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GO TO YOUR GOD LIKE A SOLDIER: A THEORY FOR COVERT INTERVENTION IN  
CIVIL CONFLICT

A Thesis Presented for the Master of Arts Degree

Political Science Department

The University of Mississippi

Shelby Robertson

May 2020

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## ABSTRACT

Under what conditions will a third party intervene covertly in a civil conflict? Scholars have researched the motivation and strategies used by states in third party intervention in civil war. However, little research explores the type of intervention meaning covert or overt. This paper aims to fill the gap in that literature and provide a theory and preliminary evidence to explain the conditions under which a third party would choose to intervene covertly versus overtly in a civil conflict. The domestic audience of the supported actor in the civil conflict will determine the type of intervention available to the external party through three mechanisms: perception of foreign intervention, in-group/out-group status of the intervening actor, and the reputation of the external actor as perceived by the supported actor's public. Two cases will be contrasted to provide initial evidence for this theory: the Soviet-Afghan war and the Greek civil war. The Afghan public did not provide the Soviets any way to justify an overt intervention in the years leading up to the full invasion. Conversely, the Greek public welcomed American support during the Greek conflict. This paper will explain the difference. The theory developed will contribute to the literature on third party intervention in civil conflict, but will also fit nicely into the burgeoning literature on covert intervention alongside existing theories for covert intervention in interstate war and covert intervention for regime change.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT-----	ii
INTRODUCTION-----	1
LITERATURE REVIEW -----	3
THEORY: THE HOOK -----	8
RESEARCH DESIGN-----	13
COVERT CASE STUDY: SOVIET-AFGHAN WAR-----	16
OVERT CASE STUDY: GREEK CIVIL WAR -----	29
CONCLUSION-----	37
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	41
VITA.....	46

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Theories of covert intervention in international politics have mostly focused on the domestic audience or political implications of the intervening actor's domestic public. These theories investigate the mechanisms that trigger a covert intervention for interstate war and regime change, yet theories for covert intervention in civil war have not been developed or really even tried (Carson 2018 and O'Rourke 2018). This paper attempts to fill that gap in the literature. To develop a theory for covert intervention in civil war the focus will be shifted from the intervening actor's public to the domestic audience of the supported actor. This shift, to my knowledge, has not been explored in the literature, and will provide an interesting study to identify the mechanisms that may differentiate covert intervention in civil war from the previously studied intervention in interstate war and regime change.

The paper will present a theory associated with this shift, and provide case studies for preliminary testing. A supported actor in an intervention must be concerned with the perception of legitimacy held by its domestic audience. Three concepts will affect the legitimacy of an intervention: the public's attitude toward foreign intervention, the public's perception of the intervening as an in-group or out-group member, and the perceived reputation of the intervening actor by the public. If these, or just one of these, conditions do not align with the support actor's public the intervention would be perceived as illegitimate and compel a covert intervention. The opposite can also be true. If these conditions do align with the public, the intervention can be perceived as legitimate and enable an overt intervention. Theoretically, these mechanisms

should work independently, but each case study analyzed below contains all three mechanisms. Separating the mechanisms in additional case studies would produce an interesting avenue for future research.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Covert intervention in civil war will fit into the third party intervention, political legitimacy, and covert intervention literatures. The literature on covert intervention is growing and includes covert intervention in interstate war and covert regime change while political legitimacy and third party intervention have a deeper literature.

### Third Party Intervention

Policymakers grapple with many options and complexities when deciding on intervention in another country's civil war. The current literature provides ample research on these options and complexities surrounding intervention decisions, yet the factors that influence a covert versus overt intervention have received little attention.

The various motivations for intervention in civil war have received considerable attention. Third parties will intervene when the intervention can have the most influence on the outcome of the conflict. Meaning biased rebel interventions will occur when the rebel group is strong and has a chance to win, while biased government interventions will occur in the toughest cases usually when the rebel group produces a credible threat (Gent, 2008). How a third party intervenes will produce a more successful intervention than focusing on when or where a third party intervenes. A mixed intervention strategy of economic and military forces will produce the most successful intervention since such an intervention will employ more pressure points than a single type of intervention (Regan, 1996). States will also intervene based on strategic decisions

concerning costs and other third party actors (Aydin, 2010) and to prevent regional proliferation if the third party has interests in proximate states (Kathman, 2011). The theory presented in this paper does not address what might compel a state to intervene, but analyzes the factors that influence the type of intervention, covert versus overt. The current literature informs interesting paths for future research such as comparison of success rates for covert and overt interventions.

Scholars also address how civil war intervention affects the duration and recurrence of the conflict. Mediation, third party guarantees, and total military victory generally produce a lasting peace and shorter duration (Regan and Aydin, 2006, Walter, 1997). Yet, negotiated settlements and equal interventions to opposing sides of the conflict can cause recurrence or a longer timeline (Regan, 2002 and Walter, 1997). Again, the question of length and duration, while not discussed here, could be interesting topics for further research to explore how covert versus overt interventions affect duration and recurrence of civil war.

The above mentions several motivations, calculations, and methods of intervention. However, none of the above considers what conditions or mechanisms would compel a covert intervention. This paper will attempt to satisfy that gap in the literature.

### Covert Intervention

A burgeoning literature on covert intervention has begun to develop in the 21st century. A theory for covert third party intervention in civil war will best fit in this newer field of study, and fit in nicely alongside existing theories of covert intervention for war (Carson, 2106) and covert intervention for regime change (O'Rourke, 2018). This theory will not dispute existing

theories of covert intervention in war, but simply tries to explore and test additional theoretical concepts regarding intervention in civil war and what unique qualities a civil war produces that might make covert intervention attractive to a third party.

States intervene covertly in war to avoid domestic, hawkish audience constraints. Each state actor will tacitly collude to keep each state's covert activity secret to avoid escalation and fight a limited war (Carson, 2018). Leaders weigh three factors when deciding to intervene covertly for regime change: mission's predicted costs, likelihood of success, and strategic benefit of intervention. While covert operations provide deniability, they decrease the likelihood of success for the operation since operating covertly limits the size of the operation and number of those involved, which leads to more errors in the planning and implementation phases. Covert operations can decrease costs, but also decrease the probability of success (O'Rourke, 2018). While other literatures inform the new theory for covert intervention in civil, this theory will fit best into the newer covert intervention literature.

### Legitimacy

A government must be considered legitimate to function effectively (Lipset, 1959). Both the domestic audience and international audience can confer legitimacy on a government. Domestically, the legitimacy of the government depends upon the relationship between the government actor and the society it serves or primarily its domestic audience (Lipset, 1959). A government must align with the values of the society, the society's perception of good governance, or be seen as rightfully holding political power to be considered legitimate. Without these domestic factors a government will struggle to function if able to function at all (Friedrich,

1963, Lipset, 1959 and Gilley, 2006). Internationally, groups seeking to govern will look to external sources for legitimacy. Rebel groups will conduct diplomacy to give the perception of legitimacy and to persuade outside actors to support its ambitions (Huang, 2016). Rebel groups can also leverage social media as a source of diplomacy to frame and distribute its message without government manipulation (Jones and Mattiacci, 2017). While much of the literature focuses on rebel groups' use of diplomacy, governments can also use traditional and non-traditional diplomatic resources to further its perception of legitimacy.

While rebel groups can use social media and in-person diplomacy to convey legitimacy, a diplomatic campaign will be unlikely to be enough to persuade an external actor to intervene. The potential intervening actor will need to see something from the ground level to determine the legitimacy of the actor it chooses to support. Large rebel groups give the group legitimacy and give cover to external actor's intervention to change the status quo. If the rebel group expands to a large size then that group must be legitimate, otherwise such a large number of people would not have joined the group (Szentkirailyi and Burch, 2018). A large number of group members can give the group the perception of legitimacy abroad, but that would mean the group had attained domestic legitimacy first and that the group attained some domestic legitimacy to grow to such a size. The group would have been unable to group to such a size had its public viewed the group as illegitimate.

Domestic legitimacy and international legitimacy work together with one enhancing the other (Huang, 2016 and Stillman, 1974). While this paper will focus on the domestic factors that affect an actor's perception of legitimacy that does not diminish the importance of legitimacy granted by international actors.

All of this assumes that the groups in question want external intervention, but perhaps the supported group sees external intervention as problematic to its legitimacy and ambitions to govern. Accepting an external intervention can invite problems for the supported actor. The next section will discuss the inherent problems for a supported actor in the principal-agent relationship brought about by an external intervention.

### Principal-agent Relationship

The principal-agent relationship concerns the amount of support a domestic actor will accept or request from an external source. The domestic actor will want to retain as much autonomy as possible to prevent any restrictions or binds imposed on it by the external supporter. So, the supported actor must determine how much support it can accept and still retain the desired level of autonomy (Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham, 2011). Furthermore, a domestic actor that accepts too much support from an external actor risks being perceived by its domestic population as beholden to or a puppet of the third party (Downs and O'Rourke, 2016). In this case, the supported actor would become illegitimate in the view of its public. Therefore, the supported actor would need to determine how much external support it needs to win versus how much it can accept and still appear as a legitimate actor to its society. A covert intervention provides one avenue to accept external support and shield the support from the public's view and retain the appearance of legitimacy.

## CHAPTER 3: THEORY: THE HOOK

The domestic audience needs a reason to perceive the government as legitimate. This reason can be discussed as a hook. In the same way an author must hook the reader to compel the reader to continue, a government needs a hook to convince the public of its legitimacy to obtain the public's support and cooperation. Put another way, the government uses a hook to convince the society to buy into what the government is selling. The government can then execute its agenda once the public buys into the hook and confers the government legitimacy. Adolf Hitler used Germany's grievances from the conclusion of World War I. Germans' frustration with rising inflation and its acceptance of responsibility for the war provided an opening. Hitler then used these grievances as his hook to gain legitimacy from the German public then used this legitimacy to get Germans to buy into his militaristic agenda and eventual termination of six million Jewish people. A hook must first be present to convince society to grant the government legitimacy and support the government's agenda. Hitler needed the hook of German economic grievances to convince the public to buy into what he was selling. Without a hook the society will not perceive the government or actor attempting to govern as legitimate.

### Legitimate versus Illegitimate Interventions

This definition of legitimacy would also hold for third party intervention in civil war. There must be a hook for the domestic actor to accept support of an external actor without

sacrificing legitimacy. Furthermore, a hook would help to solve part of the principal-agent problem by giving the domestic actor a way to justify external intervention to its public.

The domestic audience must be convinced of the legitimacy of an external intervention. In order to convince the public, the supported actor must have a “hook” or a reason that justifies the intervention. The hook enables the domestic audience to buy-in to the legitimacy of the intervention. If a hook is not possible, then the domestic public will not be convinced that the intervention is justified. An unjustified intervention would make that intervention illegitimate. Whether or not a hook is possible will depend on the relationship between the supported actor’s public and the external actor. Three conditions regarding this relationship will affect whether or not the domestic audience will perceive the intervention to be legitimate or illegitimate: a domestic audience’s historical attitude toward interventions, the in-group/out-group dynamic between the domestic audience and the intervening actor, and the perceived reputation of the intervening actor by the supported public. These conditions will create the opportunity for a hook or make a hook more difficult to sell to the public. The hook affects the type of intervention available to the third party, external actor. The absence of a hook will compel a covert intervention, since the public would view such an intervention as illegitimate. By contrast, the presence of a hook would allow for an overt intervention, since the public would view this intervention as legitimate.

### Illegitimate/Covert Conditions

If a hook is not possible then the intervention would likely be considered illegitimate and compel the third-party to intervene covertly. The following conditions would be likely to produce an illegitimate intervention and make a covert intervention more attractive.

First, a domestic audience that historically opposes foreign intervention in domestic affairs will present problems in the event of an overt intervention. A supported actor would not be able to publicly accept external support if constrained by this opinion. Few countries will appreciate foreign intervention; however, some domestic actors will oppose it more vehemently than others. If the public opposes intervention, then that would create difficulties in justifying an intervention and cause the intervention to be viewed as illegitimate.

The opposite will be true for a legitimate external intervention. If the domestic audience has historically approved of or responded well to external intervention, then a third party can intervene without compromising the legitimacy of the intervention.

H1a: If the supported actor's audience opposes foreign intervention, then the third party must  
intervene covertly.

H1b: If the supported actor's audience has approved of intervention in the past, then a third party  
will intervene overtly.

Second, a hook would be difficult to find if the intervening actor could be considered to part of an out-group. In-group, out-group bias provides a strong emotion for a civilian population (Lyall, Blair, and Imai, 2013). This type of bias can take several forms to include

ideological symmetry, shared values, or ethnicity. The public must share the values and ideology of a government to consider that government legitimate (Lipset, 1959). Put another way, the public would be more likely to perceive an in-group intervention as legitimate compared to an out-group intervention. If the supported actor's population cannot consider the intervening actor as an in-group member then that population is unlikely to view that external actor's motivation as legitimate.

H2a: If an external actor does not have in-group status (ideology, ethnicity, or values) then the third party will intervene covertly.

H2b: If the supported actor's domestic audience can view the intervening actor as part of the in-group, then the third party can intervene overtly.

Lastly, we must consider the perceived reputation of the intervening actor by the supported public. An overt intervention by a third party with a problematic history with the country or poor reputation will compromise the legitimacy of the supported actor to its public. A domestic public may be comfortable with a third party intervention, but not by a particular third party with a bad reputation. There may be animus built over time or a previous interaction, such as a failed intervention, between the supported country and the intervening actor that compromised the relationship. Any attempted intervention by such an actor would be viewed as illegitimate.

Conversely, an intervening actor with a good history or reputation can intervene overtly and legitimately. A positive relationship with the intervening actor would enable the public to

view the intervention as legitimate. The intervening actor may have intervened successfully in the past or bought goodwill through humanitarian actions or foreign aid. Even if the two countries are not historically part of the same in-group, the intervening actor can still intervene if the public has a favorable opinion of the third party based off of past actions.

H3a: If the supported actor's audience views the third party poorly, then the third party must intervene covertly.

H3b: If the supported actor's audience views the third party positively, then the third party can intervene overtly.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN

This paper will employ a most likely case study design to provide the initial support for the new theory of covert third party intervention in civil war (George, Bennett, Lynn-Jones, and Miller, 2005). This design supplies an appropriate methodology for the introduction of a new theory. Carson (2018) develops a covert theory for war, but acknowledges that his theory does not include mechanisms for covert intervention in civil war. Therefore, developing a theory with case study support will be necessary before further testing can be done. Future testing can include additional cases or the operationalization of variables to test the hypotheses quantitatively. Either method will be useful to build upon this initial study. The Soviet-Afghan war and the Greek civil war will provide the empirical support. Each case supports all three theoretical mechanisms; however, future research should also identify cases for each mechanism separately to test each mechanism's independent effect and deepen the validity of the theory.

For the purposes of this paper, each case shares commonalities, but diverge at critical points to provide quality evidence to justify each mechanism. Both the Soviet-Afghan war and Greek civil war involved a communist revolution and a superpower intervention. The cases critically diverge in the type of intervention, overt or covert, with the theoretical mechanisms providing strong explanations for the divergence in overt versus covert intervention. The domestic attitude of the supported actor's public provides expository evidence to support each mechanism's impact on intervention type.

The Soviets intervened covertly in Afghanistan for decades before the wider, overt conflict began. The first and second concepts of the theory will be developed using Soviet considerations and internal deliberations in the years leading up to its overt intervention in Afghanistan. The third mechanism will be supported using Russia's alleged involvement in the current Afghan conflict. These two time periods may be considered as two cases, but this paper will analyze it as a single case study despite spanning two conflicts for a couple reasons. First, they concern the same actors, Russia and Afghanistan. Second, Russian involvement in the first conflict will theoretically affect how it can intervene in the second conflict. More will be explained on that point later in the paper.

By contrast, the United States intervened overtly in the Greek civil war as part of the beginning stages of the Truman Doctrine's focus on containing communism. The United States built off past British intervention to justify its own intervention in Greece. Each theoretical concept will be supported using evidence from the years just prior to and the years of the civil conflict in Greece.

Archival documents, works of history, and contemporary news sources will provide the data to support the theory. The National Security Archives provides translated Soviet documents from the time period and memoirs of Soviet leaders involved in the deliberations on the intervention in Afghanistan. Additionally, insight into the interworking of the KGB was made available after a former KGB archivist, Vasilij Mitrokhin, defected to Great Britain and began writing on the subject. His writings concerning KGB activity in Afghanistan proved especially helpful to inform this analysis. Documents for the third mechanism have proven the most difficult to obtain likely due to the recency of the events analyzed; however, the amount of

documents available to analyze concerning the first and second mechanisms has been somewhat surprising.

The case for the Greek civil war will be built using the work of historians, the memoirs of U.S. ambassador to Greece, Lincoln MacVeagh, and archival documents to include U.S. President Harry Truman's March 1947 speech to Congress and U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson's comments on the situation in Greece in 1949. Evidence for the Greek civil war proved more difficult to find than in the Soviet case. The declassification of Cold War documents provides incredible insights into the Politburo's decision-making considerations. The situation proves different for the Greek case. One historian laments the scarcity of Greek authors and the controversial nature of the conflict. "I repeatedly discovered that not only were foreigners ignorant of the Greek civil war; many Greeks themselves were not conversant with the calamitous events which took place in their country in the 1940s" (Nachmani, 1990 p. 515). Unfortunately, more abundant evidence exists from the perspective of U.S. officials than Greek communist officials. The Greek communist leadership exercised tight security and secrecy in the conduct of its affairs; therefore, only slight evidence exists from the KKE's (Greek communist party) perspective (Iatrides, 1995). Including the historical analysis of Greek historians John Iatrides, who has written prolifically on the subject, and Amikam Nachmani hopefully averts a potential Western bias and helps to provide a fair and sober account of the Greek situation. Any historical disagreement is noted in the case study analysis.

## CHAPTER 5: COVERT CASE STUDY: SOVIET-AFGHAN WAR

The following section will detail how the Soviet-Afghan conflict supports the three theoretical mechanisms that compel a covert intervention. Each mechanism will be broken down into its own section to explain how the case study supports its development.

### Perception of Foreign Intervention

When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains,

And the women come out to cut up what remains,

Jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains

An' go to your God like a soldier.

Go, go, go like a soldier,

Go, go, go like a soldier,

Go, go, go like a soldier,

Soldier *of* the Queen!

The history of Afghanistan is replete with great power struggles. The excerpt above from Rudyard Kipling's "The Young British Soldier" describes the suffering imposed on Her Majesty's soldiers during the British misadventures in their "Great Game" contest with Russia throughout the 19th century (Kipling, 2008). A brief history of attempts at Afghan invasion

coupled with accounts of Soviet discussions leading up to the invasion will provide evidence for the first theoretical concept.

Afghans quite simply do not approve of foreign intervention and will fiercely resist foreign invasion, attempts at occupations, or foreign imposed leaders. Afghanistan's history of defiant opposition to external intervention provides the first evidence for the intervention mechanism in the theory. Afghans so vehemently oppose external intervention that it remains difficult to envision how an intervening actor could develop a hook that the public would buy. Afghanistan hosts several ethnic groups who often struggle to harmonize, yet a foreign invasion solves this collective action problem, as the country will cohere to eliminate the invaders (Tanner, 2009 and Olson, 1965). The Soviets, like the British before them and perhaps the Americans after them, tried and failed at all three of these. Afghanistan earns its moniker as the "graveyard of empires." A public in constant opposition to intervention produces little room to create a hook and thereby compels covert intervention by an external actor.

One great constant throughout world history, from its days as Bactria to modern day Afghanistan, tells of the difficulty invading forces experience with this region. Alexander the Great suffered his greatest defeats here in the 3rd century BCE (Holt, 2012). The following quote attributed to Alexander sums up his expeditions there: "May God keep you away from the venom of the cobra, the teeth of the tiger, and the revenge of the Afghans" (quoted in Andrews, 2016). The British learned a similar lesson, not once, but twice in the 19th century. The most sensational account comes from 1842, after the British placed Shah Shuja on the throne in Kabul. Opposition swept across Afghanistan in response to the foreign intervention unifying the disparate tribes in rebellion to the British move. The opposition made it to Kabul and resulted in

the killing of British official Alexander Burnes prompting the eventual retreat of the British garrison in Kabul to Jalalabad. However, Afghan guerrillas attacked the approximately 16,500 British soldiers and civilians along the way with just one survivor arriving in Jalalabad (Holt, 2012). The historical evidence supports the claims that Afghan citizens oppose external intervention and that finding a hook to justify intervention seems implausible.

The internal dialogue of the Soviet General Staff provides more direct support to the intervention mechanism. The Soviet Chief of the General Staff, N. V. Ogarkov would likely have been keenly aware of such misfortunes encountered by Afghan invasion forces. The prospect of sending Soviet troops to Afghanistan “did not inspire any enthusiasm” among the Soviet military leaders and advisors during the deliberations in December 1979 (Kornienko, 1994, p. 2). The General Staff discussed how the deployment of Soviet troops would weaken their global stance and ability to project military power in other regions. Yet, the group also considered the Afghan public’s strong aversion to overt foreign intervention. Defense minister D. F. Ustinov met with Ogarkov to inform the General of the decision to invade on December 10. Ogarkov then warned Ustinov of the negative consequences likely to result from overt military intervention citing “the traditions of the Afghan people, who never tolerated foreigners on their soil” (Lyakhovsky 1995, p. 2). It can be assessed that Soviet military leaders were more comfortable with covert rather than overt intervention. A Soviet airborne battalion flew into Bagram covertly in July 1979 disguised as mechanics when the actual purpose of the deployment was to secure the base and protect assets (Andrew and Mitrokhin, 2005). The General Staff would certainly have been involved in planning this operation, therefore military leaders likely favored covert intervention due to, at least in part, the Afghan public’s fierce historical resistance

to foreign intervention. The General Staff was not the only group to warn against overt intervention. KGB members also cautioned their chairman from overextending the civil war intervention into the overt sphere (Hughes, 2008). The internal deliberation of Soviet military officials reveal a deep concern for the Afghan public's history of stiff opposition to external intervention producing little chance the Soviets could develop a hook to justify the ensuing invasion.

The Soviet intervention supports the first theoretical mechanism for a covert intervention. The Soviets had been involved covertly in the Afghan conflict from its beginning; however, the Soviet General Staff clearly disapproved of an overt intervention in part because of the attitude of the Afghan public towards foreign intervention. The General Staff also worried over the reallocation of resources from other strategic locations. However, this concern would not impact the decision to intervene overtly or covertly. The evidence provided, both the Afghan public's historical opposition to intervention and the Soviet General Staff's knowledge of this long-standing opposition, provides support for the first, intervention mechanism of the theory.

The CPSU made the final decision to invade on December 12, 1979 with operations commencing on December 25 (Kornienko, 1994 and Hughes, 2008). Immediately after the invasion of Soviet troops into the country, posters appeared in Kabul with the slogan "Get rid of the Russians and teach them the same lesson we taught the English" (Mitrokhin, 2002, p. 104). Clearly the Afghan citizens did not appreciate the foreign intervention and viewed the Soviet presence as illegitimate. The immediate reaction of the Afghan public supports the General Staff's trepidation about invasion and provides more evidence to support the first mechanism.

The war lasted for nine years concluding with a Soviet withdrawal in early 1989. The decision to intervene resulted in 13,310 dead, 35,478 wounded, and 311 missing Soviet soldiers (Taubman, 1988). Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev referred to his country's intervention in Afghanistan as "the bleeding wound" on several occasions (Gorbachev, 1985, 1986, 1988). The British and Macedonian voices of the past warned the Soviets as well as their contemporary generals, but the Politburo leadership did not heed this advice and added one more layer to this "land of bones" in Southwest Asia (Holt, 2012).

### In-group/Out-group

A historical analysis of the pre- and post-revolution KGB activity supports the second theoretical mechanism showing that the Soviets viewed the Afghans as an out-group and that the Afghans also viewed the Soviets as an out-group. First, the Soviets prioritized the legitimacy of the communist brand above the support of the PDPA. Second, Soviet leadership did not believe the Afghan public could support a communist state. This section will briefly outline the formation of the communist party in Afghanistan, then discuss the supporting evidence for the two above claims.

The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), the Afghan communist party, was established in 1965 through the combination of two groups, Parcham led by Babrak Karmal and Khalq led by Nur Muhammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin (Gibbs, 2006 and Mitrokhin, 2002). The two groups struggled to cohere and the party suffered from internal division. The CPSU provided covert funding and support for the PDPA after it formed. For example, this funding supported the founding of pro-PDPA newspaper call Khalq in April 1965.

Despite its covert support for the PDPA, the Soviets remained skeptical of both the PDPA's leadership and Afghanistan's potential as a communist state. First, the Soviets did not trust the PDPA to represent communism effectively seeing the leadership as rash and politically immature (Gibbs, 2006). From the outset of the Soviet-PDPA relationship, the Soviets encouraged the PDPA to move slowly and covertly (Mitrokhin, 2002). Furthermore, the Soviets were reluctant to integrate the Afghan communists into the international communist movement. The Soviets did not invite Taraki to a conference of Communist Parties in 1968, and ordered state media to downplay the nascent communist movement in Afghanistan (Mitrokhin, 2002 and Gibbs, 2006). The Soviets feared the Afghan communists could not represent communism effectively and did not want them to receive large amounts of international attention that would damage the communist brand. The evidence here suggests that the Soviets did not view the Afghans as part of their communist in-group.

An Afghan official in 1958 described the likely aversion to communism among Afghan citizens. "It is 'beyond imagination' that Communism could make any inroads in view of Afghan traditions, religion, and the very nature of the Afghan regime" (Gibbs, 2006). Soviet officials concurred with this assessment two decades later. The CPSU thought of Afghanistan as a backward country incapable of becoming a communist state. During a CPSU meeting on the situation in Afghanistan, one official said, "If there is one country in the developing world where we would like not to try scientific socialism at this point in time, it is Afghanistan" (Gibbs, 2006). The attitude within Afghanistan supported these assessments. The peasant class in Afghanistan viewed the PDPA with suspicion and hostility. Further, Afghanistan's deeply religious population showed little interest in the "godless" Marxist ideology and promotion of

equal rights for women (Gibbs, 2006). The PDPA certainly suffered from internal problems; however, a better organized group would likely have still struggled to find support in Afghanistan because its domestic audience would not support communism. This ideological difference shows that the Soviets and the Afghan viewed the other of an out-group member. The lack of any in-group acceptance between the two actors supports the in-group mechanism of the theory making any hook for an overt intervention nearly impossible to justify to the Afghan public.

This pre-Saur revolution historical analysis provides more support for the second theoretical mechanism. The Soviets knew that communism would struggle to succeed in Afghanistan. The Afghan public would be reluctant to accept the ideology, and the PDPA did not have the influence or organizational capacity to successfully bring communism to Afghanistan. The evidence suggests the Soviets surveyed the domestic audience in Afghanistan, determined that communism would struggle, and then favored covert instead of overt intervention.

Afghan Prime Minister Mohammed Daud led a coup in 1973, overthrew the monarch, and essentially imposed himself as dictator of the country. Daud took a more Western disposition that changed domestic politics in Afghanistan. As an anti-communist, he cracked down on the PDPA and arrested much of the leadership. These arrests triggered a revolt from pro-PDPA military officers that produced the April 1978 revolution known as the Saur Revolution that resulted in Daud's death and brought the PDPA to power in Afghanistan with Taraki and Amin taking the top leadership positions (Mitrokhin, 2002 and Gibbs, 2006).

The PDPA continually requested direct military intervention from the Soviet Union in order to consolidate power and quell the growing civil conflict. However, the Kremlin denied these overt requests and sent military advisors to assist the Afghan communists in the civil war. The Kremlin did expand its covert policy after the revolution, while providing minimal overt support. The KGB deployed covert units to Afghanistan in the winter of 1978 to target the Islamist opposition side of the conflict. These operations were not even known to the PDPA (Mitrokhin, 2002). Yet, the revolution did not change the situation in Afghanistan. The PDPA still struggled to cohere internally, and the Afghan public did not change to suddenly support communism. In fact, the PDPA further damaged its reputation domestically by trying to crack down on Islam (Andrew and Mitrokhin, 2005). This decision would have further alienated the communist agenda. Religion is an indicator of in-group membership, and by attacking Islam we can reasonably assess that the PDPA doomed itself to out-group status condemning any hook or justification for an overt, Soviet intervention. These factors contributed to the Soviets decision to avoid overt intervention in favor of covert intervention. Of course the Soviets did eventually intervene overtly after a series of events. Amin had Taraki assassinated and took power in 1979, then the Soviets killed Amin to open their overt invasion after believing Amin, erroneously it turns out, to be pro-Western and negotiating with the mujahedeen. These events are critical to the narrative of Soviet intervention, but are not necessary to discuss in depth for the purposes of the second mechanism.

The historical analysis helps develop the second, in-group theoretical mechanism. An intervening third party must consider the supported actor's ability to view the third party as an in-group member. The ideological differences between communism and Islam can explain the

PDPA's struggle to transform Afghanistan into a communist state and the Soviet Union's reluctance to intervene overtly. The Soviets favored covert intervention and viewed overt intervention as a last resort because of the difficulty in converting Afghans to communism and the desire to protect the communist brand. Furthermore, Afghanistan's domestic aversion to communism differentiates the first and second theoretical concepts. Afghanistan staunchly opposes and resists foreign intervention. However, controlling for this opposition, the Afghan public still would not have been open to accepting communism or the Soviets as an in-group member as displayed by the previously mentioned religious and cultural factors, therefore the Soviets had to consider this when determining the type of intervention. The evidence above supports the Soviet status as an out-group member to the Afghan public and prevents a hook for intervention.

### Reputation

We will fast-forward in the relationship between the Russians and Afghanistan to find evidence for the third theoretical mechanism. A third party will intervene covertly if the public perceives it to have a bad reputation. This would apply to specific third parties to a specific public. A public may not disapprove of an intervention in the general sense, but may not approve of the intervention by a poorly thought third party. The Afghans would likely perceive the Russians to have a bad reputation based on its previous invasion making any hook difficult to justify. The allegations that Russia covertly supplies arms to some Taliban factions will be discussed to explore the contemporary relationship between the two actors.

CNN published a story in June 2017 claiming to show video of Taliban fighters with Russian made weapons to include Kalashnikov rifles, sniper rifles, and heavy machine guns (Walsh and Popalzai, 2017). According to U.S. and Afghan officials, the Russians have been supplying weapons to the Taliban since 2014 (Ryan and Ferris-Rotman, 2018). "The Russians have said that they maintain contact with the Taliban, we have lots of other reports from other people they are arming the Taliban ... there is no smoke without fire," Afghan government spokesman Sediq Sediqi said (Walsh and Popalzai, 2017). Former commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan John Nicholson Jr. and commander of U.S. Central Command Joseph Votel have also accused the Russians of supplying arms to the Taliban. While the weapons were likely derived from Russia, they did not bear any markings that indicate their origin (Walsh and Popalzai, 2017). However, removing identifying features from weapons and supplies is a common tactic used by governments to conceal involvement (Carson, 2018). The Russians have been diplomatically involved with the Taliban, but deny providing any weapons to the insurgents. "As we have repeatedly stated, the accusations of a number of Western and some Afghan mass media ... regarding alleged Russia's support of the Taliban militants are groundless. To date, neither the Afghan authorities nor the command of the U.S. and NATO contingents in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan have provided evidence that would confirm these speculations," the Russian foreign ministry said (Walsh and Popalzai, 2017).

Several motivations have been proffered to explain this alleged Russian arming of the Taliban. Some believe Russia is simply trying to discredit the United States in Afghanistan. General Nicholson claimed the Russians are trying to "drive a wedge" between coalition partners and the U.S. "We know that Russia is attempting to undercut our military gains and years of

military progress in Afghanistan and make partners question Afghanistan's stability," Nicholson said (Ryan and Ferris-Rotman, 2018). Others maintain the Russians know that the Afghan government will fail once the United States removes troops from the country, and want to buy some goodwill with the Taliban whom they believe will take over the country after a U.S. exit (Ahmad, 2016).

The above motivations seem plausible considering the tense history between the United States and Russia; however, Russian also has a security motivation to intervene in Afghanistan: the rise of the Islamic State. The first allegation of the Russians arming the Taliban coincides with the first appearance of the Islamic State in Afghanistan, known as the Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) (Ahmad, 2016 and Associated Press, 2019). ISIS-K mainly operates in eastern and northern Afghanistan on the border of traditional Russian ally and former satellite state Tajikistan (Yousafzai, 2017). The Taliban and ISIS-K have engaged in intense fighting in Afghanistan since ISIS-K's emergence there. Therefore, Russia's arms alliance with the Taliban can be viewed in terms of security assurances and opposition to a common enemy (Ahmad, 2016 and Yousafzai, 2017). "Taliban interests objectively coincide with ours," said Zamir Kabulov, Russia's special envoy to Afghanistan.

Russia wants to ensure the destruction of ISIS-K in Afghanistan and does not trust the United States to look out for their interests, so they ally with the Taliban in the fight against ISIS-K. This is a legitimate security concern, so why the need for secrecy? There are strategic reasons to avoid confrontation with the United States, but the Russians have not shied from putting a finger in the eye of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East this century. See Syria, for example. Another explanation is that Russia would not want to cause problems for the Taliban

in this fight by overtly supporting them. The Russians would likely be viewed as an unsavory intervener in Afghan domestic affairs. The history of the Soviet-Afghan War gives Russia a bad reputation within Afghanistan and would make an overt Russian intervention illegitimate to the Afghan public. Russia's covert action likely based on its poor reputation among Afghans supports the third, reputation mechanism. The lack of a hook for Russian intervention supports the need for a covert intervention for two reasons, both derived from the war.

In a conversation between Alexei Kosygin and Taraki before the Soviet-Afghan war, in which Taraki requested overt Soviet intervention Kosygin said, "our troops would have to fight not only with foreign aggressors, but also with a certain number of your (Afghan) people. And people do not forgive such things" (Gibbs 2006, p. 251). This warning provides the first reason. The Soviet-Afghan war produced over one million Afghan casualties and many atrocities against civilians (Ahmad 2016, Sciolino 1984, and Schodolski, 1989). "I can't hide the fact that women and children have been killed," said one sergeant deployed to Afghanistan. "And I've heard of Afghan women being raped." Another Soviet soldier recounted a time his unit struggled to take a village and decided instead to call in an airstrike that "bombed that village clean down to the ground" (Sciolino, 1984). Afghans have a long memory (Tanner, 2009). The Afghan public likely perceives the Russians to have a bad reputation based on this evidence making any hook for Russian intervention elusive. The Afghan public would likely punish a group that accepted Russian military equipment or aid to fight within its boundaries. Russia would need to provide arms covertly to the Taliban for the insurgent group to avoid domestic blowback for allying with the former occupier.

Secondly, the Taliban is a decentralized organization that struggles with internal strife, especially over leadership (Stancati and Shah, 2015, Ahmad, 2015, and Mashal and Shah, 2016). Some factions still have ties to the mujahedeen that so bitterly fought Soviet occupation during the war (Ahmad, 2016). An alliance with the Russians would likely further intensify any rift in the leadership ranks of the Taliban. The video published by CNN shows that a group of Taliban fighters obtained the Russian weapons after a firefight with another Taliban faction, therefore Taliban leadership often finds itself in a precarious position when attempting any efforts at unity (Walsh and Popalzai 2017). Accepting aid from a third party with a bad reputation would degrade Taliban unity and prevent a hook for Russian support thereby compelling covert support from the Russians.

Furthermore, the Taliban cannot compromise its own stance of rejecting foreign intervention. In a statement released in 2014, the Taliban announced, “We believe the war in Afghanistan will come to an end when all foreign invaders pull out of Afghanistan and a holy Islamic and independent regime prevails here” (Council on Foreign Relations, 2014). Taliban leadership must exercise caution to avoid damaging its own agenda in Afghanistan. In this instance, that means accepting covert arms from Russia.

The contemporary relationship between Russia and Afghanistan provides evidence for the third mechanism. An intervening actor with a bad reputation within the public must intervene covertly to avoid damaging the supported actor’s legitimacy. Afghans would be unlikely to forget the human carnage that resulted from the Soviet-Afghan war and support Russian supplied arms to the Taliban. Furthermore, Russian intervention would likely produce further divisiveness to a group that already struggles with cohesion. The Russians would not be

able to find a hook to justify external support, because of the third, bad reputation mechanism.

This provides a plausible explanation for Russia's covert support of the Taliban.

## CHAPTER 6: OVERT CASE STUDY: GREEK CIVIL WAR

A brief summary of the years prior to the 1946-1949 civil war will be necessary for context. The Germans occupied Greece during World War II and were resisted on several fronts by various groups. Two groups with communist ideals opposed the Nazi occupation, the National Liberation Front (EAM) and the (ELAS) National People's Liberation Army. In the wake of WWII, the British and these groups tacitly agreed to serve under a government headed by Georgios Papandreou. In December of 1944, Papandreou ordered ELAS to disarm and the communists left the government. Protests then erupted, which quickly turned into fighting before British troops drove ELAS out of Athens and to eventual defeat. The Varkiza Agreement in February 1945 ended this conflict. The agreement included the disarming and disbanding of ELAS, restoring civil authority, holding a vote for the king's return (who had been exiled during the war), and national elections for parliament (Iatrides, 1995).

The communist party of Greece, KKE, annexed the EAM and ELAS in 1946. The KKE steadily lost influence in Athens and became a target for persecution by its opponents. The KKE abstained from voting in the parliamentary elections of March 1946, and then in September a national vote returned the king to the throne by a substantial margin. By winter of 1946-1947, the KKE decided to rebel and overthrow the political order (Iatrides, 1995).

## Perception of Foreign Intervention

Greece endured consistent historical intervention in its internal affairs (Iatrides, 1995 and Nachmani, 1990). The Germans occupied Greece just two years before the civil war began. Greek citizens would have been accustomed to foreign intervention. Furthermore, the economic and political turmoil that ensued after WWII made Greece vulnerable to and even dependent upon external intervention, and several divergent groups from across the political spectrum sought to govern the country. The internal divisions were too weak to consolidate control, almost mandating foreign support (Iatrides, 1995 and Nachmani, 1990). “Foreign patrons would be called upon to ensure victory. In the end, the level of foreign intervention on each side would spell the difference between winners and losers in the Greek crisis” (Iatrides, 1994 p. 17). This assessment provides support for the intervention hook. Foreign intervention would not only have been tolerated in Greece, but also solicited to win the conflict. The side that received better foreign aid would emerge victorious in the war.

The Greek government maintained consistent support from the British in its effort to consolidate control. The British began struggling to provide aid to the government in 1946 and asked the United States to relieve its burden of support. The United States complied sending material support to the Greek government in 1947 (Iatrides, 1995). President Harry Truman addressed Congress in March 1947 requesting aid for the Greek government in what became the larger communism containment strategy, the Truman Doctrine (Truman, 1947). The Greek government received training and equipment for its military and resources to stabilize the economy. These efforts made a communist victory in the war unlikely (Iatrides, 1995 and Nachmani, 1990). The government received consistent support from the British and then the

United States to support its fight against communism. The Greeks knew they needed this support to repel the KKE insurgency providing an easy hook for U.S. intervention efforts.

The KKE did not receive consistent support from foreign patrons during the conflict. Soviet policy toward Greece remains unclear. The Soviets condemned the Greek government and praised the communist effort, but little evidence exists that Stalin provided any material support to the KKE (Stavrakis, 1995). Ambassador Lincoln MacVeagh, U.S. envoy to Greece, wrote that his “own intelligence sources could find no evidence of Soviet financial support for the KKE” (MacVeagh, 1980 p. 683). Therefore, while the Greek government received aid from a superpower, the KKE did not receive commensurate aid from the Soviet Union.

The KKE did receive support from Yugoslavia during the war providing weapons and safe travel across the border. Yugoslavia endorsed and encouraged the KKE’s revolt with the revolt perhaps more a product of Yugoslav pressure than KKE initiative (Banac, 1995). However, Yugoslavian leader Tito and Stalin engaged in a public row with Stalin eventually ordering Yugoslavia to discontinue supporting the KKE. Tito refused to comply and Stalin expelled Yugoslavia from the Cominform (Stavrakis, 1995 and Banac, 1995). The KKE sided with Stalin in the dispute in 1948, which resulted in the stoppage of the Yugoslavian weapons flow to the KKE and the closing of the Yugoslavia/Greek border. These actions denied the KKE critical resources necessary to continue their fight in the civil war (Stavrakis, 1995). U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson noted the ending of Yugoslav support in October 1949. “According to the United Nations Special Committee, the Yugoslav Government has closed the Greek borders, precluding the entry of fleeing guerrillas, and has not recently lent support to these forces ... It is not believed that there is a large number of guerrillas now remaining in

Yugoslavia” (Acheson, 1949). The decision to support Stalin alienated the KKE from its only source of material support (Kofos, 1995).

The need of external intervention for victory in the civil war provides evidence for the first hook mechanism. Each side knew it needed external support. The Greek government received continuous material support from the British and then the United States, while the KKE struggled to secure Soviet support and then alienated its only benefactor. This resulted in a clear advantage for the government in the conflict.

### In-Group/Out-group

The Greek civil war provides support for the in-group/out-group hook in two ways. First, the Greeks viewed the United States as part of its in-group while, secondly, the population viewed the KKE as an out-group. The United States maintained in-group status by its alliance with Great Britain and its overt support for the Greek government. By contrast, the KKE suffered from little support, especially within Athens, condemning it to out-group status.

As part of the Varkiza Agreement, Greece held a vote to determine the reinstatement of the monarch. The vote passed by a wide margin (69% in favor) and King George II returned to Greece (Nachmani, 1990). The king provided a symbol of national unity and shared British heritage being Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh’s first cousin (Iatrides, 1995). Furthermore, the British intervened successfully in support of the government in the 1944-1945 conflict. The British by virtue of the Greek king’s lineage and its past support shared in-group membership with the Greeks.

The British struggled to continue supporting the Greek government moving into 1945 and asked the United States to step in and provide assistance to the Greek government, which the United States eventually chose to do. “The British Government, which has been helping Greece, can give no further financial or economic aid after March. Great Britain finds itself under the necessity of reducing or liquidating its commitments in several parts of the world, including Greece” (Truman, 1947 p. 3). This provides evidence for the second mechanism. The British enjoyed popular support and in-group status with the Greeks. This in-group status extended to the United States since the United States remained a strong ally of the British and the British asked the United States to support the Greek government. The British alliance and endorsement provided a clear in-group hook for U.S. intervention.

Separate from the British in-group tie, the Greek government requested support from the United States. “The United States has received from the Greek Government an urgent appeal for financial and economic assistance” (Truman, 1947 p. 2). Further, the United States both wanted to and did provide this support. Truman told Congress, “the Greek Government is unable to cope with the situation ... Greece must have assistance if it is to become a self-supporting and self-respecting democracy” (Truman, 1947). In the same address, Truman went on to say, “The United States must supply that assistance” (Truman, 1947). Truman’s speech makes clear that the Greek government sought U.S. assistance and that the United States wanted to provide that assistance. Truman’s public declaration of support for the Greek people after the Greek government’s request for assistance provides further evidence for the in-group hook.

This event stands in stark contrast to the Soviet-Afghan case study previously discussed. The PDPA sought Soviet support; however, the CPSU did not recognize the PDPA

internationally and ordered state media to downplay the group's existence. The Soviets did not see the PDPA as part of their in-group. Conversely, President Truman stood before Congress and made the case for U.S. support to the Greek government. These two episodes highlight the critical divergence between the two cases. The Greeks and United States viewed each other as members of the same in-group resulting in an overt, successful intervention, while the Soviets denied the PDPA in-group membership resulting in a covert, ultimately unsuccessful intervention.

The Greeks viewed the United States as an in-group member, but to make matters worse for the KKE, the public viewed the KKE as an out-group. The KKE did not garner much, if any, support within Athens. Conflicting evidence suggests the KKE found some support outside Athens and won success on the battlefield in northern Greece, but Athens remained central to the outcome of the conflict (Iatrides, 1995 and Nachmani, 1990). Therefore, the opinions of Athenians remain most critical. Domestic opponents of the KKE remained united in opposition to the group and anti-communist sentiment ran through the government and the public at large (Iatrides, 1995). U.S. Ambassador MacVeagh observed KKE parades and rallies in late 1945, but noted in cables back to the State Department, "KKE with their signs and slogans and megaphone boys are getting on the nerves of the ordinary citizen" (MacVeagh p. 651). Greece experienced some upheaval after the Nazi occupation, which may have provided the KKE with an opening, but, instead, the group compromised with the government. By 1945, the moment of opportunity for communist revolution had passed. Greek historian John Iatrides concludes, "It is not at all clear why, after 1945, the KKE leaders could believe that they continued to enjoy enough public support at home to ensure the success of a Communist direct revolution" (Iatrides,

1995, p.15). This evidence provides support for the KKE's out-group status. The Greek population did not support the KKE, but did support British and U.S. intervention creating an easy in-group hook for U.S. intervention in 1947. As previously mentioned, there appears to be some dissent by scholars on the early military successes of the communists; however, the consensus seems to be that U.S. intervention in 1947 proved decisive in the outcome of the conflict, turning any advantage the KKE may have had, and ensured government victory.

### Reputation

The support the Greek civil war provides for the third mechanism proves more condensed, but still quite strong. European states after WWII held the United States in high regard. Greece shared this opinion with its European neighbors (Iatrides, 1995). The United States, immediately after the war, maintained a position of nonintervention. Ambassador MacVeagh cabled back to the U.S. in late 1944 calling this strategy a mistake. "U.S. prestige is high, but policy of nonintervention in internal matters seems ill-adapted to the present world situation ... This policy is actually enabling both Left and Right to claim U.S. sympathy" (MacVeagh, 1980 p. 686). The United States clearly did not want communism to take root in Greece and MacVeagh feared that in desperation the Greeks would be pliant for a communist takeover. Therefore, the ambassador concluded that the United States needed to pick a side, so that the communists could not claim to have U.S. sympathy.

This communication supports the third theoretical hook mechanism. A third party's perceived reputation proves critical in an intervention scenario. The United States' maintained such a good reputation in Greece that both sides of the conflict wanted the perception of U.S.

support (MacVeagh, 1980). Furthermore, this justifies the need for a third mechanism. A third party's reputation can overcome the in-group/out-group dynamic. The United States and a communist insurgency would not share an in-group dynamic. The fact that this type of group would seek U.S. sympathy provides strong evidence that the Greek citizens held the United States in high regard and that the belligerents in the conflict believed U.S. support would be decisive in the conflict. Additionally, based on Ambassador MacVeagh's reports, the U.S. government would have known the Greek opinion of the United States before deciding to intervene.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This paper attempted to add to the growing literature of covert intervention by articulating a theory for covert intervention in civil war. The theory described here used the Soviet-Afghan war and the Greek civil war to support three mechanisms that would theoretically impact the decision to intervene covertly or overtly. First, a third party will consider the public's perception of external intervention. Second, the in-group/out-group status of the intervener will impact its intervention type. And, finally, if the third party's perceived reputation will factor into the decision to intervene covertly or overtly.

Follow-on research should continue to test the theory using a most likely case model. Each mechanism will theoretically work independently; therefore, future papers should apply cases that satisfy each mechanism to test them independently. Both case study and quantitative analysis would each provide useful insights into theory's explanatory power.

The policy implications from this theory and supporting evidence produce a bleak view, especially for covert intervention. A line from the popular television series *The West Wing* sat at the forefront of my mind. A discussion about what constitutes a war crime prompts one military official to say, "All war is a crime" (Sorkin, 2001). Each conflict produced mass destruction of property and, more importantly, human life. The Greek civil war resulted in over 80,000 casualties and left approximately 700,000 people homeless. The overt, U.S. intervention in Greece can be assessed as more successful than the covert, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The longer arc of history supports this claim. Greece did struggle in the aftermath of the civil

war, yet it has remained a democratic country since about 1974 (BBC, 2019). Additionally, Greece became a member of the international community and participates in international institutions. It joined NATO in 1951 and the European Union in 1981 (NATO, 2012 and EU, 2018). The U.S. intention for the future of Greece largely developed over time despite some bumps in the road. Perhaps we can conclude that if the three theoretical mechanisms described here are met and a third party intervenes overtly, then the supported actor stands a chance at succeeding in the future. War persists as one of the most uncertain and destructive of human endeavors; therefore, this conclusion remains tacit, yet perhaps hopeful.

By contrast, the Soviet intervention caused irreparable harm for Afghanistan during the conflict and inflicted future consequences that damaged both the Soviet Union and her interests abroad. Scholars argue the Soviet intervention provided the opportunity for Islamic fundamentalism to flourish in Afghanistan and the Middle East more broadly (Prados, 2002). Actors such as Osama bin Laden gained prominence, credibility, and influence through their participation in the Soviet-Afghan conflict and in the case of bin Laden eventually headed an organization capable of attacking the world's only superpower at the time in a spectacle that brought down critical infrastructure and plunged a generation (and counting) into wars in the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

History is a cruel mistress to those who paid her no penance. Governments who fail to consider the history and impact of a domestic audience do so that their peril. The deeper implication from this study is that governments should learn from history and respect a domestic audience. The theory presented here tries to develop further the theory for covert action in war. Yet, the real policy implication here is likely different from what the reader expects. If the

criteria of this theory are met it should produce a covert intervention, but it should also produce a thorough amount of questioning regarding the efficacy of an intervention of any type. If a domestic audience's opinion compels a covert intervention, then the intervention may actually be a bad idea. The Soviets ignored history and learned that the hard way. More frustratingly, the United States did not learn from the Soviets' failures and, while the conflict remains ongoing, seems destined to repeat these same mistakes. We know three things about the history of warfare in Afghanistan.

1. Occupiers of Afghanistan suffer.
2. The country cannot have an ideology imposed upon it, neither communism nor democracy. The Soviets failed to support a communist state and the current U.S. supported democratic state does not look promising.
3. The Afghans will not support or capitulate to a foreign emplaced leader. The British failed at this with their emir, the Soviets failed at this with Karmal, and America is trying it now, but Hamid Karzai's "leadership" proved an unmitigated disaster.

The Soviet General Staff opposed an overt intervention in Afghanistan. Soviet leadership did not believe the Afghan people would easily submit, since they never had before, or that the people of Afghanistan were amenable to creating a socialist state. The Soviets chose covert intervention which led to mission creep and an eventual catastrophic outcome. Then, once intervention became inevitable, the General Staff disapproved of the number of troops deployed to the region claiming such a force would prove too small to complete the mission in Afghanistan and requested a much larger force (Lyakhovsky 1995). If only U.S. leadership had

learned from the mistakes of history. Instead, the United States adopted a “light footprint” approach, then embarked on a nation building mission to impose democracy. The approach found success during the initial invasion, but proved ill equipped for the ensuing occupation and the security situation started to deteriorate almost immediately (Salt, 2018). The Soviet General Staff would not have been surprised and those still living likely watched with a knowing shake of the head. Not only did the United States fail to learn any lessons from history, it replicated, almost exactly, many of the Soviet mistakes. The U.S. military occupies all the old Soviet bases. I have a photo of my time there standing next to a burned out Soviet anti-aircraft gun at a base near Kabul. The area right outside the base in Kandahar is off limits because the Soviets emplaced a minefield around that location and we do not want to risk equipment or personnel clearing the minefield.

Therefore, the implications of the theory presented here are somewhat contradictory. If these three mechanisms indicate a covert intervention, a state should reconsider its intervention strategy all together instead of diving into a covert intervention. The Soviets suffered almost 50,000 casualties, while the United States has suffered 22,883 casualties to date (Taubman, 1988 and Department of Defense, 2019). These numbers would likely be much lower if each country had learned from the mistakes of the past. Instead, Soviet and U.S. troops were told to “go to your God like a soldier,” and far too many have done just that (Kipling, 2008).

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