

# A Theory on the Use of Neutral Territory in International Conflict

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## **Abstract**

This paper puts forth a theory to explain whether and under what circumstances a state not directly involved in a dispute will allow its territory, airspace, or infrastructure to be used in an attack by one state upon another. The theory argues that the decision to grant access is based not solely on estimates of the relative capabilities of the Attacking State, but also upon the domestic political arrangements in each of the three states. Specifically, the Middle State is most likely to allow the use of its territory when the Attacking State is a democracy and the Target State is an autocracy. This probability is heightened when the Middle State is also an autocracy. Several illustrative case studies will be employed to demonstrate the efficacy of the theory. The paper will conclude with a brief discussion of the implications of the theory along with potential avenues for future research. Future studies should examine factors such as alliance memberships among the three states, and whether the Attacking State has more than one option to reach the Target State.

**Keywords:** game theory, international relations, national sovereignty, defense strategies, foreign policy