

Research Paper:

The major assignment for the class will be a research paper in which each student analyzes an international dispute or "conflict episode" (chosen from a list provided by the instructor) from its inception, through its escalation phase, to its termination.

The paper will be written in five phases. The phases allow the students to complete portions of the research throughout the semester and get feedback regarding that research. It is expected that the final paper incorporate the feedback that the student has received.

Phase 1. Demonstrate understanding of the dispute you have been given. Provide a summary of your dispute episode and an initial reference list that you will use for future research. This will include identification of key leaders in each country, a detailed description of the relative capabilities of each country, why either country could not (perhaps) use their full capabilities in this dispute, whether either country was a major power, the regime type of each country (using both the Polity Score and a more descriptive identification, identification of the alliance(s) between the countries if an alliance type is listed. Provide an analysis and discussion of the predicted outcome using the international interaction game and the ordinal preferences you have been given. (2-3 pages in at least eight paragraphs, not including one page for the international interaction game worksheet and another page for the works cited list.)

An explicit outline for Phase 1 is provided as a guide:

Phase 1 Outline

A. Opening

1. Name of dispute
2. Dates
3. Between what countries
4. Summary of "dispute information"
5. Where did the relevant events take place?

B. State A

1. Regime type
2. Major-power status
3. Key decision-makers

C. State B

1. Regime type
2. Major-power status
3. Key decision-makers

D. Relative capabilities

1. Military personnel
2. Military expenditures
3. Energy consumption
4. Iron & steel production
5. Urban population
6. Total population
7. Percent of system capabilities

E. Qualifiers to relative capabilities

F. Alliance between the two countries?

G. International interaction game

1. Predicted outcome
2. "Off the equilibrium path" decisions

H. Comparison of predicted outcome and actual outcome using the "hostility-level method"

Phase 2. Timeline of the dispute.

Provide a detailed timeline accounting for the actions of the states and their leaders that make up the dispute. Include relevant third-party actions. The timeline itself should be written in prose but with dates as headers; there should be at least one paragraph per date. (See example below.) Provide citations (author or outlet and date of publication) throughout the timeline regarding where you discovered these actions and the details thereof. Add a "Works Cited" list at the end of the assignment that is alphabetized by author or outlet. (The length of the timelines will vary according to how long your dispute was and how much happened. This assignment is expected to be at least 2 pages: at least one for the timeline and at least one more for the works cited list.)

Example entries for a (fictional) timeline:

29 August 1935

Prime Minister Gordon of New Zealand makes a speech demanding that Australia cede Tasmania to New Zealand (Gordon, 1935). Later that day, Australia puts its military forces on alert (Canberra Times, 30 August 1935).

30 August 1935

New Zealand's navy (thirty ships, including two battleships) masses in the Bass Strait. Australia is caught unawares, having only three patrol boats in the area (Canberra Times, 31 August 1935; Christchurch Daily, 1 September 1935). Foreign Minister Palmer of Great Britain offers to mediate the conflict (London Gazette, 31 August 1935).

Phase 3. Historical background leading up to the dispute

What did the actors say the dispute was about? How far back in time does this conflict of interest extend between these two states? Also describe the general historical relationship between the two states and any relevant third-party actors. Cite your evidence and provide a works cited page at the end of the assignment. (Again, the length of this phase will vary according to the nature of your dispute. This assignment is expected to be at least 2 pages: at least one for the historical background and at least one more for the works cited list.

Phase 4. Make a determination of the likely stakes, costs, and probabilities of winning (objective and perceived). Cite your connecting evidence and provide a works cited page at the end of the assignment. Then make an informed estimation of what the actors' likely preferences were over the eight outcomes of the international interaction game. (These need not match the ordinal preferences given to you earlier.) Provide an analysis and discussion of the predicted outcome using the international interaction game and your ordinal preferences. (2-3 pages, not including one page for the international interaction game worksheet and another page for the works cited list.)

Phase 5. Using another theory from class (one that you think can help you the most in understanding the dispute), review the theory and what information it needs to generate predictions. Make a determination of the relevant information from your case (citing connecting evidence), and then argue what the chosen theory would predict for your case. (3-4 pages, not including the works cited list)

The final paper is a synthesis and re-write of the five phases. It also contains three new sections: an opening that argues for a theory, a compare and contrast section, and a conclusion. Your final paper should be the best written piece of work you have turned in this semester.

Final Paper Outline

- I. Opening
 - A. What dispute, when, between what states?
 - B. Preview of findings: "I argue that X theory explains this case better..."
- II. Historical background between the states, including the conflict of interest that led to the dispute
- III. The dispute itself (timeline in prose form; specifically, without the date headers)
- IV. International Interaction Game Analysis
- V. Second Theory Analysis
- VI. Compare & Contrast Theories
 - A. Which of the two theories better explains the case?
 - B. Why?
 - C. What are the weaknesses of the better theory?
 - D. What are the strengths of the weaker theory?
 - E. Having done this analysis, what third theory would you want to apply to your case next? Why would you choose that third theory?
- VII. Conclusions
 - A. What have you learned about theories of conflict and cooperation as a result of this research project?
 - B. What have you learned about social scientific research more generally?
 - C. How would you make this assignment better for future students?