

University of Denver

Digital Commons @ DU

---

Undergraduate Theses, Capstones, and Recitals

Undergraduate Research


---

Spring 6-13-2024

## Missed Exits: Causal Mechanisms Influencing Militarized Interstate Dispute Escalation in Latin America

Colton Arciniaga  
*University of Denver*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.du.edu/undergraduate\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.du.edu/undergraduate_theses)

 Part of the [International Relations Commons](#), [Latin American Studies Commons](#), and the [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Arciniaga, Colton, "Missed Exits: Causal Mechanisms Influencing Militarized Interstate Dispute Escalation in Latin America" (2024). *Undergraduate Theses, Capstones, and Recitals*. 40.  
[https://digitalcommons.du.edu/undergraduate\\_theses/40](https://digitalcommons.du.edu/undergraduate_theses/40)



All Rights Reserved.

This Undergraduate Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Research at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Theses, Capstones, and Recitals by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact [jennifer.cox@du.edu](mailto:jennifer.cox@du.edu), [dig-commons@du.edu](mailto:dig-commons@du.edu).

---

# Missed Exits: Causal Mechanisms Influencing Militarized Interstate Dispute Escalation in Latin America

## Abstract

Research on militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) and the reasons for their escalation to interstate war is sparse at the global level and the regional level in Latin America. This thesis contributes new research on militarized interstate dispute escalation in Latin America. In this project, I ask: how do differences in conflict escalation indicators between states affect whether a Latin American country will participate in a Militarized Interstate Dispute that escalates to the use of force? To answer this question, I conduct a case study utilizing the most similar cases analysis approach to compare the cases of the 1995 MID between Ecuador and Peru as well as the 1997 MID between Nicaragua and Honduras. I also utilize process tracing to analyze the impact of the causal mechanisms of territorial contiguity, natural resource contention, development level, and issue salience on the escalation of MIDs in the former cases to one where actual force is used. From this process tracing, I find that a difference in issue salience, or the degree of importance attached to an issue by the actors involved, between the two cases contributed to a difference in MID escalation. Overall, this thesis fills a preexisting gap in the literature on militarized interstate disputes in the Latin American region while contributing new points of discussion to research on militarized interstate disputes, conflict escalation, and conflict early warning.

## Document Type

Undergraduate Honors Thesis

## Degree Name

B.A. in International Studies

## First Advisor

Sandy Johnson

## Keywords

Militarized interstate disputes (MIDs), Latin America, Militarized interstate disputes in Latin America, Conflict early warning, MID Escalation

## Subject Categories

International and Area Studies | International Relations | Latin American Studies | Peace and Conflict Studies | Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration | Social and Behavioral Sciences

## Publication Statement

Copyright is held by the author. User is responsible for all copyright compliance.

The University of Denver

**Missed Exits: Causal Mechanisms Influencing Militarized Interstate Dispute  
Escalation in Latin America**

A Thesis Submitted to  
The Faculty of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies  
In Candidacy for Departmental Distinction in  
International Studies

By  
**Colton R. Arciniaga**

Denver, Colorado

March 2024

Copyright © 2024 by Colton R. Arciniaga

All Rights Reserved

## **Abstract**

Research on militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) and the reasons for their escalation to interstate war is sparse at the global level and the regional level in Latin America. This thesis contributes new research on militarized interstate dispute escalation in Latin America. In this project, I ask: how do differences in conflict escalation indicators between states affect whether a Latin American country will participate in a Militarized Interstate Dispute that escalates to the use of force? To answer this question, I conduct a case study utilizing the most similar cases analysis approach to compare the cases of the 1995 MID between Ecuador and Peru as well as the 1997 MID between Nicaragua and Honduras. I also utilize process tracing to analyze the impact of the causal mechanisms of territorial contiguity, natural resource contention, development level, and issue salience on the escalation of MIDs in the former cases to one where actual force is used. From this process tracing, I find that a difference in issue salience, or the degree of importance attached to an issue by the actors involved, between the two cases contributed to a difference in MID escalation. Overall, this thesis fills a preexisting gap in the literature on militarized interstate disputes in the Latin American region while contributing new points of discussion to research on militarized interstate disputes, conflict escalation, and conflict early warning.

## Contents

Introduction	1
Literature Review	3
Conflict Typology	3
Militarized Interstate Disputes	4
Militarized Interstate Disputes and Conflict Escalation Indicators	5
Territorial Contiguity & Natural Resource Contention	6
Economic Development & Issue Saliency	7
Historical Context of Selected Militarized Interstate Dispute Cases	8
1995 Militarized Interstate Dispute between Ecuador and Peru	9
1997 Dispute Between Nicaragua and Honduras	11
Conflict Early Warning	13
Interstate Conflict Mitigation	16
Underdevelopment, Inequality, and Conflict	19
Methodology	20
Analysis	25
Territorial Contiguity	25
Natural Resource Contention	29
Development Level	33
Issue Saliency	39
Results	47
Territorial Contiguity	47
Natural Resource Contention	49
Development Level	51
Issue Saliency	53
Doubly Decisive Test	58
Discussion	60
Conclusion	64
Bibliography	67

## Introduction

In December 2023, Venezuela held a referendum that gave the government permission to annex the disputed Essequibo region in Guyana.<sup>1</sup> The two countries have been disputing ownership of the shared territory for decades as it is rich in Oil. Many feared that this move would provoke a conflict between the two states, as videos showed Venezuelan military personnel being mobilized to patrol the Essequibo River located in the territory.<sup>2</sup> However, unlike many other territorial disputes in Latin America, this one did not escalate to conflict despite the tensions between the two countries and mobilization of forces. Given that many territorial disputes between Latin American Countries do indeed escalate, this leaves us with the question: why do some states fight and avoid escalation into a full-scale war when others do not? This has long been a central question to the study of international conflict within the international relations field. States will disagree and engage in a sub-war militarized conflict over the issues at the heart of their disagreements, but ultimately reach a peaceful resolution. Other times, states will disagree and confront each other in a small, militarized dispute that escalates quickly into a war before reaching a resolution. In the latter case, there comes “breaking point” or a point where states engaged in a disagreement move from using a militarized dispute as a foreign policy instrument to engaging in a full-scale war with one another.

Current scholarship on war focuses largely on why and how large-scale wars occur. However, conflict at the militarized interstate dispute, or sub-war, scale is not studied as thoroughly, presenting a significant gap in the contemporary understanding of conflict. As Jones,

---

<sup>1</sup> Kejal Vyas, “Venezuela Ramps Up Threat to Annex Part of Guyana,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 5, 2023, sec. World, <https://www.wsj.com/world/americas/venezuela-ramps-up-threat-to-annex-part-of-guyana-7ad621e1>.

<sup>2</sup> Vyas.

Bremer, and Singer state: “One such under-analyzed, data-poor area is that of sub-war interstate conflicts that are serious enough to become militarized”.<sup>3</sup> Understanding how militarized interstate disputes occur and how they escalate is essential to understanding the breaking point between sub-war conflict and conventional interstate war. Furthermore, current scholarship on sub-war conflict and the causal mechanisms at the subnational level that cause escalation is lacking. This is especially true for Latin America, which has witnessed a substantial number of contemporary MIDs since the independence of many nations in the region from Spanish colonial rule, but for which few analyses of MID exist.

This thesis contributes to filling the research gap on sub-war conflict in Latin America. Within this case study, I ask: how do differences in conflict escalation indicators between states affect whether a Latin American country will participate in a Militarized Interstate Dispute where force is used? I also hypothesize that a difference in issue salience, or the degree of importance attached to an issue by actors, results in militarized interstate dispute escalation. To answer this question and test my hypothesis, I will utilize a case study to explore the historical context of between two cases of MIDs between Nicaragua and Honduras, as well as Ecuador and Peru. I will also examine the indicators that affect the escalation of this type of conflict. Finally, I take utilize process tracing to explain which of the conflict indicators is important to the escalation of the militarized interstate disputes analyzed in this case study to full interstate war. Overall, this case study contributes new scholarship to prompt new discussions about militarized

---

<sup>3</sup> Daniel M. Jones, Stuart A. Bremer, and J. David Singer, “Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816–1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15, no. 2 (September 1, 1996): 163–213, <https://doi.org/10.1177/073889429601500203>.



interstate disputes and how they can escalate into larger interstate wars. This in turn points to areas for potential de-escalation.

## Literature Review

### Conflict Typology

Before examining what militarized interstate disputes are, it is important to understand how they are situated in the broader domain of conflict typology. At the meso-scale level of analysis where the interstate system is the unit of analysis, war is characterized as interstate, intrastate, and extrastate.<sup>4</sup> An interstate war is fought between two or more states that are part of the interstate system.<sup>5</sup> States are included as members in the interstate system if they have a population of at least 500,000, are sovereign, and have recognition (from the UN or two major powers).<sup>6</sup> The next category, intrastate, refers to civil and inter-communal wars that occur between at least two groups within a state's internationally-recognized territory.<sup>7</sup> The last category, extrastate, refers to war between a state and a non-sovereign entity outside of the state's territory.<sup>8</sup> Originally, Small and Singer created the three classifications of war. However, in response to the changing nature of modern-day war, Sarkees, Wayman, and Singer built on this foundation by editing the categories and adding additional definitions.

Considering the former categories, militarized interstate disputes fall into the interstate bucket, as they occur between two or more states that are part of the interstate system. Given that we have established they occur at the interstate level, we must now shift our focus to

---

<sup>4</sup> Melvin. Small and J. David Singer, *Resort to Arms : International and Civil Wars, 1816-1980 / , Resort to Arms : International and Civil Wars, 1816-1980*, [2nd ed.]. (Beverly Hills, Calif: Sage Publications, 1982); Meredith Reid Sarkees, Frank Whelon Wayman, and J. David Singer, "Inter-State, Intra-State, and Extra-State Wars: A Comprehensive Look at Their Distribution over Time, 1816–1997," *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (March 1, 2003): 49–70, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2478.4701003>.

<sup>5</sup> Small and Singer, *Resort to Arms : International and Civil Wars, 1816-1980 /*.

<sup>6</sup> Small and Singer.

<sup>7</sup> Sarkees, Wayman, and Singer, "Inter-State, Intra-State, and Extra-State Wars."

<sup>8</sup> Sarkees, Wayman, and Singer.

understanding where MIDs find themselves in terms of conflict intensity. In the literature on conflict intensity, four types of disputes are defined. These four categories progress on a continuum of increasing intensity starting with interstate disputes and progressing to militarized interstate disputes, militarized interstate crises, and finally interstate war.<sup>9</sup> At the lowest level of intensity are interstate disputes, which are simply disputes between one state and at least one other member of the interstate system.<sup>10</sup> The next rung on the ladder is a militarized interstate dispute, where the dispute grows to include the threat, display, or use of force by at least one party in a dispute.<sup>11</sup> A militarized interstate dispute becomes a militarized interstate crisis once a state on each side of the dispute indicates through action that it is willing to go to war to obtain an objective or defend its interests.<sup>12</sup> At the top of the ladder of disputes is interstate war.<sup>13</sup> Now that we have examined the typology of war and interstate disputes, we now know that militarized fall into the category of interstate conflict and are fairly moderate in terms of conflict intensity. However, as we will address in the next section examining this type of dispute, they still have significant and dangerous consequences.

### Militarized Interstate Disputes

Militarized interstate disputes, or MIDs, are united historical cases of conflict in which the threat, display, or use of military force short of war by one state is explicitly directed towards the government, official forces or representatives, property, or territory of another state.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Russell J. Leng and J. David Singer, "Militarized Interstate Crises: The BCOW Typology and Its Applications," *International Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (1988): 155–73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2600625>.

<sup>10</sup> Russell J. Leng, "Escalation: Competing Perspectives and Empirical Evidence," *International Studies Review* 6, no. 4 (December 2004): 51–64, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1521-9488.2004.00449.x>.

<sup>11</sup> Leng and Singer, "Militarized Interstate Crises: The BCOW Typology and Its Applications."

<sup>12</sup> Leng and Singer.

<sup>13</sup> Leng, "Escalation."

<sup>14</sup> Daniel M. Jones, Stuart A. Bremer, and J. David Singer, "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816–1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15, no. 2 (September 1, 1996): 163–213, <https://doi.org/10.1177/073889429601500203>.

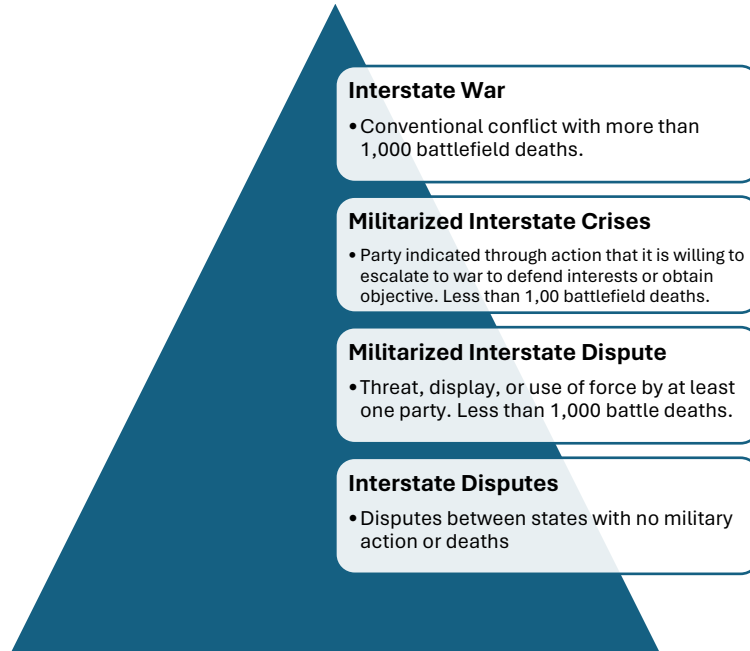


Figure 1. Interstate conflict classification and escalation. Leng, Russell J. “Escalation: Competing Perspectives and Empirical Evidence.” *International Studies Review* 6, no. 4 (December 2004): 51–64. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1521-9488.2004.00449.x>.

While militarized interstate disputes appear similar to what is seen in conventional full-scale conflict in that military force can be used, there is a critical difference in that MIDs do not exceed 1,000 battle deaths.<sup>15</sup> Once this threshold is surpassed, the conflict becomes a conventional interstate war. Although the force used in these disputes falls short of war, they can escalate quickly into a crisis or full-scale war. Thus, militarized interstate disputes present unstable and volatile situations that can quickly escalate to an intense conflict.

#### Militarized Interstate Disputes and Conflict Escalation Indicators

Current scholarship on Militarized Interstate Disputes discusses how the presence of certain indicators, prior to or during the conflict, increase the likelihood of an MID occurring or the possibility of escalation once the dispute is in progress respectively. Four indicators

<sup>15</sup> Small and Singer, *Resort to Arms : International and Civil Wars, 1816-1980* /.

consistently appear in the literature. They are territorial contiguity, natural resource contention, economic underdevelopment, and issue salience.

### *Territorial Contiguity & Natural Resource Contention*

The first indicator that the literature describes is land or sea contiguity between countries. Contiguity is defined as having a direct land border between states or having a sea separation that is 150 miles or less.<sup>16</sup> Bremer finds that the presence of land or sea contiguity in a dyad (group of two states) significantly increased the likelihood of conflict occurring and that land contiguity slightly increases the possibility of conflict when compared to sea contiguity.<sup>17</sup> Once a militarized interstate dispute is underway, contiguity significantly increases the probability that the conflict will escalate when compared to conflicts that do not have contiguity.<sup>18</sup> When states have territorial contiguity, it is possible that there is a territorial element to the conflict, meaning that the states may be contesting natural resources or rights to a land claim. Furthermore, geographical proximity through contiguity allows for more intense conflict since resources are more readily available and deliverable to the conflict area by the states involved. Closely related to territorial contiguity, another indicator of MID escalation is contention over natural resources. Mitchell and Prins found that fishing stocks, maritime boundaries, and natural resources are significant indicators of militarized disputes occurring between democracies.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, large amounts of oil production, reserves, or net oil exports are significant in determining MID participation. Latin America has a myriad of resource rich areas, such as oil fields (etc), making

---

<sup>16</sup> Stuart A. Bremer, "Dangerous Dyads: Conditions Affecting the Likelihood of Interstate War, 1816-1965," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36, no. 2 (1992): 309–41.

<sup>17</sup> Bremer.

<sup>18</sup> Paul D. Senese, "Geographical Proximity and Issue Salience: Their Effects on the Escalation of Militarized Interstate Conflict," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15, no. 2 (September 1, 1996): 133–61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/073889429601500202>.

<sup>19</sup> Sara MacLaughlin Mitchell and Brandon C. Prins, "Beyond Territorial Contiguity: Issues at Stake in Democratic Militarized Interstate Disputes," *International Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (March 1999): 169–83, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0020-8833.00115>.

the region particularly vulnerable to territorial conflict that includes resource disputes. States in the region depend heavily on these resources for economic development and state survival, making resource contention an important driver of militarized interstate conflict.

### *Economic Development & Issue Salience*

The economic development level of a state is another important indicator to the likelihood of a militarized interstate disputes. Lesser developed states have participated in MIDs involving a territorial element at a greater rate than advanced states.<sup>20</sup> This is a result of more developed states obtaining fewer benefits from territorial acquisition, whereas less developed states may see it as beneficial as they are lacking resources needed for increased economic growth and/or human security.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, as Latin American states continue to develop, they are increasingly competing in new rivalries for increasing integration into the world market and procurement of raw materials.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, there is an interaction between physical economic development which entails resource extraction and conversion, and economic decision-making within states that contribute to propensity for conflict. Within my selected cases, this is an important factor to consider, especially since there are different resource types that are present. In both cases, there is an important distinction between raw and value added. Raw materials in this case study constitute resources that have value because of their inherent nature. Prominent examples from my cases would be oil, gold, and marine products. Additionally, value-added resources include those that gain value from improvement or services connected to them.

---

<sup>20</sup> Charles R. Boehmer and David Sobek, "Violent Adolescence: State Development and the Propensity for Militarized Interstate Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 42, no. 1 (January 1, 2005): 5–26, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343305049664>.

<sup>21</sup> Boehmer and Sobek.

<sup>22</sup> Wolf Grabendorff, "Interstate Conflict Behavior and Regional Potential for Conflict in Latin America," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 24, no. 3 (1982): 267–94, <https://doi.org/10.2307/165498>.

Finally, one of the less frequently discussed factors related to the likelihood of an MID occurring and escalating once in progress is issue salience, especially when discussing issues related to territorial claims. Issue salience is the degree of importance attached to an issue, whether tangible or intangible, by the actors involved.<sup>23</sup> What this means is that the more an issue resonates with stakeholders who have the power to influence actions, the more likely it is that an MID will occur. Diehl provides a theoretical justification for including issue salience in understanding how national behavior is related to conflict, and finds that studies that have included issue salience when analyzing conflict escalation have shown promising results in explaining the use of military force.<sup>24</sup> In the Latin American context, conflicts that include an issue of territory have high issue salience and is an important factor that increases the intensity of conflict.<sup>25</sup> Many Latin American MIDs include a territorial element, where therefore may increase the risk of conflict through interaction of both issue salience and the aforementioned natural resource and economic development concerns.

#### Historical Context of Selected Militarized Interstate Dispute Cases

While Latin America as a region has experienced sustained periods of instability and conflict, militarized interstate disputes in the latter parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century have been rare. However, when looking at recent MIDs in the region, two dyads of countries stand out when analyzing the indicators that increase the likelihood of militarized interstate dispute escalation. Ecuador and Peru are the first dyad to be analyzed since they engaged in a series of MIDs with force in the 1990s over their contested borders in the Cordillera Del Condor

---

<sup>23</sup> Paul F. Diehl, "What Are They Fighting For? The Importance of Issues in International Conflict Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 29, no. 3 (August 1, 1992): 333–44, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343392029003008>.

<sup>24</sup> Diehl.

<sup>25</sup> Senese, "Geographical Proximity and Issue Salience: Their Effects on the Escalation of Militarized Interstate Conflict."

region. Additionally, Nicaragua and Honduras are analyzed next since they participated in an MID in 1997 over their shared Gulf of Fonseca where military force was not utilized.

### *1995 Militarized Interstate Dispute between Ecuador and Peru*

In the case of Ecuador and Peru, a significant interstate war broke out between the two countries in the opening months of 1995 along their border in the remote Cordillera Del Condor region. The two countries have had a protracted history of conflict since they both gained their independence in the early nineteenth century, with their borders being disputed and occasionally fought over.<sup>26</sup> At the heart of the dispute is the competition between both countries for additional access to the resource-rich Amazon. Specifically, both countries were attempting to protect their access to the Amazon River. This competition has produced a total of 32 militarized disputes between the countries in the twentieth century alone.<sup>27</sup> Table 2 describes some of the notable disputes between the two countries.

The first major border conflict between both countries took place in 1941 when Peru saw an opportunity to take a military advantage and end their history of defeats in previous border conflicts since their independence.<sup>28</sup> Peru invaded Ecuador and penetrated deep into the country, threatening to occupy all the territory it held unless Ecuador agreed to accept all Peruvian claims to the Amazon. This factor along with strong inter-American solidarity for Peru caused the Ecuadorian government to agree to the Rio Protocol in January 1942, which denied them sovereign access to the Amazon River.<sup>29</sup> The Peruvian government believed that this protocol had resolved the conflict, however Ecuador remained resentful.

---

<sup>26</sup> Michael P. Colaresi, Karen A. Rasler, and William R. Thompson, *Strategic Rivalries in World Politics : Position, Space and Conflict Escalation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> David R. Mares, *Violent Peace : Militarized Interstate Bargaining in Latin America* / (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> Mares.

<sup>29</sup> Mares.

**Table 1. Summary of MIDs in Latin America, 1960 - 2000**

Year	Countries	Issue
1962	Venezuela & Guyana	Essequibo Region & use of force
1978	Argentina & Chile	Maritime borders & territorial claims
1987	Colombia & Venezuela	Gulf of Guajira borders
1993	Guatemala & Belize	Border incursion
1994	Nicaragua & Colombia	Territorial claims
1994	Colombia & Venezuela	Border incursion
1995	Colombia & Venezuela	Border incursion
1999	Nicaragua & Honduras	Troop mobilization & border incursion
2000	Guatemala & Belize	Border incursion & territorial dispute
2000	Venezuela & Colombia	Border incursion & use of force

Sources: Franchi, Tássio, Eduardo Xavier Ferreira Glaser Migon, and Roberto Xavier Jiménez Villarreal. 2017. "Taxonomy of Interstate Conflicts: Is South America a Peaceful Region?" *Brazilian Political Science Review* 11 (August): e0008. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1981-3821201700020008>; Reid, Meredith, and Frank Wayman. *Resort to War: 1816 - 2007*. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010.

Two more crises over the border occurred in 1981 and 1991 but did not escalate to a militarized dispute because of external mediation.<sup>30</sup> Finally in early 1995, both countries engaged in one of their most serious conflicts since 1941, which witnessed the deployment of modern military technology and the deaths of around 1,000 people.<sup>31</sup> While this 34-day conflict was considered a conventional interstate conflict, an MID between Ecuadorean and Peruvian forces over two days in January of that year opened the conflict.<sup>32</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, the

<sup>30</sup> Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson, *Strategic Rivalries in World Politics : Position, Space and Conflict Escalation*.

<sup>31</sup> Mares, *Violent Peace : Militarized Interstate Bargaining in Latin America /*.

<sup>32</sup> Mares; Glenn Palmer et al., "The MID5 Dataset, 2011–2014: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*. 39, no. 4 (July 2022).



initial two-day long conflict will be the MID escalation case, as it meets the criteria for a militarized interstate dispute and was one in which force was used. Because this MID was a clear pre-cursor to escalation, it is a logical case for this analysis.

**Table 2. Summary of Militarized Interstate Disputes between Ecuador and Peru.**

Year	Specific MID Action
1981	Combat
January 1995	Mobilization & combat by both countries
September 1995	Border incursion and combat by both countries.
December 1995	Border incursion by Ecuador
1997	Troop confrontation & border incursion by countries
1998	Troop mobilization

Source: Reid, Meredith, and Frank Wayman. *Resort to War: 1816 - 2007*. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010.

#### *1997 Dispute Between Nicaragua and Honduras*

Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras have been engaged in a long-standing dispute over the Gulf of Fonseca, a gulf in the Pacific Ocean that traverses the borders of the three countries. The dispute witnessed the intervention of the International Court of Justice, which established the “Condominium” concept of control in the gulf. Under this concept, all three countries would share the maritime spaces within the gulf with specifically defined limits on how far their territorial waters expanded into the gulf.<sup>33</sup> However, the conflict in the gulf between Nicaragua and Honduras is particularly notable, as the dispute became militarized several times during the disagreement without severe escalation.

---

<sup>33</sup> Chamber of the International Court of Justice, Case Concerning Land, Island and Maritime Frontier Dispute (El Salvador/Honduras: Nicaragua Intervening), No. General List No. 75 (International Court of Justice September 11, 1992).

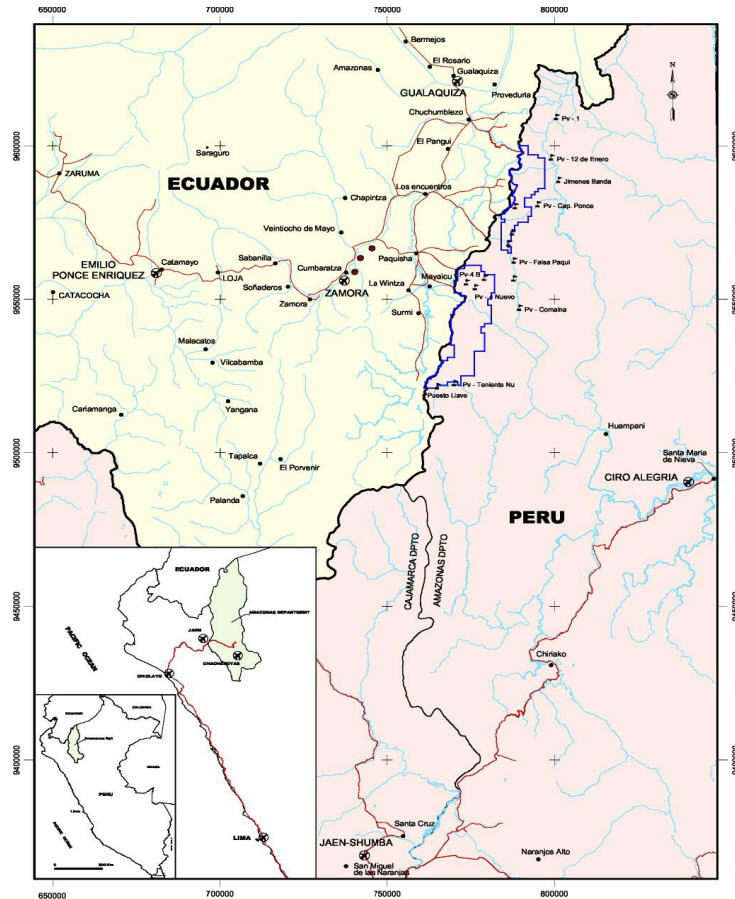


Figure 2. Map of the Cordillera del Condor region. Belik, G.D. “Location Map.” United States Securities and Exchange Commission, January 28, 2008. <https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1126932/000127351108000030/exhibit994.htm>.

For instance, in January 1997, Honduras arrested fourteen Nicaraguan fishermen after claiming that Nicaraguan boats fired upon Honduran Fishermen.<sup>34</sup> This initial incident led both Honduras and Nicaragua to detain boats and arrest fishermen who were nationals of the opposing country over the course of a few months.<sup>35</sup> With each arrest by opposing naval forces, Nicaragua or Honduras would claim that their nationals were detained within their territorial waters and the respective countries would release the fishermen shortly thereafter.<sup>36</sup> Overall, the case of

<sup>34</sup> Faten Ghosn, Glenn Palmer, and Stuart A. Bremer, “The MID3 Data Set, 1993—2001: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 21, no. 2 (April 1, 2004): 133–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07388940490463861>.

<sup>35</sup> Ghosn, Palmer, and Bremer.

<sup>36</sup> Ghosn, Palmer, and Bremer.

Honduras and Nicaragua in the Gulf of Fonseca will be used as the non-escalation MID case, as it meets the criteria of an MID but falls short of a conflict where conventional military force was used.

### Conflict Early Warning

When discussing the previously identified indicators and their impact on militarized interstate dispute escalation, it is essential to understand how the analysis of their impact is conceptualized. The assessment of contemporary conflict early warning systems provides a foundational framework for measuring the impact of indicators on conflict development and escalation. At its core, a conflict early warning system is a risk analysis tool that provides a forecast of political violence to increase public awareness and prevent or mitigate conflict.<sup>37</sup> These systems seek to identify the causes of conflict, anticipate their occurrence, and mitigate their impact.<sup>38</sup> While multiple types of systems and approaches to prediction of conflict exist, Wulf and Debiel classify early warning systems into either qualitative or quantitative models and five functional categories: conditional and causal factor models, predictive models, risk and capacity assessments, and crisis watch lists based on research or intelligence.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Espen Geelmuyden Rød, Tim Gåsste, and Håvard Hegre, “A Review and Comparison of Conflict Early Warning Systems,” *International Journal of Forecasting*, January 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijforecast.2023.01.001>.

<sup>38</sup> United Nations Development Programme and Organization of American States, “Practical Guide: Early Warning and Response Systems Design for Social Conflicts” (Panama: United Nations Development Programme, 2016), [https://www.oas.org/es/sap/pubs/GuiaAlerta\\_e.pdf](https://www.oas.org/es/sap/pubs/GuiaAlerta_e.pdf).

<sup>39</sup> Herbert Wulf and Tobias Debiel, “Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanisms: Tools for Enhancing the Effectiveness of Regional Organisations? A Comparative Study of the AU, ECOWAS, IGAD, ASEAN/ARF and PIF,” May 2009.

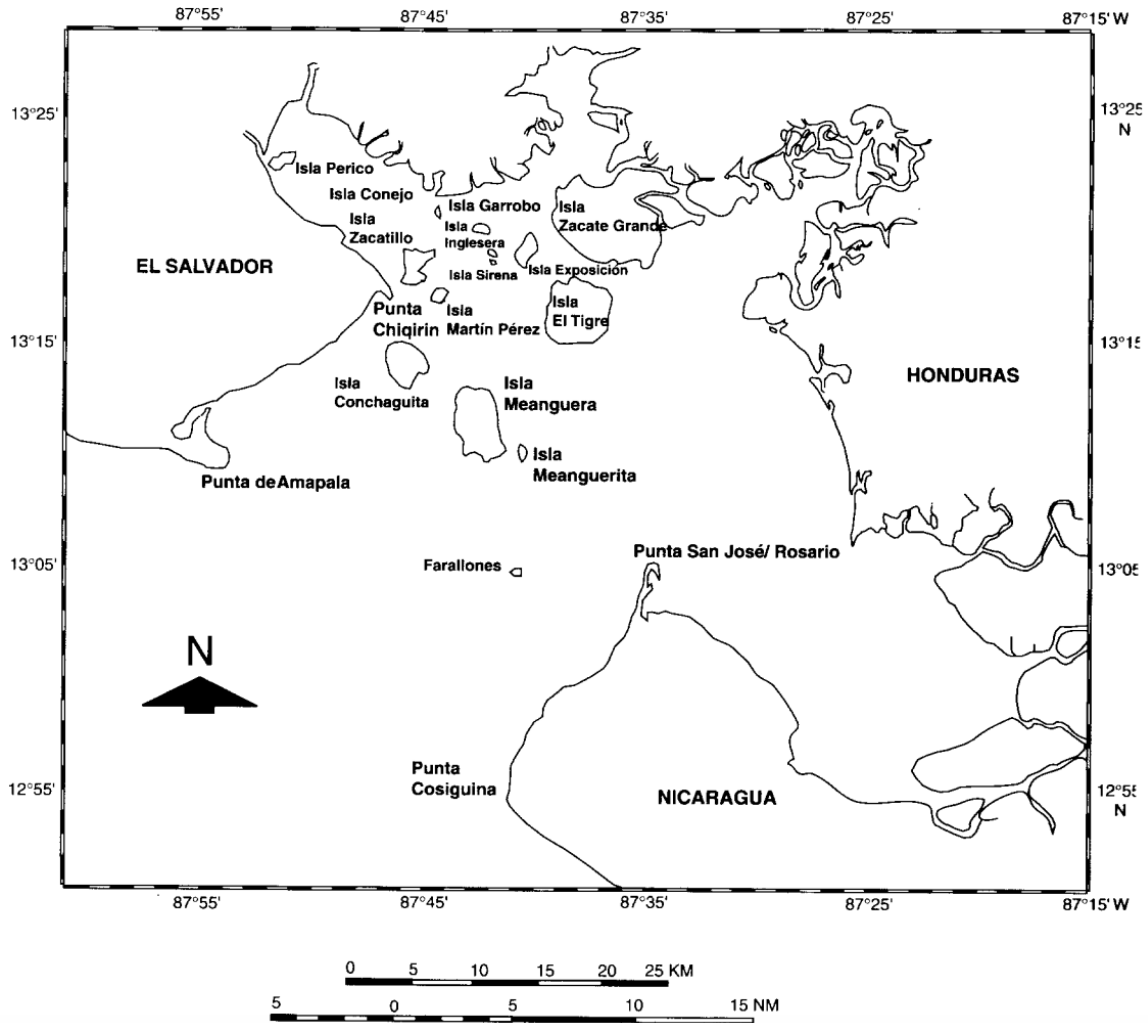


Figure 3. Map of the Gulf of Fonseca. “Sketch Map No. G-1: Gulf of Fonseca.” September 11, 1992. <https://www.icj-cij.org/public/files/case-related/75/075-19920911-JUD-01-00-EN.pdf>.

At the most fundamental level, these models utilize quantitative or qualitative methods to estimate the likelihood of conflict occurring based on broad indicators, such as educational attainment. However, these methods often fail to include an analysis of how interconnected processes and relationships drive these indicators. Additionally, the early warning systems that exist are limited by problems with the accuracy and completeness of their models and data.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Jack A Goldstone, *Using Quantitative and Qualitative Models to Forecast Instability* (District of Columbia: United States Institute of Peace, March 2008, 2008).

To resolve these issues, Wulf and Debiel argue that the accuracy of early warning models can be further improved by combining quantitative and qualitative analysis with structural analogies identified in case studies.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, identifying and including structural drivers would further improve the accurate prediction of conflict outbreak. Thus, it is necessary to analyze the interconnected processes and relationships that serve as the drivers of these indicators to adequately assess their impact on conflict escalation.

Furthermore, while the contemporary notion of conflict early warning systems associates them primarily with larger conflicts that exceed the casualty threshold of militarized interstate disputes, they are actually broadly applicable to various types of threats to human security. For instance, efficient early warning systems can address various types of armed conflict, state failure, genocide and politicide, human rights violations, and humanitarian emergencies caused by natural disasters.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, early warning systems are broadly applicable to all types of conflict, including militarized interstate disputes, and useful in predicting the outbreak of violent events.

The issue that arises with the effectiveness of conflict early warning systems is that the warnings generated by these systems oftentimes do not lead to preventative action. This is a result of institutional factors, such as political concerns and response planning, and cognitive bias affecting timely and effective action.<sup>43</sup> However, notwithstanding the reluctance among policymakers and institutions to integrate and act upon findings from early warning systems, examples of success do exist. For instance, the ECOWAS Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) is assessed as being one of the most promising systems, as it combines risk

---

<sup>41</sup> Wulf and Debiel, "Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanisms: Tools for Enhancing the Effectiveness of Regional Organisations? A Comparative Study of the AU, ECOWAS, IGAD, ASEAN/ARF and PIF."

<sup>42</sup> Wulf and Debiel.

<sup>43</sup> Wulf and Debiel.

assessments with data collection by civil society and government agencies.<sup>44</sup> Thus, this warning system demonstrates an innovative approach that could be included within other warning systems.

Overall, early warning is an important factor to consider when assessing conflict escalation. An analysis of contemporary warning systems provides a framework for effective analysis of conflict commencement and escalation. Additionally, early warning systems demonstrate that an analysis of variables at the subnational level is an effective tool for determining when a conflict may occur or escalate to the point of military action.

#### Interstate Conflict Mitigation

An important component of analyzing conflict escalation is understanding what “off ramp” strategies states may be able to employ to avoid full-scale war when a conflict appears imminent or is already underway. Scholarship on mitigation strategies tends to be dominated by the classical realist perspective. Specifically, the predominant view is that security interests motivate state behavior towards achieving more power through greater war-fighting capabilities and the behavior of decisionmakers engaged in MIDs is generally rational since they respond to cost-benefit analysis.<sup>45</sup> However, this model often overlooks the cost of human life or reduces loss of life to a number.<sup>46</sup> Data suggests that there are impacts beyond just the numerical datapoint of loss of life, including social, health, and economic impacts.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, under

---

<sup>44</sup> Wulf and Debiel.

<sup>45</sup> Leng, “Escalation”; Charles S. Gochman and Russell J. Leng, “Realpolitik and the Road to War: An Analysis of Attributes and Behavior,” *International Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1983): 97–120, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2600621>.

<sup>46</sup> Antonio Ugalde et al., “The Health Costs of War: Can They Be Measured? Lessons from El Salvador,” *BMJ: British Medical Journal* 321, no. 7254 (July 15, 2000): 169, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.321.7254.169>.

<sup>47</sup> Barry S Levy and Victor W Sidel, *Preventing War and Its Health Consequences: Roles of Public Health Professionals* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1997); Sandy A. Johnson, “The Cost of War on Public Health: An Exploratory Method for Understanding the Impact of Conflict on Public Health in Sri Lanka,” *PLOS ONE* 12, no. 1 (January 12, 2017): e0166674, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0166674>.

this realist perspective of state behavior and incentivization, conflict mediation between states can be classified into mitigation actions taken by disputing states and actions taken by third party states. Thus, the literature demonstrates that the study of conflict mitigation incorporates dimensions both at the subnational and state levels of analysis.

When analyzing conflict mitigation actions taken by disputing states, one of the widely discussed strategies in the literature is that of interstate bargaining. Interstate bargaining is a process of influence attempt-response sequences in which a state will first attempt to influence the behavior of another state through a negative or positive inducement, the other state will respond, and the original state will observe the response and adjust the inducements to accompany the next demand.<sup>48</sup> Under this system of bargaining, a strategy of “reciprocation” is the most impactful in providing a way for states to de-escalate tensions. Reciprocation involves “tit-for-tat”, or in-kind, responses to the actions of the other side along with unilateral cooperation initiatives that are terminated immediately if the other side does not respond with cooperation.<sup>49</sup> This strategy was associated with diplomatic victory and peaceful compromises in 64 percent of the cases where it was utilized and only associated with 28 percent of outcomes where war occurred.<sup>50</sup> Reciprocation is effective since it allows the state to demonstrate an initial resolve through a “carrot-and-stick” (combination of negative and positive inducements) approach while maintaining an door open to cooperation.<sup>51</sup> In other words, this strategy allows a state to save face through demonstrating its willingness to engage in a militarized conflict if the other state does not also respond in kind with cooperation. However, if the offering of

---

<sup>48</sup> Russell J. Leng, “Reciprocating Influence Strategies in Interstate Crisis Bargaining,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37, no. 1 (1993): 3–41.

<sup>49</sup> Leng.

<sup>50</sup> Leng; Leng, “Escalation.”

<sup>51</sup> Leng, “Escalation.”

cooperation by the sending state is reciprocated then a conflict spiral is avoided, and cooperation can ensue.

Equally important, intervention by third-party states is an important factor in diffusing conflicts. When states that are not involved in a conflict intervene in the manner of a mediator, substantial results in resolving a conflict or shortening its length can be achieved. For instance, Beardsley finds that the chance of a conflict ending with a diplomatic agreement is five times higher when it is mediated.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, mediation allows for conflicting states to avoid miscalculation and bargaining failures by reducing asymmetric information, or fog-of-war limitations on knowledge of the opposing state's capabilities.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, mediation by third-party states is an effective conflict mitigation tool as it allows for states to voluntarily accept resolution terms facilitated by a neutral party while also establishing clear lines of communication between all parties involved.

Within Latin America specifically, the creation of inter-American organizations, such as the Organization of American States and intervention by third party countries in played a large role in the management of conflicts latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>54</sup> These regional institutions and other countries have supported peace through negotiation, mediation, verification missions, and technical support, demonstrating that there is a predominant image of lawful and peaceful conflict resolution within the region.<sup>55</sup> Overall, the actions taken by disputing states and third-

---

<sup>52</sup> Kyle C. Beardsley et al., "Mediation Style and Crisis Outcomes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 1 (2006): 58–86.

<sup>53</sup> Robert W. Rauchhaus, "Asymmetric Information, Mediation, and Conflict Management," *World Politics* 58, no. 2 (2006 2005): 207–41.

<sup>54</sup> Jorge I. Domínguez and David R. Mares, *Boundary Disputes in Latin America*, Peaceworks ; No. 50 (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2003).

<sup>55</sup> Monica Herz, Maira Siman, and Ana Clara Telles, "Regional Organizations, Conflict Resolution and Mediation in South America," in *Power Dynamics and Regional Security in Latin America*, ed. Marcial A.G. Suarez, Rafael Duarte Villa, and Brigitte Weiffen (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017), 123–48, [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-57382-7\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-57382-7_6).



party states contribute to conflict mitigation at a broad scale, as well as within Latin America as a region.

### Underdevelopment, Inequality, and Conflict

Current scholarship on underdevelopment and its linkages to conflict focuses predominantly on intrastate conflict initiation and escalation. Broadly, economic underdevelopment and horizontal inequality at the intrastate level contributes to a higher risk of conflict and political violence.<sup>56</sup> When there is economic inequality and underdevelopment, individuals perceive a larger gap between the top and bottom income groups within society, the opportunity costs become low enough for individuals to participate in conflict, and state institutions are unable to adequately respond to the demands of conflicting groups, all of which contribute to conflict.<sup>57</sup> Further, low levels of economic development contribute to the conflict spiral and may be viewed as a violation of the social contract between the state and its citizens which may, in turn, lead to or exacerbate civil conflict.

While there is ample scholarship on the linkages between economic inequality and underdevelopment and conflict at the national level, there is a lack of relevant scholarship that examines the linkages at the interstate level. However, the scholarship that does exist argues that economic underdevelopment at the subnational level contributes to increased risk of interstate conflict. For instance, Long and Pickering find that higher levels of domestic inequality are associated with an increased probability of MID occurrence.<sup>58</sup> They argue that state decisionmakers can view MID initiation as tool for deflecting popular attention away from the

---

<sup>56</sup> Frances Stewart, "Crisis Prevention: Tackling Horizontal Inequalities," *Oxford Development Studies* 28, no. 3 (October 1, 2000): 245–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/713688319>; Debraj Ray and Joan Esteban, "Conflict and Development," *Annual Review of Economics* 9, no. 1 (August 2, 2017): 263–93, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-061109-080205>.

<sup>57</sup> Stewart, "Crisis Prevention: Tackling Horizontal Inequalities"; Ray and Esteban, "Conflict and Development."

<sup>58</sup> Stephen B Long and Jeffrey Pickering, "Disparity and Diversion: Domestic Economic Inequality and MID Initiation," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 18, no. 1 (November 9, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orab032>.

poor economic situation.<sup>59</sup> Thus, domestic economic underdevelopment and inequality could have important linkages when looking at interstate conflict and intrastate conflict initiation.

For instance, Caprioli finds that gender equality is a predictor of a state's level of interstate militarism.<sup>60</sup> Specifically, they find that higher levels of gender inequality correlate with higher levels of military action because domestic inequality represents intolerance and hierarchical organization.<sup>61</sup> Ethnic discrimination at the domestic level also increases a state's likelihood of participating in an interstate conflict. Specifically, states with the highest levels of discrimination against ethnic minorities are approximately six times more likely to utilize force in an interstate conflict.<sup>62</sup> In both cases, domestic inequality translates into a state world view that places some states above others and increases hostility as states project hierarchical organization into the international arena.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, domestic economic underdevelopment, combined with economic, gender, and racial inequality contribute to interstate conflict participation and escalation.

## Methodology

Now that we have established a theoretical basis for what MIDs are, how they fit into the larger field of conflict typology, and what factors influence their escalation, I will now explain how I will test my hypothesis. Within this thesis, I hypothesize that a difference in issue salience

---

<sup>59</sup> Stephen B Long and Jeffrey Pickering, "Disparity and Diversion: Domestic Economic Inequality and MID Initiation," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 18, no. 1 (November 9, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orab032>.

<sup>60</sup> Mary Caprioli, "Gendered Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 51–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343300037001003>.

<sup>61</sup> Mary Caprioli, "Gendered Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 51–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343300037001003>.

<sup>62</sup> Mary Caprioli and Peter Trumbore, "Ethnic Discrimination and Interstate Violence: Testing the International Impact of Domestic Behavior," *Journal of Peace Research* 40, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 5–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343303040001842>.

<sup>63</sup> Caprioli, "Gendered Conflict," January 1, 2000; Caprioli and Trumbore, "Ethnic Discrimination and Interstate Violence: Testing the International Impact of Domestic Behavior."

between the two cases contributed to a difference in escalation. My null hypotheses are that territorial contiguity, natural resource contention, and development level respectively contributed to a difference in MID escalation between the two cases. Given that I have selected two pairs of countries which experienced MIDs, I will be using a case study. Within the case study itself, I will be using a most similar case analysis since the difference in the dependent variable is escalation to a Militarized Interstate Dispute involving the actual use of force. The engagement case will be the series of MIDs between Ecuador and Peru that led to the full-scale conflict in 1995, The non-engagement case will be the 1997 MID between Nicaragua and Honduras. These countries were chosen since both of their MIDs had a territorial element and that both sets have a history of territorial disputes. As a result, both sets of countries meet the requirements for the most similar cases analysis, since the literature dictates the use of a most similar case analysis where the cases are as similar as possible with the exception of one independent variable and the dependent variable.<sup>64</sup> Within the case study, the independent variables will be the conflict warning indicators from the literature discussed above: territorial contiguity, natural resource contention, lower levels of development between states, and issue salience.

I operationalize the variables in the following manner. First, territorial contiguity is operationalized to describe whether the states are contiguous or not contiguous. Operationalizing territorial contiguity in this manner is most productive, as it is not possible to measure the extent of contiguity, nor is the area of contiguity significant. Furthermore, natural resource contention will also be operationalized to describe whether the case features natural resource contention or not. Additionally, development will be quantified as the Human Development Index, or HDI, score for the year in which the conflicts occurred. I chose the Human Development Index

---

<sup>64</sup> Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, "Case Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield," *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 2 (2007): 170–95.

**Table 3. Hypothesis Summary**

<b>Summary of Hypothesis</b>
H <sub>0</sub> :1 – A difference in causal mechanisms within the territorial contiguity variable contributed to a difference in MID escalation between the two cases.
H <sub>0</sub> :2 – A difference in causal mechanisms within the natural resource contention variable contributed to a difference in MID escalation between the two cases.
H <sub>0</sub> :3 – A difference in causal mechanisms within the development level variable contributed to a difference in MID escalation between the two cases.
<b>H<sub>1</sub> – A difference in causal mechanisms within the issue salience variable contributed to a difference in MID escalation between the two cases.</b>

**Table 4. Most Similar Cases Approach Variable Presence.**

<b>Most Similar Cases Variable Matrix</b>					
	<b>Dependent Variable: MID Escalation</b>	<b>Independent Variable: Territorial Contiguity</b>	<b>Independent Variable: Natural Resource Contention</b>	<b>Independent Variable: Development Level</b>	<b>Independent Variable: Issue Salience</b>
<b>Ecuador &amp; Peru</b>	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
<b>Nicaragua &amp; Honduras</b>	Not Present	Present	Present	Present	Not fully present

specifically because it includes multiple dimensions of social development outside of just economic development. While the Human Development Index has been criticized for imperfectly measuring areas of development and other indices have been proposed, the HDI is the only multifaceted development index that has data available for the Latin American countries examined during the time periods in this case study. Additionally, the HDI is not as flawed as some critics would argue since its calculation was updated in 2010 and the rankings of countries

would not change substantially under new weighting methods.<sup>65</sup> Finally, the issue salience variable will be operationalized in a manner that examines four categories: leader perceptions, domestic population perceptions and its effect on prioritization, domestic issues, and history of conflict. Issue salience, in the context of conflict, is the importance of the conflict to the leaders of the governments involved in the MID that makes them want to participate. Additionally, each variable, for the purposes of this study, will be referred to as a causal mechanism. Each variable is a causal mechanism which affects MID escalation. These variables as causal mechanisms have different parts that drive it. We are concerned with the effect of these parts on MID escalation.

To measure the effects of each of the variables on MID escalation, I will be utilizing process tracing. Bennett and Elman discuss that process tracing is an effective means to show that confounders are not influencing the difference in cases.<sup>66</sup> To conduct my process tracing, I adapt Beach's process tracing framework. Under this framework, I consider each variable to be a "causal mechanism" that is associated with MID escalation. I will break each causal mechanism series into actions and temporal segments and trace how these processes result in MID escalation or non-escalation.<sup>67</sup> After process tracing occurs in my analysis, I then apply a series of tests to each variable to evaluate if there is a significant difference in the variable between each case. To start, I will apply two "hoop" tests to each variable. Under the hoop test, each hypothesis must meet a series of requirements to remain in consideration.<sup>68</sup> First, each variable must feature an observable difference in the parts of its causal mechanism. For instance, at least one causal

---

<sup>65</sup> Georges Nguefack-Tsague, Stephan Klasen, and Walter Zucchini, "On Weighting the Components of the Human Development Index: A Statistical Justification," *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* 12, no. 2 (May 1, 2011): 183–202, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2011.571077>.

<sup>66</sup> Bennett and Elman, "Case Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield."

<sup>67</sup> Derek Beach, "It's All about Mechanisms – What Process-Tracing Case Studies Should Be Tracing," *New Political Economy* 21, no. 5 (September 2, 2016): 463–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2015.1134466>.

<sup>68</sup> David Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44, no. 4 (October 2011): 823–30, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096511001429>.

mechanism is present in one case but absent in the other, or at least one functions in a completely different manner in one case versus the other. Second, there must be an impactful difference between the parts of the causal mechanism. Should any of the variables other than issue salience pass both hoop tests (territorial contiguity, natural resource contention, and development level), the null hypothesis associated with the variable will be strengthened. Should the issue salience variable pass both hoop tests but none of the others, then my original (alternate) hypothesis will be strengthened, and the null hypotheses weakened. Finally, I will subject any of the variables that pass both hoop tests to the doubly decisive test. This test, in its most basic form, states that when the investigator has eliminated all possible alternatives, the remaining scenario must be the correct one.<sup>69</sup> To accomplish this, I will evaluate the results of each hoop test. Should all the null hypotheses be weakened by the hoop tests, my alternate hypothesis of issue salience causing a difference in escalation will be confirmed under the test.

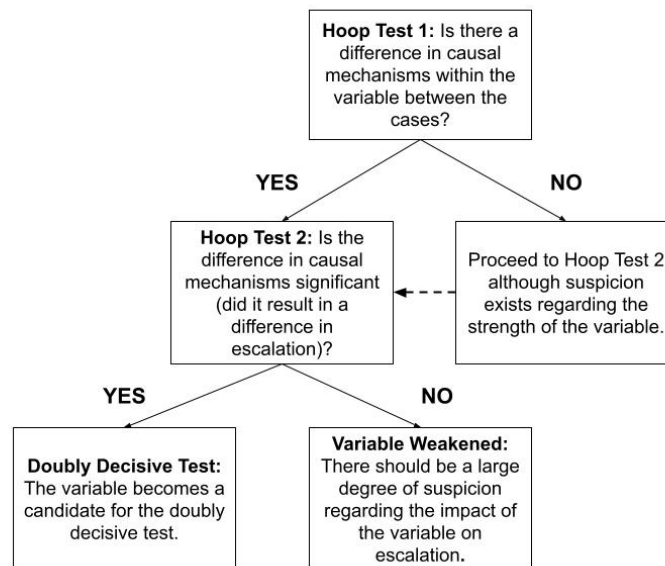


Figure 4. Flowchart of variable testing logic.

<sup>69</sup> Collier.

## Analysis

Now that I have defined the methodology for how I will conduct the case study, I will now begin the process tracing process for each of the variables I am examining. As I mentioned previously, each variable will be evaluated as a causal mechanism that contains different parts. Each part of the causal mechanism is essential to understanding how each of these variables contributes to the escalation of militarized interstate disputes in the selected cases within this case study.

### Territorial Contiguity

As I established in the literature review, Ecuador and Peru share a land border in the Cordilla del Condor Region. As a consequence of their territorial contiguity, they have had a relationship characterized by disputes related to their borders and access to strategic, sometimes transnational, resources in these areas. Territorial contiguity can increase the likelihood of a conflict where force is used because there is usually an underlying reason for why the states care so much about the disputed territory. In terms of this relationship between Ecuador and Peru, there are two parts of the causal mechanism at play related to their territorial contiguity.

The first part of the causal mechanism relates to an unresolved border dispute which began in 1941. Following the 1946 Rio Protocol that ended the dyad's major 1941 border war, more than 95% of their shared border was demarcated.<sup>70</sup> However, the two countries did have a disagreement in six areas of the border, including the Cordillera del Condor region. The dispute was managed by Brazil, granting the contested area to Peru under an arbitral award in 1945.<sup>71</sup> Even after the mediation by Peru and the other guarantor states of the Rio Protocol, the dispute

---

<sup>70</sup> Beth A. Simmons, *Territorial Disputes and Their Resolution : The Case of Ecuador and Peru* /, Peaceworks ; No. 27. (Washington, DC (1200 17th St., NW, Washington 20036): U.S. Institute of Peace, 1999).

<sup>71</sup> Simmons; David R. Mares and David Scott Palmer, *Power, Institutions, and Leadership in War and Peace : Lessons from Peru and Ecuador, 1995-1998* (Austin, UNITED STATES: University of Texas Press, 2012), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/du/detail.action?docID=3443594>.

continued. Specifically, Ecuador contested the award in 1946 after aerial photos showed that the border was not where the agreement had stipulated in a small section.<sup>72</sup> Using the aerial photos as evidence, the Ecuadorean government declared the award and the full Rio Protocol null and void.<sup>73</sup> The government of Ecuador maintained this position for almost five decades, insisting that the protocol be revised to ensure Ecuador's territorial access to the Amazon.<sup>74</sup> This inability to resolve the border dispute, both in terms of Ecuador's claim and Peru's failure to negotiate with agreeable terms, allowed for the issue to fester for decades. This sustained inability to come to any sort of resolution regarding the border issue resulted in the escalation of the border dispute to a militarized interstate dispute where force was used.

The second part of the causal mechanism is access to strategic resources. Specifically, Ecuador was seeking access to water and rivers in the Amazon in their contested zone with Peru. In Article VI Rio Protocol of 1946, Ecuador was guaranteed access to the Amazon and navigation of its rivers.<sup>75</sup> However, while Ecuador was granted these rights on paper, the government of the country did perceive these rights as being upheld. They believed that Peru was preventing the country from having sovereign access, as Peru maintained that the access points to the Amazon that Ecuador wanted in the Cordillera del Condor were inside their territory. In 1992, President Fujimori proposed completing the demarcation of two sections of the border in exchange for navigation rights to the Amazon River in accordance with Article VI to his counterpart in Peru.<sup>76</sup> Peru offered use of its ports on the Amazon instead for final border demarcation, to which Ecuador objected because they insisted on sovereign access.

---

<sup>72</sup> Simmons, *Territorial Disputes and Their Resolution : The Case of Ecuador and Peru /*.

<sup>73</sup> Simmons.

<sup>74</sup> Simmons.

<sup>75</sup> "Peace, Friendship, and Boundaries between Peru and Ecuador (Rio Protocol)" (1946), <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/Rio%20Protocol%20English%201942.pdf>.

<sup>76</sup> Simmons, *Territorial Disputes and Their Resolution : The Case of Ecuador and Peru /*.



Consequently, there is strong interaction between this part of the causal mechanism and the natural resource contention variable, which I discuss further later in this analysis. This interaction fueled the Ecuadorean perception that they did not have sovereign access to strategic resources in the disputed Cordillera del Condor, which caused the escalation of the militarized interstate dispute to one where force was used.

The last part of the causal mechanism driving the territorial contiguity variable in the case of Ecuador and Peru is strategic delay on the part of Ecuador regarding border demarcation. Ecuadorean officials may have been aware of the existence of the Cenepa River in 1943, three years prior to the aerial images that led to the border demarcation disagreement.<sup>77</sup> However, demarcation was not finalized until the end of the conflict between the two countries in 1998.<sup>78</sup> They then initiated several strategic delays in the work of the boundary commission in order to maintain their access to the amazon through the area.<sup>79</sup> Through their strategy of stymieing border demarcation, the Government of Ecuador was able to press for strategic access to the amazon through territory that it could claim as its own. Had it agreed to final border demarcation in the contested area, then its strategy of pressing the Peruvian government for sovereign access to the Amazon would become moot. This strategic delay allowed for the militarized interstate dispute to escalate to one where force was used, as minor engagements and animosity among the leadership and populations of the two countries continued for a prolonged period.

In the case of Nicaragua and Honduras, similar parts of the causal mechanism of territorial contiguity drive the territorial contiguity variable. These similarities relate to the

---

<sup>77</sup> David Scott Palmer, "Peru-Ecuador Border Conflict: Missed Opportunities, Misplaced Nationalism, and Multilateral Peacekeeping," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 39, no. 3 (July 1, 1997): 109–48, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-2456.1997.tb00041.x>.

<sup>78</sup> Simmons, *Territorial Disputes and Their Resolution : The Case of Ecuador and Peru* /.

<sup>79</sup> Palmer, "Peru-Ecuador Border Conflict: Missed Opportunities, Misplaced Nationalism, and Multilateral Peacekeeping."

contested demarcation of boundaries between the two countries. The Specific parts of the causal mechanism are the imposed demarcation of the Gulf of Fonseca by an International Court of Justice ruling in 1992 and contestation of the maritime boundaries between the two countries.

**Table 5. Analysis of The Territorial Contiguity Causal Mechanism in Ecuador and Peru.**

Casual Condition (Territorial Contiguity)	Analysis of Causal Mechanism: Ecuador & Peru			Outcome (Condition for MID Escalation)
	Part 1 Unresolved Border Dispute	Part 2 Strategic Resources in Contested Territory	Part 3 Strategic Delay of Final Border Demarcation	
Peru and Ecuador share a terrestrial border in the Cenepa River Valley Region.	Decades of the border dispute being unresolved allowed tension and animosity to build.	Ecuador perceived that sovereign access guaranteed to the country was not being upheld.	The strategy of delaying final border demarcation by Ecuador allowed tensions to grow between the two countries.	Territorial contiguity contributed to conditions necessary for the MID to escalate to one where force was used.

Source: Adapted from Beach, Derek. “It’s All about Mechanisms – What Process-Tracing Case Studies Should Be Tracing.” *New Political Economy* 21, no. 5 (September 2, 2016): 463–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2015.1134466>.

The first part of the causal mechanism of territorial contiguity for Nicaragua and Honduras relates to the contestation of their maritime boundaries. Both countries are both geographically contiguous within the Gulf of Fonseca. With the 1992 ruling of the International Court of Justice regarding the Gulf of Fonseca, both countries were given a three-mile territorial sea extending immediately offshore their coasts.<sup>80</sup> Given that both countries are geographically proximate to each other, this three-mile extension of territorial waters from the coastline severely restricted both countries to access the gulf for economic activity. Consequently, conditions were

<sup>80</sup> Vivian Lezama Pizzati, “HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT: A CONDOMINIUM IN THE GULF OF FONSECA” (United Nations, 2016), [https://www.un.org/oceancapacity/sites/www.un.org.oceancapacity/files/thesis\\_vlezama.pdf](https://www.un.org/oceancapacity/sites/www.un.org.oceancapacity/files/thesis_vlezama.pdf).

prime for accidental incursions into each states' territorial waters, which indeed occurred in the 1997 case which is central in this thesis.

The second part of the causal mechanism related to territorial contiguity is ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that established the “condominium” of control in the Gulf of Fonseca. As I discussed in the literature review, the 1992 decision of the ICJ established the “condominium” between Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador in the Gulf of Fonseca. The ruling by the ICJ established in new demarcations that were unpalatable to Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. Consequently, the governments did not believe that the ruling was in their best interests. They perceived the demarcation to be based on an arbitrary standard rather than meaningful geographic demarcations. To say, the court delineated areas that were not contested by any party while guaranteeing access for Honduras to the Pacific, which brought Nicaragua into the situation.<sup>81</sup> This demarcation of borders and definition of the condominium between Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador had strategic implications for the Nicaragua-Honduras dyad which I will discuss in the next section.

Overall, there are noteworthy similarities in the drivers of territorial contiguity between both cases in this study. Both cases feature the contestation of boundary demarcation and the participation of third-party guarantors in the demarcation process.

#### Natural Resource Contention

Now that we have established how territorial contiguity might contribute to MID escalation, we can examine the causal mechanism of natural resource contention. In both selected cases, strategic resources were a central theme in the underlying driving processes. However, the effect

---

<sup>81</sup> LADB Staff, “Maritime Conflicts Flare Up Again Between Nicaragua, Honduras,” 1998, <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=9381&context=noticen>.

of the economic resources traditionally attributed to natural resource contention was only present in the case of Honduras and Nicaragua.

**Table 6. Analysis of The Territorial Contiguity Causal Mechanism in Honduras & Nicaragua.**

Casual Condition (Territorial Contiguity)	Analysis of Causal Mechanism: Honduras & Nicaragua		Outcome (Condition for MID Escalation)
	Part 1 Contestation of Maritime Borders	Part 2 ICJ Demarcation	
Honduras and Nicaragua share a maritime border in the Gulf of Fonseca	Limitation of each territorial waters by the ICJ ruling created conditions for crossing of disputed territory.	ICJ ruling created new contested areas in the Gulf and a strategic asymetry for Nicaragua.	Territorial contiguity contributed to conditions necessary for the MID to escalate to one where force was used

Source: Adapted from Beach, Derek. “It’s All about Mechanisms – What Process-Tracing Case Studies Should Be Tracing.” *New Political Economy* 21, no. 5 (September 2, 2016): 463–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2015.1134466>.

In the Ecuador and Peru case, there are two parts underlying the casual process of resource contention. The first is contention over strategic access to water resources in the Amazon. Specifically, securing sovereign access to the Amazon River presented a key strategic objective for Ecuador, to which Ecuadorean officials consistently pushed for. For instance, in 1960, after President José María Velasco Ibarra declared the Rio Protocol null due to Peruvian military aggression, he retracted his statement and instead opined that Ecuador could accept the protocol with an “honorable transaction”.<sup>82</sup> What he was actually saying was that sovereign access somewhere in the Amazon would result in Ecuador being able to accept the proposal.<sup>83</sup> Ceding sovereign access to parts of the Amazon would have resulted in Peru giving up portions of what it considered to be its own territory. This was unpalatable to the Peruvian government, which

<sup>82</sup> Mares and Palmer, *Power, Institutions, and Leadership in War and Peace : Lessons from Peru and Ecuador, 1995-1998*.

<sup>83</sup> Mares and Palmer.

extended offers of use of Peruvian port facilities to Ecuador, but always rejected anything beyond that.<sup>84</sup> Overall, rivers were a consistent theme in the lead up to the 1995 militarized interstate dispute between Ecuador and Peru. Ecuador wanted to have sovereign access to the lucrative economic opportunities in commerce that the rivers brought. However, Peru had an equally strong desire and incentive to maintain its existing sovereign control for similar reasons. Not to mention, it considered the area that Ecuador contested to be its own territory.

This leads into the second part of the causal process at work, which is a lack of contention over traditional economic resources. In this case, contention did not involve what we consider to be economic resources such as gold, uranium, and oil – all of which can be found in the Cordillera del Condor.<sup>85</sup> While indirectly related to economic resources, the limits placed on access to these resources by a lack of infrastructure negates their economic value. Due to the terrain and limited infrastructure in the region, these resources are difficult to extract.<sup>86</sup> Water and access to rivers, as previously discussed, were the principal issues at the heart of resource contention in this case.

In the case of Honduras and Nicaragua, there was also contention over water as a strategic resource in terms of strategic access to water resources. However, there was an added dimension of contention over natural resources of economic value. Thus, there are two causal mechanisms that are driving this variable for Nicaragua and Honduras. The first mechanism is contention over strategic water resources meanwhile the second mechanism is contention over traditional economic resources.

---

<sup>84</sup> Mares and Palmer.

<sup>85</sup> Simmons, *Territorial Disputes and Their Resolution : The Case of Ecuador and Peru /*; Palmer, “Peru-Ecuador Border Conflict: Missed Opportunities, Misplaced Nationalism, and Multilateral Peacekeeping.”

<sup>86</sup> Simmons, *Territorial Disputes and Their Resolution : The Case of Ecuador and Peru /*.

**Table 7. Analysis of The Territorial Contiguity Causal Mechanism in Ecuador and Peru.**

Casual Condition (Natural Resource Contention)	Analysis of Causal Mechanism: Ecuador & Peru		Outcome (Condition for MID Escalation)
	Part 1 Strategic Access to Water Resources	Part 2 Lack of contention over economic resources	
Ecuador and Peru featured natural resource contention as a part of their MID.	Ecuador wanted to secure sovereign access to the Amazon via the Cordillera del Condor. Peru saw this as violation what it considered to be its own territory	A lack of contention over economic resources in the contested area allowed for strategic access to water resources to be the main issue in the dispute.	Resource contention contributed to conditions necessary for the MID to escalate to one where force was used

Source: Adapted from Beach, Derek. “It’s All about Mechanisms – What Process-Tracing Case Studies Should Be Tracing.” *New Political Economy* 21, no. 5 (September 2, 2016): 463–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2015.1134466>.

Like Ecuador, Honduras recognized the benefit of access to water. Due to the low socioeconomic development of the southern region of Honduras, the country wanted to maintain access to the Pacific vis-a-vis the Gulf of Fonseca. Access is a strategic priority for the development of commerce and the potential for the creation of a “dry canal” through the country to the Caribbean.<sup>87</sup> A dry canal is a road or rail network that connects two bodies of water and allows for the transfer of goods between two opposing ports. A dry canal, coupled with other economic opportunities presented by the Gulf, would allow for increased socioeconomic development in Honduras.

Additionally, there was an additional dimension to natural resource contention as it also took on the form of the economic value of natural resources. Specifically, mangroves and salt flats within the Gulf of Fonseca area in Honduras have created an area perfect for shrimp farming and

<sup>87</sup> Rene J. Palao, “Honduras Strategic Free Passage Through the Gulf of Fonseca” (US Army War College, 2007), <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA468952>.

have presented a lucrative economic opportunity.<sup>88</sup> By 1995, 11,296 ha were under production by 88 firms.<sup>89</sup> The production from these farms resulted in shrimp becoming the third-largest export from Honduras.<sup>90</sup> As demonstrated by the shrimp farming industry in the Gulf of Fonseca, the natural resources contained within the area present a lucrative opportunity for economic development. Competition for access placed Nicaragua and Honduras at odds with each other, especially under the condominium ruling by the International Court of Justice. As a result of the two countries and El Salvador sharing access under the condominium concept, competition over these resources contributed to increased animosity between these states as none of them could have definite control over these resources. After establishing that resource contention in the strategic access to water resources was present in both cases, there appears to be strong interaction between the territorial contiguity and natural resource contention causal mechanisms.

#### Development Level

In terms of the causal mechanisms at play in the development level variable, there are some interesting similarities to note between the two cases. The first similarity primarily relates to the first part of the development level causal mechanism, which are the drivers of each country's HDI.

The first part of the causal mechanism relates to both Ecuador and Peru's Human Development Index score and its drivers, which is the key measurement of this variable. During

---

<sup>88</sup> Billie R. Dewalt, Philippe Vergne, and Mark Hardin, "Shrimp Aquaculture Development and the Environment: People, Mangroves and Fisheries on the Gulf of Fonseca, Honduras," *World Development* 24, no. 7 (July 1, 1996): 1193–1208, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X\(96\)00033-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(96)00033-2); Denise Stanley and Carolina Alduvin, "Science and Society in the Gulf of Fonseca -The Changing History of Mariculture in Honduras" (World Bank, Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific, World Wildlife Fund, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2002), <https://library.enaca.org/Shrimp/Case/LatinAmerica/Honduras/Honduras-SciAndSoc.pdf>.

<sup>89</sup> Stanley and Alduvin, "Science and Society in the Gulf of Fonseca -The Changing History of Mariculture in Honduras."

<sup>90</sup> Dewalt, Vergne, and Hardin, "Shrimp Aquaculture Development and the Environment."

the 1995 period, Ecuador and Peru’s HDI scores were 0.671 and 0.647 respectively.<sup>91</sup> At the surface, these scores indicate that both Ecuador and Peru are in the middle-developing category as well as that both countries were experiencing a similar development trajectory at the time of the conflict.<sup>92</sup> However, it is important to understand the specific context that drives the HDI score by breaking down each of them into their respective parts.

**Table 8. Analysis of The Resource Contention Causal Mechanism in Honduras and Nicaragua.**

Casual Condition (Natural Resource Contention)	Analysis of Causal Mechanism: Honduras & Nicaragua		Outcome (Condition for MID Escalation)
	Part 1 Strategic Access to the Pacific	Part 2 Economic Resource Contention	
Nicaragua and Honduras featured natural resource contention as a part of their MID.	Honduras wanted access to the pacific in order to construct a “dry canal” to ports on the caribbean side of the conuntry. However, Honduran access to the Pacific affected Nicaraguan access.	Nicaragua and Honduras competed with each other for access to the mangrove areas in the gulf used for economic production.	Resource contention contributed to conditions necessary for the MID to escalate to one where force was used.

Source: Adapted from Beach, Derek. “It’s All about Mechanisms – What Process-Tracing Case Studies Should Be Tracing.” *New Political Economy* 21, no. 5 (September 2, 2016): 463–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2015.1134466>.

The HDI score is calculated based on three categories: life expectancy at birth, educational attainment, and real GDP in Purchasing Power Parity.<sup>93</sup> Across each of these three categories, Ecuador and Peru featured similar levels of development. Both Ecuador and Peru featured similar life expectancies, with 71 years and 67 years respectively.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, both countries

<sup>91</sup> World Bank, “World Bank Open Data,” World Bank Open Data, accessed March 31, 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org>.

<sup>92</sup> United Nations Development Programme, “Human Development Report 1995” (United Nations, 1995), <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdr1995encompletenostatspdf.pdf>.

<sup>93</sup> United Nations Development Programme.

<sup>94</sup> World Bank, “World Bank Open Data.”



had similar real GDP with Peru having a slightly higher \$2,180 compared to Ecuador's \$2,113.<sup>95</sup> However, there is a slight difference in their educational attainment, most notably with their secondary and tertiary enrollment rates. In 1995, Peru had 68 percent secondary enrollment rate and a 27 percent tertiary enrollment rate.<sup>96</sup> Meanwhile, Ecuador had approximately a 52 percent secondary enrollment rate and an 18 percent tertiary enrollment rate.<sup>97</sup> As I explore in-depth later, this difference in enrollment rates is indicative of high inequality in both countries. This inequality subsequently created economic conditions that contributed to the escalation of the militarized interstate dispute between the two countries.

Leading up to the conflict, both countries experienced a high degree of poverty and inequality. Structural adjustment programs in Peru reduced job opportunities in the formal sector and increased the need for additional sources of family income, forcing women to take on jobs in the informal sector.<sup>98</sup> Additionally, more than 80 percent of economically active women participated in the informal sector.<sup>99</sup> The high participation of women in the informal sector in Peru indicates a high degree of inequality, as women could only find informal employment in domestic fields rather than formal employment. Additionally, poor economic performance in the 1980s and 1990s was still affecting the country and the structural adjustment programs implemented by President Fujimori were causing economic pain.<sup>100</sup> The residual economic troubles coupled with the difficulties of the structural adjustment programs contributed to economic poverty, which reduced Peru's HDI score. Furthermore, Ecuador was experiencing similar issues related to inequality and poverty. Within the country, women's non-agricultural

---

<sup>95</sup> World Bank.

<sup>96</sup> World Bank.

<sup>97</sup> World Bank.

<sup>98</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "Human Development Report 1995."

<sup>99</sup> United Nations Development Programme.

<sup>100</sup> Mares and Palmer, *Power, Institutions, and Leadership in War and Peace: Lessons from Peru and Ecuador, 1995-1998*.

wage as a percentage of men's was only 64 percent and the maternal mortality rate was 170 per 100,000 births.<sup>101</sup> All of these indicators are indicative of a high degree of inequality in both Ecuador and Peru. The GINI score confirms that both countries were indeed experiencing a high degree of inequality. In 1995, Ecuador witnessed an index score of 53.4 while Peru had a score in the 53 range (extrapolated from the earliest available data in 1998).<sup>102</sup> Overall, high inequality contributed to domestic legitimacy challenges for leaders in both countries. As a result, they were more inclined to escalate the MID to divert attention away from domestic issues. I will explore this more in the issue salience section.

In the case of Ecuador and Peru, the second part of causal mechanism of the development variable is the separation of the economic sphere from that of the border and conflict issues. At the national scale, the government of Ecuador was able to separate the economic development and integration with Peru from the issue of sovereign access to the Amazon. Specifically, Ecuador was focused more on economic access and development via the Amazon rather than economic competition with Peru. This allowed for the economic development of both countries to continue while being somewhat insulated from the issue at the heart of the conflict, which was the border itself. However, as I discuss later, the public did not perceive this to be the case and believed the opposite. Additionally, the area of the conflict itself largely remained undeveloped. The terrain of the Cordillera del Condor is difficult to access and has minimal infrastructure.<sup>103</sup> This should have been a mitigating factor in the conflict; however, it still escalated.

Now examining the case of Honduras and Nicaragua, both countries featured a similar, low level of development in the period leading up to their MID. In 1997, Honduras' score was

---

<sup>101</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "Human Development Report 1995."

<sup>102</sup> World Bank, "The Human Capital Index 2020 Update: Human Capital in the Time of COVID-19" (Washington, DC: World Bank, September 16, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1596/34432>.

<sup>103</sup> Simmons, *Territorial Disputes and Their Resolution : The Case of Ecuador and Peru* /.

0.544 and Nicaragua’s was 0.542 with the world average being 0.629.<sup>104</sup> Both countries featured similar adult literacy and life expectancy rates. According to the data closest to 1997 (2001), Honduras’ adult literacy rate was 80 percent meanwhile Nicaragua’s was 77 percent.<sup>105</sup> Additionally, Nicaragua’s life expectancy in 1997 was 66 while Honduras’ was 67.<sup>106</sup> However, a key difference between the two countries is observed with their real GDP. In 1997, Honduras’s real GDP was \$876.90 while Nicaragua’s was \$919.90. This points to a key causal mechanism in the development variable for Nicaragua and Honduras, as high absolute poverty and low socioeconomic development was a mitigating factor in their MID.

**Table 9. Analysis of The Development Level Causal Mechanism in Ecuador and Peru.**

Casual Condition (Development Level)	Analysis of Causal Mechanisms: Ecuador and Peru		Outcome (Condition for MID Escalation)
	Part 1 Inequality and Poverty	Part 2 Separation of Economic and Border Issue	
Both Ecuador and Peru had a low HDI scores leading up to the 1995 MID.	High inequality and poverty created the economic and legitimacy challenges for both the Peruvian and Ecuadorean Governments. They felt that they needed to deliver a win in the border dispute (strong interaction with issue salience).	The Ecuadorean public was not able to separate the question of the border conflict from economic cooperation with Peru. The border area in the Cordillera del Condor also remained largely underdeveloped.	Low development levels contributed to conditions necessary for the MID to escalate to one where force was used.

Source: Adapted from Beach, Derek. “It’s All about Mechanisms – What Process-Tracing Case Studies Should Be Tracing.” *New Political Economy* 21, no. 5 (September 2, 2016): 463–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2015.1134466>.

<sup>104</sup> United Nations, “Human Development Index Specific Country Data,” *Human Development Reports* (United Nations), accessed January 18, 2024, <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data>.

<sup>105</sup> World Bank, “World Bank Open Data.”

<sup>106</sup> World Bank.

Given that I have examined the context behind the HDI of Nicaragua and Honduras, I will now further discuss their development situation. A key challenge in both countries is that their coastal areas along the Gulf of Fonseca have been historically underdeveloped. Specifically, these coastal areas along the Gulf of Fonseca have historically faced lower socioeconomic conditions when compared with other parts of the country and region. This is especially true for Honduras where agricultural production does not satisfy the needs of the local population.<sup>107</sup> Consequently, socioeconomic development vis-à-vis the Gulf of Fonseca is a key causal driver in the case of this dyad.

**Table 10. Analysis of The Development Level Causal Mechanism in Honduras and Nicaragua.**

Casual Condition (Development Level)	Analysis of Causal Mechanisms: Honduras and Nicaragua		Outcome (Condition for MID Escalation)
	Part 1 Poverty	Part 2 Low Socioeconomic development in coastal areas	
Both Honduras and Nicaragua had a low HDI scores leading up to the 1995 MID.	High inequality and poverty caused both countries to compete for access to economic opportunity via access to the Pacific Ocean.	Low socioeconomic development concentrated in coastal areas of both countries caused conflict between the two countries, as local populations were trying to sustain themselves through production in the gulf.	Resource contention contributed to conditions necessary for the MID to escalate to one where force was used.

Source: Adapted from Beach, Derek. "It's All about Mechanisms – What Process-Tracing Case Studies Should Be Tracing." *New Political Economy* 21, no. 5 (September 2, 2016): 463–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2015.1134466>.

<sup>107</sup> Palao, "Honduras Strategic Free Passage Through the Gulf of Fonseca."

## Issue Saliience

The issue saliience variable in the case of both dyads has some unique causal mechanisms that comprise the larger variable. Specifically, these mechanisms examine domestic perceptions on the MID cases by including leader perceptions, public perception and its impact on prioritization, the historical legacy of conflict in the cases, and the effects of domestic issues. Despite the fact that this variable is measured across the same four categories of historical relationship, leader perceptions, public perceptions, and domestic issues, both cases have unique parts that contribute to the issue saliience causal mechanism.

Both Ecuador and Peru have had a protracted history of conflict related to their borders. Since their independence, the two countries have witnessed multiple wars and conflicts, including the 1995 militarized interstate dispute, related to their border. Beginning in 1941 and ending 47 years later in 1998 with the signing of an accord that ended their border dispute, the countries were having consistent military encounters with one another. This protracted history of conflict set the stage for a higher degree of issue saliience. As I discuss later in this section, the decades-long sustained duration of this dispute increased the importance of conflicts related to it in the eyes of leaders and the public. Thus, the historical significance causal mechanism is an important factor in the overall issue saliience variable.

Furthermore, the perceptions by Ecuadorean and Peruvian leadership are a notable mechanism that drove the issue saliience variable. In Ecuador, President Sixto Durán Ballén (1992-1996) was a conservative who did not favor war.<sup>108</sup> However, he was being challenged domestically by an economic crisis and a failed referendum to force structural economic changes.<sup>109</sup> Despite his personal aversion to conflict, the 1995 militarized interstate dispute

---

<sup>108</sup> Mares and Palmer, *Power, Institutions, and Leadership in War and Peace : Lessons from Peru and Ecuador, 1995-1998*.

<sup>109</sup> Mares and Palmer.

increased national cohesion through a “rally around the flag” effect while simultaneously lifting his approval ratings.<sup>110</sup> These circumstances, coupled with the fact that he would face public backlash if he were to withdraw Ecuadorean forces after their military success in repelling Peruvian forces, pushed him to continue the conflict.<sup>111</sup> He was able to have an effective “red herring” that diverted public attention away from domestic issues and towards unifying around a common issue. Similarly, President Alberto Fujimori of Peru (1990 - 2000) entered the 1995 conflict facing a high degree of domestic political risks which influenced his decision-making.<sup>112</sup> One of his greatest risks was that he was facing reelection in April 1995.<sup>113</sup> Leading up to the 1995 conflict, Fujimori’s main opponent in the election questioned his ability to defend Peruvian interests while calling for harsher action against Ecuador.<sup>114</sup> This put pressure on him to take a more hawkish stance on Ecuador and its desire for negotiations for access to the amazon.

The next causal mechanism influencing the issue salience variable is that of Ecuadorean and Peruvian public perception of the circumstances of the conflict. Public perception in Ecuador leading up to the 1995 militarized interstate dispute was characterized by deep distrust of Peru. In 1992, 49 percent of respondents perceived Peru to be an “enemy” country while 39 percent perceived it to be friendly.<sup>115</sup> This deep distrust of Peru had its roots in the historical legacy of the conflict in 1941, the perceived inequities imposed on Ecuador through the Rio Protocol that ended the conflict and continued Peruvian “aggression” with minor military engagements in the contested border areas leading to the 1995 conflict. Additionally, the issue of the dispute of the territory in the Cordillera del Condor generated strong sentiments among the Ecuadorean

---

<sup>110</sup> Mares and Palmer.

<sup>111</sup> Mares and Palmer.

<sup>112</sup> Mares and Palmer.

<sup>113</sup> Mares and Palmer.

<sup>114</sup> Mares and Palmer.

<sup>115</sup> Mares and Palmer.

population. Additionally, 79 percent of individuals believed that the border issue obstructed development compared to only 15 percent of the population believing that it did not.<sup>116</sup> Public perception also showed a concern for the possibility of war, but also a willingness to engage in war rather than acceding to Peruvian demands.<sup>117</sup> This is a notable dichotomy, as Ecuadoreans saw Peru as an enemy state and were more willing to go to war to protect their interests, but still had concern about the outbreak of conflict itself. Thus, while the population was somewhat averse to the costs of war, they supported the eventual conflict because of their sentiments towards Peru and desire to make sure that their interests were maintained.

Conversely, Peruvians had a more positive sentiment towards Ecuadoreans. In a poll conducted in 1994, 63 percent of respondents saw Ecuador as a “friendly country” compared to 23 percent who perceived it as the “enemy”.<sup>118</sup> In a separate poll conducted in the same year, 41 percent of individuals who responded believed that no problem existed between the countries because the border issue has been resolved by the Rio Protocol.<sup>119</sup> While Peruvians overall had a positive view of Ecuadoreans, there were some key lines of fracture. Generally, they believed that their territory was being intruded on by Ecuadorean incursions and voiced strong support for the actions of the Peruvian armed forces.<sup>120</sup> For instance, in a 1994 poll, 65 percent of respondents believed that Ecuadorean troops had been on Peruvian territory before 1994.<sup>121</sup> Additionally, in a poll in February of the same year, 86.5 percent of respondents supported the actions of the Peruvian military.<sup>122</sup> Thus, public sentiment in Peru, while mostly

---

<sup>116</sup> Mares and Palmer.

<sup>117</sup> Mares and Palmer.

<sup>118</sup> Mares and Palmer.

<sup>119</sup> Mares and Palmer.

<sup>120</sup> Mares and Palmer.

<sup>121</sup> Mares and Palmer.

<sup>122</sup> Mares and Palmer.

positive toward Ecuador, also demonstrated strong support for force to be used in defending its interests and sovereign territory that it viewed as being infringed upon.

The last part of the causal mechanism underlying the issue salience variable in relation to Ecuador and Peru is the effect domestic issues had on prioritization. For Ecuador, domestic issues leading up to the 1995 conflict in the created the conditions for the leaders of the country to pursue the resolution of the border dispute prior to the outbreak of the 1995 militarized interstate dispute. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, social inequality and persistent poverty resulted in massive demonstrations against the government while the economy had become worse.<sup>123</sup> With a resolved border dispute, there was the potential for greater international investment, regional market expansion, and international recognition for negotiating peace.<sup>124</sup> However, for the reasons mentioned previously, Ecuador was not able to resolve the dispute peacefully until after the 1995 MID.

In terms of Peru, the emergence of the country from multiple domestic crises that occurred during the 1980s allowed the country to remain largely unified. The Fujimori presidential administration was able to reduce inflation significantly from over 7,000 percent to single digits, foster economic growth, and return Peru to a better position in the international community.<sup>125</sup> Additionally, the administration was able to tackle years of political violence in the country wrought by the Shining Path Guerilla movement through implementing a micro development program targeting the poorest areas of the country and redefining its

---

<sup>123</sup> International Crisis Group, "Ecuador: Overcoming Instability?," Latin America Report (International Crisis Group, September 7, 2007), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/ecuador/ecuador-overcoming-instability>; Mares and Palmer, *Power, Institutions, and Leadership in War and Peace : Lessons from Peru and Ecuador, 1995-1998*.

<sup>124</sup> Mares and Palmer, *Power, Institutions, and Leadership in War and Peace : Lessons from Peru and Ecuador, 1995-1998*.

<sup>125</sup> Mares and Palmer.



counterinsurgency strategy.<sup>126</sup> All the former granted President Fujimori a large base of political support, despite military losses to Ecuador in the outbreak of the 1995 militarized interstate dispute.

**Table 11. Analysis of The Issue Saliency Causal Mechanism in Ecuador and Peru.**

Casual Condition (Issue Saliency)	Analysis of Causal Mechanism: Ecuador and Peru				Outcome (Condition for MID Escalation)
	Part 1: History of Conflict	Part 2: Public Perception	Part 3: Leadership Perceptions	Part 4: Domestic Issues	
Ecuador and Peru witnessed a high degree of issue saliency during their MID, with all four parts of the causal mechanism being present.	The border conflict took place continuously from 1941 to 1998, allowing smaller outbreaks of conflict to occur.	The Ecuadoran public had strong distrust of Peru, while Peruvians viewed Ecuador as infringing on their territory.	Domestic challenges to legitimacy caused Peruvian and Ecuadorean leadership to use the conflict to rally domestic populations.	Domestic issues in Ecuador led the country to pursue resolution of the border dispute for economic development. Peru was emboldened by its stronger position and wanted to get a win from the dispute.	Issue saliency contributed to conditions necessary for the MID to escalate to one where force was used.

Source: Adapted from Beach, Derek. "It's All about Mechanisms – What Process-Tracing Case Studies Should Be Tracing." *New Political Economy* 21, no. 5 (September 2, 2016): 463–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2015.1134466>.

Moving on to examine the case of Honduras and Nicaragua, both countries have also had a protracted history of conflict. The relationship between Nicaragua and Honduras has been characterized by tension since the Nicaraguan revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. Principally, this tension has been a function of both countries' respective bilateral relationships with the United States.<sup>127</sup> Concerned about the socialist ideas from the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, the

<sup>126</sup> Mares and Palmer.

<sup>127</sup> Mark B. Rosenberg, "Nicaragua and Honduras: Toward Garrison States," *Current History* 83, no. 490 (1984): 59–87.

United States worked with the Honduran government to train Anti-Sandinistas.<sup>128</sup> This angered the Nicaraguan government, which threatened guerilla warfare against Honduras.<sup>129</sup> In addition to tensions in their relationship created by the Nicaraguan revolution, the dyad has also had a prolonged history of border disputes. Their relationship of border disputes began with a disagreement in 1894 when the two countries were delineating their borders and could not compromise.<sup>130</sup> The King of Spain arbitrated their disagreement, which culminated with Nicaragua rejecting the arbitration in 1912.<sup>131</sup> Since this original border dispute, their relationship has been characterized by contention over borders with a war in 1956 and interventions from the International Court of Justice in 1960, 1986, and 1992.<sup>132</sup> This prolonged history of border disputes set the stage for how both countries approached the Gulf of Fonseca issue in 1997.

Historically, neither Honduras or Nicaragua have had strong nationalistic sentiment towards each other.<sup>133</sup> However, beginning with the Nicaraguan revolution, Honduran sentiment toward the country was being shaped by the involvement of the United States in the country.<sup>134</sup> Additionally, during the 1997 militarized dispute, Honduran nationalistic ire was only briefly invoked when Nicaraguan officials claimed that they were protecting their territorial waters from “pirates” after Honduran fishermen were arrested.<sup>135</sup> Thus, nationalistic sentiment between the two countries has largely only been invoked during times of conflict.

---

<sup>128</sup> Pizzati, “HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT: A CONDOMINIUM IN THE GULF OF FONSECA.”

<sup>129</sup> Rosenberg, “Nicaragua and Honduras.”

<sup>130</sup> Pizzati, “HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT: A CONDOMINIUM IN THE GULF OF FONSECA.”

<sup>131</sup> Pizzati.

<sup>132</sup> Pizzati; Moreno Quintana, *Arbitral Award Made by the King of Spain on 23 December 1906 (Honduras v. Nicaragua)* (International Court of Justice November 18, 1960); Rosalyn Higgins, *Territorial and Maritime Dispute between Nicaragua and Honduras in the Caribbean Sea (Nicaragua v. Honduras)* (International Court of Justice October 8, 2007).

<sup>133</sup> Rosenberg, “Nicaragua and Honduras.”

<sup>134</sup> Rosenberg.

<sup>135</sup> LADB Staff, “Maritime Conflicts Flare Up Again Between Nicaragua, Honduras.”

Furthermore, the perceptions of Honduran and Nicaraguan leadership have been shaped by not only by the Gulf of Fonseca dispute, but a similar dispute occurring on the dyad's Caribbean coast. While the dispute in the Gulf of Fonseca was in progress, a dispute was occurring that involved border demarcation on the Caribbean coast on the opposite side of both states. Both Nicaragua and Honduras were contesting that border in addition to the Gulf of Fonseca. The concurrence of both disputes is notable, as Nicaraguan leaders tied resolution of the dispute within the Gulf of Fonseca to the resolution of the Caribbean dispute. At the time, Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Emilio Alvarez stated, "we have to resolve all conflict zones, not just selected ones... If Honduras wants to discuss its rights in the Pacific and lay down border markers, there is no problem, as long as it also cooperates to resolve the conflict on the Atlantic Coast."<sup>136</sup> Despite this, the leadership of Nicaragua and Honduras took measures to de-escalate conflict after the 1997 militarized interstate dispute. Specifically, the foreign ministers from Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador agreed to meet regarding the borders in the Gulf of Fonseca, which is an important first step toward regulating commercial activities.<sup>137</sup> This move towards de-escalation was incredibly notable, as negotiations regarding final demarcation in the Gulf of Fonseca would prevent similar militarized interstate disputes, such as the 1997 case I selected for this study, from occurring.

Finally, the last causal mechanism influencing the issue salience variable in Nicaragua and Honduras relates to their domestic issues. In the years prior to the 1990s, both countries were experiencing economic decline and contraction.<sup>138</sup> As mentioned previously, both countries have

---

<sup>136</sup> LADB Staff.

<sup>137</sup> LADB Staff.

<sup>138</sup> Brown University Library, "Honduras: A Country and a Coup | Modern Latin America," accessed January 29, 2024, <https://library.brown.edu/create/modernlatinamerica/chapters/chapter-16-latin-america-in-the-world-arena-1990s-present/honduras-a-country-and-a-coup/>; U.S. Department of State, "1997 Human Rights Report: Nicaragua," 1998, [https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/human\\_rights/1997\\_hrp\\_report/nicaragu.html](https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/human_rights/1997_hrp_report/nicaragu.html).

extremely low levels of socioeconomic development. In Honduras, it was estimated that 65 percent of the population in 1997 lived in poverty with a per capita income of \$700.<sup>139</sup> The figure was \$465 for Nicaragua.<sup>140</sup> The low socioeconomic development level of the country adds salience to the Gulf of Fonseca issue, as it presents a vital economic lifeline that would allow both countries to improve their development. Agricultural exports, especially seafood and shrimp, contributed significantly to Nicaragua and Honduras' economies respectively.<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, both countries witnessed significant government transitions in the decades leading up to the Gulf of Fonseca dispute. For instance, Honduras transitioned to democracy in 1982 and its police force was transferred to civilian control in 1997.<sup>142</sup> Nicaragua witnessed various human rights abuses at the hands of police, rampant corruption, and a weak judiciary that struggled to prosecute perpetrators.<sup>143</sup> Consequently, the domestic situation in both countries did not provide many incentives for conflict, outside of economic interests in the Gulf of Fonseca. Additionally, both countries were not in an economic position to be able to participate in a sustained conflict position with one another. Conflict fatigue was also present, as civil wars in both countries prior to their return to civilian control combined with their low socioeconomic development likely made the domestic population more averse to war. Thus, the domestic issues causal mechanism within the larger issue salience variable presents a notable mitigating factor related to conflict between both countries.

---

<sup>139</sup> U.S. Department of State, "1997 Human Rights Report: Honduras," 1998, [https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/human\\_rights/1997\\_hrp\\_report/honduras.html](https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/human_rights/1997_hrp_report/honduras.html).

<sup>140</sup> U.S. Department of State, "1997 Human Rights Report: Nicaragua."

<sup>141</sup> U.S. Department of State, "1997 Human Rights Report: Honduras"; U.S. Department of State, "1997 Human Rights Report: Nicaragua."

<sup>142</sup> U.S. Department of State, "1997 Human Rights Report: Honduras."

<sup>143</sup> U.S. Department of State, "1997 Human Rights Report: Nicaragua."

**Table 12. Analysis of The Issue Salience Causal Mechanism in Honduras & Nicaragua.**

Casual Condition (Issue Salience)	Analysis of Causal Mechanism: Honduras & Nicaragua				Outcome (Condition for MID Escalation)
	Part 1: History of Conflict	Part 2: Public Perception	Part 3: Leadership Perceptions	Part 4: Domestic Issues	
Honduras and Nicaragua witnessed a medium degree of issue salience during their MID, with three of the four parts of the causal mechanism being present.	The maritime dispute in the Gulf of Fonseca was part of a larger border dispute that started at the independence of both countries.	Nationalistic Sentiment in both countries was briefly invoked as the conflict progresses.	The political leadership of both countries were also dealing with another conflict on the Caribbean coast. A mitigating factor was that both governments began to negotiate once the conflict was in progress	Domestic issues in both countries caused them to prioritize the conflict for economic reasons. However, a key mitigating factor was that there were not incentives for conflict outside of economic interests.	Issue salience slightly contributed to conditions necessary for the MID to escalate to one where force was used. There were many mitigating factors that reduced

Source: Adapted from Beach, Derek. "It's All about Mechanisms – What Process-Tracing Case Studies Should Be Tracing." *New Political Economy* 21, no. 5 (September 2, 2016): 463–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2015.1134466>.

## Results

### Territorial Contiguity

Starting first with the territorial contiguity variable, I examine if the causal mechanisms present demonstrate significant differences that pass the hoop test. At the state level of analysis, each case had contiguous borders and territorial conflict related to their contiguity. However, taking a more nuanced view into the causal mechanisms present, both cases featured three mechanisms that contributed to their militarized interstate disputes. First, both cases had disputes related to border demarcation. In the case of Ecuador and Peru, the border demarcation was not

fully completed for approximately five decades. In this period, multiple armed incidents and approaches to resolution took place, ultimately leading to the 1995 MID.

Similarly, the case of Nicaragua and Honduras remained unresolved even after the ruling of the International Court of Justice establishing the “condominium” between the two states and El Salvador. The dispute over what constituted both countries’ territorial waters within the condominium contributed to the 1997 MID. Furthermore, both countries desired to have strategic access within their disputed contiguous territory. For instance, Ecuador wanted to maintain sovereign access to the Amazon River and wider Amazon via the Cordillera del Condor region as it had strategic importance. Conversely, Peru did not want to cede what it considered to be its own sovereign territory. Additionally, Honduras wanted to maintain access to the Pacific, as it had great strategic importance related to commerce being able to reach the country. The biodiversity of the Gulf of Fonseca also played a large role, as Honduras and Nicaragua export goods from it. Given the economic and strategic importance of the Gulf of Fonseca, we would expect that the natural resource contention variable alone would have caused the Honduras-Nicaragua case to escalate. However, this was not the case as I explore when applying the tests to this variable.

Considering this evidence present in the three causal mechanisms, territorial contiguity does not pass the hoop tests. In this first hoop test, I ask if there are significant differences in the territorial contiguity causal mechanisms between the two cases. This variable does not pass the first hoop test because there are no significant differences in the three identified casual mechanisms between the cases. Consequently, the territorial contiguity variable alone does not have explanatory power for why there was a difference in MID escalation between the cases.

Furthermore, this variable does not pass the second hoop test of a significant variance in causal mechanisms. even if there were to be a difference one of the casual mechanisms, one difference alone would not cause Given that, the null hypothesis that a difference in causal mechanisms related to territorial contiguity variable between the cases is weakened.

### Natural Resource Contention

The natural resource contention variable was also present in both cases within the study. Similar to territorial contiguity, both cases featured two causal mechanisms that contributed to the effect resource contention had on escalation. For Ecuador and Peru, the two causal mechanisms were contention over water resources and a lack of strategic resource contention. Ecuador was intent on maintaining access to the Amazon River via the contested Cordillera del Condor border region. However, this was an unacceptable proposition for Peru, which viewed the issue of Ecuadorean sovereign access to the Amazon be an infringement upon its own territory. Thus, water resources played a large part in the case of the escalation of the militarized interstate dispute between Ecuador and Peru. Furthermore, although the two countries did have contention over the economic access provided by strategic access to the Amazon River, they did not experience what is traditionally considered to be resource conflict. Meaning, the two countries did not fight over resources of economic value, such as mineral deposits. While these resources are present in the contested Cordillera del Condor region, they are difficult to access and extract, significantly reducing their strategic value.

Nicaragua and Honduras share a similar story, albeit with one difference in their causal mechanisms. Like the case of Ecuador and Peru, this case features a causal mechanism of contention over water as a strategic resource. Honduras wanted to maintain access to the pacific

via the Gulf of Fonseca as a tool for economic development. By maintaining access to the Pacific, it could create a “dry canal,” or highway for shipment of goods, to ports on the Caribbean side of the country. Consequently, the government would be able to spur economic development and diversification in the poorest parts of the country that are heavily dependent on agricultural exports.

While there was this similarity between the cases, a key difference in the causal mechanisms between the cases was that Nicaragua and Honduras did have contention over economic resources. The Gulf of Fonseca is home to mangroves that have perfect conditions for the production of primary goods with the main one being Shrimp. At the same time, these mangrove areas lie in the disputed area between Nicaragua and Honduras. Additionally, under the concept of the “condominium” instituted by the International Court of Justice ruling, neither Honduras, Nicaragua, nor El Salvador had definite control over resources in the Gulf. These two factors contributed to increased animosity between the two countries and the subsequent escalation to a militarized interstate dispute.

Considering the totality of the causal mechanisms that are at play in both cases, the natural resource contention variable does not pass one of the two hoop tests. In the first hoop test, I ask if there are any significant differences between the natural resource contention causal mechanisms. This variable does pass the first hoop test, as there is a significant difference observed in causal mechanisms between the cases. Specifically, Honduras and Nicaragua did witness contention over economic resources meanwhile Ecuador and Peru did not. Consequently, we would expect the Honduras and Nicaragua case to escalate to an MID where force is used. However, it did not which lessens the implications of passing the first hoop test. Had there been



escalation, this would have been a notable result. While the variable does pass this first hoop test, it does not pass the second one. Even with this difference in causal mechanisms present, it is not significant enough by itself to explain why there was a difference in escalation between the cases. There was a strong interaction between territorial contiguity and natural resource contention which contributed to a similar level of contention between the two cases. Specifically, in both cases, natural resources, and strategic access to them, was linked to the countries' territorial disputes, which increased the contention between the countries to an indistinguishable level. Logically, we would expect to see escalation in the Nicaragua and Honduras case, as they did have contention over natural resources that had an associated economic value. However, their MID did not escalate. As a result, the power of the observed difference in the economic resource causal mechanism to explain the difference in escalation is negated. With this variable not passing both hoop tests, the null hypothesis of natural resource contention being the variable that influenced a difference in escalation between the two cases is weakened. I expected this outcome with the natural resource contention variable, as contention over resources is usually indicative of other issues.

### Development Level

In the development level variable, there are some unique causal mechanisms at play which influenced the escalation towards militarized interstate disputes in both cases. Under the HDI score for the countries in each case, the causal mechanisms tell clear stories. In the case of Ecuador and Peru, the causal mechanisms that comprise the HDI score reveal two countries experiencing similar economic and societal issues which contributed to the 1995 militarized interstate dispute. High domestic inequality in Ecuador resulted in demonstrations against the government, which added pressure for it to achieve a victory against Peru. Additionally, despite

Peru witnessing an improving economic situation under President Fujimori, the structural adjustment programs that were used to achieve growth caused pain and reduced job opportunities in the formal sector. In both cases, the causal mechanism of inequality as measured by HDI forced leaders to act to secure their development interests. Ecuador wanted to seize a key development opportunity through sovereign access to the Amazon meanwhile Peru wanted to protect its economic gains from a costly war and ceding valuable territory to Ecuador.

In terms of Honduras and Nicaragua, extreme poverty and lower social capital contributed to conditions in which a militarized interstate dispute could occur. In Nicaragua, extreme poverty coupled with rampant governance challenges perpetuated underdevelopment. Additionally, in Honduras, a high degree of income poverty coupled with the fact that the agricultural production does not satisfy the needs of the local population. Both countries have also experienced low socioeconomic development in their coastal areas when compared to their urban areas. Thus, the Gulf of Fonseca was a key economic lifeline for the individuals living in these areas, as the primary economic activity of both countries is marine exports. This part of the development variable demonstrated a strong interaction with the resource contention and territorial contiguity variables. Specifically, fishermen were captured by the forces of the opposing country for participating in the economic activity in the contested zone between both countries. Since local populations in coastal areas were primarily dependent on this activity for subsistence because development conditions did not permit other economic activity, this contributed to the escalation of the militarized interstate dispute.

Considering the causal mechanisms present in both cases, the development level variable does not pass the hoop test. This variable does pass the first hoop test, as I am asking whether

there is an observed difference in causal mechanisms between the cases as it relates to the drivers of each country's HDI score. Between the two cases, there was a difference in the drivers of the HDI scores in each case. In the case of Ecuador and Peru, a key difference between the two countries was with the school enrollment components of their HDI score. Conversely, Honduras and Nicaragua witnessed a difference in their real GDP per capita. Based on this difference, it may be the case that a difference in inequality rather than absolute inequality caused a difference in MID escalation. For this reason, the development level variable does pass the first hoop test. However, the development variable does not fully pass the second hoop test, as the causal factors related to each countries specific development situation feature similar characteristics of underdevelopment. For instance, the countries in both cases featured inequality as a root driver of their low development level while also sharing a status of developing nations. Given that the development variable only passes one hoop test and not the other, the null hypothesis that the development variable caused a difference in escalation is further weakened. Overall, this result matched what I expected to see as a result from process tracing. With the interactions between development and the other variables, development itself is unable to explain why the Honduras and Nicaragua MID escalated and the Ecuador and Peru dispute did. As I explore in the discussion section of this thesis, the elimination of the development level in this test points to a new alternative hypothesis outside the scope of consideration in the current research.

### Issue Saliience

Closing with the last variable of issue saliience, there is a key difference in the causal mechanisms that affected the escalation of militarized interstate dispute escalation between both cases. Looking first at the historical significance causal mechanism, both cases featured a similar history related to their territorial disputes. Ecuador and Peru had a protracted history of conflict,

with their border dispute in the Cordillera del Condor beginning when both countries gained independence and ending in 1998. Similarly, Nicaragua and Honduras have witnessed multiple maritime and terrestrial boundary disputes with one another since their independence. Thus, the significance of the historical legacies is high in both cases.

Furthermore, the leaders of the countries in each case shared similar perspectives on the issues that led up to the militarized interstate disputes. In the Ecuador-Peru case, both Ecuadorean President Sixto Durán Ballén and Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori faced domestic legitimacy challenges because of economic issues and taking a conciliatory stance on the conflict respectively. As a result of these domestic challenges, these leaders had to take a more hardline stance on the border conflict. This allowed them the ability to create a “rally around the flag” effect to distract from domestic issues while neutralizing the arguments made by political opponents that they were not being strong enough on the border dispute.

While Ecuadorean and Peruvian leadership were solely focused on the singular border issue present in the Cordillera del Condor, Honduran and Nicaraguan leadership were contending with an additional border dispute taking place beyond the Gulf of Fonseca. This dispute was occurring concurrently and concerned disputed demarcation of marine territory on both countries’ Caribbean coast. This, coupled with domestic issues related to governance and poverty, put the leaders of both countries in a spot to escalate the conflict towards a militarized interstate dispute. Like the case of Ecuador and Peru, the leaders of Honduras and Nicaragua did not want to appear as though they were conceding ground to the opposing side. Additionally, Nicaraguan leaders tied resolution of the Gulf of Fonseca dispute with resolution of the maritime dispute in the Caribbean. However, a key difference in the leader perception causal mechanism

was observed in this case, as the leadership of both countries took actions to deescalate the situation following the militarized interstate dispute. Specifically, leaders from both countries agreed to meet regarding the borders of the Gulf of Fonseca. Thus, this causal mechanism features a difference between the cases where Ecuador and Peru did not take de-escalatory action whereas Nicaragua and Honduras did.

In addition, public perceptions were another causal mechanism of the issue salience variable where a key difference between cases was observed. In the case of Ecuador and Peru, there was an imbalance in public perceptions of the opposing country. For instance, in Ecuador, public sentiment was characterized by deep distrust of Peru. The population of the country was willing to go to war to protect their interests rather than acceding to Peruvian demands while also demonstrating concern about the prospect of war. Conversely, individuals in Peru had a positive view of their Ecuadorean counterparts. However, they concurrently believed that their national territory was being infringed upon. As a result, many individuals supported the military actions of the government in protecting national sovereignty. While national sentiments in this case were largely cemented, the case of Honduras and Nicaragua demonstrates some key differences. Historically, both countries have not demonstrated strong nationalistic sentiment towards each other. However, during the period of the militarized interstate dispute between both countries in 1997, their respective populations did demonstrate nationalistic sentiment against the opposing state. This nationalistic sentiment was only briefly invoked during the MID and subsided as the countries began to negotiate. This is a key difference from Ecuador and Peru, as their case featured sustained asymmetric nationalistic sentiments between both countries.

Finally, the effect of domestic issues and their effect on prioritization is the last causal mechanism present in both cases. In Ecuador and Peru, domestic issues created the conditions necessary for an MID to be prioritized. Persistent social inequality and poverty in Ecuador during the 1980s and 1990s motivated citizens to demonstrate in the streets, placing acute pressure on the government. The Ecuadorean government wanted to distract from these domestic issues, and a conflict was an opportunity in which they could divert public attention. Conversely, Peru was able to emerge from the same period largely united. Popular economic policies and the ability of President Fujimori to quell a guerilla movement that had been causing political violence gave him a strong foundation of support. Although this support was questioned by opponents in the lead up to the 1995 militarized interstate dispute, he was able to largely maintain it. Thus, Peru was motivated to participate in an MID to protect its economic interests even though Ecuador was becoming stronger militarily. While the case of Ecuador and Peru featured distinct domestic issues that increased the likelihood of an MID, the case of Honduras and Nicaragua featured issues that mitigated conflict. At the forefront of domestic issues in Honduras and Nicaragua was their low socioeconomic development. Sustained poverty and inequality put both countries in a position where they would not be able to mobilize for a prolonged conflict against each other. While Ecuador and Peru were also in a similar position, they were more developed and had been preparing for a direct conflict in the years leading up to their MID. However, the aquaculture and agriculture-focused economies of Honduras and Nicaragua produced conditions necessary for conflict, as the governments of both nations wanted to protect their access to areas needed to produce these products. While there was this slight difference, both cases featured underdevelopment as a key feature of domestic issues. I expected to see this interaction between the development level and issue salience variables, as it is

inevitable that economic issues and inequality associated with a state's development level will affect the salience of domestic issues.

Considering each of the causal mechanisms present within the issue salience variable, it is clear that this variable passes both hoop tests. This variable passes the first hoop test, as there is indeed an observed difference in the causal mechanisms of leader perceptions and public perception that drove prioritization. In the case of Ecuador and Peru, the militarized interstate dispute was incredibly salient to both leaders as their domestic bases set the expectation of escalation. If one leader were to concede to the other, they would lose domestic political support. Conversely, Nicaraguan and Honduran leadership took steps to negotiate, which deescalated the conflict. Based on the analysis, both countries realized that negotiation was likely in their best interest given that maritime boundary disputes on both sides of their shores was not conducive to their domestic economies. Additionally, the public perception of conflict in each case was different. In the case of Ecuador and Peru, public perception of the conflict was asymmetrical. Ecuadoreans had an overall negative view of their Peruvian neighbors while Peruvians had a largely positive view of Ecuadoreans. Also, individuals in both countries had consistent views of each other, meaning that their perceptions of one another did not change even at the outset of the militarized interstate dispute. However, the opposite is true for the case of Honduras and Nicaragua. Individuals in both countries had not harbored strong nationalistic sentiments against each other until the outset of their 1997 militarized interstate dispute. Even when this nationalistic sentiment started, it was only short lived. Once both countries began their negotiations and actions to alleviate the tension that led to the Gulf of Fonseca MID, this nationalistic sentiment subsided. Thus, while asymmetrical and nationalistic public perception was more sustained in the case of Peru and Ecuador, it was not in the case of Honduras and

Nicaragua. Furthermore, as there are multiple differences in the causal mechanisms within the issue salience variable, it also passes the second hoop test. Since there are multiple differences in issue salience between the cases, the issue salience gains more explanatory power for why there was a difference in escalation between the two cases. Consequently, my alternate hypothesis that a difference in issue salience between the cases caused the Ecuador-Peru case to escalate to an MID where force was used and the Honduras-Nicaragua case to not escalate is strengthened. I expected this result, given how important public perception is in the issue agenda setting process. Leaders are responsive to their domestic populations, especially if discontent among their constituents represents a political threat. This then affects their perceptions of an issue and conflict, which may cause them to take actions that they would not normally take.

#### Doubly Decisive Test

Now that I have finished conducting hoop tests for each variable, I can now conduct the doubly decisive test of my hypothesis. Previously, I established that my alternate hypothesis was weakened through the failure of the territorial contiguity, natural resource contention, and development levels to fully pass both hoop tests. My null hypothesis stating that territorial contiguity and natural resource contention contributed were weakened after failing both hoop tests. However, the development level variable, while weakened, was not weakened to the extent that the previous two variables were. This variable passed the first hoop test, as there was an observed difference between the drivers of the HDI scores between the two cases. Specifically, Ecuador and Peru witnessed differences in school enrollment rates while Nicaragua and Honduras witnessed a difference in real GDP per capita. This indicates that despite the development level causal mechanism being weakened, it remains necessary to consider how inequality versus absolute poverty influences MID escalation between the two cases. Despite this



variable passing the first hoop test, it does not pass the second one. For this reason, I still eliminate the development level null hypothesis, as my methodology dictates that a variable must pass both hoop tests to be subjected to the doubly decisive test. Despite this variable being eliminated, the finding regarding inequality versus absolute poverty remains valuable and I will examine it further in the discussion. These variables alone, while still key contributors to MID escalation, do not explain the difference in escalation. Thus, I can eliminate these variables, leaving the issue salience variable as the remaining variable. With the difference in how the perceptions of national leadership and the public in each case contributed to escalation, I have an additional piece of inferential evidence that strengthens my hypothesis. Given that we have eliminated all the variables besides issue salience and the combined weight of the evidence causes issue salience to pass the doubly decisive test. Consequently, I can now fully eliminate the null hypotheses and confirm my alternate hypothesis that issue salience was the variable that resulted in a difference in the escalation of the militarized interstate disputes between cases.

**Table 13. Summary of Variable Testing and Outcomes.**

<b>Summary of Variable Testing</b>				
	<b>Territorial Contiguity</b>	<b>Natural Resource Contention</b>	<b>Development Level</b>	<b>Issue Salience</b>
<b>Hoop Test 1</b>	Fail	Pass	Pass	Pass
<b>Hoop Test 2</b>	Fail	Fail	Fail	Pass
<b>Doubly Decisive Test</b>	Fail	Fail	Fail	Pass

## Discussion

The results of this thesis have important implications for the study of conflict escalation and early warning systems. First, the findings of this study confirm the importance of issue salience in the study of MID escalation. Although measures of issue salience may vary among different studies, one key element is clear across the board: the perceptions of domestic actors, whether leaders or constituents, matter. Previous work on the importance of domestic constituents and leaders supports this finding. As I examined in the literature review, Mares finds, constituencies will express their preferences to domestic leaders in foreign policy not only in terms of resources are needed for survival, but also what protects their social, political, and economic interests.<sup>144</sup> He also includes the former as constituency cost, or a constituencies willingness to participate in conflict to protect their interests, in his calculation of whether states will use of force to participate in militarized bargaining.<sup>145</sup> The findings of this thesis affirm and provide additional evidence towards Mares' findings. Citizens and leaders are not only concerned about the resources and stability necessary for basic survival. As demonstrated by the causal mechanisms of issue salience in this case study, each of these groups has political and economic priorities that are important to them. I also found that these groups also have different positions on their willingness to protect their interests when it comes to these priorities. Thus, my findings related to issue salience, especially related to domestic issues, the importance of public perception in prioritization, and leader perceptions, provide additional evidence towards Mares' argument and further highlight the importance of issue salience in the study of MID escalation.

My findings also affirm the work of Diehl, who argued that issue salience is an important process that explains how national behavior is important in understanding conflict escalation.<sup>146</sup>

---

<sup>144</sup> Mares, *Violent Peace: Militarized Interstate Bargaining in Latin America*.

<sup>145</sup> Mares.

<sup>146</sup> Diehl, "What Are They Fighting For? The Importance of Issues in International Conflict Research."

The process tracing methodology that I used in this thesis to examine the causal mechanisms of issue salience affirmed the relevance of national behavior, especially when considering how the perceptions of domestic leaders and populations affect salience. When leaders face challenges to their legitimacy or electoral threats that call on them to take a more hardline stance, the salience of conflict is increased. Additionally, when nationalistic sentiment is strong in a population for a prolonged period, there is a greater risk of MID escalation because the domestic population will influence the agenda setting undertaken by national leaders. In addition, this thesis also affirmed the findings of Senese who stated that Latin American militarized interstate disputes that include a territorial element have a higher issue salience and are more intense.<sup>147</sup> In both cases selected for the case study, there was interaction between the issue salience and territorial contiguity variables, as one of the principal issues at stake was access to disputed territory. This created the conditions necessary not only for the states in each case to participate in an MID, but also the correct conditions for the MID between Ecuador and Peru to escalate to one where force was used.

While the results of this thesis affirm these works, additional research is needed to confirm the effect issue salience has on conflict escalation in Latin America and how it may create the same observed differences in escalation. Two key limits to the findings of this thesis are that I utilized the qualitative method of process tracing and focused specifically on the context of Latin America. To confirm the linkage between issue salience and MID escalation, future research should utilize quantitative methods to examine the correlation identified through the causal mechanisms identified in this case study and confirm correlation. Additionally, future research should include a broader geographical and temporal sample of militarized interstate

---

<sup>147</sup> Senese, "Geographical Proximity and Issue Salience: Their Effects on the Escalation of Militarized Interstate Conflict."

disputes to determine whether issue salience is relevant to MIDs outside of Latin America and in different temporal periods.

Equally important, the results of this thesis have important implications for the field of conflict early warning, especially considering the interaction between issue salience and development. As I identified in the literature review, a key limitation on contemporary conflict early warning systems is that they oftentimes do not consider how interconnected processes and relationships influence conflict initiation and escalation. This result of this thesis affirms the need for the inclusion of causal mechanisms into these systems. Within this thesis, each of the variables I examined were present in each of my selected cases. However, it wasn't until the causal mechanisms of each of the variables underwent closer examination that I identified that a difference in issue salience caused the Ecuador-Peru MID to escalate to one with force and the Honduras-Nicaragua MID to not escalate. Conflicts are highly contextual, and while the same conflict early warning indicators may be present for both conflicts, one may escalate to a higher intensity than the other. Wulf and Debiel also identify this opportunity and find that the accuracy of early warning systems can be further improved by combining quantitative and qualitative analysis with structural analogies identified in case studies.<sup>148</sup> The results of this thesis affirm their findings and provide further evidence for the inclusion of causal mechanisms in conflict early warning systems. This is especially true considering how we witness the interaction between the causal mechanisms within the issue salience and development level variables. In the case study, I identified how domestic issues related to underdevelopment had a large effect on domestic populations and leaders, which influenced the escalation of both MIDs. In each case, leaders were compelled to participate in an MID to protect their domestic economic interests or

---

<sup>148</sup> Wulf and Debiel, "Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanisms: Tools for Enhancing the Effectiveness of Regional Organisations? A Comparative Study of the AU, ECOWAS, IGAD, ASEAN/ARF and PIF."

create a diversion from domestic issues that were challenging their legitimacy. Additionally, domestic populations influence the decision-making of leaders, as they participated in agenda-setting that prioritized protection of economic interests and measures to reduce the impacts of poverty and inequality. Thus, these findings provide additional evidence that the inclusion of causal mechanisms of issue salience and other variables that interact with it into conflict early warning systems.

In addition to providing evidence for the inclusion of the interaction between issue salience and development variables into conflict early warning systems, this thesis provides new directions for research of the relationship between development and conflict escalation. In my results, the development level variable passed one of the two hoop tests. This is a notable finding, as current scholarship on development indicators, such as poverty and inequality, is focused on how these indicators affect civil armed conflict at the subnational level. However, scholarship on how development affects interstate conflict is significantly lacking. Given my finding that inequality may have influenced MID escalation between Ecuador and Peru, an additional hypothesis not originally considered in my research has arisen. Additionally, I also found that conflict fatigue may have played a role in the Nicaragua and Honduras case, as their low socioeconomic development attributed to their civil wars may have removed domestic will for conflict. I now hypothesize that development is a factor that contributes to MID escalation. I also hypothesize that with a lesser development level, states will be averse to escalating conflict as they do not have the resources necessary to pursue a protracted militarized dispute.

Additionally, I hypothesize that states that have experienced conflict fatigue because of civil war will be averse to participating in interstate conflicts. Further research must be conducted to examine this hypothesis and confirm the relationship between development and interstate

conflict escalation. This research must also focus on examining what aspects of development are important to conflict escalation. This thesis presents the starting points of inequality and poverty; however, there may be other measures of development that are significant. Some questions that could serve as a starting point of future research could be: how do low levels of development contribute to conflict escalation? Does domestic inequality contribute to conflict escalation at the interstate level? Answering these questions will contribute further to conflict escalation studies and the development of effective conflict early warning systems.

Finally, this thesis highlights the relevance of process tracing as an effective methodology in the field of conflict studies. Process was an incredibly useful methodology for this case study, as it allowed for the identification of causal mechanisms that drive variables. By examining these mechanisms at the subnational level, more nuance is gained into specific drivers of conflict. In this thesis, I was able to explain conflict escalation with more detail and accuracy because I was able to trace the processes unique to individual conflicts. As Beach finds, "...by tracing mechanisms using in-depth case studies, we can analytically pry open the causal processes that link causes and outcomes."<sup>149</sup> Thus, this thesis confirmed the utility of process tracing as a methodology. Coupled with quantitative methods, process tracing can contribute strong evidence to establishing causality and concrete conclusions in the field of conflict escalation.

### **Conclusion**

In this thesis, I asked how do differences in conflict escalation indicators between states affect whether a Latin American country will participate in a Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) where force is used? In examining the literature that contextualizes this question, we learned that four types of conflict indicators: territorial contiguity, natural resource contention,

---

<sup>149</sup> Beach, "It's All about Mechanisms – What Process-Tracing Case Studies Should Be Tracing."

development level, and issue salience influence the escalation of militarized interstate disputes. Based on the literature, I hypothesized that issue salience was the indicator that contributed to a difference in escalation between my two cases. To answer my research question, I conducted analysis of each of these indicators through process tracing and the application of hoop tests and doubly decisive tests. Through these tests, I discovered that issue salience was the variable that influenced the difference in conflict escalation between the two cases.

The results of this thesis have significant implications for the field of conflict studies and conflict early warning. First, they confirm the importance of issue salience in the study of conflict escalation. In the literature review, I examined how the perceptions of domestic actors shape the prioritization of issues at the interstate level. Additionally, domestic actors may have a differing willingness to protect their social, economic, and political interests. Both factors were present in each of my cases, which affirms the influence of issue salience conflict escalation. Furthermore, these results confirm the importance of including the nexus of issue salience and development into conflict early warning systems. In both of my cases, leaders decided to participate in an MID to protect their economic interests and create a diversion from domestic development issues that were challenging their legitimacy. To further improve early warning systems, this nexus of issue salience and development should be included. Finally, this thesis highlights the utility of process tracing as a research method in the field of conflict studies. Through examining the causal mechanisms of conflict at the subnational level, more nuance is gained into the drivers of conflict. Additionally, combining process tracing with quantitative methods contributes strong evidence to establishing causality and concrete conclusions regarding conflict escalation.

In this thesis, I also propose new directions for research in the field of conflict escalation and early warning. Two key limits to the findings of this thesis are that I utilized the qualitative method of process tracing and focused specifically on the context of Latin America. To confirm the linkage between issue salience and MID escalation, future research should utilize quantitative methods to examine the correlation identified through the causal mechanisms identified in this case study and confirm correlation. Additionally, my results provide new directions for research of the relationship between development and conflict escalation. In examining the issue salience and development variables, I identified a nexus between the two. Current scholarship examining this interaction at the interstate level is lacking, which creates a barrier to understanding how development and issue salience affect conflict escalation. Thus, future research should ask: how do low levels of development contribute to conflict escalation and how does domestic inequality contribute to conflict escalation at the interstate level? As part of research focused on answering these questions, special attention must be given to conflict fatigue. This phenomenon was identified as a potential contributor to the difference in escalation between the two cases I examined. The effect of conflict fatigue because of low development levels on conflict escalation must also be examined further.

Overall, this thesis emphasizes the importance of considering domestic actors and their prioritization of issues during conflict. In doing so, conflict early warning systems will be able to more accurately account for domestic issues that may translate to the interstate realm and the actions of leaders in events leading up to conflict. This will allow for a more effective and timely response that prevents, rather than reacts to, the onset of conflict. In the end, it will be possible to reduce the economic and social cost of low-grade conflict while, most importantly, saving lives and protecting vulnerable populations.



## Bibliography

- Beach, Derek. "It's All about Mechanisms – What Process-Tracing Case Studies Should Be Tracing." *New Political Economy* 21, no. 5 (September 2, 2016): 463–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2015.1134466>.
- Beardsley, Kyle C., David M. Quinn, Bidisha Biswas, and Jonathan Wilkenfeld. "Mediation Style and Crisis Outcomes." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 1 (2006): 58–86.
- Bennett, Andrew, and Colin Elman. "Case Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield." *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 2 (2007): 170–95.
- Boehmer, Charles R., and David Sobek. "Violent Adolescence: State Development and the Propensity for Militarized Interstate Conflict." *Journal of Peace Research* 42, no. 1 (January 1, 2005): 5–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343305049664>.
- Bremer, Stuart A. "Dangerous Dyads: Conditions Affecting the Likelihood of Interstate War, 1816-1965." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36, no. 2 (1992): 309–41.
- Brown University Library. "Honduras: A Country and a Coup | Modern Latin America." Accessed January 29, 2024. <https://library.brown.edu/create/modernlatinamerica/chapters/chapter-16-latin-america-in-the-world-arena-1990s-present/honduras-a-country-and-a-coup/>.
- Caprioli, Mary. "Gendered Conflict." *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 51–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343300037001003>.
- . "Gendered Conflict." *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 51–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343300037001003>.
- Caprioli, Mary, and Peter Trumbore. "Ethnic Discrimination and Interstate Violence: Testing the International Impact of Domestic Behavior." *Journal of Peace Research* 40, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343303040001842>.
- Chamber of the International Court of Justice. Case Concerning Land, Island and Maritime Frontier Dispute (El Salvador/Honduras: Nicaragua Intervening), No. General List No. 75 (International Court of Justice September 11, 1992).
- Colaresi, Michael P., Karen A. Rasler, and William R. Thompson. *Strategic Rivalries in World Politics : Position, Space and Conflict Escalation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Collier, David. "Understanding Process Tracing." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44, no. 4 (October 2011): 823–30. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096511001429>.
- Dewalt, Billie R., Philippe Vergne, and Mark Hardin. "Shrimp Aquaculture Development and the Environment: People, Mangroves and Fisheries on the Gulf of Fonseca, Honduras." *World Development* 24, no. 7 (July 1, 1996): 1193–1208. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X\(96\)00033-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(96)00033-2).
- Diehl, Paul F. "What Are They Fighting For? The Importance of Issues in International Conflict Research." *Journal of Peace Research* 29, no. 3 (August 1, 1992): 333–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343392029003008>.
- Domínguez, Jorge I., and David R. Mares. *Boundary Disputes in Latin America*. Peaceworks ; No. 50. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2003.

- Ghosn, Faten, Glenn Palmer, and Stuart A. Bremer. "The MID3 Data Set, 1993—2001: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 21, no. 2 (April 1, 2004): 133–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07388940490463861>.
- Gochman, Charles S., and Russell J. Leng. "Realpolitik and the Road to War: An Analysis of Attributes and Behavior." *International Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1983): 97–120. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2600621>.
- Goldstone, Jack A. *Using Quantitative and Qualitative Models to Forecast Instability*. District of Columbia: United States Institute of Peace, March 2008, 2008.
- Grabendorff, Wolf. "Interstate Conflict Behavior and Regional Potential for Conflict in Latin America." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 24, no. 3 (1982): 267–94. <https://doi.org/10.2307/165498>.
- Herz, Monica, Maira Siman, and Ana Clara Telles. "Regional Organizations, Conflict Resolution and Mediation in South America." In *Power Dynamics and Regional Security in Latin America*, edited by Marcial A.G. Suarez, Rafael Duarte Villa, and Brigitte Weiffen, 123–48. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017. [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-57382-7\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-57382-7_6).
- Higgins, Rosalyn. Territorial and Maritime Dispute between Nicaragua and Honduras in the Caribbean Sea (Nicaragua v. Honduras) (International Court of Justice October 8, 2007).
- International Crisis Group. "Ecuador: Overcoming Instability?" Latin America Report. International Crisis Group, September 7, 2007. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/ecuador/ecuador-overcoming-instability>.
- Johnson, Sandy A. "The Cost of War on Public Health: An Exploratory Method for Understanding the Impact of Conflict on Public Health in Sri Lanka." *PLOS ONE* 12, no. 1 (January 12, 2017): e0166674. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0166674>.
- Jones, Daniel M., Stuart A. Bremer, and J. David Singer. "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816–1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15, no. 2 (September 1, 1996): 163–213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/073889429601500203>.
- . "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816–1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15, no. 2 (September 1, 1996): 163–213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/073889429601500203>.
- LADB Staff. "Maritime Conflicts Flare Up Again Between Nicaragua, Honduras," 1998. <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=9381&context=noticen>.
- Leng, Russell J. "Escalation: Competing Perspectives and Empirical Evidence." *International Studies Review* 6, no. 4 (December 2004): 51–64. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1521-9488.2004.00449.x>.
- . "Reciprocating Influence Strategies in Interstate Crisis Bargaining." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37, no. 1 (1993): 3–41.
- Leng, Russell J., and J. David Singer. "Militarized Interstate Crises: The BCOW Typology and Its Applications." *International Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (1988): 155–73. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2600625>.
- Levy, Barry S, and Victor W Sidel. *Preventing War and Its Health Consequences: Roles of Public Health Professionals*. Oxford University Press: New York, 1997.
- Long, Stephen B, and Jeffrey Pickering. "Disparity and Diversion: Domestic Economic Inequality and MID Initiation." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 18, no. 1 (November 9, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orab032>.

- . “Disparity and Diversion: Domestic Economic Inequality and MID Initiation.” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 18, no. 1 (November 9, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orab032>.
- Mares, David R. *Violent Peace : Militarized Interstate Bargaining in Latin America /*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- Mares, David R., and David Scott Palmer. *Power, Institutions, and Leadership in War and Peace : Lessons from Peru and Ecuador, 1995-1998*. Austin, UNITED STATES: University of Texas Press, 2012.  
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/du/detail.action?docID=3443594>.
- Mitchell, Sara MacLaughlin, and Brandon C. Prins. “Beyond Territorial Contiguity: Issues at Stake in Democratic Militarized Interstate Disputes.” *International Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (March 1999): 169–83. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0020-8833.00115>.
- Nguefack-Tsague, Georges, Stephan Klasen, and Walter Zucchini. “On Weighting the Components of the Human Development Index: A Statistical Justification.” *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* 12, no. 2 (May 1, 2011): 183–202.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2011.571077>.
- Palao, Rene J. “Honduras Strategic Free Passage Through the Gulf of Fonseca.” US Army War College, 2007. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA468952>.
- Palmer, David Scott. “Peru-Ecuador Border Conflict: Missed Opportunities, Misplaced Nationalism, and Multilateral Peacekeeping.” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 39, no. 3 (July 1, 1997): 109–48. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-2456.1997.tb00041.x>.
- Palmer, Glenn, Roseanne W McManus, Vito D’Orazio, Michael R Kenwick, Mikaela Karstens, Chase Bloch, Nick Dietrich, Kayla Kahn, Kellan Ritter, and Michael J Soules. “The MID5 Dataset, 2011–2014: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description.” *Conflict Management and Peace Science*. 39, no. 4 (July 2022).
- Peace, Friendship, and Boundaries between Peru and Ecuador (Rio Protocol) (1946). <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/Rio%20Protocol%20English%201942.pdf>.
- Pizzati, Vivian Lezama. “HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT: A CONDOMINIUM IN THE GULF OF FONSECA.” United Nations, 2016.  
[https://www.un.org/oceancapacity/sites/www.un.org.oceancapacity/files/thesis\\_vlezama.pdf](https://www.un.org/oceancapacity/sites/www.un.org.oceancapacity/files/thesis_vlezama.pdf).
- Quintana, Moreno. Arbitral Award Made by the King of Spain on 23 December 1906 (Honduras v. Nicaragua) (International Court of Justice November 18, 1960).
- Rauchhaus, Robert W. “Asymmetric Information, Mediation, and Conflict Management.” *World Politics* 58, no. 2 (2006 2005): 207–41.
- Ray, Debraj, and Joan Esteban. “Conflict and Development.” *Annual Review of Economics* 9, no. 1 (August 2, 2017): 263–93. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-061109-080205>.
- Rød, Espen Geelmuyden, Tim Gåsste, and Håvard Hegre. “A Review and Comparison of Conflict Early Warning Systems.” *International Journal of Forecasting*, January 2023.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijforecast.2023.01.001>.
- Rosenberg, Mark B. “Nicaragua and Honduras: Toward Garrison States.” *Current History* 83, no. 490 (1984): 59–87.
- Sarkees, Meredith Reid, Frank Whelon Wayman, and J. David Singer. “Inter-State, Intra-State, and Extra-State Wars: A Comprehensive Look at Their Distribution over Time, 1816–

- 1997.” *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (March 1, 2003): 49–70.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2478.4701003>.
- Senese, Paul D. “Geographical Proximity and Issue Salience: Their Effects on the Escalation of Militarized Interstate Conflict.” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15, no. 2 (September 1, 1996): 133–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/073889429601500202>.
- Simmons, Beth A. *Territorial Disputes and Their Resolution : The Case of Ecuador and Peru /*. Peaceworks ; No. 27. Washington, DC (1200 17th St., NW, Washington 20036): U.S. Institute of Peace, 1999.
- Small, Melvin., and J. David Singer. *Resort to Arms : International and Civil Wars, 1816-1980 /*. *Resort to Arms : International and Civil Wars, 1816-1980*. [2nd ed.]. Beverly Hills, Calif: Sage Publications, 1982.
- Stanley, Denise, and Carolina Alduvin. “Science and Society in the Gulf of Fonseca -The Changing History of Mariculture in Honduras.” World Bank, Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific, World Wildlife Fund, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2002.  
<https://library.enaca.org/Shrimp/Case/LatinAmerica/Honduras/Honduras-SciAndSoc.pdf>.
- Stewart, Frances. “Crisis Prevention: Tackling Horizontal Inequalities.” *Oxford Development Studies* 28, no. 3 (October 1, 2000): 245–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713688319>.
- Ugalde, Antonio, Ernesto Selva-Sutter, Carolina Castillo, Carolina Paz, and Sergio Canas. “The Health Costs of War: Can They Be Measured? Lessons from El Salvador.” *BMJ : British Medical Journal* 321, no. 7254 (July 15, 2000): 169.  
<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.321.7254.169>.
- United Nations. “Human Development Index Specific Country Data.” *Human Development Reports*. United Nations. Accessed January 18, 2024. <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data>.
- United Nations Development Programme. “Human Development Report 1995.” United Nations, 1995. <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdr1995encompletenostatpdf.pdf>.
- United Nations Development Programme and Organization of American States. “Practical Guide: Early Warning and Response Systems Design for Social Conflicts.” Panama: United Nations Development Programme, 2016.  
[https://www.oas.org/es/sap/pubs/GuiaAlerta\\_e.pdf](https://www.oas.org/es/sap/pubs/GuiaAlerta_e.pdf).
- U.S. Department of State. “1997 Human Rights Report: Honduras,” 1998. [https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/human\\_rights/1997\\_hrp\\_report/honduras.html](https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/human_rights/1997_hrp_report/honduras.html).
- . “1997 Human Rights Report: Nicaragua,” 1998. [https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/human\\_rights/1997\\_hrp\\_report/nicaragu.html](https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/human_rights/1997_hrp_report/nicaragu.html).
- Vyas, Kejal. “Venezuela Ramps Up Threat to Annex Part of Guyana.” *Wall Street Journal*, December 5, 2023, sec. World. <https://www.wsj.com/world/americas/venezuela-ramps-up-threat-to-annex-part-of-guyana-7ad621e1>.
- World Bank. “The Human Capital Index 2020 Update: Human Capital in the Time of COVID-19.” Washington, DC: World Bank, September 16, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1596/34432>.
- . “World Bank Open Data.” World Bank Open Data. Accessed March 31, 2024. <https://data.worldbank.org>.
- Wulf, Herbert, and Tobias Debiel. “Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanisms: Tools for Enhancing the Effectiveness of Regional Organisations? A Comparative Study of the AU, ECOWAS, IGAD, ASEAN/ARF and PIF,” May 2009.