51). Similar to a “contest of nerve and risk-taking” (Schelling 2008, 33), the greatest risk in an international dispute is not appearing to have aggressive intentions, but appearing weak in front of one’s opponent.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Some scholars compare this interpretation of dispute escalation to mating “rituals” of animals such as stags (Archer and Huntingford 1994; Leng 2009). In this dissertation,

While this account of dispute escalation is logically compelling at first glance, it has several potential issues. First, as many scholars have pointed out, the assumption that states are unitary actors has its limitation. Even in international disputes where political leaders are the most important decision-makers, there are reasons to believe that, in order to stay in power, leaders in both democracies (Fearon 1994; Potter and Baum 2014; Schultz 2001) and autocracies (Croco and Weeks 2016; Weeks 2008; Weiss 2014) need to alleviate concerns of domestic political punishment—or “audience cost”—when they to back down from a hawkish position or a diplomatic threat that they made but decide not to follow up. The concerns over domestic audience have significant implications on rationalist theory’s prediction of dispute escalation. Where the leader of Country A learned that Country B is more capable than previously thought, a rationalist theory will predict that Country A should back down and update its bargaining strategy according to the new information. However, a theory that takes domestic politics into account might predict that, since backing down is too politically costly for the leader of Country A, the two countries have no other choice but to go to war.

Another issue with the rationalist perspective is that, even if the unitary actor assumption holds, political leaders might not be fully rational actors. While some theorists

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however, I have a different definition of ritualization that will be laid out in succeeding sections of this chapter.



of international relations assume state behavior to be rational (for example, see Fearon 1995; Nye and Keohane 1987), others believe that state leaders are cognitively (Elster 1989; Jervis 1968; Kinder and Weiss 1978; Lebow 1981; Levy 1997) and emotionally (Crawford 2000) irrational in important ways. Drawing from the psychological literature and experimental evidence, Lebow, for example, argues that policymakers are less receptive to new information compared to truly rational actors. Once a belief has taken hold, policymakers tend to be more responsive to information that supports or confirms such beliefs. When facing new information that is critical to the existing beliefs, “they tend to misunderstand it, twist its meaning to make it consistent, explain it away, deny it, or simply ignore it” (1981, 105). This line of research implies that escalation might be more dangerous than rationalist theorists are inclined to believe, and that international disputes might be less manageable or manipulatable than previously thought.

Finally, while a rationalist perspective views provocations and subsequent escalations in an international dispute as a form of costly signaling—in other words, a way to credibly communicate information between actors—this perspective does not fully elaborate the role of repetition and pattern in dispute escalations. If the United States and the People’s Republic of China, for example, can sufficiently reveal their relative capabilities or resolves through exchanging one provocation respectively, what is the rationale for the two sides to repetitively exchange the same set of provocations over time? Since provocations are “costly signals” that requires time and resources, wouldn’t

two rational states be better off doing nothing than engaging in this type of ritualized interactions? Moreover, by treating provocations primarily as signals, a rationalist perspective also tends to ignore that provocations might have additional effects not captured by the bargaining and informational framework. This is not to say that a rationalist perspective is not valuable. However, the preceding discussion of its limitation shows how a rational actor assumption is not sufficient for answering the questions at hand, and that it is necessary to go beyond the rational actor assumption to better understand ritualization.

#### *Escalation from the Psychological Perspective*

A different approach to dispute escalation is to adopt a psychological perspective. Taking the emotional and cognitive limitations of policy-makers as given, scholars who adopt a psychological perspective focuses on the relationship between these limitations and dispute escalation (Leng 2004, 52). Since human rationality is bounded (Jones 1999; March 1978; Simon 1957; Stein 2013), political leaders are susceptible to different types of cognitive biases and misperceptions (Jervis 1968, 1976b). When making a foreign policy decision, leaders tend to use cognitive shortcuts and heuristics to both simplify complexity and reduce stress under uncertainty. In her research on how state leaders assess “threats,” for instance, Yarhi-Milo (2014) demonstrates that decision-makers tend to rely on kinds of information that are particularly vivid—such as information received in face-to-face interactions—rather than on kinds information that scholars consider

credible indicators of an adversary's intentions. A large number of studies in the field of International Relations also apply prospect theory to a number of problems in world politics and investigate how emotion influence ethnic conflicts, diplomacy, and nuclear policy (Kertzer and Tingley 2018).

In the context of dispute escalation, one important characteristics of the psychological perspective is its focus on a dispute's self-reinforcing properties (Leng 2004). Since states typically exchange provocations and coerce each other in an international dispute, a dispute is the most likely situation where political leaders make hostile interpretations from the behaviors of their adversaries. Once the leader in the United States decides that the Soviet Union is an "aggressor" or "revisionist state," for example, it will be highly difficult to reverse such image even if it was a misperception because leaders' cognitive biases will selectively process information that is consistent with existing perceptions (Jervis 1976a, 68). Moreover, the psychological dynamics also prevent states from seeing that their adversaries might have legitimate concerns about their own security or survival under international anarchy. Because states tend to believe that others know that they are not a threat, they will conclude that others will "arm or pursue hostile policies only if they are aggressive":

When the state believes that the other knows that it is not threatening the other's legitimate interests, disputes are likely to produce antagonism out of all proportion to the intrinsic importance of the issue

at stake. Because the state does not think that there is any obvious reason why the other should oppose it, it will draw inferences of unprovoked hostility from even minor conflicts (Jervis 1976a, 72).

Consequentially, scholars with a psychological perspective find that provocations tend to invite more provocations in international disputes. If one also takes the high domestic political cost for a leader to back down in an international dispute into account, the result is that every dispute is likely to “lock-in” the leaders on both sides and spiral into unintended war (Rapoport 1960). Therefore, instead of treating escalation as a manageable process from which adversaries gain credible information about each other, a psychological perspective treats any behaviors that might be interpreted as aggressive as highly destabilizing and ought to be avoided.

While a psychological perspective of dispute escalation addresses many challenges a rational actor approach faces, it also has its own limitations. As Jack Levy (1997) summarizes in his comparison between the psychological “prospect theory” and the rational actor model, psychological theories often have external validity problems. While many insights can be drawn from carefully controlled lab experiments, it is unclear how well these results can be generalized to real-world situations and problems, where policymakers have to take a lot more issues into consideration. In addition, psychological theories also lack an aggregation mechanism that connects individual psychological responses all the way to the final policy decision. On the one hand, it is possible that most psychological processes are

averaged out in a group deliberation. If true, this would imply that a rationalist perspective with a unitary actor assumption provides a more parsimonious and no less useful explanation—even if it is more “simplistic.” On the other hand, it is also possible that additional social psychological dynamics in small, high-level groups might further bias the decision outcome (see, for example, Hart, Stern, and Sundelius 1997). Without further clarifying how cognitive responses of multiple individuals go through a decision-making process and become a collective policy response of a larger organization, a psychological approach requires a broader model to constitute a general model of foreign policy (Levy 1997, 104).

### **Rituals and International Politics**

While reoccurring hostilities increase a territorial dispute’s propensity to escalate, they also *stabilize* the disputed relationship when hostilities share a common pattern. This theoretical argument is built on two psychological mechanisms: (1) due to our tendency to apply analogical reasoning in understanding complex realities, our perceptions of threat and uncertainty of a current event is strongly “primed” by the results from earlier similar events; (2) when experiencing similar shocks, the psychological effect of later shocks diminishes as we become “habituated” to the shocks. I also develop this theory into four empirical hypotheses in the section that follows.

In the most general sense, ritualization involves making something “into a ritual by following a pattern of actions or behavior”<sup>8</sup> In a non-religious context, it is most famously developed by sociologist Erving Goffman’s *Interaction Ritual* (1967) and by Murray Edelman in the field of political science. Edelman’s *Politics of Symbolic Actions* (1971) asserts that the political form of rituals chiefly influences states of mind. “It facilitates social interaction, mutual role-taking, and a sharing of perspectives among leaders; it thereby encourages cooptation” (ibid., 22). To him, the dramatic labor-management relations in the U.S. exemplifies “an advanced stage of the ritualization” (ibid., 142) with a tacit cooperation between political adversaries under the disguise of antagonism, an interaction he calls the “dramaturgy of conflict”:

Analysts of strikes notice that they often occur when inventories are high; for managements then have added reason to take a strike. In this situation the strike is in substantial measure a substitute for layoffs that would occur anyway. As just noted, it serves important functions for the union leadership as well. Seen now as part of a crisis tactic for winning an economic or status victory rather than as a simple deprivation, the hardship buttresses support for the union even while it helps resolve a management dilemma (ibid., 149).

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<sup>8</sup> See New Oxford American Dictionary. For the development of “ritualization” as an academic terminology, see Bell (1992, 88).

The example highlights how, instead of aiming at changing the status quo, the particular patterns and regular occurrences of conflictual or even violent event can serve a *performative* and *communicative* purpose. Performative because the strike in this example is not conducted with the ostensive goal of changing management policy, but to maintain support for the union. It is also communicative because the timing of conflicts is decided in such a way that it is difficult for the management officials to misunderstand the performative component of the strike. Hence, through repetitive labor-management conflicts every year, the two adversaries come to a point at which their exchanges of hostilities and tacit mutual understanding coexist. Interestingly, this episode is almost a parallel of the U.S.-Japan annual defense budget debate in the 1960s and 70s. According to Campbell, although growing Japan's defense budget to 6 or 7 percent in a given year is substantively trivial, the issue is "symbolically important as a demonstration of both the disagreement and the underlying agreement on defense" (1993, 47). Similar to Edelman's conclusion, Campbell states that the debate become highly ritualized and demonstrate how conflict can be functional for maintenance of stable relations.

Building on earlier discussions of reoccurring hostilities and dispute escalation, I argue that a territorial dispute is less likely to further escalate when the provocations are *ritualized*. For a provocation to be considered ritualized, it needs to satisfy two requirements. First, the provocation needs to have occurred multiple times between the two parties of a dispute. Second, the reoccurring provocations must have an established pattern in their

timing and content. For example, annual commemorations or monthly protests both qualify as ritualized because they both have a meaningful and consistent time interval. When these events take place, their contents—such as the statements being issued, or activities being conducted—are highly similar with one another.

While all the examples of ritualization given so far took place in peacetime, it is also possible to find ritualization in the context of military actions or even all-out wars. In Thomas Schelling's discussion of "the idiom of military actions," the interaction pattern between the U.S. and the Chinese forces can be seen as a form of ritualized hostilities. During the Korean War, despite intensive fighting between adversarial troops, as long as the U.S. did not bomb across the Yalu River, the Chinese did not attack American ship at sea, bases in Japan, or the vital area of Pusan (Schelling 2008, 127). As long as the military activities carried out by both sides continue to follow this implicit pattern, the level of hostilities would be under control despite the absence of any negotiation or agreement between the two sides.

Another example of ritualized military action is the "odd-day shelling" between the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Republic of China (ROCA) from 1958 to 1978. As the Chinese Civil War ended with a victory of the Communist People's Republic of China (PRC), the former quickly gained control over the entire Chinese territory while the defeated Nationalist Republic of China (ROC) led by Kuomintang (KMT) retreated to Taiwan. In 1958, after the PLA's failed attempt to seize Quemoy, the offshore island of



Taiwan in the so-called “the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis,” the Communist army developed a pattern of only shelling Quemoy, the offshore island of Taiwan, on odd days. Similar to the Korean War example, there was never an agreement in any form between Taipei and Beijing to limit the use of force, lower unnecessary casualties, or allow logistical support to get in and out safely. Nevertheless, this particular shelling pattern had persisted for 20 years until the United States normalized its diplomatic relations with China in 1978 (Chen 2016).

While cases of ritualized provocations in peacetime and ritualized hostilities in war time are well-recorded by both political scientists and historians, we still have a rather limited understanding of the effects of these ritualized interactions. In the following sections, I argue that ritualized hostilities as such are less likely to escalate, and present two psychological mechanisms: the development of a perception of “mutual understanding” and the psychological process of habituation in the wake of repetitive shocks.

#### *Mechanism 1: Perception of Mutual Understanding*

First, ritualization helps states maintain a stable image of its adversary. Living under anarchy and perennial uncertainty of their adversary’s intention or resolve, states tend to develop an image of others and their intentions (Jervis 1968, 454). As hostilities with similar patterns occur and reoccur, the level of uncertainty and psychological stress of policymakers and observers decrease and prevent a dispute from unintended spirals. Human beings tend to use heuristics and analogical reasoning to reduce cognitive burdens

during complex situations (Khong 1992) and identifying patterns in likely random events (Gilovich 1991). “Bomb once across the Yalu, and the enemy will expect more bombs across the Yalu the next day; keep bombs this side of the Yalu for several months, and the enemy will suppose that, though you may change your mind at any time, the odds are against your bombing north of the Yalu tomorrow” (Schelling 2008, 132). Although this tendency could potentially lead policymakers to draw faulty comparisons or to ignore critical evidence that defies their cognitive framework, it can stabilize an otherwise hostile stand-off in a ritualized context by *biasing* both sides towards a common understanding. In other words, ritualization can psychologically ease the policymaker's concern over the uncertainty of the adversary's intention or resolve.

It is possible to understand the same process as a form of Bayesian learning. Under a Bayesian framework, an actor enters an environment with a set of prior beliefs and update such prior when encountered with new evidence. Following this analogy, a ritualized provocation can be understood as an event that carries no new information that adjusts an actor's priors about the territorial dispute, whereas a non-ritualized provocation is one from which actors learns something new. However, this dissertation shares Khong's (1992) concern that the term “learning” implies learning something factually correct, whereas the psychological mechanism proposed here does not preclude the possibility of “learning the wrong lesson.” Following Khong's decision to emphasize “use of history” instead of “learning” (ibid, p6), my emphasis is on the formulation of a

stable expectation that does not necessarily correspond to the *true* intention or resolves of the adversary.

### *Mechanism 2: Habituation*

As a series of hostilities gradually become *expected*, they are expected to become less escalatory in the long term. Even if some hostilities are initially destabilizing, as similar patterns reoccur, their shocks may become less “surprising” and their escalatory effect may diminish due to the psychological process of “habituation” (Thompson and Spencer 1966). The concept of habituation—or the diminishing of a physiological or emotional response to a frequently repeated stimulus (Stevenson and Lindberg 2011)—is well-documented even in early human history. In neurobiology, scholars have used a variety of terms to describe the same phenomenon, from acclimatization, accommodation, negative adaptation, to fatigue (Thompson 2009).

From experimental evidence, it is now understood that humans can become habituated to natural stimuli such as heat and cold (Zimny and Miller 1966). In learning process such as language acquisition (Rankin et al. 2009), human beings can also become habituated to the stimuli from new information. More recently, social scientists have found that human can also become habituated with social phenomenon. For example, Mangelsdorff and Zuckerman found that, through repeated presentations of violent images from auto accidents and “Viet Cong massacre of civilians,” subjects can become habituated

to scene of violence (1975). Focusing on the Vietnam War, Ziferstein also argue that “gradual habituation” leads to individuals’ acquiescence to escalated war efforts (1967).

In an effort to review the vast research literature on habituation, Rankin and coauthors (2009) summarized ten common behavioral characteristics of habituation found by researchers. Since five characteristics are particularly relevant to the discussion of ritualization, I list all of them below.

1. Repeated application of a stimulus results in a progressive decrease in some parameter of a response to an asymptotic level.
2. If the stimulus is withheld after response decrement, the response recovers at least partially over the observation time.
3. After multiple series of stimulus repetitions and spontaneous recoveries, the response decrement becomes successively more rapid and/or more pronounced
4. Other things being equal, more frequent stimulation results in more rapid and/or more pronounced response decrement, and more rapid spontaneous recovery
5. Within a stimulus modality, the less intense the stimulus, the more rapid and/or more pronounced the behavioral response decrement. Very intense stimuli may yield no significant observable response decrement.

For instance, in the annual diplomatic battle between Japan and South Korea over the “Takeshima Day,” even if each commemoration induces the same objective level of

instability, the shock of such event and its perceived threats is expected to diminish due to its repeated performance on the same population.

### *Why Ritualize? A Preliminary Assessment*

The theoretical discussions in this chapter so far focus on ritualization's psychological effect. While I take ritualization as "given" in these discussions, it is important to note that I do not assume that ritualization occur without any outside intervention or that, once started, ritualization will simply "run on its own." For territorial provocation to become ritualized, repeated interactions between two parties to a dispute are essential. This implies that for ritualization to gain any momentum, policymakers need to invest valuable political capital and resources for each iteration to occur. The ritualized "odd-day shelling" between the PLA and ROC Army over 20 years mentioned earlier, for example, consumed so much steel that "Kinmen knife"—knives made from the remains of artillery shells from the Communist China becomes a famous merchandise in Taiwan (Bartholomew 2004). If ritualization is costly, why would a country want to ritualize an international dispute? To answer this question, I present a preliminary assessment on policymakers' incentives to engage in ritualized interactions. In sum, I argue that a country can use ritualization to credibility communicate with its adversaries and other audience abroad, create an advantageous international legal context for future sovereign claims, and address the political demand of certain domestic audience at home.

First, because ritualizing a provocation is costly, countries can be use it to more credibly communicate their resolves in an international dispute—both to its adversary and other international audience. For example, if the People’s Republic of China wants to communicate its continued determination to use force over Taiwan and express its displeasure at Taiwan’s relationship with its security allies, ritualized military provocation can be highly effective. Indeed, one can see how the PRC adopts a ritualized approach in the past two years when it developed a new pattern of sending its military jets into Taiwan’s air defense identification zone (ADIZ) on an almost daily basis. As of October 2020, the said provocation has already cost Taiwan’s air patrol forces more than 146 million (USD) to respond to the PRC jets and is projected to cost even more for the PRC (Lee 2020). In addition to using its ritualized jet incursion to signal resolve and dissatisfaction, the PRC also uses it to send positive signals once the pattern is built. After Taiwan's Foreign Minister Joseph Wu stated that “Taiwan is not pursuing formal diplomatic ties with the United States for now,” the PRC stopped its jet incursion into Taiwan’s air space for three days (Lee 2020; Ruwitch 2021).

In cases where a country’s sovereign rights over some territories is at stake, ritualization might help create an advantageous international legal context for future sovereign claims. While the literature on the effect of international law on international relations is extensive, work in this area has traditionally focused on the role of international organizations and formal international treaties. However, more recent work has shown that

customary international law—the source of international law that is established through state practices and *opinio juris*—can also significantly influence the behaviors of sovereign states. For example, in an empirical study of low-level provocations between allies, Ryou-Ellison and Gold find that customary international law is important for explaining states' motivations for engaging in maritime provocations (2020). Specifically, when a challenging country repeat low-level provocations without meeting strong oppositions from a defending country, the defending country's inaction can potentially be interpreted as tacit acceptance of the challenge made by the constant provocations over time in an international legal battle (as established in the Temple of Preah Vihear, the Norway-U.K. fisheries dispute, and other cases of the International Court of Justice). Therefore, even if ritualizing territorial provocations can be costly in the short term, both the challenging country and defending country has a long-term incentive to keep initiating (or refuting) such provocation.

Finally, for politicians, ritualizing a territorial provocation can satisfy the political demand of certain domestic audience at home. To avoid domestic punishment from opposition or the public, leaders of countries with territorial disputes tend to avoid making territorial concessions to its territorial adversaries (Wiegand 2011, 15).<sup>9</sup> In some cases,

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<sup>9</sup> In the case of Guatemala, its president's decision to reduce Guatemala's territorial claim in 1983 caused a domestic backlash that eventually led to his removal from power through a military coup just a month later (Wiegand 2005).

leaders can even reap domestic political rewards for their acting tough. For example, scholars who focus on the Japan-Russo territorial dispute found that “maintaining the Japanese claim has resulted in almost guaranteed domestic support for every Japanese governing political party since 1951” (Kimura and Welch 1998). While this seems to suggest that leaders should always pursue a hawkish territorial policy to mobilize public support and avoid punishment, the same leaders also need to take the risk of policy failure at the international level into consideration: if a leader’s hawkish territorial policy escalates into a costly military conflict and even more territorial concession, the domestic political punishment on the leader would greatly outweigh the initial benefit of acting tough. As a result, a leader might choose to repeat the pre-existing interaction patterns to balance between being perceived as “not doing enough” about the territorial disputes by its domestic audience and “doing too much” by its international rivals.

*Ritualization at Home: Can Domestic Audience Be Habituated to Territorial Provocations?*

The notion that ritualization can satisfy domestic political audience opens another interesting aspect of ritualization. As discussed in Chapter 1 and above, I argue that citizens and political leaders in a target country of repeated territorial provocations can become habituated to the provocations’ negative effect. As territorial provocation becomes increasing “ritualized” between the two countries, their effect can diminish over time. As these processes unfold at the international level, a completely different dynamic



of ritualization might also be taking place within the domestic politics of the provoking state. While territorial provocations are being perceived negatively as destabilizing and threatening by the target state, they can be perceived positively by some domestic audience in the provoking states as a sign that their leaders are willing to do everything to defend or assert their national glory and territorial integrity. However, as their leaders repeated these “positive” provocations time and again, can the same domestic audience also become habituated to the same provocation and now expecting its political leader to do more? If true, this mechanism can set off another chain of effects that transform a ritualized and stable interaction pattern into escalations by the two parties.

Will the dynamic of ritualization with positive stimulus offset the stabilizing effect of the original ritualization at the international level? At the point of this writing, evidence confirms that it is possible for territorial nationalists or activists to become habituated with their government’s ritualized provocation. When such habituation occurs, some of these domestic actors are likely to ask for more actions from the government. In the Dokdo/Takeshima case, for example, once it becomes established that the central government in Tokyo would always send a high-level official to attend the controversial ceremony, the right-wing nationalists began to request the government to send a cabinet member. In this case, however, the Japanese government has been able to satisfy most of its domestic constituents by simply maintaining the ritualized pattern without turning to further escalation. One explanation is that a ritualized territorial provocation—despite being

“ritualized”—still presents a good enough option to most of the domestic audience compared to the world without any provocation in the first place. While the concern over ritualization with positive stimulus is reasonable, how likely (and under what condition) would this mechanism tip an existing balance of a ritualized territorial provocation is an empirical question that requires more research and data collection for scholars to answer.

Another explanation why ritualization at home and the habituation to the “positive stimuli” of territorial provocation might not necessarily drive a country to further escalate is territorial provocation against another country is that an increase in short-term domestic reward might not be always worth the long-term political risk. In the territorial dispute between Lebanon, Hezbollah, and Israel over the Shebba Farms, for example, while above 70 percent of the Lebanese supported Hezbollah’s continued resistance in against Israel in 2004, most became furious once it was clear that Hezbollah had dragged Lebanon into a war against Israel in 2006 and domestic support proved to be short-lived (Wiegand 2011, 161). In sum, while domestic audience—stimulated by positive habituation or other developments in a territorial dispute—might be willing to reward their leaders for further escalations, they would also punish them when the escalation gets out of control or when there are signs of failure. Unless the reward significantly outweighs the risk, ritualization can be a better and safer option compared to escalation.

## Observable Implications

If my theory of ritualization is correct, the two related theoretical mechanisms introduced in this chapter —the perception of mutual understanding and habituation— suggest that the following empirical implications should follow.

**H1 (Bilateral level):** A territorial provocation is expected to increase bilateral conflict at first. But as the provocation becomes ritualized, such effect will gradually diminish.

At the bilateral level, I expect ritualization to have a stabilizing effect: all else being equal, a ritualized territorial provocation is less likely to trigger further escalation between the two parties of a territorial dispute compared to a non-ritualized territorial provocation. It is important to note that the comparison is made between provocations with varying degree of ritualization rather than between ritualized provocation and the situation in which no provocation is initiated at all. Since territorial provocations are by definition provocative and destabilizing, it is more likely for ritualization to weaken rather than completely reverse a provocation's original impact. While it might be plausible that some provocations have become so ritualized that they actually *lower* the baseline hostilities of the entire territorial dispute, since such scenarios are still rare, a comparison between different levels of ritualization *given* the occurrence of a territorial provocation is more useful.

Another important characteristic of this hypothesis is that it is making a “within-case” rather than “cross-case” comparison of ritualized provocations. In other words, instead of looking at a number of provocations from different territorial disputes and measuring their

level of ritualization, this dissertation focuses on one territorial dispute and studies the effect of ritualization within that particular dispute. While a cross-case study allows researchers to better generalize their findings, it also generates additional challenges in comparability: because ritualization is highly contextual, ritualized provocations in one dispute tend to look very different from another dispute. For instance, while one can draw similar lessons from ritualization surrounding on the timing of shelling operations (see discussion on “odd day shelling” earlier in this chapter) in a militarized conflict and ritualization based on a controversial territorial ceremony, it is empirically more challenging when the goal is to quantify the level of ritualization in the two cases and estimate ritualization’s overall effect. As formulated in this hypothesis, I argue that a better way to study the effect of ritualization is to track the trajectory of territorial provocation in one case across time and evaluate the provocation’s effect as it becomes more (or less) ritualized.

**H2 (Individual level):** Given a territorial provocation, a respondent’s threat perception of the adversary is expected to be lower if the provocation is ritualized.

Since the main theoretical mechanisms presented in this dissertation are either cognitive or psychological, I expect ritualization to have a stabilizing effect not only at the international level, but also at the individual level threat perceptions. While one would expect a territorial provocation to elicit a sense of threat from the general audience in its target country, I argue that when people becomes habituated to the provocation, they are less likely to perceive the same provocation as threatening.

## **Empirical Strategy**

I test the above theory and two hypotheses in the context of the Dokdo/Takeshima territorial dispute between South Korea and Japan. In particular, I select the controversial commemoration of “Takeshima Day” in Shimane Prefecture in Japan from 2005 as my primary case. The annual ceremony provides researchers opportunities to observe countries’ response to a territorial provocation and their interactions following the same territorial provocation. After collecting the observational data, it then becomes possible to compare across provocations to study how ritualization influences these responses and interactions as the same provocation was repeated over time.

Studying ritualization through “Takeshima Day” also allows me to sidestep a challenge in causal inference. Without a controlled research environment, it is always a concern that the subjects of my study might “select themselves into ritualization” based on the factors I set out to explain. For example, if given a free choice every time, policymakers might choose to engage in ritualized provocation only when the issue at stake is less serious and choose not to ritualize when they believe that the escalation risk is high. In this case, even when we observe that ritualization is associated with less escalation or conflicts, the relationship might simply be an artifact due to policymakers’ self-selection. Ideally, one way to mitigate this concern is to have ritualization “assigned” to subjects through a process that is independent of the beliefs or preferences of policymakers. In the next two chapters, I will demonstrate how Takeshima Day satisfies such requirement as the annual commemoration is an outcome of local politics

which then “forced” ritualization upon politicians in Tokyo and Seoul. After providing historical and political context for my case selection, I then demonstrate my research design for testing the two ritualization hypotheses.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I sought to develop a theory of ritualized hostilities that explains why some territorial provocations are more escalatory than others. I have argued that previous scholarly efforts in understanding the dynamics of dispute escalation—the rationalist approach and the psychological approaches—have not fully address this question because neither have paid sufficient attention to the role of previous interaction patterns by the parties to a dispute. To fill this research gap, I propose a novel theory that seeks to better capture the dynamics of ritualization and interaction patterns with two related psychological mechanisms. Through the formation of a mutual understanding and the development of habituation after repeated shocks, I argue that ritualization can make a provocation less escalatory. This theoretical framework suggests that territorial provocation should not be directly seen as a sign of instability or high escalation risks. Instead of focusing on the *presence* of provocations, scholars and policymakers should also look at the *patterns* of territorial provocations when assessing risks and formulating security strategies.

While my theory of ritualized hostilities focuses primarily on the effect of ritualization, this chapter also tried to answer a more fundamental question that might

interests many readers: why does ritualization occur? While territorial provocations are less costly compared to full-scale military conflicts, ritualizing a territorial provocation can still be costly. In PRC's regular jet incursion into Taiwan's air space discussed earlier, one can see how establishing a consistent provocation pattern can constitute a non-trivial financial and logistical burden for both sides. Even in cases where only political actors are involved, as in the case of Takeshima Day, a significant amount of political capital and budget are still required for ritualization to take place. My preliminary assessment suggests that despite being potentially costly, ritualization can be useful for politicians because (1) it allows more credible communication between parties to a territorial dispute, (2) it can create advantageous legal context for future sovereign claims, and (3) it can satisfy the demands of some domestic political actors. This chapter also address the potential theoretical concerns of whether domestic audience can also become habituated to the government's effort in ritualization itself.

Finally, based on the empirical implications of my theory of ritualized hostilities, this chapter formulated two testable hypotheses. At the bilateral level, a ritualized territorial provocation is expected to be less escalatory compared to its non-ritualized counterpart. In other words, a ritualized territorial provocation is less likely to cause future conflictual events to occur between two countries with territorial dispute. At the individual level, a ritualized territorial provocation is expected to elicit a lower level of threat from its audience compared to a non-ritualized provocation. While an observer in

a target country might still see a ritualized provocation as threatening, the threat perception is expected to decrease as the provocation becomes ritualized.

Using the Dokdo-Takeshima dispute as my primary case, I will empirically test the first hypothesis using the bilateral interaction data between Japan and South Korea in Chapter 3 and test the second hypothesis using a conjoint survey experiment conducted in Japan in Chapter 4.



## **Chapter 3 – Ritualized Hostilities and Bilateral Relations**

In territorial disputes where countries exchange provocations, how might we empirically test the relationship between ritualization<sup>10</sup> and escalation? In Chapter 2, I theorized that ritualization has a pacifying effect through creating perceptions of mutual understanding between adversaries and through habituation. I also developed a set of testable hypotheses that focus ritualization's effect on two different variables: (1) the bilateral relationship between countries with territorial disputes and (2) the threat perception of ordinary citizens. Following the research strategy underlined in the previous chapter, chapter 3 will turn to the case of Dokdo/Takeshima dispute between South Korea and Japan with the goals of operationalizing key theoretical concepts and conducting an empirical test for the first hypothesis.

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<sup>10</sup> As defined in the previous chapters, I consider a territorial provocation ritualized when it meets the following two criteria: (1) it occurs between the same parties for multiple times and (2) it has an established pattern in its timing and contents.

This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, I provide the historical and political context of the Dokdo/Takeshima territorial dispute. While scholars of international disputes have traditionally focused more on cases that have led to full-scale militarized conflicts and a high number of battlefield deaths, I argue that understanding international disputes with lower-level hostilities like the case of Dokdo/Takeshima is also crucial for researchers and policymakers. The second section guides the readers through how the contentious ritual of Takeshima Day was created. This section also reemphasizes how the regularity and consistency of this ceremony make it a compelling case to study the role of ritualization. In the third section, I present a within-case quantitative research design. In order to measure the latent concept of bilateral relationship between South Korea and Japan and estimate how ritualization might influence the fluctuation of such relationship, I take advantage of a newly available event data database (ICEWS) that contains all the interactions between all nations reported by the news media. Using these data, I run a series of statistical tests and compare the effect of “Takeshima Day” across its iterations. The results provide empirical support for my theory: as Takeshima Day became more ritualized, its shock on the South Korea-Japan relationship diminished. In the final section of the chapter, I discuss the implication of the findings before moving to test the second hypothesis in chapter 4.

## **The Dokdo/Takeshima Dispute and Its Implications**

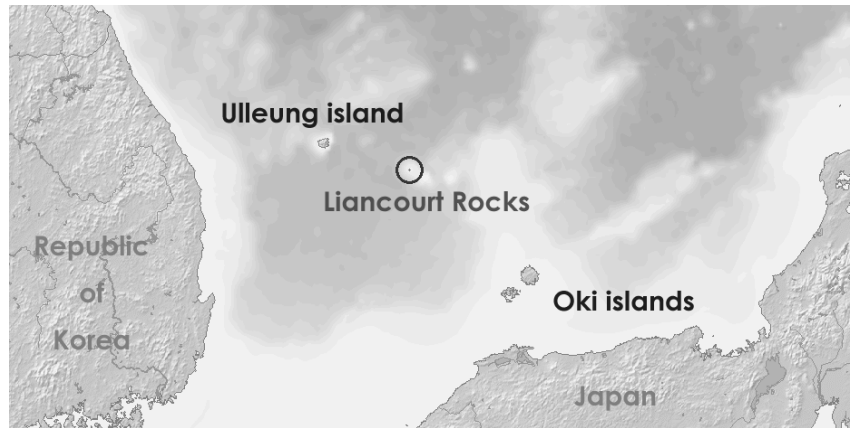
### *Historical Background*

For more than six decades, two major United States allies in East Asia—South Korea and Japan—have made competing sovereignty claims over two islets and their surrounding rocks located midway between the two countries (Choi 2005).<sup>11</sup> While the United States calls the islands “Liancourt Rocks” in its official documents, this group of islands is called “Dokdo” (or “Tokto,” meaning “solitary islands”) in Korean and “Takeshima” (meaning “bamboo islands”) in Japanese. As shown in Figure 2, the disputed islets (marked as Liancourt Rocks following the U.S. convention) are located between Oki Islands and Ulleung island. Oki islands (“Okinoshima” in Japanese) are a group of islands administered by Shimane Prefecture in Japan including Dogo, Nakanoshima, Nishinoshima, and Chiburijima. Ulleung island (“Ulleungdo” in Korean) is a volcanic island administered by North Gyeongsang Province in South Korea. Both Oki Islands and Ulleung island are inhabited by civilian residents and unlike the case of Dokdo/Takeshima, their sovereignty statuses are not contested.

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<sup>11</sup> In addition to South Korea, North Korea also claims sovereignty over the islands and often issue protest following Japan’s policy change towards the islands. For recent examples of such protests from North Korea to Japan, see Shim (2020) and *The Korea Times* (2021).

**Figure 1 Location of Dokdo/Takeshima/Liancourt Rocks**



Source: Wikipedia Commons

While it is not this dissertation’s goal to evaluate the validity of historical and legal arguments made by both sides to the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute, I provide historical context below to illustrate the earlier interactions between Korea and Japan surrounding Dokdo/Takeshima and how a dispute emerged between the two countries in the first place.

Since the islands of Dokdo/Takeshima are formed from volcanic rocks, they are extremely tiny in size (total size only around 0.21 squared kilometers), with only limited vegetation, and without drinkable water.<sup>12</sup> Until recently, these unfavorable natural conditions have constrained human activities on Dokdo/Takeshima to mostly hunting and fishing. In the Korean claim, it is argued that Korea’s jurisdiction over Dokdo/Takeshima

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<sup>12</sup> Despite the small size and harsh natural conditions, the islands that consist of Dokdo/Takeshima have economic value for the fish in adjacent waters. Other natural resources such as oil and natural gas have also been reported in the nearby area (Choi 2020; Roehrig 2021).

can be dated back to as early as 512 A.D. This specific claim is based on the historical record of the *Three Kingdoms of Korea* (“*Samguksagi*”), which states that “Ulleung and Usan are both territories of Usan-guk.” In the Geography Section of *The Annals of King Sejong’s Reign* (“*Sejong Sillok*”) in 1454, there is once again the reference of the island of Usan, which Korea argues to be the modern-day Dokdo/Takeshima.<sup>13</sup> Whereas South Korea views Usan as Dokdo/Takeshima, Japan argues that the connection has never been fully substantiated with direct evidence.<sup>14</sup> However, since there was no dispute over

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<sup>13</sup> According to South Korea’s official interpretation of *Sejong Sillok*, the geographical section (“*Jiriji*”) says that “The two islands of Usan [Dokdo] and Mureung [Ulleungdo] are not located far apart from each other so Dokdo is visible from Ulleungdo on a clear day.” Note that “[Dokdo]” and “[Ulleungdo]” were added by South Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs on its Dokdo website, not by the author. See <https://dokdo.mofa.go.kr/eng/dokdo/reason.jsp> (last accessed: November 8, 2021) for more information.

<sup>14</sup> For Japan’s official position and disagreement over South Korea’s historical claim over Dokdo/Takeshima in English, see the section “Recognition of Takeshima” on Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs website at [https://www.mofa.go.jp/a\\_o/na/takeshima/page1we\\_000057.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/takeshima/page1we_000057.html) (last accessed: November 8, 2021) and Japan’s official pamphlet at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000092147.pdf> (last accessed: November 8, 2021).

Dokdo/Takeshima during this early period, the two countries had not formally discussed the status of the islands until the Ahn Yong-bok incident.

Ahn Yong-bok is a Korean fisherman who visited Japan in 1693 and 1696. In 1693, Ahn was taken to Japan from the island of Ulleungdo (“Utsuryo” in Japanese) by the Ohya family—one of the families based in Yonago, Japan that were permitted passages to the Ulleungdo/Utsuryo island to conduct business activities by the Tokugawa shogunate.<sup>15</sup> This incident sparked diplomatic tensions between Korea and Japan over the ownership of Ulleungdo/Utsuryo island and potentially Dokdo/Takeshima. In the end, Ahn Yong-bok was deported back to Korea. According to the *Annals of King Sukjong’s Reign* (“*Sukjong Sillok*”), Ahn was then investigated and imprisoned by the Border Defense Council of Korea for violating Joseon Dynasty’s own seclusion policy. The Korean government treats Ahn Yong-bok’s statement during the investigation as evidence of Koreans’ understanding that Dokdo/Takeshima was part of the Joseon territory and Japan’s acquiescence of the claim.<sup>16</sup> However, the Japanese government dismissed Ahn Yong-bok’s statement as lies

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<sup>15</sup> As noted by many scholars, the literature on the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute is vast (Lee and Lee 2019) and it is impossible to discuss all the relevant work in this chapter. For more discussion of the Ahn Yong-bok incident, see Hyon (2006), Ikeuchi (2012) and Shimojo (2017). In particular, Shimojo’s book focuses on the relationship between the Ahn Yong-bok statement and the Dokdo/Takeshima issue today.

<sup>16</sup> South Korea’s official position is that, according to Ahn Yong-bok’s own statement, when he encountered Japanese fishermen on Ulleungdo/Utsuryo island, he told these

and emphasized the lack of authority for Ahn to represent Korea under the Joseon dynasty. Despite the disputed and controversial historical facts surrounding this incident, the case received significant scholarly attention because it resulted in “the very first Dokdo-related contacts between Korea and Japan at the diplomatic level” (Choi 2005).

After Japan’s Meiji Restoration in 1868, the Dokdo/Takeshima issue faced a different situation for two main reasons. First, the Meiji Restoration ended Japan’s seclusion policy and led to Japan’s renewed interests in Ulleungdo and Dokdo/Takeshima (Choi 2005). Second, while the Tokugawa Shogunate had assigned the Tsushima Domain (“*Tsushima Han*”) and its Daimyo the role in maintaining diplomatic relations between Japan and Korea (Kazui 2018; Kazui and Videen 1982), such responsibility was taken over by the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During this transitional process, one notable effort was a report produced by three Japanese officials sent to Korea called “An Inquiry into the Diplomacy of Korea.”<sup>17</sup> Within the report, a section titled “The Circumstance in which

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fishermen that “Matsushima is Jasando [Dokdo] which is Korean territory” and that he went over to Japan to lodge a protest against Japan’s encroachment on the Korean territories of Ulleungdo and Dokdo” (see Q.05 in “Questions and Answers on Dokdo” on <https://dokdo.mofa.go.kr/eng/dokdo/faq.jsp>, last accessed: November 8, 2021). Regarding this point, Japan made an official statement on February 10, 1954 that Ahn had simply lied (Hyon 2006).

<sup>17</sup> The three officials are Sada Hakubō, Morikawa, Shigeru, and Saito Ei. The full report (in Japanese) can be accessed through the digital archive of the National Archives of

Takeshima and Matsushima Had Become Territories of Korea” was cited by the South Korean government as the confirmation of Korean ownership of the two islands (Choi 2005).<sup>18</sup> Similar to previous incidents, Japanese governments and some scholars refute the South Korean claim. In particular, scholars such as Shimojo Masao (2004) and Tsukamoto Takashi (2015) argued that there was context inconsistency and ambiguity over whether “Matsushima” was indeed referring to Dokdo/Takeshima today.<sup>19</sup>

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Japan under the name “Chosenkoku Kousai Simatsu Naitansyo” at <https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/img/637354> (last accessed: November 8, 2021).

<sup>18</sup> Some scholarly account like Choi (2005) described the primary goal of the Japanese officials as uncovering the circumstances of how Takeshima and Matsushima had become Korean territory and subsequently produced the report “An Inquiry into the Diplomacy of Korea.” While not incorrect, the appropriate order should be the other way around: the officials were sent to Korea with 14 items of investigation—all falling under the general (and internal) investigation of Japan’s previous diplomatic dealings with Korea. The report on Takeshima and Matsushima was part of the 14 items. See the original report (in Japanese) at <https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/img/637354> (last accessed: November 8, 2021). Also see Hyon (2006).

<sup>19</sup> The island of “Takeshima” in this report was another previous name of Ulleungdo/Utsuryo island—the larger and undisputed islands of Korea, whereas the island of “Matsushima” was argued to the current Dokdo/Takeshima. The confusion



In 1876, the situation surrounding Dokdo/Takeshima changed once again. Facing intense political pressure from Japan, Korea signed the Treaty of Ganghwa Island (also known as Japan–Korea Treaty of 1876) on that year. The treaty ended Korea’s formal tributary relationship with China and opened up Korea to Japan. In particular, Busan became Korea’s first international port. Because of Ulleungdo’s forestry business, the island saw a significant increase of Japanese citizens settling on the island (Hyon 2006). Alerted by this development and a protest, Gojong, the last King of Joseon, sent military official Lee Kyu-won to Ulleungdo as a Royal Prosecutor in 1882 to investigate the situation. Eventually, Lee’s investigation prompted the Korean government to take a “a significant step to reaffirm its sovereignty over Ulleungdo and Dokdo” through issuing Imperial Ordinance No. 41, which upgraded the administrative level of Ulleungdo (Choi 2005). While Article 2 of the Ordinance states that the jurisdiction of Ulleungdo covers “the island of Ulleungdo, Jukdo and Seokdo,” the “Seokdo” reference and its relationship to today’s Dokdo/Takeshima sparked controversy. In its territorial claim, South Korea argues that while Jukdo referred to an island surrounding Ulleungdo, Seokdo referred to Dokdo/Takeshima (Choi 2005).<sup>20</sup>

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was caused by both the imprecise measurement of the islands’ location at that time and the transfer of the islands’ information from the two domains (Tsushima and Tottori) to the Meiji government following the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the start of Meiji Restoration See Hyon (2006).

<sup>20</sup> This interpretation is partially based on the dialects of Korea’s Gyeongsang region. In formal Korean writing represented by Chinese characters, “Seokdo” is written as two

The final major incident surrounding the Dokdo/Takeshima issue occurred five years after the Korean Imperial Ordinance. On February 22, 1905, the Shimane Prefecture in Japan issued Prefectural Notice No. 40, which incorporated Dokdo/Takeshima into the jurisdiction of the Oki Islands magistrate—making the island a part of Shimane. According to Japan’s account, this decision was made through Japanese government’s acknowledgement of a petition from Shimane businessman Nakai Yozaburo, who requested the government to incorporate the uninhabited island of “Liancourt” on the northwest of Oki islands (of Japan) and southeast of Ulleungdo (of Korea). While Japan argued that the decision constituted an effective occupation of *terra nullius* under international law, South Korea argued that the island was historically part of Korea and that Gojong’s Imperial Ordinance was in effect earlier than Japan’s decision (Tsukamoto 2014). At the time of Japan’s incorporation of Dokdo/Takeshima, however, controversy was limited because Korea itself would soon become Japan’s colony under the Japan–Korea Treaty of 1905.

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words: “rock” and “island”—literally meaning “rock island.” In South Korea’s argument, because rock can be pronounced as “dok” in Gyeongsang dialects, the island written as “Seokdo” in the Imperial Ordinance was an island called by the Gyeongsang fishermen as “Dokdo” (Hyon 2006). By contrast, Tsukamoto argues that “rock island” could also refer to the island of Kannon and other surrounding rock islands near the Ulleungdo (2015).

### *Modern Origin of Dispute*

As discussed in the previous section, both Korea and Japan claim ties to the islands. In the arguments made by Korea, its historical ties to Dokdo/Takeshima can even be traced back for several centuries. However, the modern origin of the dispute can be dated back to January 18, 1952. On this date, then South Korean President Syngman Rhee declared a “Peace Line” (also known as the Syngman Rhee Line) that asserts sovereign territory over Dokdo/Takeshima. Two years later in 1954, South Korea began effectively controlling the disputed islands in the form of stationed coast guard patrols (Tamura 1965, 23). In the following decades, the Japanese government has made several proposals to refer this dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for settlement in 1954, 1962, and 2012 (Masahiro 2015, 2). During the two countries’ negotiation of the 1965 normalization treaty, both parties attempted to reach an amicable settlement (Cha 1999, 158). However, Japan and South Korea effectively shelved the issue and the dispute has persisted until today. As the competing territorial claims remain unresolved, they have become a source of domestic political tension and an “omnipresent irritant in Korea-Japan relations” (Choi 2005).<sup>21</sup>

While the relationship between South Korea and Japan has remained ostensibly peaceful during the lifespan of the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute, the nationalist sentiment in both countries incensed by the dispute has led to strong antagonism in both societies.

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<sup>21</sup> For more discussion on the Dokdo/Takeshima literature and the dispute’s impact on nationalism, see Lee and Lee (2019).

In South Korea, multiple protesters have cut off their fingers in protest against Japan's territorial claims, with one man sending his finger to the Japanese Embassy in Seoul (Associated Press 2013; Yonhap News Agency 2011). Kim Ki-jong, a South Korean activist for the protection of Dokdo, even attempted self-immolation in front of the Blue House—the Presidential Office in South Korea (Yonhap News Agency 2015). At the governmental level, the dispute has also led to a near-crisis. In 2006, then-Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced that two Japan Coast Guard research ships had departed from Tokyo to conduct maritime research around Dokdo/Takeshima area. This announcement triggered a fierce response from then-South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun. Roh deployed 20 South Korean Coast Guard ships around the region, setting up an inevitable maritime confrontation between the two countries. As the two research ships were trapped in a port due to bad weather, however, the two governments gained time to work through the diplomatic channel to avoid further unpredictable situations (Nakajima 2007, 4).

In addition to creating challenges in domestic and bilateral realms, the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute has also created challenges in East Asian security cooperation and America's alliance management strategy in the region. For example, South Korea and Japan came close to signing an important intelligence-sharing pact called the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2012. However, South Korea decided to back down from signing at the very last hour, which led many to observe that the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute, together with other historical issues, served as a major

symbolic deterrent for such security agreements (Wiegand 2015). Since GSOMIA was regarded as an important tool for the U.S. and its allies in monitoring North Korean military activities, this development can potentially embolden not only North Korea, but also major actors such as Russia and China, all would like to see a weakened U.S. alliance system in the region. The Dokdo/Takeshima dispute even found its way to headlines during U.S. President Donald Trump’s visit to South Korea, when Japan protested through diplomatic channels over South Korea’s serving of a dish named “Dokdo Shrimp” (Kyodo News 2017).

*Forced-upon Ritualization: The Takeshima Day and the South Korean Response*

I argue that “Takeshima Day”— the annual territorial ceremony held in Matsue City in Japan—makes it possible to study ritualization’s effects because it is a “forced-upon” ritualization by the local government of Shimane. Following a series of political events that led to South Korea’s issuance of its controversial “Dokdo Stamps” (Brooke 2004), Japan’s Shimane Prefectural Assembly adopted an ordinance that announces February 22 to be the annual “Takeshima Day” in 2005. The Shimane Prefecture has a strong tie to the Dokdo/Takeshima issue. Historically, the Prefecture was the official administrator of these disputed islands between 1910 and 1945, when South Korea was still colonized by Japan. Moreover, many Japanese fishermen who had been fishing and gathering around the disputed islands are also from the Prefecture. Initially, faced with what they perceived as provocative acts from South Korea, politicians in Shimane sought stronger political support by calling for the establishment of a national “Takeshima Day.”

Since politicians in Tokyo were not interested, they moved ahead and establish the ceremony locally.

Tokyo's cold response to Shimane's proposal was not surprising. Despite some frictions at the local level, the relationship between Tokyo and Seoul was positive in 2005. Just less than three years prior, the two countries hosted the FIFA World Cup together in 2002, while reaching several cooperative agreements in between (Cha 2002). Since 2005 was also the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the two countries' diplomatic normalization, then-Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi had just announced the year would be celebrated officially as the "Year of Friendship" between South Korea and Japan. Unwilling to antagonize Seoul, Koizumi and many legislators of his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) held a dismissive attitude towards a national "Takeshima Day" (Bukh 2015). After Shimane's passage of the local ordinance, instead of showing support or reaffirming Japan's sovereignty over Dokdo/Takeshima, Koizumi stated instead that Japan should "deal with the situation in a forward-looking manner by considering how to develop friendship and overcome emotional conflicts" (Onishi 2005).

The local adoption of the "Takeshima Day" ordinance yields two unique characteristics to the subsequent ceremonies. First, its passage in a Japanese prefectural legislature rather than in Tokyo makes it less susceptible to intervention by the central government. Political leaders in Japan—even those who are willing to periodically visit the controversial Yasukuni Shrine—may at times have an incentive to play down nationalist sentiments. Since "Takeshima Day" is administrated by local officials in Shimane,

however, it has never been canceled nor postponed even as the ruling party in Japan and the relationship between Japan and South Korea changed from year to year. As the ceremony and the timing are pre-determined, they are relatively independent of the changing political situations in the two countries. In terms of research design, this context helps isolate the effect of ritualization from the broader political conditions that allow ritualization to happen.

The second characteristic of the “Takeshima Day” ceremony is its consistency in its venue, attendance, and surrounding activities throughout the years. The ceremony has always been held in Matsue City—Shimane’s Capitol. Attendance at the ceremony is usually around 500 people. While the number of attending Parliamentary Members from Tokyo does fluctuate from year to year to some extent, the lack of attending cabinet members has become a norm. Outside of the ceremonial hall, activities conducted by a variety of groups from Japan and South Korea are also highly consistent. Local newspaper *Sanin Chuo Shimpo* reported “street propaganda” (*Gaisen*) activities by anti-Korean right-wing groups and protests led by South Korean activist Choi Jae-ik almost every year. While this does not imply that all the “Takeshima Day” ceremonies are *identical*, I argue that they are sufficiently similar over time to be considered different iterations of the same treatment, and that researchers can draw lessons from the repetition of such similar events over time.

In sum, the regularity and consistency of the Takeshima Day make it a compelling case to study the role of ritualization. Because the ceremony repeats every February regardless of the changing political realities and fluctuating Korea-Japan relations, it

becomes plausible to examine how an increased level of ritualization affects the following events between the two countries and the threat perceptions of citizens who live in those countries.

### **Research Design**

To test the first hypothesis—the escalatory effect of the same territorial ritual diminishes as it becomes ritualized through reoccurrence with a consistent pattern, I use a sub-sample of Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) event data that contains all bilateral events between South Korea and Japan. In the data set, each row contains a "source country," a "target country" and a CAMEO code that records the event type.<sup>22</sup> The distribution of event count over year is shown in Figure 2.<sup>23</sup> While the Japan-South Korea

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<sup>22</sup> The CAMEO (Conflict and Mediation Event Observations) coding scheme is developed by Schrodtt (2007). For instance, a code of 030 indicates the source country "expressed intent to cooperate" with the target country whereas 042 indicates the governmental officials in the source country "made a visit" to the target country.

<sup>23</sup> Because ICEWS events were parsed out from English newspapers across the world, it is possible that the huge increase of total events in the 2000s compared to the 1990s is due to the growth of international media and their capability to cover more news rather than the interaction density between the two countries themselves. To alleviate this concern, events that occurred before January 1 of 2000 are dropped.



disputes never escalated into a full-scale military conflict, the dispute has a significant impact on the two countries' conflictual events "short of war."

### *Dependent Variables*

To capture both low-level and high-level conflicts, I recode the events to construct two dependent variables. The first dependent variable is the number of verbal conflicts between Japan and South Korea, whereas the second dependent variable is the number of material conflicts between Japan and South Korea with the aggregation criteria in Table 1. The visual representation of verbal and material conflicts between Japan and South Korea are then shown in Figure 3.<sup>24</sup>

Since the effect or "shock" of a territorial provocation usually lasts for a period of time between countries with territorial disputes after it happened, I operationalized the two dependent variables in the following time series analysis using a 90-day window. In other words, instead of studying whether a territorial provocation has an impact on the number

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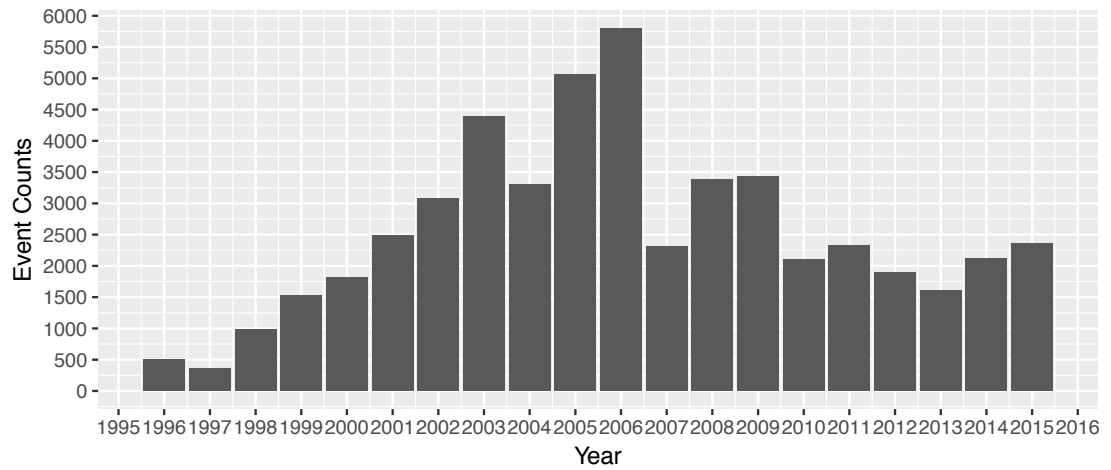
<sup>24</sup> To construct the two variables, I recode the CAMEO coding scheme according to the criteria below. This decision rule is consistent with the Phoenix Project's "QuadClass" approach that allows a researcher to presents a higher level of aggregation for the CAMEO categories (<http://phoenixdata.org/description>). After the recoding, I transform the data so that each row contains the number of verbal and material conflicts that took place between Japan and South Korea on a given date.

of verbal or material conflicts on the same day of the provocation, I study how the provocation affect the overall level of verbal or material conflicts in the next 90 days following the provocation. This design will ensure my dependent variables capture both the immediate and lasting impact of a provocation in a time series context.

**Table 2. Aggregation Criteria for CAMEO Coded Events**

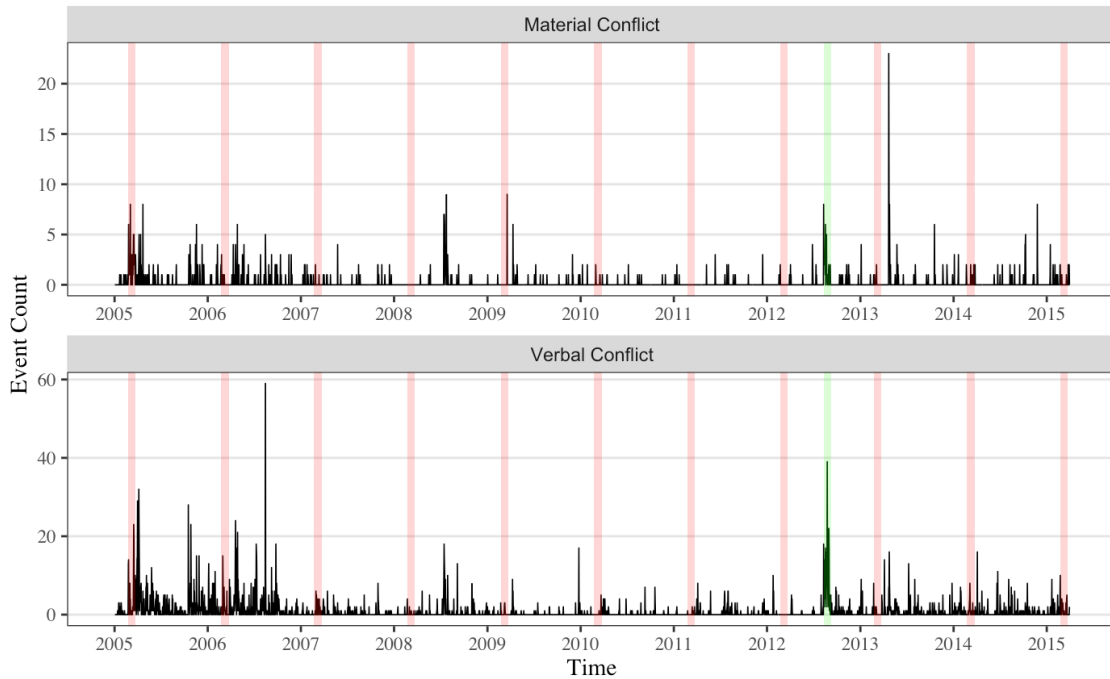
CAMEO Code	Selected Categories	QuadClass
090, 100, 101, 102, 105, 106, 107, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 120, 124, 125, 127, 128, 130, 131, 133, 134, 138, 139, 1011, 1014, 1031, 1041, 1043, 1213, 1221, 1231, 1232, 1233, 1241, 1312, 1313, 1621	Investigate, Demand, Criticize or denounce, Accuse, Rally opposition against, complain officially, Bring lawsuit against, Reject, Defy norms, law, Threaten, Threaten with military force, Give ultimatum, Reduce relations	Verbal conflict
141, 1412, 142, 143, 145, 150, 151, 153, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 170, 172, 173, 174, 175, 180, 181, 182, 183, 185, 186, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 202, 1711, 1721, 1821, 1822, 1823, 2042	Demonstrate or rally, protest violently, riot, demonstrate military or police power, coerce, impose administrative sanctions, arrest, detain, or charge with legal action, expel or deport individuals, use conventional military force, impose blockade, restrict movement, occupy territory, fight with small arms and light weapons fight with artillery and tanks, Engage in mass killings	Material conflict

**Figure 2. Japan-South Korea Bilateral Event Grouped by Year, 1996-2015**



Source: World-Wide Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS)

**Figure 3. Japan-South Korea Verbal and Material Conflicts, 2000-2015**



Note: Red-shades represent the week of Takeshima Day. Green shades represent the week of Lee Myung-bak's visit to disputed island.

Source: Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) dataset

### *Independent Variables*

I test the effect of each “*Takeshima Day*” separately by treating them as different *shocks* to the bilateral relationship that took place on the same day (February 22) between 2005 and 2015.<sup>25</sup> Under this setup, it is possible to test whether later commemorations indeed have a smaller escalatory effect and do not lead to more conflicts. In addition, I include a non-ritualized hostile event: South Korean president Lee Myung-Bak’s historical visit to the disputed islets on August 10, 2012 as a base-line comparison. To model time dependency and alleviate the concern that the commemoration simply occurred when the bilateral relationship of South Korea and Japan also happened to be improving, it is necessary to model time dependency in order to de-trend the data. While I leave most of

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<sup>25</sup> Whereas the first independent variable indicates the passage of the ordinance to commemorate the *Takeshima Day* in Japan, the rest record the territorial rituals from its inauguration in 2006 to its tenth anniversary in 2015. Each *Takeshima Day* is a binary variable with values of either 0 or 1. In time series terminology, I specify them as “pulses” with the length of 90 days starting from February 22 of each year to take into account both the events that occurred during the ceremony and the ensuing diplomatic backlash in the following weeks. Technically, it means in a given year after 2005, that every day before February 22 is coded as 0. The first 90 days that begins on February 22 are coded as 1 and the remainder of the same year is coded as 0 again.

the technical details such as model selection in the *Appendix*, the time series models I use for this test can be expressed as below.<sup>26</sup>

### Equation 1. Time Series Specification for Verbal Conflicts

#### ARMA(2,1)

$$y_t = \alpha + \delta_1 y_{t-1} + \delta_2 y_{t-2} + \sum_{i=1}^{12} \beta_i X_{it} + \varepsilon_t$$

$$\delta \in (0,1), \varepsilon_t = \gamma_1 \varepsilon_{t-1} + \nu_t$$

### Equation 2. Time Series Specification for Material Conflicts

#### ARMA(1,2)

$$y_t = \alpha + \delta y_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^{12} \beta_i X_{it} + \varepsilon_t$$

$$\delta \in (0,1), \quad \varepsilon_t = \gamma_1 \varepsilon_{t-1} + \gamma_2 \varepsilon_{t-2} + \nu_t$$

## Results

I first present the effects of each Takeshima Day incidents from 2005 to 2015 on verbal conflicts and material conflicts between Japan and South Korea that took place in the 90 days following the incidents in Table 3. Consistent with my theory, while the occurrence of Takeshima Day in 2005 and 2006 significantly increases both verbal and

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<sup>26</sup> In both models,  $y_t$  is the verbal or material conflicts at time  $t$ , which is a function of an intercept, its previous lag(s) and  $X_t$ , a vector with 11 independent variables as explained earlier. As both time series are stationary, the term  $\delta_i$  is constrained to be between 0 and 1. The error term  $\varepsilon_t$  in both time series has a lagged component(s) specified by  $\gamma_i$  and a white noise component  $\nu_t$ . The hypothesis  $H4$  can be restated as  $H_0 = \beta_j < \beta_k \forall j, k \in (1,11), j > k$ . Since independent variable 1 to 11 denote the 11 “Takeshima Day” events (the twelfth is a non-ritualized event for reference), the later an event occurred, the smaller its effect on the bilateral conflicts because it has gradually ritualized and become part of the expectation.

material conflicts, as it reoccurs over time, its escalatory effect gradually diminishes back to zero and even becomes negative in some cases. By contrast, because it is a novel event, the 2012 visit of the South Korean president has a significant escalatory effect. One can also observe a clearer relationship in the visualization of Figure 6 and Figure 7. One curious feature in the two plots is that after Lee Myung-bak's visit, the effect of Takeshima Day becomes more escalatory again. While this cannot be explained by the theory, the result is not too surprising. As a non-ritualized event breaks into established patterns of interaction, it is possible that the novel event might "throw everything out of whack" before the relationship returns to normal. While additional research design is necessary to test whether this conjecture is correct, the results together provide preliminary support that a process of habituation might exist when a hostile event becomes ritualized through the reoccurrence of similar patterns. This dynamic is in sharp contrast with novel events that brings new shock to the relationship. As can be seen in the coefficients of "Passage of Takeshima Day Ordinance (2005)" and "Lee's Visit to the Islets (2012)", when new events occur, the high uncertainty makes them more escalatory and lead to more conflict in the future.

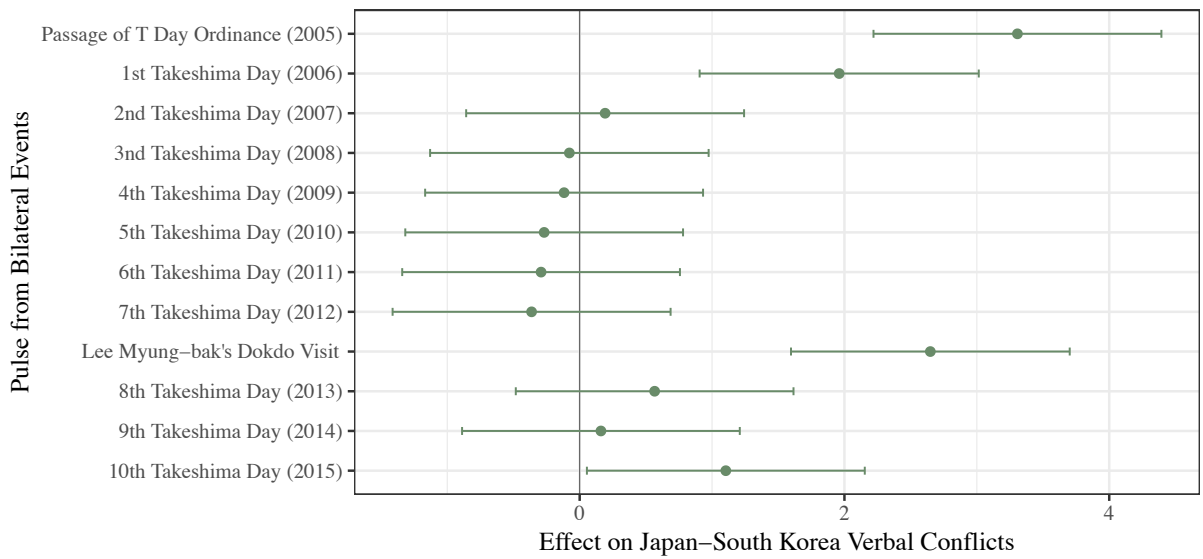
**Table 3. Takeshima Day and Japan-South Korean Bilateral Conflicts: Multivariate Regression with Times Series Processes (ARIMAX)**

Independent variables	Verbal Conflicts	Material Conflicts
Ritualized Hostilities		
Passage of Takeshima Day Ordinance (2005)	3.30678* (0.55479)	0.925001* (0.14694)
First Takeshima Day (2006)	1.96035* (0.53789)	0.263410* (0.14689)
Second Takeshima Day (2007)	0.19223 (0.53557)	-0.067641 (0.14690)
Third Takeshima Day (2008)	-0.07784 (0.53672)	-0.126370 (0.14688)
Forth Takeshima Day (2009)	-0.11770 (0.53555)	0.092927 (0.14689)
Fifth Takeshima Day (2010)	-0.26815 (0.53521)	-0.055135 (0.14688)
Sixth Takeshima Day (2011)	-0.29148 (0.53519)	-0.117436 (0.14689)
Seventh Takeshima Day (2012)	-0.36317 (0.53565)	-0.045938 (0.14692)
Eighth Takeshima Day (2013)	0.56631 (0.53514)	0.448953* (0.14720)
Ninth Takeshima Day (2014)	0.16059 (0.53512)	-0.065250 (0.14688)
Tenth Takeshima Day (2015)	1.10405 (0.53546)	0.004875 (0.14693)
Non-Ritualized Hostilities		
Lee's Visit to the Islets (2012)	2.64895*	0.454253*

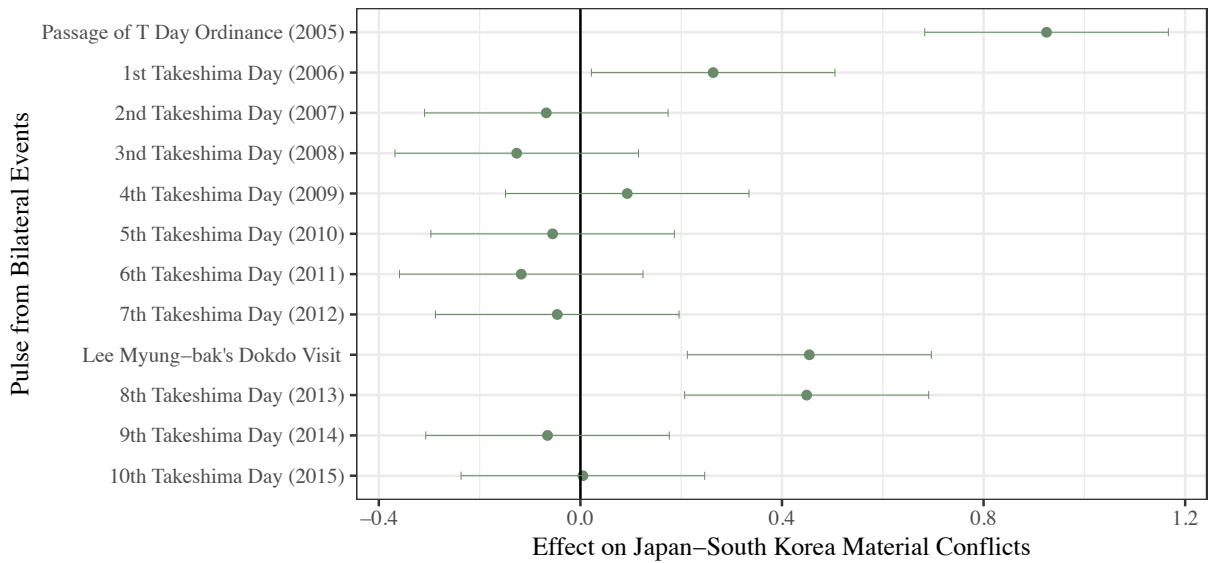
	(0.53707)	(0.14717)
AR1	1.19265*	0.781367*
	(0.02748)	(0.03764)
AR2	-0.24573*	-
	(0.01856)	
MA1	-0.86162*	-0.574840*
	(0.02271)	(0.04023)
MA2	-	-0.051521*
		(0.01868)
Intercept	0.63895*	0.146243*
	(0.08391)	(0.02146)
Note: * indicates that the coefficient is statistically significant at the 95% level.		



**Figure 4. Coefficient Plot of Takeshima Day and Verbal Conflicts**



**Figure 5. Coefficient Plot of Takeshima Day and Material Conflicts**



## **Conclusion**

This chapter began with the following question: how can we empirically test the relationship between ritualization and escalation? Using the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute between South Korea and Japan as my primary case, I first provided an overview of the history of Dokdo/Takeshima, the modern origin of the dispute following the “Rhee line,” and the dispute’s substantive significance to political scientists and policymakers despite having a low number of casualties. From the perspective of research design and causal inference, I also provide support for how the annual nature of “Takeshima Day” ceremony create a forced-upon ritualization, which allows researchers to side-step several methodological challenges when studying ritualization’s effects. After laying down the groundwork, I conducted a careful examination of ritualization’s effect through tracing the degree of escalations caused by each “Takeshima Day” ceremony as it became increasing ritualized. The results following my analyses not only showed that it is possible to study ritualization’s effect empirically, but that, as expected according to my theory of ritualization, as a territorial provocation become more ritualized, its destabilizing effect diminished.

In an enduring territorial dispute like of Dokdo/Takeshima, where parties to the dispute exchanged a high number of territorial provocations on a regular basis, I showed that a provocation’s level of ritualization can moderate its escalatory effect on the bilateral relations between parties to the dispute. In other words, while territorial provocations tend to increase future conflicts between countries with territorial disputes at the general level, ritualization can weaken such escalatory effect. In particular, after tracing the effect of each

Takeshima Day ceremony on future Korea-Japan relations, I found that, as the controversial ceremony became ritualized through repetition by both countries, its escalatory effect diminished. Moreover, the results are consistent across two different dependent variables—future verbal conflicts and future material conflicts. This consistency indicates that ritualization does not only moderate a territorial provocation’s effect on diplomatic protest and condemnations, but also on high-stake bilateral events involving economy and security. Together, the empirical results in this chapter provide support for the first hypothesis listed out in Chapter 2.

While I find that “ritualized” territorial provocations between South Korea and Japan were no longer escalatory, this does not imply that the entire territorial dispute has been stabilized. The case of then-South Korean president Lee Myung-bak’s visit to Dokdo/Takeshima in 2012 provided an important empirical data point that shows the limit of ritualization: even in a dispute where some provocations are ritualized, when some actors introduced a non-ritualized territorial provocation into the countries’ interaction, since the provocation did not exist in the previous interaction patterns, the “perception of mutual understanding” of country receiving such provocation would likely break down. As a result, the provocation is expected to be no less escalatory than any territorial provocation before ritualization. The results in this chapter from both verbal and material conflicts confirms this claim. When including Lee’s official visit to Dokdo/Takeshima as an example of non-ritualized provocation in the analysis, the escalatory effect of this event is very close to the initial Takeshima Day. The visit’s escalatory effect also showed that my finding on

ritualization was not an artifact of a generally improving Korea-Japan relationship that pacified all the provocations. In sum, ritualization only moderate ritualized provocation. When a new (non-ritualized) shock entered the system, my theory does not expect its effect to be affected by other pre-existing interaction patterns.

What emerges from the analyses is the first systemic test of ritualization's effect. It is rarely possible to perfectly extract causal relationships between factors using observational data. However, the research design that utilized the unique nature of "Takeshima Day" implemented in this chapter mitigated the risk that the findings were simply artifacts caused by omitted variables or unaddressed threats to causal inference. Since ritualization only moderates the effect of territorial provocations, this theoretical construct does not stand on its own in absence of any territorial provocations. Consequentially, testing the effect ritualization requires not only a territorial dispute, but also a number of provocations—some more ritualized and some less ritualized—exchanged by the parties to a dispute across time. Ideally, these territorial provocations also need to be as similar to each other as possible except for their levels of ritualization. As discussed in this chapter, the legal context of "Takeshima Day" provides an empirical set up that almost satisfied all the requirement. Each ceremony was held on the same day, in the same city, with similar attendance, and with near-identical statements, performance, and protests by all the parties involved—the Shimane Prefecture, Right-wing and South Korean activists, and the South Korean government. The annual nature of the ceremony also avoided potential endogeneity issue because actors

cannot select themselves into ritualization based on how good or bad the bilateral relationship between Japan and South Korea was in a given year.

So far, the evidence presented in this chapter supports the claim that ritualized territorial provocation can be less escalatory than non-ritualized territorial provocations. However, it does not reveal the underlying causal mechanisms of ritualization. Since my theory is built on how ritualization lowers the audience's threat perception through creating the perception of mutual understanding and the process of habituation, one might ask whether the micro-foundation of my theory—the positive relationship between ritualization and individual threat perception—really exist? In the next chapter, I present an empirical test on this relationship by leveraging a conjoint survey experimental design in Japan on people's threat perception towards territorial provocations from neighboring states.

## Chapter 4 – Ritualization and Threat Perception

Many psychological works in international relations suggest that provocations in international disputes can be dangerous because they are self-reinforcing. At the leadership level, as provocations from one country lead to hostile interpretations by the receiving country, political leaders on both sides might become susceptible of cognitive biases that their adversary is an aggressive state (Singer 1958; Vasquez and Gibler 2001). In such a situation, the increased threat perception and cognitive biases often lead to premature cognitive closure, which primes leaders to seek information that confirms their beliefs, while ignoring information that run against their preconception.<sup>27</sup> At the public opinion level, provocation from abroad might also influence state behavior through its impact on public perception. Since democratic politics requires that citizens' opinions play some role in shaping policy outcomes (Baum and Potter 2008), if ordinary citizens

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<sup>27</sup> For more examples and discussions of cognitive closures, see Larson (1989) for the case of Cold War containment and Sigal (1989) for the case of World War II.

sense a high level of threat from another state's provocations, they might expect their government to respond forcefully.

Together, the mentioned psychological dynamics predict that in territorial disputes, provocations will likely lead to more provocations in the future, and that since it is very difficult to reverse the process, exchange of provocations can spiral a dispute into unintentional wars. While I showed in the previous chapter that ritualization can weaken territorial provocation's escalatory effect on bilateral relationships, how does ritualization achieve this by weakening the psychological consequences of territorial provocations? More importantly, how can one empirically demonstrate this effect?

Focusing on ritualization's effect on foreign policy through public opinion, this chapter provides an empirical test of the second hypothesis of my theory. Whereas the first hypothesis (discussed in chapter 3) focuses on ritualization's effect on the behaviors of countries with territorial disputes and on their bilateral relations, the second hypothesis focuses on the theory's micro-foundation. If ritualization indeed weakens the effect of territorial provocations through establishing a perception of mutual understanding and the initiating a process of habituation on the audience, one should be able to measure the effect of ritualization not only at the bilateral level, but also at the individual level.

While I use the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute between South Korea and Japan as my primary case in chapter 3, testing ritualization's effect on individual threat perception with an actual case leads to two research challenges. The first challenge for researchers interested in this topic is one of limited data availability. In a perfect world, one would

conduct a panel study that asks the same respondents about their threat perceptions towards a set of territorial provocations—some more ritualized than others—immediately after these provocations took place. To the author’s knowledge, however, no panel data on post-provocation threat perception exist. Some panel surveys do measure public attitudes towards a certain territorial issue across time, but these studies are more interested in the attitudinal change at the aggregate level and neither track nor make available individual-level data.<sup>28</sup> The second challenge is the one of comparability. Even if a researcher does possess panel data on threat perceptions following territorial provocations, the contexts between different provocations might be too different for a structural comparison.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> This is the case of the panel survey published by the Cabinet Office of Japan (CAO). While the Public Relations Office of CAO regularly publishes its survey on the Japanese attitudes towards Dokdo/Takeshima among other issues (<https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/index.html>), the author was not able to obtain individual level data from the government through Japan’s FOIA inquiry due to privacy and other concerns.

<sup>29</sup> While the unique nature of Takeshima Day does present an opportunity for researchers to actually measure and compare people’s threat perception towards each ceremony across time, doing this retroactively may introduce serious bias into the survey data. When asking respondents, at time  $t$ , their threat perceptions towards a territorial provocation that occurred at time  $t-5$ , their response might be contaminated by all the additional information revealed about this provocation between  $t-5$  and  $t$ .



To avoid these potential pitfalls, this chapter takes a different research approach. Instead of measuring people's attitudes and threat perceptions towards specific territorial provocations occurred in the past, I chose to test the individual-level effect of ritualization using plausible but hypothetical scenarios instead. While using hypothetical cases in survey research has its own limitations, I argue that this new approach is more productive for two reasons. First, testing people's threat perceptions towards hypothetical provocations eliminates the concern that panel data on actual provocations might not be available. Using hypothetical scenarios also presents a more viable strategy because it allows researchers to manipulate the level of "ritualization" in a carefully controlled environment. Since the researcher is responsible for generating the hypothetical scenarios, it is also possible to improve cross-provocation comparability

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I discuss the existing literature on the role of public opinion in territorial disputes. While scholars have generated significant insights into how public opinion matters to foreign policy and international relations in general, previous research tends to neglect the role of public opinion in the context of territorial disputes. Facing this research gap, I highlight how analyzing the role of ritualization on individual threat perceptions can contribute to this literature. In the second section, I present my research design, which leverage a conjoint survey experiment that asked the respondent to compare their threat perceptions of different hypothetical territorial provocations from a foreign state against their own country. In the final section of the chapter, I discuss the implications and potential limitations of the findings.

## **Ritualization, Territorial Disputes, and Public Opinion in IR**

Despite contrasting scholarly assessment about its influence, public opinion occupies an important space in the study of international relations today. Historically, liberal political thinkers, scholars and practitioners have long argued that “public’s capacity to gather and retain information, and to use it to formulate coherent opinions, is arguably integral to the functioning of democracy” (Baum and Potter 2008). In the field of International Relations, public opinion was initially ignored or treated as distractions by early Realist scholars who were more interested in developing structural theories that treat each country as a unitary actor without looking within any particular states (Waltz 2010). However, the role of public opinions later became the center of debates between two approaches to foreign policy of the United States—one treating it as a “force for enlightenment” and more peaceful relations among states, whereas the other treated it as a “source of emotional and shortsighted thinking that can only impede the effective pursuit and defense of vital national interests” (Holsti 2004). During this period, scholars have made significant progress in understanding various characteristics of public opinion in foreign policy, including its role in foreign policy crises (Sobel 2001; Klarevas 2002; Larson and Savych 2005), the “rally-around-the-flag” phenomenon (Lee 1977; James and Oneal 1991; Oneal and Bryan 1995), and the public’s aversion to casualties (Mueller 1973; Gartner and Segura 1998).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Some International Relations scholars study public opinion as an intervening mechanism that can influence foreign policy behavior. For example, Chapman (2009)

In addition to being a prominent area of study for researchers in U.S. politics and foreign policy, public opinion also occupies a prominent place for International Relations (IR) scholars who adopted an experimental approach in their work today (Kertzer and Tingley 2018). Due to the rise of survey experiment as a research methodology, the fall of the cost in conducting surveys, and the emergence of a new set of research agendas, there has been a rise in research that adopts a micro-level approach that focuses on the role of public opinion in IR. For example, Tomz (2007) utilized a survey experiment research design to trace the micro-foundation of domestic audience cost. Interested in understanding how the public responds to a variety of international bargaining outcomes, Trager and Vavreck (2011) utilized a large-scale, randomized experiment to study the judgment formation of American voters. Finally, in their efforts to evaluate American attitudes towards the use of nuclear weapons, Press, Sagan, and Valentino (2013) used an original survey experiment to evaluate the strengths of normative prohibitions like the “nuclear taboo” on states’ foreign policy behavior.

Among experimental research that studies the role of public opinion in IR, one new trend of research is the “first image reversed” approach. In Kenneth Waltz’s (1959) seminal work on international politics, he established three related but conceptually separated

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found that multilateral institutions such as the United Nations Security Council can influence foreign policy through public opinion.

images—or levels of analysis—in analyzing international affairs.<sup>31</sup> Whereas the first image refers to the individual-psychological level, the second image refers to the national level of domestic politics. Finally, the third image refers to the structural level, which treats the entire international system as the unit of analysis. In an earlier attempt to “reverse” the disciplinary analytical focus in the 1970s, Gourevitch (1978) summarized a new approach called “second image reversed,” which studies the impact of IR on the domestic politics of nations rather than the traditional way of studying the effect of domestic politics on IR. The intellectual goal of “first image reversed” can be understood in the same vein: rather than studying the role of individual-level and psychological factors on IR, another productive research avenue is to study the effect of IR at the individual and micro level.<sup>32</sup>

Although the experimental literature on public opinion and IR has generated valuable insights, application of this research approach on territorial disputes remains scarce. In his survey of field of public opinion research in International Relations, Tanaka (2016) finds that early research on territorial disputes tends to neglect the role of public

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<sup>31</sup> For more recent evaluation and assessment of Waltz’s analytical framework introduced in *Man, the State, and War*, see Elshtain (2009) and Sjoberg (2011).

<sup>32</sup> For examples of this approach, see Fordham and Kleinberg (2012) on how economic interests could influence the public support for free trade and Tingley (2017) on how whether a country’s rising power could lead to individuals responds consistent with the Power Transition Theory.

opinion in territorial conflicts due to the assumption that the long-term policy preference of individuals in states with territorial disputes tend to be uniform, at least for the long term. This lack of research on public opinion and territorial disputes becomes even more puzzling when one considers recent findings by IR scholars, which indicate that individual and psychological characteristics play a significant role in making territorial disputes more salient and dangerous than other types of international disputes. For example, Gibler (2012) argues that territorial disputes trigger basic biological and psychological responses to threat that are endemic to humans through constituting threats to individual lives and livelihoods. Johnson and Toft (2014) also suggest that the “indivisibility” of territories in many disputes can be traced back to the evolutionary origin of territoriality.

Among scholars’ general tendency to neglect the role of public opinion in territorial disputes, there are a few notable exceptions. One is the work by Arai and Izumikawa (2014), which investigates Japan’s public opinion towards the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea.<sup>33</sup> In surveys conducted in February and October 2012, the authors asked whether the respondents would support Japan’s use of force in a set of hypothetical contingency scenarios surrounding the Senkaku/Diaoyu

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<sup>33</sup> These islands are currently administered by Japan, but also claimed by the People’s Republic of China, which call the islands “Diaoyu,” and by the government of Taiwan, which call the islands “Diaoyutai.”

islands dispute. Situating two surveys before and after the anti-Japanese riots and civil unrests in China, they found an increased level of support for use of force following the actual bilateral tensions between Japan and China. Another exception is a survey conducted by Zhou and Wang (2016) in the PRC. Recruiting students from three universities in Beijing, the authors explore a variety of factors ranging from demographics, social network, issue framing, and party identification that might drive a student to participate in anti-Japanese demonstrations. Finally, through two online surveys, Tanaka (2016) measures the public's attitudes towards a variety of different proposals for Japan to make a territorial compromise to a neighboring state and finds that distance from disputed territories can shape individual policy preferences over the territory.

While these works have improved our general understanding of how public opinions matter in territorial disputes, most of them focus on the variation in individual attitudes and policy preferences within a population. Despite implementing experimental research designs, most research discussed above aimed at answering questions such as “what types of individuals support a more (or less) hawkish policy in a territorial dispute,” rather than evaluating how public opinion might be affected by what happens in the international arena. In particular, the role of psychological factors was rarely discussed. To sum up using Waltz's level-of-analysis framework, most research in this category are still looking at the first image. By studying public opinions towards territorial disputes, scholars seek to understand how these individual-level attitudes and preferences might aggregate and influence policy outcomes at the international level. Meanwhile, a significant research

gap exists in our understanding of phenomena that can be classified as “first-image reversed”: given a territorial disputes and countries’ behavior at the international level, how do these IR events influence individual perceptions?<sup>34</sup>

In testing the effect of ritualization on individual-level threat perceptions, this chapter aims at answering an important theoretical question about ritualization while also addressing the mentioned research gap in public opinion and experimental IR. In the next section, I will lay out my research design, which leveraged a conjoint survey experiment in Japan that tests the effect of ritualization on individual threat perception.

### **Experimental Design**

To test the hypothesis that a territorial provocation is less likely to be perceived as threatening when it is ritualized, I fielded an online survey experiment in the summer of 2018. The experiment was fielded on a sample of 256 Japanese adults who participated

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<sup>34</sup> While most work on public opinion and territorial dispute leaves this question unaddressed, there are some works in territorial disputes using observational data that can be categorized as “first image reversed.” For example, Miller (2013) studies how territorial threats can influence individual’s well-being in Nigeria. Hutchison (2011a, 2011b) studies how territorial threats affect people’s level of trust and political participation. Both Miller and Hutchison focus on territorial disputes in Africa.

voluntarily through the online platform “Yahoo! Crowdsourcing.”<sup>35</sup> An experimental design is useful for this study in two ways. First, it provides additional empirical evidence from a carefully-controlled environment to the event-data approach introduced back in Chapter 3. Even if the escalatory effect of *Takeshima Day* is found to be decreasing with each repetition, the comparison is made among provocations taking places at different time and under varying political circumstances and identification of causal effect can be difficult. Moreover, by measuring respondents’ threat perception directly thorough the survey, the psychological assumption that ritualization decreases escalation through lowering threat perception can be tested.

#### *Procedure*

For recruiting purpose, I listed the survey experiment as a general survey on the Yahoo! Crowdsourcing platform.<sup>36</sup> To sidestep the concern that participants could tailor

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<sup>35</sup> For an example of survey experiment in Japan using the same platform, see Grieco, Matsumura, and Tago (2020). Matsushima and Tago (2019) used a combination of Nikkei Research and Yahoo! Japan Crowdsourcing. For a review of using Yahoo! Japan Crowdsourcing as a platform to study cognitive science (in Japanese), see Majima (2019). Also see Behrend, Sharek, Meade, and Wiebe (2011) for a more general critique on this approach.

<sup>36</sup> See Appendix for more details on the survey posting including screenshots and actual wordings (in Japanese).



their answers in accordance with the researchers' expectations, or the "experimenter demand effects" (Orne 1962; Sears 1986; Iyengar 2011), the title and description of the survey intentionally avoided any references about Dokdo/Takeshima, South Korea, and territorial disputes. This approach also mitigates the concerns over selection effect that people who felt more strongly about Dokdo/Takeshima, South Korea, and territorial disputes are more likely to become participants to the survey. Without presenting any misleading information, the experiment is simply introduced as a survey that collect people's opinion about "challenges facing Japan in the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

When a respondent decides to participate in the survey, she would be guided to the survey landing page on the Qualtrics platform with a link. The landing page contains more details about the survey, including the purpose of the survey, what demographic information will be collected, the estimated amount of time to finish the survey. Consistent with the IRB regulation, the same webpage also describes the potential benefits and risks involved from taking the survey, how personal information will be handled, and provide the respondent one last time to determine if she would like to take the survey or not. Only respondent who clicked "yes" will be shown with the survey questions.

### *Respondent Population*

To test the effect of ritualization on individual threat perception, this study targets ordinary citizens in Japan from the age of 18 to 99 through online convenience sampling.<sup>37</sup> As shown in Table 1, males are more represented in the respondents than females. People in their middle age are also more represented compared to people in their twenties. While the respondents were not nationally representative of Japan's population, I was able to recruit people from 43 out of a total of 47 prefectures in Japan.<sup>38</sup>

**Table 4. Age and Gender Distribution of Respondents**

Age/Gender	Male	Female	Total
10-19	0	0	0
20-29	6	6	12
30-39	27	25	52
40-49	61	34	95
50-59	50	16	66
60-99	24	7	31
Total	168	88	256

While it is also possible to target a different respondent population, such as political elites in Japan who have more direct access to information and decision-

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<sup>37</sup> See Chandler and Shapiro (2016) for more detailed discussion on online platform and convenience sampling.

<sup>38</sup> There were no respondents identified themselves as from Toyama Prefecture, Yamaguchi Prefecture, Kōchi Prefecture, and Saga Prefecture.

making power, I choose to focus on the general public instead for two reasons. First, despite being theoretically plausible, elite experiment can be logistically unfeasible and often requires a very different setup (Renshon, Lee, and Tingley 2017). Moreover, despite conventional beliefs that political elites tend to differ systematically from the public in their ways of information-processing and decision-making, such distinction was rarely tested and latest research have begun to challenge this view (Sheffer, Loewen, Soroka, Walgrave, et al. 2018).

### *Experimental Treatments*

In my experiment, after answering questions about their demographic characteristics and political attitudes,<sup>39</sup> respondents are presented with the following prompt (original prompt in Japanese):

In the following section, please compare a series of situations that Japan might face in the future. For each pair of situations, you will be asked to provide your opinions. For scientific validity, the situation is general and is not about a specific country in the news today. Some parts of the situation may strike you as important, other parts may seem unimportant. Please read the details very carefully and answer the questions below.

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<sup>39</sup> See the Appendix for all the questions (in Japanese).

Country B currently exercises effective control over island A which Japan also claims as its territory Hypothetically speaking, if Japan is confronted with the following two provocations, which one would you describe to be more threatening?

Following the prompt, respondents were then presented a pair of hypothetical territorial provocations from “Country B” with randomly generated contexts (the “profiles”). For a total of five rounds, the respondents are asked to click on the territorial conflict, among of the two provocations, that is more threatening. Following the conjoint survey design developed by Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto (2014), the profiles are presented to the respondents as shown in Table 1.

**Table 5. Illustration of Profile Format (Translated to English)**

Provocation 1		Provocation 2	
Provocation type	B <sub>1</sub>	Provocation type	B <sub>2</sub>
History	C <sub>1</sub>	History	C <sub>2</sub>
Regime type	D <sub>1</sub>	Regime type	D <sub>2</sub>
Trade	E <sub>1</sub>	Trade	E <sub>2</sub>
Culture	F <sub>1</sub>	Culture	F <sub>2</sub>
Security	G <sub>1</sub>	Security	G <sub>2</sub>

[Provocation 1 is more threatening]

[Provocation 2 is more threatening]

A total of six attributes are used in this survey design. Table 2 displays each attribute and all the levels associated with each attribute in this conjoint survey. For the levels of *provocation*, I choose two provocation types of that are both politically salient and plausible for a Japanese audience. The trichotomous attribute “History,” is the main variable for testing *Hypothesis 2*. Whereas the level “This is a first-time provocation” implies a non-ritualized provocation, the remaining two levels “Similar provocations have occurred multiple times on the same day every year,” and “Similar provocations have occurred multiple times before irregularly” capture the main attributes of ritualization – that a provocation has a fixed pattern (a fixed and meaningful interval in this case) and has been repeated over time.

An individual may view a territorial provocation as threatening for a variety of reasons. In addition to whether a provocation is ritualized, I took five other provocation-level characteristics—attributes D, E, F, and G—into account. These additional attributes were included to serve as baselines and allow us to understand the empirical implication of ritualization comparing baseline conditions such as democracy, cultural similarity, and regional security partnership.

**Table 6. List of Attributes (Translated to English)**

Attribute		Level
B	Provocation	The president of country B made an official visit to the disputed territory
		The military of B conducted a shooting exercise on the disputed territory
C	History	This is a first-time provocation
		Similar provocations have occurred multiple times on the same day every year
		Similar provocations have occurred multiple times before irregularly
D	Regime type	B is a democracy
		B is an autocracy
E	Trade	B is a major trade partner of Japan
		B is not a major trade partner of Japan
F	Culture	The cultures between B and Japan are highly similar
		The cultures between B and Japan are highly different
G	Security	B is a regional security partner with Japan
		B is not a regional security partner with Japan

## Results

Table 2 presents the coefficient plot from the conjoint survey experiment. Due to the conjoint experimental design, the coefficients reported here are not the marginal effects in OLS and GLM regressions, but the Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) of

estimated using the “cjoint” package in R. Each provocation “attribute” has two rows. The first row indicates the baseline attribute assigned for comparison purpose (and hence does not have a coefficient of its own). After the first row, each row within the same attribute presents an alternative condition presented to the respondent during the experiment. The coefficients and standard errors listed on the right of these alternative attributes are the estimated effect of these attributes on respondents’ threat perception compared to the baseline attribute.

### *Does Ritualization Lower Individual Threat Perceptions?*

A key empirical implication from my theory and hypothesis (discussed in chapter 2) was that given a territorial provocation, a respondent’s threat perception of the adversary is expected to be lower if the provocation is ritualized. If this is indeed the case, I expect to see that respondents were more likely to select a hypothetical territorial provocation as “more threatening” when it was not ritualized (i.e., first time provocation) compared to more ritualized provocations (i.e., happened multiple times on same day of the year before, or happened multiple times irregularly). The results were consistent with my hypothesis: all else being equal, a territorial provocation that occurred before—either regularly or irregularly—is predicted to be perceived as less threatening by the respondents. Furthermore, the difference was statistically significant at the 95% level, as shown in both Table 2 and the confidence intervals in Figure 1.

One caveat is that while my model shows that a ritualized provocation is less likely to be selected as “threatening” by the respondents compared to a non-ritualized provocation, the results are more nuanced when it comes to comparing territorial provocations with different levels of ritualization. On the surface, there is some evidence that a ritualized provocation with regularity is less threatening compared to a ritualized provocation that occurred irregularly. Specifically, from Table 2, one can see that the smaller coefficient around -0.098 from the variable “multiple times on same day of the year” compared to the also negative but slightly higher coefficient of -0.074 from the variable “multiple times irregularly.” However, while the Average Marginal Component Effects of both variables are statistically significant at the 95%, the difference in the two variables’ effect is not statistically significant. Without further research, it is difficult to parse out whether there the non-significance was due to the lack of statistical power, or the lack of actual difference between the two types of provocations.

#### *Other Drivers of Threat Perception in Territorial Provocations*

Next, we turn to the role of other attributes of a territorial provocation that might also potentially influence individual threat perception. While these variables were included primarily as controls, their average marginal component effects reveal how a number of potential factors that can either arouse or mitigate respondents’ threat perception in the context of a territorial dispute.



First, as expected, the content of a provocation plays a significant role in determining whether a territorial provocation is perceived as threatening. Compared to the base category: shooting exercise on the disputed island, a presidential visit by an adversarial country is perceived as less threatening in my results. Moreover, the difference in the two variables' AMCE is statistically significant at the 95%. This implies that perhaps because of the strong military implications from a shooting exercise, while a presidential visit to the disputed island is highly political, it is on average perceived as less threatening by the audience.

Second, consistent with scholarly works on democratic perceptions in IR (Owen 1994; Farnham 2003), my results also show that a provocateur's domestic political regime type matters in how likely its territorial provocation will be perceived as threatening by audience in the target state. The AMCE of domestic regime type is statistically significant at the 95% level. Moreover, its substantive effect size is also the strongest among all variables in my analysis, indicating that when the provocateur is an autocracy as opposed to a democratic regime, its territorial provocations are much more likely to be perceived as threatening by the audience.

Third, my results show that trade relationship between a provocateur and a target state does not significantly influence individual threat perception. As shown in the first row of Figure 1, the substantive size of the AMCE of trade relationship is close to zero. Also, the lack of statistical significance in the effect size at the 95% level indicates that without further research, one cannot be certain whether the observed effect was indeed present or

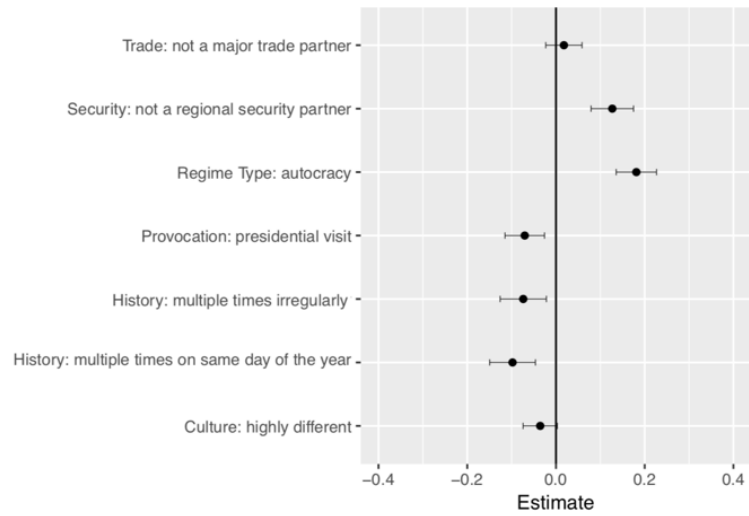
observed simply by chance. While the International Relations literature on trade finds bilateral trade relations effective in constraining international conflicts, my results suggest that even if trade indeed constrain dispute escalation to a certain degree, it does not appear that it achieves this through shaping individual threat perceptions.

**Table 7. Average Marginal Component Effects on Threat Perception**

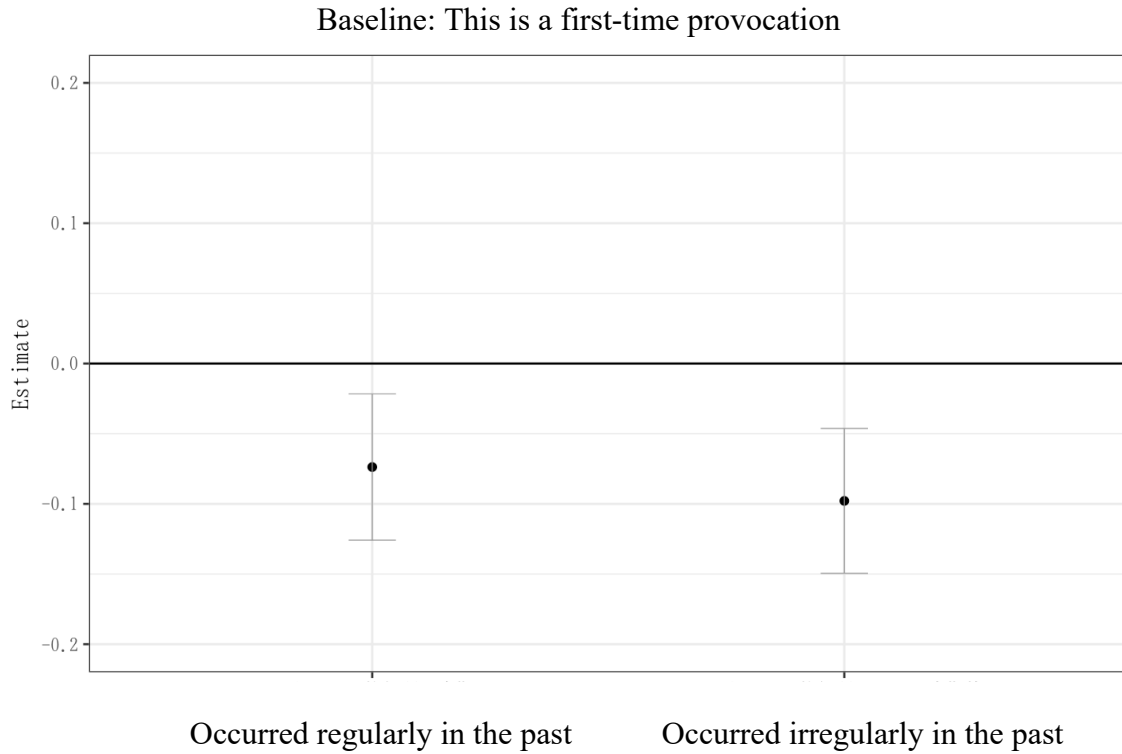
		<b>Dependent Variable:</b> For a profile to be selected as “threatening” by a respondent
Attribute: Provocation		
	Shooting exercise (base level)	-
	Presidential visit	-0.0704** (0.0227)
Attribute: History		
	First-time provocation (base level)	-
	multiple times on same day of the year	-0.0979*** (0.0263)
	multiple times irregularly	-0.0738** (0.0266)
Attribute: Regime type		
	Provocateur = Democracy (base level)	-
	Provocateur = Autocracy	0.1812*** (0.0232)
Attribute: Trade		
	Provocateur = Major trade partner (base level)	-
	Provocateur = Not major trade partner	0.0179 (0.0209)
Attribute: Culture		
	highly similar (base level)	-
	highly different	-0.0355 (0.0197)
Attribute: Security		
	Regional security partner (base level)	-
	Not a regional security partner	0.1270*** (0.0244)
Respondents		256

(Standard errors in parentheses and clustered by respondent ID)

**Figure 6. Coefficient Plot of AMCE on Threat Perception**



**Figure 7. Average Marginal Component Effects of History on Threat Perception**



Next, I find that when a provocateur is a security partner with the target country, even when it initiates a territorial provocation, the provocation is less likely to be perceived as threatening by audience in the target country, compared to the alternative scenario that no security partnership exists between the two countries. The AMCE of security relationship is statistically significant. Its substantive size is only smaller than the AMCE of a provocateur's domestic regime type.

Finally, similar culture with the provocateur seems to have a negative effect on threat perception, although the effect is substantively weak in size and statistically insignificant at the 95% level. While many scholars in international relations find cultural affinity to be an important factor in conflict and peace, the results in my survey experiment show that the respondents did not lean heavily on a provocateur's cultural similarity to its own country when deciding whether its territorial provocation is threatening or not.

#### *Limitations and Scope Conditions*

While my results revealed how a variety of factors together shape the respondents' threat perception in the context of a territorial provocation, they have a number of potential limitations as well. Since the respondents were all Japan nationals, it is possible that a substantial aspect of the Average Marginal Component Effects lies not in how individuals generally respond to these attributes of provocation, but rather in how people in Japan think about these issues based on their collective experience and their countries' specific territorial disputes with its neighboring states. In this regard, the results generalizability

might be more limited, and further research is necessary to see how the findings on ritualization and individual threat perception can be generalized to other international contexts. In addition to the respondents participating in the survey, the timing of survey also imposed some limitations to the finding's implications. While summer 2018 was a relatively calm period in Japan in terms of its territorial disputes with neighboring states,<sup>40</sup> additional experiments during more turbulent periods such as the anti-Japanese protest in China in 2012 or Japan's recent sanctions on crucial supplies for the semiconductor industry against South Korea in 2019 will reveal whether ritualization's individual effects could be affected by exogenous political shocks.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I tested the micro foundation of the ritualization we saw in the previous chapter in the form of "Takeshima Day." While I found evidence in Chapter 3

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<sup>40</sup> The main controversies between Japan and its neighbors about territorial disputes prior to the survey experiment in 2018 were Japan's diplomatic protest about South Korea's state banquet for Donald Trump, which features a dish called "Dokdo Shrimp" (McCurry 2017) and Japan's opening of a permanent exhibition on its self-proclaimed sovereignty all of the disputed territories, which brought protests from South Korea and China (Baird 2018). Both controversies had a relatively short lifespan. However, Japan's sovereign exhibition sparked additional protest once again in 2019 when the government relocated and expanded the exhibition (Cho 2019).

that ritualization could lower future conflictual events between countries with territorial disputes, the analysis has not yet provided support that ritualization lowered future conflictual events through also lowering the audience threat perception—the empirical implication emerged from two psychological mechanisms of my theory. Testing this psychological mechanism requires going beyond observational data and setting up a controlled environment that allows researchers to observe ritualization’s effect while holding other characteristics of a territorial provocation constant. To achieve this goal, I leveraged a conjoint survey experiment in Japan in 2018.

As expected by my theory of ritualization and the evidence from Chapter 3, what emerged from my experiment was a negative effect of ritualization on individuals’ threat perception. After asking a sample of Japanese adults to repetitively compare the levels of threat they perceived in territorial provocations with randomly generated characteristics, I found that provocations that have already occurred multiple times irregularly and regularly in the past were associated with a lower possibility of being chosen as “threatening” by the respondents compared to first-time provocations. Along with this key finding, the results also show that all else being equal, territorial provocations initiated by autocracies are more likely to be perceived as threatening. On the other hand, if a territorial provocation is initiated by a democracy or the target country’s security partner, audience threat perception tends to be lower.

Taken together, the empirical evidence in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 shows that once an interaction pattern is established in the territorial provocations between countries with

territorial disputes, ritualization can both lower audience threat perception and future escalations when such provocations take place.



## Chapter 5 – Conclusion

The resultant evils still have a beneficial effect. For they compel our species to discover a law of equilibrium to regulate the essentially healthy hostility which prevails among the states and is produced by their freedom.

– Immanuel Kant, *Idea for a Universal History*, 49

This dissertation began with an empirical puzzle about territorial provocations. While we are living in a relatively calm period of long peace without major international wars (Lebow 1994; Kivimäki 2014), our collective experience reminds us that the territoriality of human beings and sovereign states—whether it came from rational calculations, our quest for symbolic significance, or evolutionary paths—can still bring conflicts to otherwise peacefully coexisting members of the international society. In modern history, territorial disputes are the most likely reason for states to go to war (Holsti 1991). The issue of territory is also central to some of the most vexing cases of conflicts (Johnson and Toft 2014). If these assertions are true, why are we still observing territorial provocations being repeated faithfully by actors like a ritual? What was the point of these interactions, and what are their roles in the more important question on war and peace?

As the first step to answer these questions, this dissertation sought to parse out the role of ritualization from the complicated interactions between countries, territories, and individuals in the context of territorial disputes. As discussed at the beginning of this

dissertation, while many scholars and policymakers are aware of the existence of ritualized territorial provocations, many disagree over their implications. On the one hand, provocations made against an adversary are always risky and dangerous to some degree. On the other hand, if a territorial provocation takes place on the same day in the same location every year with almost identical patterns, in what sense is it still “provocative?” Since it is impossible to provide satisfying answers to these questions without an analytical framework supported by empirical evidence, this dissertation set out to develop a novel theory on “ritualized hostilities” and explore the theory’s implication in East Asia.

In Chapter 1, I observed that countries in hostile relations sometimes developed particular interactions patterns. In contrast to earlier scholarly approaches that treat such reoccurring hostilities as either a force of deterrence or fuel for unintended spirals, I presented a third possibility: that ritualized hostilities are part of the maintenance of the disputed relationship between countries. Chapters 2 laid out the groundwork of my theory: Instead of being a destabilizer that increases uncertainty and escalation, ritualization can stabilize adversarial tensions by generating perceptions of mutual understanding and lowering audience’s perception of threat. Focusing on the case of Dokdo/Takeshima, Chapter 3 provides the first test of my theory’s empirical implication using large scale bilateral event data between South Korea and Japan. In Chapter 4, I tested the theory’s micro-foundation in a conjoint survey experiment in a slightly more general context: Japan’s territorial disputes with neighboring states, to solidify my theoretical claim. Taken together, the empirical evidence shows with consistency that compared to non-ritualized

territorial provocations, ritualized provocations are associated with less escalations and a lower level of threat perception.

In the concluding chapter, I discuss this dissertation's broader implications and significance. First, I show how my theory of ritualized hostilities contributes to existing research on interaction patterns, dispute escalations, and experimental IR. Second, I explore my findings' implications in the greater foreign policy debates and show how this dissertation lead to a new set of policy recommendations for U.S. Grand Strategy in the Indo Pacific region. Third, while ritualization was found to have a pacifying effect in territorial disputes and making it "desirable" in some sense, I address some important normative implications it has, especially its potential role in enhancing domestic territorial nationalism. Finally, I list out additional puzzles for future research on this topic. Because the empirical analyses of this dissertation have centered around South Korea and Japan—both are U.S. allies in East Asia—further research is needed to explore whether other regions share the same pattern and to what extent the U.S. dominance in the region has helped forming the dynamics of ritualization.

### **Theoretical Contributions**

As scholars of "enduring rivalries" argued, all rivalries have a temporal component that emerges from past competitions and affects both current and future behavior (Diehl 1998). Political scientists have long attempted to study one such temporal component—how patterns of interactions in the past between countries in a dispute can shape their

interactions in the future. Focusing on the Suez Crisis, Edward Azar (1972) theorized that when two countries interact with each other over a period of time, a normal relations range (NRR)—a range of interaction which they perceive as normal—will emerge. When Schelling (2008) discussed the “idiom of military action,” he also raised historical cases where it was not the hostile interaction patterns themselves, but the “deviation” from such patterns that led to escalated militarized conflict when he discussed a variety of “idioms” of military action.

The idea that an interaction pattern can gradually become a mutually acceptable “range of interaction” is intuitive—even without policymaker’s intervention, an interaction pattern of “live and let live” can emerge and stabilize between British and French soldiers at a time when the two countries were fighting against each other during World War I (Ashworth 1980). The challenge for researchers, however, is how to systematically evaluate the effects and mechanisms of these patterns. Despite early scholarly efforts in studying the role of patterned interactions, evidence from the existing literature has been mostly illustrative and anecdotal. To the author’s knowledge, no study has yet to explore how interaction patterns affect escalation or examine the psychological foundation of how these patterns can influence human behaviors.

This dissertation is the first systematic empirical investigation of the earlier scholars’ claims that our tendency in recognizing patterns in complex interactions can lead to consequences in many aspects of international relations. In particular, such tendency has an effect on our threat perceptions towards territorial provocations and on the relations

between countries with territorial disputes. While my theory of ritualized hostilities also adopts a psychological approach, unlike earlier psychologists in International Relations who found that cognitive limitations can bias human towards unintentional wars, I find evidence that some cognitive tendencies—even when observing ostensibly hostile or unfriendly interactions—could nonetheless bias us towards peace.

The findings in this dissertation also present a new way to think about the meaning of “hostility” in the study of international politics. Traditionally, many scholars implicitly adopted a count-based approach in operationalizing theoretical constructs related to disputes and conflicts. We code a militarized international dispute as more severe when fatalities of participating countries exceed a certain number.<sup>41</sup> When comparing the level of stability of one polarity compared to another, we rely on the number of “great power war years” occurred within each type of international systems.<sup>42</sup> While such approach is justifiable in most cases, they might also fail to capture all the dynamics of an international dispute.<sup>43</sup> As shown in this dissertation, where a conventional, count-based approach sees

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<sup>41</sup> For an example from a widely used dataset on militarized international disputes, see Palmer, D’Orazio, Kenwick, and Lane (2015).

<sup>42</sup> For an example of operationalizing stability and peace under different polarities, see Monteiro (2012, 2014).

<sup>43</sup> My intention is not to determine which approach is “superior.” As reminded by Goertz (2005), definitional concepts should be evaluated according to their usefulness, and I

a high number of hostile events, a pattern-based approach that focuses on ritualization sees a consistent and stable process. Empirical research on international hostilities or dispute escalation might benefit from paying attention to not only the “presence” of provocations, but also the “patterns” that emerged from these provocations.

### **Policy Implications**

The contrast between the presence of provocations versus pattern of provocations highlighted in my dissertation also have policy recommendations on how political leaders should assess the level of risk and danger of a territorial dispute. In particular, my theory has a strong implication on how the United States should formulate its Grand Strategy in the Indo-Pacific region, where a large number of standing territorial disputes involving major countries such as China, India, Russia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Vietnam remain unsolved. The results from this dissertation suggest that regions with ostensible hostilities between rivalries might not be as dangerous as they appear to be. As long as the hostile interaction patterns between adversaries remain stable, an intervention to stop all hostilities together may not be necessary. At the most general level, the United

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believe that a combination of count-based and pattern-based approach will be the most fruitful if our goal is to capture the full spectrum of dynamics behind provocations in the context of a territorial dispute.

States should formulate its policy based on the pattern instead of the presence of provocations alone.

This dissertation's focus on the emergence and evolution of hostile interaction patterns also intersects with United States concern over the "gray zone" operations of its strategic rivals such as Russia and China (Morris et al. 2019). As the case of Dokdo/Takeshima has shown, many hostile interactions between sovereign states today do not appear in the form of military conflicts. Instead, they take place in the so-called "gray zone"—a zone between peace and war. In particular, the People's Republic of China has substantially increase its maritime gray zone operations in recent years (Erickson and Martinson 2019), including a unique patrol pattern over the disputed territorial waters near Senkaku/Diaoyu (Liff 2019) and its regular jet incursions into Taiwan's airspace.

This dissertation does not aim at providing specific policy recommendations for countering gray zone operations *per se*. However, many hostile activities in China's maritime behaviors can be assessed through the lens of ritualization. For example, consider the gray zone challenge from the China Coast Guard's behavioral patterns back in 2016 and 2017:

"Until recently, three China Coast Guard ships entered Japanese territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands three times each month, remaining in the waters for two hours on each occasion, in a manner that has become known as the 3-3-2 Method. However, this has recently shifted to the 3-4-2 Method, in which four China Coast Guard ships enter and stay in the waters for two hours" (Kotani 2017).

While one could interpret the shift in pattern as the start of a tit-for-tat escalation that might spiral out of control, a perspective of ritualization will also pay equal attention to the China's attempt in creating a new pattern. As much as China sought to exploit Japan's reluctance in responding its gray zone operations militarily or engaging the Self Defense Force, it also showed a level of constraint by stopping at creating a "new normal" that is likely to stabilize through ritualization over time. Future research can further contribute to our understanding of ritualization and gray zone operation by exploring ritualization's dynamics when parties to a dispute seek to strategically manipulate the interaction patterns to gain ground without being forcefully retaliated.

### **Normative Concerns**

In this dissertation, I focused on the pacifying role of ritualization in territorial disputes. In particular, through testing ritualization's effects at multiple levels, I showed that if territorial provocations cannot be avoided altogether, it is better to have ritualized provocations compared to non-ritualized ones, which tend to be more escalatory to the bilateral relations between states and more threatening to the individuals in the target state. In a way similar to Kant's comment in his *Idea for a Universal History* (1991), the underlying argument is that at least in some cases, there could be a type of "essentially healthy hostility" that could have a beneficial effect in providing stability and avoiding hostilities that are unanticipated and unconstrained. After highlighting the positive implications ritualization can have on a territorial



dispute, I also want to point out that depending on the situations and available alternatives, ritualization might also have negative consequences. Below, I highlight two main normative concerns my study of ritualization has raised.

The first normative concern is that despite its pacifying effects, one should be cautious not to treat ritualization as an alternative to fundamentally resolving a territorial dispute. Ritualization plays a very nuanced role. While it can have a moderating effect on territorial provocations exchanged by countries with territorial disputes, it is important to note that ritualization does not “deescalate” a dispute back to peaceful coexistence nor fundamentally change how a person think about the dispute in general. Here, the analogy of boiling water comes in handy again in illustrating the point. If one views a territorial dispute as a pot of boiling water on the stove, regularly letting the steam off can only mitigates the potentially dangerous consequence brought by the heat. While this might be ideal in most situations, letting the steam off is not capable of cooling the water, which is an outcome only achievable by turning off the heat from its source.

Another normative concern undiscussed before is the unintended effects of ritualization. While my results find ritualization to be less escalatory and threat-provoking, ritualization, as shown in the case of Takeshima Day, could also influence a civil society through normalizing or even strengthening the role of territorial nationalism. At the surface, such influence can affect people’s personal well-being, political participation, and political tolerance, as threat environments can force citizens to choose

between security and egalitarian values (Gibler 2012).<sup>44</sup> To understand the full effect of ritualization on civil societies in countries with territorial disputes, additional research on these areas is necessary. However, ritualization's effect might also go beyond influencing political behavior and attitudes. Scholars of contemporary nationalism argue that "routine evocations of the nation in settled times are essential for the continual reproduction of the national community" (Bonikowski 2016) and make theoretical distinction between "banal nationalism" and the more incendiary "hot" nationalism (Billig 1995). By bringing the typically occasional display of national territories and a country's territorial struggles with adversaries on regular display in citizen's everyday life, ritualization could potentially enhance the process of nation building in people's everyday lives and play a role in shaping citizens' identity.

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<sup>44</sup> When in a war situation or engaged in continued struggle with an outgroup—a typical scenario of a territorial disputes—groups cannot afford "individual deviations from the unity" (Simmel 1955) and tend to be intolerant within (Coser 1964). More recent research also found that territorial threats can influence individual's well-being (Miller 2013), level of trust (2011a), and political participation (2011b).

## **Additional Puzzles**

### *How Typical is the Dokdo/Takeshima Dispute?*

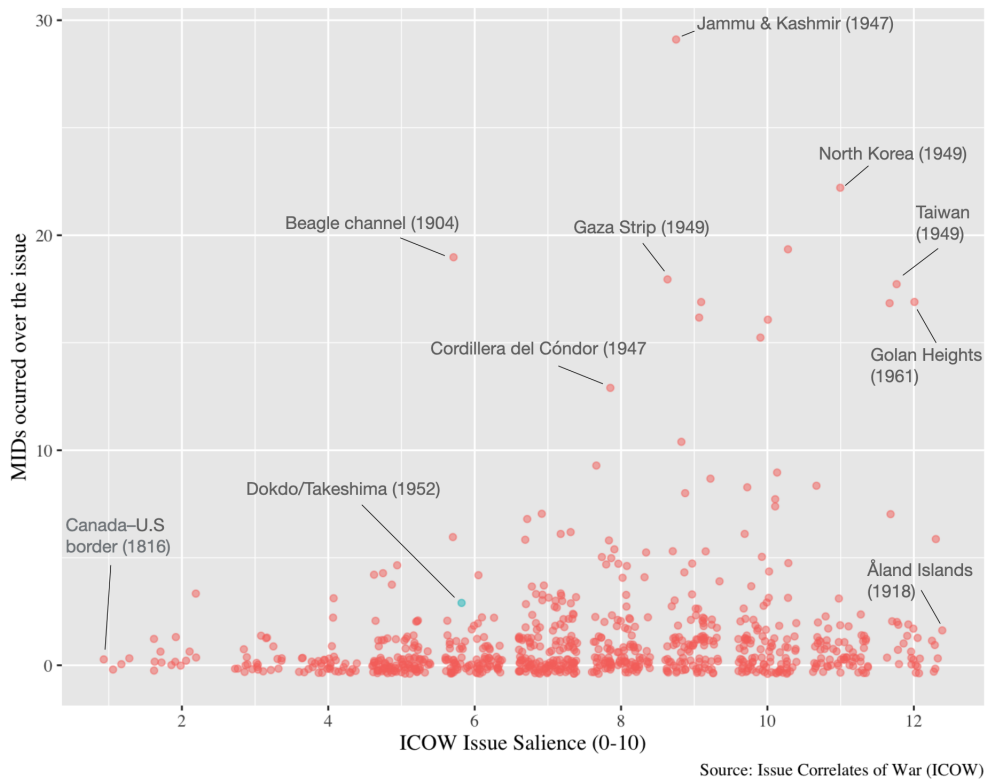
As this dissertation explored the role of ritualization in the dispute over Dokdo/Takeshima (Chapter 3) and Japan's territorial disputes with its neighbors (Chapter 4), one might ask how well the dynamics of ritualization can extend beyond these contexts? In particular, readers might be interested in knowing how typical or unique the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute is compared to other historical and contemporary territorial disputes. Some might also have the concern that if Dokdo/Takeshima is an outlier, then it would be difficult to apply the theoretical and empirical insights from this case to other territorial disputes.

The question of whether the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute is typical or not can be answered by exploring its dispute-level characteristics compared to other territorial disputes. To do this, I compared how the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute might be similar to or different from another territorial disputes from 1816 to 2001 across three separate dimensions: (1) the political salience of the issue at stake, (2) the number of Militarized International Disputes (MIDs) seen in the context of the dispute, and (3) the duration of the dispute using the territorial claims data from the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) dataset (Frederick, Hensel, and Macaulay 2017).

The distribution of territorial disputes across the first two dimensions (issue salience and MIDs occurrence) can be seen in Figure 8. At the general level, one can observe a positive correlation between issue salience and total MIDs occurrence: there

are more disputes with high MID occurrence in the region where the territorial claims are labeled as with political salience between 8 to 12 compared to the region on the left.

**Figure 8. Issue Salience and MID Occurrence of Territorial Disputes, 1816-2001**



From the perspective of issue salience and level of military action, the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute is surprisingly close to being average. With the issue salience of 6, it is neither insignificant nor highly salient. While the 3 MID that occurred in the context of Dokdo/Takeshima dispute are low compared to cases on the top-right, they did set the dispute apart from the majority of disputes with no MID occurrence at all. Among disputes with the same political salience level, only three—the Beagle Channel dispute between Chile and Argentina, the case of Northern Epirus between Greece and Albania,

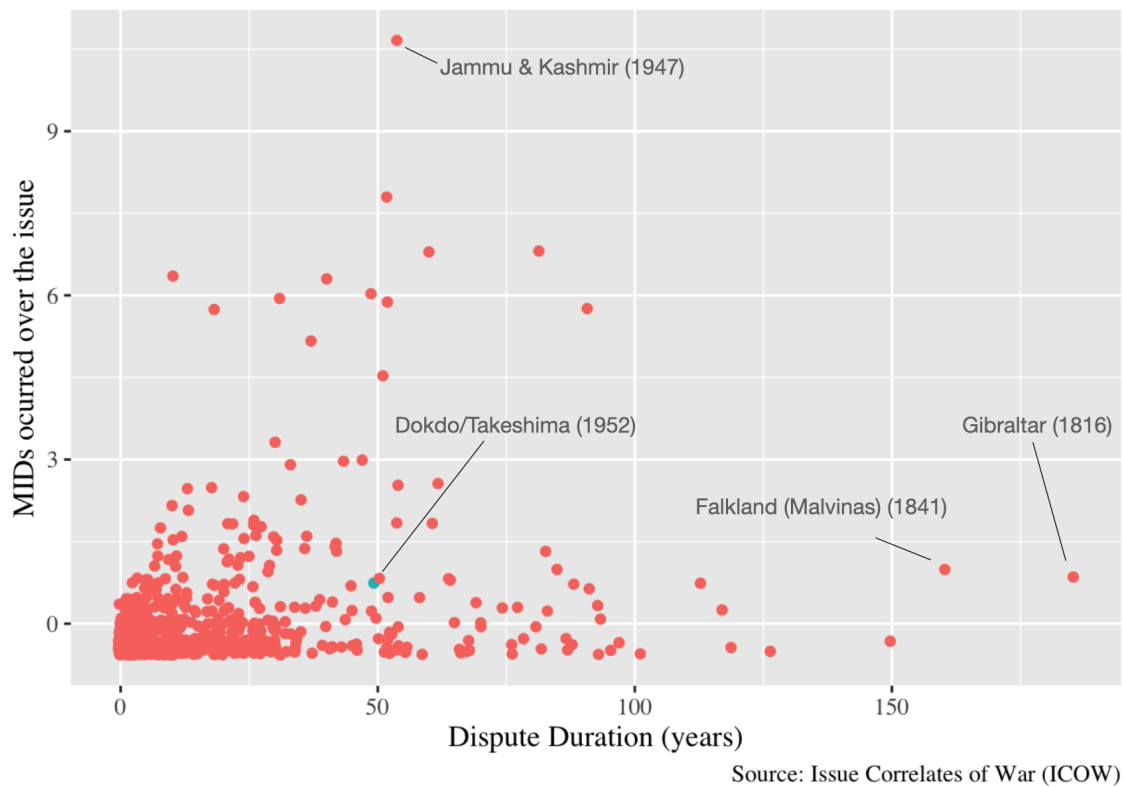
and the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute between China and Japan—have a higher level of military activities.

In Figure 9, I break down the distribution of dispute duration instead of issue salience. With a start year of 1952, the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute has a duration of 49 years in the ICOW dataset.<sup>45</sup> This duration is above the third quantile of 22.8 years, indicating that the Dokdo/Takeshima lasts longer than 75% of the disputes in the ICOW dataset. However, the distribution of duration is highly skewed to the far-right region, which includes well-known cases such as the dispute over Gibraltar between the United Kingdom and Spain or the Falkland/Malvinas dispute between the United Kingdom and Argentina, both are more than three times over Dokdo/Takeshima (185 and 160 years).

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<sup>45</sup> This is because the year 2001 is the most recent year in the ICOW dataset. At the time of this writing in 2022, the actual dispute duration of the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute is 70 years. Also note that the start year of 1952 is based on the modern origin of the dispute (see Chapter 3 for more detailed overview) and some might argue that the source of dispute can be traced back to earlier historical periods of Korea-Japan relations.

**Figure 9. Dispute Duration and MID Occurrence of Territorial Disputes, 1816-2001**



What should one make of these results? In terms of dispute-level characteristics, it can be said that Dokdo/Takeshima is not an obvious outlier. While it indeed lasts longer than most territorial disputes, its duration, moderate salience level and above-average MID occurrence are much closer to the statistical mean compared to some high-profile cases at the extreme such as Falkland and Gibraltar (in terms of duration) or Kashmir and Golan Heights (in terms of salience and military activities). If the goal is to extrapolate findings from the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute to these extreme cases, it might not be appropriate. If the goal is to generalize to cases similar to Dokdo/Takeshima, however, more meaningful comparison. While additional investigation is necessary to reveal how

far the logic of ritualization can be applied, a mix-method approach that incorporate statistical case selection based on dispute similarities and differences—as shown in Table 4—and qualitative case studies can be a promising approach.

**Table 8. Most Similar Cases to Dokdo/Takeshima Based on Dispute Characteristics**

<i>Most Similar Cases</i>				
Rank	Case	Start year	Parties	Distance
-	Dokdo/Takeshima	1952	South Korea, Japan	-
1	Rio Motagua	1899	Guatemala, Honduras	0.77
2	Misiones	1841	Argentina, Paraguay	0.78
3	Lété Island	1960	Niger, Benin	0.92
4	Oriente-Aguarico	1854	Ecuador, Peru	1.03
5	Chaco Central	1846	Bolivia, Paraguay	1.06
<i>Most Different Cases</i>				
Rank	Case	Start year	Parties	Distance
-	Dokdo/Takeshima	1952	South Korea, Japan	-
1	Southern Spratly Islands	1899	Philippines, China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam	16.15
2	Eastern Spratly Islands	1841	Philippines, China, Taiwan	10.84
3	Jammu & Kashmir	1960	Pakistan, India	9.94
4	North Korea	1854	South Korea, North Korea	7.88
5	Golan Heights	1846	Syria, Israel	6.80

Source: The Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) Project<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Distance is generated by calculating the Euclidean distance from the Dokdo/Takeshima to all other territorial disputes in the ICOW dataset after conducting principle-component analysis (PCA) on the scaled version of six dispute characteristics: overall issue salience, tangible salience, intangible salience, MID occurrence, duration,

*How Typical is the Behavior Surrounding Dokdo/Takeshima?*

In addition to how typical Dokdo/Takeshima is as a dispute, readers might also be interested in how typical were the provocations being exchanged. Are ceremonies, diplomatic protests, controversial visits and domestic activism commonplace practices in a territorial dispute, or are they something particular to certain countries and regions?

Despite the lack of comprehensive data on territorial provocations, I believe these behaviors are not uncommon across all territorial disputes. In the ideal world, one can investigate all the interactions being exchanged in the context of different territorial disputes and conduct an analysis similar to the previous section to determine the typical types of provocations. However, no provocation data at the global scale is currently available. At the point of this writing, the best existing scholarly efforts to collect territorial dispute data only focuses on the claim/dispute without information on provocations.<sup>47</sup> That said, interaction dynamics similar to the Dokdo/Takeshima—while

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and the number of parties involved.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, the ICOW project (<http://www.paulhensel.org/icowterr.html>). Even at the claim/dispute level, getting accurate information is challenging due to the cross-national and historical nature of territorial disputes. In compiling a list of cases of territorial disputes, Huth (1996, 240), for example, was unable to find evidence that a dispute actually existed or one country indeed challenged another country's territorial control in multiple cases.



probably not the most typical or representative—are more widespread than conventionally thought. In April 2017, then British Defense Secretary claimed that Britain would go “all the way” to defend Gibraltar, which triggered a response from Spanish Prime Minister that Britain has lost its composure (Williams 2017). Decades after the Falklands War, some Argentinians commemorate its anniversary by protesting in front of the British Embassies in Buenos Aires and sometimes resort to violent attacks (The Guardian 2012). Demonstration and protest over Falklands also occurred in Argentina in the wake of Princess Anne’s official visit in 2013 (Roberts 2013), and when the U.K. sponsored a group of Chilean students to visit Falklands for three weeks in 2010 (MercoPress 2010). When then U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made the first visit by a U.S. top diplomat to Golan Heights in 2020, the event was protested by a group of Palestinian demonstrators in the West Bank and condemned by the Syrian government as “provocative” (Al Jazeera 2020). At the very least, these incidents help illustrate that diplomatic rhetoric, protest, and commemoration can be found in territorial disputes outside of Asia as well.

At a more fundamental level, the issue of provocation representativeness might not be as important compared to whether a ritualized pattern is established. Since territorial disputes are different in their salience and level of hostilities (as seen previously in Figure 8), the contexts and actual practices of provocation tend to vary widely from case to case. In some cases, the majority of provocations can be ceremonies, official visits, and military exercises. In other cases, the majority can be shelling of border/islands, military attacks that aimed at taking control of the disputed territory, or airspace intrusion. As long as

ritualized patterns can be found in the provocations being exchanged, my theory expects actors to gradually develop perceptions of mutual understanding and become habituated to the shocks of these provocations. It is certainly possible that the number interaction repetitions and the size of ritualization's stabilizing effect might be different in cases where provocations are more violent or the stakes are much higher. Additional investigation on this can significantly improve our general understanding of how ritualization works.

### *Other Challenges for Future Research*

The discussion over whether differences in provocation characteristics can shift the conditions for ritualization to emerge and moderate its stabilizing effects lead to two other challenges for future research that wish to generalize the findings from this dissertation. Due to the particularities of South Korea-Japan relations and the uniqueness of Japan's role in the international society, the first challenge is how factors at the supernational level—for instance, factors such as alliance framework, international treaties, and international organization—influence ritualization's effect on the ground. While I already discussed the multiple challenges created by escalations in the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute in Chapter 3, one might argue that the fact that both South Korea and Japan are under a U.S.-led regional alliance system nevertheless imposed a “hard-limit” on the escalations and made ritualization more effective. While I do not expect ritualization's psychological mechanisms be affected by these factors, it is possible that these supernational factors can influence how frequently countries with territorial disputes initiate territorial provocations. Taking the role of alliance membership for example,

while the literature on armed conflicts found alliance can both deter and accelerate wars depending on other situational factors (Kenwick, Vasquez, and Powers 2015), recent research on lower-level hostilities found that alliance can actually increase maritime provocations (Ryou-Ellison and Gold 2020). When one expects more territorial provocations to take place between two countries, ritualization might become more likely to be developed as well.

The second challenge is how factors at the national level such as constitution, political system, and other domestic political situation within countries with territorial disputes might influence the dynamics of ritualization. Recruiting Japanese nationals in the survey experiment in Chapter 4 makes the task of comparing different territorial provocations more realistic to the participants.<sup>48</sup> However, since Japan outlawed war through the famous Article 9 in its pacifist constitution, one might suspect that Japan's domestic constraint makes the effect ritualization stronger than it can be elsewhere. To address this particular question, one way for future research to empirically test this would be to conduct the same experiment cross-nationally and compared the effects of ritualization in different countries. If this critique is correct, then one would expect ritualization's effect on the threat perception of Japanese nationals to be stronger than citizens in similar countries without a pacifist constitution. While this does not falsify my

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<sup>48</sup> Specifically, the conjoint survey experiment was more realistic for Japanese nationals because Japan indeed has multiple ongoing territorial disputes with neighboring countries that vary in their security, economic, and cultural relationship with Japan.

theory of ritualized hostility, such cross-national study would help better specify the theory's scope condition and demonstrate where ritualization is the most (and least) effective on a general level.

## Appendix A to Chapter 3

### Time series analysis

When both the independent and dependent variables vary across time, the usual approach of using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression will be problematic because as tomorrow's conflicts are likely to be corrected with conflicts today, the unexplained variations (residuals) of this variable can have serial correlations across time, violate the model's assumption, and bias the statistical result. To account for this empirical challenge, time series models take into account two types of serial dependency: Autoregressive (AR) and Moving Average (MA) processes. If the residuals of an ARMA model have a mean of zero and a fixed variance, they are essentially "white noise" without serial correlation and researcher can then conduct usual regression analysis without concerns. However, this approach is only possible when the variable of interest is a stationary time series with a long-term mean. Thus, before presenting the statistical result, I first (1) test the unit-root assumption for both dependent variables, and (2) select appropriate ARMA processes based on Akaike's Information Criteria (AIC).

For the unit-root test, I implement the Dickey-Fuller test on both verbal conflicts and material conflicts.<sup>49</sup> Through reparametrizing the time series equation, the Dickey-Fuller test evaluates the null hypothesis that the time series under analysis has a unit-root. If a unit root is present, the time series is said to be "integrated" and researchers will need to resort to other methods such as taking the first difference of the variable. In the present case, both verbal conflicts and material conflicts are stationary. The test statistics shown in

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<sup>49</sup> This is conducted using the "urca" packages under the R environment

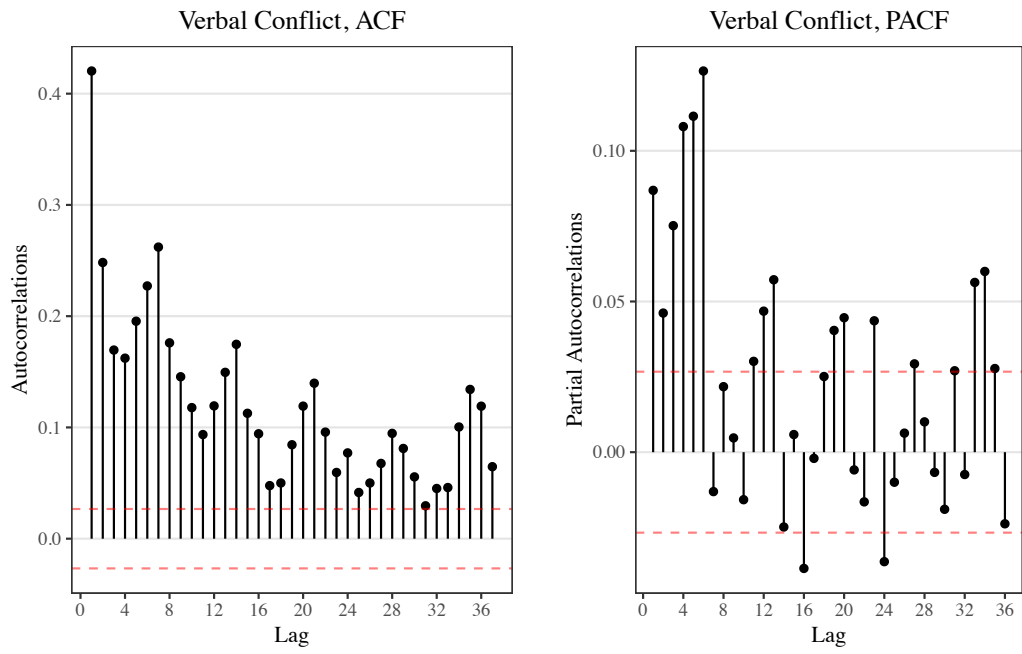
Table 2 indicates that we are confident at 99% level that both time series do not have a unit-root.

**Table 9. Augmented Dickey-Fuller Unit Root Test**

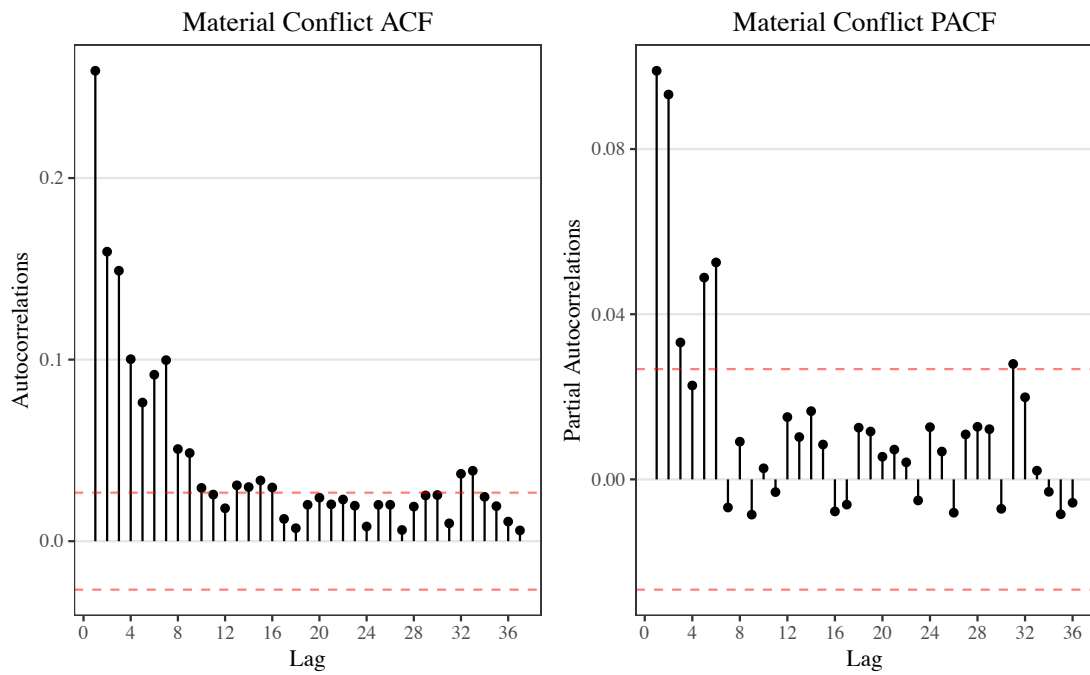
Dependent variable	Test Statistics	10pct	5pct	1pct	Integrated at 95% level
Verbal conflicts	-10.39	-3.12	-3.41	-3.96	No (stationary)
Material conflicts	-21.05	-3.12	-3.41	-3.96	No (stationary)

The next task involves specifying the correct Autoregressive and Moving Average process so that the residuals of verbal conflicts and material conflicts are “white noise” without concerns of serial correlation. To do this, I first present both the Autocorrelation Function (ACF) and Partial Autocorrelation Function (PACF) for both variables in Figure 4 and Figure 5 (see Box-Steffensmeier 2014). Both figures imply that current values of verbal and material conflict is significantly correlated at the 95% level with its multiple lagged values in the past. While it is possible to tell simple ARMA processes such as AR(1) or MA(2) from the plot, the present case requires more precise statistical estimates and I use the `auto.arima` function in R’s “forecast” library. According to the AIC criteria, the model ARMA(2,1) has the best statistical fit for verbal conflicts, whereas for material conflict the best fit model is an ARIMA(1,2).

**Figure 10. ACF and PACF for Verbal Conflict**



**Figure 11. ACF and PACF for Material Conflict**



**Table 10. ARIMA Selection Based on Akaike's Information Criteria (AIC)**

Verbal Conflicts	Material Conflicts																								
ARIMA(2,0,1) with non-zero mean	ARIMA(1,0,2) with non-zero mean																								
Coefficients:	Coefficients:																								
<table border="0"> <tr> <td>ar1</td> <td>ar2</td> <td>ma1</td> <td>mean</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1.235</td> <td>-0.262</td> <td>-0.891</td> <td>0.785</td> </tr> <tr> <td>s.e. 0.022</td> <td>0.018</td> <td>0.016</td> <td>0.119</td> </tr> </table>	ar1	ar2	ma1	mean	1.235	-0.262	-0.891	0.785	s.e. 0.022	0.018	0.016	0.119	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>ar1</td> <td>ma1</td> <td>ma2</td> <td>mean</td> </tr> <tr> <td>0.847</td> <td>-0.629</td> <td>-0.066</td> <td>0.175</td> </tr> <tr> <td>s.e. 0.027</td> <td>0.031</td> <td>0.018</td> <td>0.023</td> </tr> </table>	ar1	ma1	ma2	mean	0.847	-0.629	-0.066	0.175	s.e. 0.027	0.031	0.018	0.023
ar1	ar2	ma1	mean																						
1.235	-0.262	-0.891	0.785																						
s.e. 0.022	0.018	0.016	0.119																						
ar1	ma1	ma2	mean																						
0.847	-0.629	-0.066	0.175																						
s.e. 0.027	0.031	0.018	0.023																						
sigma^2 estimated as 4.76	sigma^2 estimated as 0.696																								
log likelihood=-11839	log likelihood=-6662																								
AIC=23688 AICc=23688 BIC=23721	AIC=13334 AICc=13335 BIC=13367																								

After modeling both time series with their best-fit ARMA processes, it is possible to check whether their residuals indeed resemble white noise. I examine this using the Box-



Pierce test, which tests the null hypothesis of whether a time series is independent. In the common practice, the failure to reject the null is used as evidence that a white noise residual might exist. As shown in Table 4, since the p-values are insignificant at 95% level, we cannot reject the null hypotheses, and both variables are likely to have white noise residuals after taking their respective ARMA processes into account.

**Table 11. Box-Pierce Test on the Independence in a Given Time Series**

Verbal Conflicts	Material Conflicts
X-squared = 0.061, df = 1, p-value = 0.8	X-squared = 6e-04, df = 1, p-value = 1

*Estimation:* after examining stationarity, specifying the best fit ARMA processes, and testing the presence of “white noise” residuals, I estimate the escalatory effect of a series of “Takeshima Day” on the future verbal and material conflicts using the following models.

## Appendix B to Chapter 4

### Yahoo! Crowdsourcing Survey

**終了** 【10問】 『21世紀の日本の課題』に関する簡単アンケート

条件付きポイント進呈 ヒント

応募条件  
**18~99歳限定**

タスクの種類  
アンケート

もらえるポイント  
**2**

タスクにかかるめやす時間  
**5分00秒**

残り件数  
**0件**  
(全500件)  
タスク実施中のユーザー：0人

100%完了

実施できる件数の上限 **1件**

制限時間 ヒント **10分00秒**

残り日数 **終了**  
(2018/03/26 23:25)

オーナー 非公開

**このタスクって、どんな内容？**

『21世紀の日本の課題』に関する簡単なアンケートです。

【条件】 18歳以上の方

【対象】 特になし

【内容】 1. 性別、年齢などの基本情報  
2. 日本と外国の関係についての質問

【注意事項】  
本アンケートは、別のWebページで開きます。  
アンケート調査が全て終了しましたら、確認のコード番号が表示されましたので、そのコード番号を最後にご記入ください。謝礼ポイントが支払われます。

[一覧に戻る](#)

This image was a snapshot of a pilot survey that only contained 10 questions on March 26, 2018, with a different research design. However, the user interface and the survey framing (“Challenges Facing Japan in the 21st Century”) was identical to the final survey conducted on July 9, 2018.

## 本調査について

この度、世論調査研究の一環として「世論と国際政局」に関して、皆様からご意見を伺いたいと思います。本調査の回答は研究目的の統計データとしてのみ使用し第三者に開示することは一切ございません。回答には10分程度要します。お忙しいところ大変恐縮ではありますが、何卒、ご協力くださいますようお願い申し上げます。

**調査の目的：**本調査においては、世論と国際政局との関係について研究することを目的とする。

**調査の流れ：**被調査者は性別、年齢などの基本情報を記入してから、ある国際政治に関する出来事について5問で答える。

**所要時間：**基本情報は約五分。国際政治に関する出来事については約5分の計10分程度。

**予想できるリスクについて：**本調査では被調査者にとって予想されるリスクがない。

**予想できる利益について：**被本調査では被調査者にとって予想される利益がない。

**調査の目的：**本調査においては、世論と国際政局との関係について理解することを目的とする。

**匿名性：**個人情報については、受け取ったデータは厳重に管理し、統計的な数字としてまとめる。個人を特定することは一切ない。

**任意参加：**本調査への参加は任意であり、調査への回答を拒否しても構わない。

**謝金：**被調査者に対し、謝金を支払う。

この調査について、ご不明な点やご意見があったら、下記の連絡先までお知らせください：

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Q1. 性別を教えてください

- 男性
- 女性
- その他

Q2. 年齢について教えてください

- 10代
- 20代
- 30代
- 40代
- 50代
- 60代以上

Q3. 住んでいる都道府県を教えてください



Q4. 最終学歴について教えてください

- 中学校卒業
- 高等学校卒業（旧制中学校、女学校、実業学校、師範学校を含む）
- 専門学校卒業
- 短期大学卒業（高専等を含む）
- 大学卒業（旧制高校、旧制高等専門学校を含む）
- 大学院修了

Q5. 収入をともなう仕事をしていますか。

- 仕事をしている
- 仕事をしていない
- わからない・答えたくない

Q6. 昨年1年間（2017年1月～12月）のあなたの家の世帯収入を選んでください

- 200万円未満
- 200万円～400万円未満
- 400万円～600万円未満
- 600万円～800万円未満
- 800万円～1000万円未満
- 1000万円以上
- わからない・答えたくない

Q7. 日本の外交問題に関心がありますか

- 関心がある
- ある程度関心がある
- どちらでもない
- あまり関心がない
- 関心がない

Q8. 下記の国についてどう思いますか。非常に嫌っているは1点、普通は3点、非常に好きは5点です。

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
アメリカ						◎					
中国						◎					
韓国						◎					
北朝鮮						◎					
台湾						◎					
スイス						◎					
ロシア						◎					

Q9. あなたの政治的立場は、保守的ですか。革新的ですか。5を中間に、左に寄るほど革新的、右に寄るほど保守的という意味です。

	革新					保守					
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
政治的立場						◎					

Q11 次に、日本が将来的に直面する可能性のある幾つかの状況を比較していただきます。二つの状況を一セットとし、ご意見を伺います。アンケートの状況は、特定の国家や昨今の国際政局に関係なく、科学的な分析を行うために作られた架空の状況です。

現実味に左右されたり、個人的に迷う部分もあると思いますが、調査の有効性を確保するため、慎重に読み進めてください。

質問は5問あります。

質問 1

日本政府はA島を日本の領土であると主張しているものの、その島は今B国により実効支配されています。日本はB国に支配されている島に関する挑発行為に遭いました。あなたは、どちらのほうの方が脅威を感じるでしょうか。

挑発 1		挑発 2	
挑発 行為	-B国の国軍が、A島で射撃訓練を行なった -B国の大統領が、A島に上陸した	挑発 行為	-B国の国軍が、A島で射撃訓練を行なった -B国の大統領が、A島に上陸した
歴史	-このような挑発は今までなかった -このような挑発はこの数年間同じ日に定期的 に何回か繰り返されている -このような挑発は、この数年間不定期に何回 か起こっている	歴史	-このような挑発は今までなかった -このような挑発はこの数年間同じ日に定期的 に何回か繰り返されている -このような挑発は、この数年間不定期に何回 か起こっている
政体	-B国は民主主義国 -B国は独裁国家	政体	-B国は民主主義国 -B国は独裁国家
貿易 関係	-B国は日本の重要な貿易相手国 -B国は日本の重要な貿易相手国ではない	貿易 関係	-B国は日本の重要な貿易相手国 -B国は日本の重要な貿易相手国ではない
文化	-B国の文化と習慣は日本に近い -B国の文化と習慣は日本と異なる	文化	-B国の文化と習慣は日本に近い -B国の文化と習慣は日本と異なる
安全 保障	-B国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がある -B国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がない	安全 保障	-B国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がある -B国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がない

[挑発 1 の方に脅威を感じる]

[挑発 2 の方に脅威を感じる]

質問 2

日本政府は A 島を日本の領土であると主張しているものの、その島は今 B 国により実効支配されています。日本は B 国に支配されている島に関する挑発行為に遭いました。あなたは、どちらのほうの方が脅威を感じるでしょうか。

挑発 1		挑発 2	
挑発 行為	-B 国の国軍が、A 島で射撃訓練を行なった -B 国の大統領が、A 島に上陸した	挑発 行為	-B 国の国軍が、A 島で射撃訓練を行なった -B 国の大統領が、A 島に上陸した
歴史	-このような挑発は今までなかった -このような挑発はこの数年間同じ日に定期的 に何回か繰り返されている -このような挑発は、この数年間不定期に何回 か起こっている	歴史	-このような挑発は今までなかった -このような挑発はこの数年間同じ日に定期的 に何回か繰り返されている -このような挑発は、この数年間不定期に何回 か起こっている
政体	-B 国は民主主義国 -B 国は独裁国家	政体	-B 国は民主主義国 -B 国は独裁国家
貿易 関係	-B 国は日本の重要な貿易相手国 -B 国は日本の重要な貿易相手国ではない	貿易 関係	-B 国は日本の重要な貿易相手国 -B 国は日本の重要な貿易相手国ではない
文化	-B 国の文化と習慣は日本に近い -B 国の文化と習慣は日本と異なる	文化	-B 国の文化と習慣は日本に近い -B 国の文化と習慣は日本と異なる
安全 保障	-B 国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がある -B 国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がない	安全 保障	-B 国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がある -B 国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がない

[挑発 1 の方に脅威を感じる]

[挑発 2 の方に脅威を感じる]



質問3

日本政府はA島を日本の領土であると主張しているものの、その島は今B国により実効支配されています。日本はB国に支配されている島に関する挑発行為に遭いました。あなたは、どちらのほうが脅威を感じるでしょうか。

挑発1		挑発2	
挑発 行為	-B国の国軍が、A島で射撃訓練を行なった -B国の大統領が、A島に上陸した	挑発 行為	-B国の国軍が、A島で射撃訓練を行なった -B国の大統領が、A島に上陸した
歴史	-このような挑発は今までなかった -このような挑発はこの数年間同じ日に定期的 に何回か繰り返されている -このような挑発は、この数年間不定期に何回 か起こっている	歴史	-このような挑発は今までなかった -このような挑発はこの数年間同じ日に定期的 に何回か繰り返されている -このような挑発は、この数年間不定期に何回 か起こっている
政体	-B国は民主主義国 -B国は独裁国家	政体	-B国は民主主義国 -B国は独裁国家
貿易 関係	-B国は日本の重要な貿易相手国 -B国は日本の重要な貿易相手国ではない	貿易 関係	-B国は日本の重要な貿易相手国 -B国は日本の重要な貿易相手国ではない
文化	-B国の文化と習慣は日本に近い -B国の文化と習慣は日本と異なる	文化	-B国の文化と習慣は日本に近い -B国の文化と習慣は日本と異なる
安全 保障	-B国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がある -B国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がない	安全 保障	-B国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がある -B国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がない

[挑発1の方に脅威を感じる]

[挑発2の方に脅威を感じる]

質問 4

日本政府は A 島を日本の領土であると主張しているものの、その島は今 B 国により実効支配されています。日本は B 国に支配されている島に関する挑発行為に遭いました。あなたは、どちらのほうが脅威を感じるでしょうか。

挑発 1		挑発 2	
挑発 行為	-B 国の国軍が、A 島で射撃訓練を行なった -B 国の大統領が、A 島に上陸した	挑発 行為	-B 国の国軍が、A 島で射撃訓練を行なった -B 国の大統領が、A 島に上陸した
歴史	-このような挑発は今までなかった -このような挑発はこの数年間同じ日に定期的 に何回か繰り返されている -このような挑発は、この数年間不定期に何回 か起こっている	歴史	-このような挑発は今までなかった -このような挑発はこの数年間同じ日に定期的 に何回か繰り返されている -このような挑発は、この数年間不定期に何回 か起こっている
政体	-B 国は民主主義国 -B 国は独裁国家	政体	-B 国は民主主義国 -B 国は独裁国家
貿易 関係	-B 国は日本の重要な貿易相手国 -B 国は日本の重要な貿易相手国ではない	貿易 関係	-B 国は日本の重要な貿易相手国 -B 国は日本の重要な貿易相手国ではない
文化	-B 国の文化と習慣は日本に近い -B 国の文化と習慣は日本と異なる	文化	-B 国の文化と習慣は日本に近い -B 国の文化と習慣は日本と異なる
安全 保障	-B 国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がある -B 国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がない	安全 保障	-B 国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がある -B 国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がない

[挑発 1 の方に脅威を感じる]

[挑発 2 の方に脅威を感じる]

質問 5

日本政府は A 島を日本の領土であると主張しているものの、その島は今 B 国により実効支配されています。日本は B 国に支配されている島に関する挑発行為に遭いました。あなたは、どちらのほうが脅威を感じるでしょうか。

挑発 1		挑発 2	
挑発 行為	-B 国の国軍が、A 島で射撃訓練を行なった -B 国の大統領が、A 島に上陸した	挑発 行為	-B 国の国軍が、A 島で射撃訓練を行なった -B 国の大統領が、A 島に上陸した
歴史	-このような挑発は今までなかった -このような挑発はこの数年間同じ日に定期的 に何回か繰り返されている -このような挑発は、この数年間不定期に何回 か起こっている	歴史	-このような挑発は今までなかった -このような挑発はこの数年間同じ日に定期的 に何回か繰り返されている -このような挑発は、この数年間不定期に何回 か起こっている
政体	-B 国は民主主義国 -B 国は独裁国家	政体	-B 国は民主主義国 -B 国は独裁国家
貿易 関係	-B 国は日本の重要な貿易相手国 -B 国は日本の重要な貿易相手国ではない	貿易 関係	-B 国は日本の重要な貿易相手国 -B 国は日本の重要な貿易相手国ではない
文化	-B 国の文化と習慣は日本に近い -B 国の文化と習慣は日本と異なる	文化	-B 国の文化と習慣は日本に近い -B 国の文化と習慣は日本と異なる
安全 保障	-B 国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がある -B 国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がない	安全 保障	-B 国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がある -B 国と日本の間に防衛上の協力関係がない

[挑発 1 の方に脅威を感じる]

[挑発 2 の方に脅威を感じる]

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