A more satisfying view on why big nations lose small wars

The decisive elements for asymmetric conflict outcome

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Introduction

The Vietnam war proved that military and technological advantage over one`s enemy does not automatically results in victory. Indeed, history has shown that in many cases it was not the stronger actor that triumphed in military conflicts (Arreguin-Toft, 2001). Whereas between 1800 and 1849 eighty-eight percent of the wars were won by the stronger party, in the period between 1950 and 1998 the amount of conflicts won by the stronger actor had shrunken to forty-six percent (Arreguin-Toft, 2001). How can this phenomenon be explained?

Military conflicts with a significant difference in military power or strategy between two opponents are called *asymmetric conflicts*. This term was first introduced by Mack (1975). He was the first to analyse why strong actors, despite an overwhelming military advantage, fail to win armed conflicts. He showed that since World War II military and technological superiority proved to be a unreliable ground to predict the outcome of wars. Instead, he argued the outcome of the conflict was determined by the political capability rather than the military capability to wage war. Twenty-five years later, another theory on asymmetric conflict outcome surfaced. Arreguin-Toft (2001) provides an alternative theory which emphasizes the importance of military strategy and argued Mack`s (1975) theory showed several shortcomings.

Apart from these two rival explanations on the decisive element in asymmetric conflict outcome, surprisingly little academic research has been conducted on explaining *how* and *why* strong actors in general are forced to withdraw in asymmetric conflicts. Instead, many works have focussed on explaining the outcome in *specific* cases of asymmetric conflict. Moreover, Arreguin-Toft (2001) has made the questionable claim political pressure is only decisive for conflict outcome in long-lasting conflicts. Furthermore, Mack (1975) assumes political pressure to be one-dimensional: it either *is* or *is not* present. However, making a distinction between internal and external political pressure could be very relevant. For example, authoritarian regimes could oppress domestic political opposition while being under high external pressure from the international community. Acknowledging and understanding the complexity of political pressure could help better understand its effects on conflict outcome. In conclusion, the current authoritative theories on explaining asymmetric conflict outcome appear to have some incompletions and debatable assumptions. Therefore, additional research could contribute to a better understanding on which elements are decisive for asymmetric conflict outcomes.

This thesis aims to develop a more satisfying answer on why big nations lose small wars in asymmetric conflicts. In order to achieve this, the deductive approach research methodology will be used to construct a multiple regression model. This means that the weaknesses and strengths of the currently leading explanations on asymmetric conflict outcome will be assessed and combined. Instead of creating another rival view, currently known decisive elements for asymmetric conflict outcome will be combined in a new, more comprehensive model. Therefore, this study will be relevant as it aims to give a better and more complete understanding on why stronger military actors lose conflicts. The

research question this thesis aims to answer is *'which combination of elements are decisive for the outcome of asymmetric conflicts?'*

   First, a thorough literature review will be conducted on the state of the art literature on the subject of asymmetric conflict outcome. Second, based on this research a hypothesis will be formulated on which elements are most decisive for asymmetric conflict outcome. Consequently, a comprehensive justification of this hypothesis will be presented. Then, the validity of this hypothesis will be tested with a case study of recent asymmetric conflicts. Finally, conclusions will be drawn on how this new model gives more satisfactory answers on the question which elements are decisive for the outcome of asymmetric conflicts.

Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter the state of the art literature on the subject of asymmetric conflict outcome will be thoroughly discussed. More precisely, the answers to this thesis` research question *'which combination of elements are decisive for the outcome of asymmetric conflicts?'* provided by the current state of the literature will be assessed. Surprisingly little academic research has been conducted on explaining *how* and *why* strong actors in general are forced to withdraw in asymmetric conflicts. Instead, many works have focussed on explaining the outcome in *specific* cases of asymmetric conflict, such as Mylroie (1993) in the case of the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq or Reuveny & Prakash (1999) in the case of the Afghan invasion by the Soviet Union. Others have formulated theories on military conflict outcome in general, such as Clark & Konrad (2007).

However, two authors have attempted to formulate general hypotheses on decisive elements for asymmetric conflict outcome: Mack (1975) and Arreguin-Toft (2001). Mack (1975) was the first to introduce the term 'asymmetric conflict' and to develop a general theory on why strong nations lose small wars. His main argument was that the outcome of an asymmetric conflict was determined by the *political capability* rather than the military capability to wage war. Arreguin-Toft (2001) developed another, rival hypothesis on the reasons why asymmetric conflicts are increasingly won by the weaker actor, arguing the adopted military strategy is the decisive factor for the conflict outcome. It could therefore be concluded the primacy of the literature review must be on researching to which extend political capacity to wage war or the adopted military strategy is decisive in asymmetric conflict outcome.

Key concepts

Throughout this thesis, several key concepts will be discussed and elaborated upon. These key concepts will be defined in this paragraph.

The term *conflict* will be defined as military confrontations resulting in over one thousand battle deaths per year (Arreguin-toft, 2001, p. 94). The words *conflict* and *war* will be used as synonyms.

The term *actor* will be defined as a state, coalition of states or group of insurgents (Arreguin-Toft, 2001, p. 94). A *strong actor* is defined as an actor whose material power exceeds that of its opponent by at least ten to one (Arreguin-Toft, 2001, p. 94). The terms *strong actor*, *big/strong nation* and *big/strong country* will be used as synonyms. A weak actor is, in result, the strong actor`s adversary.

Material power is defined as the product of an actor`s population and armed forces. The concept of 'strong' and 'weak' is therefore always relative towards a specific adversary (Arreguin-Toft, 2001, p. 94).

Asymmetric conflicts are defined as conflicts in which one belligerent`s relative material power exceeds the other belligerent`s power by at least ten to one (Arreguin-Toft, 2001, p. 94). Alternatively,

an asymmetric war can be defined as a limited war in which the survival of at least one of the parties is not at stake (Mack, 1975). The terms *asymmetric conflict* and *asymmetric war* will be used as synonyms.

Asymmetric conflict: the introduction of a new concept

Mack (1975) was the first to introduce the term 'asymmetric conflict'. He challenged the idea that military superiority automatically leads to victory in war. Indeed, history shows that in the period after World War II "military and technological superiority proved to be a highly unreliable guide to the outcome of wars" (p. 175). Mack aimed to provide a perspective in which the outcome of asymmetric conflicts could be explained. He observed that research has been conducted on *why* the insurgents were not defeated, but *how* and why the external power has been forced to withdraw has practically been neglected.

Mack concluded an interesting aspect of asymmetric wars is that many strong actors did not win the conflict in a military sense, nor were they defeated military. Such military defeat would have been impossible as the insurgents lacked the capacity to start an invasion. According to Mack "success for the insurgents arose not from a military victory from the ground – though military success may have been a contributory cause – but rather from the progressive attrition of their opponents` political capability to wage war" (p.177). The American war in Vietnam has showed military superiority does not only fail to guarantee victory, it may even be counter-productive. An example of this counter-productivity are the large domestic anti-war protests in the United Stated. The duration of the conflict, loss of American lives and stories of indiscriminate violence against the local Vietnamese population are amongst the reasons that sparked these protests. The use of overwhelming military force to repress the insurgents had achieved what the insurgents themselves had never been able to achieve: the political mobilization of the masses against the authorities in the home country of the stronger actor.

Another interesting aspect of the Vietnam war is that the conflict extended far beyond the battlefield and encompassed the political and social institutions of the US. Mack describes this as follows: "the Vietnam war may be seen as having been fought on two fronts – one bloody and indecisive in the forests and mountains of Indochina, the other essentially nonviolent – but ultimately more decisive – within the polity and social institutions of the US" (p. 177). In 1969, Henry Kissinger wrote a highly prophetic paper in which he stated: "We fought a military war; our opponents fought a political one. We sought physical attrition; our opponents aimed for our psychological exhaustion. In the process, we lost sight of one of the cardinal maxims of guerrilla warfare: the guerrilla wins if he does not lose. The conventional army loses if it does not win" (Kissinger, 1969, p. 214).

Mack argues the Vietnam war has shown the main goal in war must be to affect the will of the enemy. It necessarily follows from the weak actor`s incapability to invade their opponents that the weak actor can only achieve its goal if it is able to destroy its opponent`s political capability to wage war. In order to win, the weak actor must impose a continuous accumulation of costs on their enemy. It must be the goal of the insurgents to provoke the external power to deploy more troops on the ground. This will

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automatically lead to political and economic domestic costs for the external power. In the domestic political and social realm of the external power "a war without visible payoff against an opponent who poses no direct threat will come under increasing criticism as battle casualties rise and economic costs escalate" (p. 185).

Mack (p. 179) reverses the famous quote by Clausewitz: "politics may become the continuation of war by other means". The outcome of military battles must not be evaluated in terms of military tactics, but in terms of political impact in the political and social institutions in the homeland of the stronger actor. The 1968 Tet offensive serves as an illustrative example. Although this US defeat in terms of casualties and damage was relatively limited, the offensive marked a dramatic strategic defeat resonating deeply into the US political and social institutions.

All the above implies that totalitarian states are not likely to be troubled by the domestic issues which forced the US to withdraw its troops from Vietnam. Popular opposition will not be tolerated in totalitarian regimes. Moreover, state-controlled media could be used to guide the popular opinion into the right direction. Indiscriminate violence and other brutalities aimed at civilians may go unreported, the economic costs of war may be concealed and the loss of soldiers may be trivialized.

Literature on asymmetric conflict after Mack: rival explanations

Mack (1975) was the first author to describe the concept of asymmetric conflict and give a somewhat satisfying explanation on the decisive elements why strong actors lose small wars. It took over a quarter century for a rival explanation on asymmetric conflict outcome to surface in the academic literature. Arreguin-Toft (2001) agrees with Mack to the extend that political pressure plays an important role in conflict outcome when a conflict duration is long, but argues the most important variable in determining asymmetric conflict outcome is the *adopted military strategies*. With this approach, Arreguin-Toft has been able to explain the outcome of the majority of asymmetric wars.

Arreguin-Toft states that before him only Mack (1975) has developed a strong general explanation of asymmetric conflict outcomes. He summarizes Mack`s main argument as the actor with the most determination is most likely to win the asymmetric conflict. Strong actors lose asymmetric conflicts because domestic opposition in democratic regimes or competitive elites in authoritarian regimes force the authorities to withdraw before victory is achieved. Arreguin-Toft argues this is true for some conflicts, but not for others. According to him, the outcome of an asymmetric conflict is best predicted by *strategic interaction*.

Arreguin-Toft has gathered data on asymmetric conflict between 1800 and 1996. This data has revealed two remarkable patterns. First, as opposed to the proposition 'the most powerful actor will be victorious in war', thirty percent of the conflicts in the chosen timeframe were won by the weaker actors. Second, over time, the weaker actors increasingly won more asymmetric conflicts. If Mack`s theory on political vulnerability being the decisive element is true, the outcome of conflicts should not have shifted

over time. Arreguin-Toft therefore attempts to develop an explanation which includes an answer to both strong-actor defeats and the increasing amount of weak-actor victories.

Arreguin-Toft introduces the *strategic interaction thesis* as a general explanation for the outcome of asymmetric conflicts. In this theory, strategy refers to an actor`s use of armed forces to achieve political or military objectives (p. 99). The following strategies are to be distinguished (p. 100):

Attack (or strong actor) strategies:
   a) direct attack
   b) barbarism
Defence (or weak actor) strategies:
   c) direct defence
   d) guerrilla warfare

Arreguin-Toft argues that every strategy has an ideal counter-strategy. Adopting the right strategy significantly increases the chances of winning a conflict. He argues all strategies can be reduced to two ideal-type approaches: direct and indirect (p. 100). Direct strategic approaches target the opponent`s armed forces, while indirect strategic approaches target the opponent`s will to fight. Arreguin-Toft argues same approach strategies (indirect versus indirect or direct versus direct) will almost always lead to defeat for the weak actor. After all, there is no possibility to deflect the strong actor`s power advantage in this situation. If the weak actor adopts an opposite strategic approach, he might be able to deflect or dodge the strong actor`s power advantage. This would significantly increase the winning chances for the weaker actor.

An important assumption in this theory is that the stronger actor initiates the conflict. Therefore, strong actor and attacking actor can be used as synonyms. The above mentioned strategies are defined below.

Direct attack
Direct attack is defined as the use of military force to eliminate or capture the enemy`s armed forces and thereby gaining control over the enemy`s 'values'. (p. 100). These values could be a capital city, industrial plants, communication centres or other strategic assets (p. 101). The goal of this strategy is to destroy the enemy`s capacity to resist with armed forces (p. 100).

Barbarism
Barbarism is defined as the systemic violation of the laws of war in order to pursue political or military objectives (p. 101). This definition includes war crimes such as the use of chemical or biological weapons, but its most important element is the use of violence (such as rape, murder and torture) against

non-combatants (p. 101). The main goal of this strategy is to destroy the enemy`s will and capacity to fight (p. 101).

Direct defence

Direct defence is defined as the use of armed forces to prevent an enemy`s attempt to capture or destroy their values (p. 103). Just like direct attack strategies this strategy is targeted towards the enemy`s military. The main goal of this theory is to damage the enemy`s advancing forces (p. 103).

Guerrilla warfare

Guerrilla warfare is defined as the organisation of a part of society for the purpose of inflicting damage upon the enemy with armed forces while avoiding a direct armed confrontation (p. 103). These damages include killing or injuring enemy combatants, damaging supplies or infrastructure, lowering the enemy`s moral to fight and delaying the enemy in achieving their objectives. The main goal of this strategy is to affect the enemy`s will to fight.

Arreguin-Toft`s strategic interaction theory is inspired by the argument of Waltz (1979) that the actors in the competitive international system 'socialize' regarding strategies and policies. "The fate of each state depends on its responses to what other states do. The possibility that conflict will be conducted by force leads to competition in the arts and the instruments of force. Competition produces a tendency toward the sameness of the competitors" (Waltz, 1979, p. 127). Arreguin-Toft (2001) argues after World War II two different socialization patterns developed in different parts of the world. The first was the Blitzkrieg pattern, in which success was measured by the capacity to deploy large mechanized armies to destroy the opponent`s armed forced or capture its values. This model was adopted by the US, its European allies and the Soviet Union (Arreguin-Toft, 2001). The second was the guerrilla warfare pattern, in which success was measured by the ability to protract a conflict versus a technologically superior opponent. This model was adopted by, amongst others, Algerian rebels, the Vietminh, Cuban insurgents and Malayan communists (Arreguin-Toft, 2001).

Arreguin-Toft derives the following hypotheses from his theory.
- Direct attack versus direct defence: "strong actors should win quickly and decisively" (p. 107).
- Direct attack versus indirect defence: "weak actors should win" (p. 108).
- Indirect attack versus direct defence: "strong actors should lose" (p. 109).
- Indirect attack versus indirect defence: "strong actors should win" (p. 109).

Arreguin-Toft has conducted a statistical analysis to determine whether a statistically significant correlation exists between conflict outcomes and his strategic interaction theory. The results of this analysis of asymmetric conflict outcomes between 1800 and 1996 is that when a same strategic approach

is adopted the strong actor wins in seventy-six percent of the cases. When an opposite strategic approach is adopted, the strong actors wins in thirty-six percent of the cases (p. 112). Moreover, he concludes the key causal mechanism of the strategic interaction thesis is time (p. 111). Same approach strategic interactions should end quickly, while opposite approach strategic interactions protract a conflict. Which, in turn, could lead to a win by the weak actor as the strong actor is forced to withdraw. Arreguin-toft found that the overall mean of asymmetric conflict duration was 2.98 years (p. 112).

Arreguin-Toft concludes strong actors lose asymmetric conflicts when they fail to adopt the right strategy vis-à-vis their weaker opponents. Same approach strategic interactions will allow the strong actor to win in most situations, while opposite approach strategic interactions favour the weaker actors. The longer a conflict drags on, the more the stronger actor is likely to be put under the untenable political pressure Mack (1975) has identified.

Arreguin-Toft`s proposition of strategy being the decisive element in asymmetric conflict outcome is supported by multiple academics. For example, Clark & Konrad (2007) argue that it is key for a defending actor to successfully defend all military fronts, while an attacking actor is likely to achieve victory if he is victorious on only one single front. Although Clark & Konrad (2007) agree with Arreguin-Toft (2001) to the extent that adopted military strategy is decisive in battle, they use an alternative definition of asymmetric war than Mack (1975) and Arreguin-toft (2001). According to Clark & Konrad (2007), asymmetric conflicts relate to multi-front wars. The asymmetry lies in the fact the attacker has to be successful on one front, whereas the defender must be successful on all. As a result of this atypical definition of asymmetric conflict, their conclusions should be seen as an indication favouring the primacy of the importance of strategy in armed conflict in general rather than a contribution to explaining asymmetric conflict outcome.

Other scholars have focussed on researching the importance of domestic political support for strong actor war efforts in asymmetric conflict. Geiß (2006) has elaborated on the implications of asymmetric conflict on humanitarian law. He argues this type of conflict produces incentives for the weak actor to circumvent the accepted rules of warfare in an attempt to balance its inferiority. In order to counter these tactics, strong actors are often forced to adopt the earlier discussed strategy of barbarism. Support for violations of human rights during war efforts abroad, especially in modern democracies, would appear to be low. However, Maoz & McCauley (2008) found that civilians are willing to sacrifice some civil liberties during retaliatory actions if their home country has been the victim of a terrorist attack. The perceived threat from a certain group and the dehumanization of that group significantly contributes to the domestic support for armed actions against that group (Maoz & McGauley, 2008). Consequently, creating and maintaining this support seems to be a necessity to allow a strong actor enough time to be victorious in battle. Although Geiß (2006) and Maoz & McGauley (2008) do not contribute to the explaining of asymmetric conflict outcome, they do support Mack`s (1975) view that the domestic political situation of the strong actor is decisive for the conflict outcome.

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Literature review analysis

This literature research has assessed how state of the art literature answers this thesis` research question *'which combination of elements are decisive for the outcome of asymmetric conflicts?* Many academics have focussed on explaining the outcome in *specific* cases of asymmetric conflict or have formulated theories on military conflict outcome in general. Two academics did formulate a comprehensive theory with the aim to explain asymmetric conflict outcome in general.

According to Mack (1975), increasing political pressure is the most important reason strong actors lose asymmetric conflicts. Arreguin-Toft (2001) agrees political pressure plays an important role in conflict outcome when a conflict duration is long, but argues the most important variable in determining asymmetric conflict outcome is the adopted military strategies. With this approach, Arreguin-Toft is able to explain the outcome of the majority of asymmetric wars.

Some weak spots are to be identified in the theories of both Mack and Arreguin-Toft. First, both authors agree conflict duration is significant for conflict outcome. However, they do not mention conflict duration as a separate variable in their theories. Instead, they assume political pressure and time are positively correlated. Although it seems logical that time and the chance of significant political pressure are positively correlated, this has not been tested before. One could think of a situation in which a long-lasting conflict does not result in massive political opposition. A more satisfying view on explaining asymmetric conflict outcome could therefore approach conflict duration as a separate variable.

Moreover, neither Arreguin-Toft nor Mack makes a proper distinction between internal and external political pressure. However, making this distinction could be very relevant. For example, authoritarian strong actors could oppress domestic political opposition while being under high external pressure from the international community. The effects of these different types of political pressure have not yet been properly studied. A more satisfying model on explaining asymmetric conflict outcome could therefore identify internal political pressure and external political pressure as separate variables.

Finally, both authors address one of the aims of their studies is to help US policy makers making better decisions in asymmetric conflicts. This US bias should be taken into account when reviewing their works.

In conclusion, two rival explanations on asymmetric conflict outcome exist. One gives primacy to the *political capacity* to wage war, the other argues the chosen military *strategy* is the decisive element in asymmetric conflict outcome. Weaknesses in their theories, such as absence of the distinction between internal and external political pressure and the assumption conflict duration and political pressure are correlated, have not been properly addressed by contemporary literature. A new model combining these two views could therefore give more satisfying answers on which elements are decisive for asymmetric conflict outcomes.

Methods and approach

Introduction

In this thesis the deductive approach research methodology will be used to construct a multiple regression model which should give a more satisfactory explanation on why strong actors lose asymmetric conflicts. The deductive approach research methodology entails explaining specific cases by deducting from general claims (Trochim, 2006). According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), the deductive researcher has a top-down approach as he formulates a hypothesis deducted from existing data or theories in order to add to or contradict to this data or theories. As this thesis aims to develop a more satisfying view on asymmetric conflicts by conducting a thorough literature review and assess to which extend existing theories are able to provide satisfactory answers, the deductive research methodology suits the aim of this thesis very well.

The following chapter will combine the two main views derived from the literature research and use them to develop a new model that better explains the outcome of asymmetric conflicts. This model will be applied to twenty-one cases of asymmetric conflict between 1965 and 1996 in the next chapter. This timeframe has been chosen as the reliable data-set of Arreguin-Toft (2001) has collected data until 1996. 1965 has been chosen as starting date as it is the first year of US military involvement in the Vietnam war, the asymmetric conflict that initiated academic interests in these kind of conflicts. Apart from being a symbolic starting point, the twenty-five cases falling within this scope fit well within the limited time and word count of this thesis. Moreover, selecting recent cases increases the policy relevance of this paper. Of these twenty-five cases, only twenty-one cases have been incorporated in this thesis. Two of these cases, The Kurdish Rebellion on the Western-Sahara conflict, lacked information on respectively conflict outcome and adopted strategy. In regard to the third case, the Chadian civil war, Arreguin-Toft (2001) utilises a timeframe very inconsistent with other literature, clouding the reliability of this case`s results. The fourth case, the Philippine-More conflict, lacked reliable literature to sufficiently conduct a literature research to determine the variables on political pressure.

A more satisfying model

Two main theories have been derived from the literature on the decisive elements on asymmetric conflict outcome. One gives primacy to the *political capacity* to wage war, the other gives primacy to adopted *strategy*. Arreguin-Toft (2001) has argued the decisive element in asymmetric conflict is the strategy which is used, while the political element only plays a role when a conflict drags on. In other words, Arreguin-Toft appears to claim political pressure and time are correlated. Although it is only logical that time and the chance of significant political pressure are positively correlated, this claim has not been tested before. Therefore, time will be a separate variable in the model in this thesis to test if this assumption is true. Moreover, neither of the two views make a proper distinction between internal and

external political pressure. However, making this distinction could be very relevant. Authoritarian strong actors could oppress domestic political opposition while being under high external pressure from the international community. The effects of these different types of political pressure have not yet been properly studied. A more satisfying view on decisive elements for asymmetric conflict outcome should therefore identify internal political pressure and external political pressure as separate variables. With this approach the effects of political pressure in different regime types can be better assessed. Lastly, no case study that both tests the relevance of political capacity to wage war and adopted strategy on asymmetric conflict outcome can be found in the literature. By creating a model that incorporates both these elements, a better comprehension can be created on under which circumstances which elements are decisive. Therefore, this model could contribute significantly to the academic understanding of asymmetric conflict outcomes and could have relevance for policy-makers.

From the literature review it follows there are strong indications the *duration* of the asymmetric conflict, military *strategy*, *external political pressure* towards the strong actor and *internal political pressure* towards the strong actor are the four most decisive elements determining asymmetric conflict outcome.

Based on these indications of decisive elements the following hypothesis can be formulated: 'If the duration of an asymmetric conflict is short, the external political pressure (ExPres) aimed at the strong actor is low, the internal political pressure (IntPres) in the home country of the strong actor is low and a symmetrical military strategy (Strat) is adopted, the strong actor wins the asymmetric conflict'.

Below this hypothesis is demonstrated in a table.

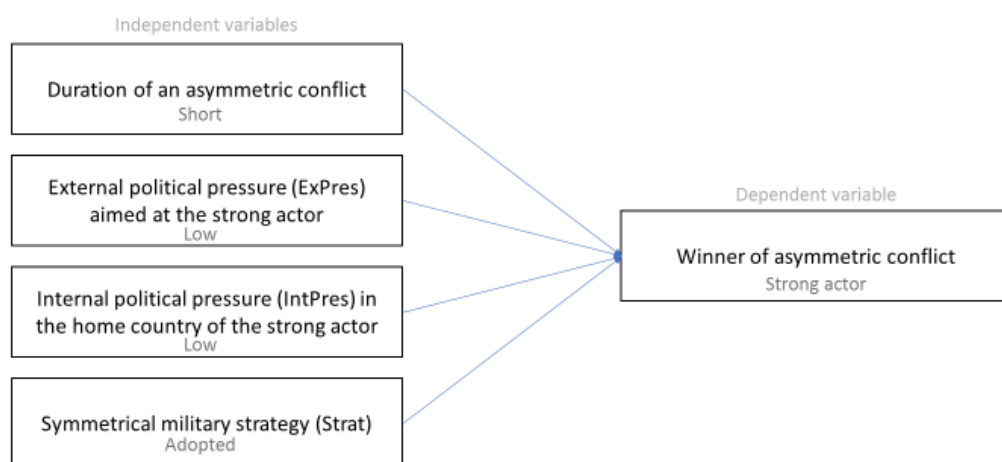| Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short	Low	Low	Sym	Strong wins

Figure 1: schematic overview of the hypothesis

In this model the *conflict duration*, the presence of *external* and *internal political pressure* and the adopted *strategy* are the independent variables. The value of *external* and *internal political pressure* will be derived from literature research, whereas Arreguin-Toft`s (2001) data set will be used to determine the values of the variables *conflict duration* and adopted *strategy*.

If any variable is true it will be given the value '1'. If a variable is untrue it will be given the value '0'. However, it is very difficult to quantify the independent variables in this model. What is the definition of a long conflict, and when can we speak of significant political pressure? In reality, the answer to these questions lay somewhere *between* 'long' and 'short' or 'high' and 'low'. It requires extensive research to approach an exact answer to one of these questions. In light of the twenty-one case studies to be researched, it seems most workable to find some way to determine if a variable is true or untrue. Therefore, the choice has been made to work with binary values. With this method the truth can be approached while still creating a clear overview of the variables. Following paragraphs will define the variables as precisely as possible, allowing the variables to be answered with a straight 'true' (1) or 'untrue' (0) answer.

In the case all conditions are true the model will look as follows.

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short (1)	Low (1)	Low (1)	Sym (1)	4

According to this model the higher the result, the higher the chance the strong actor wins the conflict. A score of 3 or 4 indicates a strong actor victory, a score of 0 or 1 a weak actor victory.

The aim of this case study is to assess the asymmetric conflicts in the chosen time frame 1965-1996 to test whether the formulated hypothesis on decisive elements for asymmetric conflict outcome is true. The information regarding political pressure should be available as extensive descriptive research already has been conducted in the twenty to fifty year period after the end of these conflicts. Satisfying answers are to be derived from relative superficial literature research to assess all twenty-one cases within reasonable time. At least two academic sources per case will be used to support the values given to the dependent variables. It will be assumed the data set regarding strategy and war outcome of Arreguin-Toft (2001) is true. Only a strong literary debate regarding the outcome to one of the variables of the model will be explicitly addressed in the body of the thesis. In these cases the most persuasive arguments will be presented and used to consequently determine the variable value.

The following paragraphs are dedicated to defining the variables in the model.

Independent variable: duration

Defining this variable raises several essential questions. What is a long conflict? Should one take the average or mean conflict duration in a specific timeframe and classify all above average conflicts as long? Or have renowned conflict researches perhaps agreed upon a general definition regarding conflict duration?

Extensive literature research learned that there is no general consensus on the definition of a 'long' or 'short' conflict. After all, a military campaign aimed at conquering a piece of land in a couple of days should be categorised as 'long' if this campaign eventually takes up one month. On the contrary, a military campaign aimed at resolving a dispute within a couple of years should be categorised as 'short' if this campaign eventually takes up one month. It is therefore not possible to determine a general point before which a conflict duration is 'short' and after which a conflict duration is 'long'. All relevant circumstances of the specific case should be taken into account.

The only right way to determine whether a conflict should be categorised as 'long' or 'short' is to compare the *expected* conflict duration with the *real* conflict duration. However, this raises two challenges: expected conflict duration could be subjective and debated amongst high-ranking army and state officials and 2) it could be very difficult to obtain these kind of statements. Because of these practical difficulties, the mean asymmetric conflict duration of 2.98 years calculated by Arreguin-toft (2001) will be used to categorise a specific case as long or short. Unless, of course, information is available which indicates that in the specific circumstances of the particular conflict another conclusion should be drawn.

Independent variable: external political pressure

Mack (1975) has argued success for the weak actor does not arise from winning battles but rather from affecting its opponents` political capability to wage war. An asymmetric conflict could expand far beyond the actual battlefield and into the social and political domestic realm of the strong actor.

An important distinction should be made between external political pressure from the international community and political uprising in the strong actor`s homeland. Mack (1975) only briefly mentioned this difference, but the separate impact of internal and external political pressure has not yet been assessed by him or academics after him. Doing so could, however, be very significant. After all, both Mack (2011) and Arreguin-Toft (2001) agreed that totalitarian regimes are not likely to be troubled by serious domestic political opposition while those regimes could be influenced by significant pressure from the international community. Assessing the internal and external impact of political pressure separately could therefore be very valuable for determining its effects on conflict outcomes.

External political pressure will be defined as actions by the international community aimed at the stronger actor which demonstrably affected the stronger actor`s strategic decisions. Acts by the international community could for example be official UN statements of joint statements by multiple

nations. Strategic decisions will be demonstrably affected when this is supported by testimonies from high ranking state or army officials or assessments by academic scholars.

Independent variable: internal political pressure

As explained in the previous paragraph, it could be very valuable to separately assess external and internal political pressure. Internal political pressure will be defined as the political mobilization of the masses against the authorities in the home country of the stronger actor. Mass anti-war effort protests or civil uprisings in the context of civil war are strong indicators this definition is met.

Independent variable: (a)symmetric strategy

Arreguin-Toft (2001) introduces the strategic interaction thesis as a theory to explain asymmetric conflict outcomes. The strategic interaction theory and its key definitions have been discussed in the literature review. Arreguin-Tofts`s (2001) conclusions on adopted strategies for the selected cases will be adopted (p. 124-128).

Dependent variable: conflict outcome

Important for determining the conflict outcome are one or more of the following elements:

- destroying the enemy`s capacity to resist with armed forces
- destroying the enemy`s will to fight
- (for the weak actor:) forcing the enemy to withdraw to the homeland

Arreguin-Toft (2001) has conducted extensive statistical research regarding the outcome of asymmetric conflicts (p. 124-128). The validity of his conclusions on conflict outcome for this thesis will be assumed, unless literature research suggests otherwise. However, Arreguin-Toft makes no distinction between weak actor victories and indecisive war outcomes in his model. A case study in which the conflict outcome was indecisive could in this model result to indicating a strong actor victory while Arreguin-Toft valued the outcome as '0'. In the chapter 'Results' extra attention will be paid during the analysis of possible outliers of this type.

Case study: a more satisfying model

Introduction

In this chapter the previously discussed twenty-one asymmetric conflict cases between 1965 and 1996 will be studied. In two hundred to four hundred words for each case, a multiple-source literature research will be summarised aimed at answering the independent variables *conflict duration*, *internal political pressure* and *external political pressure*. The aim of this case study is to assess if these elements are indeed decisive for asymmetric conflict outcome.

The conclusions and corresponding values of the variables will be schematically demonstrated below each case analysis. An overview of the schematic results and analysis of the results will be presented in the next chapter. To make it easier for the reader to quickly view if a case study result is in accordance with this thesis` hypothesis, the box representing the case study result has been given a colour. Green represents a result in accordance with the thesis` hypothesis, orange represents an indecisive result (two variables being true), red represents a result contrary to this thesis` hypothesis.

Vietnam (1965-1975)

The Vietnam or Second Indochina war occurred in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The strong actor in this conflict was the US, supported by the government of South Vietnam, whereas the weak actor was the North Vietnamese government supported by the Soviet Union, China and other communist allies (Daddis, 2011).

Duration

The timeframe between deployment of US troops (1965) and their withdraw (1975) is approximately ten years (Rockoff, 2012). With a conflict duration over three times the mean asymmetric conflict duration this war should be classified as long.

ExPres

The research on domestic and bottom-up anti-war movements is overwhelming, which clouds the available literature on international opposition towards to conflict. In regard to the context of the cold war, limited information on this topic is not surprising. The United Nations failed to take a unified position on the war, for obvious reasons: three of the permanent members of the security council had opposing interests (China, Soviet Union, US). Liberal and capitalist states supported the American war effort or abstained from critique, whilst communist states supported their 'red' ally. US allies might not have been in favour of the war efforts, but the contemporary power balance and ideological struggle appeared to prevent them from making a joint statement. The critical question is whether the political opposition from communist states had more impact than the support by allied nations. In light of the course and outcome of the cold war era this international support and international opposition was at least balanced, if not in favour of the supporting efforts. Therefore, it is concluded external political pressure could not have been so high that it was a decisive element in the outcome of the Vietnam war.

IntPres

The Vietnam war led to multiple major anti-war demonstrations within the US, leading to the conclusion internal political pressure was high. (Rockoff, 2012, p. 277-279).

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Long	Low	High	Sym	Weak wins
0	**1**	**0**	**1**	**2**

Second Kashmir (1965-1965)

The Second Kashmir war or Indo-Pakistani war was a culmination of skirmishes in 1965 between strong actor India and weak actor Pakistan. The armed hostilities were initiated by India as a response to a Pakistani attempt to start an insurgency against Indian rule in border regions (Riedel, 2013).

Duration

The armed skirmishes took place in the period between April and September of 1965 (Riedel, 2013). Far below the asymmetric conflict duration mean, the war should be classified as short.

ExPres

The conflict occurred within the cold war era in a time where both capitalist and communist ideologies tried to influence the area (Riedel, 2013). During and after the conflict, both actors felt betrayed by the limited support from the two power blocks (McGarr, 2013; Riedel, 2013). External political pressure was therefore limited and not a decisive factor in determining the outcome of the war.

IntPres

Domestic support for the war effort was high. Indian premier Lal Bahadur Shastri was even hailed as a national hero (Riedel, 2013).

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short	Low	Low	Sym	Indecisive
1	1	1	1	4

Six-Day War (1967-1967)

The Six-Day war, also known as the June War or Third Arab-Israeli War, was fought in June 1967 between weak actor Israel and an Arab coalition of which the main contributors were Egypt, Jordan and Syria as strong actor (Parker, 1996). Although the Israeli army had a technological advantage, their troops, planes and artillery units were greatly outnumbered (Parker, 1996).

Duration

Only lasting six days, the conflict is categorised as short.

ExPres

Both the context of the cold war and the extremely short duration of the conflict did not allow significant organized external political pressure towards the Arab coalition during the time of the conflict (Ferris, 2013).

IntPres

National sentiments, but even more importantly, anti-Israeli sentiments shared by the population of all Arab coalition partners assured there was no massive political opposition towards the war efforts (Ferris, 2013). Moreover, the extremely short timeframe in which the hostilities took place did not allow any organised opposition.

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short	Low	Low	Sym	Weak wins
1	1	1	1	4

Israeli-Egyptian (1969-1970)

This conflict, also known as the War of Attrition, was a direct result of the Six Day War (Aloni, 2004). It was a fight between weak actor Israel and strong actor Egypt with its allies.

Duration

The War of Attrition was officially announced by Nasser in March 1969 and continued until August 1970 (Aloni, 2004). Less than half the mean asymmetric conflict duration the conflict should be categorised as short.

ExPres

The whole Israeli-Arab conflict should be viewed in the context of the cold war. Both sides were under strong influence and received significant military support from either the communist or capitalist power block (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1980). Official statements from governments were mainly general calls for de-escalation but were not directly aimed at the strong actor to cease its war efforts (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1980). External political pressure was therefore limited and not a decisive factor in determining the outcome of the war.

IntPres

The pursuit for revenge after the shameful defeat during the Six Day War, desire to recapture the Sinai and strong anti-Israeli sentiments were shared by both high command and majority of the Arab coalition`s population (Aloni, 2004; Bar-Siman-Tov, 1980). Therefore, mass political opposition did not take place.

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short	Low	Low	Sym	Weak wins
1	1	1	1	4

Bangladesh (1971-1971)

The Bangladesh Liberation War or Bangladesh War of Independence was an armed revolution sparked by a self-determination movement in former East Pakistan and the 1971 Bangladesh genocide (Sisson & Rose, 1992). The conflict resulted in the independence of Bangladesh. Bangladesh, being supported by approximately 250.000 Indian troops, can be identified as strong actor, Pakistan as weak actor (Sisson & Rose, 1992).

Duration

The conflict started in the night of March 25th 1971 with Operation Searchlight and ended on December 16th 1971 (Chowdhury, 2012). The conflict duration of just under 9 months is to be categorised as short.

ExPres

The Bangladesh Liberation War should be viewed in light of the cold war. Bangladesh and India were supported by the Soviet Union while Pakistan was backed by the US (Sisson & Rose, 1992). Apart from these power relations, gross human right violation caused firm responses from the international community (Chowdhury, 2012). Several individual governments, as well as the United Nations, condemned these violations and called for an immediate end to these atrocities (Sisson & Rose, 1992). Political pressure towards weak actor Pakistan was high and in support of strong actor Bangladesh. Therefore, external pressure aimed at the strong actor is to be categorised as low.

IntPres

The population of Bangladesh was the victim of genocide and were threatened by extinction (Sisson & Rose, 1992. Support for independence was high, internal pressure, therefore, low.

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short	Low	Low	Sym	Strong wins
1	1	1	1	4

Yom Kippur War (1973-1973)

The Yom Kippur war was an armed conflict that lasted approximately three weeks. An Arab coalition led by Egypt and Syria (strong actor) launched a surprise attack on Israeli positions on the Sinai and Golan Heights, areas occupied since the Six Day War of 1967. The war resulted in Israel losing many of its occupied territories and brought to light weaknesses at the Israeli Defend Forces (Shoham, 2013). However, the war was a military Israeli victory as Israeli troops had advanced close to Damascus and Cairo and had surrounded most Egyptian troops (Morris, 1999).

Duration

The Yom Kippur War was fought just under three weeks, resulting in a conflict duration classification as short.

ExPres

The Israeli-Arab conflict is to be viewed in the context of the cold war. Both sides were under strong influence and received significant military support from either the communist or capitalist power block (Morris, 1999). Opposed by the Unites States and some allies but supported by the Soviet Union, in combination with the short duration of the war, did not result in significant external political pressure aimed at the Arab coalition.

IntPres

Support for the war was high due to the desire to recapture lost territory and the memory of earlier shameful defeats against Israel (Morris, 1999).

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short	Low	Low	Sym	Weak wins
1	1	1	1	4

Turko-Cypriot (1974-1974)

The Turko-Cypriot war constitutes the Turkish (strong actor) invasion of Cyprus (weak actor) between July 4 and August 18 following a Cypriot coup d`état. The conflict resulted in the Turkish occupation of Northern Cyprus (Quigley, 2010).

Duration

The armed conflict took approximately four weeks, resulting in a short conflict duration.

ExPres

The Turkish occupation of Cyprus is seen as illegal under international law (Ker-Lindsay, 2011). The international community views the declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus as an illegal occupation, infringing the sovereignty of Cyprus (Quigley, 2010). Turkey is the only nation to acknowledge this Republic (Salin, 2004). External pressure aimed at strong actor Turkey has been and remains to this day high.

IntPres

No significant domestic protests against Turkish war efforts have been noted during the armed conflict (Ker-Lindsay, 2011).

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short	High	Low	Sym	Strong wins
1	0	1	1	3

Eritrean (1974-1991)

The Eritrean War of Independence was a violent conflict between the Ethiopian government as strong actor and Eritrean separatists as weak actor during and before the Ethiopian Civil War. The war continued until 1991, when Eritrean separatists defeated Ethiopian forces stationed in Eritrean territory (Keller, 1992).

Duration

The armed hostilities continued for over seventeen years. The Eritrean War of Independence is therefore to be qualified as long.

ExPres

The Eritrean conflict has been under strong influences of the Cold War. Remarkably, in several stages of the conflict the parties were supported by different ends of the power spectrum due to a regime change from an ancient monarchy to Marxist-Leninist government (Johnson & Johnson, 1981). When the Cold War and thus Soviet support for Ethiopia ended, external pressure to end the conflict grew (Keller, 1992). External pressure in the decisive moments in the war has therefore been high.

IntPres

Being a civil war with the aim for independence, the conflict by definition constituted significant internal pressure aimed at strong actor Ethiopia. The results of the post-war referendum, verified by the United Nations, confirmed the approval of the Eritrean population in favour of independence and opposing Ethiopian rule: 99.79 percent of the Eritreans voted for sovereignty (Government of Eritrea, 2013).

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Long	High	High	Sym	weak wins
0	0	0	1	1

Kurdish Autonomy (1974-1975)

The Kurdish Autonomy War or Second Kurdish-Iraqi War was initiated by failing Kurdish autonomy talks and the resulting offensive of strong actor Iraqi troops against weak actor Kurdish fighters. Instead of using guerrilla tactics like in earlier skirmishes the Kurds adopted a symmetric war strategy, which resulted in a relative quick Iraqi total victory (Harris, 1977).

Duration

The Second Kurdish-Iraqi war lasted just over a year, resulting in a short conflict duration classification.

ExPres

No significant external political pressure forced Iraq to cease its war efforts. In fact, Iraq was able to strike a deal with Iran, the largest military supporter of the Kurds (Kelly, 1993). In return for handing over Iraqi territory to Iran, the latter would stop supporting and supplying the Kurdish autonomy fighters (Kelly, 1993).

IntPres

The Iraqi population consists of a significant number of Kurds. Moreover, the conflict was fought on territory Iraq regarded as its own. After the war, the contested area became an autonomous region within the border of Iraq. These circumstances should lead to the conclusion the Kurdish Autonomy War has been a domestic violent conflict which caused high internal political pressure.

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short	Low	High	Sym	strong wins
1	1	0	1	3

East Timor (1974-1975)

The conflict in East Timor began when Portugal gave up this colony and Indonesia as strong actor claimed and occupied this territory. The war resulted in the Indonesian occupation of East Timor. Arreguin-Toft (2001) concluded the war resulted in a weak actor victory for East Timor, but the available literature suggests otherwise (Bertrand, 2009; Ramos-Horta, 1987). It is true East Timor eventually gained sovereignty, but the direct result of this particular conflict lead to a convincing political and military strong actor Indonesian victory.

Duration

The East Timor conflict in 1974-1975 lasted little under eight months. It is therefore to be categorised as short.

ExPres

According to Ramos-Horta (1987), there was no significant reaction by the international community because of the Indonesian war efforts, mainly due to Indonesia`s strategic importance during these late stages of the Cold War.

IntPres

Indonesia justified their actions against East Timor as anticolonial, aiming to provide the East Timorese self-determination (Indonesia, 1977). There have been no significant domestic protests against the Indonesian war efforts (Ramos-Horta, 1987).

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short	Low	Low	Asym	strong wins
1	1	1	0	3

Vietnamese-Cambodian (1975-1979)

The Cambodian-Vietnamese War was a conflict between weak actor Khmer Rouge controlled Cambodia and strong actor Vietnam. The conflict started with smaller border skirmishes between 1975 and 1977 and evolved into an armed conflict involving hundreds of thousands combatants.

Duration

Arreguin-Toft (2001) concluded the conflict lasted approximately four years, although other sources keep a higher estimate (Bultmann, 2015; Morris, 1999). Either way, the conflict duration is to be determined as long.

ExPres

This conflict is to be viewed in the context of the cold war. Both sides were under strong influence of either the communist or capitalist power block (Bultmann, 2015). Furthermore, some states expressed their support of Vietnam for acting against the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge, while there was also the critique Vietnam merely acted to expand their power (Carpenter, 1986). It is not likely external political pressure has been significant enough to be decisive in the conflict outcome.

IntPres

There have been no reports of massive domestic protests against the Indonesian war efforts (Morris, 1999).

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Long	Low	Low	Sym	strong wins
0	1	1	1	3

Ethiopian-Somalian (1977-1978)

The Ethiopian-Somalian War or Ogaden War was fought between Ethiopia as strong actor and Somalia as weak actor. The core of the dispute was the Ogaden region, which was claimed and invaded by Somalia in July 1977. The War was heavily influenced by Cold War politics. Remarkably, before the conflict the Soviet Union supported Somalia while the United States supported Ethiopia (Urban, 1983). When the Somalis invaded Ethiopia, both external actors started supporting the opposite party (Urban, 1983).

Duration

The Ogaden War took approximately eight months, resulting in a short conflict duration classification.

ExPres

Ethiopia was heavily backed by the Soviet Union and in lesser extend by Cuba during the conflict (Urban, 1983). This intervention initially has a political character, but in the later stages of the war Cuban and Soviet soldiers and equipment were deployed (Urban, 1983). This international support for strong actor Ethiopia justifies a low external pressure qualification.

IntPres

There have been no reports of significant internal political pressure within Ethiopia. This variable should be assessed as low.

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short	Low	Low	Sym	strong wins
1	1	1	1	4

Afghanistan (1978-1989)

The Soviet-Afghan war was a conflict fought by a large Soviet expeditionary force as strong actor and Afghan mujahedeen as weak actor. After a coup by Afghan traditionalists the Soviets staged their own coup, brought to power a communist government and sent a total of more than half a million troops to keep the regime in charge (Kepel, 2002).

Duration

The war lasted over nine years, resulting in a long conflict duration classification.

ExPres

Started at the peak of the Cold War, the Soviet Union had all reasons to keep Afghanistan under its sphere of influence. The longer the war lasted, the more Soviet power crumbled and external pressure increased. Already in the early 80s, thirty-four nations of the Islamic Conference had adopted a resolution demanding immediate withdrawal of the Soviet troops, whereas the United Nation`s General Assembly adopted a resolution protesting the Soviet war effort (Pittsburg Post-Gazette, 1980; Toledo Blade, 1980). Scholars agree that besides the military costs, the diplomatic costs became an increasingly large burden (Crile, 2003). Therefore, it should be concluded external political pressure was a significant contributor to the conflict outcome.

IntPres

Especially at the beginning of the conflict domestic Soviet media outlets, like most aspects of Soviet society, were heavily controlled. Therefore, massive popular protests did not occur. However, the war created severe friction between fractions of the Soviet military and government. It is argued by multiple scholars these internal struggles contributed to the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union (Reuveny & Prakash, 1999). These circumstances legitimise the conclusion to assess the internal political pressure as high.

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Long	High	High	Sym	weak wins
0	0	0	1	1

Sino-Vietnamese (1979-1979)

The Sino-Vietnamese war or Third Indochina War was a relatively brief armed conflict and a direct result of Vietnam`s invasion of Cambodia some months earlier (Kissinger, 2011). The Third Indochina War was fought between China as strong actor and Vietnam, backed by the Soviet Union, as weak actor.

Duration

The conflict lasted four weeks, resulting in a short conflict duration classification.

ExPres

The conflict occurred under heavy influences of Cold War politics. However, the communist fractions were not united. Known as the Sino-Soviet split, relations between the Soviet Union and China had deteriorated, mainly due to persistent Chinese critique on the new Soviet leadership under Khrushchev (Kissinger, 2011). Soviet dissatisfaction was mainly manifested by providing military support for Vietnam. Significant or unified objections from the international community did not occur (Kissinger, 2011). Therefore, external pressure has been low.

IntPres

In the late 70s Chinese media and other aspects of society were heavily controlled (Kissinger, 2011). The Chinese communist party did not allow organised political opposition. These circumstances prevented any possible significant internal political pressure.

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short	Low	Low	Sym	Strong wins
1	1	1	1	4

Peruvian Civil War (1982-1992)

The Peruvian Civil War was an armed conflict between the Peruvian government as strong actor and several guerrilla organisations as weak actor. Most of the hostilities occurred between 1982 and 1992, but some guerrillas have remained active until today (Rochlin, 2003).

Duration

Most of the armed hostilities took place over a ten-year period, justifying a conflict duration qualification as long.

ExPres

Especially during the last years of the war, the power of the communist block had deteriorated. Thus, international support for the insurgent was practically non-existent (Rochlin, 2003). In fact, the only external political and military support in the conflict was received by the Peruvian government by the United States (Rochlin, 2003). Therefore, it must be concluded external political pressure was low (Gorriti Elleborgen, 2006).

IntPres

Several organisations had took up arms, including the People`s Guerrilla Army, the Communist Party of Peru and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (Rochlin, 2003). They represented mostly left-wing and communist parts of the Peruvian population. Although the guerrillas enjoyed support from a significant part of especially the rural population at the beginning of the war, support quickly crumbled when the guerrillas started killing civilians they deemed to be enemies of their cause (Gorriti Elleborgen, 2006). Therefore, the armed insurgents did not receive widespread popular and political support. Internal political pressure towards the Peruvian government is assessed as low.

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Long	Low	Low	Sym	Strong wins
0	1	1	1	3

Tamil Rebellion (1983-1990)

The Tamil Rebellion or Sri Lankan Civil War was an armed insurgency by the Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam (Tamil Tigers) as weak actor against the central government as strong actor with the aim to establish an independent state in the North of Sri Lanka (James, 2015). The Tamil Tigers were defeated in 2009, but had achieved major political and military successes in 1990 (Arreguin-Toft, 2001; James, 2015).

Duration

The first phase of the rebellion lasted approximately seven years, resulting in a long conflict duration classification.

ExPres

Both the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers have been accused of gross human rights violations (Balasingham, 2003). Tamil tactics such as massive suicide bombings and the use of indiscriminate violence resulted in the listing of the Tamil Tiger as terrorist organisation by dozens of countries (Bhattacharji, 2009). Moreover, India provided the Sri Lankan government with military support while the Tamil Tigers received no known military support (Balasingham, 2003). Therefore, external political pressure towards strong actor Sri Lanka is to be assessed as low.

IntPres

The population of Sri Lanka roughly exists of the majority Sinhalese group and the minority Tamil group. In the early 1980s, tensions had risen to such a high level that drove especially Tamil youngsters into militancy (James, 2015). Trust in political parties had shrunken dramatically, which contributed to many Tamils joining the Tamil Tigers; voter turnout in the 1983 government elections was only ten percent (Gunaratna, 1998). Being a civil war with the aim for independence, the conflict by definition constituted significant internal pressure aimed at the central Sri Lankan government as strong actor. Internal political pressure should therefore be assessed as high.

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Long	Low	High	Asym	Weak wins
0	1	0	0	1

Sino-Vietnamese 2 (1985-1987)

The period 1985-1987 in the Third Indochina war represents the peak of armed activities between strong actor China and weak actor Vietnam. Unlike the convincing Chinese victory in 1979, observers concluded China had failed to achieve either a political or military victory in this timeframe (Weisskopf, 1981).

Duration

The peak in armed activity, mostly Chinese border shelling and division-sized attacks on Vietnamese border positions, took little under two years. Still well under the three year asymmetric conflict mean, this timeframe is to be considered short.

ExPres

The Sino-Vietnamese border skirmishes between 1985 and 1987 have been part of a larger conflict lasting from the late 70s until the early 90s (Joyaux, 1994). Taking place in the final days of the Cold War, the traditional Cold War power fractions did not attempt to significantly influence any of the fighting parties. External political pressure should therefore be assessed as low.

IntPres

In the mid-80s Chinese media and other aspects of society were still heavily controlled (Kissinger, 2011). The Chinese communist party did not allow organised political opposition. These circumstances prevented any possible significant internal political pressure.

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short	Low	Low	Sym	Weak wins
1	1	1	1	4

Iraq-Kuwait (1990-1990)

The Iraq-Kuwait War was the successful and quick invasion of weak actor Kuwait by strong actor Iraq. The war resulted in a seven month occupation of Kuwait and eventually led to a United Nation mandated coalition force to aid Kuwait, a conflict that came to be known as the First Gulf War (Mylroie, 1993).

Duration

The invasion only took two days to complete, allowing an easy conclusion the conflict duration is to be assessed as short.

ExPres

Although the invasion led to a strong condemnation of the Iraqi war effort, external political pressure was not a significant determinant in the outcome of the conflict due to the extremely short time the invasion had taken place. Therefore, it should be concluded external political pressure *during* the invasion has been low.

IntPres

The remarkably short time span of the invasion did not allow any form of significant Iraqi domestic political protests. Furthermore, Iraqi leader strongman Saddam Hussein did not allow organised criticism on Iraqi policies (Mylroie, 1993). Internal political pressure is to be marked as low.

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short	Low	Low	Sym	Strong wins
1	1	1	1	4

Gulf War (1990-1991)

The First Gulf War, also known as operation Desert Shield, was a war against Iraq waged by a coalition force led by the US. The cause of the conflict was Iraq`s invasion and annexation of Kuwait (Ruckoff, 2012). The strong actor was the US and its allies, the weak actor Iraq.

Duration

The Gulf war took approximately seven months, of which six weeks could be identified as the combat phase (Ruckoff, 2012, p. 305-306). Far beneath the mean asymmetric conflict duration this war should be classified as short.

ExPres

No significant political pressure from the international community was aimed at the strong actor. On the contrary, over thirty nations actively supported the war effort. Moreover, the United Nations adopted a resolution in which they adopted severe sanctions against Iraq (United Nations, 1990). Therefore, external political pressure was low.

IntPres

The Gulf war was unique for its massive and instantaneous media coverage. However, media freedom was heavily restricted by a Pentagon document called 'Annex Foxtrot' (Gendzier, 2005). This caused opposition from several independent media outlets (Lee & Devitt, 1991; Naureckas, 2010). These critiques were not significant enough to mobilize a large anti-war movement. The internal pressure should therefore be classified as low.

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short	Low	Low	Sym	Strong wins
1	1	1	1	4

Serbian Rebellion (1991-1996)

The Serbian Rebellion or Croatian War of Independence started when Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991 during the breakdown of the Yugoslav Federation. The Serbian minority in Croatia rejected the authority of the new state of Croatia and demanded to remain part of the Yugoslav Federation (United Nations, 2017). Croatian Serbs started a rebellion and claimed approximately 30 percent for an independent Serb state (Burg & Shoup, 1997). They were fought by the forces of the new Socialist Federal Republic of Croatia. The power balance when the conflict started is remarkable: the Serb rebels had mostly outdated military equipment to their disposal, but the state of the Croatian forces was even far worse (Burg & Shoup, 1997). Moreover, the Serbs outnumbered the Croatians about two to one (Burg & Shoup, 1997). Although the power balance shifted during the course of the war, Arreguin-Toft (2001) seemed right to classify this war as asymmetric conflict with the Serb rebels as strong actor and Croatian government as weak actor.

Duration

The armed hostilities lasted over four and a half years, resulting in a long conflict duration.

ExPres

During the course of the war many nations started to acknowledge Croatia as an independent state. For example, the European Union and Russia did so in 1992 (Kinzer, 1991). This caused significant external political pressure for the Serbs as strong actor, leading to the conclusion this variable is to be assessed as high.

IntPres

In the 1990s, the former Yugoslav republic was torn by internal wars (United Nations, 2017). The core of the conflict constituted an independence claim within an independence claim. The only possible conclusion is that internal political pressure has been very high.

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Long	High	High	Asym	weak wins
0	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Russo-Chechen (1994-1996)

The Russo-Chechen War or First Chechen War was an armed conflict between strong actor Russia and weak actor Chechnya. The Russians tried to regain control of Chechnya, which had declared independence in 1991, but failed to do so.

Duration

The conflict lasted approximately 20 months, well under the three year mean for asymmetric conflicts. This conflict should therefore be assessed as 'short'.

ExPres

There have been many confirmed reports of gross human rights violations during the war, especially conducted by Russian forces (Human Rights Watch, 1996). In particular the battle of Grozny during the last months of the conflict sparked fury in both Russia and the international community (Gall & de Waal, 1998). Therefore, diplomatic pressure aimed at Russia most likely became a significant factor in Russian leadership decisions. Because of those reasons external political pressure should be assessed as high.

IntPres

As Chechnya was a part of the Russian Federation during the war (and *de jure* remained after), it could be concluded internal pressure against Russia was significant due to this single reason. Moreover, many high-ranking officers, including the Russian general of Ground forces, resigned in protest (Gall & de Waal, 1998). Furthermore, several high-ranking Russian politicians openly objected Russia`s war efforts (Gall & de Waal, 1998). Therefore, internal political pressure was high.

Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Short	High	High	Sym	Weak wins
1	**0**	**0**	**1**	**2**

Case Study Results and Analysis

Introduction

In this chapter the results of the case study will be analysed. First, a table with the schematic overview of the case study results will be presented. Then, the case study results will be commented. Special attention will be given to results that are inconsistent with this thesis` hypothesis and to explaining outliers. In the last paragraph the main conclusions derived from the case study analysis will be presented.

Case study results

Conflict name	Duration	ExPres	IntPres	Strat	Result
Vietnam	Long (0)	Low (1)	High (0)	Sym (1)	**Weak wins (2)**
Second Kashmir	Short (1)	Low (1)	Low (1)	Sym (1)	**Indecisive (4)**
Six Day War	Short (1)	Low (1)	Low (1)	Sym (1)	**Weak wins (4)**
Israeli-Egyptian	Short (1)	Low (1)	Low (1)	Sym (1)	**Weak wins (4)**
Bangladesh	Short (1)	Low (1)	Low (1)	Sym (1)	**Strong wins (4)**
Yom Kippur War	Short (1)	Low (1)	Low (1)	Sym (1)	**Weak wins (4)**
Turkish-Cypriot	Short (1)	High (0)	Low (1)	Sym (1)	**Strong wins (3)**
Eritrean	Long (0)	High (0)	High (0)	Sym (1)	**Weak wins (1)**
Kurdish Autonomy	Short (1)	Low (1)	High (0)	Sym (1)	**Strong wins (3)**
East Timor	Short (1)	Low (1)	Low (1)	Asym (0)	**Strong wins (3)**
Vietnamese-Cambodian	Long (0)	Low (1)	Low (1)	Sym (1)	**Strong wins (3)**
Ethiopian-Somalian	Short (1)	Low (1)	Low (1)	Sym (1)	**Strong win (4)**
Afghanistan	Long (0)	High (0)	High (0)	Sym (1)	**Weak wins (1)**
Sino-Vietnamese 1	Short (1)	Low (1)	Low (1)	Sym (1)	**Strong wins (4)**
Peruvian Civil War	Long (0)	Low (1)	Low (1)	Sym (1)	**Strong wins (3)**
Tamil Rebellion	Long (0)	Low (1)	High (0)	Asym (0)	**Weak wins (1)**
Sino-Vietnamese 2	Short (1)	Low (1)	Low (1)	Sym (1)	**Weak wins (4)**
Iraq-Kuwait	Short (1)	Low (1)	Low (1)	Sym (1)	**Strong wins (4)**
Gulf War	Short (1)	Low (1)	Low (1)	Sym (1)	**Strong wins (4)**
Serbian Rebellion	Long (0)	High (0)	High (0)	Asym (0)	**Weak wins (0)**
Russo-Chechen	Short (1)	High (0)	High (0)	Sym (1)	**Weak wins (2)**

Case study analysis

Vietnam: inconsistent with hypothesis

Relatively low external political pressure and the use of symmetric military strategies led to the model not being able to indicate a conflict victor. The Vietnam conflict started with an asymmetric strategic approach (direct attack versus guerrilla), but ended in an symmetric strategic approach (barbarism vs guerrilla). This leads to a distorted representation of the strategy value.

Second Kashmir: inconsistent with hypothesis

Arreguin-Toft (2001) concluded the conflict to be military indecisive, while it could be argued India actually achieved a strategic and political victory (McGarr, 2013). According to Dennis (1992) "India had the better war" (p. 238). Taking the literary consensus on Indian victory as conclusive instead of Arreguin-Toft`s (2001) assessment on the conflict as indecisive in his data set, the model actually correctly explained the conflict outcome with all variables in favour of strong actor India.

Six Day War: inconsistent with hypothesis

Why did the model indicate all variables were in favour of a strong actor victory, while weak actor Israel won the war convincingly? It could be argued the Six Day War was not a real asymmetric conflict due to the technological advantage of weak actor Israel. The classification of Israel as weak actor is not in accordance with Arreguin-Toft`s (2001) own definition of an actor whose material power exceeds that of its opponent by at least ten to one (p. 94).

Moreover, Israel received significant military support from the US and the United Kingdom (Ferris, 2013). These circumstances made the Israeli army perhaps even superior over their Arab enemies, although Arreguin-Toft (2001) classified Israel as weak actor. This could explain why the model was completely wrong on this conflict`s outcome.

Israeli-Egyptian War: inconsistent with hypothesis

Again, the model indicated a victory for strong actor victory while weak actor Israel won the war. And again, it could be argued this conflict was not a real asymmetric conflict due to the technological advantage of weak actor Israel and the significant military support from foreign actors.

Bangladesh: consistent with hypothesis

The model indicated a strong actor victory consistent with the conflict outcome. Moreover, substantial military support for Bangladesh from India could also be seen as an important factor determining the strong actor victory (Sisson & Rose, 1992).

Yom Kippur War: inconsistent with hypothesis

The model indicated a strong actor victory for the Arab coalition. However, the conflict resulted in a military victory for weak actor Israel, although there is a general consensus the Arab coalition achieved a political victory (Morris, 1999). Also significant is that both sides, but especially Israel, received extensive military support (Morris, 1999).

Turkish-Cypriot: consistent with hypothesis

Apart from external political pressure, the variables indicated the achieved strong actor victory for Turkey.

Eritrean: consistent with hypothesis

Apart from the strategic approach, the variables indicated the weak actor victory of Eritrea. This outcome is an indicator that this more comprehensive model is better able to explain asymmetric conflict outcomes than the Arreguin-Toft`s (2001) narrow theory of strategic focus.

Kurdish: consistent with hypothesis

The literature suggests the typical strategic mistake by the Kurds of switching from guerrilla to symmetric strategy approach while being in the position of a weak actor in asymmetric conflict. Iraq on the other hand adopted the right strategy for a strong actor in asymmetric conflict by cutting of all support from the Kurds (Kelly, 1993).

East Timor: consistent with hypothesis

Remarkable in this case is that literature research has led to a different conflict outcome conclusion than Arreguin-Toft (2001). With this alteration form Arreguin-Tofts (2001) data-set, apart from the adopted strategy, the variable outcomes suggested the achieved strong actor victory.

Cambodian-Vietnamese: consistent with hypothesis

The conflict lasted for a long time, but the other variables indeed suggested the achieved strong actor victory.

Ethiopian-Somalian: consistent with hypothesis

All variables indeed suggested a strong actor victory. However, the studied literate indicated especially external military support contributed heavily to the strong actor Ethiopian victory (Urban, 1983).

Afghan: consistent with hypothesis

The Soviet-Afghan conflict, in popular culture referred to as 'Russia`s Vietnam', has been explained consistently with the model`s hypothesis. Despite adopting a symmetric military strategy, all other variables were in favour of strong actor`s Soviet defeat.

Sino-Vietnamese 1: consistent with hypothesis

All variables indeed suggested victory by strong actor China.

Peruvian Civil War: consistent with hypothesis

This conflict lasted long, but the other variables correctly indicated the strong actor victory of the Peruvian government.

Tamil rebellion: consistent with hypothesis

Despite low external political pressure for the Sri Lankan government the Tamil Tiger`s tactics proved successful, just as the other variables indicated.

Sino-Vietnamese 2: inconsistent with hypothesis

Although all variables indicated a victory for strong actor China, Vietnam achieved a political and military victory. The explanation could lay in the remarkable timeframe of 1985-1987 chosen in Arreguin-Toft`s (2001) data-set. Fighting between 1985 and 1987 perhaps was at a peak, but the conflict lasted for years and eventually resulted in Chinese victory (Weisskopf, 1981). Other explanations for the weak actor victory are Chinese military budget cuts or the rain season favouring Vietnams strategies (Weisskopf, 1981).

Iraq-Kuwait: consistent with hypothesis

The extremely short and effective Iraqi invasion of Kuwait using overwhelming military superiority did not allow a quick political and military reaction from external actors, assuring a clear strong actor victory like all the variables indicated. It should be noted the international community did respond in a matter of months, leading up to the First Gulf War.

Gulf War: consistent with hypothesis

Just as all the variables indicated the conflict resulted in a clear and quick strong actor victory.

Serbian Rebellion: consistent with hypothesis

The Serbian Rebellion is a remarkable case as the conflict power balance was favouring the rebellious actor as strong actor. The support of international community for the independence of weak actor Croatia accelerated the end of the conflict. All variables indicated the achieved weak actor victory.

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Russo-Chechen: inconsistent with hypothesis

With two variables being true, the model did not indicate a winner. Russia suffered severe domestic and international political pressure. A proper symmetric military tactic had been adopted, but morale within the military was extremely low. The conflict even led to many cases of desertion by low as well as high ranking soldiers (Gall & De Waal, 1998). With 20 months the war duration is far below the mean, but still not very short.

Case study analysis conclusions

The literature research had demonstrated several shortcomings in the existing views on asymmetric conflict outcome. Arreguin-Toft (2001) has made the questionable claim political pressure is only decisive for conflict outcome in long-lasting conflicts. Instead of creating another rival view, a new model has been developed in this thesis that combines the decisive elements of both theories. The aim of the case study was to test whether this new model of combining and improving the two main views on explaining asymmetric conflict could better explain the outcome of asymmetric conflict.

The model has been able to correctly indicate the conflict outcome in fourteen (sixty-six percent) of the cases. In two (ten percent) of the cases the model could not indicate the victor, in five cases (twenty-four percent) the model was wrong. Because the model only indicated the correct victor in two-thirds of the cases, it could seem this model does not indicate decisive elements for asymmetric conflict outcomes. However, a lot can be learned from its results. Moreover, due to some distortions the model could appear less valuable than it actually is.

First, three of the five cases in which the model wrongfully indicated the conflict victor involved Israel as weak actor. As earlier stated, it is highly controversial to qualify Israel as weak actor due to the technologically advanced state of their military and the enormous amount of military support they received. Leaving the Israeli conflicts out of the case study, the model`s success rate increases to seventy-eight percent.

Second, a wider trend can be recognised. The actor receiving significant military support from an external actor appears to almost always win the conflict. The studied literature did not indicate this to be a decisive element. However, military support from an external actor seems to be very significant. Although this element has not been incorporated in the model, this conclusion contributes to a better understanding of the decisive elements of asymmetric conflict outcome.

Third, the importance of separating internal and external political pressure has been indicated. Whereas Mack (1975) and Arreguin-Toft (2001) assumed 1) only one level of political pressure exists and 2) political pressure and time are positively correlated, this model has 1) showed that in four (twenty percent) of the cases only one of the variables *internal political pressure* or *external political pressure* was true and 2) in more than half of the cases a long conflict duration was not correlated with high

political pressure. Of the seven long asymmetric conflicts, two conflicts had one low political pressure variable while at two other cases both political pressure variables were assessed as low. These findings lead to the conclusion it is wrong to automatically assume political pressure can only be decisive in long-lasting conflicts. The proposition by Arreguin-Toft (2001), who *did* make this assumption, is hereby falsified. Moreover, the results of this model have demonstrated the existence of at least two levels of political pressure. Therefore, this model gives more insight in the complexity of the concept of political pressure and allows a better assessment of the importance of this concept for asymmetric conflict outcome for multiple regime types.

Limitations

This thesis has given valuable insights on the outcomes of asymmetric conflict. However, the limitations connected to the used data-set from Arreguin-Toft (2001) has caused some distortions that influenced the ability to correctly indicate the winning actor in several cases. Two major limitations with the data-set can be identified.

First, sometimes odd conflict duration timeframes were used in the data-set. In these cases, literary consensus indicated altering starting and ending dates. This complicated the literature research as it limited use of sources who used another timeframe. Second, it is debatable if all cases in Arreguin-Toft`s data-set are truly asymmetric conflicts. The Israeli examples have been addressed in the previous chapter: although being assessed as weak actor by Arreguin-Toft (2001), it is highly controversial to do so due to their technological superiority over their opponents and received military support.

Moreover, there are other limitations connected to the model itself. First, the independent variables are measured in a binary way. Scaling and quantifying the chosen independent variables is very difficult and arbitrary, but would have given more reliable results. Second, all independent variables are given the same weight. This has a very practical reason as it is near to impossible to determine the significance of each separate variable for each individual conflict. However, attempting this would have also increased the reliability of the results. Third, it is uncertain whether the right independent variables are chosen for this multiple regression, and whether the right number of independent variables is chosen. The case study revealed that external military support is also a significant determinant for conflict outcome, although the literature research did not indicated this.

Conclusions & further research

The aim of this thesis has been to answer the question *'which combination of elements are decisive for the outcome of asymmetric conflicts?'* and consequently develop a more comprehensive understanding of asymmetric conflict outcomes. Ground-breaking work on this subject had already been conducted by Mack (1975) and Arreguin-Toft (2001), but a thorough literature research revealed some omissions, incompletions and debatable assumptions.

Arreguin-Toft (2001) has made the questionable claim political pressure is only decisive for conflict outcome in long-lasting conflicts. Moreover, the possible significance of separating internal and external political pressure and the assumption conflict duration and political pressure are correlated, had not been properly addressed by contemporary literature. Instead of creating another rival view, a new model has been developed in this thesis that combines the decisive elements of both theories. A literature review has indicated the *duration* of the asymmetric conflict, military *strategy*, *external political pressure* towards the strong actor and *internal political pressure* towards the strong actor are the four most decisive elements determining asymmetric conflict outcome.

A case study has been conducted to test whether this new model of combining and improving the two main views on explaining asymmetric conflict could better explain the outcome of asymmetric conflict. Analysing the case study results has led to the conclusion this new model could indicate the asymmetric conflict victor relatively well, especially when the distorted results of the Israeli conflicts were left out. However, substantial military support for the weak actor seemed to be a very significant indicator for the conflict outcome as well. This element had not been derived from the literature research. Another important conclusion has been that it is indeed valuable to assess internal and external political pressure as two separate variables. Especially cases including authoritarian regimes could subsequently be assessed much better as internal political pressure is mostly oppressed while external political pressure could certainly affect the course of the conflict. Furthermore, in more than half of the cases a long conflict duration was not correlated with high political pressure. This leads to the conclusion it is wrong to automatically assume political pressure can only be decisive in long-lasting conflicts. The proposition by Arreguin-Toft (2001), who *did* make this assumption, is hereby falsified.

Unfortunately, but inevitably, several limitations and shortcoming in this research could be identified. The used data-set appeared to be flawed in some cases, causing some distorted results. Moreover, some limitations apply to the developed model itself. The variables have been measured binary, the significance of the individual variables have not been taken into account and other relevant variables, such as external military support, have not been included in the model. As a result of these limitations, some specific recommendation for further research could be highlighted:
- instead of using and assuming the validity of a data-set, invest in assessing and possibly adapting anomalies in a data-set to achieve more reliable results;

- scaling and quantifying variables is difficult and arbitrary, but will result in much more reliable results;
- incorporate at least the variable *military support from an external actor* in the model and thoroughly research the possibility of other relevant and significant variables;
- adopt a larger timeframe for a case study for more reliable results.

This research proved to have several flaws and limitations, but has provided valuable insights on decisive elements for asymmetric conflict outcomes. Three main conclusions in particular result in new insights adding to the existing literature. First, the conclusion long conflict duration is not correlated with high political pressure confirms the importance of political pressure, even in conflicts with short duration. Second, the separation in two levels of political pressure allows a better explanation of conflict outcome for authoritarian regimes. Third, this model has indicated that besides the four variables already incorporated, a fifth element is decisive for conflict outcome: military support from an external actor.

As asymmetric conflict will most probably the main type of military conflict in the coming decades, the results of this research have value for both policy-makers and researchers to develop broader comprehension on decisive indicators of asymmetric conflict outcomes. Although further research should assess the significance of the individual variables and the relevance of possible other variables, it can be concluded that if the duration of an asymmetric conflict is short, the external political pressure aimed at the strong actor is low, the internal political pressure in the home country of the strong actor is low, a symmetrical military strategy is adopted *and* the strong actor received more military support from an external actor than its opponent, the strong actor is most likely to win the asymmetric conflict.

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