

Geographic and Territorial Pathways to State Death

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State death, understood as the formal loss of control over foreign policy, is an important but neglected phenomenon in the international relations literature. When do states die and why? How do states exit the system? The consequences of state death can be wide-ranging from forced migration movements, to regional instability, to general famine. Despite these severe consequences political scientists have so far failed to empirically and systematically study the causes of state death. Fazal (2004) finds that states are prone to death when they are located as a buffer between two rivals; this suggests that being a buffer state is a cause of state death. Our research suggests the concept of territoriality is critical to state death. We find that states are at greater risk of death when they become involved in territorial disputes that lead to general state destabilization. The resulting research will demonstrate that a reliable predictor of state death is the engagement in a territorial dispute. Territorial disputes are the most prevalent issue that leads to war and can also be a leading cause of state death.

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Introduction

State death is an important but hitherto neglected concept within the international relations literature (see Fazal 2007). Since state survival is typically the minimum a leader must strive for to maintain political power (Machiavelli 1886; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003), the potential loss of functional statehood requires scholarly attention. When do states die and why? How does a state 'exit' the system? The consequences of state death can be wide-ranging and include institutional disintegration, mass violence, forced migration movements, the establishment of terrorist safe havens, and famine (Rotberg 2002). Despite these severe outcomes, political science as a field has so far failed to empirically and systematically study the potential causes of state death in a satisfactory manner. This research seeks to push the study of state exit forward and suggest new pathways towards state death so that it can be avoided in the future.

Fazal (2004) demonstrates empirically that states are typically predatory targets when they fall between two rivals and thus suggests that being a buffer state is a primary cause of state death. State death is understood as the loss of formal control over political decision making within the state, particularly foreign policy decision-making (Fazal 2004). States die when they come between the ambitions of two historical rivals. Rivals are defined as long term historical enemies who have fought a series of militarized disputes and wars (Diehl and Goertz 2000). This view of state death is incomplete and inadequate because it fails to account for the factor of territorial disputes, which often precedes or supersedes buffer state status. Our expansion and refinement of current research seeks to add the concept of territoriality (Vasquez 1995) to the state death literature. Territoriality is defined as the biological need to conquer and delineate territorial boundaries often involving issues of national security and international prestige. We theorize that states are more likely to die when they become involved in territorial disputes as

such disputes will then destabilize the state, its leadership, and can open it up to the possibility of conquest.

Due to the salience of territorial disputes (Senese 1996) and their connection to irredentist movements (Saideman 2001), we believe that territorial disputes are symptoms of when states will be at risk for system exit. Engaging in disputes that will put a state's territorial boundaries in question is a path towards state ruin. The resulting process will demonstrate that a reliable predictor of state death is the engagement in a territorial dispute or the emergence of a territorial issue with neighboring states. Buffer state status may still be an important predictor of when states die, but there are other factors that have been left unexplored and we hope to uncover them here.

The implication of this research is an expansion of the territorial theory of war (Vasquez 1993) to include the impact of external events on internal foreign policy processes. It demonstrates that the territorial theory of conflict has research fertility in that new questions and answers can emerge from its central logic (Lakatos 1970). Territorial disputes are typically the most likely causes of war (Vasquez and Valeriano 2010) and are also strongly associated with instances of state death. Territory as a process, and key issue of dispute, can explain more than is assumed in international politics. The relevance and importance of territorial questions has long been ignored in the field and this article is an example of how the process of state death may have territorial elements inherent in the story of such events. States do not die because they fail economically, fail to provide for social safety nets, or experience environmental destabilization. States often die when they fail to control and settle pressing issues at stake in the realm of foreign policy. We will next examine past research on state death and present our theoretical refinement.

What Do We Know About State Death?

The issue of state death has not received much attention by international relations scholars. This may be due in part to the greater attention scholars generally give to major powers or, more recently, the concept of state failure, when domestic control collapses but its international juridical sovereignty remains intact. Major power bias has been justified on the grounds that, “the fates of all states and of all firms in a system are affected much more by the acts and the interactions of the major ones than the minor ones” (Waltz 1979, 61). The problem raised by major power bias is that the states most at risk of state death are rarely major powers and more often minor states poorly equipped to fend off the designs of stronger states. This is significant to the extent that state survival tactics advanced by scholars have been developed solely through the lens of major powers. It is argued that states that fail to undertake the strategies of balancing or conquest risk being selected out of the inter-state system, or suffer death through annexation (Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2001).

While strategies of survival applied to great powers remains a controversial topic we have empirical evidence that they are largely untenable strategies for minor states to adopt (Fazal 2007). This is particularly the case when the state in question is a minor one in conflict with a major power. Thus our present understanding of the process of state death is both underdeveloped and stymied by theoretical aversions to straying from major power analyses that dominates Realist theory.

Scholars are, generally, more familiar with the concept of buffer states. However, usage of the buffer concept has been limited within international relations scholarship since it is largely tied to specific eras of history and historically significant rivalries between powerful states. The essential function of a buffer state is to stand at the center of a strong pattern of securitization,

separating rival powers (Buzan and Waeber 2007). The utility of the buffer state concept rests, in large part, upon the classic examples of 19th century Afghanistan between the British and Russian Empires and late 18th century and early 20th century Poland situated between Germany and Russia. However, questions remain as to the efficacy of buffer status as it relates to state death. Specifically, is it in fact a state's status as a buffer that increases the likelihood of state death or some as yet unidentified issue? Is it dangerous to be a buffer as Fazal (2004, 2007) suggests?

The geopolitics of post-colonial South America sheds light on the question. According to Kelly (1997) five of the seven major South American wars directly engaged the regions buffer states (Ecuador, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Paraguay) where the issue of contention was disputed territory and the outcome was loss of territory by the buffer state. While this evidence supporting a territorial connection to buffer status is largely anecdotal it suggests that scholars would do well to investigate the specific and underlying issues of contention that buffer states have with their neighbors, particularly issues involving territorial disputes. The following analysis will take this first step by comparing the respective explanatory power of buffer state status and presence of territorial disputes as they pertain to instances of state death.

Territoriality and the Process of State Death

This research follows the issue based approach (Hensel 2001, Vasquez and Mansbach 1983) which suggests that issues of contention are the key to war and peace. Territorial issues as a cause of internal state problems are typically ignored as important issues that need to be solved and settled. Instead scholars focus on geography (Diamond 1997), governmental instability (Rotberg 2002), and threats posed by major powers (Fazal 2007) as causes of state death. The problem with the current literature on state stability is its focus on reactive policy and not the

factors endemic to state death in the first place. One cannot hope to solve the problem of state death without first understanding the concept's systematic, structural, or agency causes. By identifying the essential factors that account for state death one can look for a way to limit these factors before they impact the state's ability to survive. By limiting the territorial issues on the foreign policy agenda between two states we can substantially minimize conflict, state death, and civilian death/displacement (Vasquez and Valeriano 2009). Territorial issues are a trap states fall into and herein we suggest that states must settle their territorial disagreements before they become a barrier against state success and, at worst, lead to state death.

One of the main issues conducive to political instability within a state is when political leadership engages in kleptocratic, patronage, and/or spoils based politics (Bates 2008). While recourse to these strategies of political survival have been connected to myriad causes such as a lack of broad political legitimacy and/or a negative political incentive structure, many connect such practices to colonial border legacies that arbitrarily and untenably lumped different cultures and societies together or conversely fragmented previously unified societies (Buzan and Waever 2007; Herbst 1997). This idea leads to the question of the impact of borders and territoriality on the probability of state death. As of yet there has not been any systematic research on the factor of territorial disputes as a leading cause of state instability and death.

We follow Fazal (2004; 2007) and build upon her conceptions of state death and the causes of state death in this analysis. Fazal's theory is that buffer states represent the states most vulnerable to death because of their placement between two states fighting for power and influence in the region. State death is defined as the formal loss of control over foreign policy

making to another state (Fazal 2004: 312).¹ “Typically, state death occurs when one state takes over another, or when a state breaks up into multiple, new states.” (Fazal 2007: 1) About 25 percent of the states in the international system since 1815 have ‘died.’ In particular, buffer states that fall between two recognized rivals (Diehl and Goertz 2000) are prone to state death according to Fazal’s (2004) analysis.

We seek to expand Fazal’s (2004) analysis and move it in a slightly different direction. Central to the concept of buffer state death is the assumption that one rival may seek to acquire a buffer state so that the enemy will be denied access to this territory for strategic reasons. Counterintuitive to conventional wisdom, it is found that rivals divided by other states are likely to conquer buffers and expand their territorial holdings so that the state is now ‘right next to a rival.’ (Fazal 2004: 313) Buffers are meant to separate deadly enemies but in fact, they may serve as tempting targets of opportunity. Since rivals typically seek to deny a benefit to an enemy, it might not be surprising that buffer states are frequently taken over by a state engaged in rivalry so that its enemy cannot beat them to it.

This line of logic leads to other questions. First, it is assumed in previous analysis that a ‘buffer’ cannot have issues that connect it to a conquering state (Fazal 2004). In this scenario it appears that the buffer is just a pawn in the game of international politics. Of course, this is not always true. Buffer states are still internationally recognized states that have control over their foreign policy; otherwise they would not be states in the first place. They are independent actors in their own right and will have issues at stake with many states, particularly their immediate neighbors. They may in fact be rivals with one or both of the states instituting buffer status and not just a hapless bystander. The assumption that minor powers matter little in global politics is

¹ While we are not completely satisfied with this definition, this research is aimed at the accumulation of knowledge. We first seek to confirm Fazal’s (2004) results and expand on them. To do this, we must use her definition of state death and seek to explain this in our analysis.

inherent in realist analysis (Mearsheimer 2001) and we must move beyond this simple construct of international affairs.

Minor states do matter in international relations (Valeriano 2009), yet the assumption that buffer states that die are minor actors in the system is called into question by looking at the states Fazal (2004) codes as experiencing violent state death. On the list are Austria, France, Norway, Greece, Germany, and the Soviet Union (see Appendix C). Clearly these are not the insignificant states that one might assume are mere pawns between two rivals in the game of buffer politics.

Even if buffer state status were to be found to be a critical variable that can account for an increased probability of state death, there is little the buffer state can do about it. Buffer status is the product of geographic circumstance, and is an issue that falls outside the purview of state control. The resulting policy advice is simply, do not be a buffer.² As researchers we must provide an opportunity to modify the sources of conflict and little can be done to prevent a state from becoming territorially connected to two rivals.

We suspect that a crucial variable that can more fully account for state death is territorial claims rather than buffer state status. What is more, the identification of territorial disputes as an important cause of state death can potentially lead to viable policy proposals to ameliorate instances of state death. While explanation is important, presumably scholars are also interested in the construction of policy proposals to ameliorate instances of state death. States are at greater risk of death when their territory is either questioned (disputed) or conquered by another state. By losing control of territorial boundaries, or the homeland, a leaders' political authority is subsequently undermined. The leadership remains unable to control the foreign policy destiny of

² Whether or not policy relevance is a useful way to judge the adequacy of theoretical propositions is an open debate in the field. We follow Vasquez (1998) and believe that policy relevance is a useful criterion to evaluate a theory but empirical accuracy, research fertility, and explanatory power are more important factors.

the state when its territorial integrity is threatened. Territorial issues alone can cause a cascade of problems associated with a failure of security and the inability to protect the national interest. Therefore, it is suggested that a primary casual mechanism that can account for the death of a state is the existence of a territorial issue.³ Not all states die and not all states have territorial disputes, yet it seems that these factors are linked in international history. If territorial disputes can help identify which states are at risk of death, then the resulting policy advice would be for international institutions and actors to focus on and resolve territorial issues at stake between two states before state death occurs.

Territoriality (Vasquez 1993) has been a recent and proliferating area of study in international relations. Once one assumes that the primary cause of conflict is the disagreement of issue areas between states (Mansbach and Vasquez 1981; Hensel 2001) it is relatively easy to move the primary locus of concern to territoriality as a cause of discord in international affairs. Territoriality is the biological basis for the desire to control land, demark borders, and conquer new areas (Vasquez and Valeriano 2009). Throughout history, territoriality has been a primary cause of conflict (Holsti 1991), yet it is only recently that this factor has been put to strong empirical tests to investigate the predictive value of the factor as a cause of international (Huth 1996, Senese and Vasquez 2008, Vasquez and Henehan 2010) and internal (Toft 2002; Walter 2003) violence. It is suggested that if a state can control its territorial disputes and minimize their importance, peace can be achieved (Vasquez and Valeriano 2009). Therefore territorial issues can be said to be the primary factor causing conflict and the settlement of such issues could lead to long periods of peace (Gibler 1997, 2007).

³ In general our theory is multicausal but here we only focus on the newly suggested factors of territoriality and buffer state status.

Rather than buffer status being the leading cause of state death, it is likely that buffer states are really just victims of the territorial trap. That a state is a buffer between rivals may indicate when and if a state is conquered due to strategic territorial concerns (Huth 1996). Yet, it still remains that the territorial issue between the buffer and conquering state(s) is the preceding critical factor for its death. Without the territorial motivation for conflict, the state may never have 'died' in the first place.

Territorial issues include specific claims that dispute control of land or the contestation of demarcation lines on a border (Huth and Allee 2002). Territorial issues include questions of conquest, secession, and irredentalism as factors that explain why states are in conflict. While a specific typology of different types of territorial disputes is still in progress, it seems clear that if a state has a territorial dispute (or issue) with another state, this foreign policy factor can contribute to the demise of a state's ability to control its foreign policy. According to Morgenthau (1952), in terms of protecting the national interest, territory is the primary factor that one must defend in order for a state to survive.

Why then are territorial issues destabilizing to the point that they can cause state death? We point to three factors inherent in territorial contests that may be in operation singularly or in combination that can lead to the demise of a state. The first is legitimacy, when a state loses legitimacy to the extent it cannot defend its territory; its claim to sovereign statehood is unambiguously undermined. The definition of a state is dependent on its sovereign ability to control territory (Weber 1918). When state leaders cannot maintain legitimate control over an area of state under contest, the whole notion of legitimacy of rule comes into question. When legitimacy is questioned the entire domestic system of authority can collapse.

The next factor that may push territorial issues to be a cause of state death is the fear of conquest. Territorial issues frequently are a source of war (Diehl 1992, Hensel 2000, Vasquez and Henehan 2001). When war erupts or conflict reaches a serious point, the fear of conquest can lead the state to cease to exist in its prior formation. External threats can lead to internal destabilization in the form of immediate fear of extinction and a such a process is evident in our theory and case study examination presented later.

Rivalry is another factor that can lead to the demise of a state.⁴ Rivalries are frequently started (Vasquez and Leskiw 2001) or begin concurrently (Colaresi et al 2008) with the onset of territorial issues. Rivalries are contentious long-standing relationships that can drain the attention and resources of participating states (Diehl and Goertz 2001). Focusing on a conflictual relationship can only divert attention away from the pressing domestic concerns that state leadership must focus on to maintain political legitimacy. Failure to allocate resources to the correct problem can lead to the downfall of a state.

When one state conquers or controls another state, it is likely because of the issue at stake between these two states and not due to its geographical placement between two rivals. While geography does matter, it is the specific types of geographic issues that territorial issues bring about that lead them to become deadly and to the failure of the state to endure.

H1: Buffer states will be more likely to die than nonbuffer states (Fazal 2004: 314)

H2: States will be more likely to die if they have an ongoing territorial issue or dispute.

Hypothesis one represents the findings of Fazal (2004) that will be reevaluated here with a new measure for buffer state status. Hypothesis two represents the theoretical refinements made in this work to include the factor of territoriality as a cause of state death. We believe that

⁴ In theory this is the argument can be inferred from Fazal (2004), yet her analysis has nothing to do with the application of what rivalry is or where it is located in terms of proximity. To be a state in danger of death, said need only be anywhere in between two rivals regardless of distance from said rivals. We will explore this problem more fully later.

territorial disputes are a better predictor of state death in the international system and will test this hypothesis by analyzing the international system from 1816 to 1992.⁵

Research Design

Our expansion and refinement of the state death research follows Fazal's (2004) methodology closely. States, in this analysis, are characterized by their membership in the international system and we rely on Weber's (1918) criteria of states as territorially bounded political units with central governments that hold a monopoly on the use of legitimate force. Membership in the international system is based upon the Correlates of War criteria: (1920 to the present) reception of permanent diplomatic missions at the rank of charge d' affairs or above from any two major powers, a population of 500,000 or more, and/or membership in the League of Nations or the United Nations (Small and Singer 1982).

State death remains conceptualized as loss of foreign policy capabilities to another state. There are 50 'state deaths' from 1816 to 1992; of those 50, 35 died of violent state death (Fazal 2004: 319). The broader category of state death includes instances of bandwagoning or nationalism where states choose to become part of another state. This analysis will focus on violent state death since it is death as caused by external factors that we wish to explore.⁶

One method of accounting for buffer status is if it falls between two rivals (Fazal 2004: 321). We further refine this variable since, as presently coded in previous study some odd choices of buffer states emerge⁷. Specifically, to require only that a state lie between two rivals (not that it border at least one) to be considered a buffer state can, at best, lead to some serious category mistakes and at worst limit the analytic utility of the buffer state concept. For example,

⁵ It should be mentioned that Huth and Allee (2002) are really measuring territorial issues between states and not formal disputes that have lead to militarized conflict. Herein, we use the term territorial dispute to refer to a territorial issue at disagreement between two states to remain consistent with the literature.

⁶ Violent state death is also the dependent variable in Fazal's (2004) analysis.

⁷ For a complete list of Fazal's buffer states see appendix A and B. Fazal (2004) derives her list from both sources.

the previous criteria for buffer state status allowed for Czechoslovakia to be considered a buffer between Iraq and the UK (1945-1992) or Luxembourg between Turkey and the UK (1944-1992). Instead we consider a state to be a buffer when it lies between a pair of rivals where at least one of the rivals shares one of five contiguity relationships (Stinnett, Tir et al. 2002) with the buffer state.⁸ In tightening the criteria for buffer state status 28 buffer states, out of a total of 127, have been dropped from the analysis.⁹

The temporal scope of the analysis covers the years 1816 through 1992.¹⁰ This research is a monadic analysis that examines if a state died at any time during the time series under investigation.¹¹ A territorial dispute is the main independent variable, and is coded from the work of Huth and Allee (2002) for the years 1919 to 1992 and augmented by the MID dataset of revisionist territorial disputes for the years 1816 to 1919.¹² A state has a positive observation for the territorial dispute variable if it has an ongoing territorial dispute during the year in question.¹³ When a territorial dispute is settled, that variable is then coded as negative (0).

⁸ These contiguity relationships are; separated by a land or river border; separated by 12 miles of water or less; separated by 24 miles of water or less (but more than 12 miles); separated by 150 miles of water or less (but more than 24 miles); separated by 400 miles of water or less (but more than 150 miles).

⁹ Appendix C lists those buffer states dropped from this analysis.

¹⁰ The Huth and Allee (2002) dataset covers territorial claims and issues while the MID dataset (Goshen et. al 2004) only captures explicit government sanctioned threats, displays, or uses of force intended to revise the territorial status quo. The two variables are *not* equal, one measures territorial claims and the other measures revisionist attempts to change the status quo over territorial issues, yet each variables does measure for the presence of a territorial issue or dispute that can alter relations between and within states. Expanding our data back to 1816 only adds one positive case of a territorial state death so we do not believe our data is biased in favor of the MID observations. If anything, the expansion of our analysis back to 1816 biases the results against our hypothesis and adds more time series to our investigation.

¹¹ While it might be interesting and important to examine whom a state has a territorial dispute with in order to examine the relevancy for the case, this is virtually impossible with monadic analysis. We could control for neighborhoods but think this is unnecessary since the great majority of territorial disputes are between neighbors. Therefore we simply ask if a state has an ongoing territorial dispute prior to its exit from the system.

¹² The MID territorial disputes are those that have a score of 2 for the 'revtype' variable. Data can be found at <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>

¹³ It might be useful to look at territorial exchanges (Tir, Schafer et al. 1998) to measure the amount of territory lost during these disputes, but as the dataset is currently composed we can only know the size of the territory lost and not how much of a state is lost (entire state, half, small part, etc) thus transforming the point of our analysis.

The dependent variable here is violent state death so as to build on Fazal's (2004) analysis. Our model incorporates territorial disputes as an independent variable while maintaining the controls for traditional realist variables such as alliances and capabilities as well as for changes in the post-WWII era. Alliances (Gibler and Sarkees, 2004) are used as a control because it is assumed that allies can come to the aid of a state 'near death' and therefore should be controlled for since they may prop up weak states. Allies add to the power of a state and thus should make a state less likely to experience death (Morgenthau 1948). Capabilities are measured as a logged proportion of state power for any given year in a similar manner to Bremer (1992). The post-1945 era is controlled for on the assumption that state interactions may be different during the era of nuclear weapons, superpower rivalry, and US preponderance. As some note (Simons 2003, Atzili 2006/2007), conquest is virtually nonexistent after 1945 so we must control for this in our analysis.¹⁴

Event history analysis is utilized to test our argument for territorial disputes as a primary determinant of state death. Each state in the system is one observation, multiplied by the amount of time it is active in the system. Therefore there are observations for each state for each year of existence during the time series. Here, we can use event history analysis to tell us how much at risk a state is for death during any given year according to the independent and control variables in the model.

Analysis

¹⁴ Of course other control variables could have been used. We prefer to follow Ray's (2003) advice and constrict our analysis to theoretically interesting variables as they impact our analysis. To add other controls such as democracy we lead to a whole new set of research questions and theories as to the efficacy of democratic states as system members. Rivalry was not used as a control because our cases of buffer states are partially chosen on the basis of ongoing rivalries.

significantly more likely to experience violent state exit. The effect of the post-1945 variable is strong and in the right direction. After 1945 it is less likely that state death will be observed. The control variables of capabilities and alliances have no significant impact on the dependent variable.

Table 3 represents a refinement of the buffer state data. As outlined above, we have recoded the variable to account for what might be suggested is a true condition of buffer status. A state is only a buffer between two rivals if it is contiguous to at least one of the rivals. This allows us to eliminate much of the noise in the buffer data. States that fall in the general area between two enemies coded as buffer states are no longer coded. One would think that to be a buffer, at least one of the rivals must border said buffer state.

Table 3: State Death and Buffer Modified

	Violent State Exit		Total
	0	1	
No Buffer	9,413 (83.5%)	24 (68.6%)	9,437
Buffer	1,865 (16.5%)	11 (31.4%)	1,876
Total	11,278	35	11,313

As can be seen with table 3, the results change substantially when the tougher coding of buffer state status is applied. Now only 31 percent of the violent state exits are buffer states. Table 1 suggested that about half of the violent state exits occur in the context of buffer state status. Our refinement of the data suggests that the strength of the prediction might be less than originally thought.

Table 4: State Death and Territorial Disputes

	Violent State Exit		Total
	0	1	
No Terr	6,692 (59.3%)	18 (51.4%)	6,710
TerrDis	4,585 (40.6%)	17 (48.6%)	4,602
Total	11,277	35	11,312

Table 4 presents the bivariate statistics for the territorial dispute variable. Close to half (48.6%) of the violent state exits come in the context of a territorial dispute. It remains to be

this finding, it can be said that the territory variable increases the hazard of state death by 114% percent (2.14 subtracted from the baseline of 1.0)

The post-1945 variable remains significant and in the same direction as in the other models. Alliances and capabilities again perform poorly in identifying when states may die, but have been controlled for in this analysis in case there was a substantive impact.

Table 7 represents our final model. The variables of territorial disputes and buffer state status may have an interactive effect in our model since the variables both become positive and significant if put in a combined model without an interaction term. Therefore we have made an interactive term for buffer state status and territorial disputes. The explanation could be that territorial disputes and buffer state status work hand in hand to explain when states die. A buffer state may be more likely to have a territorial issue and therefore it is more likely to die.

Table 7: State Death and Interaction Effects

Variable	Harzard Ratio	Std. Err.	z	P>z
Buff*Terr	0.782	0.605	-0.320	0.751
TerrDis	2.547	1.133	2.100	0.036
GD Buffer	2.176	1.090	1.540	0.123
Post-45	0.051	0.039	-3.940	0.000
LogCap	0.905	0.091	-0.980	0.328
Alliance	0.912	0.343	-0.240	0.807

Subjects = 230

Observations = 11307

Failures = 35

Time at Risk = 11307

Log Likelihood = -134.82

Prob>chi2 = 0.000

In Table 7, the interaction between territorial disputes and buffer state status (recoded) is positive but not statistically significant. The factor of territorial disputes does remain positive and statistically significant while buffer state status fails to be significant below the conventional level of .10. In fact, it seems that the variable of territorial disputes is 40 percent more likely to be a factor in state death when compared to buffer state status. This last table leads us to

question the utility of the buffer status variable and to have renewed confidence that territorial issues have more empirical content than the buffer variable.

The results presented here suggest to us that the buffer state variable cannot be recovered as a primary causal factor that explains state death. While buffer state status may explain some individual cases of state death, on balance, the factor does not help predict when states will die. Likely the story of state death involves the failure to settle outstanding territorial issues and not geographic buffer state status. To further investigate our theory and explore the causal mechanisms involved, we provide a case study analysis of Poland's state interactions as a buffer state that also had territorial issues at stake.

Case Example: Late 18th and Early 20th Century Poland

We next move to a qualitative approach to further explore our theory and results. We only intend to demonstrate that the theory has explanatory power when used to examine specific cases of state death. These case studies are illustrative rather than theory testing or confirming (George and Bennett 2005) and demonstrate the role of territoriality prior to the establishment of a state as a buffer and instances of state death.

Here we will revisit what has commonly been held as the classic buffer examples leading to state death, late 18th and early 20th century Poland. Though the case of late eighteenth century Poland is prior to our empirical analysis, Fazal (2007) nevertheless employs it as a case illustrating the impact of buffer status leading to state death. As such, we revisit this period of Polish history in order to discover if there were also prominent issues of territoriality involved that have been previously ignored. Having demonstrated empirically that the factor of territorial disputes offers a more compelling explanation of state death than buffer state status for the period 1816-1992 it should be useful to revisit what has become the conventional viewpoint for

Poland's demise. Furthermore, in order to establish the coherency of our theory on the link between state death and territorial disputes illustrative case studies are important (Vasquez 1998). Late 18th century Poland has the added benefit of being outside the time period under investigation statistically, suggesting increased generalizability of our theory throughout history.

Geographically situated between Imperial Russia, Prussia, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire the Polish state experienced a slow death via three partitions from 1772 and 1795. While some scholars (Fazal 2007) have laid heavy emphasis on Poland's exit from the state system due primarily to its victimhood of geographically lying between competing rivals, such a conclusion can only be maintained if one limits their treatment of Polish history to the immediate period prior to partition. Poland had not always been the weak state that it eventually became in late 18th century Europe. In order to advance this argument we will briefly reappraise and expand upon Poland's relationship with two of its neighbors, Russia and Prussia.

During the mid 16th century the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (formed in 1569) was regionally formidable. For example, Poland invaded Russia on several occasions throughout the early 17th century and successfully captured Moscow for a brief period between 1610 and 1612 before eventually being repulsed by the Russian army. Tensions between Poland and Russia flared again in the mid 17th century as disputes over border territories (including Bely, Dorogobuzh, and Smolensk) sparked the Russo-Polish War of 1654-1667 (Fuller 1987). Though Poland was critically weakened during this war and would subsequently pose little threat to an expanding Russian empire these militarized events belie conventional viewpoints of a hapless Poland perennially at the mercy of great power rivalry. Indeed this snapshot of Polish-Russian relations suggests that Poland's road to state death was paved in no small part from her earlier rivalry and conflicts over disputed border territory with Russia.

In applying similar scrutiny to Polish-Prussian relations we are further disabused from seeing Poland as purely a powerless victim of greater regional rivalries. Just as Poland competed over disputed territory with Russia so to did Poland and Prussia engage in territorial disputes over the port city of Gdansk (Danzig). Indeed, from 1308 to 1521 Poland and Prussia (the Teutonic Order prior to 1454) engaged in no less than 9 wars over the disputed city of Gdansk (Fuller 1987). Prior to the 1793 annexation of Gdansk by Prussia under Frederick the Great the port city had been under Polish control for approximately three centuries. Again we have a historical record that calls into question the accuracy of conceptualizing Poland solely as a powerless buffer state caught between other states engaged in rivalry. Instead the record supports the proposition that Poland was a major state in Eastern Europe prior to the late 18th century partitions of its territory and fiercely competed with its immediate neighbors over the control of disputed territory.

After having been partitioned out of existence in the late 18th century Poland was resurrected as a republic by the victors of the Great War with the signing of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. Conventional viewpoints treat Poland as essentially reprising its earlier role as a buffer state at the mercy of its neighbors, Germany and Russia. Is this viewpoint and identification of Poland as merely recapitulating its role as a buffer state accurate? Was the eventual repartitioning of Poland Between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia *alone* the byproduct of an extraneous great power rivalry? Again, the historical record suggests a prominent role for territoriality as opposed to buffer status for Poland's eventual demise.

Carving out a Polish state from what had formerly been, for over a century, German and Russian territory was bound to raise complex boundary issues prone to igniting territorial disputes. Regarding Polish-German relations we once again see the port city of Gdansk and its

inclusion as part of a reestablished Polish state as particularly contentious. Despite Gdansk's Polish heritage the city was demographically German, which resulted in its establishment as a "free city" granted internal autonomy while its external relations were controlled by Poland. Initially Poland took a conciliatory stance towards Germany and its claim on the port city and sought a negotiated outcome to the dispute. However, the rise of Nazism in Germany during the 1930's facilitated an increasing bellicosity and assertiveness by the Germans towards reincorporating Gdansk. Mindful of its relative military weakness vis a vis a rearming Germany, Poland halted its policy of compromise and chose a policy of alliance with the establishment of the Anglo-Polish military alliance signed in the spring of 1939. Polish-German relations subsequently deteriorated resulting in several border skirmishes between the two states prior to Germany's September 1st invasion. Again we find the buffer explanation of Poland's death, whereby Poland was merely in the way of an extraneous great power rivalry, inadequate. Poland and Germany were engaged in a contentious territorial dispute over the status of the port city Gdansk and German nationals living in Poland, a dispute Germany was willing to go to war over and which led to the death of the reestablished Polish state.

Polish-Russian relations would prove to be just as contentious as Polish-German relations had been. In the aftermath of WW1 Poland immediately took an aggressive stance towards a Russia racked by revolution and civil war. Seeking to reclaim territory it had lost during the late 18th century partitions in Western Ukraine and Belorussia, Poland launched an invasion sparking the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1921 (Davies 2003). Despite Russia's weakened condition the war ended in stalemate with both sides agreeing to split the disputed territory in Ukraine and Belorussia with the signing of the Peace of Riga in 1921. Clearly Poland's launching of a war with its Russian neighbor over disputed territory, again, belies conventional views of early 20th

century Poland reprising its role as merely a buffer state at the mercy of extraneous great power rivalries. Future conflicts with Russia must be examined in the context of the prior border war.

While this case study is intended to be illustrative and not theory testing, our work suggests a need to reappraise Poland's place as the archetypical buffer state. Far from being a powerless minor state at the mercy of competing regional rivals the history of Poland is littered with instances of serious disputes over territory with its neighbors, disputes that it initially benefited from but which ultimately left it vulnerable as its neighbors ascended to power. For Poland the road to buffer state status was paved by its engagement in repeated territorial disputes with its neighbors, disputes that it could not resolve peacefully and which led to its death on multiple occasions.

Assessment and Future Directions

Our research demonstrates that territorial disputes are important factors that can help tell the story of state death. While buffer state status increases the probability a state will die, we have no confidence in this prediction with a refinement of the buffer state data because the factor fails to reach conventional levels of statistical significance. If buffer states are restricted to those states that border at least one of the rivals in question, it is unclear if being a buffer actually increases the probability of state death.

Those states that experience an active territorial dispute are more likely to experience state death. This finding is not too surprising if one considers the importance of territorial conflict throughout history. When a state experiences a territorial dispute, the internal domestic processes change and leaders are imperiled. Territorial disputes lead to rivalry (Vasquez and Leskiw 2001) and those states in rivalry can fail if a leader is not able to maintain and mobilize strong domestic support against an enemy (Colaesi 2004). States that have territorial disputes

are also likely to end up in war and thus suffer the consequences of war in the form of desired conquest or general societal destabilization leading to state death. With this knowledge, it is important to consider the importance of settling territorial issues before they lock-in and lead to protracted conflict. Our policy advice in general is to constrain and constrict the ability of states to use force particularly when territorial issues are at stake. If bolstered, international and region based institutions can provide mechanisms (international law, mediation, provision of incentives etc.) to diffuse the territorial conflicts that lead to state death. In an integrated world it is in the interest of the vast majority of states to avoid the instability resultant from territorial disputes and state death, all that is required is the will to cooperate and act.

We now have a firmer grasp on why states die and encourage others to further expand our knowledge of the causes of state death. There are likely many more factors that can help account for the death of a state including income inequality, rivalry, civil war, and environmental concerns. But what of state life, when do states thrive? Future work should build on this research to also demonstrate the causes of state survival. We suspect that neighborhoods and outside support are important. If a state lies in a geopolitically relevant region where conflict spillover can seriously affect the stability of other states, it is likely that states in such a region are at greater risk of experiencing state death. But the impact of neighborhood effects can be mitigated or ended if there is a relevant security community in operation as demonstrated by European integration. This process has happened in the region of Europe and North America where some powerful states prop up weak states to prevent them from experiencing death.

Scholars should continue to work on the issue of state death since the ramifications of such an event are widespread for regional networks. Much like the death of a star, the death of a state can suck other surrounding states into its own black hole. For the international system to

remain stable, it is imperative for state death to be monitored and controlled. The results presented here suggest that an important way to prevent state death is to remove territorial issues from the agenda.

Appendix A: List of buffer states and associated rivalries.¹⁶

<i>Buffer State</i>	<i>Years as buffer</i>	<i>Associated rivalries</i>
Albania	1914-1939	France-Turkey
	1944-1956	Italy-Yugoslavia
Austria	1919-1938	Italy-Turkey
		UK-USSR
	1955-1985	UK-Iraq
		UK-Russia
		UK-Turkey
Austria-Hungary	1876-1918	France-Germany
		France-Turkey
		Germany-Italy
		UK-Russia
		UK-turkey
		France-Germany
		France-Turkey
		France-China
		Germany-Italy
		Italy-Turkey
		Russia-Turkey
Baden	1830-1870	France-Germany
Bavaria	1830-1871	France-Germany
Belgium	1830-1940	UK-Germany
	1945-1985	UK-Russia (USSR)
		UK-Turkey
Bhutan	1971-1987	UK-Iraq
		France-Germany
		China-India
		UK-Turkey
		UK-Iraq
Bulgaria	1908-1938	France-Turkey
	1958-1992	Italy-Turkey
		Russia-Turkey
Cambodia	1975-1989	Thailand-North Vietnam (Vietnam)
China	1895-1984	USSR-Japan
Czechoslovakia	1918-1939	UK-Russia (USSR)
	1945-1992	UK-Turkey
		UK-Iraq
		Germany-Italy
Denmark	1887-1934	UK-Germany
	1939-1940	UK-Russia (USSR)
	1945-1985	UK-Turkey
Djibouti	1977-1985	Somalia-Ethiopia
Estonia	1918-1923	UK-USSR
Finland	1939-1940	UK-USSR
	1917-1923	UK-USSR
	1939-1987	UK-USSR
France	1887-1934	UK-Germany
Germany, East	1954-1990	UK-USSR
		UK-Iraq
Germany, West	1955-1990	UK-USSR

¹⁶ Appendix A Buffer states are based on Diehl and Goertz (2000) list of enduring rivalries, 1816-1992. Sources: compiled from the Correlates of War list of members of the interstate system.

Germany	1876-1945 1990-1992	UK-Iraq UK-Russia (USSR) UK-Turkey UK-Iraq France-Turkey France-China France-turkey Italy-Turkey France-Germany France-Germany France-Germany UK-Russia (USSR) UK-Turkey UK-Iraq France-Turkey France-Germany France-Turkey France-China
Greece	1880-1938	Iraq-Israel Israel-Saudi Arabia
Hanover	1830-1866	Russia-Japan
Hesse Electoral	1830-1866	China-Japan
Hesse Grand Ducal	1830-1867	USSR-Japan
Hungary	1919-1992	China-South Korea China-Japan USSR-Japan China-Japan
Italy	1830-1945	Thailand-Vietnam (North)
Jordan	1957-1991	UK-Russia (USSR) UK-Russia (USSR)
Korea	1884-1905	Syria-Israel
Korea, North	1948-1987	UK-USSR
Korea, South	1948-1984	UK-Turkey
Laos	1961-1989	UK-USSR
Latvia	1918-1923 1939-1940	UK-Iraq France-Germany UK-Germany UK-Turkey Belgium-Germany
Lebanon	1948-1986	France-Germany
Lithuania	1918-1923 1939-1940	USSR-China USSR-Japan
Luxembourg	1920-1940 1944-1992	China-India
Mecklenburg Schwerin	1843-1867	UK-Germany
Mongolia	1921-1986	UK-Russia (USSR) UK-Turkey UK-Iraq Belgium-Germany France-Germany
Nepal	1950-1987	UK-Russia (USSR)
Netherlands	1887-1940 1945-1985	UK-Turkey UK-Iraq Belgium-Germany France-Germany
Norway	1905-1923 1939-1940 1945-1985	UK-Germany UK-Germany
Parma	1919-1934	France-Germany
Poland	1919-1934 1945-1992	UK-USSR UK-Turkey UK-Iraq

Romania	1878-1985	UK-Russia (USSR) UK-Turkey France-Turkey France-China Russia-Turkey UK-Iraq
Russia	1870-1900	France-China
Saudi Arabia	1967-1991	Iraq-Israel
Saxony	1830-1867	France-Germany
Sweden	1876-1923	UK-Russia (USSR)
	1939-1987	USSR-Norway
Switzerland	1830-1945	UK-Turkey France-Germany France-Turkey France-China Germany-Italy
Syria	1957-1958	UK-Iraq
	1961-1992	Iraq-Israel Israel-Saudi Arabia
Turkey	1958-1992	UK-Iraq
Wurttemberg	1830-1870	France-Germany
Yugoslavia	1878-1938	UK-Turkey
	1958-1992	UK-Iraq France-Turkey France-China Italy-Turkey

Appendix B: List of buffer states and associated rivalries.¹⁷

<i>Buffer State</i>	<i>Years as buffer</i>	<i>Associated rivalries</i>
Albania	1914-1923	Italy-Ottoman E. (Turkey)
Austria	1919-1938	France-Prussia
	1955-1970	Germany-Russia
Austria-Hungary	1833-1918	Russia-UK
		France-Prussia
		Germany-Russia
		Ottoman Empire-Russia
Baden	1850-1870	France-Prussia
Bavaria	1833-1871	Russia-UK
		France-Prussia
Belgium	1833-1940	Russia-UK
	1945-1955	France-Prussia
		Germany-UK
Bhutan	1971-1992	China-India
Bulgaria	1908-1923	Ottoman Empire-Russia
		Italy-Ottoman Empire
China	1853-1992	Japan-Russia
Czechoslovakia	1918-1939	Germany-Russia
	1945-1970	Germany-Russia
Denmark	1833-1940	Russia-UK
	1945-1970	Germany-UK
		Germany-Russia
Djibouti	1977-1992	Ethiopia-Somalia
Estonia	1918-1940	Germany-Russia
Finland	1899-1942	Germany-Russia
France	1899-1942	Germany-UK
	1944-1945	Germany-UK
Germany, East	1954-1970	West Germany-Russia
Germany (Prussia)	1816-1923	Russia-UK
		Ottoman Empire-Russia
Greece	1880-1923	Italy-Ottoman Empire
Hanover	1838-1866	Russia-UK
		France-Prussia
Hesse Electoral	1833-1866	Russia-UK
		France-Prussia
Hesse Grand Ducal	1833-1867	Russia-UK
		France-Prussia
Hungary	1919-1970	Germany-Russia
Italy/Sardinia	1850-1955	France-Prussia
Korea	1884-1905	Japan-Russia
		China-Japan
Korea, North	1948-1992	Japan-Russia
		China-Japan
Korea, South	1949-1992	Japan-Russia
		China-Japan
Latvia	1918-1940	Germany-Russia
Lebanon	1948-1992	Israel-Syria
Lithuania	1918-1940	Germany-Russia
Luxembourg	1920-1940	Germany-UK
	1944-1955	France-Germany

¹⁷ Appendix B buffer states are based on Bennett's (1996) list of enduring rivalries, 1816-1992. Sources: compiled from the Correlates of War list of members of the interstate system.

Mecklenburg Schwerin	1843-1867	Russia-UK France-Prussia
Modena	1843-1860	Austria-Hungary-Italy
Mongolia	1921-1992	China-Russia
Nepal	1950-1992	China-India
Netherlands	1833-1940 1945-1955	Russia-UK France-Prussia Germany-UK
Norway	1905-1907	Russia-UK
Papal States	1843-1860	Austria-Hungary-Italy
Parma	1851-1860	Austria-Hungary-Italy
Poland	1919-1939 1945-1970	Germany-Russia Germany-Russia
Romania	1878-1970	Germany-Russia Ottoman-Empire-Russia
Saxony	1833-1867	Russia-UK Russia-UK France-Prussia
Sweden	1833-1907	Russia-UK
Switzerland	1843-1955	Austria-Hungary-Italy France-Russia
Tuscany	1843-1860	Austria-Hungary-Italy
Wurttemberg	1850-1870	France-Prussia
Yugoslavia-Serbia	1880-1923	Italy-Ottoman Empire

Appendix C: List of buffer states dropped from analysis.¹⁸

<i>Buffer state</i>	<i>Years as buffer</i>	<i>Associated rivalries</i>
Albania	1914-1939	France-Turkey
Austria	1919-1938	Russia-UK Turkey-UK
Austria-Hungary	1876-1918	Russia-Turkey Russia-UK France-China
Czechoslovakia	1918-1939 1945-1992	UK-USSR Turkey-UK
Germany, East	1954-1990	Iraq-UK
Hungary	1919-1992	Iraq-UK Turkey-UK
Lithuania	1939-1940	Iraq-UK France-Turkey
Luxembourg	1920-1940 1944-1992	Turkey-UK Russia-UK Iraq-UK
Mongolia	1921-1986	Turkey-UK
Poland	1945-1992	Iraq-UK Turkey-UK
Romania	1878-1985	Iraq-UK
Romania	1878-1985	China-France
Switzerland	1830-1945	Iraq-UK
Yugoslavia	1958-1992	Turkey-UK Iraq-UK China-France

¹⁸ A buffer state was dropped from the analysis if it failed to have at least one out of five possible contiguity relationships with at least one of the associated rivals. The five possible contiguity relationships are derived from the Correlates of War contiguity data (Stinnett, Tir et al 2002).

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