WAR ON THE CHEAP?
ASSESSING THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF PROXY WAR

A Dissertation
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Government

By

Tyrone L. Groh, B.S./M.A.

Washington, DC
February 23, 2010
WAR ON THE CHEAP?
ASSESSING THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF PROXY War

Tyrone L. Groh, M.A.

Thesis Advisors:
Dan Byman, Ph.D.
Anne Clunan, Ph.D.
David Edelstein, Ph.D.
ABSTRACT

Decision makers face a difficult dilemma when perceived threats in another state do not clearly warrant or justify a direct military response. Under such conditions, policy makers may seek to respond indirectly. An especially alluring prospect arises when an indigenous group operating inside the target state appears willing to serve as a proxy and act in the intervening state’s interests. Such a proxy seems to provide a significant benefit; it introduces a partner to share the costs and risks involved in influencing affairs in the target state. History, however, shows that pursuing interests in another country through the actions of a third party has mixed results. In some cases, an intervening state benefited greatly from supporting a proxy; in others, states incurred disastrous, unexpected consequences and exorbitant costs. The difference in the types and amounts of costs and benefits raises two questions: what are the costs and benefits of proxy war and how do conditions affect them? To date, proxy war lacks a systematic treatment of its costs and benefits. This dissertation provides such a treatment and arms strategists and policy makers with a framework for considering the potential rewards and risks before making the decision to use a proxy.
DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this dissertation are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, or the United States Air Force.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dan Byman, Anne Clunan, David Edelstein, Andy Bennett, Pete Fesler, Chrystie Swiney, Alex Berg, Michael Koplow, Tim Castle, Henri “Bossi” Boshoff, the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, and most especially, my wife, Dawn Groh.

Many thanks,
TY L. GROH
### Summary of Non-state Proxy Wars 1945-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervening State(s)</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Viet Minh</td>
<td>Indo-China</td>
<td>1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Castillo Armas’ Forces</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Pathet Lao</td>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Hmong</td>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Brigade 2506</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union</td>
<td>Southwest Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO)</td>
<td>SW Africa</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union</td>
<td>Zimbabwean African People’s Union (ZAPU)</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU)</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Vietnam</td>
<td>National Liberation Front (NLF)</td>
<td>South Vietnam</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union</td>
<td>Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA)</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Mukti Bahini</td>
<td>East Pakistan</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA)</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA)</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA)</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>Lebanese Front (LF)</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>South Lebanese Force (SLF)</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF)/ Somali-Abo Liberation Front (SALF)</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Mujahideen</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO)</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Contras</td>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Mujahideen</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Tamil Tigers (LTTE)</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA)</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda/Rwanda</td>
<td>Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL)</td>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda/Rwanda</td>
<td>Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD)</td>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>Revolutionary United Front (RUF)</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Northern Alliance</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction ................................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 2: Deriving the Costs and Benefits of Proxy War and Predicting How Conditions Affect Them ...................................................................................................... 22

Chapter 3: United States and the Hmong in Laos ........................................................................ 52

Chapter 4: South Africa and UNITA in Angola ......................................................................... 104

Chapter 5: India and LTTE in Sri Lanka .................................................................................. 148

Chapter 6: Summary and Analysis ............................................................................................ 185

Appendix 1 .................................................................................................................................. 205

Appendix 2 .................................................................................................................................. 255

Bibliography ............................................................................................................................... 258
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Proxy War’s Costs and Benefits ................................................................. 7
Table 1.2: Conditions Affecting Proxy War’s Costs and Benefits ......................... 8
Table 1.3: Specific Conditions Found in Proxy War Cases, 1945-2001 ................... 13
Table 1.4 Specific Conditions of Cases included in this Study ............................... 14
Table 2.1: Conditions Affecting Proxy War’s Costs and Benefits ....................... 39
Table 3.1 Costs and Benefits to the United States in Supporting the Hmong .... 66
Table 3.2: Effect of Civilian Proximity on US Costs and Benefits ....................... 78
Table 3.3: Effect of Conflict Character on US Costs and Benefits ....................... 81
Table 3.4: Effect of International Norms on US Costs and Benefits ..................... 85
Table 3.5: Effect of Domestic Willingness on US Costs and Benefits ..................... 88
Table 3.6: Effect of Proxy Dependence on US Costs and Benefits ....................... 89
Table 3.7: Effect of Proxy Autonomy on US Costs and Benefits ......................... 92
Table 3.8: Effect of Incentive Structure on US Costs and Benefits ....................... 94
Table 3.9: Effect of Secrecy on US Costs and Benefits ......................................... 96
Table 4.1 Costs and Benefits to South Africa in Supporting the UNITA ............... 115
Table 4.2: Effect of Civilian Proximity on South Africa’s Costs and Benefits ......... 121
Table 4.3: Effect of Conflict Character on South Africa’s Costs and Benefits .......... 124
Table 4.4: Effect of International Norms on South Africa’s Costs and Benefits ....... 127
Table 4.5: Effect of Domestic Willingness on South Africa’s Costs and Benefits ..... 131
Table 4.6: Effect of Proxy Dependence on South Africa’s Costs and Benefits ........ 133
Table 4.7: Effect of Proxy Autonomy on South Africa’s Costs and Benefits........... 136
Table 4.8: Effect of Incentive Structure on South Africa’s Costs and Benefits........ 138
Table 4.9: Effect of Secrecy on South Africa’s Costs and Benefits.................... 141
Table 5.1 Costs and Benefits to India in Supporting the LTTE ........................... 160
Table 5.2: Effect of Civilian Proximity on India’s Costs and Benefits.................. 165
Table 5.3: Effect of Conflict Character on India’s Costs and Benefits.................. 166
Table 5.4: Effect of International Norms on India’s Costs and Benefits................ 169
Table 5.5: Effect of Domestic Willingness on India’s Costs and Benefits............... 170
Table 5.6: Effect of Proxy Dependence on India’s Costs and Benefits.................. 172
Table 5.7: Effect of Proxy Autonomy on India’s Costs and Benefits.................... 174
Table 5.8: Effect of Incentive Structure on India’s Costs and Benefits.................. 175
Table 5.9: Effect of Secrecy on India’s Costs and Benefits.............................. 177
Table 6.1: Summary of Effect of Civilian Proximity on Costs and Benefits......... 186
Table 6.2: Summary of Effect of Conflict Character on Costs and Benefits......... 189
Table 6.3: Summary of Effect of International Norms on Costs and Benefits ...... 191
Table 6.4: Summary of Effect of Domestic Willingness on Costs and Benefits ...... 193
Table 6.5: Summary of Effect of Proxy Dependence on Costs and Benefits ......... 194
Table 6.6: Summary of Effect of Proxy Autonomy on Costs and Benefits .......... 196
Table 6.7: Summary of Effect of Incentive Structure on Costs and Benefits ......... 197
Table 6.8: Summary of Effect of Secrecy on Costs and Benefits ....................... 199
Table A2.1 Costs and Benefits Present in the 28 Cases of Proxy War............... 254
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Decision makers face a difficult dilemma when perceived threats in another state do not clearly warrant or justify a direct military response. Under such conditions, policy makers may seek to respond indirectly. An especially alluring prospect arises when an indigenous group operating inside the target state appears willing to serve as a proxy and act in the intervening state’s interests. Such a proxy seems to provide a significant benefit; it introduces a partner to share the costs and risks involved in influencing affairs in the target state.

History, however, shows that pursuing interests in another country through the actions of a third party has mixed results. For example, in 1954 the United States perceived that the left-leaning regime of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala might provide the Soviet Union with a potential foothold in the Western Hemisphere; Moscow had yet to act, making it impractical to overtly send in US troops to depose of Arbenz. Instead, the United States helped a small group bring down the Arbenz government. The operation cost very little and provided enough secrecy to allow the United States to deny its involvement. As a result, it was viewed in Washington as a tremendous success. Seven years later, the United States faced a somewhat similar situation in Cuba. Once again, the United States supported a small group of Cuban exiles bent on bringing down the Castro government. Despite the perceived similarity to the Guatemalan operation, Washington grossly overestimated the capabilities of its proxy. In what has come to be known as the “Bay of Pigs” incident, Castro’s forces easily deposed of the US proxy and the affair apparently drove Fidel Castro even deeper into Moscow’s sphere of influence. The difference in both the types and amounts of US costs and benefits in these two cases
raises two questions, “what are the costs and benefits of proxy war and how do conditions affect them?”

Currently, US decision makers and strategists appear to have a benefit-focused view of proxy war as demonstrated in the 2006 version of the US Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). The QDR states that the Department of Defense can reduce costs, conserve resources, gain legitimacy, improve efficiency, and increase flexibility through the use of proxy forces.¹ A majority of the academics that have written on the subject support this view. Scholars such as Philip Towle (1980), Bertil Duner (1981), and Chris Loveman (2002) claim that proxy war helps insulate intervening states from retaliation or escalation and protects their reputations in the process. Jeffrey Record (2002) argues that the use of proxies in conjunction with air power and Special Forces can preserve domestic support while in the pursuit of national interests. Andres, Wills, and Griffiths (2005) claim that proxy war has the combined effect of expanding a states influence while conserving its resources.

Steven David (1985, 223-225) similarly argues that proxy forces have proven highly effective for states such as the United States and the Soviet Union. David, however, warns policy makers not to exaggerate the benefits of proxy war without first considering whether it will provoke a response from its rival, the capability of the proxy’s adversary, and whether such a policy can be defended politically.

¹ The QDR specifically uses the term “indirect approach” instead of “proxy war” when describing its policy recommendations, but the two terms are virtually synonymous. The “indirect approach” is defined in the QDR as acting “with and through others to defeat common enemies—shifting from conducting activities ourselves to enabling partners to do more for themselves” (2). The QDR illustrates the “indirect approach” using the example of a proxy war involving British Colonel T.E. Lawrence and Bedouin tribesmen against Ottoman forces on the Arab peninsula (11).
All of these views, however, fail to consider the potentially negative implications of acting through a third party. Proxy war, like any war, is a political endeavor whose character emerges from the actions, motivations, and relations of those involved (Clausewitz 1976, 88). Proxies, like adversaries, are self-interested and therefore add another layer of complexity to a conflict. Because of this, it is critical that an intervening state not only consider carefully the character and motivation of its adversary, but also that of its proxy.

To date, proxy war lacks a systematic treatment of its costs and benefits. This dissertation provides such a treatment and arms strategists and policy makers with a framework for considering the potential rewards and risks before making the decision to use a proxy. Moreover, this dissertation offers a framework for the policy makers and strategists to consider the potential costs and benefits of proxy war based on the existing environment.

DEFINITIONS

A definition of proxy war requires two specific clarifications: the nature of the action and the relationship of the parties involved. Proxy war is a form of military intervention—an effort to influence the affairs of another state through the use (or threat) of violence (Hoffman 1984; Bennett 1999; Finnemore 2003). The difference is that proxy war involves an intervening state employing a local actor, rather than its own forces, to do the majority of the fighting on the ground (Duner 1981; David 1985).

The relationship between an intervening state and its proxy is hierarchical; the proxy subjugates its interests to that of the intervening state due to its inability to act on its own (Duner 1981; David 1985). This does not mean that the proxy is not self-
interested or acts purely in the interest of the intervening state. Depending on the conditions, a proxy may be more or less capable of pursuing its own objectives and taking advantage of the intervening state’s support (David 1985, 199-200). Finally, a proxy is not a mercenary force; it is politically motivated to alter the affairs of the target state (David 1985, 200). Combining these two concepts, I define proxy war as an intervening state providing support to a local actor engaging in an armed conflict to influence a target state’s affairs.

Costs and benefits also require a definition. Discussing the costs and benefits of an alliance, Glenn Snyder explains that “costs are suffered in carrying out one’s own side of the agreement; benefits are enjoyed when the ally carries out its” (1997, 10). Borrowing from this definition and applying it to proxy war, I propose that costs are what a state uses or expends when supporting a proxy and benefits are what a state gains or saves in return.

I also want to emphasize that the costs and benefits of any policy can be either material or non-material (Finnemore 2003, Biddle 2004). Material costs refer to tangible resources—e.g. side-payments (carrots) or physical threats (sticks)—used to influence a target state’s behavior. Material benefits equate to the gain or conservation of tangible resources—e.g. money, materiel, and personnel—that can be used to influence other actors in the future. Non-material costs and benefits refer to losses or gains of intangible resources such as legitimacy, prestige, or reputation that allow one actor to influence the behavior of another (Risse 2000; Nye 2004; Krebs and Jackson 2007).

---

2 David (1985) also suggests that the relationship demands that the intervening state be capable of carrying out the intervention on its own. Such a consideration unnecessarily limits the scope of proxy wars. In some cases, an intervening state may need the proxy to permit an intervention. I develop reasons when this may occur in Chapter 2.
One might include the opportunity cost of an intervening state choosing to use a proxy rather than its own forces. I specifically avoid incorporating opportunity costs into this study for two reasons. First, they are counterfactual costs that can only be considered intellectually; comparing the relative costs and benefits of direct intervention or non-intervention is more appropriately studied in an effort to understand why a state chose to engage in proxy war. Second, I am more concerned with providing policy makers and strategists a better understanding of what they are getting into when they choose proxy war rather than comparing the relative merits of one course of action over another. Opportunity costs are important, but this study aims to improve discussions about opportunity costs in future scenarios rather than hypothetically explain them in past cases.

RESEARCH STRATEGY AND METHODOLOGY

This dissertation has two specific research objectives: to identify the different costs and benefits an intervening state incurs when engaging in a proxy war and to explain how different conditions affect the accrual of those costs and benefits. When addressing proxy war’s costs and benefits, I focus mainly on those pertaining to an intervening state. Costs and benefits may apply to the state as a whole or to its policy makers. I am not comparing proxy war to direct- or non-intervention. My intent is to provide a comparison of proxy war’s costs and benefits and identify the types of conditions that might favor a proxy war policy. Further, I have structured my research to help explain the relative weights of different conditions on the accumulation of costs and benefits.
I have chosen to focus on non-state proxies because previous studies have mostly emphasized states serving as proxies (Duner 1981; David 1985; Bills 1986) and the few studies that did consider non-state proxies provided only a broad brush of the subject (Loveman 2002; Andres et al 2005; Biddle 2005). To narrow the scope of my research, I have chosen to focus exclusively on the period following World War II. The creation of the United Nations and the Security Council has arguably altered the way states interact with one another, especially with regards to the use of force (Thompson 2006); any state that intervenes in the domestic affairs of another state without provocation or the approval of the UN Security Council violates the UN Charter. This is not to say that the UN Charter has completely changed how states behave—it simply acknowledges the fact that states often seek the approval of the United Nations when using force.³

To identify the different costs and benefits of proxy war, I use theories from other areas of study that closely resemble the relationships involved in a proxy war. To validate these theoretical costs and benefits, I conducted a study of 28 cases of non-state proxy war between 1945 and 2001 (see Appendix 2). In each study, I found multiple examples of the different costs and benefits I have identified. The study also provided a basic understanding of the relationship between the different costs and benefits and the general conditions under which they occurred. To identify conditions that affect those costs and benefits, I looked at those commonly considered in foreign policy development and operational planning. To avoid overwhelming my research with an exhaustive list of potentially relevant conditions, I chose eight that, in previous cases, policy makers often seemed to overlook or marginalize based on the proxy war’s conduct and outcome (see “Propositions” section below).

³ An exception, however, is when states use force in self-defense.
To explain how conditions affect the accumulation of an intervening state’s costs and benefits, I use a method of structured, focused comparison across three different cases. The structure of the comparison rests on my evaluation of the same eight propositions (they are listed below) that describe the effects of a particular condition on a proxy war’s costs and benefits. The focus of the comparison relies on the fact that all three cases fit my definition of a proxy war and that I limit my study to the duration of the proxy war—specifically the period during which the intervening state supported its proxy in pursing its objectives in the target state.

**COSTS AND Benefits**

Costs and benefits stem largely from the relationships between an intervening state and the other actors with which it is involved—the proxy, other states in the international system, and its own people. As shown in Table 1.1, each relationship generates its own costs and benefits. I develop the logic behind each of these costs and benefits in Chapter 2.

*Table 1.1: Proxy War’s Costs and Benefits*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adds Critical Skills</td>
<td>Wastes Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extends Influence</td>
<td>Increases Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conserves Resources</td>
<td>Increases Control Costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decreases Commitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increases Support/Toleration</td>
<td>Decreases Support/Toleration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decreases Commitment</td>
<td>Decreases Target State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hides/Obscures Involvement</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoids Unwanted Escalation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase Target State Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domestic</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increases Support</td>
<td>Decreases Domestic Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hides/Obscures Involvement</td>
<td>Increases Commitment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 The merits of this particular case study method can be found in George and Bennett 2005, chapter 3.
CONDITIONS

Conditions occurring at different levels—in the target state, internationally, and at home—over which a state has no control (also referred to as “structural conditions”) affect proxy war’s costs and benefits. Inside the target state the proximity of civilians to the battlespace and the character of the conflict itself—ethnic versus ideological—impact costs and benefits. Externally, international norms affect other states’ perception of the proxy war and may influence their willingness to exact costs on the intervening state. Finally, conditions within the intervening state such as its public’s willingness to get involved and support a proxy, also have an effect.

Conditions, such as specific policy choices, over which an intervening state has some control (also referred to as “agentic”)—whether to keep its involvement secret and how to support and control its proxy—can also affect costs and benefits. These choices are often taken in an effort to reduce the effects of structural conditions, or at least shape them in a way that may increase benefits and reduce costs. Table 1.2 summarizes the different conditions chosen for this study and identifies them by type: structure or agent.

Table 1.2: Conditions Affecting Proxy War’s Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Target State</th>
<th>Agentic Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civilian Proximity</td>
<td>Covert vs. Overt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character of Conflict</td>
<td>Measures to Aid/Control Proxy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International System</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms regarding intervention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intervening State</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to Intervene</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROPOSITIONS

In the course of my research, I have developed eight propositions about how the conditions listed above affect the accumulation of an intervening state’s costs and benefits. These propositions have allowed me to focus my research and explain how these conditions affect proxy war’s costs and benefits. Although I have considered other conditions, these eight are, in my opinion, the most salient, interesting, and potentially consequential with respect to policy determinations.⁵

Proposition 1 Civilian Proximity

Civilian proximity increases international, domestic, and target state costs due to an increase in the probability of civilian casualties. It has the counter-effect of providing the proxy with the access necessary to influence and hide among the population.

The rising influence of civilian vulnerability and casualties over the last two decades and the proclivity of adversaries to exploit—in some cases, successfully—civilians to make up for asymmetrical disadvantages in combat strength demands a closer look at the effects of this particular condition. Even more alarming is how states adhering to international laws of war seem to be losing rhetorical battles over civilian casualties caused when attacking insurgents or agents of international terrorist networks that have willingly chosen to use civilians as a means of leveling the playing field.

Proposition 2 Character of the Conflict

An ethnic conflict is less costly to influence than an ideological conflict because the lines between opposing sides are more divisive and outside support is less damaging to a proxy’s legitimacy.

The importance of gaining the support of the public in civil conflicts (Galula 2006; Trinquier 2006) and the influence of ethnicity and ideology on loyalty competition (Kaufmann 2004) both suggest that an intervening state should have a firm grasp on a conflict’s character.

⁵ Appendix 2 has 28 additional propositions that could provide guidance for future research.
Proposition 3 International Norms
Involvement in a proxy war that violates international norms raises an intervening state’s costs associated with interstate and domestic relationships. Exceptions to the norm of non-intervention include: human rights violations within the target state or an inability to provide adequately for the safety and needs of the people; a proxy that is a recognized belligerent fighting for its freedom; if another state is already involved in the conflict taking place in the target state; and if the conflict in the target state spills over into a neighboring state.

Despite Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, states intervene in the affairs of other states. States also, however, often attempt to justify intervention their actions citing international norms. Supporting a proxy may offer the justification necessary to avoid international costs.

Proposition 4 Domestic Willingness
If a domestic public is predicted to reject an interventionist policy, a proxy can lessen that resistance and lower domestic costs because it shares the burden, especially when it minimizes the intervening state’s commitment and casualties.

Considering that all policy makers are, in some fashion, accountable to a domestic audience (Danilovic and Clare 2004; Rosato 2003; Bueno de Mesquita et al 2003), the possibility that a proxy may positively affect the costs of intervening in another state warrants consideration.

Proposition 5 Proxy Dependence
A high level of proxy dependence reduces agency costs, but increases the costs of supporting a proxy.

If a proxy is so dependent upon an intervening state that it cannot hope to achieve any of its objectives without outside assistance, it stands to reason that the proxy will be very careful to ensure that it does not act in a way that might jeopardize that support. Such a high level of dependence, however, also likely requires an intervening state to provide more resources to allow the proxy to make any gains against the adversary. Independence equates to less support, but it also means that the proxy may place less
concern on keeping the intervening state happy. The question is whether one type of relationship is better than the other.

**Proposition 6 Proxy Autonomy**

*Higher levels of autonomy can decrease the cost of supporting a proxy, but increase the costs of monitoring the proxy’s activities and may lead to an increase in agency, international, and domestic costs depending on the proxy’s behavior.*

In a similar spirit to the previous proposition, more autonomy logically translates into less involvement, but it also leads to a lower degree of transparency—it reduces an intervening state’s ability to know what its proxy is really doing. Once again, the question is whether one has the tendency to outweigh the other.

**Proposition 7 Incentive Structure**

*Behavior-based incentives work best when fighting a superior enemy, when the intervening state’s and the proxy’s goals conflict, when it is necessary to give the proxy a high degree of autonomy, or when the intervening state has a great deal of knowledge and familiarity with the proxy. Outcome-based incentives work under the opposite conditions.*

As I mentioned previously, proxies are self-interested actors. An intervening state looking to minimize the costs and maximize the benefits of operating through a proxy should have a basic understanding of how the incentives it offers might affect the proxy’s behavior.

**Proposition 8 Secrecy**

*Keeping a proxy war secret potentially lowers domestic and international costs, especially when the action would be considered unpopular domestically and clearly violates the international norm of sovereignty. Secrecy, however, severely constrains an intervening state’s ability to support its proxy and jeopardizes the proxy’s ability to gain relative superiority in the battlespace. Secrecy, however, can inflict higher costs due to blowback.*

Keeping the support of a proxy hidden from domestic and international audiences has an obvious benefit. History, however, has shown that on some occasions states have suffered from trying to keep such a policy secret. Policy makers contemplating such a
policy should have a better picture of how secrecy can impact a proxy’s ability, the utility of secrecy, and the potential repercussions both internationally and domestically.

**Case Selection**

When looking at the universe of cases (see Table 1.3) and trying to determine the best combination for study, I made some decisions about how to narrow the list without sacrificing too much variation. I excluded *civilian proximity* because every proxy war had civilians living and working in the battlespace. Therefore, the only variation I achieve is the degree to which the civilians were present in the battlespace and the difference in their role in the conflict. I excluded *domestic willingness* due to my inability to establish sufficiently whether the people to whom the decision maker was responsible were for or against the proxy war. Instead, I chose cases that clearly showed the link between decision makers and the domestic public to whom they were accountable. Finally, I did not seek variation in the particular exceptions to the norm of non-intervention because my intent was to discern if international norms have an effect on costs and benefits *at all*, rather than establish the relative weights of the different norm exceptions. Using the remaining conditions I previously identified, there are potentially 14 different categories of cases.

Admittedly, there is an obvious weakness in my case selection—I have no cases that involve the use of outcome-based incentives. My alibi for not choosing such a case is that I would have had to sacrifice the study of an overt conflict. Although this limits my ability to make claims about the effects of outcome-based incentives, the cases I have chosen vary in the conditions that theoretically compliment or detract from the effects of behavior-based incentives.
### Table 1.3: Specific Conditions Found in Proxy War Cases, 1945-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Proxy Autonomy</th>
<th>Proxy Dependency</th>
<th>Proxy Incentive Structure</th>
<th>Overt</th>
<th>Character of Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA / Brigade 2506 (Cuba)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA / Contras (Nicaragua)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India / Mukti Bahini (E.Pakistan)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda, Rwanda / RCD (DRC)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA / UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria / PLO (Lebanon)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel / SLF (Lebanon)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA/Mujahideen (Afghanistan)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan / Mujahideen (Afghanistan)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia / WSLF, SALF (Ethiopia)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria / LF (Lebanon)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA / UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA / FNLA (Angola)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China / Pathet Lao (Laos)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR / ZAPU (Zimbabwe)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China / ZANU (Zimbabwe)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR / SWAPO (Namibia)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China / FNLA (Angola)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA / RENAMO (Mozambique)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India / LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia / RUF (Sierra Leone)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR / MPLA (Angola)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA / N. Alliance (Afghanistan)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China / Viet Minh (Indochina)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA / Armas (Guatemala)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRV / NLF (South Vietnam)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA / Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned previously, I use a structured, focused comparison of three different cases. The cases—US-Hmong in Laos, South Africa-UNITA in Angola, and India-LTTE
in Sri Lanka—provide variation in the types and amounts of costs and benefits each intervening state incurred\(^6\) and the conditions under which the proxy war occurred. Table 1.4 shows some of the specifics found in each case.

### Table 1.4 Specific Conditions of Cases included in this Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
<th>Policy Specifics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proxy Related</td>
<td>International (Norms Exceptions)</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-Hmong</td>
<td>High dependence Low autonomy Low objective divergence Low agency costs Ideological conflict</td>
<td>Invited by government Outside involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA-UNITA</td>
<td>High dependence High autonomy High objective divergence Low agency costs Mixed ideological/ethnic conflict</td>
<td>Outside involvement Recognized belligerent</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE</td>
<td>Low dependence High autonomy High objective divergence High agency costs Ethnic conflict</td>
<td>Human rights Recognized belligerent</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The US-Hmong case provides an example of a highly cooperative, highly dependent proxy receiving covert support, operating with a low degree of autonomy, and possessing relatively convergent objectives as the intervening state. Inside Laos, the

---

\(^6\) Although King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) explicitly condemn research designs that choose cases based on the dependent variable (the costs and benefits of proxy war), George and Bennett (2005) acknowledge that the practice serves a valuable role in achieving the variation necessary to conduct a useful and informative study.
Hmong were instrumental in forestalling communist forces from capturing Laos’ capital in Vientiane, despite the fact that they were a politically isolated ethnic group with relatively weak connections to the Royal Lao Government.

From an international perspective, the Lao conflict takes place during the Cold War. Soviet involvement, however, remained limited in spite of heavy US involvement. Both the international community and the US public were assumed by decision makers to be unsupportive, but little action was taken by either audience after news of US involvement became public knowledge.

The US-Hmong case is critical for five reasons. First, Chaim Kaufmann wrongly classifies the war in Laos as a purely ethnic conflict. Kaufmann’s work on the effects of a conflicts’ character on an intervening state’s policy (2004) underpins Proposition 2, making this an excellent case for evaluating Kaufmann’s thesis. Second, US support to the Hmong remained highly covert for over ten years before it was publicly revealed. Even more importantly, the United States elected to continue its support to the Hmong for several years after; this provides an opportunity to study both the effects of keeping a proxy war secret and what happens when a covert policy is revealed. Third, this case represents one of the rare instances when an intervening state supports a proxy that is essentially unaffiliated with the sitting government. Fourth, the case depicts an example of an intervening state cultivating its own proxy force. Although the Hmong had already begun to band together to fight the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao, it was not until the

---

7 Chaim Kaufmann charges that the war in Laos was an ethnic conflict and has been wrongly characterized as an ideological conflict due to the participation of the United States and the influence of the Cold War. The US-Hmong case has some elements of an ethnic conflict—the Hmong despised the North Vietnamese and were not well liked by the lowland Lao. The reason for this enmity, however, stemmed more from the Hmong fear that either group would attempt to change their way of life rather than ethnic hatred. In addition, the conflict was mostly about gaining control the government in Vientiane. The divisions among the Hmong ethnic group—some supported the United States while others supported the Pathet Lao—further confirms this claim. For more information, see Chapter 3.
United States got involved that the Hmong became an influential factor in the Laotian conflict. Fifth, this case provides an opportunity to study a scenario where an intervening state received marginal benefits and incurred only moderate costs.

Like the US-Hmong example, the South Africa-UNITA case demonstrates a highly cooperative, highly dependent proxy; it differs, however, in the fact that UNITA received relatively overt support, operated with a high degree of autonomy, and had highly divergent objectives. Inside Angola, support for UNITA and its rival, the MPLA, is mainly divided along ethnic lines. Internationally, this case reflected the superpower rivalry common in the Cold War, but the United States remained only a limited participant. South Africa, the regional hegemon regarded as a pariah among most states, opposed the Soviet Union’s attempt to increase its influence in southern Africa. Although the international community rhetorically opposed South Africa’s involvement in Angola, the actions of the United States and Western Europe reflected a more tacit approval. Domestically, South Africa’s public was reluctantly supportive, but only on the condition that the costs remained low.

The South Africa-UNITA case is critical for three reasons. First, it provides an example of a high dependence and high autonomy to balance out the other two cases (US-Hmong was high dependence/low autonomy and India-LTTE was low dependence/high autonomy). Second, it provides an opportunity to study a scenario where states should have inflicted high costs on South Africa for its proxy war policy but failed to follow through. Considering that the majority of states had already rhetorically condemned Pretoria’s government and its foreign policy in southern Africa, it is

---

8 Understandably, I found no examples of a low dependence, high autonomy relationship between an intervening state and a proxy.
interesting that states failed to raise the international costs of South Africa’s policy. Third, South Africa—unlike the other two examples—incur very low costs, yet still managed to maximize its benefits.

The India-LTTE case involved the support of an uncooperative proxy operating with a high degree of autonomy and possessing highly divergent objectives. For the duration of the conflict, India’s support remained covert and plausibly deniable. Inside Sri Lanka, the character of the conflict was almost exclusively ethnic and involved the government in Colombo trying to prevent the emergence of an independent Tamil state. Internationally, the United States, the Soviet Union, and most other global powers, for the most part, remained sidelined. In addition, the spillover of refugees into India, the human rights violations committed by Sri Lanka’s armed forces, and the covert character of India’s policy all combined to help New Delhi to avoid significant international costs. Domestically, India’s government had to balance its foreign policy with concerns about its sympathetic Tamil population and the threat of several different secessionist movements inside its own borders.

The India-LTTE case is critical for three reasons. First, the case by far demonstrates the most costly proxy war policy. Not only did LTTE hamper India’s policy in Sri Lanka, it also led India to intervene directly to curtail LTTE’s operations contributed to the assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (Jain Commission Interim Report 1997). Second, it represents the only case where the willingness of the intervening state’s domestic public to support the proxy overwhelms the state’s ability to execute its policy. Third, it provides an example of a proxy war that takes place without
significant influence from a global hegemon; both the United States and the Soviet Union remained relatively uninvolved throughout the conflict.

**Findings**

**Civilian Proximity**

Civilian casualties did not inflict international costs on intervening states—in all three cases it appears that the importance of the intervening state’s economy to other states superseded any desire to take action. The proximity to civilians does, however, allow a proxy to deny its adversary the access to the population necessary to boost public support. It appears to become an even greater point when the conflict is based on ethnic differences because it raises the costs of the adversary to conduct operations.

**Character of the Conflict**

Ethnic conflicts are not always about efforts to secede and ideological conflicts are not always about gaining control of the government—the reverse can also be true. Ethnic conflicts also reduce the willingness of the two sides to negotiate—a condition that can raise an intervening state’s costs if there is any desire to pursue a negotiated settlement. Finally, ethnic conflicts involve a competition between different factions within a particular ethnic group from attempting to gain domination over the others and increase its influence. In such a scenario, an intervening state’s resources can be diverted for purposes that suit its proxy rather than its own interests.

**International Norms**

The primary benefit an intervening state receives from its proxy is not the ability to justify intervention through one of the proposed exceptions, but to provide enough obscurity to the intervening state’s actions to allow other states to look the other way.
This is especially true when an intervening state provides such significant benefits to outside states that it makes them reluctant to take any sort of punitive action that might conflict with their own interests.

**Domestic Willingness**

Costs are likely to be extraordinarily high in a situation where an intervening state’s domestic public becomes committed to the proxy and its cause. Costs become more inflated when the government is vulnerable politically to the group with a close affiliation because it becomes very hard to maintain a coherent policy and execute the aspects of the policy necessary to control the proxy’s actions and reduce agency costs.

**Proxy Dependence**

Ensuring a high level of proxy dependence minimizes agency costs as expected. The most important conclusion in this area, however, is that proxy dependence seems to have the greatest weight in minimizing agency costs. In two of the cases, dependence overwhelmed the proxy’s ability to pursue self-interests—the UNITA case is especially compelling. The cases also show that the tradeoff for an increase in resources to allow the proxy to compete at a level that provides the desired influence is worth it.

**Proxy Autonomy**

If an effective control measure is in place, proxy autonomy should be as high as possible. If not, then the resources required to reduce proxy autonomy are worth it. Although this study did not have the variation necessary to determine if autonomy alone is sufficient to minimize agency costs, it is clear that it serves as a complement to other methods of controlling a proxy.
Incentive Structure

The basic logic of agency theory (see Chapter 2) holds up in terms of incentive structure under each of the proposed conditions except when an intervening state and its proxy have highly divergent objectives. In the absence of strong control measures or if an intervening state desires a settlement between its proxy and its adversary, an intervening state needs to assess its incentive structure and consider shifting to some form of outcome-based incentives.

Secrecy

Covert support to a proxy does appear to lower domestic and international costs. From an international perspective, states seem reluctant to act if there is some degree of plausible deniability. That reluctance is increased when the intervening state is integral to other interests. Domestically, it appears that secrecy may complement domestic willingness (based on a proxy shouldering a significant amount of the burden) because the public does not know the extent of the government’s involvement and likely perceives that the proxy is doing the majority of the fighting. The US case is particularly compelling here, but would require further investigation to parse out the effects of the Vietnam War and the potential that events in Laos received less attention. Although the benefits (adding critical skills and extending influence) increase as expected, there is also a corresponding increase in commitment costs—an intervening state must work much harder to overcome the proxy’s weakness relative to the adversary and will be at a significant disadvantage if the adversary has fewer limits on its ability to escalate the conflict.
CONCLUSION

Proxy war has long been a tool of foreign policy; knowing its associated risks and rewards will hopefully lead to better policy decisions. I make no judgments about proxy war from an ideological/moral standpoint. Every situation is different and in some cases proxy war may be the only viable option. Regardless of the circumstances, this work provides a systematic method of evaluating the costs and benefits of proxy war. My intent is to provide policy makers and strategists with an understanding of how different costs and benefits influenced the overall cost/benefit ratio in past proxy wars and give them a basic understanding that can be applied today.
What are the costs and benefits of using a proxy to intervene in the affairs of another state? How do conditions drive those costs and benefits up or down? This study specifically focuses on the costs and benefits of one state intervening in the affairs of another. The costs and benefits to an intervening state stem from its connection to the other actors involved—the proxy, the adversary, other states in the international system, and the people governed by the intervening state.

The accrual of an intervening state’s costs and benefits are based on two separate, but interconnected sets of factors: immutable conditions, or ones that change very slowly, related to the inherent nature of the actors involved—structure—and the conditions stemming from the particular choices those actors make—agency. The effects of these two sets of conditions overlap and exert their influence at different levels—in the target state, internationally, and on the intervening state’s public—and therefore have a potential effect on all three relationships. To understand the most significant effects, I develop a series of propositions that explain how conditions should theoretically affect an intervening state’s costs and benefits and then test them in specific cases in the following three chapters.

Identifying Costs and Benefits

Identifying the costs and benefits of proxy war presents two challenges. First, this aspect of proxy war is under-theorized—there are no well-developed explanations describing an intervening state’s costs and benefits. Although the major works on proxy war (Towle 1980, Duner 1981, David 1985, Bills 1986, Loveman 2002, and Andres et al...
2005) offer some important insights, they serve mostly as a point of departure. Second, proxy war, like any subject of study, has an infinite number of aspects that could lead to a cost or benefit. To overcome these two challenges, I use established theories that share similar characteristics to the relationships involved in a proxy war and provide examples of past cases.9

Steven David (1985, 223-225) offers some insights about the potential costs and benefits of proxy wars based on his study of the Soviet Union’s use of Cuba in Angola in 1975 and Ethiopia in 1977-1978 and the US use of French and Belgian troops in Zaire in 1977-1978. David’s cases are somewhat problematic. David argues that smaller states were used as proxies to do the bidding of a superpower. More current evidence, however, shows that Cuba acted of its own volition and began its intervention of both Angola and Ethiopia before Moscow made its desires known (Gleijeses 2002). Further, Castro asked Moscow to step aside and to let Cuban forces operate without oversight due to the ineffective strategy in Angola.10

Nonetheless, David’s work provides a logical point of departure. For David, the use of proxy forces proved to be a highly effective tool of foreign policy for the United States and the Soviet Union, especially for Moscow because Cuba proved to be such a capable proxy. David cautions policy makers not to over exaggerate the benefits and offers several qualifying conditions that reduce those benefits. First, proxies are best used in regions that will not provoke a response from a rival state. Second, a proxy is not likely to succeed against a capable, indigenous adversary. Third, the superpowers should limit their use of a proxy to situations where the policy can be defended politically,

---

9 I outline the specifics of all 28 cases of non-state proxy wars in Appendix 1.
10 Interview with Chester Crocker, Georgetown, Washington DC, 5 Jan 2009.
meaning that the proxy is employed in support of the sitting government and in a
defensive manner. For David, employing a proxy in an illegitimate or offensive manner
could quickly cause the costs to overwhelm the benefits.

In the remainder of this section, I derive theoretical costs and benefits originating
from the following research programs: alliance theory, agency theory, institutional
theory, theories of reputation, and liberal theory (particularly theories of the influence of
domestic politics on international relations). In considering other research programs such
as organizational theory (Morgan 1997), relational contracting theory (Baker, Gibbons,
and Murphy 2002), power transition theory (Organski and Kugler, 1980), hegemonic
stability theory (Gilpin 1981), I have found that there is a significant amount of overlap—
two different theories often identify similar costs and benefits. To avoid lengthy
discussions about the superiority of one theory over another and to provide a succinct,
informative study, I have limited my discussion of proxy war’s theoretical costs and
benefits to these five.

**Costs and Benefits: Proxy**

Proxy war involves (at least) two actors—an intervening state and its proxy—
cooperating to achieve some common security objective. An alliance is very similar in
this regard, the main difference being the nature of the actors; alliances are exclusively
between states, and proxy wars, in this particular study, are between a state and a non-
state actor.¹¹ This similarity makes the extensive literature on alliance theory a logical
starting point for identifying proxy war’s costs and benefits.

---

¹¹ As I mentioned in chapter 1, one state can be another’s proxy. This study, however, focuses on the costs
and benefits relating to the use of non-state proxies.
A consensus in the literature is that states form alliances to increase their own position; strategic partnerships provide greater resources to pursue security interests (Waltz 1979; Snyder 1984, 1997; Christensen and Snyder 1997; Leeds 2003). In this sense, more resources translate into three potential benefits: they can add critical skills that qualitatively improve a state’s ability to influence a particular situation, they may provide the manpower necessary when commitments restrict a state’s ability to use its own forces, and they should allow a state to conserve its resources in case they are needed elsewhere (Snyder 1997). A proxy can provide any or all of these benefits; in 23 cases a proxy helped an intervening state conserve its resources, in 10 cases a proxy provided critical skills to an intervening state, and in 19 cases a proxy extended an intervening state’s influence; nine cases provided all three (see Appendix 1).

Alliances, however, also can impose unwanted costs. One side may be dragged unwillingly into a conflict due to concerns that reneging on its alliance commitment may justify similar behavior from other allies in the future (Snyder 1997, 9-10, 44). Although prominent scholars in the structural realist camp of International Relations argue that alliances are not binding in this way (Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2003), several alliance scholars (Smith 1995; Leeds, Long, and Mitchell 2000; Leeds 2003) provide empirical evidence that indicate states still often honor their commitments under undesirable conditions.12

A proxy’s ability to drag a state unwillingly into a conflict is arguably less than an alliance and an intervening state can more easily cut-off support to a proxy at any point if

---

12 Alliance scholars, however, do not agree on how often states honor their alliance commitments. Smith (1995) concludes that states honor their commitments about 25 percent of the time and Leeds et al (2000) conclude that states honor commitments about 75 percent of the time. Although these authors suggest varying degrees of reliability, they all conclude that to some extent partners hold up their end of the bargain.
the relationship no longer appears beneficial. Three cases demonstrate this phenomenon at different stages. The United States cut off support to Brigade 2506 during the Bay of Pigs operation when it became obvious that Cuba’s forces were far more substantial than expected and the amount of additional support necessary to sustain the proxy would have directly implicated the Washington in the affair. China cut its ties with the FNLA because its connection with South Africa undermined China’s influence in southern Africa. Finally, the United States curtailed its funding to the Mujahideen in Afghanistan after the Soviets withdrew in 1989, despite the fact that Moscow’s continued support to the Najibullah regime thwarted the Mujahideen’s efforts to take back the country.

Alliances built on mutual dependence can also impose costs. When one side abandons the other, the remaining state must bear the expense of continuing its effort or withdrawing and suffering a costly blow to its prestige (Lake 1996, 15; Snyder 1997, 44). Alliances that involve states with large differences in their capabilities reduce the probability of abandonment, but also transfer the majority of the costs to the stronger side (Lake 1996). History shows that partnering with a proxy typically avoids abandonment costs during periods of intense fighting, but in five cases (US/Armas, India/Mukti Bahini, India-LTTE, Uganda-Rwanda/AFDL, and US/Northern Alliance) a proxy abandoned its commitment to the intervening state once it achieved some acceptable measure of security.

Some alliance costs stem from a greater sense of commitment created when two actors work together and develop a concern for one another (Snyder 1997, 9-10). Two cases of proxy war reflect a similar pattern. Out of a sense of obligation, South Africa’s Foreign Minister “Pik” Botha went to great lengths to get Jonas Savimbi a position in the
Angolan government after his loss in the presidential election, despite the fact that Pretoria had stopped funding UNITA and had withdrawn from Angola (Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09). The United States felt it necessary to bring the soldiers (and the families) of its proxy in Laos to America to protect them from being punished when the Pathet Lao took control of the country.

Agency theory complements alliance theory because it concentrates on relationships when one side contracts the services of another (Eisenhardt 1989, 58) and most aptly applies in the following three conditions (Eisenhardt 1989, 71): when a principal’s (an intervening state’s) goals conflict with those of its agent (proxy), when the uncertainty of the outcome increases the likelihood that each side will attempt to cheat the other, and when it is difficult to evaluate the other side’s behavior. Under most circumstances, an intervening state and its proxy will face at least one, if not all three, of these conditions.

Costs associated with a principal-agent—intervening state-proxy—relationship (herein labeled “agency costs”) should apply to proxy war because an intervening state and its proxy, like a principal and its agent, will rarely have perfectly symmetrical interests and objectives (Mitnick 1998, 12). Therefore, an intervening state often must expend further resources—additional agency costs—just to keep the proxy under control.

Agency costs can be broken down into three categories: moral hazard, adverse selection, and Madison’s dilemma. Moral hazard (also known as hidden action) refers to the principal’s inability to see and understand the actions of its agent. Two ways moral hazard manifests into costs is when the agent is shirking (not doing all that was contracted) or doing the task in an undesirable way (Mitnick 1998, 12). A good example
of shirking is when Northern Alliance forces (the US proxy in Afghanistan) allowed members of the Taliban and Al Qaeda to escape across the Afghan border into Pakistan. Costs associated with undesirable behavior are found in two cases: when the South Lebanese Force executed 400 Palestinian prisoners, it substantially raised Israel’s international and domestic costs; and when LTTE’s atrocities created such intense domestic and international scrutiny that it forced India to send its own forces to Sri Lanka to stop LTTE operations.

Adverse selection (also known as hidden information) occurs when the agent does not have the qualities and capabilities it professed to have, and when the principal does not have the expertise necessary to notice (Shapiro 2005, 281). Somalia, for example, used the Somali-Abo Liberation Front (SALF) to help gain control of the Ogaden region. The SALF shared a common ethnicity with a large group of people living in the Ogaden and had been recruited to gain popular support for Somali efforts to reclaim the region. The SALF, however, chose to terrorize the population, preventing the necessary mobilization of the Ogaden people against Ethiopian control.

Madison’s dilemma refers to the costs created when “resources or authority granted to an agent for the purpose of advancing the interests of the principal are turned against the principal” (Kiewet and McCubbins 1991, 25-28). Costs stemming from Madison’s dilemma are easy to imagine because a state-proxy relationship is often based on convenience rather than deeper ties that promote and sustain amity between the two actors. In addition to moral hazard, the LTTE case provides a strong example of an extreme cost due to Madison’s dilemma: the LTTE, enraged at India’s efforts to suppress
its efforts in Sri Lanka, used its resources to assassinate India’s former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi.

The two main benefits of a principal-agent relationship are that both parties share the costs of pursuing an objective and each side likely brings a unique set of skills that make attaining those objectives easier or more efficient (Fiorina 1982). In proxy war, an indigenous actor with knowledge of the local language and the ability to blend into the environment may not have adequate resources or skills to accomplish its objectives alone; an intervening state lacking these skills may still be able to accomplish its security objectives, but at a significantly higher cost. Acting together, each side improves the chances of achieving their objectives and potentially reduces their costs. These two benefits can be found in the 10 cases where a proxy provided critical skills and the 19 cases where it extended the intervening state’s influence.

**Costs and Benefits: International**

In today’s competitive environment, states must cooperate to survive and prosper (Keohane 1984). Interstate cooperation has led states to form dense webs of associations in areas such as politics, economics, diplomacy, security, and the environment (Keohane and Nye 1977). The growing density of global networks and the ever-increasing speed at which information travels make it virtually impossible for states to conduct foreign policy in isolation (Keohane and Nye 1998). Although states clearly benefit from cooperating with one another (Pugel 2004, ch 3), sustained benefits depend on both parties keeping up their end of the bargain. If one side cheats, the other side pays—at least in the short-term (Axelrod 1984). The potential for cheating is a particularly difficult problem for interstate cooperation because there is no overarching authority to ensure states fulfill
their contractual obligations (Waltz 1979; Keohane 1984). The necessity of interstate cooperation and its inherent uncertainty highlight the importance of international institutions and a state’s reputation.

Institutions are “persistent and connected sets of rules that prescribe behavior roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations” (Keohane 1988). Examples range from formal treaties such as the United Nations Charter to accepted customs such as *pacta sunt servanda* (promises should be kept). Institutions facilitate interstate cooperation in three major ways. First, institutions help states avoid having to engage over and over again in lengthy, costly negotiations about the terms of cooperation (Keohane 1984, 89). Second, once states have gone through the trouble and expense of creating an institution, states will not easily risk their investment to make small immediate gains by cheating on one or two transactions (Axelrod 1984; Axelrod and Keohane 1985). Third, institutions provide valuable information to states about the behavior of other states with regards to interstate cooperation. Institutional rules offer states a much clearer picture with which to evaluate the cooperative behavior of other states (Keohane 1984: 92-96). Further, a state’s ability to benefit from one international institution often depends upon its compliance in others (Lipson 1984, 7). A misstep in one institution carries the possibility of sanction in another. For example, when Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990, the UN Security Council first invoked *economic* sanctions cutting off all trade, including Iraq’s oil supplies and the European Community froze Iraq’s financial assets in its members’ countries (Freedman and Karsh 1993).

Reputation refers to how a state’s past patterns of behavior affect its current and future relationships (Press 2001, 3). Reputation, like institutions, strongly influence
cooperation. Reputation facilitates cooperation because states tempted to cheat and reap benefits in the short-term fear the long-term costs of being labeled a cheater (Press 2001). Institutions only strengthen the importance of state reputation. Institutions provide a transparent means of assessing how well a state complies with its international obligations (Axelrod and Keohane 1985). A good reputation increases a state’s ability to influence others and encourages other states to expand their interaction with that state (Nye 2004). Supporting a proxy may trigger institutional and reputational costs because, under most circumstances, states are not supposed to intervene in the domestic affairs of another state. Further, supporting a proxy could have a ripple effect causing an intervening state to suffer in trade, diplomatic, and security relations unrelated to the proxy war.

Conversely, a proxy may justify an intervening state’s involvement; supporting an indigenous actor in a way that does not deviate from what other states consider acceptable behavior should not trigger institutional or reputational costs. For example, India justified its support of Mukti Bahini in East Pakistan because the government crackdown caused millions of refugees to seek shelter inside India’s border. As a result, other states in the international system stood by as India supported East Pakistan’s secession and significantly weakened Islamabad’s strategic position. Yet, overtly supporting a proxy may also invite additional costs to an intervening state because it could justify a rival state supporting the opposition. For example, both South Africa and

---

13 Although not all IR scholars agree that reputations matter, empirical evidence supports this claim. For two contrasting opinions see Press 2001 and Crescenzi 2007.
14 Article 2(4) of the UN Charter specifically states “all members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.” Although scholars as well as policy makers disagree on the conditions that justify intervening in the domestic affairs of another state (Arend and Beck 1993, chapter 6), the UN Charter only authorizes the use of force when sanctioned by the UN Security Council (Article 39 and 42) or in response to an armed attack (Article 51).
the United States incurred additional costs when supporting UNITA in Angola because
the Soviet Union backed the MPLA.

If an intervening state perceives that a proxy will not justify its involvement
enough to avoid institutional or reputational costs, then a proxy also provides a necessary
front through which it can secretly intervene in a target state, or at the very least, offers
the benefit of plausible deniability. If the international community cannot definitively
prove the intervening state acted unlawfully, then it decreases the chances of incurring
institutional or reputational costs and lowers the potential for inviting unwanted
escalation. The United States involvement in Laos provides an excellent example of
both. Numerous countries suspected but could not substantiate Washington’s
involvement in Laos; America’s ability to deny its activities avoided institutional and
reputational costs and prevented Soviet retaliation (see Chapter 3).

Plausible deniability may also provide a benefit in another way. Proxy war gives
outside states the ability to look the other way, especially under conditions where
cooperation with the intervening state provides enormous benefit. For example, the
United States is a lucrative market for many states. If the United States uses a proxy, it
gives states with domestic publics opposed to foreign intervention the ability to continue
trading with America without suffering domestic political consequences. Table 2.2
below summarizes proxy war’s interstate costs and benefits.

**Costs and Benefits: Domestic**

As mentioned in the previous section, states never make foreign policy in
isolation; forces at work inside a state, as well as outside, influence those decisions. The
idea that states are not unitary actors is a cornerstone of one strand of liberal theory;
liberal scholars argue that states are complex social structures with competing interests that influence policy formulation and outcomes (Allison 1971; Putnam 1989; Milner 1997; Clark 2001). The domestic costs and benefits of foreign policy usually depend on whether the public perceives the policy as necessary and legitimate (George 1980; Smoke 1994; Slantchev 2006). Whether a policy is necessary and legitimate, however, is not only a function of money spent versus money earned. For example, if a policy conflicts with the public’s sense of acceptable behavior, then the public is likely to reject the policy, even if it appears that the gain will exceed the cost (George 1980; Finnemore 1996; March and Olsen 1998). The response of Israel’s people to the South Lebanese Force’s massacre of 400 Palestinian prisoners reflects this—Israeli’s stopped supporting Tel Aviv’s proxy policy in Lebanon and helped convince the government to withdraw.

Assuming that decision makers want to stay in office, they often must balance what they think they should do against what they think the people will tolerate and support (Bueno de Mesquita et al 2003). This gets complicated because decision makers often have more information and a better understanding of potential threats than can be related to the public15 and foreign policies that include the use of force are particularly dependent upon internal consensus to sustain military operations (Clark 2001, 641).

If a decision maker senses that the public will not support getting involved in an area s/he deems vital, then s/he can attempt to persuade the public that the intervention is worth the cost. The use of a proxy in this case offers two potential benefits. First, supporting a proxy gives the appearance that the state’s costs will be low—the proxy’s people will be risking their lives and contributing their resources. South Africa managed

---

15 Two logical reasons for this are: the need to protect intelligence sources and the cumulative level of the public’s understanding of complex foreign policy issues is going to be less than those who devote their full attention to such matters.
to maintain its (white) people’s support for operations in Angola because UNITA provided the majority of the personnel, allowing South Africa to avoid unacceptable numbers of casualties. Second, a decision maker may also claim that the state has an obligation to support a particular proxy that is suffering human rights violations or attempting to overthrow a repressive regime.16 Five cases—USSR/SWAPO, USSR, ZAPU, China/ZANU, China/FNLA, and Syria/PLO—show that decision makers used this logic to justify supporting a proxy to its people.

A corresponding cost, however, is that the state may find itself increasingly entrenched as the costs of supporting its proxy increase. Although there are no historical cases of this happening, a decision maker might overstretch the state’s resources in an attempt to avoid losing face with his or her constituents (Snyder 1991), losing office (Smith 1998; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003), or being punished (Rosato 2003).

If a strategic partnership with a proxy is expected to fail to engender public support, then a decision maker may choose to keep an intervention secret (Baum 2004), or at the very least, plausibly deniable. The benefit of keeping the policy secret or deniable, however, carries at least three domestic costs. First, it may be costly to keep the proxy quiet. The US proxy in Angola actually hired a lobby group in Washington DC and directed it to inform Congress of the secret support it was receiving from the CIA in hopes of gaining greater amounts of aid (Crocker interview with author, 5 Jan 09). Second, secrecy, as I mentioned earlier, jeopardizes relative superiority in the battlespace because it limits the type and amount of support an intervening state can provide. Third, if the policy becomes public, competing parties or coalitions within a government may

---

16 Alliance theory also suggests that states often use an alliance to justify getting involved in a conflict (Snyder 1997, 131-133).
use it to their advantage in future elections (Shultz 2001; Baum 2004). Although I have cast these costs as a response to a secret proxy war becoming public, these costs could also apply to overt uses of proxy war that had purposely or accidentally misled the public. Table 2.3 below summarizes the costs and benefits of proxy war stemming from intrastate relationships.

Although useful, knowing the costs and benefits of any policy means relatively little without understanding the effects of the surrounding conditions (George 1993, 1994). The next section takes the next step necessary to assess an intervening state’s cost and benefit, developing theoretical explanations for how conditions should affect them.

**HOW DIFFERENT CONDITIONS AFFECT PROXY WAR’S COSTS AND BENEFITS**

Identifying a set of conditions that affect a proxy war’s costs and benefits presents the same two problems mentioned in the previous section: there is no existing framework outlining the relevant conditions that affect proxy war and there are an infinite number of conditions that could potentially have an effect. In light of these two challenges, I rely on theories from the fields of international relations (IR), policy analysis and formulation, management, and operational planning first to formulate a general sense of the conditions that affect an intervening state’s costs and benefits and then later to narrowing the list of those general conditions into eight specific propositions that can be evaluated in actual cases.

It is neither feasible nor useful to consider the effects of every possible condition that could affect a proxy war’s costs and benefits. Therefore, I focus on the conditions that I consider the most relevant, interesting, and provocative. Many of the conditions I have chosen to omit in this section were either relatively obvious or empirically difficult
to test. This is not to say that these aspects are not important; I am simply wagering that the effects of many of the additional conditions are somewhat intuitive and easily incorporated into a discussion about the merits and pitfalls of proxy war; the others represent ideas for future research. For those readers interested in more information, I have included a more comprehensive discussion of how conditions affect proxy war in Appendix 3.

Identifying the Conditions

What conditions affect an intervening state’s costs and benefits? Some scholars (Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2003) argue that structure, particularly the relative capabilities of the actors involved, determines a policy’s outcome; more power yields a greater ability to produce a desired outcome. This would mean that in a proxy war, the capabilities of an intervening state, its proxy, and their adversary drive costs and benefits up or down. In many ways this may be the case, but this view ignores many other factors that can affect the accumulation of costs and benefits.

In his work on foreign policy formulation and analysis, Alexander George (1994, 149) highlights the importance of factors beyond relative capability and power such as a state’s domestic conditions, its strategy, and its understanding and perception of an adversary. Domestic conditions can inflict costly penalties on a policy, even though it produces significant benefits in theater (Rosenau 1974; Putnam 1989; Milner 1997). For example, the Tet Offensive of 1968 clearly demonstrated the benefits of US policy in Southeast Asia; US forces overwhelmingly defeated North Vietnam’s incursion into

---

17 I have omitted George’s recommendation to also consider bargaining as a condition. George ties strategy and bargaining together in his discussion under the same category. I consider strategy separately because the emphasis of this research is to influence the decision making process when considering proxy war as a means to intervene in the domestic affairs of another state. Bargaining, in this light, is a separate strategy that can be used in lieu of or in conjunction with proxy war to influence the target state.
South Vietnam and permanently crippled Hanoi’s proxy (the National Liberation Front). In the United States, however, the Tet Offensive marked a major turning point in the American public’s support for the war and ultimately led to the US withdrawal.

For George, a policy’s strategy is particularly important because it provides a policy maker with an ability to influence cost/benefit accumulation (1994, 149). A poor strategy likely leads to higher costs, regardless of how much other conditions may contribute to the benefits of a proxy war. Jeffrey Record (2006, 48) echoes George’s point arguing that though external assistance is one of the most important factors determining an insurgency’s success, a sound strategy is necessary to achieve the desired outcome (2006, 48).

George’s reference to the importance of a state’s perception of its adversary emphasizes the dangers of mirror imaging when considering the potential effects of ideology and belief systems (1994, 165). In terms of proxy war, George’s point suggests that an intervening state should understand the character of the conflict—such as whether the conflict is based on ethnic or ideological differences—and how its proxy relates to the people living in the target state to better estimate how those conditions will affect the accumulation of its costs and benefits.

George also mentions the importance of “normative considerations” when formulating policy (1994, 145); if an intervening state’s people believe that supporting a policy is appropriate, then the costs of that policy—at the domestic level—should be lower and the benefits higher. This extends to the international arena as well; perceptions of appropriate behavior-based on established international norms can drive the costs and
benefits of a policy (March and Olsen 1998). The conditions that normatively justify a proxy war policy, however, require further development (see Proposition 3 and 4 below).

To provide a more comprehensive look at the subject and to add a sense of familiarity to academics, policy makers, and military strategists, I also use the US Army’s heuristic METT-TC (mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, and civil considerations) to identify potential conditions. US Army Field Manual (interim) 5-0.1/B-2 (2006) states that commanders and staffs use METT-TC to understand “the operational environment, including enemies, adversaries, terrain, and civil considerations; the desired end state of their higher and next higher headquarters; their mission and how it is nested within those of their higher and next higher headquarters; and the forces, capabilities, and resources available.” The term “civil considerations” is specifically defined as “how the manmade infrastructure, civilian institutions, and attitudes and activities of the civilian leaders, populations, and organizations within an area of operations influence the conduct of military operations” (FM 3-24 2006, 3-19). Civil considerations are especially useful in identifying conditions that stem from the target state’s environment and the character of the actors involved.

Anyone familiar with military operational planning and analysis will quickly recognize that the organization and categorization of the relevant conditions in Table 2.1 does not follow US Army doctrine exactly. To avoid confusion, I have incorporated sub-headings to correlate the different elements of METT-TC with my own formulation.

---

18 March and Olsen (1998) do not specifically delve into domestic politics and George (1994) does not specifically address normative considerations outside the domestic arena, but their discussions about norms and the logic of appropriateness conceivably extend to both domestic and international arenas.

19 FM 3-24 specifically identifies six socio-cultural factors that should be considered: society, social structure, culture, language, power and authority, and interests (3-4).
In summary, structural conditions remain relatively constant during the timeframe when different policy options are being formulated, debated, and implemented. For example, the character and type of the conflict occurring in the target state (ethnic or ideological) is fixed within the time the policy will take place. Therefore, structural conditions largely represent those an intervening state must work around during the implementation of its policy.

An intervening state’s policy, however, is a choice and can create effects in two ways. On the one hand, policy is a condition that can be crafted to either accentuate or mitigate the effects of structural conditions. For example, a good strategy could make use of geography, resources, and politics to increase benefits and lower costs. On the other hand, a policy can also inflict added costs and reduce potential benefits if, for example, the objectives of the proxy war do not match the capabilities and politics of the situation.

The ultimate goal of this section is to develop a framework for studying how conditions affect costs and benefits. In the remainder of this section I present eight
propositions that suggest how and why conditions should affect a proxy war’s costs and benefits.

**Proposition 1 Civilian Proximity**

Civilian proximity increases international, domestic, and target state costs due to an increase in the probability of civilian casualties. It has the counter-effect of providing the proxy with the access necessary to influence and hide among the population.

By my definition, proxy wars involve fighting between (at least) two groups inside a single country. These types of conflicts typically occur where the general population lives and works. Therefore, civilians are almost always involved—willingly, tacitly, or unwillingly—in the fighting. The presence and role of civilians becomes even more important because civil conflicts typically reflect a battle to win the support of the people (Galula 2006; Trinquier 2006). Civilian proximity poses an especially difficult challenge considering the increasingly popular tactics of using civilians as a form of protection and a tool of propaganda. In terms of proxy war, this places a heavy burden on an intervening state to guard against what are often perceived as unwarranted and indiscriminate civilian casualties, regardless of the circumstances.\(^{20}\)

Civilians living in a battlespace present an intractable problem for well-trained, professional soldiers and significantly restrict the way regular combat forces can fight.

According to Yaacov Vertzberger (1998, 120)

An army untrained and unprepared to deal with problems of this kind will find itself denied the fullest use of its skills and resources to reach its objectives, and yet it will be expected to accomplish its assigned mission…This moral dilemma has far graver implications when there is an asymmetry in normative rules of conduct between the intervener and the local adversaries. An intervener that cares about human rights and therefore, with the local allies, observes strict humanitarian rules of

\(^{20}\) A recent example is how the Taliban conducts operations and hides from International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) in and around Afghan civilians. This places a significant burden on ISAF when engaging Taliban forces, despite the fact that it is the Taliban that has chosen to fight amongst civilians and thereby put them in danger.
conduct in dealing with the local population will suffer significant comparative disadvantages if the adversaries do not share similar concerns.

Most intervening states faced with this problem adjust the rules of engagement and restrict the operations of its armed forces to avoid needlessly killing civilians, violating international laws of war, losing international and domestic support, and undermining popular support in the target state (Hosmer 1987, 57).

In a proxy war, civilians in the battlespace should dramatically decrease international and domestic support considering that most proxy forces are going to be less professional and more difficult to restrain than regular forces. Professional armed forces that operate amongst a hostile society for long periods of time are likely to have at least a few individuals that commit atrocities (Vertzberger 1998, 117, 120); it seems plausible that a proxy force, with significantly less training, is even more likely to do so.

A proxy force’s training, however, is only one condition that could affect the likelihood of an undesirable incident that raises costs related to interstate and domestic relationships. The political climate in the target state could also have a strong effect. Underlying hatred spawned from ethnic or ideological differences may combine with cultural norms to cause a proxy to act in ways that directly contradict the morals and values of the intervening state or the international system at large.²¹

In some cases (Mukti Bahini, National Liberation Front, Mujahideen, Contras, and LTTE), however, civilian saturation increased a proxy’s relative capability vis-à-vis the adversary, providing a benefit to the intervening state. Civilians in the battlespace

²¹ The concept of civilian proximity in the battlespace also encompasses the idea that a proxy or its adversary may intentionally target civilians to gain an advantage. Therefore, the way I use the term civilian proximity also includes scenarios where combatants have easy access to non-combatants, regardless of where the opposing side conducts operations.
may allow inferior proxy forces to blend in with the population, complicating the adversary’s efforts to engage them. Proximity to civilians may also give a proxy the access necessary to influence the population and gain its support. Access, however, can be used either to provide services that bolster a population’s support of a proxy or to terrorize the population and demonstrate the opposition’s inability to protect the people (Tullock 1974, 56-58). In some cases, a proxy further succeeds when it provokes a harsh overreaction from the opposition that adds to the public’s hardship; an act that often drives the people deeper into the proxy’s camp. North Vietnam’s use of the NLF in South Vietnam is a good example; the NLF terrorized the South Vietnamese population and caused a violent government crackdown on the people, pushing the population further away from the struggling and corrupt leadership in Saigon.

An additional benefit is that an indigenous proxy is more likely to understand the culture and apply appropriate customs that avoid alienating the local population. A proxy should also be able to distinguish combatant from non-combatant more easily. In this sense, a proxy offers an intervening state a real advantage over using its own troops, despite its lack of training and professionalism.

**Proposition 2 Character of the Conflict**

*An ethnic conflict is less costly to influence than an ideological conflict because the lines between opposing sides are more divisive and outside support is less damaging to a proxy’s legitimacy.*

Political conditions in the target state provide the motivation and the opportunity for an intervening state to get involved. Political conditions also determine the actors that can serve as a proxy and define the relationship between antagonists. As I mentioned briefly above, proxy wars almost always entail a battle to win the local population’s favor. Therefore, the underlying character of the existing conflict in the target state
should significantly affect a proxy war’s costs and benefits. According to Chaim Kaufmann, civil conflicts are predominantly ideologically or ethnically driven.22 Kaufmann claims that outside assistance in ideological conflicts is rarely decisive because the determining factor “is the relative political competence of the competing factions” because the battle centers on gaining control of the government. Kaufmann (2004, 405) argues, “more massive involvement does not necessarily produce better results than a lesser involvement, and may actually reduce the chances of the local client.” In fact, an intervening state's involvement may sour its proxy’s ability to gain popular support. If the intervening state plays too large a role in assisting its proxy, it may incur the unintended cost of spoiling its proxy’s domestic legitimacy (Odom 1992). Ethnic conflicts, however, center on controlling territory and involve one group bent on secession. There is no competition for loyalty because each side is committed to its particular cause based on its ethnic affiliation. Therefore, an intervening state does not have to pay the additional costs of ensuring its proxy gains public support.

Ethnic conflicts, on the other hand, are more often a test of the relative military strength between competing factions and rely less on political competency because ethnicity rather than political views divide the two sides (Kaufmann 2004, 406). Therefore, an intervening state can dramatically tip the balance in its proxy’s favor by providing the resources and training necessary to defeat the adversary militarily. A proxy

22 Kaufmann does not consider the possibility that a civil conflict can also be about greed. In two cases (Liberia/RUF and Uganda-Rwanda/RCD) the character of the civil conflict was more about greed than ethnic or ideological differences. Liberia and the RUF wanted control of Sierra Leone’s diamond mines; the ethnic issues were a much lesser issue. Uganda and Rwanda wanted access to territory in the DRC to exploit the state’s rich natural resources. The ethnic issues that involved Kabila’s government allowing Congolese Tutsis to be harassed and terrorized came after Uganda and Rwanda began supporting RCD’s efforts to overthrow Kabila. These are, however, only two cases out of 28 and both still had ethnic undertones.
war that takes place within an ethnic conflict may still have high costs, but the corresponding benefits should also be much higher.

Kaufmann’s assessment suggests that involvement in an ideological conflict should prove more costly to an intervening state and will likely yield little return for the investment unless its proxy is politically competent and well received among the target state’s people. If the proxy does enjoy widespread popular support in the target state, then it stands to reason that the target state’s population would shoulder some of the burden of supporting the proxy and reduce the amount of resources coming from the intervening state. If not, the intervening state will be forced to invest significant resources to bolster its proxy’s political competency—a condition an intervening state will find extremely difficult to influence or improve considering that outside support can compromise a proxy’s political/ideological legitimacy (Odom 1992).

**Proposition 3 International Norms**

Involvement in a proxy war that violates international norms raises an intervening state’s costs associated with interstate and domestic relationships. Exceptions to the norm of non-intervention include: human rights violations within the target state or an inability to provide adequately for the safety and needs of the people; a proxy that is a recognized belligerent fighting for its freedom; if another state is already involved in the conflict taking place in the target state; and if the conflict in the target state spills over into a neighboring state.

Although the inviolability of state sovereignty and the power of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter are up for debate, states almost always attempt to justify the action under international law (Thompson 2006). The norm of non-intervention arguably limits an intervening state’s ability to “unleash its full military power for fear of being denounced as an aggressor and possibly losing external legitimacy for the intervention policy”

---

23 For a debate on the salience of the norm of non-intervention and sovereignty see Gray 2004 (for) and Reisman 1985 (against).
(Vertzberger 1998, 119). This norm imposes costs on an intervening state when the opposition in the target state does not pose a direct threat or in the absence of a recognized exception to the non-intervention norm.

What conditions justify an intervention and therefore reduce the costs of supporting a proxy? Scholars of international law have suggested several: when a state’s government invites the assistance of another state (Arend and Beck 1993, ch 6), when a government rampantly violates the human rights of its citizens or fails to provide adequately for its people’s safety and needs (Kohut and Toth 1995; Daalder 1996, 467; Finnemore 2005), supporting a group recognized as a belligerent seeking self-determination (Arend and Beck 1993, ch 6; Moore 1974, xiii; Bowett 1974), when another state is already involved in the target state (Arend and Beck 1993, ch 6), and in cases when the conflict in the target state spills over into a neighboring state (Oudraat 1996, 518).

**Proposition 4 Domestic Willingness**

*If a domestic public is predicted to reject an interventionist policy, a proxy can lessen that resistance and reduce domestic costs because it shares the burden, especially when it minimizes the intervening state’s commitment and casualties.*

Domestic politics influence a foreign policy’s costs and benefits because decision makers are almost always accountable to someone that can exact costs on them based on their perception of the success or failure of a policy (Rosenau 1974; George 1993, 1994;)

---

24 I am not arguing that international law keeps states from intervening in the domestic affairs of another state. My point is that international law serves as a means of communicating between states with different values and norms to reach agreements on commonly held beliefs about how states and other international actors should behave. In this sense, international law serves as an institution that identifies specific norms and provides a basis for evaluating whether states comply with those norms. For a more detailed understanding of how international law affects state behavior, see Arend 1999 and Gray 2004.

25 The basis of this argument is that the principle of self-determination outlined in Articles 1(2) and 55 of the UN Charter justifies external assistance. The problem, as Professor Moore notes, is that the principle of state sovereignty and territorial integrity outlined in Article 2(4) explicitly forbids states to intervene in the domestic affairs of another state.
Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995; Reiter and Tillman 2002; Bueno de Mesquita 2002). Regime type seems an obvious explanation. Many scholars support the claim that authoritarian regimes are less constrained domestically than democracies and subsequently face lower domestic costs for foreign policy decisions (Bueno de Mesquita et al 2003; Gelpi 1997; Fearon 1994).

Although all policy makers are accountable to some portion of the public (Danilovic and Clare 2004; Rosato 2003; Bueno de Mesquita et al 2003), foreign policy is not always transparent at the domestic level (Baum 2004; Reiter and Tillman 2002). Even a liberal democracy can spin or hide unpopular foreign policy choices in ways that prevent or minimize domestic costs stemming from a predictably unsupportive public (Risse-Kappen 1991). Therefore, I focus on the effects related to a state’s willingness to endure the costs of a proxy war instead of its regime type.

Willingness is inextricably linked with stakes (Danilovic 2002, 98). Historically, domestic publics tend to be more supportive of costs when the stakes are high, such as when the state’s physical or economic security is in jeopardy (Feaver and Gelpi 2004; Jentleson and Britton 1998; Eichenberg 2005). If a conflict takes place in a region or state of significant interest, then the state should be more willing to get involved (Danilovic 2002, 22-23).

Although the increased willingness of citizens to support their government when it chooses to use the state’s armed forces (Mueller 1970) can also reduce the domestic costs of intervention; this “rally around the flag” effect, however, may actually mask the public’s true willingness to support an armed intervention (Russett 1990). Research has shown that public support for a military intervention tends to decline as costs and
casualties increase or when the public expects high casualty rates (Eichenberg 2005; Sullivan 2006). Supporting a proxy could reduce costs and casualty rates and therefore decrease the domestic costs of intervention.

One final way a proxy may lower the domestic costs of an intervention stems from the notion that people are more willing to bear the costs if the proxy shoulders its share of the burden (Hosmer 1987, 127-128). Edward Luttwak (2001, 75) adds to this argument asserting that the use of force becomes easier to wield when a state incurs fewer casualties and that the use of an external force allows the “political responsibility for any casualties [to be] reduced, even if not entirely eliminated.”

**Proposition 5 Proxy Dependence**

* A high level of proxy dependence reduces agency costs, but increases the costs of supporting a proxy.

A decrease in proxy dependency should correspond to a decrease in the resources an intervening state must contribute. The literature on arms transfers suggests that the more a proxy needs the resources of the intervening state, the more control the intervening state has over its proxy (Paul 1992; Catrina 1988; Sislin 1994; Kinsella 1998). Greater control over the proxy’s actions should reduce costs incurred domestically and internationally because it enables the state to curb actions that might provoke scrutiny in those arenas.

Building on the work of Albert Hirschman (1980), T.V. Paul (1992) explains how arms transfers can establish the dependence necessary to provide the donor (intervening) state with the leverage necessary to control its partner (proxy). Paul concludes that arms transfers do provide leverage when the lesser actor is highly dependent on those weapons.

---

26 There is some debate about the effectiveness of arms transfers generating influence over another actor (Sylvan 1978). The concept is worth considering, however, because it has provided significant leverage over a third party (mostly states in the literature) in many cases (Sislin 1994).
for its survival, but also finds that providing more resources does not correspondingly equate to more leverage or control. Although Paul’s work focuses on states rather than non-state proxies as the recipient of arms, it suggests that a strategy that cultivates a high level of proxy dependence should ensure that the costs of monitoring a proxy remain low and reduce the potential that the proxy will engage in behavior that will generate higher international or domestic costs.  

High levels of proxy dependence can also inflict costs. A high degree of dependence weakens a proxy's political position in theater because it increases the perception that it serves the intervening state's interests (Odom 1992). A politically weak proxy may also force the intervening state to play a bigger role, exposing the intervening state to an increase in international and domestic scrutiny. A higher level of dependence also means that an intervening state may have to contribute more resources and maintain a closer affiliation with its proxy—a condition that could alienate the proxy from the target state’s population (McGinnis 1990; Odom 1992) and increase the visibility of the intervening state’s participation to international and domestic audiences.

**Proposition 6 Proxy Autonomy**

*Higher levels of autonomy can decrease the cost of supporting a proxy, but increase the costs of monitoring the proxy’s activities and may lead to an increase in agency, international, and domestic costs depending on the proxy’s behavior.*

Proxy autonomy reduces an intervening state’s involvement in the actual fighting of a proxy war, but also reduces its control over the proxy’s actions (McCubbins 1985, 725; Bawn 1995, 62). A lower level of involvement allows an intervening state to

---

27 A proxy may be able to produce a significant amount of leverage over an intervening state based on its position and the character of the conflict within which it operates. T.V. Paul (1992) refers to this condition as “reverse influence” and notes that a client (proxy) gains considerable leverage over a supplier (intervening state) if the region or state of interest possesses important strategic value. Reverse influence enables a proxy to extort more resources than necessary from an intervening state, potentially raising the material costs of the proxy war. Further, reverse influence increases as competition with regional or global rivals force an intervening state to become more dependent on its proxy (Paul 1992, 1081).
decrease its commitment to its proxy and should increase domestic support for the policy. Less involvement and control, however, corresponds to a potential increase in wasted resources and could lead to proxy activities that invite interstate or domestic costs. To prevent its proxy from committing acts that damage international or domestic support, an intervening state must invest more heavily in measures to monitor and restrict its proxy’s behavior. Conversely, less autonomy should result in reduced monitoring costs, but they also potentially raise operating costs due to the additional number of the intervening state's own personnel needed for participating in combat operations as well as international and domestic costs due to its increased level of involvement.

**Proposition 7 Proxy Incentive Structure**

*Behavior-based incentives work best when fighting a superior enemy, when the intervening state’s and the proxy’s goals conflict, when it is necessary to give the proxy a high degree of autonomy, or when the intervening state has a great deal of knowledge and familiarity with the proxy. Outcome-based incentives work under the opposite conditions.*

In addition to influencing its proxy’s dependence and autonomy, an intervening state can also affect the accumulation of costs and benefits by altering the structure of the incentives it offers to its proxy. In the agency theory literature the two common variations of incentive structures are behavior-based and outcome-based (Bawn 1995, 62). Both offer a principal (state) the ability to minimize the costs of supporting its agent (proxy) by structuring the rewards in a way that delivers a higher level of compliance under the given circumstances.

Behavior-based incentives work best under conditions where there is a high degree of uncertainty about the outcome, when the agent is likely to be risk averse, when principal and agent goals conflict, when the principal lacks the expertise necessary to recognize self-interested agent action, when the outcome will take a long time to occur,
or when the principal has a great deal of knowledge and familiarity with the agent gained through a long-term relationship (Eisenhardt 1989, 62-63).

Outcome-based incentives, on the other hand, work under the opposite conditions: more certain outcomes, risk accepting agents, relatively congruent goals, when the principal has sufficient expertise to evaluate the difference between contracted and self-interested agent activities, when outcomes are predicted to occur in a short period of time, and when the principal is unfamiliar with its agent and expects the length of the relationship to be short (Eisenhardt 1989, 62-63).

In terms of proxy war, behavior-based incentives should work best when fighting a superior enemy, when the intervening state’s and the proxy’s goals conflict, when it is necessary to give the proxy a high degree of autonomy, or when the intervening state has a great deal of knowledge and familiarity with the proxy. Outcome-based incentives should work under the opposite conditions.

**Proposition 8 Secrecy**

*Keeping a proxy war secret potentially lowers domestic and international costs, especially when the action would be considered unpopular domestically and clearly violates the international norm of sovereignty. Secrecy, however, severely constrains an intervening state’s ability to support its proxy and jeopardizes the proxy’s ability to gain relative superiority in the battlespace. Secrecy, however, can inflict higher costs due to blowback.*

Keeping a proxy war secret can lower domestic and international costs, especially when the action would be considered unpopular domestically and clearly violates the international norm of non-intervention. To ensure the proxy war stays a secret, however, an intervening state must structure its assistance to preclude any overt signs of its involvement; this severely constrains an intervening state’s ability to support its proxy
and jeopardizes the proxy’s ability to gain relative superiority in the battlespace.  

Therefore, the potential costs incurred from insufficiently supporting a proxy must be weighed against the benefits of keeping the proxy war secret and the necessity of maintaining relative superiority to achieve the proxy war’s political objectives.

**CONCLUSION**

This chapter has explained the theoretical relationships between proxy war’s different conditions and their correlating affect on the accumulation of an intervening state’s costs and benefits. The purpose, as I mentioned up front, has been to create an analytical framework that can be applied to different cases of proxy war and ultimately provide explanations for how the conditions highlighted in this chapter affect cost/benefit accumulation. In the next three chapters, I test each of these propositions against actual cases of proxy war to explain how these particular conditions actually affect the accumulation of an intervening state’s costs and benefits and to determine if the theories I have borrowed from different fields of study aptly apply to the phenomenon of proxy war.

---

28 Clausewitz (1976, 197) defines “relative superiority” as, “the skillful concentration of superior strength at the decisive point.” In plain language, relative superiority means being stronger than your enemy during a specific engagement. William McRaven’s theory (1995, 1) on special operations poses that “once a special operations force can achieve relative superiority over the enemy…the attacking force is no longer at a disadvantage and has the initiative to exploit the enemy’s weaknesses and secure victory. Although relative superiority doesn’t guarantee success, it is necessary for success.”
CHAPTER 3
UNITED STATES AND THE HMONG IN LAOS

I personally feel that although the way the [Laos] operation has been run is unorthodox, unprecedented, in many ways I think it is something of which we can be proud of as Americans. It has involved virtually no American casualties. What we are getting for our money there, as the Ambassador said, is, I think, to use the old phrase, very cost effective.

U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

A short time ago we rounded up three hundred fresh [Hmong] recruits. Thirty percent were fourteen years old or less, and ten of them were only ten years old. Another 30 percent were fifteen or sixteen. The remaining 40 percent were thirty-five or over. Where were the ones in between? I’ll tell you—they’re all dead…and in a few weeks 90 percent of the new recruits will be dead.

Edgar ‘Pop’ Buell, US AID

The US support of Hmong irregulars provides both a case in which an intervening state engages in the covert support of a non-state actor (the Hmong) to conduct counter-insurgency (COIN) operations. Those two factors aside, the US-Hmong case offers six particularly diverse and interesting characteristics that provide the necessary variation in my three main cases to help answer the questions posed in Chapter 1 and test the validity of the propositions presented in Chapter 2. First, the United States used a politically isolated Hmong proxy as a counterinsurgency force. Second, US and Hmong forces maintained a close, well-integrated relationship but could only provide the Hmong with a low degree of autonomy due to the relatively superior military capabilities of the opposing forces. Third, Washington supported the Hmong to ensure US involvement remained plausibly deniable. Fourth, the character of the war in Laos was predominantly ideological. Fifth, US involvement steadily increased causing a corresponding increase in the costs and decrease in the benefits. Sixth, the Hmong became completely dependent upon the United States, in ways far beyond the actual fighting.

The US-Hmong case demonstrates a highly cooperative, highly dependent proxy receiving covert support and operating with a low degree of autonomy. International
conditions did not support US involvement at any level. The conflict has both ethnic and ideological characteristics. Finally, the case represents a situation where the intervening state gained significant benefits from the arrangement with comparatively small costs, yet the proxy incurred tremendous costs with very few benefits.

US support of the Hmong fits the definition in listed in Chapter 1—an *intervening state providing support to a politically motivated, local actor engaging in an armed conflict to influence a target state’s affairs*—in that the United States organized, trained, equipped, directed, and supported Hmong operations against Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) forces in Laos. Although the United States had Forward Air Controllers (FACs) operating covertly inside Laos and used a substantial number of aircraft to aid indigenous forces in Laos, very few US personnel participated in the fighting on the ground. From a political standpoint, the Hmong were completely isolated from the Royal Lao Government (RLG) in Vientiane and had little interest in gaining a stake in the political process. Rather, the Hmong fought to avoid “any external effort to control and manage their affairs” (Blaufarb 1972, 33).

**BACKGROUND**

Shortly after Laos gained its independence in 1954, the United States feared the fledgling country might fall to communist expansion and that should Laos fall, the remainder of Southeast Asia would follow shortly thereafter (Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower, 3 Jan 1961). In addition, the Eisenhower administration worried that a coalition government, as mandated by the Geneva Accords, would have negative effects on the administration of President Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam (Girling 1970, 377). Therefore, American interest in Laos focused on
preventing communism from taking root and spreading uncontrollably to the rest of the region. Conversely, the Soviet Union, China and North Vietnam all supported the expansion of communist ideology throughout the region.

Despite growing concerns about the communist threat in the north, the RLG refused to invite an overt, military intervention to halt or reverse the gains of the communist Pathet Lao. In response, Washington flooded Laos with money to bolster the country’s economy and strengthen the RLG’s domestic support (Girling 1970; Haney 1972, 251). The infusion of aid, however, only fueled elite corruption and increased the Lao people’s enmity for its government (Girling 1970, Castle 1993). In spite of American efforts, the political arm of the Pathet Lao made significant gains in the government election of 1958, taking nine of the 21 seats available (Haney 1972, 254). With support from China and North Vietnam, the Pathet Lao began to push southward and started closing in on Vientiane (Laos’ capital).

The Geneva Accords of 1954 explicitly prevented Washington—or any other country—from sending armed forces into Laos.²⁹ Geneva also directed the establishment of a coalition government that included all political parties: conservative, neutral, and communist. Without an overt invitation from the RLG, the United States feared sending its own troops to defend Laos because it might trigger a response from both China and the Soviet Union and unnecessarily escalate the war (Telegram from the Delegation to the Conference on Laos to the Department of State, Geneva, 6 Nov 1961; Memorandum of Conversation, Secretary of State, 17 Jan 1961). Unable to send forces or advisors to Laos overtly, the United States created a covert military advisory group—under the cover

²⁹ Although the United States did not sign the 1954 Accords, Washington still desired to avoid overtly breaking them.
of a Program Evaluation Office in charge of US aid programs—to assist the Lao
government (Haney 1972, 251-252).

Inside Laos, widespread distrust between the different ethnic groups and the lack
of meaningful connections in terms of communication and transportation prevented the
formation of a singular effort to keep communist forces at bay (Langer 1968, 82). The
situation in Vientiane proved equally divisive which resulted in the development of three
separate factions. The conservative faction, made up of social elites controlling the
majority of the country’s wealth and power, wanted to maintain control of the RLG. The
elites strongly opposed communism and rejected the mandate within the Geneva Accords
that required the inclusion of all political parties in the government. The communist
faction—the Pathet Lao—followed a Marxist-Leninist ideology, rejected the elites’ self-
proclaimed right to rule Laos, and sought political and economic reform. The neutral
faction, largely consisting of lower class elites heavily involved in politics and
government, believed it could solve the political problems in Laos without foreign
assistance or intervention through a policy of “national reconciliation” that addressed the
grievances between the have and have-nots (Zaslof 1973, 61; Simmonds 1968, 10).

Between 1954 and 1959, a coalition government containing political
representatives from both democratic and communist parties governed Laos. The free
elections held in 1958 saw nine of the 21 available seats in the national government go to
the political wing of the Pathet Lao and four to its allies in the neutral faction (US House
Committee on Government Operations, *US AID Operations in Laos* 1959, 46). The
situation began to appear dire when the Soviet Union began conducting air support
operations to assist communist forces (Memorandum of Conversation, Secretary of State,
Admiral Harry D. Felt, Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, and Admiral Arleigh Burke, Chief of Naval Operations, feared Laos would soon fall to the communists and advised an American response (Marolda and Fitzgerald 1986, 55). This greatly concerned the Eisenhower administration and led to increased efforts to strengthen the conservative faction (Memorandum from the Director of the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs). In 1959, US support enabled the right-wing faction to gain control of the government from the neutral Souvanna Phouma and declare that Laos had fulfilled its commitment to the Geneva Accords and “was no longer bound by its provisions.” The RLG directed the RLA to purge members of the Pathet Lao from the state’s armed forces, imprison the leader of the Pathet Lao political organization, and declare the Pathet Lao illegal (Devillers 1970, 42-45). In response to this order, the Pathet Lao organized its forces and launched an offensive on the Royal government that started Laos’ bitter civil war (Castle 1993, 17).

After nearly two years of civil war, a new Geneva conference convened to readdress the situation in Laos and only re-affirmed the goals set forth in the 1954 Accords (Devillers 1970, 46-47). The RLG returned to a politically neutral footing under the leadership of Souvanna Phouma, which did little to assuage US concerns about the communist threat. Washington’s failure to convince the RLG to renounce any affiliation with the Pathet Lao worried the Kennedy administration, which believed that US allies and enemies might perceive this as a sign of weakness. This led President Kennedy to quickly approve a number of covert measures focused on strengthening the RLG’s
military in hopes of bolstering Laos’ national security and further demonstrating US resolve (Conboy 1995, 51).

In 1959, the situation grew more desperate as the Pathet Lao began an offensive against RLG forces in northern Laos. Immediately, Vientiane claimed that Hanoi had sent forces to support the Pathet Lao, but further evidence failed to confirm the claim. The United States did, however, believe that the Pathet Lao had received both moral and materiel support for the attacks and provided ample motivation to boost American support (J.T. Folda, Jr., Joint Message, Office of Secretary of Defense to Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, ISA, Robert H. Knight, 11 Aug 1959).

Although Laos was a small and relatively unimportant country, the context of the Cold War, and the failing situation in east Asia made the tiny state America’s most difficult foreign policy issue. The RLG refused to acknowledge the need to protect itself from the rising threat of communism during the first four to five years of the conflict. The majority of Lao statesmen maintained a neutral stance and remained committed to the idea that the danger associated with the Pathet Lao was an internal matter (Memorandum of Conversation, Department of State, Washington, 13 Jan 1958). Without sufficient support from Lao political leaders, US efforts to strengthen the RLG failed to produce positive results.

The reluctance of the RLG also denied the Royal Lao Army (RLA) the leadership it needed to provide an effective defense force (Memorandum from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lemnitzer) to President Kennedy, 7 Jul 1961). Washington faced the difficult task of supporting a government unwilling “to shed blood in its own defense”

---

30 In President Kennedy’s speech on the situation in Laos (7 Sep 1962), he revealed that during a discussion before his inauguration, President Eisenhower made it clear that Laos was the most difficult issue currently facing the United States.
(Castle 1993, 130). Considering the difficult political and geographical terrain surrounding any military operation in Laos, the Eisenhower administration elected to forego deploying its own forces (Quincy 2000, 181; Leary 1999). Instead, America looked to the Hmong, a culturally remote, politically ostracized, Lao Sung tribal group living on the mountaintops of northern Laos. Emphasizing the dangers the communists posed to the Hmong way of life, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) persuaded a significant number to ally themselves with the United States to defend Laos from the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese (Castle 1993, 43).

Between 1961 and 1975, the political situation in Laos remained relatively static. The neutral faction stayed in control of the RLG due to the effort of Hmong and Thai irregular forces keeping the Pathet Lao occupied in northern Laos. The RLG and RLA refused to commit themselves whole-heartedly to upholding democracy and fighting against the Pathet Lao. As the Vietnam War drew to a close, US interest in Indochina waned and the Americans began a slow withdrawal from Laos. Despite US assistance, the RLG failed to gain adequate public support, ultimately causing its defeat at the hands of the North Vietnamese and the Pathet Lao.

POLICY AND STRATEGY

The delicate situation in Laos and its proximity to the conflict in Vietnam made it difficult for the United States to maintain a consistent, coherent policy. The United States still keenly aware of its failure to keep China out of the Korean War and concerned about directly confronting Soviet forces and the rapid escalation that would likely follow, avoided getting directly involved to minimize the effects of Soviet and Chinese responses.

31 After nearly ten years, senior White House officials in 1964 were still uncertain of what the US policy in Laos aimed to achieve (Barrett 1997, 52).

In a big picture sense, US objectives in Laos remained somewhat firm: to hold back communist advances without committing US forces or getting the US drawn in so deeply that it could not get out without incurring heavy costs to its prestige and reputation. More specifically, the United States wanted to disrupt Pathet Lao’s hold on Lao territory (Department of State Bulletin 15 Apr 1969, 567-572; Porter 1970, 193-194) and avoid the appearance of “the American giant dominating and controlling events in neutralized Laos” (Blaufarb 1972, 18). Further, Washington wanted to show that it was not immobilized by Hanoi’s political campaign and was determined to utilize other options that would minimize the neutralizing effects of the Geneva Accords (Barrett 1997, 48).

In response to the surrounding conditions, the United States sought to keep its involvement as secret and deniable as possible—if keeping the communists out of Vientiane became too costly, the United States could withdraw with minimal consequences to its prestige and reputation. To ensure maximum flexibility both domestically and internationally, the United States elected initially to pursue a strategy of providing covert assistance to the RLG and later to covertly organize and support tribal

The arguments for keeping US involvement covert were: to keep the Soviets out of Laos and avoid a direct confrontation between US and Soviet forces, to prevent the Pathet Lao from gaining control of the government, to avoid becoming overly committed to the conflict, and to avoid losing the propaganda battle with North Vietnam (Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *U.S. Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Part 2, Kingdom of Laos* 1969, 399-402). In his book *War and Responsibility*, Professor John Ely (1993, 81-82) argues that there were also two unstated arguments: to allow the executive to conduct foreign policy without concern for domestic interference and to “still domestic criticism” of US operations in Laos. CIA station chief Douglas Blaufarb supports Ely’s claim, purporting that the US policy in Laos was guided by the belief that Congress would not likely support the amount of aid required, despite the fact that the sum necessary was far lower than many of America’s other concerns (1972, 18).

Initially, the United States hoped that secretly bolstering the Lao economy with outside funds would generate enough support for the RLG that it could stop Pathet Lao advances on its own. In addition, Washington took the necessary action to install a conservative government in Vientiane to curb support for the Pathet Lao and to provide better justification for expanded US involvement. After Phoumi Nosavan and Boun Oum ousted Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, the RLG formally requested support. The

---

32 During this sub-committee hearing, William Sullivan testified that “the North Vietnamese operate with enormous numbers of forces in Laos, totally clandestinely. They deny that their people are there, and this, therefore, in terms of the mechanism of the 1962 agreements, gives them a totally unfair, totally legal protection.” Sullivan suggests that if the United States openly admitted that it was breaking the Geneva Accords, Hanoi would score a tremendous political victory and would likely gain the upper hand in Laos (402).
United States responded with Operation White Star—a mission to train Hmong soldiers to conduct irregular warfare in Pathet Lao territory (Parker 1995, x).

Based on French experience during the Indochina War, the CIA knew the Hmong were natural warriors. The French described the Hmong as a mountain tribe “known for their martial spirit, courage and dedication to the protection of their region” (Zasloff 1973, 62). The French began formally training Hmong tribesmen during the French-Indochina war (Burchett 1970, 303). Therefore, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) began coordinating support and training for the Hmong to support US interests. Considering the other available options in Laos, especially among a largely pacific, Buddhist population, the Hmong—an animist, warrior culture—were an obvious favorite. Throughout the end of the 1950s and into the 1960s, the Hmong steadily proved themselves standing their ground against NVA regulars when RLA soldiers tended to flee.

Prior to gaining US support, Lieutenant Colonel Vang Pao (a highly influential member among many Hmong clans) convinced a number of Hmong clans to begin moving to more secure and strategic areas to check communist advances in Hmong territory. The CIA recognized the importance of these locations and began assisting Vang Pao and the Hmong clans loyal to him. Air America helped Vang Pao relocate nearly 200 villages to seven sites ringing the Plain of Jars (Castle 1993, 39-40).

Under the direction of the CIA, the United States provided military training to Hmong forces with the intention of using them to conduct a guerrilla-style war against the Pathet Lao. US advisors were included down to the company level to assist in directing Hmong soldiers in battle. By 1961, the CIA had equipped about 7,700 Hmong
soldiers and had created a logistical support network independent from the RLA (*FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol XXIV: Laos Crisis*, 263). Lieutenant Colonel Vang Pao, a Hmong officer in the RLA, quickly established himself as the leader of the Hmong irregular forces and worked diligently to establish a cooperative atmosphere among the Hmong clans loyal to him (Castle 1993, 40).

Despite US efforts, the conservative government failed to establish political control in non-Pathet Lao areas and foster the support and leadership necessary to enable the RLA to defend against the Pathet Lao and NVA regulars. In 1960, an RLA paratrooper named Kong Le seized control of the government in Vientiane in a bloodless coup and reinstated Souvanna Phouma. At this time, the United States realized that a neutralist government defended by Hmong irregulars was its best hope of forestalling a communist takeover (Blaufarb 1972, 17-18).

In 1961, the CIA started a Hmong paramilitary program that involved “recruiting, training, and directing a tribal army.” Hmong soldiers were sent to Thailand for training in guerrilla warfare tactics, to learn how to use modern weapons and radios. By 1963, “the CIA had instituted a vigorous, Thailand-based, offense-oriented paramilitary training program for [the Hmong]” (Castle 1993, 57). Vang Pao, with the assistance of the CIA, built a 30,000 man irregular army, 10,000 of which were organized into Special Guerrilla Units (Castle 1993, 80). Supporting Hmong forces, however, required a significant effort that relied heavily on American air power.

As US support and training increased, the Hmong predominantly engaged in harassment operations to avoid the appearance of illegal US support in Laos and to prevent Hanoi from increasing its support for the Pathet Lao. Under heavy pressure, the
Prime Minister formally requested US assistance in September 1962 giving added flexibility to American support for the Hmong (Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *U.S. Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Part 2, Kingdom of Laos* 1969, 368). The CIA began more formal training for the Hmong and sought to create a substantially more capable force. In addition, the United States provided air superiority and air mobility for its Hmong proxy force to provide them with advantages over the Pathet Lao (Quincy 2000, 297).

In 1963, after extensive guerrilla warfare training in Thailand, the CIA changed its original plan for Hmong forces and directed them to begin an offensive campaign to free and fortify Hmong villages in northern Laos, and to build airstrips nearby for re-supply by Air America (Castle 1993, 57-58). The CIA also started sending Hmong units of 10-12 men deep into northern Laos and North Vietnam to report on enemy activity and to conduct “harassment raids” on enemy forces, such as “ambushing and destroying enemy trucks, ammunition, and fuel supplies” (Castle 1993, 58, 83).

Throughout the mid 1960s, the employment of Hmong forces gained a steady rhythm, slowly transitioning from an irregular force aimed at stalling and harassing NVA and Pathet Lao operations to a conventional force bent on capturing and holding territory. During the rainy season (June to October), Hmong forces went on the offensive and made substantial gains in territory due to their near-exclusive use of air support. The Pathet Lao and the NVA were dependent on roads to move supplies during this time of year and made easy targets for US warplanes. During the dry season, the Hmong forces retreated in the face of communist offensives supported by better environmental conditions (Blaufarb 1972).
The ability of the Hmong force to stall Pathet Lao and NVA advances and the growing importance of the Ho Chi Minh Trail to the Vietnam War led to a shift in focus and a shift in strategy. The irregular war in Laos became a conventional war to gain control of the Plain of Jars and to cut off the Ho Chi Minh Trail (Castle 1993; Castle 1999, 84). For the remainder of the war, the conventional battle to control the Plain of Jars dominated US policy in Laos (Blaufarb 1972, 20).

In 1966, the United States began allocating more strike aircraft for missions in Laos to enhance the ability of Hmong forces to counter Pathet Lao and NVA advances. To assist the Hmong in calling in air strikes, the CIA convinced Washington to station USAF Forward Air Controllers (FACs) in Laos. These pilots, known as the Ravens, flew with Hmong pilots to provide effective and valuable assistance to the Hmong irregulars on the ground (Robbins 1987; Castle 1993, 87). By 1968, the United States substantially stepped up its air campaign in Laos, dropping more than 350,000 tons of bombs (Quincy 2000, 310-313).

At this point in the war, Hmong forces had almost completely transitioned to conventional operations. In an effort to roll back the Pathet Lao and threaten the communist stronghold in the north, Vang Pao led his Hmong forces onto the Plain of Jars and defeated the communists in a conventional battle. Although this was a huge blow to communist forces, Hanoi responded six months later by sending a second NVA battalion equipped with tanks to defeat Hmong forces and reclaim the Plain of Jars and better defend the Ho Chi Minh Trail. To prevent a communist rout, the United States sent B-52s to stop the enemy’s pursuit. Despite the enormous losses Hmong forces suffered to

---

33 Looking through President Johnson’s letters during this period, the situation in Laos, once a somewhat independent concern, became completely entangled with the situation in Vietnam after 1965 (Barret 1997).
gain and hold the Plain of Jars, the United States allowed Vang Pao to retake the Plain the following May. After a predictable retreat six months later, the Hmong were spent. Vang Pao’s forces had sustained heavy attrition and the commander resorted to calling 13 and 14-year old boys into service (Shaplen 1968).

By the end of the 1960s, US rhetoric had shifted from President Kennedy’s statement of “bear and burden” (Kennedy inauguration speech, 20 Jan 1961) to President Nixon’s proclamation that the United States would only help countries fighting for freedom to help themselves (Guam, 3 Nov 1969). Despite the shift in rhetoric and a probing investigation of US operations in Laos made by Senator Symington’s sub-committee hearing (20-22 Oct 1969), Washington did little to change its operations in Laos. Congress only upheld President Nixon’s decision to avoid committing US ground troops in Southeast Asia and elected not to curb CIA assistance to the Hmong or halt the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and northern Laos (Ely 1993, 96).

As Hmong forces dwindled, the United States attempted to backfill them with Thai mercenaries paid by the CIA. Thai soldiers were allowed to resign from Thailand’s armed forces and were given Lao identity cards and names (Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Staff Report, 1972). Without a direct US intervention, this move only slowed the inevitable fall of the neutral government in Vientiane. US air support decreased substantially after 1973. By 1975, the war in Vietnam had been lost and the United States withdrew from Laos. Vientiane fell to the Pathet Lao shortly thereafter.

**COSTS AND BENEFITS**

In the previous section, I outlined the context of Pretoria’s involvement. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the different costs and benefits as described in Chapter 2. In
this section, I describe briefly the specific elements that produced each of the different costs and benefits the United States encountered supporting the Hmong in Laos.

Table 3.1 Costs and Benefits to the United States in Supporting the Hmong

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added Critical Skills</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Influence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserved Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasted Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costly to Control Proxy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased International Support/Toleration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Domestic Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hid/Obscured Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoided Unwanted Escalation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Target State Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Target State Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased International Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Domestic Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hid/Obscured Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased International Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Domestic Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hid/Obscured Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased International Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Domestic Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Added Critical Skills**

The Hmong clans loyal to Vang Pao were a tough, resilient people living in the heart of the communist controlled areas of northern Laos. Hmong soldiers were familiar with the region and proved particularly adroit at operating within its dense jungles and rough terrain (Blaufarb 1972; Castle 1993, 1998). The Hmong were also familiar with the people living in the region and were used extensively for spotting and identifying Pathet Lao and NVA activity (Robbins 1987). The Hmong were also able to infiltrate areas behind enemy advances and inflict heavy losses during their seasonal retreats (Castle 1993; Quincy 2000). Although US forces were undoubtedly better trained, equipped, and disciplined, their inability to speak the language and blend into the surroundings would have made it difficult and costly to operate in Laos.

**Extended Influence**

In the late 1950s, the United States had a significant commitment to Europe and a smaller, yet still sizeable commitment on the Korean Peninsula. Although military advisors, such as Admiral Arleigh Burke recommended direct US involvement (Marolda
and Fitzgerald 1986, 55), the strategic situation did not support getting bogged down in a landlocked country with little infrastructure or access. Further, the Geneva Accords of 1954 did not afford the United States the ability to get directly involved without exposing itself to strong international criticism.

Supporting an indigenous force with covert assistance, however, allowed the United States to influence Laos’ affairs. The Hmong particularly enabled the United States to extend its influence because of the inability and unwillingness of the RLG and RLA to take on the Pathet Lao and the NVA (Blaufarb 1972).

**Conserved Resources**

Without having to deploy and sustain its own combat forces in Laos, the United States conserved a considerable amount of its material and political resources. From a material perspective, installing the force protection measures and the logistic centers necessary to support regular American forces would have almost certainly exceeded the amount of support given to the Hmong over the entire period. Overt deployments almost always include the means necessary to secure and support American armed forces sent abroad.

**Wasted Resources**

Without a clear picture of the US policy in Laos, it is difficult to justify that the United States wasted resources in its support of the Hmong. As CIA station chief Douglas Blaufarb suggests in his previously classified study of US involvement, “the unconventional military effort of the US in Laos, although inconclusive, thus achieved a

---

34 Douglas Blaufarb (1972, 85-86) notes that US accomplishments in Laos “have been achieved at comparatively modest cost. To date, the US has met its minimum goals with resource inputs that make the 1962-1970 unconventional war in Laos perhaps the most cost-effective of all such US ventures in Southeast Asia.”
significant part of its goals at a relative low cost” (1972, x). For the first several years, it is more accurate to suggest that the United States conserved its resources. Using the Hmong as an irregular force to delay or stem communist expansion in Laos provided significant savings. The United States did not have to acknowledge its involvement, and therefore saved political resources. In addition, the conflict remained significantly more limited; the participation of NVA forces was minimal, as was the use of US air power. After 1965 when the war in Vietnam began its sharp escalation, supporting the Hmong in Laos began to waste American resources. The conflict in Laos became absorbed into the conflict in Vietnam. What President Eisenhower told the newly elected Senator Kennedy was that Laos was the most important foreign policy issue facing the United States, later shifted to a complete absence of discussing the Laos problem outside the context of the war in Vietnam.

**Decreased Commitment (to the Proxy)**

From the beginning, the United States sought to minimize its commitment to the conflict in Laos. With US support, the Hmong managed to disrupt and deter the Pathet Lao and the NVA from controlling northern Laos. The United States established a system of supporting the Hmong, and by default the RLG, that could easily be terminated. William Sullivan, the former US ambassador to Laos from 1964 to 1968, makes this point during the Symington Sub-Committee hearing in 1969 (521) stating, "we used to use as a rule of thumb our ability to make [our presence in Laos] reversible and terminate it within eight hours. It would probably take twenty-four hours now, but it still could be done."
The only resources the Hmong needed to compete with the enemy were weapons, mobility assets, logistical supplies, and close air support. The United States managed to provide all of these resources without revealing the degree of its involvement and therefore decreased its commitment. The United States avoided having to overtly acknowledge its support of the Hmong until the latter half of 1969 and refused to put itself in a position where it would have to commit an undesirable amount of resources or personnel to protect its proxy. Although rescue assets were instructed to assist Hmong forces when necessary (Castle 1999, 121), the number of casualties the Hmong suffered reflects the US desire to avoid getting too committed in Laos.

In 1967, Sullivan outlined the conditions that warranted an expansion of the war in Laos: when “our war effort in Vietnam would be substantially helped; the security of Thailand and of presently held territory in North Laos would be significantly enhanced, or our relations with the RLG would be significantly enhanced, or that our failure to support expansion in North Laos would result in substantial deterioration in our relations” (quoted in Blaufarb 1972, 37).

The United States also rejected requests to expand the war. For example, Ambassador Sullivan also rejected repeated requests by Vang Pao to reclaim the Plain of Jars and refused to supply arms and send forces to protect an area south of Sam Neua because “the commitment to support the villagers involved as an excessive burden” (Blaufarb 1972, 37).

**Increased Commitment (to the Proxy)**

The strategy of moving Hmong clans to critical areas created such a high level of dependence that the United States had to create programs to deliver supplies to those
remote Hmong outposts. The dependence of the Hmong and the US need for their assistance led Washington to invest in an elaborate air support operation capable of delivering the supplies necessary to sustain the Hmong outposts (Castle 1993, 83).

The seasonal exchange of territory created a tremendous amount of refugees in northern Laos. The United States had to increase the amount of supplies accordingly to provide for the influx of people fleeing from the Pathet Lao and NVA advances. Douglas Blaufarb (1972, 86) notes

Estimates place the refugee population as of April 1970 at 246,000. But over the years many more—possibly as many as 700,000 people out of the roughly 1.9 million under RLG control—have left their homes to resettle permanently or temporarily in safer areas...For the [Hmong], it has been particularly painful; various [casualty] estimates place it somewhere between 40,000 and 100,000.

The United States also invested resources to rescue Hmong villagers from persecution after the Pathet Lao took control of the country in 1975. Rather than allowing the Hmong to be murdered for their support of the United States and their opposition to the Pathet Lao, numeroUS-Hmong people were brought to the United States and granted citizenship.

**Hid/Obscured Involvement (Internationally)**

Although North Vietnam complained of US involvement in Laos, the lack of credible evidence and Hanoi’s own involvement seems to have eliminated the international community’s will to take formal action. Supporting the Hmong also seems to have allowed Washington the ability to deny giving Hanoi any rhetorical leverage on the Laos issue. An unnamed US official in Vientiane stated (Time, 17 Oct 1969, 39) “If we [acknowledged bombing Laos]…every dove in the US would hit us over the head with it like they did with Johnson and the Bombing of North Vietnam. The North Vietnamese don’t admit the presence of their 47,000 troops. Why should we give them the advantage of admitting the bombing?”

Moscow occasionally accused Washington of intervening in Laos, but those charges never escalated to an attempt at sanctioning the United States in an international forum such as the United Nations. Further, the covert character of US operations provided Moscow with the opportunity to look the other way and stay out of Laos after 1962. For example, William Sullivan’s testified before the Symington sub-committee hearing (Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Part 2, Kingdom of Laos 1969, 399) that a senior Soviet official has said that insofar as he reads things in newspapers or hears statements and allegations about US operations, he does not have to take any official cognizance of them. But if they are made directly by US officials he does have to take cognizance of them and this will color, to some extent, the Soviet attitude toward Souvanna Phouma’s neutrality and toward the retention of the understanding which underlie the agreement between ourselves and the Soviets for the neutrality of Laos.”

Although Senator Fulbright argued that the Soviets would not have gotten involved whether they knew or not (402), the bottom line is that the Soviets stopped supporting the Pathet Lao after 1962 and stayed out of the conflict.
Ultimately, the Hmong proxy in Laos offered the United States only a fig leaf to conceal its involvement, but the lack of any response in the UN Security Council or General Assembly to deliver some form of sanction and the lack of international response based on the reports coming from inside Laos suggest that Hanoi’s involvement and the RLG’s willing acceptance of US intervention minimized costs at the international level.

_Hid / Obscured Involvement (at the Domestic Level)_

Although the substantial opposition to the war in Vietnam later overshadowed the war in Laos, the covert character of operations in Laos prevented the American public from knowing, and potentially limiting, the US President’s ability to act in Laos.

Before assessing the costs and benefits of keeping the proxy war in Laos secret, I first want to establish the degree to which US involvement actually was _secret_. Senator Fulbright stated that neither Congress nor the American public knew what the President was doing in Laos (Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, _U.S. Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Part 2, Kingdom of Laos_ 1969, 404). Writing in 1973, Shaplen (483) claims that

In return for American help in holding off the communists within Laos, Souvanna Phouma allowed the Americans to bomb the HCMT from Thai, Vietnamese, and Guam air bases as well as aircraft carriers. These bombings, described as “reconnaissance flights” were never officially admitted either by the Lao or the Americans, but correspondents in SE Asia mentioned them frequently. And just as Hanoi mocked the official denials, so Souvanna and the Americans drew constant attention to the bland denials of Hanoi that there were any North Vietnamese troops in the country. The truth of the matter, which bears directly on the current situation and on the fuss and fury that have attended the secret Laos hearings held by the Symington subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is that nobody was fooled by anything including that portion of the American public willing to read the newspapers and magazines with a modicum of care. Throughout Asia, let alone in the United States, the bombings of the Ho Trail were a matter of common knowledge, and there were repeated articles in the press about the so-called "secret war" in Laos backed by the CIA and the "hush-hush" airlines, Air America and Continental Airlines. Two years ago, for
example, two other correspondents and I interviewed General Vang Pao at Sam Thong, one of his northeastern headquarters, and wrote about the CIA support he was being given.

What Senator Fulbright or other members of Congress actually knew about US activities in Laos remains obscure. On 28 May 1964, Under Secretary George Ball told President Johnson that he had discussed US actions in Southeast Asia with Senator Fulbright and explained that “he is not going to do any talking and wants to do everything that keeps the maximum freedom of maneuver for the President—which distinguishes him from some of his colleagues” (Ball Papers, Box 7, LBJ Library; quoted from Barrett 1997, 44).

After the Symington sub-committee hearing in October 1969, Senator Mansfield told the Washington Post that he “didn’t learn much from the Laos hearings that he didn’t already know.” In that same time frame, the CIA claimed it had briefed at least 67 Senators since 1963 (Lehman, fn 41, 129). In 1965, President Johnson briefed a bipartisan group of congressional leaders on operations in Southeast Asia. After a brief discussion about covert operations, Senator Long interjected that he did not want to hear all of the details and that he wanted to avoid being told things he should not know. Secretary McNamara continued the briefing and described US activities in Laos, including the training and deploying of proxy forces into North Vietnam and the use of US aircraft to take out a heavily defended bridge at Ban Ken that the RLAF T-28s were incapable of destroying due to the heavily armed defenses surrounding the bridge (Barrett 1997, 100).

Regardless of what Senator Fulbright or other Senators actually knew, none of the administrations were wholly forthcoming about US involvement. Near the end of the sub-committee hearing (547), Fulbright complains

We do not know enough to ask those direct questions, and this is what I meant about quibbling about whether the US role in Laos is exclusively advisory. When
you take a group of Senators who are primarily concerned with their own states, and only incidentally in this foreign affairs area, the responsibility for which we are given by the Senate, we do not know enough to ask you these questions unless you are willing to volunteer the information. There is no way for us to ask you questions about things we don’t know you are doing” (Symington 547)

John Ely (1993, 82-83) concludes that some members of Congress may very well have known the extent of US involvement in Laos and later feigned surprise to avoid being labeled an accomplice, but “to a significant degree the administration succeeded in maintaining secrecy. Though this was partly due to willful ignorance, an unwillingness to ask what should have been the obvious next question…Indeed, a 1970 memorandum from Dr. Kissinger to President Nixon essentially admitted that ‘the Senators’ had not known ‘what is going on in Laos’ prior to the Symington hearings” (Ely cites Kissinger fn 70, p 454). Ely (91) also concludes that Shaplen’s argument that the US public knew of the involvement in Laos, while theoretically possible, is simply false. In 1968, Time released a story about US bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, but still maintained that the US was upholding the 1962 Geneva Accords. It was not until September 1969 that the New York Times’ began publishing more extensive reports of US involvement that eventually led to the Symington sub-committee hearings in October. That the information was often based on rumor and publicly denied by the US government significantly diminishes any claim that the US public actually knew what was going on in Laos (Ely 1993, 92).

The United States used several different methods to hide its involvement in Laos from the American public. First, very few American forces were sent to Laos, allowing Washington to avoid significant pressure from the press. Second, US military personnel who did participate transferred to different organizations such as US AID or the embassy
in Vientiane. Third, the United States kept correspondents out of Laos for reasons of security, though most observers believed it was for political reasons (Branfman 1970, 267-268). In 1970, three correspondents walked from Sam Thong to Long Tieng, were detained, threatened with execution by Vang Pao (Robbins 1987, 240 fn 5), and shipped back to Vientiane—all this after US operations in Laos had become more open (Ely 1993, 89). Fourth, bombing missions conducted by regular USAF aircraft were flown under the guise of “armed reconnaissance” (Shaplen 1973, 483).

The CIA also took careful measures to avoid Congressional scrutiny. First, efforts were made to hide the money being spent on operations in Laos (Castle 1993, 104-105; Robbins 1987, 108-109). US domestic laws prevented the General Accounting Office from auditing the CIA’s books for most of the war (Ely 1993, 83). Second, government officials outside the executive branch and war correspondents were given briefings and were shown glimpses of operations in a manner that represented only half-truths. Fred Branfman overheard James Chandler, the Deputy Chief of USAID, tell Edgar “Pop” Buell that State’s briefing to visiting members of Congress had been a “beautiful snow job” (Branfman, fn 18, 270). It has also been argued that Long Tieng was purposely called “Alternate” to hide the fact that it was the main staging area for military operations against the Pathet Lao.

Government officials involved in the operations in Laos also helped keep details hidden from Congress. For example, William Sullivan testified before the Symington

---

35 Professor Ely specifically explains that 50 USC § 403j(b) allowed CIA funds to be spent without regard to the usual regulations governing expenditures.
36 Fred Branfman was an International Volunteer Service employee at the time and later became a journalist operating in Laos.
37 Two different pieces of evidence lend credence to Christopher Robbins (1987, 36 fn 5) claim that visitors were taken to a smaller base at Sam Thong. First, Senator Symington notes that he did not recall seeing Long Tieng when he was in Laos (Symington, 411). Second, a New York Times article (26 October 1969, 24) reported that the real base was Long Tieng and that Sam Thong was “only a show window.”
Sub-Committee in 1969 that there were no Americans flying bombing missions in Laos, and subsequently failed to recall that testimony a year later. Colonel Robert Tyrell told the Symington Sub-Committee that pilots had their regular USAF identification cards and that they did not fly operational training missions in Laos. Based on more recent evidence, it appears that Colonel Tyrell was not telling the truth. Tim Castle, an expert on US operations in Laos, writes, “The [Ravens] wore civilian clothes, carried USAID identification cards, flew RLAF aircraft, and operated under the direction of the American ambassador in Vientiane” (1993, 86-87, fn 35). Lt Col (ret.) Jerry Klingaman, an “Air Commando” operating off and on in Laos from 1966 to 1969 describes his experience:

The conditions of our operations were a little bit extraordinary, it was a covert operation. I crossed the river into Laos wearing jeans and a jean jacket. I had no uniform, no ID and no Geneva Convention card…your weapon was willed to you by the guy that you were replacing.

Having established that US involvement was certainly deniable, and to a large extent, secret, I now address how keeping the war secret lowered domestic costs.

Domestically, the Kennedy and Johnson administrations were able to keep US involvement in Laos quiet enough to avoid any serious scrutiny; there were virtually no demonstrations, petitions, or marches opposing US action in Laos. Even after finding out about US activities in Laos, or at least having to admit to knowing about US involvement, Congress only upheld President Nixon’s decision to avoid committing US

---

38 Professor Ely makes this comparison to demonstrate the lengths some officials would go to keep operations in Laos hidden.
39 A portion of Colonel Tyrell’s testimony remains classified, so it is impossible to say if Col Tyrell lied to the committee about flying operational missions in Laos, or if he simply did not know that it was happening.
ground troops and “neither CIA assistance to the Hmong and Vang Pao nor continued bombing of the HCMT or northern Laos was prohibited” (115 Congressional Record 39169, 1969).

CONDITIONS AND THEIR EFFECT ON COSTS AND BENEFITS

This section focuses on the effects of the conditions highlighted in Chapter 3 on the accumulation of US costs and benefits from supporting the Hmong in Laos. Under each proposition, I explain how the condition affected the applicable costs and benefits. At the end, I also provide a short discussion about the conditions aside from those in the eight propositions that explain the case’s missing costs and benefits.

I want to point out that the conflict in Laos lasted over two decades and that the conditions on the ground and in the international arena changed fluidly. My intent, is to present a strategic view—to capture a broader perspective of the conditions present and explain their effects over the course of the conflict. This is not to diminish the effects of any single event; where appropriate I will address those as well. It is, however, important to weigh the conditions over the entire period to gain a proper understanding of their effects on the costs and benefits of America’s proxy war in Laos.

**Proposition 1 Civilian Proximity**

Civilian proximity increases international, domestic, and target state costs due to an increase in the probability of civilian casualties. It has the counter-effect of providing the proxy with the access necessary to influence and hide among the population.
**Table 3.2: Effect of Civilian Proximity on US Costs and Benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Civilian Proximity on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>↑ ↑ ↑ ↓</td>
<td>↑ ↑ ↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td>↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↓</td>
<td>↑ ↑ ↑</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faced with the reality that the RLA lacked the temerity to engage Pathet Lao forces augmented with NVA regulars, the United States relied on its Hmong proxy to prevent the collapse of the neutralist government in Vientiane. Although the battle took place throughout Laos, the geographical center of gravity was the Plain of Jars.

Considering that the battle for Laos consisted of insurgency and counter-insurgency operations, non-combatant civilians populated the battlespace. Due to Laos’ primitive development, the density of civilians living within the battlespace was rather low. These individuals, however, were subjected to repeated exchanges of territory and, as the intensity of the air campaign increased, to more indiscriminate levels of bombing. In this section I address how the presence and proximity of civilian, non-combatants in the battlespace affected the costs and benefits of the proxy war in Laos.

The Hmong case is particularly interesting because the United States looked at the proximity of non-combatants as a potential advantage. Early in the conflict, Vang Pao developed a plan to move 200 Hmong villages in northern Laos to seven mountain sites
surrounding the Plain of Jars; each overlooking a potential enemy supply route.\textsuperscript{41} US Special Forces personnel encouraged the move because it would allow more of the Hmong men to join in the fight because they would have fewer responsibilities for providing food and security (Porter 1970, 183-184). Later in the conflict, the United States encouraged the Hmong clans to move to strategic sites such as Long Tieng and Phou Pha Thi to increase the security of the locations and reduce the size of the supply.

The proximity to conflict had mixed effects. The already aggressive Hmong fought even harder because their families were close to the fighting. The presence of Hmong families in the battlespace, however, also imposed a significant cost. Hmong soldiers, often outnumbered, would fight to the bitter end rather than pursuing the irregular warfare tactic of slipping away to fight another day. The Hmong accepted greater risks and held a lower regard for their own safety due to the proximity of their own families. The result of having Hmong families in the battlespace and within striking range of the Pathet Lao and NVA was that the attrition of Hmong forces sped up; the return on the US investment of training and equipping Hmong soldiers was eclipsed prematurely due to proximity.

During the Pathet Lao and NVA dry season offensives, Hmong villagers living in the newly captured areas were forced to serve as porters and were subjected to harsh disciplinary measures and intense indoctrination; an added incentive to join forces against the Pathet Lao. In addition, Hmong irregulars hiding amongst the population were able

\textsuperscript{41} There is some discrepancy about how and why the Hmong moved to these protected areas. Branfman (1970) suggests that American personnel came up with the idea and Porter (1970) suggests it was Vang Pao. Tim Castle (interview with author, 5 October 2009) explains that the Hmong had few other choices than to move to defensible areas and try to deflect Pathet Lao advances because the Hmong were not welcomed in the lowland areas based on their ethnicity and their culture and way of life required the space and freedom gained from living on the mountain tops in northern Laos.
to provide useful intelligence during their dry season advances and inflict losses as they retreated during the rainy season. The Pathet Lao and NVA put an end to this in the late 1960s when they began a scorched earth policy and began cleaning out the inhabitants in local villages (Robbins 1987, 134).

The escalation of US air operations in 1968 and 1969 increased the refugees receiving US AID support from roughly 130,000 to over 250,000 (Branfman 1970, 254). The depleting numbers of Hmong soldiers and the increasing danger of living in and around the battlespace created a potential failure point in 1971. The increased pressure from Pathet Lao and NVA forces and the damage inflicted from American air strikes led Vang Pao to consider moving Hmong tribes to safer areas in northwestern Laos. This concerned the United States because Hmong soldiers would move with their families, leaving little hope of continuing to tie down enemy forces north of Vientiane (Lofgren and Sexton, “Air war in Northern Laos” 44, 86). The United States convinced Vang Pao to remain and fight, despite depleted numbers.

To make up for the lack of Hmong men available to fight, the US had to resort to recruiting and paying Thai soldiers that were given Lao names and identity cards. The US funded all of the costs, plus provided each individual with a substantial pay supplement (Castle 1993, 112).

The costs to the Hmong were significant. Douglas Blaufarb (1972, 86) notes that the costs to the Lao have been far greater, both in human suffering and in the destruction of towns and villages caused by bombing. The latter is limited almost entirely to the area occupied by the NLHS. But the tribal war against the LPLA/NVA has been brought home to the tribal populations with harsh impact. Estimates place the refugee population as of April 1970 at 246,000. But over the years many more—possibly as many as 700,000 people out of the roughly 1.9 million under RLG control—have left their homes to resettle permanently or temporarily in
safer areas...For the Meo, it has been particularly painful; various casualty estimates place it somewhere between 40,000 and 100,000. These grim statistics raise the question of whether the tribesmen would have chosen the same course had they foreseen the consequences to themselves and their communities.

The international and domestic costs to the United States, however, were inconsequential. I suggest this occurred for at least three reasons. First, because Hmong were an obscure ethnic group living in a small, remote country, many people did not really know or care the extent of Hmong losses. Second, Hmong deaths were related to a civil war, an event that many people recognize produces high casualty rates. Third, because the United States kept such tight controls on access to northern Laos and because the North Vietnamese had no desire to publicize the human costs on the Lao population, very little information made its way to international or US domestic audiences.

**Proposition 2 Character of the Conflict**

An ethnic conflict is less costly to influence than an ideological conflict because the lines between opposing sides are more divisive and outside support is less damaging to a proxy's legitimacy.

**Table 3.3: Effect of Conflict Character on US Costs and Benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Ideological Conflict on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td>↓↓</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

81
Although the conflict in Laos contained some ethnic issues, it was predominantly an ideological conflict. Conservative, neutralist, and communist factions all maintained different ideologies about how Laos should be governed. The conservative faction, made up of social elites controlling the majority of the country’s wealth and power, wanted to maintain control of the RLG. The elites strongly opposed communism and rejected the mandate within the Geneva Accords that required the inclusion of all political parties in the government. The communist faction—the Pathet Lao—followed a Marxist-Leninist ideology, rejected the elites’ self-proclaimed right to rule Laos, and sought political and economic reform. The neutral faction, largely consisting of lower class elites heavily involved in politics and government, believed it could solve the political problems in Laos without foreign assistance or intervention through a policy of “national reconciliation” that addressed the grievances between the haves and have-nots (Zasloff 1972, 61; Simmonds 1968, 10).

The Hmong, a territorial people politically isolated from Vientiane and the lowland Lao, abhorred central authority and the notion of being subjected to the control of the Lao Lum (lowland Lao); the feeling was mutual on both sides. Prime Minister Phouma distrusted the Hmong forces. These animosities, as well as a dearth of leadership, precluded the RLG from controlling Hmong forces. Further, direct contact with US personnel added tremendously to Hmong morale and provided additional encouragement that the cause for which they were fighting would not be subjugated to the desires of the RLG (Blaufarb 1972, 78).

Although the political struggle ranged from a three-way battle—conservative, neutral, and communist—to a two-way battle—communist and anti-communist, the
majority of the fighting took place in regions that were outside the control of Vientiane and was fought by people who were largely apolitical and devoid of any sort of Lao nationalist sentiment. Richard Hawkins (1970, 7) captures this dynamic stating “although one side wages a fluid guerrilla struggle while the other modifies techniques of positional warfare, the ultimate goal of all parties is still control of territory. There can be no lasting truce until the battleground is finally divided and a suitable and lasting border is achieved where none now exists.”

As I mentioned earlier, an ethnic dimension also existed. The people of Laos were both diverse and disconnected. The Lao Lum, the low land dwellers, made up roughly 30-50 percent of the population. Representing the most educated portion of the population, the Lao Lum dominated commerce and politics. Their position in Lao society gave them an elitist perspective and led them to look upon Laos’ other ethnic groups as either subordinates or servants. The Lao Tai, the higher valley dwellers, were a tribal people made up of approximately 12 different sub-groups. Living in relative isolation in the upland river valleys and plateaus, the Lao Tai managed to exist in relative autonomy, allowing them to mostly avoid urban areas. Unsurprisingly, the geographical separation of the Lao Tai from Laos’ urban areas gave them little influence in the country’s politics. Even further down the social ladder, the Lao Theung represented the weakest social group in Laos. Characterized as mountainside dwellers, the Lao Theung lacked the ability to exist independently from the other social groups, leading to their domination and exploitation by the Lao Lum and, to a lesser extent, the Lao Tai. The last major Lao ethnic group, the Lao Sung, belonged to a larger ethnic group dispersed throughout Southeast Asia. Within the country, the Lao Sung predominantly lived in the
mountains of northern Laos and survived as subsistence farmers and ranchers who raised opium poppies as a cash crop. The Lao Sung were a tribal people who maintained strong regional ties and lived completely outside the influence of the lowland Lao due to poor transportation networks and the nearly impenetrable geography of their homeland (Langer 1968, 82). One particular tribe of the Lao Sung, the Hmong, displayed a strong predilection toward violent behavior and tended to fight with other ethnic groups as well as amongst themselves (Lewallen 1970, 362). The ideological character of the conflict, however, overwhelmed these divides. Only the Hmong loyal to Vang Pao fought against the Pathet Lao and NVA; other Hmong clans fought with the Pathet Lao.

Essentially, the US engaged in a proxy war backing the Hmong in an effort to protect the neutral government in Vientiane from being forcefully taken over by the Pathet Lao. The Hmong were fighting a territorial war, aimed at preserving their freedom, land, and culture (Shaplen 1970, 493). The inability of the RLG to reform its corrupt practices and formulate an ideology that could gain the support of the majority of the Lao people only aided the Pathet Lao and its North Vietnamese and Chinese benefactors. The United States and the RLG failed to effectively “drain the swamp” of potential Pathet Lao support because it could not formulate a coherent and visible government that could win over the political support of the people. The Lao that did not actively participate in the war were in a sense just bystanders caught in the cross fire and in the service of which ever side happened to be in control of their territory at a particular point in time. Lao passivity meant that a settlement would be achieved solely through arms rather than a combination of military and political efforts. The failure of the RLG
to prevail supports my stated proposition based on Kaufmann’s theory—focusing on military operations in an ideological conflict will result in enormous costs with little gain.

**Proposition 3 International Norms**

Involvement in a proxy war that violates international norms raises an intervening state’s costs associated with interstate and domestic relationships. Exceptions to the norm of non-intervention include: when a government invites outside intervention, a response to human rights violations within the target state or an inability to provide adequately for the safety and needs of the people; when a state’s government asks for assistance; when a non-government group becomes recognized as a belligerent fighting for its freedom; if another state is already involved in the conflict taking place in the target state; and if the conflict in the target state spills over into a neighboring state.

Table 3.4: Effect of International Norms on US Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of International Norms on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this case, the two exceptions to the international norm of non-intervention were a state government asking for assistance and the involvement of another state. Almost immediately after the conclusion of the Geneva Accords in 1954, Washington, Moscow, Beijing and Hanoi all increased their involvement in Laos. To prevent superpower confrontation, the states involved signed a new set of accords in 1962. The 1962 Accords re-affirmed the objective of maintaining Laos’ neutrality, removed Laos from the
protection of the SEATO Treaty, and charged that all states were to refrain from intervening in Laos’ affairs (Paul 1971, 571).

Although Soviet intervention (predominantly in the form of airlift), for the most part, ended after the conclusion of the Geneva Accords of 1962 (Blufarb 1972, 8-9), neither the United States nor North Vietnam complied with the newly established restrictions. Instead, Washington and Hanoi continued to operate covertly in Laos and engage overtly in a battle of rhetoric about the exploits of the other side’s activities (Paul 1971, 537).

The United States used two justifications for its involvement in Laos. First, Washington charged that its actions were in response to requests from the RLG (Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Part 2, Kingdom of Laos 1969, 377, 398, 406) and were supported by article 6 of the 1962 Accords: “The introduction into Laos of armaments, munitions and war materiel generally, except such quantities of conventional armaments as the Royal Government of Laos may consider necessary.” The lack of response from the international community suggests that the United States was justified to intervene in Laos’ affairs because it was supporting a recognized belligerent.

Second, the United States continually related the conflict in terms of North Vietnamese aggression and Hanoi’s failure to honor the 1962 Geneva Accords. McGeorge Bundy relates this particular part of US strategy as a means of showing the “seriousness of US will and the limited character of US objectives” (Barrett 1997, 42). In terms of taking action at the UN, Bundy suggests that the US ought to expose Communist aggression in Southeast Asia with the intent to “give worldwide publicity to the basic
variant problem” and to “make it perfectly plain if we move to further action that we had done our best at the UN” (Barrett 1997, 43). President Kennedy (Washington, 7 Sep 1962) and President Nixon (Guam, 3 Nov 1969) also used this particular argument when informing the American people about US activities in Laos.

Undoubtedly, there are some additional factors that may have influenced the international community’s support/toleration of US activities. First, the US involvement in Laos was likely overwhelmed by its involvement in Vietnam. Accordingly, the relatively small conflict occurring in Laos would not have been the most pressing matter for most of the states opposed to US involvement in Southeast Asia. Second, America’s position on the UN Security Council and its ability to veto any proposal for sanctioning the United States for its actions also helped reduce costs. Third, the United States was such a large part of the world economy, it is conceivable that states objecting to US violations of the 1962 Geneva Accords chose simply to ignore the situation and the Hmong proxy gave them a convenient means of doing so.

The use of international norms to defend US involvement did not prevent outside states from intervening and escalating the conflict, but it did arguably reduce the degree of escalation. China refused to fight directly and only sent its forces to protect the personnel sent to build roads. North Vietnam, however, was undaunted by the US justification for its involvement; Hanoi’s willingness to increase the number of its forces in Laos denied the United States the ability to maintain relative superiority. The United States was unable to provide the type and amount of assistance necessary to maintain relative superiority in the battlespace. Undoubtedly, the increasing amount of US air
power provided a significant advantage to Hmong forces. Characteristic of air power when used in isolation, the duration of relative superiority was fleeting at best.

Finally, the RLG’s formal request for assistance from the United States arguably reduced some of the US costs to gain support for its efforts in Laos. The corruption of the RLG and the elites’ tendency to abscond with US funds intended to build public support, however, negated the potentially beneficial effect.

**Proposition 4 Domestic Willingness**

*If a domestic public is predicted to reject an interventionist policy, a proxy can lessen that resistance because it shares the burden, especially when it minimizes the intervening state’s commitment and casualties.*

**Table 3.5: Effect of Domestic Willingness on US Costs and Benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Domestic Willingness on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proposed</strong></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑↓↓↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>US-Hmong (Laos)</strong></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↓------↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The secrecy of the war in Laos precluded the US government’s need to publicly justify its involvement. Although the US government did not overtly justify its involvement based on the Hmong’s acceptance of the majority of the burden in terms of manpower and suffering, supporting Hmong forces enabled Washington to forestall public scrutiny due to the relatively low number of American casualties incurred during the conflict.
Once it was revealed that the United States had intervened in Laos, those involved in making and executing policy often justified US involvement based on its small costs in terms of American casualties and resources (William Sullivan testimony, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *U.S. Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Part 2, Kingdom of Laos* 1969; U. Alexis Johnson testimony, Senate Armed Services Committee, *Hearings on Fiscal Year 1972 Authorizations*, 22 Jul 1971). The continuation of US involvement for several years after Washington publicly acknowledged its involvement in 1969 suggests that supporting a proxy that shoulders the majority of the burden, especially in terms of casualties, can help garner and sustain public support for an otherwise unpopular, interventionist policy. Further, this case suggests that the lack of affiliation between the American people and the Hmong fighting in Laos and Washington’s justification for its involvement lowered US commitment costs.

**Proposition 5 Proxy Dependence**

*A high level of proxy dependence reduces agency costs, but increases the costs of supporting a proxy.*

*Table 3.6: Effect of Proxy Dependence on US Costs and Benefits*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Proxy Dependence on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adding Critical Skills</td>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Extending Influence</td>
<td>Effect on Resource Costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

89
In this case, the high level of dependence of Hmong forces on the United States had the expected effect on resource, commitment, and control costs. The US decision to move Hmong families and provide support to allow the men to join the war increased resource costs due to the significant need for food and other supplies. The need stemmed from the US strategy of establishing a holding action in northern Laos to forestall the Pathet Lao from forcefully taking control of the capital. As a result, the war hinged on territorial control; the Pathet Lao made gains in the dry season and the Hmong reversed those gains in the wet season. This made it almost impossible for Hmong villagers to put in crops and harvest them.

Although the United States avoided sending in its own ground forces, its commitment costs increased because the Hmong continually faced a scenario of military inferiority in the battlespace. Pathet Lao augmented with NVA regulars far exceeded the capabilities of the Hmong militias. To counter this lack of relative superiority in the battlespace, the United States augmented Hmong forces with air power; a move that significantly increased US costs in terms of its commitment and resources. Initially, Washington used close-air support, aerial re-supply, air mobility, and airborne strike assets to support the Hmong irregulars in conducting hit-and-run attacks against Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces (*FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XXIV: 282, 911). As the war transformed into a conventional battle to control the Plain of Jars and the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the United States made increasing amounts of air power available. Although this allowed Hmong forces to make gains during the rainy seasons, Hanoi often responded by sending more and better-equipped forces to recapture the territory it had lost. This back and forth only served to increase Hmong dependence on the United States.
The high level of Hmong dependence had disastrous consequences. Rather than abandoning the gains that had been made previously, the Hmong would stand their ground too long and needlessly suffer enormous casualties in anticipation of US air support. It is fathomable that the Hmong simply believed they were invincible with US air support; an understandable conclusion when considering how a primitive people exposed to the awesome display of hundreds of US fighter and bomber aircraft decimating Pathet Lao and NVA forces bogged down during the rainy season. Without understanding the limits of air power, the Hmong likely believed they could hold their ground against a conventionally and numerically superior enemy and often got caught over-extended.

The Hmong’s utterly complete dependence on the United States for its existence and its ability to wage war against the NVA and Pathet Lao, however, put them in a position of near-total commitment to US objectives in Laos. This high level of dependence supports the idea that an increase in proxy dependence lowers agency related costs, but it also demonstrates that the increased costs in terms of resources and commitment can quickly overwhelm the savings.

Finally, the dependence of the Hmong did a negligible effect on costs to gain public support for the proxy in Laos. Hmong dependence also had no effect on domestic commitment costs due to the secrecy of US involvement and, arguably, the lack of affiliation between the American public and the Hmong people.

Proposition 6 Proxy Autonomy

Higher levels of autonomy can decrease the cost of supporting a proxy, but increase the costs of monitoring the proxy’s activities and may lead to an increase in agency, international, and domestic costs depending on the proxy’s behavior.
Table 3.7: Effect of Proxy Autonomy on US Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Proxy Autonomy on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The United States did not reduce the autonomy of Hmong forces to reduce agency costs. The secrecy of US involvement did not benefit from the low degree of autonomy. The relationship between the United States and Hmong forces did not reflect a situation where monitoring costs increased to curb agency costs or stem international and domestic costs. The situation in Laos more accurately reflects a situation where the limited choices of a proxy forced the United States to throw its support behind a group that was militarily inferior to the opposition (due to the involvement of the NVA) and vulnerable due to the proxy’s isolation from the rest of the population and its dependence on territory and agriculture. The Hmong could not count on the non-communist population opposed to the Pathet Lao for support; lowland Laos (Lao Lum) did not favorably view the Hmong (Lao Sung) and had little concern for their well-being.

Counter to the proposition, the increase in US costs associated with the low degree of Hmong autonomy stemmed from the need to provide increasing amounts of support and how that conflicted with the US desire to keep its involvement in Laos secret,
or at least plausibly deniable. The transition from a guerrilla style strategy to a conventional strategy further complicated this problem. When the emphasis of Hmong operations was intended to harass and disrupt Pathet Lao and NVA efforts to control northern Laos, Washington managed to keep the degree of its involvement relatively quiet providing limited air support under the auspices of “armed reconnaissance.” When the focus of operations shifted to capturing and holding the Plain of Jars, the United States could not match North Vietnam’s response. As Hmong forces became progressively more overwhelmed, the air power necessary to balance the increase in NVA forces made it difficult to keep a lid on US operations.

The low level of Hmong autonomy on and off the battlefield did prevent an increase in monitoring costs. Washington maintained tight control of operations in northern Laos and ensured that the resources apportioned to the Hmong served US interests (Blaufarb 1972, 37). The Hmong lacked the technical capability necessary to allow the United States to provide them with a high degree of autonomy and still compete adequately with opposing forces. For example, the Hmong could not operate highly complicated and expensive weapons systems that may have leveled the playing field. The resources necessary to make up for Hmong shortfalls in capability would have been too costly and too visible to allow the United States to maintain its covert involvement.

The extreme dependence of the Hmong and the limited nature of US involvement created a situation where the Hmong did not have the resources to make it necessary for the United States to increase its monitoring of Hmong operations. As US involvement increased to bolster Hmong forces against the increasing capabilities of Pathet Lao and NVA forces, the Hmong’s inability to act autonomously put the United States in a
position where it had to reveal its involvement. In this sense, the lack of Hmong autonomy created a condition where the United States had to increase its support to a level where it could no longer expect to keep its involvement secret. This level of support exposed the United States to the potential of increasing international and domestic costs based on the revelation that it had been secretly supporting Hmong forces in violation of the 1962 Geneva Accords. The United States, however, arguably avoided those costs for the same reasons it avoided international costs as discussed in Proposition 3. The United States also incurred negligible domestic costs related to Hmong autonomy—the limited information about the conflict and the apparent willingness of the US public to accept the limited amount of US involvement prevented effect.

**Proposition 7 Incentive Structure**

Behavior-based incentives work best when fighting a superior enemy, when the intervening state’s and the proxy’s goals conflict, when it is necessary to give the proxy a high degree of autonomy, or when the intervening state has a great deal of knowledge and familiarity with the proxy. Outcome-based incentives work under the opposite conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Incentive Structure on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.8: Effect of Incentive Structure on US Costs and Benefits**
The fact that Washington offered an inferior force behavior-based rather than outcome-based incentives supports this proposition. The other three sub-propositions, however, do not appear to apply as stated in this case. The United States and the Hmong shared a very similar goal of keeping the Pathet Lao and the NVA from forcefully taking control of northern Laos. The technical nature of the support the United States provided to the Hmong did not allow for a high degree of autonomy. In this case, however, low autonomy still seemed to work with behavior-based incentives because the United States was not going to provide any of its ground forces—the stakes were very high for the Hmong and this seemed to counter some of the problems normally associated with principal agent relationships such as shirking or using resources in a way they were not intended (see Chapter 2).

Although Agency theory suggests that the United States should have offered the Hmong outcome-based incentives to reduce agency costs, the use of behavior-based incentives still managed to lower US agency costs. The United States made no promise to deliver a particular outcome in exchange for its support (Blaufarb 1972, 96; Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *U.S. Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Part 2, Kingdom of Laos* 1969, 521). Services were provided to families in the form of food, health care, and education to encourage more Hmong men to join the fight. These

---

42 Although some scholars (Fall 1967, 189; Barney 1967, 275) contend that the United States offered the Hmong an independent Hmong state in return for their assistance in fighting the Pathet Lao and the Vietnamese, Douglas Blaufarb (1972, 79), in a declassified study of US participation in Laos, notes that no such deal took place. The agreement was that the Hmong fight for a unified Laos and would not seek independence. Blaufarb substantiates this claim stating that “the language of instruction in the elementary schools which sprang up under the protection of Vang Pao was Lao; the Lao flag flew at his installations; the King’s and Souvana’s pictures were very much in evidence; his radio called itself the Voice of the Union of Lao Races.” Vang Pao accepted the CIA’s mandate that he not seek independence, but he did not accept the notion that the Hmong would be subjected to the domination of the RLG in Vientiane. Like so many other facets of the situation in Laos, this duality only undermined the possibility of a unified, coalition government capable of exerting its authority throughout Laos.
services enabled the Hmong to resist NVA and Pathet Lao forces and provided some hope to the Hmong for a better standard of living (Blaufarb 1972, 96). In addition, the use of behavior-based incentives allowed the United States to avoid the extra costs that would have been required to guarantee an outcome that would have inspired the Hmong to fight for US interests. In this case, it appears that the convergence of US and Hmong objectives—the aim of keeping NVA and Pathet Lao forces at bay, was enough for the Hmong.

The US use of incentives had a negligible effect on American domestic support. The actions of the Hmong that helped avoid such domestic costs were driven more from their dependence on US assistance than on the incentives being offered.

**Proposition 8 Secrecy**

Keeping a proxy war secret potentially lowers domestic and international costs, especially when the action would be considered unpopular domestically and clearly violates the international norm of sovereignty. Secrecy, however, severely constrains an intervening state’s ability to support its proxy and jeopardizes the proxy’s ability to gain relative superiority in the battlespace. Secrecy also can inflict higher costs due to blowback.

**Table 3.9: Effect of Secrecy on US Costs and Benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Secret on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>↑ ↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td>↑ ↑</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates the proposed effect when the proxy war becomes public
This case upholds the proposition about how a policy of secrecy affects the accumulation of costs and benefits. On the one hand, the US decision to use covert operations to avoid overtly breaking the Geneva Accords did lower international and domestic costs. The Soviets essentially left the conflict after 1962 and the Chinese limited their support to the development of roads in northern Laos. Further, the United States did not suffer international sanctions or decreases in trade and foreign investments.

The United States also suffered few domestic costs. Although policy makers in Washington never overtly admitted their concern that the United States public would not support an interventionist policy in Laos, all three presidential administrations took steps to obscure US involvement. Regardless of how much members of Congress actually knew about the war in Laos, the secrecy of US operations allowed four different Presidents to maintain greater latitude and flexibility in their policy because members of Congress could plausibly deny knowledge of US involvement.

When the United States officially acknowledged its involvement in Laos in 1969, Congress did not limit operations in Laos, though they did formally ban the introduction of American forces. The author of the legislation, Senator Frank Church, stated “We are not undertaking to make any changes in the status quo. The limiting language is precise. And it does not undertake to repeal the past or roll back the present. It looks to the future” (115 Congressional Record 39169, 1969).

On the other hand, the US policy also constrained its support and denied the Hmong the ability to gain relative superiority in the battlespace. Hmong successes may

---

43 Nixon, however, does allude to this concern when he tells Alexander Haig (Conversation number 571-8, 13 Nov 1971) that the American public is growing weary of US involvement in Southeast Asia. "We've gone to the well too many times now with regard to Vietnam. November 3, Cambodia, Laos. Laos is the last. I can't go and make another Nov. 3rd speech. The American people won't respond to that."
have suggested that they were capable of the task, but the United States miscalculated on Hanoi’s response. Hanoi, apparently less concerned about international opinion, increased its support to the Pathet Lao to ensure they could defeat the Hmong and maintain the security of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Washington, constrained by the desire to uphold the Geneva Accords, could not sufficiently respond. The United States could not send ground troops or provide equipment to make up for the Hmong’s inability to compete with Pathet Lao and NVA forces; Washington had to rely almost exclusively on air power. Although the RLG’s request for US assistance in 1962 gave America greater flexibility with regards to the amount of type of air power, Washington still had to ensure the majority of its operations remained secret to avoid giving North Vietnam a justifiable reason for intervening directly in Laos (Dommen 1971).

**Missing Costs and Benefits**

In addition to their effects on US costs and benefits, the conditions above also mitigated or negated some of the costs and benefits associated with proxy war. The relative inferiority of the Hmong and their dependence on US support prevented Washington from decreasing its commitment. The increasing need for US support eventually forced America to acknowledge its presence in Laos. That dependence, however, ensured that the United States did not find it costly to control the Hmong. The extreme dependence of the Hmong and Washington’s commitment to limit its involvement on the ground made it easier for the US embassy in Vientiane to control Hmong operations and avoid supporting actions that were not in accordance with US interests.
The high priority Washington placed on keeping its involvement secret, the restricted access of the press in the battlespace, and the relatively little focus on events within Laos avoided issues related to international support and toleration; the United States did not use its proxy to justify its involvement and the secrecy of the operation avoided international condemnation. Secrecy, restricted access, and limited emphasis on Laos also prevented actors in the international sphere from pressuring the United States to expand its involvement.

Secretly supporting the Hmong did not, however, avoid unwanted escalation in Laos. Hanoi, however, steadily increased its support to the Pathet Lao as US efforts strengthened Hmong forces. Although the United States diverted significant air power resources from the war in Vietnam, Hmong forces suffered massive attrition when fighting against North Vietnamese regulars. Each time the Hmong made gains on the Plain of Jars, North Vietnam responded sending more of its regular forces into Laos to assist the Pathet Lao.

Supporting the Hmong did not engender support for the RLG. The people living in northern Laos did not witness RLA forces fighting to preserve their lives and property. US support for the Hmong and the RLA’s unwillingness to fight only served to further isolate the RLG from the people living in the rural areas of northern Laos. As a result, the RLG was unable to inspire the people to passively join in the fight and make it difficult for Pathet Lao and NVA forces to operate there. US support for the Hmong also failed to inspire the RLG to increase its support of US efforts inside Laos, but it did not inhibit the RLG’s tacit approval. The RLG was suspicious and dubious about the US decision to support the Hmong—a group that had traditionally been a problem in the
domestic sphere—but it was willing to allow the Hmong to fight on its behalf (Blaufarb 1972; Castle 1993).

Finally, keeping its involvement limited secret allowed Washington to avoid having to garner public support or from getting entangled in a conflict from which it could not easily and cheaply disengage. Paul (1971, 544) notes that

As far as a commitment through a general American identification with the Laotian cause, by contrast with Vietnam, the way we have "packaged" our position in Laos has been a classic case of low profile. Until recently the operation was an official secret. This secrecy was regrettable from an American constitutional point of view, and after a time should have ceased, but from the point of view of commitments it avoided the Vietnam type of entanglement. If we had ever been faced with the unfortunate choice between a Laotian capitulation and the dispatch of large numbers of American combat troops, we could have chosen the former and walked away from the situation.

CONCLUSION

Considering the conditions present in Laos and their effect on the accumulation of America’s costs and benefits, Douglas Blaufarb (1972, 83-84) presents an interesting conclusion:

Given these difficulties, the US backed resistance effort from 1962-1970 seems to have been at least a qualified success. As of end 1970, it had achieved its overriding aim of preserving the RLG, and leaving the government in control of most of the populated Mekong lowlands…It implies that the North Vietnamese have been forced to settle for a good deal less in Laos than they would have obtained without the US involvement there, and have paid a considerable price for rather little in the way of progress toward their ultimate objective. A second achievement is that, with many compromises and at considerable cost, the fabric of the Geneva Accords has been precariously preserved.

Regardless of the moral implications of encouraging the Hmong to move their families into the battlespace so that more Hmong men could participate in the war, the end result was that they fought harder. It also caused the Hmong to sustain higher
casualties rates. Guerrilla-style operations require mobility, but families living in the battlespace created anchor points that limited mobility and led the Hmong to fight more pitched battles than they should have.

The focus on the Plain of Jars had a similar effect. The conventional mentality of taking and holding a piece of territory was not conducive to the type of fighting the Hmong could do best, given their limited numbers and the limited support on the ground from the United States. The evidence suggests that the Hmong, lacking familiarity with modern technology and its limitations, were over-confident about the capabilities of the United States. It is possible to think how an immense and over-whelming display of air power could create the illusion that American forces could do anything. It appears that the Hmong may have often over-committed themselves in the expectation that the United States could prevent them from being overrun.

The incompatibility of the Hmong’s political isolation and the need to conduct counterinsurgency operations added another complication. The US decision to use the Hmong as its proxy made it nearly impossible to inspire popular support for the RLG. The conspicuous absence of the RLG in northern Laos prevented Vientiane from providing the protection and services necessary to gain the support of the population. Further, the Hmong only enhanced their autonomy from the RLG due to US support. The RLG never felt compelled to fight for its survival and once the Hmong forces had been exhausted, the United States no longer had an ability to counter communist advances.

This case adds a different dimension to the idea of how autonomy relates to costs and benefits. Unlike the literature on principal-agent relationships (see Chapter 3), a low
level of autonomy did not correspond to an increase in US monitoring costs. The alignment of US and Hmong objectives—to keep the Pathet Lao from gaining control of northern Laos—reduced concerns that the Hmong would expand their sights beyond what the United States wanted to support.

The combination of high proxy dependence and low autonomy did not match well with the US desire to keep its involvement hidden. High dependence ensured that the Hmong did not use US resources in a way that proved counter-productive. Low autonomy, however, required the United States to increase the level of its involvement to the point where it was no longer possible to keep it secret.

The Hmong proxy did provide the US with the benefit of giving those that might be inclined to raise the costs of US involvement the ability to look the other way. Internationally, the Soviets were able to avoid getting involved after leaving Laos in 1962. Prominent Senators (Symington and Fulbright being the most obvious) were able to avoid having to acknowledge that they knew about US operations. Interestingly, even when US involvement became public there was little change to US policy in Laos. It is difficult to explain exactly why this occurred, other than that key members of Congress supported the policy. If that is the case, this point suggests that plausible deniability may make it possible for policies that are considered pragmatic to gain the necessary domestic support, despite the fact that they violate international law.

When it comes to domestic willingness, this case suggests that a proxy matters more in the sense that it will bear the burden of the majority of casualties. Most of the discussions focused on concerns about American casualties rather than the amount of material resources the United States had been providing to the Hmong. This point is
potentially lessened if supporting a proxy actually causes the intervening state’s people to suffer economically. The fact that the United States had the world’s largest economy somewhat obscures this point.

The most important conclusion in this case is how the Hmong’s dependence on the United States emerged as the predominant condition influencing US costs and benefits. In this sense, Washington over-cultivated Hmong dependence and created a situation that would inevitably increase US resources and commitment. Although Blaufarb’s quote is arguably correct, the strategy could never have served as anything more than a delaying action—leaving the United States with limited options had things gone better in South Vietnam.

As a final point, Washington’s ability to keep its involvement in Laos secret may not so easily transfer into today’s environment. In the 1950s and 1960s it was possible to keep operations secret due to the US ability to restrict access to the theater and the remoteness of northern Laos. In addition, the lack of knowledge of Laos and its people also logically contributed to the ease of keeping operations secret. Advances in communication have likely changed the ability for any government to keep its support for a proxy in another country secret for a significant length of time.44

---

44 This point was made to the author during an interview with officers working for US Special Operations Command, Washington DC, 01 Apr 09.
CHAPTER 4
SOUTH AFRICA AND UNITA IN ANGOLA

When you have read the whole story right up to the end of the campaign, you might ask: What about Savimbi and UNITA? What did they do? The answer is: a lot. One hell of a lot.

General Johannes “Jannie” Geldenhuys
Chief, South African Defense Force

South Africa’s use of UNITA as a proxy provides a case where a politically isolated state got involved in the tense civil war in Angola to protect itself from communist influence and stop the SWAPO (Southwest Africa People’s Organization) insurgency from gaining ground in Namibia (Southwest Africa). This case is especially interesting for at least four reasons. First, it deals with somewhat divergent objectives between the intervening state and the proxy. Second, it includes the dynamics of more than one intervening state supporting a proxy. Third, the conflict in Angola had elements of both an ethnic and an ideological struggle. Fourth, South Africa’s role as a regional hegemon and pariah in the international system is highly unique.

South Africa’s support of UNITA fits the definition listed in Chapter 1—an intervening state providing support to a politically motivated, local actor engaging in an armed conflict to influence a target state’s affairs—in that South Africa provided logistics, uniforms, weapons, weapons training, and South African Defense Force (SADF) personnel serving as operational and tactical advisors. On occasion, SADF provided artillery and air support for SADF and UNITA elements engaged with FAPLA (Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola) and Cuban regulars. UNITA’s forces far outnumbered those of the SADF and did the majority of the fighting. South Africa gave UNITA a very high degree of autonomy, despite its significant support for the movement. The combination of UNITA’s dependence and its closely aligned objectives enabled South Africa to maintain a relatively hands off approach during the war in Angola
South Africa’s support of UNITA during the Angolan Civil War poses two challenges to an accurate assessment of the costs and benefits of using a proxy. First, the aims of Pretoria’s policy in Angola differ significantly from conventional wisdom. Some (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa 1998; Smith 1986; Grest 1989) argue that South Africa’s involvement in Angola was designed to hold on to Namibia indefinitely and to uphold apartheid. Pretoria sought neither to uphold apartheid nor to control Namibia indefinitely, but rather to find a means to transition to an inclusive government at home without having the country, and the region, devolve into chaotic, bitter war (“Pik” Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09). Ultimately, Pretoria sought an outcome that would prevent the African National Congress (ANC) from taking over South Africa by force, remove Cuban soldiers from Angola, minimize Soviet influence in the region, allow Namibia to transition peacefully into the control of SWAPO, and prevent the MPLA government in Luanda from destroying UNITA. Therefore, when some scholars or analysts claim that South Africa’s loss of Namibia and its transition away from apartheid as costs, a better understanding reveals that the way in which these two outcomes occurred were in fact benefits.

Second, it is difficult to separate the effects of South Africa’s broader regional and domestic policies from those specifically related to Angola. The issue of apartheid

45 General Johannes “Jannie” Geldenhuys served as Chief of the Army from 1980-1985 and Chief of the South African Defense Force from 1985 to 1990. Brigadier Willem “Kaas” van der Waals (ret.) was the SADF officer that made initial contact with UNITA in 1975 and later served as the senior SADF liaison to UNITA in 1978-1979.

46 Frederick “Pik” Botha was South Africa’s ambassador to the United States and the United Nations from 1975-1977 and held the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1977-1994.
often overshadowed South Africa’s involvement in Angola and Pretoria’s involvement in Mozambique and its affiliation with RENAMO provided a strong source of international scrutiny. In explaining the effects of different conditions on the costs and benefits of South Africa’s proxy war in Angola, I present evidence of how conditions affected the costs and benefits of South Africa’s use of UNITA and, where identifiable, attribute effects to circumstances unrelated to the Angolan Civil War.

**BACKGROUND**

In the mid to late 1970s, South Africa’s economy was threaded into both US and European economies, with Europe’s stake being significantly higher (Franko 1979).\(^47\) Geo-strategically, South Africa was of considerable importance based on the naval choke point at the Cape of Good Hope. According to Richard Bissell (1979, 214-215), “the military perspective on the Cape sea-lanes has thus involved two elements. On the one hand, the growth of Western imports of energy has made the Cape route far more important: over 2,300 ships transit the Cape each month, including 600 tankers. In terms of NATO planning, 57 percent of Western Europe’s oil needs and 20 percent of American oil needs pass by the Cape.”

In 1974, a coup occurred in Lisbon that changed the course of Portugal’s role in Angola. The new regime in Lisbon set the date for Angola’s independence for 11 November 1975 and helped create the Alvor Agreement, a move intended to unite the three competing liberation movements into a single unity government in Luanda. The three factions—MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA—were divided ethnically, geographically

\(^{47}\) US imports and exports to South Africa were roughly equivalent to both German and the UK, roughly $1 billion. Foreign investment, however, was significantly higher among European countries. The United Kingdom had nearly double the amount of foreign investment (30 percent) compared to 16 percent for the United States. Germany, France, Switzerland, and Netherlands account for the majority of the remaining foreign investment (Franko 1979, 188-193).
(Marcum 1969), and to a lesser extent, ideologically (Davidson 1972). The MPLA combined the Mbundu ethnic group living in central Angola and the Portuguese-African mestizo population living in the urban areas in and around Luanda. The MPLA faction accounted for approximately 26 percent of the population and had ideological tendencies toward socialism; a fact that some argue has often been overblown (Alao 1994, 3). The FNLA represented roughly 17 percent of Angola’s population and belonged mostly to the Bakongo ethnic group living in the border region between Zaire and Angola. UNITA, the newest of the three, was predominantly Ovimbundu, the largest ethnic group in Angola, and made up approximately 38 percent of the population. The Ovimbundu were relatively spread out living in southern Angola, the more remote regions of eastern Angola, and the state’s central highlands (van der Waals 1990).

Jonas Savimbi, the leader and founder of UNITA, was somewhat of an opportunist. In 1964 he joined up with Holden Roberto’s FNLA. He left the movement due Roberto’s ethnic favoritism (Bridgland 1987, 62) and then courted the MPLA. Failing to gain his desired level of influence, Savimbi formed UNITA in 1966. Shortly after UNITA’s inception, Savimbi and eleven other members went to China to receive military training and instruction in the Maoist philosophy of revolutionary war. Savimbi cultivated close relationships with both SWAPO and the African National Congress (ANC)48 and managed to gain the support of key ethnic groups, such as the Ovambu and Ovimbundu, in the rural areas of southern Angola. Savimbi’s opportunism may have even extended to involving UNITA in a secret alliance with Portugal against MPLA forces in the early 1970s (Minter 1988).

48 The ANC was the liberation movement in South Africa.
The Alvor Agreement lasted for only a short period before the three factions returned to the use of armed force. Making matters worse, the politics of the Cold War infused Angola with an abundance of arms and created a new region of superpower rivalry. Although FNLA was initially militarily superior to MPLA due to support from Zaire and the United States, the Soviet Union made a decisive move to support the MPLA with a rapid infusion of military hardware and leadership and facilitated the movement of Cuban troops into the theater. Moscow’s actions gave the MPLA a military edge and forced UNITA and FNLA into an alliance. UNITA, however, had very little military capability. This allowed MPLA to focus its efforts against FNLA and ultimately contributed to the elimination of FNLA as a serious competitor in Angola by the end of 1975.

Regionally, the communist thrust into southern Africa provided a significant threat to South Africa. The introduction of Cuban forces into Angola and MPLA’s significant backing from Moscow intensified South Africa’s concerns for four reasons (Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09). First, Angola provided the Soviet Union and Cuba an ability to expand their influence in the region and Pretoria worried that Moscow might later set its sights on South Africa. Second, the MPLA allowed SWAPO’s forces to stage attacks on Namibia from within Angola’s borders. Third, South Africa feared that it could lose electrical power from the Cunene River hydroelectric project in Angola that powered its uranium mines and other industries in Namibia. Fourth, Pretoria worried about its ability to maintain control of its own territory if the Cubans joined forces with the ANC (Geldenhuyts interview; Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09). Pretoria believed that a transition by force would create a dysfunctional, Marxist government that
would destroy the economic and industrial advances the apartheid government had made during the previous two decades (Botha interview; Hallett 1978, 363-365).

South Africa’s apartheid government had already been subjected to intense political isolation both inside and outside the African continent. In addition to the international scrutiny of maintaining apartheid and denying political rights to black South Africans, Pretoria also refused to release its control of Namibia, despite the fact that in 1966 the UN General Assembly declared that South Africa had no right to administer the territory and in 1971 the International Court of Justice found that South Africa’s presence in Namibia was illegal.

UNITA’s opposition to the MPLA and its significant rural support in southern Angola made it a convenient ally. UNITA initially sought the assistance of South Africa with help from President Kaunda of Zambia and President Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast (The Guardian, 16 February 1976). South Africa contributed training, arms, air, and artillery assets to bolster UNITA’s efforts. South Africa’s involvement in Angola also included the deployment of a limited number of regular forces into Angola to secure the Namibian border and protect the Cunene hydroelectric project inside Angola’s border.

Initially, Pretoria worried that its domestic policy would jeopardize UNITA’s legitimacy in both Angola and on the continent. Apartheid and the Namibian issue meant that South Africa had to proceed carefully in Angola; Western and African states were already somewhat reluctant to support Pretoria’s policies in southern Africa (Hallett 1978). Based on these conditions, South Africa elected to keep its involvement covert to spare Savimbi and UNITA from a loss of credibility (van der Waals interview with
The combination of South African and UNITA forces, however, proved so effective against FAPLA (Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola), the MPLA’s armed force, that Cuba rushed additional forces (transported on Soviet aircraft) to stop UNITA/South African advances. Through Cuban and Soviet efforts, the MPLA managed to hold on to Luanda and declared itself as the legitimate government of Angola on 11 November 1975. The Soviet Union, along with many of its satellites, quickly recognized the MPLA government while the United States and the majority of other Western states refused to do the same.

South Africa’s involvement in Angola helped legitimize Cuban and Soviet efforts to support the MPLA and damaged UNITA’s credibility (Somerville 1984, 76; Klinghoffer 1981, 108). For example, UK Prime Minister James Callaghan stated at the NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting in Brussels that he “was plainly anxious to avoid any suggestion that any NATO member become involved in support for UNITA/FNLA” and that “neither Britain nor NATO can afford to be seen by Africans to be making common cause with Mr. Vorster” (The Guardian, 13 January 1976). Further, China terminated its eight-year support of UNITA, embarrassed by South African involvement (Hallett 1978, 379).

The feeling in Africa was also divided. On 14 January 1976 an Organization of African Unity (OAU) conference ended in a stalemate, with 22 of the 46 member states voting to recognize the MPLA as the government of Angola, 22 against and two (Ethiopia and Uganda) abstaining. Less than a month later, Nigeria changed its position, stating that “current events in Angola must be seen in its right perspective not just fighting between factions in Angola but fighting between racialist South Africa and its
backers and the MPLA” (*The Guardian*, 19 December 1975). As a result of Nigeria’s reversal, the OAU voted 23-21 to recognize the MPLA as the government of Angola.

Obviously, the Cold War also played a significant role in the Angolan Civil War. A region of relatively low strategic importance to either Moscow or Washington escalated into another East-West confrontation. The United States, still suffering from its failure in Vietnam, faced strong domestic constraints that prevented expanded US involvement. Most telling was when Congress passed the Clark Amendment and prevented the Ford administration from providing covert assistance to either the FNLA or UNITA.

Between 1976 and 1981, Pretoria engaged in rather limited operations designed to enable and sustain UNITA’s ability to hold southern Angola. Plagued internationally by its apartheid regime and its refusal to vacate Namibia, South Africa failed to put much pressure on the MPLA government and only managed to minimize SWAPO advances in Namibia.

After 1981, the election of conservative governments in the United Kingdom and the United States enabled Pretoria to operate in Angola and Namibia with a freer hand (Barber and Barrett 1990, 276-277). When President Reagan came into office, Washington renewed its commitment to the strategy of containment and once again began supporting South Africa and UNITA. It was at this time that the idea of “linkage” was born and the United States and South Africa submitted that the issues in Namibia and Angola would have to be resolved simultaneously—South African forces would leave Namibia at the same time Cuban forces left Angola (Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09). Although the change in sentiment among prominent Western states caused
negotiations to become more structured and focused through the 1980s, the shift also contributed to a steady increase in the level of violence. As the Soviets and Cubans struggled to consolidate the MPLA’s hold on Angola, the United States and South Africa used violence to increase the pressure and force a settlement (Crocker interview with author, 2 Jan 09).

In 1987, multiple factors at international and domestic levels pushed the main players in Angola to move toward a settlement. The United States was pressuring South Africa to settle because of the upcoming election (Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09; Crocker interview with author, 2 Jan 09). The Soviet Union faced a rapidly declining economic situation at home. Cuba had convinced Moscow to allow it to take over operations in Angola (Crocker interview, 2 Jan 09). South Africa had been forced to deploy SADF units within its own borders to control domestic unrest. Most importantly, however, South Africa and Cuba finally reached an agreement about how to get out of Angola; Pretoria could say that it had managed to get the Cubans out of Angola and Havana could say that it had freed Namibia (Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09).

In 1988, a series of agreements were signed that created the conditions necessary for an election in Angola: South Africa agreed to comply with UNSCR 435 and vacate Namibia, Cuba agreed to a staged withdrawal of its forces from Angola, the MPLA agreed not to support SWAPO, and the MPLA agreed to open elections in Angola. In 1990, SWAPO won the election in Namibia and South Africa relinquished its hold on the territory. In 1992, Angola’s open election granted the MPLA’s candidate, Eduardo Jose dos Santos, the presidency and a majority in the parliament. In 1994, South Africa’s last
white president, Frederik W. de Klerk, conceded defeat in an open election to Nelson Mandela and the ANC.

**POLICY AND STRATEGY**

South Africa had to find a way to keep the Cubans from getting across the border into Namibia and wipe out SWAPO’s based in Angola. South Africa did not want to enable UNITA to defeat the MPLA and gain sole control of Angola. Rather, Pretoria wanted to prevent Luanda and the Soviets from gaining control of Angola by force. In addition, South Africa wanted to push SWAPO out of the border region and curtail its operations in Namibia; the fact that UNITA was pro-SWAPO and pro-ANC did not deter Pretoria (Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09). South Africa wanted to work through UNITA because it offered a level of legitimacy and provided a force that would prevent South Africa from having to send a significant amount of its force to the region.

Ultimately, Pretoria’s policy aimed to allow South Africa to bargain from a position of strength on Namibia and to do it in a way that prevented a rapid escalation of violence and dissent along and within South Africa’s own borders.

For Pretoria, the conditions that would protect South Africa’s security—both domestically and regionally—required a peaceful transition to an independent state in Namibia and the removal of Cuban forces in Angola (Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09). Although FAPLA was somewhat of a concern, UNITA was more than capable of holding those forces well north of the Namibian border. The Cuban forces with Soviet support, however, outmatched UNITA. UNITA provided the buffer necessary to allow a rather modestly deployed SADF to keep SWAPO forces from massing on the Angolan
border and securing a military victory in Namibia (Geldenhuys interview with author, 18 Aug 09; Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09).

South Africa’s strategy mainly entailed supporting UNITA to hold back FAPLA and harass Cuban forces enough to weaken them and allowing SADF units their adversary’s advances despite their overwhelmingly superior numbers. UNITA’s control of the southern region of Angola forced FAPLA and Cuban forces to maintain long, vulnerable supply lines. UNITA and SADF cooperated to defend key areas and made the costs of gaining ground in southern Angola so costly that Cuban and FAPLA forces were often forced to pull back to the north.

As the war progressed into the late 1970s and early 1980s, SADF commanders realized that the real value of UNITA was not in its conventional capability, but in its ability to move and operate in southern Angola (Geldenhuys interview with author, 18 Aug 09). Over time, UNITA’s SADF advisors began emphasizing the importance of focusing operational efforts against Cuban forces and bypassing FAPLA units when operationally or tactically feasible. The intent of focusing on the Cubans was to raise Havana’s costs and weaken Cuba’s resolve (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09).

In many cases, the SADF was only used to prevent UNITA forces from suffering significant losses based on operational or tactical mistakes (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09). So long as UNITA maintained a fielded force capable of keeping FAPLA and Cuban forces from gaining control of southern Angola, South Africa’s strategic goals would be fulfilled (Geldenhuys interview with author, 18 Aug 09; Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09).
COSTS AND BENEFITS

In the previous section, I outlined the context of Pretoria’s involvement. Table 4.1 provides a quick overview of the different costs and benefits as described in Chapter 2. In this section, I describe briefly the specific elements that produced each of the different costs and benefits South Africa encountered supporting UNITA in Angola.

Table 4.1 Costs and Benefits to South Africa in Supporting UNITA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added Critical Skills</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Influence</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserved Resources</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Commitment</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Commitment</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Commitment</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Int’l Support/Toleration</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Target State Support</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Domestic Support</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Domestic Support</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Commitment</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Added Critical Skills

UNITA originated in the rural areas of southern Angola and managed to gain the support of a majority of the population living in that area. Because of this, UNITA forces were able to move easily without being detected by the enemy. In addition, UNITA was able to collect useful intelligence on FAPLA or Cuban forces operating in the region and harass them, making it difficult to move or operate without losing supplies, equipment, or personnel (Geldenhuys 2009; Heitman 1990). It was for this reason that SADF personnel assigned to train UNITA were told to focus on providing weapons training; the tactics of operating in the bush were largely left to UNITA because senior SADF officers believed UNITA was better at conducting guerilla operations than the SADF (Geldenhuys interview with author, 18 Aug 09).

Extended Influence
Supporting UNITA allowed Pretoria to field a much larger and stronger opposition in Angola than would have been possible if just using SADF units. Although estimates on the number of UNITA soldiers vary, Savimbi claimed in 1980 to have 20,000 men under arms (Bridgland 1987, 311). This number is probably overstated, but it is undeniable that South Africa’s support of UNITA put considerable pressure on the MPLA government in Luanda and significantly curtailed SWAPO incursions into Namibia.

**Conserved Resources**

South Africa provided UNITA with considerable resources not only to prosecute the war against FAPLA and Cuban regulars, but also to establish basic services such as health care and education. Although this was a significant investment, SADF operations without UNITA would have been far more demanding in terms of both money and personnel. The force protection measures that would have been necessary to continue operations without UNITA would have been considerable, even without considering the corresponding effects it would have caused in terms of escalation with the Cubans and the Soviets.

The accomplishments of South Africa during the period of the Angolan Civil War also reveal the significance of using UNITA to conserve resources. Between 1975 and 1990, South Africa was able to sustain its involvement in Angola, develop a nuclear program, and foster a robust arms industry. More surprisingly, the percentage of South Africa’s GDP allotted to the armed forces remained at or below five percent—an amazing feat considering the level of operations and Soviet competition in Angola (Batchelor 1998; Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09).
Increased Commitment (to the Proxy)

Although quite capable at operating in the bush, UNITA’s operations often lacked the vision and planning necessary at the operational level (the coordinating of tactical events over time to accomplish larger objectives) to conduct a more conventional-style campaign. Occasionally, due to the fault of the SADF advisors pushing them to engage in more conventional-style battles (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09) or the impatience of Savimbi (Heitman interview with author, 23 Aug 09), UNITA forces would get into a bind that required Pretoria to increase its commitment and send SADF units to their aid.

As I mentioned above, South Africa also made an investment to enlarge UNITA’s following among southern Angola’s rural population. Although the resources necessary to provide services to the people did not contribute directly to the war, Pretoria recognized that giving UNITA the ability to provide resources to these people solidified its control of the region (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09).

Increased International Support / Toleration

Working through UNITA, South Africa found a way that would bridge many of the barriers it had with Western states who opposed Soviet/communist expansion in Africa. Savimbi’s success in selling UNITA to the United States and many of its allies as an anti-Marxist movement afforded Pretoria the opportunity it needed to pursue its interests and intervene in Angolan affairs without the fear of significant international costs. Although direct incursions into Angola by SADF personnel often instigated international scrutiny among western European countries, the effects were often inconsequential. Most importantly, South Africa’s support of UNITA allowed the United
States to take a more active and protective political stance toward those operations (Crocker interview with author, 2 Sep 09). For example, in 1981 the United States vetoed a proposed UN Security Council Resolution calling for the immediate withdrawal of South African forces from Angola (Smith 1986, 64).

South Africa did not, however, suffer economically from its involvement in Angola, suggesting that its low level of involvement allowed countries such as the United Kingdom and France from having to take a stronger stance in opposition. In fact, imports from South Africa to France and the United Kingdom increased significantly between 1975 and 1981, and remained above 1975 levels until 1990 (IMF Direction of Trade).49

**Decreased International Support / Toleration**

South Africa’s support of UNITA had negative international effects as well. Within Africa, the OAU voted to recognize the MPLA government in Luanda when it became evident that Pretoria had been assisting UNITA operations in Angola. Outside Africa, Pretoria’s support to UNITA did not prevent Moscow and Havana from condemning South Africa’s involvement in Angola and increasing their support of the MPLA (Somerville 1984, 76).

International scrutiny of South Africa’s actions, however, went beyond the communist bloc. The UN Security Council passed five resolutions (387, 428, 447, 454, and 475) between 1976 and 1980 condemning South Africa for its direct involvement in Angola. In 1981, France and the United Kingdom proposed that the UN Security Council condemn South Africa for SADF incursions into Angola (though it was vetoed by the United States).

---

49 In the UK, there was a dip below 1975 levels in South African imports in 1985 and 1986, but the levels again exceeded 1975 levels between 1987 and 1990. In France, South African imports dropped slightly in 1976 and 1977, but the consistently exceeded 1975 levels through to 1990.
**Decreased Commitment (International)**

Throughout the conflict, South Africa maintained a relatively low degree of involvement in Angola. UNITA forces, in most cases, managed to defeat FAPLA forces and proved competent at harassing Cuban forces when they attempted to gain ground in southern Angola. South Africa remained confident that its forces deployed to the border region were quite capable of holding their own, despite being outnumbered in terms of both personnel and equipment. Even more importantly, SADF units continued to put pressure on Luanda, Moscow, and Havana. This was especially evident when Cuba’s lead negotiator in Cairo in 1988 became incensed after threatening to deploy 15,000 more troops to Angola in response to the recent escalation in violence and “Pik” Botha (South Africa’s Minister of Foreign Affairs) coolly responded that deploying an additional 1,000 SADF personnel would effectively negate such a move. It was that day Cuba and South Africa agreed to the terms put forth by Chester Crocker’s Contact Group (Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09).

**Increased Target State Support**

South Africa consolidated its support in southern Angola through its affiliation with UNITA and by providing resources to the people living in the region. Although the resources were given to UNITA rather than to the people directly, the connection still provided South Africa with the ability to operate more freely and effectively in southern Angola.

**Increased Domestic Support**

The white population of South Africa saw UNITA much the same as it saw SWAPO: a terrorist organization. The feeling in South Africa was that the West had
abandoned southern Africa and that South Africa had to fend for itself. The people were
to reluctant to support operations on the Namibian border that would result in large
numbers of white casualties, but they also recognized and supported a policy that
protected South Africa’s interests (Geldenhuys interview with author, 18 Aug 09).
Pretoria sold UNITA as an anti-Marxist movement that would do the majority of the
fighting in Angola and would prevent South Africa from having to send more of its own,
white soldiers to protect Namibia’s northern border.

_Hid / Obscured Involvement (at the Domestic Level)_

Initially, Pretoria was able to keep its involvement secret by assisting UNITA in
fighting FAPLA and Cuban forces in southern Angola. The involvement of the SADF,
however, only remained hidden from the public for a short time. The need for higher
levels of intervention to curb Cuban/FAPLA moves in southern Angola and to provide
UNITA with additional equipment and training soon overrode the desire to keep South
Africa’s involvement secret. The limited means with which SADF units carried out their
mission, however, helped keep the level of South Africa’s involvement somewhat
obscure until 1985, when Magnus Malan, the Minister of Defense, publicly
acknowledged that South Africa had been supporting UNITA.

**CONDITIONS AND THEIR EFFECT ON COSTS AND BENEFITS**

This section focuses on the effects of the conditions highlighted in Chapter 2 on
the accumulation of South Africa’s costs and benefits from supporting UNITA in Angola.
Under each proposition, I explain how the condition affected the applicable costs and
benefits. At the end, I also provide a short discussion about the conditions aside from
those in the eight propositions that explain the case’s missing costs and benefits.
Before proceeding, I want to point out that the conflict in Angola lasted over 15 years and that the conditions on the ground and in the international arena changed fluidly. One specific battle may have caused numerous civilian casualties or caused a particular state’s government to openly oppose the actions of South Africa and UNITA. My intent, however, is to present a more broad, strategic view—to capture a broader perspective of the conditions present and explain their effects over the course of the conflict. This is not to diminish the effects of any single event; where appropriate I will address those as well. It is, however, important to weigh the conditions over the 15-year period to gain a proper understanding of their effects on the costs and benefits of South Africa’s proxy war in Angola.

**Proposition 1 Civilian Proximity**

Civilian proximity increases international, domestic, and target state costs due to an increase in the probability of civilian casualties. It has the counter-effect of providing the proxy with the access necessary to influence and hide among the population.

**Table 4.2: Effect of Civilian Proximity on South Africa’s Costs and Benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Civilian Proximity on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA/UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In creating UNITA, Savimbi specifically set out to create a peasant-based, rural movement in southern Angola (Bridgland 1987, ch 5). The relationship between UNITA
forces and the people living in the region strongly influenced the beneficial effects of having civilians live in close proximity to the fighting in southern Angola.\textsuperscript{50} Both the Ovimbundu and Ovambo people were supportive of UNITA (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09). The lack of professionalism and training, at least by modern standards, did not give way to retaliatory attacks on civilians because UNITA forces were never threatened by the population. UNITA’s relationship with civilian population in the region and its ability to blend in to local villages provided excellent opportunities to collect good intelligence about FAPLA/Cuban forces and to harass enemy movements.

South Africa benefitted from the proximity of civilians in the battlespace because it enhanced UNITA operations. While it is true that civilians were occasionally caught in the crossfire or were killed due to tactical or operational mistakes, UNITA actively cultivated and sustained the population’s support. South Africa encouraged this behavior, teaching Maoist principles of revolutionary war to UNITA forces and providing resources to create services that would further garner civilian support (Geldenhuys interview with author, 18 Aug 09; van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09).\textsuperscript{51}

The conditions in the battlespace meant that South Africa had the luxury of supporting a proxy that required essentially no restraint. UNITA was fighting on its home turf and the rural population living in the battlespace supported them. Because UNITA was popular in the rural areas of southern Angola where the majority of the fighting took place (Heitman 1990, 11), Pretoria did not have to worry about UNITA

\textsuperscript{50} It is important to keep in mind the focus is on how conditions affected South Africa’s costs and benefits. Civilians living in within the battlespace reflected a benefit to South Africa and not necessarily to the civilians themselves.

\textsuperscript{51} Although Savimbi and eleven other members of UNITA went to China to receive training in Maoist principles of revolutionary war as well as weapons training (Bridgland 1987, 65-67), Brigadier van der Waal commented that he provided training in the late 1970s to UNITA commanders on the strategy of Mao’s revolutionary war (interview with author, 30 Aug 2009, Pretoria, South Africa). For an explanation of Maoist principles, reference Schram 1969.
subjecting the population to atrocities—a point that also spared South Africa domestic and international costs stemming from an affiliation with a proxy terrorizing innocent civilians. As an added benefit, the MPLA and Cuban forces were forced to fight in hostile territory; the necessary rearguard actions and UNITA’s ability to blend into the surrounding environment made UNITA an effective guerrilla force.

This case supports the idea that civilians living in the battlespace increase an intervening state’s benefits. UNITA forces moved easier in southern Angola, were able to get useful intelligence, and were able to garner support based on health and education services supplied through South African resources. This case also expands the effect of civilian proximity on potential costs related to the difficulties of protecting a population while conducting counter-insurgency operations. In southern Angola, UNITA’s ability to deny prolonged access to FAPLA forces and provide resources to the people living in the region made it difficult for the MPLA to provide the services necessary to gain their support and overcome the ethnic divide.

Proposition 2 Character of the Conflict

An ethnic conflict is less costly to influence than an ideological conflict because the lines between opposing sides are more divisive and outside support is less damaging to a proxy’s legitimacy.
Table 4.3: Effect of Conflict Character on South Africa’s Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Ethnic Conflict on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>↑ ↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA/UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td>↑ ↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If elections would have been held when Portugal left in 1975, UNITA would likely have fared better than either the MPLA or the FNLA due to its popularity among rural Angolans and its affiliation with the Ovimbundu ethnic group (Alao 1994, 3, 17; Gleisejes 2002, 352). Soviet and American influence on events surrounding the transition to independence from Portuguese rule, however, overlaid the façade of an ideological struggle. In reality, the conflict in Angola was largely a battle for territory and the underlying tension between competing factions was predominantly ethnic. Ideology had some part in the conflict, but it was something to be manipulated along ethnic lines. South Africa, France, the United States, Cuba, and the Soviet Union all put ideological overtones on the war in Angola (Hallett 1978), but this was mostly just posturing and justification. Savimbi was especially skilled at manipulating ideology to serve his own purposes (Crocker interview with author, 2 Sep 09), but admitted “there was no fundamental ideological conflict between the two movements” (Smith 1986, 64).
It would be incorrect, however, to describe the conflict in Angola as purely an ethnic war. Although the predominant struggle was based on an ethnic struggle, it was also a battle for power and control among the prominent players (Minter 1988, 9; Crocker interview with author, 2 Sept 09). Among others, Jonas Savimbi was an ambitious leader with somewhat flexible loyalties as indicated by his willingness to cooperate with whoever could provide him with power, status, and influence. It was his reliance on South Africa—a point I will develop further below—that kept his pursuits in Angola relatively in check.52

Considering that the conflict was rooted mainly along ethnic lines, South Africa benefitted greatly from its support of UNITA. This benefit is closely tied to the previous proposition regarding the proximity of civilians in the battlespace: it afforded South Africa the ability to operate in a relatively permissive environment and subjected FAPLA and Cuban forces to the opposite (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09). This, in turn, put a great deal of pressure on opposing forces with a rather limited amount of South Africa’s personnel and resources.

South Africa did incur a small increase in its commitment costs and its costs to gain support in Angola. According to Kaufmann (2004), the ethnic character of the conflict should have made it nearly impossible for the people of southern Angola to join the MPLA due to the ethnic divide. Pretoria, however, still invested resources that deepened its commitment to UNITA in an effort to expand the movement’s popularity and influence. Although it may have been unnecessary, it did deny the MPLA

52 Once South Africa achieved its goals in Angola and Namibia, it no longer had the influence over Savimbi it once had. Savimbi’s desire for power becomes even more evident after he loses the elections in 1992, denounces the elections as a fraud and returns to the bush to plunge Angola back into civil war for another two years (Gleisejes 2002, 352).
government the ability to gain access to southern Angola by extending services to the people there.

South Africa did suffer one unexpected cost related to the ethnic dimension of the war in Angola. The Ovimbundu were closely aligned and supportive of the Ovambu people living in the trans-border region between Namibia and Angola. The Ovambu were a prominent ethnic group in SWAPO and UNITA refused to provide information or assistance to SADF units pursuing SWAPO forces. South Africa had to tread carefully in its operations with UNITA and against SWAPO to ensure that it did not jeopardize its ability to operate in the border area (van der Waals interview author on 30 Aug 09; Geldenhuys interview with author on 18 Aug 09).

The relationship between South Africa and UNITA supports the idea developed in Chapter 2 that ethnic lines are often well established and durable. In spite of the ideological differences between the apartheid government in Pretoria and the rural people living Angola, South Africa supported UNITA for 15 years without jeopardizing the population’s support.

This case does, however, challenge the notion that an ethnic conflict negates the need of a proxy to gain legitimacy. It is impossible to say if the people of southern Angola would have supported UNITA if they had not received social services in the form of education and health care. It is possible to say, however, that it did not hurt. The people of southern Angola endured over 15 years of bitter conflict and stayed loyal to UNITA, as evidenced by the 40.7 percent of the vote share Savimbi received in the presidential elections in 1992 and the 70 seats (out of 223) that UNITA won in the parliamentary election (James 2004, 51). Further, the election results provide evidence of
the durability of ethnic ties; UNITA’s affiliation with Pretoria did not damage its legitimacy among the people of southern Angola.

**Proposition 3 International Norms**

Involvement in a proxy war that violates international norms raises an intervening state’s costs associated with interstate and domestic relationships. Exceptions to the norm of non-intervention include: when a government invites outside intervention, human rights violations within the target state or an inability to provide adequately for the safety and needs of the people; a proxy that is a recognized belligerent fighting for its freedom; if another state is already involved in the conflict taking place in the target state; and if the conflict in the target state spills over into a neighboring state.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of International Norms on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adding Critical Skills</td>
<td>Effect on Benefit of</td>
<td>Effect on Benefit of</td>
<td>Effect on Benefit of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extending Influence</td>
<td>Resource Costs</td>
<td>Support/Toleration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effect on Costs</td>
<td>Effect on Commitment</td>
<td>Effect on Costs of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effect on Proxy</td>
<td>Effect on Control</td>
<td>Unwanted Escalation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA/UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After Angola’s independence on 11 November 1975, the legitimacy of the MPLA government remained contested both domestically and internationally. After the FNLA had been defeated in 1976, UNITA and the MPLA stood as the two predominant factions competing for control. Like many issues during the Cold War, the situation at the international level became somewhat polarized by the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. The legitimacy of the Angolan government was contested and the country was thrust into a civil war. Based on these conditions, human rights violations were not an issue. Both sides—UNITA and MPLA—were recognized internationally as
belligerents, and Angola had undergone extensive foreign intervention from states such as the United States, Soviet Union, Zaire, South Africa, China, and Cuba.

From the beginning, Pretoria recognized that it lacked sufficient justification for its direct involvement in Angola. Based on that, South Africa elected to secretly back UNITA in 1975 (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09). Savimbi was equally concerned about affiliating with South Africa because of the unpopular apartheid regime. At the time, the MPLA had failed to solidify enough support to gain recognition from the OAU, and UNITA wanted to make sure it did not get it (Geldenhuys interview with author, 18 Aug 09).

The predominant view of the international community was that South Africa was attempting to prolong the war in Angola in hopes that it could hold onto Namibia (Smith 1986, 65). In spite of this view, certain conditions enabled South Africa to violate international norms of non-intervention without really suffering for it. First, the political isolation of South Africa created the impetus for self-reliance that took away many of the instruments other states could use to coerce Pretoria to adhere to non-intervention norms. For example, in 1977, 55 percent of South Africa’s military procurement was imported. The 45 percent that was produced indigenously, however, revealed competence, depth, and sophistication. In 1979, Chester Crocker (an American expert on southern Africa) suggested that Pretoria’s isolation due to a UN embargo would only “accelerate further the development and diversification of South African arms production, both for local consumption and export” (1979, 79). Second, South Africa was such a lucrative economic market that it deterred many states from enacting economic sanctions that could have inflicted significant costs on Pretoria (Franko 1979; Crocker interview with
author, 2 Sep 09). Third, the desire of the United States to stem Soviet expansion in southern Africa curbed concerns about Pretoria’s involvement in Angola (Crocker 1992, 36).

The situation in southern Africa created an opportunity for South Africa to break down some of its isolation (Crocker interview with author, 2 Sep 09; Hallett 1978, 385). Pretoria sold UNITA as a strong, anti-Marxist movement to the West, and it helped alleviate some of the problems caused by the apartheid government and recast the conflict in terms of stopping the spread of communism in Africa (Crocker interview with author, 2 Sep 09). In 1978, Robin Hallett describes this phenomenon:

“The United States was not the only 'free world' power likely to welcome a move to check the MPLA. France, too, had recently developed an interest in the area, particularly in Cabinda, and there is evidence of the dispatch of arms and even of mercenaries to help FNLA and UNITA. Put all these associations together and it becomes clear that Pretoria, which for so long had suffered a position of diplomatic isolation, found itself in September 1975 in the gratifying and unusual position of pursuing the same objective as at least two and possibly three, if the Ivory Coast is included African states, the United States and France.” (Hallett 1978, 363).

As the war progressed, the position most Western states took was to tacitly or actively support South Africa’s support of UNITA, oppose direct intervention, and criticize Pretoria for its apartheid government (Barber and Barrat 1990). Washington’s support, however, became more evident and more consistent after Ronald Reagan took office and was most visibly demonstrated when the United States promptly vetoed a proposal by members of the UN Security Council (UK, France, and Germany) to condemn South Africa for the incursion of SADF units into Angola during an operation (Protea) in 1981.
Although Soviet involvement arguably influenced the United States and other western European states to tacitly support South Africa’s policy in Angola, Cuba’s involvement had a more subtle effect on the international community. Havana’s involvement did not justify Pretoria’s operations in Angola, but it did lead many Western states to work toward a Cuban withdrawal in conjunction with South Africa’s withdrawal of Namibia. For example, during the decade long process of negotiating an end to the Angolan Civil War, European states closely aligned with the United States would not openly support “linkage”—the idea that Cuban forces in Angola and South African forces in Namibia would withdraw simultaneously—but they privately put pressure on negotiators from Cuba and the MPLA to settle along the lines of what “linkage” was trying to accomplish (Crocker interview with author, 2 Sep 09).

The principal cost of South Africa’s intervention and its support of UNITA was that it led to a rapid escalation of Cuban involvement. At the peak, different estimates show that approximately 40,000 to 50,000 Cubans were operating in Angola while only 5,000 to 6,000 South Africans were there opposing them (Geldenhuys 2009; Malan 2006; Heitman 1990). As shown in Table 4.4, Cuban escalation had an unexpected effect; South Africa was insulated from the predicted costs of Cuban escalation due to the advantages gained from operating with UNITA in southern Angola, the competence of its forces, and its comparatively low level of involvement.

**Proposition 4 Domestic Willingness**

*If a domestic public is predicted to reject an interventionist policy, a proxy can lessen that resistance because it shares the burden, especially when it minimizes the intervening state’s commitment and casualties.*
Table 4.5: Effect of Domestic Willingness on South Africa’s Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed</th>
<th>RSA/UNITA (Angola)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proxy</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Adding Critical Skills</td>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Extending Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Resource Costs</td>
<td>Effect on Costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Commitment Costs</td>
<td>Effect on Costs to Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Costs to Gain Support in Target State</td>
<td>Effect on Costs to Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Commitment Costs</td>
<td>Effect on Int'l Support/Tolerance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the face of rising domestic unrest over the government policy of apartheid and the subsequent attacks against “white” targets, South Africa’s population was hesitant to support operations on the Angola/Namibia border. SWAPO’s attempts to take Namibia by force, however, appear to have fostered some support. A public opinion poll conducted by Market Research Africa in May 1976 showed that a majority of white South Africans supported the government's policy of conducting cross-border raids to engage SWAPO forces operating from inside Angola. That same poll, however, also revealed that the people surveyed did not feel that the government was keeping the public well informed about its involvement in Angola (The Argus, 12 May 1976).

International isolation also helped maintain domestic support for the border war. The people of South Africa felt that the world had turned its back on them and that South Africa must fend for itself (Heitman interview with author, 23 Aug 09). Although many South African newspapers suggested that the people were shocked and angered by the SADF’s involvement in Angola, it was an inaccurate representation of the country’s
position. General Geldenhuys argues that the confusion stemmed from the fact that Pretoria had kept its initial involvement secret and that the far right and far left both hated the P.W. Botha administration and therefore showed resentment toward his policy in the border region. According to General Geldenhuys, “Prime Minister Botha was a polarizing figure in South African politics. The conservatives considered him a sell out and the liberals considered him a racist. Yet there were no demonstrations or protests of considerable or significant size during the nearly 15-year conflict. It was PW Botha’s prior affiliation with the SADF that tainted these groups’ attitudes toward the SADF” (Geldenhuys interview with author, 18 Aug 09).

It was not until 20 September 1985 that General Magnus Malan, Minister of Defense, admitted publicly that South Africa had been supporting UNITA with aid “of a material, humanitarian, and moral nature” (Brittain 1998, 27). Generally, white South African’s supported Pretoria’s continued involvement because it cost very little, caused very few casualties, and helped jump start relations with the West. The public and the government, however, remained highly sensitive to any casualties. In one example, an air attack on an SADF position near Calueque Dam on 27 June 1988 that resulted in 10 white casualties created significant push back and concern from the Cabinet and started questions about border war operations (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09). It is also plausible that the limited support of the white South Africa public, in a small way, kept Jonas Savimbi and UNITA’s actions in check; UNITA had more to lose if South Africa began pulling back its support to mollify its people.

**Proposition 5 Proxy Dependence**

* A high level of proxy dependence reduces agency costs, but increases the costs of supporting a proxy.
Table 4.6: Effect of Proxy Dependence on South Africa’s Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proxy Dependence on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proposed</th>
<th>RSA/UNITA (Angola)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effect of Proxy Dependence on Costs and Benefits</td>
<td>Effect on Benefit of</td>
<td>Effect on Benefit of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort on Benefit of</td>
<td>Effort on Benefit of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extending Influence</td>
<td>Extending Influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Resource Costs</td>
<td>Effect on Resource Costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Costs</td>
<td>Effect on Costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Commitment</td>
<td>Effect on Commitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Costs to Control</td>
<td>Effect on Costs to Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Int'l Support/Toleration</td>
<td>Effect on Int'l Support/Toleration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of</td>
<td>Effect on Benefit of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwanted Escalation</td>
<td>Unwanted Escalation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Costs to Gain</td>
<td>Effect on Costs to Gain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Domestic</td>
<td>Effect on Domestic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of</td>
<td>Effect on Benefit of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiding Involvement</td>
<td>Hiding Involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Commitment</td>
<td>Effect on Commitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>Costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UNITA gained momentum and strength during the course of the Angolan Civil War, but Savimbi and UNITA remained highly dependent on South Africa militarily, politically, and financially. Initially, UNITA forces were poorly trained and equipped. UNITA’s first patron, China, believed in the concept that a revolutionary movement must rely on its own abilities and accordingly provided very little in the way of training and equipment (Bridgland 1987, Chapter 5). Throughout the conflict UNITA depended on SADF for training, strategic and operational advice, and as a backstop in cases when UNITA forces committed operational mistakes that compromised their position or needed SADF units to blunt significant FAPLA/Cuban offensives (Geldenhuys interview with author, 18 Aug 09). Although UNITA’s dependence on South Africa required additional costs in terms of resources and commitment, it had the corresponding effect of ensuring that UNITA’s operations remained in line with South Africa’s interests.

UNITA worried that South Africa would lose interest in supporting the movement’s operations. To help ensure Pretoria would remain interested, UNITA often
provided false reports of its progress (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09). Savimbi also worried that South Africa was going to sell him out during the negotiations led by Chester Crocker and the “Contact Group.” In his private discussions with Crocker, Savimbi continually asked to be included in a settlement and Crocker told him repeatedly that provisions could be made that would increase the likelihood of him getting what he wanted, but no settlement could be arranged that specifically guaranteed his desires to get UNITA a share of the power in Angola (Crocker interview with author, 2 Sep 09).

Financially, South Africa provided resources for UNITA’s war effort and for providing services to the people of southern Angola. Pretoria also served as the main financier for many of the commodities UNITA could sell on its own such as diamonds, ivory, or hardwoods (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09). UNITA’s dependence, however, ensured that the resources provided were used to further South Africa’s interests and had to forego any self-interested behavior that might jeopardize future allotments.

UNITA’s dependence coupled with its ethnic connections to the people living within the battlespace provided significant boundaries to the kind of conduct that could harm South Africa’s pursuit of its objectives. Although Savimbi suffered some degree of international scrutiny later in the conflict due to allegations of harsh treatment of civilians and executions of UNITA leaders that were a potential threat to his position (Alao 1994, 32), UNITA’s efforts at keeping FAPLA and Cuban forces at bay remained stalwart. Savimbi himself admitted that he did not want the war to go on longer than necessary and
that he was willing to compromise and work with leaders of the MPLA who had earned the right to lead Angola (Crocker interview with author (2 Sep 09)).

UNITA’s dependence on South Africa supports the concept that a proxy highly dependent on an intervening state will not engage in behavior that increases international and domestic costs. Although UNITA avoided committing atrocities and terrorizing the population of southern Angola (isolated incidents likely did occur), the cause of its avoidance is threefold. First, UNITA needed the support of the population to pressure Luanda and to avoid being isolated and destroyed by superiorly equipped and trained Cuban forces—FAPLA was never really proficient enough to challenge UNITA (Crocker interview with author, 2 Sep 09). Second, UNITA needed to show Pretoria that it was worth supporting, and the most obvious means of demonstrating that support was through UNITA’s control of the population. Third, South Africa’s position was already contentious; supporting a proxy that further aggravated the international community could have soured the relationship and terminated Pretoria’s support.

Politically, South Africa’s support of UNITA did not have the proposed effect of diminishing the organization’s credibility with the population for two reasons. First, the ethnic ties between UNITA and the population likely minimized the issue. Second, and probably even more important, UNITA’s commitment to providing services and its efforts to offer an inclusive organization to all the rural people of southern Angola, not just the Ovimbundu, stemmed any criticism that UNITA was doing Pretoria’s bidding. From its inception, UNITA’s political competence remained a significant strength,

---

53 In conversations with Chester Crocker, Savimbi was dismissive of Jose Eduardo dos Santos, labeling him as a Soviet puppet.
largely due to the presence of Jonas Savimbi as its leader (Crocker interview with author, 2 Sep 09; Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09).

**Proposition 6 Proxy Autonomy**

*Higher levels of autonomy can decrease the cost of supporting a proxy, but increase the costs of monitoring the proxy’s activities and may lead to an increase in agency, international, and domestic costs depending on the proxy’s behavior.*

**Table 4.7: Effect of Proxy Autonomy on South Africa’s Costs and Benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Proxy Autonomy on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑↓</td>
<td>↑↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA/UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to General Geldenhuys (interview with author, 18 Aug 09), UNITA managed to keep FAPLA and Cuban forces from making lasting incursions into southern Angola because its forces were disciplined, had been given excellent weapons training (but not tactics or operations—this the SADF thought was unnecessary because UNITA was from the area and understood it better), had the support of the people, and were fighting in territory that had very few enemies and many friends and supporters. Based on these factors, the SADF did not feel the need to control UNITA’s operations. South Africa did not fear the behavior of UNITA because they were fighting amongst their own people (a plus having civilian saturation in the battlespace) and because the objectives UNITA sought would allow South Africa to protect the northern border of Namibia and
gain a more moderate government in Angola. South Africa did not even feel the need to curb UNITA’s practice of taking hostages as a means of gaining recognition and publicity, so long as the hostages were always returned unharmed (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09).

At the strategic level, Pretoria did not pressure Savimbi to alter or change UNITA’s operations; both sides’ objectives were sufficiently aligned to allow for a large degree of autonomy (Geldenhuys interview with author, 18 Aug 09; Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09). Operationally, however, SADF advisors had a more active role. SADF steered UNITA during large battles due to its lack of training and skills in operational planning. In some cases, SADF commanders had too high of an expectation of UNITA’s capabilities and pushed them in ways that contributed to higher losses. Overall, UNITA operations were most useful when SADF commanders avoided conventional-style operations and played to UNITA’s strength as a guerrilla force (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09).

UNITA’s autonomy did not raise South Africa’s costs because there was little need to monitor UNITA’s behavior. UNITA was so closely tied to the population and its dependence so severe that it could not really use its resources in a way that would have been detrimental to South Africa’s interests. The only way UNITA could really use the resources it had been given to promote its cause was to stick with a guerrilla-style campaign and provide support to the population—anything else would have been counterproductive.

**Proposition 7 Incentive Structure**

Behavior-based incentives work best when fighting a superior enemy, when the intervening state’s and the proxy’s goals conflict, when it is necessary to give the proxy a high degree of autonomy, or when the intervening state has a great deal of knowledge
and familiarity with the proxy. Outcome-based incentives work under the opposite conditions.

Table 4.8: Effect of Incentive Structure on South Africa’s Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Incentive Structure on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Adding Critical Skills</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Extending Influence</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Resource Costs</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Commitment Costs</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Costs to Control of Resource Costs</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Costs to Control of Commitment Costs</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Support/Toleration</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Int'l Support/Toleration</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Hiding Involvement</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Unwanted Escalation</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Control of Target State</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Support of Domestic</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Support of Domestic</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Hiding Involvement</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Unwanted Escalation</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Control of Target State</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Support of Domestic</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Support of Domestic</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

South Africa offered UNITA and Jonas Savimbi an almost purely behavior-based incentive structure. UNITA’s ability to hold southern Angola and pressure Luanda into accepting a unity government that included both parties satisfied South Africa’s leaders. Pretoria never promised Savimbi that he would get control of Angola, but it did support efforts to put UNITA in a position to win, or at least share, control of the government (Botha interview with author, 20 Aug 09).

UNITA’s support of the population, its inability to get what it wanted on its own, and the limited nature of South Africa’s objectives all combined to allow a behavior-based incentive structure to provide Pretoria with the means to accomplish most of its objectives. In addition, South Africa’s limited objectives in Angola matched up well with the behavior-based incentives it offered to UNITA. UNITA’s dependence on South Africa protected Pretoria from Savimbi’s ambition; he could not force South Africa into supporting his own objectives and had to settle for making the most of what support
South Africa was willing to provide. Although there was more than one principal involved, UNITA could not get the United States involved in a way that would alleviate its dependence on South Africa. Further, Washington’s and Pretoria’s objectives overlapped sufficiently to prevent UNITA from leveraging its position into greater support and a guarantee that negotiations among the principals would yield the inclusion of UNITA in the settlement.

At the end, Savimbi got greedy and refused to join the unity government in Luanda after he lost the election. South Africa’s Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, brokered a deal with the Angolan government for Savimbi to take a position as the commissar for the reconstruction of Angola. Savimbi initially agreed, but then quickly changed his mind and went back to the bush to fight for two more years (Botha interview, 20 Aug 09).

This is not to say that Savimbi did not want peace. Savimbi, in discussions with Mr. Crocker, stated that he did not want the war to endure. The problem, however, was that Savimbi was ambitious and egoistic. He admitted that there were people in the MPLA that he respected and could work with, such as Neto, but Savimbi considered Jose Eduardo dos Santos a lackey of the Soviet Union and would not agree to work with him. The treatment of Savimbi and the support UNITA was given overplayed the military side of the conflict and underplayed the political aspects. This was especially evident when Savimbi refused the position of Vice President and went back to the bush and restarted the war against the MPLA government. Support was not given in a way that ensured that Savimbi clearly understood his role and the objectives of Pretoria (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09).
From Chapter 2, this proposition stems from the concept of how offering specific incentives can minimize agency costs. In this case, however, it appears that designing an incentive structure that minimizes agency costs becomes less important if a high degree of proxy dependence already exists. UNITA operations more closely describe an insurgency-style campaign to resolve a predominantly ethnic conflict. Although UNITA forces were somewhat inferior to the Cuban forces operating in the region, they definitely maintained superiority over FAPLA forces.

The one area that this case supports, however, is that behavior-based rewards are more conducive to reducing agency costs when a proxy faces a superior force. South Africa never provided UNITA with the resources necessary to defeat the MPLA and take control of Angola. Neither did the United States. Because this was never the aim for either Pretoria or Washington, UNITA had to remain tied to guerrilla-style operations. Although Savimbi wanted outcome-based incentives—he repeatedly asked that UNITA be included in any settlement—he had to be satisfied with what he was given. Therefore, UNITA’s ability to accomplish its objectives hinged on its ability to retain Pretoria’s, and to a lesser extent Washington’s, support.

**Proposition 8 Secrecy**

Keeping a proxy war secret potentially lowers domestic and international costs, especially when the action would be considered unpopular domestically and clearly violates the international norm of sovereignty. Secrecy, however, severely constrains an intervening state’s ability to support its proxy and jeopardizes the proxy’s ability to gain relative superiority in the battlespace. Secrecy also can inflict higher costs due to blowback.
Table 4.9: Effect of Secrecy on South Africa’s Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Secrecy on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA/UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates the proposed effect when the proxy war becomes public

The war was kept secret in its early stages to avoid domestic and international costs. Internationally, Pretoria worried that a connection with its apartheid regime would ruin UNITA’s credibility in Angola and would threaten its support among other African states and in the international community at large. Domestically, Pretoria felt that the South African public would reject an intervention into Angola designed to support “terrorists.” Secrecy, it was hoped, would lower these two costs of the policy.

In September 1975, (then) Lieutenant Colonel Willem van der Waals, an officer in the SADF, and his team of SADF volunteers were sent to establish contact and advise UNITA. His objectives were to train two UNITA brigades, provide strategic and operational guidance, stop MPLA and Cuban forces from taking Huambo, avoid casualties, and ensure that South Africa’s assistance remained plausibly deniable.

Originally, Pretoria intended that van der Waals and his team would be out before independence on 11 Nov 1975. The events leading up to independence, especially the
rapid escalation of Soviet and Cuban involvement, persuaded South Africa to continue its efforts after that date (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09).

To keep Pretoria’s involvement secret, South African volunteers sent to Angola were told they would be disavowed if they were caught or exposed. In addition, UNITA had to accept weapons and armament that were plausibly deniable.\textsuperscript{54} This left UNITA and supporting SADF units with a more limited ability to engage FAPLA and Cuban forces. For example, UNITA and SADF units would not be allowed to use modern anti-tank weapons and would instead have to rely on outdated and rather ineffective bazookas (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09). It also, however, kept the costs of supporting UNITA to a minimum.

Pretoria, however, was relatively overt with its support of UNITA among the strongly anti-communist governments of the United States and Western Europe before 1985 (Crocker interview with author, 2 Jan 09). Even after Pretoria admitted its support of UNITA in 1985, the costs of supporting UNITA remained relatively low. The South African public (the whites) were outraged when they found out that the government had been supporting and fighting alongside what they considered terrorists. The public, however, was also concerned about Cuban and communist involvement in the region and how they might affect the efforts of the ANC inside South Africa. This allowed Pretoria to continue its current course in Angola without significant domestic interference (van der Waals interview with author, 30 Aug 09).

UNITA and SADF were not terribly constrained by the secrecy/obscurity of the relationship early on because of Pretoria’s limited strategy. Staying with a predominantly

\textsuperscript{54} For example, South Africa purchased weapons from China to give to UNITA instead of providing weapons through normal supply chains.
guerrilla strategy and operating in an unconventional manner, South Africa steadily moved toward its objectives. Had the war shifted to a more conventional style, then the constraints of secrecy would logically have played a larger role. UNITA had to accept this limitation, even if Savimbi wanted more, because it was the only way UNITA could create the conditions necessary to gain a significant amount of influence in Angola.

Although Pretoria’s support of UNITA contributed to Soviet and Cuban retaliation, it appears that the limited and obscure way in which it was done allowed South Africa to keep its involvement limited without generating a large enough reaction that would have caused South Africa to commit its forces directly. Havana might have had some difficulty, even considering the authoritative nature of its government, justifying the need to send more troops in addition to the 40,000 to 50,000 Cuban soldiers that were already in country to counter an indigenous threat and a modest South African contingent of 4,000 to 5,000 soldiers.

**Missing Costs and Benefits**

To be thorough, I feel a short discussion of the conditions that led to the absence of certain costs and benefits is required. South Africa’s support of UNITA did not result in wasted resources because UNITA’s efforts to gain control of Angola’s government in Luanda fulfilled Pretoria’s desire to protect Namibia’s northern border and pressure Cuban and Soviet efforts to consolidate the MPLA regime in Angola. Although the objectives were significantly different, the means in which the two sides went about achieving those objectives were complimentary. Insurgency experts tend to agree that the population is the key to an insurgent group gaining influence in a state (Trinquier 2006; Galula 2006). The resources and operational support South Africa provided
UNITA to gain and sustain the population’s support in southern Angola also created the necessary barrier to protect Pretoria’s interests in Namibia.

In spite of the benefits UNITA offered South Africa in terms of critical skills, extended influence, and conserved resources, Pretoria endured an increased commitment to UNITA. UNITA’s lack of operational and tactical prowess occasionally required SADF units to rescue UNITA forces that had been overcommitted. Although South Africa incurred significant operational costs in terms of equipment, supplies, and personnel due to UNITA’s autonomy and its operational and tactical mistakes, Pretoria benefitted more from the relatively few SADF units required to protect the Namibian border due to UNITA’s efforts.

South Africa’s support of UNITA did not really hide or obscure the state’s involvement. In the early stages, Pretoria’s direct involvement to protect a critical hydroelectric plant in southern Angola and its overt use of SADF units to engage SWAPO forces operating north of the Namibian border was scrutinized by a number of states. South Africa’s strong economy and its political isolation, however, protected the state from damaging costs linked to its international relations. Further, Pretoria’s relatively quiet support of UNITA avoided an increase in commitment to maintain South Africa’s reputation or prestige. From an international perspective, Pretoria had very little invested in UNITA—it only needed UNITA to provide a buffer on the Angola-Namibia border.

South Africa’s support of UNITA did not avoid unwanted escalation. As the opposition to MPLA forces in Angola gained strength, Moscow and Havana responded with increases in equipment, funding, and personnel. Based on the responses of these two states, it seems as though Soviet and Cuban interest in Angola had reached such a
point that the two states remained determined to ensure that the MPLA government in Luanda survived, regardless of South Africa’s or any other state’s support.

Domestically, Pretoria’s support of UNITA did not spare the government the cost of a decrease in support among the population at home. Although many South Africans acknowledged the threat of Cuban and Soviet influence in southern Africa and the lack of international support for South Africa to protect the region from communism, they still reacted negatively to white casualties in the border region. Based on those negative reactions, South Africa had to be careful of how it employed SADF units and had to bolster those forces in an effort to minimize casualties when they were operating in Angola. This caused an increase in commitment from SADF units engaged in supporting or rescuing UNITA forces.

**CONCLUSION**

South Africa’s political isolation due to its apartheid government created a condition that made South Africa highly sanction-resistant. South Africa’s robust economy with influential links to US and Western European economies reduced the desire to deliver sanctions that could produce the coercive effects associated with issue linkage and international sanctions. Giving states that were important to South Africa’s economy or its policy in Angola the means to look the other way made it easier for South Africa to support its proxy in a controversial and widely scrutinized manner. When an intervening state has something that other states want and could potentially withhold if states attempted to initiate or leverage sanctions to change that behavior, then a proxy appears to provide a useful means for would-be sanctioners to look the other way.

145
South Africa’s isolation also provided an important source of domestic support, or at the very least, toleration for supporting UNITA and staying involved in Angola. Because the white public perceived that the international community would not help South Africa because of apartheid, it justified the need to pursue a solution without international support. Pretoria avoided any serious challenges to its policy because UNITA provided the largest share of the fighting forces and provided the connections necessary with the population of southern Angola to allow SADF units to engage in limited operations with a relatively low threat of casualties.

Because UNITA was ethnically tied to a majority of the people living in the battlespace, it remained relatively invulnerable to enemy infiltration and did not suffer attacks from an enemy that could hide among the population and cause an overreaction. South Africa also made it possible for UNITA to provide services that further garnered support for the movement. A third contributing factor was that the people of southern Angola did not care for the fact that Cuban forces were fighting on their soil (cite from one of my interviews).

Although South Africa’s objectives were significantly different from UNITA’s, the methods used and the strategy employed to accomplish those objectives overlapped. Both South Africa and UNITA needed to establish and maintain control of the battlespace in southern Angola. In addition, the strategy that was employed by UNITA—keeping the war as a guerrilla-style operation with the objective of denying Cuban and FAPLA forces from establishing a presence in the region—worked well under conditions of a predominantly rural area and enhanced the relative invulnerability of UNITA due to its center of gravity being the support of the population. The MPLA government in
Luanda could not get access to the people long enough to establish the types of services necessary to gain their support. Further, FAPLA’s affiliation with Cuban forces and the mestizo population that made up a significant portion of the MPLA identified them as enemies rather than Angolan forces with the legitimate right to use force.

It is interesting to think that Savimbi may have wanted more—to be able to conventionally defeat the MPLA and take control of Angola—but that his sponsors would not support the idea. Savimbi and UNITA were then forced to accept a predominantly guerrilla strategy because the amount of support given by South Africa and other participating states, most notably the United States, would not support a shift to a more conventional approach. In this light, it appears that UNITA was ultimately hamstrung by its dependence on South Africa. Therefore, in this particular case, proxy dependence appears to be more important than incentive structure and lowers the costs of providing a higher degree of autonomy.

An important point that this case demonstrates was that secrecy did not necessarily contribute as much to lowering costs and maximizing benefits as did the appropriate strategy. South Africa remained committed to its limited aims of protecting the border region between Angola and Namibia and getting Cuban forces out of southern Africa. Further, South Africa kept its focus on the political aspects rather than getting sidetracked on military aspects.

A second point is that the costs of blowback are blunted when the government can justify its policy in terms of security; the communist threat was a serious consideration to the white population of South Africa. Although this is somewhat obvious, it does provide some guidance for when a secret policy may not create significant blowback costs.
India’s support of LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) depicts a case in which an intervening state initially elects to covertly support one side of a civil conflict and is then later forced to intervene directly and overtly to stop its proxy’s operations. The India-LTTE case offers six particularly diverse and interesting characteristics that help answer the questions posed in Chapter 1 and test the validity of the propositions presented in Chapter 2. First, this case provides an example where both international and domestic pressures figured strongly into a state’s interventionist policy (de Silva 1991, 77-78). Second, India’s concern about regional and global rivals siding with Sri Lanka initially led the government in New Delhi to look for ways to influence Sri Lanka’s foreign and domestic policy. Third, India and LTTE did not have a close working relationship; India’s efforts to penetrate the organization and control it ultimately failed. Fourth, India maintained relations and provided support to a number of Tamil militant groups and purposely sought to keep them all relatively even to prevent one group from gaining a dominant stance among Sri Lankan Tamils. Fifth, the character of the war in Sri Lanka was predominantly ethnic. Sixth, this case provides the most obvious and
devastating example of a proxy using the support it had been given against the intervening state.\textsuperscript{55}

Unlike the previous two cases, the regional context of this case overshadowed many of the effects of the global political environment that were so influential in Angola and Laos. Although the conflict took place during the Cold War, both the superpowers remained sidelined and allowed India to exercise its role as the regional hegemon.

India’s support of LTTE fits the definition listed in Chapter 1—*an intervening state providing support to a politically motivated, local actor engaging in an armed conflict to influence a target state’s affairs*—in that India, provided equipment, training, and supplies to LTTE in an attempt to influence Sri Lanka’s foreign and domestic policies and assert India’s dominance in South Asia. None of the Tamil militant groups, including LTTE, had the resources or capability to compete with Sri Lanka’s armed forces and produce an independent Tamil state (Phadnis and Jetly 1990, 159). Although India and LTTE had different intentions, both wanted to stop the violence and reverse Sinhalese efforts to marginalize Tamils under the auspices of Sri Lanka’s constitution.

**BACKGROUND**

When the British controlled Sri Lanka (formerly known as Ceylon), they promoted Tamil interests and provided opportunities well beyond the Tamils’ ethnic representation to weaken the more numerous Sinhalese (DeVotta 2000, 58). Because ethnic conflicts were not allowed under British rule, the Tamils and Sinhalese lived under a forced peace (Oberst 1988, 181).

After independence in 1948, the Sinhalese began exploiting their majority to undermine the Tamil position. The Sinhalese, under the auspices of Sri Lanka’s

\textsuperscript{55} In Chapter 2 I used the term “Madison’s Dilemma” to describe this phenomenon.
constitution, started passing legislation to restrict the rights of Tamils. Attempts to make Sinhala the official and only language of Sri Lanka polarized the two ethnic groups and clearly signaled Sinhalese effort to use the democratic process to marginalize and discriminate against the Tamils. The Sinhalese majority made it legally possible to erode dominant Tamil businesses, reduce Tamil appointments to bureaucratic offices, and restrict Tamil access to universities. Small-scale race riots began as early as 1956. By 1972, Sri Lanka’s constitution provided superior status to both the Sinhala language and the Buddhist religion and put an end to what was once a secular democracy (DeVotta 2000, 58-59).

Lacking protection from Sri Lanka’s constitution, Tamils formed the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and began to clamor for an independent state. Around the same time, Tamils frustrated with TULF’s failure to enact changes politically formed militant organizations—LTTE, among others—bent on using violence to coerce the government into allowing the Tamil areas to secede (Phadnis and Jetly 1990, 152). In 1979, Sri Lanka’s government passed the Prevention of Terrorism Act that “allowed the security forces to arrest, imprison, and leave incommunicado for eighteen months without trial anyone suspected of unlawful activity. Applied retroactively, the Act led to widespread torture and human rights abuse of many young Tamils. That such abuse occurred at a time when the military was viewed as an occupation force in the north only exacerbated the Tamils’ sense of alienation” (DeVotta 2000, 63). By the end of the 1970s, the government in Colombo had even begun—tacitly and actively—to support widespread violence against Tamil citizens. For example, government vehicles were used to transport Sinhalese rioters to destroy Tamil stores and businesses; the rioters were
also given electoral registration forms to identify Tamil targets (Rupesinghe 1988, 345; DeVotta 2000, 64).

In 1983, a group of Tamil students attacked a detachment of Sri Lankan soldiers, killing 13 of them. The Sinhalese people responded killing hundreds of Tamils and forcing thousands more out of their homes. Due to the violence, many Tamils fled to Tamil Nadu—a nearby state in southern India—where a predominantly Tamil population provided sanctuary and support.

Outraged Tamils in Tamil Nadu pressured the local government to support Tamil militant groups (Gunaratna 1993, 53; Jain Commission Interim Report, section 4) and demanded that New Delhi take action Sri Lanka (Rao 1988, 419; Wilson 1988, 146). Many Indian Tamils even pushed for the creation of an independent Tamil state—a sentiment known as Tamil Eelam (Phadnis and Jetly 1990, 152-153). India’s government, however, was opposed to a separate state for the Tamils in Sri Lanka (Rao 1988, 420-421); New Delhi worried that the ethnic conflict and the influx of Tamil refugees might incite a secessionist movement in Tamil Nadu (Hagerty 1991, 354).

India’s domestic affairs also pushed New Delhi toward intervention in another way. Since her election in 1980, Indira Gandhi’s Congress Party had been suffering an erosion of its support throughout India; supporting the Tamils in Sri Lanka provided a means of shoring up much needed support in southern India (de Silva 1995, 102). Indira Gandhi faced a difficult dilemma: she did not want an independent Tamil state in Sri Lanka, but she needed the support of Tamil Nadu’s politicians to sustain her political position (Ispahani 1992; de Silva 1995). This led Prime Minister Gandhi to
accommodate Tamil concerns regarding Sri Lanka in hopes of gaining the support of the dominant political party in Tamil Nadu.⁵⁶

Although influenced by India’s pressing domestic concerns, New Delhi perceived the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka posed an even greater international threat to India’s security (Rao 1988, 424). Prior to the election of President Jayewardene in 1976, Sri Lanka and India both stood firmly in the non-alignment movement.⁵⁷ Shortly after Jayewardene took office, however, Sri Lanka began courting the West.⁵⁸ Sri Lanka’s deep-water port at Trincomalee—often considered the best on the Indian Ocean—and its proximity to both India and the main sea-lanes between the Middle East and East Asia made the island a desirable location for distant global powers such as the United States and the United Kingdom.

After the outbreak of violence in 1983, India involved itself in Sri Lanka’s domestic crisis, arguing that the ethnic character of the violence made the conflict a regional affair (Lok Sabha Debates, 12 Aug 1983).⁵⁹ Overtly, India served as the principal mediator between Colombo and the Tamil militant groups—LTTE being the dominant voice.⁶⁰ To bolster its ability to influence Sri Lankan affairs diplomatically,

---

⁵⁶ India has a parliamentary system. At the time the Congress Party needed the dominant party in Tamil Nadu (AIADMK) to join its political coalition and ensure that the Congress Party had enough votes to secure the office of the Prime Minister.

⁵⁷ The non-alignment movement was a group of states that remained outside the sphere of influence of the United States or the Soviet Union.

⁵⁸ Sri Lanka leased over 1000 acres to the United States for a Voice of America antenna farm; India worried that it would be used to monitor naval and land communications as well as communicate with American submarines in the Indian Ocean (Muni 1993, 55). Additional Indian concerns revolved around an increase in the number of US Navy vessels docking at the port in Trincomalee and the lease of an oil storage facility to a company with ties to the US government.

⁵⁹ Prime Minister Indira Gandhi addressed the Lok Sabha (a house in the Indian Parliament) and explained that Tamil ethnic ties and the flow of refugees into Tamil Nadu directly involved India in Sri Lanka’s crisis (Lok Sabha Debates, vol. 38, col. 418, 1983).

⁶⁰ Some of the other Tamil groups included EPRLF (Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front), PLOTE (Peoples Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam), TELO (Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization), and EROS (Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students).
India also began providing covert support to LTTE and other Tamil militant groups to persuade Colombo to abandon its pursuit of a military solution.

Out of concern for its deteriorating domestic situation and its fear that India would intervene due to its affiliation with the Tamil population and the island’s influence on Indian security, Sri Lanka solicited support from different countries, including the United States and Great Britain. Acknowledging India’s rising global influence and its dominance in South Asia, the United States and United Kingdom denied Sri Lanka’s request that they intervene directly and instead encouraged Colombo to enlist the assistance of Israel’s Mossad and retired SAS commandos to train its forces in counterinsurgency tactics (Muni 1993, 53-56). India’s regional rival, Pakistan, also agreed to help Sri Lanka and provided both equipment and training.

Initially, Tamils demanded a separate state, but they later conceded to the creation of autonomous, Tamil-dominated regional governments that would remain within the Sri Lankan state.\(^{61}\) LTTE, however, wanted to merge the Northern and Eastern—Tamil dominated—provinces, but Colombo demanded that the two remain separate; this became a major sticking point that stalled negotiations (Hagerty 1991, 355). LTTE wanted the two provinces fused together because the northern province Tamils holding the most political clout were of a higher caste (Vellala), and though this group of Tamils had embraced the LTTE out of necessity, they had not embraced them politically. Due to this, the TULF had an upper hand in political elections on the Jaffna Peninsula. The members of LTTE varied widely in their castes and they therefore wanted a merger between the two provinces to combine the economic potential of the East province and its

---

\(^{61}\) Tamil groups had reservations about Colombo’s willingness to accept a solution that would grant Tamil autonomy short of secession, but the Tamil groups lowered their sights from secession based on the notion that India would convince Colombo to honor it (Muni 1993, 82).
largely mixed-caste population to offset the TULF’s dominance in Jaffna (Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1988, 618).

In 1985 and 1986, negotiations made little headway due to the efforts of LTTE and the mutual distrust between India and Sri Lanka. Colombo’s representatives engaged in negotiations to provide its military with more time to train and acquire better equipment. India continued to provide covert support to Tamil militant groups at the same time it pushed for a diplomatic solution. LTTE specifically planned its operations to derail negotiation efforts by making it difficult for Colombo to offer up the concessions for which India was pushing. In an attempt to strengthen its bargaining position and maximize the concessions from the Sri Lankan government, LTTE steadily worked toward expanding its influence in the north and east. LTTE also began to establish a parallel government in the Jaffna region providing social services to Tamils (Jain Commission Interim Report, section 28; Muni 1993, ch 3).

Frustrated by LTTE’s unwillingness to accept its concessions and outraged at the movement’s attempts to establish a parallel government, Colombo launched a major offensive—Operation Liberation—against LTTE in January 1987. By this time, Sri Lanka’s armed forces had become adept enough to push LTTE back into the Jaffna Peninsula and had even begun to make progress toward eradicating them. LTTE’s behavior in Tamil Nadu weakened Tamil sympathy and allowed New Delhi to soften its support of Tamil militants. LTTE’s position had become tenuous and its ability to use Tamil Nadu as a safe haven forced the movement into a corner.

Sri Lanka, however, made a critical operational error in stiffening its efforts to roll back LTTE’s influence. Focusing on the effort to eliminate LTTE and neglecting the
importance of gaining the support of the civilians in the battlespace, Sri Lanka’s tactics caused widespread civilian casualties and sent a new wave of Tamil refugees to India (Rao 1988, 433). Despite the frustration of Tamil militants living in Tamil Nadu, Operation Liberation renewed the sympathy of Indian Tamils who once again demanded that New Delhi intervene. As a result, India warned Colombo to stop the siege of the Jaffna Peninsula and to restore Tamil access to vital resources. When President Jayewardene refused to stop the blockade, Rajiv Gandhi authorized Indian ships to carry supplies across the Palk Strait; the Sri Lankan Navy, however, promptly turned those ships back. Unwilling to be denied, New Delhi then sent cargo aircraft, under fighter escort, to provide aerial deliveries of critical supplies.

Lacking outside support and unable to counter India’s actions without inviting a military invasion, Colombo capitulated (Muni 1993, 90-104; Rao 1988, 433). Three months later, India and Sri Lanka signed an Accord to end the crisis. This move, unlike the others, did not involve LTTE in the negotiations. Sri Lanka agreed to Tamil autonomy in the Northern and Eastern provinces so long as India agreed to offer military assistance should Colombo have difficulty disarming LTTE and reasserting its control over the island.

India’s role in the Accord, however, resulted in the deployment of over 50,000 Indian soldiers, known as the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) to disarm the LTTE and stop the violence in Tamil areas. India found that its forces were grossly under prepared for conducting counterinsurgency operations. The strain of operating in Sri Lanka led IPKF soldiers to commit the same strategic error as Sri Lanka’s forces; tactics that resulted in weakening LTTE’s forces caused widespread civilian casualties, discrediting
IPKF’s actions and bruising India’s prestige on the world stage. The failure of IPKF to disarm LTTE and reports of IPKF soldiers killing innocent civilians and raping innocent women turned India’s public against the policy and contributed to Rajiv Gandhi losing the election in 1988.

**Policy and Strategy**

India’s concern with Sri Lanka’s foreign policy became more acute after Jayewardene took over as Prime Minister in 1977. To ensure that Sri Lanka’s foreign policy did not interfere with India’s own security, New Delhi used the eruption of the ethnic crisis in 1983 to expand its policy (de Silva 1995, 113). India’s policy aimed to reverse Colombo’s efforts to involve extra-regional states (Muni 1993, 52) and ensure that the situation in Sri Lanka did not escalate to a point that would facilitate outside intervention (Rao 1988, 420). To preserve its image as a leader of the non-aligned movement and avoid giving outside states a reason to intervene, India’s policy had to work in a way that would force Sri Lanka to accommodate Tamil demands for autonomy without an overt use of force (Wilson 1988, 203). In addition, India wanted to avoid destroying or weakening Sri Lanka’s democratic government, despite its evolution to a sectarian, control-democracy (Muni 1993, 37-38).

To accomplish its objectives, India formulated a two-pronged policy. Overtly, India strong-armed its way into serving as an intermediary between the Tamils and the Sri Lankan government and used diplomacy to prevent outside states from supporting Sri Lanka’s government and gaining a foothold in south Asia (Muni 1993, 69-73; Hagerty 1991, 353-354). Covertly, India used its Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) to infiltrate and manipulate numerous Tamil militant groups—LTTE being the most capable
and influential—to make it more difficult for the Sri Lankan government to subjugate its ethnic Tamils and subsequently pressure Colombo into granting the Tamils greater autonomy (Wijemanne 1996, 32-33; Gunaratna 1993, 118, 342-343).

To provide India with enough leverage to control LTTE and other Tamil militant groups, RAW distributed its support in a way that would preclude a single Tamil militant group from emerging as a dominant force—stronger groups received less support while weaker groups received more (Wilson 1988, 204). India controlled Tamil sources for weapons and other necessary supplies to keep Tamil militants from looking for support from outsiders. India also kept the Tamils from looking elsewhere by providing adequate levels of support and training and keeping alive the possibility that India might intervene directly on the Tamils’ behalf (Wilson 1988, 203).

Although India supported several Tamil militant groups, LTTE quickly became India’s most dominant proxy. India’s policy, however, failed to keep all Tamil militant groups relatively equal in their capabilities and influence. With the help of India’s training and resources, LTTE steadily eradicated rival Tamil militant groups. Inside India, LTTE also engaged in widespread illicit activities such as drug running, smuggling, and terrorism (Jain Commission Interim Report, section 5 and 6) that likely provided some degree of independence.

62 The government of India does not publicly acknowledge the existence of RAW or that it assisted LTTE. Several sources, however, provide evidence of India’s involvement with LTTE and other Tamil militant groups. For example, Hellmann-Rajanayagam (1988, 610-611) makes a connection based on LTTE’s use of surface to air missiles. Gunaratna (1993, 37) describes the events surrounding an Indian spy, Coomar Narain, who sold documents detailing RAW’s operations in Sri Lanka to the French intelligence agency. Finally, the Jain Commission Report (India Today, 8 Dec 1997) publicly acknowledged the connection between India and LTTE during the Sri Lankan civil war.

63 All Tamil militant groups engaged in some form of illicit activities, LTTE just happened to be the most effective (Jain Commission Interim Report 1997).
Rajiv Gandhi’s landslide victory following his mother’s assassination helped reduce the domestic pressure on New Delhi to support Tamil militants. Confident the United States and United Kingdom would steer clear of the conflict (Rao 1988, 422), India shifted its policy to focus on finding a solution involving a united Sri Lanka. India’s desire to slow LTTE operations met with resistance because the Tamil militant group wanted to push even harder to bargain from the strongest position possible (Rao 1988, 432). The divergence created a rift and fostered a sense of growing animosity among LTTE members toward India. Although LTTE understood the importance of India’s support and participation and India’s interest in the region, LTTE began to see that India was motivated by its own interests and not by any humanitarian or human rights considerations (Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1988, 607-609).

Colombo also hindered India’s ability to shepherd negotiations. For two years—1984-1986—the Sri Lankan government would agree to concessions so long as it preserved some way of reversing them in the future. Sri Lanka continually stepped up military operations to counter LTTE’s efforts. Frustrated, Rajiv Gandhi returned to his mother’s—Indira Gandhi—policy of simultaneously engaging Colombo diplomatically and militarily (Gunaratna 1993, ch 4).

Although India had some success in getting Colombo to agree to Tamil autonomy, LTTE refused to accept Colombo’s concessions and instead engaged in inflammatory, terror operations to derail the negotiations. LTTE leaders rejected different proposals because they did not allow the North and East Tamil provinces to merge into a single region (Hagerty 1991, 354-355; Rao 1988, 425-427). India lost patience with LTTE and, with the cooperation of the Tamil Nadu government, initiated a
crackdown on Tamil militants on 8 Nov 1986. The act, however, was intended to
influence an upcoming meeting between Prime Minister Gandhi and President
Jayewardene in Bangalore; those arrested were released within a day and the weapons
that had been confiscated were later returned (Rao 1988, 429). The action suggests
India’s desire to control LTTE without cutting it off its ability to augment the diplomatic
pressure on Sri Lanka’s government.

When Sri Lanka began a concentrated assault against LTTE in January 1987 and
later blockaded the Jaffna Peninsula, India was pressured domestically to intervene (Rao
1988, 432-433). India still wanted to avoid direct military intervention, but it could not
afford to allow the Tamils to be slaughtered either. India used its military superiority to
put Sri Lanka on the defensive and sign an agreement that would end the violence. In
this round, however, India did not invite LTTE to the negotiations. To solidify the
agreement, India offered to provide security assistance to Sri Lanka’s government to
ensure LTTE’s compliance with the Accord. Initially, LTTE only partially complied and
then later began to use terror and violence to reassert its dominance in Tamil areas. India
deployed its peacekeeping forces, but the policy failed to bring LTTE under control and
resulted in India’s government pulling its forces out of Sri Lanka in 1989.

Costs and Benefits

In the previous section, I outlined the context of India’s involvement. Table 5.1
provides a quick overview of the different costs and benefits as described in Chapter 2.
In this section, I describe briefly the specific elements that produced each of the different
costs and benefits India encountered supporting LTTE in Sri Lanka.
Table 5.1 Costs and Benefits to India in Supporting LTTE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proxy Benefits</th>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>International Benefits</th>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>Domestic Benefits</th>
<th>Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Added Critical Skills</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Extended Influence</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Increased Commitment</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserved Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wasted Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>Decreased Commitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Costs to Control Proxy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Decreased Involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Int'l Support/Tolerance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hid/Obscured Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Avoided Unwanted Escalation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Target State Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased Int'l Support/Tolerance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Decreased Domestic Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Domestic Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>Decreased Target State</td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased Domestic Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased Commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Decreased Domain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wasted Resources

To pursue its interests in Sri Lanka, India provided resources and training to LTTE. Although this proved fruitful in pressuring Sri Lanka’s government into providing concessions to the Tamil population, LTTE also used those resources to pressure Colombo in a way that undermined India’s interests. For example, LTTE’s ability to use force to coerce the government provided it with a seat at the negotiating table, but LTTE also purposefully derailed negotiations pushing for a separate Tamil state and refused to accept autonomous Tamil districts that would not be conjoined (Muni 1993, 74-75).

The resources and training India gave to LTTE also required India to dispatch 50,000 troops to disarm LTTE and stabilize the Tamil regions in Sri Lanka. In addition to the costs of deploying and sustaining a sizeable force, the IPKF’s record of civilian casualties and charges of rape and corruption also damaged India’s prestige.

Finally, LTTE also used training and resources to eliminate other Tamil militant groups (O’balance 1989, 97)—a move that completely undermined India’s policy to balance the capabilities and influence of the different Tamil militant groups.
Increased Commitment (to the Proxy)

The inability of LTTE and other Tamil militant groups to withstand Sri Lanka’s assault in 1987 led to India’s direct intervention (de Silva 1991, 89; Muni 1993, 94-95). India not only had to airdrop supplies to circumvent Sri Lanka’s blockade of the Jaffna Peninsula and provide relief to the Tamils, it also had to prevent LTTE from losing its appearance as an effective counter to Sri Lanka’s armed forces. LTTE was the predominant hope of the Tamil people against Sinhalese domination (de Silva 1991, 90); keeping LTTE viable allowed India to preserve the possibility that Colombo would make concessions to the Tamil people.

Costly to Control Proxy

As the conflict progressed, India began to pressure both sides to negotiate and reach a settlement that involved a one-state solution. In light of LTTE’s dominant position among the Tamil militant groups, India made efforts to include the leaders of the organization in the negotiations (Jain Commission Interim Report, section 27.6). LTTE, however, did not desire a one-state outcome and sought to disrupt negotiations through the use of flagrant violence and taking an unwavering stance on secession. LTTE succeeded in derailing efforts on two different occasions. 64 Frustrated, India excluded LTTE from the negotiations in 1987 that resulted in the Indo-Lanka Accord.

To convince Colombo to sign the Accord, India provided a guarantee that it would help Sri Lanka reestablish peace and stability in Tamil regions if Colombo asked for assistance. Because Sri Lanka also had a Sinhalese insurgency operating in the

---

64 First was the conference in Thimpu, and then Bangalore at the SAARC Summit in November 1986.
south,\footnote{Jathka Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) was a political party that engaged in terror and anti-government propaganda to gain control of the capital. JVP relied heavily on pro-Sinhala rhetoric and used India’s intervention in 1987 to highlight the weakness of Jayewardene’s administration (Muni 1993, 101).} this particular provision of the accord allowed Sri Lanka to focus its efforts in the South while putting India on the spot to deal with the Tamil militants in the North and East.

LTTE delivered only a token number of weapons to Indian authorities and later began engaging the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) directly. India’s first experience policing LTTE proved shocking. When IPKF captured the first 17 LTTE soldiers, each took the cyanide capsule they wore around their neck. Twelve of them died. In retaliation, LTTE executed eight IPKF soldiers it had captured (Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1988, 604). What was believed to be a simple operation for Indian forces turned out to be a difficult and costly task in terms of resources and reputation. India’s forces faced with the difficult task of fighting an insurgency as a third party caused numerous civilian casualties and employed many of the same tactics they had criticized Sri Lankan forces of in previous years. New Delhi quickly found out that its forces were grossly under prepared and that it was now engaged in a conflict amongst an unfriendly population; a surprise considering that the same population had previously considered India as its protector (Rupesinghe 1988, 350).

\textit{Hid / Obscured Involvement (Internationally)}

India succeeded to hide its support to LTTE and other Tamil militants.\footnote{Judging from the articles written in 1988, India’s support of Tamil militant groups appears only suspect until the Jain Commission Report was released in 1997. For example, Oberst (1988, 186) comments that India’s role had been that of an intermediary and that India had been further drawn in because of the presence of LTTE bases in Tamil Nadu and the concern of Indian Tamils about the plight of Sri Lankan Tamils. Rupesinghe (1988, 347) only mentions that Indian intelligence had been suspected of supplying} Sri Lanka repeatedly accused India of intervening through its support of Tamil militants—
providing safe havens and training in weapons and tactics. Sri Lanka, however, was
unable to provide actual proof, leaving India with the ability to plausibly deny any
involvement and avoid some of the costs of outside intervention. Although Israel and
Pakistan did provide support to Sri Lanka’s government, India’s policy precluded direct
involvement from the United States, United Kingdom, and China (Wilson 1988, 205).
Further, the United States cut its support to Colombo due to its reluctance to make
concessions to and its mistreatment of the Tamil people (cite). Finally, veiling its support
to LTTE allowed relations—though strained—to remain open between India and Sri
Lanka (Wijemanne 1996, 39).

**Increased and Decreased Domestic Support**

India’s support for Sri Lanka’s Tamils placated the immense sympathy of the
Tamil population living in Tamil Nadu. LTTE’s illicit activities and its wanton use of
violence, however, wore out the group’s welcome in Tamil Nadu after a few years.
Support among Indian Tamils waned until early 1987 when Sri Lanka’s armed forces
renewed their efforts and pursued the eradication of LTTE. The unrestrained violence
perpetrated against Sri Lanka’s Tamils—especially the civilians—reinvigorated Tamil
sympathy. Once again, India’s efforts to save LTTE and provide relief to the suffering
Tamil population regained the support of the Indian Tamils.

**Increased Commitment (Domestically)**

Despite India’s efforts to keep all Tamil militant groups relatively equal in
capability and influence, LTTE emerged—through its efforts to eradicate rival Tamil
militant groups—as the dominant and most widely recognized symbol of Tamil interests

arms to LTTE. Chief Justice Jain was commissioned by the Indian Government to investigate the
circumstances behind the assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.
in Sri Lanka. Although Indian Tamils had grown disillusioned and weary of LTTE’s presence in Tamil Nadu, the extreme pressure put on Tamils during the blockade of the Jaffna Peninsula forced India to intervene. India could not cut-off LTTE for fear of appearing to have abandoned the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka; a perception that could have created unwanted civil unrest within India’s borders (Pfaffenberger 1988, 138).

Conditions and Their Effect on Costs and Benefits

This section focuses on the effects of the conditions highlighted in Chapter 2 on the accumulation of India’s costs and benefits from supporting LTTE in Sri Lanka. Under each proposition, I explain how the condition affected the applicable costs and benefits. At the end, I also provide a short discussion about the conditions aside from those in the eight propositions that explain the case’s missing costs and benefits.

Before proceeding, I want to point out that the conflict in Sri Lanka lasted nearly 5 years and that the conditions on the ground and in the international arena changed fluidly. One specific battle may have caused numerous civilian casualties or caused a particular state’s government to openly oppose the actions of India and LTTE. My intent, however, is to present a more broad, strategic view—to capture a broader perspective of the conditions present and explain their effects over the course of the conflict. This is not to diminish the effects of any single event; where appropriate I will address those as well. It is, however, important to weigh the conditions over the 15-year period to gain a proper understanding of their effects on the costs and benefits of India’s proxy war in Sri Lanka.

**Proposition 1 Civilian Proximity**

Civilian proximity increases international, domestic, and target state costs due to an increase in the probability of civilian casualties. It has the counter-effect of providing the proxy with the access necessary to influence and hide among the population.
Table 5.2: Effect of Civilian Proximity on India’s Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Civilian Proximity on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LTTE used the population to hide from Sri Lankan forces and used its frustration and low regard for Tamil citizens to incite Sinhalese revenge upon Tamil civilians. The atrocities committed by the Sri Lankan armed forces generated a great deal of scrutiny from India and other states in the international system; it also put more pressure on India to take action.

The irony of the situation was that the presence of civilians in the battlespace presented a significant challenge for IPKF. After only a short time, Indian forces began committing similar atrocities and inflicting casualties on Tamil civilians (de Silva 1991, 95). LTTE used civilians to shield their operations and incite violent and damning responses from Sri Lanka and IPKF. Strangely, LTTE’s tactics did not engender greater support for Sri Lanka or IPKF—instead it had the opposite effect and discredited efforts to disband LTTE.

Civilian proximity provides an additional consideration in this case. Because India provided refuge and training areas inside its own borders to LTTE and other Tamil
militant groups, India’s civilian population was subjected to an increase in violence between rival militant groups and other illicit activities (mentioned previously). India incurred the additional cost of having to police the activities of these groups inside its own border and ran the risk of souring the population’s support of the proxy.

**Proposition 2 Character of the conflict**

An ethnic conflict is less costly to influence than an ideological conflict because the lines between opposing sides are more divisive and outside support is less damaging to a proxy’s legitimacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Ethnic Conflict on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>-- ↓</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>-- ↑</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contradiction to this proposition, the ethnic character of the conflict increased the cost of India’s involvement for several reasons. First, the overwhelming majority of Sinhalese led the conflict into a state where both sides committed to a solution through violence rather than negotiation (Rupesinghe 1988, 346). Second, the Sinhalese people resented India’s support of the Tamils and saw India’s actions as forcing Sri Lanka to accept conditions that they otherwise would not. This played into the hands of Sinhalese opposition groups, such as the JVP (Jathka Vimukthi Peramuna) and Prime Minister Premedasa, and essentially rendered the Indo-Lanka Accord irrelevant after only a couple
of years. It also served to expand the divide between the two sides rather than bring them together—another factor that prolonged the violence and India’s need to continue its support of the Tamil cause. Third, it created a scenario where India’s and LTTE’s objectives differed so significantly—a one state solution versus secession—that the two sides end up fighting one another rather than working toward a similar goal.

There was an increase in domestic commitment costs due to the Tamil population in India—the costs of policing Tamil militants and the effects on political status based on their activities and the government’s inability or unwillingness to do anything about it. The disparity between Tamil and Sinhalese ethnic groups led to an increase in India’s commitment to LTTE. The character of the conflict created such a high level of enmity between the two ethnic groups that the Sri Lankan government, with support from the majority of the population, was willing to use such harsh tactics that LTTE could not effectively compete on a military level. The harsh treatment of the people did not erode Sri Lanka’s support among the Sinhalese people—a product of the ethnic character of the war.

Kaufmann’s notion of how the character of a conflict affect costs and benefits goes awry in this case for two reasons. First, the connection between Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils creates a situation where India faces serious domestic costs if it does not assist the Tamils; combined with the perception that supporting the Tamils in Sri Lanka can provide a means of pressuring the government in Colombo to alter its foreign policy (courting of the West) blinds India to the possibility that it can lose control of LTTE. Second, India underestimates LTTE. It does not properly monitor the militant group, especially when it is operating within India’s borders; this provides LTTE with the means
necessary to pursue its own objectives, independent of India’s desires. When the Sri Lankan armed forces increase the pressure beyond LTTE’s capabilities and drive the militant group to the brink of destruction, the sympathy of the Tamil population in India and the delicate political atmosphere inside India force Delhi to support LTTE regardless of the group’s aims.

Not only did LTTE block efforts to resolve the conflict diplomatically (raising India’s costs), it also created a situation where India could not broker an agreement without providing its own military forces as leverage to police LTTE and giving Colombo enough confidence to withdraw Sinhalese forces and make concessions to Tamil demands. As stated above, the cost of policing LTTE was stifling militarily and politically. In addition, the ethnic character of the conflict created a sense of enmity between India and LTTE that resulted in Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination—another cost that is almost impossible to measure.

**Proposition 3 International Norms**

Involvement in a proxy war that violates international norms raises an intervening state’s costs associated with interstate and domestic relationships. Exceptions to the norm of non-intervention include: when a government invites outside intervention, human rights violations within the target state or an inability to provide adequately for the safety and needs of the people; a proxy that is a recognized belligerent fighting for its freedom; if another state is already involved in the conflict taking place in the target state; and if the conflict in the target state spills over into a neighboring state.
Table 5.4: Effect of International Norms on India’s Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of International Norms on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

International norms, in a small way, affected the level of international support/toleration. India effectively used norms such as the right to intervene when human rights had been violated and the right to intervene when the conflict spills over as a means to cover its support of LTTE and other Tamil militant groups. The former was used when LTTE was on the brink of destruction during Operation Liberation; the latter provided India with the means to establish training camps and create safe havens for Tamil militant groups on Indian soil. Further, India’s political intervention as an active mediator in the conflict was justified by the fact that the conflict spilled over into Tamil Nadu.

India’s covert support of LTTE in many ways negates the effects of international norms, with the exception that India had to hide its involvement to avoid international condemnation and the associated costs of losing the support of the international community. Without proof of India’s direct intervention via LTTE, other states, such as the United States and United Kingdom, refused to intervene on Sri Lanka’s behalf. It did
not stop those two states from providing some support, but it did limit the support to a level that did not threaten the Sri Lankan government’s hold on the state.

Finally, international norms had a negligible effect the costs of gaining support in Sri Lanka due to the ethnic divide between the two sides. LTTE did not gain support from Sri Lankan Tamils because of international norms—it came from the ethnic bond and LTTE’s ability to serve as a symbol of Tamil rights. Although India’s airdrops in 1987 angered most Sinhalese citizens and undermined domestic support for the proposed Indo-Lanka Accord (de Silva 1991, 91), discontent was based on ethnic divides rather than international norms.

**Proposition 4 Domestic Willingness**
*If a domestic public is predicted to reject an interventionist policy, a proxy can lessen that resistance because it shares the burden, especially when it minimizes the intervening state’s commitment and casualties.*

**Table 5.5: Effect of Domestic Willingness on India’s Costs and Benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Domestic Willingness on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑↓↓↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE  (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑↑↑↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This case shows that domestic willingness, under certain domestic and international conditions, can push a government into supporting a proxy beyond what is desired. Tamils living in Tamil Nadu were very willing to commit India to the defense of
Tamils living in Sri Lanka and exerted tremendous pressure on New Delhi to intervene (Wilson 1988, 140; Sivarajah 1990, 140). The vulnerability of Indira Gandhi’s Congress Party to the politics of Tamil Nadu and the link between Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils combined to create enormous costs.

Under such intense domestic pressure, India failed to create the conditions necessary to control LTTE. Sympathy for the plight of Sri Lankan Tamils made it difficult to police the actions of Tamil militants in Tamil Nadu—the delicate political environment turned any action to control Tamil activities into a weapon for opposition parties to claim the policy was insensitive to the current situation in Sri Lanka. When LTTE resistance to negotiations led New Delhi to attempt to curb both its support and that from the local government in Tamil Nadu, Sri Lanka’s renewed efforts to destroy LTTE led to a resurgence of support among Indian Tamils (Sivarajah 1990, 145-148). LTTE and other Tamil groups continued to receive support, despite their efforts to spoil India’s attempts to foster negotiations and their illicit use of Indian territory to further their own agenda.

Proposition 5 Proxy Dependence
A high level of proxy dependence reduces agency costs, but increases the costs of supporting a proxy.
Table 5.6: Effect of Proxy Dependence on India’s Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Proxy Dependence on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although LTTE proved a capable, motivated, and relatively independent proxy, LTTE needed India. Without assistance from New Delhi and Tamil Nadu, LTTE would not have become such a potent force. The problem, however, was that India was unable to use LTTE’s dependence to gain the control necessary to reduce the costs of supporting its proxy.

India specifically kept the possibility of direct intervention open to prevent LTTE from seeking outside help (Wilson 1988, 203). India also used RAW to increase LTTE’s dependence by playing the different Tamil militant groups off one another and providing support in a way that kept them all relatively equal in their capabilities (Gunaratna 1993, 341). Four factors, however, contributed to India’s failure to cultivate LTTE’s dependence and gain the leverage necessary to control its proxy (Muni 1993, 79). First, India’s decision to give LTTE access to Tamil Nadu provided an additional means of gaining resources--mostly through smuggling and gun running. Second, the political situation in India and the sympathy of Indian Tamils allowed LTTE to exploit decision
makers at the local (Tamil Nadu) and national level and play them off each other (Gunaratna 1993, 2-3); LTTE managed to secure support despite its disregard for India’s interests due to the political vulnerability of elected officials. Third, LTTE expanded its international contacts. Not only did LTTE manage to gain equipment and supplies from foreign governments interested in profiting from arms sales, it also gained the support of a sympathetic Tamil diaspora that lobbied governments and provided additional resources. Fourth, India insistence that, in addition to TULF representatives, LTTE’s leader—Prabhakaran—participate in negotiations with Sri Lanka at Thimphu in 1986 forced both India and Sri Lanka to publicly recognize LTTE as a legitimate party with whom a settlement should be worked out (Muni 1993, 78). Having gained this recognition, LTTE now had a formal role to play and could begin to voice its own opinions with some legitimacy. LTTE’s participation also marginalized TULF’s moderate position and shifted the focus to the secessionist position of the militant groups.

Although LTTE’s low level of dependence did reduce the amount of personnel and equipment necessary to allow LTTE to pressure Sri Lanka’s government, it also raised India’s costs in three ways. First, LTTE’s relative independence negated the potential benefits of the group’s unique skills and its position to allow India to extend its influence beyond the diplomatic arena. Rather than pursuing India’s interests, LTTE used its skills and position to promote its own. Second, New Delhi’s lack of leverage allowed LTTE to derail negotiations (Rao 1988, 435) and added to the duration of the conflict—the longer the conflict, the more resources India had to provide to LTTE. Third, LTTE further raised India’s resource, commitment, and control costs due to its
effectiveness in resisting the IPKF’s efforts to bring the group into compliance after the Indo-Lanka Accord was signed.

**Proposition 6 Proxy Autonomy**

*Higher levels of autonomy can decrease the cost of supporting a proxy, but increase the costs of monitoring the proxy’s activities and may lead to an increase in agency, international, and domestic costs depending on the proxy’s behavior.*

**Table 5.7: Effect of Proxy Autonomy on India’s Costs and Benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Proxy Autonomy on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑↑↑↑</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LTTE was highly autonomous, a characteristic that saved India from having to invest a large number of personnel to ensure that LTTE could effectively pressure Sri Lanka’s government to make concessions to the Tamil people. India, however, failed to invest adequate resources to monitor LTTE and detect the duplicitous use of its support—pressuring Colombo into granting Tamil demands while eliminating the other Tamil militant groups. RAW also failed to provide other Tamil militant groups with enough assistance to compete with LTTE, an error that allowed LTTE to emerge as the primary symbol of Tamil resistance.

LTTE’s autonomy reduced India’s benefits from the group’s skills and influence; LTTE’s high-degree of autonomy meant that India lacked the ability to monitor LTTE’s
operations and limit the group’s self-interested behavior. LTTE’s autonomy also increased its ability to act effectively when India sent the IPKF to enforce the 1987 Accord. The IPKF was unprepared for the challenges of counterinsurgency warfare against a highly capable, highly autonomous adversary. Not only did the IPKF require greater resources, its inability to disarm LTTE quickly and effectively damaged India’s reputation as the regional hegemon. Further, IPKF’s inexperience combined with LTTE’s willingness to use civilians as leverage significantly increased the policy’s domestic costs after Indian soldiers began committing atrocities against Sri Lankan civilians, many of whom were Tamils. The failed policy later contributed to Rajiv Gandhi’s loss in the election in 1988.

**Proposition 7 Incentive Structure**

Behavior-based incentives work best when fighting a superior enemy, when the intervening state’s and the proxy’s goals conflict, when it is necessary to give the proxy a high degree of autonomy, or when the intervening state has a great deal of knowledge and familiarity with the proxy. Outcome-based incentives work under the opposite conditions.

**Table 5.8: Effect of Incentive Structure on India’s Costs and Benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Incentive Structure on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

175
Because LTTE was fighting for secession/autonomy and India wanted only to put additional pressure on Sri Lanka’s government, the behavior-based incentives India offered to LTTE equally served as outcome-based incentives. The domestic pressure on New Delhi also reduced India’s ability to use incentives to control LTTE’s operations. Giving LTTE a place to train, weapons with which to fight, and supplies to sustain its operations mollified Indian Tamils, but it failed to structure India’s support—and thereby its incentives—according to LTTE’s behavior. India continued to support LTTE despite its willingness to derail negotiations, its efforts to destroy other Tamil militant groups, its illicit activities inside India, and its decision to use violence against civilians as leverage against Sri Lanka (and later India). Any action that was taken to check LTTE operations was usually just a warning with no consequences. Although troublesome LTTE leaders were deported to Sri Lanka, weapons and equipment confiscated in retribution for undesirable behavior were usually returned within a very short period.

It was not until after the talks in Bangalore that India, and the state of Tamil Nadu, began placing restrictions on LTTE’s support (Jain Commission Interim Report, section 27). By this time, however, enough time, space, and resources had been given to allow LTTE to set up its own organization independent of India’s assistance. Like previous situations, however, India came to LTTE’s rescue when Sri Lanka’s armed forces back them into a corner on the Jaffna Peninsula.

**Proposition 8 Secrecy**

*Keeping a proxy war secret potentially lowers domestic and international costs, especially when the action would be considered unpopular domestically and clearly violates the international norm of sovereignty. Secrecy, however, severely constrains an intervening state’s ability to support its proxy and jeopardizes the proxy’s ability to gain relative superiority in the battlespace. Secrecy also can inflict higher costs due to blowback.*
Table 5.9: Effect of Secrecy on India’s Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Secrecy on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adding Critical Skills</td>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Extending Influence</td>
<td>Effect on Resource Costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates the proposed effect when the proxy war becomes public

India’s ability to veil its support to LTTE and put pressure on Sri Lanka was especially beneficial because it prevented Colombo from adding concrete evidence ability to its complaints of India’s intervention at the United Nations General Assembly. India’s support of LTTE and other militant groups remained plausibly deniable until after the Accord was signed in 1987.

Up until that time, India avoided international sanction and remained a potent force in bringing a resolution to the crisis. Although Sri Lanka suspected and accused India of providing support to Tamil militants, Colombo still agreed to the concessions New Delhi favored. India’s use of covert support to LTTE also denied Sri Lanka the ability to get the aid it needed from India’s global and regional rivals.

The secrecy of the affair, however, required India to use third parties to provide items such as weapons that were difficult to veil or deny. Secrecy also precluded India from using the necessary amount of resources to monitor the actions of LTTE. This complicated India’s ability to maintain control over their Tamil proxies because it
introduced ways for the militants to get access to weapons and circumvented India’s control over their actions (Muni 1993, 71-72).

India’s desire for secrecy also made it difficult to enable LTTE to compete with Sri Lanka’s improved counterinsurgency tactics. When Sri Lanka’s armed forces threatened LTTE’s survival in 1987, India had to abandon its covert support and provide overt support to prevent the group’s extermination.

**Missing Costs and Benefits**

To be thorough, I feel a short discussion of the conditions that led to the absence of certain costs and benefits is required. Although LTTE had critical skills that allowed them to put pressure on Sri Lanka’s government, the skills that provided India with the benefit of being able to pressure Sri Lanka’s government militarily also raised the costs of India’s involvement. LTTE used India’s resources to improve its bargaining position with Sri Lanka’s government—a move that stalled India’s efforts to broker a settlement. Further, Colombo accepted the 1987 Accord because India had isolated it from outside assistance and because the government found itself in a two front war with a Sinhalese insurgency operating in the South.

India’s inability to get LTTE to agree to the terms of the 1987 Accord and its inability to curb or influence LTTE military operations limited the amount of influence India could extend into Sri Lanka. Undoubtedly, India’s policy forced Colombo’s hand and created the impetus for the government’s concessions, but the instruments that caused those concessions were external to India’s support of LTTE. The only way LTTE could conceivably be construed as extending India’s influence was that it provided a means to protect Tamil interests without forcing India to commit its forces directly. This,
however, also failed and forced India to airdrop supplies into Jaffna. This signaled
India’s willingness to intervene directly and ultimately forced Colombo’s hand.

As explained above, India’s support of LTTE wasted resources rather than
conserved them. LTTE used India’s training and support to further its own cause and
block New Delhi’s efforts to stop the civil war. Making matters worse, LTTE’s actions
required India to deploy the IPKF to honor its commitment under the Indo-Lanka Accord.
The deployment and support of IPKF required significant resources—resources that were
wasted due to LTTE’s ability to flourish with India’s support earlier in the conflict. The
fact that Indira Gandhi’s Congress party was so dependent upon Tamil support and the
close relationship between Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils required India to become even
more committed to the conflict.

India’s use of LTTE did not increase or decrease international support/toleration.
New Delhi managed to keep states that could jeopardize India’s hegemonic position in
south Asia through the use of diplomacy and leveraging its importance to those countries.
India’s covert support of LTTE also helped prevent outside states from intervening—
without clear evidence of India’s violation of Sri Lankan sovereignty it, states interested
in taking action were denied an obvious justification for doing so. It did not, however,
stop the United States and the United Kingdom from providing support to Colombo
through unofficial channels. For example, the United States encouraged Israel to assist
the Sri Lankan government with counterinsurgency training; the United Kingdom did the
same sending former SAS commandos.

The close proximity and relationship between Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils
precluded India from hiding its support of LTTE from the Tamils living in Tamil Nadu.
LTTE’s behavior was overt enough that it created resentment among the people living in Tamil Nadu and allowed India to put pressure on LTTE. LTTE’s existence as the sole Tamil group capable of standing up to Sri Lankan forces and the sympathetic reactions of Indian Tamils toward the plight of Sri Lanka’s Tamils, however, prohibited India from undermining LTTE’s ability to operate effectively.

In this case, an additional cost emerges from the way India conducted negotiations with Sri Lanka. Because India focused on its own interests and neglected those of its proxy, it did not address one of the core issues of the conflict—the deep ethnic bias that precluded either side from committing to a negotiated settlement. India had to offer the IPKF as a guarantee to Sri Lanka’s government that the Tamils would honor the Accord. India did not, however, offer a similar guarantee to the Tamils. Although the policy addressed many Tamil concerns, LTTE felt that New Delhi had sold them out and chose to ignore the Accord (Hagerty 1991, 357).

**CONCLUSION**

The most important point revealed in this case is the importance of an intervening state retaining the ability to control its proxy. Several different conditions contributed to India’s inability to control LTTE. First, the sympathy of Indian Tamils and the vulnerability of India’s central government to domestic politics created a scenario where New Delhi could not effectively use incentives to control LTTE. Second, the secrecy of India’s support to LTTE and the decision to offer sanctuary to Tamil militant groups in Tamil Nadu provided LTTE with the resources necessary to conduct its operations independent of India’s support. Third, India’s failure to monitor LTTE’s operations, specifically those involving the elimination of rival Tamil militant groups, undermined
New Delhi’s plan to keep LTTE and other Tamil groups responsive to India’s direction. When Sri Lanka stood on the verge of defeating the Tamil insurgency, India felt it had to support LTTE to compliment its diplomatic efforts to secure Tamil autonomy from the Sri Lankan government and to mollify the Indian Tamils’ desire for direct intervention.

This case also strongly confirms the importance of considering agency costs when choosing to intervene in another state via proxy. The divergence between India’s and LTTE’s objectives, the inability of New Delhi to control LTTE’s actions through the use of dependence, limited autonomy, and behavior-based incentives both combined to make India’s policy extremely costly. The only overlap between India’s and LTTE’s objectives was to stop the violence being waged against Sri Lankan Tamils; it stopped promptly thereafter. India did not want a separate Tamil state—something LTTE adamantly demanded. The point to be made here is that India did not push to include LTTE in negotiations to settle the Tamil issue. Instead, New Delhi purposely excluded LTTE from the final negotiations. India also lacked the leverage to force LTTE to accept the terms of the Accord—LTTE was too independent and too autonomous. India’s offer to make LTTE’s leader, Prabhakaran, the chief minister of the Tamil regions and the ability to select the majority of the members of the administrative council failed to make amends (Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1988, 606).

According to Agency theory, India should have limited LTTE’s autonomy based on the disparity between each side’s objectives. Although a lower degree of autonomy would have added to India’s resource costs, it would have likely prevented LTTE from using India’s resources to destroy rival Tamil militant groups. More importantly, the
need for secrecy would have complicated India’s ability to reduce LTTE’s autonomy and would have likely undermined India’s diplomatic efforts.

Agency theory also suggests that India correctly used behavior-based incentives considering the conditions and the character of the relationship. In reality, however, India’s desire to negotiate a solution to the conflict and its failure to provide adequate guarantees that the Sri Lankan government would not later renege on its promise of autonomy apparently demonstrated that New Delhi had its own interests at heart. This led LTTE to pursue a more self-interested campaign designed to give it the strongest position from which to bargain with Colombo, regardless of the effects on the military aspect of India’s policy (Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1988, 610). Therefore, this case shows that when a proxy perceives that the intervening state has no interest in the proxy’s objectives, it may cause the proxy to move in a more self-interested direction. Under such conditions, an intervening state should either make concessions to its proxy’s objectives or ensure that it retains enough leverage over the proxy to prevent such self-interested behavior.

India, saddled with the enormous domestic pressure to support LTTE, could have reduced its costs if it had more carefully considered the disparity of its objectives compared to LTTE’s and had blended some outcome-based incentives into its support. This case suggests that when an intervening state’s ability to control its proxy’s is questionable, outcome-based incentives of some sort should be used to ensure the proxy remains sufficiently committed to the intervening state’s objectives.

An important question is how RAW lost control of LTTE. The support coming from Tamil Nadu is possibly one reason and its popularity among Sri Lankan Tamils is
probably another. I do not have the evidence necessary to explain how this happened. The effects, however, were devastating to India’s policy both militarily and politically. India could not control LTTE because it had eliminated other Tamil militant groups. The Tamils in Sri Lanka saw LTTE as its best hope for getting the autonomy they desired from Colombo. India could not allow LTTE to be destroyed by either the Sri Lankan armed forces or the IPKF because of the sympathy of the Tamils living in India. LTTE derailed negotiations, prolonging the conflict and then revolted against the Indo-Lanka Accord brokered in its absence; an act that drew India deeper into the conflict and visibly demonstrated India’s impotency in solving the crisis.

India’s policy of backing LTTE interfered with its ultimate goal of shaping Sri Lanka’s foreign policy. The problem was that India was negotiating with Jayewardene, but the President did not have the support of his Cabinet, nor did he have the power to push his policies through without some degree of support (Muni 1993, 74). India’s pressure had the unintended effect of undermining Jayewardene’s position and pushing public support into the hands of Sinhalese conservatives. When India threatened Jayewardene with intervention after the spike in violence in January 1987, his decision to sign the Indo-Lanka Accord was viewed by the Sinhalese public as a sign of weakness. LTTE’s behavior had already cast a sense of enmity into the Sinhalese population—granting LTTE and the Tamils autonomy resulted in Jayewardene losing control of the government and nullified the Indo-Lanka Accord.

This case also reveals another condition that I neglected to consider in Chapter 2. The widespread support LTTE and other Tamil militant groups received from sources other than India’s central government suggests that a significant consideration in a
conflict with strong ethnic overtones is the size, location, commitment, and resources of the proxy’s diaspora. If a diaspora can provide enough resources to reduce the proxy’s dependence, then it is possible that the agency costs will go up. A diaspora can also influence outside states to intervene. For example, Tamil expatriates in the United States lobbied decision makers to support Tamil secession in exchange for access to Trincomalee harbor (Muni 1991, 119-120).

As a final point, India’s decision to fuel ethnic divides to accomplish its foreign policy reflected a lack of sensitivity to one of the most intractable problems in the region—ethnic fragmentation. New Delhi’s decision to use LTTE and other Tamil militant groups to influence Sri Lanka’s foreign and domestic policy did not adequately consider the effect it might have on the ethnic divides within its own borders (Hagerty 1991, 362). India overplayed the ethnic divide to gain favor with its domestic public, a move that played into the hands of LTTE and significantly raised the costs of India’s policy.
CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

In the beginning of this study, I suggested that the apparent tendency of strategists and policy makers to focus more on the benefits of proxy war warranted a systematic treatment of proxy war’s benefits and costs. Therefore, this study set out to define the costs and benefits of proxy war and explain how certain conditions affect them. A secondary goal has been to provide strategists and policy makers with a better understanding of the potential benefits and costs of engaging in a proxy war based on existing conditions. In this final chapter, I have two objectives: to summarize the effects and relative weights of specific conditions on costs and benefits and to summarize some lessons learned that will hopefully guide strategists and decision makers should they choose a proxy war policy.
EFFECTS AND WEIGHTS OF CONDITIONS

Proposition 1 Civilian Proximity
Civilian proximity increases international, domestic, and target state costs due to an increase in the probability of civilian casualties. It has the counter-effect of providing the proxy with the access necessary to influence and hide among the population.

Table 6.1 Summary of Effect of Civilian Proximity on Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Civilian Proximity on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Adding Critical Skills</td>
<td>↑ --</td>
<td>↓↓↑</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Extending Influence</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Resource Costs</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Costs</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Commitment Costs</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support/Toleation</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Costs to Control</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Int'l Support</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Hiding Involvement</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Costs of Unwanted Escalation</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Costs of Support in Target State</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Hiding Involvement</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Domestic</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Domestic Support</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Externally Maintained Proxy</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all three cases, the proximity of civilians in the battlespace did lead to a high-degree of civilian casualties in every case, but it did not produce the expected effects. Table 6.1 shows that, despite high civilian casualty rates, civilian proximity did not increase costs as expected. International costs remained low or unaffected due to the importance of the intervening state’s economy (South Africa and United States) or concerns about its influence in the region (South Africa and India). Similarly, domestic costs were either unaffected or the opposite of expected. The domestic response to civilian casualties did not prevent the United States from continuing its previously secret
proxy war policy in Laos. In Angola, South Africa’s government experienced a small *boost* in domestic support due to its affiliation with UNITA. Finally, the killing of Tamil civilians actually increased domestic support—albeit almost exclusively among Indian Tamils—for India’s policy of supporting LTTE.

In two cases—UNITA and LTTE—proximity to civilians did, as expected, allow the proxy to deny access to the population and further shore up public support in the target state. More importantly, civilian proximity that allows an intervening state and its proxy to build a relationship with a significant portion of the population can provide an enormous benefit because it raises the adversary’s costs to conduct operations. For example, Cuban and FAPLA forces struggled to operate in southern Angola because it had to devote considerable attention to rearguard actions and could not easily isolate UNITA forces. In another example, India’s difficulty in isolating LTTE from Tamil civilians led its forces to commit similar atrocities as the Sri Lankan government’s forces, creating a high level of scrutiny that strengthened LTTE’s position both internationally (greater recognition as a legitimate belligerent) and within Sri Lanka (Tamils no longer trusted India and more strongly supported LTTE).

Table 6.1 shows two other notable effects. In Angola and Laos, the intervening state incurred additional resource costs because it chose to provide services and support to the civilians connected to its proxy. In Laos, those costs came in the form of providing for the care and feeding of the families of the Hmong soldiers. In Angola, similar provisions were extended to the Ovimbundu people. Providing those extra resources, however, had the corresponding effect of increasing the proxy’s dependence and reducing control costs.
The effects in Sri Lanka, however, were different; the proximity of civilians added to India’s resource and commitment costs. LTTE gained support from the Tamils in Sri Lanka and India—a factor that contributed to its independence from India. This lack of leverage left India unable to compel LTTE to comply with the Indo-Lanka Accord and required the deployment of Indian soldiers to disarm LTTE. The presence of Tamil civilians only confounded India’s efforts and raised its costs because LTTE still maintained the support of Sri Lankan Tamils and used the population as a shield to offset India’s overwhelming military advantage.
Proposition 2 Character of the Conflict
An ethnic conflict is less costly to influence than an ideological conflict because the lines between opposing sides are more divisive and outside support is less damaging to a proxy's legitimacy.

Table 6.2 Summary of Effect of Conflict Character on Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of the Character of the Conflict on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA-UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The argument that cheaper and easier to influence than ideological conflicts due to the absence of a competition for loyalty among the people living in the target state (see Kaufmann’s argument in Chapter 2) is oversimplified. First, ethnic conflicts are not always about efforts to secede and ideological conflicts are not always about gaining control of the government—the reverse can also be true (e.g. UNITA did not want to secede and the Pathet Lao wanted to gain control of territory and get control of the
Ethnic conflicts can increase resource and commitment costs because it reduces the willingness of the two sides to negotiate—a point shown specifically in the India-LTTE case in Table 6.2. The ethnic character of the conflict in Sri Lanka raised India’s resource costs because it prolonged the conflict and lowered its prestige as the regional hegemon because it struggled to bring the two sides to an agreement. In addition, ethnic conflicts may incite a competition between different factions—a condition that can affect an intervening state’s costs and benefits. As I mentioned previously, competing proxies may provide an additional measure of control, but only if the intervening state maintains the ability to play one off the other. LTTE’s elimination of rival Tamil militant groups ultimately limited India’s ability to control it.

Second, ethnic and ideological conflicts have different effects when an intervening state desires a negotiated settlement. Ethnic conflicts are not easily (cheaply) resolved via bargaining. Neither UNITA nor LTTE were involved in the bargaining process that “ended” the two conflicts and both groups, unsatisfied with the outcome and distrustful of the other side, continued to fight. Although South Africa did not incur costs due to UNITA’s decision to continue the conflict in Angola, India suffered heavy costs due to its commitment to the negotiation process and its decision to provide its own forces to enforce it. Ideological conflicts have more room for compromise. If the proxy wants to be a part of the government and has the capability—militarily and politically—to pressure the existing government to concede to its participation, then the conflict should cost less. The US-Hmong case demonstrates the folly of backing a proxy in an ideological conflict without the ability or desire to influence the political process. When backing a politically weak proxy, an intervening state should realize that any long-term
solution is not going to involve its proxy and there should be no intention of influencing affairs in the target state beyond the short-term.

**Proposition 3 International Norms**

Involvement in a proxy war that violates international norms raises an intervening state’s costs associated with interstate and domestic relationships. Exceptions to the norm of non-intervention include: human rights violations within the target state or an inability to provide adequately for the safety and needs of the people; a proxy that is a recognized belligerent fighting for its freedom; if another state is already involved in the conflict taking place in the target state; and if the conflict in the target state spills over into a neighboring state.

### Table 6.3 Summary of Effect of International Norms on Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of International Norms on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effect on Benefit of Extending Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA-UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 6.3, international norms had a limited effect on the intervening states’ costs. None of the cases showed any affect on costs to gain support in the target state—two of which are attributable to the ethnic character of the conflict (RSA-UNITA and India-LTTE). South Africa suffered only minor costs due to unwanted escalation when the Soviet Union and Cuba both justified their involvement based on the presence
of South African Defense Forces in Angola. Further, South Africa’s high-level of military and economic independence—resulting mostly from its status as a pariah in the international community—and the importance of its economy to Western Europe both served to insulate Pretoria from other international costs. In Sri Lanka, the spillover of Tamil refugees into India’s borders and India’s declaration that the conflict was a regional matter did help prevent outside states from joining in and escalating the conflict.

The cases do not, however, provide sufficient evidence to claim that the exceptions to the norm of non-intervention listed in Proposition 3 were sufficient to reduce international costs. Instead, the evidence suggests that the real benefit of a proxy in this sense is that it gives states that could inflict costs on an intervening state an excuse to look the other way. For example, Moscow used the fact that the United States had not openly admitted that it had been supporting the Hmong to avoid getting involved in Laos after 1962. Therefore, this particular area requires further research to determine the effects of the proposed exceptions.
**Proposition 4 Domestic Willingness**

*If a domestic public is predicted to reject an interventionist policy, a proxy can lessen that resistance and reduce domestic costs because it shares the burden, especially when it minimizes the intervening state’s commitment and casualties.*

**Table 6.4 Summary of effect of Domestic Willingness on Costs and Benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Domestic Willingness on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA-UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both the Laos case and the Angolan case show that when a domestic public believes that there is a threat to the state’s interests and that support is being given to a group fighting to achieve those interests, costs attributable to domestic willingness remain relatively low (see Table 6.4). Costs are driven even lower when there is no connection between the intervening state’s domestic public and the groups involved in the conflict. The Sri Lankan case, however, shows that a strong affiliation between an intervening state’s domestic public and the proxy can have dramatic effects.

India’s costs skyrocketed due to the connection between Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils; those costs became even more inflated due to the government political
vulnerability to the Tamil population. The connection between Indian Tamils and India’s proxy adversely affected India’s ability to implement control measures on LTTE’s actions. Tamil sympathy inside India contributed to LTTE’s independence from support from the Indian government and left New Delhi without the leverage necessary to force LTTE to agree to the proposed settlement or comply with the Indo-Lanka Accords.

**Proposition 5 Proxy Dependence**

*A high level of proxy dependence reduces agency costs, but increases the costs of supporting a proxy.*

---

**Table 6.5 Summary of Effect of Proxy Dependence on Costs and Benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Proxy Dependence on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA-UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ensuring a high level of proxy dependence minimizes agency costs—those incurred when a proxy takes advantage of an intervening state’s support—as expected. In two of the cases—Angola and Laos—dependence overwhelmed the proxy’s ability to pursue self-interests—the UNITA case is especially compelling in this respect due to its
high degree of objective divergence with South Africa. The cases also show that the ability to control the proxy’s operations offset the increase in resource and commitment costs.

South Africa’s strategy is particularly interesting because it demonstrates how to maximize control through proxy dependence without incurring high resource or commitment costs. Pretoria managed UNITA’s dependence; by isolating UNITA’s ability to procure additional support and providing a mix of military and service (health and education) oriented resources, South Africa avoided the need to invest in additional means of control. The small increases seen in Table 6.5 came from the need for SADF to rescue UNITA when it became overextended. The lesson is that high dependence based on tightly controlled levels of support can endanger a proxy’s survival and that an intervening state must be prepared to take action to prevent its proxy from getting eliminated.

An additional consideration that emerged in this study is how certain types of support can have unintended effects on a proxy’s dependence. India’s decision to provide sanctuary and training bases inside its own borders eroded India’s ability to maintain LTTE’s dependence. From this, it appears that an intervening state should confine its proxy to the battlespace, or at the very least, in the immediate proximity and deny it unfettered access to the outside world. In Laos, the United States kept the Hmong highly dependent and the landlocked nature of the Hmong kept it from seeking outside support. An additional factor was that the Hmong were relatively unsophisticated—especially compared to LTTE. South Africa was not able to keep Savimbi from traveling around the world to drum up support for his cause, but Pretoria had the fortune that the
other major contributor to UNITA’s operations—the United States—wanted essentially
the same thing and was not going to provide resources in a way that would remove
UNITA’s dependence on South Africa.

*Proposition 6 Proxy Autonomy*

*Higher levels of autonomy can decrease the cost of supporting a proxy, but increase the
costs of monitoring the proxy’s activities and may lead to an increase in agency,
international, and domestic costs depending on the proxy’s behavior.*

**Table 6.6 Summary of Effect of Proxy Autonomy on Costs and Benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Proxy Autonomy on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑↓</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA-UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↓↓</td>
<td>↑--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 6.6, all three cases support the idea that resource and
commitment costs fluctuate indirectly with increasing levels of proxy autonomy—higher
autonomy means lower costs. The cases also suggest that if an effective control measure
is in place, proxy autonomy should be as high as possible and that limiting a proxy’s
autonomy becomes vital when the objectives of the intervening state and its proxy are
highly divergent.

196
Regrettably, this study did not have the variation necessary to determine if autonomy alone is sufficient to minimize agency costs. A high level of proxy dependence overwhelmed the effect of proxy autonomy in the Angola and Laos cases and the lack of LTTE’s dependence combined with its high degree of autonomy to raise India’s costs in terms of resources, commitment, and control. Therefore, the only conclusion I draw from this study is that proxy autonomy complements other forms of control and likely serves as an insufficient means to influence costs and benefits.

**Proposition 7 Incentive Structure**

Behavior-based incentives work best when fighting a superior enemy, when the intervening state’s and the proxy’s goals conflict, when it is necessary to give the proxy a high degree of autonomy, or when the intervening state has a great deal of knowledge and familiarity with the proxy. Outcome-based incentives work under the opposite conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Incentive Structure on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA-UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This study reveals three important conclusions about incentive structure. First, incentive structure is likely insufficient in maintaining control over a proxy. Although UNITA remained concerned with South Africa’s perception of its performance and chafed at the difference between its objectives (control of the government in Luanda) and those of Pretoria (get Cuban forces out of Angola and provide the time and space necessary to shape conditions in Namibia), UNITA’s main fear was losing South Africa’s support. Without UNITA’s near-complete dependence on South Africa, it is questionable whether behavior-based incentives would have been sufficient to ensure that UNITA did not widen the scope of its operations to better influence events in Luanda.

Second, incentive structure and objective divergence have a particularly important relationship. In the absence of an effective control mechanism such as dependence, the relationship between incentive structure and objective divergence may not reflect that described in Agency theory. LTTE’s perception that India was willing to negotiate on the conditions of Tamil autonomy and was not interested in a separate Tamil state led LTTE to behave in a more self-interested fashion. It is possible that India could have avoided this situation if it had more carefully considered the disparity of its objectives compared to LTTE’s and had blended some outcome-based incentives into its support. Therefore, when an intervening state’s ability to control its proxy’s is questionable, outcome-based incentives, or at least of blend of the two, could be used to keep the proxy committed to the intervening state’s objectives.

Third, an intervening state should carefully consider both the character of the conflict as a whole and its proxy’s role in the conflict. The Hmong were not engaged in a fight for control of the government—they were fighting for territory and the preservation
of their way of life. The US use of behavior-based incentives arguably had little effect on its own, but it complemented the US policy because it avoided any additional commitment in the form of outcome-based incentives.

**Proposition 8 Secrecy**

Keeping a proxy war secret potentially lowers domestic and international costs, especially when the action would be considered unpopular domestically and clearly violates the international norm of sovereignty. Secrecy, however, severely constrains an intervening state’s ability to support its proxy and jeopardizes the proxy’s ability to gain relative superiority in the battlespace. Secrecy, however, can inflict higher costs due to blowback.

Table 6.8 Summary of Effect of Secrecy on Costs and Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Secrecy on Costs and Benefits</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA-UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India-LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates the proposed effect when the proxy war becomes public

As expected, Table 6.8 shows that covert support increased benefits associated with the proxy’s skills and its ability to extend an intervening state’s influence. Unexpectedly, however, covert support did not increase costs when the policy became public; states seem reluctant to act if an intervening state maintains some degree of
plausible deniability and, as mentioned earlier, when the intervening state is integral to those states’ other interests.

Domestically, it appears that secrecy may complement domestic willingness—based on a proxy shouldering a significant amount of the burden—because the public does not know the extent of the government’s involvement and likely perceives that the proxy is doing the majority of the fighting. The US case is particularly compelling here, but would require further investigation to parse out the effects of the Vietnam War and the possibility that events in Laos received less attention. Although the proxy-related benefits (adding critical skills and extending influence) increase as expected, there is also a corresponding increase in commitment costs. The burden of secrecy means that an intervening state must work much harder to overcome the proxy’s weakness relative to the adversary and will be at a significant disadvantage if the adversary has fewer limits on its ability to escalate the conflict.

An additional consideration that became evident in the course of my research is the potential difficulty in maintaining policy coherence from formulation through to execution. For example, it appears that the CIA kept some aspects of its operations in Laos hidden from policy makers.67 During the execution of a covert policy, oversight will likely be very difficult and it is possible the government may not have a full understanding or control of what is going on at the operational or tactical level—both of which could adversely affect the efficacy of the policy.

---

67 As I mentioned in Chapter 3, it is impossible to discern how much members of Congress and the President actually knew about operations in Laos.
LESSONS LEARNED

To minimize costs and maximize benefits, an intervening state must strike a delicate balance between supporting and controlling its proxy. Too much support and the proxy may become too independent; a condition that likely leads to greater self-interest, higher costs, and less influence in the target state. Too little support and the proxy may fail to accomplish the intervening state’s objectives. Knowing how much support and control requires a great deal of insight about the target state, the proxy, the intervening state’s role in the international system, and the intervening state’s domestic public. Obviously, having an understanding of those four factors is difficult, but engaging in proxy war without them could prove disastrous. Armed with that knowledge, the following guidance should significantly improve an intervening state’s ability to manage favorably a proxy war’s costs and benefits.

The first lesson learned is that the correct balance of control and support hinges on applying the right policy choices to the existing conditions. Agency theory aptly describes the proxy-specific conditions that are most conducive to a proxy war policy: a proxy that has similar objectives, is highly capable with respect to the adversary, remains dependent on the intervening state for support, and is too isolated—geographically and socially—to establish and/or capitalize on outside sources of support are all conditions that favor an intervening state’s ability to minimize costs and maximize benefits.

If the proxy’s objectives closely match those of the intervening state, then costs are likely to be low and benefits high—there is no incentive for the proxy to cheat, the intervening state does not have to offer incentives to get the proxy to do something it does not really want to do, and the intervening state saves the cost of having to
implement strict measures to monitor and control its proxy. This, however, rarely happens. What does happen, on occasion, is that an intervening state and its proxy have convergent objectives in one particular area—e.g. both the United States and the Northern Alliance wanted the Taliban out of power—but in the larger scheme their objectives diverge dramatically—e.g. the United States wanted a government in Afghanistan capable of governing its territory and the Northern Alliance wanted to put an end to Pashtun domination in Kabul. Not surprising, a lack of control measures combined with divergent objectives has adverse effects on an intervening state’s costs and benefits. For example, LTTE significantly raised the cost of India’s policy in Sri Lanka because of its relative independence, high-degree of autonomy, and widely divergent objectives. Therefore, an intervening state should carefully consider and identify its own objectives and then identify those of its proxy. If that is not possible, then an intervening state should ensure that its policy permits greater control.

Although this study focused on control as a function of dependence, autonomy, and incentive structures, these are not the only means of controlling a proxy. The India-LTTE case suggests that supporting multiple proxies and playing them off one another could persuade a proxy to avoid pursuing its own interests. Having additional proxies does, however, add to the complexity of the policy and may result in devastating consequences. For example, the government in Pakistan backed several different Mujahideen groups in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation in the 1980s; Islamabad structured its support to prevent any one group from taking control of the resistance. Although Pakistan succeeded in getting rid of the Soviet threat and gaining (eventually) a

---

68 The only case that comes close is when Liberia supported the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone. Both sides wanted access to Sierra Leone’s valuable resources; the only difference being that they wanted control of those resources for themselves rather than for the other.
government in Kabul that reduced one of Pakistan’s primary regional security concerns, the long-term result—referring to the rise of the Taliban and the events of 11 September 2001—has placed a significant burden on Islamabad both domestically and internationally.69

The second lesson learned is that a high-level of proxy dependence, appears to provide sufficient control to counteract the negative effects of having divergent objectives. For example, UNITA’s desire to gain control of the government in Angola did not interfere with South Africa’s objective of maintaining control of the border region between Angola and Namibia—UNITA was too dependent to risk pursuing interests that differed from Pretoria’s.

Cultivating dependence requires two simultaneous actions: providing enough support to enable the proxy to accomplish the intervening state’s objectives without the excess that can lead to self-interested behavior and—as shown in both the US-Hmong and RSA-UNITA cases—isolating the proxy from sources of outside support. India’s failure to isolate LTTE from outside assistance—including the influential and affluent Tamil diaspora—significantly weakened New Delhi’s ability to control its proxy. States should strongly consider conditions, such as a strong ethnic or ideological affiliation or if the target state’s geography provides open and easy access, which may challenge their ability to control its proxy.

A final lesson is that if an intervening state desires some form of political reconciliation or negotiation, then it must take the appropriate action based on the character of the conflict. If the conflict is ideological, an intervening state must ensure

69 For a more complete description of Pakistan’s involvement in Afghanistan and its regional security concerns during that period see Groh 2006; Groh 2007.
that its proxy has the political support necessary to convince the other side to negotiate; the Hmong’s lack of political influence meant that the United States would have likely struggled to broker a favorable agreement in Laos. If the conflict’s character is predominantly ethnic, minimizing costs requires putting the proxy on a tight leash. India incurred higher costs because LTTE engaged in terror operations that made it almost impossible for the Sri Lankan government to negotiate without looking weak. South Africa’s ability to control UNITA, however, allowed it to avoid similar costs; but once South Africa revoked its support, UNITA began engaging in terror operations that would have crippled Pretoria’s ability to reach an acceptable compromise in Angola. In an ethnic conflict, it is imperative that an intervening state possesses the level of control necessary to ensure that its proxy does not derail negotiation efforts. If control measures are weak, an intervening state should consider offering its proxy some outcome-based incentives and including its proxy in the bargaining process.

CONCLUSION

Does proxy war warrant the current benefit-focused view expressed in US security documents? Intervening via proxy definitely has the potential to reduce costs and increase benefits, yet there are pitfalls associated with proxy war that should be more carefully reflected when formulating future security strategy. If events unfold in a way that limits a direct military response, more attention should be paid to the character of the conflict, the motivation of the proxy, and the potential for putting in place adequate control measures. If there are doubts or unknowns in these three areas, serious consideration should be given to avoiding a proxy option no matter how enticing it may appear.
APPENDIX 1
EMPIRICAL STUDY OF PROXY WAR’S COSTS AND BENEFITS

To further support the costs and benefits developed in this Chapter 2, I conducted a study of all 28 proxy wars to identify those incurred in each case and to see if any of the theoretical costs and benefits failed to apply to actual cases. The specific details of those cases can be found below. Table A2.1 summarizes the costs and benefits from each case.

China / Viet Minh (Indochina 1949)

Following World War II, China considered US involvement in Indochina, Korea, and Taiwan a growing threat to its security. The size and immediacy of the US response to North Korea’s attack surprised China and convinced its leaders that America had aggressive intentions in Asia (Jien 1993). Inside Indochina, many indigenous Vietnamese chafed at France’s attempt to regain control of its colony after Japanese forces withdrew in 1945. An armed insurgency, the Viet Minh, arose from within the colony to fight against French authority. Although US involvement in Indochina was limited to the supply of financial and military aid to France, it was in effect France’s primary means of exerting its influence in the region. Under the circumstances, both China and the Viet Minh had a common interest in thwarting French, and more importantly US, encroachment (Zhang 1992; Jian 1996).

In 1950, China began assisting Viet Minh forces. Chairman Mao Zedong instructed his advisors to help the Viet Minh organize and train a formal army and assist planning and conducting operations against the French. The Viet Minh’s primary resources were limited to manpower and a tremendous ability to suffer hardship. China’s strategy was to spread French forces and allow the Viet Minh to concentrate its forces in order to overcome deficiencies in training and equipment (Windrow 2004). China also
integrated its own commanders into the Viet Minh’s forces (battalion, regiment, and division) to provide much needed leadership (Zhai 1993) and ensure its strategy would be followed (Jien 1993).

With Chinese guidance and support, the Viet Minh made significant gains over the next three years. Although there were also some setbacks, the Chinese and Viet Minh realized that their patient strategy was working. When the French occupied Dien Bien Phu in 1953, China and the Viet Minh changed their strategy and began preparing for a large battle to strangle French presence in northern Indochina. China provided the resources necessary, but the Viet Minh’s relentless will made victory possible (Windrow 2004). The French surrendered on 7 May 1954 and the Geneva conference began discussing the Indochina problem the next day; this put the Vietnamese in a very strong bargaining position. China, however, needed to temper Vietnamese demands to accomplish its own objectives.

The relationship between China and the Viet Minh began to fall apart toward the end of the war. China’s desires did not match the Viet Minh’s objective of liberating all of Indochina. China’s objectives had a much longer view. First, China wanted some stability along its borders to allow it to focus on its domestic situation. Second, China wanted to avoid drawing the United States into the conflict, and therefore pushed for a separation of Vietnam and for separate agreements regarding the situations in Laos and Cambodia. China even ordered its military advisors to prevent the expansion of military operations in Indochina to prevent unwanted provocation and escalation. Third, China felt that its open support of peaceful coexistence would allow it to expand its prestige on the international scene. Fourth, China wanted to prevent Vietnam from emerging as the
new communist center in East Asia (Jian 1993). Under the pressure of both the Chinese and Soviet delegations, the delegation representing the Viet Minh agreed to withdraw its forces from Cambodia and Laos, allow those areas to be settled separately, and to partition Vietnam.

At the end of the Geneva Conference, China had ultimately achieved nearly all its strategic objectives. A communist North Vietnam and communist controlled regions of northern Laos provided a strategic buffer on China’s southern borders. China’s presence at the conference and its influence over the Vietnamese delegation improved its standing in the world and opened up new contacts with France and Great Britain. Most importantly, China had finally gained recognition as a world power (Jian 1993). China’s support for the division of Vietnam, however, added to Hanoi’s reservations about the trustworthiness of its ally and highlighted that Beijing would readily sacrifice Vietnam’s interests for its own. In addition, North Vietnam began distancing itself from China and sought closer ties to the Soviet Union.

United States / Castillo Armas (Guatemala 1953)

The growth of a communist movement in Guatemala and its government’s decision to enact a radical land reform policy worried Washington that Moscow might soon gain a foothold in the Western Hemisphere (Schneider 1959). To prevent a Soviet beachhead in the western hemisphere, President Eisenhower authorized the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to organize and support a proxy force to take down the left-leaning Arbenz regime (Holland 2005). The CIA began cultivating a proxy force in

---

70 Piero Gleijeses (1992) disputes the idea that the Soviet Union had intended to use Guatemala as a way to gain a foothold in the Western Hemisphere. According to Gleijeses, the Soviet Union had little interest in Guatemala; it was Arbenz in Guatemala who appeared to form a connection with the Soviet Union. Moscow, however, rebuffed Guatemala until Stalin’s death in 1953. Gleijeses notes that Soviet interest in Latin America began to increase after Arbenz had been cast out (188-189).
Nicaragua under the leadership of Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas and embarked upon an intense anti-Arbenz propaganda program to undermine the government’s authority and intensify civil unrest. The CIA provided funds, supplies, weapons, training, and air assets to Armas’ forces. With only 150 armed guerillas, Armas entered Guatemala from neighboring Honduras and got bogged down in a fight with Guatemalan forces just six miles across the border. US radio broadcasts painted an imaginary picture of a large force closing in that was made even more real by aircraft dropping leaflets on the capital. The US desire for secrecy limited the amount of support it could provide Armas, but fortunately Arbenz had been sufficiently intimidated to resign (Immerman 1982).

Despite its success in bringing down Arbenz, Washington suffered costly setbacks. Armas had initially been easy to control, but once in power it became exceedingly difficult (Cullather 1999, 117). Armas also proved to be an inept leader and administrator. Civil unrest resumed almost immediately following his ascension to power. Armas, unable to garner domestic support, instituted repressive domestic policies to maintain his hold on the country. Within two years, Guatemala’s domestic political scene spun out of control. Communist cells flourished. After government agents fired on a crowd demonstrating outside the presidential palace and killed six student protesters, Armas suspended all civil liberties and declared that his government was under siege.

Inside the United States, President Eisenhower’s reputation upheld the administration’s claims of innocence regarding illicit action in Guatemala. Further, the US media left the American public oblivious printing mostly anti-communist propaganda and portraying Arbenz as an ardent communist intent on turning Latin America against the United States (Day 2000). The US attempt at secrecy in the international arena,
however, failed. Prior to Arbenz’ overthrow, Guatemala informed the UN Security Council that the United States was interfering in its domestic affairs. Surprisingly, Great Britain and France joined the Soviet Union in stating that the matter should be reviewed further. Furious, Eisenhower informed the leaders of France and Great Britain that their lack of support in Guatemala would quickly lead to a US response in North Africa and the Suez (Immerman 1982). Both France and Britain backed down.

Washington also received strong criticism from the other states in Latin America and added to the already escalating anti-American sentiment in the region. In addition, the United States received strong disapproval from Dag Hammerskjold, the popular UN Secretary General, and from the media in the Great Britain, France, and Germany (Immerman 1982).

Although the United States accomplished its initial goal of removing Arbenz from power without having to resort (or pay for) an overt intervention, Guatemala languished in instability and civil conflict. To keep the country from flying apart, the United States had to keep a hand in its affairs. In 1966, the United States sent military advisors and weapons to help the government quell the violence that had led to the loss of two US ambassadors and two US military attachés. The lack of evidence that Arbenz had been closely affiliated with the Soviet Union, the repressive and corrupt policies of Castillo Armas, and the conclusion that the United States removed a legitimately elected government from power all paint a negative picture of US policy in Latin America.

---

71 US information operations had convinced Arbenz and the military high command that his government was collapsing. Armas’ forces struggled until the Guatemalan army pulled back and refused to arm civilian militias. Arbenz ultimately stepped down in response to demands from the Guatemalan military high command. The United States managed to convince the military high command to step aside and allow Armas to take charge of the country (Streeter 2008).
(Cullather 1999, 106); a legacy the United States continues to struggle against in the 21st century.

**China / Pathet Lao (Laos 1954)**

Following the Korean War, China worried about an increasing US presence in Indochina. China, moving slowly away from the Soviet Union’s shadow, wanted to establish its own influence in Indochina (Vinacke 1965). To promote its international prestige, China pushed the Pathet Lao to accept a peaceful coexistence with the Royal Lao Government (RLG) during the Geneva Conference in 1954. China continued to support this position until the United States succeeded in undermining the coalition government in Vientiane and managed to get an anti-communist government in place in 1959. As the American presence expanded in the late 1950s, China continued openly supporting the coalition government to bolster its international reputation, but began secretly to provide aid to the Pathet Lao. China wanted to avoid unnecessarily escalating the conflict due to its weak economy and struggling domestic situation (Zhang 2002). Therefore, China’s main strategy was to push the concept of self-reliance. Beijing provided the movement with enough resources to make gains against anti-communist forces, but still allowed the Pathet Lao to direct its own military activities. The Pathet Lao, however, were not strong enough to counter anti-communist forces without significant outside support. Through the early 1960s, the civil war in Laos continued to escalate. In 1962, China responded sending 4,000 soldiers and enough equipment for 22,000 Pathet Lao soldiers to help them take control of a US stronghold (Nam Tha) in northern Laos (Brown and Zasloff 1986).
As the war in Vietnam intensified, China’s security interests shifted. The Pathet Lao became an important means of countering US containment efforts in Asia. In addition, China wanted to expand its relations with communist movements in southeast Asia in hopes of countering growing Soviet influence. To accomplish this, China began to direct Pathet Lao to reflect China’s revolutionary model of land reform and mobilizing the peasant population. This model, however, did not match well with the domestic situation in Laos; land reforms held little meaning because peasants already had land. Further, the Pathet Lao did not want to start a radical ethnic or class based struggle because it felt that there was no basis for such a movement (Zhang 2002).

The failure of China to export its revolutionary model led to an eventual decline of its involvement in the Pathet Lao’s military operations. In the latter half of the 1960s, North Vietnam took control of the Pathet Lao’s efforts and used them predominantly to protect supply routes running through Laos. China, however, remained active in Laos. Beijing continued to send weapons and supplies (most of which Hanoi appropriated), provided military training, built transportation routes in northern Laos, and sent anti-aircraft artillery units to defend its engineering forces (Zhang 2002).

Although Hanoi held greater influence over the Pathet Lao’s military operations, China’s support sustained the Pathet Lao’s presence in northern Laos long enough to exhaust American efforts. The different goals and the relationships between Chinese and Vietnamese involvement, however, kept the Pathet Lao from executing a coherent plan to achieve victory against the RLG and the United States. Although China managed to achieve its objective of reducing US influence in the region, its efforts in Laos and
Vietnam eventually led to a new threat in the late to mid-seventies: a unified Vietnam and a sympathetic Lao government.

**United States / Hmong (Laos 1960)**

See Chapter 3.

**United States / Brigade 2506 (Cuba 1961)**

From an American perspective, Fidel Castro’s overthrow of the Batista regime threatened the stability of the Western Hemisphere. Once it was clear that Castro’s regime was strongly anti-American, President Eisenhower secretly authorized the CIA to cultivate and train a force of Cuban exiles, called Brigade 2506, to overthrow Castro (Gleijeses 1995). The CIA, having failed to do a detailed after-action report on its mission in Guatemala, confidently designed the Cuban mission to mirror the Guatemalan mission in 1954 (Gleijeses 1992, 372). President Eisenhower authorized the use of Department of Defense assets, but required that personnel not be used in a combat role (Gleijeses 1995).

The United States established the Brigade’s primary training area in Guatemala in 1960, yet the presence of the US proxy was a relatively open secret. In late November 1960, a group of young officers angry at the presence of the training camp on Guatemalan soil started a revolt that threatened to bring down the government. The United States, at the request of Guatemala’s government, used Brigade 2506 to suppress the revolt. Although successful, the instability in Guatemala worried the CIA.

The CIA’s plan involved getting an American friendly insurgency into Cuba, providing it with the means necessary to gain enough territory to legitimately contest Castro’s government and then throw open the door for US intervention. The key element
of the plan was creating a massive anti-Castro movement once the insurgency had shown the Cuban people that they could safely revolt.

Upon taking office, members of President Kennedy’s administration reviewed the plan and were divided about its potential success. President Kennedy, however, was beholden to the rhetorical attacks he made against the Eisenhower administration during his presidential campaign. Kennedy berated Eisenhower for allowing the communist movement to gain a foothold so close to the United States (New York Times, 6 Oct 1960) and plainly stated that he would support anti-Castro forces in Cuba (New York Times, 25 Oct 1960).

In the original plan under President Eisenhower, the insurgency would be smuggled into Cuba in small numbers. Once established, these forces would begin a guerilla warfare campaign against Castro to mobilize the Cuban people. The CIA, however, had difficulty infiltrating insurgents into Cuba; Cuban military or police typically snatched them up within a few days. This failure led the CIA to change its plan to an amphibious invasion.

President Kennedy favored the original plan of infiltrating insurgents in small numbers over time due to the potential for high political costs should the current plan fail and the likelihood that US involvement would be undeniable if the plan succeeded. The CIA, however, told President Kennedy that the Brigade would no longer support the original plan and that the change would make them feel that the United States was wavering in its support (Gleijeses 1995). The CIA also pressured Kennedy about the situation in Guatemala and warned that the longer Castro was in office, the more time the
Soviets had to provide the equipment necessary to resist the invasion (Gleijeses 1995, fn 111; Vandenbroucke 1993).

President Kennedy did not want to scrap the plan because the Republicans would have used the decision to make him look weak (Gleijeses 1995). Instead, Kennedy directed the CIA to develop an alternative plan that would better hide US involvement. The CIA complied and at President Kennedy’s request the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) reviewed the revised operational plan. The JCS concluded that the plan was a logistical nightmare and would not succeed unless the Brigade landed unopposed (Gleijeses 1995). Noting the difficulties, the JCS asked President Kennedy if they could provide logistical support. Kennedy denied the request refusing to allow US armed forces to assist the Brigade in any way for fear of exposing the operation as an American plot (Vandenbroucke 1993).

As part of the plan, air strikes prior to the invasion were intended to wipe out Cuba’s air force. The first strike occurred during a meeting of the UN General Assembly (GA), just two days before the UNGA had scheduled a discussion about US aggression toward Cuba. American newspapers had been running stories about US plans to invade Cuba and the presence of Cuban exiles training in Guatemala for months. The United States attempt to conceal its involvement had failed and led Kennedy to cancel the remaining air strikes. The invasion, however, went as scheduled.

The entire operation was a disaster. Poor mission planning and poor intelligence gathering led to a gross underestimation of Castro’s hold on Cuba. Cuban forces slaughtered a significant number of Brigade 2506’s landing force and quickly hunted down the rest. The United States took a tremendous blow to its prestige (Vandenbroucke
1993) and pushed Cuba to tighten its relations with the Soviet Union in hopes of deterring future American aggression. To make matters worse, Cuba consented to the delivery of nuclear missiles the following year. The American public, however, did not waver in its support for President Kennedy. A Gallup poll taken after the Bay of Pigs incident was made public showed that the President enjoyed an 83 percent job approval rating (Newport 2001).

**Soviet Union / SWAPO (Namibia 1962)**

In 1962, the Soviet Union began providing arms and funding to the Southwest Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO). SWAPO sought independence from South Africa in Namibia (Southwest Africa). Moscow wanted to supersede Beijing’s growing influence in southern Africa and to establish the Soviet Union as the primary patron of liberation movements throughout the world (Rothchild and Hartzell 1991, 170-171).

Under pressure from South Africa’s forces, SWAPO shifted its military operations from Namibia to Angola; this allowed Soviet advisors to provide assistance, training, and weapons directly (Sommerville 1984, 96). Soviet support remained low until South Africa’s forces entered Angola to attack SWAPO strongholds and to weaken communist influence in the country. Soviet support, however, remained rather modest, when compared to its support for its proxy in Angola.

Supporting SWAPO provided Moscow with four important benefits. First, all the liberation movements in southern Africa sympathized with SWAPO’s struggle against Pretoria’s apartheid regime. The Soviet Union’s support of SWAPO, therefore, improved Moscow’s credibility among liberation movements in the region (Goodman 1987, 52). In return for its assistance, SWAPO leaders added to Soviet prestige praising Moscow for its
concern over the welfare of subjugated people in the Third World (Sommerville 1984, 97). Second, Moscow used SWAPO to weaken South Africa’s position in the region and strengthen the position of the Soviet proxy in Angola (Sommerville 1984, 97; Golan 1988, 282-284). Third, the ICJ’s decision in 1971 that declared South Africa’s hold on Namibia unlawful and the UN General Assembly’s decision in 1973 to recognize SWAPO as the sole and legitimate representative of the Namibian people gave Moscow an added boost to its international prestige. Fourth, the Soviets used the West’s apparent indifference toward Namibian independence to prevent the United States from tying the issue of Cuban withdrawal in Angola to South Africa’s withdrawal from Namibia (Somerville 1984, 98).

Soviet support for SWAPO, however, provided few dividends. Apart from the prestige Moscow gained, SWAPO remained relatively free of Soviet influence and domination. SWAPO kept open relations with China and promised Western corporations that they could continue to run their businesses based in Namibia (Sommerville 1984, 98).

Soviet Union / ZAPU (Zimbabwe 1962)

In 1961, the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) formed to liberate Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) from a white-dominated, racist regime. At this time, independence movements were gaining international support, albeit more slowly in Europe. In 1962, ZAPU met with Soviet and Chinese officials in Egypt and both quickly began supporting ZAPU with military training (Sommerville 1984, 92). Moscow wanted to expand its influence in southern Africa and simultaneously deny China and the United States the opportunity to do the same. The Soviet Union was especially concerned with China’s

---

72 South Africa used Namibian territory to launch attacks in Angola.
previous success in attracting the favor of liberation movements in the region (Rothchild and Hartzell 1991, 170-171). In 1963, ZAPU and ZANU split over leadership issues (Martin and Johnson 1981, 70-71). Following the Sino-Soviet split, China sought ways to counter Soviet influence in southern Africa and promote its own version of the communist movement. Moscow considered ZANU a splinter group and chose instead to throw its support behind ZAPU (Sommerville 1984, 92). ZAPU’s close relations with Moscow offered China and ZANU the opportunity to form a convenient partnership (Taylor 2006, 107).

The Soviet Union supplied ZAPU with large quantities of modern, and in some cases sophisticated, weapons. In addition, Moscow provided military, political, and technical training to ZAPU personnel in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Sommerville 1984, 93). ZAPU used its relations with other regional liberation movements affiliated with the Soviet Union to keep ZANU from gaining local support and recognition (Reed 1993, 37). Despite Moscow’s efforts, ZAPU proved to be an incapable guerilla force. Making matters worse, the Sino-Soviet rivalry undermined the independence movement in Zimbabwe, causing ZANU and ZAPU to compete with one another rather than cooperate (Mubako 1975, 16). ZAPU, plagued by internal dissent, also suffered from a weak organizational structure that prevented it from cooperating with other liberation movements. ZANU, however, presented a more unified organization and steadily began to gain support and cooperation from the other liberation movements in the region.

Ultimately, the Soviets gambled on the wrong organization. ZANU ultimately gained control of the liberation movement in Zimbabwe and absorbed the majority of
ZAPU’s personnel. After gaining control of the government, ZANU quickly marginalized the ZAPU leadership. ZANU also punished Moscow by not allowing it to open an embassy in the newly formed state for three years. Further, ZANU opened its doors to the West allowing the United States to become the country’s biggest donor (Reed 1993, 54).

**China / ZANU (Zimbabwe 1963)**

The dominant liberation movement in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) was the Zimbabwean African People’s Union (ZAPU). A rival movement, Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU), split from ZAPU frustrated by its non-violent, ineffective struggle against the Rhodesian government (Mubako 1975). Following the Sino-Soviet split, China sought ways to gain influence in southern Africa and promote its own vision of the communist movement. Because ZAPU had close relations with Moscow, China and ZANU formed a convenient partnership (Taylor 2006, 107). Just one month after its inception in August of 1963, China began training ZANU members in the art of guerilla warfare (Martin and Johnson 1981, 11).

China provided training, logistics, and political support to ZANU. In exchange, ZANU began to push Mao Zedong’s views of socialism and engaged in the Mao-style mass mobilization that had been successful in China. Despite Chinese support and a Marxist-Leninist strategy, ZANU struggled to make gains against the Rhodesian government. The Sino-Soviet rivalry ultimately undermined the independence movement in Zimbabwe, causing ZANU and ZAPU to compete rather than cooperate with one another (Mubako 1975, 16). ZANU’s affiliation with China also hindered its ability to form useful connections with other, Soviet-sponsored liberation movements in the region.
(Taylor 2006). Further, China’s focus on modernization to alleviate its own domestic problems made it impossible for Beijing to supply enough aid to support ZANU’s military aspirations. By 1974, ZANU had nearly collapsed, diminishing China’s ability to influence affairs in southern Africa (Reed 1993, 42). In 1978, ZANU reemerged with renewed vigor and quickly began to lead the liberation movement in Zimbabwe. Although China’s ideological influence greatly benefited ZANU and enabled the movement to push its rival aside in Zimbabwe, ZANU had left its ties and obligations to China behind (Taylor 2006, 108-109).

**North Vietnam / NLF (South Vietnam 1963)**

After the Geneva Accords of 1954 partitioned Vietnam, North Vietnam (DRV) supported the National Liberation Front (NLF) to disrupt and weaken South Vietnam (RVN). Although Hanoi’s initial efforts began in 1958, it took control of the movement in 1963 (Pike 1966, 116). To avoid provoking the United States into increasing its involvement, North Vietnam secretly used the NLF to gain a foothold in the South. The widespread dissatisfaction with the Diem regime in Saigon allowed North Vietnam to use the NLF to gain access to anti-Diem regions in the south, gain access to anti-Diem organizations (communist and non-communist alike), and create a shadow government in the south (Pike 1966, 82). Through the NLF, Hanoi mobilized and organized a stern resistance movement of disaffected people angry with the Diem government (Pike 1966, 84; SarDesai 1988, 103).

Although Diem’s death and the US Strategic Hamlet program initially hurt NLF numbers, NLF cadre coming from the North still managed to use their family connections

---

73 Strategic Hamlet was a program where Vietnamese villagers were moved and scattered to different locations that had been swept and secured from NLF cadre. This would make it more difficult for NLF
to get into the villages and consolidate their hold on rural areas in the South (Pike 1966, 117). Further, the NLF harassment of RVN soldiers and civil servants sparked a government over-reaction; further repression only served to distance rural Vietnamese from the government in Saigon (Pike 1966, 155).

The NLF, following Diem’s death in 1963, began informing Hanoi that the rural population was ready for a full-scale uprising in support of re-unification under Ho Chi Minh. In 1964, North Vietnam began sending regular forces into RVN territory, but later learned that NLF reports had been overly optimistic. As American forces began arriving in large numbers, support for NLF dwindled. Hanoi realized by the end of 1964 that the NLF would be incapable of gaining control of South Vietnam on its own (Pike 1966, 165).

In response to the growing number of US troops being sent to South Vietnam, North Vietnam significantly stepped up its support for NLF in terms of training and weapons. The chief aim of the NLF was to create an environment of disorder in South Vietnam and foster mistrust in Saigon’s ability to lead the country. Throughout the war, North Vietnam framed NLF actions in legalistic rhetoric (the NLF chairman was a lawyer). Hanoi wanted to ensure that NLF efforts gained the support of the population in the South (Pike 1966, 165). In this sense, NLF activities largely succeeded; selective acts of terrorism against government officials and military targets—acts that often killed civilians—weakened the RVN government’s control over the population and engendered support for North Vietnam (Shultz 1978, 75-76). Within two years after Diem’s death,
South Vietnam had already seen five different government administrations (Borer 1999, 156).

Between 1965 and 1968 the NLF depended very little on support from North Vietnam, yet still managed to control the majority of the countryside. In 1967, North Vietnamese regulars began infiltrating the South in preparation for a massive offensive against US and RVN forces (SarDesai 1988, 117). The offensive, known as the Tet Offensive, had been planned to incite a widespread uprising among rural Vietnamese in the South and influence the upcoming American elections. Although the offensive was a complete failure in military terms, it scored a political victory. The NLF proved a poor conventional force and had been virtually wiped out (Borer 199, 162). Although the offensive was a complete failure militarily, domestic support in the United States for the war in Vietnam vanished (SarDesai 1988, 120-121).

**Soviet Union / MPLA (Angola 1964)**

As independence movements in Sub-Saharan Africa began to emerge in the 1950s and 1960s, the Soviet Union seized the opportunity to expand its influence in a region embittered by its relations with Western colonial powers (Legum 1987, 229). Following the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, Moscow was especially eager to prevent China from gaining a strong foothold in southern Africa (Klinghoffer 1981, 9). In 1963, China began supporting the two primary independence movements in Angola (Larkin 1971): the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). A year later, the Soviet Union began supporting the more

---

74 Although MPLA became the recognized government of Angola, this case has been included due to Soviet support before Portugal’s withdrawal and the contested nature of the government.
radical and socialist MPLA with arms and training to supplant China’s connection with the organization (Klinghoffer 1981, 100).

As Angola moved toward independence in 1974, the Soviet Union began to increase its support to the MPLA in an attempt to offset American and Chinese aid to the FNLA. After Portugal’s withdrawal in 1975, a civil war began as the competing factions fought to gain control of the country. Unlike China, the Soviet Union ignored the pleas of the Organization of African Unity to create a coalition government that included all three parties. Instead, Moscow pushed the MPLA to stamp out the opposition and take control (Legum 1976, 750). The FNLA, however, proved a formidable adversary that managed nearly to gain control of Angola’s capital. Moscow acted quickly, providing a substantial delivery of weapons and equipment. In addition, Cuban regular forces began to arrive to augment the MPLA’s forces. For a few months the battle went back and forth. The FNLA allied with a third independence movement, the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). South Africa also intervened in support of the FNLA and UNITA.

As the conflict escalated, the Soviets had to significantly increase their aid to ensure the MPLA could withstand FNLA and UNITA advances supported by the Americans and South Africans (Klinghoffer 1981, 99-101). Benefiting from unfettered Soviet support, the MPLA essentially eliminated the FNLA and drove UNITA and South African forces back to the Namibian border.

After gaining control of a majority of Angola’s territory and the country’s capital, the MPLA declared itself the ruling government of the People’s Republic of Angola. The Soviet Union immediately recognized the new state and pushed other states to do the
same. The MPLA victory offered Moscow a veil of international and domestic legitimacy, allowing it to frame its involvement as an effort to support a legitimate state from foreign aggression (Klinghoffer 1981, 102). Although Soviet efforts in Angola sparked US warnings that its actions threatened the existing détente, Moscow’s support of the MPLA continued without an adverse effect. American shipments of grain continued to flow into the Soviet Union during the early phase of the Angolan civil war and Washington still attended the 1976 SALT talks (Klinghoffer 1981, 113-114).

Regionally, the Soviet Union also benefited from supporting MPLA because it demonstrated Moscow’s commitment to freeing Africans from Western dominance (Guelke 1980, 658).

Supporting the MPLA and getting it recognized as the legitimate government of Angola allowed Moscow to expand its influence in southern Africa. In addition to gaining the admiration of the majority of the liberation movements in the region, the Soviet Union gained valuable strategic locations in the southern hemisphere to base patrol aircraft and harbor naval assets (Goodman 1987, 52-53).

From a military standpoint, the MPLA proved a weak proxy. Despite the enormous amount of military and economic aid from the Soviet Union, the MPLA was incapable of resolving the political situation in Angola. After more than ten years of conflict and incalculable suffering for the Angolan people, UNITA still controlled at least a third of Angola’s territory and often managed to interdict the country’s main transportation lines. The Soviet Union’s prestige suffered as South Africa and UNITA continued to make gains against its immense military support. Further, Moscow’s continued and expanding involvement alleviated American domestic opposition.
In the last half of the 1980s, the United States steadily increased its support to UNITA to prevent a clear victory and force a settlement that included a coalition government in Luanda (Vanneman 1991, 69-81). Moscow found itself mired in a conflict it could not win. Despite the costs of being perceived as an unreliable patron retreating from military failure, the Soviet Union changed its position and began pushing for reconciliation between MPLA and UNITA. After the settlement, Angola quickly slipped away from Moscow’s influence (Vanneman 1991, 86-87).

**India / Mukti Bahini (East Pakistan 1971)**

India and Pakistan have been in a struggle since the two countries were released from British authority in 1947. Pakistan’s military has always played a significant role in the country’s politics. In 1970, the military wanted to transfer control of the government back to civilian leadership. Elections were held, but the results were unexpected. The Awami League, the major party of East Pakistan, had won an overwhelming majority. Immediately, the Awami League began to challenge the status quo of West Pakistan’s domination over the country. The Pakistani military doubted whether the Awami League would continue to support its current level of autonomy and funding. In response, the Awami League’s victory was marginalized and East Pakistan was once again put under West Pakistan’s domination (Kumar 1975). The people of East Pakistan promptly began efforts to secede. Islamabad, still under the control of Pakistan’s military, imposed a crackdown to prevent East Pakistan’s secession.

Islamabad’s violent repression caused over nine million of East Pakistan’s people to seek refuge in the Indian state of West Bengal. West Bengal was a poor, strife ridden
state and New Delhi feared that the refugees would not only be an economic burden but also could foster civil unrest within its own borders.

In view of the situation taking place on its eastern border, India anticipated an opportunity to weaken its rival. New Delhi reasoned that separating East and West Pakistan would significantly reduce Islamabad’s influence and would minimize its threat to India. India also predicted that a military victory over Pakistan would elevate India from a South Asian power to an Asian power (Sisson and Rose 1990). From a domestic perspective, Indira Gandhi wanted to influence the elections coming up in the following year to strengthen her party’s already dominant position in the government and to ensure that her failure to institute many of the domestic policies she had promised during her campaign would be overlooked (Sisson and Rose 1990). New Delhi enjoyed widespread domestic support; India’s people strongly supported recognizing Bangladesh and supporting its secession (Ghosh 1983).

To accomplish its goals, India wanted to ensure the new state of Bangladesh not only gained its independence, but also established a moderate, democratic government that would not interfere with New Delhi’s politics in West Bengal (Sisson and Rose 1990). In addition, India had to block the intervention of the international community that would likely prevent East Pakistan’s secession (Sisson and Rose 1990; Ghosh 1983).

Soon after Pakistani refugees began pouring into West Bengal, New Delhi instructed the military to begin cultivating a proxy—Mukti Bahini—that could prevent Pakistan from settling the conflict internally (Marwah 1979) and provide India’s forces with valuable intelligence (Qureshi 2002). Further, India wanted Mukti Bahini’s forces
capable enough to minimize the number of regular forces that would be necessary should a war start with Pakistan (Sisson and Rose 1990).

Diplomatically, India made several moves to isolate Pakistan. Overtly, India refused to recognize the secessionist government and called on the international community to provide a solution (Ghosh 1983). India’s seemingly benevolent aid to Pakistani refugees fleeing from the atrocities committed by the Pakistani military made it difficult for outside states to support Pakistan’s position. India also managed to reduce the sympathy of other Islamic states for Pakistan by emphasizing that the conflict was not only Muslim versus Hindu, but also Muslim versus Muslim (Sisson and Rose 1990). India’s position gained further legitimacy based on how the domestic conflict had spilled over into its border and created a substantial refugee problem (Ghosh 1983). India argued that Pakistan must withdraw its forces from East Pakistan because that was the only condition under which the refugees would leave India and return to their homes.

To further influence events in South Asia, India signed an agreement with the Soviet Union that would protect the interests of both countries in light of the newly emerging Sino-American détente and Pakistan’s increasingly friendly relations with China (Marwah 1979; Ghosh 1983). This move prevented China and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) from stopping the conflict before India had achieved its objectives.

Despite India’s efforts, Pakistan managed to reassert its control over East Pakistan. In response, India increased its support and began providing both fire support and command and control to Mukti Bahini’s forces. India also used the monsoon season to its advantage. While Pakistani forces were bogged down, India pushed Mukti Bahini
(assisted and commanded by Indian forces) to conduct raids that disrupted Pakistan’s control.

India’s support of Mukti Bahini increased after the monsoon season had passed, adding artillery and air support. Cross border incursions increased on both the Indian and Pakistani sides. India was careful to ensure that neither its forces, nor those of Mukti Bahini, violated international laws of war (Chander 2003). In the end of November 1971, India managed to provoke Pakistan into attacking Mukti Bahini strongholds within India’s borders.

India successfully used Mukti Bahini both politically and militarily. India’s overt support for Mukti Bahini’s independence provided enough political cover to forestall outside intervention that might prevent New Delhi from reaching its desired objectives. New Delhi’s covert support of Mukti Bahini succeeded in creating a legitimate pretense for India’s direct intervention (Ghosh 1983).

The conflict in East Pakistan immediately escalated into a full-scale war between India and Pakistan. As India had expected, Pakistan immediately launched an offensive in the Kashmir region. Prior to the beginning of the war, India had positioned its forces to regain key strategic positions in Kashmir that had been lost in the 1965 war (Sisson and Rose 1990). India’s strategy proved fruitful. India quickly recaptured its positions in Kashmir and then shifted to a defensive war in the west. In the east, India went on the offensive, securing air and naval superiority. With the overwhelming popular support in East Pakistan, India’s army quickly overwhelmed Pakistan’s forces. Pakistan’s army surrendered on 16 December 1971.
Pakistan had largely counted on international intervention to stop the war and prevent the loss of East Pakistan (Sisson and Rose 1990). Despite the reluctance of most states to allow a secessionist movement, the legitimacy of India’s case combined with the support of the Soviet Union sufficiently delayed international intervention long enough to allow India to accomplish all of its objectives. The lack of response from the international community projected a respect for India’s power in South Asia and demonstrated to Pakistan that it could no longer count on outside support (Marwah 1979).

**China / FNLA (Angola 1973)**

China began courting the FNLA in 1963. Beijing’s primary goals were to counter growing Soviet influence in southern Africa and create connections with emerging liberation movements (Larkin 1971). For the next ten years, China maintained open relations with all three of the main factions—the other two being the MPLA and UNITA—fighting for independence from Portugal. After the coup d’état in Portugal in 1974, the three factions began turning on one another to get control of the country. As the Soviet Union and the MPLA gradually drew closer, China withdrew its support for the MPLA and concentrated on the FNLA. Although the FNLA did not share China’s ideology, Beijing saw it as China’s best opportunity to influence the new government of Angola (Taylor 2006).

Within a few months after the coup, China began shipping weapons and setting up training camps for FNLA guerillas in Zaire. China also sent a shipment of weapons to UNITA through Sudan, but UNITA never received them (James 1992, 144). Initially, the FNLA made quick gains against MPLA forces concentrated in Luanda. The rapid influx of Soviet weapons and equipment and the arrival of Cuba’s regular forces and military
advisors, however, turned the tide. This setback led China to begin withdrawing its military advisors embedded with FNLA forces (Taylor 2006). To counter the MPLA’s dominance, UNITA and FNLA forces joined together in the October of 1975. In addition, South Africa sent its forces to assist UNITA in the south.

UNITA-FNLA forces, supported by South Africa’s regular forces, regained the offensive and briefly managed to push the MPLA back toward the capital. South Africa’s involvement, however, damaged China’s relations with the other liberation movements in the region (Klinghoffer 1980). With substantial Cuban and Soviet assistance, the MPLA recovered and pushed UNITA back into Namibia and effectively eliminated the FNLA. As a result, China’s hopes of influencing the government in Angola had been dashed, and its ability to influence the other major liberation movements in Africa had been compromised (Taylor 2006).

*United States / FNLA, UNITA (Angola 1974, 1985)*

Following US failures to stop communist expansion in Southeast Asia, the Soviet Union apparently raised its sights. Southern Africa became a new Cold War battleground. As Angola moved toward independence, the three factions fighting against Portugal—MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA—began to fight amongst themselves and pushed the country into a bitter civil. To counter Soviet advances and keep the countries of southern Africa within the international free market economy, the United States initially supported the FNLA against the Soviet-backed MPLA.

Although US support initially gave the FNLA a significant advantage, Soviet and Cuban support to the MPLA quickly turned the tide. The United States, however, was unable to respond due to strong domestic opposition; the US Congress cut off funding to
Angola as Soviet support continued to escalate. South Africa’s apartheid regime only complicated US efforts to garner domestic support; any effort to support FNLA appeared to defend the pariah state. The region’s self reliance made it especially difficult to use non-military means of coercion. Keeping the two sides balanced militarily provided Washington with its best leverage (Crocker 1992, 451).

In 1985, Congress repealed limits on aid to Angola; this allowed Washington to provide military assistance to UNITA. America’s covert assistance to UNITA provided a clear message to the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Angola that the United States could push them “deeper into the bog in which they were already mired” (Crocker 1992, 462). The United States openly pushed for a diplomatic solution and secretly prevented the MPLA from a stronger position from which to bargain. Leveraging the immeasurable amount of human suffering occurring within Angola, the United States pushed hard for a diplomatic solution that would end the civil war and reduce internal strife perpetuated by the presence of intervening states (Crocker 1992). At the conclusion of the negotiations, South Africa and Cuba both agreed to pull out their forces and the United States promptly cut off its support to UNITA.

**South Africa / UNITA (Angola 1975)**

See Chapter 4.

**Syria / LF-PLO (Lebanon 1975)**

Despite Lebanon’s separation from Syria in 1920, Damascus continued to view Lebanon as predominantly Syrian (Olmert 1992). Lebanon’s civil war in the mid 1970s threatened Syria’s security interests in the region on a variety of levels: leftist Muslim factions supported by Arab countries hostile to Damascus threatened Syria’s hegemony
in Lebanon, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) stood to greatly expand its influence in Lebanon and would likely spill over into Syria, and partition would likely create a pro-Israel state in the Christian sector and could create a dangerous partition movement within Syria. Domestically, a large portion of Syria’s population resented its secular government, making intervention against a largely Muslim coalition problematic. Internationally, Syria had to consider the responses of the superpowers, Israel, and the other Arab states; none were likely to accept Syrian intervention without some form of retaliation. The Soviets had already sided with the PLO, as had Iraq and Libya (both hostile to Syria). The US and Israel were likely to support the Marionite Christians. Israel, maintaining clear military superiority, would certainly object to Syrian intervention.

Syria first supported the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) in an attempt to force Syrian mediation between the Lebanese Christians and Muslims. The rapid success of Syria’s proxy and the PLO’s refusal to agree to Syria’s mediated plans caused Syria to change its policy. After working through the United States to broker an agreement with Israel, Syria changed sides and began supporting the Lebanese Front (LF) made up of mainly Christian and Shi’a militias. Syria used the LF to weaken the PLO’s position in Lebanon and help put a pro-Syrian president in charge of the government.

Although this policy improved Syria’s position within Lebanon, it compromised the government’s position domestically (Olmert 1992). The LF’s success in Lebanon also changed Israel’s stance. As PLO forces fled to southern Lebanon, Israel moved into the Golan Heights and ended five years of tacit cooperation. Syria intervened directly and began fighting along side the PLO while the superpowers remained on the sidelines.
Syria sought to hold on to its initial gains and justify its previous efforts to its dubious public (Weinburger 1986, 232). Israel’s intervention rapidly undermined Syria’s previous gains and by 1982, Syria and the PLO were forced to leave Beirut in defeat.

Following this turn of events, Syria changed its policy once again. Damascus withdrew its own forces and began supporting PLO proxies against Israeli defense forces and the Israeli backed South Lebanon Army (SLA). This move allowed Syria to avoid direct confrontation with Israel, garnered domestic support, prevented unwanted escalation in Lebanon, and restored Syria’s influence. By 1985, Israel withdrew from Lebanon. Syria, through its deft use of proxies, had regained its hegemony in Lebanon and had reestablished its position as a major power broker in the Middle East (Olmert 1992).

Israel / SLF and Christian Militias (Lebanon 1976)

When civil war broke out in Lebanon, Israel initially supplied weapons and ammunition to Christian militias and assured Syria that it would not intervene directly if Syria also refrained. At the time, Israel was also engaged in mediation to demilitarize the Sinai Peninsula and therefore wanted to avoid derailing talks with Egypt. As the situation unfolded, Syria and Israel found that they had a common interest in checking the PLO’s growing influence in Lebanon.

Under pressure from coalitions supported by both Syria and Israel, PLO forces supporting leftist Muslim coalitions fled to southern Lebanon. To protect its northern border from an influx of PLO friendly forces, Israel supported the South Lebanese Force (SLF), a coalition of Christian and Shi’a militias, with weapons and artillery. Israel’s policy initially proved both effective and inexpensive (Feldman 1992, 134). The
effectiveness, however, also produced some unwanted costs. Syria had become emboldened and started encroaching on agreed upon restrictions regarding the deployment of forces. Although Syria’s actions would have further reduced the PLO’s position in Southern Lebanon, Israel began to consider Syria a greater threat and directed Syria to withdraw. In response, Syria reversed its position and began supporting Palestinian forces against the Christians (Feldman 1992, 134-135). Israel quickly found that its proxy in southern Lebanon was ineffective against the Syrian-backed PLO forces and elected to intervene directly to protect its northern border.

Although Israel intervened directly in southern Lebanon, it limited its involvement in other areas and continued to support the Marionite Christians in the north. The low cost of this policy ensured that domestic support would remain high for the Israel’s involvement in Lebanon (Feldman 1992, 137). Between 1978 and 1982, Israel with the help of its proxies, managed to overwhelm PLO and Syrian forces in Lebanon. These gains, however, were quickly negated when members of a Christian militia, under Israeli supervision, massacred over 400 Palestinians in refugee camps. Media coverage of the incident outraged the American public and led the United States to increase its pressure on the Israeli government to leave Lebanon (Feldman 1992, 150). Israel, having suffered a significant blow to its prestige and a reversal in domestic support for its operations in Lebanon, reevaluated the policy and withdrew from Lebanon in 1985 (Hughes 2001). Israel’s efforts also undermined Egyptian political elites that pushed for a peace treaty with Israel and jeopardized Israel’s security on its southern front (Feldman 1992, 152).

Somalia / WSLF-SALF (Ethiopia 1976)
The Ogaden region of Ethiopia contained fertile valleys and minor oil reserves. The population living in Ogaden belonged predominantly to the Somali ethnic group. In an effort to reclaim the Ogaden region from Ethiopia, Somalia supported the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) and the Somali-Abo Liberation Front (SALF). Despite Somalia’s military superiority, Mogadishu chose initially to pursue its interests via proxy. Both guerilla forces were organized and led by Somali military officers (Markakis 1987). The WSLF and SALF provided Somalia with several advantages. First, the proxies enabled Somalia to conserve its own forces and pressure Ethiopia to negotiate. Second, the guerillas were familiar with the terrain. Third, the WSLF maintained popular support among many of the people based on ethnic and religious connections. The SALF, however, failed to engender this kind of support. The SALF resorted to terrorizing the people in hopes of forcing them to leave the area (Tareke 2000). The result was that Somalia’s proxy managed to drive out many of the people it had intended to liberate. Although the WSLF and SALF managed to gain control of Ogaden and forced Ethiopia’s military to stay within their garrison, Somalia could not take control of the region until the garrisons had been dismantled. As Ethiopia struggled to respond, Somalia began committing its regular forces to shore up its hold on Ogaden and destroy Ethiopia’s garrisons.

Somalia made quick gains, but stalled as Ethiopian defenses improved. Having withdrawn to a few key strategic areas and having gained air superiority, the Ethiopians managed to hold off Somali advances. After several months of fighting, Somalia still had not broken the stalemate. In November 1977, the frustrated Somali government hoped to gain aid from the West by severing its relations with Cuba and the Soviet Union.
West did not respond, but within two weeks the Soviet Union began sending massive amounts of military aid to Ethiopia (Tareke 2000). Failing to achieve a quick victory, Somalia overextended itself. As Ethiopia received and infusion of military equipment and support, as well as 18,000 soldiers from Cuba’s army, Somali forces had exhausted their reserves. Ethiopia turned the tide and promptly pushed the Somali forces back across the border. At the end of the conflict, Somali had lost its military hegemony in the Horn of Africa.

**Pakistan / Afghan Mujahideen (Afghanistan 1979)**

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan presented two serious threats to Pakistan. First the rapidly increasing number of refugees threatened to overwhelm Islamabad’s domestic security. Second, Pakistan’s buffer from communist pressure had been removed. To avoid unnecessarily provoking Moscow and to keep its domestic situation under control, Islamabad sought to disguise its involvement. In addition, Pakistan wanted to create the ability to strongly influence Afghanistan’s domestic politics to ensure it did not jeopardize Pakistan’s security (Weinbaum 1994, 28-32).

Pakistan’s geographical position made it the logical distribution hub for the substantial amount of aid flowing in from the United States and Saudi Arabia. Islamabad used its position to control the Mujahideen groups, giving greater support to those more in line with Pakistan’s strategic objectives. Pakistan also allowed the Mujahideen, either tacitly or deliberately, to engage in illicit operations such as gun running and drug trafficking to further finance their operations (Weinbaum 1994, 32-33). Allowing these illicit activities, however, later caused Islamabad problems as the Mujahideen groups
became more self-reliant and more resistant to government control in Pakistan’s Tribal Areas (Khan 2005, 38-39).

Pakistan made extensive use of its intelligence service (ISI). ISI personnel operated Mujahideen training camps, distributed US intelligence, and directly participated in Mujahideen operations. Most importantly, the ISI managed to foster cooperation and discord between Mujahideen factions in a way that maximized Pakistan’s benefit. Pakistan’s objective was not only to harass Soviet operations in Afghanistan, but also to keep Mujahideen groups sufficiently weak to prevent the emergence of a dominant faction that could challenge Pakistan’s control. The tenacious and adaptable Mujahideen fighters proved highly capable, but most importantly, they were fiercely independent and prone to factionalism. It was these qualities that enabled Pakistan to manipulate the Mujahideen. By 1982, the ISI had managed to reduce the number of Mujahideen groups from over forty to just seven. This allowed Pakistan to keep closer tabs on Mujahideen operations and to monitor the relative strength of each group.

When the Soviet’s withdrew in 1989, Pakistan fueled the civil war that ensued. In the short term, Pakistan’s efforts paid great dividends and allowed Islamabad to continue to influence Afghanistan’s domestic politics. The policy, however, also fostered greater unrest and resistance in the Tribal Areas.

**South Africa / RENAMO (Mozambique 1980)**

In 1976, the Rhodesian government founded the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO), a derivative of an intelligence organization originally developed to counter ZANU operations in neighboring Mozambique (Arnold 1995, 400). After gaining
independence from Portugal, Mozambique’s government began supporting independence movements in Zimbabwe, offering refuge to over 10,000 ZANU guerillas. For the next four years, Rhodesian security forces and RENAMO engaged in counter-insurgency operations inside Mozambique’s territory. Rhodesia’s efforts to thwart ZANU’s bid for liberation collapsed, South Africa took over as RENAMO’s new patron.

South Africa principally used RENAMO to disrupt Mozambique’s support of the African National Congress (ANC), an organization that sought to end South Africa’s apartheid rule. Pretoria’s main strategy was to use RENAMO to cripple Mozambique’s economy. RENAMO forces proved highly adept, providing South Africa with a nearly self-sufficient force that was highly familiar with Mozambique’s geography, politics, and economics. In 1981, RENAMO began targeting main transportation thoroughfares—mostly railroads—that provided a significant amount of Mozambique’s revenue (Arnold 1995, 402-403). RENAMO, however, expanded its operations and cut power lines from a hydroelectric power station in Mozambique that provided ten percent of South Africa’s power; an indication that South Africa’s control was far from complete (Arnold 1995, 403). To further hamper Mozambique’s economic recovery, RENAMO began kidnapping and/or assassinating foreign workers.

RENAMO’s efforts triggered an overreaction from Mozambique’s government that resembled Portugal’s efforts to contain its own insurgency campaign and damaged its popular support (Arnold 1995, 404). In addition, Mozambique began asking Zimbabwe and Tanzania for their assistance in rooting out RENAMO forces within its own borders. Mozambique also appealed to Western states for assistance. France, Great Britain, and
Portugal all provided aid, but forced Mozambique to cut its ties with the Soviet Union (Arnold 1995, 404).

In 1984, Mozambique faced increasing pressure from RENAMO and mounting economic disaster. To gain a much-needed respite from the fighting, Mozambique met with South Africa and signed the Nkomati Accords—a formal agreement that required each state to stop supporting insurgencies in the other’s territory. Mozambique forced ANC guerillas either to live in controlled refugee camps or leave the country. South Africa, however, secretly continued to support RENAMO and enabled the organization to expand its operations into all ten of Mozambique’s provinces (Arnold 1995, 405). Over the course of the next year, South Africa repeatedly declared it had stopped aiding RENAMO. Mozambique launched a violent counter-assault that resulted in capturing a RENAMO headquarters in Sofala province. Although Mozambique failed to capture RENAMO guerillas, it did acquire documents that proved Pretoria had reneged on the Nkomati accords. Embarrassed, Pretoria admitted it had indeed violated the agreement and attempted to substantiate its continued support of RENAMO as an attempt to stop the insurgencies operations in Mozambique. Further, South Africa announced that Portugal had been secretly assisting RENAMO in an effort to deflect international criticism (Arnold 1995, 406). Although it is difficult to conclude that Pretoria’s actions in Mozambique added significantly to South Africa’s civil unrest, it is reasonable to conclude that it increased the population’s growing opposition to the apartheid government (Thompson 2001, 230-235).

By 1986, 46 percent of Mozambique’s revenue went toward curbing RENAMO operations. To increase the pressure, Pretoria announced that it would no longer permit
Mozambican laborers to work in South Africa due to Mozambique’s continued support for ANC guerillas; a policy that cost Mozambique approximately $90 million in revenue per year (Arnold 1995, 406). A year later, the conflict continued to escalate as RENAMO openly declared war on Zimbabwe in retaliation for its efforts to suppress RENAMO operations in Mozambique. In 1987, international aid officials estimated that four million Mozambicans were on the brink of starvation (Arnold 1995, 407). To make matters worse, RENAMO’s perceived ability to attack targets with impunity demoralized outside states and international aid organizations. RENAMO had effectively isolated Mozambique from outside assistance. Widespread violence ravaged the country as individuals, unable to work or farm, turned on one another. By the end of the 1980s, RENAMO had earned an international reputation as a brutal terrorist organization.

In 1988, Western states began providing substantial amounts of aid to Mozambique. Great Britain also provided security forces to ensure that international aid reached the people in need. South Africa continued to claim it had severed ties with RENAMO and offered funding and training to help Mozambique get its largest hydroelectric plant back on line (Arnold 1995, 409). South Africa had essentially lost all control over its proxy. South Africa invited the United States to mediate between RENAMO and Mozambique in the same way it had done in Namibia.

By 1992, RENAMO and Mozambique agreed to a cease-fire. In over a decade of civil war, Mozambique had become the poorest country in the world and had an estimated 1,300,000 refugees living in neighboring countries. Although South Africa managed to cripple Mozambique and completely undermine its support for ANC, its
affiliation only added to its reputation as a pariah state and ultimately contributed to the end of its apartheid rule.

United States / Contras (Nicaragua 1981)

When the Sandinista government came to power in 1979, the United States immediately recognized the new regime and offered aid to the troubled country. The Sandinistas, however, rebuffed US overtures and. Although the new Nicaraguan regime openly stated that it desired good relations with the United States, the Sandinista government mostly rejected US overtures and instead moved closer to Cuba and the Soviet Union. In 1981, the United States suspended all aid programs and began cultivating a proxy force to protect US interests in the region.

The Reagan Administration directed the CIA to begin covert, paramilitary operations to interdict arms transfers from Cuba and Nicaragua to insurgencies in Central America. In 1982, Congress enacted an Intelligence Authorization Act the prohibited the CIA from supporting any effort to bring down the Sandinista government. In 1983, President Reagan expanded the CIA’s mandate and directed the Agency to begin pressuring Nicaragua’s government to stop working against US interests. After the CIA’s mining of Nicaraguan harbors became public in 1984, Congress denied the CIA additional funding and cut off future funding for the Contras. In addition, Congress passed legislation that prohibited the CIA from providing the Contras with any paramilitary assistance for a period of two years.

In response to Congress’ decision, members of the National Security Council created a clandestine program to resume funding the Contras (CIA 1998). The funding, however, proved inadequate. In 1986, President Reagan persuaded Congress to reinstate
the covert program. Shortly thereafter, Congress found out that the United States had been selling arms to Iran to fund the Contras. Although Congress had already approved $100 million in aid, it firmly stated that it would only provide humanitarian aid in the future. The nature of the operation apparently protected the White House from long-lasting domestic disappointment. After eight months of news coverage on the Iran Contra Affair, only 54 percent of the people in the United States knew that the United States supported rebels trying to overthrow the government in Nicaragua (Fried 1997, 82). President Reagan did experience a drop from 63 percent to 47 percent after news of the Iran-Contra Affair had been made public. Reagan’s approval rating remained relatively low throughout the next two years but rebounded back to 63 percent at the end of his presidency (Gallup 2006).

In 1986, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) found that the United States, having mined Nicaragua’s harbors and promoted civil dissent, had violated international law. Despite the ICJ’s ruling, the United States ignored the ICJ’s order to pay reparations and continued supporting the Contras. Operations reached their peak in 1987 as 10,000 to 12,000 Contra insurgents conducted attacks against the Sandinista government. In early 1988, the Contras and Sandinistas agreed to a cease-fire and began negotiations. By the end of 1988, operations promptly ceased and the Contras fled to neighboring countries. In 1989, the Sandinistas honored their agreement to allow the Contras to return to Nicaragua and to hold open elections. In 1990, the Sandinistas lost the presidential election and after the new president took office the Contras demobilized. In 1991, Nicaragua informed the ICJ that it no longer wanted to pursue the case against the United States, relieving Washington from any obligation to pay Nicaragua reparations.
On 25 December 1979, approximately 30,000 Soviet forces invaded Afghanistan; an act that caused widespread international condemnation. In response, the United States openly criticized the act and enacted several economic sanctions against the Soviet Union, but Washington did not want to directly confront the Soviet Union in an armed conflict. Instead, the United States chose to intervene covertly, enjoying both international (Borer 1999, 177; Saikal 2004, 198-199) and domestic support (Hartman 2002, 471)

The United States provided support to indigenous Afghan rebels, the Mujahideen, via a third party, Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). This arrangement allowed the ISI to control funding to different resistance groups and to siphon off support for its own use (Saikal 2004, 204). Predominantly, US aid went to radical fundamentalist groups, such as Hizb I Islami, that used the support against both the Soviets and its Mujahideen competitors (Hartman 2002, 479; Yousaf and Adkin 2001). The Mujahideen, however, proved particularly adept at insurgency operations. The tenacious, independent, resourceful, and vicious nature of the Mujahideen made them a powerful instrument of destruction.

Washington’s policy focused predominantly on how best to hurt the Soviets rather than on how best to bring peace to the region (Saikal 2004, 204). Increasing Soviet efforts to strangle the Mujahideen insurgency were often frustrated by external assistance. In 1986, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev called Afghanistan a “bleeding wound” and started looking for a way out (Saikal 2004, 200). The Soviets began pursuing a diplomatic settlement that involved keeping the communist government in Kabul.
Washington, however, stymied Moscow’s efforts to find a rapid diplomatic solution because it wanted partly to take advantage of using the Mujahideen to punish the Soviets for their interference in Vietnam (Borer 1999, 186; Hartman 2002, 468, 471). The United States also used the situation to make the Soviets look weak and to reduce Soviet influence in the Middle East while adding to US prestige in Arab states (Borer 1999, 186).

The United States succeeded in driving up the cost of the war in terms of both money and casualties. The Soviet Union could no longer hide its failure and finally had to acknowledge that continuing the war in Afghanistan offered little chance for success (Ziegler 1993, 74-75). Moscow finally agreed to a full-scale withdrawal of its forces.

Following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, US interest waned and its support went from $600 million at the height of the conflict to nothing in 1992. The massive infusion of weapons and the way the ISI structured its support to the Mujahideen groups in Afghanistan led to a particularly bitter civil war that ultimately paved the way for the Taliban regime to take control of the country (Dorronsoro 2005). The consequences of US neglect following the Soviet withdrawal, however, would not be fully felt or understood until 11 September 2001.

*India / LTTE (Sri Lanka 1983)*

See Chapter 5.

*Uganda/Rwanda / AFDL (DRC 1997)*

For years, Zaire had poor relations with Rwanda and Uganda. In 1996, President Mobutu ordered the Banyamulenge (ethnic Tutsis) to leave Zaire’s territory. In retaliation, Rwanda and Uganda provided advisors, weapons, and regular forces to help
the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) bring down the Mobutu regime (Clark 2001). AFDL’s role was critical because it kept Uganda’s and Rwanda’s involvement from looking like an occupation to Zaire’s people.

Internationally, the combination of Mobutu’s reputation as a harsh, tyrannical leader and the support of an indigenous insurgency provided sufficient political cover (Clark 2001). With considerable help from Rwanda and Uganda, AFDL’s forces led by Laurent Kabila took control of the capital in Kinshasa in May 1997 with relative ease. The insurgency was largely welcomed by Zaire’s population after having suffered under Mobutu’s regime for over 30 years. Kabila, once in power, renamed the country the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Kabila’s ties to Uganda and Rwanda were very strong immediately following his ascension to power. Kabila granted both Uganda and Rwanda access to DRC territory for the purpose of pursuing terrorist groups that had retreated from their countries inside DRC borders. Kabila also allowed Uganda and Rwanda to position regular forces in DRC territory to help them root out terrorist camps (Clark 2001).

The ties to Kabila’s patrons, however, became problematic—the majority of Congolese citizens chafed at the presence of high-ranking Ugandan and Rwandan advisors in Kabila’s government and military (Clark 2001). In response to domestic pressure, Kabila removed Ugandan and Rwandan Tutsis from office and ordered Ugandan and Rwandan forces to leave DRC territory (Clark 2001). Although both countries were still allowed to pursue hostile groups in Congolese territory, both countries complained that Kinshasa was incapable of stopping terrorists from invading
their borders and also charged that Kabila was allowing genocide of Banyamulenge living in eastern Congo.

In the middle of 1998, relations between Kinshasa, Kampala, and Kigali, soured. Kinshasa began complaining that Uganda and Rwanda were stealing the DRC’\’s resources and Uganda and Rwanda began supporting a Banyamulenge insurgency to remove Kabila from power (UN Report 2008).

_Uganda/Rwanda / RCD (DRC 1998)_

This case picks up where the previous left off. Kabila’s decision to limit Rwandan and Ugandan influence in his country convinced both countries to remove Kabila’s regime from power. The disaffected Tutsi officers that Kabila had forced out of their government positions formed the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD). Uganda and Rwanda saw the RCD as another opportunity, similar to Kabila’s AFDL, to intervene in their neighbor’s affairs.

RCD, along with a significant number of Rwandan regular forces, made gains quickly against Kabila’s forces and would have taken Kinshasa had Angola and Zimbabwe not sent expeditionary forces to stop them. As a result, RCD’s progress (supported by Rwandan regulars) quickly stalled. Rwanda’s difficulties increased when the United States, its main supplier of military aid, decided to cut off its support in retaliation for Rwanda’s involvement in DRC. To prevent a collapse in Rwanda and damage to the regimes domestic prestige, Uganda’s president sent forces to assist RCD and Rwandan forces (Clark 2001). Although both Uganda and Rwanda attempt to conceal their activities, a UN Security Council report confirmed that both were involved (UNSC Report 2008).
Under international pressure, Uganda and Rwanda signed a cease-fire agreement with DRC. Rwanda and RCD, however, continued to conduct insurgency operations in an attempt to gain control of DRC’s natural resources (UNSC Report 2008). The split between Uganda and Rwanda led to a falling out between the two countries and divided the ranks of RCD. Later, Ugandan and Rwanda forces began fighting against each other. The UN Security Council enacted Chapter VII powers to the UN mission in the DRC. In 2001, both Uganda and Rwanda, under international pressure, began removing their troops from inside DRC’s borders. Both countries, separately, signed a peace agreement with Kinshasa in 2002 (UNSC Report 2008).

**Liberia / RUF (Sierra Leone 1998)**

Liberia’s notorious President, Charles Taylor, had a close relationship with the leaders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), an insurgency group operating in Sierra Leone (Abdullah 1998). In October 1998, the RUF launched an offensive against Sierra Leone’s government and captured Freetown (the capital of Sierra Leone) the following January. Liberia provided weapons, funding, and sanctuary to RUF. Taylor wanted an RUF led government in Sierra Leone to reduce his political isolation and to gain control over the country’s lucrative diamond mines (Reno 2007, 76; Gbla 2008, 360). Although Taylor tried to keep his support secret, numerous reports (including a UN report) revealed Liberia’s involvement. In addition to gaining influence in Sierra Leone, Taylor’s regime used the RUF to probe the limits of the United Nations’ willingness to intervene in his affairs in West Africa (Reno 2007, 75).

When the RUF first began its insurgency operations in Sierra Leone in 1991, its habit of conducting wanton violence and terrorizing the population distanced the
movement from the rural population (Abdullah 1998, 225-228). In this respect, RUF strategy differed significantly from most insurgency operations—there was no attempt to gain the support of the population, it only sought to terrorize it into submission. During the 1998 offensive, President Taylor directed the RUF to commit atrocities believing that this would lead the International Community to push for a settlement rather than further subject innocent civilians to the torturous and murderous acts of the RUF (Hoffman 2004, 218; Reno 2007, 75).

In response to RUF capturing Freetown, the Economic Community of West African States Military Observer Group (ECOMOG) intervened. Led by Nigeria, ECOMOG quickly took back the capital and reinstalled Sierra Leone’s previous regime (Oudraat 2001, 334). The EU also took action and withheld a $53 million aid package intended for Liberia (Reno 2007, 75).

Unfortunately, the costs of the peacekeeping operation quickly surpassed Nigeria’s and the UN’s available resources. To avoid having to pull the peacekeeping forces out before a cease-fire had been initiated, the United States pushed for a settlement. RUF agreed to halt its operations in exchange for the creation of a unity government and amnesty for its members. Under both international and domestic pressure, Sierra Leone agreed. The settlement left the RUF with a considerable hold on the country, especially over the diamond producing areas. Surprisingly, the RUF were in many ways rewarded for their brutal policies. In addition to getting amnesty, RUF members received incentive packages, job training, and reintegration benefits from Sierra Leone’s government (Hoffman 2004, 218).
President Taylor used his position to profit from the diamonds being smuggled out of Sierra Leone by the RUF (Oudraat 2001, 335). Although Taylor seemed to benefit in the short term, increasing pressure from the international community and a waxing domestic insurgency in his own country forced him to step down in 2003. Taylor, however, escaped to Nigeria where he was offered sanctuary (Reno 2007, 79). After three years, Nigeria agreed to release Taylor to Sierra Leone to stand trial; he has been charged with crimes against humanity for his support of RUF by the UN sanctioned Special Court for Sierra Leone (Reno 2007, 79).

United States / Northern Alliance (Afghanistan 2001)

Following the tragic events of 11 September 2001, the United States enjoyed overwhelming international and domestic support for Operation Enduring Freedom. The Taliban’s refusal to extradite Al Qaeda and its decision to defend the terrorist network from US retaliation led Washington to seek a regime change in Kabul. Afghanistan’s isolated, landlocked territory, however, lacked a feasible location for deploying ground forces and Afghanistan’s neighbors offered relatively poor options as well. Further, Afghanistan had earned worldwide notoriety as an exceedingly difficult place to conduct military operations (Bearden 2001), persuading Washington to look for other options.

The United States saw an opportunity to use the Northern Alliance, a coalition of three anti-Taliban factions as a proxy ground force. The Northern Alliance provided a capability that allowed the United States to avoid the expense of deploying a sizeable US force, conserved its equipment and manpower, and prevented Washington from having to expend an enormous amount of political capital to carve out a staging area for its forces.

75 Although Uzbekistan allowed the United States to use an air base at Kharshi Khanabad as a staging area, the location was still too far away to be useful for conducting ground operations.
To accomplish its objectives, the United States embedded Special Forces and CIA operators with Northern Alliance forces to provide them with highly effective air and space assets. Although the fighting got off to a slow start, the Taliban quickly fell to the combined forces of the United States, its NATO allies, and the Northern Alliance. As a result, the American people and the international community remained overwhelmingly supportive of Washington’s policy.

The quick victory over the Taliban, however, also brought some unexpected costs. First, the United States overestimated the loyalty and ability of Northern Alliance soldiers. Al Qaeda leaders slipped through Northern Alliance positions, spoiling US hopes of capturing Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants. Second, factional leaders of the Northern Alliance re-established their fiefdoms shortly after the Taliban had been removed from power. American desires for a strong central government that could deny sanctuary to transnational terrorist networks would remain an elusive goal, especially after the United States provided factional leaders with the material resources necessary to resist Kabul’s authority. Third, the United States faced a significant challenge in bringing an ethnically fragmented Afghanistan under the control of a predominantly non-Pashtun government. Although the Taliban proved remarkably easy to remove from power, the United States found itself drawn deeper into the conflict.

General Observations

Table A2.1 shows that all of the categories of costs and benefits were found in more than one case. Their frequency, however, varied significantly. Five benefits (conserved resources, extended influence, decreased international and domestic commitment, hid/obscured involvement) occurred in 50 percent or more of the cases. All
the costs identified occurred in 50 percent or less of the cases, four of which (increased international and domestic commitment, decreased support in target state, and decreased domestic support) were found in 25 percent or less.

This does not mean that on average the benefits of proxy war outweigh the costs. The costs and benefits listed here are not weighted. It is entirely possible that one cost could outweigh ten benefits. Further, the weight of each cost and benefit should shift with changes in surrounding conditions. It also does not mean that costs and benefits occurring more or less frequently have a greater or lesser effect on a proxy war’s outcome. It is possible that the costs and benefits that show up the least often matter most. For example, the high level of domestic support and the resultant increase in India’s commitment to LTTE completely overwhelmed the policy and severely limited New Delhi’s ability to control its proxy. Frequency, however, does offer some insight about the likelihood of each cost and benefit.

The two most common benefits of using a proxy were that it allowed an intervening state to conserve its resources in 82 percent (23 out of 28) of the cases and extended the influence of an intervening state into a target state in 68 percent (19 out of 28). Somewhat less common but still prevalent was that supporting a proxy helped gain international support or toleration in eleven out of fourteen cases where an intervening state either overtly supported a proxy or made no attempt to conceal its involvement. A proxy war also lowered the intervening state’s commitment to its policy in more than half

---

76 Ten cases were clearly overt and are marked as such in Table A2.1. Four cases, however, were somewhere in between an overt and a covert proxy war. China did not overtly attempt to justify its involvement in Laos, but it did send its own forces in non-combat roles to assist the Pathet Lao. Somalia sent field commanders to accompany the WSLF and SALF into the Ogaden region and then directly intervened to break Ethiopia’s hold on the area. Rwanda and Uganda both sent regular forces to assist the RCD in taking down Kabila’s regime in the DRC, even though they denied the action. Liberia made no effort to disguise its support of RUF in Sierra Leone, but it did not overtly use the RUF to justify its involvement.
of the cases. The most common cost was that proxy war decreased international support/toleration in 46 percent (13 out of 28) of the cases.

In three areas, costs and benefits incurred present conflicting information. First, six cases showed that proxy war led an intervening state both to conserve and waste its resources. Two cases showed that a state lowered and increased its commitment. Lastly, two cases both increased and decreased international support/toleration.

Of the six cases that both conserved and wasted the intervening state’s resources, three were a product of the intervening state’s proxy being eliminated by the enemy. In these three cases—US-Hmong, US/Brigade 2506, and US/FNLA—the intervening state conserved its own personnel, but the resources used to support the proxy provided no additional influence to the state. In the three remaining cases, the proxy was too independent to allow the supporting state to gain its desired level of influence. In two of the cases—China/Pathet Lao and China/FNLA—the proxy’s independence stemmed from the presence of an additional intervening state offering its support—North Vietnam to the Pathet Lao and the United States to FNLA—and China’s desire to remain somewhat distant from its proxies. China consistently pushed its proxies to be self-reliant. In the third case—USSR/SWAPO—the Soviet Union failed to supply enough support to overshadow SWAPO’s connections to the West. The Soviet Union, preoccupied with its efforts in Angola, offered only meager support to SWAPO and played only a minor role in its bid for independence. The lack of Soviet involvement, especially in the economic sphere, allowed Namibia to assure Western states a role in their economy and remain relatively clear of Soviet influence.
The two cases that showed a state both lowered and increased its commitment—China/Pathet Lao and Uganda, Rwanda/AFDL have very different explanations. In its involvement in Laos, China initially conserved its resources because it chose to refrain from intervening directly on behalf of the Pathet Lao the way it had in support of North Korea. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, China stressed self-reliance in its proxies. As China ceded control of supplying and leading the Pathet Lao to Hanoi, Beijing changed its strategy for gaining influence in Laos. Instead of getting more deeply involved in the fighting, China elected to provide much needed infrastructure in hopes of gaining influence. This strategy, however, required China to dispatch a large number of its own forces to protect the engineers from the war. The change in strategy only added to China’s involvement in the theater, and as previously mentioned, provided very little benefit.

In the Uganda, Rwanda, and AFDL case the contradiction stemmed from the fact that Uganda and Rwanda conserved their resources using the AFDL to get rid of Mobutu and gain control of Zaire, but then lost control of the AFDL after its leader, Kabila, gained control of the country. As a result, the resources Uganda and Rwanda expended did not provide the influence both countries had desired.

Another apparent contradiction in Table A2.1 is that two cases both increased and decreased international support/toleration for the policy. Both the United States and Israel supported Syria’s decision to back the Lebanese Front during Lebanon’s civil war, but the results of this strategic partnership later threatened Israel’s position and caused it to oppose the connection. Although Israel’s decision to change its stance is not so surprising, the international community’s toleration of Liberia’s and RUF’s activities in
Sierra Leone is shocking. The UN condemned Liberia’s support of RUF and the atrocities for which they were responsible, but it also pressured Sierra Leone into accepting a negotiated settlement with the RUF that provided the movement’s inclusion in the government and amnesty in exchange for its members to stop the violence.
Table A2.1 Costs and Benefits Present in the 28 Cases of Proxy War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Added Critical Skills</td>
<td>Exposed</td>
<td>Conserve Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China / Viet Minh (Indochina)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*USA / Armas (Guatemala)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China / Pathet Lao (Laos)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*USA / Hmong (Laos)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*USA / Brigade 2506 (Cuba)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†USSR / SWAPO (Namibia)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†USSR / ZAPU (Zimbabwe)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†China / ZANU (Zimbabwe)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*DRV / NLF (South Vietnam)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†USSR / MPLA (Angola)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*India / Mukti Bahini (E.Pakistan)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†China / FNLA (Angola)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*USA / FNLA (Angola)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†RSA / UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Syria / LF (Lebanon)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†Syria / PLO (Lebanon)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†Israel / SLF (Lebanon)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia / WSLF, SALF (Ethiopia)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Pakistan / Mujahideen (Afghanistan)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†RSA / RENAMO (Mozambique)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*USA / Contras (Nicaragua)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*USA/Mujahideen (Afghanistan)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*India / LTTE (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*USA / UNITA (Angola)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†Uganda, Rwanda / AFDL (DRC)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda, Rwanda / RCD (DRC)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia / RUF (Sierra Leone)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†USA / N. Alliance (Afghanistan)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Occurrences

|                | 11 | 19 | 23 | 14 | 10 | 12 | 9 | 11 | 16 | 13 | 11 | 14 | 7 | 12 | 9 | 6 | 2 |

* Indicates a covert proxy war  † Indicates an overt proxy war
APPENDIX 2
ADDITIONAL PROPOSITIONS FOR HOW CONDITIONS AFFECT COSTS AND BENEFITS

GEOGRAPHY

Terrain
1. A proxy accustomed to the conditions in theater reduces an intervening state’s need for manpower and reduces/eliminates the costs of developing tactics and training personnel to operate under those specific conditions.
2. Terrain provides inferior forces (in terms of both quantity and quality) engaging in irregular warfare with a greater ability to compete with superior forces engaged in counterinsurgency operations.

Distance / Access
1. The longer the distance, the greater the benefit an intervening state gains from using a proxy, but longer distances increase costs related to transporting resources and monitoring proxy activity.
2. Restricted access increases the benefits of using a proxy, but also increases the costs of supporting a proxy and limits an intervening state’s ability to provide the equipment necessary to sufficiently enable its proxy to overcome the adversary.
3. An adversary with access to external assistance mitigates the benefits of the intervening state’s proxy and drives up a proxy war’s costs.

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

In Theater
1. A weak economy and a government with poor leadership and a history of antagonizing its people reduce the costs of an insurgency-style proxy war and increase the costs of a counterinsurgency-style proxy war.
2. An intervening state’s public is more likely to maintain its support for a proxy war if the objective is to remove an aggressive, troublesome regime.

International
1. An intervening state faces higher costs in all categories—proxy, international, and domestic—when a rival state enters the conflict on the side of the adversary.
2. A great power state with high-levels of internal consensus incurs lower interstate-related costs when supporting a proxy due to its importance in the economy and security of so many other countries.

Domestic
1. The higher the stakes, the lower the policy’s domestic costs. Low stakes coupled with high costs, however, should have the opposite effect.
2. An intervening state’s public increases its support for a proxy war as the proxy’s burden for carrying out the war increases and vice versa.
3. A war weary public increases the benefits of a proxy war because it puts some of the burden on someone else or hides/obscures the state’s involvement from the public.
4. A proxy war benefits an intervening state with a poor economy because it shares the policy’s costs with a third party and preserves resources for domestic use. A proxy requiring high levels of support erodes public support and pushes policy
makers to use the state’s resources to increase the welfare of its citizens rather than to support the activities of a proxy.

5. An enemy that senses that the intervening state maintains cohesive, popular support for its proxy becomes more inclined to capitulate earlier and drives down the costs.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Intervening State
1. An intervening state’s ability to influence the actions of other states or international organizations provides a significant boost to its proxy’s ability to compete with the adversary and lowers the costs of a proxy war.

2. A proxy engaging in offensive operations with offensively oriented weapons that are technologically superior to the adversary’s defensive weapons should result in greater benefits and lower costs to the intervening state, so long as the way those weapons are employed does not undermine their potential capability and they are used against a reasonably vulnerable enemy. If defensive weapons are technologically superior to offensive weapons, then the reverse effect should occur with the same caveat regarding the quality of employment.

3. A state with flexible, adaptable resources provides a higher quality of support at a lower cost than a state with rigid, one-dimensional resources.

4. A robust cultural, ideological, and ethnic understanding of the proxy reduces costs related to information asymmetry.

Proxy
1. The benefits of proxy war increase as an intervening state’s commitments in other areas or regions increase.

POLICY

Objectives
1. An objective of establishing and/or maintaining internal order increases the level of chaos and violence in the target state and forces an intervening state to abandon its proxy and waste the resources it had previously donated or expand the level of its commitment and increase the duration and cost of the proxy war.

2. The shorter the duration of a proxy war, the lower an intervening state’s domestic costs.

3. The longer the conflict lasts the more likely that stress and frustration will lead a proxy to commit atrocities that spoil domestic and international support.

4. The costs of proxy war increase as an intervening state’s political objectives become increasingly ambitious.

Strategy
1. Focusing too much on the military aspects of a proxy war generates adverse political costs.

2. A conventional strategy produces lower costs and greater benefits when a proxy is fighting in an ethnic conflict against a weaker adversary in relatively open and accessible terrain. Conditions favoring an irregular warfare strategy are essentially the opposites in each category.

Implementation / Oversight
1. A militarily and politically competent proxy with closely aligned political interests lowers an intervening state’s costs in terms of oversight and support. The cost of finding or developing a proxy with similar political interests and competent combat skills, however, warrants compromising on one or both.

2. The better the intervening state understands a proxy, the lower the costs of monitoring a proxy.

3. Enlisting two or more proxies creates a competitive environment that encourages higher levels of obedience and lowers the costs of monitoring a proxy and reduces the amount of wasted resources. Two or more proxies, however, increase the material costs of a proxy war and may increase the collective costs of ensuring each proxy is acting in a way that furthers the intervening state’s objectives.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Interviews


Crocker, Chester A. Washington DC, 2 Jan 09 and 30 Aug 09.


van der Waals, Wilhem. Pretoria, RSA, 30 Aug 09.

Castle, Timothy N. McLean, VA, 5 Oct 09.


Books and Secondary Sources


Ostrom, C. W., Jr., and B.L. Job. (1986). The President and the Political Use of Force. American Political Science Review, 80, 541-566.


Public Documents


J.T. Folda, Jr., Joint Message, Office of Secretary of Defense to Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, ISA, Robert H. Knight, 11 Aug 1959.


“Memorandum from the Director of the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960, Vol XVI: East Asia-Pacific Region; Cambodia; Laos*, eds. Edward Keefer and David Mabon, 804-805.

“Memorandum from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lemnitzer) to President Kennedy, 7 Jul 1961,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Vol XXIV: Laos Crisis*, ed. Edward C. Keefer, 290-291


