



CDSn4001: Conflict Analysis

**Asymmetric conflicts:
rebellion and insurgency**

November 22, 2022

Miriam Matejova, PhD

Agenda

- What makes a conflict asymmetric?
- Why doesn't a state easily win against an insurgency?

Asymmetric conflict

- Terrorist attacks? Rebel attacks? Computer viruses?
- Antagonists not fighting “fair”?
- Regular wars with parties possessing unequal resources?
- An umbrella term for warfare between parties with **legal status differences, power imbalances, or asymmetric strategies**

Asymmetric conflict: legal status

- State actors (recognized as sovereign and possess centralized armed forces) vs. non-state actors (lack international recognition and operate under a more diffuse chain of command)

Asymmetric conflict: resources

- The weaker actor lacks sophisticated armaments (e.g., aircraft carriers, long-range missiles) as well as manpower, economic resources, technological competence, or other assets to confront the stronger actor on *equal terms*.

Asymmetric conflict: strategies

- Direct strategies targeting opponent's fighting capabilities vs. indirect strategies targeting opponent's **willingness to fight**

Discussion

- What makes rebel groups prevail?
- How are insurgencies different in democratic vs non-democratic states?
- Remember...can we apply the concepts from studying interstate wars to intrastate conflicts? *Why/why not?*