



The Domestic Origins of No-War Communities

State capacity and the management of territorial disputes in South America and Southeast Asia

Nicole JENNE

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to explain the relative absence of inter-state war in South America and Southeast Asia. I maintain that the two regions are security communities in a minimalist sense. The sustenance of these minimalist, no-war communities lacks a conclusive explanation, as the factors commonly emphasised by security community scholars have been either weak or wholly absent in the two cases. The emergence of no-war communities in South America and Southeast Asia is all the more puzzling given the fact that in both regions there have been numerous territorial disputes, which have been shown to be the best predictor of interstate conflict.

Building on qualitative case studies of territorial disputes, I advance three propositions. First, I argue that a lack of domestic state capacity induced an overriding and lasting concern with internal stability in the two regions. The need for internal security created incentives to manage international conflict, leading states to avoid war with their neighbours. Second, I maintain that in order to understand the conjunction between accommodation and the sporadic escalation of conflict, state capacity needs to be disaggregated into its theoretically relevant dimensions. In this study, three dimensions correlated strongly with how states behaved in territorial dispute: military capacity, institutional capacity, and socio-political cohesion. My third proposition is that in both regions, states came to develop stable expectations that major war between them was highly unlikely. The causal arrow that explains the emergence of community in South America and Southeast Asia is domestic incapacity; however, how the no-war pattern regularized and institutionalized, took different forms in the two regions.



Jury: Pascal Vennesson (S. Rajaratnam School of Int.I Studies, Singapore), Nicholas J. Wheeler (Univ. Birmingham), Nicole Jenne (Ph.D. candidate), Chris Reus-Smit (Univ. Queensland) (Supervisor), Emanuel Adler (in absentia)

Bio

Nicole started her PhD under supervision of Prof. Chris Reus-Smit at the EUI in 2011. Since March 2016, she works as an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Political Science at the Catholic University of Chile. Nicole holds a Master in International Relations from the University of Edinburgh and worked at the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals before she joined the EUI.