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United States' Military Interventions into Civil Wars

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INTRODUCTION

The Syrian civil war has continued since mid-March of 2011, when protests directed at government-sponsored violence towards citizens emerged in Daraa. Since those protests, armed opposition forces have attempted to forcefully oust the current regime, led by Bashar al-Assad. This continued violent conflict was instigated as a result of widespread resentment at the brutal rule of the regime, and was catalyzed by the uprisings of the Arab Spring. The Assad regime has responded to this rebellion with violence and an oppressive crackdown on threats to the stability of the regime. Amid a massive civilian exodus from the country, an annihilated economy and political structure, and nearly a hundred thousand deaths between both factions of the civil war, Assad has stayed the course and maintained attempts to quell the opposition forces through any means necessary. Through deployment of security forces and major military operations, Assad has used the full power of the state to suppress the resistance movements.

This conflict has emerged as one of the most pressing humanitarian and political concerns in the contemporary international landscape, and has important implications for United States' current foreign policy. The Syrian civil war lays in the center of a region paramount to the United States' interests. It has been increasingly more infeasible for the superpower to ignore the effects resulting from the constantly enlarging scope of the conflict. The United States is positioned to significantly influence the balance of the civil war, and has insofar been

willing to do so only in limited circumstances. I will ultimately seek to understand the United States' foreign policy on intervention in domestic conflicts, using the latest Syrian civil war as a backdrop to discuss contemporary policy. To aid in my understanding of the factors that determine this specific facet of the United States' foreign policy, I will observe two other domestic conflicts, the Lebanese Civil War and the Bosnian War, in which the United States intervened with military force. The United States' foreign policy towards domestic conflicts is determined both by the specific qualities of the conflict, as well as the political landscape in which the intervening nation is operation within. Thus, by looking at the policies adopted in each of these three events, and delineating the factors which determined the cause and type of intervention, I will seek to deepen the understanding of the role United States interventions play in domestic conflicts. Additionally, I will seek to explain the current role the United States plays in the Syrian civil war, and use historical examples to suggest prudent political action.

I will precede my discussion of historical case studies with an in-depth understanding of the Syrian civil war, and the myriad number of influences affecting the United States' decision-making towards policy on Syria. I will then chronologically discuss the United States' historical military interventions, comparing the two case studies with the contemporary conflict. All domestic conflicts are unique, and I have sought to minimize the variables inherent in comparing and contrasting different conflicts through my selection of case studies. Additionally, by choosing the appropriate factors that determined the intervention, I seek to selectively focus on the most relevant aspects of the historical case studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The broad array of political science literature focusing on civil wars attests to the continuing relevance of these conflicts to the international landscape. Patrick Regan, a participant in the development of understanding civil wars, recently released a retrospective analysis summing the historical development literature on international interventions into civil wars, beginning in the second half of the twentieth century and continuing to the present (456-76). The bulk of my literature review will be an assessment of Regan's findings, which succinctly and nearly comprehensibly covers the political science literature relevant to my paper.

Before any further discussion, however, I seek to provide a definition for intervention, which I will henceforth use for the rest of the paper. While this may at first seem like a banal distinction, it appears to me to be a more difficult task than it first appears. Many state and non-state actors influence the outcomes of civil wars, in varying degrees of directness and intention. These actors affect the warring state in political, economic, and military spheres. However, though they may intervene to some extent in warring nations' domestic affairs, their actions should not necessarily always be defined as an intervention.

Roseneau, an early observer of civil wars, provided an excellent conceptual framework for understanding the limitations of interventions by actors. While I believe that Roseneau cannot alone complete this discussion – I will follow an explanation of his framework with its limitations – he does provide two paramount standards for defining actors' actions as intervention. First, Roseneau states that any intervention should attempt to influence the authority structures of the warring nation (166). This distinction is important, considering the multiple centers of authority which exist within any domestic power struggle that devolves into a civil war. The following civil wars which I will explore all have multiple centers of authority,

which are manipulated and influenced by the regional and global actors which hold interest in the outcome of the war. The intervening actors seek to alter the degree of power which their respective authority structure holds following the end of the conflict. If their respective warring authority structure can gain enough power to further their own interests, and thus usually the interests of the intervening nation, then the capital required to engage in intervention is justified by the intervening actor. Whereby international actors intervene within a civil war, but do not aim to influence the power held by authority structures – obvious examples include the many forms of humanitarian aid which are provided to warring nations – then such acts should not be defined as intervention.

Second, Roseneau states that interventions must break from the previous conventions and policies adopted before the conflict (166). Thus, if an international actor is already an influential force within a nation, and the government devolves into multiple authority structures, the influential actor is not committing itself to intervention unless it changes its policy to reflect its influence among the warring parties. Interestingly enough, this change, leading to a categorization of intervention, is not necessarily limited to increases in aid among the authority centers. If an influential actor removes longstanding aid from the warring nation, such an act of intentional influence can similarly be seen as an act of intervention. The complications of this second standard of intervention will later become apparent, especially under the light of Russia's current relationship with the Syrian regime.

While I believe that Roseneau's standards are essential to a proper conceptual framework of civil war intervention, they do not discuss the problem of *scope*. While many actions can be taken by intervening nations to affect the power of authority structures, they come in many different degrees of importance for all parties. Simply applying a label of intervention to actions

that meet Roseneau's criteria, and rejecting the label for those actions that do not, does not seem to me to be a satisfactory approach to understanding intervention. Following an understanding of this basic framework, I believe that a detailed exploration of the escalation of intervention is necessary for a thorough definition of the concept. I believe that two factors are most important in appraising the scope of an intervention into a civil war: first, the commitment of the intervening actor to the policy being pursued; and second, the influence which the intervention has on the power of the competing authority structures within the warring nation. I believe these considerations reflect both the consequence of the intervention on the intervening nation as well as the warring nation, and thus serve as the most appropriate ways to assess the significance of the policies adopted. I will explore these themes throughout my exploration of civil wars, and will attempt to give an adequate treatment to understanding the importance of the scope of the intervention on all actors. However, this will not be the primary focus of my study, and deserves a more in-depth exploration in the future.

Following this understanding of the standards definition of intervention, I will now explore the broader themes of civil war intervention literature. Reagan states that civil war literature can be separated into two subsections, which attempt to unearth fundamentally different truths about civil wars and the actors that intervene in them (457). First, a significant body of literature has attempted to explain the conditions under which international actors decide to intervene in civil wars. The numerous civil wars that have erupted since the end of the Second World War have elicited varying responses from countries with the military, economic, and diplomatic means to interfere with other nations' domestic crises. The nature of this question is two-fold, as it relates to both the nation intervening into the civil war, as well as the war-torn nation itself. Thus, this subsection of scholarship attempts to answer two questions fundamental

to the problem of intervening actors within domestic conflicts: first, what characteristics do international actors have which causes them to intervene in foreign conflicts; and second, which characteristics do nations experiencing civil war have which lends them to being intervened?

The second subsection of political science literature on interventions in civil wars focuses instead on the effects that the interventions have on the domestic conflicts. This scholarship thus attempts to place normative claims towards the intervening nations' actions, and almost invariably provides policy suggestions for the political decision makers that influence the nature of the intervention. Reagan delves much more into the progression of this normative scholarship than he does on the question of actors, indicating that a significantly greater body of scholarship has been dedicated to the latter subsection of intervention literature. This extensive treatment of policy suggestions is not surprising, as there is a high demand for a better understanding of how to pursue intervention policies. Reagan notes that there are two specific facets within this subsection of intervention literature used to determine the effectiveness of the intervening nations' policies: first, the duration of the war; and second, a number of variables assessing the pervasiveness of violence throughout the civil war. Scholars and policymakers alike use either of both of these factors to appraise intervention success.

Regan, through surveying the literature, finds the following general conclusions: first, that interventions are not effective in decreasing the duration of a civil war; second, that interventions are associated with increased violence between the warring parties; third, that it is unclear as to whether supporting rebel factions increases or decreases their likelihood of their victory prior to the start of negotiations with the regime forces; fourth, that partitioning may or may not be efficient in shortening civil wars and preventing violence; fifth, that interventions may or may not promote democratic transition; and sixth, that distanced negotiation is

sometimes, but not always, preferable to military intervention (463). It is dangerous, however, to draw broader theories from these general conclusions gleaned from meta-analysis, as Regan compiles the numerous studies which refute the above generalizations. While Regan attributes these persistent differences in broader trends in intervention literature to the authors' inconsistent definitions of "intervention," I believe that more study is required in order to generate consistent and generalizable conclusions about these effects of intervention.

I will primarily be focusing my study on the former subsection of intervention literature that Regan delineates. By observing the policies the United States has adopted throughout the last half of the twentieth century towards civil wars, I will aid in our understanding of *when* the superpower intervenes in civil wars, and *why* it intervenes to the extent that it does in each unique conflict. Thus, I am ultimately attempting to understand the motives behind the United States' foreign policy, and to uncover the reasons why certain civil conflicts elicit certain responses of intervention from influential international actors. I will be similarly attempting to understand the United States' specific current foreign policy towards the Syrian civil war, assessing the reasons for the nation's hesitant commitment to the Syrian rebels. Following this study, I will follow my analysis with a brief appraisal of the United States' foreign policy towards the Syrian crisis, in an attempt to understand the multifaceted challenges the superpower faces when confronting the humanitarian crisis. It is important to note that the bulk of my paper will be devoted to the former subsection delineated by Regan; however, I feel obliged, like many other observers of this unfolding crisis, to comment and respond to the difficult moral obligations the United States has to the Syrian people, and the nearly insurmountable political obstacles that stand in the way.

THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR: INTRODUCTION

The civil conflict has manifested itself through a number of different tensions, especially with the rise of sectarianism throughout the progression of the war. I identify five distinct spheres within the Syrian civil war: first, a domestic Syrian sectarian battle between the broader Sunni population and the Alawite minority population with longstanding political power; second, a popular uprising against an authoritarian regime fueled by the Arab Spring; third, a regional power struggle between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims; fourth, a decades-old conflict over regional influence between allies of the United States and allies of Iran; and fifth, a reignited debate, reminiscent of the Cold War, between the United States and United Nations Security Council nations over the boundaries of international participation and intervention within domestic conflicts (Cockburn). The United States has had to engage the Syrian conflict on all of these levels; each different aspect of the conflict has changed the United States' calculus in appraising intervention.

Struggle against Alawite Minority

The Alawi elite has ruled the Syrian government since Hafez al-Assad, the father of current Syria strongman Bashar, engineered a coup under the Ba'ath Party in 1966 (Fouad 9). Nearly fifty years of rule followed the al-Assad regime's rise, with the imposition of an authoritarian government whose security was founded on openly violent state suppression. Hafez al-Assad pursued policies of cultural and economic modernization, coupled with a commitment to stable and stagnant political structures (Fouad 17). Hopes for a freer and more inclusive political system were crushed when Bashar exhibited the same brutal tendencies as his father after the transfer of power in 2000 ("Syria — Uprising and Civil War"). Bashar al-Assad, however, showed to lack the same political intuition as his father, exhibiting, among other

blunders, a clumsy and uncoordinated violent reaction to intellectual forums advocating liberalism and democracy that arose with his inauguration as Syrian president. While those forums were initially tolerated and even encouraged, al-Assad responded to a call to political modernization by 99 of Syria's leading intellectuals with a belated violent crackdown (al-Baker). The widespread disappointments over Bashar al-Assad's failure to execute the modern initiatives many Syrians hoped from him are clearly manifested in the unrest and turmoil that exploded a decade later.

Prior to Hafez al-Assad's coup in 1966, Syrian Alawites were deemed an inferior class, denigrated to the lowest social strata in Syria (Malek). Dating back to the Ottoman Empire, where Alawites were forced to live in separate communities from the Sunni Muslims, the Alawites have been subjected to second-class citizenry within their own state (Fouad 9). Before Hafez al Assad's rise to power, Alawi men were expected to join the armed forces, and Alawi women to become housemaids, simply because they lacked other professional options (Malek). The al-Assad regime largely gained political and economic clout for the Alawite minority population, which remained in enclaves in Western Syria. The divide between the Alawite and Sunni populations has remained essential to the civil war, as widespread age-old distrust of the respective populations has fueled tensions and complicated the process of negotiating a mutually accepted settlement. Syrian Alawites, which comprise 12% of the Syrian population, are reasonably fearful of their future in a post-conflict society. Many have noted that their continuing support of the al-Assad regime is merely because they fear that they will suffer injustice and possibly population cleansing if they do not have a strong military power to defend them ("Syria — Uprising and Civil War"). Opposition forces are likely to commit human rights violations and propose sectarian annihilation if there is not an external force mediating the

negotiations between the two parties. United States policy makers have admitted that this mutual distrust is an important aspect of the conclusion of the civil war, and have raised the possibility of an Alawite settlement or partition into an independent state (Malek).

Popular Uprising

Al-Assad maintained a suppressive reaction to threats to his regime with the state-sponsored violence against protesting civilians following the unrest of the Arab Spring, which began in Syria in 2011 and continues to this day (“Syria — Uprising and Civil War”). The grassroots protests emerged as a justified response to decades of repressive rule, and devolved into continued violence and civil war, with neither side backing down under the growing weight of the failing Syrian nation. The Syrian rebels originated as a citizens’ revolt; as the conflict has grown, the opposition forces still remain largely native Syrians who have transitioned into the lives of soldiers through the demands of the civil war. Many of the intellectuals who have advocated for political reform long before the emergence of the civil war have co-opted the peoples’ revolt, and have been elected as or declared themselves as leaders of organizations speaking on behalf of the opposition forces (d’Arc Taylor). While such organizations and coalitions represent the most internationally respected and recognized of the Syrian opposition’s institutions, a wide host of other anti-Assad groups exist acting under the banner of rebel forces. While some of these groups are more militarized native Syrians, there are also a number of foreign fighters and organizations acting on behalf of the Syrian opposition as well. One of the greatest challenges to American foreign policy has been distinguishing the most appropriate recipients of aid within the number of groups claiming to represent the opposition forces within Syria (d’Arc Taylor).

The Syrian civil war sharply diverged away from the other uprisings of the Arab Spring, and has thus dictated a wholly different approach from United States policy makers. The United States could not expect to commit to decisive action as it did in Libya, with the expectation that the military could pull out of the intervention at any time without serious repercussions. Any military intervention within Syria would require a significantly greater expenditure of resources and would be a riskier operation, as the al-Assad regime has access to a greater military force, and is backed by numerous allies with strong military forces of their own. Moreover, the United States also does not command the same authority as it does in Egypt, and thus cannot pursue a similar policy as it did in the North African state. The persistent violence and chaos that has metastasized into the center of a region vital to the United States' strategic interests has demanded attention from the superpower, although its options for attractive policy decisions remain nonexistent.

Regional Sectarian Power Struggle

One of the most unique and surprising developments of the Syrian civil war has been the rise of a broader sectarian conflict that has erupted throughout the Middle East. The Alawites, a Shi'ite offshoot, and the Sunni population, which comprises the majority of Syrian citizens, have been co-opted by numerous regional actors in their efforts to spread political power for their respective Islamic sect. Actors within the region have vested interests in the outcome of the domestic conflict, as the religious ideology espoused by the prevailing party will significantly affect the political atmosphere of all neighboring nations. Michael Stephens claims that the "conflict [is] an all-out sectarian death-match in which Islam's two sects fight a zero sum game" ("Is Qatar guilty of sectarianism in Syria?").

Al-Nusra has proved to be one of the most important international Sunni actors in the Syrian civil war, and has provided numerous challenges for the United States government (“Ending the arms embargo on Syria”). One of the most effective groups among the opposition forces, al-Nusra is largely comprised of foreign fighters from Iraq, who have recruited Syrian soldiers en masse as a result of their superior administration and extensive funding from the terrorist organization al-Qaeda.¹ While the Free Syrian Army initially emerged as the dominant organization among the opposition forces, their funds and motivation have wavered as the war has continued, and the domestic nationalist rebel group has suffered numerous public setbacks and defeats (Borger). The Iraqi jihadists who run al-Nusra, characterized as terrorists by the United States government, are widely known to provide a stricter fighting ethic than the ragtag Free Syrian Army cadres, and have been able to gain access to key oil wells and grain silos throughout Syria as a result of their military competence (Borger). Even moderates have accepted the growing power of the organization, citing their lack of faith in the efficacy of a Western intervention, and al-Nusra’s army-like discipline and commitment to protect, rather than exploit, the Syrian people. An al-Jazeera article states that, “Syrians seem ready to throw their support behind any group that can protect them and provide basic provisions” (d’Arc Taylor). Al-Nusra, and organizations who espouse similar violent ideologies, have given United States policymakers who desire to ramp up aid to the rebel forces countless headaches. Fearful of sending weapons and military assistance to terrorists willing to incite sectarian violence and participate in religious cleansing within Syria, the United States has been forced to place serious limitations on the scope of their military aid (d’Arc Taylor).

Additionally, many Sunni actors within the region have called for increased sectarian violence, and have encouraged armed men within their own nations to join the rebel forces and

¹ Al-Qaeda currently donates half of its annual budget to al-Nusra (Cockburn).

defeat the Shi'a regime. These calls to arms are cloaked from their true sectarian intentions to varying degrees. A notable Qatari Muslim Brotherhood leader, Qaradawi, has incited numerous Qatari Sunni men to join the fight against the Syrian regime, under the openly sectarian view that the Shi'ite actors must be abolished from power within the region (Stephens). This type of inflamed sectarian violence espoused by religious leaders is reported to be common throughout the region, especially from Iraq, Turkey, and Qatar. There has been a persistent fear that the sectarian actors within the region do not hold the nuances that some of the Syrian rebels hold, and especially do not hold similar views to United States policymakers (Stephens). This persistent appeal to violent sectarianism has concerned many observers, and has provoked fears of unnecessary bloodshed throughout Syria.

Similar sectarian actors have joined the pro-regime forces within Syria, and have been massively successful in fighting back against rebel held villages in the eastern coastal regions. Shia Iraqi have left their homeland in droves, many previously militarized by calls to jihad or rooted in other calls to violent sectarianism, and have proved to be massively successful against the Syrian rebels due to their previous military experience (Khouri). Thus, Iraq has supplied foreign forces for both parties within the Syrian civil war. Many of these foreign forces have originated from the Lebanese Hezbollah and Iran. I will thus limit my exploration of the pro-regime sectarian forces to my subsequent discussion of the Iranian allied powers.

Power Dynamics between United States and Iran

The United States and Iran have long struggled over the power dynamics of the Middle East, and the Syrian civil war has headed their efforts directly against each other. With the sectarian dimensions of the civil war, many other regional actors have supported either of the major regional powers, and have been drawn in to support the warring parties within Syria. The

United States' alliance with the Saudi monarchy has had important implications, as both Saudi Arabia and other Arab states of the Persian Gulf have spent significant time and capital aiding the Syrian rebels (Hassan).

The United States refused to openly give military aid to the Syrian rebels well into the civil war, and instead channeled funds through allied networks among the Gulf states. Qatar donated 3 billion dollars to the Syrian rebels from 2011 to 2013, and was a significant contributor to the Syrian rebels' access to weapons and ammunition (Cockburn). Much of Doha's influence within the Syrian opposition landscape was acquired through the nation's ties with the Muslim Brotherhood – as well as the similar prominent faction Liwa al-Tawhid – who exerted pressure on the Syrian rebels to act in ways determined best by the Qatar government (Hassan). Similarly, the Doha government has offered 50 thousand dollars to families of all defectors of the Syrian regime's army (Cockburn). Because the domestic Syrian rebel forces are largely Syrians whom previously held non-military positions, the regime forces have consistently had a military and strategic advantage, which has been offset to an extent by the fiscal and arms donations by the Gulf states. The United States has largely been satisfied by these donations, as they have empowered the more moderate rebel forces whose aims the superpower seeks to advance in the post-conflict nation. Many of the more radical rebel forces are comprised of largely militarized, frequently foreign forces who have had a history of jihadist ideologies or violent sectarianism before focusing their forces against the Syrian regime (Entous). Thus, it has been beneficial for the United States to support these states' military donations, while having its own hands frequently tied up with extraneous political and diplomatic obligations, both by domestic politics and by the United Nations Security Council.

The Syrian National Council, the moderate coalition of Syrian rebel forces deemed by most Western and Arab League actors as representative of the broader opposition landscape and the Syrian people, has been deeply affected by these Gulf states' military and economic contributions (Arab League). The Qatari-led rebels lost the essential strategic town of Qusair, and important roadway for moving supplies and soldiers across Western Syria. Additionally, Qatari-led military leaders allowed a six month held rebel blockade in Wadi al-Deif to be overrun by regime forces (Karouny). United States and Saudi leaders attributed these massive setbacks to warlordism among the Qatari leaders, who fought among themselves for power and wealth while lapsing on their military opposition to regime forces (Karouny). Additionally, the Qatari Islamist candidate for the open prime ministerial position in the proposed transitional government, Ghassan Hitto, resigned from office, and acted as a significant obstacle to further peace talks between the United States and opposing regional and global actors.

These essential losses, which have significantly impacted both the rebels' military standing against their regime as well as their diplomatic power at negotiating peace processes, catalyzed a shift in regional influence from Qatar to Saudi Arabia (Hassan). The former Syrian general Salim Idris has been essential in translating Saudi influence throughout the Free Syrian Army; the United States has continued to ensure that all Gulf aid to the rebels, following the failures of the Qatari government, are delivered through General Idris (Hassan). This has significantly countered the Qatari and Muslim Brotherhood's influence throughout the opposition forces, and has consolidated power into the hands of the United States government and Riyadh (Karouny). Additionally, the political leverage the United States and Saudi Arabia have gained through their relationship with General Idris, accompanied with sharp skepticism towards the Syrian peoples' ability to best determine their own future, has led to persistent

restructuring within the Syrian National Coalition (Karouny). This restructuring has been received bitterly by the native Syrian members of the transitional government, who are distrustful of the motives of the more powerful international actors.

Jordan and Turkey have similarly proved essential in the Gulf states' aid to the Syrian opposition forces. Jordan, though nervous of a jihadi victory among the rebel groups, has allowed arms shipments to reach rebels in Southern Syria through roads and truck shipments (Cockburn). Although Turkey has experienced serious unrest throughout the duration of the Syrian civil war, partially caused by the general unrest throughout the region caused by the inflamed Sunni and Shi'ite tensions, Ankara have remained an important actor in support of the opposition forces (Hassan). The United States' commitment to General Idris, however, has limited Turkish influence within Syria.

These Gulf states' military and fiscal aid to the Syrian rebels has both directly and indirectly come into conflict with the persistent Iranian influence with the Syrian regime. The Syrian government, under the al-Assad regime, has long served as a conduit for Iranian influence throughout the region. Iran remains strongly motivated to maintain power for the current Syrian regime, thus limiting the influence of the opposing Gulf states through the ineffectiveness of the Syrian rebel forces. While this regional layer of the Syrian civil war holds strong sectarian elements previously discussed – both the Iranian nation and the Syrian regime are predominantly Shi'ite Muslims – this contest of power is rooted in fundamentally different concerns. Iran and the Gulf states both seek to gain political power as nation states, as well as for their broader respective religions, which has fueled much of the contest between Iran and the United States' regional allies (Fouad 31). Iran has repeatedly sunk significant economic and political capital into maintaining strong relations with the Syrian regime – what the Institute for the Study of War

calls an “extensive, expensive, and integrated effort to keep President Bashar al-Assad in power as long as possible while setting conditions to retain its ability to use Syrian territory and assets to pursue its regional interests should Assad fall” (Fulton et al). The Iranian regime, however, has persistently vocally believed that the al-Assad regime will withstand the military onslaught of the opposition forces (Entous). The Iranian military has been reported as serving as strategic advisors to the Syrian regime forces, directly supporting the violence against the Syrian citizens (Entous). Additionally, the Iranian military has provided sea-lanes, ground resupply routes, and significant air power in their efforts to bolster al-Assad’s military forces (Fulton et al). Recently, Iran agreed to supply the al-Assad regime with 3.6 billion dollars’ worth of oil, in exchange for the ability to invest in Syrian institutions following the end of the civil war (“Iran and Syria”). Economic and political support from other nations, exemplified by this important oil exchange between these two nations, has largely floated the al-Assad regime’s floundering government, which has been massively setback by EU and United States-imposed economic sanctions (Entous).

The influence Iran has had on the Lebanese organization Hezbollah, however, has arguably been more beneficial for the Syrian regime than Iran’s direct actions. Hezbollah has been an important aspect of Lebanese political life for decades, when they transformed the Lebanese Shi’ites from a “downtrodden and subjugated community” into the most politically powerful group in the nation (Khoury). They have similarly continued to significantly influence Syrian and Iranian policy since their inception in 1985 (Masters). Hezbollah’s well-trained armed forces – whom have been well-prepared for the Syrian civil war after decades of the constant threat of warfare with their Israeli enemies – have emerged as formidable foes along the battlefields of eastern Syria. Their victories in the strategic village of Qusair have tipped the tide

of war in favor of the al-Assad regime, and provoked the shift in Gulf aid, previously discussed, from Qatar to Saudi Arabia (Khouri). There have been significant concerns that Hezbollah, with a military force larger than that of the Lebanese Army, has effectively circumvented state processes, and is now completely under Iranian influence. The goals and gains by Iran and its Lebanese allies – the latter of whom ultimately only seek to end the subjugation of the Lebanese Shi'ite peoples – cannot be mediated when faced with the goals of the United States and its Gulf states allies, without compromise by both sides. The Gulf states have attempted to maintain their status as absolute monarchies secured by United States oil funds and arms sales, while Hezbollah has similarly attempted to advance their own interests by supporting those goals of the Syrian government and Iran (Karouny). These conflicts are thus ultimately representative of the power struggle between the regional superpowers of Iran and the United States.

The United States and the United Nations Security Council

In one of the more intriguing events that has unfolded throughout the Syrian civil war, the United States has found itself at odds with the other major powers of the United Nations Security Council about how to deal with the humanitarian crisis. While the United States has also faced serious internal debates about how to best deal with the crisis, efforts to aid the rebels have arguably faced more serious obstacles by both Russian and Chinese officials. Russia has staunchly maintained that the United States should not exert an influence on the Syrian opposition forces, and views its attempts at unseating a standing government as deeply concerning (Grove). Russia has been opposed to the United States' support of the rebels both for pragmatic and theoretical reasons. Foremost, Russia has kept al-Assad as a longstanding ally, and Syria has remained one of Russia's closest political allies in the Middle East (Weir). Russia's ability to exert a political influence on the Middle Eastern region would be severely

compromised if the al-Assad regime was replaced by an opposition government. Moreover, the sort of a government which the United States and its European Union and Arab League allies are currently pushing for – a secular, pro-democratic coalition – is a less possible outcome for the Russian government. Thus, major power politics have clearly entered into Russia's considerations towards their relationship with Syria. Russia has also had reason to prevent the United States' intended actions within Syria, as they are uncomfortable with the precedent such action sets (de Carbonnel). In a fascinating article on the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Negroponte writes the following: "if [Lavrov] has any moral compass, my Geiger counter hasn't clicked into it. His morality is the Russian state" (Glasser). Russian foreign policy has been consistently devoted to thwarting American interests, Glasser proclaims, whom attributes Russia to nearly single-handedly preventing the United States from sufficiently aiding the Syrian opposition forces ("Minister No.") Thus, Russia's uneasiness with allowing a United Nations Security Council-approved removal of an allied sitting government, coupled with their resistance to allow American influence in their own backyard, has resulted in their extreme unwillingness to allow for United States and European Union intervention (Gordon and Schmitt).

Russia, in addition to preventing the United States from effectively delivering aid to the Syrian rebels, has also directly propped up the government forces and the al-Assad regime in general through economic and military aid. The northern major power has threatened to sell the Yakhont missile, an advanced antiship cruise missile, to the Syrian government (Gordon and Schmitt). This weapon would change the calculus of how Western powers would aid the Syrian rebels, as tactics such as no-fly zones and heavy aerial bombing of regime targets would be compromised, and made significantly more difficult (Gordon and Schmitt). The Russian government has similarly persistently supplied the regime with smaller arms and ammunition,

which became more pervasive after the European Union allowed the Syrian arms embargo to end on June 1, 2013 (“Assad says Syria received Russian missile shipment”). Most of these arms shipments, especially the advanced antiship cruise missile, have been defended by the Russian government as merely fulfilling old arms contracts made prior to the outbreak of the Syrian civil war (Gordon and Schmitt). They can thus claim that their actions do not constitute a form of intervention in the way that my definition requires, because they have not changed their policy to adapt to the threat of the opposition forces to their ally, the al-Assad regime.²

China has similarly refused to allow for Western intervention, using the veto power of their United Nations Security Council status to prevent key movements towards threatening and dismantling the al-Assad regime (Feldman). Foreign Policy writer Noah Feldman believes that this opposition to Western intervention – specifically by the United States – is indicative of their fear of United Nations Security Council precedent setting in a similar manner as Russia. Their nations own poor track record for human rights violations is at the root of their unwillingness to address human rights violations in other countries, especially in a politically fiery nation like Syria. In his own words, “Beijing has an independent interest in opposing any form of humanitarian intervention or regime change based on a human rights justification – hence its opposition to any justifications by the U.N. Security Council for intervention in Syria” (Feldman). It is likely because of these concerns that China, under pressure from the Russian government, vetoed the United Nations proposal to unseat the al-Assad regime, and support the proposed transitional government (Gladstone). Other proposals, including a “fact-finding” investigation on Syrian refugees in Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon were rejected, similarly considered outside the mandate of the United Nations Security Council (Gordon and Schmitt). A

² This complication reflects either the limitations of my definition of intervention, or merely a smart diplomatic achievement by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

proposal to investigate the use of chemical weapons used by the al-Assad regime was, notably, vetoed only by the Russian government, although the United States later unilaterally achieved information of the chemical weapon attacks anyways (Gordon and Schmitt).

THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR

The Lebanese Civil War reflects many of both the regional struggles of the Syrian civil war, as well as the intricate complications of intervention that the United States dealt with. I believe that the war is an extremely instructive case for understanding the place the United States is currently situated in. I will first present a history of the conflict, followed by an analysis on the United States' motivations to engage with the Lebanese people and the surrounding actors that played important roles in the civil war. I have primarily referenced the excellent history of the civil war, written by Dilip Hiro (*Lebanon: Fire and Embers*). Rather than citing Hiro throughout the entire subsection on the history of the Lebanese Civil War, readers should instead assume that all historical information is gleaned from the book unless otherwise stated.

History of the Lebanese Civil War

The Lebanese state had been predominantly governed by the Maronite Christian population following the end of the Second World War, when France granted the nation independence from the European nation's colonial empire. Lebanon has long acted as a magnet for the region's persecuted religions, and attracted many Islamist populations, specifically comprising pan-Arab and Leftist movements. Lebanon had previously suffered a brief civil war during 1958, following the assassination of the pro-Western Iraqi monarch Faisal II. Camille Chamoun, having lost one of his last essential allies in the Middle East, called upon the United States to aid in the Lebanese government's stability, while pan-Arab groups called for a union with the anti-Western governments of Syria and Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt. Responding to

this plea, and acting obviously to combat the threat of Soviet influence within the region, the United States delivered ten thousand Marine troops, seventy six military ships, and the five-thousand man 6th naval fleet, with accompanying nuclear weapons. While the United States' military intervention proved to halt the escalating violence between the pan-Arab Muslim populations and the Maronite Christians, who supported Chamoun's decision to remain allies with the Western powers despite their antagonism towards the Egypt-Syria coalition, tensions remained between the two divisive groups of Lebanese society.

The tensions flowing from this 1958 conflict preceded the fifteen year civil war, which erupted over a decade later. Following the Black September in Jordan, where King Hussein and his Jordanian Armed Forces killed and evicted thousands of Palestinian Liberation Organization members, the Lebanese government found the southern half of the nation embroiled by the arrival of thousands of Palestine Liberation Organization members. The headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization moved from Amman to Beirut throughout 1971. Many Muslim Lebanese became enraged at the murder of three Palestinian leaders by Israeli commandoes, who called upon the still predominantly rightist Maronite government to place greater pressure on Israeli aggression. The Maronite Christians agreed to the Muslim protests, and lifted the blockade of Palestinian camps in Southern Lebanon, for two reasons: first, because the Syrian government, allied with the Lebanese Muslim populations, had sealed their shared border and effectively shut out the nation from the rest of the Arab community; and second, because the Palestinian groups offered up exceptional resistance against the demands of the Maronite government. The gradual demographic shift from Rightist Maronite Christians to pan-Arab and Leftist Lebanese Muslims put the nation at odds with its Israeli neighbor, and begun a series of violent clashes between the two parties. Yassir Arafat led the Palestinian Liberation

Organization through a broad dependency on foreign-supported finances, despite the organization's loosely confederated structure.

Mass executions by both sides quickly escalated the violence of the emerging civil war, and brutal civilian executions became routine nation-wide throughout the first years. Syria openly supported the Maronite government, providing armed soldiers against the Palestinian militias, as well as rejecting their prior affiliation with the Palestinian Liberation Organization. The Palestine Liberation Organization continued to make armed advances into Israel, initiating a massacre of dozens of Israeli citizens, prompting an Israeli invasion of South Lebanon and an extreme deterioration of relations between the two countries. Massive civilian massacres, in both Lebanon and Israel, perpetrated by the opposing nations, occurred throughout the 1970s and early 80s. Following a Palestine Liberation Organization breach of the United Nations Security Council imposed ceasefire in 1982, Israel launched an invasion into South Lebanon, intending to make a security zone large enough to prevent Palestinian rockets from reaching Israeli soil. While most of the Security Council approved a resolution demanding that Israel withdraw from Lebanese soil, the United States refused to do so, and vetoed the resolution.

A further ceasefire agreement in 1982, proposed as a resolution by the United States Security Council, passed, demanding the removal of Israeli troops from Lebanese territory, as well as the withdrawal of Palestinian forces from the Lebanese capital of Beirut. This agreement was overseen by American, French, and Italian forces. Two major events sparked tensions between the Maronite Christians and the Lebanese Muslim populations, however: first, the murder of Bachir Gemayel, an elected Maronite President, who at the time had been believed to be assassinated by a Syrian Muslim force supported by Hafez al-Assad; and second, the Sabra and Shatila massacres, where Maronite Christians murdered 3500 Palestinian and Muslim Shi'ite

civilians in retaliation for the above assassination. A series of devastating attacks on Western intervening forces followed, most notably the Iranian sponsored bombing of Beirut barracks in 1983, killing 241 American and 58 French military members. These attacks signified a deep distrust of the Multinational Force present in Lebanon at the time, who attempted to buffer the deep animosity and violence between the sectarian divisions between the Syrian-sponsored Muslim populations, and the Israeli occupying forces, who were mostly ideologically aligned with the Maronite Christians. The 1700 stationed United States Marines, alongside Italian and French soldiers, exchanged shelling between Druze and Shi'ite encampments throughout Lebanon during their presence from 1982-84, and installed roadblocks and visible posts throughout Beirut in attempts to buffer tensions. The United States oversaw the removal of the Israeli Army in May of 1983, and ensured that Palestine Liberation Organization groups left Beirut throughout the evacuation. United States Marines and naval fleets left Lebanon in February of 1984, after repeated exchanges of artillery fire between Syrian positions supporting the Lebanese Shi'ites.

Unlike the Bosnian War, the United States did not continue to oversee the peace processes between the warring Lebanese factions. The disintegration of the Lebanese army following the evacuation of the Multinational Force reignited the instability of the region, and Syrian-led Shi'ites instigated violence against Palestine Lebanese groups. After another half-decade of violence, a successful group of Syrian opposition forces – possibly with diplomatic clearance by United States officials – ousted General Aoun, then head of the Lebanese government. Arab League neighbors appointed a committee, which successfully arranged the Taif Agreement of 1989, ceasing inter- and intra-state hostilities. A more stable regime grew out

of the civil war, subjecting the Maronite populations to a severely politically unrepresented position in society, which ceased violent conflict with their Israeli neighbors.

The United States Intervention into the Lebanese Civil War

I will now seek to understand the why the United States intervened in the Lebanese Civil War in 1982. The United States committed a massive number of trained military personnel to oversee the crisis, and in the process lost the greatest number of American lives abroad since the end of the Vietnam War. The relations between Lebanon and Israel would have likely continued to be antagonistic and violent throughout the 1980s if the Multinational Force, supported by Italian and French military personnel as well, did not oversee the removal of the Israeli military from Southern Lebanon. I will provide three reasons why the United States intervened in the Lebanese domestic crisis, and argue that relationships with foreign actors, as well as the United States' history with Lebanon, most importantly precipitated the vast use of military force.

The United States' Relationship with the Soviet Union

The Lebanese Civil War was severely exacerbated by the Cold War, especially the power politics that pervaded both the United States and the USSR's relations with other nations throughout the duration of the conflict. Much of the relation between the Cold War and the Lebanese Civil War dates back to the 1958 crisis in Lebanon. President Camille Chamoun's decision to call for a United States military intervention significantly resulted from the tension between Lebanon and Egypt, when Chamoun refused to break ties with Western powers after United States aggression over the Egyptian Suez Canal (Alin). Nasser's strong ties with Soviet politics further polarized the views of these two nations, and brought them within the respective spheres of the two Cold War actors (Alin). Arab nationalism, under the banner of Nasser's Egypt, adopted a pro-Soviet stance, which threatened American regional interests, and deepened

American commitment to the success of Chamoun's Lebanese government. This Soviet-era fear on the part of the United States continued to influence their policies towards Lebanon decades later. The loss of Faisal II, a key pro-American actor in the Middle East, furthered this commitment to the perceived ally, whereby the United States deeply feared the influence of the pro-Arab nationalistic groups within Lebanon. While the USSR played a relatively minimal role in the unfolding of events between Maronite Christians, Israeli defense forces, and Shi'ite and Arab nationalists, the threat of their regional influence – especially through the United Arab Republic, a pro-Soviet coalition between Egypt and Syria – further motivated the United States to delve into the Lebanese domestic conflict (Alin).

The United States' Relationship with Israel

Israel has long served as an essential actor for the United States in the Middle East, and as proved massively important – since its inception in 1948 – in influencing the superpower's foreign policy. Israel remains an essential actor in influencing the United States' presence in the Syrian opposition today, which I will discuss later in the paper. The serious tolls Israel suffered as a result of the Lebanese Civil War were obvious to policymakers in the United States, who sought to protect their Israeli ally, and condemn the violence perpetuated by the Lebanese terrorists (Hiro 12). Several of the massacres that occurred in Israel throughout the war – especially the Coastal Road massacre – drew worldwide condemnation over the actions of the violent Muslim Lebanese, who were deemed out of control and who repeatedly broke international human rights norms (Hiro 72). These events were largely perpetuated on civilian targets, and were considered especially reprehensible. It is thus to be expected that the United States felt such a large obligation to aid their Middle Eastern ally when confronted with violent targets. It should also be considered that the 1982 military intervention on the part of the United

States facilitated a comfortable and easy exit on the part of the Israeli forces from the south of Lebanon, and allowed the Jewish state to save face, while still imposing a serious and credible threat to the violent Muslim Lebanese parties.

The United States' Historical Relationship with Lebanon

The historical success of the United States' military intervention in 1958 largely influenced the superpower's decision, decades later, to again engage in military intervention. The 1958 intervention was by all means a success, and has been historically noted as one of the most efficient and effective uses of American military intervention (Spiller 1). United States' military strategy involved positioning a sizeable land and Navy forces, which showed an impressive display of military force, and quieted domestic unrest and regional threats from the United Arab Republic nations of Egypt and Syria. This display of force required little direct combat, reduced losses of lives on both sides, and succeeded primarily because the enemy was unwilling and incapable of engaging with the overtly superior American forces. Importantly, this 1958 intervention was the first in a number of interventions that followed a doctrine pursuing the support of foreign regimes whom the United States felt threatened by the Soviet Union, communist influences extending from the communist superpower ("The Eisenhower Doctrine, 1957"). Therefore, the United States felt compelled – based on its previous protection of Lebanon from communist influence – to continue its policy towards support of Lebanon, and maintain the nation's security against domestic and external forces. Moreover, the success of the prior intervention led policymakers to believe that a follow-up intervention could be achieved with the same grand display of force, on the basis that little direct combat would have to be engaged in to secure an Israeli leave of the country, and a reduction of the domestic unrest and tension between the warring factions (Spiller 12). While the catastrophic car bombings on

American military barracks proved this logic to be false to a certain extent, the United States did ensure that important strategic developments occurred while stationed in the country, while engaging in relatively little combat.

THE BOSNIAN WAR

The Bosnian War, though different from the Syrian civil war in many important respects, is still an invaluable case study that can teach observers important things about the United States' current foreign policy in civil wars abroad. I will again first present a history of the conflict, as I did with the Lebanese Civil War, followed by an analysis on the United States' motivations to play a role in the conflict. Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup have written the definitive account of the war, which I have referenced extensively to aid in my understanding of the conflict. Thus, rather than individually citing the entire next passages, instead assume that all historical information regarding the matter is gleaned from their work unless otherwise stated.

History of the Bosnian Civil War

The Bosnian War began in 1992 when violence erupted between the nation's three largest ethnic minority groups: the largely Orthodox Croats, the largely Catholic Serbians, and the Muslim Bosniaks. This violence was catalyzed by the breakup of Yugoslavia following the end of the Cold War and the broader breakup of the USSR states throughout Eastern Europe. Bosnia-Herzegovina had never had an independent state before their post-Communist history: the state had been passed down between multinational empires for over a century, and had previously existed as distinct ethnic enclaves with no shared political systems. While the Communists had succeeded in imposing a functional national government – secured through the draconian elimination of any nationalist leaders, as well as the receptiveness of the Communist ideology to the pro-Yugoslav population of Bosnia-Herzegovina – the fall of the USSR and the

removal of the prior government did not guarantee the success of a national transitional government. The Bosnian Muslim elite had held the vast majority of the political power during the Communist take-over, and sought to maintain the national identity of the state so as to preserve their seat at the head of the national government. Serbian and Croat ethnic groups' lack of willingness to accept this politically subservient seat in the transitional government was intensely magnified by the presence of Bosnia-Herzegovina's neighboring countries of Serbia and Croatia. Both nation-states fueled the ethnic entities' abilities to wage war against each other, and supplied Bosnia-Herzegovina with arms and willing fighters throughout the duration of the war.

Three parties dominated the political landscape leading up to the steady eruption of the civil war in 1992, each belonging to the respective ethnic communities they served: the Serb Democratic Party (henceforth referred to as the SDS) led by the violently nationalistic Radovan Karadžić; the Party of Democratic Action (henceforth referred to as the SDA) led by a deeply religious Muslim, Alija Izetbegović, who persistently argued for a multiethnic and secular Bosnian state; and the Croat leadership, whom had a marked absence of any strong national leaders, but who were heavily influenced by the Croatian nationalist party, the Croatian Democratic Union (henceforth referred to as the HDZ.) That Bosnia-Herzegovina's political landscape was defined by these nationalist parties has since been determined as being caused by a brutality cascade. All ethnicities feared that their ethnic partners within Bosnia-Herzegovina would elect nationalist leaders, thus putting their personal party at a disadvantage. By voting for nationalist parties out of fear, the Bosnian people guaranteed that no moderate political parties would oversee the nation's political transition. These parties, excepting the SDA, later favored

violence over accepting compromise, and sealed the nation's fate to violent civil war. In a fascinating passage, Burg and Shoup make the following comment:

“If the nonethnic or multiethnic parties had been able to escape their communist past and appeal to enough voters so that ethnic elites stood to lose critical support if they became too extreme, then perhaps the incentives to find a successful formula for sharing power might have outweighed the incentives to extremism. But the structure of the electoral system itself, and the absence of cross-cutting, or moderating, interests in society, reinforced intransigence and extremism” (69).

The essential conflict between the ethnic groups of Bosnia-Herzegovina eventually boiled down to a simple territorial dispute. Much of the warring prevalent in the years following the first outbreaks of violence in 1992 was directed at gaining land to occupy, so as to solidify the broader territory held by the parties' ethnic group, and to secure the livelihood of the ethnic populations living within those territories. All attempts at mediating the conflict by the Western powers, namely the European Council and the United States, all were stymied by the national political parties' unwillingness to concede territorial losses, whereby each side held a zero-sum conception of how Bosnia-Herzegovina following the end of the civil war. The aggressors of the civil war, mostly the Serbs and the Croats to a lesser extent, frequently employed territory-gaining tactics supported by the United Nations, whereby generals would freeze and consolidate their military successes by calling for ceasefire lines by United Nations Protection Forces after large territorial gains. Serbs additionally committed violence on a mass scale, engaging in genocide against Muslim Bosnian populations by the thousands, as well as systematic rape of captured Muslim women employed as a terror tactic to remove ethnically foreign populations from newly gained territories. As a result of the aggressive role these Serb militaries played

throughout the civil war, the United States and the European Council consistently empathized with the plight of the Bosnian Muslims, and sought to aid in their recovery against what they saw as an unjust enemy.

All Western attempts to mediate the violence between these ethnic groups failed prior to 1994, as the mediating advisors did not have any “teeth” to back up their claims of imposing and instituting a process of peaceful transition. The leaders of the national parties – especially the Serbs Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, as well as the Muslim Izetbegović – refused to make any concessions, and were thus stuck in a stalemate while tens of thousands of Bosnians died in warfare. Attempts by multiple European diplomats, aided by NATO and United Nations Protection Forces, failed to warrant any successes at even slowing the violent within Bosnia-Herzegovina, and attempts at lasting ceasefires and prolonged peace talks were repeatedly broken by all sides.

The alliance of the Croat and Muslim forces in 1994 ultimately led to peace within the war-torn nation. The United States’ decision to more forcefully intervene came after years of failed policy at the day to day level, whereby policymakers reluctantly accepted diplomatic responsibility after having long expected the European Union, having changed its name from the European Council, to deal with the bulk of the crisis. Though highly controversial at the time, facing serious domestic criticism for the imprudence of the action, the executive department under President Clinton, alongside the Pentagon, allowed for direct aerial bombing of aggressing Serb targets by NATO forces. This direct aerial force, occurring on multiple Serb targets beginning July of 1994, occurred alongside large amounts of covert United States-funded arms shipments into Muslim Bosnian regions, kept secret by many European skeptics who disagreed with the arming of sides within the warring nation. These actions finally provided the United

States with a credible enough threat to convince the Serbs to accept significant concessions with the Bosnian Muslim and Croat populations. While they at first had no incentive to end the conflict, as they could repeatedly make constant territorial gains followed by legitimating them through an abuse of United Nations ceasefire procedures, their military losses – as result of both United States aggression and the Muslim-Croat alliance – convinced the Serb military to accept their gained territories and enter a mediated peace-building arrangement. For the first time in the history of the Bosnian War, the Dayton Agreement ensured separated ethnic enclaves for all sides, as well as a legitimated transitional government supported by all ethnic communities. The United States agreed to have indefinitely deployed troops to act as observers of the peaceful transition, something which it had tried not to do earlier in the development of the civil war. While many critics of the Dayton Agreement focused on the possibility of the ethnic enclaves – especially the Serb enclaves, which were granted equal status to the Muslim-Croat federation – to atomize into several parts away from the system of the federal government, it has proven largely successful in ending the horrific and disturbing violence of the Bosnian War.

United States Intervention into the Bosnian War

I will now seek to understand the reasons why the United States eventually decided to commit itself as extensively as it did to the end of the Bosnian War. The superpower provided a necessary and extensive role in resolving the tensions between the ethnic groups, and played an invaluable effort in displaying a credible threat of force to halt the Serb military offensives. I will first provide an explanation for the United States' initial serious hesitance to provide substantial aid to the suffering Muslim Bosniak population, followed by an explanation of the tipping point which motivated the United States to ultimately accept responsibility of rebuilding the war-torn nation.

Initial Reluctance to Act by the United States

The United States' initial reluctance to intervene in the Bosnian War was the result of two primary factors. These factors, compounded together, led to significant wavering of the United States' foreign policy, as well as a deep-seated fear resulting in a refusal to commit to any policy beyond day-to-day crisis management. Despite being the most consistent and staunch ally of the Muslim Izetbegović and the Bosniak population in general, the United States routinely skirted the tempting intervention role, which they increasingly fell into later in the war.

First, the United States refused to intervene significantly earlier in the war because it felt that the European Council had a greater responsibility over the crisis than the superpower (Burg and Shoup 80). Germany played a significant role in the outcome of the war in a heavily criticized decision of recognizing the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Burg and Shoup 92). Many of the other states which arose out of the fall of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Yugoslav state were put up for review within the European Council for international recognition. While some states seemed to fit the criteria, and were accepted either conditionally or out of hand, the process was not uniform (Burg and Shoup 94). All post-Yugoslav states diplomatically fought for recognition, and Germany made a hasty decision – without discussing with any other major regional powers – that Bosnia-Herzegovina be recognized as a legitimate nation state. Many people believe that this decision led to the civil war that soon unfolded within a year of the decision, as it placed a tighter timeframe on the goals of the nationalist ethnic parties of the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims (Burg and Shoup 95).

Additionally, there was a general perception among United States policymakers that the resolution of the Bosnian crisis was a chance for the newly minted European Council to shine (Burg and Shoup 102). The United States had played a major role in European politics for

decades, beginning in its entrance into the European theatre in World War II, and continuing on throughout the continent's reconstruction and the Cold War. The superpower felt obliged to allow the European Council to deal with its own region's crises, and did not feel obligated to rush into an intervention when the conflict was egregiously enflamed by one of the council's member states.

Second, and in all probability more importantly, the United States saw no real incentive to intervene in the nation's hostilities (Burg and Shoup 19). The superpower had little to gain from intervening on behalf of the Bosnian Muslims, and persistently feared being dragged into a costly civil war, which would have invariably required millions of dollars of military capital, and which would have undoubtedly claimed American lives. Tactics such as no-fly zones and limited airstrikes were seen as effective only under the precondition of the United States backing the threats up with diplomatic support, walking the parties together in a peaceful transition with permanently stationed American troops. While the United Nations Protection Forces were still marginally effective at combating the widespread violence within the nation, the United States was more than happy to stand behind the organization and allow the largely European forces to engage the ethnic militaries. Burg and Shoup report that the American public was not at all deeply affected by the various wars that had sprouted up throughout the post-Yugoslav region, and did not press the United States government to aid the suffering Muslim populations within Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Moreover, as was continually discussed by American policymakers, half-hearted – and thus more desirable – measures to decrease the violence within Bosnia-Herzegovina would have been unlikely to succeed. The extreme prevalence of violence throughout the entire state, coupled with the single-minded willingness by Serb parties to exchange lives for the betterment

of the military, maintained this catch-22. While the United States may have been willing to commit to less intensive intervention policies earlier in the war, the limited choices offered to them, as determined by the conditions of the war, prevented this outcome.

Motivations for United States to Enter Bosnian War

The primary reason why the United States committed itself to an interventionist policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1994 at first appears disingenuous to the astute observer: the Clinton administration, and the president especially, felt an exceptional moral obligation to the Bosnian people, and the Muslim Bosniaks in particular. This claim to the motivation of United States policymakers seems skeptical, especially in light of the history of other 20th and 21st century military interventions into civil and other domestic conflicts by the superpower. Additionally, the realism in the assessment that they did not intervene within the war-torn nation earlier in the war because they had no vital interests in securing victory for any of the ethnic national parties at first seems to directly contradict this logic. However, I believe that this moral claim is legitimate for reasons outlined in the following subsection.

First, the day-to-day crisis management previously employed by the United States policymakers had failed miserably (O'Hanlon). The United States had lost significant diplomatic credibility for failing to address the Bosnian problem, despite the fact that there was not significant disappointment from the American people over the nation's absentee policies (O'Hanlon). By limiting the United States' engagement with the ethnic nationalist parties to proxy nations and the European Council – which by 1994 had become the European Union – and refusing to develop a holistic and long-term plan to deal with the crisis, the superpower significantly handicapped its own ability to efficiently and successfully deal with the warring nation. When the United States dropped these pretenses – accepting their moral responsibility as

an important actor within Bosnia-Herzegovina – their policy became cohesive, and a model for future actions towards warring states. This change coincided with the complete removal of most United Nations Protection Forces and European Union-sponsored management of Bosnia-Herzegovina, who respected the United States' decision to accept responsibility over the warring nation, and having failed themselves to supply the capital and lives required to tame the crisis. However, these respectable and cohesive policies only came about after it became apparent that a daily crisis management approach was wholly ineffective.

Second, the United States faced little in opposition to its change in interventional policies towards Bosnia-Herzegovina. Izetbegović and the SDA remained somewhat unattractive parties for the United States to support for two primary reasons: first, they were “unable to formulate a political ideology outside of the Muslim national ideology” (Burg and Shoup 195); and second, the conservatism and general trend of Islamism within the SDA's clergy and political leaders tilted their politics towards authoritarianism, bolstered by the inherited mindset of Soviet communism (Burg and Shoup 196). However, these fears were minor, and were wholly overruled by the obvious moral imperative of the United States to act on behalf of the newly formed Muslim-Croat coalition, and secure peace for the ravaged nation. While Russia posed several qualms about the ingenuity and genuineness of the United States' claim to the legitimacy of their intervention, and Germany later expressed deep skepticism over the prudence of the American oversight of the peace accords, the United States' policies at the time secured widespread support. The United Nations seemed glad to relieve itself of the troubling responsibilities of the humanitarian crisis, and the whole of the European Union and NATO organizations approved of the new approach to the inept and poorly thought out policies that preceded the United States' intervention. Where other nations had been unwilling to expend

their own capital and the lives of their own citizens to secure Bosnian peace, even in their own backyard, the United States made the rarely congratulated step of military intervention.

Third and finally, the United States felt an exceptional obligation to Bosnia-Herzegovina because of its historical attachment to Yugoslavia and the USSR. With the fall of the Soviet Union, and the recognition of the United States as the sole world superpower, the United States found itself uniquely placed as the most credible and wealthy nation available to engage in military intervention. With the massive military surplus present in the United States at the time, the superpower found itself able to engage in smaller conflicts than would normally attract its attention (Weinberger). More importantly, the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a result of the inability of the state to form a coherent national political ideology that did not revolve around supporting a minority or plurality ethnicity. This power vacuum at the national level was a result of the collapse of the Yugoslav federation, which came about as a direct result of the fall of the Soviet Union. The United States thus felt a great obligation to intervene, despite a lack of any specific relevance of the regional struggle, so as to demonstrate itself as a respectable and dependable actor in its entrance into an internationally unipolar system.

I believe that these reasons substantiate the claim that the United States intervened in the Bosnian War for primarily moral reasons.

THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR: EXPLAINING UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY

I will now seek to explain the actions of the United States in the current Syrian civil war by observing its motivations for military intervention in Lebanon and Bosnia. Through these two case studies, I seek to appropriately explain why the United States has gone to the lengths it has to support the Syrian opposition and condemn the al-Assad regime, and why it has not done more to arm the flailing and disorganized rebel groups, and ensure that President Assad will not

be a participant in the government following the civil war. I will first detail the actions which the United States has taken to intervene in the Syrian civil war at the time in which this paper was written, followed by the specific motivations for those actions.

How the United States Has Intervened in the Syrian Civil War

The United States has demanded that al-Assad be replaced as early as July of 2011, and has persistently maintained – despite doubts by some political analysts – that legitimate peace talks involving the superpower must list the removal of al-Assad as a prerequisite for the intended transitional government (Hersh). In order to substantiate these demands, the United States has supported the Syrian opposition through a number of primarily fiscal services (Bakr and Doherty). Intricate systems designed to funnel aid to moderate rebel organizations have been employed throughout the United States’ Gulf states allies, especially Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and to a lesser extent Jordan and Qatar. The United States, as well as most other Western nations, has declared the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as the primary recipient for humanitarian and military aid, and has spent significant efforts ensuring that aid funneled from the coalition to armed rebel groups is primarily directed away from jihadist factions, as well as known brigades which have caused human rights violations (Bakr and Doherty). The executive decision by Barack Obama to deliver arms, rather than the humanitarian aid which United States provisions had previously been limited to, was a significant development in the relationship between the superpower and the armed forces, and has indicated a general trend in an increase in involvement into the civil war by the United States (Cornwell and Zakaria). It is currently unclear as to whether there are any plans by Pentagon officials or United States policymakers to increase the scope of the intervention within Syria.

*Motivations for United States Intervention into the Syrian Civil War***Russian Opposition to United States Intervention**

I have already previously discussed the dual dimensions in which Russia has opposed the intimate involvement of the United States with the Syrian opposition forces.³ I will now discuss the ramifications that these objections by the Russian Foreign Ministry have had on the United States' foreign policy, and contrast the vetoing power the state currently has with its traditionally weaker stance in the previously discussed interventions in Lebanon and Bosnia.

The United States has been forced to heed to the objectionable demands of the Russian government, as well as their hypocritical stance on providing aid to Syrian domestic belligerents, because the superpower is no longer in a position to openly defy the political demands of the al-Assad regime's last remaining ally (Grove). The United States is routinely required to call upon the Russian state to aid in facilitating its own policy, and cannot afford to disregard the other actor's perspective in diplomatic crises such as the current humanitarian crisis in Syria. Russia's stance on international action of the Syrian crisis has more to do with anxieties about the implications of United States power than it does about Syria itself; thus, to the extent that Russia's policy is reactionary to United States aggression in pursuing support of the Syrian opposition, the superpower will always find itself at odds with the essential al-Assad ally (Charap).

This obstacle by the Russian government can be contrasted with the previous case studies, in which the Russian state is either at odds with the United States, in which its policy can, and by some perspectives must, combat the regional influence of the warring actor, or is in a weakened state, and cannot summon the diplomatic capital required to refute the actions of the

³ For a more in-depth discussion of the theoretical and pragmatic reasons why Russia has opposed this intervention, see pages 18-20.

United States. Such relations between the two powers can be observed in the Lebanese Civil War and the Bosnian War respectively. Moreover, the practical military tactics which the United States can effectively employ, in favor of the Syrian opposition, while the Russian state opposes such action are necessarily limited. Thus while Russia maintains a staunch supporter of the al-Assad regime, the United States' ability to exert power over the Syrian crisis is reduced to remain within the framework of what is considered acceptable by the Russian Foreign Ministry, or comes at the grave cost of disrupting the uneasy peaceful relationship between the United States and the ex-superpower.

United States' Desire to Contain Iranian Regional Influence

While the United States has publicly shied away from the Iranian influence on their foreign policy on Syria, the influential regional actor has indeed played a significant role in influencing both the presence of the United States' arms shipments, as well as their reluctance to further engage the al-Assad regime. The al-Assad regime had long served as a conduit for Iranian influence throughout the Levant, and likely influenced the United States' decision, much earlier in the civil war, to take off the table all diplomatic options involving Bashar al-Assad in the transitional period following the final ceasefires and the decline of nation-wide violence. This decision has since been seen as a blunder by many analysts of the United States' foreign policy, as it fundamentally limited the superpower's options in engaging with the rebel forces, and constrained its relations with both Iran and Russia. In a fascinating and influential article, Samuel Charap argues that the United States' commitment to removing the al-Assad regime is fundamentally at odds with a peace process inclusive of two absolutely necessary actors, Russia and Iran ("Russia, Syria and the Doctrine of Intervention"). While this blunder was likely caused by the self-assuredness of the Arab Spring's protests, which at the time seemed inevitably

successful to American policymakers due to their immediate successes and widespread enthusiasm, the commitment against al-Assad has cemented the opposition of the United States to Iranian interests in the region.

As a result of this inherent opposition, by design of the foreign policy the United States has constructed, the nation has felt strongly obliged to strengthen the Syrian opposition forces, for fear that a power vacuum will be left if there is not a strong moderating force. Iran will likely be able to strengthen their influence on the al-Assad regime if the opposition forces are not successful in removing the authoritarian government, which would further harm American interests in the region. The United States is thus stuck hesitantly supporting rebels which they are largely only supporting to prevent the advantageous position of a national enemy.

This fear of a power vacuum, playing into the hands of an unwanted successor, is a recurring theme in the case studies I have looked at. Especially in the Bosnian War, the bulk of the United States' aims at military intervention was to fill the vacuum in power being filled by the Serb army and the SDS. The anarchic system, imposed by the collapse of the Yugoslav political system, allowed for a violent political force to overcome through successful and unwanted means, imposing a force antithetical to the desires of the United States.

United States' Fear of Jihadist Influence

The United States' fear of jihadist influence on the Syrian civil war has been paramount to the superpower's fear of the conflict. A negative resolution to the conflict would undoubtedly harm the United States' attempts to quell terrorism abroad in the Middle East, and a war-ravaged Syria could serve as an anarchic ungovernable home for terrorism if stability is not restored. The United States would almost undoubtedly prefer a stable authoritarian regime over the collapse of the current political system, replaced by a national power vacuum and a series of warring rebel

groups fighting for local power and money. This fear has been significantly furthered by the presence of jihadist groups within Syria, such as the previously discussed and extremely successful al-Nusra brigades. The difficulties of selectively aiding secular and moderate rebel groups has been difficult, as the United States has found the likelihood of these groups' political successes to be significantly infringed upon by both the extreme relative strength of the regime forces, as well as the more closely relative strength of ideologically religious or violent opposition forces. The United States' attempts at arming opposition forces, and the limited number of arms provided, have mostly been dictated by this fear.

This fear has emerged as a new consequence of the Syrian civil war, and was not witnessed in either of the previously discussed civil wars. The phenomenon of international terrorism, especially the kind witnessed and currently prevalent throughout the Middle East, has not been a factor in wars predated before the terrorism attack of September 11th (Weinberger). Thus, there is not much information to be gleaned about the rise and fear of jihadist politics by examining the Lebanese Civil War and the Bosnian War.

Relationship with Israel and Influence of Hezbollah on the Conflict

The foreign Hezbollah fighters of Lebanon have accumulated many impressive victories throughout Western Syria, and have significantly changed the al-Assad regime's chances of outlasting and overpowering the opposition forces. As obviously evidenced by the previous discussion of the Lebanese Civil War, Lebanese-based terrorist organizations have a long and vivid place in Israeli history. The United States' strong alliance with Israel, and their commitment to the Jewish state's national security, is one of the most basic pillars which dictates the superpower's foreign policy in the Middle East. The extent to which the Lebanese terrorist organization has ingratiated themselves into the military forces of the al-Assad regime, and the

strong influence Iran currently holds over the organization, has attracted the attention of both rational and fear mongering Israeli observers. Thus, the Israeli government has placed significant pressure on the United States to aid in the advancement of the moderate and secular Syrian rebels, although the Israeli state fears the influence and rise of jihadist groups in much of the same way as the United States does.

Moral Obligation to Humanitarian Crisis

While this aspect of the United States' obligation to military intervention often gets overlooked by political analysts, and occasionally over-emphasized by political pundits, I believe that there is a significant moral aspect to the United States' commitment to the Syrian rebels. As the Bosnian War has demonstrated, genuine commitments to ending humanitarian crises can be strong catalysts for intervention by stronger observing actors. The death toll in Syria has risen to over 100 thousand, according to United Nations estimates, and the United States has faced serious criticism, especially abroad, over acting as a 'mere observer' in a preventable crisis of such large proportions ("More than 2,000 killed in Syria since Ramadan began"). Skeptics of this moral consideration have pointed towards the general apathy of the American public, who have not in polls generally shown any negative opinion towards the United States government for failing to address the security and future of the Syrian people. Notable foreign policy observer Fareed Zakariah has made exactly that point, and has repeatedly pointed to the public's disregard of the seemingly distanced and irrelevant civil war as a reason not to intervene ("U.S. credibility is not on the line in Syria"). In his own words, the United States' credibility is not on the line, and there will be little ramifications if they do not act; thus, a claim that a moral pressure is exerted on the United States government to act is a faulty claim. It is important to note, however, that there was not significant public unrest over the mass killings, rapes, and

genocide of the Bosnian War, and the primary motivation of the United States government in engaging in military intervention was a moral claim. Thus, domestic unrest has been shown to not necessarily be a prerequisite for all claims to moral motivation for decisions to engage in military intervention.

THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR: SOLUTIONS AND REALITIES

I have explored in depth the motivations of the United States in its attempts to mediate the humanitarian crisis of the Syrian civil war, as well as the attempts the superpower has made to mitigate the devastating qualities the war has had on its ability to exercise control over the Middle East. I will now seek, briefly, to place a limited defense of the policies the superpower has adopted, and attempt to argue why the United States should not intervene with the domestic crisis of the Syrian nation and people, and why arming rebel factions, even in moderation, to secular and less violent opposition forces, is a bad decision by American policymakers. I would instead favor a policy towards Syria of non-intervention, whereby the United States provides appropriate amounts of humanitarian aid to those Syrians in need, both inside their homeland and as refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Qatar. This humanitarian aid would be the sole extent of the United States' relationship with the Syrian opposition forces, although the superpower would be more than willing to engage in any peace talks between the regime and rebel forces, through the joint agreement of other United Nations Security Council member nations.

First, I believe that Fareed Zakariah's claim that the United States' credibility is not on the line is a legitimate and worthwhile explanation for the hazards posed to the superpower if further intervention is committed to (Zakariah). The repercussions of inaction by Western nations are admittedly a heavy burden to bear: the rebel and regime forces may continue upon their current paths for decades, in which they will maintain the military stalemate they have

currently been stuck in for nearly a year. However, this is significant concern as to whether the United States, alongside its Gulf coast allies, can feasibly ensure military victories for opposition forces. While many pundits and political analysts long held that it was only a matter of time before the al-Assad regime fell, it has since been recognized that this was an incorrect assumption. Not only have the regime forces significantly strengthened their strongholds throughout major cities in Syria – notably by allowing for minor rebel victories in strategically unimportant regions, while falling back and fortifying key cities – but there is now evidence that there was never any legitimate threat to regime stability, and that they have consistently held an upper hand throughout the duration of the civil war (Gordon and Landler). The al-Assad regime has shown to hold strong allies in Russia, and especially in Hezbollah and Iran, and would thus require a massive military effort by the United States to overcome. While some policymakers had previously argued for more limited intervention, restricting United States engagement to mostly indirect means of support, it is by now generally regarded to be an ineffective and useless way to deal with the Syrian crisis (Brzezinski). Zbigniew Brzezinski, in a compelling article written by a notable political academic, argues that these partial commitment interventions, such as no-fly zones, or aerial bombing, have no strategically successful outcomes in the long run, simply because they do not further any diplomatic goals the United States could desire to achieve in attempting to impact a peaceful transition out of the civil war (“Syria: Intervention Will Only Make it Worse”). Thus, the massive capital required for a successful military intervention in Syria must be weighed against the consequences of inaction, which is not currently pressing considering the lack of domestic uproar over the United States’ current foreign policy towards Syria. It is a hard sell to the American people to gather the capital and motivation for engaging in an extensive military engagement when there is no demand for action in the first place.

Much of this lack of enthusiasm in engaging in expansive military projects in the Middle East with dubious end goals can be attributed to the political atmosphere present from the post-Iraq era of foreign policy. Unlike the Bosnian War, when United States' foreign policy in the post-Cold War era was marked by self-perceptions of competency and humanitarian motivation, the view of the superpower's role abroad has greatly shifted following the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan. In the words of New York Times op-ed contributor Ray Takeyh, "the legacy of Iraq looms large" ("In Syria, Go Big or Stay Home").⁴ The political and military backing of the al-Assad regime ensures that any successful military intervention leaves open the window of possibility that the engagement would last for multiple years, and both the American people and the American government have little interest in doing such. Moreover, Fareed Zakariah points towards the political failures of the United States' previous two wars to cast doubt on the nation's ability to successfully win another one: decade-long interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq did not ultimately aid in reducing the regional influence of the United States' enemy, Iran ("U.S. credibility is not on the line in Syria"). Nor did they deter our ally, Pakistan, from aiding the Taliban in nations we were engaging in war with (Zakariah). The memory of these failures has likely contributed to the lack of urgency towards the United States government to commit to decisive and committing action.

Second, and likely more importantly, the long-term ramifications of United States' military action are not necessarily likely to bring about a peaceful transition. While it is attractive to believe that a victory by the opposition forces will guarantee an eventual replacement of the authoritarian politics that previously pervaded Syrian political life, the

⁴ The political climate of the Syrian civil war, following two costly United States' wars in the Middle East, differs wildly from the political climate present in Lebanon in the early 1980s. The previous successes the United States had in Lebanon presented a favorable condition from which military advisors and policymakers could argue. No such favorable condition exists in regard to the Syrian conflict today, where hesitancy and caution in embarking in military interventions with no obvious end-game pervades policymakers' attitudes.

recurring backlashes against democratic political change in Egypt has demonstrated the fallacy in this logic (“Egypt News — Revolution and Aftermath”). Not all opposition forces are secular moderates ultimately seeking Syria’s transition into democracy, and it has proven to be extraordinarily difficult to single out those forces the United States deems worthy of funding. More troubling, those forces that the United States desires to hold greater power in the political transition process often do not have a history of militarized members, and are thus the least effective at combating the al-Assad regime. Therefore, simply arming and supporting select rebel forces has proven to be a failed policy. Direct United States participation, such as what was proposed following the end of the Bosnian War, would be required to enact a peaceful transition into a different government, coupled with a United Nation-sponsored elections and democratic institutions, backed and agreed upon by the Russian and Chinese governments (Brzezinski).

However, this ultimatum requires a political climate which I believe is not possible. It would be infeasible for the United States to ensure that such democratic institutions could remain uncorrupt and functioning without a constant present force. Moreover, the losers of the civil war, supporters of the al-Assad regime, general Alawite populations, and foreign Iranian, Iraqi, and Hezbollah supporters of the regime forces, would undoubtedly return as insurgents following the imposed transitional government implanted by the United States (Zakariah). This same backlash against a government perceived as illegitimate can be seen in Iraq, where opponents to the United States-led government dealt with repeated attacks from insurgent groups throughout the war (Zakariah). Moreover, this perception of illegitimacy would only be magnified by the imposition of the transitional government by an American, Israeli, and Saudi coalition, whom would generally be viewed with skepticism by native Syrian actors. Because of these concerns, I

believe that a unilateral United States military intervention would inevitably end in a waste in diplomatic and military capital, as well as a further deterioration of the situation in Syria, and that the only advisable intervention action the superpower should take is a United Nations Security Council-backed peace accords process.

CONCLUSION

I have demonstrated, through observing the histories and United States military interventions of the Lebanese Civil War and Bosnian War, the motivations and obstacles that are currently informing the United States' foreign policy towards Syria. I have defined military intervention, clarified the ways in which the United States has currently intervened in Syria, and pointed towards the directions that the United States may act in the future. Additionally, I have voiced my own opinions on the ways the United States *should* act, and the blunders the United States is currently in its attitude towards the opposition forces within the Syrian civil war. In this paper, I have hoped to provide additional resources to observers of the Syrian civil war on the intricate dynamics that have unfolded since political upheaval began in the Middle Eastern nation over two years ago, and the ways in which the United States responds to those dynamics. While providing many specifics on the events of the current unfolding civil war, I have sought to further political scientists' understanding of military interventions more broadly, and hope to fill a contemporary gap in academic literature on interventions into civil wars.

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