Maoz, Zeev. "Resolve, Capabilities, and the Outcomes of International Disputes, 1816-1976."
   ***Journal of Conflict Resolution* 27:2 (June, 1983), pp. 195-229.**

Empirically, those who initiate interstate conflicts (war or sub-war) win with disproportionate frequency. Why is this so? Maoz designs to examine two large but not comprehensive classes of explanation – *capability-based* and *resolve-based* – and determine their relative merit. While doing so, he acknowledges that they are not truly competing theories, and that they might both contain some degree of truth.

In capability-based theories, the stronger (i.e., more capable) state is more likely to start the conflict. Because the initiator is more powerful, it is also more likely to win. This leaves the question of why the stronger state is more likely to originate a dispute; two likely scenarios have been advanced:

- the *threat model*, where conflicts begin when powerful states feel another state's rising power must be forestalled through a preventative war (e.g., Israel triggering war with Egypt in 1956 lest the latter's Soviet arms deal bear fruit), and

- the *power transition model*, where rising military powers attempt to accelerate their increase in political influence by challenging the fading former power (e.g., Prussia inducing war with France in 1870)

In resolve-based theories, by contrast, it is the relative motivation of each player to fight that determines the outcome: as per Schelling, those players more willing to risk escalating the conflict are more likely to win. In addition, the greater motivation could preserve one's focus and thereby improve strategic management, and with better management comes the initiative. The third model is then:

- the *resolve model*, where initiators of international disputes continue to escalate the tension until their opponent backs down (e.g., Germany triumphed in the Sudetenland crisis because the Allies were unwilling to risk war).

Capability-based theories emphasize power alone and thus align more with neo-realist theories of politics. Resolve-based theories, with their greater stress on matters of psychology (commitment and decisiveness), are more revisionist in nature.

Maoz runs several statistical analyses on a data set (the construction of which is described in gruesome detail) involving a random sample of international incidents in the eponymous years. He repeatedly finds that the resolve model is much more effective than the capability model, and that this is true in virtually any possible context (i.e., century, region, etc.) and dispute type (i.e., war vs. non-war, Great Power vs. Pissant Power, etc.) Indeed, the capability model has very little explanatory power at all, and virtually all its statistical value is already captured in the resolve model.