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LASTING IMPACT: ANALYZING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COLONIALISM AND  
PROXY WAR ONSET

by  
Sydney L. Rehm

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion  
Of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies  
Croft Institute for International Studies  
Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College  
The University of Mississippi

University, Mississippi  
May 2024

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## ABSTRACT

Proxy wars are a very specific subset of war that have increased in frequency. Researchers have studied why proxy wars occur, but there are less studies specifically on to what extent, if any, colonialism has on the onset of proxy wars. To fill this gap, I write a historical analysis of past proxy wars—specifically the Vietnam War (1955-1975), Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), and Yemeni Civil War (2014-present)—to examine the effects of colonialism. Furthermore, I utilize my case studies to assess my argument’s limitations. I also utilize statistical analysis to determine the probability of proxy war if a country has a history of colonialism. I argue that colonialism causes limited economic development, ethnic divides, and patron investment, which then in turn heightens the probability of proxy war onset. My findings are mixed; my Vietnam case study shows evidence that colonialism led to proxy war onset, but statistics show the opposite effect: that colonialism, on average, decreases the probability of proxy war onset. The research conducted in this paper provides new insight on why proxy wars occur that have not been discussed in previous literature by tying in colonialism and its legacy. It also contributes to the existing scholarship on intrastate conflict, internationalized domestic conflicts, the influence of outside entities in conflicts, and the ramifications of colonialism.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

What explains proxy war onset? Proxy wars are a common type of conflict that is widespread amongst world powers due to the mostly indirect forms of intervention, which proves to be less costly in terms of money, citizen deaths, and political blowback (De Soysa 2017, Watts et al. 2023). For example, during and after the Cold War, the United States and Russia have become patrons for other conflicts. The Syrian Civil War, beginning in 2011, had the United States funding the rebels and Russia funding the state, becoming a recent example of major world powers indirectly fighting each other through a proxy. Peaking in frequency during and after the late Cold War era, proxy wars, given their importance, have started to be more studied, with scholars (Cunningham 2016; Hendrix 2011; Dixon 2009; Fearon and Laitin 2003; De Soysa 2017; Hughes 2012) frequently analyzing the start of proxy wars and how different factors like state making, state capacities, economic development, and resources affect proxy war onset (Watts et al. 2023). However, less research has been performed on the potential influence of colonialism on proxy war onset. The intersection between proxy war onset and colonialism will help scholars further understand why conflicts internationalize and the long-term effects of colonialism.

Colonialism is a phenomenon that has afflicted most countries on Earth in one way or another and has created an incredible impact on both colonizers and colonized states (past and present) and their economies (Cimini et al. 2020, Chandra 1965). In my research, I aim to study the gap in knowledge of colonialism and proxy war onset and write about the relationship between colonialism and the onset of proxy wars. Colonialism needs to be focal in the context of proxy war onset because many ramifications of colonialism—like limited economic development and ethnic divides—are also present in factors affecting proxy and civil war onset. Specifically, I

aim to answer the research question of what explains proxy war onset. Identifying aspects related to proxy war onset can prevent future conflicts and stabilize ones already in motion.

I argue that colonialism increases the likelihood of proxy war onset. Specifically, I argue that colonialism has an effect on proxy war onset by providing limited economic development, exacerbating ethnic divides, and colonial investment signaling to other states that there is something of value. Each of these mechanisms leads to internationalized conflict. The results of my research reveal mixed results: my case studies show it does have a clear effect by leading to limited economic development, heightened ethnic divides, and state investment, but the logistic regression model displays a negative relationship between colonialism and proxy war onset in my statistics, so my argument is not generalizable to all former colonies experiencing proxy war. I still maintain that they did have a positive effect in my specific case studies by providing the foundation for proxy war onset.

This research will contribute to existing scholarship on proxy wars by providing a new perspective on how previous historical events can contribute to conflict onset, specifically proxy war onset. I contribute to knowledge on how colonialism leads legacies for future conflicts. Henley (2018), Ghosh (2001), and more authors focus on colonialism's impact on economic development and how a history of colonialism in a country severely limits a state's future ability to diversify and grow its economy. De Soysa (2017), Cunningham (2016), Fearon and Laitin (2003), and other authors detail limited economic development's strong role in the probability of civil war onset. I expand on this and see how it could internationalize and create a proxy war onset.

Additionally, I contribute to scholarship on the ramifications of independence and colonialism by describing how colonialism can lead to the internationalization of conflicts. Other

than limited opportunities for economic growth, there are several other documented consequences of colonialism, like heightened ethnic divides (Cooper 2005; Ali et al., 2018; Morrock 1973) and political instability and violence (De Juan and Pierskalla 2017). I elaborate on these consequences and explain how they lead to internationalized conflict.

This research also describes how some types of colonialism are more likely than others to internationalize. Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) and Chandra (1965) argue how extractive colonialism is extremely detrimental to the population and the economy because of lack of regard for the wellbeing of the state and a focus on siphoning, or extracting, resources for the colonizer's gain. Extractive colonialism is harmful more so than settler colonialism due to the colony being designed for the colonizer to live there in settler colonialism. I expand on this by detailing how the most harmful forms of colonialism can lead to internationalized conflict.

My research is important for combining two very widespread areas of scholarship and researching the intersection between the two. Throughout this paper, I utilize qualitative and quantitative methods to determine the likelihood of proxy war onset in countries with a history of colonialism. I used mixed methods to create a fuller analysis using both individual and generalized instances. I use the Vietnam War, Yemeni Civil War, and Lebanese Civil War as cases. These case studies display if my hypothesis is valid on an individual level. I use statistics to create a more thorough picture of proxy wars as a whole to see general trends, and I utilize cases to see how my hypothesis plays out in individual countries. Statistical analysis reveals the effect across all cases; qualitative inferences reveal insights about individual cases that are invaluable and provide historical legacy. I picked the Vietnam War and the Lebanese Civil War due to them both being French colonies but with different time spans for conflict; I wanted to observe this hypothesis for more than one French case. I researched the Yemeni Civil War due to



its interesting status as a protectorate under British rule and it is a deviant case. Vietnam and Lebanon are most-different cases: the ideological, economic, and theological reasons for the war and its internationalization are different, along with their Cold War relevance. However, both are colonized by the French with extractive colonialism methods in place and both had severe domestic problems after independence, mostly due to factors associated with French colonialism. I utilize these cases to see how two drastically different countries had the same outcome. Yemen is an outlier, to see if my hypothesis works for mandates with different kinds of colonial presence.

In this paper, I first start by introducing proxy war and colonialism and explaining the literature associated with each. Then, I introduce my theory that the probability of proxy war onset increases if a state has been colonized before getting into my cases. This is because of limited economic development, heightened ethnic divides, and state investment by the colony, all leading to internationalization. The third chapter is a case study about Vietnam, where I show that the Vietnam War (1955-1975) internationalized in part due to past French colonialism. The fourth chapter is about Lebanon and the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), which relates to my Vietnam case study and I argue that past French colonialism led to the onset of the war. I end with a case study of Yemen, which adds a clarifying view of the conditions under which theory does and does not apply. I then go through my statistical design and results to assess the generalizability of my argument on colonialism heightening the probability of future proxy war onset. Lastly, I conclude with a discussion of potential theories for my results and a call for further research.

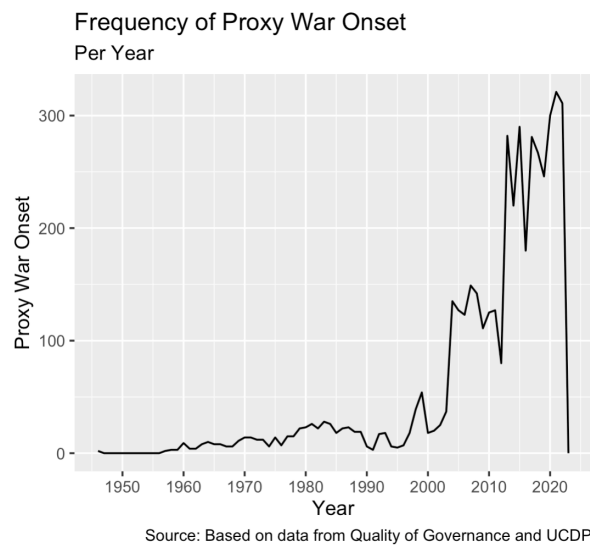
## Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

Proxy wars have happened for centuries, like the Egyptian-Ottoman War in 1839 (Dixon and Reid 2015), but have become more frequent during and after the Cold War—the Vietnam War and Korean War being examples of Cold War proxy wars—due to the development of nuclear weapons and the high costs of conflict (Watts et. al 2023). Instead, states decide to interfere in other conflicts to indirectly fight other powers (De Soysa 2017, Mumford 2013). Due to civil wars and proxy wars sharing several commonalities, there are factors from civil war onset that can be drawn on to explain proxy war onset. Existing literature has argued that the probability of proxy war onset can be heightened by a combination of domestic and international factors. In regards to domestic factors, a contributing aspect to the onset of civil and proxy war is countries with low average incomes due to a low opportunity cost of conflict along with the difficulties associated with a state trying to surveil and control larger populations. Limited economic development is positively linked with conflict onset (Cunningham 2016; Jakobsen, De Soysa, and Jakobsen 2013; Fearon and Laitin 2003; De Soysa 2017). With international causes, proxy wars happen more frequently because of a lack of public support for direct conflict in the patron's own state and the expanding financial cost of war (Mumford 2013). Their frequency has increased due to stronger states preferring a war without being directly involved; it lessens the responsibility the strong state shoulders in order to participate in the conflict (Byman 2018). Some of these domestic factors, like limited economic development and low incomes, are also linked to the aftermath of colonialism (Cimini et al. 2020, Chandra 1965). But there are several unique factors that contribute to proxy war onset. Though civil wars and proxy wars share commonalities, I argue that colonialism has a unique impact on proxy wars due to its weakening of the colonized and its institutions, specifically by limiting economic development, exacerbating

ethnic divides, and state investment. The specific effect of colonialism on proxy war onset has yet to be widely studied within conflict or colonialism literature.

**Figure One** demonstrates the amount of incidences of proxy war onset that have occurred from 1946 to 2020.<sup>1</sup> The figure displays the history of proxy war onset and how it has had more occurrences in recent years.

**Figure One: Bar Plot Displaying the Amount of Proxy War Incidences per Year**



Although civil wars and proxy wars are slightly different—civil war describes a conflict within groups in the same country for power (Fearon 2006) whereas proxy wars are a subset of civil wars that are distinguished by an international power supporting a party (Byman 2018)—they share several factors related to their onset. Proxy wars and third-party intervention share a definition in this analysis; Elbadawi and Sambanis (2000) define third-party intervention as a "military, economic or mixed assistance in favor of either the government or the rebel movement involved in the civil war" (Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000 pp.8). I utilize the term "proxy war," but the difference in the context of this project is more stylistic than conceptual. The dependent variable I utilize to predict proxy war onset, created by UCDP, is imperfect,

<sup>1</sup> Multiple incidences can happen within the same country in the same year.

because while I define proxy war onset as military *and* economic assistance, the variable only includes military assistance. This leads to bias, which I will return to in my statistics section.

Intervention in this analysis consists of military, direct, or financial aid. Although there is no agreed-upon specific definition for a proxy war (Bar-Siman-Tov 1984; Byman 2018), for the purpose of this paper, the operational definition of a proxy war will be the presence of state actors supporting other governments or third-party groups in a civil war. This definition limits proxy wars to state interventions and provides more definitive parameters. They also need to comprise at least financial or logistical aid in order to be considered a proxy war; only having direct military aid is unnecessary. I focus on proxy wars that are internationalized intrastate conflicts, so I only consider civil wars with external intervention as proxy wars in this analysis (Gleditsch et al., 2002). I chose to include direct aid in my definition due to wars themselves with direct aid being considered a proxy war. I did not include interstate conflict due to it being a very wide definition and not necessary for what I am researching here; however, they are still part of the definition of proxy wars, just outside my scope conditions.

Proxy wars are a kind of war that include the involvement of an external state or entity that typically provides resources, troops, or weapons to a country or armed third party (Rauta 2021). The dispute has to map onto a larger dispute between major world powers. When I am referring to "patrons" I am discussing the entity (another state or rebel) intervening militarily or financially on behalf of the original state or warring party, not against it. This definition includes both rebel organizations and other nations. "Proxies" refer to the local warring parties or states that receive funding from the patron(s) and are usually used for larger conflicts between world powers. Alternatively, they might involve the provision of these funds, which can then be utilized for weapons or resources or another asset to the country or third party. To specify, the

countries I mention with “a history of colonialism” refers to countries that are former colonies, not the colonizers themselves. For my research, colonialism is defined as a form of political and economic domination over nations that are dependencies of a foreign state (Horvath 1972; Kohn and Reddy 2006).

### **Theorizing The Onset of Proxy Wars**

There are three mechanisms that heighten the probability of proxy war onset through colonialism. The first mechanism is economics, the second mechanism is ethnic grievances, and the third mechanism is learning of interest from a third party. In the next section, I will elaborate on each in detail.

#### *Colonialism and the Economy*

The first mechanism is economics. Vast amounts of scholarly works are dedicated to the influence of colonialism’s impact on the economy of a state (Henley 2018; Cimini et al. 2020; Ghosh 2001). In practice, if a foreign state engages in exploitation and occupation in a country other than its own, it is colonialism. For example, the French engaged in extractive colonialism in Vietnam in order to obtain resources and bolster their economy.

Colonizers frequently established “extractive institutions,” which robbed the local populations of resources and opportunities while exploiting local labor (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006). This was utilized to "maximize economic returns" and resulted in lower institutional quality (Dell and Olken 2020 pp. 1). In turn, the state's post-colonial economy was underdeveloped and stunted. In my case studies specifically, extractive colonialism is used in Vietnam. Similarly, the “drain theory” or “drain of wealth” argument is commonly discussed by economists and political scientists. They apply this theory to India and argue that the

expropriation of resources—like land and control over trade—limited the benefits of economic growth to only the colonizer and left the colonized state with no economic gains of their own (Chandra 1965). The literature mostly agrees that the affected country’s economy is severely impacted during and after colonialism due to extractive methods. Furthermore, there is extensive research about post-colonial states suffering from the middle income trap, which is when a state experiences limited economic growth, inhibiting the state from increasing its GDP and becoming a more economically advanced country (Cimini et al. 2020). There is significant amounts of literature on the middle income trap and colonial legacies in both Latin America and Southeast Asia (Henley 2018; Cimini et al. 2020).

Similarly, the economic dependency theory hypothesizes that limited economic development is due to the peripheral position of states, and these states were unable to develop as long as the wealthy states in the center continued to take advantage of cheap labor and resources the underdeveloped states provided (Ghosh 2001). This theory applies to several post-colonial states due to extractive colonialism establishing only raw material infrastructure and no advanced machinery or factories (Ghosh 2001).

It is easier for third parties to intervene and turn a civil war into a proxy war when there is existing colonial legacies. If colonialist institutions are already put in place by a previous power, it is much easier and less costly for another foreign state to intervene. A country that experienced extractive colonialism has infrastructure that was developed solely for trade and control for the benefit of the colonizer. These previously established trade infrastructure and colonial administration provides a second colonial power with the resources needed to start or continue intervention. Since both the extractive and outside power institutions are already in place, it is easier for a future third party to control the state. For example, Vietnam was colonized

by the French for its resources, but then was slowly handed off to the United States in the aftermath of World War II. These institutions aided the United States in intervening and internationalizing the Vietnam War later.

### *Colonialism and Ethnic Divides*

Moreover, colonialism has led to several consequences that have the potential to impact the start of civil and proxy wars, like exploiting ethnic divides—called the “divide and rule” strategy—and seizing control of the state’s economy for the colonizer’s own gain (Cooper 2005; Ali et al., 2018; Morrock 1973). Colonizers and political elites frequently purposefully exacerbate ethnic divides in colonies to remain in power; in turn, ethnic polarization heightens the likelihood of conflict (Alder and Wang 2014; Fearon and Laitin 2000). Policies designed to incite polarization include language suppression and limiting educational policies, inequalities in the military and legislation, and discriminatory administration practices (Lange et al. 2021). Colonialism is also linked with ethnic conflict (Blanton, Mason, and Athow 2001) and some scholars argue that colonialism heightens inter-communal violence (Lange and Dawson 2009; Ali et al., 2018). Furthermore, discriminatory communalizing colonial policies (CCPs)—policies that benefit some communities at the expense of others— are linked to higher probabilities of civil war onset (Lange et al. 2021). Colonialism, specifically more harmful forms like extractive colonialism, creates these CCPs during their occupation, which then increases the likelihood of conflict by exacerbating ethnic divides (Lange et al. 2021). This happens in Lebanon, where the constitution—made by the French—specifically favors certain groups (Chamie 1976, Khleif 1984). Conflicting views and evidence about the impact of diversity and population density on civil wars is common, but several findings in literature suggest that “ethnic dominance” is a

factor in explaining civil war (Dixon 2009). The ethnic dominance theory argues that when a state has a considerable majority of a particular ethnic group and a minority of another, conflict, including civil war, is more likely (Dixon 2009).

### *Colonialism and Third Party Investment*

An additional mechanism is if other colonial states have already invested money and time building institutions and potentially conducting resource extraction, this might increase the interest of other foreign powers. As mentioned previously, past colonial infrastructure—like railroads specifically for trading, resource-based economies, and ports in extractive colonial settings—is valuable for control of a colony in the future. Because another major power decided to supply resources or invest financially to the establishment of a colonial state, that might encourage other states to devote more interest and time into a state when there would be no investment otherwise. The opportunity cost is lower. For example, since France colonized Vietnam, this signaled to the United States that Vietnam had value, and likely increased the probability of U.S. interest and intervention.

These conflicts have the opportunity to turn into proxy wars when the past colonial power or an ally intervenes, potentially to minimize damage to its legacy or resource extraction systems still in place after independence. Furthermore, past patrons or their allies may invest into the conflict to maintain the existing power structure or to enter the country for resource extraction. Patrons utilize the country's weaknesses for their own self interests to push their own ideology and to gain more power.



In summary, these mechanisms make proxy war more likely within the last century, and therefore I hypothesize:

*H1: A history of colonialism in a country within the last century contributes to and heightens the probability of proxy war onset.*

To reiterate, this project focuses on the specific impact of colonialism on proxy war onset, which is understudied in literature despite the wide variety of research concerning proxy wars and their start and colonialism's relationship to civil war.

### *Research Design*

To test this hypothesis, I use both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to widen the scope of my research and examine the data from both a historical and statistical viewpoint. On the statistical side, I intend to use data from several datasets, which are collections of data from various sources that can be coded to fit the scope of statistics the researcher needs. I will use data from the Quality of Government compilation dataset (Teorell et al. 2019) to predict the probability of proxy war onset utilizing a set of independent variables; my variables come from the Authoritarian Regime Type Revisited dataset (Wahman, Teorell, and Hadenius 2013) and the UCDP/PRIO dataset (Gleditsch et al. 2002). This analyzes the relationship between colonized countries and proxy war onset. I will utilize these statistics to draw inferences on if, and how, colonialism influences proxy war onset. The statistics test if this hypothesis transfers to other countries with different types of colonialism. Furthermore, this tests the generalizability of my study and if my hypothesis applies to conflicts that are not just my case studies.

Regarding my qualitative analysis, I intend to use three case studies as a historical analysis comparing two countries experiencing proxy wars that were colonized by different

powers and one partially-colonized proxy war to analyze the limitations of my research. Currently, my cases are the Vietnam War (1955-1975), the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), and the Yemeni Civil War (2014-present). The Lebanese Civil War is a proxy war that started in 1975 with influence from actors like Israel and Syria due to vast socioeconomic difficulties and significant ethnic and religious divides in Lebanon. Colonized by the French, the ethnic divides fortified during French colonial rule lead to a unique colonial angle of ethnic conflict that internationalized with regional actors. The Vietnam War was a civil war between North and South Vietnam with North Vietnam supported by the Soviet Union and China while the South was largely supported by the United States with aid from several other countries. Vietnam is an example of economic extractive colonialism that had an unconventional switch from French colonial occupation to United States intervention in the Vietnam War. Vietnam and Lebanon were colonized by France and South Yemen was indirectly occupied by the British. The Yemeni Civil War is a proxy war that, I argue, does not stem from the British protectorate, and instead is a deviant case that started from factors present before colonialism. This case study is utilized as a means to limit the parameters of my hypothesis. I recognize that colonialism is not the only reason for proxy war onset, and merely hope to explain additional factors that make proxy war more likely. I do this by first analyzing my case studies to see individual examples of the effect of colonialism on proxy war onset, before then moving on to quantitative analysis to research generalized effects.

## Chapter Three: Vietnam

### *Introduction*

In this chapter, I am analyzing Vietnam and the Vietnam War as a case study to look at the impact of French colonialism on proxy war onset. The Vietnam War was a devastating proxy war that lasted from 1955 to 1975 and included the United States and the Soviet Union as some of the external states involved. I chose Vietnam due to its colonization by the French for variety (as opposed to British or other European colonizers), had ties to the United States and Soviet Union, and also had a proxy war that involved external parties that did not participate in Vietnamese colonialism but inserted themselves later in Vietnamese history. I argue that French colonialism and the exploitative economic colonial system and institutions in place severely hindered Vietnamese financial development and contributed to the onset of the Vietnam War. I do this by describing the relationship between colonialism and proxy war onset by detailing the colonial history in Vietnam, its repercussions, and how it contributed to the onset of the Vietnam War.

### **Colonialism**

#### *The Colonial Period*

The initial goal of French colonialism and the establishment of a base in present-day Vietnam was to open China to Western trade. At first, the French were just involved politically and militarily, but later moved to complete control in 1867 (Cady, 1966; Cumings, 2004). Throughout France, French involvement in Indochina (see Figure 1) was seen as a negative in France throughout the late 1800s because France had not gained a significant amount of money from the colonies (Cady, 1966). Indochina consisted of several countries including Laos,

Thailand, and Vietnam, with Vietnam being split into North Vietnam (Tonkin), Central Vietnam (Annam) and South Vietnam (Cochin-China) by the French; these countries had borders and were independent before French colonialism (Logevall 2010).

### *Traits and History of French Colonialism in Vietnam*

Before French Governor Paul Doumer arrived in Colonial Indochina, Indochina was simply a military base and the French instead focused on expanding occupied territory rather than governing (Chapuis 1995). Doumer thought of a solution to the lack of money coming from Indochina, and designed a colonial administration system of rule for Indochina in 1897 (Cady, 1966). The system was exploitative by taking advantage of staples like rice, tin, and rubber for exportation to aid the French administration in benefiting the French rather than local communities (Cumings, 2004). The goal of the colonial state under the new administration was to “facilitate the movement of commodities” out of Indochina (Cumings 2004, p. 290). Additionally, instead of discouraging opium production, the French administration supported the opium trade, as it was a great source of financial revenue for the French (Cumings 2004).

South Vietnam—labeled Cochin-China at the time—was ruled directly by the French under “a modified system of French law and an advisory Colonial Council” (Cady 1966, 75). The Colonial Council consisted of 10 members of the Vietnamese elite and only two members that were appointed locally. The other 12 were chosen by the French—24 representatives in total. Cochin-China was filled with French economic investments and had more of a traditional economic system than other French colonies in the region, meaning it was ruled mostly directly by French leaders as opposed to indirect rule. Though several countries were included in the Indochinese label, the countries were not treated equally. In Saigon, in Cochin-China, the French obtained complete financial control, but Laos and Cambodia were colonies with more limited

French intervention (Cady, 1966). Annam and Tonkin, in Northern Vietnam, were protectorates and not fully colonized (Slobodkin 2023). Instead, French officials focused on transferring the French administration onto existing Vietnamese institutions, managing the Vietnamese government officials (Slobodkin 2023). Five years after Doumer's system, extensive railways were constructed, the volume of the region's commerce doubled, and the French largely benefited monetarily. The French spent little money in Vietnam, just enough to utilize the agricultural resources present (Cumings, 2004).

The French Governor-General of French Indochina, Albert Sarraut, created an "integrated but flexible system of colonial administration" that relied less on French officials to create policy and instead selected specific Vietnamese individuals to lead the government (Cady, 1966, p. 75). Under French rule, the village chiefs and notables, who led the village, were selected differently. The French specifically chose notables and chiefs who had profited "from their positions at the expense of the poor" and drove out the popular and fair village leaders (Popkin 1976 pp. 432). This led to lower classes in villages feeling unsupported and heightened economic stratification (Popkin 1976). After World War I, French officials expressed ideas that greater political representation was coming for the Vietnamese, but the actions put into place were nominal at best. Policy determination remained in French control until Vietnamese independence (Cady, 1966).

Under French colonialism, in 1938, the French had a plan to invest in industrialization sectors like cars and textiles, but the policy was "deemed impractical" (Cumings, 2004, p. 293).

### *Colonialism Complications*

The French colonial system took advantage of local Vietnamese populations while benefiting French citizens. Over five thousand French workers moved to Cochin-China to take advantage of the employment opportunities. French exploitation of the expanding Vietnamese economy created little economic benefit for the Vietnamese local populations; they rarely were able to participate in the areas of the economy experiencing growth, including agriculture, finance, and transportation. All of the transportation infrastructure, like railroads along the coast, were built to increase French export capabilities, and they organized tariffs to improve production (Cumings, 2004). Trade with countries nearby was disadvantageous due to high customs fees, and traditional art handicraft production decreased as a symptom of colonial policies (Cady, 1966).

Furthermore, after 1924, the French colonists living in Vietnam invested in Vietnamese agriculture, like rice, rubber, and tea. French citizens took advantage of fertile land on the Northern span of the Mekong river at the expense of local indigenous populations. After French colonists arrived in Vietnam, pre-existing arrangements, like protected communal lands for subsistence, collapsed, and instead became privatized for wealthy Vietnamese and foreigners (Slobodkin 2023). At one point, 75% of the fertile land in Vietnam was owned by foreigners (Cady, 1966). Additionally, due to French imports to Vietnam, Vietnam's industrial resources like minerals, textiles, and metal, were not developed for fear of competition. Vietnam remained an agricultural-based economy with no ability to form a diversified economy for economic development (Cady, 1966). Vietnamese economic development was severely hindered due to the French presence.

### *The Fall of French Colonialism*

Starting before World War II, the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) was a popular resistance movement against French forces, regardless of the harsh punishments put in place because of its existence, including death and mass killings (Singh, 2015).

During World War II, the Japanese military occupied several valuable locations, like airfields, in Indochina, specifically Northern Vietnam, after invading in 1940, which allowed the Japanese military to be stationed there while French colonialism continued (Miller 1990). During the Japanese occupation, the ICP merged with the political organization Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi—shortened as Vietminh—to form the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). The DRV was backed by the majority of the Vietnamese population, but French rule was soon restored (Singh, 2015). In the summer of 1946, Ho Chi Minh, the founder and leader of the Viet Minh, a nationalist group, was invited to France in order to negotiate Vietnam's place in the French Union. The talks did not succeed, and Cochinchina, South Vietnam, was declared to be “a separate republic independent of the proposed Vietnamese state” (Cady, 1966, p. 77).

### **Colonial Legacy**

As North Vietnam became free from the French, Ho Chi Minh referenced the American Declaration of Independence as a contrast to the French ruling governmental document, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen in order to highlight the decades of oppression and exploitation faced by the Vietnamese under French colonial rule (Bradley, 2003).

The legacy of French colonialism contributed to several Vietnamese conflicts and inner turmoil after independence (Cumings, 2004). At the end of the war, Vietnam was very underdeveloped and poverty-stricken due to the economic exploitation and development only for

agricultural and related sectors (Cumings, 2004). As mentioned, limited economic development is a cause for conflict onset, including proxy war onset. When the French colonized Vietnam in a way that limited its economic growth, it heightened its probability of conflict.

### *Colonial Aspects that Lingered After Colonialism*

Subsistence farmers no longer were able to work, and Vietnam only had transportation lines along the coast—not in the developed cities—for trade purposes (Cumings, 2004). The importance of education was not emphasized under French colonization, and there were significantly less teachers present in Vietnam in the post-colonial period, which occurred after Vietnamese independence and the split in 1954 (Cumings, 2004). Furthermore, since the French administration employed large swathes of uneducated and unskilled Vietnamese to work labor in the agricultural fields, the Vietnamese government was unprepared to create a diversified economy and did not have the means to do so (Cumings, 2004).

### *History of Communism in Vietnam after French Colonialism*

The Kuomintang (KMT), which was a Chinese nationalist party, contained several exiled political leaders from Vietnam and was supported by the Soviet Union at the very end and after French colonialism. Ho Chi Minh was one of those leaders, and grew up witnessing the impact of French colonialism in Vietnam while additionally studying abroad in France. Ho Chi Minh relied on financial support from the Soviet Union and China to support his rise to power (Moyar 2006). Minh was a Marxist-Leninist, and he argued that communism could reorder Vietnamese society in the wake of the destruction that French colonialism left (Singh, 2015). He later became the leader of the Vietnamese Communist Party in 1941.



Communism in general grew under French colonialism and through the United States' attempts at eliminating and repressing Communism in Vietnam after Vietnamese independence (Huỳnh 1986). In Vietnam, Communism was framed as a national movement by a "colonized, predominantly agrarian society" and peasants in the anticolonial national movement as opposed to internal class struggles, like Communism movements in the West (Huỳnh 1986 p. 23). The communist and nationalist parties in Vietnam saw rapid mobilization from the "anti-feudal peasant movement" and other agrarian laborers due to the anti-colonial framing of the parties (Huỳnh 1986 p. 23, Cumings 2004). After the First Indochina War from 1946 to 1954 where France attempted to recolonize Vietnam, nationalism in Vietnam grew, which in turn spread Communism and helped the party acquire legitimacy by "expos[ing] colonialism's violent character and advertis[ing] communism's political and social objectives" (Huỳnh 1986, p. 19). From less than 10 imprisoned members in 1925, the Communist party grew to about 1.5 million members in 1976 (Huỳnh 1986).

### *United States Involvement*

In 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was independent; the First Indochina War followed soon after and France retook control of Vietnam once more. The United States, recognizing that Northern Vietnam (and Vietnam as a whole) was leaning towards communist sentiments, became more involved financially in Vietnam and encouraged France to enact an anti-communist policy in Vietnam in order to limit the spread of communism after France regained control of Vietnam in the aftermath of the First Indochina War in 1946. Furthermore, the United States provided both military and financial aid to Vietnam worth about \$2.6 million USD between 1950-1954 (Singh, 2015). The United States'

involvement increased as France became increasingly occupied with the First Indochina War (Eckhardt 1974). To end the first Indochina war, the Geneva Accords took effect, which divided Vietnam temporarily at the 17th parallel in July of 1954.

As South Vietnam entered the post-colonial era in 1954—the same time that the Cold War was heightening tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union—the United States government “systemically replaced French control” throughout South Vietnam through American influence in an attempt to prevent the growth of communist sentiments (Statler 2007, p.1) South Vietnam became a very important ideological asset against the spread of communism for the United States. South Vietnam, led by Ngo Dinh Diem, was accused of being an American puppet by North Vietnam and the Vietnamese Communist Party, or the Viet Minh (Moyar 2006). The decision for the United States to completely replace France came from United States policymakers’ confidence that they had the best ability to create a state without communism (Statler 2007). As time went on, the United States sent military advisors to South Vietnam, and United States had their advisor presence increase after the start of the war (Chronology of Events Relative to Vietnam 1965).

## **The War**

The Vietnam War started in November of 1955 and was the second Indochina War. The war began due to North Vietnam’s desire to create a fully communist country and reunify North and South Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh, the leader of Northern Vietnam and the Viet Minh, gained communist and anti-Western ideals due to French exploitative colonialism in Vietnam and gained support from China. The Viet Minh in Northern Vietnam were supported by China after China and the Soviet Union proclaimed support for the Viet Minh’s state the Democratic Republic of

Vietnam in Northern Vietnam. In contrast, the United Kingdom and the United States supported the French government before the Geneva Accords, and the Vietnamese political turmoil turned into a Cold War proxy conflict. After witnessing the Korean War, the United States was worried about Soviet expansionism (McNamara & Brigham 2000).

The United States and other world powers were very active in Vietnam when the conflict started, with aid from the Soviet Union and briefly the People's Republic of China to North Vietnam and the United States to South Vietnam. The conflict began under the assumption that it would internationalize and turn into a proxy war; South Vietnamese forces would have been overwhelmed almost instantly without American intervention. As the war continued, the United States sent 2.7 million military personnel to Vietnam—among over \$5 billion in aid—in order to defend American anti-communist ideals (data.va.gov; Fishel 1965). Soviet aid to North Vietnam included air defense weapons, other military equipment, and military training. The Chinese military also supported North Vietnam's military training and provided monetary aid. And although the Chinese and Soviet government never confirmed ground troop movement from the respective countries, it is widely believed that there were small amounts of troops defending North Vietnam. Most Soviet military personnel operated surface-to-air missiles (Central Intelligence Agency, 1965). The weaknesses that developed over the colonial period, like grievances of local populations due to economic struggle, made it easier for the war to internationalize by providing a low opportunity cost while developing the proper establishments needed to aid American intervention.

## *Conclusion*

In summary, the Vietnam War is an important example of a proxy war that demonstrates the ramifications of colonialism and the lasting impact colonization has on the former colony. France's colonial history and established institutions in Vietnam led to significant economic downfall, which internationalized the war by creating grievances against the West and colonial state and initiating investment from other Western nations. However, it is also important to consider ideologies when considering the onset; a large part of the war was also likely an ideological cold war dispute. Despite this raising uncertainty about the factors leading to internationalization, Vietnam is a crucial case study in understanding the relationship between proxy war onset and colonialism due to the lengthy time of occupation and the particularly exploitative nature of the French in Vietnam. Furthermore, Vietnam is a typical example of French colonialism—as opposed to indirect British colonialism—and includes U.S. involvement despite the United States having no colonial relationship to Vietnam.

## Chapter Four: Lebanon

### *Introduction*

Like Vietnam, Lebanon is a country that was colonized by the French and was a French colony until 1946. Lebanon is included as a part of my research due to the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) that turned into a proxy war after the onset. The conflict was a civil war between Christian and Muslim militias that internationalized. Syria intervened on behalf of the Christian militias and Israel sent military assistance against the Palestinian and Muslim militias in Lebanon. I chose Lebanon specifically due to its colonization by the French—to compare with Vietnam. Since they are most-different cases, I chose Lebanon to see how ethnic and theological differences could potentially be exacerbated and exploited by a colonial power and how this could contribute to proxy war onset. Furthermore, the foreign actors were regional powers instead of world powers, which differed from Vietnam. Here, I analyze how France utilized ethnicity within Lebanon to achieve its goals, Lebanon's French-made constitution, and its creation of borders in Lebanon contributed later to the onset of the Third Lebanese Civil War and its status as a proxy. I argue that France's colonial legacy, specifically with its position in creating the Lebanese constitution, played a significant role in the onset and subsequent internationalization of the war. The internationalization of the war was caused by ethnic ties. I first detail French colonization in Lebanon and its immediate and long-term effects, followed by details of the war, and finally how the war internationalized.

### *Background*

Originally formed as Ottoman Syria with the Levant, Lebanon later separated with Syria under French control to form a French mandate under the direction of the League of Nations.

Before the mandate, Mount Lebanon, although part of the French mandate called Greater Syria, had political autonomy and was populated by religious minorities like Maronite Christians and Druze due to its status (Cleveland and Bunton 2009). Before World I, Lebanon was considered part of Greater Syria rather than a separate state. In 1916, the Sykes-Picot agreement was signed by the British and the French, which allowed France to set up a direct or indirect administration in current day Lebanon and Syria, but the countries were not assigned these borders until later (Hirst 2010). The creation of Greater Lebanon (a region that included Mount Lebanon, Beirut, and surrounding areas) as an area separate from Syria was deliberate by the French to encourage ethnic and religious fractionalization and maintain power (Cleveland and Bunton 2009).

Lebanon has 18 total officially recognized ethnic groups as of 2011, but 6 of them are considered major sects (Harris 2012; Stoaks 1976). Religion in Lebanon was (and still is) used as a basis for economic power, privilege, and status. In Lebanon, religion is an incredibly salient identifier for individuals and religious affiliation is used to distribute power to specific ethnic communities and people are elected with sectarian considerations (Khleif 1984; Samra and Nasouri 2016). France's colonial period in Lebanon led to ethnic resentment due to French policies that favored the Christian ethnic groups within Lebanon.

Throughout almost the entire era of French colonialism in Lebanon (1920-1940) there was severe instability and government changes within France, which meant that policy related to the mandate was rarely consistent and changed often (Hakim 2019). Furthermore, throughout its colonial period in Lebanon, the French government exploited ethnoreligious divisions to establish France as a strong imperial and colonial power (Hakim 2019). These divisions continued after Lebanon became independent and were the main reason why the Lebanese Civil War began.

### *France's Governmental Systems in Lebanon*

In Lebanon, the French colonial government aimed at building a state that required French support (Kassem 2018). The colonial institutions were weak and the constitution was not built to foster Lebanese development by focusing on ethnic divides and creating an environment for ethnic grievance; Lebanon's crucial relationship between politics and religion was strengthened and emphasized by the French ruling government. Greater Lebanon as a state was created with existing religious and ethnic tensions due to the systems put in place by the French government—specifically confessional democracy—that fostered resentment between differing ethnic groups. France gained Greater Lebanon and Syria after Turkish defeat and fully undertook control in October of 1914. Lebanon separated from Syria in November of 1919 under French occupation in order to “strengthen the political position and economic viability of Mount Lebanon's pro-French Maronite Christian community,” (Chamie 1976 pp. 171). In doing so, the Administrative Council of Greater Mount Lebanon, consisting of elected representatives, essentially has the role of creating the separate Lebanese state (Simon 1995). The council, which was a legislative body, contained five Maronite Christians, three Druze, two Greek Orthodox, one Sunni, one Shiite, and one Greek Catholic member (Simon 1995). The Maronite Christians were mostly located in and around Mount Lebanon, but when France elected to annex the regions surrounding Tripoli, the Bekaa Valley, and Beirut—among others—from Syria, this decision lessened the overall Maronite Christian community within Lebanon due to the regions having a Muslim majority. Furthermore, the establishment of Greater Lebanon reduced the Arab nationalist movement in Syria (Khoury 1987). After the annexation, Greater Lebanon essentially consisted of modern Lebanon's borders. However, there were significant demographic differences from before the annexation.

Following the announcement, there would be an administration council consisting of appointed representatives: 10 Christians, and 7 Muslims and Druze (Harris 2012). Furthermore, after being separated from Syria after the First World War by the French mandate, the French gave a more dominant role to the Maronite Christians as there was a slight Christian majority in Lebanon's demographics (O'Ballance 1998). There have been requests for a new census for decades, but there has not been a new census since 1932. Fears of conflict forbade the census to take place, as with the power sharing agreement, the census directly determines which ethnic groups have the most power. This has been an incredible grievance for the minority ethnicities in Lebanon who were experiencing sectarian discrimination (Khleif 1984).

Furthermore, France established Greater Lebanon in order to accommodate the Christian Maronites, as the French government had a strong relationship with the Christian Arab population, which was typical as the French had a traditional protectorate of the Catholics (Hakim 2019). The Muslim population resisted strongly to being placed in Lebanon and preferred to be placed in Syria and protested by boycotting and revolting after the border establishment (Hakim 2019). The Sunni Muslim population in particular refused to endorse Lebanon as a separate state and boycotted state institutions, only reintegrating in 1936. There were country-wide revolts in the French Mandate between the years 1925 and 1927 due to a strict French administration; after the revolts, France changed tactics, and adopted newer policies to benefit Syrian nationalists and Lebanese allies (Hakim 2019).

There had been ethnic conflict present in Lebanon before French intervention; however, I argue that the redrawn borders and subsequent Maronite Catholic favoritism exacerbated the existing ethnic divides. The French have exploited the historical diversity in Lebanon to advance their own power and nation (Makdisi 2019; Chamie 1976). In doing so, the French colonial



government exacerbated weak institutions and ethnic divides, leading to the onset of the Lebanese Civil War.

### *Lebanon's Constitution and Confessional Democracy*

The French government developed a representative council in Greater Lebanon in 1922, which allotted representatives based on population. This was called a confessional democracy, and the purpose was to have representatives from each religion present in Lebanon's government proportionally to their population (Harris 2012; Chamie 1976). Shortly after, in 1926, the first Lebanese constitution was established, and it established the institutional foundation of Lebanese politics while starting the phase of French indirect rule (Hakim 2019). This constitution created the presidency and Parliament. The constitution also granted diverse powers to the French High Commissioner; the French leadership maintained the military forces and allowed the High Commissioner to suspend the constitution twice (Hakim 2019).

Mount Lebanon was mostly Maronite Christians, but after the annexation, Greater Lebanon only had a very slight Christian majority. The Christians—being the majority and favored by the French—had a slight advantage in the government, and the Muslims, who were previously in governments under Muslim control, became hostile and resentful towards the Maronite Christians and the French government. The Muslims held lower roles within the government and the Maronite Christians held higher roles. Furthermore, Non-Christians had less seats than they should have, even given the confessional representation (Chamie 1976; Khleif 1984; Harris 2012).

Additionally, in 1943, the French government developed a Lebanese power-sharing pact named the National Covenant of 1943, or the National Pact. In the pact, political power was

divided between Maronite Christians and Muslims based on a 6 to 5 ratio, with the ratio relying on a census in 1932 that detailed that Lebanon had a slight Christian majority (O'Ballance 1998, Fakhoury 2014). According to the information in the census, the President was to be Maronite Christian, Prime Minister Sunni Muslim, Army Commander Maronite Christian, and the National Assembly Speaker a Shia Muslim. According to the constitution, the President nominates the Prime Minister, and all governmental and military appointments were confessional, which meant they were appointed based on the population of the various sects (O'Ballance 1998). The French government emphasized the confessional identity throughout the end of its colonial occupation in Lebanon, which inherently created ethnic strife due to the disproportionate Christian representation in the French constitution. Confessional democracy and governance was not a viable long-term governance solution and made sustained stability nearly impossible (Salman 2022).

The Chamber of Deputies was the Lebanese government's checks and balances, and according to the Lebanese constitution, the Chamber of Deputies is elected by the Lebanese population proportional to the different ethnic communities. The Deputies then choose a President and Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister then forms the cabinet. None of the main roles (President, Prime Minister, Cabinet members) had to be associated with a particular religion or ethnic group (O'Ballance 1998). According to the constitution, the President had the role of being essentially directly responsible to the Chamber, but over the years, the President gained the ability to fully control the policies of the Cabinet and Prime Minister, to disband Lebanon's Chamber of Deputies, and to veto bills along with other methods to limit other individuals' power (O'Ballance 1998).

Shortly after the constitution, the French left Lebanon; they were supposed to leave in 1943, but finally finished their withdrawal in 1946 (Khleif 1984). The Lebanese people were immediately faced with severe internal social and political divisions and political leaders were increasingly frustrated by the confessional restrictions (O'Ballance 1998). Additionally, due to an influx of Palestinian refugees in 1948 and 1967, the small Maronite majority turned into a minority (Hakim 2019).

### *The Lebanese Civil War*

The Lebanese Civil War began in April of 1975. The immediate reason for the war was because of the Palestinian People's Liberation Army (PLO)'s entrance into Lebanon along with growing militias within Lebanon, specifically Muslim and Christian militias. However, I argue that the ethnic divisions that the French colonial period exacerbated produced the environment for the civil war. There was growing resentment between majority and minority groups within Lebanon that stemmed from the constitution made by the French and because of ethnic divisions. The PLO and Muslim militias were against the Christian and Phalangist militias (Chamie 1976; O'Ballance 1998). Furthermore, the constitution's power sharing arrangement originally based on population no longer led to balanced reputation, as there was significant Muslim population growth. The original border establishment by the French harbored resentment and contributed to the onset of the war by exacerbating existing ethnic divides. France favored the Maronite Christians through the constitution established by the French, which increased tensions between ethnic groups between Lebanon (Chamie 1976). The French constitution and the confessional system was one of the main reasons why the civil war started and why Syria intervened.

### *Internationalization*

Despite being separated by borders drawn by the French, Syria and Lebanon's combined history made Syrian intervention in Lebanese conflicts significantly more likely. The French government's decisions drawing borders between Syria and Lebanon caused the ethnic groups in both states to overlap. The Lebanese Civil War was no different: the war internationalized when Lebanese Christian militias forged relationships with the Syrian government. The Syrians intervened on the side of the Lebanese Christian militias because Syria aimed to suppress the PLO (Luthi 2015). Following this alliance, the Syrian government provided military assistance to the Christian militias, which were called the Lebanese Front (O'Ballance 1998). The Lebanese Front fought for the continuance of the political structure in Lebanon, utilizing the confessional system that gave them priority (Rasler 1983). Following the Syrian military aid, the Muslim and Palestinian militias (known as the National Movement), including the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), turned against Syria; Syria then invaded under the guise of providing aid due to President Assad wanting influence and power over Lebanon (Rasler 1983). Additionally, the Israeli government intervened and conducted air strikes against the Palestinian militias in Lebanon (O'Ballance 1998). The Syrian and Israeli governments, along with the PLO, utilized weaknesses caused by the French colonial period to establish power within Lebanon.

### *Conclusion*

To conclude, French colonization, specifically the creation of Greater Lebanon and Lebanon's confessional democracy, created growing resentment between ethnic groups due to France's constitution in Lebanon that designated officials based on demographic ethnic population information. France specifically wanted a Christian government in Lebanon and weaponized ethnic conflict to create a beneficial system for the French government. This led to significant long-term complications and directly contributed to the onset of the Lebanese Civil War. Given the ethnic ties mechanism being used, it was more difficult to find a relationship between colonialism and internationalization. Despite this case raising uncertainty about the role of colonialism in the internationalization of the conflict, and instead explains the onset, this chapter displays the negative ramifications of colonialism and the long-term effects of a colonial legacy.

## Chapter Five: Yemen

### *Introduction*

In this chapter, I analyze Aden's colonization and its limited impact on the Yemeni Civil War (2014-present). The Aden colony was a protectorate in South Yemen from 1937 to 1963 under the British government. I chose Yemen to display a deviant case in a country where my argument does not necessarily work to demonstrate that there are limitations to this research; this instance narrows the scope of my argument. The case of Yemen is different because it was a protectorate and, while being overseen by the British, the British had less influence on local politics since they were only interested in the Gulf and port. Throughout this chapter, I argue that the conflict that led to the Yemeni Civil War in 2014 was largely based on events not related to colonialism and instead were present before colonialism. However, the North Yemen Civil War does give weak support for my hypothesis, as the British colonial legacy did play a small role in the internationalization of the conflict. This chapter shows that depending on the colonization type and the situation, the legacy of colonialism is vastly different. More involved types of colonialism, like extractive colonialism, might increase the probability of conflict. The role of colonialism in other conflicts is more muted. I start by describing the colonization type in Aden, how it differs from Lebanon and Vietnam, detail the North Yemen Civil War and British relations with Nasser, and then describe the causes of the Yemeni Civil War (2014-present).

### *Background*

The Aden protectorate was originally colonized by the Indian government in 1839 as a military location; like how the British governed later, the colony essentially acted as a “vacuum”

surrounding the port for protection. India did not believe they had any obligation “for the peace or welfare of the protectorate and its inhabitants,” (Smith p. 510; 1995).

The British government first became involved in Aden with treaty agreements; these agreements were not complex and allowed Great Britain control of Aden’s foreign relations. At the same time, they maintained Aden’s existing governmental autonomy and continued to let the existing rulers govern (Smith 1995). Aden formally became a British protectorate in 1937 after the administration of the protectorate was given from the Indian government to the British colonial office (Willis 1997; Blumi 2021).

### *The British Colonial Period*

As the transition to British rule continued, the British government opted to leave existing governments in place as they were not concerned with the land, more about the port and sea access (Smith 1995). The British colonial system was extremely uninvolved and in 1940, the British Foreign Affairs Office reaffirmed “Britain’s commitment to the indigenous rulers” (Smith pp. 515, 1995). Unlike in both Lebanon and Vietnam with French extractive colonialism, Aden was ruled indirectly by the colonial government and Britain was not invested in the land next to the port. Great Britain did not impose British leadership within the existing ruling structure (Smith 1995). The British government actually enforced reforms—especially in education—to encourage stability, as that increased the value and security of the port (Smitson 2010). The goal of the reforms were also to create a “strong, self-sustaining government” and “eventual independence of the colony,” (Smitson p. 3, 2010). A document published by the Colonial Office in 1948 states that its goal in Aden was to “guide the colonial territories to responsible self-government,” (Smitson pp. 2, 2010). British colonialism in Aden focused solely on utilizing

the port and reforming the surroundings for the benefit of the port. In contrast, the French in Lebanon and Vietnam utilized extractive colonialism instead of indirect or settler colonialism, which led to detrimental ramifications including economic decline and limited development along with severe conflict. The purpose and type of the colonialism severely impacted the long-term consequences of the occupation.

Aden was colonized because of its location; Aden served as a very valuable and common port for trade, which increased after a 1934 treaty (Willis 1997). Aden was also an important refueling location for ships traveling the world. Aden served simply as a “buffer zone” around the port; the British government placed very little value of the Aden protectorate aside from the port (Smith p. 509, 1995).

Furthermore, there were no outright attempts for foreign entities to take control in Aden; when outside forces utilized violence in Aden, it was “in an attempt to tip the scales in favor of one of the local surrogates of empire rather than secure outright direct occupation” (Blumi p. 5, 2021). After a mutiny that ended in November 1967, the British withdrew from Aden and South Yemen gained its independence (Smitson 2010). The armed rebellion happened soon after the Six Day War in 1967 and during the North Yemen Civil War; the groups involved included the National Liberation Front (NLF, supported by Nasser-led Egypt) and the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY). Both groups fought against British forces (Campbell 2012).

### *The North Yemen Civil War*

There was a civil war in North Yemen from 1962 to 1970, which was between supporters of the existing monarchy opposed to the rebel supporters of a republic. Called the Arab Cold War, this civil war had Egypt (supported by the Soviet Union) and Saudi Arabia (supported by



the United States and the United Kingdom) in conflict with each other (Ferris 2013). After being crowned king, Mohammad al-Badr was dethroned in a coup and Yemen was declared a republic. The Egyptian president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, supported the rebel forces and provided financial and military aid, including troops, due his desire to move British forces out of South Yemen and regain reputation in the Arab world as an Arab nationalist (Badeeb 1986). Nasser believed in Pan-Arabism, or the idea that all countries in the Middle East should be unified; specifically, he believed that "Arab unity" was a strong force opposing imperialism. Colonialism limited the spread of Pan-Arabism in the Middle East due to countries being colonized by different Western powers (Jillani 1991). He specifically wanted to remove British influence from both Aden and Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, Imam Ahmed- who led North Yemen before Mohammad al-Badr— became more threatened by Nasser after Nasser started promoting revolution and Pan-Arabism. After Ahmed died, al-Badr was forced to leave after the coup attempt. The outcome of the coup was the removal of the monarchy and the new government supported by secular military officers, (Badeeb 1986). Saudi Arabia intervened financially and politically on behalf of the monarchy because the Saudi Arabian monarchy was worried the revolution would spread to its own borders (Ferris 2013). The war ended due to Egyptian disengagement during the Six-Day War in June of 1967 and led to a long-standing alliance between Saudi Arabia and the Yemen Arab Republic (Badeeb 1986, Ferris 2013). British opinions of Nasser were tense and all diplomatic relations had been officially severed after December of 1965 (Kerr 1967). British colonialism in Yemen, though less involved than most, limited the spread of Pan-Arabism and encouraged Nasser's intervention in the North Yemen Civil War.

## *The Civil War*

The Yemeni War began in 2014 from grievances that were brought to light with the Arab Spring and the Yemeni revolution in 2011 like corruption, economic stagnation, poor infrastructure, and a low state capacity (Montgomery 2021, Albasoos and Al-Hinai 2020). Furthermore, tribalism and ethnic divisions were also main causes of the war, which have been causing conflict in Yemen for centuries (Albasoos and Al-Hinai 2020). As mentioned in my theory, ethnic divides are a cause for wars to internationalize and are often caused by colonial legacies; however, internationalization in this conflict came from regional politics instead of ethnic divides. Iran supported the Houthis and Saudi Arabia supported the ousted government; both intervened to provide aid to their allies. Saudi Arabia intervened to reinstate the previous Yemeni administration and to prevent the Houthis from gaining control in Yemen. British colonialism in Yemen, I argue, had limited involvement in Northern and Southern divisions due to previous divisions. Furthermore, the British government, unlike the French government in Lebanon, did not exacerbate existing ethnic divides significantly during the protectorate period of Aden due to very limited intervention in local affairs. The war started when a Houthi insurgency took control of the government and capital in September of 2014 and demanded lower prices on commodities like gas. The conflict turned into a proxy war with Iran and Saudi Arabia intervening on opposite sides, but most international actors were local with limited interference from world powers (Montgomery 2021). Although British colonial legacies in South Yemen did not significantly contribute to the internationalization of the war, British colonialism did have a small effect in the internationalization of the North Yemen Civil War.

## *Conclusion*

The purpose of this chapter is not to say that Aden and Yemen as a whole experienced no side effects from British colonialism, but I argue that the results of the indirect colonialism had a much less drastic effect on the state and its internal stability in the case of the 2014 Yemeni Civil War. In this case, if colonial countries interfere less in the colony's government, this reduces the risk of international conflict later due to less countries becoming involved. However, in the North Yemen Civil War, colonialism and Nasser's Pan-Arabism contributed to the internationalization of the conflict. This case is a deviant case and an example on how different types of colonialism—and different colonial powers—can affect its legacy and the long-term ramifications. Compared to my previous cases, Yemen has a much more decentralized form of colonialism, which was common for the British. This case study raises more questions of to what extent different colonialism types and colonial powers affect the likelihood of conflict.

## Chapter Six: Impact of Colonialism on Proxy War Probability

### *Statistical Design*

To test the generalization of my hypothesis beyond my case studies, I utilize quantitative inferences with proxy war onset and colonialism. My data is from 1946 to 2020, so I am generalizing for this time period and my sample size includes every country (n=6182). The purpose of completing this research with data from every country instead of specific states aids in looking at proxy wars in general and not just specific examples. This helps me find more general trends instead of specific instances, as my case studies do. Together, they complete a fuller picture of the influence of colonialism on proxy war onset. The case studies I utilize are also incredibly valuable, as they provide an individualistic look on the impact of colonialism on proxy war onset. The statistics as a whole can generalize, so it is important to consider this research question through an individual and generalized lens.

My dependent variable is proxy war onset. I utilize the UCDP/PRIO dataset (Gleditsch et. al 2002), specifically their variable internationalized intrastate conflict, to substitute for my proxy war onset variable. The UCDP dataset, from Uppsala University's Department of Peace and Conflict Research in Sweden, focuses on organized violence and civil war. Since there is no official data on proxy wars, internationalized intrastate wars were utilized as a substitute; UCDP defines internationalized intrastate wars as any "armed conflict between a government and non-governmental party" where each side, or both, receives "troop support from other governments that actively participate in the conflict" (UCDP). This definition does not include economic support, which moves away from my proxy war definition into war. While imperfect, this is still a useful variable because it still displays that third parties are substantial patrons and a close comparison to my definition by retaining most of the main information: intrastate conflict

where either (or both) sides receive support. This will limit the inferences I receive to not include economic support and solely reflect direct military intervention. However, the case studies should hold more weight in this analysis due to the imperfect variable and the evidence in my case studies relating colonialism to proxy war onset. The timing is helpful by including proxy wars that started after the end of World War II. My independent variable is colonial origin from the Authoritarian Regime Type Revisited data set (Wahman, Teorell, and Hadenius 2013). This data set focuses on authoritarian regimes, specifically electoral regimes, and builds upon the original Authoritarian Regime Type dataset. The colonial origin variable focuses on specifically Western colonialism overseas and determines if a country has been colonized by a Western power.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, this data is focusing on Western-only colonialism and omitting cases containing other colonizing countries. This limits the scope by not including several aspects of settler colonialism by both the British and Japanese, which might overstate or understate the role of colonialism in proxy war onset. The unit of analysis is categorized by country year from 1946 to 2020. All of my datasets were assessed through the compilation data set Quality of Government (Teorell et al. 2019).

I control for variables related to both proxy war and colonialism to reduce concerns of bias from factors that confound the relationship between colonialism and proxy war onset. I am utilizing a GDP per capita control, an ethnic fractionalization control, religious fractionalization control, and a polity control. Ethnic fractionalization determines the amount of ethnic diversity within the state by measuring the cultural distance between groups within the same country utilizing language structure to compare differences (Fearon 2003). Polity is a regime type dataset calculated by subtracting a state's autocracy score from its democracy score, and essentially

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<sup>2</sup> Sample is restricted because the colonialism independent variable excludes Japanese and British settler colonialism (Taiwan, Korea, United States, Canada, etc.).

measures the level of democracy a state has (Marshall and Gurr 2020). Religious fractionalization, like ethnic fractionalization, determines the amount of religious diversity in the state by measuring the probability that "two randomly selected people from a given country will not belong to the same religious group," (Alesina et. al, pp. 155 2003). If the probability is high, the level of religious fractionalization is high. Both the religious and ethnic fractionalization controls together create a picture of the ethnic and religious division within a state. The GDP per capita of a state (World Bank 2023) is utilized as a proxy for state strength, like state capacity, to determine how economically developed the state is and how much money a state can invest into its own security. Colonialism and proxy war have a negative effect on GDP per capita, so not including this control would overstate the results and create a positive confounding effect. These controls work to prevent bias and account for both my colonialism and my proxy war onset variables by being elements related to both the outcome of colonialism and reasons for proxy war onset. I utilize a logistic regression model to predict the probability of proxy war onset in countries that were colonized in the past.

If my hypothesis is correct, we should see the logistic regression model have positive values for the colonialism variable, signifying that former colonies are more likely to experience proxy war onset.

### *Statistical Results*

**Table One** shows the results of the logistic regression model for the probability of both proxy war onset and civil war onset given a presence (or lack thereof) of colonialism. **Model One** showcases the results of a logistic regression model estimating the likelihood of proxy war onset considering a past history of colonialism, with GDP per capita, polity, religious

fractionalization, and ethnic fractionalization as controls. **Model Two** displays the probability of civil war onset in former colonies. I utilized civil war onset as another variable to compare if less war was probable overall in the context of colonized countries or specifically proxy wars.

**Table One: Predicting Probability of Proxy War and Civil War Onset**

	<b>Model 1: Probability of Proxy War Onset</b>	<b>Model 2: Probability of Civil War Onset</b>
<b>Colonial Origin (Base = Not Colonized)</b>		
Dutch Colonialism	-1.03 (1.02)	1.11 <sup>***</sup> (0.28)
Spanish Colonialism	-1.13 <sup>***</sup> (0.31)	-0.09 (0.12)
Italian Colonialism	1.47 <sup>*</sup> (0.64)	0.29 (0.49)
American Colonialism	-0.02 (0.74)	3.55 <sup>***</sup> (0.38)
British Colonialism	-0.40 <sup>*</sup> (0.20)	0.44 <sup>***</sup> (0.11)
French Colonialism	0.05 (0.22)	-0.49 <sup>***</sup> (0.13)
Portuguese Colonialism	-0.32 (0.48)	0.59 <sup>*</sup> (0.24)
Belgian Colonialism	0.62 (0.37)	1.24 <sup>***</sup> (0.21)
GDP per capita	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 <sup>***</sup> (0.00)
Polity	0.04 <sup>***</sup> (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Religious Fractionalization	0.10 (0.30)	-2.48 <sup>***</sup> (0.18)
Ethnic Fractionalization	1.21 <sup>***</sup> (0.35)	2.02 <sup>***</sup> (0.18)
Constant	-3.66 <sup>***</sup> (0.21)	-1.23 <sup>***</sup> (0.12)
AIC	2053.64	4961.02
BIC	2142.38	5049.76
Log Likelihood	-1013.82	-2467.51
Deviance	2027.64	4935.02
Num. obs.	6812	6812

\*\*\* p < 0.001; \*\* p < 0.01; \* p < 0.05

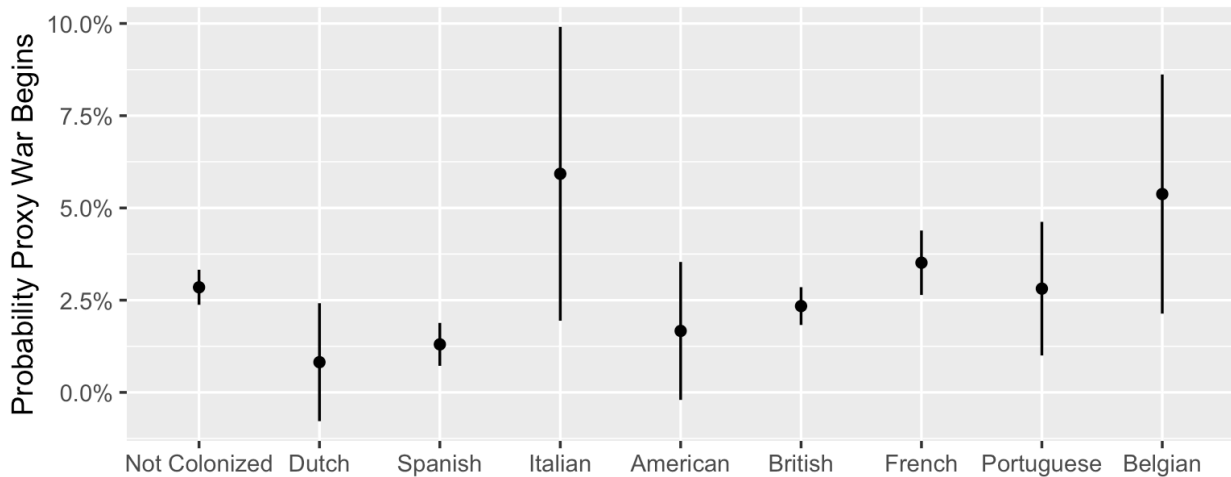
Model Two shows that several former colonies are more likely to experience civil war, like Dutch, Italian, American, British, Portuguese, and Belgian colonialism. Models One and Two provide an empirical demonstration of how civil and proxy wars are different. Comparing Models One and Two, British colonialism switches from having a negative relationship to positive relationship from proxy war onset to civil war onset. The Spanish, British, Portuguese, and Dutch Colonialism probabilities become negative in Model One compared to Model Two, where it is null or positive. Furthermore, French and Spanish colonialism are negatively associated with civil war onset. In practice, this means that Dutch, Spanish, and British colonies had colonialism types that decreased the likelihood of proxy war onset in the future. In contrast from Model One, ethnic and religious fractionalization are both significant in Model Two, with ethnic fractionalization having a positive effect and religious fractionalization having a negative effect. As shown in Model Two, when compared to the probability of proxy war onset in former colonies in Model One, colonialism has a significantly more positive result when just related to probability of civil war onset rather than internationalization.

Ethnic fractionalization is also positively correlated with international conflict, meaning the more internal ethnic divides a state has, the more likely they will experience proxy war. Even outside of colonialism contexts, ethnic fractionalization still continues to affect proxy war onset. Specifically, conflict is more likely when there is an established, large ethnic minority against an ethnic majority (Horowitz 1985, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005). This is true in Lebanon with the Maronite Christians and the Muslim populations. Even controlling for colonialism, ethnic fractionalization continues to have a positive effect, which shows that there are ways that ethnic fractionalization happens even without the presence of a colonial power. Interestingly, religious fractionalization has an insignificant effect, which means that although ethnic



fractionalization is positively associated with internationalized conflict, religious diversity has no effect. Table One shows that the values for British Colonialism and Spanish Colonialism are statistically significant and negative. The significant effect of colonialism being related to proxy war onset negatively directly contradicts my hypothesis and shows that countries with past British and Spanish colonialism are unlikely to have a proxy war in the future.

**Figure One: Graphed Predicted Probability of Effect of Colonialism on Proxy War Onset**  
**Predicting Probability of Proxy War Onset**



**Figure One** is a Predicted Probability Plot to explain the relationship of the independent variables and controls on the dependent variable, proxy war onset. Furthermore, the coefficient plot converts the logistic regression coefficients into marginal effects to show the effects of each factor on the probability of proxy war onset. As seen in the plot, the probability of proxy war increases significantly with Italian and Belgian colonialism, and decreases for Dutch, Spanish, American, British, and Portuguese colonialism.

### *Statistical Interpretation*

As seen in Table One, my hypothesis was incorrect. The on average negative relationship colonialism has with proxy war onset informs our understanding of how colonialism leads to internationalized conflict. This leads to more questions on why might colonialism decrease the probability of proxy wars that need to be studied more in depth in the future.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that statistics recognize general trends instead of individual cases. Despite the table showcasing a negative relationship of colonialism to proxy war onset on average, I argue that, in my cases, colonialism still has a meaningful individual effect and Vietnam is an outlier to the statistics presented. My French cases, especially Vietnam, had extractive colonialism that led to several harmful, long-term consequences, which directly led to international war onset by providing patrons an opportunity to intervene at a lower cost and encouraging proxies to start conflict.

There are several possible explanations for the negative significance of colonialism on proxy war onset. This is possibly due to when a colonial country withdraws from a state or agrees to independence, this signals to other world powers that the state is not worth intervention. This happened in the case of several countries in Africa, like Mali and Kenya. In opposition from my earlier mechanism, the investment, and subsequent lack thereof, achieves the complete opposite effect. When a country decides to invest and subsequently leave, this might signal to other states that the country is not "worthy" of foreign investment and intervention. This, in turn, creates less of a likelihood for internationalization of conflicts in the future, as states are not involved and are not overly interested in protecting the state.

Additionally, I theorize that the type of colonialism matters. British colonialism was a lot more decentralized than French colonialism. Specifically, British structures were informalized,

flexible, lacked hierarchy, and delegated power to local administrative leaders (Berda 2023). These specific traits, not often found in centralized forms of colonialism, could explain why British colonialism was much more negatively associated with proxy war onset. In decentralized governments, the colonial ruler empowers local leaders with the colonial state's backing. These leaders then have an authority-based relationship with the colonial state; therefore, when the domestic population has grievances, it is against local individuals in addition to the colonial power. If the colonial power is ruling, like France's centralized models, all of the local population has grievances against the colonial power. There will need to be increased research on individual types of colonialism and their effect on war onset.

Despite the logistic regression model, I still argue that the actions the French took in Vietnam, exploiting local populations and creating institutions capable of incentivizing continuing intervention had significant implications on the internationalization of the conflict. The weaknesses that developed from colonialism encouraged international conflict by lowering opportunity costs for patrons to intervene. These conflicts would not have internationalized without the influence of French colonialism. Furthermore, due to the definitional changes of internationalized intrastate conflict as my dependent variable, it does not count economic intervention, which is a large part of proxy war onset, specifically for my Lebanese case where aid was more financial rather than military.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I have shown that my statistics results, meant to create a generalizability aspect of my research, do not give evidence for what I have shown in my case studies. They show that some former colonies are *less likely* to experience proxy war onset. Regardless, the

case studies I displayed should not be overlooked, as the colonialism shown in Vietnam has a clear and heavy presence on the internationalization of conflicts after independence. Overall, the results from the statistical results are extremely interesting, and show how there might be differences in conflict based on colonialism type and the country that colonized the state. In the future, it will be important to research the probability of proxy war onset in relation to different types of colonialism and based on the colonial country.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have researched what causes proxy wars, specifically looking at if former colonies are more susceptible to proxy war onset. I answered this question by utilizing three case studies: two on French colonialism, and one on British colonialism. Lebanon and Vietnam were utilized to display extractive colonialism by the French government, which led to ethnic divides and limited economic development, respectively. Both of which were factors in why their conflicts internationalized. I utilized my Yemen case study to explain that not all colonialism types and colonial powers led to equal results and do not have the same legacy.

In Vietnam, France's past colonialist history led to limited economic development and local populations harbored resentment against the West, which caused the war to start and then internationalize with United States' and Soviet presence. This was due to the communist party in Northern Vietnam chose to take advantage of the weak state, partially due to its economy, perhaps knowing the United States would intervene knowing its extensive presence in South Vietnam.

In Lebanon, French colonialism and its role in creating the Lebanese constitution and confessional system, which created proportional ethnic representation in the government based on census information, but was flawed and favored the Maronite Christian population, led to ethnic divides within the country. These ethnic divides, present before but were exacerbated significantly by French rule, caused the civil war to internationalize and involve surrounding states.

Yemen was under a British mandate and demonstrated the limits of the scope of my argument by showing that the British presence in Yemen, albeit limited, had little effect on its conflict onset and internationalization in its 2014 conflict. The limited effect here is most likely

due to Britain's decentralized colonial approach. Interestingly, colonialism did have an effect on the internationalization of the North Yemen Civil War. This is due to colonialism interfering with Nasser's Pan-Arabism goals, which led Egypt to intervene in the conflict.

My case studies show the limits of my research, but also the individual effects and long-term ramifications that colonialism had in Vietnam, Lebanon and Yemen. My cases raise questions on the effects of specific types of colonialism and different colonial powers on the probability of conflict onset. Additionally, I analyzed a logistic regression model on the probability of proxy war onset given there was a past history of colonialism. I utilize statistics in my research to test if this hypothesis can apply to other countries and also differing forms of colonialism. Interestingly, the statistics showed the opposite effect of my hypothesis: that former colonies were less likely to experience proxy war onset. Given that these statistics showed generalizability, it is now known that my argument works specifically for my cases, and does not apply to others.

I contributed to the existing literature on proxy wars and their onset (Watts et. al 2023, De Soysa 2017, Mumford 2013) by specifically analyzing a factor, colonialism, related to their onset. I argued that colonialism in my case studies impacted proxy war onset negatively and raised questions for future research of why the probability actually decreased. I added to literature on the ramifications—economic and otherwise—of independence and colonialism (Cimini et al. 2020, Chandra 1965) by describing conflict onset after independence from a colonial power. Specifically, I analyzed how colonialism leads to limited economic development in Vietnam, which can lead to internationalized conflict. Lastly, I supplemented existing literature on the internationalization of conflict as it relates to specific types of colonialism by analyzing extractive colonialism in two of my case studies and decentralized conflict briefly.

My statistics showed the opposite effect of my case studies: that colonialism *decreased* or had no significant effect on the probability of conflict. Although this evidence goes against my thesis, I still argue that my case studies provide ample evidence to prove that, at least in specific circumstances, colonialism can lead to an increase in probability of proxy war onset. In Vietnam, which is an outlier for the French colonial statistics, colonialism heightened anti-Western ideals by significantly hindering economic development and creating institutions that encouraged intervention and occupation, which eased the cost of intervening for the United States during the Vietnam War. Thinking about the Vietnam War and the Lebanese Civil War through a colonialism lens helps explain the cause of the conflict by providing context to some of the major causes of the war and their internationalization, like limited economic development and ethnic ties.

Before this study, there was less research done analyzing the relationship between proxy war onset and colonialism. During my study, I have found that although it seems like colonialism heightens the probability of proxy war onset in specific outlier French former colonies, in other cases the relationship is more uncertain. My study is not the definitive answer to this question, but yielded unintuitive results, like Yemen's Civil War not internationalizing with a past colonial history and my statistics showing different results than expected.

Given the conflicting results of my statistics, there needs to be future research on the negative effect of some forms of colonialism on proxy war onset, especially for specific types of colonialism and differing countries. In building upon my study, future research should analyze why former colonies, specifically under Spanish, British, and Dutch colonialism, are less likely to have proxy wars. Furthermore, communism and ideology have consistently been mentioned, especially with my Vietnam case. As one of the reasons why the Vietnam War occurred was due

to class struggles of the Vietnamese working class against the colonial French government, researchers should look at the ideological facets of cases to determine whether colonialism leads to proxy war onset; I looked more at structural causes. More work also needs to be done analyzing the effect of centralized versus decentralized colonialism and their effect on proxy war onset. The effects of different types of colonialism, and different colonial powers, on the internationalization of conflict also needs to be further studied.

The cause of war, including proxy war, is never simply one factor, but a compilation of many different variables. It is impossible to think about the onset of proxy wars without considering the lasting impact of colonialism.



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