

The Influence of Mediator Military Power on Armed Conflicts Resolution¹

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Abstract. The study of mediation in resolving armed conflicts remains a promising area of research in international relations. However, contemporary IR research provides a limited understanding of the role of the mediator's military power in the cessation of hostilities and the implementation of peace agreements. We have suggested that asymmetry and parity can characterize the military superiority (or lack thereof) of a mediator state. To assess the relevant characteristics of military power, we propose using a generalized indicator of military asymmetry created through a simple comparative analysis. Within the framework of the methodology presented in this article, various metrics of the military power of the parties to conflicts and their respective mediators were compared in pairs with each other according to the criterion of threshold values (quartiles), indicating an asymmetry (or parity) of military power. Various thresholds of sufficient skewness, ranging from 20% to 50%, were then also used to aggregate the binary scores into a single score. Through the assessment of a series of regression models, we were able to establish that the aggregate military superiority of the mediator state over the warring parties contributes in a statistically significant manner to both the immediate cessation of hostilities and the successful establishment of peace in the long term. Control variables in the form of the features of peace agreements also influence the positive outcome of the peace process. Key among these are increasing the transparency of political decision-making procedures and the involvement of various social groups in power processes at various levels. The results of this study demonstrate the interconnectedness of military force and successful mediation and also indicate the complementarity of military and negotiation components in the context of state-led mediation. Thus, this study proposes to transform the idea of mediation that currently dominates international relations theory.

Keywords: armed conflict; non-state player; mediator state; military strength; asymmetry; parity; simple comparative analysis; regression analysis

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The end of the Cold War did not guarantee the end of local armed conflicts. A total of 286 armed conflicts were waged during the 1990s, and in the 2000s this number ballooned to 311². This was the situation at the beginning of the 21st century, when articles started to appear in the scientific literature suggesting that international mediation could be the most effective method of resolving armed conflicts (Bercovitch, Jackson 2001; Bercovitch, DeRouen 2005). Moreover, researchers started to indicate that states could perform this function more flexibly than institutional entities (regional and international organizations and alliances), and therefore be more effective. A flexible approach to mediation would mostly involve the mediator establishing the interests and goals of the parties to a given conflict, as well as in determining its root causes (Bercovitch, Jackson 2001). At the same time, previous studies have emphasized that effective mediation hinges on the cumulative power of the mediator state, primarily based on its economic potential (Sahadevan 2006).

In the early 2000s, researchers drew attention to the fact that the ratio of military power between the parties to a conflict, on the one hand, and the mediator, on the other, can influence the course of mediation. For example, Virginia Fortna suggested that military superiority, or even dominance, on the part of the mediator state would most likely prevent the resumption of hostilities after peace agreements are signed (Fortna 2003). The statistics, however, have yet to prove this to be the case. How significant is military superiority in preventing conflicts from flaring up years after the signing of peace agreements? And how, in principle, can we empirically assess the overall military superiority of a mediator state?

In this paper, we use the term military force (power) to refer to a wide range of means of warfare that allow for coercion and the achievement of sociopolitical goals set during an armed conflict. In order to quantify military power, we proposed a comprehensive set of various indicators. The metrics of military power used in the study were: defence budget; specific parameters of ground, naval, and air forces (indicating individual types of weapons and equipment); and the presence of heavy arms, weapons supplies, etc.

In determining the prerequisites for the successful resolution of armed conflicts, we relied on the concept of “resource asymmetry” (Geiss 2006; Paulus, Vashakmadze 2009). This concept refers to the unequal distribution of certain goods, which provides players with strategic advantages when it comes to achieving their political goals (Gross 2009). Information asymmetry is another factor that is frequently mentioned in the context of studying armed conflicts. It implies that the mediator state has extensive information about the motives, interests, intentions, and strategies of the conflicting parties (Kressel, Pruitt, Pruitt 1989). Thanks to this, the mediator can build a

² Correlates of war. URL: <https://correlatesofwar.org/> (accessed: 24.04.2022).

more flexible dialogue with the direct participants in the conflict and help them reach a mutually beneficial compromise (Walter 2002)³.

We proceeded from the assumption that the ratio of military power between the parties to an armed conflict and the mediator state can be classified as asymmetrical or parity. With the concept of “resource asymmetry” in mind, we attempted to develop our own methodology for forming a generalized indicator of military asymmetry/parity. Then we tested the presence and nature of the relationship between the asymmetry/parity ratio of military power of all parties and the resolution of the armed conflict. By **resolution**, we mean the *complete cessation of hostilities after the start of the negotiation process, as well as remaining peace five years after the signing of peace agreements*

Previous studies have suggested that an asymmetry of military power in favour of the mediator state could be an important factor in successful negotiations (Fortna 2004). This idea stems from analyses of military interventions, where the intervention of an external player strengthens the military potential of one of the parties to the conflict. In the context of a civil war, for example, an external actor is more likely to provide military support to government forces rather than rebels.⁴ And this makes it far more likely that government forces will emerge victorious in an armed conflict (Greig, Rost 2013). In other words, material (military-technical) superiority arising as a result of the intervention of a third party in a conflict may play a role in the victory of one of the sides. What is more, it has been argued that the military capability of a third party makes intervention less violent and more effective.

The logic of asymmetry was introduced into the study of mediation by Virginia Fortna. She shifted the focus of the analysis of asymmetry in armed conflicts from the assessment of the ratio of military power of the parties to a given conflict to an assessment of the military potential of the parties to the conflict and the mediator state. At the same time, Fortna emphasized that mediation does not imply military victory, but rather negotiations and the search for compromise between the parties to the conflict. She suggested that the superior military power of the mediator state could influence the warring parties to move more quickly from fighting to peace negotiations. As a result, the likelihood of a general peaceful settlement to the conflict increases. This assumption has not undergone any further testing, meaning that a statistical relationship between the asymmetry of military power in favour of the mediator state and the cessation of hostilities has not yet been confirmed. Moreover, it has not been established whether the dominance of the mediator state in terms of military power helps prevent the resumption of hostilities down the line, after peace agreements have been signed.

The authors of the present study assessed the ways in which asymmetry in military power in favour of the mediator state influences the cessation of hostilities, if at all, and the possibility of lasting peace after the signing of the relevant agreements.

³ Doyle, M. W., Sambanis, N. 1999. Building peace: challenges and strategies after civil war. *World Bank*. 34 p.

⁴ Ibid.

The proposed hypothesis is that the military superiority of the mediator state contributes not only to the cessation of hostilities, but also to their non-resumption in the future.

In this study, effective mediation is measured as a result of the interaction of two components – the asymmetry of military power and the provisions of the peace agreements. A similar approach to conceptualizing the mediation process is actively used in the analysis of historical examples of armed conflict resolution. For example, the armed conflict between Egypt and Israel was resolved thanks to the mediation efforts of the United States (Quandt 2016). The Camp David Accords were signed in conditions of absolute military superiority of the United States, outnumbering the parties to the conflict by approximately 4–5 times in terms of combined armed forces in 1978–1979 (McMahon, Miller 2013). At the same time, the negotiation process itself was an important component of the overall peace settlement (Wallensteen, Svensson 2014). The main goal of negotiations was to identify the underlying contradictions between the parties to the conflict and, thus, its root causes. The text of the peace agreement proposed compromise solutions to overcome political differences between the fighting sides. The Camp David Accords addressed the interests of all parties to the conflict, and the United States, with powerful military potential, acted as the guarantor that the peace agreements would be implemented.

Conceptualization of Mediation and Theoretical Approaches to Its Study

What is at the very heart of the mediation process? I. William Zartman and Saadia Touval stress that a mediator is able to help the parties to a conflict develop compromise solutions that the parties cannot reach on their own (Zartman, Touval 1985). Scott Gartner argued that only a state mediator is capable of ensuring tripartite communication, primarily through building a constructive dialogue with each party to the conflict (Gartner 2014). This allows the mediator to get a handle on the specific motives and interests of the conflicting parties and develop solutions that would be most acceptable to them.

Gartner attempted to generalize the features of mediation, offering the following definition of this phenomenon: “The mediation of international conflict represents a process whereby disputants work with a third party to reach a mutually acceptable peace agreement” (Gartner 2011). This definition does not offer anything in terms of which players can or should act as mediators and, moreover, which of them might play this role most effectively. Given this, the most relevant conceptualization of mediation is the one presented by Jacob Bercovitch and his co-authors: “a process of conflict management where disputants seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an individual, group, state or organization to settle their conflict or resolve their differences without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of the law” (Bercovitch et al. 1997; Bercovitch, DeRouen 2005; Bercovitch, Langley 1993).

It is this understanding of mediation that informs the present study. In this scheme, the mediator will be interpreted as **a state** that demonstrates its intention to enter the negotiation process as a third party and put an end to the conflict. In the event of an armed conflict, the mediator state must initiate a negotiation process at the level of senior officials (Ruhe 2015). What is more, even before the negotiation process is launched, the mediator should establish two-way communication with each conflicting party, including non-state actors (Jenne 2010). Lastly, the mediator must be present at the signing of the peace agreements. The above criteria were used to determine whether or not a mediator state was present in armed conflicts that later formed the sample of the study presented in this paper (Lundgren, Svensson 2020).

A broader vision of mediation is offered by various theories that explain the nature of armed conflicts and their resolution. These are based on the contractual (trade) theory of war, which is better known in the English-language literature as the bargaining theory of war (Powell 2002). According to this theory, armed conflict is seen as a search for a balance between benefits and losses (Reiter 2003). Peace negotiations can maximize the benefits for each party to a conflict, regardless of its position on the battlefield. However, despite the potential benefits of peace negotiations, parties to armed conflicts often tend to continue fighting anyway. The main reason for this is because the parties do not possess sufficient information about the other's intentions.

Moreover, one of the key representatives of the bargaining theory of war, James Fearon, argued that it is extremely difficult for the parties to a conflict to comply with the agreements and obligations reached (Fearon 1995). This phenomenon has to do with the political elite of the conflicting countries, the composition of which can undergo significant changes during periods of active fighting. As such, the bargaining theory of war presents armed conflict as a struggle between antagonistic players whose goals are often opposite. At the same time, it is possible to find a balance in such an antagonistic struggle, which will ultimately be reflected in the provisions of the peace agreements.

The bargaining theory of war has a number of limitations. For example, overcoming information asymmetry (for example, notifying the warring sides of a mutual intention to move to peace negotiations) does not always lead to a change in behaviour of the parties. What is more, it is almost impossible to establish a universal formula for costs and benefits using theory alone, since the benefits depend on the motives and goals of each party to the conflict.

We should note here that the bargaining theory of war does not distinguish between different types of armed conflicts. When the theory was being developed, it was important to identify, on a case-by-case basis, the conditions for concluding a deal in which the parties would agree to cease hostilities. In other words, the essence of the bargaining theory of war consisted, first of all, in defining the goals and motives of the parties to an armed conflict, identifying its causes, and determining the conditions of interaction at the negotiations. All of these are universal characteristics of all armed conflicts, regardless of their type. Finally, the presence of a third party as a mediator

state is necessary to facilitate the transition from intense hostilities to peace negotiations, and this is true for both intra-state and inter-state armed conflicts. Consequently, the bargaining theory of war may become a relevant theoretical paradigm for both types of conflict (intra-state and inter-state) presented in this paper

An Empirical Study of Mediation

Having now conceptualized mediation, it now becomes apparent how complex this phenomenon actually is. The process of mediation consists in the mediator state defining the goals and interests of the disputants, and developing a compromise solution to the contradictions that caused the outbreak of hostilities. However, we have also suggested that a mediator state with great military potential could contribute not only to the end of hostilities, but also to a lasting peace after the signing of (final) peace agreements (Popova 2009). This means that both resources (primarily military) and negotiation ability are integral components of state mediation in the resolution of armed conflicts.

Putting an end to hostilities and ensuring a lasting peace are more likely with the participation of a mediator state (Sidorov 2018). Mark Mullenbach stresses that mediation activities are most likely to commence when there is a risk that the combat zone could expand and new players might become involved in the conflict (Mullenbach 2005). Other scholars have suggested that the likelihood of mediation also increases if the mediator and at least one of the parties to the conflict are members of the same international alliance (Jones 2000). For example, in their analysis of armed conflicts in the post-Soviet space, the Russian experts Vladimir Zolotarev and Filipp Trunov noted that membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States accelerated mediation processes (Zolotarev, Trunov 2018).

Assistance of this kind in resolving armed conflicts corresponds to the true nature of mediation, since it implied an appeal for assistance on the part of the conflict-ing players (i.e. the voluntary nature of mediation), as well as the consent of all CIS members regarding the start of mediation activities (Kurylev et al. 2018). This kind of involvement can be described as an example of institutional mediation. However, this particular regional association has an obvious leader, and this country assumes a key role when it comes to carrying out implementation. That said, many other researchers also agree that participation in an international association can contribute to successful mediation (Goryunova 2022).

The strategy of the mediator state in resolving armed conflicts may depend on what the prerequisite for launching mediation was in the first place. Even so, many researchers agree that the communicative aspect of mediation, manifested in conducting peace negotiations, is extremely important in the formation of a mediation strategy. If the mediating state succeeds in establishing a constructive and trusting dialogue with each party to the conflict, then the likelihood of a peaceful settlement will increase. At the same time, as Elizabeth Menninga notes, it is extremely important for the mediator

state to constantly emphasize the difference in the balance of power with the disputants (Menninga 2020). The sooner the parties to the conflict acknowledge the military superiority of the mediator, the more effective the negotiation process will be. How exactly should this military superiority be expressed? How should it be demonstrated?

First, however, we need to understand how significantly the methods of resolving armed conflicts have changed in recent decades. And this immediately invites the question: To what extent are the armed conflicts of the 2010s–2020s different from earlier armed conflicts (those that took place in the second half of the 20th century)? Specifically, the idea began to spread in the 2010s about the growth in the number of potential hotspots for conflicts that could pose a threat to all the countries of the world (Popova 2009). O. Popova linked these concerns with the fact that the world's leading countries had started to actively develop their respective military-industrial complexes (2015). What this means is that the likelihood of states testing improved military capabilities is constantly increasing.

At the same time, the armed conflicts of the 2010s–2020s were characterized by an intense struggle for vital resources against the backdrop of ever-increasing socio-economic threats (Stepanova 2020). Hence yet another problem: the intensification of the circulation of weapons (including obsolete models) increases the risk of them falling into the hands of destructive players, in particular terrorist organizations. As a result, terrorists become more actively involved in hostilities, which, in turn, reduces the chances of resolving the conflict through peace negotiations. Finally, another distinctive feature since the mid-2010s has been the aggravation of regional armed conflicts (in North Africa and the Middle East) that took place in the 20th century. The only difference is the current lack of obvious mediators. This may be due to the desire of the heads of the warring states to resolve the conflict independently, without external influence (Druckman 2001).

As we can see, experts (mainly Russian-speaking) have identified a number of characteristics inherent to armed conflicts in the 2010–2020s. However, the authors of the present paper are inclined to believe that the conflicts of the second half of the 20th century also demonstrated the features described above (in particular, threats of a socio-economic and terrorist nature). Consequently, there are grounds for analysing armed conflicts of the 20th and 21st centuries in a single analytical context.

Many who specialize in the analysis of conflicts have focused on identifying the factors that directly influence the success of mediation activities, which can be expressed in the cessation of hostilities and lasting peace after the signing of peace agreements (Bercovitch, DeRouen 2005; Savun 2008; Walter 2002). We have previously suggested that resource asymmetry in favour of the mediator state can directly influence the successful resolution of armed conflicts. Researchers often resort to the concept of asymmetry to describe the disproportionate potential of direct participants in an armed conflict. At the same time, this interpretation of asymmetry does not imply that military actions cannot continue despite the obvious superiority of one of the parties to the conflict. Since the early 2010s, the concept of structural asymmetry, which im-

plies “sharp differences in the organizational forms of the opposing sides,” has become increasingly relevant (Stepanova 2020). The evidence of these differences is the status of the parties to the conflict (state or non-state players), as well as in their power, mobilization and ideological potential. Consequently, some participants in the conflict may have a rigid hierarchy and a unified strategy, while others, on the contrary, may *de facto* consist of (semi-)autonomous groups that do not share common ideological and strategic principles and are thus not headed by a single leader.

That said, most researchers use the term asymmetry when describing the potentials of the warring sides. The present study is valuable if only for the fact that it applies the concept of asymmetry to describe the relationship between the military potential of the parties to a conflict and the mediator state.

Resources are not the only factor that can shape the mediation process. Other factors that maximize the likelihood of a successful settlement include involving all interested parties in the negotiations, establishing the foundations for future democratic institutions, and developing compromise solutions on issues that caused the conflict in the first place [Mediation in international relations 1994; Resolving international conflicts 1996]. Menninga insists that a real difference in the balance of power in favour of the mediator state could form the basis for the settlement of international conflicts (Menninga 2020). She reduces the balance of power to military and economic resources. Mediators with greater military and economic power can promote the normalization of relations between previously conflicting countries far more quickly (Carnevale, Pruitt 2012; Chodosh 2003; Crocker et al. 1999; 2001; 2004).

Druckman and Fisher also emphasized that a mediator state with superior military power could establish a barrier between the warring parties, reducing the likelihood of renewed hostilities to zero (Druckman 2001; Crocker et al. 1989). It is important to note here that mediation also involved organizing and holding negotiations. According to Rost, Schneider, and Kleiby, successful negotiations are always based on establishing the interests and goals of all the disputants (Rost, Greig 2011). What is more, according to Bercovitch and Houston, when setting up negotiations, the mediator state must take into account the possible influence of external forces (Resolving international conflicts 1996). Such players are usually not directly involved in the confrontation, but often provide significant military, technical, intelligence and other assistance to the participants in an armed conflict. Assistance of this kind can escalate hostilities, and if it is not interrupted in a timely manner, it could complicate the peaceful settlement of the conflict significantly (Beardsley 2009; Chodosh 2003; Rost, Greig 2011; Greig, Diehl 2005).

Many researchers argue that the cessation (“freezing”) of hostilities is itself a sufficient condition for the subsequent settlement of a given conflict. In this situation, the signing of peace agreements and their long-term implementation can be considered secondary tasks (Bartenev 2014). However, the lack of compromise on the issues that caused the armed conflict in the first place could lead to a resumption of hostilities (Zhukov 1987). If this happens, all previous efforts of the mediator state to resolve the

conflict will be in vain. Bolshakov, for example, stresses that “freezing” methods have been employed for some armed conflicts (the Georgian–Abkhaz Conflict, for example), leaving them, at least temporarily, explosive situations (Bolshakov 2008). Nevertheless, the risks of renewed hostilities in such conflicts increase due to the ethnic nature of the confrontations, although many researchers see the conservation method as applicable to them (Bekmurzaev 2021). This method involves ensuring peace through the permanent presence of a peacekeeping contingent in the combat zone, primarily made up of representatives of the mediator state.

It was important for the authors of this study to understand what exactly ensures that hostilities will not resume after they have ceased. Many researchers believe that in times of global instability it is especially important to guarantee the long-term implementation of the agreements reached, which, in turn, minimizes the likelihood of a resumption of hostilities (Kukushkin, Polikanov 1997). In this regard, another area of the academic literature examined in this paper is devoted to the issue of maintaining peace in the post-conflict period. Some researchers emphasize the importance of mutual disarmament following the signing of peace agreements, as well as preventing the sides from rapidly building up their military might in the future (Sullivan et al. 2020; Reid 2017). Further, if the mediator provides economic assistance to the former combatants, then this will reduce the likelihood of renewed armed clashes (Dundich 2010). In such conditions, the formerly belligerent parties will most likely reorient themselves towards their own socio-economic recovery, and continuing military operations would thus be inadvisable.

There is already a general idea of what mediation in armed conflicts is. Moreover, researchers argue that the resource superiority of the mediator state often plays a role in the full reconciliation of the warring parties (Lisenkov et al. 1988). However, no comprehensive justification for the assumption that asymmetry of military power in favour of the mediator state contributes to the cessation of hostilities and the maintenance of peace years after the signing of peace agreements has been presented to date. The question of whether the discussion of contentious issues during negotiations can contribute to the complete resolution of an armed conflict given the already established military superiority of the mediator (or the lack of such superiority) also remains unanswered.

Sources

The prerequisite for any armed conflict is the presence of opposing parties (parties to the conflict). When forming our sample of conflicts, “parties to the conflict” were defined as players representing opposing political forces who took direct part throughout the conflict in military actions as part of military units and subdivisions of the armed forces of states, temporary and rebel formations, or other military associations (Kukushkin, Polikanov 1997; Krefß 2010).

In addition, we developed, based on the literature we studied, a set of criteria for determining the presence or absence of a state mediator in a given armed conflict (Ruhe 2015; Paulus 2009; Reiter 2003). First, the mediator must initiate the negotiation process at least at the level of representatives of the highest-ranking officials of the disputants. Second, representatives of the leadership of the mediating state must also be present at the negotiations. Third, even before negotiations begin, the mediator must establish two-way communication with each of the parties (Wennmann 2009). A mediator is deemed to be a state that is capable of organizing negotiations in which all the parties to a given conflict (and primary non-state actors) are equally involved. Finally, the mediator must be present at the signing of the peace agreements.

In order to make the procedure for forming the research sample as transparent as possible, the authors used the Correlates of War data, which contains information on all armed conflicts that took place in the period 1961 to 2021. The reason for choosing this timeframe is because the need for state mediation, as well as the study of this phenomenon at the academic level, was only recognized after the Second World War.

For each armed conflict, we analysed whether a mediator state was involved. Conflicts where no mediator was apparent were excluded from the general list. Applying these criteria for determining the mediator in all the armed conflicts that took place between 1961 and 2021 provided us with a final research sample of 60 armed conflicts. These included both intra-state and inter-state conflicts.

Keeping in line with the proponents of the bargaining theory of war (on which this study is based), we deliberately refused to distinguish the specific features of mediation in conflicts of different types. First, the only reasonable way to compare the nature of intra-state and inter-state conflicts is by identifying all the differences between these types of conflict, which could very well be the subject of a separate study. Only then would we be able to talk about the tailored and targeted mediation tactics in the settlement of intra-state and inter-state armed conflicts. Second, when discussing the theoretical foundations of this study, we pointed out that all types of conflicts demonstrate common patterns (motives, goals, interests, negotiating positions), meaning that the boundaries between different types of conflicts can effectively be erased. This assumption becomes especially relevant given that approximately one fifth of the armed conflicts in our sample are ongoing.

The following set of indicators was used to measure the military potential of mediator states and the parties to conflicts: population; gross domestic product; defence budget; ground, naval, and air forces; and the presence of heavy weapons. The “population size” indicator allowed us to assess the total potential of the armed forces of states (including reserve forces). At the same time, population size and **normalized** GDP are often included in works that study military power. These are also important indicators in *The Military Balance* reference guide, the most comprehensive source for a systematic description of the military power of states. At the same time, the level of economic development of a given state could point to how much it is able to spend on increasing its military potential (Simons 2021). The economic potential of states may prove

even more significant in the long term (during the transition to a peaceful life). For this reason, we supplemented the original data set with the indicators “gross domestic product” and “defence budget.”

Each specific indicator of military power (including population size) is itself directly related to the success (or failure) of mediation. That is, the relationship between individual indicators of military power (primarily population size) is not linear. That said, measuring and comparing the military potential of players is no small feat. Consequently, any of these indicators (or the initial indicators included in it) will only indirectly reflect the real balance of power of all parties. Nevertheless, the transparency of the procedure for forming a generalized indicator of military power asymmetry (which we will present below) allows us to state with confidence that it is sufficiently valid.

Furthermore, this study will point to a direct positive relationship between the “military asymmetry” indicator and successful mediation (as demonstrated by the regression calculations presented below). While demographic and economic indicators can contribute to the growth of a state’s combat capability, the most obvious manifestations of a state’s military power are its ground, naval, and air forces. Our description of the military strength of states (mediators and parties to conflicts) using this set of indicators was informed by the materials contained in the archive of *The Military Balance* reference book for 1961–2021⁵.

When attempting to describe the military potential of players involved in an armed conflict, it is also worth paying attention to whether or not the mediator state has military bases in the combat zone. However, there appears to be no information regarding the presence or absence of military bases in a host of countries during the 1960s. There is a similar gap with regard to crisis response forces. What is more, it should be noted that mediation activities are often led by senior officials, which increases the likelihood that armed forces of the mediator state will make up the main part of any future peacekeeping contingent.

Finally, it is important to note that the nature of mediation requires an understanding of the role that perception plays in the mediation process. Most times the parties to a conflict recognize the absolute military superiority of the mediator state and thus agree to open negotiations without any obvious coercion. In other words, there is always a turning point at which the transition to the peaceful settlement of armed conflicts in the presence of a mediator state begins. The launch of a peaceful settlement process is vital in the context of increasing escalation and the loss of civilian life due to intensive fighting. In such conditions, even seemingly abstract indicators as GDP and defence budget can at least create the appearance of the unconditional superiority of the mediator state, meaning that any attempt by the parties to the conflict to continue military operations will be doomed to failure.

⁵ IISS. *The Military Balance*. URL: <https://www.iiss.org/publications/the-military-balance> (accessed: 23.03.2022).

Our analysis of research papers on the subject revealed that economic assistance to belligerent parties can be a positive factor in mediation. However, such assistance may go beyond simple financial benefits. Economic assistance can come in the form of humanitarian aid, for example, or in other ways. What is more, economic assistance from the mediator state is not always explicit, since it involves redirecting budgetary funds of the mediator state. These funds may be used to resolve intra-state socio-economic issues of the mediator state itself. As a result, it sometimes makes sense for both the mediator and other players providing support to the warring parties to carry out such activities unofficially, that is, not record them in any documentable way. The limited, non-systemic, and heterogeneous nature of the available data does not allow us to assess the role of economic assistance in the mediation process (Lanz 2011). Finally, in practice, support for parties in the post-conflict period is not limited exclusively to economic assistance, and often concerns political issues (aspects of transforming government institutions, delineation of power, etc.). This is also the reason for considering aspects of the peace agreements, the implementation of which, under the supervision of the mediator state, can contribute to the establishment of peace.

Many armed conflicts today are what we call intra-state conflicts. This much is confirmed by the ratio of intra-state to inter-state armed conflicts in the research sample (presented in the online appendices)⁶. A distinctive feature of intra-state conflicts is that they typically involve irregular armed groups (non-state players), including rebel groups (opposition forces), as well as terrorist organizations (for example, ISIS and al-Qaeda). In other words, our assessments of military potential include analyses of non-state actors too. This allows us to assess the impact of asymmetry in various armed conflicts, including those involving rebel and terrorist groups (Palmiano 2019).

Our evaluations of the military strength of various non-state actors in armed conflicts leaned heavily on the Non-State Actor Database compiled by David Cunningham et al. in 2013 (Cunningham et al. 2013). When describing their military strength, it is almost impossible to single out individual branches of the armed forces and the types of weapons they use. To address this, Cunningham and his colleagues identified four characteristics that reflect the overall military strength of non-state armed groups. These were used to determine the average, maximum, and minimum estimates of the size of armed forces, as well as their relationship with the factors that typically determine the military power of state players (parties to the conflict and mediators):

- Rebestimate – average estimate of the number of troops under the command of rebel forces
- Rebestlow – lowest estimate of the number of troops under the command of rebel forces
- Rebesthigh – highest estimate of the number of troops under the command of rebel forces

⁶ The full list of armed conflicts and their features can be found in the online appendices to this article: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RMGEkUUNug5NMI-P2aEzQ_bon3z6a70g/view?usp=sharing.

- Rebstrength – the ratio of military strength between the rebels and other participants in the conflict

Since the figures represent the overall military power of non-state actors, it seemed logical to compare them with the overall military power of states. This is a purely minimalistic comparison, based not on all the indicators we have identified, but on their ground, air, and naval forces only. What is more, these are the parameters that were included in the rebestimate mentioned above. The authors of the present paper calculated the arithmetic mean of the indicators of the ground, air, and naval forces of mediator states and compared them with the rebestimate indicators. In cases where several non-state actors were involved in a conflict, we summed their average scores for military power. By using threshold values (presented below), we were able to establish the presence or absence of asymmetrical military power in favour of the mediator relative to non-state actors.

To describe the military power of non-state actors in conflicts since 2013, we had to resort to “gluing” data, meaning that we searched for identical codes in numerous databases in order to carry out further data supplementation. The codes use in this study consisted of the name of the conflict and the corresponding year.

The military potential of the parties to an armed conflict also depends on the supply of weapons and military equipment. For this reason, we used the SIPRI Arms Transfer Database, which is maintained by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.⁷ The information gleaned from this particular source allowed us to establish how the volume and frequency of arms and military equipment deliveries were counted in the research sample. The data also helped us understand how the ratio of military powers of the parties to the conflict and the mediator shifted as a result of these deliveries.

In addition to assessing potentials, we identified the provisions that are most often discussed and written into peace agreements. Many experts note the vital importance of communication in resolving armed conflicts. At the same time, negotiations – and the conclusion of peace agreements in particular – constitute its quintessence. That is, they are the main result of negotiations (Keels, Greig 2019).

As we noted above, mediation is a diplomatic method of resolving armed conflicts. In this sense, it would be folly to consider the military superiority of the mediator state as the only prerequisite for mediation in the settlement of armed conflicts. On top of this, the features of peace agreements that enshrine the diplomatic settlement of conflicts need to be considered too. These may include reform of the political system, in which opposing sides are incorporated into the legal political process, with mechanisms of checks and balances. In addition, such peace agreements may contain information on decision-making procedures between branches of government,

⁷ Davis, I., van der Lijn, J. (n.d.). SIPRI (1961–2021): Yearbook: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. URL: <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex> (accessed: 16.03.2022).

the structure of state institutions, and various issues of social and cultural policy. The Political Agreement in Internal Conflicts (PAIC) database published by a group of conflict scholars from the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom was used to incorporate the specific features of the negotiation process into our analysis⁸.

For example, our analysis of issues related to the reorganization of power was duly informed by the provisions regarding the representation of various social groups in the legislative, executive, security, and judicial spheres. Furthermore, this block also included an analysis of issues affecting political decision-making in the relevant branches of government. The “Justice and Social Reform” block allowed us to account for the procedure for investigating war crimes in the post-negotiation period, as well as for the punishment for such crimes. We were also able to integrate indicators into this block that called for the creation of institutions of reconciliation and social cohesion.

The “Building a Vertical Power Structure” block allowed us to track the potential influence of factors such as reintegration, disarmament and demobilization policies, as well as the processes of decentralization and the holding of referendums on the status of the disputed territories. Finally, our consideration of cultural aspects included an assessment of the impact of media and education reforms, as well as the organization of cultural events.

In the course of working with the PAIC database, the issue of how to integrate the details of peace agreements (to end intra-state conflicts) into our own database with its indicators of military power (described for intra-state armed conflicts) arose. The latter was considered the main database, since it included a much wider range of intra-state and inter-state armed conflicts. This ensures greater external validity of the study. Since our database already contained information on the military power of participants in intra-state and inter-state armed conflicts, the “gluing” procedure required supplementing data on the basic features of peace agreements in inter-state conflicts. We examined the data sources used by the compilers of the PAIC database, and also consulted similar sources describing the basic features of peace agreements in inter-state armed conflicts. The additional data was entered manually, in strict accordance with the variables proposed by the creators of the PAIC database. The main source used for this was the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), as well as other publications describing the process of resolving interstate armed conflicts. We were able to enter the additional data manually because the number of inter-state armed conflicts included in the research sample was quite small.

The reader might ask the question: Why did we consider inter-state armed conflicts in the same context as intra-state armed conflicts in this study? Furthermore, the reader might be wondering: To what extent are the features of the peace agreements discussed above relevant in the context of inter-state conflicts? First, our analysis did

⁸ The dataset of Political Agreements in Internal Conflicts (PAIC). URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343808007_The_dataset_of_Political_Agreements_in_Internal_Conflicts_PAIC (accessed: 25.02.2022).

not reveal a correlation between the type of armed conflict and the dependent variables. However, if we construct separate paired regressions for the “conflict type” predictor and both dependent variables, it turns out that the predictor is not statistically significant in either model. In addition, if we conduct separate ROC analyses for different types of conflicts with the same dependent variables, we see virtually identical optimal models for different types of conflicts. So, there was no purely statistical basis for including just one type of armed conflict. Second, all of the inter-state and intra-state armed conflicts we looked at involved a high degree of military action. This gave reason to believe that, regardless of the type of conflict, the mediation mechanisms used for them are the same. Third, and most importantly, the inter-state conflicts in the research sample involved a struggle for influence in certain territories, which may include an economic as well as a socio-cultural component (the latter might serve to consolidate the establishment of influence in the territories that were being fought over). This allows us to state that inter-state and intra-state conflicts are similar in nature, or at least to consider them in a single context.

Thus, following the logic of examining the mediation process we outlined above, we have compiled a single database that includes both military and negotiation (peace agreement) variables. A distinctive feature of the compiled data array is the presence, alongside aspects of the peace agreements, of a generalized indicator of military asymmetry (parity) formed according to the methodology we developed. The third and final feature of the data set is that it identifies changes in military characteristics and provisions of peace agreements, which are fluid depending on the duration of each armed conflict. The final sample for our study included 270 observations, each of which represents a feature of an armed conflict for a specific period (month or year) depending on its general chronology and has the form “name of armed conflict + month/year.”⁹ Two dependent variables (outcomes of the armed conflict) were specified for each observation: 1) cessation of hostilities; and 2) lasting peace five years after the signing of the peace agreements. The first dependent variable was the absence of hostilities during the mediation process. The second dependent variable uses the first five years after the signing of the peace agreements as the reference time period. It is our contention that this is the period in which the resumption of armed clashes and full-scale hostilities is most likely (Yang et al. 2022).

It is important to stress here that previous works on this subject point to the preservation as peace as an integral part of ensuring the overall peaceful settlement of armed conflicts. The reasoning here is that, in some cases, the cessation (“freezing”) of hostilities is not irreversible and after some time the conflict resumes. With this in mind, it was important for us to understand what ensures that hostilities will not re-

⁹ The full list of armed conflicts and their features can be found in the online appendices to this article: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RMGEKUUNug5NMI-P2aEzQ_bon3z6a70g/view?usp=sharing.

sume after they have ceased. It was this consideration that led to a second dependent variable being introduced into the analysis.

The procedure of combining and supplementing databases thus ensured that all players (mediators and participants in conflicts), as well as all intra-state and inter-state armed conflicts, were characterized from the standpoint of the features of military power and peace agreements. It is important to note that the simple comparative analysis presented below was based on cross-sectional time-series data¹⁰. This allowed us to establish asymmetry/parity in military power at different stages of armed conflicts. At the same time, constructing a logistic regression does not involve working with cross-sectional time-series data. Rather, it involves analysing characteristics in a specific (in this study, a terminal) period of armed conflicts. With this in mind, logistic regressions in this study were constructed using the characteristics of military power and features of peace agreements corresponding to the terminal stage of armed conflicts.

Research Methodology

Researchers have attempted to provide comprehensive assessments of the military power of states since the 1950s. for example, Princeton University professor and adviser to the U.S. government Klaus Knorr effectively equated national and military power and suggested measuring them using the military-economic indicators of the state (such as GDP and defence budget) (Knorr 1970; Knorr 2019). Knorr's idea was developed in the 1960s by Cambridge University professor G. Clifford, who put forward that the military power of a state is the sum of the following components: territory, population, nuclear potential (as a component of military power), and an industrial base (Horowitz 2011). In 1963, J. David Singer and his colleagues developed the National Potential Index (Singer et al. 1972), which considers not only the resources that the state currently possesses, but also the potential that the country is expected to have in 5–10 years.

Later, researchers started to argue that the only way to determine a state's true combat capability is through a comprehensive assessment of its weapons. This led to the creation of the Global Firepower (GFP) index, which combines more than 50 different indicators of the combat readiness of a state.¹¹ In addition to indicators relating to ground, naval, and air forces, the developers of this index also took the volume of economic resources allocated to maintaining the military potential of the state into account.

¹⁰ Database compiled by the authors. URL: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/15t8GgP65E-Gxi28062R0d-PvD7ubE8loq/edit#gid=1452593445>.

¹¹ Global Firepower 2022. URL: <https://www.globalfirepower.com/> (accessed: 17.05.2022).

Even so, a universal method for measuring military power based on the comparison and aggregation of its individual indicators has still not been put forward by international relations scholars. Existing indices either aggregate the macroeconomic potentials of military power into single indicators that are only indirectly related to the actual combat capability of the armed forces, or represent structured compendiums listing the country's material and technical base (mainly a number of various types of weapons and military equipment). The methodology for assessing military power proposed in this paper seeks to provide a qualitative description of asymmetry, while at the same time referring to specific quantitative indicators of the armed forces. It is based on a pairwise comparison of indicators of military power of the parties to a given conflict and the mediator state. Table 1 presents, in a step-by-step form, the algorithm for creating a generalized indicator of military power asymmetry

Table 1
Stages in a Simple Comparative Analysis

Preparatory stage: calculating the ratios between the parties using various metrics of military power Stage 2. Selected metrics of military power. Asymmetry: At what quartile value can we detect asymmetry at the level of an individual metric? Asymmetry (designated 1) was consistently found at quartiles 0.25, 0.5, and 0.75, respectively. Stage 4. Combining threshold values: Model 1: quartile 0.25 – percentage value 20% Model 2: quartile 0.25 – percentage value 30% Model 3: quartile 0.25 – percentage value 50% Model 4: quartile 0.5 – percentage value 20% Model 5: quartile 0.5 – percentage value 30% Model 6: quartile 0.5 – percentage value 50% Model 7: quartile 0.75 – percentage value 20% Model 8: quartile 0.75 – percentage value 30% Model 9: quartile 0.75 – percentage value 50%	Stage 1. Data unification: converting different numerical ranges into a single quartile form Stage 3. Aggregate military asymmetry: What percentage of asymmetric values is sufficient to establish the mediator's overall military superiority? Threshold values of 20%, 30%, and 50% were chosen. Stage 5. Obtaining a generalized indicator of military asymmetry: The asymmetric values calculated in the nine models were summed separately for each observation.
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Source: compiled by the authors.

To assess the level of military power asymmetry in armed conflicts, we first used the method of simple comparative analysis. This method is designed to compare and aggregate individual metrics of a complex parameter into a single qualitative assessment of a binary type – in our case, the presence or absence of asymmetry. This involved performing a pairwise comparison of the corresponding values for each quantitative indicator of the military power of the mediator state and the parties to the conflict.

The main criterion for comparative analysis was the use of the quartile, a tool used in statistics. We used this tool to divide the entire ordered numerical range into four roughly equal quarters (quartiles). The first quartile combined 25% of the values of the ordered range, and the second quartile (median) combined 50% of the values. A spe-

cific formula for converting into quartiles of 0, 0.25, 0.5, 0.75 or 1 was established for each metric. This gave us unified quartile values for all the quantitative assessments of military power in our data array. Table 2 outlines how the values for the military power indicators, converted to quartiles, are related.

Table 2
**Expression of the Ratio of Forces of the Parties to Conflicts and the Mediator State
in Various Metrics of Military Power, in Quartiles**
(ratios are given for every 20th observation in the research sample)

	Population	GDP	Defence budget	Army	Navy	Air force
1	0	0.25	0.25	0.5	1	0.75
20	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.25	0.75
40	0.75	0	0	0.5	1	0.5
60	1	0.25	0.75	0	1	0.5
80	0.5	0.75	0.25	0.5	0.75	0.5
100	0.25	0.5	1	0.25	0.25	0.5
120	0.25	0.25	0.25	0	0.25	0.25
140	0.25	1	0.75	1	0.5	0.25
160	1	0.25	0.5	0.75	0.25	0.75
180	0	1	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.75
200	0	1	0.75	0.5	0.75	0.75
220	0	1	0.75	0.5	0.75	0.75
240	0.25	0.5	0.5	0.75	0.75	0.75
260	1	0.75	0.75	0.25	0.75	0.75
270	0.5	0.25	1	0.5	1	0.75

Source: compiled by the authors.

When conducting the simple comparative analysis, it was important to define a set of threshold values that would allow us to identify the presence or absence of military asymmetry at the level of individual indicators. This required converting all the data in the array into binary form, giving us values of 0 (no asymmetry) or 1 (asymmetry). Asymmetry values can vary widely depending on the chosen threshold. When converting quartiles into binary form, standard mathematical rounding rules (rounding 0.5 and 0.75 to 1) are perfectly acceptable. However, it is reasonable to assume that significant asymmetries in total military power may be the result of significant superiority in some particular aspect of it (for example, air force potential as an instrument of power projection). As such, we proposed three different threshold criteria for asymmetry for subsequent robustness checks of the statistical modelling results. The asymmetry in individual indicators of military power was found to be 0.25 In the first model, 0.5 in the second model, and 0.75 in the third model.

Threshold values were again used to aggregate individual asymmetry estimates into a single indicator. A similar approach is used by the National Democratic Insti-

tute for International Affairs¹². According to the index developed by researcher at this NGO, a political regime is identified as democratic if it demonstrates 20%, 30%, or 50% of individual democratic features. Identical thresholds are used in this paper. In the first model, total asymmetry of military power was determined if 20% of the total number of military power indicators collected in a single array showed asymmetry (value 1). The thresholds for the second and third models were set at 30% and 50%, respectively. Thus, the application of more or less “soft” thresholds of asymmetry at the quartile level of individual indicators and the general aggregation of estimates gave us nine models (“three by three”) to work with, which are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Ratio of Quartile Percentage Thresholds in Models 1–9

Model	Combination of threshold values
Model 1	0.25 – 20%
Model 2	0.25 – 35%
Model 3	0.25 – 50%
Model 4	0.5 – 20%
Model 5	0.5 – 35%
Model 6	0.5 – 50%
Model 7	0.75 – 20%
Model 8	0.75 – 35%
Model 9	0.75 – 50%

Source: compiled by the authors.

The second stage of the study involved assessing the statistical significance (if it exists) of the military superiority of the mediator state for the resolution of armed conflicts. Since the 1970s, the general mechanisms of reproduction and resolution of armed conflicts have been studied in the form of patterns on large samples (so-called “large-N studies”). Statistical methods – typically various regression models – were frequently used in the late 1990s and early 2000s to analyse armed conflicts (Lee & Greig 2019)¹³.

Multiple regression is one of the most commonly used methods of multivariate analysis of statistical data in international relations, as it allows us to identify and evaluate the strength and tendencies of statistical relationships between various characteristics of the object of study (for example, countries, conflicts, or other phenomena). In

¹² National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (2010). See: <https://spisok-inoagentov.ru/natsionalnyy-demokraticheskiy-institut-mezhdunarodnyh-otnosheniy-ssha-national-democratic-institute-for-international-affairs/>. On March 10, 2016, the activities of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs were declared undesirable on the territory of the Russian Federation.

¹³ Garrigues J. 2015. *The case for contact: overcoming the challenges and dilemmas of official and non-official mediation with armed groups*. Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre. 9 p.

the context of this study, regression analysis allowed us to establish the nature of the statistical relationship between success in ending a conflict and implementing a peace agreement as dependent variables, and parameters of asymmetry in military power between the mediator state and the warring sides as independent predictors.

Specifically, we used a logistic regression model (logit-model), designed to model a binary dependent variable. The reasoning for this was that the characteristics of armed conflict resolution (ceasefire and maintained peace for five years) during the simulation were assigned a value of 0 (failure) or 1 (success). The independent variables were the characteristics of military power asymmetry calculated using the nine models of pairwise comparative analysis we outlined above. As for control variables, these were the characteristics of the peace agreements. What is special about control variables is that they do not change over the course of the study and thus allow a better understanding of the nature of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

Research Results

Simple Comparative Analysis

The first stage of the study involved establishing, through simple pairwise comparative analysis, whether or not an asymmetry of military power existed within each armed conflict. As we explained in the previous section, this was done by reducing the difference in values for each of the indicators between the mediator state and the warring peoples to quartile form. This allowed us to establish asymmetry in individual metrics of military power at quartile levels of 0.25, 0.5, and 0.75. Depending on the severity of the quartile threshold for different conflicts, the asymmetry of power is determined by a greater or lesser number of indicators (Table 4). This, in turn, affects the probability of passing the aggregate asymmetry threshold. A less stringent threshold by quartile allows us to identify the overall asymmetry of military power in a larger proportion of observations.

Table 4
Percentage of Recorded Asymmetric Values Depending on the Set Value Threshold (quartiles)

Observation number (example)	Quartile 0.25 (percentage of asymmetric values among all observations)	Quartile 0.5 (percentage of asymmetric values among all observations)	Quartile 0.75 (percentage of asymmetric values among all observations)
1	77.78	44.44	29.63
20	51.85	29.63	18.44
40	66.67	37.33	25.93
60	14.81	11.11	6.44
80	62.96	31.33	22.22
100	55.56	51.85	44.44
120	48.15	25.33	15.33

Observation number (example)	Quartile 0.25 (percentage of asymmetric values among all observations)	Quartile 0.5 (percentage of asymmetric values among all observations)	Quartile 0.75 (percentage of asymmetric values among all observations)
140	59.26	33.33	19.33

Source: compiled by the authors.

Combining different comparison thresholds for both individual and general indicators gave us nine models for assessing the ratio of military power between the parties to an armed conflict and the mediator state. Table 5 shows that the set value of asymmetry and parity can depend significantly on the thresholds that are chosen.

Table 5
Ratio of Quartile and Percentage Thresholds in Models 1–9

	M. 1 0.25 20%	M. 2 0.5 20%	M. 3 0.75 20%	M. 4 0.25 35%	M. 5 0.5 35%
Parity	2.96	7.41	29.19	7.14	19.05
Asymmetry	97.04	92.59	70.81	92.86	80.95
	M. 6 0.75 35%	M. 7 0.25 50%	M. 8 0.5 50%	M. 9 0.75 50%	
Parity	44.44	14.68	40.87	99.63	
Asymmetry	55.56	85.32	59.13	0.37	

Source: compiled by the authors.

Table 6
Threshold Value Dependent Rating Spread of Asymmetry or Parity of Military Power
(Models 1–9)

Observation number	Combined quartile and percentage thresholds in models 1–9								
	M. 1 0.25 20%	M. 2 0.5 20%	M. 3 0.75 20%	M. 4 0.25 35%	M. 5 0.5 35%	M. 6 0.75 35%	M. 7 0.25 50%	M. 8 0.5 50%	M. 9 0.75 50%
1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0
20	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
40	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
80	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
100	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
120	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
140									
...	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0

Source: compiled by the authors.

The various combinations of more or less strict quartile and percentage values allow us to establish asymmetry or parity of military power in a given percentage of observations (larger or smaller).

Table 6 shows that, at low threshold values, asymmetry is observed in almost all armed conflicts. Conversely, at the maximum values of both thresholds, the overwhelming majority of observations prove a parity of military power. It can thus be assumed that if military power asymmetry is identified in several models with intermediate thresholds, then this indicates that the mediator state really does have superiority over the warring parties.

Table 7
**Number of Armed Conflicts with Overall Military Superiority
of the Mediator State in at Least One of the Models**

	M. 1 0.25 20%	M.2 0.5 20%	M.3 0.75 20%	M. 4 0.25 35%	M.5 0.5 35%
Number of armed conflicts where asymmetry in favour of the mediator state is recorded	3	39	35	52	47
	M.6 0.75 35%	M. 7 0.25 50%	M.8 0.5 50%	M.9 0.75 50%	
Number of armed conflicts where asymmetry in favour of the mediator state is recorded	44	17	21	10	

Source: compiled by the authors.

As we can see from Table 7, most combinations of thresholds, with the exception of the maximum and minimum values, suggest a stable asymmetry or parity of military power for many conflicts. We also examined how resolved and unresolved conflicts are distributed in terms of the aggregate asymmetries of military power they yield. In models 1–9, asymmetry was most often recorded in conflicts that are now over (approximately eight of the nine models (Table 8). The same cannot be said of unfinished conflicts, however, where the military superiority of the mediator could not be established, even when using relatively soft threshold values.

Table 8
**Average Number of Overall Military Asymmetry and Parity Indicators
in Models 1–9 for Finished and Unfinished Armed Conflicts**

	Average number of asymmetric values	Average number of parity values
Finished armed conflicts	7.67	1.33
Unfinished armed conflicts	0.83	6.78

Source: compiled by the authors.

Regression Analysis

The regression analysis tested a number of assumptions (hypotheses), which we will list below.

Hypothesis 1. The asymmetry of military power in favour of the mediator state will contribute to the cessation of hostilities.

Hypothesis 2. Military power asymmetry will have a positive impact on maintaining peace five years after the signing of the peace agreements. Conversely, parity in military power will hinder both the cessation of hostilities and the establishment of lasting peace.

Hypothesis 3. Peace agreements are also an important element of the overall peace settlement when there is an asymmetry of power. In this regard, a peaceful settlement will be easier to achieve if issues of the reorganization of political decision-making processes and representation in government bodies are considered.

The main dependent variables in the regression analysis were: 1) the cessation of hostilities; and 2) the maintenance of peace five years after the signing of the peace agreements. At the same time, the generalized indicators of military asymmetry (parity) calculated at the previous stage of the study, and for each observation in the sample, acted as a key independent variable. The statistical significance of this predictor could indicate the extent to which the military superiority of the mediator state influences conflict resolution as a whole.

The first stage of the regression analysis involved determining how the military superiority of the mediator affects **the cessation of hostilities in armed conflicts**. First, we assessed the statistical significance of the generalized indicator of military asymmetry (parity). It was found to be statistically significant for both the cessation of hostilities and the maintenance of peace five years after the signing of the peace agreements (Table 9). Conversely, the variable indicating parity in military power between all parties demonstrated the opposite (a negative relationship between this variable and the dependent variables).

Table 9

Paired Regression Model. Testing the Statistical Significance of the Generalized Indicator of Military Asymmetry with Respect to both Dependent Variables

	Dependent variable 1. Cessation of military hostilities	Dependent variable 2. Lasting peace five years after signing of peace agreements
Generalized indicator of military asymmetry	2.89658*** (0.49765)	3.23357*** (1.08760)

Significance codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Source: compiled by the authors.

As we noted above, the negotiation process is an integral part of mediation. Presumably, negotiations could have an equal impact on both ending hostilities and maintaining peace in the post-negotiation period. At the same time, the negotiation process itself is made up of a number of overt and latent phases, which would be better left for consideration in separate studies. At the same time, the signing and implementation of peace agreements is the quintessence of the negotiation process. The compromises written into peace agreements, along with their consistent implementation, can guarantee that hostilities will not resume, at least in the short term.

What key provisions of peace agreements can guarantee, first and foremost, the cessation of hostilities? Almost all the main characteristics of peace agreements mentioned by various researchers are collected in the PAIC database. The thematic blocks (aspects of peace agreements) included in this array were designated above. We hypothesized that different provisions of peace agreements may impact the cessation of hostilities and the maintenance of peace five years after their signing in different ways. Specifically, we proceeded from the assumption that the provisions dealing with cultural issues were the least significant. Conversely, resolving issues of citizen representation in government bodies and political decision-making is likely to have the greatest impact on the overall peace process.

In constructing regression models, we assessed the simultaneous impact of all provisions of the peace agreements, primarily on the cessation of hostilities (the first dependent variable). Keep in mind that the variables characterizing peace agreements were treated as control variables in the regression models. Our regression analysis made it possible to prioritize different aspects of the peace agreements in terms of their impact on dependent variable 1 (Table 10). It turns out that education reforms and the establishment of common symbols and national holidays do not have any effect on the cessation of hostilities. At the same time, the regression analysis allowed the researchers to conclude that the transformation of the media (also included in the “Cultural Aspects” thematic block) contributes to increasing the explanatory power of the regression model. The positive effect of this variable became even more apparent when the factor of military power asymmetry was also present in the model. In other words, the reorganization of the media space can contribute to the cessation of hostilities (especially when there is an asymmetry in military power).

How do other provisions of peace agreements affect the cessation of hostilities? Specifically, to what extent including issues of justice in peace agreements brings an end to hostilities closer? The PAIC database’s block on justice examined the following variables: the investigation of war crimes and the verification of the respective involvement of officials; and socio-legal reforms aimed at preventing crime. Researchers argue that the transformation of the legal field of the warring sides should be carried out gradually and without the intervention of a third party (Kastner 2015). At the same time, the regression analysis we performed demonstrated that launching investigations into war crimes can contribute both to the cessation of hostilities and to the prevention of re-occurrences. That said, investigations into war crimes can only be successfully

carried out when there is an asymmetry in military power. This is also confirmed by the regression model: the variable “investigation of war crimes” is only significant in conditions of military power asymmetry.

Table 10

Regression Model. Results of Testing Aspects of Peace Agreements and the Generalized Indicator of Military Asymmetry with Respect to Two Dependent Variables

	Dependent variable 1. Cessation of military hostilities	Dependent variable 2. Lasting peace five years after signing of peace agreements
Generalized indicator of military asymmetry	2.89658*** (0.49765)	3.23357*** (1.08760)
Executive decisions	0.68017** (0.52687)	1.10115** (0.60373)
Legislative decisions	0.16578* (0.56338)	0.16249** (0.60825)
Judicial decisions	0.24567* (0.53467)	0.22282* (0.65890)
Power decisions	0.18756 (0.51383)	1.42249* (0.23222)
Representation in executive decision-making	1.81264** (0.80205)	0.96661* (0.60571)
Representation in legislative decision-making	1.08367* (0.25768)	1.32846** (0.60457)
Representation in judicial decision-making	0.33853* (0.57687)	0.24482* (0.66677)
Representation in decision-making at the level of power	0.80143** (0.12609)	0.42794* (1.12747)
Gender aspects	-1.76006 (0.87236)	-0.71672 (0.81962)
Laws on violent acts committed against citizens	0.71634* (0.58548)	1.15867* (0.64054)
Investigation of war crimes	1.58985* (0.54765)	1.21622 (0.65980)
Institutions of social cohesion	0.27389 (0.53271)	0.08684 (1.87070)
Disarmament and demobilization policy	1.53547** (0.50654)	0.73443 (0.83273)
Reintegration policy	0.69678 (0.51347)	0.71478 (1.55888)
Bodies to facilitate reconciliation between the warring groups	0.43758 (0.52224)	0.04856 (0.98764)
Education reforms	-0.73979 (0.54796)	-0.23549 (0.98243)
Media reforms	1.31200* (0.51797)	1.56790** (0.60878)
Large-scale cultural events	0.32989 (0.51500)	0.51769 (0.47892)

	Dependent variable 1. Cessation of military hostilities	Dependent variable 2. Lasting peace five years after signing of peace agreements
Building a vertical power structure	1.48651* (0.54780)	1.26785* (0.46780)
Decentralization and delegation of powers	1.54772** (0.53678)	0.76341 (1.99964)
Referendum on the status of disputed territories	1.58645** (0.50908)	-0.64789 (1.67589)

Significance codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Source: compiled by the authors.

The PAIC database allowed us to integrate the following processes into the regression model: centralization of power; scope of powers of the local authorities; and the presence of autonomous territories in the state. It turns out that all of these circumstances can contribute to the cessation of hostilities and the preservation of peace years after the signing of peace agreements. Attempts to implement these provisions of peace agreements conditions of a parity in military power, on the contrary, may hinder the overall peaceful settlement of armed conflicts. Thus, the provisions of peace agreements concerning issues of decentralization of power and the organization of territorial self-governance cannot be successfully implemented in the absence of a mediator state with powerful military potential.

Can the institutionalization of new principles for the functioning of various branches of government influence the dynamics of an armed conflict? Will greater citizen representation in the legislative, executive, judicial, and security spheres help put a quick end to hostilities? The PAIC dataset does not identify specific political positions within each branch of government that may be filled by different groups of the population after the end of the armed conflict. It does, however, allow us to assess how much attention is paid to issues of civil representation in various branches of government of the peace agreements. Including the variables of representation in the legislative, executive, judicial, and security spheres in the regression model allowed us to conclude that it is the legislative sphere, and representation in it, that is of primary importance for the cessation of hostilities. At the same time, there needs to be a clear asymmetry of military power in favour of the mediator state if these factors are to play a role in the cessation of hostilities. Otherwise, any attempt to reach a compromise will inevitably lead to an escalation of the armed conflict. This much is clear from the negative relationship between these variables and the dependent variable, which is observed when the generalized indicator of military asymmetry is not included in the model.

The PAIC database, among other things, allows us to include such control variables as policymaking in the legislative, executive, judicial, and security branches of government and predict the effect that they may have. In this case (according to the compilers of the PAIC database), we are talking about the very fact that changes have been made to the procedures for making political decisions in these areas of gov-

ernment. Our regression analysis showed that all four variables listed above have the greatest influence (compared to the groups of predictors we looked at earlier) on the explanatory power of the model. What this means is that the provisions of peace agreements that deal with the procedures for making political decisions and their transformation as a result of the implementation of the agreements are the most significant, at least when it comes to bringing hostilities to an end. At the same time, a trend we spotted earlier can still be observed: compromise on these provisions of peace agreements can only be achieved when the mediator state has clear military dominance.

The cessation of hostilities at the time the peace agreements are signed is just one of the two components of the complete settlement of armed conflicts. It is just as important for the mediator state to ensure peace five years down the line. Accordingly, it was necessary to determine the significance of the mediator state's military might not only in terms of ending hostilities, but also in terms of preventing a full-scale resumption of fighting. To do this, we began with constructing another paired regression – for the preservation of peace in the initial years following the signing of peace agreements (See Table 9). Testing of the generalized indicator of military asymmetry revealed that its statistical significance relative to the second dependent variable was just as strong as it was relative to the first dependent variable. This observation allows us to state with greater confidence that, even in the post-conflict period, the mediator state still has to exercise its duties as a mediator (albeit in a more indirect form).

The regression model with the second dependent variable was constructed in the same way as the regression model with the first dependent variable. Similar predictors (thematic blocks) were used, and the procedure for testing them also remained unchanged. The regression analysis revealed that transformation of the media space towards greater transparency and inclusiveness is no less important for maintaining peace. However, in this case, successful transformation of the media space requires monitoring by an intermediary with powerful military potential. In the absence of a generalized indicator of military asymmetry in the regression model, the relationship between the variable “transformation of the media space” and the second dependent variable (“maintaining peace five years after the signing of peace agreements”) becomes negative. In other words, even years after peace agreements are signed, the mediator state should continue to monitor the media space of the belligerent parties and prevent the transmission of hostile or violent narratives through the media.

At the same time, other cultural aspects – education reforms, symbols and emblems for minorities, and common holidays and special events – become more important for maintaining peace than they were during the negotiation stage. What is more, the reorganization of the cultural aspects mentioned in peace agreements (the thematic blocks were described earlier) can be of particular importance when there is military parity between the parties to the conflict and the mediator state. This can be explained by the fact that the creation of a communication and socio-cultural space based on unity and equality contributes to a peaceful coexistence. We should note here that the predictor “investigation of war crimes” proved statistically significant for the

successful cessation of hostilities. However, testing it in relation to the second dependent variable revealed the opposite – that it can hinder the establishment of a lasting peace in the post-negotiation period. And the likelihood of re-occurrences increases as a result.

As noted earlier, the reorganization of the vertical power structure can play a role in the cessation of hostilities (especially when there is an asymmetry of military power). The testing of variables that characterized such aspects of peace agreements as “Decision-making procedures” and “Representative in government bodies” revealed that they contribute not only to the cessation of hostilities, but also to lasting peace. Representation of various population groups in legislative and executive bodies is itself something that can guarantee continued peace. In the long term, however, and we are talking years after the peace accords are signed, the asymmetry of military in favour of the mediator state does have an effect on the maintenance of peace. Otherwise, attempts to regulate issues of representation and decision-making in power structures may lead to greater confrontation. This much was evident from the regression analysis: the statistical significance of these variables decreased in the absence of a generalized indicator of military asymmetry in the model.

Discussion of Results

The results of the study demonstrate that asymmetry in military power is important both for ending hostilities and for maintaining peace years after peace agreements are signed. At the same time, even in cases where the mediator has superior military force, the role that the actual content of the peace agreements plays in resolving the conflict should not be underestimated. The regression analysis and construction of ROC models within it led us to the conclusion that the optimal models for the first and second dependent variables are practically identical. Finding a compromise on the provisions of peace agreements that deal with issues of gaining, distributing, and maintaining power is crucial both for the cessation of hostilities and the preservation of peace. At the same time, this issue can only be resolved in the presence of a mediator state with military potential that is superior to that of the combatting parties. Military parity between the parties to the conflict and the mediator state is not conducive to reaching a consensus on how to organize public authority. In this case, it is extremely unlikely that the armed conflict will be resolved. Decentralization and referendums on the status of the disputed territories can also contribute to the successful resolution of a conflict, but only when there is a parallel reorganization of all branches of government.

The statistical significance of the variables related to representation and decision-making was somewhat lower compared to the predictors that characterized changes in other branches of government. Our regression analysis demonstrated that, in conditions of military parity, predictors related to the functioning of the security forces do not contribute either to the cessation of hostilities or to the maintenance of peace.

At the same time, the implementation of the provisions of peace agreements concerning the investigation of war crimes, the holding of referendums on the status of disputed territories (if any) and the implementation of decentralization processes can complement

and complete the process of a general peace settlement. Transformations of this kind will contribute to the formation of a more democratic legal framework in states that were parties to armed conflicts. What is more, the introduction of decentralization processes will be an impetus for the development of local self-government. This, in turn, can ensure that all social groups are involved in the decision-making process, that their interests will be heard and considered. Having said all this, the results of our regression analysis indicate that the provisions of peace agreements we have just mentioned can only have a positive impact on the cessation of hostilities and a lasting peace when there is an asymmetry of military power between the parties to the conflict and the mediator state. The basis for successful mediation, and for peaceful settlement in general, is thus finding a solution to issues of acquiring and distributing power, coupled with military superiority of the mediator state.

* * *

Mediation is a unique method of modern armed conflict resolution in the sense that it combines the military superiority of the mediator state with the elimination of deep contradictions between the parties to the conflict through peace negotiations. What is more, mediation is not limited solely to the use of military force, but rather involves creating favourable conditions for launching a constructive dialogue between the parties to the conflict. At the same time, the parties themselves, realizing the significant military superiority of the mediator state, will not dare resume hostilities. Mediation by a player with powerful military potential thus reduces the likelihood of escalation of an armed conflict.

There are some limitations to this study. One is that it examined intra-state and inter-state armed conflicts that took place between 1961 and 2021. Accordingly, doubts may remain as to the possibility of extrapolating the results to other historical eras. That said, the need for institutional mediation was only realized after the Second World War. The notion of mediation by another state emerged even later, and it remains the most undervalued means of resolving armed conflicts today. Moreover, until 1960, there was no systematic data on the characteristics of the military power of all the states in the world. The first examples of what we would today call state mediation came during the height of the Cold War, that is, in the 1960s (Wallenstein, Svensson 2014). A considerable number of armed conflicts in the period 1961–2021 involved state mediators. These were a mix of inter-state, intra-state, and non-state conflicts.

Thus, despite the chronological limitations, our study allowed us to analyse a wide range of armed conflicts and thus obtain reasonably valid and representative results. Another limitation of the study was that it only identified the military power ratio (asymmetry and parity) between the mediator state and each of the parties to the conflict. In other words, we did not calculate the military power ratio between the conflicting states. This is not an oversight on our part, since any analysis of mediation primarily involves assessing the extent to which the mediator is superior to the parties to the conflict, regardless of the individual characteristics of their military power. We proceeded from the assumption that the greater this superiority, the easier it would be to resolve the armed conflict. And this

was borne out in the study: the overall military dominance of the mediator state (regardless of the balance of power between the participants) already creates favourable conditions for the successful resolution of an armed conflict.

One thing that stood out in this study was that it considered the characteristics of military power and peace agreements as complementary and equivalent prerequisites for successful mediation. This was itself an attempt to transform the very concept of mediation, which is often limited to negotiations and the signing of peace agreements. In addition, through simple comparative analysis, we were able to develop a generalized indicator of military asymmetry that demonstrates how the military power of the parties to the conflict on the one hand and the mediator state on the other relates to each other. Finally, the formation of this indicator made it possible to fill in the methodological gap – the lack of understanding in the scientific literature of how to move from a pairwise comparison of the metrics of military power of the parties to a conflict and the mediator to an overall qualitative assessment.

Thus, our study successfully demonstrated that asymmetry of military power in favour of the mediator state is equally important for both ending hostilities and for maintaining peace years after the conclusion of the negotiation process. However, the implementation of aspects of peace agreements dealing with representation in government bodies and political decision-making processes is of paramount importance for the overall peaceful settlement of an armed conflict. Ensuring the representation of all social groups in different branches of government, increasing the transparency of decision-making procedures, holding referendums, and implementing decentralization can contribute to achieving and maintaining peace. At the same time, the regression analysis demonstrated that the only way to find compromise solutions on these issues and implement these solutions in practice is when there is an asymmetry of military power in favour of the mediator state.

This paper represents an attempt by its authors to contribute to the study of the phenomenon of mediation involving a state mediator, and have probably already proven the relevance of this method of resolving armed conflicts. This clearly highlights the need for even deeper study of the phenomenon of mediation. The emergence of new academic knowledge in this area can inform real political strategies for achieving peace in territories where active hostilities are currently taking place.

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Conflict of interest:

The authors declare the absence of conflicts of interest.

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