THE LOGIC OF DECISIONS IN MILITARIZED DISPUTES: 
THE EFFECT OF REGIME, POWER, ARMS CONTROL, 
AND AIRPOWER ON DECISION-MAKING IN MILITARIZED DISPUTES

Kwang-Jin Kim

Dr. Stephen L. Quackenbush, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This study examines the causal relationship among pre and intradispute information and
decision-makers’ decisions determining evolution of militarize disputes. The identified causal
factors are interconnected with one another throughout several decision-making stages of
militarized disputes. As pre-dispute information, ex ante external and domestic contexts,
expected outcomes, and the role of intergovernmental institutions affect decisions to initiate and
to escalate disputes. Likewise, as updated information, ex post coercion by airpower affects the
decisions to determine dispute duration. Empirical models test the effects of ex ante contexts, the
probability of victory derived from expected outcomes, arms control agreements, and the use of
airpower coercion on decision-making process of militarized disputes. The results reveal that (1)
ex ante contexts, relative power and regime, can become a useful predictor of dispute outcome,
(2) the probability of victory based on ex ante contexts exponentially increases the likelihood of
initiation, (3) pre-dispute arms control agreements can reduce the incentive to escalate violence,
and (4) the use of airpower coercion, as an ex post choice, is a significant determinant of dispute
duration. These findings show that decisions to terminate, to initiate, and to escalate militarized
disputes can be linked to one another. This also implies that pre-dispute information can guide
the intradispute decisions and decision-makings are interconnected from the initiation to the
termination of militarized disputes.