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The Effect of U.S. Foreign Intervention on Civil Wars and State Failure in the Post-Cold-War
Era

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the effect that United States foreign intervention has on civil conflict and state failure. This is a qualitative study. First, I start by conducting a review of the existing literature on the topic of foreign intervention and its effects on civil conflicts. It is my hypothesis that United States foreign intervention will prolong and exacerbate civil conflicts and also correlate positively to state failure. In an effort to prove my hypothesis, I move into an extensive review of several case studies; the case studies selected for this paper are United States interventions into Liberia, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Bosnia, and Lebanon. In the end, using the aforementioned case studies, I find my hypothesis to be true. In the studied cases of United States foreign intervention into existing civil conflicts or those on the brink of taking off, the United States' intervention has intensified and prolonged the conflict as well as eventually led to the failure of the state in which the conflict has taken place. As far as reasons why the states failed, in all of the case studies evaluated, it is because the United States military departed prematurely. In Liberia and Somalia, the United States failed to accurately measure the resolve of and power of the opposition before deciding to intervene. In Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Bosnia, the United States failed to accurately calculate its own resolve before intervening. In these cases, the U.S. anticipated being able to resolve the conflict quickly and was not prepared for the long-lasting conflicts that actually followed. They then departed without leaving the countries properly situated, and these states failed as a result. I do not issue a judgement on the righteousness of the American decision to intervene, rather provide an accurate account of what has taken place in the instances in which the United States has chosen to involve itself.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Exploring Foreign Intervention

If you have siblings and have ever been in an argument with them, did someone else ever intervene and things just came tumbling down? It's a fair question. Or maybe, another, different third party stepped in and the matter was effectively resolved. That's the question that will be at hand for this paper. To be sure, I won't be studying disputes between siblings, but I will be evaluating the role of third-party intervention on internal conflicts. Instead, I am asking the question, "how does foreign intervention affect civil wars and the subsequent failure of states?" Over the course of our American history, the United States has not always been a passive observer to the world's problems. Often, for better or worse, the United States of America has made the disputes of the world its own. In order to limit the research scope of this paper, I will be evaluating only cases of United States foreign military intervention in the post-Cold War era. To mark the specific end date of the Cold War, I will be using the date upon which the Berlin Wall came down: November 9th, 1989. However, there will be one case study analyzed in this paper that presents an exception to these parameters. I will also be examining the United States' military involvement in Lebanon beginning in 1982, because the results of the conflict and the events that have taken place in the aftermath have proven to be exceedingly interesting and stretched well past November of 1989.

I hypothesize that United States foreign military intervention in countries increases the likelihood of civil wars and also positively correlates to state failure. Within the vast body of research that currently exists on civil wars, I look to use much of that work to prove my

hypothesis. I am putting forth a theory and testing it against existing literature to see if it fits. I will start by expanding and clarifying my hypothesis. Then, the existing literature on the topic will be thoroughly examined. Finally, I will compare my theory to real-world case studies, specifically foreign intervention in Liberia, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Bosnia, and Lebanon. To see how well my hypothesis stacks up against actual real-world examples.

To begin, it is important to develop an understanding of the role third parties play in civil wars and domestic conflicts more generally. There have been many works dedicated to exploring this topic specifically. In political science, the causes of civil wars have long been studied. However, the focus has most commonly been on domestic determinants of civil war such as an abundance of natural resources or the presence of ethnic cleavages or divisions (Albornoz and Hauk 2014). The works move their focus away from these domestic determinants and look more closely into external determinants such as foreign intervention. I start by reviewing this existing literature and explaining how it will fit into the research in this paper. Balch-Lindsay, Enterline, and Joyce assert that third parties have a key effect on 3 critical aspects of the civil war process: the causes of the intervention in the civil war, the outcome of the civil war, and the duration of the civil war (Balch-Lindsay, Enterline, and Joyce, 2008). For the context of this paper, this conclusion will be most aptly applied to the study of civil war outcomes, and more specifically, how they relate to state failure. However, it is not to be understated the effect that third-party interventions have on the duration of civil wars. In his paper on the subject, Patrick Regan makes clear his view of why states get involved in other intrastate conflicts, stating, “I make a general assumption that outside interventions into internal conflicts are a form of conflict management and therefore attempt to control the hostilities rather than exacerbate them” (Regan, 2002). The aim of interveners, then, is to help produce a proper moment for a favorable settlement, or, “In

other words, to be successful, both sides to the conflict must come to the conclusion that, at least at this time, continued fighting presents too low an expected payoff” (Regan, 2002). In his research, Regan expected to find that third-party interventions would shorten the expected duration of the conflict under review. This would be that third-parties would pick a moment to intervene to change the status quo of the conflict and convince both parties to reach a settlement. However, In the over 150 cases studied, Reagan concludes that third-party involvement has a pronounced tendency to *prolong* rather than shorten the interstate conflict in question (Regan, 2002). The experts are largely in agreement. When third parties choose to involve themselves in the civil wars taking place in other countries, they have a marked effect on the civil war process. The United States is certainly no exception to this conclusion, and I will later provide specific evidence and examples of instances in which this has occurred. Even before civil wars erupt, though, third parties like the United States can play a pivotal role in causing those conflicts to take shape (Silverstein 2016), such as encouraging a rebel group to engage in war against the ruling authority, typically the state. When I move into discussing the case of the civil war in Iraq, I will demonstrate this.

Chapter 2

Defining Foreign Intervention and State Failure

Furthermore, before investigating the role that United States foreign intervention in civil wars has on state failure, it must be established what exactly foreign intervention typically looks like. Though foreign intervention has no one shape, there are several types of aid and assistance that have proven themselves to be most common. In his paper on the subject, scholar Adam Lockyer argues that the supply of troops, financial aid, and supply of arms all constitute ways in which foreign intervention can reshape the dynamic of a civil war (Lockyer 2011). Lockyer's point is certainly true but foreign intervention in civil wars can often also take a much less definite shape while still having a large effect on the course of the war. For example, the supply of information and intelligence is just one way in which third parties can influence civil wars without sending assistance in a more traditional, physical sense. Aiding with logistics or providing training to a rebel group can drastically increase the rebel group's ability to effectively fight against the ruling government power (Lockyer 2011). Much of the literature on foreign intervention into civil wars takes the position that doing so, while most often well intended, actually has an adverse effect on this conflict, demonstrating that, "these types of structural interventions often prolong a conflict and are not very effective at bringing about the termination of a civil war" (Regan and Aydin, 2006).

Next, what does it take for a foreign military intervention to be successful? In the wake of the Cold War, the geo-political landscape was in a state of upheaval. There were new states, and the role of outside nations was still taking shape. Largely, the world was in disarray. As just one indicator of such chaos, the use of United Nations peacekeeping forces multiplied by a factor of four times between 1987 and 1992 (Regan, 1996). Those numbers also only reflect the use of

peacekeeping forces in intrastate conflicts, not those taking place between two or more countries. It should also be noted that the role that the United Nations and the United States play are very different. My purpose for including this statistic is not to compare the United States and the United Nations, but rather to emphasize the state of turmoil that the geopolitical landscape was in following the fall of the Soviet Union. There was a need for more foreign aid at the time, as many new nations were forming and struggling to assert themselves on an evolving international stage.

One additional issue of note that is important to mention before moving into an analysis of the case studies presented by Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Libya is that third parties, and specifically, the United States, can influence domestic conflicts in exceedingly indirect ways. Countries and their respective leaders are heavily scrutinized by other states and state leaders. So, actions from these leaders are often interpreted (and sometimes misinterpreted) and can incite conflict in other countries. These signals, also referred to as cheap signals, from foreign states can have costly consequences, increasing the likelihood of civil war (Thyne 2006). This can look like a variety of different things. An example from the past can be drawn from a speech given by former President George W. Bush directed at opposition to the Iranian regime (Thyne 2006). Today, an example could be President Trump tweeting recklessly about a conflict in another state. Cheap signals from foreign powers can increase the likelihood of civil war by influencing a rebel group's decision to rebel. If a leader of a foreign power issues a statement in support of a rebel opposition movement in another country, it can encourage that group and move them to rebellion resulting in a civil war (Thyne 2006). The employment of such signals may also be a direct attempt by a third party to not "internationalize" the conflict itself. By this, I mean that third-parties may not want other third-parties to become involved in the conflict,

especially not by means of troop deployment in the conflict zone. The alternative is “external support for some of the internal combatants” (Regan, 1996).

Perhaps something else worth considering is why third-parties intervene in the first place. It will be a main operating assumption of this paper, much like it is in Regan’s 1996 work, that the goal of a third-party’s intervention is to be successful, that is to bring an end to the conflict. In accepting this assumption, I will not entertain notions that third-parties intervene in intrastate conflicts to create chaos or purposefully cause the collapse and subsequent failure of a state. To be sure, bringing an end to a conflict in the fastest way possible is not the only reason for intervention. If that were to be the case, when the United States intervened in Syria, as will be outlined later, they would have taken the side of the Assad regime rather than the rebels. Instead, the U.S. military took the side of the rebels for ideological reasons, which is just one other reason for intervention on the part of a third-party. Other rationales for third party interventions that may be included and discussed include, but are not limited to, “territorial acquisition; regional stability; protection of the intervener's diplomatic, economic, or military interests; ideology; and the upholding of human rights have all been identified as goals of intervention” (Regan, 1996). The goal of an intervention can also include any combination of the aforementioned factors, and is often not limited to one singular reason.

Lastly, I find it important to the goals of this paper to establish a working definition of state failure itself and how the concept originated. While preliminarily explored in political science in the 1970s the term “state failure” really rose to prominence with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the failure of Yugoslavia (Flibbert 2013). In political science, “Most contemporary theorists have come to use the term to describe a state's inability to perform a range of vital state activities, especially in the areas of security, administration, and territorial

control (Flibbert 2013). I also consider a failure to provide social services sufficient to ensure the public well-being to be an indicator of state failure.

Now that I've established what foreign intervention looks like and reviewed some of the literature on how it can help to shape the civil war process, I will move on to evaluating a series of different case studies to determine whether or not United States foreign intervention in civil wars leads to state failure. The cases to be investigated include United States foreign intervention in Liberia, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Bosnia, and Lebanon.

Chapter 3

Third Party Intervention and the Bargaining Model of War

Continuing, I find it critical to enter into a brief discussion of how the beginning and eventual termination of conflicts are evaluated by the parties involved in them. To do so, I will be referencing the bargaining model of war. Bargaining models have existed for years. Basically, bargaining models help to explain the motives and parameters under which an actor may enter or choose to end a negotiation. More traditionally, bargaining models were used to support economic principles or political ones. Historically, war has not always been considered a political action, but rather an end unto itself. However, General Carl Von Clausewitz examined war as simply another form of political bargaining, noting, “[t]he political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose” (Reiter, 2003). Clausewitz’s view of war resurfaced in America in the 1950s through the lens of the Korean War. As the impending Cold War grew ever closer, it became apparent that the conflict would manifest through a series of smaller, satellite conflicts, rather than a total third world-war. With this understanding becoming clearer, it then became apparent that these small conflicts would need to be resolved through collective bargaining rather than a decisive, one sided military victory (Reiter, 2003). Theoretically, if there is a bargained end to a war to be found, states could negotiate this settlement before fighting ever starts, saving the vast cost of fighting. However, as scholar James Fearon points out, “The common flaw of the standard rationalist arguments is that they fail either to address or to explain adequately what prevents leaders from reaching ex ante (prewar) bargains that would avoid the costs and risks of fighting” (Fearon, 1995). So why do states choose war then? To change the terms of the status quo upon which bargaining can occur, or for “at least one state to choose war as an alternative to accepting

the status quo or continuing to bargain” (Reiter, 2003). If one state isn’t satisfied with the status quo, they may choose to roll the dice and initiate war rather than bargain in order to avoid conflict. Plainly, “that is, an intervention on behalf of the opposition is designed to alter the pre - conflict status quo ante. In contrast, when an outside actor intervenes on behalf of the government, we can assume that this is an attempt to restore the pre-conflict status quo ante.” (Regan, 2002). It is entirely possible, however, that one side or the other in an intervention may have and be operating with bad or incomplete information. This can look like a myriad of different things. For example, it is quite feasible that the military or fighting capacity of one side may not be clear to the other. If one faction has a much larger military than was publicly known or has some military technology that had been kept secret and a third party decides to intervene, it is possible that the decision to intervene may not have come had the intervener had complete information. Another form of bad information is that of miscalculating resolve. Resolve can be understood as one sides’ willingness to fight while obtaining losses and other various costs. Perhaps the intervener (in the cases here, the United States), overestimates their own resolve and expects to maintain support for a conflict much more so than they actually will. When the United States involves itself in a conflict, as will be demonstrated in the following case studies, it often calculates a strong resolve for itself, and a weak resolve for the opposition. But, if the opposition has a stronger resolve than anticipated by the intervener, the intervener may not be prepared to continue a conflict or intervention to the capacity at which the opposition can fight.

The relevance of the bargaining model of war is robust. Third-parties choose to get involved in conflicts in an attempt to affect the bargaining. For example, if a third-party is dissatisfied with the conditions of a situation, they may wish to influence a participant in the conflict to convince them not to negotiate an end to the conflict. This influence comes in the

form of foreign intervention. If the status quo of a conflict involves one party having significantly fewer resources than their opponent, a third-party may intervene by supplying resources. This moves the status quo and effects bargaining attempts as such.

Chapter 4

Case Studies

Liberia

To start off, I will be examining the U.S. intervention in the intrastate conflict in Liberia. The conflict can be traced back to 1989, when “Charles Taylor, a former Liberian minister who had fallen out of favor with the repressive Liberian regime of Samuel Doe, organized a rebel force in neighboring Ivory Coast and invaded Liberia, sparking a lengthy civil war” (Murphy, 2004). Over the next eight years, from 1990-1997, a period of violence and civil war erupted. The Economic Community of West African States largely involved in a peacekeeping effort which eventually included the United Nations. At the end of that first period of violence, in 1997, there were established elections that took place within Liberia in which Charles Taylor was elected president. At that time, many of the peacekeeping efforts were then concluded and the Liberian state was largely left alone. However, not all were pleased with Root’s election and by 2003 two rebel groups, “Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), had gained control over two-thirds of the country and were threatening to seize the capital Monrovia and to overthrow the Taylor government” (Murphy, 2004). At this time, the United States was heavily involved with a military intervention in Iraq, which will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs of this paper. As a result, in 2003, President George W. Bush was reticent about sending troops to Liberia to ensure the peaceful establishment of elections and a new Liberian government. However, the United States did end up deploying troops to Liberia, at least until they could be replaced by United Nations troops (Murphy, 2004). Eventually, with elections looking like they would be successfully underway, the United States military forces departed from the country. At the

same time, a major tsunami occurred in the Indian Ocean and wreaked havoc in the country of Indonesia. As a result, many NGOs and other organizations of the like decided that they needed to turn their attention away from the situation in Liberia. It followed that much of the peacebuilding operations were abandoned a mere 18 months after mortars stopped falling on the capital city of Monrovia (McGovern, 2005). Many actors expected the process of ensuring peace security to be one lasting 3-5 years, whereas in reality, a true security of peace would have required something a lot longer, closer to 15-25 years (McGovern, 2005). This long-term effort is not what happened. Instead, as predicted, United States military efforts concluded too early to ensure a lasting security and in the years that followed, the country has slipped into collapse. In other words, the United States miscalculated its own resolve while underestimating that of the opposition. The United States military expected a speedy resolution to the conflict once it involved itself and decided to intervene.

The U.S. made its decision to intervene based largely on the notion that the conflict in which they would be involving themselves would be a short one. When it became clear that the conflict would indeed not be resolved quickly, the United States made the decision to leave Liberia, rather than double down on their efforts. Meeting my definition of a failed state, Liberia lacks sufficient infrastructure and civilian services and was not ready for internal stability by the time the United States left. It is possible that had the intervention lasted longer, the U.S. could have assisted in the establishment of political and physical infrastructure that would have allowed Liberia to thrive after the United States eventually left. This was not the case and the Liberian state failed as a result. There are also large numbers of internally displaced peoples in Liberia as a result of the botched intervention by the United States (as well as others) (Ingersoll, 2013).

Somalia

Somalia provides a prudent example of the correlation between United States foreign intervention and state failure. Somalia has been referred to as a “graveyard of foreign aid” and, “despite the announcement of a post-transitional federal government in 2012, Somalia remains ranked as the world’s “most failed state” (Menkhaus, 2014). But before I move to a diagnosis on Somalia, I must first examine the role of United State foreign intervention in the situation. To do so, it is once again important to expand on the background of the conflict at hand. United States military intervention in Somalia began in 1992 during the presidency of George H. Bush. In the time period leading up to the intervention of the United States, there was a United Nations mission in Somalia, however by 1992 the effort was collapsing. At first, the reason presented as the one that predicated the United States’ ultimate decision to send in troops was one of traditional humanitarian concern. Fearing that the United States would get pulled into a struggle created by a power vacuum as a result of prior efforts from the USA, Bush senior decided to send troops in an attempt to stabilize the country until a new United Nations effort could be properly mounted (Recchia, 2020). The United State was looking to avoid dealing with a civil war and humanitarian disaster with no clear exit strategy (Recchia, 2020). At first, after the preliminary deployment of troops in 1992, the intervention was able to greatly decrease the number of civilian casualties of the conflict, however the transition back to a United Nations mission rather than one of United States intervention, happened too quickly (Recchia, 2020). When the United States withdrew, the United Nations mission in Somalia was not even fully staffed, indicating that the withdrawal came from a timeline in Washington rather than one of logic (Recchia, 2020). The subsequent events were essentially a failure, and the actions upset local warlords which led to a series of attacks on United Nations personnel. As a result, the

United States went back into Somalia in the summer of 1993, which was when the infamous “Black Hawk Down” incident took place (Recchia, 2020). With 13 American soldiers killed, the United States once again left Somalia. Since then, the situation in the country has continued to deteriorate, and since 2012, “a post-transitional government is in place, but it too has yet to develop even a modest capacity to exercise its authority over territory or deliver basic security and social services. It faces a stronger, better-organized, and more committed foe in the jihadi group al Shabaab, and has been able to remain in Mogadishu mainly because of the protection it receives from African Union peacekeepers” (Menkhaus, 2014). Not being able to deliver these key social services is largely what constitutes its categorization as a failed state according to my working definition for this paper. Many of those familiar with the American operation in Somalia have asserted that the United States regarded the mission largely as a lesson learned on how to conduct foreign intervention in the future, given the disastrous result (Menkhaus, 2014). However, as I will demonstrate in the coming sections of this paper, the United States would continue to engage in foreign military interventions with no clear strategy for a clean exit. Somalia provides yet another example of a time in which the United States miscalculates its own resolve as well as that of the opposition. The U.S. military fully expected the conflict in Somalia to wrap up neatly once it intervened in the country. However, the opposition demonstrated a much greater resolve than the U.S. had previously anticipated, another prime instance of bad information influencing an intervention decision. Not wanting to become bogged down in another long-lasting conflict, the United States decided to pull out of the country instead of maintaining or ramping up its efforts. As a result, the Somalian state failed because the United States withdrew too early.

Iraq

Next, I will analyze the case study demonstrated by the civil war in Iraq. The United States has had a near-constant military presence in Iraq for almost two decades. On September 11th, 2001 the terrorist group Al-Qaeda attacked the United States. Thousands of lives were lost and the country was left devastated and reeling. Scrambling to come up with an adequate response, President George W. Bush and his administration made the decision to invade Iraq. The stated purpose was to thwart the Iraqi government's attempt to obtain weapons of mass destruction and because the United States believed the Iraqi government to be harboring and supporting terrorists including those responsible for the attacks on September 11th, 2001. This government is one that had been receiving aid from the United States since the 1980s. With this aid, the Hussein regime was able to de-professionalize the military and in turn create a largely ethnic army that was loyal to Saddam Hussein which would later contribute to the failure of the Iraqi State. The United States military forces invaded Iraq on Thursday, March 20th, 2003. In the years that followed, the United States maintained a constant military presence in the country until 2011, when the Obama administration decided to order a formal withdrawal of troops from the country.

The presence of the United States in Iraq did not mean a state of peace though. Roughly beginning in 2007, there has been a civil war within the Middle Eastern country. There is no specific start date on when exactly the civil war began, as fighting has been persistent and it is hard to identify one specific event that launched the civil war. However, with the absence of the United States military, the seeds of terror were allowed to spread and grow. After the U.S. left Iraq, it was not long until the terror group ISIS rose to power and took control over much of Iraq. During ISIS's control of Iraq, there were prolonged levels of intense violence that claimed the

lives of many. As a result, the United States decided to return to a military presence in Iraq just a few years after their initial departure in 2011. Even during the period when the United States has had a standing military presence, the U.S. failed to establish a stable, lasting government in Iraq.

Moving forward and turning to the United States' involvement in Iraq, there were several instances of intervention that influenced the civil war in Iraq even prior to the 2003 invasion. As already established by the work of Silverstein, foreign influence in states prior to the onset of a conflict can greatly increase the likelihood that there will, in fact, be a conflict. Financially, the United States was heavily involved in Iraq prior to 2003 and the monetary relationship only expanded as the U.S.'s involvement in the country continued to grow. . There was a large amount of financial capital flowing from the U.S. to Iraq. At the time, the Iraqi government (the recipient of much of this money) was rife with corruption. This was apparent and an undeniable fact, yet the United State's played a role in and arguably helped to perpetuate corruption in Iraq leading up to the U.S. invasion and subsequent civil war that left Iraq as a failed state (Silverstein 2016). The money would be sent to Iraq with little to no oversight of where the money was truly going or how it was being used. Silverstein posits that the United States funneled money into Iraq for purposes of fighting Al-Qaeda that routinely "vanished into Swiss bank accounts" (Silverstein 2016). This corruption ultimately signified the major misappropriation of funds that crippled the country economically and fueled a system of violence for years to come.

Despite the United States' failed efforts to establish a stable and lasting democratic government in Iraq, it certainly wasn't for a lack of trying. The United States and its Western allies repeatedly played their hand at achieving a regime change and state-building in Iraq during the period in which the country was engulfed in a civil war (Hinnebusch 2016). It is precisely these efforts that some experts blame for causing the ultimate failure of the Iraqi state. The hand

of Western influence, especially in instances of state-building, is by no means a light one. In so forcefully involving themselves in the creation of a democratic Iraqi state, the United States did not allow Iraq to do so properly on its own. So, when the United States eventually departed from the country, the Iraqi state was not left in a position to sustain itself in the long term. This led to the failure of the Iraqi state. What was left was not a pretty sight. One scholar, Andrew Flibbert, contends, “After taking the country by force in 2003, the United States disbanded the Iraqi military, dismantled its bureaucracy, transformed its legal system, and replaced its leadership from top to bottom. The result was a brutal and multi-headed insurgency, ongoing terrorism, economic stagnation, crumbling infrastructure, rampant criminality, sectarian and ethnic polarization, and low-grade civil war” (Flibbert 2013). The United States’ intervention in Iraq and its civil war didn’t just wreak havoc on the country’s civil and political institutions; the human cost of the U.S.’s intervention was enormous. Between the years of 2003 and 2011 alone, there were over 100,000 documented civilian deaths (Flibbert 2013). It should not be discounted either that Iraqis weren’t the only ones to suffer. 4,400 Americans were killed and over 32,000 were wounded in the same time period (Flibbert 2013). Scholars have also noted the many similarities in the events that took place in Iraq due to foreign intervention and what has transpired in Syria. This leads me to my next case study.

Syria

Iraq is not the only country in which U.S. foreign intervention has had an effect on civil war and state failure in the country. Syria is another country that has seen civil war and state failure. Unlike in Iraq, the events and U.S. intervention occurred in a slightly different order.

Whereas in Iraq, U.S. involvement led to a civil war which led to state failure, in Syria U.S. involvement began after a civil war had already begun. The Syrian civil war has been ongoing since 2011, beginning during the peak of the Arab Spring. The involvement and intervention of the United States came the following year in 2012 when former President Barack Obama delivered his famous “red line” speech (Associated Press, 2019). Following reports of the widespread usage of chemical weapons by the Assad regime in Syria, the Obama administration declared that if confirmed, those reports would mark a “red line” being crossed that would prompt military intervention from the United States. As the reports were eventually confirmed, the United States did intervene, and sent troops along with other forms of aid, to Syrian rebels. The situation in Syria has proven to be incredibly complex, with the United States fighting more than one group within the country. In addition to supporting rebels in their fight against the Assad regime that rules the country with an iron fist, the U.S. has also fought ISIS directly inside Syrian borders. The United States has undoubtedly helped to prolong the conflict in Syria, which has come to be one of the greatest human rights issues of the century. In aiding the rebel group against the Assad regime, they have stretched out what may have otherwise been a quick and decisive victory by the ruling power. In an attempt to maintain power amidst the conflict fueled largely by the United States, the Assad regime has repeatedly sacrificed Syrian civilians in incredibly violent ways. It should be noted that the Assad regime also has powerful backers in the Russian and Iranian governments that were in part influenced by the United States’ own decision to intervene. With the perpetuation of this violent conflict, Syria has been devastated. Countless lives have been lost, the infrastructure of the country has crumbled, and the country has been reduced to a “pre-industrial” state (COAR 2020). The situation in Syria is still volatile and incredibly dire. Despite this however, the Trump administration has made it clear that the

United States will be leaving Syria. In a tweet written in 2019, President Trump remarked, “now it’s time for our troops to come back home” (Associated Press 2019). After having greatly drawn out the conflict in Syria and escalated the scale of the destruction, the United States withdrawal comes rather abruptly. The war is not over. The civil war being fought between the ruling Assad regime and Syrian rebel groups still rages on. The United States cites the defeat of ISIS as a primary reason for departing from the country, but it was not the reason that it became involved in the first place. Now with a completely ravaged country, hundreds of thousands of lives lost, the United States leaves Syria as a failed state by having departed prematurely. The country is completely dysfunctional; it is utterly unable to provide the services required for the general well-being of its people, meeting my definition of a failed state.

Libya

Next, it is time to examine the case study of U.S. foreign intervention in Libya and how it has affected civil war and state failure within the country. The timeline of events in Libya mirrors what occurred in Syria more closely than it resembles what took place in Iraq. In 2011, the ruler of Libya was Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Colonel Gaddafi had for years been a bit of an outcast on the global stage, but had a largely normal relationship with the rest of the world. It should not be said though, that Colonel Gaddafi was a benevolent ruler of Libya. In fact, it was the opposite. Colonel Gaddafi was considered to be a rather brutish leader. For years, it was his relationships with other world leaders and his ability to maintain relative order in Libya that allowed him to stay in power. However, in 2011 the Arab Spring hit the country with much of the same force that it had in Syria. With large protests erupting as a result, Colonel Gaddafi and

his regime sought to crush the insurrection and unrest with unrelenting force. The situation escalated quickly, and the amount of bloodshed was massive. In 2011, the United States intervened, leading a NATO coalition in an attempt to topple the Gaddafi regime (McKernan 2020). The attempt proved to be successful, but it left Libya without a governing authority and created a power vacuum in its place. In 2014, a civil war broke out in Libya over who should hold power in the country. The civil war is ongoing to this day. Despite continuously elevating levels of violence, the United States has remained absent since 2011. After successfully toppling the ruling power in Libya, the United States took to the sidelines and allowed Libya to descend into chaos and violence. The resentment for the United States among the Libyan people is clear; “To this day, many Libyans denounce the United States, unfairly or not, for not offering more help after the Arab Spring (Ryan 2020). As a result of the bloody civil war, Libya has fallen from having some of the highest standards of living in Africa to having some of the worst (McKernan 2020). Casualties have been high, with dozens of thousands of lives lost over the course of the conflict (McKernan 2020). The absence of a sustained United States presence in Libya, however, has not meant a complete absence of foreign intervention. Many European powers have stepped in in place of the United States, often backing different factions and leading to prolonged violence (Ryan 2020). And America’s allies in Europe aren’t the only ones with a hand to play in the Libyan conflict. Egypt, Turkey, and Russia have all been “pour[ing] weapons and fighters into a combustible battle” (Ryan 2020). Libya marks yet another example of a conflict into which the United States has gotten itself involved, but failed to ensure a peaceful situation following its exit. It is impossible to know what will unfold in the years to come, but it is safe to say that at the moment, Libya is a failed state. The violence has leveled the country’s infrastructure, devastated its civilian population, and left its people without an authority that can

provide essential services. There is still no clear and apparent ruler to govern the country in Colonel Gaddafi's place.

Bosnia

Next, one of the most lively periods for foreign intervention, especially on the part of the United States was the time period directly after the Berlin Wall came down under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev in November of 1989. Many of the satellite Soviet states experienced extreme turmoil after the Soviet Union collapsed. The civil conflict in Bosnia provides a clear example of United States foreign intervention, especially in a military capacity. At the onset of the conflict, the United States was hesitant to engage in any form of intervention, despite the obvious humanitarian need. This was so because many policy makers in the United States framed the conflict as an ancient one with sides drawn over ethnic lines, a conflict in which there was little that the United States could do to help (Western, 2002). For a time, the Bush administration was successful in defining the conflict using this narrative, allowing for public support (or at least complacency) toward inaction into the conflict (Western, 2002). However, complete information can only be withheld from the public in a free state for so long, and the full scope of what was happening in Bosnia was destined to become public eventually. So, as more information became known to liberal humanitarians throughout the summer and fall of 1992, it was becoming more difficult for the United States to sit idly by. At this point, I find it important to point out that the weighing of the decision of whether or not to intervene in a military capacity in Bosnia was taking place largely at the same time that the United States was deciding whether or not to go into Somalia. The two incidents can hardly be isolated, as the United States was

factoring its stretched military into its decision. The reticence to involve the United States military in multiple conflicts at once can be thought of as a primary reason as to why the United States did not intervene in Bosnia, or Somalia for that matter, sooner. These important decisions were being weighed all while a presidential election was in full swing in America. The more conservative Bush administration lost the election, making way for the much more liberal Clinton administration, which would take office in January of 1993. In the period during which Clinton was the President-elect, but Bush was still the sitting President, George H. Bush's administration decided that the United States would have to take some form of action. They decided to intervene in Somalia, rather than Bosnia (Weseter, 2002). The hesitance to intervene in Bosnia was actually a weak point in Bush's presidential campaign against Clinton. Then candidate Clinton was much more outspoken and indeed, outraged, about the situation in Bosnia. As knowledge of the media and the public on the Bosnian crisis grew, so did Clinton's profile for having a firm stance on the issue (Western, 2002). When Clinton finally took office in 1993 and decided to escalate the United States' involvement in Bosnia, there were several factors that motivated the decision. Certainly, the United States' intervention into Bosnia was largely predicated on the humanitarian crisis taking place in the country. The bloodshed was massive, with high levels of civilian casualties. It stands to reason that the United States wanted to lessen the loss of life. But there were the other factors in the decision to intervene, as well. There was the desire to contain the fighting, to not have it spread further across Europe; this was a desire to maintain world security. Then there was also the internal American political motivation. Clinton was looking to add an international success to his tenure in office, and saw Bosnia as an opportunity to do so (Auerbach and Bloch-Elkon, 2005). But once the President Clinton made the decision to finally involve the United States, it was not well understood how it would leave.

When the U.S. did eventually depart from Bosnia, it once again did so prematurely, leaving the country fractured, and “each fracture, in turn, both has hampered efforts at state-building and recovery from the war and continues to distort other aspects of social, cultural, and economic life” (Curp, 2014).

Lebanon

The last case study to be evaluated in this research takes place decades before the other civil conflicts studied in this paper. To end my review of case studies on United States foreign military intervention and its effect on civil war and state failure, I will be investigating the civil war that took place in Lebanon starting in the 1970s. There is a debate among experts as to when exactly the civil war in Lebanon officially began, but most sources agree that the starting point was in approximately 1975 (BBC 2018). The causes of the war are extensive, involving religious clashes between Muslims and Christians as well as the state of Israel. Though the war started in 1975, the United States however did not become involved until seven years later, in 1982. Among all of the case studies presented here, the United States foreign intervention in the Lebanese civil war was by far the shortest. American involvement only lasted for two short years, with President Reagan ordering a withdrawal of American troops in 1984. The United States’ decision to leave came after a “suicide attack on [the] US embassy kills 63 people in April, and another in October on the headquarters of the peacekeepers kills 241 US and 58 French troops (BBC 2018). After the departure of American troops in 1984, the civil war in Lebanon raged on for another six years, officially ending in 1990. In the years that followed however, there was not a peaceful resolution. Lebanon marks an interesting case study to follow

because it has the fewest characteristics of a failed state. Even after the end of the war in 1990 and the departure of United States forces in 1984, several foreign powers such as Israel and Syria maintained a formal presence until much later. Israel did not withdraw its troops until 2000 (BBC 2018). Following the war, there was a government that was established and remains, for the most part, the same to this day. However, many authorities would still consider Lebanon to be a failed state nonetheless. One of the main parties seated in the Lebanese government is Hezbollah, a group regarded by many to be a terrorist organization. Even though Hezbollah represents a significant part of the Lebanese government, it should only cautiously be viewed as being truly and independently Lebanese. Estimates show that Hezbollah receives nearly 700 million dollars (70% of its budget) from Iran (Reinsch 2019). At the time of its inception following the culmination of Lebanon's civil war, Hezbollah acted more commonly as a terrorist organization that would fit most conventional definitions. For example, they relied on forced recruitment to supply their personnel numbers. However, as time progressed, "Following the civil war, however, it [Hezbollah] developed a strategy based on a much broader marketing approach, a vastly expanded network of social services, and greatly reduced use of coercion" (Szekely, 2012). So, in using the provision of social services necessary for public well-being alone as a metric, Lebanon could not properly be categorized as a failed state. However, the primary component of Lebanon's ruling government is recognized by much of the world as a terrorist organization, which calls into question its legitimacy. Furthermore, while there are social services being provided in Lebanon, they should be considered to be lacking. The major explosion in August of this year was largely attributed to a general ineffectiveness of the Lebanese government, and had the government not have been a failed one, the explosion might not have ever occurred. Several government officials in Lebanon, including the Prime Minister,

have even been charged with negligence in the wake of the explosion, which killed over 200 people and displaced countless more (Reuters 2020). So, despite the *existence* of civil and political institutions in Lebanon following the United States' departure during the civil war in 1984, Lebanon never truly established itself as an independently sufficient state, and continues to be in a state of decline to this day. The United States left Lebanon before there could be confidence in the notion that an effective government would form, and in the wake of the U.S. departure, Lebanon was allowed to crumble into a position of state failure.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

So, in the end, was intervention on the part of the United States helpful? Was the United States justified in its decisions to intervene into the aforementioned intrastate conflicts? The purpose of this paper is not to enter into a discussion on the righteousness of such decisions, however, here I will consider the overall results of intervention more generally. One interesting notion is the idea of escalation as discussed by Arman Grigoryan in his 2010 work on the subject. In short, Grigoryan warns third-parties that they should be wary of intervening if they are not prepared for a full-scale escalation which they will then have on their hands (Grigoryan, 2010). When weighing the calculus of how to conduct warfare, be it to escalate or deescalate, a third-party intervention may have any of several effects on a conflict. The ideal intention of intervention is that upon facing a third-party intervention, one party in the conflict will have to reweigh their calculations and eventually deescalate the situation. However, this is not the only possible outcome by any means. It is also quite possible that the party which is in opposition with the *opposite* route from de-escalation. As is common with dictators facing a collapsing regime, when faced with third-party intervention, some groups may in fact double down rather than scale down their war efforts. If this is the case, the third-party that decides to intervene should in fact be prepared to double down as well. If they do not, then they are left with an intensified conflict on one side and an unprepared response on the other. This is largely what happened when the United States decided to intervene in Somalia. Essentially, the United States expected the opposition to scale back their military operations when confronted with the United States' involvement. Instead, the United States military was met with an intensified resistance that they had not expected, one which ended up costing the U.S. heavily financially and in terms

of human lives lost. Grigoryan notes on this darker side of foreign intervention in intrastate conflict well, asserting that some efforts may in fact, “generate incentives for intensified, not reduced, violence under certain conditions. Not all interventions, in other words, are better than no intervention, contrary to the popular interventionist mantra” (Grigoryan, 2010). The lessons here are resolute. Foreign military interventions on the part of the United States of America will not go away. As the timeline of history continues to progress, the potential need for intervention will only grow. But, as I have demonstrated throughout the course of this paper, conventional forms of third-party intervention in intrastate conflicts are not always the best course of action. Before the United States intervenes in a civil conflict in the future, it will need to ask itself a series of serious questions before taking any form of concrete action. One, is it prepared for the conflict to escalate once it enters? If so, then it should proceed with caution. If it is not prepared for such intensified violence, then perhaps it may be better to sit back for a moment and ponder a potentially more effective course of action. Similar to the first question, yet slightly different, is the question of whether or not the third party (in this case the United States) is prepared to be involved in the conflict long term. Even if the fighting and violence does not escalate, research, as supplied in this paper, has concluded that third-party intervention is more likely than not to prolong the conflict in a general sense. If the United States can only commit to involving itself in a conflict for a short period of time, then maybe it is better to seek alternative options. If, on the contrary, the United States is indeed prepared to get involved in the conflict and remain involved for the foreseeable future, then intervention may truly be the wisest course of action. As seen in Liberia, proper measures to ensure a secure state cannot be established in a matter of months, or even a couple of years. Instead, the United States must be prepared to remain involved with

conflict for much longer, often upwards of a decade, before it decides to involve itself heavily as a third-party intervener in an intrastate conflict.

When one thinks of civil war, the common image is of a war between a rebel faction and the seated ruling government. We've been socialized to envision civil conflict in this way, largely because this is how our own civil war unfolded in the United States in the 1860s. But as has been shown, civil wars are often like icebergs. What is visible on the surface is only a small fraction of what can be seen below the water. Foreign intervention in states has been demonstrated to have an extremely pronounced effect on the likelihood of civil wars, the way these wars unfold, and the subsequent failure of states. From how the war begins, the balance of power during the war, including the style and intensity of the fighting, how the war ends, and what becomes of the state after the conclusion of the conflict are often almost wholly predicated on foreign intervention. In the cases of Liberia, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Bosnia, and Lebanon, I have proven my theory. Foreign intervention, namely the involvement of the United States, in a country's domestic conflict positively correlated with state failure. From the bolstering of rebel forces and prolonging of violence and destruction, the increased capacity to draw international attention, the failure of the intervener to concretely continue support for the rebel group after the war ends, and the miscalculation of resolve and bad information, these states are primed for collapse. This should not be mistaken as saying that the United States should not have intervened in the conflicts outlined by the aforementioned case studies. It is likely that the situation in these countries would have been far worse had the U.S. sat idle. The purpose of this research is not to take a stance on United States foreign intervention, but rather to simply investigate the effect it has on civil war and state failure. Moving forward, perhaps this

tested theory can be applied to more cases, further solidifying its validity in the hopes of preventing potential state failure in the future.

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