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# Why Do Superpowers Stomp in the Mud: Incentives for Third Party Interventions in Intrastate Conflicts

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May 28, 2019

## Abstract

Do third-parties intervene militarily in civil conflicts to save lives and to preserve peace and security, as they claim? Intrastate conflicts have dominated the war scene since the end of the Second World War. Since then more than 150 civil conflicts have erupted with a mean duration of 11 years (compared to around 100 interstate conflicts of average duration of around 1 year). Millions have been killed and displaced in civil conflicts that in some cases split countries leading to the formation of new states. Third-party military interventions have occurred in the majority of these intrastate conflicts where their presence shows to be correlated and effective in tilting the balance of power in favor of the faction they support. Although the role of intervention seems crucial in civil conflicts, mostly supporting governments over rebels, the incentives of the intervening parties to intervene have often been dismissed in the study of civil conflicts. This thesis attempts to provide a better understanding on why and how third-parties intervene in others' costly conflicts. Unlike what intervening states announce and what some authors have argued about the humanitarian and peace-keeping aspects of intervention, this research argues that intervention happens due to self-centric interests and is triggered by different factors that at the end relate to the political and economic benefits of the intervening third-party.

This dissertation uses a mixed-method approach that encompasses Game Theory, Qualitative Approach, and Quantitative Methodology. After the introductory chapter, Chapter 2 looks at the incentives for third-party interventions in interstate conflicts using a game-theoretic model. Results in this chapter suggest that interveners, especially superpowers intervene in other states' conflicts when their associated ideological utility is high, among other types of incentives. Ideological utility is defined as the economic and geo-strategic privileges that foreign governments receive when a certain regime is in power. The results of the theory are exemplified using a case study approach in Chapter 3 looking at the ongoing conflicts in Yemen and Syria. The case studies use a qualitative approach in which politicians and experts from both cases are interviewed. The list of interviewees include prime ministers, ministers, ambassadors, academics, and experts on the ongoing conflicts in the two cases. To further test the theoretical hypotheses and propositions, a multinomial logit regression model is used in Chapter 4. The quantitative study looks at all cases of civil conflicts since the end of World War Two until 2018. The results of the empirical study confirm show that indeed self-centric interests matter most to interveners, as well as the strength of the fighting factions. In addition, the quantitative results show that unlike oil and other economics variables, democratic indicators and humanitarian incentives do not affect the probability of the third-party intervention.



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Intrastate conflicts have dominated the war scene since World War II ended. Millions have been killed and displaced in civil conflicts that spanned over 10 years and, in some cases, split countries to lead to the formation of new states. Third-party interventions, whether in support of the fighting factions or for peacekeeping missions, have transpired in the majority of intrastate conflicts post World War II (Allanson et al., 2017; Harbom et al., 2007). In addition to their presence in civil conflicts, third parties seem to play a significant role in tilting the balance of power toward the faction they support, where most of the interventions have been by the government and have led to more government victories (UCDP, 2016). Although the role of foreign parties that have intervened has been crucial in intrastate conflicts, their incentives for intervening have often been dismissed in the study of civil conflicts. This book attempts to provide a better understanding on why and how third parties intervene in others' lethal and expensive conflicts. Despite the claims of intervening states and the arguments of certain authors who state that intervention by independent states is crucial for humanitarian reasons (Bass, 2008; Wheelere 2000; Finnemore, 2003), this research argues that intervention is undertaken for selfish interests and is triggered by different factors that are ultimately related to political and economic benefits for the intervening third-party.

The importance of third-party intervention has been made apparent in the abundant research that examines the effects of such intervention in civil wars. One strand of scholarly work discussed how intervention, or even the expectation of intervention by internal factions, can encourage rebel groups to fight (Rowlands and Carment, 1998; Jenne, 2004; Kuperman, 2006; Grigoryan, 2010a; Kydd and Straus, 2013). Kuperman (2008) argues that intervention leads to an insurance problem that encourages rebels to even take advantage of massacres. Fortna et al. (2018) use the empirical data available on civil conflicts to explain that groups with external sources of financing, such as foreign state support, may be more likely to engage in terrorism. Intervention is also argued to have no impact

on the likelihood of the conflict in some cases, but this is only in the context of the terms of agreement (Cetinyan, 2002).

In addition to leading to an increased number of genocides and terrorist attacks, interventions can also prolong the civil conflicts by changing the distribution of power. Fearon (2003) argues that an exogenous shock, such as foreign intervention, can shift the distribution of power in favor of the losing side. However, if this additional power is not enough to fully tilt the balance, it only makes it more difficult for either of the two sides to reach a decisive victory.

However, if the intervention was aimed at peacekeeping, it can result in a longer duration of peace after war. Fortna (2003) uses empirical data to demonstrate that, in both civil wars and interstate wars, peace lasts longer when peacekeepers are present as compared to when belligerents are left on their own. Doyle and Sambanis (2000) argue that international peace-building can improve the prospects of a civil war getting resolved. However, the cases of Bosnia and Somalia indicate that peace enforcement can amount to "war-making", and the case of Rwanda shows how the United Nations record failed to even attempt to exercise force (Doyle and Sambanis, 2006).

Although several authors have criticized intervention for being a hypocritical act by the West (Chomsky, 1999; Bandow, 2000), there have been others who advocated intervention by independent states for humanitarian reasons (Bass, 2008; Wheelere 2000; Finnemore, 2003). Bass (2008) pushes for intervention to resolve conflicts and, after a summary of the history of intervention, realizes that the world can be divided into "spheres of humanitarian interest" and "free and unfree countries" where states have historically intervened to protect minorities and vulnerable groups. His main motivation behind making these arguments is the failure to stop the massacres in Rwanda and Bosnia due to the hesitation in executing military intervention. However, Bass does not consider the fact that the same democracies that practice freedom of speech domestically can be oppressive or support dictatorships internationally.

Jervis and Snyder (1999) also advocate for intervention to end civil wars based on the security dilemma concerns, stating that civil wars rarely end without intervention. Their main claim is that the third parties, when they are strong, can make credible promises to all factions to remain peaceful and not be oppressed. However, their discussion of the important potential role of the intervening entity does not account for the fact that, despite its strength, the said entity might not know what the most suitable action is in the other countries' domestic context. The domestic context can consist of different types of institutions instead of the third party's institutions and may therefore lead to more

complicated, long-term negative effects.

Jervis and Snyder agree that for an intervention to be successful in ending war, the international community should agree upon a plan for the post-intervention phase, which includes structuring warring groups in an institutionalized framework that guarantees the survival of all of them. They argue that intervention must be multilateral in order to guarantee credibility to both parties, to decrease resources and make it more effective, to ensure that if one retreats then the others can remain, and to avoid looting. They illustrate that if the intervening party supporting the opposition does not give enough power to overthrow the government, it will only intensify the war.

Even among the researchers who criticized the historical trend of intervention, there were recommendations regarding how to keep it but amend interventions in civil conflicts. Fearon (1999) uses the Somalia case study in his book to criticize intervention and demonstrate the best ways to make it more efficient. He argues that the role of international intervention in a war of attrition is to support the strongman (without giving prizes) so that the others would lose the will to fight. The next step would be to establish institutional democracy under the strongman's authority and allocate international police for long-term monitoring of the cease fire.

On the other hand, in line with this research, other scholars have specifically examined the mixed motives for executing an intervention. Grigoryan (2010b) argues that the non-humanitarian motives of the third party increases the risk tolerance of the escalation of the civil conflict. However, Grigoryan examines the third party only when it is in support of the opposition. This research will mainly investigate the incentives for third parties supporting governments.

Chomsky (1999) and Bandow (2000) also consider interventionism for humanitarian motives a hypocritical act by the West to propagate neo-imperialism. Their approach is based on case studies from Kosovo and the Balkans. Thus, this research will serve to complement this type of studies in order to investigate the incentives of intervention using a multi-method approach that consists of a theoretical conceptualization, a qualitative case study research, and a quantitative method approach.

This work uses a mix-methods approach in studying civil wars (Weinstein 2006; Balcells 2017) based on a formalization of the theory (Kalyvas, 2006). By using this approach the aim of this research is to uncover the unstated incentives for third-party intervention. My definition of third-party intervention here is "the military involvement by a foreign state using weaponry and personnel to weaken a fighting faction in an ongoing civil con-



flict". A civil war in this dissertation, and in particular in the empirical perspective is when the government is contested by a military group for the acquisition of authority in a war that leads to at least a thousand deaths.

The main findings of this dissertation indicate that foreign states in other countries' ongoing intrastate conflicts only when they find a self-interest in supporting a faction over the other. The empirical study shows that the interest of this third-party is reflected in the voting trend in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voting. The more similar a country voted to one of the superpowers (mainly United States and Russia), the more likely it was that these governments will receive support from that superpower, when it is contested by a rebel group. On the other hand, a superpower country was more likely to support the rebels when the government's votes were more similar to its rival superpower.

The next chapter will study the incentives for intervention from a game-theoretic perspective. The chapter introduces a basic model of the extensive form and a finite-horizon game tree. The model defines *ideological utility* as the utility of third parties that comes from having a specific government in power. This utility is driven by the geopolitical and economic privileges offered by the government as well as strategic power for the foreign player internationally and domestically. The main hypothesis of the model is that third-parties are more willing to intervene in support of governments that offer them higher ideological utility.

The third chapter is a case study approach that uses qualitative methods to conduct semi-structured interviews with politicians and experts on Yemen and Syria. The cases of Yemen and Syria were chosen due to their predicaments being relevant to the topic, where a third party has intervened in support of the government. The interventions in these countries are also ongoing, which provides raw information for analysis. The cases were used to establish patterns and make comparisons in order to exemplify and compliment the theoretical model in explaining the incentives for intervention.

The fourth chapter is a quantitative study of all civil conflicts that have taken place after World War II. The empirical model is a multinomial logit model that considers over 150 civil conflicts with all the episodes that occurred throughout the year. Quantitative results on the effects of ideological utility, government strength, humanitarian factors, economic factors, democracy variables, and others are used for testing the theoretical hypotheses and propositions.

## Chapter 2

# A Theoretic Approach on the Incentives for Third-Party Interventions in Civil Wars

### 2.1 Introduction

After the end of the Cold War and by the beginning of the third millennium, one superpower emerged and was able to influence all the regions of the world. Since the early 1990s and through the beginning of the 2000s, the United States and its allies in NATO have intervened in internal conflicts to support one side against the other or to overthrow dictators. Russia and other regional powers have risen again and have also soiled their hands in the conflicts of other countries, claiming benevolent intentions but being criticized for fighting only for their own political and geo-strategic interests.

In many international conflicts and wars, a third-party intervention was the main factor that influenced the shifting of the balance of power and led to a more decisive outcome. While a third-party intervention by supporting one player over the other can result in a longer duration of persistent fighting, it can also lead to a quicker end to the war in other situations. Moreover, a third party intervention can have different types of outcomes and can be triggered due to different types of incentives for the third party.

In recent years and since the incidents of 11 September 2001, the wars against terrorists and non-governmental armed groups have increased. Third-parties, such as the United States and NATO, have initiated wars against Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan by allying with the Afghani government. The Saudi army had allied with the Yemeni government to launch a war against the Houthis and the former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. In Syria, Russia (the government's ally) has declared and started an expensive war against

the "Islamic State in Syria and Iraq" (ISIS) and other armed extremist groups. During all of these wars and various others during the Cold War era, third-party intervention led to numerous atrocities and the deaths of civilians, mainly by air strikes. These wars were all launched in oil-rich regions and can be associated with economic and power gains for the third party. These cases can provide evidence regarding the incentives for third parties, whose intervention might not be merely for humanitarian purposes and does not always support the opposition.

Russia and Saudi Arabia did not only militarily intervene without consulting international organizations but have also clearly stated that the purpose of their intervention was to protect themselves and hence maintain their power and influence. Rarely have any third-party interventions that support the government claimed to have intervened for humanitarian purposes. The Saudi intervention in Bahrain is another example of third-party intervention that was executed to support the government when the shift in power began to favor the opposition, even in cases where the opposition movement was peaceful.

Previous studies have examined the humanitarian factors that lead to an intervention by a third party (Kuperman, 2008; Kydd and Straus, 2010). The intervention in these cases was assumed to be in support of the rebels against the state that can commit atrocities and anti-humanitarian acts. Other research has investigated the role of a third party, considered an International Organization, as supportive of one state (challenger) against a target state (Chapman and Walford, 2010). The uniqueness of the research at hand is that it considers the third party to have self interests (ideological utility) and assumes that it would support the government and not the opposition.

The aim of this paper is to study the initial incentives that lead to the intervention of a third party. The incentives considered here are mainly those associated with political and geo-strategic interests for the intervening entity. This study also inspects the thresholds of costs and benefits at which the third-party decides to intervene and the factors that play a part in the decision making process.

The second section of this chapter will present a literature review of relevant research related to third-party intervention. The third section will introduce the main features of the basic game-theoretic model under complete information. The fourth section will examine the equilibrium conditions for the incomplete information model. The fifth section will discuss the main results and associate them to some of the empirical and qualitative outcomes of the following chapters. The sixth section discusses the expected results and policy implications. The final section concluded by presenting the main findings as well as suggestions for related future research and relevant research challenges.

## 2.2 Literature Review

The role of a third party has been extensively studied in the context of international conflicts by illustrating its role and impact. More specifically, a branch of the literature in this regard has highlighted the moral hazard resulting from a third party that aims to protect the rebels in the first place. The problem is primarily similar to the insurance problem in that it encourages rebels to go to war and take advantage of massacres (Kuperman, 2008). Similarly, intervention can raise the possibility of war by empowering the rebels the rebels (Crawford and Kuperman, 2006; Jenne, 2004; Rowland and Carment, 1998). Grigoryan (2010a) argues that escalation occurs when the state is unsure whether the third party intervention will take place.

On the other hand, an opposing branch of literature has argued that the moral hazard is only a threat under limited conditions (Kydd and Straus, 2013) and, in some cases, has an impact only on the terms of agreement and not on the likelihood of the conflict (Cetinyan, 2002).

Another branch of the literature specifically considers the third party as an international organization. Such organizations can intervene either directly or by simply providing support to the challenger. After a challenger state consults the international organization (IO), the IO can support the challenger, oppose it, or remain neutral. Each of the three decisions taken by the IO will have a different effect on the cost of war for the challenger (Chapman and Wolford, 2010). The IO's support for the challenger decreases said cost by alleviating potential international opposition and providing political cover (Fang, 2008; Thompson, 2006).

In almost all of the aforementioned studies, the third party was assumed to be benevolent in nature, aiming to reduce the atrocities and crimes against humanity. However, in this proposed research, the aim is to consider a hawkish third party that has its own motives. A relevant model is the one employed by Grigoryan (2010b), where he considers a mixed motives-driven intervention. This allows us to observe that the risk tolerance of escalation increases not only as a function of the brutality of the state but also as a function of the non-humanitarian interests of the third party. This mode of analysis is opposite to the ones used by Wheeler (2007) and Finnemore (2003), who discuss the non-selfish aspects of a third-party intervention. However, unlike this research, Grigoryan's study considered the third party as an ally of the opposition and not the state.

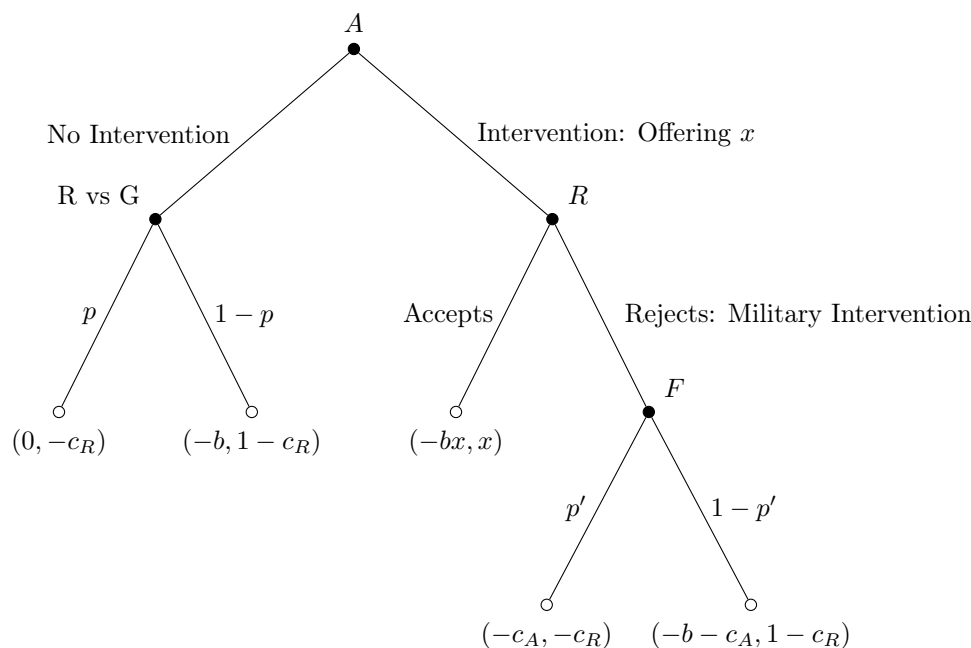
## 2.3 The Model

The majority of research works conducted on third-party intervention have overlooked the self-interest incentives of the third player, especially that there has not been explicit formalization of third-party military intervention. In the simple model below, I will explain how a selfish gain/loss in ideological utility ( $b$ ) can be a determinant factor for whether the third party will intervene. In this model, we are interested in two main players—the government's ally ( $A$ ) and its rival ( $R$ ).  $G$  will represent the government, a player whose payoffs and strategic actions will be overlooked in this model. This will be an extensive-form game, and the finite-horizon game tree will begin after  $R$  has already made an explicit decision to wage a war against  $G$  to capture the pie (pie = 1), which represents the country's land, resources, and decision-making power internally and in foreign affairs.

$b$  is defined as the ideological utility that  $A$  enjoys when it has an ally government in power from the same ideology (political preference, political-economic orientation, set of values, or being an enemy of its ideological enemy), where the value of  $b$  is between 0 and 1. First, when a government is formed from the same ideology or is one that shares the same set of values as the foreign state, the foreign state will be strengthening itself internally and its geo-strategic presence by exhibiting that it's type of regime is strong, effective, and productive. On the other hand, when a government that has the same ideology loses power to a local rival of a different ideology, the former ally of the government  $A$  suffers a loss in utility due to losing a supporter in international assemblies along with but its values and form of governance losing their effectiveness and strength credibility against the superpower's international rival. Internally, this entails that domestic rivals of the third-player's government can gain momentum. On the international level, this will weaken the image of  $A$  in international assemblies and cause it to gain less votes. In addition, this weakens the third party's ability to bargain for a certain cause that requires votes and international credibility. In addition, losing an ally of the same ideology can result in reduced economic partnership when the rival has a different political economic orientation.  $R$  replacing  $G$  in power can also mean that the new ideological group in control will shift all the previous benefits enjoyed by  $A$  to  $A$ 's opposition, who can also become superpowers, thus affecting the balance of power in other negotiation events. Geo-strategic presence is also of importance to international players and losing allies in different parts of the world means losing economic and military ports and political privileges. Last, as states are involved in coalitions and security pacts for defense, they face credibility threats from other allies if they do not step in to step in to honor their alliance.

### *No Intervention*

### Game Tree:



After  $R$ 's decision to attack  $G$  for the pie, the first decision in the game tree is for  $A$  regarding whether to intervene. If  $A$  does not intervene,  $G$  may still win with probability  $p$  and eliminate the rival, where  $p$  also represents the government's power. In this case, the payoff for  $A$  will remain the same (0), while  $R$  will suffer the cost of fighting  $-c_R$ .  $A$ 's payoff remains zero because it did not suffer any military cost and did not lose any ideological utility, as the same government is still in power. The cost  $-c_R$  for  $R$  is the loss of lives, political power, and presence in that country. If  $R$  is defeated by  $G$  without intervention, the war ends. However, with a probability  $(1 - p)$ , it is possible that  $R$  may win and end the war by overthrowing the government. In this case, the result will affect the third-player  $A$ , who is an ally of the government and will suffer a loss  $(-b)$  that represents the loss in ideological utility and bargaining power discussed above.  $R$ , on the other hand, will end up with a payoff equal to  $1 - c_R$ . The 1 here entails having the total pie by capturing power in the country, which includes everything that falls under its decision-making power internally and in the international stage as well as its economic gains.

Therefore, the following expected utilities will result in the case of no intervention:

$$U(A) = p(0) + (1 - p)(-b) = -b + pb$$

for  $A$ , and

$$U(R) = p(-c_R) + (1 - p)(1 - c_R) = 1 - p - c_R$$

for  $R$ .

### 2.3.1 *Intervention with Complete Information*

The right side of the game tree starts when  $A$  decides to intervene from the side of  $G$  and, thus, gains control of the pie. The reason  $A$  is assumed to be in control of the pie is because we have already assumed that  $A$  will intervene only when  $G$  is in such a dire need for aid that it will hand over the control of the bargaining decisions to  $A$  (further proof of this assumption is presented in the qualitative part of the dissertation).

When  $A$  decides to intervene and before it acts militarily, it first considers acting as an intermediary to stop the war in order to save military cost and diplomatic loss. Acting as an intermediary from the side of  $G$  means that  $A$  will consider bargaining with the rebels regarding a specific share of the pie—a share that keeps both parties satisfied (usually guaranteeing a friendship with the head of the regime or assuring that the new rulers promise to keep certain matters in line with the previous relations). This implies that  $A$  will begin at the first period ( $t=1$ ) by offering a share  $x$  of the pie to  $R$ , where  $0 < x < 1$ . The share that is offered could be a certain amount of power in decision-making by giving the rebels some ministerial seats in the government or simply by allowing the rebels to act freely on the territories in cases where  $G$  used to be a dictatorship. The share  $x$  can also be more rights for certain ethnic or political groups that did not enjoy total freedom before the rebellion.

If  $R$  accepts the terms proposed by  $A$ , the game ends with  $A$  receiving a payoff  $-bx$  and  $R$  receiving  $x$ .  $bx$  in this case is the loss that  $A$  will suffer in ideological utility and bargaining power because its ally,  $G$ , is no more in total control of the decisions that align with the third player's preferences (note that  $bx$  is less than  $b$  since both  $b$  and  $x$  are between 0 and 1). Thus, the following are the expected utilities results for  $A$  and  $R$  respectively:

$$V_1(A) = -bx$$

$$V_1(R) = x$$

Two recent examples of when a third party on the government's side acted as a mediator are from the Middle East during the last decade. The United States supported the Kurds' objective of having their own entity and decision-making power in Northern Iraq within the Iraqi state in order to avoid any conflict between the Kurds and the Arabs. The Russians on the other hand, during the crisis in Syria, have played a crucial role in persuading the Syrian Regime to appoint Riad Hijab, an opposition leader, as the Prime Minister of Syria before he fled to Jordan. The two cases underwent different circumstances and had different outcomes. Until last year, the Kurds considered their share

sufficient for them to abandon the military split in order to have their own state. However, as the Kurds built enough power, such that the share was no longer satisfactory for them, they voted for a secession referendum. On the other hand, the Syrian opposition had believed that they were too powerful to accept such a share in decision-making since the beginning of Russia's attempts. The subsequent events did not witness an American intervention against the Kurds in Iraq, but it did witness a Russian military intervention against the Syrian armed groups. This indicates that, when the offered share is accepted, the chances of retaliation decrease.

The decision of  $A$  to make an offer to  $R$  does not only depend on whether doing so is better than a civil war but also on whether making the offer would still be better than the consequences of a military intervention. The last two branches on the far right of the game tree illustrate the probabilities of a military intervention. With a probability  $p'$  (also representing the strength of  $A$ ), the third party will win and suppress the rebellion. In this case, its payoff will be  $-c_A$  while  $R$ 's payoff will be  $-c_R$ . However, with a probability  $1 - p'$ ,  $A$  may not emerge victorious, its intervention only being tiresome and resulting in a payoff of  $-c_A - b$  and  $1 - c_R$  for itself and  $R$  respectively.

In addition to the weaponry cost and soldiers' casualties,  $c_A$  is what the third player might suffer due to international pressure and the economic sanctions for intervening in a civil war. Pressure could be imposed from other states that have an interest in supporting the rebels or could be from international organizations or coalitions of players that are accusing the third-party of breaking international laws.

Therefore, the expected utility of a military intervention for  $A$  and  $R$  respectively are as given below:

$$W_1(A) = p'(-c_A) + (1 - p')(-b - c_A) = -b + p'b - c_A$$

$$W_1(R) = p'(-c_R) + (1 - p')(1 - c_R) = 1 - p' - c_R$$

The offer  $x$  that would appease  $R$  is one that would at least leave it better off than the outcomes of going to war with  $A$ . Therefore, the optimal  $x$  for  $A$  to buy-off  $R$  would be  $x = W_1(R) = 1 - p' - c_R$ . Since offering a share to  $R$  will provide  $A$  with a utility  $V_1(A) = -b(x) = -b + bp' + bc_R$ , which is always greater than  $U(A) = -b + pb$  (since  $V_1(A) - U(A) = b(p' - p) + bc_R > 0$  as  $p' > p$ ),  $A$  will always prefer being an intermediary over witnessing the fight between  $G$  and  $R$ .

*Lemma 1: Under complete information,  $A$  would always decide to intervene as a mediator by offering  $x$  when  $R$  declares a rebellion against  $G$ .*



Therefore, the strength of the government and its probability of winning does not matter in the complete information game anymore; instead, the foreign player's strength  $p'$  matters. Thus, as  $A$  would want to limit its potential loss due to the costs of military intervention, whether in the military budget, international sanctions, or casualties, it will compare the expected utility of making an offer  $V_1(A)$  to the intervening military  $W_1(A)$ .

### 2.3.2 *Equilibrium with Complete Information*

As we are assuming a complete information game,  $A$  is aware of the cost of war for  $R$  ( $c_R$ ) and, consequently, of its payoffs in case of no intervention and in case of accepting a share  $x = 1 - p' - c_R$ . As a rational player,  $A$  will therefore ensure that it chooses the optimal  $x$  that is equal to the minimum value that  $R$  will prefer over fighting  $G$ , as long as  $A$  considers it better than military intervention.

In the following section, I will show the condition under which the third player will prefer to intervene militarily over bargaining a share  $x = 1 - p' - c_R$  with the rebels. This will be the case for the following condition:

$$W_1(A) > V_1(A):$$

$$-b + bp' + bc_R < -b + p'b - c_A \implies bc_R < -c_A \implies b < \frac{-c_A}{c_R} < 0 \quad (2.1)$$

Since we have already assumed  $b$  to be between 0 and 1, this condition will never be plausible. Hence,  $A$  will never prefer military intervention over a peaceful agreement with  $R$ .

*Lemma 2: With perfect information,  $A$  would always prefer to buy off  $R$  instead of engaging in a military confrontation with it.*

Considering the decision of  $R$  and since the above Lemma suggests that there will be no scenario in which  $R$  goes to war with  $G$  alone, we will only consider the right hand side of the game tree in which  $R$  will take the decision to challenge only if its utility of going to war with  $A$  ( $W_1(R) = 1 - p' - c_R$ ) is greater than the peacefully offered share ( $V_1(R) = x$ ). In other words,  $R$  will accept a peaceful agreement as long as it offers a minimum share of  $x = 1 - p' - c_R$ .

*Proposition 1: With perfect information, the appeasing offer  $x = 1 - p' - c_R$  would always be accepted and would always be preferred by  $A$  over going to war.*

By deriving the appeasing share  $x$  with respect to  $p'$  the strength of  $A$ , we get  $\frac{\delta x}{\delta p'} = -1 < 0$ . Therefore, the stronger the third party, the lower the share that it has to pay to appease  $R$  and end the conflict peacefully.

*Corollary 1: With complete information, a stronger ally  $A$  can reduce the peaceful share  $x$  that  $R$  can get while maintaining peace.*

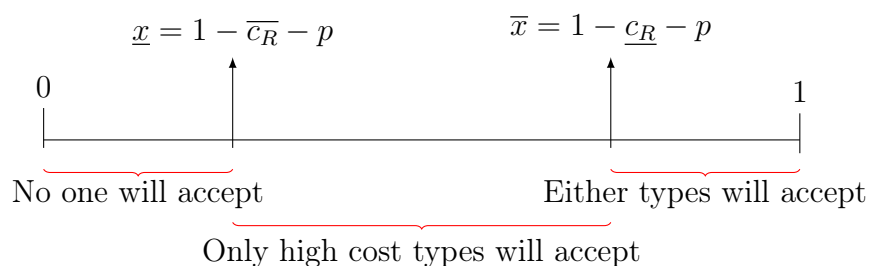
### 2.3.3 Intervention with Incomplete Information

In the complete information game, we assumed that  $A$  knows  $R$ 's cost of fighting and chooses the optimal  $x$  accordingly. In the incomplete information game, we will assume that the cost  $c_R$  is ambiguous to the third player.

For simplicity, we will assume that  $R$  can be of two types.  $R$  could either be a weakly armed group that has low preparation to overthrow the government and therefore suffers a high cost from fighting ( $\bar{c}_R$ ). This is the case with rebellions that start suddenly, without planning, and from popular citizens' protests. The other type is a well-trained  $R$ , which could be a well-trained group that has plans and has been preparing to overthrow the government and, in some cases, receives foreign support for arms and consultations. This type will suffer a minimum cost ( $\underline{c}_R$ ) when fighting the government such that  $0 < \underline{c}_R < \bar{c}_R < 1$ .

In this situation,  $A$  does not know which type  $R$  is, it only expects that  $R$  will suffer a cost  $\bar{c}_R$  with probability  $q$  and  $\underline{c}_R$  with probability  $1 - q$ .

$A$  can therefore choose between two different shares to offer to  $R$  in order to reach a peaceful agreement. As illustrated in figure 2 below,  $A$  can either choose a high share  $\bar{x} = 1 - \underline{c}_R - p$ , which any type would accept, or choose a low share  $\underline{x} = 1 - \bar{c}_R - p$ , which would only lead to peace if  $R$  was a high-cost type.



**Figure 2**

If  $A$  was able to appease  $R$  with the share offered, war will be avoided in the incomplete information situation. Player  $A$  however might decide to take the risk of offering a

low share to  $R$  in order to gain from the risk-return revenues.

If the offer is rejected by  $R$ , the game proceeds to the second period in which war occurs. War can either be between  $R$  and  $G$  or between  $R$  and  $A$  if  $A$  decides to intervene militarily. If  $A$  intervened militarily, it will emerge victorious with probability  $p'$  and only suffer a cost  $c_A$ . On the other hand, if  $A$  lost with probability  $1 - p'$ , it will suffer a cost  $-c_A - b$ . Thus, the expected utility from a military intervention for  $A$  is calculated as follows:

$$W(A) = p'(-c_A) + (1 - p')(-c_A - b) = -c_A - b + p'b$$

Therefore, when  $A$ 's offer is rejected, it will be willing to intervene militarily over watching the fight only when  $W(A) > U(A)$ :

$$-c_A - b + p'b > -b + pb \implies b > \frac{c_A}{p' - p} \quad (2.2)$$

This means that the third party will prefer military intervention when its ideological utility of having  $G$  in power is high enough.

*Hypothesis 1: A third party will be more willing to intervene militarily to save the government, after acting as a mediator, when it associates high ideological utility with the government in power.*

By deeming  $b^* = \frac{c_A}{p' - p}$  as the threshold or the critical ideological utility that will motivate  $A$  to intervene to support a government against the rebels, we can see how the different factors affect this threshold, affecting the likelihood of  $A$  intervening. First, we can derive  $b^*$  with respect to  $p$  to gauge how the government's power affects the ideological utility threshold:

$$\frac{\delta b^*}{\delta p} = \frac{1}{(p' - p)^2} > 0$$

This indicates that a higher  $p$  increases the  $b$  threshold, making it less likely to have military support.

*Hypothesis 2: Third parties are more willing to intervene militarily in support of weaker governments that share the same ideology. **The weaker a government is, ex-ante to a rebellion, the more friendly boots are willing to stomp in its mud.***

Next, we can examine the effect of having a higher cost in fighting for  $A$ :

$$\frac{\delta b^*}{\delta c_A} = \frac{1}{p' - p} > 0$$

*Proposition 2: The higher the cost that a third party will suffer in terms of military loss and international pressure, the less encouraged it will be to save its allies. This explains*

*the threats in sanctions prior to interventions.*

Last, we can calculate the effect of the third-party's power:

$$\frac{\delta b^*}{\delta p'} = \frac{-1}{(p' - p)^2} < 0$$

This concludes that stronger allies entail a higher likelihood of an intervention occurring.

*Proposition 3: Strong allies, especially superpowers, are available to a greater extent for saving their friends that share the same ideology at times of authority threats.*

### 2.3.4 *Equilibrium with Incomplete Information*

In this section, I will illustrate the conditions under which  $A$  will offer a share that is not accepted by  $R$  and therefore leads to the possibility of war.

When  $A$  offers  $\bar{x}$ , the game will certainly end with  $R$  accepting the offer. However, when  $A$  offers  $\underline{x}$  whose value will only satisfy a high-cost  $R$ , the game will end with a probability  $q$ —the probability that  $R$  is a high-cost type. On the other hand, with probability  $(1 - q)$ ,  $R$  will decline the deal and attack the government, and  $A$  can then decide whether it wants to intervene depending on the ideological utility ( $b$ ) discussed above.

To understand  $A$ 's decision between avoiding war (offering  $\bar{x}$ ) and benefiting from the risk-return spoils (offering  $\underline{x}$ ), we must compare the expected utility from each decision. Let  $V_2(A)$  be the expected utility for  $A$  when  $\bar{x}$  is offered (so the offer is certainly accepted). Further, for the case wherein the offer is not accepted, there can be two possible outcomes depending on the ideological utility level ( $b$ ).

For a low ideological utility ( $b < b^*$ ),  $W_2(A)$  is assumed to be the expected utility for  $A$  when offering a low share  $\underline{x}$ . On the other hand, when the ideological utility is high enough ( $b > b^*$ ) so that  $A$  prefers military intervention over watching the fight,  $W_3(A)$  is assumed to be  $A$ 's expected utility from offering a low share  $\underline{x}$  (note that the ideological utility  $b$  is private information and not known ex-ante to the rebels. Hence, they cannot be sure whether  $A$  will actually intervene militarily if they were to reject the offer). Thus, we obtain the following:

$$V_2(A) = -b\bar{x}$$

( $A$  offers a high share that any rebel group would accept)

$$W_2(A) = (1 - q)(-b + pb) + q(-b\underline{x})$$

( $A$  offers a low share but is not willing to go to war)

$$W_3(A) = (1 - q)(-c_A - b + p'b) + q(-b\underline{x})$$

( $A$  offers a low share but is willing to go to war)

Where the first equation is the payoff return to  $A$  after the guaranteed peaceful agreement from offering a share that would appease any rebel type. The second equation is the probability of having a low-cost  $R$  multiplied by the expected utility for  $A$  from a war between  $G$  and  $R$  along with the probability of having a high-cost  $R$  multiplied by the payoff for  $A$  from its low offer being accepted. The third equation represents the probability of having a low-cost  $R$  multiplied by the expected utility for  $A$  from fighting  $R$  plus the probability of having a high-cost  $R$  multiplied by the payoff for  $A$  from its low offer being accepted. Therefore, in the following sub-subsections, we will study two alternative cases of period  $t = 2$ . The first is regarding what will happen when  $A$  infers a low ideological utility ( $b < b^*$ ), and the second is when the ideological utility is high ( $b > b^*$ ):

### ***Low Ideological Utility***

$A$  will offer  $\underline{x}$  and therefore create a possibility for war between  $R$  and  $G$  only when  $W_2(A) > V_2(A)$ . Mathematically, this means that  $A$  will offer  $\underline{x}$  for the following condition:

$$q > \frac{1 - p - \bar{x}}{1 - p - \underline{x}}$$

This implies that the chance of a civil war breaking out will exist only when the probability of having a low-cost rebel group is high enough. In other words, when the alliance between the third player and the government is too weak (low ideological similarity) to incur intervention, civil war will occur only when  $A$  believes that  $R$  is a high-cost type with a probability above a critical  $q^* = \frac{1-p-\bar{x}}{1-p-\underline{x}}$ , where  $A$  will be indifferent at this threshold.

*Proposition 4: When third parties underestimate the strength of the rebels, they will offer them lower shares and therefore create higher chances of conflict.*

To observe the effects of the different factors on this threshold  $q^*$ , we can look at the different derivatives:

$$\frac{\delta q^*}{\delta p} = \frac{\underline{x} - \bar{x}}{(1 - p - \underline{x})^2} < 0$$

Therefore, when the ideological utility is low, an increase in the strength of the government lowers the  $q$  threshold, therefore increasing the probability of  $A$  offering a low

share to the rebels. This increases the possibility of civil war breaking out by increasing the chance of going to the second period.

*Corollary 2: Stronger governments with weak alliances have high chances of engaging in civil wars when the opposition has been preparing for war.*

### ***High Ideological Utility***

In the case of  $b > b^*$ , wherein the third party will be willing to enter the combat if its offer was rejected,  $A$  will bear the risk of offering  $\underline{x}$  when  $W_3(A) > V_2(A)$ . Mathematically, this means that  $A$  will offer  $\underline{x}$  for the following condition:

$$(1 - q)(-c_A - b + p'b) + q(-b\underline{x}) > -b\bar{x}$$

$$\implies q > \frac{b(1 - p' - \bar{x}) + c_A}{b(1 - p' - \underline{x}) + c_A} = q^{**}$$

Where  $q^{**}$  is the probability threshold that  $q$  must exceed in order for  $A$  to offer a low share to the rebels. Therefore, when third parties associate high ideological utility with the government, their expectation of having a high-cost rebellion influences their decision of whether to offer the rebels a high or low share.

*Corollary 3: When third parties expect the rebels to be weakly prepared, they offer them a low share of the pie. This creates a higher chance of the offer being rejected and, therefore, a higher chance of military intervention..*

To study the different effects of the components on  $q^{**}$ , we derive with respect to  $c_A$ ,  $b$ , and  $p'$  as illustrated below.

$$\frac{\delta q^{**}}{\delta c_A} = \frac{b(\bar{x} - \underline{x})}{[b(1 - p' - \underline{x}) + c_A]^2} > 0$$

*Proposition 5: When the diplomatic, economic, and military costs of intervention increase, the possibility of the third party offering a low share to the rebels decreases. This reduces the chances of war breaking out.*

$$\frac{\delta q^{**}}{\delta b} = \frac{c_A(\underline{x} - \bar{x})}{[b(1 - p' - \underline{x}) + c_A]^2} < 0$$

*Proposition 6: In the case wherein a third party already prefers military intervention to civil war, the higher the party's associated ideological utility is, the lower the share it will offer to the rebels. This creates higher chances of war occurring between the third party and the rebels.*

$$\frac{\delta q^{**}}{\delta p'} = \frac{b^2(x - \bar{x})}{[b(1 - p' - \underline{x}) + c_A]^2} < 0$$

*Corollary 4: When the third-party is stronger, the chance that it will offer a small share increases, thus leading to a higher chance of war. This happens when the third party has high expectations from the rebels being of the high-cost type, but the rebels are a low-cost type in actuality.*

## 2.4 Aligning Results with Qualitative and Quantitative Evidence

The historical overview of most civil conflicts that took place after World War II exhibit alignment in terms of results. Most cases of civil conflicts, during and after the Cold War, indicate that when there is no ideological utility benefit, third parties are less tempted to intervene. The hypothesis of this study is supported by the surplus of cases in which the United States and the Soviet Union have both entered a number of conflicts, always from opposite sides; with the Russians being on the communist side, and the Americans being on the other side.

Third parties were also less present in conflicts with high-causality rates (Myanmar, Colombia, Burundi, Indonesia, and Turkey). They mostly intervened in wars where at least one of the fighting factions was in their political camp or belonged to the same ethnicity or religion. This was the case for all regions of the world. The post Cold War era also supports this hypothesis with numerous evidence. In many cases, economic gains were the main motive behind intervention (Indonesia, Iraq, and Libya). In other cases, the motive was security requirements due to terrorism or refugee costs for neighboring countries.

In addition, some countries that attracted foreign intervention when the battle was ideological, with at least one side sharing ideological preferences with a foreign player, did not attract attention from the rest of the world when the war was between parties of no shared ideology (Sudan, Libya, Iraq, Yugoslavia, etc.).

On the other hand, intervention was absent in countries where the opposition was extremely weak and the strong government shared common ideology with the foreign power. In such cases, the damage was greater for the opposition even when the majority of casualties were civilians.

Case studies from Syria and Yemen further support the hypothesis and propositions. Interviews with high-rank officials representing the Syrian regime and its main allies confirmed that the importance of geopolitical interests was a primary incentive for intervention. Representatives of the states involved in the wars neglected the humanitarian issues and rather stressed upon the geopolitical and economic interests. Other experts on the two cases also highlighted the "existential" interest of the allies as well as the importance of sharing the same enemy when ideologies differ.

Empirical results also support these conclusions. Statistical tests that were performed on all the civil wars that took place after World War II indicate that agreeing more with one of the great powers has significantly affected the intervention decisions of these powers. Military power was significantly and negatively correlated with intervention while humanitarian cost was not.

## 2.5 Policy Perspective

The main objective of international organizations in the context of conflicts and security is to end wars and limit the humanitarian and economic costs. Understanding the significance of ideological utility in driving foreign intervention during civil conflicts provides a coherent insight into the main incentives that might be overlooked by some. This recognition is essential due to the decisive implications that may result from a foreign intervention, especially if the third player is a superpower. Third players can lead one of the fighting factions to a decisive victory and not necessarily a more humanitarian or peaceful one. Interventions by countries (versus IOs) are also found to prolong wars and cause additional casualties and destruction (Regan, 2002).

As most interventions claim benevolent goals such as saving citizens, restoring democracy, maintaining international peace, and other such slogans, it is important for the international organizations to understand the selfish incentives behind undertaking the intervention before making recommendations or providing credibility and support to third players for intervening in the internal conflicts of other countries.

As third parties intervene to save weaker governments of the same "ideology" in an attempt to maintain self-interests and benefits, in contrast to humanitarian and peace-seeking interests, a direct implication of the above results is that unilateral interventions can be better associated with this type of biased intervention. Therefore, in order to avoid interventions that could lead to prolonged or expensive wars, the international community should push for multilateral interventions that primarily consist of superpowers or



states that are not of the same ideology. This can guarantee that the intervention is not to support a faction merely based on ideology regardless of the long-term benefits for the citizens and international security. Third parties, especially superpowers, tend to intervene in order to support weaker governments when they associate higher ideological utility and selfish gains to having such regimes in power. For this reason, governments that face great threat from the opposition can work on their foreign policy in a manner that increases the ideological utility of dominant superpowers.

The international community can also play a crucial role in preventing military conflicts through its various international organizations. Even in cases where military confrontation is inevitable, there are still ways to minimize their humanitarian and economic costs.

One main outcome of this research states that asymmetric information can lead to civil wars and, in some cases, military interventions due to the different players underestimating their rivals' power. In such cases, international watchdogs should coordinate to better generate public information regarding the real costs of the different factions in order to facilitate the negotiation and bargaining processes, therefore avoiding conflicts between third parties and rebels.

Moreover, as the costs and sanctions of military interventions has been shown to decrease the chances of such behavior, the international community, represented by the different political and economic organizations, as well as military coalitions can increase the pressures against a biased intervening party. Although some previous experience indicates that some players intervened in conflicts despite an objection by the United Nations agencies and the Security Council, it does not eliminate the effects of sanctions and costs that can result from the different international bodies.

When the government is facing unethical rebellious challenges, it is crucial for the international community to empower the legal authorities in order to avoid conflict. This international behavior should be undertaken, especially in cases where the government has weak alliances with superpowers.

Governments, especially the weak ones that feel the threat of possible rebellious acts, can secure their stances of keeping power by associating higher ideological utilities with strong allies. This can be done by cultivating economic agreements and political-economic orientations to align with such allies. Consequently, this will make third parties care more about maintaining the government in power. As stronger allies tend to intervene more based on ideological utility, governments under threat would benefit more by allying with

superpowers over weaker players, effectively guaranteeing sizable shares in power for themselves.

Governments can also enhance ideological utility for superpowers by reforming their internal institutions to be similar to those of a strong third party. This can also be done by having notable religious or ethnic preferences in the government's hierarchy that are the same as those of the superpower. The mode of the government and the electoral system can also be seen in the superpower's list of preferences to affect ideological utility. Moreover, signing treaties or committing to support the superpower in international assemblies can also secure the weak government's position when faced with a military rebellion by proving to the third party that this government will enhance its international bargaining power.

Since allies place high importance on the preparations and potential costs of rebellions in the case of confrontation, governments must implement policies in order to prevent any opposition group from becoming strong enough to threaten its security and authority. This includes making sure that no foreign support in weaponry and finance is being received by a domestic group that is not aligned with the government's preferences.

Opposition groups aiming at overthrowing governments can increase their chances of avoiding military intervention by raising their power and making it apparent to third parties. Therefore, even if third parties have good relations with the government in power, they may avoid saving it due to the high cost. Further, even if they do intervene, they will offer a high share of the pie to the opposition when acting as the mediator.

Rebels can also avoid severe third-party intervention in support of the government by making compromises for the third-party by becoming closer to it ideologically. Rebel groups can do this by making promises to maintain the foreign power's interests that existed before the conflict. In addition, the opposition can promise economic partnership in a case wherein they were in power. Such steps by the opposition will demonstrate to the foreign power that its ideological utility will not be negatively affected by a loss for the government. However, as the qualitative research study has shown, this might be in conflict with the credibility concerns that superpowers look to maintain.

## 2.6 Conclusion

Interventions by relatively stronger states in other states' civil wars has been increasing in the last decades. The main contribution of this research is illustrating the conditions

for peace and war when an ally of the government intervenes to stop the war or end it in her favor. This chapters aims to show that the main motives for such an intervention are the selfish incentives for the third party and not due to its benevolence. The study also aims to elucidate other conditions of intervention and how weaker governments receive more military support from their foreign allies.

The main hypotheses of this study is that foreign players are motivated to intervene in saving regimes facing civil appraisals when they associate high ideological utility with the government in power, and they do so when these governments are weak. In the context of democratic and semi-democratic countries, the term "weak" implies that they are not legitimate enough to have sufficient popular support to keep them in power.

Other propositions of this paper highlight the role of third parties in settling agreements and dividing power in the country by splitting the pie. The strength of each player matters significantly in the actions performed by this third-party.

To this end, this research addresses a legitimate question regarding the actual interests behind biased intervention and the aftermath of such an intervention. The policy implications of this understanding are spread in different directions. International Organizations should bear the responsibility of using tools to disincentivize superpowers from intervening unrighteously. The selfish-incentive factor (ideological utility) also suggests that governments are better off increasing the similarities and support for superpowers in order to protect themselves against rivals. In the same regard, the rivals should take ideological utility into consideration when deciding whether to fight or concede.

## Chapter 3

# Incentives for Third-party Interventions in Intrastate Conflicts using Case Studies of Yemen and Syria

### 3.1 Introduction

"Russians never tried to dictate anything on us, even if there are differences. At the end the only decision about what is going in Syria and what is going to happen in Syria, is the Syrian decision, made by the Syrian government." Syrian President Bashar Al Assad on June 10, 2018 (Syrian Arab News Agency, 2018).

States bear immense costs when intervening in other states' conflicts and therefore require valuable incentives to intervene. This chapter aims at understanding the real incentives of foreign interventions in civil wars by first taking a look at all the civil wars that have occurred since the end of World War II before conducting an in-depth case-studies investigation (Goldthorpe 2000) taking the criteria of relevance and triangulation into account (Creswell, 1994; Yin, 1994; Marshall and Rossman, 1995). For this purpose, the cases of Syria (2011–Present) and Yemen (2011–Present) were chosen. The main strategy used to analyze the cases was to follow the theoretical propositions from the previous chapter, which leads to the choice of the mentioned case studies (Yin, 1994) in order to exemplify and check the fit of the theory.

The previous chapter has generated a number of hypotheses and propositions regarding the main factors affecting intervention. The result obtained suggested that foreign allies are motivated by "ideological utility" correlated with the faction under threat. Ideological utility is defined by the similarity in political and economic orientations between two states and the privileges that a certain government regime offers to a foreign state.

Privileges can also be in terms of special economic and geo-strategic facilities offered by the domestic government regime. Allies of this government would want to retain these privileges and avoid losing any as well as to avoid any potential procedures that are against their interests if the regime was to be overthrown and replaced by a new one of a different "ideology."

In addition, the theoretical chapter has shown that the weaker a government is, the more likely it is to receive support due to the incentives available for its allies, which includes taking over its decision-making power. In practice, this means that a government requests foreign support when it is desperate enough and is therefore willing to share its decision-making power with the foreign power. The assumptions and propositions in the theory state that foreign allies of governments act as mediators at the beginning of their intervention. The share that is offered by the mediator is chosen dependent on the power of the rebels, as the stronger rebels are, the higher the share of the pie they will receive. In addition, economic and political costs are the main factors that hinder interventions by third parties. Last, unlike most claims regarding the intervention being humanitarian, the research at hand suggests that the humanitarian suffering of a country at war does not necessarily drive intervention.

This chapter attempts to explore and exemplify these results. Therefore, to understand the main motives, one must look at the mechanism in which the intervention occurred over the timeline of the conflict. To this end, all cases of civil conflicts after World War II, irrespective of whether they have witnessed intervention, have been considered in the historic narrative in order to grasp similar patterns over time and across regions. To better understand the background characteristics of the intervening entities as well as the relevant domestic conditions, cases were classified by groups of ideological type (related to the Cold War) and according to their geographical location.

The importance of this study lies in the qualitative approach it employs in the case studies by conducting semi-structured interviews with high-ranking decision makers from Syria and Yemen as well as experts from different fields. Having a qualitative approach is important owing to the behavioral nature of the topic and the nature of the research question (Agranoff and Radin, 1991; Marshall and Rossman, 1995). Both the Syrian and Yemeni cases are witnessing severe civil conflicts, resulting in millions of casualties, and both conflicts have seen a third party intervene to save the government. Interviews were conducted with government personals as well as high-ranking official representatives of the third parties involved. The qualitative approach also facilitates the understanding of the mechanism and triggers associated with military intervention.

In line with the derived propositions in chapter 1, the case studies will also explain how economic and diplomatic costs have the ability to hinder intervention. Economic costs as well as security costs justify, in some instances, military intervention that can indeed be for peacekeeping purposes, especially when refugees become a burden on neighbors and foreign players.

Interviewees from the different fields and having opposite political orientations were chosen to triangulate the theoretic results (Creswell, 1994; Yin, 1994; Marshall and Rossman, 1995) to obtain a more credible perception of the incentives for intervention. The interview protocol was structured in order to understand the background of the conflict and the benefit-cost equation that third parties considered when deciding whether to intervene. In addition, questions were asked to representatives of factions in the same alliance to understand the similarity between the allying fighting factions and the common interests that unites them on the same battle field.

Last, this study will use interviewees' responses to perform an in-depth analysis of the process of bargaining and making an offer to the rebels according to the strength levels of the fighting factions. The Syrian Civil War case study in particular demonstrates how the rebels' power defines the kind of foreign support received and defines the share offered to the rebels as well. The study shows, in line with the findings in the theoretical research, that the offered share does not lead to a cease-fire when the players who are making the offer are unaware of the real strength of the rebels and are therefore not able to appease them with the offered share. The qualitative approach to the case studies allows the ability to draw similarities and differences between the two cases, especially when it comes to the share offered to the rebels.

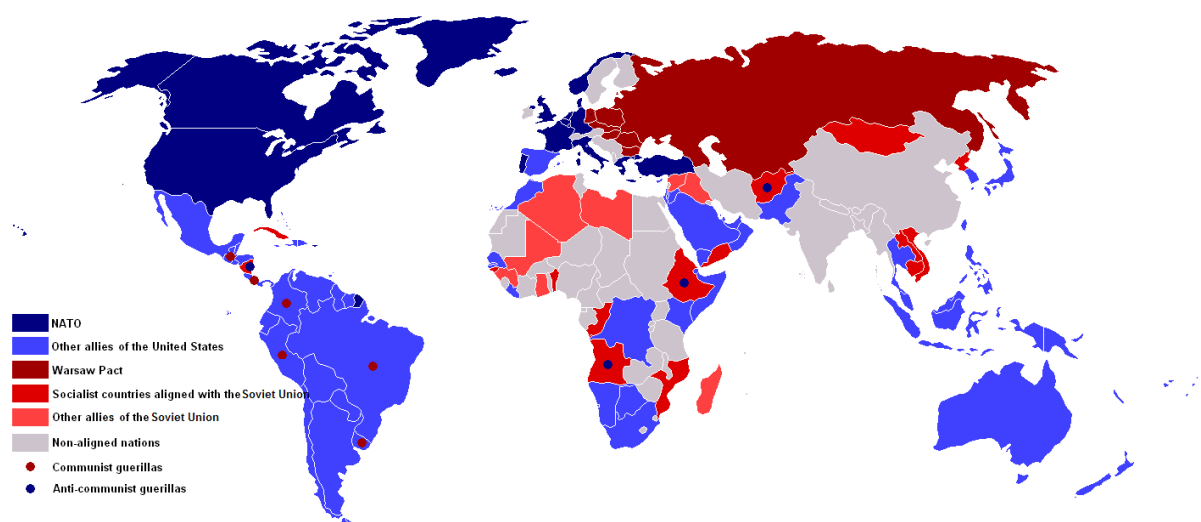
To this end, one can understand the real incentives and, therefore, the negative sides of intervention and derive ways to avoid this type of biased intervention. By avoiding unilateral intervention strategies and instead combining the efforts of different superpowers, more peacekeeping missions can be achieved. In cases of violations, raising the economic and diplomatic costs can be an obstacle for interventions, which prolong and intensify civil wars.

The next section consists of a descriptive overview of the civil conflicts that took place since 1944, which will provide an empirical grasp and set the scene for the case studies. The third section will describe the methodology used in the case studies. Sections four and five will be the case studies of Yemen and Syria respectively. The sixth section will discuss the findings and compare the two cases while relating them to the hypotheses. Section seven will present the derived conclusions.

## 3.2 Setting the Scene: Historic Overview of Civil Wars 1945–2018

Since the end of World War II, over a hundred civil wars have broken out, with over twenty wars still ongoing. Despite the emergence of free trade agreements, unification of Europe, end of the colonialism era, and the revolution in technology and globalization, over twenty civil wars have started in the 21st century. Among the civil wars that existed at the end of World War II in 1945, a majority of civil wars included at least one intervening foreign party, while fifty-five percent of intrastate conflicts have included a third party (Chapter 3). The interventions ranged from providing simple support by supplying weapons and intelligence information to military engagement from the side of one of the fighting factions. Seventy-three percent of the military interventions in civil conflicts were in support of the government only, fourteen percent were in support of the rebels only, and thirteen percent of these military interventions were cases wherein both internal factions received support (Chapter 3).

### 3.2.1 Cold War



Source: *Santa Fe Council on International Relations, 2008*

Figure 3.1: Cold War Map 1980

The Cold War divided numerous states between two camps, the United States led NATO and their allies on one side and the Soviet Union with its allies on the other side. In addition to governments, political and guerrilla groups aligned with either sides were scattered in all continents (Figure 1). Most of the intervention cases were due to one of the two leading poles supporting governments or armed groups who share similar ideologies. Al-

though the main declared purpose of intervention has been to stop genocides and support the oppressed for humanitarian purposes, cases of intervention indicate that regimes and armed groups have received military support in conflicts that resulted in a few thousand casualties. On the other hand, many conflicts that resulted in hundreds of thousands of casualties, some of which are still ongoing, did not originally require any kind of intervention from any foreign party.

The first civil war to begin after the end of World War II was the Iranian Crisis from 1945 to 1946. This war was directly related to the competition between the Soviet Union and the United States' led Allies, in which both camps intervened to support their preferred groups. During the World War, Iran was jointly occupied by the United States and the Soviet Union; upon their withdrawal, Azerbaijan and the Kurds were supported by the Soviets against imperial Iran, which was supported by the Americans and the British (Abrahamian, 1970). Americans did not want the Soviets to expand their influence in the region and therefore supported the Shah of Iran against the secessionists until Iran was unified under the Shah authority.

In the subsequent years and decades, a number of similar Cold War-related civil wars erupted. The Greek civil war of 1946 between the USA-UK-backed government and the Yugoslavia-Bulgaria-backed communist opposition resulted in tens of thousands of deaths on both sides, including over two hundred British soldiers (Koliopoulos and Veremis, 2009). Two years later, the Jeju Uprising in South Korea required American intervention against the communist rebels in a conflict that resulted in over 15,000 deaths (Deane, 1999). Also in the same year in Asia, in a conflict that lasted for two years in Malaysia, the Malayan Communist Party attempted to capture power against the government while it received support from the People's Republic of China, North Vietnam, the Soviet Union, and Indonesia (Garver, 2015). The government, which had its economy controlled by the British, received enough military combat support from the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, with additional non-combat support from the United States. The Malayan Conflict resulted in the death of 2,400 civilians, 8,000 soldiers from both sides, and over 500 British Military personnel.

In the following decades, similar proxy wars that witnessed intervention include the Korean War (1948–1960), Laotian Civil War (1953–1975), Vietnam War (1955–1975), Congo Crisis (1960–1966), Guatemalan Civil War (1960–1996), Malayan Insurgency (1962–1990), North Yemen Civil War (1962–1970), Nicaragua Civil War (1962–1990), Rhodesian Bush War (1965–1980), Thai Communist Insurgency (1965–1983), Ethiopia Civil War (1974–1991), Mozambique Civil War (1975–1992), Angola Civil War (1975–1992), Soviet War in Afghanistan (1978), Second Sudan Civil War (1983), and others (COW,2018). The



common factor in all of these wars is that they all included a communist fighting faction, while at least one of the fighting groups received some form of military support (Westad, 2005). The intervention was either undertaken by the pro-communism-led governments or by the governments raising anti-communism flags.

The Cold War wars that can be considered proxy wars clearly demonstrate the importance of ideological similarity in receiving foreign support for internal factions. In fact, these cases have witnessed civil conflicts in the first place due to the manipulation of the two superpowers in their ideological worldwide battles. Cold War civil conflicts did not prompt intervention due to the humanitarian costs.

### 3.2.2 Interventions in Africa

Other civil wars that were not Cold War-related also attracted foreign intervention. Both USA and USSR supported the Nigerian government during its 1967 civil war against minorities, in which the government itself had allegedly committed genocides (Agbi and Otubanjo, 1992). The minorities accused the foreign powers of enjoying economic benefits with the government that was in power. Several cases in Africa indicate that previous colonizers intervened and supported the governments they left in power right after dissolving the colonies; France militarily intervened in support of the Rwandan government in the early 1990s civil war. The UK supported the weak government of a diamond-rich Sierra Leone, which was a former British colony (Kiwuwa, 2012).

Additionally, in Africa, interventions have occurred due to ethnic similarities. Morocco intervened in the sixteen-year 1990 conflict in Senegal from the Muslims' side, while Gambia supported the other side (Wikileaks, 2006). During the first Congo civil war, a number of African countries intervened to protect themselves and support parties that share the same ideology (Duke, 1997). Rwanda is thought to have intervened to maintain a neighboring puppet state and launched an invasion to appoint the president of the then-called Zaire. Subsequent wars in the Republic of Congo (1997–1999) and Guinea-Bissau (1998–1999) illustrate that the intervention by Angola and Senegal respectively were due to their fear of the conflict spreading to their territories and strengthening their local opposition. In Chad's Fourth Civil War (2005–2010), France intervened to support the Christian-affiliated government in its former colony against the Muslim rebels that were being backed by Sudanese Muslim militias. Mali's Northern Conflict (2012–2015) saw a similar intervention, but it fell under the United Nations umbrella and was only undertaken after a French request (Waal, 2011).

The African cases demonstrate that the humanitarian cause was minor as compared

to the ethnic motives as well as the economic motives.

### 3.2.3 Civil Conflicts in Europe

In Europe, the number of civil wars that have broken out after World War II is less than each of Asia, Africa, and South America in total. However, all the cases of civil wars had some kind of support or military intervention. The Greek case mentioned earlier was due to the division of power in Greece between the ruling government and the rising communist party, which resulted in the allies supporting the government (Koliopoulos and Veremis, 2009). The next conflict in continental Europe was in Cyprus from 1963 to 1967, where both Turkey and Greece intervened with an invasion and indirect support respectively. In this conflict, each foreign country supported groups that belonged to their own ethnic background (Landis and Albert, 2012).

Another fierce conflict that lasted for almost three decades was one that occurred in Northern Ireland from 1969 to 1998. The British intervened in this conflict from the side of the Loyalists/Unionists (loyalists to Britain and seeking union with United Kingdom) against the Nationalists/Republicans (Donohue, 1998). A Euro-Asia conflict case was the Soviet War in Afghanistan, in which the Russians supported their loyalist government against US-Iran-Pakistan backed Islamist opposition. Russia also intervened in the Georgian civil war between 1991 and 1993 and has been accused of trying to maintain its influence on its smaller neighbor after the fall of the USSR. The Russian intervention that took place in 2014 in Ukraine after the overthrowing of the Russian-backed president was undertaken for the same purpose. Moreover, Russia invaded Chechen when the Islamic International Brigade invaded the Russian Republic of Dagestan (Saradzhyan, 2005).

The Yugoslav Wars in Europe are a series of seven ethnically based wars and insurgencies from 1991 to 2001 in the territory of former Yugoslavia. What is interesting about this case is that, although over one-hundred thousand lives were lost, there was no major intervention until NATO intervened after several massacres took place and was able to end the war shortly after. The intervention was also executed due to the heavy burden of refugees felt by the neighboring countries, similar to the Albanian rebellion in 2007 (Tim, 2011). In the Albanian conflict, gangs were amassing power in the country and, due to the refugees and economics cost of their burden and in addition to the fear of conflict spreading over the borders, over 7,000 Italian-led UN troops intervened and put an end to the rebellion (Abrahams, 2015). This indicates that, when the intervention is undertaken for humanitarian goals, the conflict is resolved quicker and in shorter periods. Unfortunately, the cases here demonstrate that the number of casualties, and thus the humanitarian requirement for intervention, has not be a crucial factor in attracting mili-

tary support for peace-keeping purposes.

Also in the Yugoslav wars, military intervention led by the United States and NATO took place against former president Milosovic. Russia and China were against the idea of military bombing against the former Communist president, while the Americans and their allies rushed for the attack (Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996). The first rebellion in Europe in the twenty-first century was the Macedonian Rebellion, in which no combat-intervention occurred but the Macedonia government did receive support from Ukraine, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria against the Muslim Albanians who wanted secession. The conflict ended with an agreement that granted more rights to the Albanians, the largest minority group in Macedonia (Petroska-Beska and Najcevska, 2004).

Interventions in the European civil conflicts after World War II were again undertaken when the third-party shared similar political views and ambitions with one of the internal fighting factions. Interventions occurred when the group that was receiving support was in such a weak position that it was desperate enough to surrender its decision-making power to the ally. The ally in return acted as the deal-maker after the conflicts ended. Therefore, it had the upper hand over its internal allies even after they emerged victorious.

Therefore, European intrastate conflicts demonstrate how the government's strength affects the possibility of military intervention in support of the regime. The European cases also demonstrate how the ally of the fighting factions can be a mediator negotiating in the name of its allied faction and controlling its decision-making power.

### 3.2.4 Civil Conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa

The first civil conflict in the Middle East after World War II ended was in Palestine (1947) between the Jews and Arabs. The conflict took place in the former British colony that did not share a similar ideology with any of the fighting factions (Morris, 2008). Britain then left behind a vacuum of power that led to chaos. The imbalance in power caused major changes in demography, and a large number of casualties occurred without requiring any military intervention by major powers to stop the fights (except for minor British attempts leading to hostility towards the British and therefore their total withdrawal).

In 1955 Sudan, the North and South entered into a cruel conflict that lasted 17 years after the British and Egyptians had separated them. The North communist-oriented government was supported by the Soviet Union and Egypt against the South that was aided by Ethiopia, Uganda, and Israel with arms (Eprile, 1974). The mostly Christian non-Arab South later surrendered to the majorly Muslim North. Less than a decade later,

the Royalist Government in Yemen entered into a civil war with the Republican Opposition. The Royalists were supported by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, and the Kingdom of Jordan, where it is argued that the Arab monarchies supported the Royalist Government in order to maintain a strong image of its regime type against Republicans' attempts in their homeland (Aboul-Enein, 2004). The British however have supported the government against the opposition due to the affiliations of the opposition being backed by the Soviet Union and Egypt. In this war, Nasser intervened by exploiting the Egyptian army in order to maintain a strong image of his ideological preferences due to the strategic location of Yemen and the "Unity of Arabs" that had started with the unification of Egypt and Syria in 1958.

In 1975, a seventeen-year civil war began in Lebanon, in which the Israeli army entered the war supporting the Christian armed groups against the Palestinian militias in Lebanon (Harris, 1996). Later, the Syrian army also intervened after requests from Lebanese political leaders, with an international guarantee umbrella to stand with a group against the other and claim security. Shortly after, Syria seized full control of Lebanese politics until 2005. During these years, the Syrian regime could negotiate with regional and international powers by using the "Lebanese card" as a tool for making compromises.

In Algeria's one-decade war, no armies intervened, but secular countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, and France supported the nationalists against the Islamist opposition, which was supported by sectarian governments such as Saudi Arabia and Iran (Martinez, 2000). These cases illustrate how important it is for foreign powers to have groups in power that have the same ideology, as they also see it as a safety measure for their regimes.

In 1994, a civil conflict emerged in North Iraq between two Kurdish groups. The group in power requested foreign support (mainly American, Turkish, and Iranian) (Leezenberg, 2005). All these powers, in addition to the Iraqi central government, intervened. The Turkish intervened because the opposition is related to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) that represents a national threat to Turkey. Iran first supported the opposition but soon shifted support due to the alliance of the opposition with the Kurdish Iranian party, who represent a similar threat to the Iranian sovereignty. When Saddam Hussein, the then president of Iraq, attacked the opposition, the US government imposed foreign hostility towards Iraq.

Although Afghanistan is not Arab and technically may not be in the Middle East region, it could be examined in this section due to its influence on the region. Prior to the American invasion of Afghanistan, all major powers including Iran, USA, and Russia (and except Saudi Arabia) supported the government against the "Islamic Emirate"

(Rashid, 2001). They all considered the "Emirate" to be a threat to their domestic security and none of them shared a similar religious ideology with it. On the contrary, except for Saudi Arabia, all these major players had an opposing ideology. The US government claims that it intervened only when the threat became real, with thousands of casualties after the September 11 attacks.

Another interesting case of civil conflicts is the Iraqi Uprising in 1999. The attacks on unarmed citizens by the government forces did not lead to any foreign intervention although the government had a different political ideology than both the universal superpower US and the regional power Iran. One of the reasons for not intervening at the time was due to the relatively short period that the government was able to suppress the uprising, which was less than one month. Another case of no-intervention in the Middle East was also in a short coup by Hamas against the Fatah movement in Palestinian Gaza in 2007 (Black and Tran, 2007).

During the same decade, two civil conflicts took place in Yemen. One was the Houthi insurgency in 2004, and the other was the South insurgency attempt in 2009. However, only the first had attracted foreign intervention. Saudi Arabia and other countries fought alongside the government against the Shi'ia Houthi groups, whereas they did not intervene against the Sunni opposition in the South. Only the United States attacked the Al-Qaeda fighters in the south of Yemen (Stewart and Mukhashaf, 2017). The former Yemeni case here will be extended in a subsequent section, as it is a part of a currently ongoing war.

In recent years, the so-called Arab Spring started in Tunisia in 2011 and extended to Libya, which witnessed a four-year civil war and an ongoing turbulence. At the beginning of the rebellion, a number of countries intervened in the combat by supplying weapons to the rebels and launching air strikes against the Qaddafi government forces (Little, 2011). The countries were mainly USA, UK, Canada, and Qatar. They intervened under UN resolution, which played a major role in the success of Qaddafi's overthrowing. However, as the conflict persisted and the "Islamic State" (ISIS) built its foundation in the country, no major intervention took place. This indicates that as Qaddafi's power and ideology, which is opposite to the those of the intervening parties, in an oil-rich country were diminished, the same foreign actors siezed their intervention efforts, even though the same human rights risks were still prevalent in the country. It is worth mentioning that the civil conflict in Libya is between groups that have the same ethnic and religious background.

The last intervention in the Middle East was undertaken in Iraq by many players against ISIS. Countries have either intervened directly (USA) or indirectly (Iran) against a threat for both opposing factions. Last, a more complicated war is still taking place in

Syria since 2011, where USA, Russia, Turkey, Israel, Iran, and other armed foreign groups have intervened in combats to secure their interests. This case will be studied extensively in the following sections.

Although the Middle East might appear attractive for economic interests to foreign players, most cases of intervention were either due to ethnic similarities or due to regional dominance by the greater powers of the region. Interventions in support of the governments were absent when the governments were strong. Therefore, the intrastate conflicts in the Middle East region demonstrate the importance of ideological utility, which is inseparable from the economic privileges provided to foreign allies.

### 3.2.5 Cases of No-Intervention/Support

Although most civil conflicts had a foreign party on either sides, there still exist civil wars that are fought only by local groups. This subsection studies these cases of intervention to draw on the differences between them and the previous cases of intervention to therefore realize certain determinant reasons for intervention.

The first civil war after World War II that did not have a foreign party supporting the fighting faction was the Paraguayan Civil War in 1947. The war began after the president suspended all political parties and one party remained to ally with the liberals and communist. The alliance was a combination of groups from different ideological backgrounds. An intervention at that time, from either sides, would have benefited or hurt the liberals and communists simultaneously. Another South American conflict that did not attract foreign intervention was the Costa Rican Civil War in 1948. Costa Rican politics have been traditionally guided by personal allegiances much more than ideological consistency (Bell, 2014). In the same year, Colombia witnessed the La Violencia conflict between the conservatives and the liberals, in which no intervention occurred despite the 10-year duration of the incidents. These three South American cases in the same period indicate that when no ideological background caused the conflict and there was no foreign intervention, unlike other civil wars during the same period that were driven by ideological preferences.

Similar to the above cases, Myanmar in Asia is witness to the longest civil war, which is still ongoing since 1948. Despite killing between 130,000 and 250,000, the country has not attracted any serious foreign intervention to end the war (BBC, 2018). Along the lines of the theoretical chapter, it appears that one reason for not intervening is that the government is relatively strong, while the rebels' ideological utility is not close to either of the superpowers. Another civil conflict in Asia that did not attract foreign intervention was the Free Aceh Movement in Indonesia that lasted three decades from 1976. The

movement that lasted till 2005 was driven by an ethnic group that was against the government and as soon as it started targeting American oil companies, it was crushed by the government forces.

The two Yemeni civil wars of 1986 and 1994 also did not require intervention because both of them, similar to the Iraqi 1999 uprising, ended shortly after their outbreak. On the other hand, the Burundi civil war lasted over a decade and killed more than 300,000 people until UN and African troops arrived in 2004 (Global Security, 2018). Unlike the previous cases of intervention, this one was between two ethnic groups (Hutu and Tutsi) with no political ideological orientation. Intervention occurred, similar to the Yugoslav wars, only when the refugees from the conflict became a huge economic and security burden on neighboring countries. Similarly, the Sudan and South Sudan Nomadic wars that began in 2009 required minimal military intervention despite the huge humanitarian cost.

Another conflict that killed hundreds of thousands was the Papua Conflict in Indonesia, which broke in 1964 and is still ongoing. Out of the hundreds of thousands killed, only around four thousand were Indonesian soldiers. The rest were ethnically Papuaian civilians (HeidbÄ¼chel, 2007). In a conflict with a huge imbalance of power and obvious requirement for humanitarian aid, no superpower intervened to save the Papuanian people on the island. It comes as no surprise that this group is not historically associated with any of the great powers and would bring no significant economic benefit to them if they were to acquire their own territories.

On the other hand, cases such as that of Libya received different intensities of intervention at different times. During the rebellion against Qaddafi in 2011, the US-led NATO and other countries attacked the governmental forces with full effectiveness to overthrow Qaddafi. However, as the clashes remained between the successors of Qaddafi, with none having absolute effects in the international arena and in oil prices anymore, the military intervention declined significantly.

Although, for some of the cases above, it can be argued that they did not receive intervention due to their short duration, other cases that witnessed hundreds of thousands of deaths and decades of attrition also did not receive foreign intervention. These cases were ones that were neither relevant to the international ideological division nor did they involve resource-rich land. Moreover, some of the cases that did receive international intervention were ones that suffered a conflict based on personal alliances and internal parties constituted of different ideological groups. Therefore, again, the role of ideological utility appears to be clear since its absence was correlated with their absence from the war scene and from intervening.

### 3.2.6 Setting the Scene: Conclusion

To analyze political relations, actions, and behavior, one must look at the historical background (Roberts, 2006). It is therefore essential in the study of military interventions to examine the historical background of foreign intervention and note the common features of cases of foreign military support for some cases and its absence for others.

The civil conflicts that broke out after 1944 exhibit the common factors that led international players to take risks while paying economic and diplomatic costs in order to favor the chances of victory of an external player. The claim for military intervention has mostly been to serve humanitarian purposes and save the righteous factions; however, the cases above demonstrate that all cases of intervention and support for either sides of the conflicts had a self-interest behind it.

The hypothesis introduced in chapter 1 is supported by cases in which the United States and the Soviet Union have both entered a number of conflicts from opposite ideological sides. Moreover, even after the end of the Cold War, many civil wars broke out, and the different international players entered only when the group of similar ideology was at a high risk of losing the war. Interventions occurred regardless of the real humanitarian costs calculated by the number of deaths and refugees. The same countries attracted foreign intervention when the battle was ideological, with at least one side sharing ideological preferences with a foreign player. However, these same countries were not significant enough for the same foreign players to intervene when the war was between parties of no shared ideology (Sudan, Libya, Iraq, Yugoslavia, and others).

On the other hand, intervention was absent in countries where the opposition was too weak and the strong government shared a common ideology with the foreign power. In such cases, the damage was greater for the opposition even when the majority of casualties were civilians.

The decision of whether to intervene has been made regardless of the region. The examples provided above suggest that every geographic region has witnessed civil wars that included a third-party and other civil wars that did not attract foreign players. Hence, implying that ideological utility plays a crucial role for foreign powers to step into conflicts and save the factions that they associate this type of utility with. In addition, the strength of the fighting factions has also been shown to be important for foreign powers when deciding whether to intervene. Weaker allies required more boots on the ground.

In the following sections, I will first take an in-depth look at the Yemeni civil war and



the reasons behind the Saudi intervention from the side of the Yemeni government. Thereafter, I will investigate the Syrian Civil War using the elite interviews representing the fighting factions on the government's side and further study the real motives and mechanisms due to which Russia and other allies became deeply involved in the battleground alongside the government.

### 3.3 Research Strategy

#### Case Study

A case study contributes uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena. Not surprisingly, the case study has been a common research strategy in psychology, sociology, political science, business, social work, and planning (Yin, 1983). A case study can be exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory (Yin, 1981). The cases of Yemen and Syria in this study answer the questions regarding "How" and "Why" in terms of the actions of the intervening party's actions in intrastate conflicts, wherein they focus on contemporary events (Yin, 1990). In addition to *explaining* the theoretical background of the study, this research chooses more than a singular case in order to *explore* and obtain patterns and comparisons between the multiple cases (Eisenhardt, 1991).

#### 3.3.1 Case Study: Data Collection

This study uses a qualitative approach by using archival data to conduct a narrative analysis and then conducts semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth case studies. Table 1 shows the data sources and their use in the analysis. Archival data was mainly taken from media outlets, newspapers, organizations' reports, and speeches on government and faction websites. Interviews were conducted with elite personnel who represent the fighting factions in the Syrian Civil War as well as academics, humanitarian organizations' representatives, field news reporters, and experts on the Syrian and Yemeni cases. The analysis was guided by Eisenhardt's notion, which states, "It is the connection with empirical reality that permits the development of a testable, relevant, and valid theory" (1989), and by Van Maanen's content, which states that this research "should be empirical enough to be credible and analytical enough to be interesting" (1988).

The inquiry consisted of two interpretive comparative interview studies (Rubin and Rubin, 2005)—one on the Syrian case and one on the Yemeni. Each of the two sets of interviews consisted of two phases. In the first phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with elites representing the fighting factions and politicians directly involved

Data Sources and Use		
Data Source	Type of Data	Use in Analysis
Semi-Structured Interviews (200 pages)	<p>Semi-structured interviews with 20 personnel. 10 on Syria and 10 on Yemen: 12 elite interviews (including governmental officials, politicians and representatives of fighting groups).</p> <p>8 expert interviews with professionals involved in what is going on in Syria and Yemen, these included individuals from the following fields: academia, Humanitarian NGOs, IOs, Field Reporters</p>	<p>Constructing time line of events.</p> <p>Investigate the motives for each faction's actions.</p> <p>Understanding the common incentives between groups.</p> <p>Understanding the balance of power and its effects.</p> <p>Validate previous answers by elites and getting different perceptions.</p> <p>Get a more objective view on the events and stances of the different factions.</p>
Archival Data	<p>Historical and Academic Books</p> <p>National News Agency</p> <p>Opposition Reports</p> <p>Foreign Player's news outlets</p> <p>International Media News (including newspapers and video interviews with official representatives and speeches)</p>	<p>Grasp a general view of the situation in the country and background of the fighting factions and alliances.</p> <p>Investigate the government's view and time line of events</p> <p>Investigate the rebels' view and time line of events</p> <p>Investigate the allies' stance along the time line of events.</p> <p>Validate the time line of events and semi-structured interviews.</p> <p>Better understanding of the perspectives by the different actors.</p>

in the crisis. The questions were modified in some cases depending on the interviewees' answers and reactions. Elites and high-ranking politicians were chosen from opposite political fronts to maintain triangulation (Creswell, 1994; Yin, 1994; Marshall and Rossman, 1995), where certain questions were asked to understand the general stance of the interviewee and determine on which camp they put themselves. The second phase of the interviews was with experts on the Syrian and Yemeni cases who can provide a more objective and theoretical perspective on the practices of the fighting factions. These experts included academics and researchers. Further, the second phase included news field reporters and INGO delegates from the region who were following up step by step with the timeline of events and witnessing the changes in the events and factions' actions. Similar to elites' questions, experts were asked questions to identify whether they have political stances in support of any of the factions, which was done to maintain objectivity.

The first step of the study was to choose interviewees who can represent and reflect the positions of the fighting factions (the list of interviewees is given in Table 3, Annex). These elites were then introduced through personal connections, where I was informed of the interview allocation only one to three days before the meeting. All elite interviews required my presence in Lebanon or Syria and therefore required quick traveling owing to the short notice period. In most elite interviews, it was not possible to provide a precise explanation of the interview and the questions before the meeting; therefore, only personal acquaintances have mentioned to them that the interview will be for a PhD thesis regarding the conflict at hand. Elite interviewees did not have any further information regarding the questions from my side. The purpose of interviewing elites was to acquire their insight and opinion regarding the timeline of the conflict and obtain information about what was happening behind the scenes on the battle field, the motivation behind their actions as well as considering their perspective without judging them based on secondary sources.

The second step was setting up a protocol for the semi-structured interviews. The questions differed for every interviewee depending on the role of the factions represented. However, a number of similar questions were asked to the different elites in order to understand their general stance regarding the conflict and the similarity between their visions and aspirations in the conflict. This technique was used to compare and contrast the interests; therefore, the "ideological utility" correlated between the allies. In general, questions about the interests and shared ideologies were indirect as to compare the answers of the interviewees.

The questions, for instance, regarding how different factions perceive terrorist groups were asked, and the answers of the elites were compared to note any similarity. Further,

questions regarding the perception of American role in the Syrian case and Iran's role in the Yemeni case were presented in order to understand the alignment of ideological visions. Additional questions were asked regarding the triggering point for intervention to understand the mechanism of intervention and the direct motive for third parties. This would help in understanding the effect of the government's strength on the chances of intervention and allow the exploration of the hypothesis that weaker governments grant great decision-making power to the third players. In this regard, questions regarding the negotiations that took place between the third players and the rebels were also asked.

The interview protocol for experts was different than that for elites. The questions regarding the incentives, interests, and relations were more direct, aiming to validate the answers of the elites and obtain the correct timeline of the conflict with objectivity. The questions to the experts were also more regarding the background of the relations shared between the different stakeholders in the two conflicts. As some interviewees working with NGOs and IOs did not want their opinions to be involved in politics, they preferred to remain anonymous. In contrast to the elite interviews, experts were contacted directly by email to take appointments and were given a detailed explanation of the purpose of the interview and the field of study. Most expert interviews were conducted on the phone.

The study used interview protocols for theory elaboration from the theoretical results presented above. The questions used an *abductive* strategy (Ospina and Saz-Carranza 2010) to map emergent codes onto existing hypotheses and propositions.

Most interviews lasted between twenty minutes to two hours and were first recorded before being transcribed into a total of around 200 pages. All elite interviews, except the one with the Lebanese PM Foud Siniora were conducted in Arabic and then translated upon transcription. Two tables consisting of the list of interviewees, their positions, and the date of the interview can be found in the Annex, with one on Syria and one on Yemen.

The main data sources in addition to the interviews incorporate scholarly work on the civil wars that has been included in historic narratives. Official speeches by representatives of the fighting factions were also analyzed. Credible news agencies and newspapers were also used to extract information regarding civil wars after the end of World War II. Videos from the internet were also used to revise the speeches and interviews of the involved politicians.

### 3.3.2 Case Study: Data Analysis

Coding was the key interpretive tool for the data analysis. The Atlas.ti software was used for coding, first by presetting a number of codes representing the main themes in an inductive strategy in order to highlight the inputs on the hypotheses and propositions of interest. The second step was to create open codes for a more deductive strategy based on the responses of the interviewees. These codes reflected the interplay between the theory discussed earlier and the contents of the interviews. The descriptive codes were used to obtain patterns and comparisons between the interviewees as well as between the two cases. The next step was in vivo coding to capture the most interesting and vivid quotes by the interviewees that could be used in the analysis and that are rare to acquire from public officials. The final step was to edit, categorize, and/or remove descriptive codes that were irrelevant on their own.

The cases were first analyzed independent of each other to draft narratives and understand the mechanism and the main factors for each of them. As the analysis progressed, the descriptive codes were edited, grouped, and/or removed as per their relevance to the study. Table 2 illustrates the interplay between the initial preset thematic codes, grounded open codes, and examples of quotes from the interviews.

Interplay of Codes		
Initial Codes	Grounded Codes	Example Quote
Causes of Conflict	Role of Israel	"Israel is standing behind everything, everything that has been done against Syria from the very beginning until this moment" Syrian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Faysal Al-Mokdad
Incentives for Intervention	Gas and Oil	"the other reasons that have to do with (Russians') interest in maintaining their monopolistic position in the field of gas as the sole important provider of gas to Western Europe" Lebanese PM Fouad Siniora
Ideological Utility	Resistance Axis	"When Syria supported the Resistance in Lebanon (Hezbollah), Syria paid high costs for this support.. which made Hezbollah an effective partner to keeps its existence" Lebanese MP Nazih Mansour
Government Strength	Trigger for Intervention	" Hezbollah did not have a pre-taken decision to enter the conflict, but when the situation reached a dangerous phase and we felt that the head of the regime is seeked..we were to enter Syria" Deputy SG of Hezbollah, Naim Kassem
Proxy War	Regional Competition	"The recent conflict is the result of the proxy war going on in the middle east, and it is the result of the Shiia-Sunni confrontation " Chairperson of Political Science Department at AUB, Ohannes Geukjian

Third, media sources, archival videos, and news reports were used to validate the elites' responses and fill in the gaps related to the time line of events and stances of the internal

and international actors. Based on the interviewees answers, credible news agencies and domestic news outlets were visited to verify the specific events that occurred during particular periods of time and particular events in the conflict timeline. International and humanitarian organizations' reports were also examined to extract information regarding the attacks that took place and their humanitarian results.

### 3.4 Yemeni Civil War (2015–)

The above historic narrative of the civil conflicts that have occurred since the end of World War II was aimed at setting the scene for the in-depth case studies. The narratives demonstrated how third-party interventions were mostly driven by ideological utility, strength of the government, and security concerns. Cases from different geographic regions demonstrate that humanitarian causes were not a priority for foreign players and great powers, as whenever there was no self-interest, intervention was absent. The Yemeni case here, and the following Syrian case, will attempt to answer the *How* and *Why* questions to explore and exemplify how interventions happen and therefore study the real incentives for intervention driven from the theoretical part.

This case study will first provide the reader with a background of the country being studied through a brief historic overview and a description of the socioeconomic and humanitarian situations prior to the conflict. The background section will enable the reader to build an image of the internal conditions and internal causes for the outbreak of the conflict. The second section of the case study presents the timeline of the events from the beginning of popular protests till the major foreign intervention in the conflict. Section three will critically describe the role of the foreign stakeholders involved in the Yemeni conflict as perceived by themselves and by other actors. This section will conclude with the main third player in the conflict who was the most effective in altering the balance of power—Saudi Arabia. The last section will then analyze the case at hand, conclude the factors that affect the decision for foreign military intervention, and thus relate the results to the theoretical approach employed in chapter 1.

#### 3.4.1 Background

##### History of the Country

Yemen, a country with a population of around 24 million people, is composed of two main religious groups—around sixty-five percent Sunni Muslims and thirty-five percent Zaidi Shia Muslims. The 1000-year reign of Zaidi Imams in North Yemen ended in 1964, and the Yemen Arab Republic was formed in the North (Stookey, 1991). During Yemen's

1964 civil war, the Wahhabis, an Islamic group adhering to a strict version of Sunni Islam found in neighboring Saudi Arabia, aided the government in its fight against the secessionist South that was previously ruled by the British. Figure 2 and Figure 3 illustrate how Yemen was split between North (Yemen Arab Republic) and South (Democratic Republic of Yemen) and includes the ethnic distribution over the two regions.

*Source: European Council of Foreign Relations, 2018*

Figure 3.2: Historic Division of Yemen before unity, between North (YAR) and South (PDRY), 1967-1990

*Source: European Council of Foreign Relations, 2018*

Figure 3.3: Religious Division of Yemen

The Zaidis complain that the government has subsequently allowed the Wahhabis to acquire an extremely strong voice in Yemen. Saudi Arabia, for its part, worries that any strife instigated by the Zaidi sect so close to Yemen's border with Saudi Arabia could agitate groups in Saudi Arabia itself (Al-Jazeera, 2009). The first armed conflict was sparked in 2004 by the government's attempt to arrest Hussein Badreddine Al-Houthi, a Zaidi religious and political leader of the Ansar Allah party (Houthis) and a former parliamentarian on whose head the government had placed a \$ 55,000 bounty (Reuters, 2013).

From 2004 to 2011, the clashes remained between the followers of Houthi and the Saleh governmental forces, killing thousands and causing tens of millions of dollars in economic loss (BBC, 2018). In 2011, a Yemeni revolution, triggered by the "Arab Spring," began in the Yemeni capital Sana'a, leading to the eventual overthrowing of President Ali Abdullah Saleh who was Houthis' rival and responsible for the killing of the former Houthi leader. The then deputy of Saleh, Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, became president by elections; however, he was the only candidate in the National Agreement who was proposed by the UN and supported by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and pushed for power sharing two years after being elected. However, "the new government did not include not even one member from Ansar Allah" (interview with Ibrahim Al Dulaimy).

After Hadi's two-year term was over, he extended his presidency for one more year, which the Houthis and Saleh were not happy with. The Houthis then restarted clashes with the Yemeni army and were able to seize power and coerce Hadi to step down before he fled to Saudi Arabia. They then declared that the Houthi authority is illegitimate and that he is the righteous president (BBC, 2015). Former president Saleh allied his forces



with Houthis and the clashes continued in different Yemeni regions until the Houthis assassinated Saleh in 2017 after accusing him of betrayal (Wintour, 2017).

During the intense conflict in 2009 between the Yemeni government and the Houthis (who were demanding autonomy), Saudi Arabia, allied with the government, launched air attacks against Houthi bases in their Sa'adah stronghold North of Yemen (Aljazeera, 2009). The Houthis retaliated inside the Saudi territories and were able to kill and capture Saudi soldiers. Through the conflict, the government accused the Houthis of receiving aid and support from Iran (who share the same Shi'a religious ideology with Houthis), while the Houthis criticized the government for being too close to the Sunni Saudi Arabia. Although the Houthis denied receiving support from Iran, Saudi Arabia intervened, reporting that it was fighting the Iranian influence in the region, in a long-running proxy conflict in the region between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

### **Economic Situation**

Understanding the country's economy allows for a better understanding of the political situation and possible triggers for civil protest. In a country that depends on petroleum (constituting of twenty-five percent of the GDP and sixty-three percent of government revenues) and where ninety percent of exports are from oil and natural gas, most Yemenis are employed in the agricultural sector that constitutes only 7.7 percent of the GDP. This percentage has been falling due to the immigration of rural labor (CIA, 2013).

The disruptions of wars and the frequent droughts that hit Yemen have adversely affected its agricultural sector and thereby most of the population suffers from poverty. According to the New York Times (2016), this situation has only been severely worsened by the outbreak of war in Yemen and the Saudi intervention, as "it has hit hospitals and schools. It has destroyed bridges, power stations, poultry farms, a key seaport and factories that produce yogurt, tea, tissues, ceramics, Coca-Cola and potato chips. It has bombed weddings and a funeral."

The siege and air force strike on Yemen have exacerbated a humanitarian crisis where cholera is spreading, millions of people are struggling to get enough food, and malnourished babies are overwhelming hospitals (New York Times, 2016). According to the United Nations, millions have been forced out of their homes and, since August, the government has been unable to pay the salaries of most of the 1.2 million civil servants." (UNHCR, 2017)

### Humanitarian Situation prior to 2015

Similar to understanding the economic situation of the country prior to the conflict, understanding the humanitarian situation serves in understand the motives of the rebels. Before the start of the 2015 conflict, more than 40,000 people were killed due to disputes over land and water (Foreign Affairs, 2015). The humanitarian suffering was complemented by the water ecological crisis that began in 2013 and increased the tension in the country due to competitions over land and resources in a region where owning personal arms is a part of the culture (Ruhayem, 2013).

In addition to the casualties that occurred due to natural resources, the Government of Yemen and its security forces have been accused of torture, inhumane treatment, and extra-judicial executions (US Department of State, 2013). The government was accused of arresting citizens, especially in the south, as well as conducting arbitrary searches of homes. Prolonged pretrial detention is a serious problem, and judicial corruption, inefficiency, and executive interference undermine due process. According to UNOHCHR, freedom of speech, the press, and religion were all restricted (UNOHCHR, 2014).

Since the beginning of the Houthi insurgency, numerous people accused of supporting Al-Houthi have been arrested and held without charge or trial, as "Houthies were marginalized and it seems they wanted to have a share in decision making and government and power" (interview with Ohannes Geukjian). According to the U.S. State Department International Religious Freedom Report 2007, some Zaydis reported harassment and discrimination by the government "because they were suspected of sympathizing with al-Houthis." However, the government's actions against the group were political and not religiously motivated (US State Department, 2010).

### 3.4.2 Evolution of the Conflict

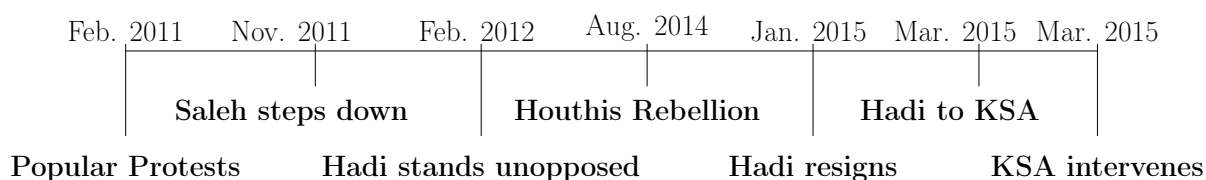


Figure 3.4: Time Line of Yemen Crisis

## From Civil Uprising to Armed Conflict

The "Arab Spring" that was ignited in Tunisia in 2011 soon reached Yemen, where the government was already facing challenges with Al-Qaeda in the South and Zaidis in the North. In 2011, Yemen witnessed a revolution led by the Muslim Brotherhood, which did not have a popular enough base to attain full legitimacy. Yemeni parties then agreed to share power; however, "the Brotherhood did not want to relinquish power and negotiate peacefully" (interview with Yasser Al-Khayro). Protests then started in the North and South against then-President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who responded violently, and the country almost went into an all-out civil war (Al Jazeera, 2011).

Later that year, Saleh agreed to step down and hand over the presidency to his deputy Abed Rabbu Mansour Hadi (in an unchallenged election) after being subjected to persuasion from the Gulf Co-operation Council led by Saudi Arabia (The Washington Post, 2011). However, the civil unrest remained as the Houthis in the North and the Southern Movement boycotted the elections, as they believed that it was unfair and one "cannot call it elections if there is one candidate (because) Hadi was brought not elected" (interview with Ibrahim Dulaimy).

The Houthis boycotted the presidential elections in which Hadi was elected, went into demonstrations after his two-year term was extended for an extra year, and were able to seize control of the capital Sana'a. The Houthis were unhappy about Hadi's proposal to split the country into six federals and proceeded to capture the presidential palace in Sana'a, force Hadi to resign, dissolve the parliament, and form the Revolutionary Council in order to govern the country on February 6, 2015 (Ghobari, 2015).

Hadi was then able to flee to Aden, where he declared the city to be the temporary capital. He also decreed that the Houthi takeover was illegitimate and that he was still the constitutional President of Yemen. From there, he commanded his troops to carry out the "Battle of Aden Airport" to recapture power from those who refused to recognize his authority. In return, the Houthi leader, Abdulmalik Al Houthi, announced the initiation of the war mobilization against Al-Qaeda and its affiliates (for him, that included Hadi), where "the army and the 'popular committees' went to Aden to fight them" (interview with Ibrahim Al-Dulaimy).

As former President, Ali Abdullah Saleh was also unhappy with the remainder of Hadi who were in power and because of the promises made to him regarding returning to power were broken. "Saleh returned and organized himself with an alliance with the Houthis, with his loyal army" (interview with Adnan Mansour). His troops (composed of army

units still loyal to him, including the Republic Guards and Paramilitary Forces of Yemen) were able to carry out an invasion and seize power in Taiz, the third largest city in Yemen.

### Foreign Intervention

On March 25, as pro-Saleh forces captured Aden Airport, Houthi fighters were close to Hadi's residence while capturing the city. Hadi then fled to Saudi Arabia, where Saudi officials announced, on the same day, that it will launch the "Decisive Storm" military campaign along with the other eight countries against the Yemeni rebels (Al Jazeera, 2015). The campaign received logistical support from the United States. In later conferences, Yemeni governmental officials and the Arab League organization requested foreign intervention against Houthis and pro-Saleh forces.

The strategic effect of the third-party intervention on the political outcomes of the conflict was crucial. Houthis claim that the rebellion against the government would have been successful if the Saudis did not intervene and that "the foreign intervention by the Americans and Saudis is what made the rebellion fail in achieving its goals" (interview with Ibrahim Al-Dulaimy).

Saudi Arabia was able to mobilize other Arab Gulf countries (all GCC countries except for Oman) and other Muslim countries (Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Malaysia, Senegal), while other countries provided weapons, intelligence, and logistics (USA, UK, France, Belgium, Turkey) and some sort of diplomatic support (Al Jazeera, 2017). According to international news agencies, hundreds of civilians were killed during these attacks that were aimed at restoring the righteous authority (BBC, 2015a; Dearden, 2015; Ghobary, 2015).

One month later, the Saudi-led coalition announced that its *Decisive Storm* operation is over after "successfully eliminating the threat," and Hadi thanked the coalition for the intervention. In the same announcement, the Saudi military official announced the beginning of operation "Restoring Hope." The next day, air-strikes continued with increased intensity. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2016) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC, 2017) both condemned the attacks and strongly advocated for immediately seizing the attacks on civil targets (Miles, 2015).

The Saudi-led coalition and its allies accused Iran of militarily and financially supporting the Houthis (BBC, 2015b). Saudi Arabia and its allies considered that Iran was

destabilizing the region and "is creating more conflict and more problems within the Islamic World and burning money like exactly the war between Iraq and Iran" (interview with Fouad Siniora). The American foreign minister also warned Iran against supplying the Houthi rebels with weapons. On the other hand, Iran consistently denied any kind of intervention in the Yemeni war.

### 3.4.3 Stakeholders Positions

#### Government Stance on Intervention

Hadi, residing in Saudi Arabia, declared support for a foreign intervention against the Houthi rebellion. This stance aligned with other government officials who supported the intervention. The Yemeni foreign minister called from Egypt for an Arab League military intervention against the Houthis (Mukashaf, 2015). Thus, most of the highest-ranking officials supporting intervention were coming from outside Yemen to provide more credibility and decision-making power to the intervening entity.

#### Iran

Although the United States National Security Council spokeswoman Bernadette Meehan stated, "It remains our assessment that Iran does not exert command and control over the Houthis in Yemen" (The Huffington Post, 2015), Houthis have been accused, especially by Saudi Arabia and the United States, of being proxies for Iran, where "Iran has influence over the Houthies" (interview with Ali Chahine).

On the other hand, Iran and its allies in Syria and Lebanese Hezbollah have explicitly expressed support for the Houthis, criticized Saudi intervention, but denied providing any military support. The Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohammad Javad Zarif, demanded "an immediate stop to the Saudi military operations in Yemen" during a televised interview (Press TV, 2016). Iranian officials also related the "war *on* Yemen" to the Palestine-Israel conflict and that "Iran will continue to be the true supporter of defiant people...in Palestine, Syria, Lebanon... Bahrain and Yemen" (interview with Muhammad Fathali).

Meanwhile, President Hadi strongly criticized the influence of Iran over the rebels, saying, "We will restore security to the country and hoist the flag of Yemen in Sana'a, instead of the Iranian flag" (Reuters, 2015a).

In an event that signifies the importance of outside actors, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal said, "Saudi Arabia is responsible for establishing legitimate gov-

ernment in Yemen and Iran should not interfere" after an Iranian cease fire request submitted to the United Nations by Iranian Minister Zarif was rejected by Saudi Arabia (Reuters, 2015b).

### **Middle East**

The Saudi-led coalition received instant military support from UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Senegal, and Sudan. Additionally, although Pakistan first exhibited interest in joining after it was invited to do so by the Saudis, the parliament soon voted to maintain neutrality (Mukashaf, 2015). Qatar was later removed from the coalition in June 2017 after falling into a diplomatic deadlock with Saudi Arabia and falling under economic and diplomatic sanctions from Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain (Hassan, 2018).

After announcing the beginning of the "Decisive Storm" operation, protests against it started in a number of the participating countries. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, and Kuwait have all witnessed protests in thousands against the intervention, while Bahrain witnessed voices of opposition in its parliamentary announcements (The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, 2015).

### **Other International Actors**

With regards to other international players, the then American President, Barack Obama, declared that he had authorized U.S. forces to provide logistical and intelligence support to the Saudis in their military intervention in Yemen, establishing a "Joint Planning Cell" with Saudi Arabia (The Washington Post, 2015). The UK, one of the largest weaponry suppliers to Saudi Arabia, immediately expressed strong support for the Saudi-led campaign (Osborn, 2016).

However, a number of major international players have criticized this intervention. First, Russia and Iran have criticized this intervention. Both the United Nations and the European Union have also criticized it (Russia Today, 2017). Iraq's Prime Minister, Haydar Al Abadi, expressed the Iraqi government's opposition to the intervention (New York Times, 2015). Humanitarian organizations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and ICRC, have highlighted the excessive harm that the coalition is causing for the civilians. Ban Ki-moon, the then Secretary General of the UN, raised "strong concern" over the continued Saudi-led airstrikes, stating, "Coalition air strikes in particular continue to strike hospitals, schools, mosques and civilian infrastructures." However, Ki-moon soon removed the Saudi-led coalition from a list of children's rights violators, claiming that Saudi Arabia threatened to cut Palestinian aid and funds to other

UN programs if the coalition was not removed from blacklist for killing children in Yemen (The Guardian, 2016).

## Saudi Arabia

### Saudi Role in the Region - Dominance Competition with Iran

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a monarchy that was established in 1932 and joined the United Nations in 1945. Saudi Arabia is a founding member of the Arab League, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Muslim World League, and Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Due to its huge GDP returns from oil revenues—being the largest producer and exporter—it plays a prominent role in the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization. Being a founding member of OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries), its oil pricing policy has been generally to stabilize the world oil market and attempt to moderate sharp price movements so as to not jeopardize the Western economies.

Saudi Arabia has spent tens of billions of USD in "Development Aid," but it has been accused of spending it to propagate and extend the influence of Wahhabism, an extreme Muslim sect allegedly pushing for intolerance, in the Middle East region and the world (Shane, 2016). Yet, it is considered to share a strategic alliance with the United States and be the primary importer of American weapons, engaging in deals worth hundreds of billions of US dollars. Further, although the United States considers Al-Qaeda as a primary enemy and threat to its security, the Saudis openly support the "Army of Conquest" fighting in Syria that includes Al-Nusra Front, which is an Al-Qaeda affiliate. The USA and KSA have been cooperating in a strategic alliance that fulfills a mutual interest, as the "USA seeks to benefit from the large reserves of Saudi oil and KSA seeks to maintain the rate of US assistance, mainly to its security sector in order to keep up with the rapidly rising Iranian war machine" (interview with Interviewee X).

On different facets of the conflict, former Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri Al-Maliki, has accused Saudi Arabia of supporting terrorist Sunni organizations against the government. Meanwhile, Saudi officials criticized the Iranian intervention in Iraq, accusing it of attempting to enforce a Shia authority in the neighboring country (Reuters, 2014).

Leaked reports from Wikileaks indicated that, after the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011, the Saudis feared Iranian domination in the region (Hubbard, 2015). For this reason, the Iranian "threat" was discussed with an American official during every visit to Riyadh. During the last visits by former

President Barack Obama and current President Donald Trump, Saudi officials expressed their fear of the Iranian security threat and pushed for pressures and sanctions to be imposed against Iran. In the last visit by President Trump in May 2017, the Americans and Saudis signed hundred-billion-dollar deals in which Saudi Arabia bought weapons from the United States, in an action that was considered more as a deal in order to acquire American support in regional politics, especially against Iran.

The Iranian threat is one major reason the Saudi officials used for intervening in Bahrain to suppress the demonstrations against the ruling family in the small neighbor of Saudi Arabia. It was claimed that Iran is supporting the Shiia opposition to overthrow the monarchy and strengthen the Iranian influence in the region. Moreover, Saudi Arabia has constantly criticized the Iranian influence on the Syrian regime, on Shiia Hezbollah in Lebanon, and on Houthis in Yemen.

The Saudi-Iranian conflict reached its peak with two events—the Hajj incidents, wherein thousands of Iranian pilgrims died in the Saudi city of Mecca, and the execution of Shiia cleric Nimr Al-Nimr in 2016 in Saudi Arabia; after which hundreds of Iranian protesters stormed the Saudi Embassy in Tehran, leading to the cutting of diplomatic ties between the two countries (Wilking, 2016).

### **History of Relations with Yemen**

"Saudi Arabia has always considered Yemen as its backyard," a statement recalled by most of interviewees when asked about the history of relations with Yemen. In the first and second halves of the previous century, the Yemeni Kingdom and Saudi Arabia were both monarchies. However, after the establishment of the United Arab Republic, which was led by Egyptian President Abdel Nasser, the Yemeni war took place and included a direct confrontation between the Egyptian government and the Saudi government on the land of Yemen, where "Yemen was supporting the type of regime that is consistent with the regime in Saudi Arabia by being both monarchies that inherit positions based on individuals and not on qualifications" (interview with Nazih Mansour). When the Yemeni revolution attempted to convert the regime from a monarchy to a republic, the war began and went on for years, until the regime changed from a kingdom to a republic and then initiated a diversion between the Yemeni and Saudi governments. With the rise of the Soviet Union, Yemen became part of the Socialist Camp, while Saudi Arabia has come under American leadership.

In terms of economic relations, Saudi Arabia depended highly on Yemeni labor in all fields, and this led to the requirement of good relations for each country. The "Yemenis



needed to employ the surplus of labor in Saudi Arabia, and similarly Saudi Arabia needed this labor to develop the country in all fields" (interview with Nazih Mansour).

Until Yemen was unified between North and South, which was also in the Socialist camp until unity, Yemen's need for Saudi Arabia became higher after the fall of the Soviet Union, as Yemen had no sponsor for its regime any longer. This alteration requested a change on the economic level between the two countries, and "Yemen became more of a follower for the Saudi government" (interview with Nazih Mansour).

Before 2015, the relations fluctuated from one period to another depending on the political situation in each of the two countries, especially in Yemen that was not politically stable due to the frequent coups and changes in the political authority. "This changed when Ali Abdallah Saleh came, he was able to remain for a long time in power in Yemen and established good relations and agreements with Saudi Arabia, and therefore Yemen received and depended on support from Saudi Arabia" (interview with Nazih Mansour).

"When the so called *Arab Spring* happened, the Yemenis started taking advantage of this reality especially that Yemen in nature tends towards independence and sovereignty" (interview with Yasser Al-Khayro). Relations remained stable between the two countries "until Ansar Allah movement (Houthis) tried to take Yemen to the other side and make it independent, politically, and economically, from Saudi Arabia," (interview with Nazih Mansour) and it was able to gain control of all the joints of the country in the North and South, which threatened the geo-strategic role of Saudi Arabia due to the "Shiaa-Sunni confrontation in the Middle East" (interview with Ohannes Geukjian).

### 3.4.4 Case Analysis

#### Ideological Utility

The history of relations between Yemen and Saudi Arabia illustrates the crucial role played by Saudi Arabia in altering the balance of power in the conflict that began in Yemen. The reasons for undertaking the intervention in the first place were due to Saudi's fear of Iranian influence in the region and the existential threats that might result from a rival threat on Saudi borders. As established in the theoretical approach, a third party that is enjoying privileges from a current government would not want authority to be handed over to its international rival, thereby shifting the privileges that "makes the conflict in Yemen a proxy war" (interview with Ohannes Geukjian).

"Saudi Arabia used to consider Yemen as its backyard and doesn't accept a regime

in Yemen against the Western political orientation" (interview with Adnan Mansour). Similar logic applies in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Bahrain, and Yemen, as the Saudi officials have accused the Iranian regime of trying to expand its Shia influence and take control of these countries. Although the support for Sunni allies in Lebanon and Syria was in the form of financial assistance and diplomatic support, the support has escalated to direct military and combat intervention in Bahrain and Yemen.

The new "ideological" split has occurred in the North and South of the Middle East region, "the South which is Saudi Arabia and its allies. And the North area which is Iran, Iraq, Syria, and the resistance in Lebanon and Palestine" (interview with Adnan Mansour).

The theoretical hypothesis discussed in chapter 1 defines ideological utility as what the foreign player enjoys in terms of benefits when the local government in power shares the same ideology. Therefore, a loss in ideological utility when rebels overthrow the government leads to the weakening of the great power's geo-strategic influence, possible loss in economic benefits for the foreign player, and possible loss in popular domestic support for the foreign player's leader. Moreover, such loss in ideological utility can threaten the country's national security either by having what they consider hostile neighbors or by encouraging a coup by the opposition in the third player's country. As such, all these types of losses are possible for Saudi Arabia and can be associated with a successful Houthi rebellion in Yemen. Hence, pushing the Saudis to intervene and avoid such loss in ideological utility associated with the "legitimate" President.

In terms of economic interests, if the power in Yemen was shifted to Saudi's ideological rivals, the ideological utility loss would be in terms of the loss of economic privileges. This interest has been reflected in Saudi's presence in the South, on the Indian ocean, and Senatra Island and their "presence in the straight of Bab Al-Mandab which is one of the most important economic ports, a strait connecting the Arabian Sea with the Red Sea" (interview with Ibrahim Al-Dulaymi). Therefore, a major economic trade channel would be controlled by Iran's allies, in addition to other economic consequences that can result if Yemen was under the influence of Saudi rivals as it previously used to be.

With regards to geopolitical power and international image, Saudi Arabia would lose its geo-strategic influence in the regions and appear much weaker if its closest and largest neighboring country was controlled by its rival. Local figures such as Muhammad Bin Salman (MBS), the rising Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, has entered this war because he believed that "Yemen was an internal issue that will allow him to become on the process of becoming crown prince" (interview with Ali Chahine). MBS had a direct role in making

the decision to enter Yemen since "Mohamad Bin Salman's specified his political future by being successful in Yemen to become a king" (interview with Ibrahim Al-Dulaymi) and since such a victory would "would have strengthened the status of a strong young prince, Mohammed bin Salman" (interview with Yasser Al Khayro).

In addition, the success of such rebellions in nearby countries can encourage other rebellions in the region and inside Saudi Arabia, which has around ten percent of Shiia minorities who consider themselves as being mistreated. "For KSA, the question of Yemeni sovereignty is secondary compared to its regional interests of keeping Iran at bay" (interview with Interviewee X).

The ability of a rival ideology to suppress a rebellion can provide credibility to Saudi officials being capable of achieving victories. This will enforce their popular support in the public opinion and provide a further push for them to act more freely. Although Saudi Arabia is not a democracy and officials do not need popular votes, exhibiting that they can defeat rivals and achieve successful military operation after the hundred-billion-dollar deals will strengthen their rule even in monarchies. In this regard, Mohammad Bin-Salman, the current Crown Prince, is said to have some rivals inside his family (Nakhhal et al, 2017), and his actions, especially in detaining Saudi princes including billionaires and officials in control of governmental and military bodies, reflect this threat that leaders consider when intervening in regional conflicts to prove their power and judgment and to get popular national support.

Although Yemen has been witnessing Al-Qaeda presence and threats in the South, Saudi Arabia had not intervened to protect the government. On the contrary, "the first (Saudi interest) is to give support to Al-Qaeda and ISIS because the Popular Committees (that include Houthis) were about to eliminate it in the Southern governorates" (interview with Ibrahim Al-Dulayme), which shows that the main target had a dominant position in the region through Yemen.

Therefore, as suggested in the theoretical hypothesis, the Saudi intervention in the Yemeni internal conflict and converting it into a cross-border conflict reflects the importance of the ideological utility intervention when pushing the third party to bear high costs to keep a certain regime in power.

### **Third party acting as a mediator**

Negotiations for a settlement were discussed between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia and not between the Houthis and Hadi or his government. "Negotiations were with the Saudi

ambassador Mohamad Al Jaber who was all in all.. even negotiating on interior matters.. where the Saudis were repeating two requests: Iran and Weapon Surrender" (interview with Ibrahim Al-Dulaymi). This is in line with the theoretical approach that a third party's intervention as a mediator occurs when the endangered regime is that desperate for intervention that it surrenders its decision-making power to the foreign ally. Therefore, the Yemeni case exemplifies our theoretic approach, which states that foreign allies of governments act as mediators who can make offers to the rebels, thus taking over the decision-making power of the government.

### **Strength of the Government**

One hypothesis in the theoretical study of this research is that foreign allies of the same ideology are more motivated to intervene when the government is facing a weak threat. This proposition is further supported in the Yemeni since when "Houthis took over the capital, the Saudis felt threatened and decided to intervene" (interview with Ali Chahine). In earlier conflicts in Yemen, the government faced civil uprisings but never achieved control of the capital and, therefore, never received foreign military support.

The governmental forces loyal to President Hadi were able to maintain a balance of power with the Houthis until the Houthis captured Sana'a and then Aden. This progress forced Hadi to flee and thereby granted full control to the Houthis. It was on the day that Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia that Saudis announced their operations against the Houthis. These events strengthen the position that foreign allies only intervene when their endangered allies will suffer a total defeat, therefore leaving intervention as the only option. Facing total defeat, internal factions are willing to reside in foreign states and give them all negotiation cards as seen in the Yemeni case. Saudi, while fighting the Houthis, were the ones setting their own conditions for the cease-fire that were irrelevant to the internal politics of Yemen. "(Saudis) had only two demands, Iran and weapons.. Hadi was not talking from his interest, he does not even know his interest.. he is repeating what they say" (interview with Ibrahim Al Dulaymi).

Therefore, the trigger for intervention by a third party is a practical example of the theoretical hypothesis that intervention occurs at the point when the government is too weak to stand alone against an internal threat.

### **Share of the Pie and Rebels' Type**

The theoretical study proposes that the share offered to rebels depends on their strength and ability to defeat the government. This share leads to peace when it is enough and in accordance with the cost that rebels have to bear. The share would be enough depending

on the actual knowledge of the rebels' strength by the other side's negotiator, the government itself, or the third-party.

Before the conflict reached armed confrontation and Saudi intervention, the Houthis were able to force the government to resign by exhibiting their military strength, and they gained an unprecedented level of influence over state institutions and politics (Ghibari, 2015b). The pie offered to the Houthis was even enlarged further when the president resigned with his ministers and the Houthi leadership announced the dissolution of the parliament. When the proposition was made to divide the country into six federal regions and isolate the Houthis from participating in the government, the Houthis weren't satisfied with the new share and formed the Revolutionary Committee to seek governing authority over the entire country and forced Hadi to leave.

This share of the pie demanded by the Houthis, which was unexpected by Hadi and his foreign allies, led to offering different shares than either players wanted. Saudi Arabia did not take the real power of Houthis into consideration and "negotiators announced that Saudi Arabia imposed impossible conditions and on Ansar Allah to surrender and obey them, and this is what you can not claim in view of the situation on the ground and the control of Ansar Allah on the capital and the north" (interview with Yasser Al-Khayro). Saudi Arabia then stopped the negotiation procedures, as it became a direct side in the conflict and was no longer a mediator.

### **Cost of War**

The cost of war determines the strategies for third players as well as for rebels. For the third player Saudi Arabia, knowing the exact power of the Houthis and therefore the cost of war for them might have shifted the confrontation strategy. The theoretical part of this study proposes that in the incomplete information game, when the foreign ally of the government does not accurately anticipate the cost of war for the rebels and therefore offers them an unsatisfactory share of power in the country, a conflict occurs between the two sides. As the Houthis proved to be stronger than expected, the conflict is still ongoing, and Saudi Arabia has suffered a cost higher than what it promised the public to maintain.

### **Humanitarian Perspective and International Players**

Violation of human rights by the Saudi air-strikes have been criticized by various humanitarian agencies and been pointed out by the former UN Secretary General (Reuters, 2018). However, despite all intervention justifications regarding defending humanitarian

intervention and the humanitarian legitimacy for supporting one faction over the other, the Saudi intervention possesses enormous evidence that demonstrates the falsehood of these claims (Human Rights Watch, 2016). Not only are the Saudis blamed for the severe human conditions and war crimes in Yemen but their Western allies are also accused of selling them weapons, offering intelligence support, and strengthening diplomatic and economic ties with them instead of threatening with diplomatic cost, such as the latest visit by the American president in May 2017 amid the war.

## 3.5 Syrian Civil War (2011–)

The case study of the Syrian ongoing crisis, similar to the Yemeni conflict, intends to explore and explain the real incentives behind intervention. The following sections will first introduce background of the country with a brief modern history of Syria, followed by a description of their socioeconomic and humanitarian situations, before the eruption of the conflict. This background is meant to provide the reader with a picture of the situation just before the civil uprising took place so as to understand the triggers for the same. The second section provides a timeline of the evolution of the conflict until intervention took place. To better understand the role of third parties, the third section will describe the role and motives for each stakeholder in the conflict. Section three will end with the background and role of the main third party in the conflict, which had the most efficient effects (in this case Russia). The last section will analyze the case and relate it to the theoretical results that have been discussed in chapter 1 and that reveal the real incentives for intervention.

### 3.5.1 Background

Syria is one of the Arab countries that witnessed a rebellion that caused millions of casualties during the "Arab Spring" period. The civil war began with civil demonstrations in a few Southern cities and extended to all regions of the country to include at least five opposing internal factions (Syrian government, Free Syrian Army, Al-Qaeda's Fath Al Sham (previously Al Nusra Front), ISIS, and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces). In addition to the internal players, each faction had at least one foreign sponsor. The war is ongoing since 2011, causing hundreds of thousands of deaths, injuring millions, and displacing over ten million people inside and outside Syria. Foreign intervention during the Syrian conflict has been crucial in favoring the balance of power for either sides involved in the conflict. The strongest international players, Russia and the United States, have stepped in using combat forces along with regional influential players such as Iran, Turkey, and Arab Gulf countries. Budgets for the war have reached hundreds of billions of dollars and have affected international relations significantly, causing mili-

tary and economic tensions between countries (Russia-Turkey conflict, Iran-Saudi Arabia conflict, Saudi Arabia-Qatar conflict, and others).

## History

Since its independence from French colonialism in 1946, Syria has witnessed a number of coups that changed the head of the regime. After over six coup d'état, Hafez Al Assad, who belonged to the Alawite minority religious group, orchestrated the last successful coup in 1971, wherein he declared himself president until his death in 2000. His reign witnessed armed revolts, especially by the Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni religious political faction that opposed Assad's 1973 implementation to alter the constitution to allow for a non-Muslim president. Hafez Al Assad faced the opposition with an iron fist and was able to suppress all attempts of revolution (Lefvre, 2013).

Upon his death in 2000, his son Bashar Al-Assad came to power in an election that was alleged to be fraud. However, his initial steps into presidency brought hopes for democratic reforms with the "Damascus Spring" that initiated the social and political debate. However, similar practices remained and the same ruling behavior stayed in place.

## Socioeconomic Situation

In a Sunni majority country (seventy-four percent Sunnis), the regime has been accused of favoring the Alawite elites (around ten percent Alawites) and personnel close to the government, as "Sunni population in Syria was already disenfranchised and marginalized economically by the time the civil war in Syria started" (interview with Interviewee Y). Since the last year of Hafez Al Assad's presidency, the socioeconomic gap has increased and poverty reached its peak with the drought that hit the country from 2006 to 2011 along with the economic pressure caused by over 1.5 million Iraqi refugees from the war in neighboring Iraq. At the beginning of the war, reports claimed that the main areas of the uprising were poor regions and areas with a majority of conservative Muslims (Associated Press, 2012).

## Humanitarian Situation Before 2011

According to Human Rights Watch annual report (2005), the rights of expression, association, and assembly were strictly controlled in Syria. The country that has been under an emergency rule since the 1973 riots did not allow for public gatherings, and security forces would arrest and detain anyone who opposes this. According to the same report, authorities have harassed and imprisoned human rights activists and other critics of the

government, who were often detained indefinitely and tortured while under prison-like conditions. Thousands of Syrian Kurds were denied citizenship in 1962 and their descendants were labeled "foreigners". A number of riots in 2004 prompted increased tension in Syrian Kurdistan, and there have been occasional clashes between Kurdish protesters and security forces ever since.

Despite the accusation of human rights violations, Assad has announced on several occasions until his recent interview (2018), saying that he was always willing to allow civil opposition, but since the major opposing groups are extremist Jihadists, he would always use fierce power to suppress them.

Although some sides claim that the causes for the conflict were triggered by the West, humanitarian aspects still arise as the main triggers when the "roots to the problem were dignity and humiliation, and many many years of being oppressed" and "what happened in other Arab countries gave them the sense that they were more brave to take to the street" (interview with Zeina Sayegh).

### 3.5.2 Evolutions of the Conflict

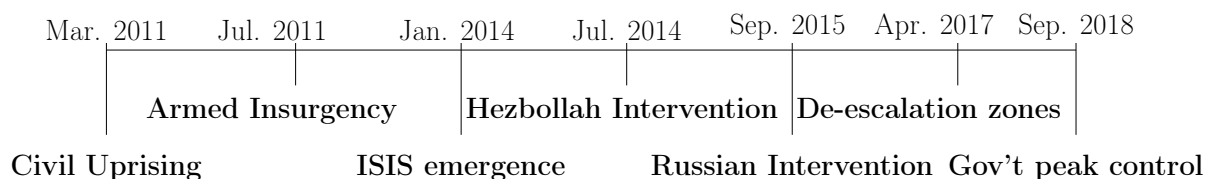


Figure 3.5: Time Line of Syria Crisis

#### From Civil Uprising to Military Confrontation

Less than a year after the outbreak of the Tunisian Revolution in December 2010 that toppled former President Ben Ali, the Tunisian fire crossed through Libya and Egypt to reach Syria in March 2011. The conflict first started with civil demonstrations when "protests took the streets in the Southern city of Daraa" (interview with Muhammad Fathali), in which protesters chanted for democratic reforms. The protests were tackled using violent measures to suppress the demonstration and detain certain participants. In the subsequent days, two underage protesters were found tortured and killed, leading to outrage, bigger protests, the burning of governmental offices, and killing of soldiers and policemen in Daraa when "security forces opened fire and killed people" (interview with Zeina Sayegh). The Syrian army responded with more violence to suppress the protests



that spread to other cities and became a weekly tradition after every Friday prayer.

With each week, more casualties resulted and the protests' requests changed to demanding the overthrowing of the President. With violence increasing, a number of army officers and soldiers started defecting from the governmental army and constituting the Free Syrian Army (FSA) whose claimed goal was to overthrow the regime and protect the civilians. On the other hand, supporters of President Bashar Al Assad also protested in support of him in major city centers, showing that he still had significant support from Syrians.

On the other hand, the Syrian government and its allies accuse foreign players with special interests in the region to be responsible of the ignition of the conflict. The Syrian official side accuses the West and that "the reasons for the outbreak of the conflict in an armed way was in the center of Western actions against Syria," since Syria was crucial in the Arab-Israeli conflict and has always been supporting the Palestinians while being in the "Resistance Axis". This view has been shared by the main allies of the Syrian regime who believe that the "West have participated in a number of "colored revolutions" republics of the former Soviet Union in an approach that has been studied well by the Americans who have been working with the radical groups in the republics of the Soviet Union such as the Yugoslavia and later the Arab Spring with a different ideology to change the authority, the political approach, or destroy the state" (interview with Alexander Zaspikin).

The FSA was able to launch attacks against the government forces and take control of a number of villages near big cities. As the conflict became more arm-based and recognized by different international actors, the UN intervened in an attempt to declare a cease-fire that ended by mid-2012 (Charbonneau, L. and Evans, E. 2012).

The cease-fire was broken after mass killings took place and extremists groups were formed mainly by Al-Qaeda loyalists groups (Al-Nusra Front - ANF) that did not only want to overthrow the president but wanted to convert the country into an Islamic rule instead (Charbonneau, L. and Evans, E. 2012). Meanwhile, the FSA became a collection of brigades and groups under Islamist names and slogans.

By mid-2013, opposition groups were able to capture major areas including the city of Raqqa, their first provincial capital, in March 2013. While the government and pro-Assad forces were mainly on the defensive, trying to retain as many holdings as possible. It was only until late 2013 that the Syrian Army was able to start attacking back and recapture areas from the opposition on different fronts with the assistance of Lebanese Hezbollah and Iraqi Al-Abbass Brigade foreign militias.

In early 2014, the "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria" (ISIS) appeared on the Syrian map. ISIS, an extremist military group considered terrorists by all states, including Islamic and Western, first emerged in north-west Iraq near the Syrian borders from the Al Qaeda left-overs in Iraq. Their impact and appearance in Syria were eminent shortly after they began their operations there due to the brutality in their methods of killing (Al Jazeera, 2014). ISIS launched military operations against both the Syrian regime and the opposition, killing any soldier or civilian who did not agree with their ideology.

As ISIS was able to control Al-Anbar Governorate in Iraq and Al-Raqqa in Syria by mid-2014, it was also able to control the Syria-Iraq border and announce its new state, with its own Caliphate and goal to expand across a larger geographical region. This step by ISIS alerted the major international players regarding the associated dangers, as ISIS was able to capture oil fields, the Moussil Central Bank in Iraq, and other sources of income that allowed it to have a billions-dollar budget for its murderous and expansion goals.

Later in 2014, ISIS was able to reach the borders of Turkey and expel the FSA and other opposition forces from the area. ISIS continued toward the Northern borders of the Syrian city of Kobani, which was inhabited by Kurds. The US military and Arab states then joined forces and attacked ISIS. They were able to assist YPG to achieve the first major victory against ISIS. This was also a major turn in which the Americans began providing official military support in the form of personnel to YPG and SDF, which was also disliked by the Turks who do not want to have a Kurdish strength on their borders. The American move was only few months after they announced the failure of the 500 million-dollar training program aimed at moderating the opposition. Therefore, they shifted their efforts in intervention to the Kurds (SDF).

## **Intervention**

The list of foreign players involved in the Syrian conflict extend over the major states in the world and the region to reach foreign fighters in extremist opposition groups and foreign pro-Assad militias. Intervention was in different forms and ranged from the support of military groups in the context of politics, weaponry, and money, to intervening personally in combats alongside one of the fighting factions. Each of the foreign actors had a significant effect on the course of events in Syria.

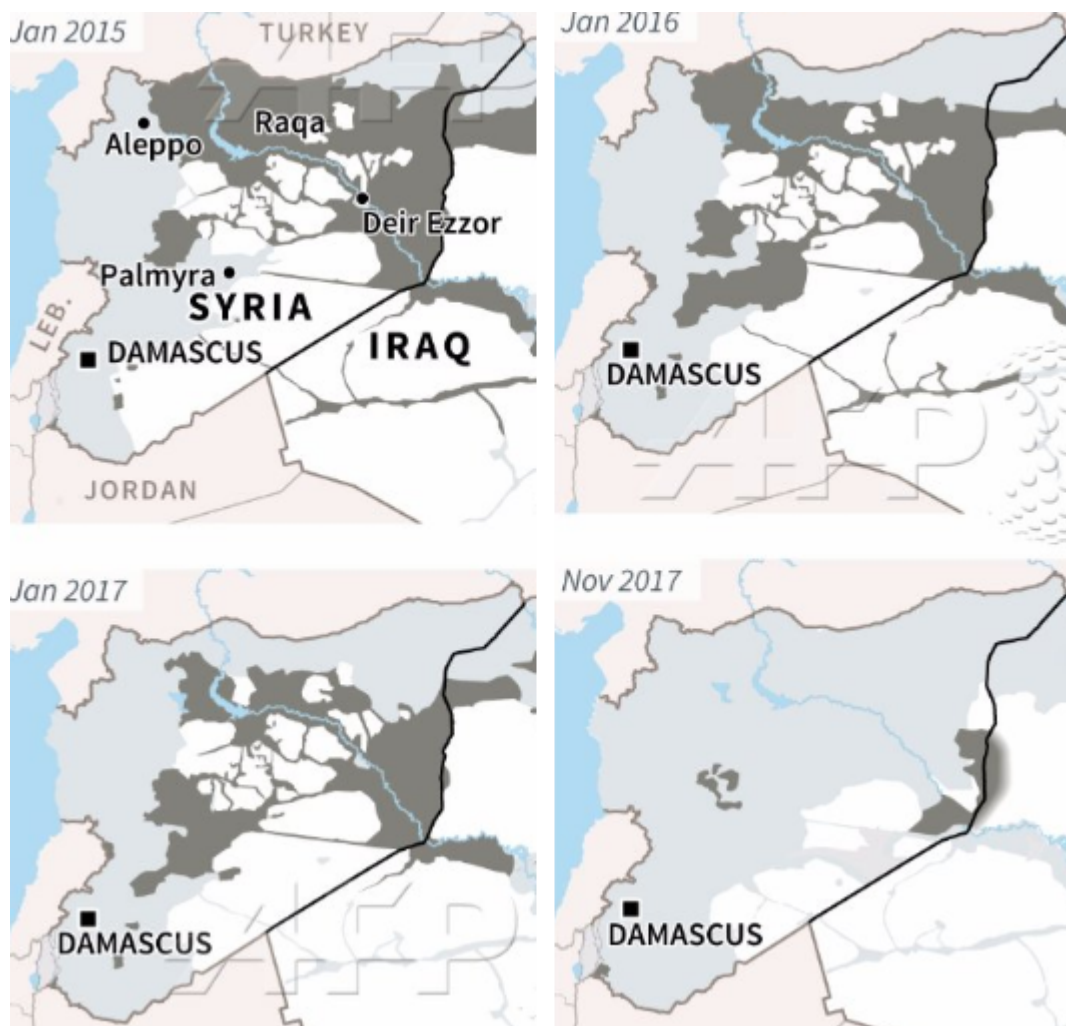
Arab Gulf countries and Turkey openly funded armed groups fighting the government and used its political influence to support them in international arenas, as the transfer of weapons "was all happening through the borders. Whether from Jordan with the direct

support of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Countries and Qatar. Or through North Syria from Turkey. So all these countries smuggled weapons into Syria" (interview with Faysal Al-Mokdad). Similarly, Israel had intervened tens of times, targeting what it considered a threat to its national security, while the Syrian regime accused it of supporting the terrorist groups whenever they are about to collapse.

The expansion of ISIS and its actions and attacks in Syria and across the globe have attracted international intervention due to fear that it can attack anywhere as it becomes stronger. Shia leaders in Iraq announced holy war against ISIS and the emergence of militias that joined the Iraqi army to defeat ISIS as military Iraqi groups in Syria fighting alongside Assad also returned to Iraq to fight ISIS in Iraq. The American army, NATO, and Arab States announced that they will join the efforts, especially in air strikes, to defeat ISIS in Syria. The Syrian army and its allies as well as the opposition (FSA) and Al-Qaeda branch in Syria (ANF) also declared war on ISIS.

However, the largest interventionist effect was by the two main powers—Russia and USA—that have supported opposing factions and made sure that their ally would not get destroyed as they increased their support whenever their ally's military position appeared to be critical.

One year after the emergence of ISIS and its control over significant areas in Syria, on September 30, 2015, Russian Aerospace Forces joined the military campaign against the extremists at an official request of Syrian President Assad (Sputnik, 2017). The Russian forces declared that they would be attacking ISIS bases through air strikes and military ships in the Caspian Sea. Although these attacks provided an advantage to the Syrian army when launching a ground offensive on ISIS, the Russians were also accused of attacking the FSA and the "moderate opposition" in Syria. The domination of ISIS gradually decreased after the Russia intervention (Figure 6).



*Source:*

*AFP, 2018*

Figure 3.6: ISIS Control over the years - Before and After Russian Intervention

The Russian intervention did not only weaken ISIS but also gave the Syrian governmental forces the upper hand over the opposition groups in several regions of the country within a year, as its attacks led to casualties on different fronts (Figure 7).

Figure 3.7: Syria before Russian intervention and one year after intervention

The Russian military support for the Syrian government was carried out simultaneously along with mediation efforts in the de-escalation zones. In September 2018, the Syrian government, along with its allies, acquired the greatest amount of control over the land since 2012, after a constant deterioration from 2011 to 2015 (Figure 8).

Figure 3.8: Control over Syrian land by different fighting factions, September 2018

The significant role of foreign actors therefore proves to be eminent right from the early stages of the Syrian Civil War. If it was not for the foreign fighters supporting Al-Qaeda and ISIS, the government would have experienced less difficulty in suppressing the opposition. On the other hand, if it wasn't for Hezbollah's intervention, the Syrian regime was almost collapsing since "the very intervention of these external actors, whether Hezbollah, Iran and Russia too is the demonstration of the fact that the Syrian government doesn't have the capacity to sustain itself" (interview with Filippo Dionigi).

### 3.5.3 Stakeholders Positions

#### Syrian Government Stance

The official Syrian stance considers that the conflict in Syria is not merely civil but more of a conspiracy by outside players against Syria due to Syria's role and that "the reasons for the outbreak of the conflict in an armed way was in the center of Western actions against Syria" (interview with Faysal Al Mokdad). The events that occurred in Daraa were considered to be manipulated by outside players to bring in weapons and destroy judicial and institutional buildings, while the governmental forces were given orders to remain non-violent and yet, somehow, protesters died. The "weapons were already being supplied to the border of Syria especially in Jordan" and the reason behind Western actions were "due to Syria's position against Israel and therefore the West was willing to support extremists Jihadists just to overthrow the regime" (interview with Faysal Al Mokdad).

Other sides supporting the opposition in the conflict had other "different interests but all required the same goal of overthrowing the regime" (interview with Naim Kassem). Turkey accordingly wanted to bring back the Ottoman Empire and was willing to seize its support to the opposition on the condition that the "Turks kept bringing up in every meeting: 'why are you isolating the Muslim Brotherhood and not allowing them to be part of the state and the Syrian government? Why don't you establish an alliance relation between the regime in Syria and the Muslim Brotherhood?'" (interview with Faysal Al Mokdad), which indicates that the Turkish regime was willing to revive the good political and economic relations with Syria as soon as the regime adhered to these conditions. However, the government was not willing to compromise its secular ideology and grant privileges to the Turks. The Saudi regime, on the other hand, was supporting the rebels to guarantee its own survival through providing free services to the Americans and Israelis

so they would protect the Saudi regime.

As for the government's allies' interests, Syrian officials highlight the historic relations with the Russians from the old Russian Empire until today, while the fall of the Soviet Union, Chechnya events, and the colored rebellions have only strengthened these relations and convinced Russia of its vital role in the region. These events are seen as Western attempts to "harm the unity of land and people of the Russian Federation," according to Faysal Al-Mokdad, reflecting the ideological competition between Russia and the American-led West. This occurred up until President Vladimir Putin returned and ended the Chechnya problem, where there was an evaluation by the Russian leadership that Russia cannot be isolated from the events occurring in the Middle East region. Russians had a feeling that their exclusion will weaken their country and render it weak enough to not be a crucial player, neither in the region nor in the world, since "the Western countries, after the coup against the Soviet regime thought the conflict is ideological, but in addition to the ideological dimension there was another factor which is the geopolitical dimension" (interview with Faysal Al-Mokdad).

The conflict is also seen as a conflict of domination between superpowers since the "USA is a country that wants domination over the whole world. This includes the foreign politics of Russia" (interview with Faysal Al-Mokdad). Therefore, based on this logic, Russians should maintain foreign and internal policies in a manner that secures the safety of their people, which makes it an issue of national security for Russia.

On the intersection of interests between Russia and Syria, the ideological utility hypothesis is resembled when Syrian officials admit that the Russian government benefits politically and economically from this Syrian regime due to the alignment of ideological interests and that "the common work against terrorism serves both Syria and the Russian Federation. The economic collaboration serves both countries. Providing facilities for Russian friends to exercise their global role in a more relaxed way, this is consistent with the Syrian interests and the Russian interests as well. Therefore meeting with Russian friends in many fields" (interview with Faysal Al Mokdad). This intersection of interests does not mean that the points of view match in every single matter, but rather that the two parties do not confront each other loudly in most discussed causes, regionally and internationally.

Syrians believe that Russia wants to keep a foot in what is called "warm water" after being excluded from Libya and other Eastern European countries by the West, while the Syrian regime has had facilities given to Russia in Tartous Port on the Mediterranean in the 1990s, while "if the other powers were successful in the coup against Syria and if they

were able to transform the country as a center for these powers, then they would have ended any presence for Russia" (interview with Faysal Al Mokdad). Thus, there is an awareness by the Russian President Putin of the importance of Syria and the importance of the Russian presence for not only maintaining Russian interests but also for defending the Russian National Security in the region.

The Syrian government admits that the major incentives for Russia are self-interests, stating that it is all related to the geopolitics because the Soviet Union cannot exit the Middle East region without having even one friend. Syrians know that Russia understands its interests and its power, and "it wants to play an effective and efficient role and not a follower role like the USA and Western Europe want it to be. Meaning that Russia like any other big country in the world, it wants to have its natural role that it can play to keep international security and peace" (interview with Faysal Al-Mokdad).

With regard to the other allies, common interests exist with Iran and Hezbollah, especially in standing against Israel, representing the main intersection points that led for the support of these two players.

### **Iran, Hezbollah, and other pro-Assad military groups**

This section describes the relations between the Syrian ruling authorities and their allies other than Russia. Iran a regional power has been an opponent of the United States and openly been an enemy of Israel since the Islamic Revolution in 1978. It has been under US-led sanctions and been targeted by Israelis. Iranian officials have constantly issued threats to destroy Israel while supporting the "Resistance Axis," including Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hamas in Palestine against the Western and "Zionist project."

Iran, a Shiia Islamic state, has had the main role in launching Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shiia political and armed party in 1982 to fight Israel, where Hezbollah has been accused to be Iran's hand in Lebanon and to have publicly received arms and money from Iranian authorities. Hezbollah, through the speeches of its Secretary General Sayed Hasan Nasrallah, has confirmed these "accusations" and classified the party's major alliance with the Syrian government since early 1990s. Nasrallah had announced coordination with the Syrian regime to receive Iranian weapons through Syrian borders and considers that, without Syrian and Iranian support, they could have not achieved victory and expelled the Israeli army from previously-occupied South of Lebanon.

The head of Hezbollah (2011–2018), in all of his speeches upon the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War, announced that Hezbollah cannot allow the fall of the Syrian regime

because this means that the Hezbollah Resistance movement will be "unarmored from the back" in the fight against Israel. Nasrallah, who spoke about every step Hezbollah made at each military and political turn, has said that Hezbollah will send troops to protect the Lebanese borders from the Syrian side, saying, "Even if it takes every single member of Hezbollah, including myself, we will go and die in Syria to prevent the extremists from achieving victory" (Youtube, 2013). As Hezbollah considered this to be part of their battle against Israel, he also accused Saudi Arabia and other countries, in every speech, of supporting terrorism and criticized their general behavior in the Middle East region.

On the other hand, Syrian opposition, military groups, and Sunni Arab Countries accused Hezbollah of intervening in the conflict for extremist religious reasons in order to kill Sunnis, empowering the Iranian Shia project in the region, and also stated that "they want to convert people from the Sunnite to Shia" (interview with Fouad Siniora).

Hezbollah's main view of the conflict was similar to the Syrian view as both saw that the conflict as a reflection of international ambitions and plans in the region and that "the opposition was taken as a frontier to an international interest to change the regime and replace it with a new regime that work according with the Israeli project and against the Resistance project" (interview with Naim Kassem).

Hezbollah show that the interest in supporting the Syrian government originates from an ideological perspective, stating, "From Iran and Hezbollah's side, they consider that the Syrian regime is a main resistance support" as part of the Resistance-Axis they lead. Hezbollah officials also admit that the Russian interests are different and are also self-interests. The reason for this is, from the Russian side, they consider that this Syrian regime is a support for the Russian political position in the competition equation with the United States in the international arena." Therefore, although "the final interests are different, but what is common is the importance of keeping this regime" (interview with Naim Kassem).

With regards to the trigger point for stomping in Syrian mud, "Hezbollah did not have a pre-taken decision to enter the conflict, but when the situation reached a dangerous phase and we felt that the head of the regime is seeked, and also to damage the resistance position of Syria, (Hezbollah) was forced to take an incremental decision to enter Syria" (interview with Naim Kassem).

However, unlike the greater national powers Russia and Iran, Hezbollah had no role as a mediator and had no part in wording the political solution or in directing the relations between the opposition and the regime.



Hezbollah's views on the opposition also align with the Syrian government's view, as both parties believe it was built on extremists' and terrorists' saying. Despite this alignment, Hezbollah differentiates between certain moderate groups saying that the Free Syrian Army has not been involved in how these Takfiris work. Further, since their goals have political aspects, as they want participation in the government, and since "at the end there is no solution in Syria except a political solution. And a political solution requires that the parties should sit and talk" (interview with Naim Kasseem).

The other major ally of the Syrian government is Iran. Although the Iranian government has not admitted to sending troops, a number of Iranian generals have been killed in Syria while working as military advisors for the Syrian army. Other Iranians have also been killed while fighting alongside Assad but not been considered as a part of the Iranian army but rather as Afghani-Iranian Shi'ia militants. In addition to the military support, Iran has been a major player in launching and participating in talks and conferences to negotiate peace and cease-fires. Iran was intervening in Syria while it was itself negotiating the "Nuclear Talks" to remove economic sanctions while limiting its nuclear development works. It has been seen by some observers that Iran's role in the region, despite its perceived authority over Hezbollah and effect on the Syrian regime, can be considered a strong point in the Nuclear Talks. A one-hour interview was carried out with the Iranian Ambassador in Beirut Mr. Mohammad Fath Ali, but the authorization to use the content of the interview is still pending.

In addition to Iran and Hezbollah, other Shiia military groups came from Iraq to aid the Syrian army, especially near the Shiia Imams' shrines in Damascus. These groups were mainly composed of Shiia volunteers who came to defend religious sites from Takfiris and extremist Sunni groups.

## **Turkey**

Turkey, that had a long history of conflict with Syria and other Arab States starting from the 17th century to the 20th century during the Ottoman Empire, was experiencing a prosperous period with Damascus and became its first trading partner. In addition to trade, because the two countries share borders and having similar religious and cultural backgrounds, the tensions between the two governments were not expected to escalate as quickly as they did.

Turkey's intervention started when Turkish President Erdogan condemned Syria's Assad and later the same year, Turkey openly hosted defectors from the Syrian Army

(Reuters, 2011). The Free Syrian Army (FSA) was founded and developed under the supervision and training of the Turkish Intelligence with the head of the Free Syrian Army, Riad Al Assaad, residing in Turkey. The FSA was able to control border checkpoints and strengthen its ties with Turkey, which was providing weaponry, intelligence, political, and financial support to the rebels.

The tension with the Syrian army increased when Syrian forces shot down a Turkish jet and Turkey responded with attacks inside Syrian territories (Telegraph, 2012). Turkey also crossed the Syrian borders claiming to defend its nation's security by attacking Kurdish insurgents and ISIS fighters. During the first four years of the civil war, Turkey threatened to invade Syria and construct a safe-zone for the rebels. In all these ways, Turkey was helping weaken the Syrian regime and Assaad by strengthening the rebels and providing them with open borders and safe havens.

After the intervention of Syria's strongest ally in the war (Russia), tension reached its highest level between Russia with Turkey, after decades of friendly relations, due to the shutting down of the Russian jet by Turkish forces over Syrian borders. Russia cut its diplomatic and economic relations with Turkey until Turkish President apologized (New York Times, 2016).

When ISIS emerged and was able to capture wide geographies with oil lands, Turkey was accused of financially supporting ISIS to buy its oil and thus providing the terrorist group with billions of dollars (The Independent, 2015). Turkey was also allegedly supporting other Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups such as ANF and Ahrar Al-Sham, which were the backbone of the armed opposition against the Syrian government.

It was only when Turkey feared the rise of Kurdish forces being supported by the United States that they agreed to work with Russia, Iran, and Iraq to coordinate against ISIS and other rebel groups. In addition to Turkey, both Iran and Iraq share a violent history with Kurdish insurgency attempts and threats to the sovereignty of their nations. However, the Syrian regime perceives the Turkish stance in this conflict only to secure a share of the authority in Syria. Syria sees these attempts to strengthen the opposition only as tools to strengthen the old Ottoman Empire and to integrate the Muslim Brotherhood that is affiliated with Turkey in the pie-sharing in Syria as Erdogan " dreams bluntly in the rise back of the Ottoman caliphate" (interview with Faysal Al Mokdad).

## Arab States

Saudi Arabia and Qatar were the two main states in the Arab Gulf that stood against Assad right from the initial days of the rebellion. The two states led the Arab League States and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to lead the political and economic campaign against the Syrian government. Moreover, Saudi Arabia was allegedly supporting the Syrian rebels financially and through weapons, while Qatar was accused of also aiding the more extremist armed groups in Syria military and financially. These states were accused of supporting oppositions as a frontier to an international interest to alter the regime and replace it with a new regime that functions in accordance with the Israeli project and against the Resistance project" (interview with Naim Kassem).

The Syrian government and its allies claimed that the main goal of intervention by Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries supporting the opposition was to reach domination over the "Islamic World" and provide services to the West in return for securing its regimes.

Even the relations between Saudi Arabia and Qatar severely deteriorated when Saudi Arabia accused Qatar of supporting terrorist groups in Syria and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, thus threatening the security of the GCC and other Arab countries. Qatar did not accept the conditions put forth to restore diplomatic and economic sanctions and responded by strengthening its ties with Turkey and Iran, which are also perceived as regional competitors by Saudi Arabia.

GCC countries and Jordan were also a part of the American-led coalition to attack ISIS by air. On the other hand, neighboring Iraq was the only Arab state that supported the Syrian regime.

## Israel

Israel, America's closest ally and Syria's first declared enemy intervened in the war in two main ways. First, Israel opened its borders to Syrian rebels, including Al-Qaeda affiliates, in order to provide medical support and safeguard themselves against Assad's offensives. Moreover, Israel launched a number of attacks inside Syrian territories against Syrian forces and Hezbollah convoys on different occasions. Israel's explanation was that it feared heavy weapons were being transported to Hezbollah and that it wanted to secure its borders. The Syrian government accused Israel of aiding the rebels near the borders whenever the Syrian Army was about to achieve a significant victory in that region.

The Israeli intervention reached its peak in April 2018, when its air forces launched at-

tacks against Syrian airports hosting Iranian generals, killing 11 of them (Haaretz, 2018). Iran retaliated from Syrian soils by launching tens of missiles on Israeli bases in Syrian-occupied Goulan Heights.

Israel's rivalry in the region was highlighted the most by both interviews from "Resistance Axis" as well as the opposition side, considering "the continuation of the problem in the region that hasn't been solve for quite a number of decades which is the Arab-Israeli conflict and this definitely is responsible for a good part of the problems in the region" (interview with Fouad Siniora).

## United States

The United States has considered the Syrian government to be on the opposing camp (along with Iran) long before the Syrian Civil War erupted. Upon the uprising of the rebels, the United States first offered non-military support to the rebels but soon openly admitted to offering weaponry, intelligence, and training worth billions to "moderate" opposition groups. The CIA however has later admitted that training programs approved by then President Obama have failed (Mazzetti et al., 2017).

The United States pressured the Syrian regime politically and economically even before the Syrian crisis and increased its sanctions during the conflict while criticizing the Russian intervention. The American support on one side and the Russian support on the other side made the war seem like a proxy war, especially since the two major international players were competing simultaneously on different grounds and during the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.

The American support also weakened Assad when American forces accused the Syrian forces of using chemical weapons in Damascus and thus threatened to militarily overthrow Assad, leading to the withdrawal of chemical weapons by the Syrian government. The United States used the chemical weapons card again to persuade the Syrian government to compromise again in early 2017. In 2018, following accusations of chemical weapons being used by the Syrian government, the United States, along with its British and French allies, carried out aerial attacks against targets in Syria; however, these only resulted in minor destruction according to the claims of Syrian officials.

Moreover, the Americans led the military coalition against ISIS and provided the strongest support to Kurdish groups and SDF in order to topple ISIS from Raqqa and North East Syria. American forces also constructed military bases near the Iraqi borders to protect and train SDF and other Syrian opposition groups and, in doing so, the

American forces have shot down Syrian jets and attacked pro-Assad groups near the Iraqi borders. America's support for the Kurds had also triggered Turkish worries, as it fears Turkish strength on its borders and also encouraged Turkey to strengthen its ties with Iran and Russia to avoid this threat and secure its interests.

## Russia

### Role in the Conflict

The impact of the Russian intervention was eminent, as a quick look at the change in the control of each of the fighting faction over the Syrian map can illustrate the significant change in the balance of power since the intervention (Figures 6 and 7). Russia entered in a direct military manner in the Syrian war only after four years from the outbreak of the conflict in September 2015. The intervention happened after previous different kinds of diplomatic, financial, and weaponry support and after an official Syrian Presidential request to intervene against "extremist terrorists." The military intervention was mostly carried out in the form of air-strikes and military advising exercised by Russian military officers on the battlefields. For this purpose, Russia set up warplanes in Syrian airbases that were preserved only for Russian forces in addition to deploying forces in the Northern sea ports and establishing Russian bases there.

The triggering moment for Russia to stomp in Syrian mud was after the Syrian President's request, as Russia "entered the Arab Spring and the major fluctuations in the Middle East as a result of the events in around 16 Arab countries especially in Libya where NATO operations happened.. the moment was chosen by the Syrian President when he was in Moscow where he provided an invitation for the Russian President Putin to enter" (interview with Alexander Zaspokin).

This power given to Russia is reflected in its mediation role between the government and the opposition, in which "Russia worked with the Americans to fix and collaborate with the Turks and Iranians in the Astana (Kazakhstan) path" (interview with Alexander Zaspokin).

In addition to the intermediary role and the power to give shares of the pie to the opposition, the Russian allies had their own classification of the opposition groups that is not perfectly aligned with that of the legitimate Syrian authorities. Russian diplomacy, unlike Syrian authorities, did not consider everyone who was holding a weapon to be a terrorist and, as long as a group is willing to sit and talk, they are not terrorists.

Although Russian forces announced they were attacking only extremists, several opposition groups and media agencies accused the Russian air force of attacking civilians and moderate opposition groups, as the UN declared that "Russia and U.S. air strikes caused mass civilian deaths in Syria" (Nebehay, 2018). The effect of the intervention was massive as it happened soon after the Syrian Army received damaging hits while the Russian support allowed it to regain hundreds of settlements and strategic gains, in addition to an effective sky cover for its troops on the ground.

Not only did this support improve the government's position against the rebels but it also empowered the government against other international players who want to topple President Assad. Among those are the Turks, who entered into a serious feud with the Russians over the shoot-down of a Russian jet that almost led to a clash. This allowed the Russians, led by President Putin, to impose sanctions on Turkey and impose its condition on the Syrian airspace against other foreign actors.

In this move, Russia placed itself again against the American efforts to be the major player in the region. As the Americans officially condemned the Syrian government and its allies while supporting what it considered moderate rebels, this put the Russians and Americans in opposite corners of the ring, while the Syrian players carried on a proxy war.

### **Russia's Circumstance at the Time**

Russia entered as a military player in the Syrian Civil War less than two years after the outbreak of its conflict with Ukraine and seizing the Crimea peninsula. The conflict with Ukraine began after Russia lost its influence over the Russian politics and foreign affairs when the pro-Russian former president was overthrown and the parliament restored a constitution that favors the EU and NATO over Russia. As Russia found itself losing more regions under its influence, especially with the formation of GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development that consists of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova, considered as the first direct challenge by these states by Russia to its trade group since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, Russia was witnessing the Arab States' regimes falling or threatened, and its "opponents" (mainly the United States and Western European states) taking advantage to impose, maintain, or strengthen their influence in these countries. As Russia did not directly intervene in places where the Americans and NATO have intervened before, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, this provided the Western allies with an international military advantage, especially by giving them army bases closer to Russia and the oil-rich region. During the last Arab Spring, the United States and its allies also intervened in

Libya and helped in the overthrowing of Gaddafi, while Russia remained an observer, diplomatically criticizing the Americans. Unlike the Americans, Russians' interests were not secured after the fall of Gaddafi regime.

After all these setbacks within the US-Russia tug of war, Russia tried first to use the Egypt civil revolution and the stepping down of former President Mubarak to strengthen its ties with Egypt by inviting the first elected (now-former) President Morsi and trying to create economic deals with the new Egyptian regime. After former President Morsi was put in jail and President Sissi was elected, Russia initiated talks and attempts to strengthen military deals with the new president who jailed their previous potential ally. This indicates that the Russians were not simply looking for a government that shares their ideology but also one that strengthens their presence around the world in a challenge to the American rise of power.

The intervention in the Syrian conflict does not fall out of this context, but indeed it happened due to the incidents, failures, and circumstances that Russia was experiencing and have been briefly described above. In addition to the attempts to challenge and limit the American president in the region, Syria, unlike other countries facing rebellions, was considered as a close ally of Russia and belonging to the opposite camp of the United States. The Syrian Regime has been an enemy of Israel and an ally of the Soviet Union since the 1970s, and due to its alliance with Iran and support to Hezbollah in Lebanon while challenging American orders, it fell under economic and political sanctions. These circumstance and characteristics of Syria made it essential for Russia not only to keep it out of American hands but also to keep it for itself and would thus take any measures, including combat forces intervention.

From an economic perspective, Russia is also seen to be intervening in an attempt to control the gas path from Qatar to Europe "to reach a monopolistic power over the gas supplies in the world" (interview with Fouad Siniora).

### **International Rivalry**

Shortly after World War II ended, two global poles emerged and the nation states and their domestic political groups were divided into their two camps, the USSR camp on one side and the USA camp on the other. The USSR and USA did not fight in a direct combat with their troops but indulged in many proxy wars. Even after the decomposition of the USSR, the Russian Federation remained strong enough to compete with the United States challenging its influential presence in proxy wars in different battle fields around the globe, whether between countries or between different domestic faction in single coun-

tries, especially where Communist parties managed to keep their strength.

The rivalry is still ongoing and can be clearly observed from Russian officials' announcements, considering that "the story of American sabotage and in general the Western, go back to the time of the breakdown of the Soviet Union, and they have served in this breakdown.. (Americans) can work with nationalist radicals, they can work with liberals under democratic slogans and under nationalist slogans, there is no difference the important goal to change the authority or the political approach or destroy the state." and the sectarian conflict in Syria and the region to the American are due to the "ambitions of hegemony by the Americans.. who are managing issues in religious or ethnic entities because it is easier for them from dealing with a national state like we know these countries in this region" (interview with Alexander Zaspikin).

For this purpose, each of the two international powers attempted to retain its allies and strengthen its economic and diplomatic ties with countries that either share a common ideology or a common interest. In this aspect, USA had strong relations with capitalist and liberal countries and Western democracies while Russia built stronger ties with communist and socialist countries, such as China, and the opponents of US Foreign policies, such as Iran, North Korea, and other African and Latin American countries. As Syria is considered a close friend of Iran and Hezbollah in their "Resistance Axis" against what they consider "Imperialist and Zionist Plan" and at the same time, an enemy of Israel, the closest friend of USA, it therefore fits easily on the Russian side of the camp. Additionally, as Russia was battling against the Western Camp in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, while the Americans are trying to take advantage of the "Arab Spring" rebellions (especially in Libya), Russia considered dissolving the Syrian regime and replacing it with an ally of the USA, as further loss to its international dominance continued, especially in the Middle East region.

In this regard, Russians see that the situation is now worse than the Cold War era, that previously there existed some implicit rules, unlike now where there are no rules. Russian foreign policy sees that since the "breakdown of the Soviet Union to the colored revolutions and the attempts to breakdown countries.. American strategy is a long term one, attempting to breakdown national countries and from this side (and) Russia that is practicing an independent approach and is considered in the first line in confronting this American-Western approach" and the attempts to attack Russia are still ongoing in all fields (interview with Alexander Zaspikin). He adds that the Americans "act only according to that the presence of Russia is inappropriate as if this country is barbarian and that they can use anything against it and everything is acceptable."



Although Russians state that the conflict nowadays is not ideological and not between communists and capitalists but is about a matter of values: "an ideology in the sense as we are excited for a certain ideology then no, but a country cannot live without ideology. We call it ideology but what we have is a set of values and they are traditions in the definition of Old Russia, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and today's Russia. On the other hand the Americans consider us as a barbarian country and that their values are higher" (interview with Alexander Zaspokin).

### 3.5.4 Case Analysis

The above subsection attempted to provide all the information behind the war, the players involved, and the relation of each player to the conflict. More specifically, the attention was on the most effective intervening party, Russia, that was able to change the balance of power and drag the line of events to its favor after its ally, the Syrian government, was falling apart slowly.

In this section, I will relate the Russian intervention through its relations with the different players to illustrate the real incentives behind its military intervention. This analysis aims at exemplifying and supporting the theoretical results presented in chapter 1, which highlighted the importance of Ideological Utility as a driver for foreign intervention as well as the effect of the strength/weakness of the government in attracting intervention. In addition to other factors that can have different effects on the outcomes of military intervention.

#### **Ideological Utility**

The definition of ideological utility included the common political interests, the bargaining power, and the utility that provides the intervening entity with a stronger image in the international as well as domestic arena. In the Syrian case, Russia intervened in support of a regime that has been standing for over four decades against American will and was a close ally of the Soviet Union. The threat to the regime was created by extremists Islamists, armed groups with the same ideology as the ones Russia faced on its borders and in the Chechen Republic. Moreover, the opposition to the regime was supported by the United States and since the early stages, the American officials have imposed pressure diplomatically and financially to topple President Assad. All these factors illustrate the closeness in ideology between the Syrian government and the Russian government and the loss that Russia would face in case this regime fell, whether in the hands of extremists or in the hands of American allies in Syria.

Moreover, Russia intervened amid its conflict with Ukraine and diplomatic and economic pressures were imposed on it due to the Crimea conflict. This also happened when President Putin was facing opposition protests in Russia against his rule. The intervention in Syria made Putin the most effective person in the course of the war and a main decision maker. For this reason, Western and Arab players, as sponsors of the armed opposition groups, reached out to Russia in order to initiate negotiation talks between the government and the opposition, while Russia is the main sponsor from the government's side. This again made Russia an important and necessary player in the international arena despite the disagreements in other places, especially when Syria's war was the base for exporting terrorists and terrorism ideology in Europe and other regions of the world.

Even allies of the government admit that what is in common between any alliance of the two, whether the resistance alliance or the other one, is the intersection of interests. In this regard, it is why Russia intervened as it "felt that it is surrounded by the Americans and their allies creating trouble for them, once in Ukraine, another in Georgia, another in some countries of Eastern Europe. Therefore the Russian ambition is the duality ambition with the United States" (interview with Naim Kassem), where this duality cannot be achieved unless they had presence in geo-strategic regions to compete as much as possible.

The view of the self-interests are emphasized by the Russians as "the period after the breakdown of the Soviet Union is related to (Russian) actions in Syria because (Russia has a) long and wide agenda with the Western countries and (it) wants partnership on a shoestring" (interview with Alexander Zaspikin). Intervention in Syria also relates Russia's own national security, as many fighters fighting in Syria might return to cause trouble for Russia on its own land.

For Hezbollah, the main interests in Syria align with the Syrian and Iranian ambitions, as their "presence in Syria is to prevent the United States and its allies from achieving their goal in overthrowing the Syrian regime" (interview with Naim Kassem).

Therefore, all allies of the government indicate that ideological utility was the most crucial factor in forcing them to intervene militarily.

### **Strength of the Government and Negotiation Power**

Although the above conditions for intervention regarding the ideological utility were present since the beginning of the Syrian civil conflict, Russia's intervention was triggered only at a certain critical point. At the beginning of the conflict, the government was able to suppress and to calm the opposition for several months while maintaining a strong im-

age of its ability to win. After many soldiers defected and thousands of foreign Jihadists entered the war arena against the government, cities and villages started to fall one by one and the Syrian army suffered many casualties, which led to great doubts regarding its durability. Soon after, the Syrian regime received military support from Hezbollah, Iraqi militias, and Iranian military advisors. This support was able to strengthen the regime and prolong its dominance, reaching a semi status quo. However, after the ISIS intervention, Turkish strong support for the rebels in the North, and funding to Al-Qaeda groups, the regime and its allies were again suffering huge casualties.

As all Syria's main allies have already put in all efforts and the regime was still at risk, the Russians found themselves facing two options—either just maintain their diplomatic support and watch the Syrian regime fall or intervene with combat power and boost the government's dominance. The Russians chose the latter, which did not only empower President Assad, but granted the Russians an additional power in decision-making and forming deals with the opposition. The Russians created reconciliation offices and announced that they were able to reconcile hundreds of villages back under the Syrian official authority.

Therefore, as the theoretical chapter concluded that third-party allies stomp in the mud when the government reaches a critical point of weakness, the Russians only intervened when the government was weak enough. In Syria, when the "West with the terrorist groups became stronger and started threatening security and stability in all the region and not only in Syria, it was necessary to get Russian support and that is how it happened in 2015 and the jets arrived at the end of 2015" (interview with Faysal Al Mokdad).

A main assumption in the theory chapter is that the intervening parties act as mediators at the beginning and, in Syria, this was confirmed when Russians made efforts to form peaceful deals between the government forces and the opposition armed groups.

Hezbollah also did not have an early decision to enter the conflict, "but when the situation reached a dangerous phase and we felt that the head of the regime is seeking, and also to damage the resistance position of Syria, we were forced to take an incremental decision to enter Syria" (interview with Naim Kassem).

Therefore, the Syrian case supports our theoretical result that foreign allies decide to intervene once the government is too weak to fight alone. In addition, this provides the allies with a mediation power, as predicted by the theoretical approach.

## Share of the Pie and Rebels' Type

The theoretical research concluded that a share of the pie, represented by authority, governmental seats, rights, or decision-making power is offered to the rebels depending on the rebels' strength. Stronger rebels are expected to request higher shares and therefore if the government is aware of the real strength of the rebels, it can settle the conflict. This is dependent on the government not being able to reach a decisive victory with bearable costs or when governments are unaware of the real strength of the rebels and offer them a non-satisfactory share then conflict resumes.

At the beginning of the protests, the government forces in Syria responded with violence to suppress the uprising. The government was expecting that the opposition will be threatened and fall shortly because, for over three decades, there was no organized opposition receiving training or weapons. Therefore, the government had no incentive to compromise or give anything to the opposition in return for surrendering.

Few months after the civil protests, army officers and soldiers started defecting and the opposition started getting stronger, yet not strong enough to overthrow the regime and "the weapons were ready in the bordering governorates of Syria and in big amounts, and the plans were ready" (interview with Faysal Al Mokdad). Moreover, within a year, Al-Qaeda, through its Al-Nusra faction, entered alongside the opposition to challenge the government. The government started feeling the threat and, in 2014, it held a presidential election, which was the first presidential election in the history of Syria that had more than one candidate. This election can be considered the first instance of offering the pie by the government, as it noted the opposition is stronger.

Soon after, President Assad proposed an amended constitution, aiming for more democratic life in the country, in an action that exhibited compromise and willingness to share the pie after being confronted with a stronger-than-expected opposition. In addition, President Assad offered general public pardon for armed Syrian fighters on many occasions if they surrendered. These offers continued as the Prime Minister position was offered for the first time to a politician from the opposition, Riad Hijab, who later fled to Syria.

All these compromises that the government made were only done after three years of the uprising and only when the opposition proved to be strong enough to threaten the sovereignty of the country. When Russia intervened, it took over the deal-making initiative, and agreements were recorded between the Russian foreign policy officials and Syrian opposition. Some of the talks were made on Russian soil when opposition figures

were invited to Moscow to discuss peace talks. In addition, Russia initiated talks with the United States, Arab Gulf States, and Turkey while also bringing these player close to Iran and Iraq. The Russians also opened administrative offices in Syria that reached out to hundreds of villages in attempts to establish cease-fires, offering opposition strongholds peaceful agreements and domestic authority in return of their surrender.

Both Syrian and Russian concessions were only offered due to the increasing strength of the opposition, as they didn't propose the same offers when the opposition seemed weaker. In alignment with the theoretical approach, this behavior of the government's ally indicates that the strength of the rebels, when observable, can affect the share of the pie that is offered in return for seizing their rebellion.

### **Cost of War**

One of the propositions introduced is that an increase in the cost of war hinders intervention of foreign players. In the Syrian case, although Russia intervened with its army, it has put most of its efforts in air-strikes and in fewer cases that used the navy to launch rockets against ISIS. This implies that Russia intervened in a way to reduce as much as possible its human casualties in terms of soldiers while keeping the Syrian regime strong enough.

Also, as diplomatic pressures from the international community were always an option for Russia's opponents, Russia only intervened when an official request was sent by President Assad and only after ISIS captured control over a significant piece of land, especially oil-rich areas. These two conditions provided the necessary legitimacy for a Russian intervention, especially after ISIS and other rebel groups were considered as terrorist organizations by the international community. This kind of legitimate intervention allowed Russia to avoid economic and diplomatic costs.

When the fighting reached its last stages, with Idlib being the last governorate under the authority of the opposition groups, Russia initiated talks with Turkey and Iran to guarantee cooperation before entering the last battle. Although Russia can reach a decisive victory against the groups in Idlib, it has hesitated and considered cooperating with Turkey in order to reduce the cost of having an open border for the groups, therefore entailing higher cost for Russia to eliminate them.

Russia is not the only foreign player that decreased its intervention with increased costs. The United States openly admitted to providing half a billion USD in support of the rebels and, as soon as this cost seemed to be insufficient, the Americans ended the

training program. The Iranians and Turks also did not intervene with all their potential, as the deeper they went, the more casualties they suffered. Instead, they mobilized local factions and trained them to do the military job for them. In this way, they reduced their casualties along with decreasing economic and diplomatic sanctions.

The cost of war therefore can affect the decision of intervention as well as the decision of to what extent to intervene and how much to compromise.

### **Humanitarian Perspective**

Around half-million people have been killed in the Syrian Civil War, a number that equals to the populations of countries such as Iceland, Maldives, and Luxembourg. In addition, over seven million have been internally displaced and over five million refugees have left Syria. Despite this huge number, no UN peacekeeping troops have been sent to Syria, and the foreign governmental armies participating in combats are the Russians in the first place and followed by more minor parts for Americans, Turks, and Iranians.

Neither of these interventions occurred due to a certain threshold in casualties or refugees. All the announced reasons for intervention were political. The Russians announced their intervention due to official request from the Syrian President and also to destroy the terrorists. The Americans also announced their intervention as due to the democratic needs for the Syrians against what they considered a tyrant oppressing their people.

The Syrian case thus is another example of how humanitarian costs have not been a main factor in driving foreign intervention but ideological utility and personal interest have.

## **3.6 Case-Comparison and Discussion**

After the in-depth study of the two cases and examining the incentives for military intervention in each case, it is crucial to draw patterns and compare the two cases to analyze the different conditions and factors (Tarrow, 2010; Eisenhardt, 1991).

The pre-conditions of the conflict are different between Yemen and Syria. In Yemen, the major rebel group today, the Houthis, have been in power in the past and were sharing power with the government when the civil crisis began. On the other hand, the armed groups in Syria had no domestic political presence, as Syria has been ruled by one political party through the past five decades (Baath Party). However, both states suffered from

harsh economic and humanitarian conditions before the outbreak of the rebellions, and both governments were accused of being authoritarian and corrupt.

The rebel groups in Yemen and Syria are of different types. In Syria, several armed groups consist of groups affiliated with general extremist ideologies that are cross-borders (Al-Qaeda and ISIS) and therefore include an abundance of foreign fighters. In addition, armed groups in Syria are directly affiliated with foreign states that support them explicitly and opens borders with them (Turkey, Israel, Jordan) while other groups are directly cooperating with foreign powers (Kurdish Forces in North Syria). On the other hand, the rebel groups in Yemen are all Yemenis. Rebels' groups in Yemen are accused of receiving support from Iran, but both Iran and the rebel groups deny any military cooperation and claim that the support is only political.

With regards to relations with the foreign ally of the government, the two cases also present different histories. While Syria had historically good relations since the Russian Empire and Empress Katrina (as indicated by both the Russian Ambassador and the Syria Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs) and through the Cold War until Putin's Russia, Yemen has had different kinds of relations with Saudi Arabia. Yemen was already split between two states (North and South) and had fluctuating relations with Saudi Arabia, which itself is a relatively newly established monarchy since 1932.

When it comes to the foreign players involved in the conflict, the Syrian case shows a larger number of third parties on both sides of the conflict. Russia and Iran, being major states, supported the Syrian government in addition to armed groups, such as Hezbollah and Iraqi militias, while the United States, Turkey, Israel, and Arab States supported different opposition groups. In the Yemeni case, however, the number of players were fewer, as only the Saudi-led coalition was militarily supporting the regime while no third-party was *openly* supporting the rebels in a military manner at least.

The Yemen and Syria cases have attempted to explore the factors behind third party intervention and to exemplify the self-motivated interests of third parties involved in civil conflicts in line with the theoretical approach presented in chapter 2. By proving the importance of ideological utility in incentivizing third-party intervention, the two cases exhibited similar behavior. Both Saudi Arabia and Russia entered in civil conflicts in order to preserve their geo-strategic and dominance interests. More specifically, Saudi Arabia is paying high costs to empower and return an overthrown fled president because a change in regime in Yemen would mean that Houthis, who are supported by Iran, which is Saudi's rival in the region, would gain power and hence diminish Saudi geo-strategic power and influence. In the Syria's case, Russia decided to stomp in Syrian mud to pre-

serve a regime that was about to fall into the hands of mostly extremist factions and armed groups supported by Russia's rivals. The fall of a regime that has been historically providing privileges to the Russians in the region would be a great loss for Russia's international image in its geo-strategic and economic competition.

In both conflicts, the president had to go himself to the foreign state and request direct intervention. This action reflects that weakness of the regime that was in desperate requirement of its foreign allies to remain in power. In addition, the sequence of events also shows that this step gave the upper hand in decision-making to the foreign intervening party over the internal government, even in domestic decisions. Both governments of Yemen and Syria were undermined by Saudi Arabia and Russia respectively. Saudi Arabia in Yemen was the one orchestrating the intensity of the war and designing conditions for the Houthis to stop the war. On the other hand, Russia was leading negotiations with other foreign powers regarding the settlement agreements and had the power to accept or reject agreements.

However, although both cases showed the importance of geo-strategic and economic interests for the third parties, the two cases demonstrated different behavior after the third parties entered the conflict. In the Syrian case, Russia acted a mediator between the government and the rebel groups and was able to settle deals for "de-escalation zones." This was in line with the theoretical assumptions about the initial first role of a third party that wishes to decrease its cost of war while maintaining the regime in power. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia acted differently after intervening and did not act as a mediator. The conflict turned into a direct cross-border conflict, where Houthis were able to launch attacks inside Saudi territories and were able to launch rockets into Saudi cities.

The difference in the mediation role between the two cases can be the result of different factors. First, Saudi Arabia's cost of Houthis captured power in Yemen is crucial to its own national security and domestic stability. The national security of Saudi Arabia will be threatened if Iran's allies in Yemen took control and posed consistent military threat. In addition, if Houthis were able to defeat Saudi Arabia, this would encourage the Shiaa minority in Saudi Arabia, which is unsatisfied with the current Saudi regime. In addition, another victory for Iran's allies in Yemen would also weaken Saudi Arabia in the region and will take away its dominance and effect on other states in the region. Moreover, Yemen, which is considered to be the backyard of Saudi Arabia, has an important economic place for Saudi Arabia because it also overlooks the Bab-el-mandeb straight. On the other hand, if the Syrian regime was overthrown, Russia will indeed suffer the price of losing its privileges in the region, but a cost not as high as the Saudis would have to pay if they lost Yemen. If the Syrian regime was replaced by a pro-West group, it would mean



another lost battle in the competition with the United States. This also implies loss in economic gas benefits and a geo-strategic loss by losing its only gate to the Mediterranean. However, this loss can be bearable to Russia, as Syria does not share borders with Syria and therefore has no direct national security impact. Moreover, a change in the regime in Syria, unlike in the Yemeni case, would not crucially affect Russia's domestic balance of power.

Another reason for the difference in behavior by Saudi Arabia and Russia can be the lack of experience. Since World War II, Russia has been involved in direct confrontations and also in intervening in civil conflicts. Russia, which was once leading the global politics along with the United States, has gained more experience in arranging agreements and coordinating with other players. On the other hand, the intervention in Yemen was Saudi Arabia's first war since the establishment of the Kingdom by the Saudi family. The conflict took place after the newly appointed young Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman rose to power and had a direct effect on the course of the conflict and Saudi Arabia's actions. Last, as some interviewees stated, the actions of Saudi Arabia could be due to American pressures and instructions and, therefore, Saudi actions are not typical of what a third party would rationally do.

Finally, although both conflicts have witnessed a high number of casualties, the case study showed that the military intervention that took place was not associated with the humanitarian costs due to the ongoing war. The cases demonstrated how intervention was for political and economic gains rather than saving lives.

To this end, the Syria and Yemen case show that, although the two conflicts differed in history of the state, nature of the domestic factions, pre-conditions of the conflict, and relations with the foreign allies, both cases faced similar dynamics of intervention. Indeed, Saudi Arabia did not act as a mediator between the government and rebels; however, both Saudi Arabia and Russia intervened due to the geo-strategic, economic, and national security interests. Both third-parties intervened when the government was on the brink of collapsing that required the personal presence of the president in the foreign state to request intervention. In both cases, this request led to a third party with stronger decision-making power than the domestic government.

In line with the theoretical hypotheses, the comparison between the two cases therefore reveals the importance of self-interest factors, such as *ideological utility*, in driving intervention. In addition, the patterns of interventions demonstrate the significance of *government weakness* in motivating third parties to stomp in the mud when their interests are threatened.

### 3.7 Conclusion

This case study research has attempted to answer the question of "Why do third-parties intervene in intrastate conflicts?" through exemplifying the theoretical results in the previous chapter. In addition to exemplifying the theoretical results, this chapter attempted to explore the mechanism of intervention and answer the *How* question using the qualitative features of the study.

The main theoretical outcomes suggested that ideological utility, defined as the utility for third-parties realized through the privileges offered by domestic governments, is the main driver for intervention. Ideological utility drives the intervening party seeking geo-strategic power, regional dominance as well as economic and security benefits. In addition to ideological utility, the theoretical results demonstrated that government strength/weakness is crucial for intervention and serves to determine the critical point for this intervention. Other factors, such as cost of war and type of rebels, also have significant roles in determining the behavior of the third-party in such interventions. On the other hand, the theoretical model assumed that humanitarian concerns had minimal effect on the possibility of intervention.

Along these lines set in the theoretical piece, this study showed how interventions in civil wars were based mainly on ideological utility and the closeness of foreign actors to the domestic factions. Interventions were by the great powers in a race for global and regional domination. Despite the differences in the conditions prior to the conflict, as each of Syria and Yemen had a different history owing to their establishment and different relations with foreign players, they both experienced similar pattern of intervention. Both cases showed that ideological utility was the main driver for intervention and that the intervention took place when the government was at its weakest point.

For foreign players, when a government of their same ideology falls, they will suffer a high cost in ideological utility and therefore would keep putting efforts in that government's conflict to retain its power. The additional military effort to support foreign governments is hindered by diplomatic and economic costs that push foreign allies to find ways to decrease these costs while maintaining their interests. Intervention also appears to occur on the side of governments when they approach defeat and their strength is not high enough to continue ruling. Therefore, the weaker a government is, the higher the chance of it receiving support from foreign players that share the same ideology or face the same enemy.

Since weaker governments were more likely to receive foreign military support from

foreign allies, they were therefore more willing to make compromises and allowing their strong foreign allies to take initiatives on their land, especially in formulating deals with the opposition. This allowed the foreign allies to offer shares of the pie, whether in land, governmental seats, or power to the opposition. The offers were mainly made dependent on the rebels' strength, where stronger rebels received bigger shares. When the shares were equivalent to the oppositions' strengths, the two fighting factions were able to reach a peaceful agreement; however, when the opposition believed it is strong enough to fight and acquire a bigger piece of the pie, the fighting resumed.

Although both conflicts witnessed high number of casualties, reaching tens of thousands in Yemen and hundreds of thousands in Syria, intervention did not seem to correlate with humanitarian purposes. Therefore, intervention for self-interest also showed to be prominent over intervention for peace-keeping missions without favoring one faction over the other. The numbers of casualties, refugees, and destruction was not efficient or interesting enough for foreign players to intervene. Only the number of refugees with their economic and security effects was in some cases triggering for neighboring countries. In addition, when rebellions in neighboring countries had a potential effect on out breaking a rebellion in a neighboring country, intervention was more likely.

To this end, one must be aware of the real intentions of players in wars in order to evaluate the legitimacy of a military intervention. As shown in this research, interventions are mostly carried out to support a fighting faction based on its "ideology" regardless of the righteous causes and humanitarian background. Geopolitical dominance, national security, and economic benefits play a crucial role in the intervention decision-making process. This kind of intervention does not lead to less casualties but, on the contrary, as a foreign intervening party would want to stay in control of a weak governments' decision-making power, they will prolong the fighting and therefore raise the humanitarian cost for all sides. Global superpowers will continue to seek more international dominance as long as there are domestic groups in different states aiming for power and willing to adopt a similar ideology with the global superpowers. This will happen as long as the diplomatic and economic costs on military intervention is not high enough. A more peace-seeking approach for intervention to end of civil wars could be done by allying the major superpowers together in a simple campaign based on international assemblies and humanitarian organizations' recommendations.

Although there is plenty of room for further case studies, it is still an important step to look and compare all historical context of civil conflicts after World War II. Another important feature of this study is to examine and compare the two cases of ongoing civil conflicts in one of the tensest regions of the world, the Middle East. The Yemeni case has

been neglected due to political reasons where many media outlets in the Middle East are affiliated with Saudi Arabia and other states in its coalition, leading to a lack of information about the events occurring from different perspectives. The qualitative study at hand looks at this case carefully and discusses the roles and alliances between all stakeholders using semi-structured interviews with experts and politicians on both sides of the conflict. The Syrian case studied here also allowed for the exploration of the conflict in a way to simplify the complicated details of the conflict. The Syrian case can be considered one of the complicated intrastate conflicts due to the direct and indirect involvement of many foreign players and the complexity of alliance, where rivals are supposedly fighting same groups (USA, Russia, Iran, and others fighting Al-Qaeda), while, in some cases, allies support different groups (USA supporting the Kurds, while USA's ally Turkey is supporting other groups against the Kurds). Therefore, in addition to its theoretical and scholarly value, this research can be a useful reference for inquiries on the two studied cases.

In the next chapter, a quantitative approach will be utilized to test the theoretical results through a multinomial logistic regression looking at all cases of civil wars since 1945. The following chapter will aim at complementing the first two chapters and providing further evidence for the incentives of third-party intervention in civil conflicts.

### 3.8 Annex

List of Interviewees - Syria			
	Name	Position	Date of Interview
1	Fouad Siniora	Lebanese Prime Minister 2005 - 2009	29/08/2018
2	Faysal Al Mokdad	Syrian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs	28/02/2018
3	Alexander Zaspeskin	Russian Ambassador to Lebanon	19/12/2017
4	Muhammad FathAli	Iranian Ambassador to Lebanon	13/01/2018
5	Adnan Mansour	Lebanese Minister of Foreign Affairs 2011 - 2014	05/09/2018
6	Nazih Mansour	Lebanese Deputy in the Parliament 1996 - 2005	31/08/2018
7	Naim Kassem	Deputy Secretary General of Hezbollah	11/01/2018
8	Interviewee X	Delegate at International NGO in Iraq	01/09/2018
9	Filippo Dionigi	Lecturer of politics and international relations (ME Affairs) at Bristol University	10/07/2018
10	Zeina Khodr	News Reporter on Syria (Al-Jazeera)	31/07/2018

List of Interviewees - Yemen			
	Name	Position	Date of Interview
1	Fouad Siniora	Lebanese Prime Minister 2005 - 2009	29/08/2018
2	Adnan Mansour	Lebanese Minister of Foreign Affairs 2011 - 2014	05/09/2018
3	Nazih Mansour	Lebanese Deputy in the Parliament 1996 - 2005	31/08/2018
4	Ibrahim Al-Dulaimy	Member of Revolutionary Council by Ansar Allah	12/01/2018
5	Muhammad FathAli	Iranian Ambassador to Lebanon	13/01/2018
6	Interviewee Y	Delegate at International NGO in Yemen	02/09/2018
7	Ohannes Geukjian	Professor of Political Studies and Conflict Resolution - Chair of Political Studies and Public Administration Department at the American University of Beirut	24/08/2018
8	Ali Chahine	Facilitator and trainer in conflict resolution in Yemen	14/09/2018
9	Farea Al-Muslimi	Yemени Scholar and International Relations Expert	15/09/2018
10	Yasser Al Khairo	Director of Al-nour Strategic Studies	18/08/2018



## Chapter 4

# Incentives for Intervention in Civil Wars: Quantitative Evidence for Ideological Utility

### 4.1 Introduction

Civil conflicts have dominated the war scenes since the end of World War II, leading to millions of casualties and refugees around the world. Military interventions by great powers have occurred in the majority of these conflicts, where a significant change in the outcome of wars was realized between cases of intervention and cases of no intervention. As most interventions were in support of the government, the percentage of government victories increased from 17 percent to 35 percent when an intervention by a great power took place. On the other hand, the outcomes in which the rebels ended up being victorious decreased from 27 to 19 percent when an intervention by a great power took place between 1944 and 2010 (Figure 1). Moreover, as one might predict, interventions have decreased post-Cold War; the data shows that the percentage of great power interventions have increased from 53 percent from the period between 1944 and 1990 to 59 percent in the period between 1990 to 2010.

As the role of the international community has increased and the world is led by one pole in the West, the number of peacekeeping missions in civil conflicts have increased from 24 percent to 42 percent after the end of the Cold War. This increase has also been parallel with the increase in truces and settlements from 42 percent to 84 percent in major civil wars. However, the real incentives of intervention are still in doubt as the number of deaths have not been correlated with intervention missions. In addition, interventions have mostly been in support of governments against rebellions, typically leading to a decisive victory for the government. Therefore, these interventions have not necessarily



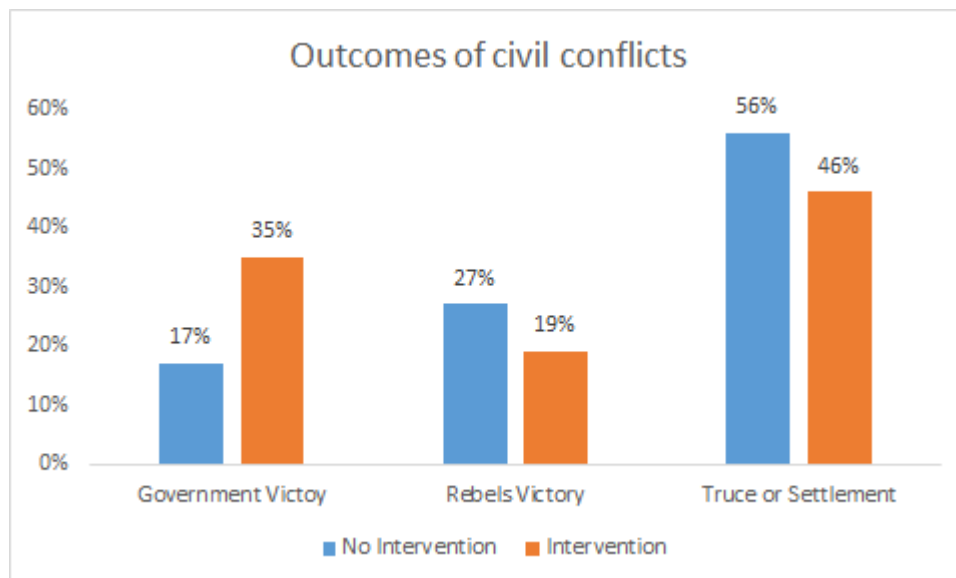


Figure 4.1: Outcomes of Civil Conflicts. Data source: UCDP, 2019

been in favor of democratic freedom of political will.

Grasping the important role of military interventions, the aim of this research is to complement the theoretical and qualitative approaches in previous chapters to provide statistical evidence on the real incentives for intervention. This work uses diverse data from different sources to support the hypotheses that the chances of supportive intervention increase when there is ideological similarity and when the ally is too weak to win on its own. In addition, the study supports the claim that intervention does not necessary happen due to humanitarian needs, economic prosperity, ethnic similarities, or democratic reforms.

During the Cold War, the two major powers, the United States of America (USA) and the Soviet Union (USSR), intervened in various ways to support groups that were aligned with their ideology. In some cases, these interventions were carried out through financial and diplomatic support, while in other cases, they were brought about through direct military intervention, by sending troops and launching attacks. The USA feared a domino effect, thining that the fall of a regime in favor of communist parties might lead to strengthening the communist camp, leading to more regimes changing in different regions. The USSR, on the other hand, was trying to take advantage of the initial momentum to strengthen its geostrategic presence around the globe and to maintain it by the end of the twentieth century. These kinds of interventions led to the outbreak of several rebellions, and interventions from either side took place regardless of humanitarian and developmental motives. However, by the end of the Cold War, and with the rise of the

"peace enforcement" missions by the UN and the American slogans for a free and peaceful world it was expected that biased military interventions would decrease. This change has correlated with a decrease in decisive victories, from 58 percent to 15 percent, after the Cold War, along with fewer government victories.

In most cases, superpowers intervene in order to pursue their political, geostrategic, and security goals while decreasing the costs, hence fighting in proxy wars. As civil wars, due to the security dilemma and especially the high costs of wars of attrition, rarely end without intervention, it is important to understand the dynamics of such interventions, especially when undertaken by superpowers who can either tilt the balance of power in a decisive manner or provide guarantees to solve the security dilemma.

In the next section, the study will provide a review of the literature on the importance of intervention and the main factors leading to intervention. The third section will revisit the theory results in chapter one. Section four introduces the methodology, data, and its sources. The fifth section will present the statistical results. The sixth section will highlight the main findings of the results and interpret them. Section seven will draw the main policy implications of the findings. The last section will conclude with the final remarks, main findings, and prospects for future research.

## 4.2 Existing Literature

The following section is on the importance of intervention on the course of civil conflicts and on the different drivers of interventionist behavior that lead to different results of intervention. In this regard, there have been several methods used by scholars to explain the incentives and impacts of intervention, including theoretical and quantitative approaches. This section will focus more on the empirical studies in this field with referencing of relevant theoretical work and case studies.

### 4.2.1 Impact and Importance of Intervention

Before looking at the incentives and factors leading to intervention, it is important to explain the impact of intervention. The crucial effects of intervention have been reflected in the literature, showing how such a change in the balance of power, or even the mere expectation of a change in the balance of power, can lead to longer wars, more genocides, and more domestic looting by foreign actors. On the other hand, others have argued that humanitarian and peacekeeping interventions can, under certain conditions, lead to

long-lasting peace.

Abundant research has discussed how the expectation of a foreign intervention in support of the rebels can encourage rebel groups (Rowland and Carment, 1998; Jenne, 2004; Kuperman, 2006; Grigoryan, 2010a). Kuperman (2008) argues that intervention causes an insurance problem that encourages rebels to even take advantage of massacres. Fortna et al. (2018) use empirical data on civil conflicts to show that groups with external sources of financing, such as foreign state support, may be more likely to engage in terrorism.

On the other hand, an opposing branch of literature has argued that the moral hazard is only a threat under limited conditions (Kydd and Straus, 2013) and in some cases has no impact on the likelihood of the conflict but only on the terms of agreement (Cetinyan, 2002).

In addition to leading to more genocides and terrorist attacks, intervention, due to the change in the distribution of power, can also lead to prolonging the civil conflicts. Fearon (2003) argues that an exogenous shock, such as foreign intervention, can shift the distribution of power in favor of the losing side, and if this additional power is not enough to fully tilt the balance, then it will only make it harder for either side to reach a decisive victory.

However, if the intervention was aimed at peacekeeping, the result can be a longer duration of peace after war. Fortna (2003) uses empirical data to show that in both civil wars and interstate wars, peace lasts longer when peacekeepers are present than when belligerents are left on their own. In this regard, she shows that the United National Security Council Chapter VII enforcement missions have not been as effective at maintaining peace and may even be detrimental to stable peace.

As for the enforcement of peacekeeping missions, Doyle and Sambanis (2000) argue that international peace-building can improve the prospects that a civil war will be resolved. However, these peace-building strategies will only be effective if designed to address particular conflicts and, to a lesser extent, the use of broad parameters that fit most conflicts. In their quantitative study, they show that UN peacekeeping is positively correlated with democratization processes after a civil war, and multilateral enforcement operations are usually successful in ending violence.

Doyle and Sambanis (2006), however, use the Bosnia and Somalia cases to show how peace enforcement amounts to "war-making", and they use the case of Rwanda to show how the United Nations failed even to attempt the exercise of force. Their study un-

dervalued the effectiveness of international organizations like the UN to enforce peace or intervene violently in most civil conflicts that emerged after the Cold War. Their central claim is that successful and unsuccessful efforts depend on the environment and external factors in the postwar civil peace.

Chapman and Wolford (2010) argue that the role of international players is crucial. Each decision by the international community, whether to intervene militarily or peacefully with one of the two fighting sides or to simply stay out, will have a different effect on the cost of war for the challenger (Chapman and Wolford, 2010). IOs' support for the challenger, for example, will decrease the cost by alleviating potential international opposition and providing political cover (Fang, 2008; Thompson, 2006).

Although several authors have criticized intervention for being a hypocritical act by the West (Chomsky, 1999; Bandow, 2000), there have been others who advocated for intervention by independent states for humanitarian reasons (Bass, 2008; Wheelere, 2000; Finnemore, 2003). Bass (2008) pushes for intervention to solve conflicts and, after a summary of the history of intervention, realizes that the world can be divided into "spheres of humanitarian interest" and "free and unfree countries" where states have historically intervened to protect minorities and vulnerable groups. His main motive in making these arguments is to highlight the failure to stop the massacres in Rwanda and Bosnia due to the hesitation in military intervention. However, Bass does not consider that the same democracies that practice freedom of speech domestically can be oppressive or support dictatorships abroad.

Jervis and Snyder (1999) also advocate for intervention to end civil wars based on the security dilemma concerns, saying that civil wars rarely end without intervention. Their main claim is that when the third-parties are strong, they can provide credible promises to all factions to remain peaceful and not be oppressed. However, they do not consider that the intervener might not know how to act best in the context of other countries' domestic affairs. Jervis and Snyder agree that for an intervention to be successful in ending war, the international community should agree on a plan for post-intervention that includes warring groups in an institutionalized framework that guarantees each one's survival. The intervention must be multilateral: to guarantee credibility to both parties, to decrease resources and make it more effective, to make sure that if one retreated, then others can remain, and to avoid looting. They show that if the intervener supporting the opposition did not provide enough power to overthrow the government, this will only increase the intensity of war.

Lastly, even among researchers who criticized the historical trend of intervention, there

were recommendation on how to keep it but amend interventions in civil conflicts. Fearon (1999) uses the Somalia case study in his book to criticize intervention and show the best ways to make it more efficient. He argues that the role of international intervention in the war of attrition is to support the strongman (without giving prizes) so others lose the will to fight. The next step would be to build institutional democracy under the strongman's authority and keep the international police to monitor cease fire for the long term. These policy recommendations are aligned with the case studies in this dissertation in which intervention led to more peaceful results.

#### 4.2.2 *Dynamics and Incentives of Intervention*

After understanding the important impact of foreign intervention on civil wars, it is essential to explain the motives behind this kind of intervention. Snyder (1991) discusses the domestic incentives for intervention, relating it to the type of governance as policy makers in democratic regimes have higher cost due to internal criticism of going to war. "Cartelized" governments, however, can divide the cost on the public while getting the revenues for the few on top of the regime. Snyder (2008) argues that with unipolarity, the costs of intervention have decreased and this gave a free hand to the United States after the end of the Cold War. He argues that strategic ideology and domestic politics play a main role in driving states to intervene in other countries' matters. In this regard, the USA is trying to impose its ideology, liberalism, by imposing its vision on other countries and the global system. Krasner (1978) agrees that ideology can become the critical determinant of foreign policy, and thereby the actions done by any state on foreign ground are all due to the imposition of the strong pole's ideology. Walt (1997) also supports this claim by showing that revolutionary states are prone to a highly ideological form of foreign relations, conflict-provoking images of their adversaries, and a comparatively painful process of "socialization" to the realities of the international balance of power system.

A similar approach that shows the self-related interests of intervening powers is highlighted by San-Akca (2009), who argues that state support is a function of the states' vulnerability in extracting and mobilizing resources to secure their borders. This explanation is in contrast to the conception that weak or failed states provide the largest pool of resources to Non-state Armed Groups (NAGs), the relatively strong states still prevail as their most fervent supporters. The preliminary evidence also suggests that NAGs serve as substitutes for allies. San-Akca (2013) later argues that strong states support NAGs because they are not happy with the status-quo and when the NAGs operate against the foreign player's rival. She tests this hypothesis with empirical data to show that foreign powers indeed support enemies of their enemies, regardless of humanitarian motives but

in a bigger ideological war. This happens also because foreign states take advantage of ongoing civil conflicts that put constraints on governments to retaliate outside their borders. Hence, the main two factors behind intervention are rivalry and ideological ties (San-Akca, 2016).

On the external reasons for intervention, Kuperman (2008) highlights the emerging norm of "responsibility to protect", which causes the moral hazard problem by raising expectations of diplomatic and military intervention to protect rebel groups, unintentionally fostering rebellions. Bosnia and Kosovo illustrate that in at least two recent cases, the moral-hazard hypothesis explains why members of a vulnerable group rebelled and thereby triggered genocidal retaliation. Most brutal state violence occurs only when members of a vulnerable group acquire arms and challenge a state's authority, prompting the state to retaliate disproportionately (Fein, 1990; Harff and Gurr, 1988; Kuperman, 2005; Valentino et al., 2004). Even groups suffering discrimination do not launch rebellions if they do not have the guarantee of foreign support (Fearon and Laitin, 1996, 2003; Gurr, 2000). Hence, the emerging norm resembles an imperfect strategy by the international community to stop civil conflicts.

Another supporter of intervention based on the noble motives of the intervener is Bass (2008), who argues that strong, free countries with humanitarian purposes intervene to save vulnerable groups in unfree countries. Woodward (2017), on the other hand, discusses the classified "states failure" that is used by external powers to justify their interventions. Woodward explains that this classification shows that the mere purpose of intervention is political and ideological. He explains that this method of classification leads to ignoring that countries facing conflicts vary significantly among each other and therefore need different types of approaches.

### 4.3 Revisiting Theory

Chapter one provided a theoretical view on the main incentives for third-party interventions in intrastate conflicts. The main results of the study showed that third parties intervene due to the ideological utility associated with the government in power. It is noteworthy to mention here that the term "ideological utility" here is different from the common notion of ideology by Costalli and Ruggeri (2015; 2017) who argue that ideologies play a crucial role in mobilizing people for civil conflicts. Ideological utility is defined as the privileges that the foreign actor receives when a government of the same political orientation is in power. The crucial concern for the ally of the government will therefore be to avoid any loss in such utility if the regime was overthrown and replaced by

a regime of a different orientation. The theory predicts that great powers have a higher tendency to be involved in intrastate conflicts as they are more concerned with geopolitical presence and domination.

In addition to the above, the theory shows that allies of governments intervene when the domestic regime is weak and on the brink of collapsing. This happens because that is when the endangered government is willing to give part of its internal and external decision-making power to its foreign allies. The theory assumes that in order to limit potential costs of intervention, third parties first try to work as mediators with the rebels, especially after gaining internal decision making powers. The above results of the theoretical studies are further studies and are exemplified in chapter two, using the cases of Yemen and Syria. Both the theory chapter and the case studies emphasize the lack of humanitarian concern for third parties that intervene militarily.

This chapter aims at further supporting the theoretical hypotheses and propositions by showing consistent statistical results from all civil wars that took place after the Second World War, in order to test for the following:

*Hypothesis 1: Third-players intervene militarily in support of governments when they associate high ideological utility with the regime*

*Hypothesis 2: Weaker governments attract more military support from their foreign allies*

*Proposition 1: Superpowers are more inclined to intervene in civil conflicts*

## 4.4 Methodology

### 4.4.1 Data

The aim of this study is to understand the effective factors that lead third-players to intervene in civil conflicts and therefore understand the real aims for intervention. The dataset used includes data on more than 150 civil wars from 58 different countries between the years 1944 and 2016. Data on intervention was collected from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) at the department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University and the Centre for the Study of Civil War at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) (Allanson et al., 2017; Harbom et al., 2007). This data includes information on all civil conflicts from 1946 to 2016. However as the data included extra-systematic and interstate conflicts, these cases were dropped since we are only interested in conflicts that

are initially between governments and domestic rebel groups. In addition, as the dataset included all conflicts regardless of the number of casualties, only cases with high intensity fighting that resulted in at least 1000 deaths were kept. This was done especially because military interventions would have a negligible chance of happening if the fighting is minimal with civilian protests only. The saturated data in our study was kept with conflicts only between the government on one side and the opposition as one side on the other. Therefore the outside military players were listed as supporters of one of the two fighting factions. Intervention in our sample is only if the support was in direct military intervention whether through air raids or boots on the ground.

The main dependent variable in the study is the probability of having an intervention in a civil conflict. Data from UCDP offered information on the foreign states that intervened in intrastate conflicts. The data included the name of the intervener and the side it supported. For the purpose of the research question at hand, Data on the identity of the intervener were coded to study the different impacts on the different types of interveners where three different possibilities were included: 1) USA and its allies. 2) Russia/USSR and its allies. 3) Other non superpower-related states. Allies of the United States were identified when the United States was in the same coalition with the intervening state during the year that these states have intervened in a conflict. For this purpose allies of the United States were state members of NATO. As for the Russian allies, states that were in the communist or socialist camp during the Cold War were considered in the same group type as Russia if the intervention happened during the Cold War. These countries include Nasser's Egypt intervening in Yemen in 1960s and Cuba intervention in Angola in 1970s. Other states that do not have a formal alliance and were not part of the proxy war during the Cold War were included in the third type of "Other" interveners group.

The reason for categorizing interveners is to study the effect of each independent variable on the possibility of having a different kind of intervention. As the data allows us to observe on which side the intervention happens, the regressions will test whether each of the factors affects intervention differently between the government and the rebels. This will also provide an insight on the different triggers for the different types of third-parties.

Since the main hypothesis of this study is that military intervention happens when the third-player finds a similarity in ideology and general political interests, the main independent variable used is the 'agreement' with states variable based on the updated version used by Voeten et al. (2013).  $AgreeX_i$  measures that ratio of agreement between state  $i$  and state X. The variable is based on the United Nations General Assembly Voting Data to generate an estimate for the similarity in votes between the years 1945 to 2015. Since we are interested in the effect of agreement between the government and the super-



powers, and not the opposite, the agreement variable was lagged one year. In other words to avoid endogeneity, we looked at the effect of  $AgreeX_i$  in year  $t - 1$  on the possibility of intervention  $interv$  in year  $t$ .

The theoretical chapter reached a conclusion that direct military interventions happen when the government reaches a weakness point that it cannot survive the rebellion and therefore is willing to give its decision making power to an outside ally to save her. This encourages foreign players that associate ideological utility with the government especially that without their intervention the regime will change and their privileges will be lost. To test for government strength we used variables on military strength from Correlates of War Project (COW). Military strength was calculated in the number of soldiers and expenditure on weapons (Moaz, 2019 forthcoming).

In this regard military strength was measured by the USD expenditure by governments on weapons and the army as well as the ratio of governmental soldiers over the total population. These variables were included to evaluate the proposition of whether stronger governments receive less military support from their allies.

As democracy and freedom associated with slogans raised by the West when intervening in different regions of the world it was important to include electoral democracy, freedom of expression, and civil liberties, corruption, and the rule of law as independent variables. Another reason for including these variables is to see and compare the effects of such factors on the different third-parties and the importance of humanitarian incentives in their decision to intervene. Data on democracy indices were retrieved from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) that includes data on 202 countries from 1789 to 2017 (Coppedge et al., 2018).

In addition to the above variables, data on annual real GDP and oil production per capita were imported from the V-Dem project. These independent variables were used to look at the possible economic incentives for the interveners as well as the oil exploitation interest for superpowers.

The case studies in chapter two showed that national security is also an important factor that leads to intervention, especially in African conflicts where neighboring countries intervened to prevent the spilling over of the conflict and refugees. Therefore data on the existence of an ongoing conflicts in a neighboring country was extracted from Havard et al. (2017) dataset on the intensity of the conflict trap. The independent variable used is a binary one showing whether there was an intervention or not in any country that shares borders with the country facing civil war.

COW dataset was also used for inputs on the lagged number of deaths in each conflict. These numbers are important in our study as we assume that humanitarian factors and number of casualties do not necessary drive intervention. The number of deaths was kept for the same year in which the conflict happened as interventions for humanitarian would logically take place right after massacres or intense human rights violations are made.

In order to study the triggering factor for intervention all high intensity episodes of a continuing civil conflict over the years were kept. In other words, even if the same country witnessed several years of internal conflict, then all the years that had intensity fighting were kept, and not only the first or the last. All episodes of the conflict that had low intensity fighting during a specific year were dropped. The reason for this choice is because some third-parties have intervened only after several years post the outbreak of the war. This was either due to a strength/weakness critical point that the government or rebels have reached, or due to the government or rebels making more compromises for the third-party in order to get its support. Strengths of the factions can be measured by military expenses, military personnel per capita. On the other hand the compromises and the ideological incentives given by the government can be measured by the *Agreement point* with great powers in the UN voting behavior.

To include the impact of ethnic wars and humanitarian motives, additional datasets were used from Fortna (2004) that uses Doyle and Sambanis (2000) and Fearon and Latin (2003) indices on ethnic wars and number of deaths. In addition to looking at the ethnic factors, this dataset was also revisited to test for the impact of the number of deaths on intervention as to measure the human rights effect.

#### 4.4.2 Empirical Analysis

After removing low-intensity episodes and extra-systematic wars, the remaining data shows that more than two five hundred yearly episodes of civil conflicts existed after the end of the Second World War with over one thousand deaths in each, and at least thirteen conflicts having more than a millions deaths (7 percent). Fifty-five percent of these conflicts have witnessed military interventions by third-players. 73 percent of these interventions were done by third-players supporting only the government, 14 percent supporting only the opposition, and 13 percent of interventions on support of both sides. However the numbers changed after the Cold War as civil conflicts ended with less decisive victories in contrast to more truces and settlements (Figure 2).

Figure 4.2: Outcomes of Conflicts by Era. Data source: UCDP, 2019

Although the number of civil conflicts slightly decreased after the Cold War, yet the ratio of military interventions increased from 53 percent to 59 percent (Figure 3) .

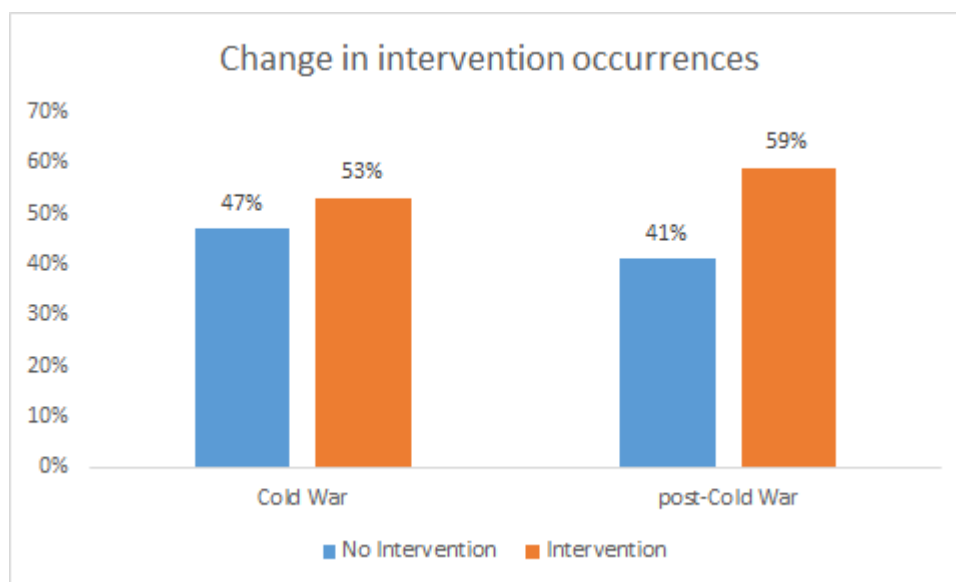


Figure 4.3: Change in intervention occurrences over time. Data source: UCDP, 2019

During the Cold War around one third of interventions were on both sides, where each of the fighting factions received military foreign support from its foreign sponsor. However since 1991 only 5 percent of interventions were on both sides, while the majority (86 percent) were in support of the government against the rebels (Figure 4). This shift from both factions receiving military support by foreign powers to only one faction receiving support was correlated with the shift from two bipolarity structure of the world system to the rise of one hegemonic power.

Different regions also experienced different intensity of intervention as they witnessed different number of civil wars. As Africa witnessed the highest number of civil conflicts with over a thousand deaths, it witnessed the highest number of interventions while Europe that had the lowest number of civil conflicts witnessed the least cases of intervention (Figure 5).

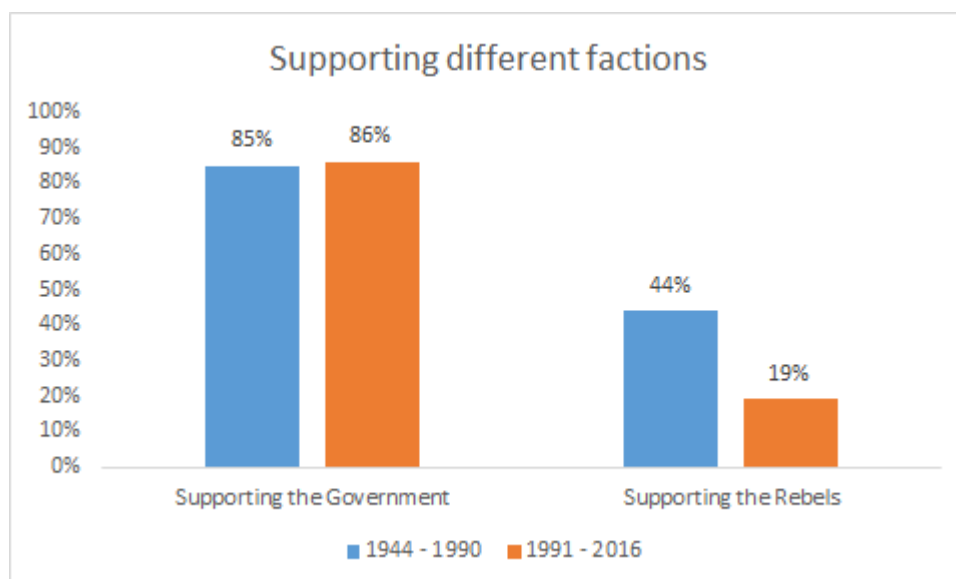


Figure 4.4: Support of the different fighting factions. Data source: UCDP, 2019

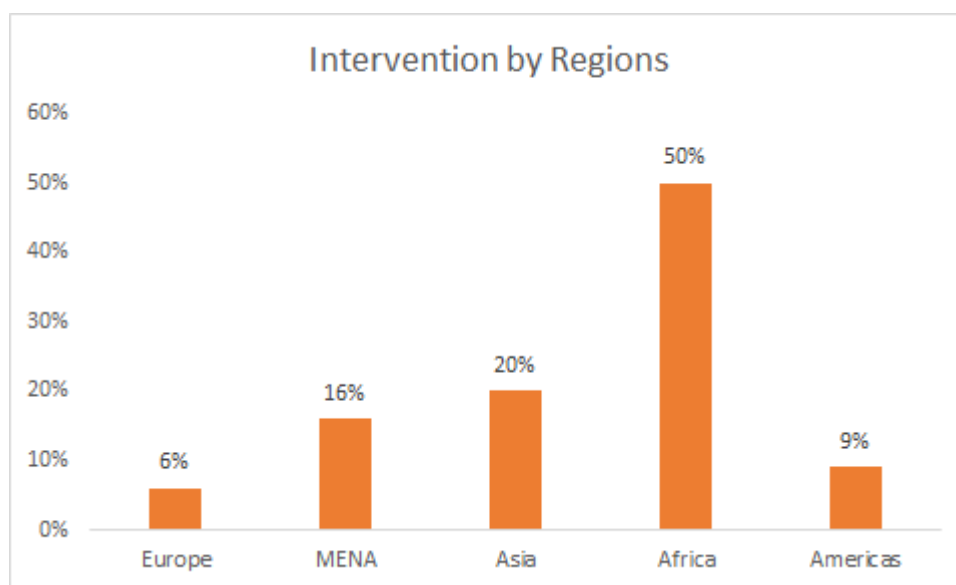


Figure 4.5: Intervention by Regions. Data source: UCDP, 2019

However interventions in Europe and Latin America have increased significantly after the end of the Cold War (Figure 6). Hence the importance of this research in understanding all the motives behind interventions regarding the support of different factions in different periods of time and intervening in different regions over time by different third-parties.

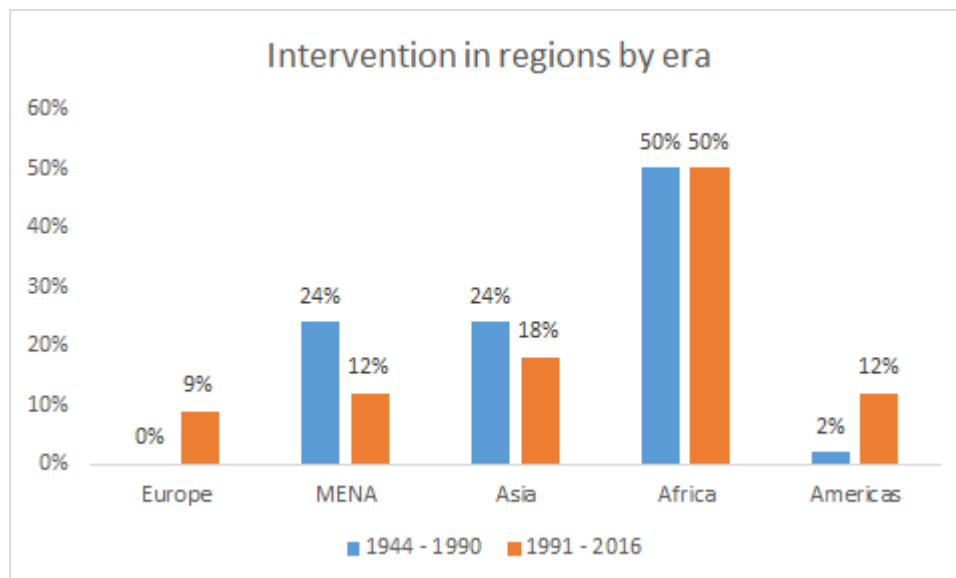


Figure 4.6: Intervention by Regions over Time. Data source: UCDP, 2019

#### 4.4.3 Model and Variables

To test the effects of the different variables on the probability of intervention I use the following multinomial logistic model with robust standard errors:

$$mlogit Pr(interv Y_{ijt}) = \alpha Agree_{ikt-1} + \beta Military\_Exp_{it} + \gamma Democracy_{it} + \delta X_{it} + \epsilon$$

Where  $intervY_{ijt}$  is a binary variable of whether there was an intervention in country  $i$  in year  $t$  in support of faction  $Y$  by third-party  $j$ .  $Y$  can be military intervention on either sides, in support of the Government ( $G$ ), or in support of the Rebels ( $R$ ).  $j$  can be one of three types of third parties: 1) United States of America and its allies. 2) Russia and its allies. 3) Other non-superpower third-parties. Allies of the United States were identified as members of NATO, while allies of Russia are governments states on the Communist and Socialist camp during the Cold War. States that were not on any side of the camps fit in the third category.

$AgreeA_{it-1}$  code the similarity of votes between state  $i$  and state  $k$  in year  $t-1$ .  $k$  can also be equal to  $j$ , indicating it can be the United States of America, Russia, or another country. For  $j$  and  $k$  parameters the USA and Russia are used since they have been the leading powers after the end of the Second World War. India is chosen for robustness tests to check whether being similar to a non-superpower affects the possibility of intervention by either types of  $j$ .

To test the impact of government strength two variables were used, military expenditure ( $MilitaryExp_{it}$ ) measuring the military expenditure in USD by country  $i$  in year  $t$ . And the second variable is  $Mltry_persPC_{it}$  measuring the number of soldiers per capita in each country.

$Democracy_{it}$  is a set of variables measuring six indices of democracy: 1) Electoral Democracy ( $Elec\_Dem_{it}$ ). 2) Liberal Democracy ( $Liberal\_Dem_{it}$ ). 3) Freedom of Expression ( $Freedom\_Exp_{it}$ ). 4) Civil Liberties ( $Civil\_Lib_{it}$ ). 5) Corruption ( $Corruption_{it}$ ). 6) Rule of Law ( $Rule\_Law_{it}$ ). In this regard Electoral Democracy is defined as the freedom of electoral competition and existence of free media to present alternative views. Liberal democracy protecting individual and minority rights against the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority. Civil Liberty is whether social groups, as distinguished by language, ethnicity, religion, race, region, or caste, enjoy the same level of civil liberties. Freedom of expression is defined as respect by government to press and media freedom, and the freedom of ordinary people to discuss political matters. Corruption is defined as how routinely do members of the executive (the head of state, the head of government, etc.) get involved in corruption act and take bribes. Lastly, rule of law is defined what extent are laws transparently, independently, and predictable.

$X$  is a set of additional variables on log GDP per capita ( $IGDP_{PC_{it}}$ ), Oil income per capita ( $Oil\_Inc\_PC_{it}$ ), and whether there was a conflict in the neighboring country to country  $i$  in year  $t$  ( $Neighbor\_Conf_{it}$ ). Oil income is an important variable in our study because it is considered one of the factors affecting geostrategic power as well as economic wealth. Controlling main oil exports therefore means controlling political and economic decisions of states and thus superpowers aim at being in control of such resources in their international rivalry battles. Considering whether there is a conflict in a neighboring country or not is important in this study to look for security concerns by third-party players where security concerns seemed to be the major interest for non-superpower interveners (Chapter 2).

Lastly additional dummy variables were added for the region of conflict. Regions were divided into five: Europe, Africa, Middle East, Asia, Americas. The Middle East was considered a separate region from Asia as its type conflicts can fit into a separate category for its countries speak the same language and of similar religious backgrounds. In addition this region is rich with oil and has a history of sectarian conflicts.

Intervention by Third party in support of government/rebels						
	USA-gov	USA-reb	RUS-gove	RUS-reb	Other-gov	Other-reb
Agree-USA	-4.110 (-1.80)	-14.36*** (-6.49)	-6.880** (-2.88)	1.135 (0.80)	-9.899*** (-4.49)	-2.842 (-0.58)
Agree-Russia	-2.729** (-3.05)	-8.531*** (-4.61)	5.355*** (4.32)	-2.275 (-1.49)	-2.164* (-1.97)	1.947 (0.70)
_cons	0.386 (0.40)	3.294** (3.01)	-4.708*** (-4.16)	-1.509 (-1.18)	0.879 (0.89)	-3.771 (-1.33)
<i>N</i>	544					

*t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4.1: Agreement between the Government and the Superpowers

## 4.5 Results

Results show that the United States of America and its allies are less likely to intervene militarily in intrastate conflicts to support the government when the government is more in agreement with its international rival Russia in the United Nations general assembly voting (column 1 row 2, Table 1). The United States is also less likely to intervene in support of rebels when the government fighting the rebels is more in line with the United States position in the UNGA (column 2 row 1, Table 1). On the other hand Russia and its allies are more likely to support governments that vote similarly to Russia in the UNGA (column 3 row 2, Table 1), while they are less likely to intervene supporting government that agree more with the United States column 3 row 1, Table 1). These result supports the theoretical hypothesis that foreign states intervene to support governments that provide them with higher ideological utility.

The second hypothesis in the theoretical chapter indicated that foreign allies of governments intervene when their internal allies reach a specific weakness level. Thus the weaker the fighting factions is, the higher chance that it will receive military support from foreign allies. Empirical results from all civil conflicts show that the United States and its allies and Russia and its allies were more likely to support the fighting factions as the became weaker. Row 4 in Table 2 show the effect of the number of governmental military personnel per capita on the possibility of intervention to support either faction. An increase in government strength as reflected by number of soldiers per capita decreased

the probability of Russia supporting the government, therefore showing that weaker governments have higher chances of receiving Russian support (column 3 row 4, Table 2). On the other hand, when governments were stronger (rebels relatively weaker) both USA and Russia were more likely to support the rebels (columns 2 and 4 row 4, Table 2).

Democracy indices were used in this study to test for the effects of factors related to slogans raised by superpowers, as opposed to ideological similarity. For the United States and its allies, results show that indices of Electoral Democracy, Liberal Democracy had a positive effect on supporting governments, but even a higher effect on supporting rebels (columns 1 and 2 row 5, Table 2). In this regard, Russia showed an opposite reaction to Electoral Democracy as it was less likely to support more democratic governments (column 3 row 5, Table 2). Other non-superpower third-parties showed that they were less likely to support either the government or the rebels when governments were more democratic (columns 5 and 6 row 5, Table 2). The democracy indices show that interventions were not based on causes such as freedom of expression and liberty, and civil freedom, but rather on supporting whoever agrees with them in the UN general assembly (Appendix).

On the other hand, the USA and its allies showed that they are more likely to support corrupt government facing rebellions (column 1, row 6). Which can also indicate that intervention do not necessary happen due to righteous incentives. This was also the case with non-superpower interveners who were more likely to intervene in support of more corrupt governments (column 5, row 6, Table 2). Unlike the United States and other third-parties, Russia and its allies did not show to be more likely to intervene in support of more corrupt governments, while the main significant factor for Russia's intervention remained on whether or not the government agrees more with Russia in the UNGA.

Moreover, an important variable such as the Rule of Law showed to be ineffective on the probability of superpowers to intervene (columns 1-4 row 7, Table 2). Again, this results shows that superpowers do not ut stability and security as a priority. This assumption is further supported since unlike superpowers, non-superpowers were more likely to intervene in support of governments that had higher rates of rule of law (columns 5 row 8, Table 4) which can reflect the security interests for foreign players not seeking geopolitical power and regional dominance. This result can be associated with the security concern of third-parties that prefer to have a stable government in power, especially if it was geographically close.

A better understanding of this correlation can be realized when observing the resulting correlation of intervention with the existence of a conflict in a neighboring state (Table 4). There was always a higher probability of intervening in support of either factions when



	Intervention by Third party in support of government/rebels					
	USA-gov	USA-reb	Russia-gov	Russia-reb	Other-gov	Other-reb
Agree-USA	-6.945 (-0.36)	-0.477 (-0.15)	11.07 (1.22)	2.568 (1.15)	0.129 (0.05)	-5.636 (-0.85)
Agree-Russia	0.776 (0.40)	0.881 (0.08)	20.91** (2.61)	-3.366 (-1.16)	4.113 (1.93)	5.701* (2.02)
Agree-China	8.124 (0.98)	-2.255 (-0.35)	-13.50*** (-3.52)	-1.186 (-0.71)	-3.578 (-1.87)	-7.303 (-1.58)
Military Strength	-32.86 (-1.04)	160.3*** (5.84)	-291.6* (-2.53)	162.5*** (3.31)	-176.2 (-1.63)	-207.3 (-1.32)
Electoral Democracy	6.592* (2.31)	10.28* (2.16)	-43.58** (-2.83)	11.52 (1.86)	-8.832*** (-3.48)	-19.66* (-2.13)
Corruption	7.335* (2.28)	-0.817 (-0.08)	-1.165 (-0.62)	-4.732 (-1.33)	6.760** (2.66)	14.20* (2.44)
Rule of Law	1.116 (0.24)	-7.142 (-0.67)	-5.020 (-1.87)	-10.20 (-1.40)	9.563** (3.10)	10.05* (1.99)
Oil Inc/Pcap	0.00225* (2.46)	-0.0129** (-2.96)	0.00121 (1.03)	-0.000544 (-0.22)	0.000858 (1.17)	0.00113 (1.10)
lGDP/cap	-0.747 (-0.62)	-0.947 (-1.87)	-0.343 (-0.30)	-1.686** (-2.70)	-0.799 (-1.74)	-0.767 (-0.98)
_cons	-12.17 (-1.16)	2.197 (0.25)	1.343 (0.13)	13.06* (2.55)	-1.767 (-0.47)	-3.310 (-0.62)
<i>N</i>	363					

*t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4.2: Government's Situation and Possibility of Intervention

the conflict took place in a country that is neighboring another country that is facing war (columns 5 and 6 row 6, table 4). This shows that security concerns are priorities for the states that intervene in civil conflicts. Cases from Africa (see Chapter 2) show that non-ideological conflicts attracted third-parties due to security concerns. States intervened in intrastate conflicts to avoid the spill of the conflict into their own lands and to avoid refugee influx. Thus a positive correlation between having a conflict in a neighboring state and military intervention in support of the government is observed.

The effect of oil income per capita on intervention, conditional on GDP, showed different effects between the types of intervener. USA and its allies were more likely to intervene in support of governments as income per capita from oil production increased (column 1 row 8, Table 2) while their support for rebels decreased as oil income increased (column 2 row 8, Table 2). These effects of income might be indicating that USA and allies prefer more stable and stronger regimes of their preference in control of oil production as to have a more stable economy. This result is also in line with the United State preferring to support more corrupt governments. The more corrupt and oil rich a country is, the more its foreign ally can exploit its oil revenues when the government is relying on a foreign power to protect its domestic authority.

On the other hand, higher oil income did not increase the chances of Russia offering support to governments (Table 2) which can be related to Russia not having allies (or followers) with high oil production and that it wishes to keep strong. Furthermore, other third-parties were not influenced by the oil income when deciding to support governments or not (Table 2) which explains that superpowers that seek dominance are more influenced by being in control of countries that have a geostrategic significance through the production of oil. This control gives the superpowers an international role and power in the international rivalry.

In addition to the above interpretation of oil income effects, the results can also show that economic gains matter significantly to third-players, especially superpowers, rather than humanitarian and democracy variables.

To support the above claims and to show the different effects of the dependent variables, Table 3 shows that there is no effect of the number of deaths in civil wars on the chances of intervention by great powers. In addition there was no effect of the conflict being ethnic on attracting military intervention. The only disincentives for great powers were GDP per capita and oil resources, such that when the country is richer and has at least one third of its exports by oil, great power intervened less in these countries' conflicts.

Table 4.3: Intervention

	Great Power Intervention	1946-1990	1991 - 2010
Great Power Intervention			
Gov't Strength	-0.067 (-0.15)	0.059 (0.12)	-0.064 (-0.07)
Democracy	0.157 (0.38)	-0.728 (-1.06)	3.148 (1.17)
GDP/cap	-0.337 (-0.77)	0.077 (0.14)	-1.947* (-2.01)
Numb of Deaths	1.201 (0.87)	1.232 (1.04)	1.391 (0.93)
Ethnic War	-0.124 (-0.23)	-0.358 (-0.54)	0.424 (0.38)
Oil Exports	-0.902 (-1.85)	-0.139 (-0.21)	-2.543** (-2.78)
Aim of War	0.088 (0.13)	-0.427 (-0.53)	1.611 (1.09)
<i>N</i>	94	58	36

Standardized beta coefficients; *t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

## 4.6 Robustness Tests

To test for robustness, the same multinomial logistic regressions was performed while looking at the effect of agreeing with India in the UN General Assembly rather than agreeing with USA or Russia (Table 5). Unlike the effects of agreeing with either USA or Russia, results show that Americans and their allies as well as Russia and their allies' possibility of intervention to support governments does not have a significant correlation with the domestic government's agreement with India. The correlation is also absent between supporting rebels and the government's closeness to India . This shows that superpower coalitions care mostly about whether the faction it wants to support is close to it or to its international rival, Russia. To support this interpretation, other third parties were also not motivated to support either faction when the government was closer or further away

from India in the UN General Assembly.

The robustness checks emphasize the role of ideological utility when it comes to the superpowers' decision of intervening or not intervening. As the costs of intervention are high and as third-players are mostly concerned with domination and international rivalry, they are therefore more willing to intervene when the faction they want to support is either on their side, as reflected by the UN voting, or if the opposing faction is on their rival's side. If, on the other hand, the fighting factions are closer to a foreign state that is not involved in the international geostrategic competition and is not in a battle of ideological dominance, then superpowers are not significantly interested in stomping in the costly mud of the civil war.

## 4.7 Findings

The empirical results highlight the importance that ideological similarity holds in driving military intervention. The United States of America and its allies showed a higher possibility of intervention to militarily support a government when this government was in alignment with American choices in international matters, as reflected by the UN General Assembly voting. The possibility of receiving support by governments from Americans and their allies significantly decreased when governments were in alignment with Russia. On the other hand, governments that were facing rebellions and had voting choices more similar to Russia, had higher chances of receiving military support from Russia and its allies. On the other hand, governments that were more similar to the US in voting decreased its chances in receiving military support from Russia.

On the other side of the war, rebels' chances of receiving military support was also affected by the government's decisions in the UN General Assembly. If the government voted in the interests of Russia, then the rebels were more likely to receive military support from the Americans, and vice versa.

These results were further strengthened when looking at the effect of aligning votes with India. India was chosen for robustness due to data availability and since it is not a superpower and had not intervened in civil conflicts around the globe. Results showed that when a challenged government agrees with India, this does not affect its chances of receiving military support from any of the two global powers or even from other third-party interveners. This result shows that interveners step in when the governments or rebels in a civil conflict are linked to their political preference and, therefore, to the ideological utility as defined above.

The empirical results also support the second hypothesis of this study, showing that the strength of the government matters when an intervention decision is being made. As suggested in the theoretical chapter, the weaker a government, the higher its chance of receiving military support. The expectations were satisfied with the different types of interveners who stepped into a conflict when the government had lowered military expenses and soldiers per capita. On the other side of the battle, interveners also put their boots on the ground to save rebels when the governments were stronger, indicating a relatively weaker rebel groups. The reasons for this decision depending on factions' strength can be understood as the opportunity cost of not intervening versus the cost of doing so. In addition, as extensively explained and exemplified in Chapter 2, third parties are more willing to intervene in saving weak and desperate regimes to control their decision making power and be in control of the negotiations with the opposition.

Economic factors, as seen by oil income per capita, was also an important factor in predicting the chances of intervention. Oil revenues can also be seen as geostrategic gains due to the political power associated with the control over oil sources. This effect was positively related to the likelihood of American intervention supporting governments versus rebels, while it was only positive on the likelihood of Russians supporting rebels. As oil exporters are mostly governments in alignment with the United States, this shows that USA aims at protecting and saving its geostrategic interests, while Russia and its allies try to influence the side in control of oil revenues to align more with its political orientation.

Democracy indices, corruption, and rule of law did not reflect the reality of the slogans raised by interveners. Better democracy, lower rates of corruption, and stronger rule of law were not always correlated with support for the government. On the contrary, in some cases, third-players were more likely to intervene in support of governments with lower democracy indicators and with higher corruption rates. This again highlights the relative importance of factors such as ideological utility and similarity in political orientation versus democracy and righteous slogans.

Only for non-superpower interveners did the rule of law become a significant variable in garnering the support of governments. This can be understood through the fact that non-superpowers intervene due to security concerns rather than global domination and international rivalry. This result is further supported since non-superpowers intervened in conflicts that already have conflicts in nearby countries and, therefore, to stop the spilling of conflicts. An in-depth look at these cases show that they occurred mainly in Africa, where intervention took place by third parties to protect their lands from the spillover of

fighters (Chapter 2).

In alignment with the mixed effects of democracy, humanitarian factors as reflected by the number of deaths did not seem to drive in military intervention on either side. Third-parties did not increase their likelihood of intervening when higher number of people were dying and massacres were committed. This shows that neither democracy indices nor humanitarian causes are more likely to drive military intervention; instead, the concern with global domination, geostrategic power, and economic gains are more influential in this regard.

## 4.8 Policy Implications

As the main goal for International Organizations and claimed goals for the great powers is to alleviate suffering by ending civil wars, numerous lessons can be learned from the above results. First, UN assemblies and international alliances can decrease the incentives for biased intervention by pushing for interventions from more than one ideological camp. The involvement of a multilateral intervention can be a guarantee that the intervention is not being done to favor one third-party over its rival. This will then lower the selfish incentives that aim at achieving dominance and geostrategic superiority.

Unlike interstate wars, civil conflicts are usually wars of attrition that end only when one faction ends up totally destroying the other. Adapting a strategy that requires the intervention of several third-parties on neither side can prevent the war from reaching extreme casualty toll. This strategy by the international community can help in solving the security dilemma for the internal fighting factions and end the war faster while avoiding unilateral biased intervention that only has self interests.

As the weakness of a government significantly affects the chances of receiving military intervention, main international players can also pay more attention to any drastic change in a government's military power to foresee potential interventions in support of either the government or its opposition.

Other recommendations can be drawn from the results to benefit the foreign policies by the different players. Superpowers can use the results presented here as evidence to show their credibility in supporting their allies and therefore incentivize weak governments to align with them. On the other hand, governments facing threats can also increase the similarity between their political orientation and the superpowers in order to increase the chance of receiving military support from them.

Opposition groups can also show similar ideologies to great powers that have a history of intervening militarily either to get the support of the third-parties or to decrease their incentives in supporting the government in power.

## 4.9 Conclusion

At time when intrastate conflicts are dominating the war scenes and causing millions of casualties and refugees, the norm of humanitarian intervention is simultaneous with the decision to support fighting factions. This variable identifies other variables that may be playing a more effective role in driving military intervention. First, ideological utility is defined by the similarity in political orientation between the government facing rebellion and the third-party, and therefore provides a geostrategic power and special privileges for the third-player. The second variable is the government's strength, as assumed in the theoretical piece to be affecting intervention by allies for two reasons: to save high costs if the faction was defeated, and to take advantage of the weakness to be in control of the decision making power of this faction.

First, ideological utility appears to be a determinant factor in military interventions. Foreign states intervene in other states' conflicts when they find a political and geostrategic interest in the group in power. Governments' military strength has also been shown to be a determinant incentive for intervention.

On the other hand, democracy, freedom of expression, rule of law, and humanitarian incentives do not seem to be effective in attracting humanitarian interventions. Cases like Zaire (1997), Lebanon (1976), Liberia (1990, 1996), Pakistan/Bangladesh(1971), Yemen (1967), Angola (1994), Zimbabwe/Rhodesia (1978), and South Africa (1988) (Chapter 2) have suffered from over one-hundred thousand deaths, yet no great power intervened to support any of the factions or to end the war.

## 4.10 Appendix

### 4.10.1 Regression Tables

	Intervention by Third party in support of government/rebels					
	USA-gov	USA-reb	RUS-gove	RUS-reb	Other-gov	Other-reb
Agree-USA	-0.328 (-0.03)	169.5*** (12.78)	1.189 (0.22)	3.012 (0.87)	-5.785* (-2.14)	-6.015 (-0.92)
Agree-Russia	1.869 (0.92)	337.4*** (20.54)	10.54** (2.95)	-1.910 (-0.83)	-1.491 (-0.92)	4.737 (1.41)
Agree-China	2.508 (0.37)	-179.9*** (-15.80)	-6.672* (-2.50)	-3.075 (-1.04)	-3.386 (-1.31)	-11.91** (-2.69)
Military Expenditure	-0.0107 (-0.85)	0.332*** (21.02)	0.000586 (0.06)	0.000342 (0.15)	0.00222 (0.53)	-0.000301 (-0.06)
Military Personnel	57.12 (0.58)	7021.5*** (22.57)	-240.2 (-1.74)	125.3* (2.30)	-125.3 (-1.67)	-186.4 (-1.07)
Democracy	7.222** (2.97)	777.8*** (21.96)	-39.68* (-2.42)	9.814* (1.98)	-8.962** (-3.01)	-26.12* (-2.56)
Corruption	7.346 (1.82)	-512.0*** (-21.73)	-0.623 (-0.35)	-5.314 (-1.53)	5.330 (1.88)	13.72 (1.65)
Rule of Law	0.938 (0.15)	-394.6*** (-22.60)	6.715 (0.77)	-10.23 (-1.75)	7.257* (2.47)	8.036 (0.97)
Oil Income/cap	0.00279* (2.16)	0.448*** (21.91)	-0.000618 (-0.24)	0.000738 (0.40)	0.000906 (0.80)	0.00134 (0.72)
lGDP/cap	-0.994 (-0.81)	-275.4*** (-21.26)	-0.172 (-0.14)	-1.772* (-2.01)	-0.374 (-0.63)	-0.0117 (-0.02)
Conflict in Nieghb	-0.582 (-0.48)	453.2*** (22.82)	-4.846 (-1.41)	2.407*** (3.41)	1.527* (2.23)	1.718* (2.15)
_cons	-7.340 (-0.83)	1340.5*** (19.67)	1.446 (0.19)	14.10 (1.95)	0.963 (0.19)	-3.129 (-0.46)
<i>N</i>	354					

*t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4.4: Government Situation and Possibility of Intervention



## 4.10.2 Robustness Check

	Intervention by Third party in support of government/rebels					
	USA-gov	USA-reb	RUS-gove	RUS-reb	Other-gov	Other-reb
Agree-India	-1.874 (-0.82)	-4.741 (-1.23)	7.284 (1.17)	0.495 (0.18)	-0.293 (-0.23)	5.726 (0.81)
Military Expenditure	-0.0128 (-0.87)	0.0620*** (8.85)	0.00888 (0.94)	-0.0000316 (-0.01)	0.00557* (2.17)	0.00575 (1.23)
Military Personnel	109.2 (1.91)	885.3*** (8.94)	-271.5** (-2.78)	217.0*** (4.84)	-139.8* (-2.10)	-125.2* (-2.05)
Democracy	10.10* (2.57)	156.7*** (9.56)	-46.34* (-1.99)	8.903* (2.23)	-9.183** (-2.90)	-15.39** (-2.60)
Corruption	6.957 (1.60)	-68.07*** (-11.05)	-2.207 (-1.06)	-4.197 (-1.58)	3.396 (1.46)	9.019 (1.88)
Rule of Law	-0.506 (-0.09)	-64.74*** (-5.23)	5.728 (0.75)	-7.822 (-1.88)	4.824 (1.84)	5.661 (1.08)
Oil_Inc_PC	0.00280* (2.48)	0.0797*** (9.19)	-0.000780 (-0.32)	-0.00243 (-1.32)	0.000507 (0.79)	0.000779 (0.98)
IGDP/capita	-1.187 (-1.55)	-54.72*** (-8.07)	-0.909 (-0.72)	-1.877 (-1.77)	-0.184 (-0.53)	-0.290 (-0.59)
Conflict in Neighb	-0.455 (-0.42)	70.18*** (9.98)	-4.415 (-1.39)	2.406*** (3.90)	1.835** (3.05)	1.605* (2.47)
_cons	-1.574 (-0.31)	285.9*** (7.72)	4.696 (0.96)	9.482 (1.71)	-3.564 (-0.98)	-11.50 (-1.32)
<i>N</i>	439					

*t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4.5: Government Agreement with India and Possibility of Intervention

# Chapter 5

## Conclusion

As interstate conflicts have dominated the war scene since the end of World War II, one major factor in tilting the balance of power and in altering the potential events of these conflicts has been foreign intervention. Foreign intervention was mostly carried out by superpowers and their alliances who were in favor of different factions. In the last decade, third party interventions were mainly disguised under slogans related to the global political commitment of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), a commitment endorsed by all member states of the UN World Summit in 2005. However, despite the announced motives raised by interveners, interventions in many cases led to more destruction and higher numbers of casualties. However, other cases of civil conflicts did not witness interventions despite the large number of casualties and the need for peacekeeping troops. To this end, this dissertation attempts to answer the question about why third parties intervene in intrastate conflicts. The main hypothesis of the study is that third parties intervene to support their preferred faction based on their selfish interest and regardless of humanitarian incentives and slogans that they announce while initiating the intervention. In this regard, I use a multi-method approach to support my hypothesis.

Chapter two takes a theoretical approach. Creating a basic game theoretic model, I look at the different aspects of intervention. The main results demonstrate how third parties, mostly allies of governments, intervene to save governments facing rebellions when there is a high ideological utility associated with the governments in power. Therefore, ideological utility, defined as the utility from privileges given to the foreign player by the government facing rebellion, has a major impact on the third party's decision. The strength of the government and the cost of war also show significant effects on the possibility of intervention. However, unlike ideological similarity, they have a negative effect on the chances of military intervention. The weaker a government is, the higher chance the chance that it will support military support as it will be more desperate to offer the third player a higher decision-making power, thus increasing the ideological utility. Moreover,

the model proposes that when acknowledged, stronger rebels will have higher chances of receiving a bigger share of the pie when the third party intervenes as a mediator splitting the pie between the government and the opposition.

The third chapter of the dissertation consists of two case studies, Yemen and Syria, to demonstrate *How* and *Why* intervention takes place. The case study approach uses qualitative methods as I carry out semi-structured interviews with politicians and experts from both countries, as well as reviewing archival data and media outlets. The interviews required my travel from Italy to Lebanon and Syria to meet active politicians representing governments and fighting factions as well as academics and other experts. The interview protocol was structured in a way that can compare answers of interviewees, especially politicians and officials representing allied factions. For a better analysis of the interviews, I used the Atlas.ti software for assistance in coding interviews.

The qualitative chapter aimed at exemplifying and supporting the hypotheses and propositions in the theoretical chapter. Although the cases of Yemen and Syria showed different backgrounds and histories of conflict, they both supported the theoretical approach and provided examples about the incentives that motivate foreign powers to support governments in civil wars. Moreover, the second chapter, through the interview protocols, showed the mechanism of intervention. The mechanism was shown through the interviewees' description of the intervention steps and the triggering factors for military intervention amid the conflicting views on the ongoing conflicts in Yemen and Syria, as well as the complexity of alliances, by triangulation methods and showing the views of the different actors involved in the conflicts. This approach allowed the case studies to provide the reader with a clear description of the alliances and specificities of the Syrian and Yemeni conflicts, which can serve as a reference for future research.

In line with the first two chapters, the fourth chapter uses quantitative methods to test the hypotheses and propositions reached in Chapter 1. I collect and combine data from different sources to study the effects of the different variables on the possibility of intervention. The data consisted of all civil conflicts after World War II. I look at each annual episode of civil conflict for each country and drop the episodes with low intensity from my observations. To test the theoretical hypotheses, I use a logistic multinomial model. My dependent variable is the probability of intervention by the different third-players. This variable was calculated using the United Nation General Assembly data. It shows how similar the votes of each state was with the United States, Russia, and four other countries. The main independent variable was the similarity of the government facing rebellion and each of the superpowers, mainly USA and Russia. Other independent variables included the strength of the government, oil exports, and democracy variables.

The main results of the regressions confirm the theoretical results and provide further understanding of the incentives for intervention. In particular, being similar with a Superpower increases the chances of the government receiving military support from this superpower and less chances to receive support for its rival. On the other hand, rebels were less likely to receive support from a specific superpower when the government was more similar to this superpower. Weaker governments also displayed a higher chance of receiving military support. Unlike oil resources, democracy and humanitarian factors seemed to be ineffective on the chances of intervention. To further support my claims, I run robustness checks by looking at the effect of states being similar to India on the possibility of intervention. Unlike agreeing with USA or Russia, agreeing with India does not seem to influence intervention of superpowers, therefore supporting the claims that intervention takes place due to "ideological utility".

Therefore, this work complements the literature that argues that intervention in civil conflicts takes place due to the shared ideology of the allies and due to self-interests rather than from the solving the humanitarian problems (Grigoryan, 2010; Chomsky, 1999; Bandow, 2000). On the other hand, this research stands in contrast to the research arguing that independent states' intervention is crucial for humanitarian reasons (Bass, 2008; Wheeler, 2000; Finnemore, 2003).

From a policy perspective, as a result of this conclusion, it is recommended that interventions should be under the umbrella of International Organizations and through the approval of all superpowers, not on the side of faction or the other. When a superpower intervenes, it will support the faction that provides it with higher ideological utility and therefore, it would not be motivated by humanitarian causes. In addition, third parties that are willing to act as mediators are favored over third parties that enter the conflict to achieve a decisive victory of one faction over the other, without attempting to reach a political settlement. Moreover, there should be close follow up by international organizations on states facing potential civil crises, as more knowledge showed to lead to more rational behavior by the factions and by the third parties. In other words, when the factions are aware of the rival's strength, they can be more rational in settling the political agreement and therefore to decrease the cost of fighting and reaching a peaceful agreement.

The results of this study will also benefit the policy approach of different fighting factions. Governments facing potential domestic threats can strengthen their relations with superpowers that have showed a high likelihood of intervention. Increasing the similarity between the domestic government and the foreign government can guarantee military support once the regime is threatened by a rebellion. On the other hand, rebel groups can

work on providing guarantees for potential third parties that might intervene in support of the government by showing that the third party's privileges will remain if the regime was overthrown and replaced by the opposition. With regards to the strength of the factions, governments can show its foreign allies that it is on the brink of collapsing, thus endangering the third party's ideological utility. This potential cost for the third party would then lead to its military intervention in support of the government. On the other hand, the rebels, if indeed strong, can show the third party of their real strength in order to make a good compromise and end up with a higher share of the pie newly split by the third party itself.

This research faced a number of challenges in each of the different approaches it took. First, the case study approach was protested by the lack of personnel, especially politicians, willing to discuss their inputs on the situation in Yemen, especially from the government's side. With the time constraints imposed, the ongoing conflict and security threats restricted the possibility of going to Yemen and allowed for only one visit to Damascus in Syria. On the other hand, the quantitative study was challenged by the limited available data especially that all yearly episodes of civil conflicts were selected. As no single dataset included all variables of interest, merging datasets showed missing and unmatching information that required prolonged and manual estimates to fill for missing and questionable data.

Despite the challenges faced, this research addresses a legitimate question of the real interests behind biased intervention where the policy implications of this understanding spread in different directions, addressing both the fighting factions and the international community. The multi-method research can open doors for future research to explore the incentives for third-party intervention in civil conflicts. On the theoretical aspect, scholarly work can expand the theoretic model and develop it into a dynamic model that can study the different aspects of intervention over periods of time. In addition, it is indeed beneficial to look at more cases to exemplify and complement the theoretical results. Cases can be from different eras and different regions of the world, which will also allow for a better understanding of the mechanism of intervention. In addition, plenty of room remains to test for the hypotheses and propositions by including more variables and data on civil conflicts.

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