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Summary of Huth, *Standing Your Ground* (ch. 3 and 6)

In chapter 3, Paul outlines what he calls a “modified realist model” of international relations. The model has three stages: (1) Policymakers in a country choose whether or not to make a territorial claim against a neighbor; (2) Policymakers decide how much military/diplomatic pressure will accompany their challenge (if one is made) and (3) Policymakers choose whether or not to seek a peaceful resolution of the territorial dispute.

Undergirding the model are nine basic assumptions: (1) states are responsible for their own security in an anarchic international system; (2) state leaders wish to maintain/expand political power at home; (3) leaders must generate support among domestic political constituencies in order to stay in office; (4) domestic political groups can influence political leaders; (5) states leaders believe that foreign policy setbacks will generate high domestic costs; (6) domestic political institutions influence the way in which leaders resolve conflict; (7) norms developed for the resolution of domestic political conflict in a state will be used by that state in its approach to international conflict; (8) the threat of military power is the ultimate recourse for state leader in resolving disputes; (9) states seek flexibility in relations with other states, but they may also sign agreements and join alliances. As we can see, Huth mixes insights from both neo-realism and “second-image” IR theory in his model.

From these nine assumptions, Huth formulates a number of hypotheses. Listing them here would be unwieldy and unnecessary as there is a nice chart on page 65 that provides a quick summary. Essentially, each hypothesis names a variable and hypothesizes whether that variable is positively or negatively correlated to either (1) dispute initiation; (2) dispute escalation; or (3) dispute settlement. Then, Huth contrasts each hypothesis with predictions from a simple realist model. He finds that the two models differ in predictions centering on domestic context variables (which for him are: the existence of prior military disputes; the existence of prior military conflict; prior loss of territory; decolonization norm; and level of democracy. Two variables in the category of issues at stake also produce different hypotheses from the realist model: support for bordering minorities, and the stake of political unification. Essentially, all of these differences between the two models stem from the fact that the neo-realist model doesn’t consider how the concerns of domestic groups and domestic institutions can influence interstate relations, whereas Huth does.

Chapter 6 is devoted to testing the third stage of Huth’s model: peaceful resolution of territorial disputes. He operationalizes the variables in his model and uses probit analysis to determine their role in predicting the likelihood that a challenger will favor peaceful resolution of a dispute. Huth uses a dataset drawn from 129 territorial disputes. He finds that each coefficient has the predicted sign and is statistically significant. However, none of the variables by themselves had a “large substantive effect in either promoting or blocking the settlement of disputes.” Huth considers this to be an effect of “immobilism,” “that no particular set of issues are fundamentally more or less prone to compromise than others.” The rest of this chapter is devoted to examining a series of “mini-case studies” to provide evidence supporting the results of the statistical analysis.