

**Shadow Armies:
Political Representation and Strategic
Reality in America's Proxy Wars**

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BY

RONAN FARROW

MAGDALEN COLLEGE

OXFORD, UNITED KINGDOM

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We can learn from history, but we also deceive ourselves when we selectively take evidence from the past to justify what we have already made up our minds to do.

– Margaret Macmillan¹

¹Margaret MacMillan, *Dangerous Games* (Modern Library 2010).

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Abstract

In the years following September 11, 2001, the United States has placed a renewed emphasis on indirect intervention in conflicts through “proxy” forces. Despite other ideological differences, this trend has largely accelerated through the Presidencies of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump. In this approach to warfare, the United States utilizes foreign governments and fighting forces to effect American goals, while reducing its reliance on American troops. These relationships are, by their nature, indirect, and, this thesis shows, arise in situations in which the United States wishes to obfuscate the true nature of its engagement, often because of political and reputational concerns. Accordingly, statements justifying these relationships, both inside the American government and to the American public, often evince a meaningful gap between the representations in the statements and the reality of a relationship. These statements often include representations of friendship and trust, arguments that the relationship will spare American lives or expenditure, or outright lies about the activity of a proxy force.

This thesis uses a series of case studies, involving a depth of primary historical research not yet seen in the literature about post-9/11 proxy wars, to analyse America’s costliest proxy interventions around the world and to explore the gap between rhetoric and reality in each. It then explores the linkages between that gap and the relative cost, in American blood and treasure, of the relationship. It concludes that the degree of deception in a proxy war and its cost appear to be mutually reinforcing, a concept not yet explored in the literature. Finally, though

this thesis is largely analytical as opposed to normative, it highlights instances in the case studies which suggest that more transparent, forthright representations can have a mitigating effect on those costs and an enhancing effect on the United States' influence in a relationship.

Introduction:

Research Questions, Literature Review, and

Methodology

1) Overview

In this chapter, I first begin by describing the phenomenon of proxy warfare and explaining why it represents an important tradition in American foreign policy, relatively overlooked within the literature on American warfare. Further, I explain how the concept of political hypocrisy – defined here as the gap between reality and political representations of that reality, using a framework building on the work of Runciman – is of intrinsic importance to that tradition, often playing an important role in the United States’ choice to rely on proxy war as opposed to other, more traditional and direct approaches.

Second, I discuss the extant literature and explain how meaningful lacunae exist, both with respect to analytical approaches to proxy warfare in the post-9/11 era in general, and with respect to the concept of political hypocrisy as a theoretical framework through which to describe and draw inferences about these conflicts. I posit that this thesis contributes, in an

original fashion, to the literature, addressing that overlooked set of concepts and opening new avenues for additional, future research.

Third, I develop my research question, which uses the degree of hypocrisy in a given relationship as an explanatory variable and the relative cost of the relationship, in blood and treasure, as a dependent variable. Finally, I discuss my analytical approach, including my reliance on a small-n case study approach, the basis for case selection, my techniques for accounting for bias and my focus on descriptive, rather than causal, inference, given the endogenous nature of the variables assessed. I also describe my research methodology, including my methods for accounting for bias in the interview-based components of that research, and my development of a typology by which to categorize and distinguish between the cases assessed.

2) An Overlooked Tradition of War, Built on Political Obfuscation

a) Chaos in Syria

In August 2016, rockets hit two Turkish tanks in Northern Syria, killing one of the country's soldiers and unravelling a delicate web of alliances for the United States. Turkey quickly blamed forces from the region's Kurdish ethnic group that has long fought the state for territory and, within Turkish borders, political autonomy. Turkish forces struck back, killing 25 Kurdish fighters the next day, according to the country's state-run media. UK-based human

rights watchdog the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights estimated 20 civilians had been killed. The Turkey-backed Free Syrian Army (FSA) announced the capture of ten Kurdish villages the same day in territory held by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an alliance dominated by the Kurdish People's Protection Unit, or YPG. Videos circulated online showed FSA fighters beating Kurdish YPG soldiers.

The Turkish, Kurdish, and Syrian forces had a remarkable common denominator: all were US allies, being actively armed and assisted by US military and intelligence agencies as partners in the war against ISIS. The Pentagon called on all the parties to “stand down” and “de-conflict.” “We find these clashes unacceptable and they are a source of deep concern,” a spokesperson said. “This is an already crowded battle space.”²

A month later, Free Syrian Army commander Abdullah Al-Mousa sheltered in an encampment outside of Aleppo. Shelling was audible through his windows. “It’s really a chaos,” he said in an interview for this thesis. “When the United States is supporting those groups like the Kurd groups, which don’t fight al Assad, and just want to make their country, it’s really a very big mistake.” Unsurprisingly, he viewed his own Free Syrian Army forces as a more suitable partner, though he conceded that fighting the Syrian regime was his first concern, before combating ISIS at the behest of the United States.³

Free Syrian Army lawyer Osama Abu Zaid said the United States’ presence in the Syrian conflict inspired confusion, with the CIA backing the Free Syrian Army and the Pentagon backing the Syrian Democratic Forces and its Kurdish subsidiaries. “There is no direct

² Sudarsan Raghavan, 'Clashes Intensify Between US-Backed Groups In Northern Syria' *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C. 28 August 2016) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/clashes-intensify-between-us-backed-groups-in-northern-syria/2016/08/28/77f46cea-6d32-11e6-993f-73c693a89820_story.html?utm_term=.6ede3372d6e2

³author, Interview with Abdullah Al-Mousa (2016).

communication between Pentagon and Free Syrian Army,” he said. He added that the divisions between US agencies had led to strange situations within joint command and training centres, with Pentagon officials refusing to talk to confused Free Syrian Army commanders being armed by the CIA. Abu Zaid said sometimes the Americans seemed to relish the tension. “Sometimes the CIA people here, they were happy, because the Pentagon program is false.”⁴

The sometimes-conflicting alliances relied upon by the United States in Syria underscore the importance of the research questions addressed in this thesis and the natural way in which the question of political hypocrisy tends to flow from descriptions of proxy war. The United States’ public framing of its alliance with Syrian armed forces began to take shape in 2012. It was couched in terms of moral exigency, in response to a year of lobbying from humanitarian and human rights advocates and in reaction to the chaos unleashed by half-measures taken by the US in Libya the year before. As is often the case when the United States rolls out its involvement in a foreign conflict, the details were carefully finessed and provided to the public largely through unattributed quotations provided in so-called “backgrounders” with reporters. The use of such unattributed quotations in selling proxy conflicts is a recurring phenomenon observable across the case studies in this thesis, and further reinforces the indirect and sometimes deceptive nature of the rhetorical approach to these relationships. “We are increasing our non-lethal assistance to the Syrian opposition,” one such unattributed State Department official said in 2012, of the United States’ engagement in that conflict. “We continue to coordinate our efforts with friends and allies in the region.”⁵ The use of rhetorical techniques that emphasize camaraderie and trust is significant and appears to be systematic across the case studies examined in this thesis. The

⁴ Interview with Osama Abu Zaid (2016).

⁵ CBS, 'US Boosts "Nonlethal" Help To Syria Rebels' (2012).

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term “friend,” in particular, was applied in representations by the United States of its relationships with warlords in Afghanistan after September 11, 2001, with the Pakistani military and intelligence service in the same period, with the Mubarak regime in Egypt as the Arab spring unfolded, with the Ethiopian military during the invasion of Somalia in 2006, and with the Colombian military during the war on drugs.

In the case of Syria, those representations of friendship became more overt in the United States’ public presentation of its engagement. The statements also became more optimistic: then-President Barack Obama began referring to “moderate opposition” forces and characterizing their shared values with the United States. “The Syrian opposition we work with,” he said in 2013, “just want to live in peace, with dignity and freedom.”⁶ As the statements became more optimistic, the situation on the ground continued to deteriorate.

During the first half of 2017, the Trump administration chose its side, first reauthorizing Pentagon support for the Kurds over the objections of the Turks, then shutting down the CIA’s covert support for rebel elements. This information was delivered to the public using similar techniques to those adopted by the Obama administration: to begin with, there were more anonymous “background” statements. “This is a momentous decision,” one current official said to the *Washington Post*. There was an added, bellicose rationale applied this time: “Putin won in Syria.”⁷ These partners would be advancing the United States’ interests against a sworn proxy-war enemy. But, despite years of assistance to various factions, the conflict deepened, and

⁶ The White House, 'Remarks By The President In Address To The Nation On Syria' (2013) <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria>>

⁷ 'Trump To Send Arms To Kurdish YPG In Syria' *Aljazeera.com*, (2017) <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/trump-send-arms-kurdish-ypg-syria-170509190404689.html>> and Greg Jaffe and Adam Entous, “Trump Ends Covert C.I.A. Program To Arm Anti-Assad Rebels In Syria, A Move Sought By Moscow.” *Washington Post* (2017) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-ends-covert-cia-program-to-arm-anti-assad-rebels-in-syria-a-move-sought-by-moscow/2017/07/19/b6821a62-6beb-11e7-96ab-5f38140b38cc_story.html?utm_term=.ade66898dd5e> .

American intervention became more forceful, culminating in aggressive air strikes in 2018.⁸ Relationships with proxy forces, sold to the American public as a way to avoid American entanglement by relying on “friends,” and allies, had in fact engendered confusion on the ground, followed by the kind of direct engagement which they were intended to prevent.

The crisis in Syria illustrates the difficult compromises of American collaboration with partner forces in conflict zones. And it highlights just how wide the gulf can be between the harsh realities of those relationships and their promise, communicated within the policymaking process and to the American public.

b) The Definitions and Significance of Proxy War

Syria is the latest illustration of a tradition of indirect warfare that is often associated with the Cold War but has also, this thesis posits, become one of the most important and under-examined ways in which the United States has sought to project its power internationally in the years since September 11, 2001. From Sunni Sheikhs in Iraq⁹ to Northern Alliance fighters in Afghanistan, local partner forces have increasingly supplemented or supplanted America’s own engagement in large-scale wars. This thesis uses the term “proxy war” to describe conflicts in which this dynamic is present, and the term “proxy forces” to describe the units within those conflicts, which fall into multiple categories laid out in a typological framework developed later in this chapter.

⁸ Phil Stewart and Tom Perry, 'US Says Air Strikes Cripple Syria Chemical Weapons Program' (*Reuters.com*, 2018) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria/u-s-says-air-strikes-cripple-syria-chemical-weapons-program-idUSKBN1HJ0ZS>>

⁹ Greg Bruno, 'The Role Of The 'Sons Of Iraq' In Improving Security' *Washington Post* (Washington D.C. 28 April 2008) <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/28/AR2008042801120.html>>

The definitions of these concepts are broadly consistent across the literature, with minor variations. Mumford's definition, "indirect engagement in a conflict by third parties wishing to influence its strategic outcome," is generally relied upon here.¹⁰ Hughes defines proxy wars as conflicts "in which belligerents use third parties as either a supplementary means of waging war or as a substitute for the direct employment of their own armed forces," which adds a further degree of specificity in focusing particularly on military engagement as opposed to other forms of assistance to parties involved in a conflict.¹¹ While this thesis sometimes describes non-military assistance as a necessary component of the context for analysing the relationships in its case studies, its primary focus is on the type of military engagement described by Hughes.

These indirect engagements have come to occupy a position of growing, overt prominence in American foreign policy. When then-President Obama laid out what sounded much like his interpretation of American foreign policy priorities at West Point military academy in 2014, the centrepiece was utilizing such forces not as a supplement but, at least some of the time, as a replacement to direct interventions:

[T]he threshold for military action must be higher. In such circumstances, we should not go it alone. Instead, we must mobilize allies and partners to take collective action... the need for a new strategy reflects the fact that today's principal threat no longer comes from a centralized al Qaeda leadership. Instead, it comes from decentralized al Qaeda affiliates and extremists, many with agendas focused in countries where they operate... we have to develop a strategy that matches this diffuse threat – one that expands our

¹⁰ Andrew Mumford, *Proxy Warfare* (2013).

¹¹ Geraint Hughes, *My Enemy's Enemy* (Sussex Academic Press 2012).

reach without sending forces that stretch our military too thin or stir up local resentments. We need partners to fight terrorists alongside us.¹²

In Obama's forty-five-minute West Point speech, the word "partner" is mentioned 17 times. Despite general references about the difficulty of America's foreign entanglements, the general tone was celebratory with respect to these partnerships, positioning them as something of a panacea. For politicians, partnerships with foreign forces represent a political escape hatch as they contend with a war-fatigued public; a way to exert influence without putting American lives on the line.

Obama's successor, Donald Trump, has placed a greater emphasis on direct engagement in his general rhetoric and in at least one of the case studies considered here, Afghanistan. He has also curtailed military assistance sharply in Pakistan, another case examined here, continuing a trendline exhibited in the last years of the Obama administration, after the killing of Osama bin Laden. However, the Trump administration has simultaneously maintained the United States' reliance on proxy war in several cases assessed, particularly in Egypt and Afghanistan, as discussed in the relevant sections of this thesis. He has also redistributed power within the executive branch of the United States government in a way that has further empowered indirect and sometimes covert engagement, delegating more authority to the Pentagon and CIA and permitting them to undertake these alliances with less oversight.¹³

The reliance on this approach has become inextricably wrapped up in American power

¹² The White House, 'Remarks By The President At The United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony' (2014) <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/28/remarks-president-united-states-military-academy-commencement-ceremony>>

¹³ Jeremy Diamond, 'Trump: Empowering The Military, Raising Eyebrows' (CNN, 2017) <<https://www.cnn.com/2017/06/24/politics/trump-pentagon-shift-war-power-military/index.html>> .

and identity. It is among the links between America's status as an economic and geopolitical superpower and its military success: partly as a result of American economic might, the United States can essentially pay others to fight its battles. The case studies examined here represent the conflict zones in which the United States has exhibited the greatest expenditures on foreign military assistance. The centrality of proxy tactics in each of these conflicts establish that this is not merely an incidental form of engagement, despite its frequent relative marginalized role in existing theoretical framings in the literature.

c) Deception as a Feature of Proxy War

The United States has relied on this indirect form of conflict for a variety of reasons. Byman encapsulates the fundamental rationale, writing that “the issue is often cost: Locals fight, and die, so Americans do not have to.” Referring not just to American proxy forces but those of Iran, Russia, and other nations, he describes several further advantages, including the superior ability, in some cases, of proxy forces to gain acceptance in local communities, garner intelligence, and adapt to conditions on the ground with which they, as locals, may be familiar.¹⁴ (This was a component of the perceived efficacy of a number of the forces described in this thesis, including the Northern Alliance commanders in Afghanistan and the warlords of Somalia.)

But the definitional characteristic that distinguishes these proxy engagements from traditional warfare is their indirect nature. Proxy wars are born of cases in which a world power would not or, politically, could not directly pursue an interest and so chose to do so through a

¹⁴ D Byman, 'Why Engage In Proxy War? A State's Perspective' <<https://www.lawfareblog.com/why-engage-proxy-war-states-perspective>>

partner force. This approach allows the power relying upon a proxy force to preserve plausible deniability. Byman notes that because these relationships are undertaken specifically in cases where direct engagement would not be politically acceptable, “States often deny that they are supporting proxies.” As a result, these relationships are often particularly, not merely epiphenomenally, characterized by significant deltas between public representations and the underlying realities of the costs and nature of the relationship.

In one example explored in depth in this thesis, the United States’ cooperation with Pakistan after September 11, 2001 was marked by deceptive public characterisations of the relationship by both sides.¹⁵ The single, narrow issue of drone strikes provides a stark illustration: The United States classified its use of that tactic and used a combination of avoidance and deception when addressing the topic. At the same time, Pakistan denied to its public that it had consented to the strikes, although cables and interviews with policymakers make it clear that this consent had been given. Both sides also made public statements emphasizing friendship and aligned interests – what Byman calls “a façade of amity” – while privately decrying an atmosphere of mistrust and double-dealing.

The use of proxy forces as a means of avoiding transparency is not limited to the United States. Byman points to Russia’s support for groups opposing the Ukrainian government with both arms and its own troops, while claiming adamantly to not be involved, as well as Iran’s support for the militant group Hezbollah as a proxy against Israel. But the reliance on these forces, and the deception and political hypocrisy that, this thesis posits, accompanies that reliance, has additional specific implications in the American context. While Russia and Iran may utilize indirect warfare as a way of avoiding escalation with their opponent, or as a way of

¹⁵ *Id.*

skirting potential retaliation from other international actors (for example, American sanctions), the United States must necessarily contend with domestic political ramifications. As the descriptions in this thesis illustrate, the United States government often appears to calibrate its disingenuous representations of these relationships to avoid negative reactions from the American public. In some fundamental ways, the inherent secrecy and obfuscation that characterise most of the cases of proxy war examined in this thesis are in tension with the aforementioned American systems of democratic accountability.

This dynamic has several implications: first, it means that (as a matter of description, not a normative claim) it is more difficult for the United States to rely on these forces consistently. The ending of cash-flow financing to Egypt under Obama and suspension of assistance to Pakistan under Trump, both cases discussed in these pages, illustrate this dynamic. In both of these cases, particularly with respect to Egypt, detailed process-tracing can sustain a causal inference: activists brought pressure to bear on politicians in the United States Congress, who in turn grappled with the political risk of the true costs of the relationship being exposed to the broader public and, through a progression of public statements and legislation, enacted change.

Second, and somewhat paradoxically, the public accountability component of the American context creates obstacles to controlling these relationships. Because, in several of the cases described here, significant aspects of the relationship cannot be addressed forthrightly – either publicly or even, as in the case of Pakistan, behind closed doors – the United States often has fewer avenues through which to apply pressure and create accountability. In each of the case studies described here (though to a notably lesser extent in the Colombian context) the entrenched commitment to false characterisations of the relationship also made it more difficult

to change policies. As Byman notes, “Once the spigot of cash and weapons to a proxy opens up, it is hard to close, particularly for a democracy like the United States.”¹⁶

3) Addressing a Meaningful Gap in the Literature

a) Placing Proxy Wars and Hypocrisy Within the Theoretical Debates on International Relations

Before delving into a survey of the literature on proxies, it is useful to consider and place this thesis in the broader context of international relations theory. Although the analysis here is driven by case studies that are relatively recent and unexplored in the literature, it also draws upon and greatly profits from a long tradition of international relations theory. The dominant schools of thought on the meta-theory of international relations provide assumptions (particularly regarding the nature of political behaviour and decision-making), analytical frameworks, and a history of fruitful intellectual debate that will be called upon in this thesis. Several of the works associated with these schools of thought are also useful in the way they illustrate the pitfalls of various extant analytical frameworks.

The theoretical framework relied upon throughout this thesis rests comfortably in the context of the intellectual tradition of classical realism, and specifically the work of the 20th century realists Reinhold Niebuhr, Raymond Aron and Hans Morgenthau. (Although earlier

¹⁶ *Id.*

realists, such as Hobbes, with his insistence that states seek to “enlarge their dominions upon all pretences of danger and fear of invasion of assistance that may be given to invaders, [and] endeavour as much as they can, to subdue and weaken their neighbour,”¹⁷ could also be considered distant intellectual forebears.) The case studies’ exploration of the use of proxy warfare and political hypocrisy in pursuit of rational state (or non-state) interests is a quintessentially realist enterprise. This is evident in its focus on states, not systems, as central actors and its assumption that all states desire power and influence, and often pursue these goals in a state of conflict and competition. As the case studies often illustrate, the United States, as well as its proxies, make decisions in the pursuit of their own interests in power and security.

Of course, as the realists suggest, and as the case studies make clear, decision-making is not determined by static conceptions of powers and interests. Instead, evolving norms and values are also instrumental in shaping those conceptions. As Morgenthau famously argued, political actors are forced to take into account both norms and values: a fully “moral man,” concerned only with values would be a fool, while a fully “political man,” concerned only with power would be a beast.¹⁸ More specifically, political actors make decisions based on their desires and goals, but international approbation – or opprobrium – is often part of the decision-making calculus, as actors are sensitive, if not to questions of morality per se, then to others’ judgments of their own handling of those values.

Indeed, concerns about moral judgments often prompt the decision to rely on proxy relationships in the first place, as well as the later decision to deploy deceptive or hypocritical

¹⁷ T Hobbes, *Leviathan* (2016).

¹⁸ ‘The Intellectual And Political Functions Of A Theory Of International Relations’ (1962) 1 *Politics in the 20th Century*, “The Decline of Democratic Politics.”

; Hans Morgenthau, *Scientific Man Versus Power Politics* (1946).

Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle For Power And Peace* (2nd edn, Alfred A Knopf 1954).

rhetoric as those relationships unfold. In several of the case studies, arguments that America's security interests would be best served by waging a so-called direct war with our antagonists are eclipsed by concerns that the values and norms of either the American people or the international community might preclude that kind of overt intervention. Countries other than the United States that appear in the case studies, likewise, engage in behaviour that appears governed by a concept of interest that subsumes the values and historical traditions emphasized by the constructivists on the one hand, and the desire for power articulated by the realists. (By way of example, the decisions of Ethiopia that figure in the Africa-based case study are deeply informed both by a desire for regional hegemony, concerns about the value judgments of regional allies and the United States, and its historically-rooted desire to quash regional rival Eritrea.)

E. H. Carr's writing on political actors' and states' use of the language of morality – appealing to norms of justice, for example – is also of direct relevance to this thesis. His work prefigures a phenomenon examined across all of the case studies here: namely, the use of rhetoric invoking norms and values to morally discredit an enemy or justify one's own positions. This practice is explored by Carr in the Soviet context and, in this thesis, in the context of twenty-first century proxy war. Carr's analysis is not embraced wholesale in this thesis: for example, his suggestion that “international moral norms are imposed on other countries by dominant nations or groups of nations” and “invented to perpetuate those nations' dominance” is at odds with the analysis in here, which tends to suggest similar concerns about public opinion across the countries and factions examined in the case studies.¹⁹ Indeed, in those instances where the United States attempts to impose its democratic norms in the manner Carr discusses, the case

¹⁹ E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction To Study International Relations* (Palgrave 2001); *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford 2017) <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/realism-intl-relations/>>

studies evidence more backfiring than success (with the lone, possible exception of American interventions in Colombia).

Where this thesis departs from the views of the classical realists, it finds common ground with their successors, the neorealists. The analysis in this thesis suggests that structural constraints, rather than human nature, govern political actors' decisions. Key components of neorealist thought – including the anarchic ordering principle of the international context, the natural pursuit of one's interests, the focus on survival and turn to military means to do so, and the inherent lack of trust built into the system that both limits and necessitates cooperation – can be seen in the foreign policy decision-making of the United States and its proxies. This thesis also takes a stance on the internal neorealist debate between defensive and offensive realism. Like the works of Mearsheimer, this analysis suggests that states generally tend to prefer regional hegemony rather than seeking to maintain the balance of power. It similarly argues that “institutions cannot get states to stop behaving as short-term power maximisers,” much as they may try.²⁰

This thesis also profits from another key contribution of neorealist thought: its analytical and methodological rigor, which was largely lacking in the earlier body of realist scholarship. Waltz's elimination of the classical realists' focus on human nature and shift to a more empirical understanding of power related to security interests, rather than power as an end itself, both contained in Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*²¹, provided for a more scientific approach than previously explored. This thesis pays tribute to Waltz's insistence on rigorous empirical testability and on falsification as a methodological standard, although it similarly understands the

²⁰ John Mearsheimer, 'The False Promise Of International Institutions' (1994) 19 *International Security*. and John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy Of Great Power Politics* (WW Norton 2001).

²¹ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory Of International Politics* (2010).

applicability of these standards to be problematic in the field of international relations, a topic much explored here. However, Waltz's (and neorealism's, more broadly) focus on balance of power structures provides an inherently limited frame of analysis that this dissertation seeks to expand. Relatedly, Schroeder, with his rejection of Waltz's focus on power distribution and his critique of Waltz's relative lack of concern for alignment behaviour,²² contributes to the theoretical foundations on which this thesis is built.²³ Schroeder's introduction of the role of alliances is foundational to this work.

While Schroeder's work is of relevance, this is less true of much of the later neoliberal literature. The strong focus of Robert Keohane, a giant of neoliberalism, on cooperative behaviour is far from apposite, with several important exceptions. (Specifically, Keohane's focus on game theory and on power-balancing is relevant; indeed, this thesis employs a similar analytical focus on the way states calculate the potential impact of cooperation on outcomes.) Additionally, the focus of Keohane, along with Joseph Nye, on non-state channels in the international context (NGOs, companies, etc.) is relatively novel in the meta-theoretical international relations debates, and is important here, particularly in the case of the Horn of Africa, where the endeavours of regional multinational entities in peacekeeping and diplomacy figure into the period of history under examination. However, it is worth noting that, in the context of proxy war, these entities generally fail to rise to the level of importance that Keohane and Nye assign them. While Keohane and Nye's beloved international institutions certainly are actors and impact states' behaviour, they are ultimately – and fatally – hamstrung by their lack of credibility and lack of power. A related aperture between the neoliberals' understanding of the

²²Paul Schroeder, 'Historical Reality Vs. Neo-Realist Theory' (1994) xix *International Security*.

²³Jack Levy, 'The Theoretical Foundations Of Paul W. Schroeder's International System' (1994) 16 *The International History Review*.

world and that of this dissertation is rooted in the former's notion that "complex interdependence" between state and non-state actors has reduced the primacy of military force.²⁴ The case studies here illustrate that military forces continue to be of central importance in that emerging interdependent landscape, though they are sometimes deployed in ways that look non-traditional or indirect. Military forces reinforce, resolve and, indeed, even enforce co-dependencies, as seen in the proxy wars chosen as case studies here.

Finally, a brief note on the constructivist school is warranted, although it holds comparatively little relevance here, with its focus on ideas and disregard for concerns about power and security. While social forces, historical forces, values, and norms certainly impact state behaviour, they can be understood to be subsumed within a state's understanding and assessment of its own interests. For example, this thesis explains how the interests that drove the United States to invest billions in supporting and legitimising the Egyptian regime were informed by the non-material forces emphasised by the constructivists, including Washington's pro-democracy values and historical incentives regarding the security of the state of Israel. Wendt's narrow focus on these social, historical, and intellectual forces ignores the reality that a rational state will absorb those variables into its decision-making calculus. Moreover, in ignoring material forces, the constructivists leave us with an inherently blinkered framework that cannot account for forces such as economic power, military might, and international prestige. In this sense, this thesis's theoretical approach, with its emphasis on more traditionally realist concepts of power and interest, subsumes and supersedes the constructivist framework. On the other hand,

²⁴Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power And Interdependence Revisited* (Longman Classics 2011).

this thesis's emphasis on historical trends (as opposed to static interests or human nature) could well be understood to pay homage to the constructivists.²⁵

b) Existing Conceptions of Warfare

In general, the literature contains no descriptive survey of proxy wars in the post-9/11 period backed by research of the scope undertaken here (notably, hundreds of interviews and significant documentary evidence, including newly reported cables and memoranda). Nor does it contain any such survey concerned with the important and overlooked questions posed here about political representation. Also absent from the literature, and much-needed, is a comprehensive effort to grapple with the consequences of the element of hypocrisy that characterises these relationships. While literature related to the concept of political hypocrisy does exist, it has not been applied in the context of proxy wars.

Even more broadly speaking, the literature on proxy wars writ large is relatively underdeveloped and often disproportionately focused on the Cold War era. The phenomenon is, Mumford asserts, “historically ubiquitous yet chronically under-analysed.”²⁶ Traditional framings of American warfare often underplay the significance of proxy warfare or omit it entirely from consideration. Tierney, for example, divides America's wars into a “crusade tradition,” marked by state-to-state conflict and framed in terms of glory and black and white moral stakes on the one hand, and a “quagmire tradition,” most prominently exemplified in

²⁵Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy Is What States Make Of It: The Social Construction Of Power Politics' (1987) 46 International Organization.

²⁶ Id

Vietnam, in which American forces engage in protracted and unpopular nation-building.²⁷ But a better understanding of the additional tradition of proxy war would serve to expand the aperture further still, acknowledging the fact that, from Afghanistan and Pakistan to Egypt, Somalia, and Colombia, a significant portion of America’s military engagement is undertaken by third parties, not by American forces at all.

Dudziak, in her argument that the United States has come to exist in a protracted state of “war time,” rendering obsolete the distinctions between periods of war and peace, touches upon the importance of including in this concept not just large-scale conflicts like World Wars I and II, but also so-called “small wars.” Dudziak writes that, “When we look at the full-time line of American military conflicts, however, including the “small wars” and the so-called forgotten wars, there are not many years of peacetime.” Here, yet again, the inclusion of a still further category of overlooked conflict – not simply small wars, but indirect ones – stands to meaningfully expand our understanding of when the United States is at war, and when it is not, in a way Dudziak and others do not explore.²⁸

In the extant literature, the most relevant efforts to interrogate the mechanics and implications of indirect intervention arise in a longstanding body of literature about American “empire” – which, accordingly, tends to frame these relationships in terms of a central power and subject states, in the tradition of history’s great empires.²⁹ These works also tend to adopt a conventional view of the motivations underlying proxy relationships – namely, that they are

²⁷Dominic Tierney, *How We Fight: Crusades, Quagmires, And The American Way Of War* (Little, Brown and Company 2010).

²⁸Mary Dudziak, *War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* (Oxford University Press 2012).

²⁹Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs And Consequences Of American Empire* (Henry Holt and Company 2000); Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire* (Harvard University Press 2002); Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise And Fall Of The American Empire* (Allen Lane 2004); Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows Of Empire* (Verso 2004).

driven by the imperial power's desire to achieve specific policy goals. They largely avoid the issues of political representation that this thesis posits are of central importance to these relationships.

As a notable alternative to the “empire” conception of American influence, Yuen Foong Khong argues for a “tributary” conception akin to the one used by ancient Chinese dynasties. He defines the “tributaries” in this structure as “mainly those who host US bases and military installations on their territory,” noting that these are generally “states that are aligned with the United States in a military-strategic sense and are content to follow the American lead in economic, political, and military affairs.” This is a distinct and, in some ways, broader concept than the definition of proxy forces used in this thesis, but the concepts are related and overlap. He notes the transactional nature of these relationships, with the imposition of liberal democratic ideals by the United States as a form of “payback” or tribute offered by the tributary party, but broadly describes the approach as a stable and successful one.³⁰ The concepts that Khong develops are useful but also stand to be tested, enriched, and expanded upon by the those developed in this thesis. The typology developed here could more finely distinguish between the types of tributaries in Khong's conception. The introduction of political hypocrisy as an important tenet of such relationships could, likewise, presents an important alternative interpretation not fully explored by Khong, in which tributaries merely create the appearance and representation of offering tribute, while, in fact, resisting the ideals of the United States.

In recent years, some related concepts have been refined in ways that provide a helpful foundation for this work. Sylvan and Majeski adopt a “patron and client” framing,³¹ drawing

³⁰ Yuen Foong Khong, 'The American Tributary System' (2013) 6 *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*.

³¹ David Sylvan and Stephen Majeski, *US Foreign Policy In Perspective: Clients, Enemies And Empire* (Taylor and Francis 2009).

parallels with individual business practices to elucidate similar relationship dynamics to the ones discussed in this thesis. Their hypothesis departs from the earlier bodies of work in holding that these relationships are motivated not by policy goals, but by accumulated institutional knowledge; that the organs of foreign policy in a patron state like the United States have only a limited number of approaches to problems, building “client” relationships being one of them.³² This is consistent with one of the recurring observations within the case studies here: namely that in many of the case studies, the deep history of working with a partner in a transactional, proxy-war context creates a limited set of habits and institutional memories and, in turn, limits the ability to expand the relationship beyond a covert and deceptive context. (This is perhaps most apparent in the Pakistani context, where several of the interview-based and documentary sources in these pages suggest that the parties to the relationship had trouble envisioning alternative methods of interacting.)

A related branch of theory, concerned chiefly with similar concepts of control in the business world, is less relevant here. Holmstrom and Milgrom's “principal-agent” framing, for example, is so specifically tailored to wages and other workplace-specific incentives that it generally does not apply usefully to the context of proxy warfare, with the exception of some highly generalized insights. For example, Holmstrom and Milgrom's central concern about how to reward the productive work of an agent – i.e., how to incentivize cooperative behaviour from a proxy – relates to the challenges faced by the dominant partners in the proxy relationships examined here. Additionally, the authors' conclusion that “a highly incomplete set of performance measures and a highly complex set of potential responses from the agent” raise challenges to motivating the agent in the principal's interest is broadly relevant to the dynamics

³² Id

of proxy war. And finally, their proposal that a range of instruments, as opposed to just compensation, should be examined in addressing this problem runs parallel to the dynamics described in several of the case studies in this thesis.³³ For example, the creative solution of ending cash flow financing to Egypt, while maintaining general military assistance, flowed from similar principles to those articulated by Holmstrom and Milgrom.

The general notion of proxy war offers a critical, and previously underutilized, framework for understanding an important set of relationships between the United States and other nations and factions in the modern era. Further, the specific conception of proxy war developed in this thesis does not merely differ from the existing characterisations of American alliances around the world; it subsumes and builds upon several of them, applying their most useful insights to a modern international relations context. It achieves this in two ways: first, by introducing a finer and more granular typology than is present in the existing frameworks, which, in turn, facilitates a more nuanced analysis of the conflicts assessed than would have previously been possible; and, second, by specifically incorporating the variable of political hypocrisy, which this thesis establishes as integral to any complete understanding of America's reliance on this form of indirect intervention in the twenty-first century.

For example, the "empire" conception relied upon by Chalmers and other scholars applies somewhat well to traditional bilateral relationships between more and less powerful nations but is less suited to complex multi-stakeholder conflicts involving layers of state and non-state actors, like those featured in this thesis's case studies focused on the Horn of Africa

³³Bengt Holmstrom and Paul Milgrom, 'Multitask Principal-Agent Analyses: Incentive Contracts, Asset Ownership, And Job Design,' (1991) 7 *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*.

and Afghanistan.³⁴ The typology developed in this thesis integrates the distinction between state and non-state entities and describes those entities' posture within a geopolitical conflict, whether offensive or defensive.

Likewise, Sylvan's and Majeski's "patron and client" framing, while a source of useful insight, too narrowly describes relationships involving direct control, failing to account for the subtle and unpredictable co-dependencies that accrete around decades of foreign assistance in cases like the United States' alliances with Egypt or Pakistan.³⁵ Moreover, the patron-client framework, with its blinkered focus on the concept of institutional knowledge, is ultimately far too narrow to fully explain the United States' persistent reliance on proxies or the role of political deception in sustaining proxy relationships. The concept of proxy war developed in these pages, by contrast, naturally facilitates analysis of the crucial element of hypocrisy and, in turn, more readily leads us to insights about the forces that drive that component (for example, the role played by public opinion and reputational concerns).

As discussed above, Khong's "tributary" conception is also insightful but focuses on a less specific category of actors, encompassing states that merely have "aligned" interests rather than a dependency-generating flow of foreign assistance, as is the case in many of the examples studied here. It is also, by dint of that broader framing, more optimistic and brings to the table fewer ready structures for interpreting the costly and conflict-ridden relationships which we seek to understand here. Khong's framework, like these other schools of thought, could be developed

³⁴ Johnson, Chalmers, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, New York: Henry Holt, 2000, Bacevich, Andrew, *American Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002; Ferguson, Niall, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*, London: Allen Lane, 2004; Johnson, Chalmers, *The Sorrows of Empire* London: Verso, 2004.

³⁵ "It is no exaggeration to say that American policy is concentrated on maintenance of US clients and hostility toward US enemies." Sylvan, David; Majeski, Stephen, *US Foreign Policy in Perspective: Clients, enemies and empire (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics)*. Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition. February, 2009. P.1.

further using the finer distinctions brought to the table with this thesis's proxy war typology.³⁶

The proxy conception developed here integrates components of each of these bodies of work but refines them and permits more nuance.

All of these frameworks for viewing international relationships fail to fully capture the indirect nature of the relationships chronicled in the case studies, including the way in which they so particularly contrast with direct interventions, and the attendant issues of deception and hypocrisy. These conceptual layers are all built into the conception of proxy relationships developed over the course of this thesis. Describing one of the central claims illustrated by the case studies – that the United States seeks out proxy relationships to exploit their indirect and sometimes covert qualities – using the language of “empire” model, or the “patron and client” model, or the “tributary” model would not be impossible, but it would require grafting on and adapting these additional concepts and distinctions. By integrating these additions at a foundational level, the “proxy” concept developed here permits significantly more nuanced analysis of a swath of important international relationships.

c) The Efficacy of Proxy War

Several existing works do offer frameworks for assessing the efficacy of foreign alliances in general. These can be usefully applied to proxies and to the component of this thesis's research question related to the costs of such relationships. Sullivan, Tessman and Li, for example, question whether a nation can successfully use military assistance to secure its interests in another country or region. Deploying three theoretical models, they find that, generally,

³⁶ Khong, Yuen Foong. “The American Tributary System,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 6, 2013, 1–47

increasing levels of US military aid reduces the cooperative behaviour of a partner nation. Their conclusion is limited, however: the authors only examine whether military intervention can be successful in achieving stated policy aims, and ignore broader costs – negative development outcomes, human casualties among the proxy state's population, and economic or financial regression, for example – that can undermine American interests.³⁷ As a result, this thesis further develops the mechanisms and data sources through which a qualitative assessment of efficacy might be undertaken, as discussed later in this chapter.

In another useful foundational concept expanded upon in this thesis, Mott anticipates several of Sullivan's findings, positing that the dominant partner in proxy relationships can paradoxically become dependent upon the recipient of their aid. This study offers several case studies in which a much weaker proxy is able to leverage that dependence to then gain compliance in the pursuit of its own interests. The United States' relationships with Pakistan and Egypt both exhibit this dynamic, and this thesis describes both relationships to a degree of depth, and with a specific focus on assessing these problems, not seen in the existing literature.

Several existing works take a positive view of the efficacy of proxy relationships. As discussed earlier, Khong does so at a systematic level with his argument that the United States has successfully revived the ancient Chinese model of tribute states.³⁸ Luttwak views the Byzantine empire as the model for success in this respect, and advocates for an application of its tactics in Afghanistan, specifically – finding allies in ethnic groups that, in his view, would require “little persuasion” to be co-opted.³⁹ Andres, Willis, and Griffith Jr. also endorse a light-

³⁷ The authors' only mention of human rights violations enabled by US military support is a reference to Blanton (1999)'s finding that arms imports have been linked to increases in human rights abuses in developing countries, and a note that controlling for the existing human rights record of the aid recipient, pre-intervention, does not change the results in any model. Sullivan, Patricia, Tessman, Brock, and Li, Xiaojun, 'US Military Aid and Recipient State Cooperation', *Foreign Policy Analysis* (2011) 7, 275–294.

³⁸ Khong, *supra*

³⁹ Edward Luttwak, 'What Would Byzantium Do' [2010] *Prospect*.

footprint approach dubbed “the Afghan model,” involving US air support, a small contingent of Special Forces personnel, and a heavy reliance on “indigenous” militias.⁴⁰ Eland, similarly, considers “effective and reasonable local actors” the best way to achieve maximum “bang for the buck.”⁴¹

Other analyses take a more sober view. Mumford describes a trend of “overspill and blowback” resulting from proxy wars.⁴² Hughes, relying on historical description, posits that these relationships, often brokered in the interest of short-term tactical goals, can become less strategically useful as time goes on, but are more difficult to extricate from than traditional means of war. Proxy war, he argues, “is fundamentally anti-strategic.” He elaborates that, whereas direct intervention allows fine control over specific tactics, including military, economic, and diplomatic measures, “by sponsoring proxies, governments effectively abandon any control over the means by which strategic goals should be attained.”⁴³ This thesis builds on this concept, describing cases in which relationships lasted long after both parties had privately acknowledged that the efficacy of the relationship had significantly diminished (for instance, in Afghanistan and Pakistan). The added concept of political hypocrisy offers a meaningful additional frame through which to view this phenomenon and provides a new explanation for the issues that Hughes raises.

Existing statistical analyses seem to accord with these pessimistic conclusions. Finkel et al.’s exhaustive statistical treatment of USAID data, for instance, concludes that US military assistance of the kind that characterizes so many of this thesis’s case study relationships may

⁴⁰Richard B Andres, Craig Willis and Thomas E. Griffith Jr., ‘Winning With Allies: The Strategic Value Of The Afghan Model’ (2005) 30 International Security.

⁴¹ Ivan Eland, ‘Turn The War On Terrorism Into A War By Proxy’ (CATO Institute 2002) <<https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/turn-war-terrorism-war-proxy>>

⁴² Mumford, *supra* at 108

⁴³ Hughes, *supra* at 144

undercut other purported US goals such as democratization. “Democracy assistance is less effective when the US provides larger amounts of military assistance,” they conclude. “Our model suggests that, as countries receive larger amounts of US military aid, the impact of USAID democracy assistance matters less and less.”⁴⁴

Nancy Bermeo, in a broader survey of data including Finkel’s, similarly concludes that countries that turned authoritarian while receiving US assistance were more likely to receive a mix of aid with a larger military component and a smaller democracy-building component. And she proposes a theory of a dark cycle of causation in relationships where the United States is providing both military and democracy-building assistance (as is the case in the proxy relationships examined here). In Bermeo’s hypothesis, the democracy funds encourage dissent, which incurs the wrath of authoritarian regimes, which in turn are further empowered to crack down by the presence of US arms and military support. This thesis’s study of Egypt and its massacre of civilian protesters at Rabaa Square fits Bermeo’s theory well.⁴⁵

Relatedly, Schlumberger argues that the foreign policy objective of democratization may be fundamentally at odds with that of regional security. In his historical view, democratization often necessitates periods of instability and overthrow before it effects peace and stability.⁴⁶ This is especially worth considering in the context of this thesis’s discussion of political honesty, since each of its cases was sold to the public in terms of both regional stability and democratization.

⁴⁴Steven Finkel and others, 'Cross-National Research On USAID’S Democracy And Governance Programs' (2008) <<http://www.pitt.edu/~politics/democracy/democracy.html>>

⁴⁵ Peter Burnell and Nancy Bermeo, *Democracy Assistance And The Search For Security, New Challenges To Democratization (Democratization Studies)* (Taylor and Francis 2010).

⁴⁶ D Jung and O Schlumberger, *Dancing With Wolves: Dilemmas Of Democracy Promotion In Authoritarian Contexts*, *Democratization And Development: New Political Strategies For The Middle East*, (Palgrave Macmillan 2006).

Many of the above authors point out the need for precisely the kind of deep primary research undertaken in this thesis. As Bermeo concludes, “The challenge is to give the right sort of resources to the right sort of actors...” and drawing further conclusions to that end will require “detailed case studies.”⁴⁷

d) Reality, Hypocrisy, and Reputation in the Literature

The indirect and often deceptive nature of proxy wars leads us naturally to this thesis’s concern with the distance between reality and political promise. Before surveying the extant political science literature regarding political hypocrisy (and, in turn, concluding that the concept has seen little application in the specific context of proxy war), it is useful to explore the general concepts of hypocrisy and reality outside of the context of international relations. Answering the foundational question, “what is hypocrisy?”, and its sister query, “how does one distinguish hypocrisy from reality?”, advances the research question by providing a clearer and more nuanced understanding of one of our key variables: the degree of political hypocrisy that a relationship exhibits. This, in turn, affords us a better understanding of why political hypocrisy appears to be correlated to high costs in the case studies explored in these pages.

A robust body of social psychology literature explores the social constructions of reality and the human struggle to perceive deception. This field of study, social constructionism, rests on foundations built by phenomenological philosophers, including Edmund Husserl, Alfred Schutz, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Martin Heidegger, among others. Following on those works, Berger’s and Luckmann’s *The Social Construction of Reality* originated the term “social

⁴⁷ Burnell, Bermeo (at 45), p77, 82.

construction” and remains one of the field’s defining texts. Berger and Luckmann introduced novel theories about the habituation and institutionalization of subjective realities, arguing that the “knowledge” we take for granted is inherently grounded in our social context. To Berger and Luckmann, “theoretical knowledge” means far less in a social context than “the sum total of “what everybody knows” about a social world: an assemblage of maxims, morals, proverbial nuggets of wisdom, values and beliefs, myths, and so forth.”⁴⁸ Their suppositions about the habituation and institutionalization of subjective realities are of direct relevance to this thesis’s observations about how values and public opinion shape decision-making, even in the context of international relations. Others, beginning in the 1960s, built on Berger’s and Luckmann’s works, including but not limited to Charles Willard in the field of politics,⁴⁹ Steven Pinker in the field of linguistics⁵⁰, and John Searle in the field of philosophy (who, in turn, builds on Durkheim’s earlier writing).⁵¹

Overwhelmingly, the literature makes clear the difficulty of identifying deception and hypocrisy. Model after model – in fields ranging from national security, international relations and intelligence; to business and economics; and to law enforcement and forensics – seeks to give actors the tools to identify acts of deception. Indeed, this “deception detection” literature, given its obvious and legion applications, is robust, including but not limited to: Vendemia, Buzan, and Green’s reaction time-based model;⁵² Honts’s physiological model⁵³ and other

⁴⁸Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction Of Reality: A Treatise In The Sociology Of Knowledge* (Anchor Books 1966).

⁴⁹ Charles Willard, *Liberalism And The Problem Of Knowledge: A New Rhetoric For Modern Democracy* (University of Chicago Press 1996).

⁵⁰Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial Of Human Nature* (Penguin Group 2002).

⁵¹John Searle, *The Construction Of Social Reality* (Free Press 1997).

⁵²J. Vendemia, R. Buzan and E. Green, 'Practice Effects, Workload, And Reaction Time In Deception' (2005) 118 *The American Journal of Psychology*.

⁵³C. Honts, 'Psychophysiological Detection Of Deception' (1994) 3 *Current Directions in Psychological Science*.

models constructed by Rockwell, Bueller, and Burgoon;⁵⁴ Boyle, Clements, and Proudfoot's individual-based model;⁵⁵ Zuckerman, DePaulo, and Rosenthal;⁵⁶ O'Sullivan and Ekman;⁵⁷ and Bond and Uysal.⁵⁸

Significantly more limited is the literature on hypocrisy, a term derived from the Greek word *hypokrisis*, meaning the playing of a part.⁵⁹ Several scholars, including Shklar, point, at the most elementary level, to the definition of the term provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "assuming a false appearance of virtue or goodness, with dissimulation of real character or inclination..."⁶⁰ The concept is not necessarily dependent on intent to deceive, and therefore includes falsehoods both wittingly and unwittingly expressed. Because intentionality is not intrinsic to the concept, there are fewer clues by which to judge the extent of the delta between reality and representation in the context of political hypocrisy. In the context of the international relations case studies here, hypocrisy is most frequently explored by weighing an actor's actions against their interests and values. The challenges of distinguishing between reality and the hypocritical distortions of it are apparent throughout those case studies.

While the literature on hypocrisy in an international relations context is underdeveloped at best, there is considerably more robust work on the subject in the political context. That includes explorations of how to identify it and, still more so, how to leverage it as a political tool.

⁵⁴P. Rockwell, D. Buller and J. Burgoon, 'Measurement Of Deceptive Voices: Comparing Acoustic And Perceptual Data' (1997) 18 *Applied Psycholinguistics*.

⁵⁵R. Boyle, J. Clements and J. Proudfoot, 'Measuring Intent: A Look At Antecedents To Deceptive Intent' (2018) 131 *The American Journal of Psychology*.

⁵⁶M. Zuckerman, B. DePaulo and R. Rosenthal, 'Verbal And Nonverbal Communication Of Deception' (1981) 14 *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*.

⁵⁷Par Anders Granhag and others, *The Detection Of Deception In Forensic Contexts* (Cambridge Press 2004).

⁵⁸C. Bond, Jr. and A. Uysal, 'On Lie Detection 'Wizards' (2007) 31 *Law and Human Behavior*.

⁵⁹David Runciman, *Political Hypocrisy: The Mask Of Power, From Hobbes To Orwell And Beyond*(Princeton University Press 2009).

⁶⁰Judith Shklar, 'Let Us Not Be Hypocritical' (1979) 108 *Daedalus*.

One of the earliest arguments in favour of political hypocrisy comes from Machiavelli, though he does not use that term. “Although employing deceit in every action is detestable, in waging a war it is, nevertheless, a laudable and glorious thing,” he argues. “And the man who employs deceit to overcome the enemy is to be praised, just like the man who overcomes him by force.”⁶¹

Writing in the 1970s, Shklar more specifically develops the concept of hypocrisy. She elaborates on the concept in the context of policymaking: “Those engaged in governing,” she writes, “must assume at the very least two roles, one of pursuing policies and another of edifying the governed in order to legitimize these plans.” She describes, in turn, “the disparity between what is said and what is done,” a gap she notes is frequently present in justifications of war.⁶² Shklar, like Machiavelli, counsels tolerance of a degree of hypocrisy, which she describes as an inevitable and unavoidable component of democratic discourse. But she also deals extensively with the democratic pressures against hypocrisy, a relevant piece of context for this thesis and its description of the ebb and flow of transparency in proxy relationships, sometimes in response to public political pressure. Shklar notes of the hypocrite that “every age, every form of literature, and every public stage has held him up for contempt and ridicule.”⁶³ In several of the cases examined here, the United States government appears to actively work to avoid being exposed as hypocritical, even if that requires further hypocrisy and concealment, with considerable political risk. (See, for instance, the effort, under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, to conceal the mass grave alleged to have been created by General Dostum – a case deeply described later in this thesis.)

Writing decades later, Runciman arrives at a different conclusion, persuasively arguing

⁶¹ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses On Livy (Oxford World's Classics)* (Oxford University Press 2003).

⁶² Shklar (at 60) p. 4.

⁶³ *Id.*

that political hypocrisy can lead to failures of reflection and, subsequently, failures of policy. “In some places,” he writes, directly rebutting Shklar, “a tolerance for hypocrisy can do real harm.” Runciman defines hypocritical statements in several ways that speak to their different qualities. The simplest and most useful of them, for the purposes of this thesis, is his description of “public statements of principle that do not coincide with an individual’s private practices” and of the related “gap between the honeyed words and the underlying reality” or “gap between appearance and reality.”⁶⁴ This concept of a hypocrisy gap will be developed in this thesis and applied within each of its case studies. The visual metaphor is well-suited to our purposes here: envisioning a gap naturally lends itself to questions about the size and nature of that gap, which figures prominently in the research question at the heart of this thesis. Runciman suggests that this concept is not binary (i.e., a situation can either exhibit a gap between reality or representation, or not) but rather on a spectrum, with small hypocrisies and large ones, and the potential to narrow or expand the degree of either. “Clearly,” he says of the debate over the merits of hypocrisy in a society, “a line needs to be drawn somewhere between the hypocrisies that are unavoidable in contemporary political life, and the hypocrisies that are intolerable.”⁶⁵ This thesis deals with related questions, in a context not contemplated by Runciman: namely, in a given proxy war, how wide is the gap between reality and representation, and how does that relate to the costs of the alliance in question?

Another body of literature speaks to the democratic pressures that shape the public representations that accompany these relationships. One classic example is just-war theory, including, notably, the work of Waltzer. “For as long as men and women have talked about war,” he writes, “they have talked about it in terms of right and wrong.” Waltzer’s normative argument

⁶⁴ Runciman, (at 59), p 93, 424

⁶⁵ *Id.* at 110

in favour of moral accountability for policy decisions and against what he describes as “amoral” realism is at odds with the tradition embodied by Shklar, but both acknowledge the forceful way in which the democratic public pressures policymaking, for better (as is Waltzer’s argument) or worse (as is Shklar’s).⁶⁶ This thesis draws on some of the concepts around public expectations of morality articulated by Waltzer, though it describes these expectations purely as a descriptive matter, not as a normative one.

Developing a related set of concepts, Lind argues that international, rather than purely domestic, reputational concerns have played a central role in the United States’ wartime decisions. He cites, as examples, the Korean and Vietnam wars, which he posits were both “waged to reinforce America’s reputation as the leader of a hegemonic alliance.” (He cites internal government memoranda pointing to reputation to validate this claim.) Lind’s work addresses the proxy war concepts dealt with in this thesis briefly, noting that the above international reputation concerns have sometimes also motivated indirect approaches to war. For example, referring to conflicts in South Korea and South Vietnam Lind argues, “the need to avoid direct Soviet-American or Sino-American confrontation required that these wars remain limited,” in the interest of “avoid[ing] the costs of a conventional world war...”⁶⁷ The same motivations, this thesis shows, are central to each of the case studies assessed here.

Like Byman, Lind notes how proxy war can serve as a form of signalling between powers, ostensibly without either side committing reputationally to a conflict such that they would be forced to commit to a full-out war. The logic here is obvious: when American soldiers are killed in a direct engagement, this can quickly trap the President into making a full-on

⁶⁶Michael Walzer, *Just And Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument With Historical Illustrations* (Basic Books 2015).

⁶⁷Michael Lind, *The American Way Of Strategy: US Foreign Policy And The American Way Of Life* (Oxford University Press 2006).

commitment to the conflict from which it would be much more difficult to extricate versus a proxy war. However, there are additional factors not considered in that rationale. As Byman points out, the veil of secrecy or deception around proxy conflicts can actually forestall extrication, a point expanded upon in this thesis. Moreover, as several original observations introduced in these pages show, there are extensive reputational costs that are exacerbated, rather than mitigated, by proxy engagement. See, for example, the international reputational cost to the United States' short-sighted decision to stand by the Mubarak regime in Egypt, or the domestic reputational cost, at least in policy-relevant human rights advocacy circles, of efforts to conceal atrocities committed by General Dostum in Afghanistan. (Both of these cases receive detailed discussion later in this thesis.)

Lind argues that the earlier Cold War-era proxy wars to which he refers “fit poorly with American traditions and ideals” and were, partly as a result, unpopular with the American people.⁶⁸ However, his work, like many of the others in the canon of literature that raises the idea of proxy war, focuses disproportionately on the Cold War. Moreover, his brief discussion of the tension between American ideals and the hypocritical nature of proxy wars points to the obvious need for a comprehensive theoretical framework and body of research by which to analyse these concepts, neither of which Lind attempts to undertake.

Several of the above works on political hypocrisy discuss the specific role of language in hypocritical political representations – what Runciman refers to as “honeyed words.” This theme receives considerable attention in the case studies here, with, for instance, General Dostum in Afghanistan and other Northern Alliance fighters being described by American officials as “friends” of the United States and General Sisi of Egypt being described by President Trump as

⁶⁸ *Id.*

“terrific.”⁶⁹ Stanski develops some related concepts about the power of terminology in the context of specific regional case studies of Afghan “warlords,” a specific subset of proxy forces discussed extensively within several of this thesis’s case studies (e.g., in Afghanistan and Somalia).⁷⁰ He argues that the use of such terms, freighted with cultural assumptions and prejudices, can itself shape foreign policy. But no literature to date has linked these explorations of terminology and hypocrisy, applied those concepts to broad questions about the efficacy of proxy warfare, or offered a comprehensive body of diverse case study research on the subject.

It must be emphasized, briefly, that the deception hypothesis does not purport to account for all of the high costs in all recent conflicts. However, a succinct look at other hypotheses allows us to consider and discard them, in turn, as primary explanatory variables, pointing to the high plausibility of this hypothesis being more significant and, therefore, more worthy of study.

High costs of recent conflicts could stem from structural constraints, namely the rigidity of an outdated military policymaking apparatus that is better suited for the Cold War and that struggles with counterinsurgency strategy and tactics; from domestic shifts such as a decline in national unity and a growing aperture between interests and values at home; or from international shifts: specifically, increased scrutiny from a war-weary West. When examined, however, each of these hypotheses can be understood to contribute to or be subsumed in the deception hypothesis; indeed, each of these constraints and shifts limits action such that political hypocrisy becomes not only appealing but often necessary.

⁶⁹ Madeline Conway, “‘Trump: ‘We Are Very Much Behind’ Egypt’s El- Sisi.’” (*Politico.com*, 2019) <<https://www.politico.com/story/2017/04/trump-praises-egypt-abdel-fattah-el-sisi-236829>>

⁷⁰Keith Stanski, 'So These Folks Are Aggressive: An Orientalist Reading Of `Afghan Warlords' (2009) 40 Security Dialogue.

The deception hypothesis is compelling both because it is intuitive and because it is supported by history. The case studies here suggest a pattern: the more a government deceives its people, the less flexibility it has to get out of a conflict, and the more it paints itself into a corner. The lack of transparency and public accountability engendered by the political deception often leads to overreach and, therefore, to costly decisions. One could note that in the post-Nixon context, deception and political hypocrisy are intimately entwined in America's policymaking reality, complicating all foreign policy decisions. All of this points to the need for an analytical framework for assessing foreign policy in the context of this element of deception.

Deception and political hypocrisy tend to compound costs. A brief development of the causal relationship between these increased costs and political hypocrisy follows:

- *Accountability*: Transparency about actions and underlying motivations on the part of a state opens that state to being held accountable by the public, by outsiders, and by different branches of the same government, which can, the case studies show, lead to better, less costly outcomes. For example, the cessation of cash flow financing in the Egyptian context was a direct result of public scrutiny. Put differently, when a policymaker understands that he or she will have to account for his or her decisions, riskier and costlier actions may appear less appealing.
- *Promise-based constraints*: Commitments to false characterizations of a relationship make it more difficult for Washington to course correct, perpetuating costly engagement long past their sell-by dates. See, for example, the period in US-Pakistan relations

chronicled in that case study, particularly during the later years of the Obama administration.

- *Leverage*: Being aware of the presence of political hypocrisy, others – the proxy force, often – can exert pressure on the deceiver, extracting further, sometimes costly concessions. Several of the case studies show the United States’ efforts to avoid domestic political accountability being exploited as a vulnerability in this manner.
- *Reputation*: An understanding within the international community that an actor engages in political deception limits trust and willingness to engage with and support that actor.

Counterfactuals to the case studies examined, while, of course, only explorable in a speculative context, point to the plausibility of the deception hypothesis. In the Afghanistan context, for example, it can be reasonably understood that direct intervention without the use of proxies would have created a situation of more honest accounting to the public, and a shorter or more limited – and therefore less costly – engagement. It could also be reasonably presumed that the lack of political deception would have incurred fewer reputational costs, which the United States is still suffering.

4) Research Question

a) Importance of Topic

The literature clearly points to an underexamined puzzle about the United States' proxy wars and the role of political hypocrisy in them. The significance of that puzzle is, likewise, clear. King, Keohane, and Verba, in their foundational text on social science research, offer two criteria for whether a research subject merits consideration: "it should deal with a significant real-world topic," they write, "and be designed to contribute, directly or indirectly, to a specific scholarly literature."⁷¹ The first quality is evident here. The observations in these pages stand to significantly expand our understanding of conflicts in which many lives hang in the balance. While it generally takes a descriptive and analytical approach rather than a normative one, that expansion of understanding has obvious potential applications for real-world policymakers, who might, for instance, make different decisions about when and how to curtail assistance to a proxy force. (Indeed, the case studies suggest that the gap in deep reflection on these dynamics of proxy warfare in the post-9/11 era is not simply present in the literature, but also in the conversations of policymakers, who often failed to grapple with the costs and consequences of the relationships.)

With respect to the second threshold of meaningful contribution to scholarship, King,

⁷¹ Gary King, Robert O Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton Univ Press 1994), p 18.

Keohane, and Verba lay out a list of six possible ways in which this might be the case. This thesis satisfies at least three. Its hypothesis deals with themes, such as the transparency and cost of geopolitically sensitive international alliances, that are widely “seen as important by scholars in the literature but for which no one has completed a systematic study.”⁷² (See, for instance, Lind’s discussion of reputational incentives in warfare, which acknowledges the importance of many of the themes dealt with here but was not backed by a comprehensive body of research.)⁷³ It argues that an important topic (namely, proxy war) has been overlooked in the literature. Finally, it “show[s] that theories or evidence designed for some purpose in one literature could be applied in another literature to solve an existing but apparently unrelated problem.”⁷⁴ (In this case, the body of literature on political hypocrisy has never been applied to the problem of proxy warfare.)

b) Formulating the Question

King, Keohane and Verba describe several values for formulating an effective research question. They discuss the necessity of simplification, taking the infinitely complex situations in qualitative case studies like the ones here and formulating a question that “specif[ies] outcomes and explanatory variables in a coherent way.”⁷⁵ They also highlight the need for a question that can generate falsifiable hypotheses.⁷⁶ As such, the research question applied in each of the case studies in this thesis is:

⁷²*Id.* at 16.

⁷³ Lind (at 64), p 118.

⁷⁴ King (at 71), p 16.

⁷⁵ *Id.* at 9.

⁷⁶ “A ‘theory’ incapable of being wrong is not a theory.” *Id.* at 100.

- *What effect, if any, does the degree of hypocrisy in political representations made by the parties to a proxy war have upon the cost of that relationship, as measured in American blood or treasure?*

This question introduces an obvious and falsifiable hypothesis: that more hypocrisy can result in more. To simplify the puzzle at issue here, I have focused on two essential variables. As an explanatory variable, I examine the degree of hypocrisy present in the relationship, using a qualitative framework described in this chapter to approximately capture this intrinsically subjective concept. As a dependent variable, I examine the relationship's relative cost in American blood and treasure, using data sources also described in detail in this chapter.

King, Keohane, and Verba divide social science inquiries into two broad categories: those seeking to establish causation, and descriptive undertakings which can simply offer detailed observation or offer observation as well as descriptive inferences drawn from those observations (i.e., extrapolating information beyond that which is directly observable).⁷⁷ The authors argue that both categories of inquiry can be equally valuable, and that either approach may be more suitable, depending on the nature of the research question.

While the foregoing research question alludes to the concept of causal linkages, this thesis does not seek to draw causal inferences in its conclusions, nor is its research arrayed around establishing causation. This is the most feasible approach for this research question for several reasons.

First, because both the topic of proxy war in general and the role of hypocrisy within

⁷⁷ *Id.* at 34.

proxy war are underserved in the literature, the kind of detailed description presented here, backed by extensive primary research, is an important next step in the discussion of these concepts. Specifically *because* of the obfuscation inherent in these relationships, that extensive description and primary research is unusual and valuable. In turn, many of the descriptive inferences offered in these pages, elucidating the dynamics at the heart of the research question, are also relatively new, helping us to understand these historical episodes as part of a unified aspect of US foreign policy. Those inferences deserve exploration before the very distinct project of firmly establishing causation is undertaken.

Second, and most importantly, the research in this thesis suggests that seeking unbiased causal inferences may be fundamentally at odds with the nature of the variables at issue. King, Keohane, and Verba introduce, as a critical problem of social science inquiry, the phenomenon of endogeneity: namely, “that the values our explanatory variables take on are sometimes a consequence, rather than a cause, of our dependent variable.”⁷⁸ Clearly accounting for the direction of causation is an important precept of drawing reliable causal inferences. But in the case of the variables of political hypocrisy and cost in proxy wars, clear and unavoidable endogeneity exists. In many of the case studies in this thesis, the parties seek to obfuscate the relationship because it carries with it costs that would be politically untenable if transparently rendered to the American public or the international community. Conversely, the case studies suggest, hypocrisy and lack of public disclosure can prolong entanglements, increase collateral damage, or compel further (and costly) direct intervention by the United States. (See, for example, the discussion of Afghanistan.) King, Keohane, and Verba lay out numerous approaches for stripping out and otherwise accounting for endogeneity in social science research.

⁷⁸ *Id.* at 185.

But in this case, this mutually reinforcing relationship between variables is not a flaw in the research design: it is a relevant observation about the dynamics of the relationships. The authors acknowledge that this may sometimes be the case, noting that “endogeneity is not always a problem to be fixed.”⁷⁹ That is the case here.

As a result, elements of process-tracing are used within the descriptions offered in these case studies – for instance, in the case of Egypt, to show how moral and reputational values translated into political pressure in Congress, which in turn translated into policy movement to end cashflow financing in the White House. But the fundamental ambition of the thesis is description and descriptive inference about the patterns of behaviour and costs of these relationships, with only a qualitative discussion of causal linkages.

c) Measuring Hypocrisy

Both of the variables here defy simple definition or quantitative measurement, which also accounts for the emphasis on qualitative and descriptive approaches within this thesis. While the concept of a gap between representation and reality is important, real, and capable of drawing out original observations, it is also extraordinarily subjective by its very nature. The imposition of any simple, metrics-based scheme to try to truly quantify degrees of deception would be at odds with the reality of the concept and offer little additional insight. As such, I have used a more qualitative measure that assesses the presence or absence of hypocrisy in three central aspects of the dialogue around a relationship, then, in a purely descriptive fashion, offers observations. This approach offers a consistent organizing framework across all case studies,

⁷⁹ *Id.*

without purporting to fully quantify such a subjective quality. Specifically, each case study will assess the presence of hypocrisy in:

- *Characterisations of the objectives of the relationship*, as reflected in the frequency and intensity of differences between the United States' public renderings of desired outcomes and the discussions of those desired outcomes within the policy process and to the proxy force on the other side of the relationship.
- *Characterisations of the parties to the relationship*, as reflected in the frequency and intensity with which statements about the nature and trust within the relationship differed from similar statements inside the US government or within conversations with that proxy force, depending on the specific dynamics at play in the case in question.
- *Characterisations of the activities of the proxy force*, as reflected in the frequency and intensity with which statements about the partner's accomplishments and misconduct differ from the actual historical record of the partner's actions, established in this thesis's body of primary research.

All three categories will be described on the basis of a comparison of public government statements with private correspondences including cables and interview-based accounts from policymakers. Whether hypocrisy is evident in one, some, or all of these categories will be used as the most basic assessment of degree of hypocrisy, expanded upon through the description

offered in each case. Measuring hypocrisy represents one of the most difficult methodological challenges in this thesis and solving this problem in a fashion that satisfies any sort of quantitative rigor is not the goal here, nor is it necessary for the descriptive inferences being drawn here.

Instead, this is an imperfect, messy approach that nevertheless provides a useful tool in reaching conclusions about the research question. Quantitative approaches to the question of hypocrisy might be possible in a more narrowly focused, standardized context. For example, examining the number of false statements in diplomatic cables in a single relationship over time could be an interesting starting point for a very different kind of inquiry. But such data simply does not exist, in any consistent fashion, across the numerous relationships – many of them covert – discussed here. A more flexible, qualitative approach was needed.

d) Measuring Cost

Capturing the cost of a given relationship also requires a flexible and qualitative approach. At the broadest level, this thesis uses the definition of “blood and treasure.” The first quality refers to loss of life, both for the United States, the partner force or nation, and with respect to any other parties, including civilians. The second captures the various expenditures, by the United States, to maintain the relationship. However, any full measurement of this variable must involve additional subjective factors, including idealistic and reputational pressures, both of which figure prominently in the analyses within this thesis. Therefore, the discussion of this variable will draw on a range of diverse measures best capturing economic, institutional, reputational, and domestic costs as appropriate. For instance:

- *Economic costs*: Trends in the level of US investment in the proxy relationship in question (as measured by direct foreign military aid) compared to:
- *Institutional costs*: Trends in the relevant countries' Polity Data Series scores, tracking stability and level of democratization.⁸⁰
- *Reputational costs*: Trends in public approval of America within the country and region in question.⁸¹
- *Domestic costs*: Trends in domestic public opinion of the proxy relationship or associated conflicts within America.⁸²
- *(Gaps in) economic costs*: Expected compared to actual economic costs of the proxy relationship (where such projections are available);⁸³

⁸⁰ 'Polity IV Project: Home Page' (*Systemicpeace.org*, 2014) <<http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4x.htm>>

⁸¹ 'Global Attitudes And Trends' (*Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project*) <<http://www.pewglobal.org/>>

⁸² 'POLL: Differing Views On Iraq And Afghanistan Wars' (*ABC News*, 2009) <<http://abcnews.go.com/PollingUnit/story?id=8136983>>) and Joseph Pudlewski <http://www.ap-gfcpoll.com/pdf/AP-GfK_Poll_Topline_Politics_Economy_FINAL.pdf>

⁸³ Expected cost will be assessed according to initial political statements and Congressional appropriations. Actual costs will be assessed using actual spending figures released by Congress and the White House Office of Budget and Management.

- (*Gaps in*) *human costs*: Promised versus actual human cost of the relationship – as measured by the death toll among both American and local citizens and both combatants and non-combatants;⁸⁴

5) Research Design

a) The Case Study Approach

The research question under consideration in this thesis naturally dictates certain approaches in terms of research design and methodology. The question involves two variables that defy simple quantitative measurement. It seeks to address a puzzle about hypocrisy and proxy war that has wide scope, integrating many different topics, from reputation and domestic political pressure to battlefield exigencies. Many of these topics, likewise, do not lend themselves to consistent data sets and qualitative measurement. On the other hand, that diverse mixture of subjects makes this thesis a strong match for a historical approach focusing on detailed description and descriptive inference. As described in the foregoing sections, that kind of description, backed by detailed primary research, is largely absent from the literature about proxy wars, and altogether absent from the literature about political hypocrisy. Here, it represents

⁸⁴ Sources for casualties in the conflict settings assessed will include: open-source mainstream reporting (e.g., from BBC, CNN, and major periodicals); United Nations civilian casualty reports, conducted annually in settings such as Afghanistan; the secondary research of academic groups such as the Eisenhower Study Group, convened by Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies, and its "Costs of War" reports; overviews and data aggregations by the Congressional Research Service.

the best approach for developing convincing conclusions in response to the research question.

The question posed also has global scope and can therefore benefit from a comparative context in order to draw broader descriptive inferences about the dynamics of hypocrisy and proxy war, as opposed to simply observations about specific cases. King, Keohane, and Verba note the utility of case studies under these circumstances, arguing that this approach can be “essential for description.” The authors also point to George and McKeown’s argument in favour of “congruence procedure,” applying standardized questions and types of data across multiple cases to systematize information and reduce bias.⁸⁵ Yin, relatedly, argues out that “[t]he more that your questions seek to explain some present circumstance (e.g., “how” or “why” some social phenomenon works), the more that the case study method will be relevant.”⁸⁶ In this case, the research question does indeed seek to explain the present circumstances and dynamics of proxy wars.

For these reasons, this thesis adopts a case study driven approach. The central element of each case study is a detailed descriptive history and analysis in the context of the research question. Each also integrates its own literature review, positioning the inferences developed here within the context of existing work and explaining how the cases, individually and separately, advance our understanding of these conflicts. Finally, each will discuss the individual fact pattern’s contribution to the larger questions raised in this thesis.

Because of the numerous respects in which the research question presents challenges to assembling consistent quantitative data that captures the full scope of the inquiry, a statistical approach was deemed to be infeasible here. Large-N statistical data with which to undertake

⁸⁵ Alexander George and Timothy McKeown, *Case Studies And Theory Development In The Social Sciences* (MIT Press 2004).

⁸⁶ Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research* (Sage 2008).

such an approach was simply less available with respect to the variables in question, particularly that of hypocrisy. Further, as Collier points out, it is an important precept of statistical inquiry that, as the number of explanatory factors approaches the number of cases, the capacity to adjudicate among the explanations through statistical comparison rapidly diminishes.⁸⁷ In this case, the focus on fewer cases and more depth was the only suitable approach.

b) Case Selection

This thesis needed to capture a global sweep of America's modern proxy interventions, while utilizing some measure by which to capture the most significant cases, and, crucially, avoiding bias in the case selection. To this end, this thesis looks at the top recipient of US military assistance in each of the six regions into which the United States State Department divides the world. Because my focus is on proxy *wars*, as opposed to assistance relationships broadly speaking, the selection was further limited to only include partnerships in conflict zones in which the United States has been involved in post-9/11 period, either as part of an overt war authorized under the Authorization of the Use of Military Force (as in Afghanistan), or solely through indirect partnerships with fighting forces (as in Somalia).

⁸⁷ Collier, David, *The Comparative Method*, in Ada W. Finifter, *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*, Washington, D.C. American Political Science Association. February, 1993.

Table 1. Top Recipients of United States Military Assistance, FY2017:⁸⁸

Country	US Dollars
Afghanistan	4,420,602,210
Israel	3,175,000,000
Iraq	2,977,463,406
Egypt	1,302,279,000

Jordan	473,879,039
Pakistan	281,004,853
Ukraine	250,314,011
Somalia	122,678,078
Colombia	112,015,241
Tunisia	97,544,588

⁸⁸ From: <https://explorer.usaid.gov> From: <http://explorer.usaid.gov/aid-dashboard.html#2011>

Within the top ten recipients, this leads us to: Afghanistan and Pakistan (which I have chosen to consider jointly, for reasons described herein); Israel and the Middle East conflict (with a focus on proxies utilized in Israel's defence, such as Egypt); Ukraine and the Western response to Russian aggression; Colombia and the so-called war on drugs; Tunisia and the fight against Islamist militants in North Africa, and Somalia and America's efforts there to combat emerging terrorist groups such as Al Shabaab.⁸⁹ Because of the aforementioned exclusion of geographic regions that have not been the site of active wars in which the United States has been involved, Europe and East Asia are not addressed.

Additionally, the criteria used limits the scope of this thesis to traditional geopolitical stakeholders, chiefly militaries and militias. The considerable separate body of literature developed with respect to Private Military and Security Contractors (PMSCs) is beyond the scope of this research.⁹⁰ In the conclusion, I briefly address the potential that the ideas developed here could be applied, in a separate project, to this topic.

As discussed, the chronological scope of the case studies is within the period since the attacks of September 11th, 2001, which fundamentally altered the trajectory of this type of engagement and propelled it to a new prominence in American foreign policy.⁹¹ However, individual case studies reach further back in history to provide context as necessary.

⁸⁹ Budget numbers have been drawn from the White House Office of Budget and Management, the United States Department of State, and USAID.

⁹⁰ Sarah Percy, "Regulating The Private Security Industry: A Story Of Regulating The Last War," (2012) 94 *International Review of the Red Cross*.

⁹¹ William Dalrymple, 'A Deadly Triangle: Afghanistan, Pakistan, And India' (Brookings Institution 2013) <<http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2013/deadly-triangle-afghanistan-pakistan-india-c>>

c) Typicality

This thesis does not assess the typicality of each case study in a conventional sense, to justify its inclusion. Their typicality or lack thereof, however, is a helpful quality for understanding how they fit in the larger context of America's proxy wars. Both the four cases deemed typical here and the one deemed atypical contribute meaningfully to our understanding of the research question.

Those four typical cases— Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt, and Somalia – encompass many of the more difficult proxy partnerships the US relies on around the world. In each, the political promise of supporting an on-the-ground faction was ultimately counterbalanced by harsh realities that had to be concealed or soft-pedalled, both publicly and within the policy-making process.

In Afghanistan, the internal narrative shaped within US policy circles about US relations with Northern Alliance warlords was sanitized. Interviews and documents suggest prominent political figures, including now-Secretary of State John Kerry, went to considerable lengths to halt investigations into Northern Alliance human rights abuses.⁹² Meanwhile, the public positioning of the Afghan war as a short-term intervention after September 11, 2001 has unravelled into one of the United States' most difficult and protracted engagements in the region, much as relationship with Pakistan has.

In Egypt, private interviews and contemporaneous communications reveal intense dissatisfaction with the abuses of the el-Sisi regime at the highest levels of the US government. The legislative machinery required to ensure the continued delivery of military assistance has

⁹² See "Afghanistan Case Study", *infra*.

been largely undisturbed, with prominent politicians regularly supporting that assistance publicly on security grounds. The Obama administration exerted considerable political energy attempting to “nudge” the structure of Egyptian aid toward a model with more room for accountability – an exercise which resulted in small changes worth examining, but ultimately illustrates the unshakable quality of these strategically critical alliances.⁹³

In Somalia, extensive intelligence and military communication document the high hopes behind a collaboration with Ethiopian forces to destabilize an Islamist regime. But when the resulting power void led to the rise of a significant wave of African terrorism, the effort to deny involvement illustrates precisely the culture of political hypocrisy discussed by Runciman.

A number of common factors emerge between case studies of this kind. First of all, as suggested by Finkel and Bermeo’s statistical analyses, there are circumstances in each case study in which the relationship appeared to directly undercut efforts to promote democracy and human rights. Second, they illustrate the disconnect in temporal scope between the promises made and the long-term realities. And third, in each case some of those long-term implications became more difficult to reverse than anticipated: from General Dostum’s continuing destabilizing influence, now from a position of formalized power; to General Sisi’s “too big to fail” attitude recounted by numerous officials; to the emergence of al Shabaab in place of the Islamic Courts Union.

In each case, facts were available at the outset of the relationship that could have led policymakers to anticipate the above long-term consequences. Sometimes these were softened or omitted in public statements by the actors involved – for example, in the frequent public lionization of Northern Alliance figures by the Bush administration. Other times, similar

⁹³ See Egypt Case Study, *infra*.

omissions were made behind closed doors, as with John Kerry’s suppression of an investigation into an Afghan mass grave.⁹⁴ Some of the omissions and manipulations of narrative were politically exigent, but others are perplexing precisely because the political gain associated with them appeared to be minimal. Several of the case studies document circumstances in which more disclosure would have been politically feasible, according to the accounts of individuals involved and contemporaneous documentation.

Finally, this thesis also examines a single case in a considerably less volatile context – Latin America – widely argued to be effective rather than counterproductive. In Colombia, a relationship built around counter-Communism and counter-narcotics has engendered human rights abuses, such as the “false positive” killings documented in this thesis. However, the long-term policy implications of US assistance broadly speaking are markedly more optimistic than in the more traditional conflict zones. Comparison across the case studies reveals several factors that may be at the heart of this distinction.

First is the question of public disclosure central to this thesis. In the Colombia case study, various factors, including lower perceived security stakes, allowed for a more robust dialogue with both Congress and the American people about Plan Colombia. Second, the alignment of strategic and ideological interests between the United States and a given proxy ally. In virtually every case study, policymakers directly involved in maintaining the relationships in question have pointed to the presence or lack of sincere alignment of interests as a decisive factor in the success of the relationship. Some, as in the case of Colombia, have further opined that this is rooted in shared *cultural*, rather than simply strategic values. See *infra* for further discussion.

⁹⁴ See Afghanistan Case Study, *infra*.

Finally – and related to both above factors – the willingness of the United States to commit fully to the relationship. In the case of the Afghan warlords and even more so the covert alliance with the Ethiopian military, individuals close to the relationships at issue complain of the tentative, quickly withdrawn support of the United States government. In each of the case studies, I discuss how the presence or lack of full commitment is deeply linked to the level of disclosure and perception of public support.

Taken together, these case studies contribute a new theoretical framework in which to view the proxy relationships that continue to be central to US foreign policy. It is the author's hope that this framework can meaningfully advance areas in which the current scholarship calls for more focused inquiry, and perhaps also provide a useful framework for assessing future engagements of this kind.

d) Types of Proxy Forces

It should be noted that, due to the complex and varied case studies at issue, this typology, like the definitions used for the variables, is messy, broad, and qualitative. It is intended chiefly as a broad organizing framework to facilitate discussion. The case studies examined in this thesis will be divided along two axes.

First, I distinguish the intent of American engagement: separating Defensive Proxies from Offensive Proxies. Defensive proxies are intended passively to maintain American interests in the region in question and tend to be marked by longer spans of time and closer overt diplomatic ties. Offensive proxies, predominantly those that have appeared in the years since September 11, 2001, are those cultivated to combat a specific enemy or challenge. They tend to

be marked by more covert special operations support, and more targeted, time-limited relationships between the United States and the proxy forces in question. This axis was selected based on what I perceived to be a lack of granularity in the existing proxy warfare literature. Hughes, Mumford, and Innes all discuss proxy forces recruited with radically different aims but draw no categorical distinction between them. Distinguishing between defensive and offensive objectives represented a simple first step towards greater granularity.

Second, I distinguish between state and non-state proxies. Traditional cold-war proxy conflicts saw the United States supporting either governments or opposition and insurgent forces, depending upon their allegiances. The present-day war on terror has diffused the actors involved further still, often pitting one non-government militia against another – as when United States-backed Sahwa (“awakening”) militias turned the tide of conflict against Al Qaeda affiliates in Iraq beginning in 2006.⁹⁵ This axis was selected as it is a source of significant discussion in existing literature.⁹⁶

Within each conflict studied, different elements involved in the conflict and supported by the United States – militias, rebel groups, governments – can be placed within this typology. For example:

⁹⁵ Michael A Innes, *Making Sense Of Proxy Wars* (Potomac Books 2012).

⁹⁶ Id

AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN PROXY TYPOLOGY:

	DEFENSIVE	OFFENSIVE
STATE	<i>[not applicable]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pakistani Intelligence Services - Afghan National Security Forces
NON-STATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Private security contractors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - US-Backed local warlords in border territories

The distinction between State and Non-State actors is clear, although the use of government-affiliated informal militias can blur this distinction. Greater contention arises in determining American engagement in a region as predominantly offensive or defence. That determination is made over the course of each case study, with an overview of both the defensive and offensive bases for engagement.

As illustrated above, each of the case studies undertaken here integrates both State and Non-State actors. As a result, necessarily, the discussion will touch upon both. However, my primary focus will be on *State Proxies*: that is, the United States’ government-to-government

foreign military assistance, and the accompanying relationships with those governments that the US utilizes to indirectly engage in conflicts.

The reasoning for this focus is manifold. First, government-to-government support is typically undertaken more overtly and is therefore the easiest variety to track. Second, government-to-government relationships are those ostensibly most subject to oversight from non-military entities within the United States government, including the State Department and Congress. Finally, high levels of military aid to foreign governments tend to be an excellent indicator of general US investment in a conflict and are often the best starting point for identifying broader entanglement, including support for less overt elements.

It must be noted, however, that in some conflicts, the United States has worked with governments that in turn support and are supported by paramilitary or semi-governmental forces. In the case of Colombia, America's relationship with these quasi-state actors is also be considered.

e) Avoiding Selection Bias

The potential for selection bias is a central concern for any case-study-driven research. King, Keohane, and Verba note that this risk is always present to some extent unless dealing with large-n, randomly selected data points. They propose several methods by which to mitigate this risk. First, they note that the selection should allow for variation on the dependent variable, a threshold obviously met here given the varying degrees of cost described in the relationships examined. Second, and more significantly, they warn of the risk of "selection on the dependent variable."

In this case, selection based on either variable – selecting for either particularly high levels of blood and treasure, or particularly acute hypocrisy– would introduce clear bias in this vein. However, an independent measure, foreign military assistance within the region, has been used instead. (Note that this is a distinct concept from the measure of “blood and treasure” described in the research question, which encompasses, for example, loss of life, reputational damage in terms of public opinion, and strategic setbacks, among other measures. In some regions the recipient of the military assistance is used to identify a different chief proxy conflict within the scheme developed for case selection. For example, when discussing the Middle East, a high level of assistance to Israel is used to select the geopolitical conflict assessed, while Egypt is identified as the relevant proxy for the United States’ interest in that conflict.)

Additionally, the descriptive case studies introduce a far broader swath of data, including historical information and context that expands the chronological aperture of this thesis to include historical context prior to the post-9/11 period. This helps to ameliorate the concern about missing important data articulated by King, Keohane, and Verba. Finally, the inclusion of both typical and atypical cases acts as another mitigating factor. While the risk of selection bias is always inherent in a case study approach, these efforts minimize the risk significantly and ensure no potentially non-confirming data is overlooked.

6) Methodology

This project draws on a diverse range of methodologies, incorporating several forms of data. These include primary documentary research and a significant reliance on semi-structured

interviews developed around the research question. Some modest quantitative analysis is also incorporated as an ancillary means of investigating various facets of the case studies, as is secondary literature analysing that data.

a) Documentary Research

The descriptive histories in each of the case studies integrate a wide range of documentary evidence. These include including contemporaneous communications such as emails and diplomatic cables, some of them obtained from the individuals involved, and others from leaked tranches of government information, including those obtained by WikiLeaks and those released in the course of disclosures about Hillary Clinton and her associates during the 2016 Presidential Campaign. In some cases, such as the intelligence memoranda regarding General Dostum's atrocities, documents were obtained through requests under the US Freedom of Information Act. With respect to some of the documents dating back to earlier historical periods, archives were also relied upon.

As with the other types of research included, these documents are not immune from bias. In many of the conflicts examined, the surviving and available communications skew disproportionately towards certain categories of policymakers who triumphed in their agendas and under-represent other competing perspectives. I have worked to mitigate these concerns by, wherever possible, seeking additional documents representing alternative perspectives. The diversity of types of data relied upon here, including interviews, also helped to broaden the aperture of research and diminish potential bias.

b) Interviews

This most significant body of primary research in this thesis is interview-driven, spanning more than two hundred conversations, conducted over the course of several years, using a structured but adaptable methodology built around the research question and designed to mitigate critiques of this technique. Turner notes that interview-based approach has significant strengths that make it appropriate to case-study-based research and to research involving historical reconstruction.⁹⁷ Both Burgess and Rubin and Rubin echo that sentiment, noting the capacity of in-depth qualitative interviews to “explore in detail the experiences, motives, and opinions of others and learn to see the world from perspectives other than their own.”⁹⁸

However, interviews are subject to a number of obvious and valid critiques, each of which I have sought to address as I developed this research design. One broad category of concern in the critical literature about interview-based research is over the unreliable nature of both the interview subject and the interviewer. Both are subject to bias,⁹⁹ described in one traditional definition as “a systematic or persistent tendency...to overstate or understate the ‘true value’ of an attribute” of the discussion.¹⁰⁰ Silverman critiques a tradition of interview-based

⁹⁷ Daniel W. Turner, III, 'Qualitative Interview Design: A Practical Guide For Novice Investigators' (2010) 15 *The Qualitative Report* <<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR15-3/qid.pdf>>

⁹⁸ I. Rubin and H. Rubin, 'Qualitative Interviewing: The Art Of Hearing Data', *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (Sage 2012).

⁹⁹ Robert Kahn and C.F. Cannell (1968) 2 *The Handbook of Social Psychology*.

¹⁰⁰ JB Lansing, GP Ginsberg and K Braaten, 'An Investigation Of Response Error' [1961] Bureau of Economic and Business Research.

research rooted in what he calls “emotionalism,” in which interviews are deep but marred by uncritical and potentially romantic reception of the subject’s subjective narratives of themselves.¹⁰¹ He also raises another prominent question in the literature about interview-based research: namely, how much to strive to avoid or embrace as inevitable the role of the interviewer in shaping the outcome of the interview. (Silverman favours an approach he calls “constructivism,” in which this element of influence is acknowledged and embraced.)

Additional challenges are introduced through basic human foible. In addition to bias and self-interest, memory is often a challenge. This includes the risk of omissions, particularly when conducting interviews about historical events that may date back decades. It can also, under some circumstances, include the risk of embroidering, fabrication, and suggestion. All of these issues can be exacerbated through faulty methodology – for instance, by way of leading questions, transactional relationships inappropriately skewing answers to questions, and so forth.¹⁰²

While no technique can ever fully remove bias and subjectivity from human recollection, approaches exist to mitigate the impact of these problems. Perhaps the most important is multiple-source corroboration: limiting the portions of the interview used, wherever possible, to those that can be corroborated by additional sources. In this thesis, a threshold of at least two sources corroborating a claim is used to justify inclusion. Where a claim was sufficiently important or authoritative to merit mention but did not meet that threshold, a caveat was provided noting this. A related concept, “triangulation” of perspectives, was also relied upon:

¹⁰¹Jane Lewis and Jane Ritchie, *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide For Social Science Students And Researchers* (4th edn, Sage 2003).

¹⁰²Steiner Kvale, *Interviews: An Introduction To Qualitative Research Interviewing*, (Sage 1996).

this thesis did not simply seek to maximize multiple-sourcing of the same outlook, but rather actively maximized competing and diverse perspectives, including competing political ideologies. The list of interview subjects used makes that diversity clear. These techniques also extend beyond the interview-based portion of the research: very often, triangulation and corroboration were provided through documentary evidence or quantitative data sets.

In-interview techniques were also used to mitigate these problems. For instance, for older claims that might be affected by incomplete or faded memories, probing questions on other subjects permitted a general assessment of that subject's acuity. With respect to self-interest, likewise, challenging questions were used to draw out potential sources of bias.

Just as, in other areas of research design, King, Keohane, and Verba counsel identifying and disclosing sources of bias where they cannot be fully removed, the same approach was also useful with respect to interviews. Individuals quoted have been placed in the context of their potential sources of bias, with explanations of their particular world view and their self-interested stakes in conveying or withholding information. Sceptical caveats and countervailing claims from secondary have been provided throughout, where appropriate. A good example of these techniques is the case study involving competing accounts of General Dostum's alleged mass grave in Afghanistan, where all these techniques, including triangulation and corroboration through documentary evidence, were brought to bear to elucidate the matter at hand.

Interview methodology is conventionally divided by levels of rigidity, from unstructured, freeform approaches to rigid survey-based interviews.¹⁰³ The use of these techniques continued to evolve over the course of this research. I utilized a semi-structured questionnaire designed to

¹⁰³ M.D. Gall, J.P. Gall and W.R. Borg (2003) 7 Educational research: An Introduction.

elicit, without leading questions that could introduce bias, answers that spoke to the research question and its variables. I initially conducted pilot interviews to test this approach, and over time, refined the questions used, based on the quality of the material obtained. Questionnaires were adapted to each individual's background and role in the case study at issue, especially with respect to the large number of narrative questions included in each to further the descriptive goals of this thesis. However, there were also a number of consistent questions about the variables of cost and hypocrisy that were employed to maintain scholarly rigor and consistency.

As discussed in the foregoing section, this thesis includes a deliberately diverse set of interview subjects with accordingly diverse perspectives. To that end, this project's interviews span the following sources:

- Washington-based policymakers integral to the creation of the policies discussed in this D.Phil.'s case studies. These include both proponents of these policies and their critics.

They include staff and leadership at the following organizations:

- The US Department of State
 - The Department of Defence
 - The Central Intelligence Agency
 - The White House
 - USAID
-
- Participants in, and people affected by these policies at a field level, in each of the regions discussed in the project. This includes:
 - Workers at NGOs

- Politicians from the host countries within the bilateral proxy relationship at issue
- Local individuals with accounts of key events

Interviewees were selected on two bases. First, I selected individuals based on the centrality of their office or other organization in the events described, according to secondary literature. Second, I selected them for their seniority within those offices and organizations.

Many of these sources are overt and named, while some agreed to speak only on background. (Therefore, this document deliberately does not include a complete list of sources.) I conducted interviews on tape, with permission exchanged either orally or in writing beforehand. I also transcribed the interviews and made notes, either longhand or typed. Some interviews, conducted in person, were also be videotaped.

c) Quantitative Data

The qualitative nature of the questions themselves makes a broadly quantitative approach to this subject virtually impossible. The most significant integration of quantitative data is with respect to comparisons of rates of US investment¹⁰⁴ in the proxy relationship that forms the basis of each case study against Polity Data Series scores, tracking stability and levels of democratization.¹⁰⁵ Because of the difficulty in controlling for other causal factors than US engagement, this data is not used as the basis for thorough quantitative analysis but rather as an exploratory, enriching source. Relevant democracy indicators are discussed for each case study,

¹⁰⁴ Available through open source US government documents. For example, via USAID at <http://explorer.usaid.gov/aid-dashboard.html>

¹⁰⁵ Available at <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>.

and the presence or absence of prominent trends over the course of the post-9/11 period examined is noted.

Other data sets, such as those related to domestic and public opinion, play a similar role. Surveys of public opinion outside America, undertaken by nongovernmental groups, are utilized to supplement my own qualitative conclusions about public opinion.¹⁰⁶ Domestic polls from Gallup and other mainstream news sources are used as an indicator of American public opinion, largely at a level of little granularity (e.g., broad binary questions about support for foreign engagement and/or individual war efforts).¹⁰⁷ These analyses are typically self-contained within each case study, due to the limited availability of consistent, easily comparable data between such disparate geographic case studies.

¹⁰⁶ For example, The Asia Foundation's extensive surveys of Afghan public opinion (<http://asiafoundation.org/country/afghanistan/2012-poll.php>)

¹⁰⁷ For example ABC News-Washington Post polls (<http://abcnews.go.com/PollingUnit/story?id=8136983>) and Associated Press-GfK polls (http://www.ap-gfkipoll.com/pdf/AP-GfK_Poll_Topline_Politics_Economy_FINAL.pdf).

Chapter 1:

New Challenges Meet Old Political Sales Tactics for a War in Afghanistan

1) Overview

In this chapter, I document the complex and often fraught evolution of the United States' reliance on warlords in Afghanistan as a proxy force. The chapter focuses its analysis on the years between September 11, 2001 and the present day, but necessarily includes significant history that provides context for the actors and events scrutinized. In it, I argue that the United States misunderstood its level of control over Afghan warlords, and that the warlords, in turn, pursued policy objectives at odds with those of the United States and effected collateral damage on a scale that interfered with narratives of the war presented in the American policy process and to the American public. As a central case study, I examine the role of General Abdul Rashid

Dostum in the period immediately following September 11, 2001, and the efforts of policymakers in two successive American administrations to cover-up atrocities he was alleged to have committed. I conclude that the gulf between public representations of the warlords and the United States government's actual knowledge of the warlords' actions created unnecessary costs in American blood and treasure and dealt a lasting blow to tenuous institutions of law and order in Afghanistan.

2) Buried Costs

In January 2002, the United States had just been plunged into a new kind of war around the world, and this country was its frontline. After the September 11 attacks, the Northern Alliance – the collection of warlords and commanders that became the United States' proxy forces – had scored a string of victories against the Taliban.¹⁰⁸ Bombing began in October, and over the course of November, the Northern Alliance warlords routed the Taliban from Mazar-e-Sharif, in Afghanistan's North, and then Kabul, and then Kunduz in the North East, where the Taliban surrendered after a twelve-day siege.¹⁰⁹ With each success came more prisoners of war. Some of these men were hardened fighters who had travelled from Pakistan and the Gulf states to join Osama bin Laden. But many were ordinary Afghan men and boys; foot soldiers for a

¹⁰⁸ Jon Lee Anderson, 'The Surrender' [2001] *The New Yorker* <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/12/10/the-surrender>.>

¹⁰⁹ Id

regime that had medieval values but little interest in the global jihad of the Saudi Emir it safeguarded. In late November, General Dostum and the Americans toppled Kunduz, a last redoubt for thousands of Taliban fighters. As many as 3,500 surrendered peacefully, by one US military estimate. The count including those taken by force was rumoured to be twice that.¹¹⁰¹¹¹

The prisoners were peeled off into separate groups. According to an air force controller, Bart Decker, some were taken directly to a black site, “another location which I can’t talk about.”¹¹² The vast majority were taken West by Dostum’s forces. Some were sent directly from a surrender point in the desert outside Kunduz to the prison at Dostum’s headquarters in Sheberghan. Others were sent to a different prison, a 19th century fortress called Qala-i-Jangi, to be interrogated by the Americans. Qala-i-Jangi’s battlements had overlooked the battles of centuries of occupying forces, from the British to the Soviets. It was about to become the site of America’s first casualty in the new war on terror. The prisoners at the fort rose up in a spectacular ambush, overpowering their American interrogators and killing one CIA agent, Mike Spann.¹¹³ The prisoners held out for a bloody, three-day siege.

General Abdul Rashid Dostum, a Northern Alliance commander almost universally rendered in the terms Stanski discusses, including “warlord,” had been at Kunduz and returned to Qala-i-Jangi. He was accompanied by a US Special Forces unit known as Team 595, led by Captain Mark Nutsch. Dostum, in a rare interview in which he agreed to discuss the dynamics of his proxy alliance with the United States for this thesis, described the consequences. In the

¹¹⁰ Richard W Stewart, “The United States Army in Afghanistan, October 2001-March 2002: Operation Enduring Freedom,” United States Army, http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/070/70-83/cmhPub_70-83.pdf

¹¹¹ Contemporaneous claims from US forces, Northern Alliance leaders, and independent journalists all vary significantly. See, e.g.: “Thousands of Taliban Fighters Surrender in Kunduz,” *Haaretz*, 24 November 2001, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/thousands-of-taliban-fighters-surrender-in-kunduz-1.75571>.

¹¹² Interview with Bart Decker, (2016).

¹¹³ Charles M. Sennott, “The First Battle of the 21st Century: Returning to the Site of America’s Earliest Casualty in Afghanistan.” [2015] *The Atlantic*.

wreckage of the fort, “they couldn’t recognize who was my soldier, who was al Qaeda, who was Taliban,” he recalled.¹¹⁴ Both the Americans and the Northern Alliance fighters were shaken by the loss of life and bitterly angry at the Taliban prisoners. For the Americans, the first American casualty of the new war made for “a very painful realization...that was the price we paid for going very fast with very few people on the ground. Also, it opens up a question of who has responsibility for prisoners of war.”¹¹⁵

Questions about exactly where that responsibility lay cast a long shadow. The United States, and particularly the CIA, immediately recognized the new wave of prisoners as a potentially crucial intelligence asset in the new war on terror. It was imperative that the small contingent of US Special Forces and intelligence agents on the ground have access to, and the ability to interrogate, prisoners. The United States was walking a delicate line, attempting to maintain unfettered access while nominally staying at arm’s length. “We didn’t have the people, the facilities, or frankly the experience to deal with [the prisoners],” recalled Hank Crumpton, the CIA officer who, as head of the agency’s newly formed Special Activities Division, oversaw the initial response to September 11th. “Our position was, like with most everything, we told the Afghans: ‘you’ve got to deal with them.’”¹¹⁶

Direct control of prisoners would supposedly fall to the militias and warlords serving as avatars of US interest on the ground. In established international case law, responsibility generally hinges on a “command and control” standard – and whether and when the United States exercised command and control over Northern Alliance forces would become one of the “war on terror’s” enduring questions.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Interview with Abdul Rashid Dostum, (2016).

¹¹⁵ Interview with Hank Crumpton, (2016).

¹¹⁶ *Id.*

¹¹⁷ Interview with Military law scholar Michael Newton, (2015).

Those questions were tested almost immediately, as Dostum's men loaded the survivors from Qala-i-Jangi into trucks and transported them West again, to join the rest of the prisoners in Sheberghan. By January 2002, questions about the fate of the prisoners were bleeding out across Afghanistan's border and into international headlines. Two investigators with Physicians for Human Rights, Jennifer Leaning and John Heffernan, arrived to investigate rumours that prisoners were being mistreated. "When the US government is supporting a force, we have an obligation to provide some modicum of care to prisoners," Heffernan argued. "We have to provide decent care for those individuals."¹¹⁸ Acting on a tip from the International Council of the Red Cross, Leaning and Heffernan followed the prisoners who had been taken by Northern Alliance forces North, to Sheberghan prison. Sheberghan, near Afghanistan's borders with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, had once been the beneficiary of booming foreign investment. In the 1960s, the Soviets had poured resources into developing the famed gas fields to the city's east. They brought irrigation systems, concrete homes, and amenities like a public address system that for years blared broadcasts of Radio Afghanistan news segments.¹¹⁹ But by the advent of the war on terror, much of the infrastructure had crumbled.

When the investigators arrived at the clay brick prison, there was an air of heightened security around the prison. Workers with the ICRC had attempted to gain entry weeks earlier to assess the humanitarian situation and two US military officers had barred their entry.¹²⁰ But a warden, troubled by the starvation, overcrowding, and mounting death toll, let the two Physicians for Human Rights investigators in. In interviews conducted through Pakistani

¹¹⁸ Interview with John Heffernan, (2015)

¹¹⁹ Masood Farivar, *Confessions of a Mullah Warrior*, (Grove Press, 2010).

¹²⁰ Interview with an ICRC worker speaking on condition of anonymity, 2002, as well as Leaning and Heffernan's contemporaneous reporting in early 2002. The two officers alleged to have turned away humanitarian workers are Colonel Kevin Wilkerson and Major Joe McDorman.

translators, prisoners begged them for food and water. But soon an additional story came to light: not all of the prisoners from Kunduz had made it to Sheberghan. Multiple sources within the prison recalled hundreds or possibly thousands of fighters being loaded into trucks at the prison and driven away.

Heffernan and Leaning noticed the numbers didn't add up. "The people held in the prison at Sheberghan was not the number of people we heard were captured in Kunduz. As many as seven to eight thousand had supposedly been captured. We saw perhaps 3,000 being held. The question was, 'where are the rest?'"¹²¹



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¹²¹ Interview with John Heffernan, (2015)

¹²² Robert Young Pelton, "US Special Forces observe Taliban prisoners at Sheberghan prison," [2002] *National Geographic*, http://www-t.nationalgeographic.com/adventure/0203/photo4_popup.html

A British humanitarian worker they encountered at the guesthouse of a nearby NGO told them that, while crossing the desert weeks earlier, he had seen large mounds of disturbed earth in a location known as Dasht-i-Leili. The sight was odd enough that he took a picture. A local driver had spotted something else: Afghan soldiers – Northern Alliance, from their uniforms – gathered around two large container trucks, their doors flung open but faced away from the visibility of the road. Some were smoking, the driver said. Others held white handkerchiefs to their noses, as if to block a strong smell.¹²³

The next day, Heffernan and Leaning set out to the site at Dasht-i-Leili. There, they found an expanse of freshly churned soil, standing out against the surrounding earth. It was crisscrossed with tire marks. The ground was strewn with black and white and red tufts, which Leaning, drawing closer, identified as turbans, clothes, flip flops, and prayer beads. Between those, she recalled, “there were fragments of skull. There were pieces of rib cage. Human bones...anyone passing through the desert would have noticed the area was problematic.”¹²⁴ By her side, another investigator, John Heffernan, took a picture. They estimated the scale of the grave to be about a football field’s worth of overturned earth.

What Leaning and Heffernan saw in January 2002 would create acute challenges for some of the United States’ most powerful policymakers, raise uncomfortable questions about the early days of collaboration between the United States and its most important partners in the war on terror, and highlight the delta between the political promises of proxy war and the realities engendered on the ground.

¹²³ These details were corroborated by both Heffernan and Leaning in separate interviews. See also contemporaneous witness statements in: John Barry, “The Death Convoy of Afghanistan,” [2002] *Newsweek*.

¹²⁴ Interview with Jennifer Leani, (2015)

3) Basis for Case Study Selection

Since September 11, 2001, Afghanistan has been a singular locus of US military, economic, and diplomatic engagement. In terms of economic engagement, a central criterion for case study selection in this thesis, the war in Afghanistan has for years made the surrounding region of South and Central Asia (SCA) the site of the United States' most aggressive spending in the world. By way of example: Sub-Saharan Africa has 49 countries, which collectively received \$7.2 billion in US aid during Fiscal Year 2012. South and Central Asia's 13 countries, by contrast, received \$15.1 billion in the same timeframe, with an overwhelming majority going to Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹²⁵

Cumulatively, this rate of spending represents nothing short of a staggering investment. Between the fall of the Taliban and the end of Fiscal Year 2014, the US assistance to Afghanistan has totalled about \$100 billion; not including the costs associated with US troops themselves.¹²⁶ In recent years the numbers have declined slowly, from \$5.7 billion in Fiscal Year 2015, to \$5.3 billion in Fiscal Year 2017.

¹²⁵ Congressional Research Service

¹²⁶ "Direct Overt US Aid Appropriations for and Military Reimbursements to Pakistan, FY2002-FY2018," Congressional Research Service; data from US Departments of State, Defense, and Agriculture and US Agency for International Development.

Table 2. Post-Taliban U.S. Assistance to Afghanistan, 2002-2017:¹²⁷

Post-Taliban U.S. Assistance to Afghanistan
(appropriations/allocations in \$ millions)

Fiscal Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017*
ESF	117	239	894	1280	473	1211	1400	2088	3346	2168	1837	1850	851	1225	1200	1000
DA	18.3	42.5	153	170	185	167	149	.4	.3	0	0	0				
GHCS	7.5	49.7	33.4	38	41.5	101	63	58.	92	70	0	0				
Refugee Accounts	160	61	63	47	42	54	44	77	82	65	99	13				
Food Aid	206	74	99	97	108	70	231	82	32	19	0.6	0				
IDA	197	86	11	4	0	0	17	27	30	66	61	14				
INCLE	60	0	220	709	216	252	308	484	589	400	324	6.1	225	325	250	185
NADR	44	34.7	67	38.	18.2	37	27	49	58	69	65	54		43.5	38	37.6
IMET	0.2	0.4	0.7	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.7	1.4	1.8	1.6	2	0.8	.51	1.4	1.2	0.8
FMF	57	191	414	397	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Other	33	23	36	18	0.2	0.1	21	5	5.8	7.4	8	0				
DOD—ASSF	0	0	0	995	1908	7406	2750	5607	9167	10619	9200	5124	4727	4109	3652	3448
DOD—CERP	0	0	40	136	215	209	488	551	1000	400	400	200	30	15		
Infrastructure Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	299	400	325	199	0		
Business Task Force	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	59	239	242	179	64	5		
DOD—CN	0	0	72	225	108	291	193	230	392	376	421	372				
DOD—Other	7.5	165	285	540	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
DEA Counternarc	0.6	2.9	3.7	17	23.7	20	41	19	0	0	0	0				
Total U.S. Assistance	909	970	2392	4712	3339	9818	5732	9292	14854	14800	13058	8084	6097	5725	5165	4672

Sources and Notes: Prepared by Curt Tarnoff, Specialist in Foreign Assistance. Department of State budget, SIGAR reports, and CRS calculations. Does not include USG operational expenses (over \$5 billion since 2002). Food aid includes P.L.480 Title II and other programs. "Other" = Office of Transition Initiatives, Treasury Assistance, and Peacekeeping. ESF = Economic Support Funds; DA = Development Assistance; GHCS = Global Health/Child Survival; FMF = Foreign Military Financing; NADR = Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, De-Mining, and Related; IMET = International Military Education and Training; INCLE = International Narcotics and Law Enforcement; ASSF = Afghan Security Forces Funding; IDA = International Disaster Assistance. Includes stipulated levels in FY2016 Consolidated Appropriation (P.L. 114-113). *Denotes Administration request.

While, during the Presidency of Barack Obama, the United States Obama made a concerted effort to wind down its massive projection of force in the region, Afghanistan remains, and will remain for the foreseeable future, a significant front in the ongoing war against terror, and, under Donald Trump, more troops have been committed to the country.¹²⁸ Afghanistan is also a one-of-a-kind illustration of proxy dynamics in the modern era. It is the heart of America's

¹²⁷ Katzman, K. (2012). Afghanistan: Post-taliban governance, security and US policy. From: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

¹²⁸ Greg Jaffe and Missy Ryan, "Up to 1,000 more US troops could be headed to Afghanistan this spring." *Washington Post* (Washington D.C., 21 January 2018) https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/up-to-1000-more-us-troops-could-be-headed-to-afghanistan-this-spring/2018/01/21/153930b6-fd1b-11e7-a46b-a3614530bd87_story.html.

first war on terror, which brought with it both some radically new tactics, and a return to other familiar ones, influenced by Afghanistan's Cold War history.¹²⁹

As described above, this thesis's research questions concern the gap between the framing of a proxy relationship in the policy process (including the public components inherent to that process) and the realities of that relationship. Afghanistan is perhaps the premier setting in which this question has been put to the test, as the US resurrected an old set of Cold War partners, marketed them to the American public as heroes, and, the evidence suggests, were forced to conceal facts at odds with that image.

Because Afghanistan has been such a prominent centrepiece of the United States' role in the region and the world, abundant qualitative and quantitative data exists documenting spending in the region and metrics for success and failure thereafter (including polity scores assessing democratic values, public opinion data, and corruption assessments).

4) Literature Review

The study of Afghanistan in the context of proxy warfare is rich, and dates from the partition of India in 1947. A significant body of literature characterizes Afghanistan as the subordinate partner in a proxy relationship with Pakistan as it clashed with the country from which it was divided. The work of Hanauer and Clark, Goodson, and Ahmed and Bhatnagar are

¹²⁹ See below.

illustrative of this line of inquiry.^{130 131 132} Others such as Nader et al. explore the interaction of other regional players, including Iran.¹³³

Studies exploring Afghanistan as the proxy in a relationship with the United States are abundant but generally limited to the Cold War period, a deficit this thesis seeks to remedy. Loveman argues that interstate war is "virtually obsolescent" as a foreign policy tool, and that the United States engaged instead in proxy war in Afghanistan throughout the 1980s to achieve its national interests.¹³⁴ Maass explicitly characterizes the United States' involvement in Afghanistan as proxy warfare, beginning with the conflict with the Soviet Union and evolving today into a "highly externalized civil war" with many external actors.¹³⁵

Stephen Walt proposes several theories of international alliance-building that the United States has engaged in with Middle Eastern nations, theorizing that states generally tend to build alliances in order to balance against (or, conversely, to align with) prevailing threats. Walt's theory undergirds this thesis, but his applications are narrowly limited to the Cold War era. Of relevance to this project, however, he finds that neither foreign aid nor political interference is an effective tool for nations to building fruitful alliances – a conclusion I also reach here.¹³⁶

A number of more recent explorations of America's proxy war in Afghanistan examine its efficacy through the lens of Washington's security interests and values. In terms of security

¹³⁰Larry Hanauer and Peter Chalk, "Pakistan," *India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan*, RAND, 2012.

¹³¹Larry Goodson, "The New Great Game: Pakistan's Approach to Afghanistan after 2014," *Asia Policy*, Number 17, p. 33-39, 2014.

¹³²Zahid Shahab Ahmed and Stuti Bhatnagar, "Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations and the Indian Factor," *Pakistan Horizon*, Volume 60, Number 2, pp. 159-174, 2007.

¹³³Alireza Nader, Ali G. Scotten, Ahmad Idrees Rahmani, Robert Stewart and Leila Mahnad, *Iran's Influence in Afghanistan*, RAND, 2014.

¹³⁴Chris Loveman, "Assessing the Phenomenon of Proxy Intervention," *Conflict, Security & Development*, Volume 2, Issue 3, 2002.

¹³⁵Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," *Central Asian Survey*, Volume 18, Number 1, pp. 65-78, 2010.

¹³⁶Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs, 1987.

interests, Galad argues that US intervention has not achieved Washington's desired outcomes: security for the Afghan people and regional stability. A lack of understanding of Afghan society and reality on the ground has vexed the relationship since invasion.¹³⁷

Several authors examine the impact of the proxy relationship, as measured by security assistance, on development outcomes. Morini stresses that a strong diplomatic presence is needed, alongside a military presence, to ensure that Afghans are spared the "tragic historical precedent set by the Soviet Union," specifically, the political violence fostered by interventionism during the Soviet-Afghan War and the subsequent Afghan civil war.¹³⁸ Taylor, however, writes that development efforts, even when backed by strong diplomacy, have often failed in Afghanistan due to Washington's ignorance of societal norms, casting doubt on the enterprise of stabilization and reconstruction efforts.¹³⁹ Watts builds on this analysis, studying the political dimensions that favour successful foreign development efforts, but is more optimistic, offering solutions to resolve such dilemmas.¹⁴⁰

Adelkhah finds that US assistance has intensified the "ethnicisation" and sectarianisation of economic and political relations, in direct contradiction to the criteria of good governance advocated by donors. Indirectly, US aid has led to tribal and ethnic tensions.¹⁴¹ Shahrani's work is useful here, as he concludes that the United States' failed proxy relationship can only be understood within the broader geopolitical circumstance of foreign intervention and proxy wars,

¹³⁷ Adriana Zobrist Galád, "The Challenges and Role of Structures in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan," *Connections*, Volume 11, Number 2, p. 5-36, 2012.

¹³⁸ Daryl Morini, "A Diplomatic Surge in Afghanistan, 2011–14," *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Volume 4, Number 4, pp. 68-100, 2010.

¹³⁹ Julie E. Taylor, "Establishing Favorable Political Conditions," *Social Science for Stabilization and Reconstruction*, RAND, 2011.

¹⁴⁰ Stephen Watts, "Political Dilemmas of Stabilization and Reconstruction," *Dilemmas of Intervention: Social Science for Stabilization and Reconstruction*, RAND, 2011.

¹⁴¹ Fariba Adelkhah, "War and State (Re)Construction in Afghanistan: Conflicts of Tradition or Conflicts of Development?," *Development As a Battlefield*, Brill, 2017.

which have accentuated ethnic divisions over the years.¹⁴² Saeed and Permentier, relying on data gathered from fieldwork, find that economic crime, specifically land-grabbing, has increased since the war on terror, a trendline accelerated by the absence of transitional justice measures.¹⁴³

Stanski, in his “‘So These Folks are Aggressive’: An Orientalist Reading of ‘Afghan Warlords,’” offers one of the analyses most directly applicable to this thesis. One of his assertions closely aligns with this thesis’s conclusion: namely, that American politicians, policymakers, and media commentators have, at times, utilized alternate terms to skew public perceptions of the United States’ relationships with these forces. Stanski writes: “US commentators often recast onetime ‘warlords’ in more moderate terms, as ‘local commanders’ or ‘militia leaders.’” He adds: “These cultural assumptions continue to inform Western imperial efforts, most obviously in how the West justifies this project, portrays the magnitude of any successes and diverts attention away from the liabilities inherent in the use of force.”¹⁴⁴ However, Stanski’s focus is distinct from this thesis’s, concerned chiefly with the language choices and cultural archetypes surrounding warlords.

His work, like the rest of the existing literature, overlooks this thesis’s central focus on the costly gap between the political representations and realities of proxy wars. This chapter adds that original inquiry to the extant literature about Afghanistan and builds on existing accounts of the challenges of US-Afghan relations in general, contributing a new analytical framework and typology through which to consider not only the state-to-state relationship between the two nations, but also the state-to-non-state relationship with Afghanistan’s warlords.

¹⁴² Nazif M. Shahrani, “War, Factionalism, and the State in Afghanistan, *American Anthropologist*, 104(3), pg. 715-722, 2002.

¹⁴³ Huma Saeed and Stephan Parmentier, "When Rabbits are in Charge of Carrots: Land Grabbing, Transitional Justice and Economic-State Crime in Afghanistan," *State Crime Journal*, Volume 6, Number 1, pp. 13-36, 2017.

¹⁴⁴ Keith Stanski, ‘So These Folks are Aggressive’: An Orientalist Reading of ‘Afghan Warlords’, *Security Dialogue* February 2009 vol. 40 no. 1, pp 74-76.

This chapter also contributes original primary research that informs the existing works on this subject, including a detailed documentary and interview-based account of the actions of General Dostum and the United States' response to allegations against him.

5) Typicality

The dynamics of Afghanistan's proxy relationships can be described as *typical* based on the four criteria this project utilizes:

- a) Afghanistan's polity score (quantifying a state's democratic values or lack thereof) is -1, classifying it as a so-called "closed anocracy" (following years of low scores, dipping to -66 during the chaos of the 2000s).¹⁴⁵ The hallmark of this category of states is a combination of autocratic and democratic traits. Afghanistan, with its complex constellation of tribal warlords thrust into government roles, is a classic example of this form of government. Elections in the country are often shadowed by allegations of rigging.¹⁴⁶ Transparency International, likewise, ranks the country among the worst in the world: 172nd of 180 countries assessed, with a transparency score of just 16 out of 100.

¹⁴⁵ "Polity IV Annual Time-Series, 1800-2015," Center for Systemic Peace, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/p4v2015.xls>

¹⁴⁶ Joseph Goldstein, "E.U. Confirms Wide Fraud in Afghan Presidential Runoff Election," *New York Times*, (2014), <www.nytimes.com/2014/12/17/world/asia/afghan-voting-fraud-detailed-in-new-report.html>

Table 3. Afghanistan in Corruption Perception Index 2018:¹⁴⁷



- b) Afghanistan also meets the typicality criterion of military assistance prompted by an urgent foreign policy concern. The country – and particularly its border with Pakistan – continues to attract concern as a safe haven and breeding ground for terrorist organizations from Al Qaeda to the Haqqani network, eclipsed in urgency only recently by ISIS’s rise in Syria. The United States’ ongoing allegiances with Afghanistan’s warlords still revolve around that concern.

¹⁴⁷ Corruption Perception Index 2018, from <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2018>

¹⁴⁸ “Corruption by Country/Territory: Afghanistan,” Transparency International, <https://www.transparency.org/country/#AFG>

- c) Afghanistan is also typical in exhibiting a high level of investment both in government entities and forces (see above) and in paramilitary and militia forces (see below discussion of covert CIA assistance).
- d) Comprehensive studies of Afghan public opinion are infrequent and often unreliable, and the underlying dynamics they seek to document are often complex in ways that create contradictory numbers. For instance, recent polls show Afghan dissatisfaction with their country's trajectory increasing as US forces draw down, supporting a narrative of resentment in response to perceived US "abandonment."¹⁴⁹ However, some polls directly questioning support for US forces reveal popularity rates close to those of Osama bin Laden.¹⁵⁰ A 2013 Gallup poll found 35% approval among Afghans of US leadership, specifically.¹⁵¹ Taken in their totality, these figures suggest that Afghanistan is typical of host countries for American proxy relationships in its low approval ratings of the US.

¹⁴⁹ "A Survey of the Afghan People: Afghanistan in 2015," Asia Foundation,

<http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Afghanistanin2015PrefaceExecSummary.pdf>

¹⁵⁰ Jean Mackenzie, "Afghanistan War: Public opinion turns sharply against US forces," *Global Post*, (2010) <www.pri.org/stories/2010-12-09/afghanistan-war-public-opinion-turns-sharply-against-us-forces>

¹⁵¹ "US-Global Leadership Project, 2013," Gallup, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/161309/global-leadership-project.aspx>

6) Typology

This thesis seeks to create a theoretical framework for categorizing proxy relationships. To this end, it distinguishes between proxies along two axes. First, it demarcates offensive proxies (those driven by a desire to defeat a specific enemy) and defensive proxies (those designed to create a passive bulwark maintaining American interests). Second it highlights the difference between *state* (foreign governments) and *non-state* proxy forces (militias and other nongovernmental entities).

Afghanistan, like most complex foreign policy engagements, exhibits a mix of all of the above qualities. However, through both the conflict with the Soviets and the present-day war on terror, the United States' support for surrogate forces has been more commonly marked by an *offensive* structure and goals. The Soviets and the Taliban were both occupying forces maintaining a status quo of their choice, against which the US was positioned. In each era, the United States backed players on the ground to destabilize and change those circumstances. It is possible that, if the regional security situation were to significantly improve over a sustained period of time, Washington's proxies in Afghanistan may transform into defensive proxies, playing a more passive supporting role for US interests in the country. That transformation, however, is far-off.

These relationships are split across state and non-state actors. However, for the purposes of this case-study, I will focus on Afghanistan's most distinctive phenomenon: *the support of non-state, offensive warlords*.

AFGHANISTAN

PROXY TYPOLOGY:

	DEFENSIVE	OFFENSIVE
STATE	<i>[Not applicable]</i>	Afghan National Security Forces (Army, Police)
NON-STATE	Private security contractors	Northern Alliance Warlords

7) Afghanistan, Dostum, and the Inconvenient Truths of Proxy

War

a) A Legacy of Proxy War

During the Cold War, the United States – independently and, much of the time, through Pakistan’s Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) – flooded Afghanistan with guns. At the time, the warlords enlisted in that fight were positioned by American policymakers as heroes.

Ronald Reagan called them “freedom fighters” and “an inspiration.”¹⁵² Then, as in the later period examined in this thesis, there were portrayals of heroism and of a proxy force that could serve as a quick fix.

A Texas socialite named Joanne Herring became an unlikely advocate for the Islamist commanders and wound up single-handedly galvanizing up the United States’ relationship with them, planting the seeds for America’s relationships with many of those same fighters after 9/11. A friend of Herring’s had been making a documentary film on the heroism of the “mujahideen,” Islamist revolutionary fighters who began to travel to Afghanistan to wage a holy war, and asked her to join him in Afghanistan. She did so, weathering freezing nights in the mountains and, on one occasion, escaped an air attack from the Soviets.¹⁵³ On her return, she convinced Charlie Wilson, a Congressman with a reputation for hard drinking and her lover at the time, to mobilize support. She later described her efforts to transform Wilson into a forceful advocate for the Mujahideen in Washington as “a sort of brainwashing.”¹⁵⁴

Each fiscal year, Wilson and a growing band of supporters would search for money allocated but never spent – often finding it in the Pentagon’s budget – and funnel it into the CIA’s Pakistani-orchestrated jihad. This led to the virtually unprecedented situation of Congress giving the CIA more than it wanted. In 1984 alone, between the reallocated defence money and matched funds from the Saudis, the budget of the covert war in Afghanistan tripled.¹⁵⁵

Eventually, the CIA’s Afghanistan program swelled from \$30 million in Fiscal Year 1981 to \$200 million in 1984.¹⁵⁶ The weapons delivered to the jihadis were at first antiquated: bolt-action

¹⁵² Reagan Library, “Message on the Observance of Afghanistan Day.” (1983)
<<https://reaganlibrary.archives.gov/archives/speeches/1983/32183e.htm>.>

¹⁵³ George Crile, *Charlie Wilson’s War*. (Grove Press, 2007)

¹⁵⁴ Crile (a 150) p.1288-1289

¹⁵⁵ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (Penguin, 2004).

¹⁵⁶ Coll, (at 152) p. 65.

.303 Lee Enfield rifles used by the British infantry during World War I. But over the ensuing years, the shipments grew larger and more advanced: Chinese AK-47s and 60-millimeter mortars and 12.7-millimeter heavy machine guns.¹⁵⁷ By mule, and donkey, and camel, the Pakistanis smuggled hundreds of thousands of guns and billions of rounds of ammunition across their border to the Jihadis over the course of the 1980s.¹⁵⁸

The flood of resources was part of a broader plan, drawn up by the CIA, to “stir up nationalism”¹⁵⁹ in Soviet territories. To that end, the CIA also worked with the ISI to inflame the religious fundamentalism they felt could serve as a corps of anti-Soviet fighters, frustrated with the communist’s secular agenda. By 1984, the ISI, at the CIA’s behest and underwritten by American taxpayer dollars, was printing and distributing thousands of copies of the Quran inside Afghanistan, translated into local dialects, including Uzbek.¹⁶⁰

The Qurans went to mujahedeen being groomed in ISI-operated training camps in the mountainous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan – bankrolled by the Americans but seldom seen by them first-hand – the ISI showed a CIA director a fake “Potemkin” camp to demonstrate the program.¹⁶¹ The actual camps would eventually be tapped by Osama Bin Laden as a recruiting resource and a model for his own efforts to engineer Jihad.¹⁶²

The Mujahedeen were the Americans’ favourite proxy tactic against the Soviets, and no degree of extremism seemed too grave. The ISI pushed the United States towards its favoured commander, the brutal fundamentalist Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. “Hekmatyar was a favourite of the

¹⁵⁷ Id at 66.

¹⁵⁸ Crile (at 150), p110.

¹⁵⁹ Id 103.

¹⁶⁰ Id

¹⁶¹ Id 100.

¹⁶² Id 145.

Pakistanis,” recalls Milton Bearden, a CIA veteran who played a central role overseeing US support for the Mujahedeen. “But he certainly wasn’t a favourite of mine.”

Still, his fighters’ particularly zealous brand of brutality was viewed as a strategic advantage. Whatever the Americans’ reservations about Hekmatyar’s hard-line tendencies, the ruthlessness paid dividends on the battlefield. The ISI judged him to be the most efficient of the mujahideen at killing Soviets, an assurance passed on to the Americans. Over the latter half of the 1980s, the Americans would diversify, quietly giving assistance unilaterally to their own chosen jihadis. But they continued to allow Pakistan to channel most of the assistance, and to prioritize the most extreme of the commanders. “Let’s be clear about one thing, moderates never won anything,” said Bearden.¹⁶³ The winners on the battlefield, another US official recalled, “were the fundamentalists.”¹⁶⁴

b) The Proxy Force Personified: General Dostum

Although he ultimately joined the fight against the Soviets, General Abdul Rashid Dostum was a man apart from the other fighters. Dostum has often been framed in the kinds of archetypal terms critiqued by Stanksi, evoking words like “ruthless” and “fearsome.” For a series of allies, he has been both an indispensable proxy fighter and an uncomfortable one, acting in ways that repeatedly defied how he was sold within the American policy process.

Originally, he was just Abdul Rashid, one of nine siblings, born to Uzbek peasants in the desert plains of Afghanistan’s Jawzjan Province. The nom de guerre “Dostum” – literally, “my friend” in Uzbek – came later, as he marshalled power as a military commander. His family

¹⁶³ Interview with Milton Bearden (2016)

¹⁶⁴ Id at 120.

owned a simple, clay-brick home – three rooms, dirt floor, no electricity.¹⁶⁵ Surviving in the desolation of Northern Afghanistan was a feat, and Dostum showed particular resilience. In one childhood story, retold for this thesis and on many other occasions over the decades, Dostum claims to have been swept away by a flash flood of melting snow water. Just an infant, he clung to a branch and survived, alone in the water until a villager spotted a hand above the waves and pulled him out. ““What is this?!”” Dostum said, channelling his rescuer. ““Oh, it is a hand of some baby!”” The villager took him to a nearby mosque and held him upside down against a mud wall until water poured out and he regained consciousness. Other childhood legends speak to a different quiddity: his apparent flair for violence, starting with schoolyard scraps. “I was a very hyper boy,” he conceded. “I was always fighting with the other kids. And still, I’m the same person.” His favourite past time, then and since, is the ancestral Central Asian game of buzkashi, or “goat grabbing,” in which 15 horsemen brawl for control of a headless goat corpse they have to manoeuvre from a pole at one end of the field to a circle of chalk at the other. The game is violent and chaotic, with stallions galloping and whinnying as players whip, punch, and trample each other.¹⁶⁶ Buzkashi requires “strong horses for a strong man,” Dostum explained.

Dostum spent brief stretches as an oil refinery worker, a plumber, and a wrestler, but war was always his true discipline. He was conscripted into army service as a teenager and rose through the ranks, effortlessly mastering the low-tech cavalry combat of his ancestors. His ascent was uninterrupted by either the mounting instability in the country, or several changes in leadership. Afghanistan President Sardar Mohammed Daoud was overthrown by the Afghan Communist Party in 1979. Rapid attempts at secular reform began to destabilize the country and

¹⁶⁵ Brian Glyn Williams, *The Last Warlord: The Life and Legend of Dostum, the Afghan Warrior Who Led US Special Forces to Topple the Taliban Regime*. (Chicago Review Press 2013).

¹⁶⁶ Dexter Filkins, "Taking a Break from War With a Game Anything by Gentle." *The New York Times*, (2009), <www.nytimes.com/2009/01/03/world/asia/03afghan.html>

in 1979 the Soviets invaded, installing their own puppet President. Dostum showed early signs of the chameleon-like flexibility that would become his trademark, musing during the nadir of anti-communist backlash in the 1980s that he could comfortably defect to the anti-communist mujahedeen.¹⁶⁷

Instead, he elected to stay aligned with the incoming Soviets. He characterized the choice as both strategic and ideological: the one constant through Dostum's shifting alliances has been a relative preference for secular powers over the faith-based fanaticism of the Mujahedeen and, later, the Taliban. But he continued to play both sides, keeping regular contact with mujahedeen commanders. General Dostum never closed doors to potential alliances, even those diametrically opposed to his professed deepest convictions.¹⁶⁸

Dostum proved to be an inimitable and indispensable force on the battlefield for the Soviets, defending supply pipelines and routing mujahedeen insurgents. He attracted the notice of the governor of his province – who grew Dostum's unit from 1,000 to 10,000. A UN representative at the time marvelled at Dostum's Uzbek fighters: a ragtag group that included both scrappy teens and grizzled veterans. They were clad in simple local attire instead of uniforms – shalwar kameez, with chapan capes and turbans or caps, their cotton trousers rolled up to facilitate running.¹⁶⁹ The UN official declared them, improbably, “the fiercest most primitive fighting force in Afghanistan.”

Eventually, the head of the Afghan Intelligence Service – future Soviet puppet President Mohammad Najibullah – sought a meeting with Dostum. The Soviets considered his unit to be a

¹⁶⁷ Williams, (at 162), p 115.

¹⁶⁸ Interviews with General Dostum's inner circle, including his Chief of Staff Dr. Par Farahmand, his most trusted foreign liaison, Ambassador Ayoob Erfani, and his son, Batur Dostum. All took pains to highlight General Dostum's progressivism on women's rights and his aversion to fundamentalism.

¹⁶⁹ Phillip Corwin, *Doomed in Afghanistan: A UN Officer's Memoirs of the Fall of Kabul and Najibullah's Failed Escape, 1992*, (Rutgers University Press, 2003).

model for successful military theatre proxy relationships – one they wanted to replicate across the country and region.¹⁷⁰

Dostum was a star fighter for the Soviets. But as the Gorbachev began his drawdown from Afghanistan, Dostum would again exhibit his trademark fluidity. Ahmed Shah Massoud, the most powerful of Dostum’s Mujahedeen enemies, and a recipient of proxy support from the Americans and Pakistanis, privately sent word¹⁷¹ that President Najibullah – increasingly weakened by the departure of his Soviet benefactors – was planning an ouster of Dostum and his men. Too many in Najibullah inner circle were uncomfortable with Dostum’s growing power and, as Dostum tells the story, his Uzbek heritage.¹⁷² And with Soviet forces rapidly drawing down, rapprochement with the powerful mujahedeen leaders looked inevitable. Dostum, sworn enemy of those Islamists, was suddenly an inconvenience.¹⁷³

Here Dostum once again demonstrated himself to be the archetypal proxy warrior, nimbly shifting allegiances to ensure his survival. He joined his 40,000-strong forces with the Islamic Mujahedeen fighters he had combated for years on the battlefield, including Massoud.¹⁷⁴ The move created a multi-ethnic front of warlords that further tilted the balance of power against Najibullah, just as he lost his Soviet benefactors. Kabul fell, and by 1993 had slipped into all-out, bloody chaos. All the mujahedeen leaders converged on the city, coalescing into rapidly changing alliances and enmities, with civilians caught in the crossfire. Massoud and Dostum battled the ISI’s chosen Mujahedeen hardliner, Hekmatyar, who was accused of some of the

¹⁷⁰ Corwin (at 166), p 121.

¹⁷¹ Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*, New York, NY: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005, 227.

¹⁷² The concept of a leader from the long-marginalized tribe killing Pashtuns – even Pashtun extremists within the Mujahedeen, had long been a source of tension.

¹⁷³ Id 142.

¹⁷⁴ Id 146.

worst atrocities, including the indiscriminate shelling of civilians. Dostum's own Uzbek militias were reported to be behind a campaign of rapes and executions.¹⁷⁵¹⁷⁶

Dostum played a crucial role in the battle for Kabul, but as a new coalition government began to take shape, he found himself in the position he often came to occupy as a proxy partner of convenience: frozen out.¹⁷⁷ He retreated into his fiefdom in the North and grew progressively more isolated as the Taliban began to encroach. When his second in command betrayed him and defected to the Taliban in 1997, a weakened Dostum was forced to flee to Turkey. But he maintained ties to his dwindling loyalists in the mountains, and in April 2001, returned to fight the extremists.¹⁷⁸

c) The Selling of General Dostum

In the weeks after September 11, 2001, a debate over how to respond played out within the military and intelligence communities. There were those, like the CIA Station chief in Islamabad at the time, who sought to continue to work entirely within the confines of the United States' military alliance with Pakistan, using the Pakistanis to pressure the Taliban regime they had for years supported to surrender Osama bin Laden. Others, in the CIA's Counterterrorism Centre in Washington, with a simpler suggestion: give American guns to anyone who would fight the Taliban. Before any coherent policy could be developed across the United States government, that latter faction in Washington began quietly executing their proposal. In this

¹⁷⁵ Id 262.

¹⁷⁶ Robert Young Pelton, *American Soldier*, 6.

¹⁷⁷ Id, 155.

¹⁷⁸ Id, 7.

case, “anyone who could fight the Taliban” meant the warlords and brigands of the Northern Alliance.



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“Dostum started fighting [the Taliban] long before the agency showed up,” said Robert Young Pelton, an American survivalist who developed what he describes as a friendship with Dostum during a trip to Afghanistan in 2001. “The Agency landed early November...but Dostum already had the troops, he was already making the headway.”¹⁸⁰ As Dostum tells the story, he reached out to the Americans through an intermediary with a bold proposal: they could help each other. According to Hank Crumpton, the Agency had been developing a relationship with

¹⁷⁹ Dostum (center) meets with local leaders on the front lines in northern Afghanistan. “FVP Afghanistan,” Facebook, June 13, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/FVPAfghanistan/photos/a.321835144689181.1073741827.321806971358665/482498028622891/?type=3&theater>

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Robert Young Pelton (2016)

Dostum for some time before September 11th.¹⁸¹ What is undisputed is that the United States forged a new alliance with its old enemy, and long-time avatar of the Soviets, General Dostum.

It was a peculiar union. “Dust kind of settles. And out of the dust comes the sand people,” Team Sergeant Paul Evans recalled. “[Y]ou see a man with an AK who’s dressed just like your enemy, and you’ve gotta walk over to him and basically ask him ‘hey, how ya doing?’ and you have no idea whether he’s gonna put out his hand or shoot you’.”¹⁸²

Bart Decker, the Air Force controller, who joined several days later to coordinate strikes from a Lockheed AC 130, said he and the other Americans rode horses, carrying the most sensitive equipment in their packs while heavier supplies were strapped to donkeys led by Afghans.¹⁸³ They slept in a series of mountain caves, with only candles and flashlights to cut through the dark nights, far from any city lights. Decker recalled Dostum’s stature, both in his literal physical size on horseback, and in the reverence he seemed to command. “He was the leader,” he said. “And I still remember going up to his tent, maybe the next night, those Northern Alliance guys would set his tent up and he would have these pillow beds in there if you will... They carried those on donkey for him. So when we stopped, his tent went up, that bed got made, so he was laying in comfort. We were laying in a ditch.”

¹⁸¹ Interview with Hank Crumpton (2016)

¹⁸² *Legion of Brothers*, dir. Greg Barker, USA, CNN films 2017, 9:30.

¹⁸³ Interview with Bart Decker (2016)



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The Americans air dropped supplies, chief among them hundreds of guns (though they were aging Russian Kalashnikovs, not the sophisticated weaponry carried by the Americans). Cash came, but, Dostum said, less than he needed. He was most offended when the Americans air dropped food for his horses and the bags turned out to contain chaff, edible for livestock theoretically, but his horses refused to eat it. “United States is such a great country,” Dostum said, “such a rich country, but very cheap.”

There were more consequential challenges born of working with the warlords. Bart and the other Americans pulled watches to make sure they were always guarding their own. And there were headaches back at Langley. “David [Tyson, the CIA operative] was with Dostum but we also had Mohamed Atta and one of the challenges we had was keeping those guys from

¹⁸⁴ Dostum (center) surveying the front lines in northern Afghanistan. “FVP Afghanistan,” Facebook, June 13, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/FVPAfghanistan/photos/a.322576824615013.1073741829.321806971358665/479052802300747/?type=3&theater>

killing each other,” conceded Hank Crumpton wearily. “Dostum and Atta and Fahim, these guys are warriors. They’ve been killing people all their lives, in one of the worst places on the planet.” Still, the Americans were, in the end, won over. “He had almost a boyish charm to him, Crumpton said of Dostum. “Had a good sense of humour which I know masked a pretty ruthless capability. But I honestly enjoyed the conversation with him.” Mostly, he said, he felt thankful “for his partnership and for his leadership and what he and Mohammad Atta and others accomplished in battlefield.”

Dostum’s entrance into the post-9/11 theatre of combat was rendered in celebratory terms, first within policy circles and, since then, to the public. George W. Bush, in one public statement, called him and the other Northern Alliance fighters, “our friends.”¹⁸⁵ A 2018 Hollywood film, “12 Strong,” lionized the American partnership with Dostum. A monument adjacent to the 9/11 memorial at the World Trade Centre in New York City depicts how American special forces rode on horseback alongside his forces.¹⁸⁶

So it was that Dostum, working with the Americans, toppled Kunduz, and came into control of thousands of prisoners – many of whom subsequently went missing.¹⁸⁷

d) A Policy of Concealment

Questions about Dostum and his missing prisoners have lingered in the years since. The Bush administration quashed three efforts to investigate the grave, across multiple agencies. An

¹⁸⁵ Bush: Northern Alliance should stay out of Kabul, CNN, November 10, 2001, available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/11/10/ret.bush.un.meeting/index.html>

¹⁸⁶ Alex Quade. Commando monument near ground zero unveiled on Veterans Day. The Washington Times. October 27, 2011, available at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/oct/27/commando-monument-at-ground-zero-to-be-unveiled-on/>

¹⁸⁷ Tony Karon, “Kunduz Reveals the Fluidity of Afghan Battle Lines,” [2001] *Time Magazine*.

FBI agent at Guantanamo Bay began hearing stories about a mass killing from other Taliban prisoners who had survived but was told to stand down and leave the matter to the military. The Pentagon, in turn, conducted only a brief “informal inquiry,” asking members of Team 595 if they had seen anything, then issuing a blanket denial that anything happened. There was, one senior Pentagon official recalled later, “little appetite for this matter within parts of DOD.”¹⁸⁸ At the State Department, Colin Powell assigned the matter to Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Pierre Prosper, who quickly faced opposition from both Afghan and American officials. “They would say, ‘We have had decades of war crimes. Where do you start?’” he recalled. His office later dropped the inquiry.¹⁸⁹

When President Obama entered office, there was a glimmer of renewed hope. During a CNN interview in 2009, he went off script to promise an investigation. “It seems clear that the Bush Administration resisted efforts to pursue investigations of an Afghan warlord named General Dostum, who was on the CIA payroll. It’s now come out, there were hundreds of Taliban prisoners under his care who got killed...” Anderson Cooper began gamely. “Right,” said President Obama. Cooper mentioned the mystery of the mass grave and asked if Obama would call for an investigation into possible war crimes.

“Yeah,” said the President. “The indications that this had not been properly investigated just recently was brought to my attention. So what I’ve asked my national security team to do is to collect the facts for me that are known. And we’ll probably make a decision in terms of how to approach it once we have all the facts gathered up.”

“But you wouldn’t resist categorically an investigation?” Cooper pressed.

¹⁸⁸ James Risen, "US Inaction Seen After Taliban P.O.W.'s Died." *The New York Times*, (2009) <www.nytimes.com/2009/07/11/world/asia/11afghan.html>

¹⁸⁹*Id.*

“I think that, you know, there are responsibilities that all nations have even in war. And if it appears that our conduct in some way supported violations of the laws of war, then I think that, you know, we have to know about that.”

But no one at the Obama White House wanted to touch the issue either, even after a Presidential promise. It declined questions about the matter for four years, then quietly announced that the investigation was complete, but would remain sealed.¹⁹⁰ A spokesperson said the investigation concluded that no US personnel were involved. The White House otherwise declined to elaborate on the contents of their findings. “It’s cowardice,” another Physicians for Human Rights investigator, Nathaniel Raymond, said. “I was interviewed by the NSC as part of the investigation. It went nowhere because it wasn’t what they wanted to hear.”

Frustrated with the executive branch’s apparent lack of transparency, human rights groups tried turning to Congress. In early 2010, Raymond received testimony from a former translator for American forces at Kunduz and Qala-i-Jangi who claimed to have seen what happened to the prisoners – and whether Americans were present. and gone on to secure asylum in the United States. Raymond brought the information to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and its lead investigator at the time, former CIA agent (and, later, controversial whistle-blower) John Kiriakou. Kiriakou considered the story explosive. The reaction from his superiors, including Committee Chair John Kerry, was explosive too – and not what he expected. “The Staff Director at the time, Frank [Lowenstein], got wind of it and called me into his office and said, ‘cease and desist immediately.’” Stunned, Kiriakou claimed he took the matter to Kerry directly. “Kerry came down to the office afterwards and said, ‘what is this I’m hearing about

¹⁹⁰ Cora Currier, “White House Closes Inquiry Into Afghan Massacre – and Will Release No Details,” *ProPublica*, (2013) < <https://www.propublica.org/article/white-house-closes-inquiry-into-afghan-massacre-and-will-release-no-details>>

Afghanistan?,” said Kiriakou. “I told him...and he said, ‘you’ve spoken to Frank?’ And I said, ‘yeah, Frank called me in and said to kill it.’ He said, ‘ok.’ I got up and said, ‘so what do I do?’ And he said, ‘you kill it.’ I said, ‘alright, I’ll kill it.’ And that was the end of it.”

Kiriakou saw it as a pragmatic call on Kerry’s and Lowenstein’s part. “Frank devoted his life to protecting John Kerry, and John Kerry wanted nothing more in the world than to be Secretary of State. And so, we just couldn’t risk any kerfuffle, even if it was historical in nature, anything controversial, so he killed it. It was a shame. I was very disappointed.”¹⁹¹ Lowenstein, a long-time Kerry advisor who worked, during the Obama administration, as an envoy on Middle East peace issues, denied the conversation happened. “I have absolutely no recollection of that whatsoever,” he said, later suggesting that, “[Kiriakou] might have interpreted...or he might have come away from our conversation with the impression that that wasn’t something that I was particularly interested in pursuing, but I certainly never would have told him to kill it.”¹⁹²

Physicians for Human Rights, through sheer tenacity, did eventually secure a handful of meetings with senior officials. The group also sent more than a dozen letters to officials across the government. Neither tack produced clarity. The consequences were real and specific: after an initial series of forensic missions, and before additional teams could return for a full excavation, the mass grave disappeared. In 2008, a UN team found, where the site had been, a series of large holes: fresh excavations, with none of the bodies that had been previously documented.¹⁹³ It was exactly the eventuality human rights advocates had been fighting to prevent. “From square one, said Susannah Sirkin of Physicians for Human Rights, “we realized if anything leaked the site

¹⁹¹ Interview with John Kiriakou (2016)

¹⁹² Interview with Frank Lowenstein (2016). Lowenstein also questions Kiriakou’s credibility, referencing criminal charges later brought against him for leaking classified information, and suggesting that “he’s [Kiriakou’s] not – let me figure out the most polite way to say this – not the world’s most reliable guy.”

¹⁹³ Tom Lasseter, “As Possible Afghan War-Crimes Evidence Removed, US Silent,” *McClatchy*, (2008) <www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/article24514951.html>

would very likely be destroyed.” But it did leak, and world powers did nothing to protect the evidence. “There is now a second layer of violation,” Sirkin told me. “The literal obstruction of investigation and suppression of information by [the US government].”

e) **The Dasht-i-Leili Massacre**

Minutes after the Physicians for Human Rights investigators discovered the mass grave at Dasht-i-Leili, they were interrupted: though they were miles from the nearest town, jeeps approached on the horizon. The investigators left swiftly, with the jeeps pursuing them for a time as they travelled the half-mike back to the provincial capital, Sheberghan. When the investigators finally shook the jeeps on their tail, Leaning suspected they’d dodged a bullet. This was because the site of the mass grave was within visual range of the stronghold of Dostum, whose history, and more violent tendencies, were legendary in Northern Afghanistan.¹⁹⁴

As reports of the mass grave began to emerge, another question came with them. Dostum, while shadowed by the Americans, had controlled the transfer of prisoners to Sheberghan after the uprising at Qala-i-Jangi. Crumpton, the CIA official, said simply: “he was responsible [for Qala-i-Jangi].”¹⁹⁵ How much did the Americans know, and when? After Leaning and Heffernan’s initial discovery at Dasht-i-Leili, Physicians for Human Rights and UNHCR sent a forensics team to investigate. That it was a mass grave was unambiguous to the crime scene investigators. “Just to look at the site, without doing any digging, it was quite clear earth had been moved recently,” says Stefan Schmitt, one of the forensics experts. “There were personal effects there, and quite a few human bones.” Several eyewitness interviews conducted by the

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Jennifer Leaning (2015)

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Hank Crumpton (2016)

team verified the stories Leaning and Heffernan had heard: that a large-scale operation had been undertaken to bury the bodies, by men who appeared to be Northern Alliance soldiers. Notably, the team found that the dirt – more than half a football field’s worth – had been moved by heavy machinery. “This was not the work of some chain gang with picks and shovels,” Schmitt explains.

Also revealing was the presence of rubber gloves on the scene – first on the surface and then within the graves themselves, ruling out the likelihood that they were dropped by investigators or other visitors to the site. “I thought it was very unlikely that Afghan forces who barely had enough aspirin to keep their wounded would use rubber gloves,” says Schmitt. He speculates that outsiders, with greater resources and infrastructure, may have been involved in the digging of the grave.

These theories, along with the full size of the grave, were never investigated further. After the initial tests were performed, and before additional teams could return for a full excavation, the mass grave disappeared.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ Id at 190.



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Untangling legal and ethical responsibility for the incident has proved an enduring challenge. Dostum, answering detailed questions about the matter for the first time for this thesis, initially deflected. “There are so many graves,” he said, shaking his head. “So many bodies. These, he swore, were from other periods; from when he was in exile in Turkey, before 9/11, and his second in command betrayed him. It was that commander, Malek, he said, who was responsible for most of the bodies in the desert. “But *specifically*,” I pressed, “the prisoners from Kunduz after the uprising at Qala-i-Jangi.”

Finally, Dostum said, “The fact is, they took the prisoners in Kunduz on the open lorry car, sent to Sheberghan.” Dostum said he, personally, had seen to it that the prisoners were loaded. It was an ugly process. “Some of them run, some were hiding,” he conceded, but they

¹⁹⁷ April 2002 test trench dug at Dasht-e-Leili as part of a preliminary investigation by PHR for the UN, finding 15 bodies. Experts found that the three bodies that were autopsied showed signs of suffocation. “Dasht-e-Leili Photos,” Physicians for Human Rights, <http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/issues/mass-atrocities/afghanistan-war-crime/dasht-e-leili-photos.html?>

were, when he was there, in open trucks. Though this may have been true for a portion of the trip, multiple eyewitness accounts suggest that the convoy from Kunduz did not go directly to Sheberghan. Instead, it, and, eventually, surviving prisoners from the uprising at Qala-i-Jangi, stopped at a fort called Qala-i-Zeini. One driver who talked to the press in 2002 said he had been hired to drive a closed container truck – the kind with a sealable metal enclosure for freight, generally about forty 40 feet by eight – to the site. According to him, other drivers, and surviving prisoners themselves, once they had assembled the containers, Dostum’s men herded screaming detainees into them. In some cases, they hogtied prisoners and simply threw them in. Ten prisoners who survived and made it to Guantanamo Bay told an FBI official they were “stacked like cordwood,” hundreds to a truck, before the doors were locked. A villager told reporters at the time that those who didn’t move fast were beaten. “The only purpose” of the operation, he said “was to kill the prisoners.” The horror stories that prisoners told have followed Dostum forcefully ever since. They spoke of screaming and beating the walls, of licking sweat and urine to stave off death by dehydration, of gnawing each other’s limbs from hunger.

It was a well-worn method of execution in the Afghan desert: locking prisoners in containers and allowing them to burn alive or suffocate, depending on the season. That November, the cold air would have made suffocation and dehydration the murder weapons in most cases. Dostum’s men allegedly carried out the entire operation. Each driver was joined by at least one soldier in the cab of the truck. When drivers tried to punch holes in the containers for ventilation or discretely pass in water bottles, they claimed they were beaten by Dostum’s forces. Survivors claimed that in some cases those soldiers even opened fire directly into the trucks,

silencing the screams. The drivers who talked said the trucks continued for days.¹⁹⁸ A Top-Secret cable sent by the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research in 2008 concluded that "we believe the number of Taliban deaths during transport to Sheberghan prison may have been higher than the widely reported 1,000." A three letter US intelligence agency, redacted in the version of the cable released through a Freedom of Information Act request, "puts the number at at least 1,500, and the actual number may approach 2,000."¹⁹⁹

Dostum sighed when I raised the allegations. In the past, one of his spokespeople had said only that there were accidental deaths from pre-existing injuries. Dostum told me a different story. "The road," he explained, "It was closed. Chimtal road and also Balkh road was closed because the Taliban was there, revolting, they blocked the road." Most of the prisoners, he insisted, stayed in open cars. "But in probably one container there is Taliban."

"One container?" I asked. This would allow for perhaps one sixth of the count given by even the most conservative eyewitness estimates.

"In one container," Dostum's translator said confidently. As he spoke, Dostum began tilting his head back and forth, reconsidering.

"Probably 2 or 3 containers," he conceded.

"Who put them in the containers?" I pressed.

"This commander, the local commanders who were supposed to transfer them, they probably, they scared because of revolt in Qala-i-Jangi. The road was blocked in Chimtal and Balkh. They thought they might also escape and they will attack them, and they put them in 2-3 containers."

¹⁹⁸ John Barry, "The Death Convoy of Afghanistan." [2002] *Newsweek*. 25 www.newsweek.com/death-convoy-afghanistan-144273 and James Risen, "US Inaction Seen After Taliban P.O.W.'s Died." *The New York Times*, (11 July, 2009) <www.nytimes.com/2009/07/11/world/asia/11afghan.html>

¹⁹⁹ Dasht-i-Leili FOIA'd State and DOD cables, page 19 in State Dept pagination, page 32 in PDF.

Dostum named two commanders, Kamal Khan and Hazarat Chunta, saying they may have opened fire on the prisoners.²⁰⁰ He sidestepped questions as to exactly how much of this he had ordered. The fact that prisoners had died, he said, was a surprise. As he told the story, he was eating lunch at Kunduz when an aide arrived to inform him. “Some Taliban prisoner were killed in container,” the aide told him. “And I asked them, ‘have you showed them to Red Cross?’ They said ‘no,’” Dostum recalled. “Then [I] was very upset with him: ‘Why didn’t you show it to the Red Cross?! You are just trying to undermine my credibility and I’m trying to be fair in this war and wartime...you had to show to the Red Cross.” But according to the Physicians for Human Rights investigators, the Red Cross didn’t gain access until weeks later, when the killing was done and the secrets buried.

Whatever Dostum’s level of actual surprise at the deaths, it is likely that he was intimately involved in the subsequent cover-up. The State Department intelligence cables declassified through the Freedom of Information Act said more needed to be done to protect witnesses, who were disappearing. Dostum and one of his commanders had “been implicated in abuses perpetrated against several witnesses connected with the events surrounding the Dasht-i-Leili site. One eyewitness reported to have operated a bulldozer used at the site to bury bodies was killed and his body discovered in the desert. At least three Afghans who worked on issues involving the mass grave have been beaten or are missing.” The UN concluded that still another witness was imprisoned by Dostum’s forces and had been tortured.

I had to ask Dostum twice about the disappearing witnesses. Finally, I handed a copy of the cable itself. He eyed it with no discernible reaction then handed it to an aide. “Is it possible,” I asked, “This accusation that witnesses were killed and intimidated afterwards?”

²⁰⁰ Dostum mentioned Chunta several times, sometimes giving the first name “Hazar”.

He shrugged. “I don’t know. I don’t recall.”

Thornier still was the question of how much the Americans saw. The witness whose testimony Nathaniel Raymond brought to John Kerry and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had been a translator for American forces at Kunduz and Qala-i-Jangi. He claimed to have been present during the transfer of prisoners into containers – and to have witnessed two Americans, in blue jeans, speaking English, at the site, watching the proceedings. “Who’s going to be at Dasht-i-Leili on November 30th and December 1st, 2001, speaking English and wearing blue jeans?” Raymond said.

“When I left Qala-i-Jangi...all the time, American colleagues accompanied me,” Dostum told me. He was adamant on this, a point of personal pride for him as he defended his faltering relationship with the nation that had used him to achieve victory, and now seemed intent on turning its back on him. He said that Mark Nutsch, the captain of Special Forces Team 595, had been by his side almost constantly, an assertion Nutsch said was generally accurate. “Yeah...,” he recalled, “we worked very closely with [Dostum] nearly every day.”²⁰¹

“Were any of the Americans assigned to Qala-i-Zeini [where the containers were loaded]?” I asked Dostum.

“All of them was with me,” he replied. “They wrongly accused,” he added, referring to suggestions in the human rights community that Americans may have been involved in the slaughter. “They say ‘oh, Dostum he killed, Americans were firing.’ It’s not true.” Dostum offered this exoneration as evidence of his loyalty to the Americans. But his conviction that the Americans were by his side during the incident raised another set of difficult questions about whether the Special Forces and CIA personnel witnessed any of the communications between

²⁰¹ Interview with Mark Nutsch (2018)

Dostum and his commanders about the murders, and failed to either stop them, or report them after the fact.

As I pressed Dostum on how much Mark and the others learned, and when, he grew restless. At one point, he stopped me mid-question. “Listen, every school has a break after one hour,” he growled, and changed the subject. “You should have some [questions about] women, children,” an aide offered hurriedly. When I turned to the Americans again, he narrowed his eye at me. “You are asking so many questions...why in so much detail, asking this questions?” General Dostum seemed to be reaching his limit. “I was always very truthful, committed to my friendship, I never betrayed,” he said, finally.

Nutsch told me he knew of no abuses. “My team has been investigated multiple times over this,” he said. “We did not witness, nor observe, anything.” Just as Dostum considered the American special forces blood brothers, the camaraderie was apparent on Nutsch’s side. “I saw him as a charismatic leader. Led from the front. Took care of his guys,” he added. He grew hostile when I asked a series of questions about the more complicated realities of the story. “Dostum’s enemies are the ones accusing him of these things,” he said. When I told him Dostum had admitted the killings may have occurred, and suggested two of his commanders may have been involved, Nutsch paused, then replied, “I don’t have a reaction to that.”

f) The Hero Becomes a Liability

In late 2016, Dostum, by then Vice President of Afghanistan, attended a game of Buzkashi, and before the goat was slaughtered, local musicians broke into a song paying tribute to martyrs in the fight against the Taliban. The lyrics struck a personal chord: A month earlier, the Taliban

had ambushed his convoy, injuring him and killing several of his Junbish militias.²⁰² In a video of the match, Dostum can be seen at the side-lines, eyes pressed shut, lips trembling, taking silent, heaving sobs. Fat snowflakes swirled as he took out a white handkerchief and wiped both eyes.²⁰³

As the match began, Dostum swung a punch at a long-time political rival, Ahmad Ishchi. It got worse from there: The Vice President toppled Ishchi and ground a heel into his neck as more than a thousand attendees watched. "I can kill you right now, and no one will ask," Ishchi later claimed Dostum told him. Witnesses said they saw Dostum's men drag an injured Ishchi into a truck and drive away with him. Ishchi later claimed Dostum and his men held him captive for five days, beating him and raping him with a Kalashnikov. Forensic evidence provided to the press seemed to back up Ishchi's claims that he suffered internal injuries.²⁰⁴ General Dostum said the allegations were a conspiracy to remove him from power. He'd responded the same way when an eerily similar charge of physical abuse was brought by another political rival eight years earlier.²⁰⁵ Dostum's grip on power had been slipping for some time. The year before, he had burst into tears at a meeting of the Afghan National Security Council. "No one returns my calls!"

²⁰²"Afghan Vice-President Dostum Injured in Taliban Ambush." *Hindustan Times*, (2016), www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/taliban-militants-ambush-afghanistan-vice-president-s-convoy/story-UQdKihxtFoddiT6NUUpwiK.html

²⁰³ Facebook video posted by Esmat Salehoghly Azimy, ATV footage, uploaded 25 November 2016,

<https://www.facebook.com/esmat.azimy/videos/vb.100002358908259/1170150113073608/?type=2&theater>

²⁰⁴ Sune Engel Rasmussen, "Vice-President Leaves Afghanistan Amid Torture and Rape Claims." *The Guardian*, (2017), <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/19/vice-president-leaves-afghanistan-amid-torture-and-claims>>; Mujib Masha and Fahim Abed, "Afghan Vice President Seen Abducting Rival." *The New York Times*,

(2016), < https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/27/world/asia/afghan-vice-president-is-accused-of-assaulting-rival-and-taking-him-hostage.html?_r=0>; Mujib Masha and Fahim Abed, "Afghanistan Vice President Accused of Torturing Political Rival." *The New York Times*, (2016),

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/13/world/asia/political-rival-accuses-afghanistan-vice-president-of-torturing-him.html?ref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FDostum%2C%20Abdul%20Rashid&action=click&contentCollection=timetopics®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=8&pgtype=collection>

²⁰⁵ Abdul Waheed Wafa. "Former Warlord in Standoff with Police at Kabul Home." *The New York Times*, (2008), <www.nytimes.com/2008/02/04/world/asia/04afghan.html>

he howled.²⁰⁶ The new allegations plunged him into political crisis. "For the Afghan government nobody is above the law. Rule of law and accountability begins in the government itself and we are committed to it," said a government spokesperson, as they announced a criminal investigation.²⁰⁷

The ensuing six-month stand-off illustrated still more of the perils of America's decision, in Afghanistan, to lionize warlords, install them to senior government posts, and deflect attention from their misdeeds. At one point, soldiers and policemen surrounded the Vice President's palace, attempting to arrest Dostum and his aides. But because Dostum commanded his own independent militia, police feared Kabul might turn into a war zone if they acted. They left empty-handed. Later, when President Ashraf Ghani left Afghanistan to attend a security conference in Europe, Dostum and a coterie of armed guards arrived at the Presidential compound and unilaterally announced that he was serving as acting President in Ghani's absence, to the alarm of the international community. Ghani returned before Dostum could act on that threat.²⁰⁸ Eventually, Dostum slipped out of Kabul on a night flight to Turkey, for yet another period of exile. When he tried to fly back, the government denied his plane permission to land.²⁰⁹

But the Vice President proved more dangerous in exile than in Kabul. He began working his connections, dating back through the decades, to the powerful warlords from Afghanistan's

²⁰⁶ Azam Ahmed, "Afghan First Vice President, an Ex-Warlord, Fumes on the Sidelines." *The New York Times*, (2015), < <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/19/world/asia/afghan-first-vice-president-an-ex-warlord-fumes-on-the-sidelines.html>>

²⁰⁷ "Afghan Vice-President Dostum Accused of Sex Assault." *BBC*, (2016), < www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38311174>

²⁰⁸ Rod Nordland and Jawad Sukhanyar, "Afghanistan Police Surround Vice President's House." *The New York Times*, (2017), <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/21/world/asia/abdul-rashid-dostum-afghanistan.html>>

²⁰⁹ Mujib Mashal, "Afghan Vice President Flies to Turkey Amid Torture and Rape Allegations." *The New York Times*, (2017), < https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/19/world/middleeast/abdul-rashid-dostum-afghanistan-turkey.html?_r=0>

other ethnic minorities. Calling themselves the Coalition for the Salvation of Afghanistan, the group was a laundry list of familiar names. There was Mohammad Mohaqqiq, and Salahuddin Rabbani, and even Atta Mohammad Noor, Dostum's long-time rival. "We may have to take control of administrative buildings and airports to put pressure on and paralyze the government," Atta said, with an air of menace. "We were the ones, not Ghani, who helped the US fight the Taliban. It is wrong that the US should use us when they need us and then throw us away like empty Pepsi cans." The group set to work playing on Afghanistan's deep ethnic rifts, claiming to stand for the country's oppressed minorities against Pashtun officials like Ghani.²¹⁰

In 2016, the US State Department quietly denied General Dostum a visa ahead of a planned trip to the United States. The literal translation of Dostum – "my friend" – had worn out its welcome. The man the United States had furnished with arms and covert tactical support for years; whose strategic importance was so central that two administrations avoided public condemnation of his misdeeds, was finally out of favour.²¹¹

Dostum, like so many proxy allies born of battlefield exigency, has for years elicited contradictory treatment. He remained on CIA payroll for years, but officials sought to bar him from re-entering Kabul (and Afghan politics) after stints abroad.²¹² The US military "buzzed" his house with a threatening overhead flight to discourage his land grabs in 2004; and just months later flew him to Germany to treat his severe liver problems brought on by years of drinking.²¹³

²¹⁰ Max Bearak, "These Ex-Warlords are Promising Afghanistan's 'Salvation.'" *The Washington Post*, (5 August 2017), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/these-ex-warlords-are-promising-afghanistans-salvation/2017/08/05/9d89f642-72cb-11e7-8c17-533c52b2f014_story.html?utm_term=.7b523df3e67c>

²¹¹ Matthew Rosenberg, "Afghanistan's Vice President Is Barred From Entering US," *New York Times*, (26 April 2016), <www.nytimes.com/2016/04/26/world/middleeast/abdul-rashid-dostum-afghanistan-barred-from-entering-us.html>

²¹² Joshua Partlow, "Dostum, a former warlord who was once America's man in Afghanistan, may be back," *Washington Post*, (23 April 2014), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/dostum-a-former-warlord-who-was-once-americas-man-in-afghanistan-may-be-back/2014/04/23/9d1a7670-c63d-11e3-8b9a-8e0977a24aeb_story.html>

²¹³ Id

For human rights groups, his definitive ban from US soil was a modest whimper of a victor. For Dostum and his followers, it was the latest sign of America's willingness to abandon its partners. "It really perplexed him," says Professor Brian Glynn Williams, who maintains regular contact with Dostum and his family. "He's almost like a child in some ways. He takes these things so personally. He really admires and loves America...he just doesn't understand that in many ways he's a fall guy for every single war crime and warlord in Afghanistan."²¹⁴²¹⁵ Meanwhile, Dostum has bolstered his contacts with Russia, traveling to Moscow and seeking increased arms sales. ²¹⁶ "Dostum's loyalty," Robert Young Pelton explains, "is to those who support him."²¹⁷

g) Lasting Consequences

The effects of decades of close relationships between the United States and warlords were far broader than Dostum or the policies built around concealing his single instance of mass atrocity. Anti-Soviet mujahideen fighters armed by the Americans had turned into Northern Alliance commanders armed by the Americans and then turned into governors and ministers installed by the Americans, or at least with their tacit assent and minimal grumbling. Some of those individuals continue to be at the heart of the forces destabilizing Afghanistan to this day. Atta Mohammed Noor, as governor of Balkh province, handed out parcels of land to loyalists and grew fabulously wealthy taking cuts of the province's customs revenue. His militias have

²¹⁴ Interview with Brian Glyn Williams (2016)

²¹⁵ Interview with Dr. Par Babur Farahmand, (2016). Dostum's chief of staff elected not to tell him when his passport was returned without a visa. "He learned from the New York Times,".

²¹⁶ Fatima Tlisova and Noor Zahid, "Snubbed by US, Afghan Warlord Looked to Russia," *Voice of America*, (2016), <www.voanews.com/a/snubbed-by-us-afghan-warlord-looked-to-russia/3303670.html>

²¹⁷ Interview with Robert Young Pelton (2016)

been implicated in sundry thuggery from murder to kidnapping and extortion to land seizure.²¹⁸ Ismael Khan, who became Governor of Herat and then Minister of Water and Energy, was accused of harassing ethnic Pashtuns and withholding provincial revenue from the government.²¹⁹ A commander named Mir Alam became chief of police in the Baghlan province and developed a reputation for his spectacular corruption and support for drug mafias.²²⁰ A 2006 US embassy cable concluded that Alam and another commander “continued to act as mujahedin commanders rather than professional police officers...abus[ing] their positions of authority to engage in a broad range of criminal activity, including extortion, bribery and drug trafficking.” Gul Agha Sherzai wreaked similar havoc – murder, drug trafficking, and corruption benefiting his tribe in Nangarhar province.²²¹

And then there was General Dostum, who served as Deputy Defence Minister before eventually becoming Vice President. Robert Finn, the first US Ambassador in Kabul after September 11, 2001, struggled with the warlords, especially Dostum and Atta, who were frequently at each other’s throats. It made for a particularly stark parable: the two warlords were sitting on oil reserves that had produced hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues during the Soviet era and could easily have been exploited for Afghan reconstruction better, and earlier. “I

²¹⁸ Sudarsan Raghavan, “Afghanistan’s Defining Fight: Technocrats vs. Strongmen.” *The Washington Post*, (12 April 2015), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/former-warlords-test-the-rise-of-a-new-afghanistan/2015/04/12/73e052ae-b091-11e4-bf39-5560f3918d4b_story.html?tid=a_inl&utm_term=.fe112937980d>

²¹⁹ Center for American Progress. "Profiles of Afghan Power Brokers." 26 October 2009, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2009/10/26/6734/profiles-of-afghan-power-brokers/>

²²⁰ Human Rights Watch. "Today We Shall All Die": Afghanistan's Strongmen and the Legacy of Impunity." 2015, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/afghanistan0315_4up.pdf

²²¹ Peceny, Mark and Bosin, Yury. "Winning with Warlords in Afghanistan." *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 22:4, 603-618, www.unm.edu/~ybosin/documents/winning_with_warlords_2011.pdf

tried to talk Dostum and Atta into becoming rich people..." Finn recalled. "But they'd rather kill each other over cows."²²² So it went with so many opportunities to rebuild Afghanistan.

Many of these men had been paid by the Americans for decades. Some traded tattered fatigues for slick suits as they grew rich off of drug deals, but most continued to behave as they always had: as warlords. Only now, they were warlords ruling with the imprimatur of a central government backed by the United States, and a steady stream of lucrative international contracts to skim from. Finn came to believe the warlords were at the heart of many of Afghanistan's broader problems. "Ministries were initially handed out to different warlords and they started running them as their fiefdoms so that was a problem," he told me. But the warlords were hard to shake, in some cases because of their tenacious grip on local power structures, and in some cases because there had never been a serious effort to empower alternatives. Often, the choice the Americans were left with was rule by warlord or complete chaos. Atta, for instance, led one of the most stable provinces in the country. Pushing him out was the last thing on the minds of the Americans. "I think we should have worked ourselves away from them," Finn reflected years later. "I understand what happened. We went in and said okay who can we get to help us...but that doesn't mean you stick with them forever. I think we have stuck with them too long. Once they're there it's difficult to get rid of them." He added: "The people that were there over time" – people like Dostum and the other warlords – "they know how to use the Americans. They know exactly what to say and what the Americans would want them to say."

Across Afghanistan in recent years, the rickety structures of the American-brokered post-9/11 government have strained against the rising tide of warlords, popping rivets. In Takhar

²²² Partlow, Joshua. "Dostum, a Former Warlord Who Was Once America's Man in Afghanistan, May Be Back." *The Washington Post*, (23 April 2014) https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/dostum-a-former-warlord-who-was-once-americas-man-in-afghanistan-may-be-back/2014/04/23/9d1a7670-c63d-11e3-8b9a-8e0977a24aeb_story.html?utm_term=.61ff3c408558

province, a warlord associated with one prominent Islamist party, Commander Bashir Qanet, created his own police state, opening fire on supporters of the central government. In Mazar-i-Sharif, a provincial councilman named Asif Mohmand got into a social media fight with Atta, threatening to “pump 30 bullets into your head and then help myself to you” in a Facebook post. When Atta sent his forces to arrest Mohmand, he found Mohmand had his own militias protecting him. The ensuing firefight killed two and wounded 17 people and plunged Mazar-i-Sharif airport into bloody chaos. The *New York Times* said the situation resembled a real-life *Game of Thrones*.

As warlordism overtook Afghanistan and the American-backed Mujahedeen turned American-backed Northern Alliance fighters turned American-backed ministers and governors turned into agents of chaos once again, the Taliban was resurging too. By no coincidence, their greatest gains were in the Northern provinces where Atta, Dostum, and other Warlords held sway.²²³ Increasingly, the resurgent Taliban was joined by another resurgent threat still more troubling to the Americans: an ISIS affiliate called ISIS-K. The group was smaller than Al Qaeda, but by 2017, proving similarly resilient in grinding battles of attrition in Afghan mountains.²²⁴

²²³ Rod Nordland, “In Afghanistan, a Destructive 'Game of Thrones.'” *The New York Times*, (2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/18/world/asia/in-afghanistan-a-destructive-game-of-thrones.html?_r=0>

²²⁴ Max Bearak, "Behind the Front Lines in the Fight to 'Annihilate' ISIS in Afghanistan." *The Washington Post*. (23 July 2017) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/behind-the-front-lines-in-the-fight-to-annihilate-isis-in-afghanistan/2017/07/23/0e1f88d2-6bb4-11e7-abbc-a53480672286_story.html?utm_term=.391eec1930b5>

8) Conclusion: Analysis and Contribution to Hypothesis

This thesis explores the gap between the framing of the proxy relationship in the policy process (including the public components inherent to that process) and the realities of that relationship. The American alliance with warlords in Afghanistan, and its relationship with General Dostum specifically, provide a striking illustration of that gap and its consequences. In the early days of combatting the Taliban, Dostum and his fellow Northern Alliance warlords proved to be a useful – even indispensable – means by which to protect US influence in Afghanistan. But policymakers’ characterization of the warlords as “friends,” and the frequent elevation of Dostum and his cohort in American media and culture as heroes contributed to a reluctance to reassess those relationships, even when it became apparent that they were harming American interests rather than advancing them.

In the relationship with Dostum, the explanatory variable contemplated in the research question – namely, the level of hypocrisy – is high. All three criteria for assessing this variable – characterisations by the United States of the objectives of the relationship, the parties to the relationship, and the activities of the partner force – were subjects of deliberate obfuscation and misleading statements. The dependent variable – the cost of the relationship – was, likewise, high by the measures laid out earlier in this thesis. Dostum illustrates the contradictions inherent in the short-term proxy alliances that have long defined America’s presence in Afghanistan, and the costs of failing to acknowledge those contradictions. In its initial investigation of the Dasht-i-Leili massacre, *Newsweek* projected broader implications. “The episode is more than just another atrocity in a land that has seen many,” the publication concluded. “The killings illustrate the

problems America will face if it opts to fight wars by proxy, as the United States did in Afghanistan, using small numbers of US Special Forces calling in air power to support local fighters on the ground.”²²⁵ This is, largely, what has played out.

The United States’ role funding, arming, and acting in a capacity that could be perceived as supervisory – present and aware, if not in command and control – is not the focus of this thesis, though those dynamics present significant issues within an international humanitarian law framework.²²⁶ Instead, the most relevant consideration for the research question at issue here is the level of knowledge the United States possessed and whether American representations of the relationship aligned with that knowledge. Despite the years of bipartisan avoidance of questions about Dostum’s atrocities, the cables obtained through the Freedom of Information Act make clear that both the intelligence community and civilian policymakers at the State Department were aware of the details of the allegations as early as 2002. The United States continued to first advance Dostum and then tolerate his presence at the highest echelons of Afghanistan’s government despite that knowledge. Furthermore, in those instances in which US officials sought to address the strategic albatross of the relationship with Dostum in more recent years, they have been forced, on account of his entrenched position of power, to do so indirectly and quietly, as in the case of the recent visa denial. In part as a result of the government’s refusal to openly address the problem or respond to inquiries into his misconduct, public representations of his and the other Northern Alliance leaders’ heroism remained unaffected as well.

²²⁵ John Barry, *The Death Convoy of Afghanistan*.

²²⁶ Though it should be noted that in practical terms, establishing a “command and control” relationship would be incredibly difficult. Michael Newton, the military law scholar, calls the idea of control in this context “a stretch...that would imply that a US special forces major could walk in and tell Dostum what to do.”

Those perceptions have gone largely unchallenged despite mounting evidence. In the years since September 11, 2001, it has grown increasingly difficult to argue that Afghanistan's warlords or their militias were effecting the original goal of the partnership: improving Afghan security. First, The United States' decision to install problematic actors like Dostum into Afghanistan's fledgling governmental institutions has generated ongoing insecurity, as exemplified by Dostum's feuds with other regional warlords.²²⁷ Second, the mistrust and antipathy it has created have opened a void that competing powers have already sought to fill, as in the case of Dostum seeking meetings with Russian officials in response to the perceived visa snub. (This last development, in particular, contradicts Walt's conception of the fundamental purposes of alliance-building, which he posits serves the primary goal of balancing against prevailing threats.)²²⁸ Finally, these dynamics have created significant opportunity costs: the entrenched culture of warlordism, reified by the depictions of the same actors as heroes and allies, stripped the United States of the ability to forge a new set of bonds with civilian politicians who might have counterbalanced these sources of instability.

The direct consequences of the United States' failure to grapple with the harsh realities, as opposed to the initial promise of these relationships, are considerable. The death toll from the Dasht-i-Leili massacre alone is illustrative of those costs. The indirect consequences are historic: Afghanistan is now America's longest-running war. In this way, this chapter's conclusions about military assistance to proxy forces run parallel to Adelkhah's conclusions about the downsides of development assistance.²²⁹ Additionally, public opinion appears to have been meaningfully

²²⁷ Ghanizada, *1 Killed, 5 Wounded as Dostum and Noor Supporters Clash in Faryab*, Khaama Press, March 24, 2016 available at <http://www.khaama.com/1-killed-5-wounded-as-dostum-and-noor-supporters-clash-in-faryab-0438>.

²²⁸ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs, 1987.

²²⁹ Fariba Adelkhah, "War and State (Re)Construction in Afghanistan: Conflicts of Tradition or Conflicts of Development?," *Development As a Battlefield*, Brill, 2017.

affected in this case – while there is no polling to suggest how the story of Dostum’s atrocities resonated with broader populace, the subject was raised with Presidents in two successive administrations and was the subject of a public shaming campaign by human rights groups.

The United States’ relationships with Afghanistan’s warlords, and the policy processes surrounding those relationships, also reveal much about the qualities that were missing and, if present, might have better served American interests in the region. Veterans of managing the relationships with the warlords pointed most frequently to two qualities that they believed should have been more forthrightly integrated into discussions of the warlords among policymakers.

The first quality that was conspicuous by its absence in the representations of Dostum, and that the experts felt should have been emphasized earlier, is the exact extent to which a warlord’s fundamental, long-term goals might align with those of the United States. While there are no perfect partners in difficult war theatres, *circumstances* can create shared long-term visions. Milton Bearden, the CIA operator, views this as a fundamental difference between the current conflict in Afghanistan and the mujahedeen’s fight against the Soviets. “Don’t lose sight of the absolute difference in the undertakings,” he argues. “One was dealing with Afghan to resist an occupation. We’re [now] going in and siding with people in what is in effect a civil war. We’re dealing with a thousand different agendas... we’re the foreign occupation now. The roles have changed. Reversed.”²³⁰ Jack Devine, another CIA veteran, points to the same distinction:

Look at Iraq, or even better, Syria. Policymakers say, ‘let’s support the surrogates, give them weapons.’ But one of the first questions needs to be: is there anyone out there who really wants to fight Islamic extremists? And the answer is, *no*, they want to fight

²³⁰ Interview with Milton Bearden (2016)

Saddam Hussein, they want to fight Assad. The most important thing you have to ask is, do you have a group that really wants to fight? ...If not, you're wasting your time. ... I'm saying don't get into a fight unless there's a common objective here.²³¹

It's a lesson born out in Iraq, where national fighting forces extensively trained by the United States collapsed rapidly and laid down their arms upon the arrival of ISIS forces.²³² In the eyes of Devine and Bearden, such failures stem from a fundamental lack of commitment to a shared fight.

The second quality that Devine, Bearden, and others pointed to as an important area of disclosure and consideration is how fully and permanently the warlord and the surrounding circumstances might compel the United States to commit to the alliance. One of the most enduring charges against the United States in Afghanistan, including from its warlords, is that of abandonment. It's a charge exacerbated by relationships marked by half-measures and ambivalence, like that with Dostum. Devine echoes this point too. "Don't dabble. Don't put in ten million so someone on the Hill can say we did...don't engage in half-measures...you'd be amazed at some of the dabbling that has taken place in the covert action field." Buzzing a warlord's house, then immediately turning around and sending them to a US base for elite medical treatment; continuing to provide US funds to a leader while working to marginalize them from local politics; these represent ambivalent half-measures that can poison not only a relationship, but perceptions of the United States and its leadership in the world.

²³¹ Interview with Jack Devine (2016)

²³² Kareem Fahim and Suadad Al-Salhy, "Exhausted and Bereft, Iraqi Soldiers Quit Fight," *The New York Times*, (11 June 2014), <www.nytimes.com/2014/06/11/world/middleeast/exhausted-and-bereft-iraqi-soldiers-quit-fight.html>

In the case of the relationship with Afghanistan's warlords, fundamental shared goals between proxy force and world power were never present or seriously suggested by policymakers, though the presence of such alignment was suggested in public representations about friendship and partnership. Full and sustained commitment, devoid of half-measures, was, likewise, never present in fact but was, at some points, a feature of representations made by American officials, more frequently to the Afghan people, but also on some occasions to the American public. With respect to the current administration, Donald Trump had, for years, preached the virtues of departing Afghanistan. "We should leave Afghanistan immediately," he had said a few years earlier. The war was "wasting our money" and "a total disaster."

But a Trump national security team dominated by generals pressed for escalation. General Mattis as Secretary of Defence, General HR McMaster as National Security Adviser, and retired General John F Kelly formed the backbone of the Trump administration's Afghanistan review. Last year, in front of a room full of servicemen and women at Fort Myer military base, in Arlington, Virginia, backed by the flags of the branches of the US military, Trump announced that America would double down in Afghanistan. A month later, General Mattis ordered the first of thousands of new American troops into the country.²³³ It was a foregone conclusion: the year before Trump entered office, the military had already begun quietly testing public messaging informing the public that America would be in Afghanistan for decades, not years. After the announcement, the same language cropped up again, this time from Trump surrogates who compared the commitment not to other counterterrorism operations, but

²³³ "Full Transcript and Video: Trump's Speech on Afghanistan." *The New York Times*, (2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/21/world/asia/trump-speech-afghanistan.html>; and Michael Gordon, "Mattis Orders First Group of Reinforcements to Afghanistan." *The New York Times*, (31 August 2017), <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/31/us/politics/trump-mattis-troops-afghanistan.html?ref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FAfghanistan>>

to America's troop commitments in Korea, Germany, and Japan.²³⁴ "We are with you in this fight," the top General in Afghanistan, John Nicholson Jr., told an audience of Afghans. "We will stay with you."²³⁵

Trump's commitment to more American troops could cut both ways: it is not yet clear whether collaborations with militias on the ground will abate or deepen with the return to a more muscular US presence on the ground. But the move appears to eschew an additional, final lesson of the United States' fraught relationships with the warlords. Walking away from relationships and military commitments once the initial representations and the realities on the ground fully diverge remains an underutilized option, one seldom considered in the United States' recent history in Afghanistan. "If you don't have a cooperative, engaged partner who understands that their existence is made possible by your sheer presence and people and funding," said General William Caldwell, who oversaw US training programs for Afghan National Security Forces. "I personally think there needs to be a point where you're willing to walk away from something."²³⁶

²³⁴Philip Rucker and Robert Costa, "'It's a Hard Problem': Inside Trump's Decision to Send More Troops to Afghanistan." *The Washington Post*, (21 August 2017), < https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/its-a-hard-problem-inside-trumps-decision-to-send-more-troops-to-afghanistan/2017/08/21/14dcb126-868b-11e7-a94f-3139abce39f5_story.html?utm_term=.3255b6d552c7>

²³⁵Rod Nordland, "The Empire Stopper." *The New York Times*, (29 August 2017), <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/29/world/asia/afghanistan-graveyard-empires-historical-pictures.html?ref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FAfghanistan>>

²³⁶ Interview with William Caldwell (2017)

Chapter 2:

Mutual Political Misrepresentation in Pakistan

1) Overview

Because the history of America's interventions and alliances in Afghanistan and Pakistan are so closely entwined, the selection of Afghanistan meant necessarily considering that case holistically with an overview of the parallel relationships in Pakistan in order to achieve a full understanding of the conclusions drawn. In this chapter, I consider the United States' alliance with Pakistan's military and intelligence entities. As in the other chapters, this thesis's predominant focus is on the period following September 11, 2001, a natural inflection point in US-Pakistan relations. However, here, as with Afghanistan, a significant survey of Cold War-era history is necessary to place those later years in context. Just as Afghanistan provides a compelling illustration of the delta between reality and representation that can occur in non-state proxy relationships, such as those with warlords, Pakistan offers a striking portrait of a mismatch between representation and expectation on the one hand and the realities of a relationship with a state actor on the other.

I argue that misrepresentations, within the relationship and to the public of both nations, had a crippling effect on mutual efforts to advance security goals on the ground and for the

broader region and suggest that the current freeze in relations can mitigate some of the costs of that dishonesty.

2) Collateral Damage

The power went out as it often did in Islamabad, and the room went dark. But the laptop had juice, so the human rights activist I had come to see swung the screen around and told me to watch. A video flickered on screen. It was shaky, surreptitiously captured from a distance. Six young men stumbled through a wooded area, blindfolded, hands bound behind their backs. In typical civilian *kurtas*, they did not look like fighters. Soldiers in Pakistani Army uniforms led the young men to a clearing and lined them up against a stonework wall.

An older, bearded officer, a commander perhaps, approached the young men, one by one. “Do you know the Kalimas?” he asked, referring to the Islamic religious phrases sometimes uttered before death. He re-joined more than half a dozen soldiers at the other end of the clearing. They were lining up in the style of an execution squad. “One by one, or together?” asked one. “Together,” said the commander. The soldiers raised their rifles – G3s, standard issue equipment in the Pakistani military – took aim, and fired.

The men crumpled to the ground. Several survived, wailing and writhing on the ground. A soldier approached and fired a second shot into each body, silencing the men one by one. For a moment after the video ended, no one said anything. Street traffic rattled through a nearby window. Finally, the human rights activist asked: “What will you do now?”

The video was shocking, but its existence was no surprise. It was 2010 in Pakistan, home

to America's most important counterterrorism partnership. Al Qaeda's leadership had fled American military operations in Afghanistan, evaporating into the thin mountain air of Pakistan's untamed border country. This was the heart of the war on terror and the hunt for Osama bin Laden. As a rookie recruit to the State Department's Afghanistan and Pakistan team, charged with talking to development and human rights groups, I found that diplomacy in the region had a quality of pantomime. Every conversation, whether about building dams or reforming education, was in fact about counterterrorism: keeping Pakistan happy enough to join the fight and allow our supplies to pass through its borders to American troops in Afghanistan. But often, the Pakistanis were unwilling (according to the Americans) or unable (by their own account) to move against their country's terrorist strongholds.

The previous fall, there had been a rare success. Pakistani forces had staged an offensive in the rural Swat valley, seizing control and capturing Taliban militants. But it wasn't long before rumours began to circulate about what exactly that success had entailed. Public reports were emerging of a new wave of executions in the wake of military operations in Swat. By that summer, Human Rights Watch had investigated 238 alleged executions and found at least 50 were heavily corroborated. As with everything in government, the executions even had an acronym: EJK, for "extrajudicial killings."²³⁷ The issue was complex. In rural Pakistan, courtrooms and prisons are more the stuff of aspiration than reality. Many Pakistani military units viewed summary executions as the only practical way of dealing with extremists they apprehended. But the tactic was also proving useful in disposing of a growing number of dissidents, lawyers, and journalists. Pakistani military personnel, when they could be enticed to acknowledge the issue at all, bitterly pointed out that the United States pressed them to target

²³⁷ "Pakistan: Extrajudicial Executions by Army in Swat." *Human Rights Watch*, 16 July 2011, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2010/07/16/pakistan-extrajudicial-executions-army-swat>

some bad guys, then complained when they took out others.

The killings were a point of extraordinary sensitivity in the relationship between Pakistan and the United States. For the Pakistanis, they were an embarrassment. For the Americans, they were a fly in the ointment. American taxpayers had bankrolled Pakistan to the tune of \$19.7 billion in military and civilian assistance since September 11, 2001 and had supported the nation in a proxy relationship for decades prior.²³⁸ Revelations about the murders raised the spectre of unwanted scrutiny. But the truth was that America's long proxy relationship with Pakistan came with a high, previously hidden human toll.

3) Basis for Case Study Selection

Much like Afghanistan, Pakistan has been a focal point of America's military, economic, and diplomatic engagement for decades, with an intensified focus following the launch of Washington's Global War on Terror. Congress has long allocated financial assistance, a core criterion for this thesis's case study selection, at high levels. High levels of military and economic assistance flowed to Pakistan shortly after its establishment, nearly topping \$3 billion per annum in the 1960s and only declining to comparable levels for the region in the 1970s, following a period of Indo-Pakistani conflict and a suspension of military aid. During the Cold War, assistance resumed at high levels once more.²³⁹

²³⁸ "Factbox: US has allocated \$20 billion for Pakistan." *Reuters*, 21 (2011), <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-usa-aid-factbox-idUSTRE73K7F420110421>>

²³⁹ "Aid to Pakistan by the Numbers." Center for Global Development, September 2013.

After September 11, aid levels soared, totalling \$22.147 billion from FY2002 to FY2011 and then remaining high each year after through FY2018, mirroring aid appropriation trends in Afghanistan but at a lower level. Of these sums, economic assistance consistently comprised a small portion of total aid, with security-related funds and Coalition Support Fund reimbursements dominating.²⁴⁰ Even as the war on terror decelerates and Washington's reliance upon proxy forces in the region declines, it is likely that America's decades-long engagement with Pakistan will continue for the foreseeable future, given the strategic importance of the relationship and America's dependence on its proxy (per Mott, as discussed in the introduction).

Table 4. Overt US Appropriations / Military Reimbursements for Pakistan, FY 2012-18:²⁴¹

(rounded to the nearest millions of dollars)

Program or Account	FY2002- FY2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017 (est.)	Program or Account Total	FY 2018 (req.)
CN	264	1	8	18	23	12	--	326	^a
FMF	2,455	296	280	280	265	255	255	4,086	100
IMET	22	5	5	5	5	5	5	52	4
INCLE	642	75	57	57	40	40	38	949	25
NADR	115	20	11	11	10	10	5	182	5
PCF/PCCF	1,900	452	--	--	--	--	--	2,352	--
Total Security-Related	5,710^b	849	361	371	343	322	303	8,259^b	134
CSH/GHCS/GHP	249	--	--	--	--	23	23	295	11
ESF	5,722 ^c	905	724	477	468	200	200	8,696	200
Food Aid ^d	413	96	81	30	--	23	--	643	--
IDA	650	54	20	101	93	--	--	918	--
MRA	236	12	9	--	--	--	--	257	--
Total Economic-Related	7,556^c	1,067	834	608	561	246	223	11,095^c	211
CSF Reimbursements ^f	8,881	688 ^e	1,438	1,198	700 ^b	550 ^b	^h	14,573	^h
Grand Total	22,147	2,604	2,633	2,177	1,604	1,118	526	33,927	345

Sources: U.S. Departments of State, Defense, and Agriculture; U.S. Agency for International Development

²⁴⁰ "Direct Overt US Aid Appropriations for and Military Reimbursements to Pakistan, FY2002-FY2018," Congressional Research Service, 28 November 2017.

²⁴¹ Direct Overt U.S. Aid Appropriations for and Military Reimbursements to Pakistan. Congressional Research Service. From <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/pakaid.pdf>

In addition to the sheer amount of resources that the US has sent to Pakistan, this nation provides a useful case study because of the changing nature and motivation of the proxy relationship. Since Pakistan's founding, the US has looked to it for assistance in threat after threat, beginning with communism and the Cold War and continuing through the war on terror.

As with Washington's engagement with Afghanistan, the US-Pakistani proxy relationship has incurred a grave number of unexpected humanitarian, financial and other costs. Pakistan's history of "double-dealing" and the many tensions manifested within both country's domestic politics make the country an extremely rich case study for this global analysis of Washington's use of surrogate forces. Perhaps none of America's alliances has ever been so fraught with distrust and complications.

Finally, the range of proxies involved in the relationship – non-state and state, offensive and defensive – provides varied and rich material for study.

4) Literature Review

The study of Pakistan in the context of proxy relationships is well-explored, with many characterizing Pakistan as the dominant actor in a proxy relationship with Afghanistan, amid

tensions and regional competition with India. The work of Hanauer and Clark, Goodson, and Ahmed and Bhatnagar are illustrative of this line of inquiry.^{242 243 244}

Other scholars explore a different lens, examining the unequal, co-dependent relationship between the United States and Pakistan, specifically in the context of regional dynamics. While the literature overwhelmingly describes both Pakistan and the United States as reliant upon the other, the former for assistance funding and the latter for security assistance, relatively few explicitly describe the relationship as one of proxy as this thesis does.

The literature exploring the efficacy of the United States-Pakistan relationship is rich. Of the early analyses of this relationship, the work of Wirsing, who studies the relationship during the Reagan years, is perhaps most useful to the research questions under consideration here. He finds that even during the first decades of the relationship, Pakistan was a problematic partner for the United States, particularly because of its internal politics and the India situation.²⁴⁵ Husain, examining the “uneasy relationship” between the United States and Pakistan during this period, relatedly posits that the lack of mutual, compatible interests between the two nations eroded the efficacy of America's foreign aid, and of the alliance more broadly.²⁴⁶

Writing in 1989, Klare is one of the first to explicitly consider Pakistan in terms of proxy relationships. He characterizes Pakistan as “by far the most important nation in the US proxy network,” offering a steady supply of logistical and training support, a sanctuary for insurgents and political operators, and a large pool of recruits for fighters. Klare sounds an early warning

²⁴²Larry Hanauer and Peter Chalk, "Pakistan," *India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan*, RAND, 2012.

²⁴³Larry Goodson, "The New Great Game: Pakistan's Approach to Afghanistan after 2014," *Asia Policy*, Number 17, p. 33-39, 2014.

²⁴⁴Zahid Shahab Ahmed and Stuti Bhatnagar, "Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations and the Indian Factor," *Pakistan Horizon*, Volume 60, Number 2, pp. 159-174, 2007.

²⁴⁵Robert G. Wirsing, "Dilemmas in the United States-Pakistan Security Relationship," *Asian Affairs*, Volume 11, Number 2, pp. 12-39, 1984.

²⁴⁶Syed Adil Husain, "Politics of Alliance and Aid: A Case Study of Pakistan (1954-1966)," *Pakistan Horizon*, Volume 32, Number 1/2, pp. 11-46, 1979.

signal, predicting in the waning days of the Cold War that the US support for hard-line Islamic groups via Pakistan would instil anti-Western bias in the region and create a pipeline of weapons to the black market.²⁴⁷

Soherwodi also provides an historical overview of the United States-Pakistan relationship, noting that difficulties began to arise after the Cold War due to changing priorities of each country's security and intelligence communities. He extends his analysis to the current time period, concluding that throughout the war on terror, the relationship has further deteriorated, bringing the two to "the brink of wrangling." Far from being a frontline ally as it was in the Cold War, Pakistan is "not the same malleable client of former decades."²⁴⁸ His characterization of Pakistan as a "client state" is similar to the characterization in this thesis.

Recent literature more explicitly studies the efficacy of US security assistance in achieving US interests, such as security in the region and internal stability in Pakistan. Writing ten years after September 11, Fair, Crane, Chivvis, Puri, and Spirtas examine US military aid to Pakistan, finding that the United States' reliance on Pakistan's military has failed to yield a peaceful and secure region. They diagnose that failure as stemming from a disproportionate focus on military assistance without sufficient oversight and accountability.²⁴⁹ This finding is reinforced in the extensive writings of Ahmed Rashid, which are critical to this thesis. Using on-the-ground reporting and historical analysis, he finds that US assistance to both Pakistan and

²⁴⁷ Michael T. Klare, "Subterranean Alliance: America's Global Proxy Network," *Journal of International Affairs* Vol. 43, No. 1, 1989.

²⁴⁸ Hussain Shaheed Soherwodi, "Pakistan-US Policies on the 'War on Terror' and the Taliban: Allies at Loggerheads," *Pakistan Horizon*, Volume 63, Number 2, pp. 51-67, 2010.

²⁴⁹ C. Christine Fair, Keith Crane, Christopher S. Chivvis, Samir Puri, Michael Spirtas, "Pakistan: Can the United States Secure an Insecure State?," pp. 139-180, 2010.

Afghanistan have failed to develop the region or sufficiently fight terrorism. He concludes that Pakistan's interests are fundamentally divergent from America's.²⁵⁰

Also of central importance to this thesis are studies of the impact of US assistance on other, non-security related outcomes. The contradictions between US interests (i.e., security) and US values (i.e., democracy, anti-corruption, human rights) is a key area of focus of this thesis. Zaidi asserts that the objectives of US aid to Pakistan have grown unclear during the war on terror and suggests that military assistance has failed to achieve its counterterrorism aims, in part because of divergent strategic goals of the two nations, and because of Pakistani corruption. He concludes that the repercussions of US security assistance have been "catastrophic" for the Pakistani people, in terms of civilian casualties, and warns of the dangers of overly strengthening Pakistan's military at the expense of its civilian institutions.²⁵¹

Shah also focuses on outcomes for the Pakistani people, studying the effect of US military financing on democratic outcomes in Pakistan and concluding that aiding the army undermines democracy. He warns that the imbalance of power between Pakistan's military and civilian institutions threatens its security and internal stability.²⁵² Ibrahim looks at corruption, arguing that US assistance to Pakistan has not been spent effectively, and has funded corruption within the Pakistani military. He suggests that, given Pakistani security forces' ties with Islamist militants, it is likely that some American funds have been directed to the United States' enemies in the war on terror, a conclusion that supports those reached in this chapter.²⁵³

²⁵⁰ See for example, Ahmed Rashid, *Pakistan on the Brink: The Future of America, Pakistan, and Afghanistan*, Penguin, 2013.

²⁵¹ S. Akbar Zaidi, "Who Benefits from US Aid to Pakistan?" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Volume 46, Number 32, pp. 103-109, 2011.

²⁵² Aquil Shah, "Getting the Military Out of Pakistani Politics: How Aiding the Army Undermines Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 90, Number 3, pp. 69-82, 2011.

²⁵³ Azeem Ibrahim, "US Aid to Pakistan – US Taxpayers Have Funded Pakistani Corruption," Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Discussion Paper #2009-06, 2009.

John Schmidt reaches similar conclusions, but is more optimistic, arguing that the United States still wields outsized influence in Pakistan given Pakistanis' overblown perception of American power.²⁵⁴ Markey is also more optimistic, describing United States' engagement with Pakistan during the first six years of the war on terror as frustrating and slow but suggesting that greater engagement with the Pakistani military, with less coercion and more carrots will improve trust and prevent support for jihadis from increasing, while producing better outcomes for US interests.²⁵⁵

Statistical studies of the effects of US military assistance are more limited. Central to the literature is the work of Naheed Zia Khan and Karamat Ali, whose findings suggest that foreign aid has failed to develop human resources in Pakistan because the distribution of aid reflected American, not Pakistani, interests.²⁵⁶ Ali, studying the period between 1947 and 2006, finds that US foreign aid to Pakistan has not achieved American interests and has, in fact, undermined democracy in Pakistan.²⁵⁷

The reviewed literature builds a strong case for the inclusion of Pakistan as a case study in this thesis. However, the research here addresses areas of inquiry thus far overlooked. While deception is a theme in virtually every analysis of US-Pakistani relations, none has so far provided a theoretical framework for judging the gap between perception and reality, nor has any existing work explored this thesis's conclusion that said narrowing said gap could offer a path forward toward a less destructive relationship between the nations. Additionally, the analysis in this thesis advances beyond the Bush years into the Obama Administration, an era for which

²⁵⁴John R. Schmidt, *The Unraveling: Pakistan in the Age of Jihad*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011.

²⁵⁵Daniel Markey, "A False Choice in Pakistan," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 86, Number 4, pp. 85-102, 2007.

²⁵⁶Naheed Zia Khan and Karamat Ali, "Foreign Aid and Human Resource Development: The Case of Pakistan (1960 to 1988)," *Pakistan Economic and Social Review*, volume 32, pp. 136-163, 1994.

²⁵⁷Murad Ali, "US Aid to Pakistan and Democracy," *Policy Perspectives*, Volume 6, Number 2, pp. 119-132, 2009.

literature on these themes is considerably thinner. It does so backed by original, primary research that sheds new light on the dynamics and challenges of the US-Pakistani relationship.

5) Typicality

Pakistan's frequent, if uneasy, role as a proxy for the United States' interest can be characterized as typical based on the four criteria this project utilizes:

- a) Since 1972, Pakistan's polity score (quantifying a state's democratic values or lack thereof) has vacillated widely, from lows of -88 in 1972 (the first year for which there is data) to positive territory throughout the relatively stable 1990s, to low negatives during the years after the American invasion of the region, to a 7 in 2015.²⁵⁸ The implication is that while Pakistan can now be called a democracy, at least in name, the wide variation of its polity scores over the years makes it typical of the proxies that Washington has traditionally utilized.
- b) Pakistan also meets the typicality criterion of military assistance prompted by an urgent foreign policy concern. Pakistan has been a critical resource as Washington pursues its various interests throughout the second half of the 20th century. Post-9/11, its position as a terrorist safe haven and its connections to militants have been of vital and urgent interest to the US.

²⁵⁸"Polity IV Annual Time-Series, 1800-2015," Center for Systemic Peace, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/p4v2015.xls>

- c) Pakistan is also typical in exhibiting a high level of investment both in government entities and forces (see above) and in paramilitary and militia forces.
- d) The Pakistan population's historic distrust of the United States and of Americans is *typical* of countries hosting proxy relationships. Polls have consistently shown that a majority of Pakistanis distrust the US and view it as an "enemy."²⁵⁹ Public opinion among Pakistanis about the proxy relationship also appears to be poorly informed. In 2012, 23% of those polled said the US provides a lot of financial aid, 22% said it provides a little aid, 10% said hardly any, and 16% believed the US gives Pakistan no aid.²⁶⁰

6) Typology

Pakistan exhibits a similar range of the proxy typologies to those present in Afghanistan. As with Afghanistan, the United States' support for surrogate forces has been more commonly marked by an *offensive* structure and goals than *defensive* ones, given Washington's focus on fighting communism and terrorism. As with Afghanistan, it is possible that, if the regional security situation were to significantly improve over a sustained period of time, Washington's proxies in Pakistan could transform into more passive defensive proxies, playing a more passive supporting role for US interests in the country.

²⁵⁹Russell Heimlich. "Pakistanis See US as an Enemy." Pew Research Center, 12 August 2010.

²⁶⁰Pakistani Public Opinion Ever More Critical of US," Pew Research Center, 27 June 2012.

These relationships are split across state and non-state actors. This chapter explores on both, with a focus on the offensive state proxies, given that US resources have primarily been directed to Pakistan’s government and military. Because of the existence of a stronger sovereign government, warlords and security contractors do not play as great a role as in Afghanistan.

PAKISTAN PROXY TYPOLOGY:

	DEFENSIVE	OFFENSIVE
STATE		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pakistani Intelligence Services - Pakistani military and government
NON-STATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Private security contractors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - US-Backed local warlords in border territories (to lesser extent than Afghanistan)

7) The Evolution of Pakistan as a Proxy Force

a) The Early Years of the Relationship

The United States had been among the first nations in the world to recognize Pakistan upon its partition from India in 1947 – an origin story that has left Pakistan, to this day, with an existential obsession with its larger, more powerful Indian neighbours. Through many of the country’s clashes with India in the ensuing decades, the United States maintained close bonds with the Pakistanis – never more so than during the Cold War, when India’s friendship with the Soviet Union made America and Pakistan natural allies. In 1971, India backed an uprising of ethnic Bengalis in East Pakistan that resulted in a stinging loss of the territory for Pakistan and the creation of the new nation-state of Bangladesh. As the conflict played out, President Nixon issued a tacit threat to India, deploying a nuclear aircraft carrier, the USS. Enterprise, into the Bay of Bengal. ²⁶¹ In an often-overlooked revelation of the tapes Nixon made of his conversations in the White House, he commented that what “the Indians...need, what they really need,” as they grappled with a refugee crisis from the conflict with Pakistan, “is...a mass famine.” Henry Kissinger cheerfully agreed: “They’re such bastards.” Pakistan, on the other hand, was becoming a useful bulwark against the Soviets and a regional powerbroker the United States could use to its advantage. Pakistan’s military leader, Yahya Khan, was even the main intermediary in Nixon’s push for rapprochement with Beijing, personally passing on messages on Nixon’s behalf to the Chinese.

From the beginning, American support for Pakistan was fraught with compromise. The same month that Nixon finally received his Pakistani-brokered invitation to Beijing, one of the most famous moments of dissent in diplomatic history provided an inconvenient reminder of the costs of the friendship. The Bangladesh liberation war had reached fever pitch after allegations

²⁶¹Pankaj Mishra, “Unholy Alliances.” *The New Yorker*, [2013],
<<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/09/23/unholy-alliances-3>.>

of mass killings of Bengalis by Pakistani forces – three million by Bangladesh’s estimate, just tens of thousands by Pakistan’s. Some called it genocide.²⁶² Archer Blood, the last American Consul General to Dhaka, East Pakistan before independence, wrote a searing cable on American indifference to the atrocities. It was signed by 20 members of the Diplomatic staff and sent through the “Dissent Channel,” a secure line of communication directly to the Secretary of State’s policy planning staff, created to allow diplomats to express fundamental disagreement outside the chain of command. The same channel would be used, decades later, by diplomats concerned about a new Trump administration’s impact on their work.²⁶³ In what came to be known as the “Blood Telegram,” Archer Blood wrote that “our government has failed to denounce the suppression of democracy. Our government has failed to denounce atrocities. Our government has failed to take forceful measures to protect its citizens while at the same time bending over backwards to placate the West Pak[istan] dominated government and to lessen any deservedly negative international public relations impact against them.” Nixon and Kissinger recalled Blood from Dhaka and chained him to a desk in the human resources department. His career never recovered, and he never became an Ambassador.²⁶⁴

The challenges piled on during the Carter administration. A few years earlier, India had tested its first nuclear bomb, code named “Smiling Buddha.” By the late 1970s, the United States learned that Pakistan was aggressively pursuing its own nuclear program. Repeated American entreaties to the Pakistanis to stop the program flatly failed. And the human rights conscious Carter administration quickly became a scold on other matters. The military dictator of Pakistan,

²⁶²United States Embassy Dacca. “Selective Genocide.” Department of State telegram, 25 March 1971, rpt. in <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB1.pdf>.

²⁶³ Krishnadev Calamur, “We Are Better Than This Ban’: Dissent Over Trump’s Immigration Order.” *The Atlantic*, [2017] <<https://www.theatlantic.com/news/archive/2017/01/state-department-immigration-memo/515034/>>

²⁶⁴Ellen Barry, “To US in ‘70s, a Dissenting Diplomat. To Bangladesh, ‘a True Friend.’” *The New York Times*, (2016), <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/28/world/asia/bangladesh-archer-blood-cable.html?_r=0>

Zia-ul-Haq, hanged the civilian leader he had forced out of office, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and cancelled further elections. Carter called out Zia and eventually suspended US assistance.

In the 1970s, transformation swept South and Central Asia and the Middle East. When the secular, American-backed shah of Iran fell to an Islamist revolution in 1979, it cemented America's reliance on Pakistan as a military and intelligence partner. The United States had lost important listening stations in Iran used to monitor the Soviets. The CIA approached Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency – the ISI – which agreed to build replacement facilities within their borders.

The call of Islamic revolution sounded across the border from Iran to neighbouring Afghanistan, where a Soviet-backed Marxist regime had seized control a year earlier. Under the guidance of the KGB, the Marxists had instituted secular reforms, including mandatory girls' education. On propaganda posters, women with red babushkas and red lips held open books under Cyrillic screaming: "If you don't read books, you'll forget the letters." For conservative Afghans, it was too much. The Afghan army erupted against the communists. Initially, Russia hesitated as the revolt spread. But in Moscow, diplomacy had been side-lined and the KGB's influence had swelled. KGB chief Yuri Andropov neatly circumvented Soviet diplomats voicing caution. On Christmas Eve, transport planes loaded with Soviet troops landed at Kabul airport.²⁶⁵

The Carter Administration saw the invasion as a chance to embarrass the Soviets. Carter green-lit a covert war orchestrated through the United States' military alliance with Pakistan. "It is essential that Afghanistan's resistance continues," National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote. "This means more money as well as arms shipments to the rebels...to make this possible, we must both reassure Pakistan and encourage it to help the rebels. This will

²⁶⁵ Id at 43.

require a review of our policy toward Pakistan, more guarantees to it, more arms aid, and, alas, a decision that our security policy toward Pakistan cannot be dictated by our non-proliferation policy.”²⁶⁶

Pakistan had not been a paragon of virtue in the late 1970s. The country was aggressively pursuing the atom bomb and had resisted American calls to stand down.²⁶⁷ In the name of war with the Soviets, as was the case in the later war on terror, all those concerns were secondary. It was the beginning of what Pakistani military leaders still recall as a golden era of friendship. Over the course of Reagan’s first term, Congress’s annual approvals to fund the covert war swelled from tens of millions to hundreds of millions a year.²⁶⁸ Zia insisted that the guns purchased with those funds be dispersed entirely on Pakistan’s terms. A Top-Secret Presidential Finding at the outset of the war called for the CIA to defer to Pakistan. One Islamabad station chief remembered his orders this way: “Take care of the Pakistanis, and make them do whatever you need them to do.”²⁶⁹ When Zia visited Reagan, Secretary of State Shultz wrote a memo advising that, “We must remember, without Zia’s support, the Afghan resistance, key to making the Soviets pay a heavy price for their Afghan adventure, is effectively dead.”²⁷⁰ (When I asked Shultz about his advocacy for the mujahedeen, he was unapologetic. “Our relationship with Pakistan was good when I was there. Zia and President Reagan, they had a relationship. The whole idea was helping the mujahedeen, get the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan, and we

²⁶⁶“December 26, 1979: Memo to President Carter Gives Pakistan Green Light to Pursue Nuclear Weapons Program.” History Commons, 2007, www.historycommons.org/timeline.jsp?timeline=aq_khan_nuclear_network_tmln&aq_khan_nuclear_network_tmln_us_intelligence_on_pakistani_nukes=aq_khan_nuclear_network_tmln_soviet_afghan_war_connections.

²⁶⁷“Reflections on Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan,” memorandum for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, December 26, 1979, rpt. by the Cold War International History Project.

²⁶⁸Id, 65.

²⁶⁹Id, 55, 58.

²⁷⁰“Your Meeting with Pakistan President . . .” Memo from Shultz to Reagan, November 29, 1982, and “Visit of Zia-ul-Haq,” from Shultz, also dated November 29, 1982, rpt. in the Cold War International History Project, Wilson Center.

succeeded.”)²⁷¹ And so, as Zia insisted, weapons would be given to Pakistan’s ISI, which would hand-select the Afghan mujahedeen who would receive the spoils. The United States, still stinging from the complexities of managing a proxy war in Vietnam, was happy to leave the details to Pakistan.

Amid the urgency of the battle with the Soviets, the partnership’s less pleasant realities were easy to overlook.²⁷² Pakistani officers sold their CIA-supplied weapons on the black market – once, they even sold them back to the CIA. Pakistan continued to brazenly flaunt its nuclear development. In 1985, the Senate passed the so-called Pressler Amendment, requiring the president to certify, on an annual basis, that Pakistan didn’t possess nukes. The rule was strict: no certification, no assistance. Zia lied to President Reagan and his other American contacts about the Pakistani nuclear program.²⁷³ “There is no question that we had an intelligence basis for not certifying from 1987 on,” said one veteran CIA official, but Reagan continued to certify that Pakistan was nonnuclear anyway.²⁷⁴ Ohio senator John Glenn argued that nuclear proliferation was “a far greater danger to the world than being afraid to cut off the flow of aid to Afghanistan...it’s the short-term versus the long-term.”²⁷⁵ But he was a rare voice of dissent.

The covert war also required that the Americans turn a blind eye to the brutality of the jihad being armed across the border. The Pakistanis passed the American arms to the most ruthless of the Islamist hard-liners: radicals like Abdul Sayyaf and Burhanuddin Rabbani and Jalaluddin Haqqani, all with strong ties to terrorist networks. Another of the ISI’s favoured sons was Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the vicious fundamentalist who struck terror into the hearts of the

²⁷¹ Interview with George P. Shultz (2018)

²⁷²Id 66.

²⁷³Id 64.

²⁷⁴Seymour. Hersch, “On the Nuclear Edge.” *New Yorker*, [1993], <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1993/03/29/on-the-nuclear-edge>.>

²⁷⁵Hedrick Smith, “A Bomb Ticks in Pakistan.” *New York Times Magazine*, [1988] <<http://www.nytimes.com/1988/03/06/magazine/a-bomb-ticks-in-pakistan.html?pagewanted=all>.>

Soviets and reputedly specialized in skinning captured soldiers alive.²⁷⁶

International Islamists were attracted like moths to the fires of extremism stoked by the Pakistanis and Americans. A wealthy Saudi patron named Osama bin Laden moved to Pakistan in the mid-1980s and drew close to some of the ISI's favoured jihadis, including Hekmatyar and Sayyaf.²⁷⁷ He offered cash stipends to fighters from the ISI training camps, and eventually established his own, modelled closely after the ISI's. And it worked.²⁷⁸ Within a few years, the CIA declared the covert war cost-effective.²⁷⁹ The true costs became apparent only later.

The relationship turned after a fateful day in 1988. President Zia flew in his American-made C-130 Hercules to an area near the provincial city of Bahawalpur, where he presided over a demonstration of the American Abrams tank, the latest offering to be purchased with Pakistan's still-ongoing flood of assistance. Then he boarded it again for the commute back to Islamabad. Exactly five minutes after he and his staff took off, the plane plunged into the desert and exploded into a massive fireball. All 30 people aboard died, included Zia.

The incident remains one of the unsolved mysteries of Pakistani history. Although an American ambassador had been killed and the FBI had statutory authority to investigate, Secretary of State George Shultz ordered that FBI investigators stay away. Milt Bearden kept the CIA away. The only Americans allowed on the site, seven Air Force investigators, ruled out mechanical failure in a secret report. The only possibility was sabotage. A canister containing VX nerve gas or a similar agent could have wiped out the plane, perhaps. One long-standing

²⁷⁶Id 379.

²⁷⁷Id 153.

²⁷⁸Luis Martinez, "Afghanistan War: Closed Pakistan Routes Costing US \$100 Million a Month." *ABC News*, (2012), abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/06/afghanistan-war-closed-pakistan-routes-costing-u-s-100-million-a-month.

²⁷⁹Id 68.

conspiracy theory holds that nerve gas was secreted in a mango crate loaded onboard before take-off.

For Pakistan, the crash deepened mistrust of the Americans. General Beg, who quickly seized power afterwards, was as committed as Zia to Pakistan's nuclear development and support for terrorist proxies – but less friendly to the United States.

The same year as Zia's death, 1988, the Soviets began pulling out of Afghanistan. The CIA station in Islamabad's cable reporting the withdrawal read, simply, "we won."²⁸⁰ It was, in fact, the beginning of the end. The lack of broader strategic dialogue between the United States and Pakistan hit hard and fast once the Red Menace subsided. Pakistan, surprising no one, continued what it had done throughout the war: aggressive nuclear development, and aggressive support for Islamist hard-liners in Afghanistan to provide strategic depth. During the war, these predilections had been easy to ignore – or, in the case of the rise of jihad, a point of convenience. Afterwards, they increasingly made the Pakistanis pariahs.

b) The Alliance Cracks Under Bhutto

Four months later, Benazir Bhutto, then Pakistan's new prime minister, made her first official trip to the United States. The cracks in the relationship were already beginning to show. Bhutto, the daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the prime minister over whose hanging Zia had presided, had returned to Pakistan after years of exile. Harvard-educated and just 35 years old, she cut a progressive and Western-friendly profile. During her first visit to the United States as Prime Minister, she stood in front of the American flag at a joint session of Congress and quoted

²⁸⁰ Id 110.

Lincoln, Madison, and Kennedy. “Speaking for Pakistan, I can declare that we do not possess, nor do we intend to make, a nuclear device,” she said emphatically.²⁸¹

But days beforehand, Bhutto had sat at Blair House, kitty-corner from the White House, and received an alarming briefing from CIA director William H. Webster. According to one person who was present that day, Webster walked in with a soccer ball converted into a mock-up of the kind of nuclear prototype he now knew Pakistan possessed.²⁸² Webster told her that if the process continued, there was no way President Bush could certify that Pakistan was non-nuclear later that year. Bhutto asked what she had to do to prevent that. Webster gave her an extremely specific answer. To make a nuclear weapon, Pakistan’s enriched-uranium hexafluoride gas (UF₆) would have to be converted into solid pellets, then machined into perfect spheres known as “pits” – the cores of atom bombs. Pakistan, Webster told Bhutto, must not metalize its gaseous uranium. Bhutto’s aides to this day defend her remarks to Congress that June under the tortured rationale that she, personally, never intended to metalize the gas. “I know this sounds semantic, but that was our rationale,” the person who was there told me.

Before the end of the month, the CIA passed word to two of Bhutto’s closest American associates: the diplomat Peter Galbraith and Mark Siegel, Bhutto’s long-time spokesperson and her party’s lobbyist in Washington for three governments, who had helped write the speech to Congress. The message: the jig was up. The CIA had irrefutable evidence that Pakistan had machined its uranium into several cores – two in May, and five more by the end of July. The program was ramping up fast.²⁸³ The cores were being stored near the other atom bomb

²⁸¹ Mark Fineman, “She Hails US Support for Pakistani Democracy: Bhutto Wins Ovation in Congress.” *Los Angeles Times*, (8 June 1989), <http://articles.latimes.com/1989-06-08/news/mn-1927_1_bhutto-pakistani-democracy-pro-democracy>

²⁸² Interview with Anonymous American lobbyist for Pakistan (2017)

²⁸³ Robert Windrem, “Pakistan’s Nuclear History Worries Insiders.” NBC News, 6 November 2007, www.nbcnews.com/id/21660667/ns/nbc_nightly_news_with_brian_williams/t/pakistans-nuclear-history-worries-insiders/#.WPj5OfnyuUl.

components, allowing a complete weapon to be assembled in just three hours. Bhutto pressed for answers from Pakistan's military, and was deposed a month later.

In 1990, just a year after the Soviets' departure from Afghanistan, George H. W. Bush became the first president to decline to certify that Pakistan remained nonnuclear. Under the terms of the Pressler Amendment, most economic and military assistance was suspended, and a number of F-16 fighter jets ordered and paid for by Pakistan, on the assurance of those future subsidies, were left to collect dust in Arizona for years.²⁸⁴ To this day, the F-16s are a point of totemic obsession for every Pakistani military man I've met. They symbolize a betrayal America quickly forgot and Pakistan never did.

Pakistan's support for militant Islam also drove a wedge into the relationship. The fall of the Soviet-backed regime in Afghanistan left a power vacuum and, quickly thereafter, a chaotic civil war between the jihadi factions. The mujahedeen leaders, only ever loosely united against the Soviets, went to war for Kabul, drenching the Afghan capital in blood. Ten thousand civilians were killed in 1993 alone. Pakistan had attempted to install Hekmatyar, their favoured extremist. But after he lost the struggle for Kabul, they turned to a different solution: a conservative movement against the warlords that began taking hold over the course of 1994.²⁸⁵ They called themselves "students of Islam," otherwise known as the Taliban.

Seeing a new avenue for that ever-elusive "strategic depth" against India, the ISI supported the Taliban with munitions, food, and fuel. The growing bond put Islamabad at direct odds with Washington. Stories of the Taliban's hard-line social policies and brutal repression of women began to reach the Western world. So did the threat of the Islamist terrorists the Taliban

²⁸⁴ "US Legislation on Pakistan (1990–2004)." PBS, 3 October 2006, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/taliban/pakistan/uspolicychart.html>.

²⁸⁵ Peter Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers*. New York: Public Affairs, 2001, pp. 405–408. Kindle.

harboured.

When the military relationship came screeching to a halt, there was little by way of meaningful diplomatic context to soften the blow. Even Milt Bearden, architect of mujahideen chaos, lamented the lack of dialogue: “The relationship was always shallow,” he remembers. “When the Soviets marched out of Afghanistan in February 1989, within the next year we had sanctioned them and cut off military contacts.” It set the tenor for the relationship in the following decade, with Pakistan in the role of jilted lover. “They love to love us,” reflected Bearden, “but they really deeply believe that every time the chips are down, we screw ‘em.”²⁸⁶

On December 27, 2007, as shadows lengthened in the late afternoon, Bhutto left Liaquat National Park in Rawalpindi, less than two miles from the headquarters of the Pakistan Army, after a stump speech calling for democracy. Supporters swarmed her white Toyota Land Cruiser.²⁸⁷ Bhutto, wearing her trademark white headscarf and a purple *kameez* over simple white cotton pants and black flats, climbed onto the backseat and poked her head out of the sunroof and waved, like Eva Peron on the balcony. Gunfire cracked through the air, followed by a deafening explosion as a suicide bomber detonated his payload. A Getty photographer, John Moore, activated his camera’s high-speed motor drive, capturing the unfolding chaos in out-of-focus real time: the orange fireball ripping through the crowd; frightened faces, surging through sparks and smoke; survivors staggering among bloody bodies.²⁸⁸

Bhutto’s political will passed leadership of the party to her widower, Asif Ali “Mr. Ten Percent” Zardari of the long-standing corruption allegations. Her grieving supporters swept him

²⁸⁶ Interview with Milton Bearden (2016)

²⁸⁷ James Farwell, *The Pakistan Cauldron: Conspiracy, Assassination & Instability*. (Potomac Books, 2011)

²⁸⁸ Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The US and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*. (Penguin, 2009) ; Nicholas Schmidle, *To Live or to Perish Forever: Two Tumultuous Years in Pakistan*. (St. Martin’s Griffin, 2010); and Isobel Coleman, *Paradise Beneath Her Feet: How Women Are Transforming the Middle East*. (Random House 2013)

into the presidency.

c) **Post-9/11: New Needs and New Partners**

Nowhere did America's military and intelligence relationships eclipse civilian dialogue more completely than in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Before the 9/11 attacks, the CIA had already collaborated with Pakistani intelligence on US strikes targeting bin Laden (one in 1998 came close, but the intelligence was never firm enough or delivered far enough in advance).²⁸⁹

Pakistani commandos were lined up for a capture attempt in 1999, but the plan was short-circuited by Musharraf's coup. The United States relied on Pakistan for information, access, and as its sole interlocutor with Pashtuns in Afghanistan's South, who were essential for any ground-level tracking of bin Laden.

And so it was little surprise that after 9/11, the United States had avoided broader regional talks, instead taking a narrow, tactical approach, executed entirely through Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies. As 19 terrorists plunged hijacked planes into New York and Washington, DC, General Mehmood Ahmad, the director-general of Pakistan's shadowy intelligence services, was on Capitol Hill. He was meeting with Porter Goss, then the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee. General Mehmood was struggling to convince legislators that Pakistan was doing everything possible to pressure the Taliban to surrender bin Laden. It was a difficult case to make: the ISI had spent the years leading up to 9/11 pumping money, arms, and advisers into Afghanistan to prop up the Taliban and vanquish its enemies – chief

²⁸⁹ Bob Woodward and Thomas Ricks, "CIA Trained Pakistanis to Nab Terrorist But Military Coup Put an End to 1999 Plot." *Washington Post*, (18 November 2001), <www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/11/18/AR2007111800629.html>

among them the group of warlords known as the Northern Alliance, which received support from India and therefore represented a dire threat in Pakistan's view. Whatever pressure they were bringing to bear in their requests for bin Laden, it didn't extend to threatening to withdraw their sponsorship.

Mehmood was interrupted when one of his associates ran into the room to announce what he'd just seen on the television outside: the second plane slicing into the Twin Towers. A congressional aide rushed in at the same time, warning that another plane was headed their way. The Pakistanis, tailed by a CIA escort, were evacuated to the embassy and the stakes of the relationship changed in the blink of an eye. In the years following Zia-ul-Haq's execution of Benazir Bhutto's father, the United States' patience for Pakistan's undemocratic practices and brazen support for terrorist groups had worn thin. Then the invasion of the Soviets had made Pakistan an indispensable interlocutor, muting American complaints in the process. History was repeating itself.

The next day, President Bush laid out the stark new world view of the Global War on Terrorism: "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." The Pakistanis were, of course, both. Nevertheless, by the morning of September 12, deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage was meeting with Mehmood attempting to lock down Pakistan's support in the impending retaliation in Afghanistan.²⁹⁰ The day after that, Armitage handed Mehmood a list of specific demands: including robust military and intelligence cooperation and, most controversially, ending all logistical support for the Taliban (initially, this extended to cutting diplomatic ties, but Mehmood was able to persuade CIA director George Tenet to soften the requirements, ostensibly to allow Pakistan to lobby the Taliban to turn over bin Laden).

²⁹⁰ Ahmed Rashid, (n 284), pp. 25-30.

Mehmood pledged his complete support for the American agenda, as did Musharraf when Colin Powell called him shortly thereafter. Powell later told a room of students at Georgetown: “I called President Musharraf after we suggested it was time to make a strategic decision to move away from [support for the Taliban]. And he reversed the direction in which Pakistan was moving.”²⁹¹ In return, Musharraf asked the United States for economic assistance, and a complete removal of the sanctions that had accumulated over the Pakistan’s nuclear program and Musharraf’s coup. Bush killed the sanctions almost instantly. Just like that, Pakistan went from foe to friend once again.

If Colin Powell ever believed that Musharraf had reversed course, it was a singular act of wishful thinking. In fact, as the United States’ requests for cooperation rolled in, Musharraf assembled his war room – stacked with powerful generals notorious for championing the Taliban and other Islamist militant groups to oppose India – and held marathon crisis meetings, one of them seven hours long. The decision taken, according to one participant, was: “we would unequivocally accept all US demands, but then later we would express our private reservations to the US and we would not necessarily agree with all the details.”²⁹² Nor, it turned out, would they necessarily implement them.

The irony was that the other half of the United States’ response across the treacherous mountains on Pakistan’s borders involved arming Pakistan’s enemies, the coalition of anti-Taliban warlords and commanders who comprised the Northern Alliance. Supplying those commanders, backing them with airstrikes, and assigning small units of Special Forces and CIA personnel to shadow them was, in immediate, tactical terms, a success. The warlords and

²⁹¹ Ali Iftikar, “Powell Defends US support to Pakistan.” *The Nation*, [2004] ref. in Ahmed. *Descent into Chaos: The US and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*. (Penguin, 2009).

²⁹² Id 28.

commanders routed the Taliban from its power centres. But the policy, spun virtually whole cloth out of the CIA with only the Pentagon as a counterbalance, was all tactics with comparatively little long-term strategy. The consequences of backing two opposing factions – the Northern Alliance and the Pakistanis seeking to undermine them and support the Taliban – reared their head almost immediately. As fighters surrendered at Kunduz, one of the major Taliban strongholds toppled by Northern Alliance fighters working with the Americans, Musharraf made a frantic call to President Bush and asked for a favour: a break in the bombing, and permission to land in Kunduz and airlift out Pakistanis.²⁹³

Over the course of several days, a series of flights collected men from Kunduz and ferried them into Pakistan, where they promptly disappeared. The operation was kept strictly secret, with American officials even directly lying about the airlift as reports began to emerge in the *New York Times* and other outlets. “The runway [in Kunduz] is not usable, I mean there are segments of it that are unusable,” Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Richard Myers said. “Neither Pakistan nor any other country flew planes into Afghanistan to evacuate anybody,” then–secretary of defence Donald Rumsfeld insisted.²⁹⁴

But it happened, and by all accounts with virtually no oversight from the Americans. “Everyone brought their friends with them,” one American official told Seymour Hersh when he covered the airlift in the *New Yorker*, describing a chaotic atmosphere as the Pakistanis crammed combatants onto flights. Hersh couldn’t pin down the exact number of Pakistanis and Arabs airlifted out, but noted that more than 3,000 combatants were unaccounted for after Kunduz fell.

²⁹³ Dexter Filkins and Carlotta Gall, “Pakistanis Again Said to Evacuate Allies of Taliban.” *The New York Times*, (2001), and Seymour Hersh, “The Getaway.” *New Yorker*, [2002], <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/01/28/the-getaway-2>>

²⁹⁴ Masood Haider, “No Pakistani Jets Flew into Afghanistan Says US” *Dawn*, 2 December 2001 and Rashid, Ahmed. *Descent into Chaos: The US and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*. London: Penguin, 2009, p. 91. Kindle.

One American Special Forces officer on the ground with the Northern Alliance throughout the siege told me the number was higher than Hersh had allowed for and included ISI officers, Taliban, and al Qaeda fighters. He also remembered Pakistani Special Services Group officers, whom he said actively fought the Americans and the Northern Alliance, in some cases mere hours before they were lifted into the night sky with American permission. He and other officers on the ground, and eventually the press, dubbed the incident “the airlift of evil.” By most estimates, the number of al Qaeda loyalists who escaped during the airlift dwarfed even the many who escaped later in the failed campaign to kill or capture bin Laden in the caves of the Tora Bora a month later. A CIA agent who worked with the Northern Alliance at the time told me flatly of the incident: “it was a mistake.”²⁹⁵

The escape of so many enemies required multiple layers of American leadership to look the other way. The CIA could have insisted on monitoring who was being taken out of Kunduz, or who got off in Pakistan. But both the White House and the intelligence community had already decided to give Pakistan an almost endless leash. On the military side, General Tommy Franks, who was commanding Operation Enduring Freedom, could have scrambled more troops to Kunduz. But the military had already decided, here and later in Tora Bora, to limit itself to an extremely small footprint – in the neighbourhood of 1,000 Americans – and to rely completely on the Northern Alliance commanders.²⁹⁶ It was a collision of proxy relationships gone wrong. By the end of 2001, many of the terrorists the United States had set out to pulverize had instead simply resettled into Pakistan, later strengthening an insurgency that would take the lives of thousands of American service members.

²⁹⁵ Interview with anonymous CIA source, (19 July 2016)

²⁹⁶ Ahmed. Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*. (Penguin 2009) pp. 91.

The leaders that escaped those early operations set up shop in Pakistan, where open, organized terrorist structures flourished in two safe havens. In Quetta, Mullah Omar built a new Taliban council or *shura*, and appointed commanders to lead a formal insurgency in each of Afghanistan's southern provinces. In the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies (FATA) in Northwest Pakistan, operations led by the Jalaluddin Haqqani (no relation to Husain, the ambassador) and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar – both former operatives used by the ISI and CIA against the Soviets – ran their own Taliban-allied movements. These operations were supported by local provincial governments, and by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, which sent funds and foreign fighters to join the cause. Pakistan's intelligence and military allowed the extremists to function openly, sometimes while brazenly lying to the Americans and denying anything was amiss.²⁹⁷ In part, the Pakistanis deliberately aimed to support the Taliban against a potentially India-friendly Northern Alliance regime in Afghanistan. But they also often told the Americans they lacked the capacity to deal with the problem. There was some truth to this, though mismanagement and deliberate half-measures made things worse. After years of inaction, Pakistan did send a small number of poorly equipped Frontier Corps paramilitary fighters to confront militant groups. The government forces quickly lost and signed a peace deal with the militants, ceding territory in exchange for a ceasefire, which the militants quickly breached. That cycle repeated itself several times, always ending in favour of the militants. Throughout, the ISI also continued to directly fund and arm the Taliban inside Afghanistan. They were further emboldened as America's shift away from Afghanistan and toward Iraq became apparent. If this was to be a rerun of the abrupt American withdrawal after the Soviet War, Pakistan needed a hedge against India all the more urgently. It created one of the great ironies of the war on terror:

²⁹⁷ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*. Second Edition, (Yale University Press, 2010) pp. 238.

as the United States drew closer to Pakistan to fight the Taliban it was, in effect, also ensuring the survival of the Taliban.

But for years, the Bush administration publicly denied that Pakistan was playing a double game. In January 2009, CIA director Michael Hayden even told the *Washington Post* that the United States has “not had a better partner in the war on terrorism than the Pakistanis.”²⁹⁸ Years later, I asked Hayden about the characterization. “I’ve always been quick to add that that was when we were going after terrorists who they thought were dangerous to them.” He meant the Pakistani Taliban, which, increasingly, came to threaten Pakistan’s cities. The chaos in the tribal regions, and in Afghanistan, was another matter. “We could not get the Pakistanis to move into the tribal region,” he went on. “We knew full well also that Pakistan was never going to give up its relationship with who we would inarguably call terrorist groups – whether you’re talking about the Taliban or Haqqanis, or indirectly, al Qaeda – because they viewed them to be necessary strategic tools in the competition with the Indians.”

There was, Hayden pointed out, successful cooperation with the ISI’s counterterrorism division in planning and executing drone strikes to take out specific al Qaeda leaders. But the Americans were aware that the ISI was a many-headed beast, and that not all divisions were as friendly. “We pretty much talked to ISI CT, who were pretty good partners. Knowing full well there were other divisions within ISI whose sole purpose in life was to actually sustain groups who we would identify as terrorist groups. So you had this constant tension...so, if I said that about the Pakistanis, it was to balance that which then followed. Which was, this is the ally from

²⁹⁸ Joby Warrick, “CIA Places Blame for Bhutto Assassination.” *Washington Post*, (17 January 2008), www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/17/AR2008011703252.html and author interview with General Michael Hayden, 2017.

hell because, actually, they have made a deal with the devil.”²⁹⁹

When ISI director Ahmed Shuja Pasha was named one of *Time*'s 100 most influential people in 2011, the outlet asked Hayden to write the blurb. “The best word I could come up with,” Hayden told me, “was *duplicitous*.” (The final draft did not, in fact, use the word, though it did obliquely reference Pakistan’s split allegiances.)³⁰⁰

d) The Double Game Worsens

In November 2008, shortly after Pasha took control of the ISI, a series of coordinated bombings and shootings devastated Mumbai, India, killing 164 people, including six Americans, and wounding hundreds more. It was the classic illustration of Pakistan’s double-dealing. The attack was executed by Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), a group based out of Pakistan and heavily sponsored by the ISI as a proxy against India and in Afghanistan. Some accounts from militants even suggest Pakistani military officers are directly involved in training exercises at LeT camps. Audio of the terrorists’ radio communications revealed the operation was coordinated, to the last, minute detail, by handlers in Pakistan who appeared to have special forces training. Pakistani authorities held a prominent organizer of the attack in what the media described as “luxurious” accommodations during a brief imprisonment, then released him on bail, infuriating the Indians.

³⁰¹ Hayden said that Pasha lied to him about the attacks.

According to one Pakistani official, Pasha finally conceded that some “retired Pakistani

²⁹⁹ Interview with General Michael Hayden, interview with author, in person at his offices in Washington, DC, (17 May, 2017.)

³⁰⁰ Hayden, Michael. “Ahmed Shuja Pasha.” *Time*, [2011], <content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2066367_2066369_2066316,00.html.>

³⁰¹ “Bailed Mumbai Suspect Lakhvi's Luxury Jail Time.” *BBC*, (10 April 2015), < www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-31606798.>

army officers” may have been involved, and that the attack may have “had ISI links,” but he denied that it was an official intelligence operation.³⁰² General Pasha, like General Hayden, is a tiny man with a storied military history and a surplus of charm. He is, it turns out, extremely responsive via text. His own are a sometimes-alarming collision of courtly politeness and excitable punctuation. Over the course of four paragraphs, he declined to directly address Hayden’s misgivings. “I have a fair idea of what most of my erstwhile colleagues, whom I hold in high esteem without exception, are likely to say about the historic events that we faced together,” he told me. “I also know that my story will be quite different. Whatever the case may be, what good will it do to Pakistan, at this stage???” To this he added, suggestively: “I cannot tell half-truth and I do not think I should tell the whole truth!”³⁰³

This, it would seem, was also sometimes his approach to conversations with American officials. Hayden said he tried to get tough, with both Pasha and his predecessors, on numerous occasions. CIA analysts would help him construct calls with the ISI prodding Pakistan on areas of inaction. But, he conceded, direct discussions of Pakistan’s support for groups like the Haqqani network and LeT were rare. The one occasion he could recall attempting to directly broach the issue was late in the Bush administration, with President Musharraf. “He kind of fobbed it off on retired ISI officers,” said Hayden. “You know, the ones who supported the ‘mooj’ during the Soviet War.” America had helped create Pakistan’s state sponsorship of militant Islam before, and now it couldn’t put the genie back in the bottle. Or at least, it wasn’t willing to. “Look, I mean, the director of the CIA is not going to cause the government of Pakistan to change course based upon a conversation he has in either Washington or Islamabad.

³⁰² Husain Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions: Pakistan, the United States, and an Epic History of Misunderstanding*. (Public Affairs, 2013) pp. 331.

³⁰³ “Email from Gen. Pasha to Ronan Farrow.” 22 September 2016.

That requires a whole government effort of long-term...and really powerful sanctions that I saw no evidence that we were prepared to make.”³⁰⁴

What he was describing was the urgent need for more transparent political representations, from both sides, that would never arrive. Hussain Haqqani, who had become ambassador a few months before Mumbai, witnessed the belated attempts at tough talk, from Hayden and others. (“Believe everything he says,” Hayden told me with a laugh. “He would come visit us at the agency routinely. Eyes wide open. He knew what was going on.”) In one meeting shortly after the attack, former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice finally levelled with Major General Mahmud Durrani, who had just left his post as ambassador to the US to become Pakistan’s national security advisor. She met with a similar historical rejoinder. Rice was quiet but curt, Haqqani recalled, “like a school-teacher,” as she explained that the United States had overwhelming evidence Pakistan was providing material support to LeT and had the power to shut down their operations. Durrani snapped back that the ISI was only training LeT “just as we were all involved together in dealing with Afghanistan during the 1980s.”³⁰⁵

Haqqani was just a few months into his new post, and his loyalties were being tested once again, as they had been under previous Pakistani regimes. He said that Pasha ordered him to tell the Americans that “nobody in Pakistan had any knowledge” of the attack, that the perpetrators weren’t Pakistani, and they would be subjected to a full and fair trial. “I said, but you know, that’s an outright lie...the reason why America and Pakistan have this huge trust deficit is because we tell them bold-faced lies. Diplomacy is never 100 percent truth, but it’s never 100 percent lies either. I wanted it to be...truth *well told*.” The attempts at tough talk had been too little, too late to break through Pakistan’s culture of denial. As Haqqani saw it, “there was clearly

³⁰⁴ Interview with General Michael Hayden, in person at his offices in Washington, DC, (17 May 2017)

³⁰⁵ Haqqani, (n 302) p 20.

no intention to act against LeT.”³⁰⁶ And just as tolerance for Pakistan’s extremist habit in the 1980s had been hard to take back during the Bush administration, the years of soft-peddling under Bush would soon prove hard to unwind during the Obama administration.

The result of Pakistan’s double-dealing, and the United States’ relative tolerance of it, was a slide into violent turmoil on the Afghan side of the border, with the Taliban steadily resurging over the course of the Bush administration. American and NATO operations offered periodic pushback, but the supply of fighters was always replenished from the safe havens in Pakistan. Starting in 2003 and mounting during the summers of 2004 through 2008, the insurgents staged devastating attacks on US and NATO forces.³⁰⁷ These were often planned from across the border in Pakistan, and militants often escaped back into the Pakistani safe havens. The Pakistani military even provided cover for some of those escapes from across the border, firing on American and Afghan soldiers from the Pakistani side. The Taliban’s gains allowed them to brazenly establish a parallel government in the country’s south and then east, complete with governors and judges. For some civilians – caught in the crossfire and desperately in need of rule of law and basic services – the signs of infrastructure made a potent case for Taliban loyalty. By the beginning of the Obama administration, America was losing.³⁰⁸ In 2003, the Taliban controlled 30 of Afghanistan’s 365 districts. Between 2008 and 2009, Taliban attacks soared. New records were set for American casualties – 44 US troops killed in July 2009, overtaken by 47 the following month (and both later overtaken when 66 were killed in August 2011, when Taliban fighters shot down a Chinook chopper full of Americans).

³⁰⁶ Interview with Husain Haqqani, (Hudson Institute Office, Washington, DC, 6 January 2017)

³⁰⁷ Rashid, (n 297), p. 227.

³⁰⁸ Id and “Deadliest Month Yet for US in Afghanistan.” *CBS News*, (2011), < www.cbsnews.com/news/deadliest-month-yet-for-us-in-afghanistan.>

In the latter years of the Bush administration, the terrorist safe havens began to backfire even within Pakistan. In 2007, hard-liners took hold of a mosque in Islamabad in a standoff that ultimately left 100 people dead. And in areas of rural Pakistan, including the Swat valley, the Pakistani Taliban began killing government officials more brazenly. The Pakistani military finally acquiesced to years of American pressure and began more concerted attempts at military intervention in 2007 and 2008. The militants had grown too organized and numerous, and the army was badly beaten several times. And these interventions were highly selective, still fastidiously avoiding the safe havens in Quetta and FATA. But it dangled the promise of Pakistan behaving like a more cooperative counterterrorism partner – a *fata morgana* the next administration would chase for years.

Accepting Pakistan's double game supposedly safeguarded tactical cooperation, but even at a tactical level, the relationship could be fraught – sometimes for both sides. One Pakistani army commander, who spoke on condition of anonymity as he now serves in a more prominent position in the military, told me that joint operations were rife with deadly miscommunication. He'd lived through one such operation when he was an infantry commander during the initial series of failed counterterrorism efforts in Swat valley in early 2009. It was still winter, and the air in the mountainous valley was freezing. He was leading his unit of 35 men through the difficult terrain, pursuing a "very important" terrorist target chosen by the Americans. (How important, he never learned. "When you're operating in the field, commanding a unit, you do not have the ability to figure out if it is a high-value target," he told me bluntly. "You're just concerned about taking him out before he takes me out.") Overhead, he could see the American drones, shadowing them. "Very few people know that we had a US technical team with us, that would have a certain control of Predator drones, flying overhead – of course, with the consent of

Pakistan.”³⁰⁹

The American technical team was in Swat, at a secure site some distance away from combat operations, monitoring through the drones. The Americans’ presence was a matter of strict secrecy. All face-to-face communication was handled through Pakistani military intelligence. Even the men in the commander’s own unit weren’t informed of the specifics. But the commander had an open line of radio communication with the American officers and was told Predator strikes could be called in as a force multiplier.

According to the commander, on the first night of the operation, the unit closed in on their target, only to watch him escape into what he described as a “hostile zone” they had been ordered against entering. He radioed the coordinates to the Americans. The drones had been in close proximity for hours. But no strike came.³¹⁰

The following night, another unit, operating about 35 miles away, had a similar encounter with a target, and called in a strike. This time, it came – targeting not the terrorists they were pursuing, but the Pakistani unit itself. “Our own soldiers,” he told me, planting a fist on the table in front of him, “We lost 31 of our men. And it was attributed to operator error. Having done that, we never called for a drone strike ever again.” They told the American technical team they wouldn’t cooperate with them; less than two weeks later, the Americans left. No Americans involved in drone strikes at the time could confirm the specific operation he referred to, though they did acknowledge that incidents of collateral damage to Pakistani forces had happened. The story echoes a sentiment that comes up often in conversations with the Pakistani military brass. The Americans were “purely focused on what they wanted to do,” the former infantry

³⁰⁹ Interview with Pakistani General, (Pakistani embassy in Washington, DC, 6 January 2017)

³¹⁰*Id.*

commander told me. “There was an absence of sincerity,” he said, born of the narrow scope of the relationship and lack of communication. For instance, even as a commander in the field, he found it galling how little the Americans seemed to share about the overarching goals of the operations with which he was involved. “The United States has never shared with us, in formal terms, its end state in Afghanistan,” he grumbled. “If we look at the history of 9/11 onward, it’s always them calling on us to quickly cooperate with the United States. That is the classic example of strategic interaction between the United States and Pakistan. We have been working on the operative issues. We have not been talking about the grand strategic issues that the two nations should be talking to each other.” Another Pakistani military official who was present while we spoke nodded vigorously. “Nobody is asking questions of what makes Pakistan do what it does,” that second official added. “We seldom discuss what *makes* us do what we do, behind closed doors.”³¹¹

One of the greatest challenges of the time was simply talking to the Pakistanis. Years of conversation conducted between intelligence agencies, with blinders on to any broader dialogue, had worked during the war with the Soviets. But during that conflict, the Pakistanis and the Americans had been on the same side. Both needed the invading forces out of the region, each for their own reasons. The relationship was already fraught with deception in other areas, like Pakistan’s nuclear development. But there was at least a strategic alignment. There wasn’t broader dialogue, but there didn’t need to be. In the Global War on Terrorism, the Americans attempted to rebuild the same relationship, but there was an essential difference that was almost impossible to overcome: this time, Pakistan was on the other side. Now we wanted al Qaeda–aligned militants out of the region. But Pakistan had kept right on using them as a proxy force,

³¹¹*Id.*

just like we taught them to do. However often the Pakistanis appeared to accede to American demands for cooperation, they always had goals opposed to those of the United States. If Pakistan was going to reconsider its basic priorities, there needed to be a broader and more honest conversation. To succeed, policymakers would have to answer an existential question: can America turn a transactional proxy relationship into a broader-based alliance?

Coaxing the Pakistanis into broader dialogue would require a show of commitment from the United States in areas other than military assistance. The Obama administration's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, sought funds to that end. In April 2009, he gathered many of the countries on his international engagement list for a donor's conference in Tokyo, where he coaxed them into \$5 billion of pledges to Pakistan. "That is a respectable IPO," he joked. Was it enough, a reporter asked? "Pakistan needs \$50 billion," SRAP Special Envoy Holbrooke said, "not \$5 billion." Back home, he and David Petraeus followed up with a frenzy of lobbying. "Sure, Richard and I worked that very hard on the Hill," Petraeus told me. "I remember the two of us worked that together." Holbrooke worked connections across numerous legislators' offices developed in decades of diplomatic work. In September 2009, the Senate unanimously authorized \$7.5 billion in new assistance to Pakistan over five years. The legislation was named Kerry-Lugar-Berman for its sponsors. The first long-term civilian aid package to Pakistan, it was born of a deliberate effort to roll back the almost exclusively military-to-military nature of the relationship. "That was a grand strategic attempt to address the perception that the US was only engaging with the Pakistani military and didn't care about democracy or the Pakistani people," recalled Alan Kronstadt, the Congressional Research Service's analyst on Pakistan assistance.³¹² But rolling back those perceptions proved more

³¹² Interview with Alan Kronstadt (August 2016).

difficult than any of the Americans had bargained for.

e) **The Proxy Relationship Fails**

In early 2011, a white Honda Civic pulled up to an intersection in Lahore, Pakistan, and stopped at a red light. Known as the Mozang Chungi stop, the intersection marks the start of Ferozpur Road, a trade route that runs all the way to the town of the same name in India, on the banks of the Sutlej River. A short drive away, the arches of Lahore's Walled City reflected the city's history as the seat of power of the Mughal Empire. But the intersection embodied a more modern side of Lahore: crowded urban sprawl, fuelled by a fast-expanding business sector.

Inside the Honda was a thirty-six-year-old American Army Special Forces veteran named Raymond Davis.³¹³ As Davis stopped, a black motorbike carrying two young Pakistani men approached from the opposite direction and swerved in front of the Honda. The rear passenger was carrying a gun. Davis pulled out a 9mm semiautomatic Glock and took aim from his seat behind the wheel. He fired five times, blowing a tightly grouped cluster of holes through the safety. The bullets hit one of the two men, nineteen-year-old street criminal Muhammad Faheem, in the stomach and arms. He hit the ground, dead. The second man, Faizan Haider, ran. He made it about 30 feet before Davis got out of the car and shot him several times in the back, killing him, too. Davis used a radio in the car to call for help, then took several pictures of the bodies with his cell phone. "He was very peaceful and confident," one onlooker said. "I was wondering how he could be like that after killing two people."³¹⁴

³¹³ Tara McKelvey, "The CIA's Last-Minute Osama bin Laden Drama." *Daily Beast*, (2011), <www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/05/10/raymond-davis-the-cias-last-minute-osama-bin-laden-drama.html>

³¹⁴ Declan Walsh, "A C.I.A. Spy, a Hail of Bullets, Three Killed, and a US-Pakistan Diplomatic Row." *Guardian*, (Manchester), 20 February 2011), <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/20/cia-agent-lahore-civilian->

Minutes later, a Toyota Land Cruiser barrelled down the crowded street in the wrong direction, scattering pedestrians, and killing Ibad ur Rehman.³¹⁵ By the time the Land Cruiser reached the intersection, Davis was gone. The American driver waved a rifle at onlookers, ordering them to get out of the way, and made his way back to the US consulate, evading police. Davis, it turned out, had fled, making it about two miles before police stopped him.

The debris left behind in the wake of the Toyota Land Cruiser – ammunition, knives and gloves, a blindfold – suggested something devious. As did Davis’s phone, which was full of surreptitiously taken photos of Pakistani military sites. Raymond Davis was, very clearly, a spy – more specifically, it came to pass, a CIA contractor. The realization dawned on the Pakistani public almost as quickly as it did on the ISI. From virtually the moment Davis was spirited away from the crowded intersection to Kot Lakhpat jail, the nation was engulfed in outrage, from street protests to searing, around-the-clock media coverage.

Two weeks later, President Obama described Davis as “our diplomat” and called for his release under the “very simple principle” laid out in the Vienna Convention – “if our diplomats are in another country, then they are not subject to that country’s local prosecution.”³¹⁶ Privately, Leon Panetta delivered a similar message to Pasha and the ISI. When Pasha asked point-blank if Davis was a CIA agent, Panetta said: “No, he’s not one of ours.”³¹⁷ Panetta didn’t comment on the specifics of that conversation, but said that, in general, “My view was we’ve got to do

[deaths](#)> and Mark Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife: The CIA, a Secret Army, and a War at the Ends of the Earth*. (Penguin, 2014), p. 2.

³¹⁵ Rana Yasif, “Raymond Davis Case: The Forgotten Victim.” *Express Tribune*, 18 March 2011, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/134313/the-forgotten-victim>.

³¹⁶ Jake Tapper and Lee Ferran, “President Barack Obama: Pakistan Should Honor Immunity for ‘Our Diplomat.’ ” *ABC News*, 15 February 2011, abcnews.go.com/Blotter/raymond-davis-case-president-barack-obama-urges-pakistan/story?id=12922282.

³¹⁷ Mark Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife: The CIA, a Secret Army, and a War at the Ends of the Earth*. New York: Penguin, 2014, p. 264.

everything possible to protect our people and that means if we have to play both sides of the streets with these guys in order to make sure that in the end we are protecting our people, that's what we're going to do.”³¹⁸ If the Pakistanis were going to lie to him, he, apparently, wasn't above doing so back.

The CIA would pay \$2.3 million to the families of those killed in the Davis incident. Two senior Pakistani intelligence officers told me that there was another assurance made by the Americans; one that was never made public. The United States would severely curtail the CIA's activities in Pakistan, for good. Whether it was part of a deal or a natural consequence of the strain the incident had put on the relationship, the agency quietly began pulling dozens of its undercover operatives out of Pakistan.³¹⁹

In the months that followed, the dominoes kept crashing down hard and fast. Just after 11:00 p.m. one night in early May, two Black Hawk helicopters, outfitted with brand new stealth technology to avoid radar detection, took off from Jalalabad in Eastern Afghanistan. Two larger Chinooks followed in case the Black Hawks' mission went awry. Collectively, the aircraft contained 79 American commandos. From their count, a team of Navy SEALs descended on the Pakistani town of Abbottabad, used C4 charges to blow through the gates of a high-walled residential compound, and shot Osama bin Laden in the head and chest. The Americans spirited away the body, and a backup sample of bone marrow, into the night. A single Black Hawk that had crashed during their initial descent was destroyed to keep its technology from the Pakistanis, leaving behind a smouldering helicopter tail and a lot of questions.³²⁰

³¹⁸ Interview with Leon Panetta, (6 May 2016)

³¹⁹ Mazzetti (n 317) p.276.

³²⁰ Nicholas Schmidle, “Getting Bin Laden.” *New Yorker*, (8 August 2011) www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/08/08/getting-bin-laden and Steven Lee Meyers and Elisabeth Bumiller, “Obama Calls World ‘Safer’ After Pakistan Raid.” *New York Times*, 2 May 2011, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/03/world/asia/osama-bin-laden-dead.html>>

If the Raymond Davis incident brought the US-Pakistan relationship to its knees, this slammed it, face first, to the curb. The most wanted man in the world had been discovered not in a lawless safe haven on Pakistan's border, but in an elite town full of the summer homes of Islamabad elites. Bin Laden's compound was just a few hundred yards from the military academy in Kakul – essentially Pakistan's West Point. Either the Pakistanis were incompetent, or they knew he was there.³²¹ The raid had happened without Pakistan's consent, and they weren't notified beforehand, at least at a leadership level. "We are still talking with the Pakistanis and trying to understand what they did know and what they didn't know," Under Secretary of Defence Michele Flournoy said a few days later.³²² It's a debate that continues to this day. During the political firestorm that ensued in Pakistan, General Pasha pled ignorance, standing before the country's parliament and offering his resignation which was, ultimately, not accepted.³²³

The Pakistanis, as usual, offered muted resignation in private and sabre-rattling in public. Minutes after the raid was declared a success, Panetta had watched Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Mike Mullen call Pakistani army chief General Kayani outside the Situation Room. "The one moment they were most honest with us," Leon Panetta told me, "was the night of the raid, because they knew damn well what had happened...General [Kayani] basically said, 'I understand what's happened here and you'd better announce it to the world.' That was probably the frankest moment of that relationship. After that, politics took over and they were doing everything they could to make it appear that it wasn't their fault that he was living where he was

³²¹ "US-Pakistani Relations After the bin Laden Raid." Stratfor, 2 May 2011, <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/us-pakistani-relations-after-bin-laden-raid>.

³²² Karin Brulliard and Karen DeYoung "Pakistani Military, Government Warn US Against Future Raids." *Washington Post*, (6 May 2011), < https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/pakistan-questions-legality-of-us-operation-that-killed-bin-laden/2011/05/05/AFM210wF_story.html?tid=a_inl&utm_term=.9dce5bb83301.>

³²³ Karin Brulliard, and Shaiq Hussain, "Pakistani Spy Chief Offers to Resign." *Washington Post*, (13 May 2011) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2011/05/12/AFdoRh1G_story.html?utm_term=.e556f2485d1a.>

living.”³²⁴ Publicly, Kayani loudly ordered the US military to scale back its presence in the country to the “minimum essential” and warned them against any future raids. The White House gathered to debate how to get tougher with the Pakistanis.³²⁵ Pakistan remained important in the broader fight against extremism, but bin Laden had totemic significance. Without him, there was a shift in attitude, palpable even at State. We needed Pakistan, but how much? “People say, ‘Boy that bin Laden raid, that really queered your relationship with the ISI,’” General Hayden reflected. “It didn’t at all, it just pulled the veil back into how difficult the relationship was.”³²⁶

The hits kept coming. At about 2:00 a.m. one cold night in November, American air support, called in by Afghans conducting an operation against the Taliban on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, opened fire on Pakistani troops. General John Allen, who succeeded Petraeus as ISAF commander in Afghanistan, was one of the first to be notified. “One of my special operations units got into a firefight with the Pakistanis at two border posts, and we ended up killing 24 of their kids overnight,” he recalled. “Now lots of fingers are being pointed, I don’t want to get into that, but the bottom line is my people defended themselves, and twenty-four Pakistani border troops got killed.” The recriminations were vicious and immediate.³²⁷ Two days later, Pakistan shut down the all-important “Ground Lines of Communication,” or GLOCs – the NATO routes used to deliver 80 percent of the supplies for US forces in Afghanistan.³²⁸

“Imagine a 150,000-person theatre, with another 100,000 civilians, having 80 percent of my

³²⁴ Interview with Leon Panetta, (06 May 2016)

³²⁵ Karin Brulliard, and Karen DeYoung, “Pakistani Military, Government Warn US Against Future Raids.” *Washington Post*, (6 May 2011), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/pakistan-questions-legality-of-us-operation-that-killed-bin-laden/2011/05/05/AFM210wF_story.html?tid=a_inl&utm_term=.9dce5bb83301.

³²⁶ Interview with General Michael Hayden, in person at his offices in Washington, DC, (17 May 2017)

³²⁷ Karin DeYoung and Joshua Partlow, “Afghans Saw Commando Unit Was Attacked Before Airstrike Was Called on Pakistan.” *Washington Post*, (28 November 2011), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/afghans-say-unit-was-attacked-before-airstrike/2011/11/28/gIQAX6ZY5N_story.html?hpid=z1&utm_term=.f70a1c3d2b3a.

³²⁸ Jasmine Coleman, “Pakistan Halts NATO Supplies After Attack Leaves Soldiers Dead.” *Guardian* (Manchester), 26 November 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/nov/26/pakistan-halts-nato-supplies-attack>.

supplies cut off in one day,” Allen remembers. He was left with just 60 days of supplies and a problem with no elegant solution.³²⁹

Allen told me it represented, in tactical terms, an opportunity that could never be regained. “We had no relationship with Pakistan after that for nine months...and in that period of time my numbers were coming down,” he said. “By the point that Kayani and I could have lunch in his office again, it was very near the end of my tour. My numbers were now well below 100,000, moving towards 60,000, reconfigured largely as advisors, not manoeuvre forces. Our ability to have the Pakistanis on one side and us on the other side and have a real decisive effect on the safe havens was lost during those nine months. And looking back on how much we could have accomplished to get after the safe havens, it’s a sad state of affairs frankly.”³³⁰

Congress, which had little appetite for Pakistani assistance after the bin Laden raid, refused to reimburse Pakistan for military activities during the long months the ground lines stood closed. It put an immediate dent in assistance plans for Pakistan.³³¹ Clinton cheerfully reflected in her campaign season State Department memoir that “the negotiations and eventual agreement over the supply lines offer lessons for how the United States and Pakistan can work together in the future to pursue shared interests.”³³² One could just as reasonably conclude that the lesson was about the perils of exploiting as a tactical proxy force a military junta with little strategic alignment with the United States. The proxy relationship, long frail, had buckled under the weight of mutual deception.

³²⁹ Interview with General John Allen, (2 September 2016)

³³⁰ *Id.*

³³¹ Interview with Alan Kronstadt, (18 August 2016)

³³² Hillary Clinton, *Hard Choices*. (Simon & Schuster 2014)

8) Conclusion: Analysis and Contribution to Hypothesis

Pakistan provides a rich case study for understanding the adverse impact of misleading political representations on the integrity of state-to-state proxy relationships. The 70-year long relationship has been continuously fraught with distrust and animosity, exhibiting the phenomenon described by Mott, of paradoxical dependence, in which a dominant partner grows reliant upon its proxy.

Complicating this is a situation of asymmetrical information (not dissimilar to the problems of the principal-agent relationships described by Holmstrom and Milgrom, but working in reverse) in which Washington cannot fully predict or understand the calculus behind many of Islamabad's actions. In the bilateral relationship between the United States and Pakistan, it became de rigueur for both Washington and Islamabad to lie about the nature of the relationship both within their respective governments and to their respective publics.

All three criteria for assessing this variable – characterisations by the United States of the objectives of the relationship, the parties to the relationship, and the activities of the partner force – were subjects of deliberate obfuscation and misleading statements. In the case of Washington, officials during the Obama administration framed the relationship as an alliance among friendly states, while in fact Pakistan engaged in a double game, aiding the enemies of the United States that it had been enlisted to defeat. The deceptive nature of American statements on the subject was exacerbated by policy decisions further restricting the flow of information, including classification policies that prevented officials from discussing core tenets of the relationship

related to counterterrorism cooperation and drone strikes. As illustrated in the pages above, resentment deepened behind the scenes at both a leadership level (see, e.g., Panetta's and Pasha's statements) and a working one (see, e.g., the statements from General Allen and the Pakistani generals).

The historical record reflects a mixed answer to the question of whether Washington's use of Pakistan as a proxy force can be sustained in a less deceptive context. On one hand, Pakistan provided an important bulwark against communism and a close ally during much of the Cold War, a period during which there was a genuine alignment of interest and, therefore, less distortion of the true nature of the relationship in how it was presented to the American public. A significant contingent of American policymakers argues, to this day, that the relationship is worth the costs. Anne Patterson, the former United States Ambassador to Pakistan, was of the opinion that "we had an extraordinary degree of cooperation with ISI on some of these counterterrorism issues, really very unique in the world," a sentiment echoed by many other State, Pentagon, and intelligence officials.

The dependent variable in this case – the cost of the relationship with Pakistan – also appears to be high by the measures laid out earlier in this thesis. With the very different stakes of the Global War on Terror after September 11, 2001, the efficacy of the relationship was eroded profoundly, as Islamabad demonstrated an existential commitment to supporting hard-line Islamic groups, to the detriment of security in the region. Petraeus, reflecting on his time as CIA director, told me "ISI was not one of the greatest of sources of intel...the bottom line is that there was a very transactional relationship."³³³ While Washington and Islamabad did work closely together on counterterrorism efforts, from strikes on bin Laden in the 1990s to the more recent

³³³ Interview with General David Petraeus, in person at his offices in New York City (25 May 2016)

successful counterterrorism operations in Swat valley, Islamabad has largely proven to be an unreliable, resistant, and often ineffective partner in the war on terrorism, particularly after the breakdown of the relationship in the wake of major rifts from the Raymond Davis affair and the Bin Laden raid.

But those developments also make Pakistan an instructive case study in how to reverse course in an alliance that exhibits a seemingly irreconcilable gap between the political representations and realities of the relationship. With the incentives for cooperation engendered by the hunt for Osama bin Laden removed, representations of the US-Pakistani relations by President Donald Trump and officials in his administration have come to hew far more closely to the realities of the relationship. Under Trump, the Pentagon has repeatedly moved to cut military financial assistance to Islamabad, withholding about \$800 million in 2018. The move has proved divisive. Since the announcement of the cuts, “there have been absolutely no signs that Pakistan has reduced support for or limited the actions of the Afghan Taliban in Pakistan since those sanctions,” David Sedney, a former Pentagon official focusing on Pakistan and Afghanistan, argued. “Arms, money, fighters, and explosives continue to stream into Afghanistan from Pakistan, right under the noses of the Pakistani military.”³³⁴

The Trump administration’s approach was born partly of a broader ideological shift, with a nationalist administration bringing isolationist and anti-assistance tendencies to the fore. But it has also, for the first time in decades, ushered in greater transparency. “The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools,” Trump tweeted in January 2018. “They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No

³³⁴Alex Ward, “Why Trump cut millions in military aid to Pakistan.” *Vox*. 4 Sep, 2018. <<https://www.vox.com/2018/9/4/17818396/pakistan-aid-military-trump-pompeo-afghanistan>>

more!”³³⁵ Whether that transparency results in less room for double-dealing on Pakistan’s part remains to be seen. Even sceptics have conceded the relationship needed greater honesty about the deception undergirding it. Sedney added: “This administration has been reasonably good about insisting on actions and not just settling for Pakistani promises.”³³⁶

³³⁵Tweet by Donald J. Trump, 1 January 2018, 8:12AM.

³³⁶ Alex Ward, “Why Trump cut millions in military aid to Pakistan.” *Vox*. 4 Sep, 2018.
<<https://www.vox.com/2018/9/4/17818396/pakistan-aid-military-trump-pompeo-afghanistan>>

Chapter 3:

A Partner Too Big to Fail in Egypt

1) Overview

In this chapter, I document the evolution of Egypt's role as an indispensable bulwark against the United States' – and Israel's – enemies, and the widening gap between American policymakers' statements of private outrage and public support during the troubled regime of General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. The analysis in this chapter will again focus on the years following September 11, 2001, but, as in the other chapters, extensive historical context is needed to understand the events of that more recent period. This Chapter will focus almost exclusively on state-to-state proxy relations, examining the challenges of arming the Egyptian military as it largely resists behind-the-scenes diplomacy aimed at engendering reform.

As was the case with Pakistan, Egypt represents a strategic partner that has at time been seen by American policymakers to be “too big to fail.” However, unlike Pakistan, where the exigent circumstances necessitating collaboration were narrowly focused and at least partially dissipated with the killing of Osama bin Laden, the strategic interests binding Washington and Cairo are more diverse and permanent, from access to the Suez Canal to the security of Israel. I

conclude that, despite the seeming immobility of these factors, Egypt provides an excellent example of the United States' ability to quietly make structural changes to financial assistance and other factors within a proxy relationship while still maintaining the alliance writ large.

2) The Rabaa Massacre

a) American Military Assistance in Action

On August 13, 2014, security officers driving an armoured Humvee on Cairo's 6th of October Bridge reversed away from a group of protesters swarming their vehicle. The Humvee hit the barrier on the edge of Cairo's 6th of October Bridge, uprooting a light post and sending it careening over the edge to shatter on the concrete 50 feet below. The Humvee followed, landing on its roof, where a crowd below quickly closed around the wreckage, throwing stones and shouting. The protesters were there to decry the country's military regime. For them, the hole punched in the bridge's guardrail was a hopeful symbol – a punch delivered to the military and its escalating crackdowns. It was the latest in a series of symbolic roles the 6th of October Bridge had played. It was built to commemorate Egypt's defiant assault on the Israeli-occupied Sinai during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War³³⁷ – land the Egyptians believed to be theirs. But by the time

³³⁷ Wendell Steavenson, Remembering the 6th of October, *New Yorker*, [October 6, 2011]
<<http://www.newyorker.com/news/wendell-steavenson/egypt-remembering-the-6th-of-october>>

the bridge was completed in 1996, it had come to represent the might of a ruling military regime supported by the United States with an eye toward maintaining Israeli security.

Teo Butturini, an Italian photographer, had woken that morning to a call from another journalist, warning him that police were storming the massive sit-in protest at Rabaa al-Adawiya Square. It was the larger of the two major protests ongoing in Cairo, evolving into an increasingly permanent encampment of thousands. Protesters there and at al-Nahda in Giza had taken to the streets after the military's ouster of the country's democratically elected Muslim Brotherhood President, Muhammad Morsi. The crackdown had been anticipated – the government would later emphasize that protesters had, indeed, been warned.³³⁸

Butturini, knowing confrontations between the military and protesters had been growing increasingly ugly, had gone to photograph other protest landmarks, like Tahrir Square. But the pull of the crowd had been hard to resist. “You were seeing people coming down from their houses to join the march. People coming down side roads. People who were waiting on sidewalks chanting...and then getting together with us in order to try to give help to the people inside the camp.”³³⁹ By the time Butturini and the group of thousands moving with him reached the bridge, police had completely surrounded the area. He remembered the sound of the vehicle crashing to the ground, and protesters packing the bridge and the road underneath. That's when Egyptian security forces opened fire on the crowd.

“The army start to shoot at us. I was there and from 300 meters they start to shoot at us. And people start to fall down close to me,” he said. As police closed in, continuing to fire, Butturini took cover behind a pylon supporting the bridge overhead. It wasn't until forces

³³⁸ Associated Press, *Egypt police to break up sit-in protests within 24 hours*, 11 August 2013
<<http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/egypt-police-to-break-up-sit-in-protests-within-24-hours-1.1372985>>

³³⁹ Interview with Teo Butturini, (17 January 2014)

“started to throw a massive amount of tear gas” that he ran toward the protective cover of nearby buildings. That’s when he heard 5 bullets passing close to him, hitting the left side of his body. Butturini struggled through the streets looking for an ambulance he’d seen earlier. Unable to find it, he waved his hands at passing cars until one stopped and took him to a hospital. Emergency room doctors were able to save his life, removing most of a bullet-shredded kidney in the process. He recalled dozens of bodies piled in the back of military trucks, and countless more overwhelming the hospital that saved him. He has few pictures from that day: his memory card, stashed in a boot as he arrived in the hospital, disappeared while his items were in the custody of hospital personnel and Egyptian security officers who arrived on the premises to keep surviving protesters in custody.³⁴⁰

The Rabaa massacre has been described as “Egypt’s Tiananmen Square.”³⁴¹ Eight hundred seventeen people were killed that day at Rabaa al-Adawiya Square alone. Estimates vary, but by most counts more than 1,000 were likely killed when additional casualties from crackdowns across Egypt that day are included. Human Rights Watch, in a year-long investigation of the events, concluded that Egyptian “police and army forces systematically and intentionally used excessive lethal force...resulting in killings of protesters at a scale unprecedented in Egypt.”³⁴² Police fired on protesters not in a single clash but throughout the day. Snipers were placed on rooftops to fire upon protesters. Soldiers were stationed to block exits for those protesters who tried to escape. According to a report by the Egyptian Initiative for

³⁴⁰ Interview with Teo Butturini, (January 18, 2015)

³⁴¹ The comparison has been employed by several commentators, including Amy Austin Holmes, assistant professor of sociology at the American University in Cairo who specializes in military and social mobilization issues in Egypt. See Holmes, *Why Egypt’s Military Orchestrated A Massacre*, August 22, 2014, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/08/22/why-egypts-military-orchestrated-a-massacre/>

³⁴² Human Rights Watch, *All According to Plan: The Rab’a Massacre and Mass Killings of Protesters in Egypt*, August 2014, available at <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/egypt0814web.pdf>

Personal Rights (EIPR), the military had been deliberately deployed to the area in advance of the crackdowns, facilitating those considerably sophisticated tactics.³⁴³

The bullets that claimed the lives of protesters across Egypt that week were almost certainly purchased with American funds. According to a 2013 report by the Congressional Research Service, US military aid covers as much as 80% of Egypt's weapons procurement.³⁴⁴

³⁴⁵ The word "Egypt" appears 13,500 times in the Pentagon's database of military contracts.³⁴⁶

Butturini, the Italian photographer, said, "the people were showing me in the streets the spent tear gas canisters, showing me that they were made by American companies...[shouting] 'they're shooting at us, the tear gas, and the tear gas comes from the USA.'"³⁴⁷

³⁴³ Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, *The Weeks of Killing, State Violence, Communal Fighting, and Sectarian Attacks in the Summer of 2013*, June 2014, available at:

eipr.org/sites/default/files/reports/pdf/weeks_of_killing_en.pdf

³⁴⁴ Jeremy M. Sharp, Egypt: Background and US Relations, Congressional Research Service, February 25, 2014, available at: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf>

³⁴⁵ Brad Plumer, *The US Gives Egypt \$1.5 Billion a Year in Aid. Here's What it Does.*, The Washington Post, July 9, 2013, available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/07/09/the-u-s-gives-egypt-1-5-billion-a-year-in-aid-heres-what-it-does/>

³⁴⁶ Thompson, Mark. "US Military Aid to Egypt: An IV Drip, With Side- Effects." *Time*, 19 August 2016, www.swampland.time.com/2013/08/19/u-s-military-aid-to-egypt-an-iv-drip-with-side-effects/.

³⁴⁷ Interview with Teo Butturini, (January 17, 2014)



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b) A Failure of Influence

The United States knew the massacre was coming. “It wasn’t a secret that the government was going to go in there with overwhelming force,” said Anne Patterson, whom I had encountered in Pakistan and who was, by August 2013, the American ambassador in Cairo. “That had been our concern for weeks prior to this.”³⁴⁹ During those weeks, the United States scrambled for a diplomatic solution, both from State Department officials like Patterson and from congressional leaders. Secretary of State John Kerry sent his deputy, Bill Burns, to work out an agreement that would limit the scope and size of the Brotherhood’s protests.

³⁴⁸ Gas canisters of US manufacture used by Egyptian police against protesters in Cairo. Photo credit Teo Butturini.

³⁴⁹ Interview with Ambassador Anne Patterson, (12 May 2016)

Congress dispatched its top two foreign policy hawks – Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham – the week before the massacre to press for a return to calm and to civilian control. The senators pleaded with Egypt’s top general, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, interim vice president Mohamed ElBaradei, interim prime minister Hazem el-Beblawi and others, before the Egyptian cabinet sat down to debate intervention.

Graham later told the press the effort never inspired optimism. “You could tell people were itching for a fight. The prime minister was a disaster,” he said, describing Beblawi’s approach to the growing ranks of protesters. “He kept preaching to me: ‘You can’t negotiate with these people. They’ve got to get out of the streets and respect the rule of law.’” Sisi, meanwhile, seemed “intoxicated by power,” as Graham recalled.³⁵⁰ “We talked to the military endlessly by that time,” Patterson, the ambassador, explained. “They had gotten calls from Washington, from me. There just didn’t seem to be anything else to be done at that point. I talked to Sisi the day before. They said they were going to exercise restraint.”³⁵¹

Even Pentagon leadership eventually stepped in, with then–Secretary of Defence Chuck Hagel calling General Sisi again and again, sometimes as often as every other day, for weeks on end. John Kerry was among the officials who told me the military-to-military rapport that has long anchored US-Egyptian relations was the most potent channel for defusing such crises. “The US investment over decades in building up the Egyptian military...made a difference when Mubarak was considering firing on the protesters” during the earlier flash point in Tahrir Square, Kerry said. In that case, “there were back-channel mil-to-mil conversations that I promise you factored into the Egyptian military telling Mubarak they would not follow his orders if he wanted

³⁵⁰ Sherif Khalifa, *Egypt’s Lost Spring: Causes and Consequences*. (Praeger, 2015)

³⁵¹ Interview with Ambassador Anne Patterson, (12 May 2016)

them to go kill ten thousand kids in the square.”³⁵² But in the case of the Rabaa massacre under Sisi’s leadership a few years later, those same pleas from American military leaders fell on deaf ears. None of it registered in Cairo. “Did you make an angry call after it started?” I asked Patterson. “I don’t think so,” she said. “Because I think we’d said everything we had to say at that point.”

In the days before the massacre, the Egyptian cabinet huddled in a government building in Tahrir Square to discuss what to do about the protesters. The exertions of the Americans had little bearing on the conversation. “I met McCain and Graham, but I felt that they were not able to understand how important [it was] for a transition government...to assure they can protect the security of the people,” said Beblawi, the interim prime minister. “The security of the people cannot be accepted and believed in,” he continued, “if you feel somebody is staking out territory by force, in the middle of the capital.” Beblawi told me he had taken calls from Ambassador Patterson and heard her out, but that, ultimately, “I didn’t feel any pressure.”³⁵³

Beblawi was in his office at the International Monetary Fund in Washington, DC, slouching in a green chair that swallowed up his small form. A mantle of dandruff dusted his shoulders. Three years had passed since the Rabaa massacre. “I have no regrets,” he said. “I feel very sorry this happened. I don’t know how it ended this way, but I think if the situation would have been reversed, it might be even worse.”³⁵⁴ He furrowed his salt-and-pepper eyebrows. “The cost was high, no one expected it to be as much. Also, there was a lot of exaggeration and many numbers were brought from outside,” he said sceptically. Beblawi’s response, like those of most officials behind the crackdown, was a thicket. The loss of life was regrettable, but also not so bad

³⁵² Interview with John Kerry (21 November 2017)

³⁵³ Interview with Hazem Beblawi (IMF offices, Washington, DC, 30 June 2017)

³⁵⁴ *Idem*.

as all that. The decision was the right one, but also out of their hands. The police and military, he later told me tartly, “are not controllable all the time.” In any case, he felt, the protesters started it. “Of course, they are challenging the authority, challenging it by force, and actually in both Rabaa and Enada, the first bullet was coming from among the Muslim Brothers. This is for sure, the starting of the using fire was on them.” I pointed out to Beblawi that most international human rights assessments disputed that narrative. He shrugged. “They asked for this.” When I asked him if American efforts had any effect, he said, simply, “No.” This was the influence America’s most muscular diplomatic intervention – and an annual military assistance package totalling \$1.3 billion – had purchased: at best, a few extra words, behind closed doors, shortly before the slaughter.³⁵⁵

3) Basis for Case Study Selection

Between 1948 and 2015, the United States has financed Egypt to the tune of \$76 billion in foreign assistance, not adjusted for inflation.³⁵⁶ That places the country in a rarefied group of the United States costliest alliances. A White House staffer involved in Egypt policy noted: “This is one of only two relationships – with Egypt and Israel – where over the course of almost 40 years, we’ve provided well over a billion dollars per year of military assistance consistently.”³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Jeremy M. Sharp, “Egypt: Background and US Relations.” Congressional Research Service, 5 June 2014, www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf.

³⁵⁶ Sharp, *supra* at 6

³⁵⁷ White House National Security Council staffer responsible for Egypt policy, speaking to the author on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the bilateral relationship, January 26, 2015

That US military assistance underwrites the purchase of weapons systems and services from American defence contractors, furnishing Egypt with everything from AH-64 attack helicopters to F-16 fighter jets to M-1 tanks like the ones used to plough through protesters during the Rabaa massacre. Since 1987, that assistance has held steady at \$1.3 billion per annum.³⁵⁸ But the relationship – roiled by the brutality of a new military regime and new changes in regional security – is now seeing its first meaningful structural changes.³⁵⁹

Table 5. Total Aid to Egypt: FY1946-2017:

Total Aid to Egypt: 1946-2017 (in millions of dollars).



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³⁵⁸ Sharp, *supra* at 6

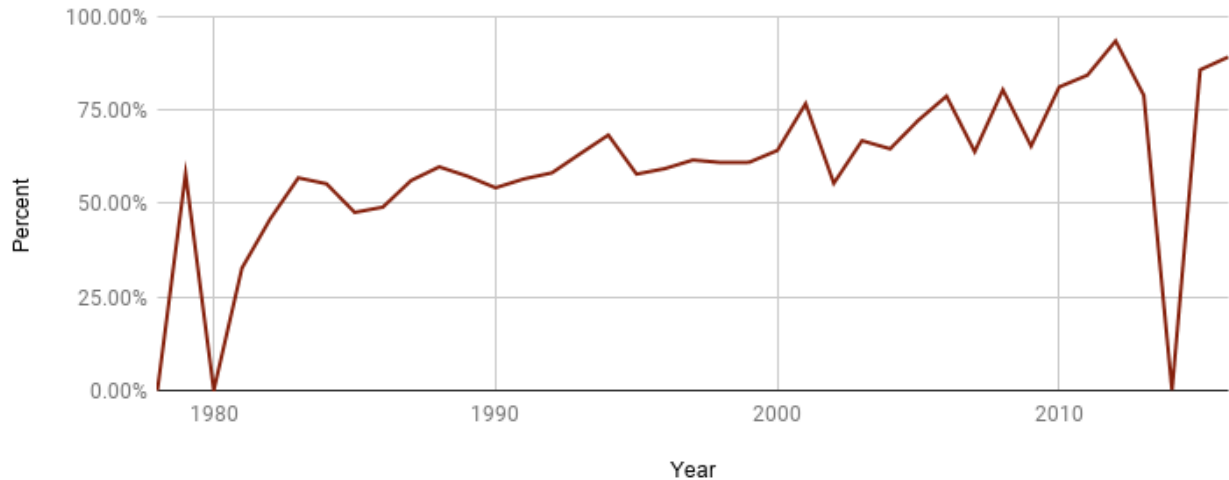
³⁵⁹ See detailed discussion of the struggle over present-day appropriations below.

³⁶⁰ U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations, July 1, 1945–September 30, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/u-s-overseas-loans-and-grants-greenbook>.

If numbers can reveal foreign policy priorities, one number stands out across all of the six regions into which the US State Department divides the world. Israel dwarfs all others, receiving about \$3 billion in foreign assistance each year, most of it military assistance. That cash flow has become an immutable truth of US politics. President Obama, in a rote repetition sentiment of every President in the last 50 years, has described it as a “solemn obligation.”³⁶¹ The reasons are familiar: Israel is a homeland with deep significance to Jewish Americans, the land of the chosen people in the eyes of some American Christians, and an indispensable bastion of Western interests in a hostile Middle East for conservatives and other foreign policy hawks.

Table 6. Military Aid to Egypt as a Percent of Total Aid to Egypt:

Military Aid to Egypt as a Percent of Total Aid to Egypt



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³⁶¹ American Forces Press Service, Obama Calls US Commitment to Israel ‘Solemn Obligation’, March 20, 2013 available at: <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=119589>

³⁶² ³⁶² U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations, July 1, 1945–September 30, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/u-s-overseas-loans-and-grants-greenbook>.

Among the forces assembled by the United States to ensure Israel's survival, one is of supreme importance – and expense. Egypt, since the signing of the hard-fought 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty, has been the most significant counterbalance to Israel's enemies across the Middle East. After Israel itself and Iraq – an atypical case due to still-ebbing US occupation in that country – Egypt is also among the top recipients of US military assistance within its region, with \$1.3 billion appropriated under Congress's fiscal year 2015 budget.³⁶³

Israel's status as the United States' most significant and longstanding investment in the Near East and Africa (NEA) region makes it an important subject for examination. And Egypt's role as perhaps the single most significant proxy force supported with the aim of securing Israel – coupled with its own status as one of the most-costly targets of foreign military assistance within its region – make it an obvious lens through which to view US proxy policy in the region.

This thesis is focused on the effects of gaps between representations and realities with respect to American proxy relationships. Egypt, given its longstanding history as a US security partner and the way in which newfound questions about the utility of that relationship appeared to lag behind the public posture of the parties involved, is an ideal case study for gaining insight into that question. Further, its prominence in US foreign policy make the relevant data for considering that question – polity scores, transparency assessments, and information about popular opinion – readily available relative to several other case studies considered.

³⁶³ H.R. 83, Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, December 11, 2014, available at: <https://www.congress.gov/113/bills/hr83/BILLS-113hr83eah.pdf>

4) Literature Review

Given the duration and importance of the United States-Egyptian partnership, a large body of literature examining the impact of US economic and military assistance exists. The literature generally places Egypt within the typology of “defensive proxy,” intended to maintain American interests in the region in question, as opposed to an “offensive proxy” cultivated to combat a specific enemy or challenge. An animating question of this body of literature is why this nation has been treated as such an important proxy, receiving so much US assistance – and whether that investment has paid dividends high enough to justify the cost.

Binnendijk studies the motivations for the US’ pursuit of the proxy relationship in a historical context, arguing that traditionally, US support for various regimes in the Middle East, including Egypt, has reflected several key foreign policy interests: namely, support for Israel, control of Persian Gulf oil, and counter-Soviet efforts.³⁶⁴ Other researchers attribute US support for Egypt to similar reasons, most importantly Cavari and Nyer’s study of US intervention in Egypt as a function of Washington, specifically Congress’, focus on Israel as a key foreign policy interest.³⁶⁵ Others build on Cavari and Nyer’s theory, including Clarke, by further arguing that America’s foreign policy goal of establishing a begrudging regional acceptance of Israel, if not a formal peace, has been realized, thereby diminishing Egypt’s strategic importance for

³⁶⁴ Hans Binnendijk, “Friends, Foes, and Future Directions: US Partnerships in a Turbulent World: Strategic Rethink,” RAND, 2016.

³⁶⁵ Amnon Cavari and Elan Nyer. 2014. “From Bipartisanship to Dysergia: Trends in Congressional Actions Toward Israel.” *Israel Studies*. Vol. 19, No. 3 (Fall 2014), pp. 1-28

America and making continued assistance unnecessary.³⁶⁶

Another key justification for US assistance emerged in both the popular political rhetoric and the literature post-September 2001, with Binnendijk, among others, suggesting that security and anti-terrorist interests have dominated US decision-making, as well as a new focus on democracy promotion. Binnendijk concludes that high, sustained levels of US military support for Egypt post-coup have led to a state of confusion among American decision-makers, in which security interests are prioritized above democratic values.³⁶⁷ Others similarly theorize that US assistance and intervention functions as a bulwark against regional authoritarianism, ironic given the historically authoritarian nature of the Egyptian government itself.

A robust body of literature is dedicated to evaluating the efficacy of the proxy relationship, and of US security assistance more specifically. Adelman concludes that the most obvious failures of US security assistance can be seen in the Middle East, including in Egypt, which has done little to combat anti-Americanism and even harboured 9/11 terrorists after receiving high levels of military-related aid.³⁶⁸ Pressman similarly concludes that US policy in the Middle East, specifically in the wake of 9/11, has been a failure, in terms of Washington's three goals of democracy promotion, defeating terrorism, and non-proliferation.³⁶⁹

Morsy examines the impacts of US assistance on Egyptians, concluding that while the US has achieved many of its security and development goals, Egyptians have not reaped the

³⁶⁶ Duncan Clarke. "US Security Assistance to Egypt and Israel: Politically Untouchable?" *The Middle East Journal* 51.2 (Spring 1997): 202-03.

³⁶⁷ Hans Binnendijk, "Friends, Foes, and Future Directions: US Partnerships in a Turbulent World: Strategic Rethink," RAND, 2016.

³⁶⁸ Carol Adelman, *Foreign Aid: Effectively Advancing Security Interests*, Harvard International Review, Volume 29, Number 3, pp. 62-67, 2007.

³⁶⁹ Jeremy Pressman, "Power without Influence: The Bush Administration's Foreign Policy Failure in the Middle East," *International Security*, Volume 33, Number 4, pp. 149-179, 2009.

benefits.³⁷⁰ The work of McGuire and Ruttan is also useful in this context.³⁷¹ Martin Weinbaum builds on this literature with his study of US economic aid to the Egyptian economy, concluding that it has failed to produce a productive, self-sustaining economy.³⁷² He suggests that America prizes the regime's stability above all, given its strategic regional position, so Egyptian leadership can be assured of whatever economic assistance it needs. This "too big to fail" theory will be further explored in this thesis, but in a security context.

Many scholars consider the recent turn of the US-Egypt proxy relationship, specifically Washington's response to the Arab Spring, disappointing. Singh argues that Washington failed to take advantage of the opportunity for political reform after the end of the Cold War, choosing instead to support repressive, corrupt, and anti-American leaders in the region, jeopardizing ultimately its interests.³⁷³ The Arab Spring represents an opportunity for the United States to advance both its interests and values in Egypt, if only the US understands how. Similarly, Ibrahim argues that the United States squandered the opportunities presented by the Arab Spring by maintaining its support for autocratic regimes no longer viewed as legitimate by the people.³⁷⁴ Selim finds that the United States' reaction to the Arab Spring protests failed because policymakers were eager to preserve the existing regime and maintain existing power dynamics.³⁷⁵ Parker and Stern attribute the failure to anticipate the Arab Spring in Egypt to over-

³⁷⁰ Soheir A. Morsy, "US Aid to Egypt: An Illustration and Account of US Foreign Assistance Policy," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Volume 8, Number 4, pp. 358-389, 1986.

³⁷¹ Mark F. McGuire and Vernon W. Ruttan, "Lost Directors: US Foreign Assistance Policy Since New Directions," *The Journal of Developing Areas*, Volume 24, Number 2, pp. 127-180, 1990.

³⁷² Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Dependent Development and US Economic Aid to Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Volume 18, Number 2, pp. 119-134, 1986.

³⁷³ Michael Singh, "Change In the Middle East: Its Implications for US Policy," *Harvard International Review*, Volume 33, Number 1, pp. 17-21, 2011.

³⁷⁴ Ahmed H. Ibrahim, "The Arab Uprisings and the United States: The Dichotomy Between Balancing Stability and Upholding Commitment to Democracy," *Digest of Middle East Studies*, February 2016.

³⁷⁵ Mohammad Selim and Gamal M. Selim (2012). *Égypte: une révolution permanente, trahie ou kidnappée? In Le "printemps arabe": un premier bilan*, ed. Khader Bichara. Paris: Alternatives Sud, 77-92.

evaluation of past regional successes, over-confidence in present-day policies, and ignorance of signals of local mass discontent.³⁷⁶

While few believe that the United States explicitly orchestrated regime change, many condemn it as complicit in the aborted success of the new regimes. El-Mahdi and Mafleet and others have argued that Washington's economic and political support for repressive regimes in North Africa have contributed to the political, social, and economic circumstance leading to the Arab Spring and the violence and suppression of human rights that have come in its wake.³⁷⁷ Collins and Rothe point out the contradiction between the US support for the democratic agenda of the Arab Spring and its support for repressive regimes, characterizing the Obama Administration as both hypocritical and complicit in the facilitation of state violence.³⁷⁸ Savage and Caverley's statistical analysis of IMET (International Military Education and Training) data finds that the United States' direct support for the Egyptian military, particularly in the form of military training, increased the probability of a military coup. The authors further argue that the increased value of US-trained Egyptian soldiers may curb Washington's willingness to punish the Egyptian military for its intervention in politics, an important conclusion given General Sisi's current position as President.³⁷⁹ While these studies begin to explore the human costs of the proxy relationship, this key impact is generally not well-explored in the literature. This thesis seeks to address this critical deficit, as well as answer the question, "how much power does the United States have to effect change, whether good or bad, in its proxy?" Bowker argues that

³⁷⁶ Charles F. Parker and Eric K. Stern (2002). *Blindsided? September 11 and the Origins of Strategic Surprise*. *Political Psychology*, 23(3), September 2002, 601-630.

³⁷⁷ Rabab el-Mahdi and Philip Marfleet, *Egypt: Moment of Change*, Zed Books, 2009 and Bassam Haddad, Rosie Bsheer, Ziad Abu-Rish, Roger Owen, *The Dawn of the Arab Uprisings: End of an Old Order?*, Pluto Press, 2012.

³⁷⁸ Victoria E. Collins and Dawn L. Rothe, "United States Support for Global Social Justice? Foreign Intervention and Realpolitik in Egypt's Arab Spring," *Social Justice*, Volume 39, Number 4. pp. 1-30, 2014.

³⁷⁹ Jesse Dillon Savage and Jonathan D. Caverley, "American Foreign Military Training and Coup Propensity," Working Paper, June 2014.

there is very little the United States can do to pursue its interests as the “new Egypt” is being shaped, with Washington forced to cooperate with Egyptian institutions and actors, a dynamic that will lead to varying levels of success.³⁸⁰ Miller and Martini reach a similar conclusion, pointing to the fundamentally domestic nature of the political change in Egypt.³⁸¹ Interviews with Egyptian and American officials in this thesis explore this question of power in the relationship.

5) Typicality

Egypt is atypical in terms of its strategic significance and its long, consistent history of United States support. But in terms of the paradigm of proxy forces supported by the United States, the Egyptian military is largely typical. It exhibits all four factors by which this thesis judges typicality, namely:

- Egypt exhibits a deep – and, in the eyes of some human rights groups, growing – lack of transparency and liberal governance.³⁸² Even before the military crackdowns following 2011, Egypt’s most recent polity score, capturing the authoritarian qualities of the regime there, was a deterioration of four points from the prior year. That classifies Egypt as a

³⁸⁰ Robert Bowker, “Egypt: Diplomacy and the Politics of Change,” *Middle East Journal*, Volume 67, Number 4, pp. 581-591, 2013.

³⁸¹ Laurel E. Miller and Jeffrey Martini, “Democratization in the Arab World: A Summary of Lessons from Around the Globe,” RAND, 2013.

³⁸² See, e.g., Human Rights Watch, *supra* at 4

“closed anocracy,” with little respect for democratic values.³⁸³ Transparency International’s latest data ranks Egypt 88thth of 168 countries ranked.³⁸⁴

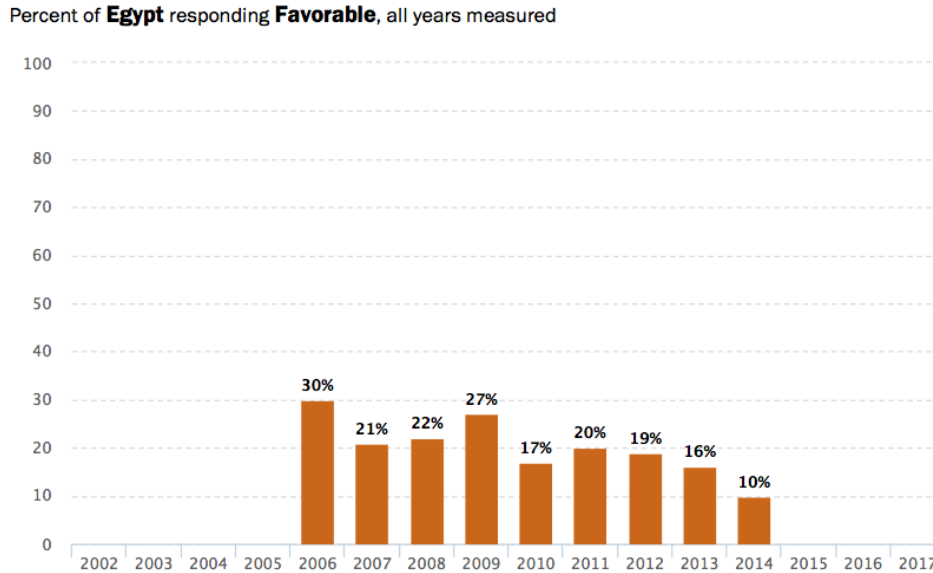
- US-Egyptian relations are clearly animated by pressing United States security concerns – from Israel’s security to the mounting threat posed by the rise of ISIS in the Sinai Peninsula.
- A high level of United States military assistance – \$1.3 billion annually – is a hallmark of the relationship. (However, Egypt differs from many of the cases studied in other regions in that this assistance tends not to extend beyond the government to other, more disparate fighting forces on the ground.)
- Egypt is also typical in terms of US support accompanying a low public opinion of the US on the ground in the country in question. In 2014, just 10% of Egyptians responded favourably when asked about their view of the United States.³⁸⁵ It is worth noting that this was not always the case. Indeed, Egypt may be atypical in its extreme fluctuations of public opinion about the United States. From 2006 through 2009, more than 20% of Egyptians responded favourably when asked about the United States (with a peak of up to 30% in 2006).

³⁸³ Polity IV Scores 2015, available at <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>

³⁸⁴ Transparency International Country Report: Egypt, available at <http://www.transparency.org/country#EGY>

³⁸⁵ Pew Global Indicators Database poll, posing the question “do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of the US?”. The poll has surveyed 450,000 individuals in 64 countries, but does not make public individual country numbers, only percentages: <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/1/country/64/>

Table 7. Egyptian Public’s View Toward US, 2006-2014:³⁸⁶



6) Typology

This project categorizes proxy forces along two axes. It distinguishes offensive proxies (ones cultivated to combat a specific enemy or challenge) versus defensive proxies (ones designed to maintain American interests, typically more passively and over the longer term). And it categorizes whether the players in these relationships are state or non-state actors.

Egypt’s assistance, disbursed directly to the country’s military in the form of monies to be used to purchase US equipment, presents a fairly straightforward example of a *state* proxy –

³⁸⁶ <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/1/country/64/>

even an unusually straightforward example, as there are no known examples of fighting forces outside of the regime but within Egypt's borders that receive US support.

The long span of Egyptian support, dating back to the 1970s in roughly its current configuration, and the diffuse nature of the threats it guards against make it a strong example of a *defensive* proxy. While a US interest in Israeli security heavily informs the relationship with Egypt, the Egyptians were not trained and armed in a short-term capacity to combat any one threat to Israel. Rather, the longstanding, constant support to Egypt ensures that the Egyptians themselves do resurge as a threat to Israel. However, one could imagine a scenario in which the threat of terrorist insurgents in Sinai, currently a minor risk to the security of both Egypt and the region, emerges as a serious threat, requiring the presence of an offensive state or nonstate anti-terrorism proxy. However, given that Al Qaeda's presence is limited in Sinai, and given the institutionalized nature of the defensive state proxy relationship even under Morsi, this is highly unlikely.

EGYPT PROXY TYPOLOGY:

	DEFENSIVE	OFFENSIVE
STATE	<p>Sadat Regime (1970s – 1981)</p> <p>Mubarak Regime (1981-2011)</p> <p>Morsi (2012-2013) and el-Sisi Regimes (2014-Present)</p>	<p><i>potentially: Morsi regime as anti-terrorism partner</i></p>
NON-STATE	<p><i>potentially: civil society groups</i></p>	<p><i>potentially: anti-terrorism local counter-insurgency group</i></p>

7) The Evolution of Egypt as a Proxy Force

a) Finding a Partner in the Ashes of the Cold War

Like so many stories of American proxy warfare, the modern US-Egypt relationship has Cold War roots. Until the 1970s, two constants marked Egypt's role in the world: Soviet sponsorship of Egypt's military,³⁸⁷ and constant conflict with Israel.³⁸⁸³⁸⁹ Bloody skirmishes over land,³⁹⁰ including the bold attempt to reclaim the Sinai after which the October 6th bridge was named,³⁹¹ continued into the 1970s.³⁹² But Egypt's new leader at the time, Anwar Sadat, was dogged in reorientation of Egypt toward two radical new goals: a peace deal with Israel, and closer ties to the United States. Above all, he wanted the Sinai back in Egyptian hands, and felt peace was the way to achieve this.³⁹³

³⁸⁷ Carol Williams, Amid US-Egypt chill, el-Sisi seeks military assistance from Russia, *LA Times*, February 13, 2014 <http://articles.latimes.com/2014/feb/13/world/la-fg-wn-russia-egypt-sisi-putin-20140213>

³⁸⁸ Zeev Moaz, *Defending the Holy Land: A Critical Analysis of Israel's Security & Foreign Policy*, The University of Michigan Press, 2009

³⁸⁹ Aloni, Shlomo. *Arab- Israeli Air Wars 1947– 1982*. Oxford: Osprey, 2001.

³⁹⁰ Michael Oren, Speech to the Washington Institute, 2 July 2002, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-six-day-war-and-its-enduring-legacy>.

³⁹¹ Eric Pace, NYT Obit of Sadat. <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/1225.html>

³⁹² Mørk, Hulda Kjeang. "The Jarring Mission" (master's thesis, University of Oslo), <http://www.duo.uio.no/publ/IAKH/2007/58588/HuldaxMxrxxMasteropgavexixhistorie.pdf>.

³⁹³ Eric Pace, "Anwar el- Sadat, the Daring Arab Pioneer of Peace with Israel." *New York Times*, (7 October 1981) <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/1225.html>.

That tenacity, after several false starts, led to one of the most startling moments in the history of the Middle East conflict when, in 1977, Sadat became the first Arab leader to travel to Jerusalem since its capture by the Israelis in 1967. He met with Israel's Prime Minister, Menachem Begin and, as a shocked world looked on, spoke before Israel's parliament, the Knesset, calling for peace.³⁹⁴

In the United States, newly elected President Jimmy Carter seized on the moment,³⁹⁵ bringing together Carter, Sadat, and Begin at Camp David³⁹⁶ for a famous thirteen-day period of negotiation. One outcome, a framework to address the Israel-Palestine conflict,³⁹⁷ was developed with little input from Palestinians, condemned by the United Nations, and otherwise ignored. But the second, "A Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty Between Egypt and Israel,"³⁹⁸ yielded the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty six months later and forged the modern relationship between Israel, Egypt, and the United States. Israel agreed to withdraw from the Sinai and return it to Egypt. In return, diplomatic relations were restored between Israel and Egypt, and Israel was guaranteed free passage through the Suez Canal. The agreement also produced another lasting trend: the commitment, by the United States, of several billion dollars of military assistance per annum to both Israel and Egypt.³⁹⁹⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁴ *Idem.*

³⁹⁵ Walter Mondale, his Vice President, was surprised by the fact that on Carter's first day in office he announced that peace in the Middle East was a top priority. That seemed wildly naïve. . . . Carter's closest advisors told him that he should wait until his second term to risk any of his fragile political capital." Wright, Lawrence. *Thirteen Days in September: Carter, Begin, and Sadat at Camp David*. New York: Knopf, 2004, p. 6.

³⁹⁶ President Carter Speech on 25th Anniversary of Accords. Washington, DC, 16 September, 2003, <https://www.cartercenter.org/news/documents/doc1482.html>.

³⁹⁷ Text: <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/campdavid/accords.phtml>

³⁹⁸ Text: <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/campdavid/frame.phtml>

³⁹⁹ Interview with Laurence Wright. "'13 Days In September' Examines 1978 Camp David Accords." NPR, 16 September 2014, <https://www.npr.org/2014/09/16/348903279/-13-days-in-september-examines-1978-camp-david-conference>.

⁴⁰⁰ Jeremy M. Sharp, "Egypt: Background and US Relations." Congressional Research Service, 5 June 2014, www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf.

In Egypt, US military had engineered an uncommonly powerful surrogate for its interests; predominantly, under the typology laid out in this thesis, a passive, long-term, state proxy.⁴⁰¹ “The whole idea,” said Michelle Dunne, a State Department official, “was that the United States and the American military would be the strategic partner to the Egyptian military.”⁴⁰² Where the US could not directly secure Israel, Egypt, in this new configuration, could.

b) The Relationship Transformed

That configuration held firm for more than 30 years. But in January 2011, the partnership between the US and Egyptian militaries began to face their first existential challenges. A wave of revolts against repressive regimes was spreading, from neighbouring Tunisia to Alexandria, and then to Cairo.⁴⁰³ That month, thousands gathered in Tahrir Square, protesting an array of painful frustrations with the ruling regime and its leader, President Mubarak, from mass unemployment to corruption to heavy-handed policing.⁴⁰⁴

The protesters sweeping the Arab world looked askance at the United States’ reliance on Egypt’s repressive military regime as a surrogate. But American policymakers continued to make public representations that were starkly at odds with the realities on the ground. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had, earlier in her tenure in that job, said of the Mubarak regime, “I

⁴⁰¹ See above for more detailed discussion of types of proxy forces.

⁴⁰² Interview with Michelle Dunne (January 27, 2015)

⁴⁰³ “The January 25 Revolution.” In *Arab Spring: A Research and Study Guide*, Cornell University Library, 2010, guides.library.cornell.edu/c.php?g=31688&p=200748%20%20Id.

⁴⁰⁴ *Idem*.

really consider President and Mrs. Mubarak to be friends of my family.”⁴⁰⁵ As violence began to spark in 2011, Clinton proclaimed the regime “stable.”⁴⁰⁶ She deployed a veteran diplomat sympathetic to the Mubaraks, Frank Wisner, who informed the public that “the president must stay in office.”⁴⁰⁷ The State Department was forced to disavow its own envoy’s remarks. It called for Mubarak to voluntarily step down,⁴⁰⁸ to little effect. After 17 days, the uprising ended 59 years of military rule. Mubarak was removed. The United States’ history of optimistic public statements wildly at odds with the actual state of the relationship and conditions on the ground was, finally, out of step with the times.⁴⁰⁹ That delta between statement and fact left the US-Egypt relationship, and America’s broader presence in the region, unmoored as power changed hands.

A committee of generals known as the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) stepped in as a caretaker government while preparations were made for the first free elections in Egyptian history.⁴¹⁰ It was the first of a series of changes of the guard that would ratchet up tensions between the US and its long-time partner.

In terms of the central objective of the relationship – the preservation of Israel’s security – the dynamic remained unchanged. But the SCAF began a series of vicious crackdowns on civil

⁴⁰⁵ 'Hillary Rodham Clinton Undercuts The State Department On Human Rights' (*Washington Post*, 2009) <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/09/AR2009030902478.html>> accessed 26 February 2019.

⁴⁰⁶ ‘Our assessment is that the Egyptian government is stable and is looking for ways to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people.’ The following day she encouraged ‘all parties to exercise restraint and refrain from violence’ 'Clinton Calls For Calm, Restraint In Egypt' (*CBS News*, 2011) <<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/clinton-calls-for-calm-restraint-in-egypt/>> accessed 26 February 2019.

⁴⁰⁷ Kareem Fahim, Mark Landler and Anthony Shadid. 'West Backs Gradual Egyptian Transition' (*New York Times*, 2011) <<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/world/middleeast/06egypt.html>> accessed 26 February 2019.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Sarah Childress, 'The Deep State: How Egypt’s Shadow State Won Out' (*PBS Frontline*, 2013) <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/foreign-affairs-defense/egypt-in-crisis/the-deep-state-how-egypts-shadow-state-won-out>> accessed 26 February 2019.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

society, including a December 2011 crackdown on ten NGOs. Employees were banned from leaving the country – among them Sam LaHood, son of then US transportation secretary Ray LaHood.⁴¹¹ Egyptian military leadership was effectively thumbing its nose at the Americans.

Anne Patterson, who arrived as the new US Ambassador to Egypt in the first months of SCAF's leadership, calls the incident “really, really disruptive...we were trying to get people out. There were some, the Americans at the Embassy; it took weeks to get them out, maybe longer. We basically paid bail and then they jumped bail that was the deal. That got the relationship off on a really bad foot.” Defusing the situation eventually required intervention at the highest levels of the US government, with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey arriving to play hardball. He was “absolutely brilliant,” recalls Patterson. “I’d never heard anyone be so forceful. He talked to [SCAF leader] Tantawi about this for 2.5 hours. And he gave the signal...because they thought that the US military was their pal. I’ve never seen a performance about this before and since. He made it absolutely crystal clear that this would be a central element in our relationship. And it wasn’t too long after that that they released them, that they worked a deal.” The interaction offers a striking example of tough, honest talk yielding effective results in a proxy relationship generally marked by softer or more euphemistic rapport.⁴¹²

c) Democracy Derailed

⁴¹¹ Sarah A. Tool, 'Egypt Cracks Down On NGOs' (*Newsweek*, 2012) <<https://www.newsweek.com/egypt-cracks-down-ngos-65823>> accessed 26 February 2019.

⁴¹² Interview with Anne Patterson, United States Ambassador to Egypt in 2011-2013 (12 May 2016)

Egypt's first, promising democratic reforms led to the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood party sweeping the Parliament and its leader, Mohammed Morsi, securing the Presidency.⁴¹³ It was yet another shift in gravity that left the United States scrambling to reconcile its public statements with its private concerns. The Brotherhood quickly proved more problematic than the SCAF. Worst of all, from the perspective of the American foreign policy establishment, Morsi threw into doubt the core tenet of the US-Egyptian alliance: support for Israel. The politician had, years earlier, described Zionists as "bloodsuckers" and "war-mongers," and complained that "futile [Israeli-Palestinian] negotiations are a waste of time and opportunities."⁴¹⁴ Patterson, the US Ambassador, was doubtful Morsi would have in fact moved the needle on Egypt's Israel policy,⁴¹⁵ but the statements alienated American policymakers. Domestically, the Brotherhood's harsh social policies on issues such as women's rights and alcohol consumption alienated much of Egypt's largely secular population.⁴¹⁶ A hastily constructed and fraudulently ratified constitution with terms favourable to the Brotherhood further infuriated Egyptians. After just one year in power, Morsi faced street protests as large as those that had ousted Mubarak.^{417 418}

d) New Leadership, Old Authoritarian Tendencies

⁴¹³ Gregg Carlstrom, 'Meet The Candidates: Morsi Vs Shafiq' (*Aljazeera.com*, 2012) <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/egypt/2012/06/201261482158653237.html>> accessed 26 February 2019.

⁴¹⁴ 'Morsi Called Israelis 'Descendants Of Apes And Pigs' In 2010 Video' (*Haaretz*, 2013) <<https://www.haaretz.com/morsi-called-israelis-apes-and-pigs-in-2010-1.5288149>> accessed 26 February 2019.

⁴¹⁵ Interview with Anne Patterson, United States Ambassador to Egypt in 2011-2013 (12 May 2016)

⁴¹⁶ Ian Black, 'Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Poised To Prosper In Post-Mubarak New Era' (*Guardian*, 2011) <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/19/muslim-brotherhood-poised-prosper-egypt>> accessed 26 February 2019.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Sharif Abdel Kouddous, 'What Led to Morsi's Fall – and What Comes Next?' (*Nation*, 2013) <<http://www.thenation.com/article/175128/what-led-morsis-fall-and-what-comes-next>> accessed 26 February 2019.

As protests became more violent, the military – led by then-defence minister Abdel Fattah el-Sisi – forced Morsi from power and placed him on trial. Sisi was, in some ways, a return to the status quo ante: a strongman who would hold the line on Israel.

“I knew Sisi very well, and I knew it wasn’t going to be great, don’t get me wrong,” said Patterson. “But frankly he’s proven a lot more brutal than I ever would have predicted.”⁴¹⁹ Sisi’s security forces clashed with protesters who took to the streets, enraged at the ouster of the democratically elected Muslim Brotherhood regime. Tensions mounted as the sit-ins and rallies grew, finally culminating in the bloody massacres of August 2013, at Rabaa, and elsewhere. In the years since, crackdowns have continued unabated. In the following year under Sisi’s rule, at least 2,500 civilians were killed and 17,000 wounded by the police or military: “By March 2015, security forces had arrested more than 40,000 people, the majority of them on grounds of suspected support for the Muslim Brotherhood, although leftist activists, journalists, and university students were also detained.”⁴²⁰ Hundreds of Egyptians were “disappeared.”⁴²¹ The repression, according to Human Rights Watch, was “on a scale unprecedented in Egypt’s modern history.”⁴²²

Most of the targeted individuals were thrown in jail on sham charges— or on none whatsoever. One prisoner at Azouli, an Egyptian military jail, reportedly said: “There is no documentation that says you are there. If you die at Azouli, no one would know.” In April 2014, 529 Brotherhood members were sentenced to death, “one of the largest ever mass death

⁴¹⁹ Interview with Anne Patterson, United States Ambassador to Egypt in 2011-2013 (12 May 2016)

⁴²⁰ Shadi Hamid. ‘Rethinking the US- Egypt Relationship: How Repression is Undermining Egyptian Stability and What the United States Can Do.’ (*Brookings*, 3 November 2015)
<<https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/rethinking-the-u-s-egypt-relationship-how-repression-is-undermining-egyptian-stability-and-what-the-united-states-can-do>> accessed 26 February 2019.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid. citing ‘Egypt: New Leader Faces Rights Crisis.’ (*Human Rights Watch*, 9 June 2014)
<hrw.org/news/2014/06/09/egypt-new-leader-faces-rights-crisis> accessed 26 February 2019.

sentences anywhere in the world. The attorneys of the accused were denied access to the “evidence” and those who protested were threatened.”⁴²³

The following year, the same court sentenced Morsi for his alleged role in the 2011 uprising. The former president faced “public execution, by hanging, with more than 100 others sentenced alongside him.” Morsi’s co-conspirators included one man who has been in jail since the 1990s and two who had already died.⁴²⁴

“He’s been . . . ‘ruthless’ is a good word. Death penalties. Mass arrests of journalists. Shutting out NGOs,” said General Hayden, the former CIA director, reflecting the common thinking about Sisi among American officials. But when I asked Hayden if there was a point at which that should trigger an easing of military assistance, he darkened. “I’m not prepared to say that,” he said. He steeped his hands, peering over his rimless glasses at me. “We make our compromises,” he mused. “We may incur a debt for the future.”⁴²⁵

“I would say it’s the worst of anywhere I’ve ever seen outside of a war zone,” added Frank Lowenstein.⁴²⁶ Blinken, the deputy national security advisor at the time, offered a bleak prognosis of Sisi’s impact: “Over time and almost inevitably if he continues to repress a significant minority of his own population...liberals, secularists, moderates, journalists, you name it, all have their voice taken away and many of them get thrown in jail, and thrown in jail where they’re mixed with genuine radicals, that is a recipe for radicalizing a lot more people. And we can’t forget that al Qaeda was born in an Egyptian jail.”⁴²⁷

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Interview with General Michael Hayden, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency in 2006-2009 (Washington, DC, USA, 17 May 2017)

⁴²⁶ Interview with Frank Lowenstein, Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations and Senior Advisor to the Secretary of State in 2014-2017 (5 August 2016)

⁴²⁷ Interview with Tony Blinken, United States Deputy Secretary of State in 2015-2017 (12 May 2016)

Samantha Power, the US ambassador to the United Nations during the Rabaa massacre, was critical of the American response to that crisis. She argued for a relationship structure with less disjunction between public posture and private concerns. “We should have completely revamped the relationship given who Sisi was and made it purely transactional,” she explained, exasperated. Instead, after brief pauses, US assistance inevitably resumed, and the relationship “looked largely the same as before the massacre.”

Power knew that cutting off the \$1.3-billion aid package to Egypt was not politically or strategically realistic, but was among the officials who felt those funds could be allocated more cautiously. “Now the Camp David rationale is over because [Israel’s] Bibi [Netanyahu] and Sisi have the relationship they need,” so much of the logic of giving the Egyptians whatever equipment they wanted was over, she said. “I argued for giving a huge share of that money to Tunisia. We should be rewarding countries who are struggling to progress in the direction we want them to.”⁴²⁸

8) A Failure of American Influence and a Quiet Workaround

a) Too Big to Fail

But the United States has continued to give Sisi its endorsement and support. Like Pakistan, Egypt was often considered, by both sides, to be too indispensable a partner to permit

⁴²⁸ Interview with Samantha Power, United States Ambassador to the United Nations in 2013-2017 (10 July 2017)

honest representations. It's a phenomenon that has long been a hallmark of similarly fraught (and strategically crucial) proxy relationships, like the United States' support for Pakistan.

Three factors have served to reinforce that dynamic. First, paramount concerns about Israeli security continue to create a significant centre of political gravity. Under el-Sisi's rule, Egyptian security forces have thwarted terrorist plots against Israel by its own citizens and by Palestinian militants.⁴²⁹ Anne Patterson, who recalls long discussions with el-Sisi about the centrality of cooperation with Israel, points out: "let me tell you who does most of the lobbying on the Hill now for Egypt, it's Israel."⁴³⁰

Second, a new array of threats, including the rise of ISIL in the country's Sinai Peninsula, has reinforced that leverage. One group, previously known as Ansar Bait al-Maqdis, declared allegiance to ISIS in 2014 and has carried out dozens of attacks that have claimed the lives of hundreds of Egyptian soldiers.⁴³¹ Another terrorist cell in the peninsula, by its account responsible for the murder of an American oil worker, also declared allegiance to ISIS, calling itself "the Sinai Province of Islamic State."⁴³² The Egyptian military has essentially served as the only major military force countering those insurgent elements.⁴³³ In Cairo and other urban centres, the military-aligned regime has made efforts to stem recruitment and prevent Egyptians from going to Syria to join ISIS.⁴³⁴ The Egyptian military, generally understood to be an

⁴²⁹ Ariel Ben Solomon. 'Egyptian army thwarts two attacks against Israel' (*JPost*, 2014). <<http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Egyptian-army-thwarts-two-attacks-against-Israel-368755>> accessed 26 February 2019.

⁴³⁰ author, Interview with Anne Patterson, United States Ambassador to Egypt in 2011-2013 (12 May 2016)

⁴³¹ Derek Stoffel, 'ISIS in Egypt: The struggle for the Sinai Peninsula' (*CBC News*, 2016) <www.cbc.ca/news/world/sinai-province-isis-egypt-1.3634601> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴³² Jared Malsin, 'Sinai Insurgency Shows Signs of Spreading after ISIS-Linked Militants Say They Killed US Engineer' (*Time*, 2014) <<http://time.com/3612225/william-henderson-sinai-egypt>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Betsy Hiel, 'ISIS jihadists lure Arab youths to fight against Western forces' (*TribLive*, 2014) <<http://triblive.com/usworld/betsyhiel/6948198-74/isis-says-abu#axzz3QBxljzYtt>> accessed 27 February 2019

opponent of political Islam, makes for a particularly Western-friendly avatar in this fight against terrorism.⁴³⁵ “There are strategic benefits to the relationship,” said Congressman Adam Schiff. “In particular some of el-Sisi’s recent comments about need to confront within Islam what radicals like ISIS are doing to try to pervert the meaning of Islam...I think those comments and that leadership is very important.”⁴³⁶

Finally, competition has played a role in maximizing Egypt’s power in the relationship and minimizing American influence. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates have pledged billions of dollars of economic support to Egypt, sometimes offering more than the United States, with fewer conditions.⁴³⁷ Saudi Arabia, in particular, has developed a cosy relationship with Sisi. Russia, too, has stepped into the fray, with meetings between Putin and Sisi and growing assistance packages.⁴³⁸ “[T]he Arab Gulf monarchies want the Administration and Congress not only to continue foreign assistance to Egypt without additional conditions, but also to do more financially,” the Congressional Research Service notes.⁴³⁹

“We certainly have influence,” Kerry reflected. “But our leverage is not as simple a formula as some people assume. We are far from the only actor...and leverage is a two-way street – we needed Egypt’s help on a set of issues including ISIL and Israel.”⁴⁴⁰ As a result, said Frank Lowenstein, “their attitude about it is, ‘What the f*** are you really going to do about it? You

⁴³⁵ John Beck and Jared Malsin, ‘Egyptian Military Targeted in Deadly Attacks as Islamists Mount Anti-Government Protests’ (*Vice*, 2014) <<https://news.vice.com/article/egyptian-military-targeted-in-deadly-attacks-as-islamists-mount-anti-government-protests>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴³⁶ Interview with Adam Schiff, United States Representative for California's 28th congressional (20 January 2015)

⁴³⁷ ‘Egypt Signs \$350 mln in Oil, Power Financing Deals with Saudi’ (*Reuters*, 2014) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL5N0SR0H520141101>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴³⁸ ‘Russia, Egypt Seal Preliminary Arms Deal Worth \$3.5 Billion: Agency’ (*Reuters*, 2014) <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/17/us-russia-egypt-arms-idUSKBN0HC19T20140917>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴³⁹ Jeremy Sharp, <Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations> (*Congressional Research Service*, 2014) <https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20140605_RL33003_856450f5493c3c5d089f810a20a9b0ab98fb1a29.pdf> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁴⁰ Interview with John Kerry, United States Secretary of State in 2013-2017 (21 November 2017)

can't afford to have me fail.' That's the ultimate leverage that Sisi has: that he will fail. And that is an extraordinarily powerful form of leverage."⁴⁴¹

Meanwhile, years of dependence on military assistance had convinced both sides that arms and equipment sales were the only currency that could purchase influence, and that diplomatic overtures were essentially cosmetic. As a result, precious little has changed in the US-Egypt relationship since the Rabaa massacre. Security wasn't simply the first priority; it was often the only one. And Washington policymakers reverted to the traditional tools of arms and military financing to enforce it, in part because they had forged few meaningful alternatives.

b) Attempts at Reform and Fitful Signs of Progress

Mounting concerns over human rights crackdowns under el-Sisi have prompted a re-examination, during recent American administrations, of what tactics can be used to pressure the Pentagon's powerful military partners in Cairo without jeopardizing the relationship's strategic goals.

Some of those explorations had little effect. After Morsi's ouster, there was debate about whether to abide by the so-called "coup clause" in US appropriations law, mandating a halt to direct assistance to "any country whose duly elected head of government is deposed by military coup d'état"⁴⁴² until democracy is restored. President Morsi, though divisive, was by any account

⁴⁴¹ Interview with Frank Lowenstein, Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations and Senior Advisor to the Secretary of State in 2014-2017 (5 August 2016)

⁴⁴² 'Provisions Relevant to the Situation in Egypt in the FY12 State Department and Foreign Operations Appropriations Law' (*Office of Senator Patrick Leahy*, 2013) <<https://www.leahy.senate.gov/press/provisions-relevant-to-the-situation-in-egypt-in-the-fy12-state-department-and-foreign-operations-appropriations-law> → accessed 27 February 2019

“duly elected” and had been removed in what was, by most accounts, a coup.⁴⁴³ And el-Sisi’s military regime had at the time made no pretence of democracy. But with \$1.3 billion to its critical ally at stake, the Obama administration resolutely declined to define events in Egypt as a “coup.” It first resorted to “difficult contortions” to simply avoid the word. Then, finally, senior State Department official Bill Burns was dispatched to brief lawmakers on the administration’s formal decision: this coup would not be called a coup.^{444 445}

In Fiscal Year 2014, Congress also introduced two democracy-related standards, to be certified by the Secretary of State, to its legislation with respect to Egypt.⁴⁴⁶ The move was hailed as a “disruption”⁴⁴⁷ but was swiftly bypassed using national security waivers. The administration resumed delivery of Apache helicopters, even during escalating crackdowns on journalists⁴⁴⁸⁴⁴⁹ citing extremist activity in the Sinai. Fiscal year 2015 brought with it another effort to strengthen the human rights conditions, replacing the two certification standards with

⁴⁴³ Dana Hughes and Molly Hunter, ‘President Morsi Ousted: First Democratically Elected Leader Under House Arrest’ (*ABC News*, 2013) <<https://abcnews.go.com/International/president-morsi-ousted-democratically-elected-leader-house-arrest/story?id=19568447>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁴⁴ John Hudson, ‘Obama Administration Won’t Call Egypt’s Coup a Coup’ (*Foreign Policy*, 2013) <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/07/08/obama-administration-wont-call-egypts-coup-a-coup>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁴⁵ Spencer Ackerman and Ian Black, ‘US Trims Aid to Egypt as Part of Diplomatic ‘Recalibration.’’ (*Guardian*, 2013) <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/09/obama-cuts-military-aid-egypt>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁴⁶ Namely, requirements that the Secretary of State certify Egypt:

- ‘Has held a constitutional referendum, and is taking steps to support democratic transition’ and
- ‘Has held parliamentary and presidential elections, and a newly-elected Government is taking steps to govern democratically.’

⁴⁴⁷ Amy Hawthorne, ‘What’s Happening with US Military Aid to Egypt?’ (*Atlantic Council*, 2014) <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/Hawthorne_Whats_Happening_with_FMF_for_Egypt_Nov19.pdf> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁴⁸ Jonathan Broder, ‘The Winter of Egypt’s Dissent’ (*Newsweek*, 2015) <<http://www.newsweek.com/2015/01/16/winter-egypts-dissent-296918.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁴⁹ After what were widely reported to be sham trials, they were sentenced to 7 years in prison each. One, an Egyptian-Canadian reporter named Mohammed Fahmy, was sentenced to an additional three years for picking up a spent bullet casing after a protest. See *ibid*.

seven, which still remain intact in subsequent years' appropriations bills. The Secretary must certify that the Egyptian government:

- i. Has held free and fair parliamentary elections
- ii. Is implementing laws and policies to govern democratically and protect individual rights
- iii. Is implementing reforms to protect freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly
- iv. Is taking consistent steps to protect and advance the rights of women and minorities, including religious minorities
- v. Is providing detainees with due process
- vi. Is credibly investigating and prosecuting the use of excessive force by security forces
- vii. Has released all American citizens deemed to be political prisoners by the US State Department and dismissed charges against them⁴⁵⁰

But once again the new certification requirements were accompanied by security exemptions, both in that legislation and through an additional waiver, added in 2015, which

⁴⁵⁰ See: HR 83 EAH, Sec. 7041(a)(6)(i)-(vii) <<https://www.congress.gov/113/bills/hr83/BILLS-113hr83eah.pdf>>

circumvented the requirements so long as the Secretary of State certified to Congress that doing so is “important to the national security interest of the United States.”⁴⁵¹ Similar waiver language permitted the relationship with Pakistan to persist as a celebrated example of counterterrorism cooperation, despite the significant misgivings of policymakers behind the scenes.

c) A Quiet Change

At least one reform effort has had lingering effect. President Obama signed off on the end of “cash flow financing,” a preferential system granted to Egypt and Israel whereby a partner state can purchase military equipment of its choice on credit, obligating corresponding appropriations of US assistance, potentially for years to come.⁴⁵² “They lost a really important element, says Patterson. “The cash flow financing was a huge deal because the only other country we do that for is Israel. So the President eliminated that.”

As Patterson recalls conversations surrounding the move, the President wanted to cut military assistance, but due to ongoing contracts, couldn’t do so immediately.⁴⁵³ The change took effect after the cessation of current contracts in Fiscal Year 2018. Eliminating the cash flow system allowed for a gradual, but major, structural shift in the relationship. While the disjunction between the reality of the relationship and the statements of warm support from American

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.* at Sec. 7041(a)(5)

⁴⁵² ‘Obama Unblocks Military Aid to Egypt’ (*The Economist*, 2015)
<<http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=883040272>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁵³ author, Interview with Anne Patterson, United States Ambassador to Egypt in 2011-2013 (12 May 2016)

leadership has only grown wider under President Donald Trump, the latest administration has not restored cash flow financing, and has not projected any plans to do so.⁴⁵⁴

9) Conclusion: Analysis and Contribution to Hypothesis

Just as Pakistan illustrated the gulf between public statements and geopolitical reality that can develop in the context of a state-to-state, offensive proxy relationship, Egypt is an instructive example of a similar dynamic with respect to state-to-state, defensive proxy relationships. Both cases also underscore how, once that divide between representation and reality has become foundational to the relationship, narrowing it can be extraordinarily challenging. Egypt, more so than Pakistan, offers a persuasive illustration of just how difficult, given the history of failed efforts to reform the relationship.

The two cases diverge more starkly in terms of their forward-looking trajectories. Where Pakistan has seen radical changes, including the cessation of some military assistance, under the Trump administration, Egypt has trended in the opposite direction. As Sisi presided over one of the worst human rights crackdowns in the country's history, Trump publicly praised his leadership as "fantastic" and noted that "we are very much behind [him]."⁴⁵⁵ Sisi was invited to

⁴⁵⁴ Jack Deutsch, 'Pentagon revamps Egypt war games in trust-building exercise' (*Al-Monitor*, 2018) <<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/09/pentagon-revamp-egypt-war-games.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁵⁵ Madeline Conway, 'Trump: 'We Are Very Much Behind' Egypt's el- Sisi' (*Politico*, 2017) <<https://www.politico.com/story/2017/04/trump-praises-egypt-abdel-fattah-el-sisi-236829>> accessed 27 February 2019

visit the White House, breaking with longstanding protocol and widening the delta between public statements and private demands for reform. Of the three criteria for assessing levels of hypocrisy used in this thesis, Egypt exhibits hypocrisy and deception in two. Specifically, the United States' public characterisations of the objectives of the relationship, with respect to securing the region and Israel, tended to closely match private communications. There was, on the other hand, a considerable gulf between rhetoric and reality with respect to both the parties to the relationship (see, e.g., Clinton's comments about Mubarak and Trump's about Sisi), and the activities of the partner force (see, e.g., the response to the Rabaa massacre).

The question increasingly looming over the US-Egypt alliance is also the dependent variable in the research question in this thesis: namely, what costs are engendered as political deception that appears to sustain the relationship? There are several obvious answers:

- a)** The economic costs of the relationship with Egypt are considerable – at \$1.3 billion a year, one of the most expensive price tags of any case examined. However, unlike several other cases examined, those costs are controlled and predictable. The United States is paying exactly what it intends to, in order to support Egypt's military. The question is whether the newfound concerns about the efficacy of that military chronicled in this case study outweigh that price. That remains an open question.

- b)** The human costs of the relationship are both significant and unexpected. The likely thousand-plus killed at the Rabaa massacre alone provide a firm answer to this criterion – suggesting an undue hindering of other goals, including protecting basic human rights and safeguarding civilians.

- c) The US investment in Egypt has remained largely flat – as compared to:
- Plummeting public approval of the United States within Egypt.⁴⁵⁶
 - During the periods of military brutality in Egypt, a spike in American support for cutting off military assistance to Egypt to pressure the government there.⁴⁵⁷
 - The Polity Data series, not yet updated since the relevant post-Arab Spring period, provides little utility here and is therefore excluded.

There remains a strong case that the Egypt relationship secures its main goals – defending Israel and combatting terrorism, to some effect. Indeed, due to the emerging security threats and geopolitical competitors willing to fill the space left by any withdrawal of American support, there are additional incentives not historically present.⁴⁵⁸ But the other metrics – the human costs and the public opinion trends – make a strong case that this is increasingly a relationship in which the deception at the heart of the bilateral rapport has exacted significant costs, as argued by Runciman.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁶ See discussion supra

⁴⁵⁷ Bruce Drake, 'Curbing military aid to Egypt has support among the US public' (*Pew Research*, 2013) <<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/10/09/curbing-military-aid-to-egypt-has-support-among-the-u-s-public>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁵⁸ See supra.

⁴⁵⁹ David Runciman, *Political Hypocrisy: The Mask Of Power, From Hobbes To Orwell And Beyond* (Princeton University Press 2009).

On the one hand, Egypt stands as a validation of that assertion by Runciman that political deception can engender destructive policy consequences. Sisi's crackdown, during the period in which American praise for him has escalated, has claimed numerous lives and seen others imprisoned without due process. However, the recent history of the bilateral relationship also offers a model for how to quietly effect change within the confines of what Shklar⁴⁶⁰ describes as acceptable hypocrisy. The introduction of a cessation of cash flow financing, and the persistence of that reform under the subsequent administration, represents a modest change. But it is a real, material one, and provides a small ration of leverage in a relationship that has otherwise trended toward disproportionate influence on the part of the Egyptians. "They lost cash flow financing," said Patterson, the Ambassador. "They'll be forced to buy stuff that we think will be useful for them to buy."⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶⁰ Judith Shklar, 'Let Us Not Be Hypocritical' (1979) 108 *Daedalus* 1-25

⁴⁶¹ author, Interview with Anne Patterson, United States Ambassador to Egypt in 2011-2013 (12 May 2016)

Chapter 4:

Africa as a Frontline of America's Proxy Wars

1) Overview

In this chapter, I chronicle the increasing divergence between statements of American policy in the Horn of Africa and private efforts, behind the scenes, to undermine initiatives on which the United States maintained claimed neutrality. This includes a 2005 regional peace initiative that, as interviews and other research in this thesis document, the United States secretly and persistently worked to sabotage. Somalia represents one of the more fractious and complex case studies under consideration, with both state and non-state proxy forces at play. This chapter explores the sometimes-competing representations and true intentions inherent in those relationships.

While this thesis poses its research question primarily with respect to the period after September 11th, a full understanding of that period requires an acknowledgement both the regime of Siad Barre, and the period of chaotic lawless warlord leadership that followed throughout the 1990s. Based upon a survey of that history, and of the United States' competing alliances with Somali warlords, Ethiopian government forces, and collective regional dialogue, I conclude that

tensions between those competing interests became a source of destructive tension in the Horn of Africa, echoing Runciman's thesis on hypocrisy.

2) Africa and America's New War on Terror

September 21, 2013 began like most Saturdays for Preeyam Sehmi. She kissed her fiancée goodbye, ran an errand, and met a friend for coffee at the upscale Westgate Mall in Nairobi, not far from her home. She and the friend had bantered for an hour about Sehmi's work as a local artist before she rose to pay their bill at around 12:30 p.m. She was waiting for change when a deafening blast rocked the building. She had no idea what was happening. "I just saw people flying off their chairs and over tables," she recalled. Then "everyone was on the floor," some crawling for safety, others now still and lifeless. She remembered the scene in slow motion, "like being in a movie." Sehmi took shelter in a nearby clothing store, and waited, covering her ears for wave after wave of gunshots and screams. The latter were the hardest to take. "The gunshots not so much, but the screams... those I will never forget."⁴⁶²

Young men with machine guns, most in plain clothes, some wearing headscarves, were ripping through the mall, hurling grenades and shredding men, women, and children with bullets. Those who survived the initial attacks were taken hostage and subjected to grisly torture and

⁴⁶² author, Interview with Preeyam K. Sehmi (Nairobi, Kenya, 13 December 2013)

mutilations. The attackers held the mall for three days against attempted interventions by Kenyan authorities. Sehmi was one of the lucky ones to escape, spirited away by police officers after six tense hours in hiding. By the conclusion of the raid, 72 people had been killed, 61 of them civilians.⁴⁶³

Harish Patel, a private security officer who was among the first responders at the scene of the attack, exchanged gunfire with the attackers and said they came well prepared. They had, he felt, an intimate knowledge of the mall's floor plan, "hiding themselves in the ventilation, in the building's walls." Kenyan authorities, by contrast, had to ask for floor plans late in the attack. They were also unprepared for the brutality of the attackers' tactics. "They used those terrible bullets, the ones that hit you and spin to damage your body," Patel says, referring to hollow-tipped or ballistic ammunition. As Patel and fellow volunteers removed bodies from the building, they encountered a slain couple. "The wife was pregnant, they had hugged each other," he recalls. As they moved the couple, the woman's baby fell from her womb, also dead. "The whole tummy had broken up and we could [not] rescue or do anything."⁴⁶⁴ The memory haunts him. The terrorists at the Westgate mall made tactical choices calculated to leave indelible images of carnage seared in the public consciousness.

Responsibility for the attack was quickly claimed by the al Qaeda-affiliated, Somalia-based Islamist group Harakat al Shabaab al Mujahideen (HSM or, more commonly, simply "al Shabaab," literally "the youth"). Spreading word of the bloodshed via Twitter, the group sent a clear message to the international community: get out of Somalia. The attack, they said, was

⁴⁶³ Nicholas Soi and Robyn Dixon, 'Kenya says Nairobi mall siege is over, with 72 dead' (*Los Angeles Times*, 2013) <<http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-kenya-mall-20130925,0,3451298.story#ixzz2pz9qg1hN>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁶⁴ author, Interview with Harish Patel (Nairobi, Kenya, 13 December 2013)

aimed squarely at the “failure to remove [foreign] forces from Somalia” by parties like Kenya.⁴⁶⁵ The group had successfully launched attacks outside of Somalia before, including dual bombings in Uganda in 2010 that left 76 dead.⁴⁶⁶ The Westgate mall shooting was a stark reminder of its powers, and its international aspirations. The United States, the *New York Times* reported during the attack, saw the shooting as “a direct threat” and quickly dispatched FBI agents to the scene of the wreckage to search for clues.⁴⁶⁷ Meanwhile, US congressional leaders showed a renewed interest in al Shabaab, convening hearings⁴⁶⁸ and introducing proposals for renewed reviews of intelligence.⁴⁶⁹

Al Shabaab had become a new priority enemy for the United States, and the Horn of Africa had become a new frontline in its war on terror.⁴⁷⁰ “The growing threat that al Qaeda affiliates are posing to nations in north, east, and southwest Africa has really changed the dynamic by making counterterrorism a growth business on the continent,” said Major General Carlton Everhart II, senior Air Force commander at the US Military’s Africa Command (AFRICOM). The United States has responded to that threat with an old standby: military aid

⁴⁶⁵ Elisha Fieldstadt, ‘Somali terror group al-Shabab claims responsibility for Kenya mall attack’ (*NBC News*, 2013) <<http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/news/2013/09/21/20624632-somali-terror-group-al-shabab-claims-responsibility-for-kenya-mall-attack?lite>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁶⁶ ‘Hunt for terrorists shifts to ‘dangerous’ North Africa, Panetta says’ (*NBC News*, 2011) <<http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/news/2011/12/13/9410244-hunt-for-terrorists-shifts-to-dangerous-north-africa-panetta-says?lite>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁶⁷ Nicholas Kulish and Jeffrey Gettleman, ‘US Sees Direct Threat in Attack at Kenya Mall’ (*New York Times*, 2013) <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/26/world/africa/us-sees-direct-threat-in-attack-at-kenya-mall.html?_r=0&pagewanted=all> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁶⁸ ‘Hearing: From al-Shabaab to al-Nusra: How Westerners Joining Terror Groups Overseas Affect the Homeland’ (*House Committee on Homeland Security*, 2013) <<https://web.archive.org/web/20140107055610/https://homeland.house.gov/hearing/hearing-al-shabaab-al-nusra-how-westerners-joining-terror-groups-overseas-affect-homeland>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁶⁹ ‘Sen. Moran Amendment Calls For Assessment of Al Shabab Threat’ (moran.senate.gov, 2013) <http://www.moran.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/news-releases?ContentRecord_id=5c7f6f6c-9d88-4307-a3fb-5ae385c668cc> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁷⁰ ‘Hunt for terrorists shifts to ‘dangerous’ North Africa, Panetta says’ (*NBC News*, 2011) <<http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/news/2011/12/13/9410244-hunt-for-terrorists-shifts-to-dangerous-north-africa-panetta-says?lite>> accessed 27 February 2019

aimed at creating proxy forces. “[T]here are some great capabilities we can offer those nations who want to partner with us,” Everhart added pointedly.⁴⁷¹ In June 2013, as President Obama set out on the first African trip of his second term, his administration was careful to publicly stress economic cooperation. But in private meetings in each country on Obama’s trip, the United States’ focus on terrorism in Africa, and its search for partners to combat it, was inescapable.⁴⁷²

Ground zero in America’s war on terror in Africa is al Shabaab’s base of operations: Somalia. Despite being regarded as a failed state since the 1990s,⁴⁷³ Somalia continued to receive significant assistance, especially foreign military assistance, through the Bush and Obama administrations. In fiscal year 2011, for instance, the United States channelled \$75.3 million in overt military aid directly to the fragile Somali government besieged by al Shabaab.⁴⁷⁴ The most significant deviation from this trend has come under the Trump administration, which, in 2017, showed a willingness to suspend fuel and food aid to Somali armed forces in response to reports of corruption.⁴⁷⁵ (This mirrors the similar trendline in the relationship with Pakistan under Trump’s leadership, discussed *supra*.)

However, under all recent administrations including Trump’s, direct assistance numbers are deceptive, accounting for only a small portion of America’s spending to advance its geopolitical interests in Somalia. A lion’s share of American investment in the conflicts there continues to be indirect, as the source of financial support, training, and guns for the mostly

⁴⁷¹ James Kitfield and National Journal, ‘Why Terrorism Is the New Big African Issue for Obama’ (*Atlantic*, 2013) <<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/06/why-terrorism-is-the-new-big-african-issue-for-obama/277278/>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁷² author, Interview with White House official speaking on condition of anonymity, (27 June 2013)

⁴⁷³ Brian Jones, ‘Somalia Is The Most Failed State on Earth’, (*Business Insider*, 2013) <<http://www.businessinsider.com/somalia-is-the-most-failed-state-on-earth-2013-7?op=1>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁷⁴ United States government military assistance numbers are available at: <https://explorer.usaid.gov/data.html>

⁴⁷⁵ Katharine Houreld, ‘Exclusive: U.S. suspends aid to Somalia's battered military over graft’ (*Reuters*, 2017) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-military-exclusive-idUSKBN1E81XF>> accessed 27 February 2019

Ugandan and Burundian soldiers that make up the 17,731-strong African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).⁴⁷⁶ From 2007 to 2009, the United States diverted \$200 million to those forces – a number that has by now likely doubled.⁴⁷⁷

3) Basis for Case Study Selection

Somalia is an important case study for this thesis, given that the country's history has been shaped by proxy relationships to a nearly unprecedented degree. As will be discussed in this chapter, Somalia was a battleground for colonial powers from the 19th century onward, and continued even during independence, as the Mohammad Siad Barre regime found itself flooded by arms and funding first from its Soviet backers and then, once ties with Moscow were severed, from an America concerned with the “threat” of communism.

Similar to other proxies employed by Washington over the same time, such as Pakistan, Somalia's reliance upon US assistance fuelled domestic unrest and resentment that ultimately may have undermined Washington's interests. However, unlike the case of Pakistan, Somalia represents a case in which the United States took a more cautious approach to proxy warfare; indeed, after the Black Hawk Down incident, Washington withdrew its engagement entirely.

⁴⁷⁶ Patrick Worsnip, 'UN council approves increase in AU Somalia force' (*Reuters*, 2012) <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/22/ozatp-somalia-un-idAFJQE81L0CF20120222?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁷⁷ David Axe, 'U.S. Weapons Now In Somali Terrorist Hands' (*Cognitive Liberty*, 2013) <<http://cognitiveliberty.net/2013/u-s-weapons-now-in-somali-terrorist-hands/>> accessed 27 February 2019

More recently, Somalia’s role in America’s global war on terror has required significant infusions of money in the country over a sustained period of time, which is a central criterion for case study selection in this project. As with the other case studies examined in this thesis, US assistance has been disproportionately focused on military assistance (including peacekeeping operations) rather than development assistance.⁴⁷⁸

Table 8. US Assistance to Somalia (in Thousands of US Dollars):

	FY2009 Actual	FY2010 Actual	FY2011 Request	FY2012 Request
Total	403,838	152,176	84,958	82,371
Development Assistance				
Economic Support Fund	32,250	31,270	25,818	25,821
Global Health and Child Survival-USAID	1,550	1,550	1,550	1,550
International Military Education and Training			40	
International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement			2,000	2,000
Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Programs		2,353	2,000	
Peacekeeping Operations	246,600	102,000	53,550	51,000
Public Law 480 (Food Aid)	123,438	15,003		

Source: Congressional Budget Justification, FY2012.

Second, Somalia exhibits a range of typologies of proxy conflicts. Offensive proxies – utilized to achieve America’s counter-terrorism interests – dominate in this case study, but defensive state proxies are also relevant. Additionally, more so than other case studies, Somalia involves defensive proxies, and, like Afghanistan and Colombia but unlike Egypt, the case of Somalia involves non-state proxies (warlords) that greatly complicate Washington’s aims.

⁴⁷⁸ Ted Dagne, ‘Somalia: Current Conditions and Prospects for a Lasting Peace’ (*Congressional Research Service*, 2011) <<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33911.pdf>> accessed 27 February 2019

Finally, this case involves an unusual proxy force – the international AMISOM coalition – that further sheds light on the efficacy of various types of proxies.

4) Literature Review

The extant literature generally identifies the conflict in Somalia as a proxy war between regional state actors. A substantial body of literature considers the Somali conflict in the context of regional dynamics, specifically, Ethiopia and Eritrea including Lorton, Lata, Kendie, and Bereketeab.⁴⁷⁹ Abbink studies the phenomenon of proxy war throughout the Horn of Africa region, attributing it to the multiplicity of alliances both among regional actors and outside superpowers.⁴⁸⁰

Others consider the interaction of the United States' involvement in this proxy conflict. While Lyons characterizes the conflict in Somalia as war by regional proxies, he goes further, arguing that the regional conflict in the Horn of Africa has been "skewed additionally" by Washington's Global War on Terror. Lyons argues that resolution of this conflict requires a consideration of domestic political processes, regional dynamics and international policies.⁴⁸¹

Lyman also considers the United States' proxy involvement in Somalia in the context of the war

⁴⁷⁹Fiona Lorton, 'Africa Watch – The Ethiopia-Eritrea Conflict: A Fragile Peace' (2000) 9 *African Security Review*; Leenco Lata, 'The Ethiopia-Eritrea War' (2003) 97 *Review of African Political Economy*; Daniel Kendie, 'Toward Northeast African Cooperation: Resolving the Ethiopia-Somalia Disputes' (2003) 10 *Northeast African Studies* 67-109; Redie Bereketeab, *The Horn Of Africa* (Pluto Press 2013).

⁴⁸⁰John Abbink, 'Ethiopia – Eritrea: proxy wars and prospects of peace in the horn of Africa' (2003) 21 *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*

⁴⁸¹Terrence Lyons, 'The Ethiopia–Eritrea Conflict and the Search for Peace in the Horn of Africa' (2009) 36 *Review of African Political Economy*

on terror, drawing parallels with our involvement in the Middle East post-9/11.⁴⁸²

Interestingly, while many consider Somalia to be a proxy for regional powers, literature positing that one of those key regional powers – Ethiopia – is itself a proxy for the United States is far more limited, with most such studies pertaining to events prior to the Global War on Terror. Writing in the 1980s, Luckham and Bekele consider the militarization of the Horn of Africa as part of the struggle for world hegemony between the United States and Soviet Union during the Cold War.⁴⁸³ Thomas and Mazrui's examination of the post-Cold War demilitarization in the Horn is also relevant to this study of early US proxy intervention in the region.⁴⁸⁴

The much-smaller body of literature examining Washington's more recent proxy involvement in the Horn of Africa characterizes it as fundamentally non-strategic, short-term, and therefore antithetical to local and regional stability. As Prunier argues, US covert involvement in Somalia became a self-fulfilling prophecy that gave rise to further bad actors in the region.⁴⁸⁵ Similarly, Malito finds that Somalia has become a front in the Global War on Terror, leading to increased political polarization and military radicalization within Somalia.⁴⁸⁶ Relatedly, Verhoeven argues that Washington's "Orthodox Narrative" of failed states blinded policymakers to the perception of players on the ground, leading to sub-optimal and preventable

⁴⁸² Princeton Lyman, 'The War On Terrorism In Africa', *Africa in World Politics* (5th edn, Westview Press 2013)

⁴⁸³ Robin Luckham and Dawit Bekele, 'Capital vs. Labour in West Africa' (1984) 31 *Review of African Political Economy* 7-28

⁴⁸⁴ Darryl Thomas and Ali Mazrui, 'Sub-Saharan Africa: Dilemmas in Political and Economic Development' (1992) 46 *Journal of International Affairs* 157-174

⁴⁸⁵ Gerard Prunier and Barbara Wilson, 'A World of Conflict since 9/11: The CIA Coup in Somalia' (2006) 33 *Review of African Political Economy*

⁴⁸⁶ Deborah Valentina Malito, 'Building terror while fighting enemies: how the Global War on Terror deepened the crisis in Somalia' (2015) 36 *Third World Quarterly*

outcomes.⁴⁸⁷ Elmi similarly finds US policy toward Somalia, particularly its overblown concerns about security threats, as flawed and counterproductive.⁴⁸⁸

Others explore the non-security implications of the United States' proxy reliance upon Ethiopia. Odinga posits that the vast power asymmetry between Ethiopia and the United States has created a situation in which Ethiopia has "routinely dictated and policed the terms" of their partnership, while wringing substantial political concessions for Washington, particularly on human rights.⁴⁸⁹ Carmody posits that post-9/11 militarization of the region by the United States is eclipsing an earlier, more consent-based Gramscian strategy of hegemony. He suggests that this more overt coercion may produce short-term security gains but has engendered increased popular resentment and resistance that ultimately undermines Washington's security goals.⁴⁹⁰ Muller's critique of the Obama Administration's concessions to Ethiopia regarding human rights also is highly relevant.⁴⁹¹ This last concern regarding the cost of America's security-focused proxy partnerships to our values will be deeply discussed in this thesis.

Menkhaus diagnoses the failure of the US proxy intervention in Somalia as stemming from a vast gulf between realities on the ground and the set of assumptions upon which Washington's aid and diplomatic policies were based.⁴⁹² Menkhaus' thesis is highly relevant to this thesis in its study of the gap between Washington's policy process regarding proxy wars and

⁴⁸⁷ Harry Verhoeven, 'The self-fulfilling prophecy of failed states: Somalia, state collapse and the Global War on Terror' (2009) 3 *Journal of East African Studies*

⁴⁸⁸ Afyare Abdi Elmi, 'Understanding The Somalia Conflagration' (Pluto Press 2010)

⁴⁸⁹ Subukwe Odinga, '“We recommend compliance”: bargaining and leverage in Ethiopian–US intelligence cooperation' (2017) 44 *Review of African Political Economy*

⁴⁹⁰ Pádraig Carmody, 'Transforming Globalization and Security: Africa and America Post-9/11' (2005) 22 *Africa Today* 97-120

⁴⁹¹ Tanja Muller, 'Representing Eritrea: geopolitics and narratives of oppression' (2016) 43 *Review of African Political Economy* 658-667

⁴⁹² Ken Menkhaus, 'Somalia: They Created a Desert and Called it Peace(building)' (2009) 36 *Review of African Political Economy*

the realities of those relationships.

This thesis makes significant contributions to the understanding of that gap, and also explores the relative success of later stages of American and international involvement in Somalia, which are largely overlooked in the literature, with the notable exception of Healy.⁴⁹³

5) Typicality

Somalia represents a fairly typical case within the larger context of American proxies around the world. It exhibits three of the four factors by which this thesis judges typicality, namely:

- a) Somalia exhibits a lack of transparent, liberal government. Indeed, this is true to an almost peerless extreme. In Transparency International's most recent global assessment of good governance, Somalia was ranked 175th of the 177 countries judged.⁴⁹⁴
- b) Somalia is the site of a pressing United States security concern, as exhibited by the language of officials describing the al Shabaab threat.

⁴⁹³Sally Healy, 'Seeking peace and security in the Horn of Africa: the contribution of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development' (2011) 87 *International Affairs* 105-120

⁴⁹⁴'Corruptions Perception Index' (*Transparency International*, 2013)
<<http://www.transparency.org/country#SOM>> accessed 27 February 2019

- c) Somalia, as the below discussion will reveal, has seen a high level of US investment in both the local government and non-government militias.
- d) Somalia may be atypical of the cases examined solely in failing to present a low level of public opinion of the United States in the surrounding region. US popularity in Africa is overall relatively high.⁴⁹⁵ Even one of the most iconic moments of perceived US failure in the country, the Battle of Mogadishu often referred to as the “Black Hawk Down” incident, may not have been to the significant detriment of public opinion in Africa.⁴⁹⁶ (This remains something of an open question, as tenuous security conditions in the country continue to render comprehensive public opinion studies difficult.) However, broader trends in public opinion aside, there is ample evidence that US proxy engagement in the country has inflamed anti-US sentiment within a number of Somalia’s fighting factions (see detailed discussion of al Shabaab *infra*).⁴⁹⁷

I therefore consider Somalia, with the above caveat, a largely *typical* example of an American proxy.

⁴⁹⁵ Matt Vasilogambros, ‘In a Global Popularity Contest, U.S. Beats ‘ (*National Journal*, 2013) <<https://web.archive.org/web/20141015145922/https://www.nationaljournal.com/nationalsecurity/in-a-global-popularity-contest-u-s-beats-china-20130718>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁴⁹⁶ Carolyn Logan, ‘US Public Opinion and the Intervention in Somalia: Lessons for the Future of Military-Humanitarian Interventions’ (1996) 20:2 *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*

⁴⁹⁷ See, e.g., discussion of ‘hated foreigners who were now guilty of ‘anti-Islamic’ behavior’ in James Fergusson, *The World's Most Dangerous Place* (Bantam 2013).

6) Typology

An additional question is how Somalia should be categorized within our typology of proxy forces, which hinges on distinctions between the defensive and offensive objectives of the force on the one hand, and its state or non-state composition on the other. This is a question that must be examined not just across the multiple, complex factions at play within Somalia (several of which have received US support) but also across the multiple time periods through which Somali-US relations shifted and took new form.

Somalia presents a complex challenge for this thesis's typology, consisting as it does of multiple, sometimes overlapping proxy forces, with complex composition and agendas. This is in part due to Somalia's intrinsic complexity – a complexity, indeed, that makes it resistant to most classification, however flexible. However, Somalia also illustrates the typology's usefulness in parsing basic distinctions in such complex cases.

SOMALIA PROXY TYPOLOGY:

	DEFENSIVE	OFFENSIVE
STATE	- Siad Barre regime, 1969-1991	- Ethiopian military during invasion and occupation, 2006-2007

	- AMISOM, 2007- Present*	- AMISOM, 2007- Present*
NON-STATE		- CIA-backed warlords, approx. 2004-2006

*Present in both defensive and offensive categories. See AMISOM discussion, *infra*.

Looking at all recent historical periods in aggregate, I consider Somalia to have been utilized chiefly as an offensive proxy force.⁴⁹⁸ This is increasingly true in the years following September 11, 2001. In most of the periods examined, the United States focused its support on state, rather than non-state actors (though the state actors are extraordinarily diverse and not limited to the Somali government itself).⁴⁹⁹ I will substantiate that analysis for each of the historical periods discussed below.

7) The Evolution of Somalia as a Locus of Proxy War

d) America's early experiments in Somalia

⁴⁹⁸ That is, one cultivated to combat a specific enemy or challenge.

⁴⁹⁹ For the purposes of this analysis, I consider the aggregated AMISOM force to be a State actor, as it consists entirely of state militaries, rather than non-state militias.

In some respects, Somalia's legacy has been entwined with proxy warfare for the entirety of the modern era. As early as the last half of the 19th century, Somalia was a battleground for colonial powers including Britain, France, and Italy.⁵⁰⁰ The longest standing of those powers was Britain, which based its operations around the strategically significant northern Somali coastline, and Italy, which had broader aspirations for control of the country.⁵⁰¹ Independence came later, in 1960, following ten years of UN administration and the unification of British and Italian territories. The fledgling nation was quickly drawn into cold war tensions, rejecting an offer of 6.5 million pounds in military assistance in favour of one valued at 11 million pounds from Russia.⁵⁰² The transition to an independent Somali government was bloodless, but quickly inspired malcontent, especially after the country's first democratically elected government (the Somali Youth League, elected in 1969) became a symbol of corruption and government excess. Six months into that government's tenure, the army initiated a largely non-violent coup, installing General Mohammad Siad Barre as President.⁵⁰³ General Siad Barre brought with him a Soviet-inspired socialist ideology and a new influx of arms and funding from his allies in the Soviet Union. During a secret meeting between Henry Kissinger and Somali officials in New York in October 1976 (since declassified), Kissinger accuses Minister of Mineral and Water Resources Hussein Abdulkadir Kassim of receiving "military equipment coming from the Soviet Union" and hosting "a soviet base."⁵⁰⁴ The United States, responding to those concerns, was at

⁵⁰⁰ I. M Lewis, *A Modern History Of The Somali* (Ohio University Press 2003) 40.

⁵⁰¹ Lewis (n496) 85.

⁵⁰² Ibid 201.

⁵⁰³ Ibid 206-207.

⁵⁰⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, New York, October 8, 1976, 3:45 p.m., National Archives, RG 59, Central Policy File, 1976, P820118-1722. Secret; Nodis.

the time pumping arms into Ethiopia, Somalia's rival in a bitter dispute over the Ethiopian-controlled but Somali-inhabited Ogaden region.⁵⁰⁵

Those allegiances shifted sharply the following year, in October 1977. A number of incidents, including Siad Barre's regime aiding a West German counter-terrorist unit responding to the hijacking of a Lufthansa flight at the Mogadishu airport, strained tensions with the Soviets to the breaking point. Within a month, Mogadishu and Moscow severed ties, with arms shipments ending and 6,000 Soviet military personnel evacuating the country's bases.⁵⁰⁶ Moscow instead began arming Ethiopia's Communist Derg regime. Siad Barre turned to Washington, which was cautious from the outset, resisting a full collaboration to match what Siad Barre had enjoyed with the Soviets. However, in the ensuing years, the United States gradually began providing military and economic aid in exchange for use of the port of Berbera on the Gulf of Aden,⁵⁰⁷ which America spent \$35 million upgrading to its own standards.⁵⁰⁸ The United States also gained some ability to direct Siad Barre's behaviour. Following intense discussions between the United States and Somalia, Siad Barre announced that he would admit defeat in the conflict with Ethiopia and withdraw all troops from the contested Ogaden region. He attributed the move to American requests.⁵⁰⁹ Using US military assistance, Siad Barre expanded his army into one of the largest in the region.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ I. M Lewis, *A Modern History Of The Somali* (Ohio University Press 2003) 235.

⁵⁰⁷ George James, 'Somalia's Overthrown Dictator, Mohammed Siad Barre, is Dead' (*New York Times*, 1995) <<http://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/03/obituaries/somalia-s-overthrown-dictator-mohammed-siad-barre-is-dead.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁰⁸ Fergusson, James, *The World's Most Dangerous Place: Inside the Outlaw State of Somalia*, Da Capo Press. Kindle Edition. 2013-05-28, page 56.

⁵⁰⁹ I. M Lewis, *A Modern History Of The Somali* (Ohio University Press 2003) 238.

⁵¹⁰ James Fergusson, *The World's Most Dangerous Place* (Bantam 2013) 56.

Military assistance from the United States helped secure Siad Barre's rule, but it also inflamed feelings of resentment among competing Somali clans. Uprisings became increasingly commonplace.⁵¹¹ Siad Barre used his military might to increasingly repressive effect. His efforts to purge opposition in the 1980s led to a "campaign of terror and intimidation on a frightened citizenry."⁵¹² The CIA, in its public appraisal of Barre's regime, describes human rights violations including "the persecution, jailing, and torture of political opponents and dissidents."⁵¹³

Here again the United States exercised caution, significantly throttling military assistance. Washington continued providing Somalia only with annual shipments of basic defensive equipment, valued at \$8.7 million – a stark contrast to the \$47 million in military assistance Siad Barre lobbied for at the time.⁵¹⁴ With foreign assistance shrinking, Siad Barre's influence waned. He was finally ousted from the country in a 1991 uprising of warlords from competing clans.⁵¹⁵

Meanwhile, the combined military assistance from the United States and other foreign interests – like Ethiopia and Libya's Muammar Gaddafi – had saturated Somalia with weaponry.⁵¹⁶ When the fractious clans that had seized Mogadishu from Siad Barre began fighting, Somalia descended into bloody anarchy.⁵¹⁷ Mogadishu became an incoherent maze of roadblocks dividing territories controlled by warlords. International attempts to intervene to

⁵¹¹ 'Roots of The Crisis' (*Enough Project*, 2009) <http://www.enoughproject.org/conflict_areas/somalia/roots-crisis> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵¹² *Somalia, A Country Study* (For sale by the Supt of Docs, US GPO 1993).

⁵¹³ 'Somalia' (*CIA World Fact Book*) <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵¹⁴ I. M Lewis, *A Modern History Of The Somali* (Ohio University Press 2003) 249.

⁵¹⁵ Enough Project (n506)

⁵¹⁶ James Fergusson, *The World's Most Dangerous Place* (Bantam 2013) 56.

⁵¹⁷ CIA World Fact Book (n508)

protect humanitarian interests ended in spectacular failure,⁵¹⁸ as in the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu, in which two American Black Hawk helicopters were shot down and several American servicemen were killed. The incident traumatized American officials and onlookers around the world alike and precipitated the complete withdrawal of Western forces.

While outside of our focus on the period after September 11, 2001, this early dabbling in military support for Somali forces is instructive in several respects. It serves as essential background for ensuing relationships. It also provides a counterpoint: a more cautious approach to proxy warfare, distinguishable from later attempts in several respects.

First, US military support in this case had narrow parameters and a focused goal: stemming the spread of Soviet influence in the region. That goal was defensive – aimed at stalling influence rather than initiating a new conflict. In large part, the relationship achieved its goal, preventing Soviet control of key coast territory during its peak years.⁵¹⁹

Second, the costs expected to arise from the relationship were limited – significant but highly controlled annual payments to Siad Barre’s regime, coupled with ancillary costs to upgrade and use Somali bases. And, at least prior to 1991, there were no additional ballooning costs, either economically or in terms of US lives lost.

By contrast, subsequent collaborations were undertaken with far more specific, and ambitious, tactical goals, and far more potential for unpredictable costs.

⁵¹⁸ Lewis (n59) 273.

⁵¹⁹ There are several caveats to that seeming success story. This analysis does not account for hidden costs linked to these early years but not apparent until later years, during subsequent relationships. It also does not account for the costs to the Somali people. The extensive human rights violations undertaken by Siad Barre’s forces prior to the cessation of US military assistance present a strong argument that those costs were present, and high.

e) The Warlords, 2004-2006

Following the “Black Hawk Down” debacle of 1993, America abandoned Somalia to lawlessness and brutality. Life in a Mogadishu carved up amongst violent warlords was crushing. Basic civic services are hard to come by. Those Somalis who didn’t flee the country needed an alternative.

Over the ensuing decade, only one alternative to the warlords emerged: the Sharia courts, which gained strength and became increasingly formalized in the early 2000s. Funded and armed by Ethiopia’s regional rival, Eritrea, the courts began to band together during that time, but Islamist groups had existed in Somalia since the early 1980s.⁵²⁰ One of the earliest Islamist groups in Somalia, the al Itihaad al Islamiya (AIAI), first militarized immediately following Siad Barre’s ouster in 1991.⁵²¹ But Islamist groups had historically been marginalized and poorly organized. With the advent of warlord rule in the 1990s, these groups found a *raison d’être* and mounting popular support.⁵²² This was the moment that set the stage for al Shabaab’s later rise to power.⁵²³

In the wake of the 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania – and, more acutely, the 9/11 attacks – the ICU became a point of obsession for American leaders. But there was a problem: according to Africa experts fluent in the region’s complex dynamics, there was little basis for making Somalia a focal point in America’s newfound war on terror. “There was a feeling here after 9/11 that Somalia might become

⁵²⁰ Jeremy Scahill, *Dirty Wars* (Nation Books 2013) 192.

⁵²¹ Roland Marchal ‘A Tentative Assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab’ (2010) 3:3 *Journal of East African Studies*, 2010.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia* (Oxford University Press, 2014) 18.

the next Afghanistan. That it would become a terrorist training ground, a new source of support for global terrorism,” Princeton Lyman, who held two ambassadorships in Africa and was President Obama’s special envoy to Sudan, told me. “Really, Somalia didn’t lend itself to that.”⁵²⁴ In 2002, analyst Ken Menkhaus, who served as a counterterrorism consultant at the State Department and the UN, estimated that fewer than a dozen Somali nationals had “significant links” to al Qaeda. “There’s no need to be rushing into Somalia,” one retired American diplomat, David Shinn, agreed. But the United States military and intelligence communities became bent on toppling the courts. Direct intervention was a political nonstarter, in the shadow of the Black Hawk incident. And so, another covert proxy war took form. The solution was an old standby: cultivating new proxy forces where old ones had failed.⁵²⁵

By 2004, the CIA was quietly approaching warlords perceived to be secular and offering them alliances in exchange for counterterrorism cooperation.⁵²⁶ For the next two years, the agency financed clan leaders and warlords across Somalia. Run out of the CIA station in Nairobi, the operation was a small-scale proxy war. Pockets lined with US dollars, the warlords were expected to battle the ICU and suspected militants, regardless of whether or not they truly had ties to al Qaeda. The operation broadened until “eventually there was a group of about a dozen militia leaders who came together with United States support,” recalled Matthew Bryden, who

⁵²⁴ Interview with Princeton Lyman, decd, United States Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs in 1996-1998 (27 February 2017)

⁵²⁵ Karl Vick, ‘Al Qaeda Ally in Somalia is in Tatters’ (*Washington Post*, 2002) https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2002/02/24/al-qaeda-ally-in-somalia-is-in-tatters/4a0dd409-2bbf-4e76-8131-0a5c9e78e86a/?utm_term=.e6e20c5fc959 accessed 27 February 2019

⁵²⁶ Somali warlord Yusuf Mohammed Siad ‘told me he was first approached by the CIA in Dubai in 2004’ Jeremy Scahill, *Dirty Wars* (Nation Books 2013) 192.

headed a United Nations group monitoring the flow of arms in the region.⁵²⁷ The US-backed warlords were even given a PR-friendly title: The Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counterterrorism, with an acronym unwieldy enough to make any government bureaucracy proud, ARPCT. The strategy was much the same as the agency's embrace of Northern Alliance warlords in Afghanistan: These, ostensibly, were the better guys, if not the good guys. If they weren't secular, at least they were more secular than the alternative.

To say the Somali warlords came with complications would be an understatement. Ironically, many of them had fought American forces in the streets of Mogadishu in 1993.⁵²⁸ Some, like Yusuf Mohammed Siad – known on the battlefield as “White Eyes,” or, for those who recalled his reign of terror capturing swaths of Somalia in the 1990s, “The Butcher” – were for years closely allied with al Qaeda. When Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, the notorious terrorist behind the 1998 bombings in Tanzania and Kenya, sought refuge from the CIA, it was White Eyes who gave him safe haven. After 9/11, he became a voluble source of anti-American sentiment. Nevertheless, he has claimed, in press interviews, that the CIA approached him during that very same period. “They offered me money, they offered me funding for the region I was controlling,” he said in 2011.⁵²⁹ At the time, he refused.

Other advances were successful, however. Mohamed Afrah Qanyare was approached in late 2002 by CIA agents seeking the benefits of his private airport near Mogadishu, and his 1,500-strong militia. American military and intelligence officials

⁵²⁷ Interview with Matthew Bryden, Coordinator for the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea (SEMG) in 2008-2012 (11 January 2014)

⁵²⁸ ‘We fought some of these warlords in 1993 and now we are dealing with some of them again,’ Ted Dagne, the leading Africa analyst for the Congressional Research Service, as quoted in Emily Wax and Karen DeYoung, ‘US Secretly Backing Warlords in Somalia’ (Washington Post, 2006) <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/16/AR2006051601625.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵²⁹ Jeremy Scahill, ‘Blowback in Somalia’ (*Nation*, 2011) <<https://www.thenation.com/article/blowback-somalia>> accessed 27 February 2019

sealed the deal in 2003, kicking off a series of regular meetings and a pricey friendship – by Qanyare’s estimation, \$100,000 to \$150,000 a month, for the use of the airport and, ostensibly, the loyalty of his men. Qanyare was among several warlords who, either at the behest of CIA officials or with their tacit understanding, began undertaking capture-and-kill operations of supposed Islamic terrorists.⁵³⁰ Sometimes, the targets of the warlords’ operations were simply executed. Other times, they were rendered into US custody, as in the case of Suleiman Ahmed Hemed Salim, who was transferred from Somalia to a series of prisons in Afghanistan.

Jendayi Frazer, America’s Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs during the second George W. Bush administration, says that the civilian government outside of the intelligence community inherited the proxy relationships from the CIA with little opportunity for input. “CIA action in Somalia in 2002 [through] 2005 was in a restricted channel and not subject to very much inter-agency⁵³¹ discussion or debate,” she explains. When the relationships finally did see high-level inter-agency discussion, through Richard A. Clarke’s Counter-Terrorism Security Group at the National Security Council (NSC), it was “very much a surprise to everyone in the inter-agency other than the agency that may have been doing it and the US Embassy in Nairobi.” The “agency that may have been doing it,” rendered obliquely due to concerns about confidentiality, was the CIA. “Just to be blunt with you,” Frazer continues on the subject of the Agency, “I think they raised it to that NSC group in a way that ensured no one knew what they were talking about. So they could claim we knew.” When the warlord relationships came fully to

⁵³⁰ Jeremy Scahill, ‘Blowback in Somalia’ (*Nation*, 2011) <<https://www.thenation.com/article/blowback-somalia>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵³¹ That is, the aggregation of United States government agencies.

light, Frazer recalls she and others in the inter-agency reacted with a confused query of “so that’s what you were talking about!?”⁵³²

Still, once the support for warlords came to light, Frazer and others in the diplomatic chain of command began defending it. Diplomatic cables from 2006, released by WikiLeaks, describe a policy of using “non-traditional liaison partners (e.g., militia leaders)” in Somalia to “locat[e] and nullif[y] high value targets.”⁵³³ A State Department official, sidestepping questions about America’s mounting support for warlords, conceded that the US was “work[ing] with responsible individuals...in fighting terror. It’s a real concern of ours, terror taking root in the Horn of Africa. We don’t want to see another safe haven for terrorists.”⁵³⁴

That support, initially targeted at a few select warlords, broadened until “eventually there was a group of about a dozen militia leaders who came together, with the United States’ support, to form the Alliance for Peace Restoration and Counterterrorism,” says Matthew Bryden, who headed the United Nations Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea’s efforts to monitor the flow of arms in the region and has reported on Somalia for the International Crisis Group (ICG).

⁵³⁵ The public relations-friendly title of the new alliance, some Somalia commentators felt, betrayed the extent of Washington’s role in its creation.⁵³⁶

⁵³² Interview with Jendayi Frazer, United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in 2005-2009 (January 12, 2014)

⁵³³ US diplomatic cable 06NAIROBI2425 from Ambassador William Bellamy, US Embassy Nairobi, as quoted in: ‘Somalia: A Strategy for Engagement’ (*WikiLeaks*, 2006) accessed 27 February 2019

⁵³⁴ Emily Wax and Karen DeYoung, ‘US Secretly Backing Warlords in Somalia’ (*Washington Post*, 2006) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/16/AR2006051601625_2.html> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵³⁵ Interview with Matthew Bryden, Coordinator for the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea (SEMG) in 2008-2012 (11 January 2014)

⁵³⁶ ‘Thus was born a US-funded coalition of warlords who would serve as Washington’s men in Somalia. Its eventual name reeked of the Agency’s involvement...’ Jeremy Scahill, *Dirty Wars* (Nation Books 2013) 120.

This new American proxy force – ironically, consisting of many of the same warlords who fought American forces in the streets of Mogadishu in 1993⁵³⁷ – was charged with furnishing intelligence⁵³⁸ and eliminating high-value targets within⁵³⁹ Islamic extremist groups.

There were two problems with the strategy. The first was that the warlords had, by the mid-2000s, become deeply unpopular across Somalia. Ordinary Somalis said they welcomed signs of American interest in their country after perceived years of neglect, but “not to back warlords.”⁵⁴⁰ The capture-and-kill operations – often targeting imams and local prayer leaders without apparent links to international terrorist concerns – enflamed Islamist sentiment. “It’s a time bomb,” the mayor of Mogadishu said of American support for the warlords. “They are waiting, they want to weaken the government, and they are waiting any time that the government falls, so that each one will grab an area.” Meanwhile, officials in Somalia’s nominal transitional government expressed panic. Then-President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmad “wondered aloud why the US would want to start an open war in Mogadishu [due to support for warlords]” during a meeting with US Ambassador William M. Bellamy, recounted in a diplomatic cable from Nairobi and later released by WikiLeaks.⁵⁴¹ The United States was, in terms of popularity, betting on the losing team.

⁵³⁷ “We fought some of these warlords in 1993 and now we are dealing with some of them again.” Ted Dagne, the leading Africa analyst for the Congressional Research Service, as quoted by Wax and DeYoung (n529).

⁵³⁸ Wax and DeYoung (n529)

⁵³⁹ ‘The United States attempted to use warlords to kill members of the [al Qaeda] network [in East Africa].’ Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia* (Oxford University Press, 2014)

⁵⁴⁰ Emily Wax and Karen DeYoung, ‘US Secretly Backing Warlords in Somalia’ (Washington Post, 2006) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/16/AR2006051601625_2.html> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁴¹ US diplomatic cable 06NAIROBI1484, from Ambassador William M. Bellamy, US Embassy Nairobi, as quoted in ‘Ambassador to Yusuf: Alliance Against Terror Not Directed at TFG’ (WikiLeaks, 2006) <<http://wikileaks.org/cable/2006/04/06NAIROBI1484.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

The second was that the United States misjudged the perceived threat from Islamist elements within Somalia at the time. While extremists with an agenda of jihad existed within the Islamic Courts system, they were a minority without much influence. The ICU even appeared to have a stabilizing effect. The courts could be brutally conservative, amputating the limbs of thieves, stoning adulterers to death, and declaring sports illegal acts of Satanism. But they also evinced little extremist ambition beyond maintaining Islamic law within Somalia.⁵⁴² Clerics with broader aspirations of jihad were a minority without much influence. Of the 97 courts, just nine were under al-Shabaab control.⁵⁴³ Under ICU rule, ports and airports were opened for the first time in years.⁵⁴⁴ Predominantly, the courts were oriented around goals of domestic stability, with “a reputation for keeping things safe, of rehabilitating bad kids and teaching them Quran and turning them into good citizens.”⁵⁴⁵ This ill-fated backing of the warlords is a powerful example of Prunier’s thesis.⁵⁴⁶

Even within the United States government, there was sharp dissent, with civilian channels pushing back on a CIA and Pentagon push to back the warlords. Diplomats who pushed back on the use of the warlords were quashed quickly. Michael Zorick, a political officer at the US embassy in Nairobi, filed a dissent cable on the subject and was promptly reassigned to Chad, a move that was widely perceived as punishment for asking too many questions.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴²Alexis Okeowo, ‘The Fight Over Women’s Basketball in Somalia’ (*New Yorker*, 2017) <<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/09/11/the-fight-over-womens-basketball-in-somalia>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁴³Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia* (Oxford University Press, 2014) 36.

⁵⁴⁴‘Mogadishu’s Port Reopened,’ (*Al Jazeera*, 2006)

⁵⁴⁵Interview with Matthew Bryden, Coordinator for the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea (SEMG) in 2008-2012 (11 January 2014)

⁵⁴⁶Gerard Prunier and Barbara Wilson, ‘A World of Conflict since 9/11: The CIA Coup in Somalia’ (2006) 33:110 *Review of African Political Economy*

⁵⁴⁷Bradley Graham and Karen DeYoung, ‘Official Critical of Somalia Policy is Transferred’ (*Washington Post*, 2006), <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/30/AR2006053001203.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

Yet, Washington was adamant about staying the course, even going as far to quietly destroy regional peace efforts that could jeopardize its covert operations. In 2004, Somalia's neighbours came together in an intensive diplomatic effort to create an alternative to either the warlords or the courts. At that point, Somalia's new transitional government presented a glimmer of hope, but it had little control beyond a few blocks of Mogadishu, and little ability to counteract the strongmen the US had empowered. And so, the members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) – a regional trade bloc that included Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda – met in October 2004 and issued a unanimous call for African troops to deploy to Somalia, to ensure that the fledgling government stayed intact. Two months later, representatives from the transitional government, UN, African Union, European Union, and Arab states met in Kenya to discuss a plan for the mission. By the early months of 2005, the AU was on board, with heads of state adopting a resolution welcoming a “peace support mission.” The UN Security Council formally backed it by the end of the year.

Tekeda Alemu, a veteran Ethiopian diplomat who was involved in the negotiations, felt that a regional peacekeeping force could have averted disaster. “I was the head of the Ethiopian delegation,” he told me. “And we accepted the proposal unanimously.” He noted that even Ethiopia's bitter regional rival, Eritrea, cooperated. “At that point, it was no problem with the US,” he said. “The problem would come later.”⁵⁴⁸

The “problem” was that, by the time the African nations began their effort to protect the transitional government from the warlords, the United States had already bet on the other side. The CIA and the Pentagon were fixated on the singular goal of destroying the Islamist threat, perceived or actual. Broader diplomatic initiatives in the region were a fly

⁵⁴⁸ Interview with Tekeda Alemu, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations (10 March 2017)

in the ointment, or, worse, a potential source of opposition to the factions with which the United States was working. Nominally, the American policy – articulated by State Department officials like Frazer – was noncommittal. But behind closed doors, the United States began waging a diplomatic battle to sabotage the deployment of peacekeepers.

In early 2005, the international peacekeeping force was, after months of intense negotiation, essentially ready to go. The United States quietly pushed back – often through State Department officials, but enforcing policy that was, at its root, designed by the intelligence community. In February 2005, diplomat Marc Meznar, who represented the Population Refugees and Migration bureau at the American embassy in Brussels, met with an EU official, Mark Boucey, to make it clear that the United States would oppose the peacekeeping effort. At the time, an EU team was in Nairobi conducting fact-finding in support of the initiative and was scheduled to travel to Mogadishu to help advance the international force several days later. Shortly after the meeting with Boucey, the EU team cancelled the Mogadishu trip. The Pentagon worked its relationships as well: US deputy assistant secretary of defence for Africa Theresa Whelan met with an EU official named Matthew Reece, who subsequently declared the peacekeeping initiative the EU had once backed a “wildcat plan.”

In the end, when international support for the operation had largely coalesced, all that remained was for an arms embargo on Somalia, imposed in 1992, to be lifted to allow the peacekeeping force to train soldiers. At the eleventh hour, the United States threw a wrench in the proceedings, sending a terse statement to the Council of Ministers from the regional players about to commit forces. “We do not plan to fund the deployment of IGAD troops in Somalia and are not prepared to support a UN Security Council mandate for

IGAD deployment,” it read. Later, the United States publicly threatened to veto any initiative to bring peacekeepers to Somalia. The effort, finally, foundered.⁵⁴⁹

Colonel Rick Orth, the US defence attaché at the time, explained the US opposition plainly: “We didn’t want to divert into this tertiary sideshow.”⁵⁵⁰ Since at least a few of the ICU leaders had historic ties to al Qaeda, “the agency was running ops to go after selected individuals...it was not an effort to have a broader solution, we were just going after more pointed targets.”⁵⁵¹

Tekeda Alemu, the Ethiopian diplomat, said US opposition to the plan was palpable from the beginning. “It was very clear,” he recalled. “They didn’t even want to look at whether the plan we had would work or not, was good or not. It was not given an opportunity...apparently, they had some plan,” he said of the Americans, “to capture a few people in Mogadishu [using] warlords who had cooperated with them. Therefore, they didn’t want anybody to spoil that...they had the project that they embraced and didn’t want to be adversely affected in any way. And that’s how superpowers behave.”⁵⁵²

US officials argued that there were legitimate reasons for their opposition. Lack of capacity among the African troop contributors was mentioned, as was cost. Above all, they argued that sending in so-called “frontline states” – direct neighbours to Somalia, such as Ethiopia – would enflame regional tensions.⁵⁵³ It was a canard: the plan already required that troops come from non-neighbouring countries. But the Americans argued that even indirect support from the Ethiopians would be viewed within Somalia as a power grab from

⁵⁴⁹ Opiyo Oloya, *Black Hawks Rising* (Helion 2016)

⁵⁵⁰ Interview with Colonel Richard Orth, United States Defense Attaché to Ethiopia and Djibouti in 2005-2006 (2 March 2017)

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Interview with Tekeda Alemu, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations (10 March 2017)

⁵⁵³ Opiyo Oloya, *Black Hawks Rising* (Helion 2016)

larger, stronger countries, and worsen the violence. It was a position that would, soon after, prove to be hypocritical.⁵⁵⁴

With no peacekeeping force in place to oppose the warlords, only the Islamic Courts Union served as a counterbalance. Predictably, the courts grew more popular and powerful, taking control of territories across Somalia between 2004 and 2006.⁵⁵⁵ The ICU's influence climaxed in Spring 2006, when, in several months of brutal fighting, ICU forces wrested control of Mogadishu from the US-backed warlords of the APRCT.⁵⁵⁶ The CIA's warlord proxies had, in the words of the New York Times coverage at the time, "backfired."⁵⁵⁷

"People started – the Mogadishu people – admiring this Islamic Court," explained Tekeda. "They were able to defeat a group of people, those warlords, who had been supported by a big power. And the Islamic Court began to be lionized. That's how they became very inflated, totally uncontrollable."⁵⁵⁸ According to Somalia's Prime Minister at the time, Ali Mohamed Gedi, the United States "stimulated the Islamic Courts people by supporting the warlords" and "the whole mess started from that point."⁵⁵⁹

America's support for Somali warlords was a marked departure from its earlier experiments in limited collaborations with state actors. The warlords were, for one thing, an "offensive" proxy force, recruited by their US handlers with the explicit mandate to mount an

⁵⁵⁴ 'US Opposes Somalia Troops Deployment, Threatens Veto' (*Panapress*, 2005) <<http://www.panapress.com/US-opposes-Somalia-troops-deployment,-threatens-veto--12-564668-32-lang4-index.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁶ Mark Mazzetti, 'US Signals Backing for Ethiopian Incursion Into Somalia' (*New York Times*, 2006) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/27/world/africa/27africa.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁸ Interview with Tekeda Alemu, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations (10 March 2017)

⁵⁵⁹ Jeremy Scahill, *Dirty Wars: The World Is a Battlefield* (Nation Books 2013) 193.

attack on high-value terrorist targets feared by the United States.⁵⁶⁰ Their non-state status brought further challenges: this time, the United States was attempting to tame a fractious, snarled mass of collaborators with conflicting interests and ambitions and complex histories.

The United States entered its collaboration with the APRCT warlords with a higher expected cost. According to the estimates of the International Crisis Group, which liaised with contacts within the APRCT during the period at issue, warlords in the APRCT received as much as \$150,000 a month from the United States.⁵⁶¹ But far more significant were the unexpected costs. These were predominantly political, in the form of simmering resentments against the United States and, eventually, the precipitation of the Islamic Courts Union takeover – the very eventuality that support for the warlords was intended to prevent.

I therefore consider the US use of warlords in the period at issue to be a *costly* example of proxy usage, failing to effectuate several stated goals and carrying inflated, hidden downsides that would require subsequent interventions.

The episode reveals a marked shift in America's posture between the end of the Siad Barre regime and the September 11th, 2001 attacks a decade later. In the former case, America proceeded cautiously in both its slowness to initiate support and the swiftness with which it withdrew that support. It was receptive to reports of abuses and bad behaviour by the proxy force and adapted to those reports. By contrast, America's dealings with Somali warlords were conducted with an aggressive bent, and under the veil of intense secrecy, preventing such public dialogue. When critiques did begin to leak and circulate, they were dispatched quickly, as with the firing of Michael Zorick. Indeed, America went to extreme lengths to quash any efforts to

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid 193.

⁵⁶¹ Mark Lacey, 'Somali Islamists Declare Victory; Warlords on Run' (*New York Times*, 2006) <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/06/world/africa/06somaliam.html?pagewanted=all>> accessed 27 February 2019

interfere with its new strategy, even going so far as to thwart widely-backed and nearly unprecedented regional and international efforts that had a high likelihood of success. This was a new America for a new age.

f) Ethiopia, 2006-2007

The takeover of the Islamic Courts Union changed everything for the United States. “I did not believe immediately after 9/11 that there was an Al Qaeda threat in Somalia,” Jendayi Frazer recalls. “My thinking evolved when the Islamic Courts Union took over Mogadishu.”⁵⁶²

The Islamic Courts Union’s rule presented a double-edged sword for Somalia, and in turn the United States. On the one hand it brought with it a repressive implementation of Sharia law. And while the extremists of al Shabaab controlled only a handful of the courts⁵⁶³, the United States began to view the entire Courts Union as an extremist threat. While Frazer acknowledges that the ICU was a “diverse group” that included “women, academics, and university professors,” she repeatedly characterizes it in extremist terms without regard for that acknowledgement. On one occasion, she refers to the period “after al Shabaab routed those warlords,” before catching her error and conceding “well, not Shabaab but the Islamic Union,” a slip that speaks volumes about the United States’ reluctance to acknowledge the ICU’s moderate elements.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶² Interview with Jendayi Frazer, United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in 2005-2009 (January 12, 2014)

⁵⁶³ *Id* 58.

⁵⁶⁴ Interview with Jendayi Frazer, United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in 2005-2009 (January 12, 2014)

That perception was complicated by the fact that Islamic Courts Union was proving to be a significant source of stability – the first Somalia had seen in more than a decade. ICU leaders removed the maze of roadblocks that had divided Mogadishu, and ended the taxes levied by warlords for passage between parts of town.⁵⁶⁵ They reopened ports and the airport.⁵⁶⁶ The capital felt “safer,” by many accounts.⁵⁶⁷ Even American diplomatic cables at the time acknowledged gains made in humanitarian access under ICU rule.⁵⁶⁸

Simiyu Werunga, who worked on counterterrorism operations during his tenure as a Kenyan military official and now advises regional governments as director of the African Centre for Security and Strategic Studies in Nairobi, says the ICU was “making progress in stabilizing the Somali country. He argues that the United States “should have taken a bit of time to understand how the Islamic Courts Union was performing and talk to...governments in the region before they made the move to dismantle the Islamic Union.”⁵⁶⁹⁵⁷⁰⁵⁷¹

ICU leaders at first attempted conciliation with the United States, describing their agenda as peaceful⁵⁷² and “invit[ing] an investigative team from the United Nations to make sure that

⁵⁶⁵ Mohammed Olad Hassan, ‘Life Under Somalia’s Islamists’ (*BBC News*, 2006)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5168008.stm> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁶⁶ ‘Mogadishu’s Port Reopened’ (*Al Jazeera*, 2006)

⁵⁶⁷ Xan Rice, ‘Mogadishu’s Miracle: Peace in the World’s Most Lawless City’ (*Guardian*, 2006) <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/jun/26/mainsection.international11>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁶⁸ US diplomatic cable 06NAIROBI3441, from Economic Counselor John F. Hoover, US Embassy Nairobi, as quoted in ‘Horn of Africa, State-USAID Humanitarian Cable Update Number 8’ (*WikiLeaks*, 2006) <<http://wikileaks.org/cable/2006/08/06NAIROBI3441.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁶⁹ Interview with Simiyu Werunga, Director, African Centre for Security and Strategic Studies (Nairobi, 14 December 2013)

⁵⁷⁰ See also: Jeremy Scahill, *Dirty Wars* (Nation Books 2013)

⁵⁷¹ Interview with former senior State Department official, conducted under condition of anonymity (15 January, 2014)

⁵⁷² Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, ‘The Union of Islamic Courts in Mogadishu Break the Silence’ (*Hiiraan Online*, 2006) <https://www.hiiraan.com/news/2006/jun/somali_news6_7.aspx> accessed 27 February 2019

international terrorists do not use the region” as a safe haven.⁵⁷³ The United States remained unconvinced. UN officials at the time reported based on meetings with American counterparts that the latter would “not allow” the ICU to remain in power.⁵⁷⁴

Shortly after the defeat of the CIA-allied warlords, the Pentagon began devising another plan to force out the ICU. Still allergic to direct intervention, the Americans turned to their long-standing ally – and Somalia’s regional rival – Ethiopia. The United States was Ethiopia’s largest donor. Thanks largely to American support, the country’s military was the most powerful in the region. The relationship between the two nations dates to the early days of the Cold War, as Luckham and Bekele and Thomas and Mazrui extensively document.⁵⁷⁵⁵⁷⁶ From the beginning, it has emphasized military cooperation. The Pentagon has extensively trained Ethiopian forces with the aim of producing a bulwark against regional security threats.⁵⁷⁷ Somalia, where local proxies had failed so spectacularly, was the ideal context in which to exploit Ethiopia’s strengths as a larger, regional proxy force.

American officials have long downplayed the closeness of the alliance. “That is not correct,” Frazer said of widespread reporting on the United States’ role in Ethiopia’s invasion of Somalia. “We never control what Ethiopia does. It has its own national interest.” Apparent plans to support the invasion were, she said “a matter of policy contingency [not] policy

⁵⁷³ US diplomatic cable 06NAIROBI2640, from Ambassador William Bellamy, US Embassy Nairobi, as quoted in ‘Islamist Advances, Prospects for Dialogue, but Still No Admission of the Al Qaida Presence,’ (*WikiLeaks*, 2006) <<http://wikileaks.org/cable/2006/06/06NAIROBI2640.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁷⁴ Mark Mazzetti, ‘US Signals Backing for Ethiopian Incursion Into Somalia’ (*New York Times*, 2006) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/27/world/africa/27africa.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁷⁵ Robin Luckham and Dawit Bekele, ‘Capital vs. Labour in West Africa’ (1984) 31 *Review of African Political Economy* 7-28; and Darryl Thomas and Ali Mazrui, ‘Sub-Saharan Africa: Dilemmas in Political and Economic Development’ (1992) 46 *Journal of International Affairs* 157-174

⁵⁷⁶ Sarah Jane Staats, ‘What Next for US Aid in Ethiopia’ (*Center for Global Development*, 2012) <<http://www.cgdev.org/blog/what-next-us-aid-ethiopia>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid* 70.

preference.”⁵⁷⁸ Military gains by the ICU, she claims, had crossed Ethiopia’s “red lines” too many times and by late 2006, “everyone [was] spoiling for a fight.”⁵⁷⁹ Other American policymakers echoed that claim. “It’s not like we had big NSC meetings saying, ‘Hey, why don’t we get the Ethiopian – ’ No, we didn’t. The Ethiopians did this,” General Hayden, the CIA director at the time, offered haltingly when I asked about the United States’ role in the invasion. He shrugged. “They had their reasons for doing it.” But even he conceded the move fit neatly with American objectives. “Given the chaos that was Somalia at the time,” he said, “this was certainly a near-term palliative that was very welcome.”⁵⁸⁰

However, many disputed the idea that the Ethiopian invasion simply fell into the Pentagon’s and the CIA’s laps. Simiyu Werunga, the Kenyan counterterrorism expert and former military official, says that “the dismantling of the Islamic Union would not have taken place without the support and resources of the American government. That is the general feeling in the region.”⁵⁸¹⁵⁸² Supporting that narrative was a backdrop of covert collaboration between the two nations: after 9/11, the CIA and the FBI had interrogated alleged terrorist suspects from 19 countries in secret Ethiopian prisons notorious for the abuse, torture, and unexplained deaths of inmates.⁵⁸³

⁵⁷⁸ Interview with Jendayi Frazer, United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in 2005-2009 (January 12, 2014)

⁵⁷⁹ Interview with Jendayi Frazer, United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in 2005-2009 (January 12, 2014)

⁵⁸⁰ Interview with General Michael Hayden, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency in 2006-2009 (Washington, DC, USA, 17 May 2017)

⁵⁸¹ Interview with Simiyu Werunga, Director, African Centre for Security and Strategic Studies (Nairobi, 14 December 2013)

⁵⁸² Interview with former senior State Department official, conducted under condition of anonymity (15 January 2014)

⁵⁸³ Anthony Mitchell, ‘US Agents Visit Ethiopian Secret Jails’ (*Washington Post*, 2007) <www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/03/AR2007040301042_pf.html> accessed 27 February 2019

Evidence of the US role in the invasion mounted over the course of 2006. The US began publicly emphasizing the ICU's human rights abuses and defending the idea of an Ethiopian intervention.⁵⁸⁴ Classified State Department memoranda from this period suggest a decision to back an Ethiopian invasion had already been made, with one such document noting that the US intended to "rally with Ethiopia if the 'Jihadist[s]' took over." It further clarified: "Any Ethiopian action in Somalia would have Washington's blessing."⁵⁸⁵

When Ethiopia did strike in December 2006, pouring thousands of troops into Somalia and strafing targets with warplane attacks, they had more than America's blessings. US Special Forces covertly accompanied the Ethiopian troops, serving as "liaison[s], advisers, and trainers."⁵⁸⁶ US Navy forces amassed on the coast to offer additional support, and American air strikes complemented those from Ethiopia's own aircraft.⁵⁸⁷ "The US position is, 'Find out from the Ethiopians what they want, and we'll provide,'" one senior defence official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the secrecy of the operation, said. "A lot of it was intelligence and special operation support...I was told that they were in more than an advisory capacity and they essentially teamed up with Ethiopian special forces."⁵⁸⁸

The operation, in terms of immediate tactical effectiveness, was a success. The combined might of Ethiopian troops and American support left the ICU splintered and in flight from

⁵⁸⁴ Nicholas Kulish and Jeffrey Gettleman, 'US Sees Direct Threat in Attack at Kenya Mall' (*New York Times*, 2013) <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/26/world/africa/us-sees-direct-threat-in-attack-at-kenya-mall.html?_r=0&pagewanted=all> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁸⁵ Memorandum from Azouz Ennifar, Deputy Special Representative for UN mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, as quoted in: 'Meeting with US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs' (*WikiLeaks*, 2006) <https://wikileaks.org/wiki/US_encouraged_Ethiopian_invasion_of_Somalia:_UN_meeting_memo_with_Jenday_Fr_azer,_Secretary_of_State_for_African_Affairs,_2006> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁸⁶ Pauline Jelinek, 'US Special Forces in Somalia' (*Associated Press*, 2007) <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/10/AR2007011000438.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁸⁷ Lloyd Vries, 'US Strikes in Somalia Reportedly Kill 31', (*CBS News*, 2007) <<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-strikes-in-somalia-reportedly-kill-31>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁸⁸ Interview with senior defense official (2 March 2017)

Mogadishu by the new year. At a January 2007 dinner, Abu Dhabi crown prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan offered a casual compliment to US Central Command boss General John Abizaid: “the Somalia job was fantastic.”⁵⁸⁹

The Ethiopian invasion represents an evolution of US proxy strategy in several respects. Like the CIA warlords before it, Ethiopia can be categorized as an *offensive* proxy in our typology. The relationship, while pre-existing, was in this case utilized to initiate a new military action, aimed at effecting new tactical gains rather than defending the status quo ante. Unlike the CIA warlords, Ethiopia’s forces are of course a state proxy, circumventing many of the difficulties the CIA encountered in its dealings with the fractious non-state actors of the warlord alliance.

Ethiopia did, however, present its own challenges as a proxy force. That includes its abysmal human rights record, which has made the relationship contentious within the United States Congress⁵⁹⁰ and the press.⁵⁹¹ As Muller points out, American neglect of Ethiopia’s problems as a proxy continues to vex the partnership.⁵⁹²

Economic costs specific to the invasion are difficult to quantify. Overt military aid to Ethiopia for Fiscal Year 2006, adjusted for inflation, came to \$2,829,802,⁵⁹³ though this number

⁵⁸⁹ Classified memorandum, retrieved from: “General Abizaid Talks Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan With Abu Dhabi Crown Prince” (*WikiLeaks*, 2007) <<http://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/01/07ABUDHABI145.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁹⁰ See, e.g., legislation championed by Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., seeking to tie US aid to Ethiopia to its record on human rights. Defending the bill, Smith has been quoted as saying: ‘We have to be careful that that old maxim – the enemy of my enemy is my friend – does not make us unwitting enablers of abuse.’ See: Barbara Slavin, ‘US support key to Ethiopia’s invasion’ (*USA today*, 2007) <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2007-01-07-ethiopia_x.htm> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁹¹ See, e.g., earlier commentary by this author, including Ronan Farrow, ‘Ethiopia’s War On Its Own’ (*Los Angeles Times*, 2008) <<http://articles.latimes.com/2008/feb/25/opinion/oe-farrow25>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁵⁹² Tanja R. Muller, ‘Representing Eritrea: geopolitics and narratives of oppression’ (2016) 43 *Review of African Political Economy* 658-667.

⁵⁹³ United States government military assistance numbers, adjusted for inflation, available at: <https://explorer.usaid.gov/data.html>

fails to capture much of the cost of a largely covert special forces support operation of this type. Broadly speaking, however, the operation in the short term carried no unexpected inflations of cost, either economically or in American lives. The chief costs would ultimately be the protracted timeframe of the occupation, first by Ethiopian forces, and subsequently by the African Union. The United States has continued to cover much of that cost.

Even Jendayi Frazer, one of the architects of the collaboration, demurs on the question of the operation's success. "I don't know how one would define success or failure in circumstances like this," she says. "It's hard for me to say success or not success. It's what would have happened if [the invasion] didn't happen, and we have no way of knowing that."⁵⁹⁴

The apparent goal of the United States' collaboration with the Ethiopians during the invasion was to remove the Islamic Courts Union from power and install a peacekeeping force more favourable to the United States' goals (chief among them, the elimination of high value terrorist targets). The operation succeeded in the first respect. Judging its success in achieving the second goal is more difficult. Ethiopia's occupation continued long after the attack, creating a military theatre much more accessible for United States strikes.

But as we will discuss below, the occupation also played into the hands of the very factions the United States nominally sought to oppose – including al Shabaab. That caveat has indelibly shadowed the historical memory of the attack. Matthew Bryden, the former UN arms monitoring chief, calls the intervention "disastrous" in its inadvertent strengthening of al

⁵⁹⁴ Interview with Jendayi Frazer, United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in 2005-2009 (January 12, 2014)

Shabaab.⁵⁹⁵ He is joined in that assessment by scores of other commentators across the political spectrum.⁵⁹⁶

I therefore consider the Ethiopian invasion, despite its short-term tactical effectiveness, a long-term example of reality diverging widely from initial promises and representations.

g) AMISOM, 2007-Present

The invasion had successfully levelled the ICU's formal structure, but in the process gave its more radical members a new lease on life. The protests against the newly installed Ethiopian forces began almost immediately.⁵⁹⁷ The new invasion fit easily within the longstanding history of Somali animosity toward Ethiopia – a sentiment extremist elements quickly moved to exploit. “The invasion legitimized the cause of al Shabaab and won them a network of support both inside Somalia and outside in the diaspora, because they were able to claim a legitimate jihad” against the occupying forces, Matthew Bryden explains.⁵⁹⁸ Even Jendayi Frazer, who is otherwise reluctant to admit that the invasion she presided over strengthened the Islamist ideology it sought to overturn, concedes that “from a propaganda perspective, the invasion was quite helpful [to al Shabaab], sure.”⁵⁹⁹ Further playing into al Shabaab's hands, the Ethiopian invasion had caused much of the more moderate majority leadership of the ICU to flee Somalia.

⁵⁹⁵ Interview with Matthew Bryden, Coordinator for the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea (SEMG) in 2008-2012 (11 January 2014)

⁵⁹⁶ See, e.g., Scahill, Fergusson, and Hansen.

⁵⁹⁷ Jeremy Scahill, *Dirty Wars* (Nation Books 2013) 208.

⁵⁹⁸ Interview with Matthew Bryden, Coordinator for the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea (SEMG) in 2008-2012 (11 January 2014)

⁵⁹⁹ Interview with Jendayi Frazer, United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in 2005-2009 (January 12, 2014)

Those left behind tended to be hardliners willing to stay and fight – including al Shabaab leadership.⁶⁰⁰

Over the year following the invasion, al Shabaab transformed from a fringe element with limited influence to a more operational group, far more focused on pursuing jihad beyond Somalia's borders. Al Shabaab was deft at exploiting anti-American sentiment, with Kenyan al Shabaab leader Ahmed Iman Ali claiming in one statement that “Jews” in the United States had sent Ethiopia to “defile” Somalia.⁶⁰¹ Al Qaeda, recognizing the strength of that narrative, strengthened its relationship with and support for the Somali extremist group.⁶⁰² Recruitment rates increased.⁶⁰³ The period following the invasion from 2007 to 2009 was “al Shabaab's period of greatest growth,” Bryden says, “because they were an insurgency.”⁶⁰⁴

In 2008, the United States officially designated al Shabaab as a terrorist organization.⁶⁰⁵ In 2012, the group made formal its status as an al Qaeda affiliate, completing its shift in focus from Somali politics to international jihad against America and its allies.⁶⁰⁶ For the second time running, an American proxy intervention had unleashed a new, more frightening threat.

⁶⁰⁰ Bryden (n593)

⁶⁰¹ Remarks by Ahmed Iman Ali, retrieved from: ‘Al-Kataib Media: Lecture By Ahmad Iman Ali (H)’ (*Metacafe*, 2012) https://web.archive.org/web/20120221235312/http://www.metacafe.com/watch/7950113/al_kataib_media_lecture_by_ahmad_iman_ali_h/ accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁰² ‘Al Qaeda saw Somalia as an ideal front line for jihad and began increasing its support for al Shabaab.’ Scahill (n592) 223.

⁶⁰³ ‘Ironically, the rise of Al-Shabaab was aided by the policy mistakes of the international community. Perhaps the best-known factor was the Ethiopian occupation, which created a fertile environment for recruitment’ Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia* 49.

⁶⁰⁴ Interview with Matthew Bryden, Coordinator for the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea (SEMG) in 2008-2012 (11 January 2014)

⁶⁰⁵ Condoleezza Rice, ‘Designation of al-Shabaab as a Foreign Terrorist Organization’ (*Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism*, 2008) <<http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/102446.htm>>

⁶⁰⁶ AL Qaeda's Morale Boost As It Formally Joins With Somalia's Al Shabaab, *The Telegraph*, February 10, 2012, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/al-qaeda/9074047/Al-Qaedas-morale-boost-as-it-formally-joins-with-Somalias-al-Shabaab.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

Al Shabaab was able to find purchase in those chaotic years because the alternatives proffered by the international community were, for several years, marked by dysfunction and perceived illegitimacy.⁶⁰⁷ The first signs of progress wouldn't arrive until 2008, when Western-backed talks in Djibouti produced a tenuous power-sharing agreement between opposition leaders, known as the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS). Al Shabaab, predictably, declined to participate. Former ICU leader Sharif Sheikh Ahmed was installed as the US-backed President of the Alliance regime, but he held little sway beyond portions of Mogadishu.⁶⁰⁸ Still, the new leadership allowed for a de-escalation of Ethiopia's presence.⁶⁰⁹ The United States, in turn, had to turn elsewhere to keep Somalia from disintegrating again.

Ironically, to extricate Somalia from the pincers of al Shabaab, the United States was forced to turn to what looked very much like the peacekeeping solution it had shunned in 2004. Starting in 2007, an international force – the African Union Mission in Somalia, or AMISOM – emerged as the sole potential antidote to the chaos. The United States was at the heart of creating the force and building it over the ensuing years. In February 2012, it dispatched Marines to Uganda to train AMISOM combat engineers, now kitted out with American equipment from mine detectors to flak jackets.⁶¹⁰ That effort was augmented by training from private contractors on America's payroll.⁶¹¹ After so many years of resistance to the idea, the United States

⁶⁰⁷ 'Somalia' (*CIA World Fact Book*) <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁰⁸ Cedric Barnes and Harun Hassan, 'The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts' (2007) 1:2 *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 151– 60.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid* 94.

⁶¹⁰ Jocelyn Edwards, 'US steps up training for African force in Somalia' (*Chicago Tribune*, 2012) <http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-05-01/news/sns-rt-us-somalia-uganda-usabre84011e-20120501_1_shabaab-somalia-siad-barre> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶¹¹ 'Several private military corporations, most notably Bancroft, were involved in the buildup and had advisers in the front line,' Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia* 118.

embraced a multinational peacekeeping force born of regional diplomacy, bringing the first signs of stability in years.

Frazer, one of the top civilian officials in charge of that early push, said that the United States “played a huge role in getting AMISOM on the ground,” rallying support for its creation in the face of a reluctant United Nations, rallying troop contributions, and eventually providing extensive resources to those troops. As the multinational force grew more robust it “created the space...for the Ethiopians to have a less visible role” and eventually “to say that they were leaving, which then denied Shabaab that [anti-occupation] propaganda to the degree that it mattered.”⁶¹²⁶¹³

Because of that advantage, the United States shifted support, building AMISOM as its primary instrument for peacekeeping – and advancing US interests – in Somalia. American officials backed an African Union attempt to expand the force’s mandate from peacekeeping to “peace enforcement” in 2010.⁶¹⁴ The United Nations Security Council eventually quashed the mandate change, but left intact, as a compromise, was a grant of permission for pre-emptive strikes and an authorization for troop increases. Those troop increases began in earnest, with Djibouti and Guinea pledging soldiers to supplement existing forces from Uganda and Burundi.⁶¹⁵ In February 2011, the United Nations further boosted troops by nearly 50%, raising

⁶¹² Interview with Jendayi Frazer, United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in 2005-2009 (January 12, 2014)

⁶¹³ Third parties have also reported that Ethiopia’s presence in AMISOM was excluded ‘in the hope of preventing anti-Ethiopian nationalistic recruitment to Al-Shabaab.’ Hansen (n606) 117.

⁶¹⁴ Charles Kabooza, ‘Somalia: AU Ministers Agree to ‘Take On’ Al Shabaab’ (*All Africa*, 2010) <<http://allafrica.com/stories/201007250021.html>> accessed 27 February 2019; and Risdal Kasasira and Solomon Muyita, ‘Africa: United Nations Blocks Change to Amisom Mandate’ (*All Africa*, 2010) <<http://allafrica.com/stories/201007280079.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶¹⁵ ‘AU to Send More Troops to Somalia’ (*Al Jazeera*, 2010) <<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2010/07/2010723133917713629.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

the total number from 12,000 to 17,731.⁶¹⁶ At the time, US Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice expressed disappointment that the troop increase wasn't accompanied by a mandate for additional support, such as naval support for AMISOM.⁶¹⁷

America's goal in supporting AMISOM was in part offensive, as with its relationship with the preceding Ethiopian occupation. However, the relationship also exhibited a far stronger defensive dimension. I have therefore listed it in both categories in this thesis's typology.

With respect to the former ambition, AMISOM troops were tasked with assisting US special operations forces in initiating military campaigns to recapture al Shabaab territories and with eliminating high value terrorist targets. In this respect, it seems to have largely succeeded. 2011 and 2012 saw AMISOM prevail against al Shabaab in a string of tactical victories, routing the extremists from Mogadishu and sending them into retreat.⁶¹⁸

The force's long-term, defensive goals of maintaining a stable Somalia and building capacity within the Somali government are more tenuous.

On the one hand, there have been obvious gains in stability. In June 2013, the United Nations reported that the number of children killed or maimed in fighting between al-Shabaab and government forces had dropped by more than half in the initial six months of 2013.⁶¹⁹ Elections resumed, and 2012 saw the election of a new parliament, Somalia's most significant step toward democracy since before the Siad Barre regime. The parliament elected a new

⁶¹⁶ Patrick Worsnip, 'UN council approves increase in AU Somalia force' (*Reuters*, 2012) <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/22/ozatp-somalia-un-idAFJOE81L0CF20120222>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶¹⁷ Ibid.

⁶¹⁸ 'In August 2011 al-Shabaab, to the amazement of most in the international community, suddenly withdrew from Mogadishu...' James Fergusson, *The World's Most Dangerous Place* 3.

⁶¹⁹ Michelle Nichols, 'Somalia Cases of Killing, Maiming, Abuse of Children Halved: UN,' (*Reuters*, 2013) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-un/somalia-cases-of-killing-maiming-abuse-of-children-halved-u-n-idUSBRE95216420130603>> accessed 27 February 2019

President, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, a university professor who had previously worked as a consultant for the United Nations. Mohamud has been characterized as a moderate Islamist and is seen as one of the least corrupt leaders the country has yet seen.⁶²⁰ The country has also made economic strides. CNN ran a cheerful story highlighting Somali entrepreneurs' interest in attracting tourists, renewed for the first time in decades.⁶²¹

The international community has eagerly publicized the apparent signs of progress. In January 2013, the United States granted Somalia diplomatic status for the first time in 22 years.⁶²² In March of the same year, the Security Council voted to lift a longstanding arms embargo.⁶²³

All of this has so far been achieved with surprisingly little fallout for the United States is a stark departure from prior proxy ventures in the region. "The US has been central to AMISOM's success but has managed to do so in a way that doesn't make its involvement a particularly contentious," Bryden says. "With respect to the US...there's no comparison between pub sentiment in '06 and today." And with the concerted effort to lower Ethiopia's profile in operations, "It's even surprising the degree to which Ethiopia's role is more accepted."⁶²⁴

However, AMISOM's brief time in the country, at least at its current size and scope, makes it hard to fully judge its long-term stabilizing capacity. Serious concerns linger.

⁶²⁰ James Fergusson, *The World's Most Dangerous Place*, 4.

⁶²¹ Nima Elbagir and Lillian Leposo, 'Holidays in Somalia? Mogadishu hopes to be tourist hotspot' (CNN, 2013) <<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/05/30/business/mogadishu-holidays-business-economy>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶²² Tom Watkins, 'After more than 2 decades, US recognizes Somalia' (CNN, 2013) <<http://www.cnn.com/2013/01/17/us/somalia-recognition>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶²³ Rick Gladstone, 'Security Council Loosens Somalian Arms Embargo' (*New York Times*, 2013) <<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/07/world/africa/somalia-arms-embargo-partly-lifted-by-un-security-council.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶²⁴ Interview with Matthew Bryden, Coordinator for the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea (SEMG) in 2008-2012 (11 January 2014)

Despite the appearance of progress, there is reason to doubt the sustainability of the fledgling Somali government. “I’m not sure how much stronger this government really is,” Bryden says over a scratchy Skype line from Somaliland. “It exists because AMISOM is there, otherwise it might not.” A recent report by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), to which Bryden contributed, warned of a “frail and embattled” regime. “There are major question marks over its inclusiveness and its relationships with other Somali authorities and factions,” the report concludes.⁶²⁵ It argues that exuberant Western proclamations of confidence in the regime have provided a cover for a lack of progress in internal politics. The United States’ swiftness to offer budgetary support “fuel[led] the delusions of the central government” and prevented it from fully “accept[ing] that it cannot rule the nation from the centre” and making concessions necessary for a sustainable future.⁶²⁶

Similar concerns remain about the AMISOM force itself. Some vicious cycle of intervention gone awry continues. In the eyes of some, like the former Kenyan official Simiyu Werunga, AMISOM’s gains are in fact attributable to Kenyan interventions against al Shabaab strongholds in places like the port city of Kismayo. “AMISOM had been in Somalia for three years and never left Mogadishu,” Werunga explains. “Ethiopians had gone to Baidoa, but never beyond. It was only when the Kenyan military began working in Southern Somalia and captured Kismayo that AMISOM started rolling down from Mogadishu.”⁶²⁷

Other concerns rest on AMISOM’s conduct within Somalia. According to revelations buried in recent United Nations reports, up to half of the US-supplied weapons delivered to the

⁶²⁵ ‘Somalia Redux? Assessing the New Somali Federal Government’ (CSIS, 2013) <<http://csis.org/publication/somalia-redux>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶²⁶ Interview with Matthew Bryden, Coordinator for the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea (SEMG) in 2008-2012 (11 January 2014)

⁶²⁷ Interview with Simiyu Werunga, Director, African Centre for Security and Strategic Studies (Nairobi, 14 December 2013)

African Union in Somalia to facilitate their fight against al-Shabaab in fact ends in al Shabaab's hands.⁶²⁸ Jendayi Frazer says that based on her experiences with AMISOM, "that type of black-market activity...wouldn't surprise me." One problem encountered in the early days of strengthening the force was that "they'd one day be with you and the next be with other people," using different parties in the region a "transactional way." In that sense, the same challenges encountered with previous, more traditional proxy forces the United States has employed in Somalia remain at play. Today's proxy can be tomorrow's enemy.

Those obstacles have contributed to a level of stability across Somalia that, while improved, remains tenuous. Even near AMISOM's centre of operations in Mogadishu, violence continues, often with deadly consequences. Even in the midst of the supposed gains of December 2013, an al Shabaab attack near Mogadishu killed three Doctors Without Borders doctors, prompting that organization to withdraw from Somalia for first time in 20 years.⁶²⁹ Conditions worsen further afield from the capitol. Al Shabaab, the Washington Post notes, "still control large swaths of the countryside" and exercises their power with splashy bans on perceived signs of Western encroachment, from bras and movies in recent years to, in January 2014, all internet usage.⁶³⁰ Upon the election of Somalia's new transitional government, al Shabaab was swift in its response, dubbing the newly elected president a "traitor" and executing a failed bombing attempt on his life a mere 36 hours after he took office.⁶³¹ And Carmody's thesis – that

⁶²⁸ David Axe, 'U.S. Weapons Now in Somali Terrorists Hands' (*Wired*, 2011) <<http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2011/08/u-s-weapons-now-in-somali-terrorists-hands>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶²⁹ 'Fighters kill Syrian doctors in Somalia' (*Al Jazeera*, 2013) <<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/12/fighters-kill-syrian-doctors-somalia-2013121811329467332.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶³⁰ Sudarsan Raghavan, 'Somalia's al Shabaab Militia Bans Internet' (*Washington Post*, 2014) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/somalias-al-shabab-militia-bans-internet/2014/01/09/7c288bdc-7953-11e3-a647-a19deaf575b3_story.html> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶³¹ James Fergusson, *The World's Most Dangerous* 5.

Washington's militarization of the region will engender sufficient popular resistance to ultimately undermine its security interests – appears to be increasingly prescient.⁶³²

Al Shabaab is changing, but it's not clear that it's going away. According to Matthew Bryden, al Shabaab is, by "most objective criteria...much weaker than it was a few years ago." However, he notes that it retains extensive international backing. In response to its dwindling territory in Somalia, the group is "abandoning guerrilla and returning to [its] roots as a largely clandestine terrorist organization," focused on assassinations and IED attacks. "Its capabilities and tactics have become more sophisticated," Bryden cautions. In its emerging new form, Al Shabaab is "a continuing transnational threat."⁶³³ In September 2017, an attack on a Somali military base near the port town of Kismayo left more than 20 Somali military personnel dead.⁶³⁴ The United States remains in steady conflict with a group partly of its own making, launching a fresh spate of air strikes in the last months of that year.⁶³⁵

That threat is evidenced in the group's ambitions within the United States. One former FBI agent who served on a taskforce focused on al Shabaab, Anders Folk, told me that he considered an al Shabaab attack on United States soil "possible." "Do they have the aspiration to conduct violent terrorist attacks against innocents in the United States? Their rhetoric tells us absolutely."⁶³⁶ Jendayi Frazer adds that while she sees al Shabaab "as a spoiler...not capable of

⁶³² Pádraig Carmody, 'Transforming Globalization and Security: Africa and America Post-9/11' (2005) 52 *Africa Today*, 97- 120.

⁶³³ Interview with Matthew Bryden, Coordinator for the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea (SEMG) in 2008-2012 (11 January 2014)

⁶³⁴ Bill Roggio and Caleb Weiss, 'Al-Shabaab Releases Video Showing Deadly Raid on Somali Military Base' (*Business Insider*, 2017) www.businessinsider.com/al-shabaab-attack-somali-military-base-video-2017-11?IR=T accessed 27 February 2019

⁶³⁵ 'US Mounts Air Strike Against al Shabaab Militants in Somalia' (*Reuters*, 2017) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-somalia/u-s-mounts-air-strike-against-al-shabaab-militants-in-somalia-idUSKBN1DF1ZK>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶³⁶ Interview with Anders Folk, First Assistant U.S. Attorney (November 25, 2013)

governing or anything like” the group remains “capable of keeping Somalia off balance or insecure,” a role she anticipates they will continue to play. “They can certainly regroup and gain greater traction if we, and the region, doesn’t stay alert and government doesn’t get off the ground.”

8) Conclusion: Analysis and Contribution to Hypothesis

The research in this chapter suggests that the United States acted deceptively with respect to its policies in the Horn of Africa, covertly backing first Somali warlords and then Ethiopian government forces to disruptive ends while declaring neutrality. All the while, American policymakers publicly conveying openness to a potential regional diplomatic solution, while assigning State Department and Pentagon officials to ensure its demise.

The deceptive nature of the United States’ projection of power in the region appears to have magnified across recent administrations of both parties. According to Frazer, the Obama administration continued and even “doubled down” on George W. Bush-era policies in Somalia.⁶³⁷ Obama’s policies in Somalia exhibit a combined aversion to direct intervention and amenability to covert extreme measures, such as proxy wars. There has been no move toward greater disclosure either under his leadership or in the early years of the presidency of Donald Trump, who has largely maintained the status quo with respect to Africa policy, with the

⁶³⁷ Interview with Jendayi Frazer, United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in 2005-2009 (January 12, 2014).

exception of delegating more authority to the Pentagon and CIA, allowing still greater tolerance of covert and deceptive policies.⁶³⁸

As a result, the explanatory variable in this thesis's research question – the level of hypocrisy – is unsurprisingly high in two of the three categories used to assess that variable's value. Characterisations by the United States of its objectives in the region were, as the diplomatic sabotage effort illustrates, at stark odds with its actual goals. The United States also made deliberately misleading statements and prevaricated about its support for Ethiopian forces, which later came to light. Distinct from, for instance, Afghanistan and Pakistan, US descriptions of its partner forces in the region were relatively less marked by mischaracterization. This was not, however, a result of greater transparency. The covert nature of the partnerships with both the warlords and the Ethiopian forces simply prevented many clear statements, of any kind, from being made.

The costs of these entanglements have been considerable. The combination of deceptive approaches appears to have directly contributed to the popularization of al Shabaab. While there is some evidence that the group's presence has waned more recently, it remains a live geostrategic threat and a source of instability. While hard costs are difficult to quantify for the fallout from each of these conflicts, incorporating even the baseline cost of maintaining the successor proxy forces – introduced to quell fallout from each of these relationships into our assessment – paints a stark picture of unexpected, and ongoing cost.⁶³⁹

Finally, Somalia is instructive in developing the typology introduced by this thesis. It requires the introduction of cross-categorization for players such as the present AMISOM force,

⁶³⁸ Jeremy Diamond, 'How Trump is Empowering the Military – and Raising Some Eyebrows' (*CNN Politics*, 2017) <www.cnn.com/2017/06/24/politics/trump-pentagon-shift-war-power-military/index.html> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶³⁹ See, e.g., AMISOM funding numbers cited above.

which carries both offensive and defensive objectives. AMISOM also illustrates the complexity of the “state” category of proxy agents – here, for example, a compound force of multiple states, rather than one. This represents a shift away from traditional literature⁶⁴⁰ focused on monolithic state-to-state relationships. In Somalia, these distinctions were at the heart of the chaos that proliferated with the United States’ early twenty-first century interventions in the region. Competing relationships with Somali warlords, Ethiopian forces, and regional entities, each accompanied by their own set of public representations that did not acknowledge the full extent of American entanglements, created a tinderbox and a strong proof point for scholars who have argued the dangers of political hypocrisy.

⁶⁴⁰ See, e.g., Hughes.

Chapter 5:

Less Deception and Mitigated Fallout in Colombia

1) Overview

In this chapter, I examine a number of dynamics that make Colombia an outlying case versus the others examined in this thesis. In the relationship with Colombia, there was fundamental alignment on shared goals, and therefore a far smaller delta between the realities and challenges of the relationship on one hand and representations made in bilateral discussions and public statements on the other. While this chapter's analysis focuses on the period after September 11, 2001, the Colombian context is one of the few cases assessed in which the attacks of that date were not a natural inflection point. As such, significant attention is given to the formation of Plan Colombia, several years earlier, which laid much of the foundation for the United States' modern engagement in the country and had profound effects on American influence in the region broadly speaking. Like Somalia, Colombia contains a snarl of state and non-state actors, arrayed around both offensive and defensive goals.

In several respects, Colombia represents an atypical proxy relationship for a conflict

zone. This is perhaps partly because the conflict that justified its inclusion, the war on drugs, is of a distinct character from the other conflicts examined. But it is also, I argue in this chapter, a product of several traits, notably absent in the other cases, being present here.

2) The Costs and Benefits of the War on Drugs

a) False positives

Waking up in the bed of a white Chevy truck trundling through the moorlands of central Colombia, Freddy Torres began to suspect that his evening had gone terribly wrong. The mild fall weather had given way to a cold wind; the forested highlands replaced by a low, flat heath. Scattered homes dotted the landscape, and the early dawn was silent. But most worrying were the burlap sacks that bumped against his outstretched legs and the empty bottles of *aguardiente*: they were filled with rifles. Torres – a young man in his twenties, born and raised in the village of Cabrera, Cundinamarca, an afternoon’s drive south from Bogota – hadn’t meant to end up here, hungover, confused, and hours from home. The truck ride was the final stop on a liquor-fuelled twelve-hour bender. Now, three strange men with strange names – *Paisa*, a common nickname for people from Medellin, *Costeño*, meaning “coast,” and another man who, improbably, was also named Freddy – had led him to what felt like the end of the world.

It was the early hours of September 17, 2006, and Freddy Torres was about to come face-

to-face with the secret costs of the United States' most expensive military alliance in Latin America. In the frenzy of that region's war on drugs, many of the same dynamics evident in Afghanistan, Somalia, and Egypt have bedevilled the United States' alliances. Colombia, where the costliest of the region's relationships has played out in the form of the multibillion-dollar Plan Colombia military-and-development assistance package, throws into relief some of the worst pitfalls of America's Faustian pacts with foreign militaries. For years, the Colombian relationship served chiefly as a cautionary tale of the human rights abuses, rampant corruption, and explosion of drugs that sprang from America's military interventions in Latin America and its insistence on prioritizing guns over negotiations. But Colombia, in recent years, has also become what US officials described as a success story, a proof point for putting civilian assistance front and centre in a national-security-sensitive relationship dominated by generals talking to generals.

That night in September 2006 had started quietly for Torres. Walking home from a job – he often pulled days-long trucking shifts that took him to the far reaches of the country – he bumped into his cousin Elvir at a *rocola*, a neighbourhood joint serving as half bodega, half bar. Elvir – always gregarious and fun-loving, never short of friends – was with an acquaintance, the man also named Freddy, and the three ordered rounds of beer. They joked around, calmly whiling away the hours, half-watching children kick a soccer ball around in the park nearby.

As evening fell, the young men grew restless. Several drinks in, their new friend Freddy suggested that the cousins accompany him to a bar in Fusa, a much bigger city several hours away. After their friend offered to pay for the trip, the cousins agreed to come with him, on a lark. Their friend left the store to make a phone call – of which Torres caught one phrase: “I’m bringing two people” – and returned fifteen minutes later, telling Elvir to go find a car to rent.

The three packed into an early 1980s Renault and set out for Fusa, picking up two men – Paisa and Costeño – on the way. A drive that would normally take only two or three hours stretched through the night, as the men stopped in forgettable bar after forgettable bar, in small town after small town. Just as often, they’d swap cars – a detail that an increasingly intoxicated Torres paid little attention to. Around midnight, after a delay at a checkpoint, the drunk men made it to Fusa, and after several boozy hours at the La Curva strip club and a meal of street empanadas, arepas, and shish kabobs, Freddy, Paisa, and Costeño suggested the cousins join them at a nearby ranch – owned by a friend, but long abandoned – to sleep off the drinks before returning home. Dawn was approaching and neither thought twice before accepting. Clambering into the bed of the rented Chevy – what Freddy remembers as their fourth car of the evening – Torres and Elvir promptly fell asleep.

It was upon waking that Torres noticed the guns. After a long, tense drive, the men parked the car and handed Torres and his cousin black sweatshirts to change into. The new friends that Torres felt increasingly convinced weren’t friends led them to an isolated two-room ranch house, seemingly empty and abandoned, and told to wait in the bedroom while the other men looked for supplies.

Torres slipped out of the house to urinate. That’s when he noticed fresh footprints in the earth around the house – odd, for a supposedly abandoned property. He had been unnerved since their arrival at the house, and he took the footprints as confirmation of his fears: that they were being set up, possibly by more men than the ones they’d been drinking with. Deciding not to wait to learn if he was right, Torres hurried back into the house and told his cousin it was time to leave. The two had almost made it outside when their drinking buddies opened fire. Dodging the deadly spray, Torres leapt out the back window and ran for the forest, where he hid for nearly ten

hours, as his would-be killers scoured the hills for him. When the sun began to fall, he walked to the nearest town and called the police and his family.

Torres survived. Elvir was killed. This was only the beginning of Freddy Torres's strange saga. To his surprise, the military falsely pronounced Elvir a guerrilla combatant in the civil war and reported his death as a combat kill. Torres launched a campaign to clear his brother's name, which drew death threats. Eventually, an unseen shooter fired through his windshield as he sat parked near his home in Bogota in February 2007. He escaped injury, but, after the assassination attempt, Torres uprooted his family and adopted a peripatetic life, changing cell numbers and houses every few months. The authorities, he said, were unresponsive to his pleas for protection. ("They don't help anyone," he told me, "because they don't want to have problems with the State.")⁶⁴¹ Torres was convinced that Elvir's murder and the subsequent intimidation efforts could only have come from power players within the Colombian military. Eventually, his suspicions bore out, when an army colonel who had encouraged his soldiers to kill civilians was indicted for Elvir's murder.⁶⁴² The men who went by "Freddy," "Paisa," and "Costeño" were never found, let alone arrested.

b) American Interventions

Torres's story matches thousands of others from bystanders to Colombia's "victorious" war on terror. Elvir was a casualty of the phenomenon of "false positives": the Colombian military's long-unacknowledged practice of extrajudicial killings. Under pressure from their

⁶⁴¹ Interview with Freddy Torres (4 November 2016)

⁶⁴² 'IIR: Cashiered Colonel Talks Freely About the Army He Left Behind (Laser Strike).' Information Report, 178798311. Department of Defense to Director of Intelligence, Washington, DC, nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB266/19971224.pdf

commanders to create the appearance of success in the war against the guerrillas, members of the armed forces lured in unsuspecting civilians, killed them, and dressed the bodies up as FARC rebels. The deaths would be used to inflate the military's batting average. Those who carried out the false positive killings were rewarded with vacation time, promotions, and medals. Victims included farmers, children, unemployed people, homeless people, drug users, the mentally disabled, and petty criminals. Rarely – if ever – were victims card-carrying FARC guerrillas.

Until 2008, most Colombian policymakers could pretend the false positives were merely a rumour, but that September, the so-called “Soacha scandal” pulled the curtain back. Prosecutors learned the fates of 22 impoverished young men from the slums of Bogota, who had been promised well-paying jobs, transported out of the city, and then murdered and dressed up as FARC members. General Mario Montoya, commander of the Colombian Army, resigned on November 4, 2008. Prosecutors went on to investigate more than 3,000 alleged false positives by militia personnel in the aughts.⁶⁴³ In 2015, the UN refugee agency UNHCR reported that the total number of victims of false positives could be as high as 5,000.

Colombia was no stranger to civilian executions, but the practice soared in the final stage of its decades-long civil war in the early 2000s, when the army took on FARC rebels with renewed fury and was eager to demonstrate progress to a frustrated public, and to its American financiers. Defence Minister Camilo Ospina de facto endorsed the practice in 2005 when he issued the so-called Directive #29, which authorized “the payment of rewards for the capture or killing of ringleaders of the illegal armed groups.”⁶⁴⁴ The reward was set at \$1,500 per kill, a

⁶⁴³ ‘On Their Watch: Evidence of Senior Army Officers’ Responsibility for False Positive Killings in Colombia’ (*Human Rights Watch*, 2015) <<https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/06/24/their-watch/evidence-senior-army-officers-responsibility-false-positive-killings>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁴⁴ ‘False Positives’ (*Colombia Reports*, 2017) <<https://colombiareports.com/false-positives>> accessed 27 February 2019

little less than half what the average Colombian took home each year. Civilian executions doubled the following year. How far up the scandal went is unclear, but the practice was common and not limited to any unit or region. UN special rapporteur Philip Alston, after carrying out an investigation into the practice, found “no evidence to suggest that these killings were carried out as a matter of official Government policy, or that they were directed by, or carried out with the knowledge of, the President or successive Defence Ministers.”⁶⁴⁵

For Washington, D.C., the false positive killings might have just been a tragic blip in some other country’s history, but for one fact: many of the worst offenders were US-trained and funded. Researchers found that Colombian army brigades that received more US assistance had been associated with significantly more executions. In Washington’s race to support its Colombian partners in their mission to secure the country from so-called terrorists, US military officials and other policymakers often failed to take a close look at the fighters they were preparing for battle. Nearly half of a group of 25 Colombian commanders trained at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation at Fort Benning have been “charged with a serious crime or commanded units whose members had...committed extrajudicial killings.”⁶⁴⁶ Commanders like General Jaime Lasprilla – a former instructor at Fort Benning, who trained at National Defence University himself and sanctioned or encouraged hundreds of killings under his command – were commonplace.

Even before the Soacha scandal broke, reports of extrajudicial killings were whispered

⁶⁴⁵ Statement by Professor Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions Mission to Colombia 8-18 June 2009’ (*United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights*, 2009) <http://newsarchive.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=9219&LangID=E> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁴⁶ ‘The Rise and Fall of ‘False Positive’ Killings in Colombia: The Role of US Military Assistance, 2000–2010’ (*Fellowship of Reconciliation and Colombia-Europe-US Human Rights Observatory*, 2014) <http://archives.forusa.org/sites/default/files/uploads/false-positives-2014-colombia-report.pdf> accessed 27 February 2019

within the United States' intelligence, military, and diplomatic corps. A 1994 cable from the US ambassador in Bogota warned of "body count mentalities," explaining that "field officers who cannot show track records of aggressive anti-guerrilla activity (wherein the majority of the military's human rights abuses occur) disadvantage themselves at promotion time."⁶⁴⁷

A CIA intelligence report from the same year was even more explicit, stating that the Colombian security forces "employ death squad tactics in their counterinsurgency campaign" and had "a history of assassinating left-wing civilians in guerrilla areas, cooperating with narcotics-related paramilitary groups in attacks against suspected guerrilla sympathizers, and killing captured combatants."⁶⁴⁸ The Pentagon came to a similar conclusion, reporting in 1997 on a "body count syndrome" in the Army that "tends to fuel human rights abuses by well-meaning soldiers trying to get their quota to impress superiors" and a "cavalier, or at least passive, approach when it comes to allowing the paramilitaries to serve as proxies...for the COLAR [Colombian Army] in contributing to the guerrilla body count."⁶⁴⁹ But the Colombians – and by proxy, the Americans – were fighting a war. Often, the brass didn't have the time to police their soldiers, or the interest in doing so.

⁶⁴⁷ 'Unclassified Cable 200202961,' from American Embassy Bogota to Secretary of State, Washington, DC, <http://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB266/19941021.pdf>

⁶⁴⁸ 'Colombian Counterinsurgency: Steps in the Right Direction.' Central Intelligence Agency. Directorate of Intelligence Memorandum, Office of African and Latin American Analysis, 26 January 1994, nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB266/19940126.pdf

⁶⁴⁹ 'IIR: Cashiered Colonel Talks Freely About the Army He Left Behind (Laser Strike).' Information Report, 178798311. Department of Defense to Director of Intelligence, Washington, DC, nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB266/19971224.pdf

3) Basis for Case Study Selection

Colombia represents one of the longest and most costly proxy relationships that the United States has maintained in recent history. The timeline of US intervention maps closely with that of the Colombian Civil War, in which more than 220,000 Colombians have been killed, according to government data. Another 7 million were driven from their homes,⁶⁵⁰ and landmines have killed more than 11,000 people since 1990.⁶⁵¹ Costs, measured in US dollars, are staggering as well: Washington has spent more than \$10 billion fighting FARC and supporting Colombian economic development.

Colombia provides a strong case study because US intervention reflects key, changing foreign policy priorities among Washington policymakers. Intervention, sequentially, has represented concerns about communism, drugs, and terrorism: three fundamental priorities in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and 2000s. Studying the efficacy of this proxy war helps us understand when if ever United States' foreign interventions utilizing surrogate forces have helped Washington promote its interests and achieve its foreign policy goals – and at what cost.

⁶⁵⁰ Adrian Edwards, 'Global forced displacement hits record high' (*UNHCR*, 2016) <<https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁵¹ Claire Denis, '*US sees advances in Colombia's landmine removal*' (*Colombia Reports*, 2015) <<https://colombiareports.com/us-sees-advances-in-colombias-landmine-removal>> accessed 27 February 2019

Two other factors make Colombia a useful selection as a case study. First, it represents nearly the full spectrum of different proxy typologies. The Colombian intervention includes: offensive state proxies (the Colombia military), offensive non-state proxies (paramilitary forces), and defensive state proxies (the Colombian government at various points pre-Plan Colombia). Paramilitary forces also represent an offensive non-state proxy force of the Colombian government, making this country an even more rich selection for study.

Finally, Colombia also is a fruitful selection for case study because of the abundance and robustness of available data, much of which is government-provided. This rich offering of data related to economics, security, political opinion, corruption and governance, and human rights provides an array of metrics for the successes and failures of US intervention.

4) Literature Review

A longstanding body of literature characterizes the United States' relationship with Colombia as one of proxy with both state and non-state actors. Sanford considers Colombian paramilitaries as non-state proxies of the Colombian government and military, and concludes that these proxies have had a devastating effect on Colombian society.⁶⁵² Unlike much of the existing analytical literature, which is statistical in nature, Sanford uses an ethnographic framework and also incorporates a testimonial account from a paramilitary fighter, concluding that the legacy of US proxy intervention in Colombia has been devastating to the populace and

⁶⁵² Victoria Sanford, 'Learning to Kill by Proxy: Colombian Paramilitaries and the Legacy of Central American Death Squads, Contras, and Civil Patrols' (2003) 30:3 Social Justice 63-81

for human rights. This thesis follows a similar line of inquiry but posits that the negative effects explored by Sanford can be traced to another actor – the United States – for its role in creating and enabling the harmful proxies.

While Sanford focuses narrowly on the state-paramilitary proxy relationship, others consider the United States-Colombian state (and the United States-non-state) relationship. Analyses of the United States' intervention in Colombia evaluate the relationship using a broad range of dependent variables, with many finding Plan Colombia to be an ultimately successful, though costly, use of proxy forces, including Shifter and Hylton and Tauss.⁶⁵³ A large body of literature focuses on the initial failures of the America's intervention. Dube and Naidu study empirical data and find that US foreign military assistance strengthened non-state paramilitary actors, undermining the Washington's interests in regional security stability.⁶⁵⁴ Rouse and Arce find that US military assistance increased coca cultivation in Colombia, undermining another key objective of Washington policymakers.⁶⁵⁵ Extrapolating from Camacho and Rodriguez, US intervention has also led to increased firm exit and other negative effects on the labour market and economy, although as Riascos and Vargas have noted, studies on the impact of the armed conflict in Colombia on economic growth are limited.⁶⁵⁶ Morrison and Lafaurie study internal migration, finding that the violence has prompted Colombians to relocate to less violent

⁶⁵³ Michael Shifter, 'Plan Colombia: A Retrospective' (2012) 6:3 *Americas Quarterly* 36-42; and Forrest Hylton and Aaron Tauss, 'Peace in Colombia: A New Growth Strategy' (2016) 48:3 *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 253-259

⁶⁵⁴ Oeindrila Dube and Suresh Naidu, 'Bases, Bullets, and Ballots: The Effect of US Military Aid on Political Conflict in Colombia' (*Center for Global Development*, 2010) <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/archive/doc/events/07.29.09/Bases_Bullets_Ballots.pdf> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁵⁵ Stella Rouse and Moises Arce, 'The Drug-Laden Balloon: US Military Assistance and Coca Production in the Central Andes' (2006) 87 *Social Science Quarterly*

⁶⁵⁶ Adriana Camacho and Catherine Rodriguez, 'Firm Exit and Armed Conflict in Colombia' (2013) 57 *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 80-116; and Alvaro Riascos and Juan Vargas, 'Violence and Growth in Colombia: A Brief Review of the Literature' (2011) 6 *Economics of Peace and Security Journal*

regions.⁶⁵⁷

Petras, on the other hand, chooses a more qualitative dependent variable, American consolidation of power in the region, and concludes that the intervention has been successful but may incur unintended negative consequences in the long-term.⁶⁵⁸ While his review of the historical background of Plan Colombia contributes greatly to the literature, his condemnation of Washington's "terror for peace formula" ignores key development objectives and strategies employed by the United States, which this thesis elucidates through interviews and analysis. Stokes takes a similarly darker view of the goals of Plan Colombia, concluding the intervention was designed to eliminate local movements that threaten US regional interests and characterizing the war on drugs as a proxy war targeting crops controlled by groups that the US opposed.⁶⁵⁹

Broadly, much of the literature narrowly focuses on the statistical human toll of the US-fuelled conflict, including Vargas and Restrepo, Spagat, and Vargas, and lacks a more comprehensive analytical framework.⁶⁶⁰ This thesis makes a much-needed contribution to the literature by expanding from a simple cost-benefit analysis, and also adding key testimony from critical players that shed light on decisions made by Washington lawmakers, based on public sentiment and shifting interpretations of US interests. Previously, only Delacour and a handful of others had explored the public perception among the American public of the Colombian intervention.⁶⁶¹ It is also the first to assess the Colombian alliance in the context of literature related to political hypocrisy, including works by Runciman and Shklar.

⁶⁵⁷ Andrew Morrison and Miguel Perez LaFaurie, 'Elites, Guerrillas and Narcotraficantes: Violence and Internal Migration in Colombia,' (1994) 19 *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 123-154.

⁶⁵⁸ James Petras, 'Geopolitics of Plan Colombia' (2000-2001) 35 *Economic and Political Weekly*

⁶⁵⁹ Doug Stokes, 'Better Lead than Bread? A Critical Analysis of the US's plan Colombia' (2001) 4 *Civil Wars*

⁶⁶⁰ Juan Vargas, 'Military Empowerment and Civilian Targeting in Civil War' (2009) 61 *Serie Documentos de Trabajo*; and Jorge Restrepo, Michael Spagat, Juan Vargas, 'The Dynamics of the Colombian Civil Conflict: A New Data Set' (2004) 21 *Homo Oeconomicus* 396-428.

⁶⁶¹ Justin Delacour, 'Plan Colombia: Rhetoric, Reality, and the Press' (2000) 27 *Social Justice* 63-75

5) Typicality

Colombia's strategic centrality to US foreign policy can be classified as atypical, given that it is widely argued to ultimately have been effective rather than counterproductive, after several decades of failed intervention that engendered human rights abuses and massive financial and other costs. Perhaps the most significant reason for this success is an atypical alignment of interests as a decisive factor in the success of the relationship.

The dynamics of Colombia's proxy relationships can be described as *atypical* based on the four criteria this project utilizes. Comparison across the case studies reveals several factors that may be at the heart of this distinction.

- a) Colombia's polity score (quantifying a state's democratic values or lack thereof) is a 7, far higher than countries categorized as "typical" in this study.⁶⁶² Afghanistan, for example, is rated -1, Egypt is classified as -4, and Somalia has finally climbed to a 5 after decades of classification as -7. Colombia's score places it solidly within the realm of democratic nations. While Colombia continues to struggle with state corruption, it ranks far better than the other countries studied in this thesis, ranking 96th of 180 countries by Transparency International.⁶⁶³

⁶⁶² 'Polity IV Annual Time-Series, 1800-2015' (*Center for Systemic Peace*, 2015) <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/p4v2015.xls> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁶³ 'Colombia' (*Transparency International*, 2018) <<https://www.transparency.org/country/COL>> accessed 27 February 2019

- b) Colombia is also atypical in terms of the typicality criterion of military assistance, given that it no longer is prompted by an urgent foreign policy concern. Indeed, US intervention and support for Colombia has recently evolved from “Plan Colombia” to its new form of “Paz [Peace] Colombia,” focused on helping Colombia “win the peace” by 1) consolidating and expanding progress on security, including by reintegrating FARC into society; 2) strengthening rule of law and rural economies, and 3) promoting justice for victims of the conflict.
- c) Pew polls suggest that public opinion of the United States during the period of Plan Colombia among Colombians is relatively high, although has fallen significantly since President Trump took office. These figures suggest that Colombia is *atypical* of countries hosting proxy relationships in its high approval ratings for the United States. (Although Pew data does not cover the pre-Plan Colombia period, it is reasonable to conclude that public opinion of Washington during that time was, by contrast, *typical* of nations in a proxy relationship with the United States.)
- d) However, Colombia is typical in exhibiting a high level of investment both in government entities and in paramilitary and militia forces.

6) Typology

This project categorizes proxy forces along two axes. It distinguishes offensive proxies (ones cultivated to combat a specific enemy or challenge) from defensive proxies (ones designed to maintain American interests, typically more passively and over the longer term). And it categorizes whether the players in these relationships are state or non-state actors.

As discussed in the basis for case study selection section, Colombia presents at least three of the four proxy typologies examined in this thesis. The Colombian intervention includes: offensive state proxies (the Colombia military), offensive non-state proxies (paramilitary forces), and defensive state proxies (the Colombian government at various points pre-Plan Colombia). Paramilitary forces also represent an offensive non-state proxy force of the Colombian government, making this country an even more rich selection for study.

It is worth noting that defensive non-state proxies are relatively rare in the literature; Washington has historically tended to cultivate proxies, whether state or non-state, to combat specific challenges. Non-state defensive proxies are particularly rare, as they tend to emerge in response to a specific threat and fade once that threat has abate.

It has been argued that FARC and other guerrilla forces are offensive non-state proxies of drug cartels, an argument most frequently deployed in Colombian politics to delegitimize the social change-oriented goals of FARC.

COLOMBIA PROXY TYPOLOGY:

	DEFENSIVE	OFFENSIVE
STATE	Colombian Government, pre-Plan Colombia	Colombian Military
NON-STATE	[Not Applicable]	Paramilitary forces (both for United States and the Colombian state) FARC (no longer in existence)

7) The Evolution of Colombia as a Proxy Force

a) Communism Looms

The United States' entanglement in Colombia was shaped by the anti-communist zeal that propelled American involvement from Vietnam to Afghanistan. Concerns over drugs would come later. In several other cases examined here, like Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Cold War context lent itself to a significantly greater alignment of interests between the United States and its partners on the ground, which then diminished with the advent of the modern global war on

terror. In Colombia, an inverse trend can be seen: The Cold War-era imposition of anti-communist sentiment on populations in Colombia was uneasy and stoked conflict and tension. Hundreds of thousands of innocents would become casualties of that intervention, much as Elvir and the other victims of extrajudicial killings were in the aughts. On the other hand, the later reliance on Colombian military and paramilitary forces, while not without violence and complication, would see a fundamentally greater alignment of interests.

US military meddling in Colombia began as part of a broad, regional strategy to eradicate communism in the hemisphere. As far back as 1950, famed diplomat and father of containment theory George Kennan made the rationale of that era's foreign policy clear. In confronting communism, he said, "the US should not hesitate before police repression by the local government." Repression was both strategically necessary and ethically correct because "the communists are essentially traitors. It is better to have a strong regime in power than a liberal government if it is indulgent and relaxed and penetrated by communists."⁶⁶⁴

The Colombian intervention began with a Special Warfare trip to Bogota in 1962, headed by Lieutenant General William Yarborough, commander of the US Army Special Warfare Centre, who recommended a counter-communist, counterinsurgency plan with military and civilian elements "to perform counter-agent and counter-propaganda functions and as necessary execute paramilitary, sabotage, and/or terrorist activities against known communist proponents."⁶⁶⁵ It should be backed by the United States." Yarborough further urged, "Exhaustive interrogation of the bandits, to include sodium pentathol [sic] and polygraph, should be used to

⁶⁶⁴ Kennan, quoted in David Schmitz, *Thank God They're on Our Side: The United States & Right-Wing Dictatorships, 1921-1965* (University of North Carolina Press 1999) 149.

⁶⁶⁵ US Army Special Warfare School, 'Subject: Visit to Colombia, February 26, 1962.' Declassified Documents Reference Series (Carrollton Press 1976), cited in Olivier Villar and Drew Cattel, *Cocaine, Death Squads, and the War on Terror: US Imperialism and Class Struggle in Colombia* (Monthly Review Press 2011)

elicit every shred of information.”

Based on those findings, the US helped the Colombian government formulate Plan Lazo, a counterinsurgency plan modelled explicitly on the Phoenix Program in Vietnam. Adopted on July 1, 1962, Plan Lazo was sold to the Colombians as a “hearts and mind” strategy, but in reality, it was US-led plot to wipe out communists, aided by civilian informants.⁶⁶⁶ Plan Lazo was reinforced by a Colombian presidential order called Decree 3398 that stated, “all Colombians, men and women...will be used by the government in activities and work that contribute to the reestablishment of order,” in effect allowing Colombian authorities to organize ordinary citizens into militia groups “to guarantee National Independence and institutional stability.”⁶⁶⁷ Together with the US-backed Plan Lazo, Decree 3398 created civilian “self-defence units” and “hunter-killer teams” instructed and authorized to kill armed or unarmed peasants.⁶⁶⁸

The US Army and the CIA began instructing Colombian troops in the same techniques being introduced in Vietnam. As part of a CIA program, USAID provided training to Colombian police at the agency’s “bomb school” in Los Fresnos, where the curriculum included “Terrorist Concepts; Terrorist Devices; Fabrication and Functioning of Devices; Improvise Triggering Devices; Incendiaries” and “Assassination Weapons: A Discussion of Various Weapons which May Be Used by the Assassin” – in addition to courses in bomb-making.⁶⁶⁹

The US wasn’t just teaching the Colombian army to fight the communists – it was

⁶⁶⁶ ‘The History of the Military-Paramilitary Partnership’ (*Human Rights Watch*, 1996)

<<https://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/killer2.htm>> accessed on 27 February 2019

⁶⁶⁷ Chelsey Dyer, ‘50 Years of US Intervention in Colombia’ (*Colombia Reports*, 2013)

<<https://colombiareports.com/50-years-us-intervention-colombia>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁶⁸ 1963 Field Manual on US Army Counterinsurgency Forces (FM 31-22), 82-84, cited in Olivier Villar and Drew Cattel, *Cocaine, Death Squads, and the War on Terror: US Imperialism and Class Struggle in Colombia* (Monthly Review Press 2011)

⁶⁶⁹ Michael McClintock, ‘Instruments of Statecraft: US Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counterterrorism’ (Pantheon Books 1992), cited in Villar and Cattel (n 663).

funding that fight. Beginning in the 1960s, Colombian state forces used US-supplied helicopters, vehicles, communications equipment, and arms to destroy rebel communities across the country. The counterinsurgency campaign against communist campesinos – most were peasants – began in earnest on May 18, 1964, when the Colombian army sent one-third of its army to attack and destroy the left-leaning village of Marquetalia, defended by a few dozen fighters, at the request of the United States, and with American assistance. The first air assault was carried out in a US helicopter with a US Air Force instructor in the cockpit. US military advisers assisted throughout the planning and execution. After that first assault, the Colombian government began attacking other self-governing leftist rural communities.

Many in Washington viewed the counterinsurgency plan as a rousing success. That the Colombian initiatives were corrupt and mismanaged – and that they encouraged more violence – was no secret in Foggy Bottom. Secretary of State Dean Rusk and UN ambassador Adlai Stevenson admitted to the moral contradiction, writing in cables that US funding was encouraging rural violence and economic dislocation.⁶⁷⁰ And the State Department would be hard-pressed to argue that the prolonged fighting between the leftists and the US-backed Colombian military did much to improve the lot of most Colombians: the underlying class struggle that sparked the conflict persisted, as the landless remained disenfranchised and the urban elite grew rich from the chaos. US investment and loans surged during this time, leading President Alberto Lleras Camargo to remark drily, “blood and capital accumulation went together.”

⁶⁷⁰ Olivier Villar and Drew Cattel, *Cocaine, Death Squads, and the War on Terror: US Imperialism and Class Struggle in Colombia* (Monthly Review Press 2011)

b) FARC and Paramilitaries

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rose up soon after and in direct response to the US-backed attack of leftists in Colombia. After the attack on Marquetalia, the few remaining leftists from the area fled to the mountains, where they banded with other rebel groups, who together pledged to fight for better conditions for people in the countryside and to defend their followers from military abuses and interventions by the government.

Their organization swelled rapidly. FARC became not just a guerrilla force fighting a struggle for more land, but a socio-political movement pushing socialist reorganization of the country. Rural peasants, indigenous people, Afro-Colombians, landless laborers, unionists, teachers, intellectuals – people “of the soil” – joined the fight. FARC began to organize schools, medical centres, and social projects, essentially running a parallel state.

But the group was, at its core, a guerrilla fighting force. Soon after organizing, FARC leaders began training militias in rural areas for combat and carrying out attacks. The first training camps were set up in the early 1970s. FARC relied on a campaign of terrorism, not only bombing police stations and military bases, but also attacking hospitals, churches, and schools. Kidnapping for ransom provided the bulk of revenues – until the late 1970s, when the group began trafficking in cocaine.

During Reagan’s first term, Colombia accounted for almost 80% of both cocaine and marijuana that reached the United States. FARC’s newfound wealth allowed it to attract support from Colombians across the country who were unhappy with the persistent, staggering poverty facing much of the country. By 1980, FARC’s numbers had grown six-fold to some 3,000,

spread across the country.⁶⁷¹ Revenues soared, eventually topping billions. And the violence worsened. FARC's reign of terror targeted priests, politicians, military officers, and even prominent right-wing civilians, often simply to incite fear.

In turn, elite landowners hired right-wing fighting forces, many of which traced their roots to the US-backed groups under Plan Lazo. These groups aggressively targeted anyone hostile to their employers. The paramilitaries were everywhere: at their peak, paramilitary forces counted 30,000 people in their ranks and operated in two-thirds of the country.⁶⁷² Some were armed by the government and legally sanctioned. And they were brutal: one group, the AUC, killed more than 19,000 people in its first two years of operation.⁶⁷³

The paramilitary death squads over time gained the support of the government, the military, and traffickers – and even the support of the United States. The White House refused to support any peace dialogue between the government and the leftists, which it decried as “narco-guerrillas” and leftist “drug cartels.” In some cases, Reagan’s White House went as far as to directly support right-wing paramilitaries, particularly when they were useful as informants or assassins.⁶⁷⁴

In the eighties, in one of the more ill-fated partnerships in America’s transnational war against drugs, the Colombian army and the 20 largest cocaine traffickers teamed up to establish a national counterterrorism training school, supported with US intelligence. The group was known

⁶⁷¹ Alfredo Molano, ‘The Evolution of the FARC: A Guerrilla Group’s Long History’ (*NACLA*, 2007) <<https://nacla.org/article/evolution-farc-guerrilla-groups-long-history>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁷² ‘United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia’ (*The Mapping Militants Project*, 2015) <web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/85> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁷³ ‘United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia’ (*The Mapping Militants Project*, 2015) <web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/85> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁷⁴ Frank Smyth, ‘Still Seeing Red: The C.I.A. Fosters Death Squads in Colombia’ (*Progressive*, 1998) <www.franksmyth.com/the-progressive/still-seeing-red-the-cia-fosters-death-squads-in-colombia> accessed 27 February 2019

as MAC, or *Muerte a Secuestradores* (“Death to Kidnappers”) and had, ostensibly, a simple mission: to thwart FARC’s increasingly common tactic of abducting the wealthy or politicians. Traffickers were required to put down \$35,000 US dollars as an initial fee. Generals contracted Israeli and British mercenaries to do the training; CIA and US intelligence agencies participated.

The group was successful in the sense that it was deadly; eventually, it grew into another paramilitary, criminal extension of the army, doing the government’s dirty work in the war against FARC, with little if any focus on stopping kidnappers. MAC would go on to kill the peace process led by President Bentancur in the 1980s by murdering over 700 FARC members who entered the political process as part of the Unión Patriótica, a leftist Colombian political party. In an ironic twist, many of these paramilitary organizations got into the drug business too, and US dollars sent to Colombia to combat the war against drugs found their way into the traffickers’ pockets. The lines between the right-wing death squads, government, military, and traffickers all became blurred, and scandals were common: the brother of army general Luis Camacho Levia was found with pounds of cocaine when traveling on a Ministry of Defence plane. In 1983, an elite army squadron transported an entire cocaine-processing lab from Colombia to Brazil – all on official military planes. Prominent Air Force officers were caught smuggling heroin into the US aboard President Ernesto Sampero’s plane in the nineties.

The result was considerable faction and violence. In 1999, Columbia experienced thousands acts of terror and kidnappings. The homicide rate was a staggering 60 per 100,000.⁶⁷⁵ Nearly 20,000 FARC fighters were holed up around the country, netting millions from

⁶⁷⁵ Michael Shifter, ‘Plan Colombia: A Retrospective’ (*Americas Quarterly*, 2012) <www.americasquarterly.org/node/3787> accessed 27 February 2019

kidnappings.⁶⁷⁶ A full half of Colombia's territory lacked a security presence; FARC essentially governed the entire south of the country, where the government did not dare enter. More than 700,000 Colombians left the country from 1995 to 2000. The violence had grown grislier, too: the AUC massacred civilians by the dozen, making a name for themselves with macabre tactics like playing soccer with heads of victims and cutting their victims apart with chain saws.⁶⁷⁷

Clinton's drug czar, General Barry McCaffrey, remembered the violence vividly. "You couldn't drive anywhere in country without risking being kidnapped. It was sort of like dialling for dollars: The FARC checkpoint would search your name, get your worth, and you'd end up either kidnapped or dead in jungle." It was a "vile situation."⁶⁷⁸

By the end of the century, Colombians had decided it was time for a permanent peace. Thirteen million people showed up at the "No mas" nationwide protest of the war in October 1999, in a country of 40 million.⁶⁷⁹ Later that month, ten million people voted for peace in a symbolic referendum that served as a wake-up call for Colombian politicians. No official political election had ever seen such a high turnout.

Andres Pastrana, who was president at the time and had himself once been kidnapped by the Medellín Cartel, told me he immediately understood the ramifications of that vote. "No presidential candidate has ever received that many votes," he said. So, after he was elected

⁶⁷⁶ Gabriel Marcella, Charles Wilhelm, Alvaro Valencia, Tovar Ricardo, Arias Calderón and Chris Marquis, 'Plan Colombia: Some Differing Perspectives' (*Defense Technical Information Center*) <www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a392198.pdf> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁷⁷ Daniel Wilkinson, 'Death and Drugs in Colombia' (*New York Review of Books*, 2011) <<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2011/06/23/death-and-drugs-colombia/?pagination=false>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁷⁸ Interview with General Barry McCaffrey, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy in 1996–2001 (22 June 2016)

⁶⁷⁹ 'Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army' (*The Mapping Militants Project*, 2015) <web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/89> accessed 27 February 2019

president, he “decided the first thing I should do was try and achieve peace.”⁶⁸⁰ Pastrana attempted tactics never seen before. He met with top FARC leaders, even going as far as travelling into the mountains to personally speak with the rebel commanders. He granted FARC a demilitarized zone as a sign of goodwill. He began official peace talks in his first six months on the job. And, of course, he and Clinton, after that strange encounter in the Rose Garden, brokered Plan Colombia.

c) Clinton, Pastrana, and Plan Colombia

On October 28, 1998, Colombia’s new president, Andres Pastrana Arango, stood in the Rose Garden next to President Clinton and became a participant in one of the strangest political press conferences on record. The goal was to discuss the deepening ties between the two nations that would eventually take the form of a watershed new assistance package. “This was the first stage of Plan Colombia,” Pastrana told me.⁶⁸¹ “The first time we really, really talked about Colombia,” at such a high level.

The reporters in attendance had other topics in mind. “The first question in the press conference,” Pastrana recalled, “was ‘How are you going to explain to Chelsea the scandal?!’” In fact, the question was several deep into the conference, but his recollection was, otherwise, correct. The transcript of the press conference reads like a layer cake – Clinton valiantly attempting to redirect toward foreign policy, the press corps hammering him about the sex scandal involving a White House intern and engulfing his presidency.

⁶⁸⁰ Interviews with Andres Pastrana, President of Colombia in 1998-2002, and Jaime Ruiz, Chief of Staff to Pres. Pastrana (29 September 2016)

⁶⁸¹ Interview with Andres Pastrana, President of Colombia in 1998-2002 (29 September 2016)

Clinton, Pastrana recalled, was stressed. “He offered me a Diet Coke. You could tell he was a human being, for the first time you saw the human side.” The surreal juxtaposition continued. Around the margins of the press conference, Pastrana asked for ten minutes with Clinton, in the Oval Office. As Pastrana recalled, Clinton went to his desk and pulled out a map of Colombia, and the two men looked at areas that Pastrana intended to demilitarize. Then, Pastrana recalled, “He asked me what I thought of his answer to the first question,” referring to Monica Lewinsky. Pastrana told Clinton he’d done all right. He chuckled. “It was strange.” The two men got along. “It was good chemistry,” Pastrana felt. The conversations continued and, over the following year, evolved into the plan that would define Clinton’s legacy in Latin America. “I proposed what I called a Marshall Plan for Colombia,” Pastrana said. The result was a ten-billion-dollar aid, development, and military assistance infusion.

In selling the expensive plan, Clinton appealed to an American public obsessed with drugs. Gallup polls from 2001 show that overwhelming majorities of US citizens expressed a “great deal” of concern about drug use.⁶⁸² Since 90% of America’s cocaine was coming from Colombia at that point, it made sense that much attention was directed at the Latin American nation. Clinton had an easy sell: “Colombia’s drug traffickers directly threaten America’s security,” he told the public.⁶⁸³ Plan Colombia “would enable Colombia’s counter-drug program to inflict serious damage on the rapidly expanding drug production activity in areas now dominated by guerrillas or paramilitary groups.” Anne Patterson, who had been US ambassador to Pakistan during Holbrooke’s stint in the region and in Egypt after, was also the ambassador to

⁶⁸² ‘In US, 65% Say Drug Problem ‘Extremely’ or ‘Very Serious,’ (*Gallup Polls*, 2016)

<news.gallup.com/poll/196826/say-drug-problem-extremely-serious.aspx?g_source=position1&g_medium=related&g_campaign=tiles> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁸³ Bill Clinton, ‘Remarks at the Council of the Americas 30th Washington Conference’ (*Government Publishing Office*, 2000) <<https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/PPP-2000-book1/PPP-2000-book1-doc-pg968-2>> accessed 27 February 2019

Colombia for the first three years of the new assistance plan. “The strategy is to give the Colombian government the tools to combat terrorism and narco-trafficking, two struggles that have become one,” she told me.⁶⁸⁴ “To fight against narco-trafficking and terrorism, it is necessary to attack all links of the chain simultaneously.”

President Clinton decided to waive human rights provisions in the funding legislation, arguing that security came first.⁶⁸⁵ In justifying the waiver, the president explained that “our assistance package is crucial to maintaining our counterdrug efforts and helping the Colombian government and people to preserve Colombia’s democracy.”

The primacy of the military alliance over other goals was borne out in the negotiations: Colombia wanted a 70–30 social-military split; the United States wanted the reverse. The plan was inked by a Colombian – Jaime Ruiz, one of Pastrana’s closest aides, in Pastrana’s and Ruiz’s telling – but it bore the obvious marks of the US agenda. Once finalized, the deal set aside \$1.3 billion over ten years to combat “narco-terrorism,” mostly in the form of military assistance – including everything from Black Hawks to communications equipment to trainers to chemical warfare technology.⁶⁸⁶ The first year the US provided \$860 million, \$632 million of which was dedicated to military and police assistance, with the remaining funds earmarked for economic development, judicial reforms and aid for displaced people. Aid would increase to at least \$1 billion every year, with a similarly disproportionate focus on military assistance.

The former US ambassador Robert White explained that “if you read the original Plan Colombia...there’s no mention of military drives against the FARC rebels. Quite the contrary.

⁶⁸⁴ Interview with Anne Patterson, United States Ambassador to Egypt in 2011-2013 (23 June 2016)

⁶⁸⁵ ‘Clinton Waives Rights Standards,’ (*CBS News*, 2000) <<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/clinton-waives-rights-standards>> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁸⁶ Michael Shifter, ‘Plan Colombia: A Retrospective’ (*Americas Quarterly*, 2012) <www.americasquarterly.org/node/3787> accessed 27 February 2019

[Pastrana] says FARC is part of the history of Colombia and a historical phenomenon, he says, and they must be treated as Colombians...[Colombia] comes and asks for bread and you give them stones.”⁶⁸⁷

d) Present Day

Nearly two decades later, that Plan Colombia is considered a success story is a testament to just how grim the situation had become by the turn of the century. The costs were astronomical in both financial and human terms. The United States had spent \$10 billion propping up Colombia’s security forces, economy, and political institutions since 2001. Only Israel and Egypt received more aid. From 2005 to 2014, more than 170,000 political assassinations targeting leftists had reportedly been carried out.⁶⁸⁸ The false positives scandal claimed the lives of thousands. Human rights abuses, some of them enmeshed in American assistance, were frequent: US-made smart bombs were used in the mid-aughts to wipe out FARC leaders outside of Colombia’s borders, which often led to the deaths of civilians.⁶⁸⁹

Incidents of “secret state terror” were common.⁶⁹⁰ Most famous was the destruction of the town of San Vicente del Caguán in February 2002 – an attack that echoed the joint US-Colombian attack on Marquetalia 40 years earlier. Government forces, under US pressure,

⁶⁸⁷ Dan Gardner, ‘Losing the Drug War’ (Ottawa Citizen, 2000), cited in Olivier Villar and Drew Cattel, *Cocaine, Death Squads, and the War on Terror: US Imperialism and Class Struggle in Colombia* (Monthly Review Press 2011)

⁶⁸⁸ Olivier Villar and Drew Cattel, *Cocaine, Death Squads, and the War on Terror: US Imperialism and Class Struggle in Colombia* (Monthly Review Press 2011)

⁶⁸⁹ Dana Priest, ‘Covert Action in Colombia’ (*Washington Post*, 2013) <www.washingtonpost.com/sf/investigative/2013/12/21/covert-action-in-colombia> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁹⁰ Villar and Cattel (n 683); and ‘Colombia: San Vicente del Caguan After the Breakdown of the Peace Talks’ (*Amnesty International*, 2002) <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3dae899f4.html> accessed 27 February 2019

invaded San Vicente, in the south in the prosperous, largely self-governing territory colloquially referred to as “Farclandia.” San Vicente was a successful community, with its own police force, new highways and bridges, widespread electricity, quality schools and health system. But after a round of peace talks had abruptly broken off, Pastrana ordered the military to invade. US-supplied A-37s and A-47s dropped 1,500 and 500-pound bombs. Thirteen US-trained troops circled the village. The government declared victory, telling the media they had wiped out the supposed FARC camps in the area. And they had – along with a number of civilians, including children and the elderly.

At the same time, victims of the war were often denied justice. Militants were “incarcerated” on farms and in villas, after which they could emerge with their wealth and networks intact, immune from further prosecution or extradition. US-extradited paramilitary leaders tended to receive light sentences – just seven years, a little more than half what street-level dealers arrested for selling less than an ounce of cocaine would serve.

Nearly two decades after Plan Colombia was launched, and nearly 70 years after US proxy intervention in Colombia began, the question remains: Did Washington’s insistence on achieving its military and security aims come with too high a human price tag? General McCaffrey, the Clinton administration drug czar, was fiercely dismissive of the notion that the United States bore any responsibility for civilian deaths that occurred throughout the civil war. The idea of US complicity was “complete illogical poppycock of the worst sort. Just utter nonsense.”

Yet, the plan – born of genuinely aligned interests and announced by American officials through largely earnest and honest representations of the issues at stake – laid the foundations for peace in Colombia. In Plan Colombia’s first decade, the national police expanded its presence to

all of the country's municipalities, helping knock kidnappings down from 3,000 a year to just over 200. Killings were nearly cut in half, as was the size of the FARC fighting. By 2006, Colombia had achieved the voluntary demobilization of more than 30,000 combatants, put an end to nearly all paramilitary violence, and launched peace talks with AUC commanders, many of whom agreed to prosecution in exchange for reduced prison sentences.⁶⁹¹

8) Conclusion: Analysis and Contribution to Hypothesis

In some respects, the alliance between the United States and Colombia has been fraught. Instances of abuse like the false positive killings underscore that failures of accountability are features of even more proxy relationships that more effectively achieve their goals than several of the others examined in this thesis. But there are also lessons to be learned from several fundamentals of the relationship that stand in stark contrast to those other case studies.

Chiefly, the level of hypocrisy present in the relationship looks very different, with only one of the three categories for assessing hypocrisy exhibiting that quality to any significant extent. The publicly stated objectives of the relationship in the wake of Plan Colombia – were actually the most significant motivation of both countries in the partnership. The warm characterisations by Clinton of Pastrana were, likewise, actually in sync with internal

⁶⁹¹ 'Colombia' (*Freedom House*, 2007) <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2007/colombia> accessed 27 February 2019

characterisations of the relationship. Only the activities of the partner force were occasional subjects of misleading statements, in the context of human rights abuse allegations like the “false positive” killings.

There are several reasons for this. First, in the years since Plan Colombia was brokered, a considerable foundational alignment of interests exists between the parties to the relationship. Guàqueta attributes that alignment to a variety of qualitative factors, including “understandings of the drug problem, ideas on what constitutes mutually acceptable political and economic behaviour and their underlying norms,”⁶⁹² including “Colombia’s self-perception as a Western and reputable member of the international community.”⁶⁹³

Covert American collaborations with paramilitaries during the Cold War exhibited the kinds of gaps between representation and reality more typical of the other proxy relationships examined. For example, Plan Lazo was deceptively sold to the Colombians as a “hearts and mind” strategy, while it in fact was designed to manipulate civilian informants into serving the United States.⁶⁹⁴ (These failures form the basis for Dube and Naidu’s conclusion that American foreign military assistance strengthened non-state paramilitary actors and, in turn, undermined Washington’s interests in the region.⁶⁹⁵)

However, by the advent of the war on drugs, far greater parallels between American and Colombian goals existed. This was even true, to an extent, prior to Plan Colombia. (Guàqueta

⁶⁹² Alexandra Guàqueta, ‘Change and Continuity in United States-Colombian Relations, During the War Against Drugs, 1970-1998’ (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford 2002) 28

⁶⁹³ Ibid 312.

⁶⁹⁴ ‘The History of the Military-Paramilitary Partnership’ (*Human Rights Watch*, 1996) <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/killer2.htm> accessed 27 February 2019

⁶⁹⁵ Oeindrila Dube and Suresh Naidu, ‘Bases, Bullets, and Ballots: The Effect of US Military Aid on Political Conflict in Colombia’ (*Center for Global Development*, 2010) <<https://www.nber.org/papers/w20213>> accessed 27 February 2019

argues that disagreements between the United States and Colombia did not preclude extensive cooperation during the 1990s.)⁶⁹⁶ While numerous power players in Colombia profited from the explosion of Coca cultivation, including Generals discretely working with paramilitaries, the uppermost tier of leadership in Colombia was oriented toward the American goals of cutting cultivation and defeating FARC. As a result, the dialogue between Pastrana and Clinton that formed the basis of Plan Colombia exhibited a level of directness and relative absence of deception. The public rollout of the plan, likewise, characterized its goals and methods frankly (despite Clinton's use of rhetoric designed to exploit the American people's fears of drug-linked crime).

Second, the subsidiary proxy forces that served as a malign source of instability in this case were less broadly supported than in other cases where this dynamic was present. The paramilitary groups that wreaked havoc in Colombia for decades were, as time went on, far less tolerated than, say, the fundamentalists supported by Pakistan's ISI. While I observe, like Sanford, that the paramilitaries had a destructive impact, I conclude that their hold on the power structures in the country was comparatively tenuous. This, too, contributed to a relationship characterized by fewer secrets and divergences of interest to conceal.

Finally, I posit that the greater degree of honesty present in political representations of the Colombian alliance afforded room for a broader range of collaborations between nations. In the relationship with Colombia, unlike so many other similar alliances, there was a holistic development plan surrounding the arms and the human rights waivers. In Pakistan, by contrast, large-scale assistance packages were met with mistrust to such an intense degree they both

⁶⁹⁶ Alexandra Guáqueta, 'Change and Continuity in United States-Colombian Relations, During the War Against Drugs, 1970-1998' (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford 2002) 28.

backfired and, ultimately, failed to fully materialize in terms of actual committed funds. But in the Colombian context, more overt moves toward broad-based support were politically feasible within the United States Congress and more palatable to the American public. In turn, Plan Colombia, once underway, was met with approval in both countries, rather than suspicion.

As a result of this broader aperture of collaboration, non-military and military components of the deal came to reinforce one another. “We tried to get Congress to do a Free Trade Agreement with Colombia, we supported Uribe in his democratic security efforts to rebuild institutions in Colombia,” Condoleezza Rice recalled. “If you look at Plan Colombia,” Rice said, “diplomacy led.”⁶⁹⁷ A diplomacy-first perspective in Washington and aligned strategic and ideological interests, among other factors, made Colombia an atypical model of success. That more-balanced integration of diplomatic and security resources strategy was at the heart of what ultimately brought peace to an embattled nation. At the end of the day, McCaffrey said, “We’re talking about the most successful policy intervention by the US since World War II.”

In that sense, broadly speaking, this thesis’s conclusions ultimately support the observations of Shifter, Hylton, and Tauss about the success of the alliance, while providing an original theoretical framework through which to view that success, and an original hypothesis for its origins: namely, the significantly diminished “political hypocrisy gap” in this case.

⁶⁹⁷ Interview with Condoleezza Rice, United States Secretary of State in 2005–2009 (3 August 2017)

Conclusions and Implications for Future Research

1) Overview

In this chapter, I outline this thesis's three central conclusions, based on the foregoing analysis. First, I argue that deceptive political representation is a central feature of the case studies examined in this thesis, and, moreover that this trait is not simply epiphenomenal but rather is often enmeshed in the selection, by a world power, of an indirect proxy relationship as opposed to a direct intervention. Second, I argue that proxy relationships exhibiting a wider gap between representation and reality are more likely to incur higher costs in blood and treasure. Third, I argue that proxy relationships marked by more honest representations, by contrast, can engender comparatively positive outcomes, as in the case of Colombia. Finally, I propose new avenues for future research opened up by this original framing and analysis.

2) A New Interpretation of Proxy Warfare

While both theoretical literature on political hypocrisy and empirical reviews of proxy relationships in some of the regions researched here exist, the extant dialogue has not married these two concepts with any degree of specificity. Runciman's inquiries about hypocrisy, for

example, provide an apt framework, but they have yet to be applied in this context. This thesis offers an original framework for analysing these proxy conflicts, which represent a critical projection of American power in the modern geopolitical landscape, but which have often been overlooked in the literature, especially in the post-9/11 era.

In several of the case studies, the political hypocrisy that accompanies the proxy relationships examined is a contributing factor to an inverse dependence dynamic that strips the world power (in this case, the United States) of agency and makes it more challenging to assert influence because of the secretive nature of certain components of the relationship. This framing is consistent with the conclusions of Mott, who describes how dominant partners in proxy relationships can develop dependence. The way in which this phenomenon has played out, to destructive effect, with respect to American relations with Afghan warlords, Pakistan's security forces, and Egypt's military, reinforces Runciman's argument that political hypocrisy can lead to failures of reflection and policy outside of the context of proxy warfare.

The typology utilized in this thesis also provides an original contribution, usefully distinguishing between types of proxy forces that are sometimes conflated in the extant literature. Across the cases researched here, distinctive traits appear linked to several of those categories. In some cases, state-to-state proxy relationships, such as the one between the United States and Pakistan and the one between the United States and Egypt, appear to create greater room for mutually deceptive representations by policymakers within the relationship. In those two cases, sprawling government institutions – Pakistan's ISI and Egypt's military, respectively – brought with them cultures of secrecy that impeded inquiries about the true nature of the proxy force's actions. (See, for example, the fruitless efforts on the part of American policymakers to intercede during the Rabaa Massacre.) On the other hand, those same state-to-state relationships appear to

leave relatively less room for public-facing deceptive statements. Where the actions of militias and warlords in Afghanistan and Somalia remained concealed, in some cases for years, the cracks in the alliances with Pakistan and Egypt showed more readily, partly because of the inevitably greater public scrutiny placed upon governments. Some of the cases also illustrate the particular perils of conflicts in which the United States has dealt with combinations of state and non-state actors. In Somalia, for instance, the snarl of militaries and militias involved created competing misrepresentations and ultimately fuelled violence and chaos.

The typology also elucidates the effect that different objectives can have on efforts to engender greater transparency. Specifically, narrowing the “hypocrisy gap” between statements and reality appears to be more difficult with regard to defensive, state proxies where the defensive goals are high-priority for the United States. Each of those qualities creates greater permanence in the circumstances surrounding the relationship. The footholds of government militaries are often less ephemeral than those of militias and warlords. Likewise, defensive objectives to which the United States is responding are often more lasting and more difficult to change than those the United States seeks to narrowly address with a more offensively-oriented proxy relationship. These distinctions are drawn out clearly by a comparison of the dynamics in Egypt, which is a highly permanent state proxy arrayed around long-term defensive goals, to those in Afghanistan or Somalia.

As noted above, these distinctions are highly qualitative. It would be implausible to suggest that sprawling, complex relationships of the kind researched here can be neatly divided, and many of them have characteristics of several categories within single relationships. Similarly, the very concept of a “hypocrisy gap,” is difficult, if not impossible, to quantify or assess with exact metrics. However, the frameworks and concepts developed in this thesis

provide a useful lens through which to view the broad dynamics of these complex relationships, and here they have generated several original insights that could productively inform further research.

3) Central Conclusions

While the number of case studies in this thesis is not sufficient to be analysed as a quantitative data set or suitable for developing comprehensive theories about all proxy engagements, the shared attributes, across the United States' costliest alliances with foreign fighting forces in active conflict zones, are striking and provide new insight into the patterns of behaviour within these relationships. I posit three broad conclusions drawn from the analysis above:

- a) The deceptive political representations that characterise many of these relationships is a formative factor in them, not an epiphenomenon.**

As discussed previously, the indirect nature of these alliances is a central, existential quality. They arise in cases in which a world power finds it untenable to pursue an interest – in the case of the United States, often for reasons of public opinion – and so chooses to do so through a surrogate force. Accordingly, they are often characterized by meaningful gaps between public statements about them on the one hand, and the underlying realities of the relationship, on the other. The extent to which this is true varies significantly on a case-by-case basis. Offensive

proxy actors in the case studies researched here were at times selected, at least in part, by virtue of their ability to take actions that would engender unacceptable political or other risks if undertaken by the United States overtly. This was true, for example, of Afghanistan's and Somalia's warlords, as well as Pakistan's intelligence and military units, all of which utilized tactics the United States publicly denounced, though it was often privately aware and tacitly approved. This was also true, to a lesser extent, of Colombia's military, which undertook activities that included some covert activity using means that might have caused political fallout (see *supra*) but also engaged in overt interdiction activities that were embraced by the United States in public statements.

These examples support this thesis's argument that, by virtue of the fundamentally indirect nature of relying on proxy forces, the resulting relationships are more susceptible to indirect and otherwise deceptive characterizations by the actors involved. (Egypt is an outlier in this respect, in that its abusive behaviour is seldom undertaken in the course of the security-related activity at the heart of its alliance with the United States and is instead an unrelated and seemingly uncontrollable consequence of its domestic authoritarian posture. However, it still exhibits the wide gap between reality and representation that is characteristic of these case studies.)

This framing is consistent with Sylvan and Majeski's argument that institutions undertake "patron and client" relationships partly through force of habit. Under that interpretation, in sets of circumstances requiring an indirect or deceptive approach, proxy relationships like those analysed in this thesis are one of the default results.

b) Wider gaps between representation and reality within a proxy relationship are often accompanied by higher costs exacted for the United States, in terms of blood and treasure. These variables appear to be endogenous and mutually reinforcing.

A consistent conclusion across all of the case studies examined in this thesis is the pivotal role the relative level of deception can play in shaping the fortunes of a proxy relationship. For example, in Afghanistan, meretricious statements about the heroism of and American friendship with General Dostum and other Northern Alliance commanders constrained the United States' ability to rein those commanders in and create accountability as evidence of mass atrocities mounted.

In Pakistan, extensive diplomacy under the Obama administration, aimed at presenting the relationship as a broad strategic partnership when it was, in fact, a narrowly focused transactional counterterrorism partnership at root, failed repeatedly to reshape the relationship. As the United States committed to ever more deceptive characterisations of the relationship, it was increasingly cornered into a position from which it could exercise little leverage in the relationship, due to the necessity of the partnership to pursue Osama bin Laden and address terrorist safe havens on the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan. This profound disjunction between real power dynamics and public representations can engender the scenario of inverse dependence described by Mott. In Egypt, a similar dynamic played out.

Somalia offers another illustration of the profound destructive potential of political deception. During the timeframe when the United States worked covertly with warlords and feigned neutrality on a regional peacekeeping deal, all while working aggressively to undermine that deal, opportunities for stability and conciliation in the region were permanently lost.

In each of these cases, elevated levels of hypocrisy appeared to coincide with exacerbated costs, assessed in both cases using the frameworks set forth earlier in this thesis. Further, while the ambition of this thesis is descriptive, not causal, inference, in a number of specific instances across the case studies, clear causal linkages do appear. For example, in the case of Egypt, a process can be traced establishing a chain of events from the Rabaa massacre, to resulting human rights activism, to lobbying directed at politicians, to politicians attempting to enact reform in a legislative context and largely failing, to the Obama administration ending cash flow financing as a half-measure. It is noteworthy, however, that the causal relationship between the variables in the research question appears, as initially predicted, to flow both ways. In several of the cases, the United States incurs additional costs by virtue of the hypocrisy embedded in the relationship; but also appears to seek out that hypocrisy and to double down on it precisely because of the presence of those additional costs, and the reputational pressures to conceal them.

- c) More forthright political representations, both inside the relationship and in a public-facing fashion, can mitigate the costs of proxy relationships and otherwise increase their efficacy.**

In Colombia, by contrast, a clear picture emerges of the comparative efficacy of bilateral dialogue and public messaging that hews closely to the true stakes and incentives of the relationship. While numerous geopolitical factors contributed to the trendline toward peace in Colombia, I posit, above, that an important inflection point was the narrowing gap between American and Colombian interests, and the relatively forthright political representations that accompanied Plan Colombia and the cooperation that ensued during the War on Drugs.

Similarly, the small steps toward meaningful reform that have been possible in the United States' relationships with Pakistan and Egypt have been accompanied by uncharacteristically genuine articulations of the challenges inherent in those fraught partnerships. With respect to Pakistan, the statements of officials late in the Obama administration and, even more so, early in the Trump administration, diverged strongly from the euphemism and flattery of prior years, and engendered the most material alterations of the structure of American assistance to that nation yet. With respect to Egypt, the cessation of cash flow financing was born of more transparent public statements during the end of the Obama administration, though it persists under President Trump despite the fact that cosier statements about Sisi have again widened the gap between reality and political posturing.

The foregoing examples suggest that transparent and honest renderings of even extremely negative dynamics within a strategically sensitive proxy relationship can yield superior results, in terms of influence within the relationship and room for reform, as opposed to relying on deception.

4) Avenues for Future Research

The typology of proxy forces and objectives, and the concept of assessing the level of political hypocrisy within a relationship, are both frameworks that could be applied more broadly, and indeed in concepts beyond the purview of the research undertaken here. Surveys of different sets of the same types of actors – militaries and non-state militias – are an obvious

further research agenda this thesis could open up. That includes different areas of geographic focus, and different echelons of geopolitical significance, measured by metrics other than United States military financing. Comparative studies to juxtapose against the research here would also be a fruitful further agenda: just as scholars have, at times, overlooked the dynamics within the American proxy relationships in the modern era, there is abundant research to be done, building on these frameworks, into similar dynamics with respect to other powers competing for geopolitical influence, including China and Russia, each of which have developed their own very distinct sets of proxy actors.

Finally, as mentioned above, this thesis does not address the very different dynamics and geopolitical effects of the private sector actors that are increasingly deployed to similar ends as some of the militias and foreign militaries described in these pages. Private military and security companies (PMSCs) command a largely distinct body of literature and do not fit into the metrics for case selection used here. However, this area of study could also benefit from the application and refinement of the analytical frameworks developed here. As Percy has argued, policy surrounding PMSCs is often afflicted by a lag time which sees regulatory regimes developed around previous conflicts rather than the rapidly changing realities of privatized warfare.⁶⁹⁸

Finally, this thesis, and the case studies developed within, offer original and material contributions to the evolving body of literature around proxy warfare. As discussed above, the limited scope of these pages, addressing only the top recipients of United States military assistance in each of the regions in which it is engaged in active conflicts, offers a beginning, not an end, for the application of the ideas developed here.

⁶⁹⁸ Sarah Percy, 'Regulating the private security industry: a story of regulating the last war' (2012) 94 *International Review of the Red Cross*.

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