

Territorial Indivisibility and Domestic Preference for Dispute Resolution: Evidence from Japan

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Puzzle

Some of the most enduring territorial disputes, e.g., Falklands/Malvinas, Jerusalem, Taiwan, seem to display the characteristic of [issue indivisibility](#):

- ▶ At least one side of the disputes has consistently taken a position of all-or-nothing;
- ▶ Moreover, states refuse compromised solutions that are better than the status quo (continued fighting or threat of war).

Contrary to bargaining theory of war

Bargaining theory of war: indivisibility is not a compelling explanation for war (Fearon 1995, Powell 2006):

- ▶ Indivisibility typically reflects some other underlying issues, such as domestic politics;
- ▶ Bargaining strategy (Wiegand 2011, Henripin 2016);
- ▶ Side payments, or some random allocation mechanism can help reach a bargaining solution even if the issues are indivisible;
- ▶ Powell (2006) further argues that an indivisibility problem is a commitment problem.

Territorial disputes and conflict

- ▶ Some territorial disputes with intangible salience to a nation are more likely to lead to severe conflict
(Gibler et al. 2012; Goertz and Diehl 1992; Hensel and Mitchell 2005, Herb and Kaplan 1999; and Newman 1999, Vasquez 1993, Shelef 2016).
- ▶ Alternatively, some argue that such territories are more likely to be seen as indivisible (Hassner 2003, Hensel and Mitchell 2005, Toft 2006, Zellman 2015);

A missing link – individuals' beliefs.

Questions

How are actors' **beliefs** influenced by the characteristics of such territories?

And how do such beliefs influence their **policy preferences**?

- ▶ Can historical ownership be a source of a perception of territorial indivisibility?
- ▶ If it can, can the perception of indivisibility be a significant cause of conflict?

Survey experiments are a great tool for getting at actors' beliefs.

Hypotheses

H1: Source of Indivisibility

Individuals are more likely to prefer indivisible outcomes in a territorial dispute if the territory is deemed to be historically owned by their country.

H2: The Effect of Indivisibility on Policy Preference

Those who hold the belief that a disputed territory is indivisible are more likely to support contentious policy options than those who do not hold such a belief.

A Survey Experiment in Japan

- ▶ Implemented in September 2016 by Nikkei Research's online subject pool of over 145,000;
- ▶ A sample of 2,621;
- ▶ Respondents are on average older, more educated, and well-off than average citizens.

Three treatments (3x2x2 design):

- ▶ Whether a disputed territory historically belonged to Japan;
- ▶ Military Strength of the potential opponent;
- ▶ Whether or not the territory has economic values.

Background Information

Please consider the following hypothetical scenario carefully and then answer the questions:

Japan is involved in a dispute with a [militarily strong/weak] neighboring country over a piece of territory (an island). This territory [has economic value/the economic value is unknown], and [historically belonged to Japan /historically belonged to the neighboring country/ historically did not belong to any country].

Question 1: Getting at beliefs

Do you find each outcome below acceptable, unacceptable or are you unsure?

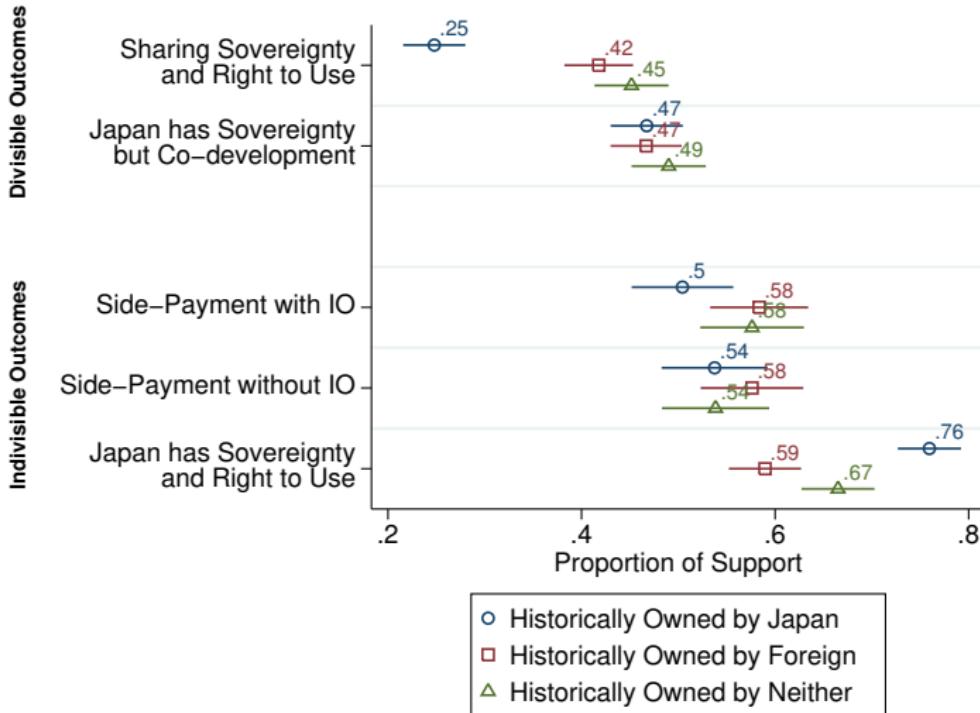
1. Two countries share both the sovereignty of and the right to use the territory;
2. Japan has the sovereignty, but both countries share the right to use the territory;
3. Japan has both the sovereignty and the right to use the territory, but makes economic or political compensations to the neighboring country.
4. Japan has both the sovereignty of and the right to use the territory, and does not make any other concessions.

Question 2: Preference over Policy

Do you find each of the following option appropriate for the hypothetical dispute scenario, or are you unsure:

1. Strengthening externally-directed propaganda;
2. Imposing economic sanctions;
3. Reaching a compromise through bilateral negotiation;
4. Submitting [the dispute] to international organizations (e.g. the UN, the ICJ) for arbitration;
5. Shelving the dispute and jointly developing resources.
6. Taking limited military actions;
7. Taking full military actions;

H1 Results: Preference over outcome of the dispute



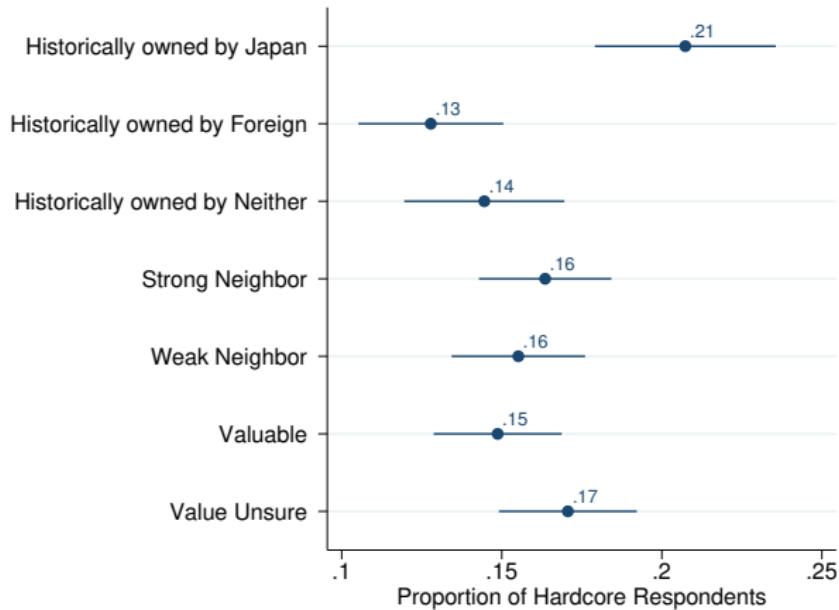
“Hardcore Indivisible Group”

We define hardcore indivisible respondents as (381 out of 2,389):

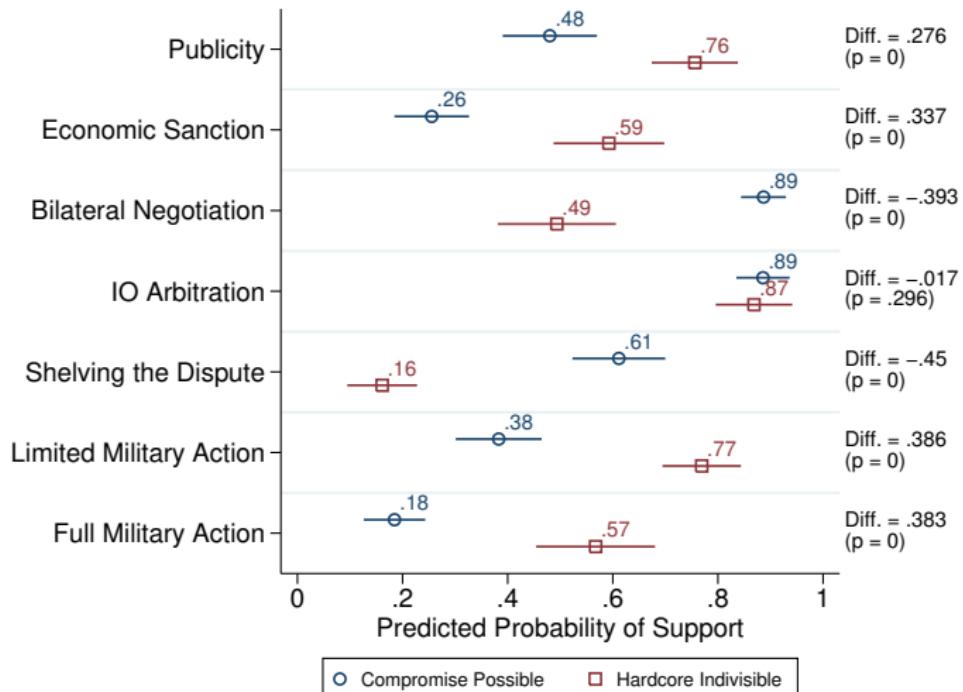
Individuals who find the ONLY acceptable outcome is the indivisible outcome without side-payments;

Proportion of Hardcore Indivisible by Treatment Group

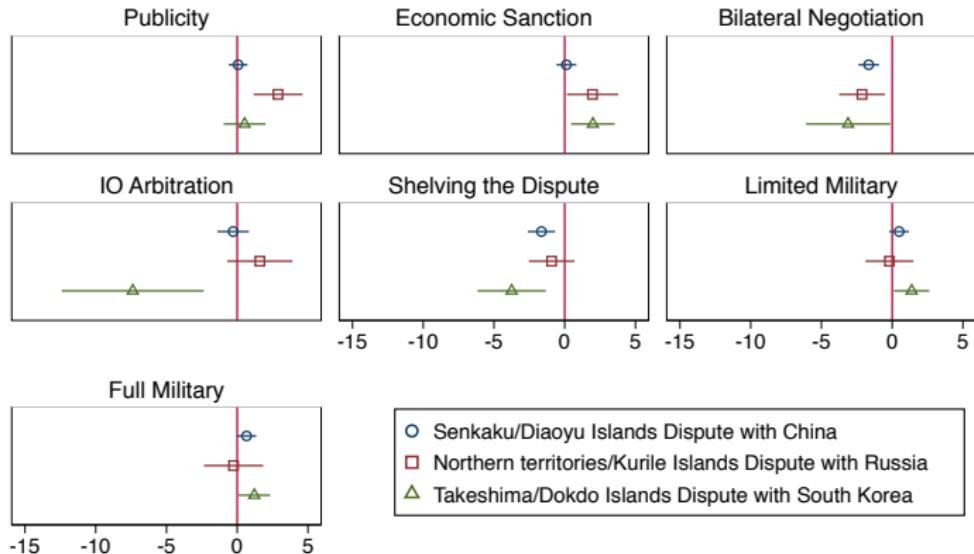
A higher proportion of the “hardcore indivisible” respondents chose the indivisible outcome when primed with historical ownership.



H2 Result: Support for Different Policy Positions



Policy Preferences for Real Disputes



Conclusion

Our study suggests that indivisibility may be a more important explanation for territorial disputes than is generally assumed:

- ▶ Historical ownership can be a source of a perception of territorial indivisibility;
- ▶ Perception of indivisibility then leads to more aggressive policy positions.

Additional findings:

- ▶ IO arbitration receive high level of support (89%);
- ▶ Economic sanctions are perceived to be more costly than limited military actions but less so than full military actions.
- ▶ More split in policy preference between the two groups than we find in China.