Role Theory and Great Power Intervention in Afghanistan from the Cold War to Present

Erin Jenne (Central European University)
Milos Popovic (Columbia University)[1]

Afghanistan has long been a fertile soil for major power intervention. Yet, we lack theories that explain when major powers choose to get militarily engaged and how they choose their sides. This paper presents a theory of great-power side-taking that shows how intervention norms, great power status, and perceived spheres of interest concatenate to forge unique intervention signatures for each great power, generating an operational code to guide intervention in civil conflicts. Relatively stable, these intervention signatures are built into each country's national image, and its effects extend across different leaderships, governments and historical eras. We argue that liberal and illiberal great powers have intervention signatures that prescribe competitive interventions in regime conflicts—not just in the Cold War but also in the post-Cold War period. We demonstrate the impact of major power intervention signatures in Afghanistan, beginning with the struggle between Soviet-supported regime in Kabul and US-backed anti-communist mujahideen and ending with the contemporary regime conflict between the US-backed government in Kabul and the Taleban (Islamist) Opposition. Using archival materials, we analyze statements by US and USSR to justify their military (in)action at crucial points of the conflicts in combination of process-tracing and longitudinal analysis to establish a relationship between intervention signatures and military policy at a select number of turning points in the wars of Afghanistan.

Paper Prepared for Presentation at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association April 4-7, 2018, San Francisco

---

[1] **Correspondence:** Erin K. Jenne, email: jennee@ceu.edu; Milos Popovic, email: milos.agathon@gmail.com, twitter: milos_agathon, www.milosp.info.

Proxy wars mostly evoke images of inexorable bipolar struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War. From the 1950s to the 1980s, the Soviet Union and the United States intervened on opposite sides in civil wars in Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Northern Yemen, Afghanistan, El Salvador and Angola. Such conflicts have been traditionally viewed as part of the ideological struggle between Western and communist blocs, with US and Soviets and their respective allies battling the other side indirectly through proxy struggles in civil wars in the periphery.[2]

An examination of the empirical record, however, reveals that neither US nor Soviet interventions followed a straightforward ideological script. The Soviets failed to support the embattled communist guerillas in Greece in 1948, and declined to intervene in Yugoslavia after its break with Tito. Nor did they intervene to support the Polish governments during the turmoil of 1956 and 1970. For their part, the US supported the regime opposition in communist countries in 1970s and 1980s Angola, Afghanistan and Nicaragua, but failed to intervene against communist regimes in 1956 Hungary and 1968 Czechoslovakia. Other liberal powers, the UK and France, sometimes joined the US in these efforts, but just as often stood aside, while China (a fellow communist power) intervened on the side of the US and against the Soviets in the ideological conflicts in Afghanistan and Angola. More troubling for the ideological hypothesis is that the US supported autocracies in Central and South America, Middle East and North Africa and Southeast Asia---alliance patterns that deviate from ideological affinities.

Structural realists counter that such aberrations are significant enough to merit disregarding regime identities as drivers of major power intervention, in favor of relative

---

[2] See, for example: John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 289-291; Celeste A. Wallander, Third World Conflict in Soviet Military Thought: Does the "New Thinking" Grow Prematurely Grey?, *World Politics* 42/1 (1989): 31-63; Richard E. Bissell, Soviet Use of Proxies in the Third World: The Case of Yemen, *Soviet Studies* 30/1(1978): 87–106; Galia Golan, 'The Soviet Union and the PLO', Adelphi Papers 131(1977): 19–20. 17 Hans Morgenthau, 'To Intervene or Not to Intervene', Foreign Affairs 45/3(1967): 430; Odd Arne Westad, *Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Mumford, A., 2013. Proxy warfare. John Wiley & Sons, pp. 37.

gains considerations. Specifically, defensive realism holds that great powers intervene on behalf of rival proxies in a third state in a bid to deny their rival greater international influence (Byman 2001; Prunier 2004; Swami 2004; Moaz and San-Akca 2012; San-Akca 2016). As rivals approach power parity, the margin of error gets narrower and each side is incentivized to fight for every inch. Since their the acquisition of nuclear capacity, major powers have been compelled to compete with one another indirectly by supporting opposing sides of civil wars in third states in a pattern known as proxy wars (Towle 1981; Bar Siman Tov 1984; Salehyan 2010; Mumford 2013).

This defensive realist account raises a different set of problems, however, namely that it dismisses the role of ideology in side-taking, despite the fact that liberal powers (here, the US, UK and France) have tended to side with democratic regimes and against non-democratic regimes. Further, defensive realism expects proxy struggles to occur in regions with considerable geostrategic significance. However, the most costliest great power proxy wars have taken place in countries remote from, and with little material value to, the intervening powers. Why, for example, did the US and Soviets intervene competitively and dangerously in Angola and Nicaragua, locations with relatively low geostrategic value? Third, this spare theory says nothing about why competing powers might engage in overt proxy war in some cases but covert proxy war in others. Finally, and most strikingly, we know little about why major powers might shift their intervention policies in a single case over time-- decisions so often unmoored from tactical or strategic considerations on the ground.

In the case of Afghanistan, mainstream Soviet and US defense analysts had consistently concluded that intervention in the Afghan war had no obvious strategic benefits, with attendant high risks and almost certain massive losses. Speaking in March 1979, before switching sides to a pro-interventionist posture, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko warned that "(...) all that we have done in recent years with such effort in terms of detente arms reduction, and much more - all that would be thrown back. One must ask, and what

would we gain? Afghanistan with its present government, with a backward economy, with inconsequential weight in international affairs."[3] More generally, balance of power or relative gains considerations fail to explain why the Soviet leadership would choose to invade a remote, resource-poor country with no clear strategic benefits. Finally, a strategic explanation of proxy warfare cannot account for the fact the US escalated their covert backing of the mujahideen in the mid-80s---at a time when a new Soviet leadership had come to power signaling its openness to withdraw from Afghanistan.

Our blended role theory of major power side-taking helps to account for these anomalies. We argue that the international normative and strategic environment provides the language for great power intervention by prescribing certain forms of intervention and proscribing others. To account for shifting intervention choices by major powers in an ongoing regime conflict, we exploit the insights of role theory.[4] Following Holsti, Walker, Thies and others, we argue that each major power has a latent "intervention role set" given by the state's self-perceived status and regime identity. Major powers take sides in regime conflicts when foreign policy executives (FPE) of major powers frame the conflict in a way that activates one of the roles in the intervention set.[5] This role contains an "action script" that guides policies on the ground--including appropriate targets, goals and rules of

---

[3] CC CPSU Politburo meeting on Afghanistan of 17 March 1979
[4] See, for example: Karl Holsti. 1970. National role conceptions in the study of foreign policy. *International Studies Quarterly*, 14(3), pp.233-309; Naomi B. Wish. 1980. Foreign policy makers and their national role conceptions. *International Studies Quarterly*, 24(4), pp.532-554; Walker, Stephen G. 1981. The Correspondence between Foreign Policy Rhetoric and Behavior: Insights from Role Theory and Exchange Theory. Behavioral Science 26: 272-281; Stephen Walker., Ed. 1987a. Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis. Durham, NC: Duke University Press; Stephen G.Walker. 1987b. ---Role Theory and the International System: A Postscript to Waltz's Theory of International Politics? ‖ In Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis, edited by S. G. Walker, pp. 66-79. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.Cameron G. Thies and M. Breuning. 2012. Integrating foreign policy analysis and international relations through role theory. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 8(1), pp.1-4; Chih-Yu Shih. 2012. Assigning role characteristics to China: The role state versus the ego state. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, *8*(1), pp.71-91; Cristian Cantir and Juliet Kaarbo. 2012. Contested roles and domestic politics: reflections on role theory in foreign policy analysis and IR theory. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 8(1), pp.5-24; Cameron Thies. 2012. International socialization processes vs. Israeli national role conceptions: can role theory integrate IR theory and foreign policy analysis?. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 8(1), pp.25-46; Cameron Thies. 2010. State socialization and structural realism. *Security Studies*, 19(4), pp.689-717.
[5] DEFINITION HERE

engagement. Intervention policies shift in response to "switches" from one intervention role to another due to exogenous shocks that shift the dominant framing of the conflict and associated intervention role. By conducting process-tracing of US and Soviet internal debates over how to frame critical events in Afghanistan, we demonstrate that great power intervention choices have been mostly a siloed contestation within each intervening state. Our approach demonstrates that US and Soviet interventions reflect domestic level role contestation more so than it does relative gains considerations.

The remainder of the article is divided into four parts. The first outlines the puzzles raised by conventional explanations of US/Soviet proxy warfare in the Afghan conflict. The second develops a blended role theory of interventions, including a schema that outlines the mechanism by which the selection of intervention roles and attendant "action scripts" guide intervention choices. Having set out our empirical expectations, we conduct process-tracing on the watershed moments leading up to key shifts in intervention policies of both the United States and the Soviet Union. We conclude with a brief discussion of the policy implications of our theory.

Theories of Major Power Side-taking

What does the IR literature tell us about why major powers intervene in regime conflicts or revolutionary civil wars? Constructivists argue national governments and international organizations have increasingly invoked the norm of humanitarian intervention (now better known as "Responsibility to Protect" or R2P) to legitimize external interventions aimed at halting or mitigating violence against innocent civilians, as in the cases of East Timor, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, and Kosovo (cf. Hoffman 1995; Knudsen 1996).[6] Some states and leaders may be more receptive to such arguments for intervention (Falk 1995-1996:493, 497; Finnemore 1996:1; Roberts 1993:432ff). Others have argued that humanitarian interventions

---

[6] For more on the R2P doctrine, see Stahn 2007; Evans and Sahnoun 2002; Weiss 2005.

have increased since the end of the Cold War due to the rising influence of humanitarian norms (Finnemore 1996:4) and rising public pressures to intervene to address these violations (Falk 1995-1996:493). This analysis shows, however, that such norms already featured in US and Soviet framing of the 1980s Afghan civil war, but they were employed sporadically and unevenly across the major powers---belying the notion that humanitarian norms were not really operative during the Cold War period (cf. Luttwak 1999).[7]

Classical realists have argued that states go to war when their "national interests" are at stake (Kennan 1989; Morgenthau 1967; Gaddis 2005; Hoffmann 1995; Smith 1986), while structural realists expect that the state's position in the international system generates opportunities and constraints when it comes to a government's decision to engage in military force (Waltz 2010; Walt 1990). However, there is considerable indeterminacy about exactly when and how this translates into military intervention. Waltz himself observed that international "structures shape and shove; they do not determine the actions of states" (Waltz 2000, 24). Nonetheless, two broad schools of neo-realism offer broadly divergent sets of predictions. *Offensive realism* holds that power-maximizing states should choosing to intervene militarily where they can expect to gain relatively greater power relative to a rival or when the expected benefits of a potential intervention outweighs its expected costs—for example, when it is expected to yield access to valuable hydrocarbon resources such as oil or gas (Bove, Gleditsch and Sekeris 2016) or some other extractable resources like diamonds (Findley and Marineau 2015). However, it has difficulty accounting for the Soviets' awesome investment of blood and treasure in a barren country where the expected costs clearly outweighed the expected benefits of intervention.

Defensive realism, by contrast, contends that security-maximizing states intervene in conflicts to prevent hostile forces from taking or consolidating political power in strategically

---

[7] See Finnemore (1996) for an articulation of this argument. But note Recchia and Welsh (2013) for the philosophical antecedents of contemporary humanitarian norms and Rodogno (2012) for an empirical account of great power interventions during the (long) nineteenth century.

important states. States are hypothesized to undertake highly costly or risky interventions in peripheral areas when the outcome of the conflict is important to the state's survival. Taliaferro argues that great powers can be expected to undertake costly interventions due to high loss aversion to their reputations or strategic positions.[8] In Afghanistan, the Soviets are believed to have viewed the Afghan leadership with suspicion, concerned that the volatile Afghan leader, Hafizullah Amin, was fomenting instability and was an unreliable partner (Valenta, 155). They also suspected that he had struck a secret deal with the United States to stay in power (Ibid, 388-389). Finally, they were concerned about the spread of Islamist ideas into Soviet Central Asia. Despite the fact that the Soviets clearly viewed themselves to be in the domain of losses, they began to look for a way out of the conflict beginning in the mid-1980s.[9] The US, meanwhile, increased its assistance to the mujahadeen despite perceiving itself to be in the domain of gains. Because their intervention was small and covert, US decision-makers saw it as a means of undermining their Cold War foe on the cheap.[10]

How much was US-Soviet engagement in Afghanistan driven by ideological considerations? Liberal scholars have argued that democratic states may intervene militarily against non-democratic states to promote democracy, significantly increasing the odds of Western power intervention (Carothers 2011). The doctrine of democracy promotion has grown especially salient in British and American foreign policy circles since the end of the Cold War (Meernik, 1996). In brief, democratic states are expected to form a "zone of peace" amongst themselves (Owen 1994; see also Huth 1998), but engage in conflict with non-democratic states. Downes and Monten (2013: 91) stated that "since the end of the Cold War, the United States and its democratic allies have intervened militarily---at least in part

---

[8] Taliaferro, J.W., 2004. Balancing risks: Great power intervention in the periphery. Cornell University Press.
[9] See, especially: Anatoly Chernyaev's Notes from the Politburo of the CC CPSU Session of October 17, 1985; Meeting of CC CPSU Politburo, 13 November 1986.
[10] Zbigniew Brzezinski, Memorandum for the President: Reflections on Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan, 26 December 1979, Washington DC, pp. 3

to empower democratic rule---in Panama (1989), Haiti (1994), Bosnia (1995), Yugoslavia/Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003), and Libya (2011)". Although this pattern appears to account for US intervention against a communist regime as early as the 1980s, it has difficulty accounting for the enthusiasm of Reagan's support for Islamic jihadists beginning in the mid-1980s. Nor does ideological alignment explain why the Soviets would intervene in a country to overthrow a Soviet-style government, against the principles of socialist solidarity.[11]

State-level factors disposing major powers to intervene include powerful ethnic constituencies and ethnic affiliations between the population of the intervening state and one side of the regime conflict (Jenne 2004, 2005; Koinova 2008, 2010; Nome 2013; Saideman, 2000; Saideman 2008). For instance, the Cuban-American exile group has certainly helped to reinforce anti-Castro sentiments in Washington, contributing in part to multiple attempts to covertly overthrow Cuba's Castro regime. In the case of Afghanistan, there were efforts by President Muhammad Zia-ul-haq of Pakistan and affiliated groups to lobby Washington for greater military assistance. However, it must be said that these efforts mostly came up short until more enthusiastic purveyors of the Reagan Doctrine achieved interpretive dominance over the Afghan war in the mid-80s. While relevant for many states, ethnic affinities (Saideman 1998, 2001) are mostly moot in the case of great powers, who rarely have ethnic ties to one or other side of a regime conflict.

Other drivers of interventions include strategic culture, regime identity and political institutions. In Chile, powerful businesses, sectors or interest groups (Aidt, 2011), such as the US manufacturing company ITT, helped persuade the Nixon administration to manufacture a coup d'état in Chile in 1973.[12] In Guatemala, the United Fruit Company induced the US

---

[11] During the Politburo meeting in March 1979, Andropov argued that the Soviet Union should not commit its troops to Afghanistan because "we know Lenin's teaching about a revolutionary situation; whatever situation we are talking about in Afghanistan, it is not that type of situation". See: CC CPSU Politburo meeting on Afghanistan of 17 March 1979.
[12] See, for example, Robinson 1996, for a broader neo-Gramscian account of US democracy promotion.

government to help to overthrow the democratically-elected regime of Jakobo Árbenz Guzmán when he redistributed uncultivated farmland belonging to wealthy landholders and corporations to landless peasants. Government bureaucracies, too, shape military interventions into regime conflicts. Scott, for example, showed that inter-agency struggles within the U.S. government had a major effect on the interventions undertaken by the Reagan administration.[13] We do not disagree with these accounts, but believe that they are broadly compatible with a role theory account. Other FPA scholars have shown how we can integrate these factors into a blended role theory of side-taking.

Finally, cognitive or psychological factors come into play with individual decision-makers' and their advisors' policy preference (the intentional dimension). The importance of elites in the decision to go to war (i.e., intervene militarily in another country), and how to do so, has been established for example, by Auerswald and Saideman (2014) in relation to decisions to participate in the NATO-led ISAF intervention in Afghanistan; and by Saunders (2011) in relation to the US interventions initiated by Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson; and by Allison (2013) and Bennett (1999) in relation to Soviet/Russian military interventions. Saunders (2011), in particular, highlights the role of individual leaders in intervention decisions. According to Saunders (2009), some leaders seek to interfere in the domestic institutions of target states while others do not. While one US President may be inclined to limit an intervention to humanitarian aid, another may pursue a path that addresses underlying internal problems of the target state. This difference is largely driven by causal beliefs of foreign policy executives concerning the natures of the threats coming from the target state. We agree that the cognitive beliefs and psychological state of the individual leaders and advisors are critical to intervention policy. However, individual-level theories generally do not explain why a leader might change their policy over time, nor can they easily account for policies that are not under the singular direction of the

---

[13] Scott 1996. Because bureaucratic politics theories are processual, these can only be tested using small-N qualitative case analysis and so will not be subjected to statistical testing.

foreign policy executive. This is particularly the case with covert interventions, as exemplified in 1980s Afghanistan. The blended role theory accommodates both unified and fragmented decisional coalitions, overt and covert interventions---showing how these processes can be integrated into a more comprehensive theory of side-taking that can account for the above-mentioned anomalies in intervention policies.

Figure 1: US (blue) and Soviet (red) arms transfers to warring sides in Afghanistan

(1979-1989)

Source: SIPRI
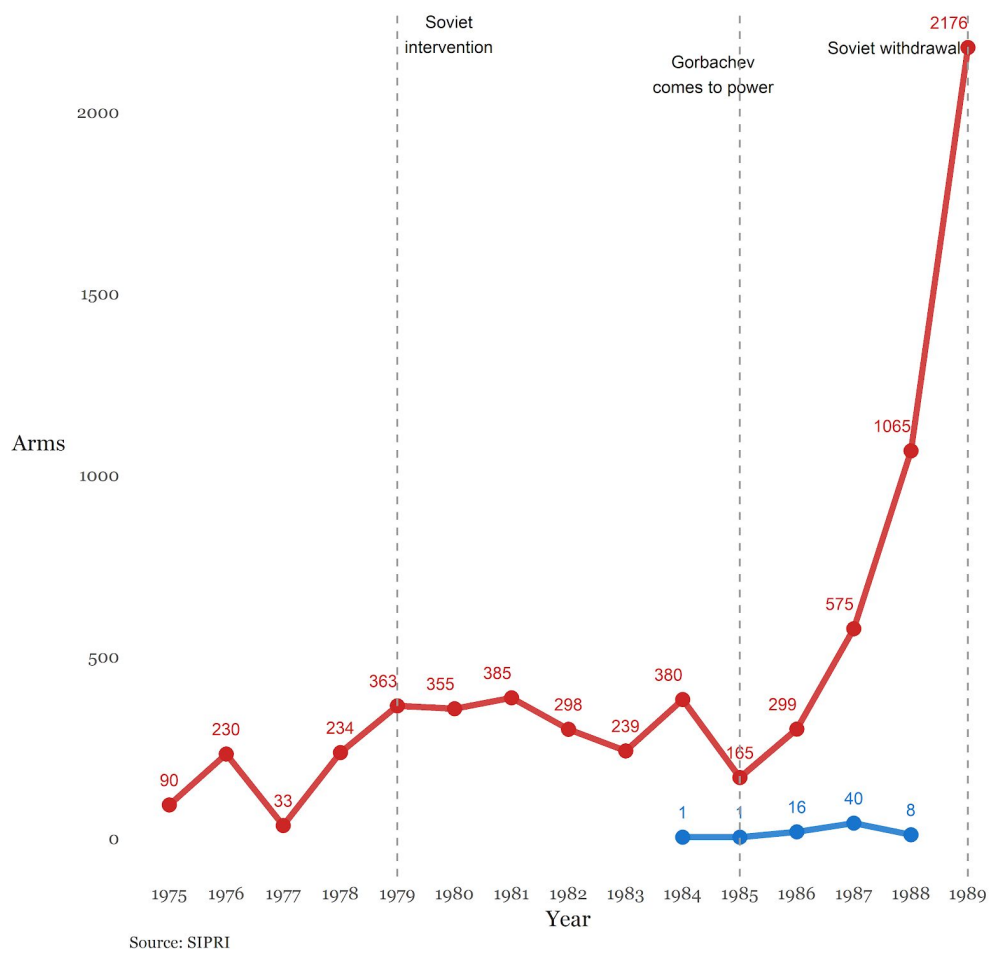
Putting the Pieces Together: A Blended Role Theory of Major Power

Side-Taking

In developing our model, we follow a strategy known as analytical eclecticism,[14] an approach that aims to capitalize on the additional analytical leverage that can be gained from combining concepts, mechanisms and theoretical intuitions from different approaches that together promise to yield a more complete account of a phenomenon of interest. In our model, we combine insights from constructivist role theory with dispositional drivers outlined by structural theories to develop a processual role theory of major power side-taking in revolutionary civil wars. The hope is to improve the predictive capacity of baseline structural theories of major power side-taking in regime conflicts. Ghose and James (2005) have argued that factors at the international, domestic and individual level can be fruitfully combined through an approach they term "systemism" to produce a multidimensional role theory of foreign policy action.

Following foreign policy analysis scholarship, we believe that although foreign policy executives exercise wide discretion in matters of national security, *intervention policies are powerfully conditioned by normative and strategic environment in which the policy-maker is embedded* (Diez, 2013, 2014; Tocci, 2009). Domestic and international norms about intervention together shape the range of "acceptable" military interventions that a government may undertake (Checkel 1998; Finnemore and Sikkink 2001; Brysk 2002; Finnemore 2004). Intervention policy is also informed by the common understandings about the international strategic context (anti-communism, Global War on Terror), which influence the policy-maker both directly and through domestic politics. Indeed, the humanitarian 'impulses' of the wider population, beliefs about universal human values and rights, and the influence of humanitarian doctrines such as "Responsibility to Protect" are all factors that foreign policy executives ignore at their peril. Hopf (2005, 225) argues that "[w]hat Russia considered to be legitimate actions by a 'great power' depended on the

---

[14] Eclecticism is an approach that "seeks to extricate, translate, and selectively integrate analytic elements...of theories or narratives that have been developed within separate paradigms but that address related aspects of substantive problems that have both scholarly and practical significance" (Sil and Katzenstein, 10).

identity that was produced by both domestic and external interactions." Similarly, Allison (2013:217) points out that Russia's foreign policy conduct, in part, reflects "a desire to preserve its domestic structure of power."

Intervention choices are further conditioned by the state's perceived status (or position) and regime identity, which together define the range or "set" of intervention roles that are may be legitimately enacted in a given regime conflict (see Figure 2). Whether the state is a primary or a secondary power, or a liberal or illiberal power are the main features that shape a major power's intervention role set. This is because states are strongly enjoined to intervene in ways that conforms with its status and regime identity and refrain from interventions that do not conform to these features.

Major power status is a critical component here, and it matters on what side of the regime divide that major power lies. Depending on where on that grid a major power stands, a regime conflict may be seen like a performative opportunity, or even an injunction, to "prove" its great power bona fides. This is true for two reasons. First, civil conflicts are among the most significant security problems facing the international community, yielding hundreds if not thousands of civilian casualties. They are therefore among the most important problems that a great power can be expected to resolve. Successful resolution of such conflicts confirms a state's status as great power, whereas the failure to resolve such conflicts can call such status into question.

The state's regime identity is also critical, for this will crucially condition the FPE's perceptions of an emerging regime conflict. Regime conflicts are a special subtype of civil war that directly impinges on the status of major power. That is because they threaten to tip the global balance of regimes either for or against the state's chosen ideological bloc. At least since WWII, states have generally divided into liberal and illiberal blocs. Liberal powers have a powerful reputational incentive to promote the spread of liberal democracies and challenge their alternatives; meanwhile, communist powers have the opposite reputational incentives.

If the ideological cleavage of the armed conflict corresponds to the ideological cleavage between major power rivals, then that conflict is all the more likely to attract major power support on the part of their ideological allies. By reconceptualizing strategic "proxy" wars as siloed domestic struggles over the appropriate role to enact, costly militarized struggles in remote corners of the world become far more explicable.

Figure 2. Pathway to Intervention
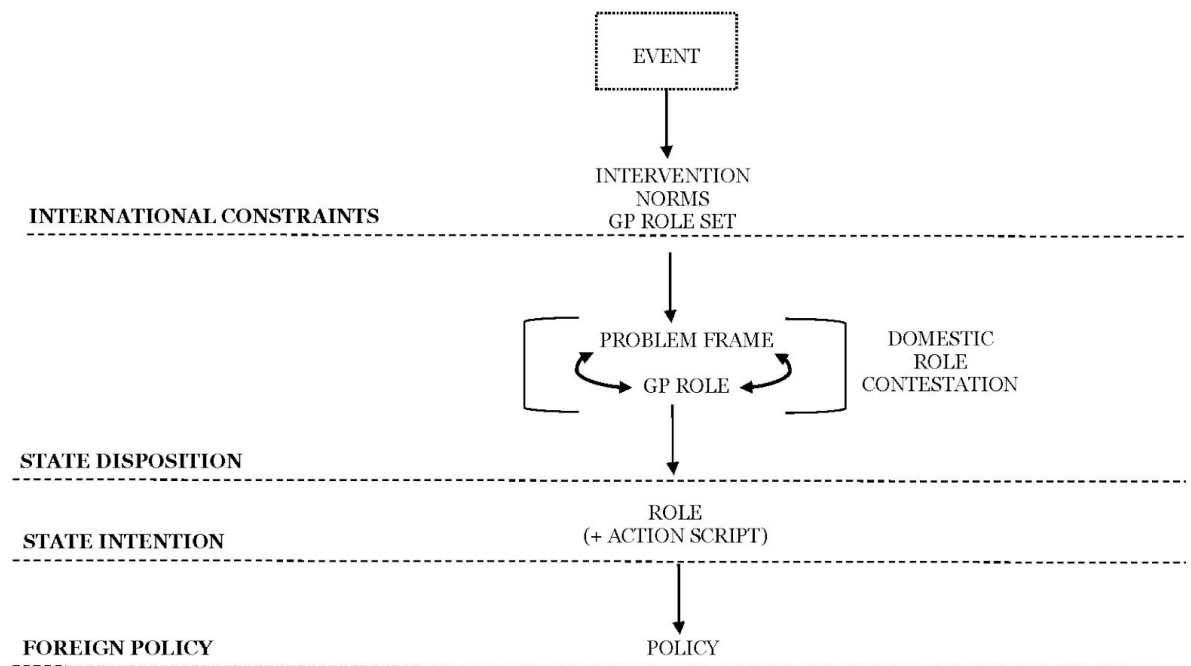
Although FPEs routinely frame conflicts instrumentally to arrive at their desired intervention policy, policy-makers are not unconstrained in their framing choices. There is a limited set of roles (based on status and regime identity) that each major power may plausibly enact. These features are deeply embedded in the national culture and transmitted to these elites "orally and informally through the family or more formally through schooling and the written word, the national image is essentially a historical image--that is, an image which extends through time, backward into a supposedly recorded or perhaps mythological past and forward into an imagined future" (Boulding 1959, 122; see also Holsti 1970). In these and other ways, national images powerfully condition the ways in which foreign policy

executives view their state's role in the international system, including whether and how to respond to regime crises in countries around the world. National roles are in turn embedded in security narratives that inform national executives about their state's security interests and constraints as well as responsibilities if the state is a regional or global hegemon.[15]y

What are these "intervention roles" and how do they relate to major powers? We define intervention roles as meta-stories about when and why states (in this case, major powers) ought to take a side in a civil war in a third country. The activated role is critical for generating a reasoned justification for intervening in a third country. Indeed, "a credible argument for intervention is necessary because leaders will need to explain why military action is necessary to key domestic political constituencies (Politburo members, military leaders, and leaders of political parties)" Huth (1998, 747) At the same time, the act of side-taking serves to reify the role that prescribed the intervention in the first place, validating the status of the great power in the international system (see Table 1), in a kind of feedback loop. We discuss in this paper two broad sets of roles that informed US and Soviet engagement in Afghanistan, in addition to their "action scripts," and what they imply in terms of intervention policy.

How do roles function to shape major power side-taking? From the constructivist FPA literature, we know that the foreign policy leaders use their agenda-setting authority to guide the selection of roles that guide intervention policy. There is by now a robust literature on how policy entrepreneurs perform this function by "framing" a problem so that a certain policy response becomes not only "thinkable," but inevitable. If one frame achieves "interpretive dominance" in a country's foreign policy circles, then that frame will inform policy choices about who is responsible for resolving the problem and the tools that should be used. For instance, Weldes and Saco (1996) describe the factional struggle in the United

---

[15] We will engage with critiques of major power interventions in the following section, but acknowledge that there is a degree of overlap here. Some critiques (e.g., ???) are based on the assumption that great powers intervene for normatively rejectionable reasons, i.e., they engage partly with debates on *why* great powers intervene.

States over the "Cuban problem," and whether the threat of a communist country close to US borders should be addressed by either normalizing bilateral relations with the country or continuing sanctions. Likewise, Paris (2002) shows that the Clinton administration and the US Congress engaged in a "metaphor war" over how to view the conflict in Kosovo; and that the choice of metaphor for Kosovo helped to make a bombing campaign not only thinkable, but necessary. These serve the functions of what Tilly (2006, 171-2) calls "superior stories," that

> maintain unity of time and space, deal with a limited number of actors and actions, as they concentrate on how these actions cause other actions. They omit or minimize errors, unanticipated consequences, indirect effects, incremental effects, simultaneous effects, feedback effects and environmental effects. But within their limited frames they get the actors, actions, causes and effects rights.

If a foreign policy executive tells a "superior story" of the conflict, this will help resolve any contestation by alternatives, while forging a domestic and sometimes international consensus around the enactment of a given intervention role. The story names the players on the ground, shapes the preference orders of outcomes, identifies legitimate rules of engagement--together making up the role's "action script." Once activated, the action script guides intervention policy on the ground. Krebs (2014) develops a similar argument about the rhetorical power of US presidents, who have at critical moments used effective storytelling to convince the public of the urgency of supporting a costly foreign policy stance.

To summarize the argument thus far, *intervention choices in a given conflict are strongly informed by a state's intervention roles, which are a joint function of its regime identity and status in the international system. These roles are linked to action scripts, which serve as blueprints for major power side-taking in a given conflict. Selecting an intervention role may occur quickly or over a period of years, depending on the nature and degree of contestation at the domestic or international level over how to frame the conflict.*

Table 1: Major Power Intervention Roles since WWII

		REGIME IDENTIFICATION	
		STRONG	*WEAK*
POWER STATUS	*PRIMARY*	Regime Promoter/ Defender	Power Balancer Global Order Defender
	SECONDARY	Liberal Ally Communist Ally	Mediator Hegemonic Challenger Historical Defender

ACTION SCRIPT: Offensive <------->Defensive

Primary Power Roles:

a) Power Balancer, Regime Promoter

The first set of intervention roles are confined to primary powers, like the US and USSR during the Cold War. The power balancer role is one associated with actors engaged in a hard-scrabble long-term struggle for every geostrategic advantage against a formidable foes. Conflicts framed as battlefields or ground zero for generational war between warring global titans create a demand for a power balancer. These conflicts tend to be concentrated in "buffer zones" between the competitor "spheres of interest" or in areas that do not lie decisively in either power's orbit. Alternatively, they may be situated in a territory or country believed to have critical geopolitical significance (in terms of access to valuable land-based resource or strategically valuable territory).

The action script of power balancer is to choose sides and intervene in such a way that the foe or competitor is weakened. This role can prescribe conflict escalation if the foe is believed to

be particularly powerful and determined to vanquish the first state. The action script is flexible because the role itself is flexible, mandating only that the state defend its perceived economic and strategic interests in conflict state at any given point in time. This action script permits changes, sometimes rapid, in state support. This includes backing one side of a conflict and then changing midstream to back the other side, once it appeared to be a better client or friendlier regime. The balancer is also enjoined to maintain the status quo by "checking" or "containing" the influence of a superpower rival. Such interventions will be squarely focused on defeating or checking one's rivals in a given conflict; all other aspects of the conflict state often recede in the background.

b) Regime Promoter/Defender

The second of the two roles hinges on the major power's regime identity and associated preferences for promoting that flavor of regime around the world. The US and Soviet Union acted as regime promoters when they intervened on either side of the embattled pro-communist regimes in Africa, South-East Asia and Latin America. The Soviets offered communist regimes assistance, while the Americans backed anti-communist rebel organizations. Where liberal regimes were challenged by communist rebels, these positions were reversed in a neat symmetry. Grappling with the Western side of the ledger, Michael Doyle famously argued that liberal or democratic powers are driven to promote the "zone of peace" by supporting liberal regimes throughout the world; in doing so, they may actually engage in "liberal aggression." In like manner, illiberal major powers engage in aggression to promote their favored regime type. Although it may appear that they merely support international allies, these alliances largely follow ideological affinities. The world's leading powers are also expected to intervene in conformity with ideological preferences, which may

mean denying a geopolitical challenger its own favored regime change in the target state.[16]

Action Script: This role implies a much more complex action script than that of global balancer. Rather than simply countering one's competitor, the role of Regime Promoter extends its circle of concern to the state regime and sometimes its people. It implies interventions that provide humanitarian assistance to part or all of the population, develop society or the economy, or even alter the regime of the target state. As a result of events that may be exogenous or endogenous to the conflict, foreign policy executives may engage in different framing of the conflict that can lead to a role "switch," for example, from an offensive one aimed at promoting or defending a given regime to one that is one that is more defensive, aimed at beating back their competitor. Each of these roles, in turn, imply a set of actions under the "action script" that are effectively automatic, apparently natural and therefore do not require extensive justification.

Research Design

We test our blended role theory against the classic theories of proxy war between great powers--particularly defensive realism, which holds that we should see states intervene consistently (rather than episodically) to check one another's gains in areas of geostrategic importance. Table 2 clarifies how we assess the relative explanatory value of these alternative explanations vis-a-vis our realist role theory explanation

.

---

[16] Kennan, George F. 1958. *The Decision to Intervene*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Gaddis, John Lewis. 2004. *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*. Oxford University Press.

Table 2: Explanations for US and Soviet Intervention in 1980s Afghanistan

Theory	Logic
Regime Ideology	**Major powers intervene in civil conflicts to support their regime allies.**
Ideas/Norms	**Major powers intervene in regime conflicts in part in response to norms of "just war."**
Offensive Realism	**Major powers are power-maximizers and intervene in order to gain a power advantage when the expected utility of intervention outweighs that of non-intervention.**
Defensive Realism	Major powers are security-maximizers and intervene to prevent other states from gaining a power advantage.
Blended Role Theory	Major power interventions are shaped by intervention roles, which are a function of leadership contestation over how to frame of the problem.

To test our theory, we follow Cameron and Thies' instruction for assessing the impact of intervention roles on policy, which requires gathering two streams of data--on roles and contestation over roles of the major power (both generally and with regard to Afghanistan), and second, data about their actual intervention policies on the ground. To gather these data, we recruited research assistants with the requisite language skills and country expertise to gather multiple streams of data from both primary foreign policy documents and secondary scholarly accounts. The independent variable is measured by examining the metaphors and values embedded in the "intervention talk" of US and Soviet leaders and their advisors from the start of the Afghan civil war in 1979 to its conclusion in 1989. With these data, we aim to measure each component of the realist-role theory model of side-taking and examine their interaction during critical decision points for each MP, which can be identified by intervention shifts by each power. The dependent variable of intervention policy, meanwhile,

is measured qualitatively using a combination of primary documents and secondary accounts summarizing the nature of MP intervention in Afghanistan at every given point, with an emphasis on scholarly accounts, official statements and official statements by state representatives in UN Security Council debates. Intervention shifts are measured as a change in (1) the types and amount of military assistance to one or both sides the conflict (indicating either escalation or de-escalation), (2) the identity of the proxy, and/or (3) the overall military strategy of the MP. As a general rule, policies aimed at regime change--for example providing extensive assistance to revolutionary armed forces or altering domestic institutions on the ground--are consistent with an offensive or revisionist action script. Alternatively, military assistance aimed at de-escalating the conflict or simply checking the intervention of competing powers--such as military aid squarely focused on pushing back competitors or scaling back one's own forces--are consistent with a defensive action script.

The second stream of data is any articulated intervention role by each MP's foreign policy executive. We asked our country experts to record any verbatim metaphors used by FPEs to describe (1) the nature of the conflict in Afghanistan, and (2) the duties or responsibilities this description implied for their own state. For our analysis, we broke each case into period segments representing distinctive intervention phases. We then use backward induction to identify shifts in these policies---paying attention to whether they map onto a shift in conflict framing and prevailing intervention role at the domestic level. Specifically, we pay attention to whether the shifts in policy correspond to the role shift that occurred in the previous period through the action script contained in that role contextualized in the specifics of the 1980s Afghan war. We also explore whether these shifts might be accounted for by alternative hypotheses. This determination is largely made through pattern-matching between actual policy and predicted policy by blended role theory versus that predicted by alternative hypotheses.

Reexamining US-Soviet Proxy War in 1980s Afghanistan

Soviet involvement in Afghanistan was never enthusiastic and in no way expansionary, contrary to its portrayal by Western leaders at the time. Like US intervention in Indochina in the 1960s, the Soviets intervened incrementally, cautiously, and mostly unwillingly--responding at long last to repeated entreaties for assistance by the second of two embattled leaders of Soviet-style regimes in Afghanistan.

*USSR and the 1979 Invasion: Regime Defender*

For decades a stable, peaceful country, the communist party in Afghanistan engineered a coup in 1978, installing Nur Mohammad Taraki as president. The government undertook vicious campaigns of oppression against the political opposition, dissidents, women and tribal groups---massacring thousands of civilians. Armed opposition groups began to mobilize to counter his reign of terror, eventually leading to a full-blown civil war. Ultimately, Taraki's rule was undone from the inside, by Foreign Minister Amin who engineered a coup that ousted Taraki and had him killed. As the new head of government, Amin largely carried on in the footsteps of his predecessor. Throughout this period, both Taraki and Amin had repeatedly appealed to the Soviets for assistance to consolidate a nascent Soviet-style regime. Despite this, the Soviet leadership viewed both leaders with distrust, fearing that their governance was destabilizing and that they were poor allies. For decades, USSR provided developmental and infrastructural aid to the country (Kalinovsky 2009), but never had provided considerable military assistance. The emergence of a self-identified communist regime In response to one of the many such entreaties, Soviet XX stated that

What finally led to the Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan? According to leading accounts (Lyakhovsky 1995; Westad 2005; Chernyaev 2008; Kalinovsky 2009), the Soviet invasion was engineered by three men---The KGB Chairman Yuri Andropov, Foreign

Minister Andrei Gromyko, and the Minister of defense Dmitry Ustinov. Evidence remains murky about the exact role of Brezhnev in the final decision-making; Chernyaev, Kalinovsky and Westad suggest that the troika convinced reluctant Brezhnev to support the invasion. What is clear is that others in the Central Command (notably the Soviet military) opposed military assistance for reasons that echo the defensive realist hypothesis: Afghanistan was peripheral to Soviet interests, and invading the small country risked destabilizing the region and provoking punitive US countermeasures (Kalinovsky 2009). According to this account, Brezhnev's concern for the performance and future of Afghanistan's regime prevailed.

Regime defense was, in fact, a hallmark of Soviet foreign policy. Soviet leaders viewed themselves as the center of world communism that stirred hope in the hearts of members of oppressed nations throughout the developing world. The associated action script included providing diplomatic, economic and sometimes even military aid to socialist regimes and to left-wing revolutionaries who fought bourgeois governments---particularly those aligned with imperial powers. Even before the Bolshevik Revolution, V.I. Lenin declared the aim of the Socialist Revolution to "put forward all these demands, not in a reformist, but in a revolutionary way...by drawing the masses into real action, by widening and fomenting the struggle for every kind of fundamental, democratic demand, right up to and including the direct onslaught of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie..." This role had changed little by the late Soviet period. Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev stated at the Twenty-fifth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1976 that "Our Party supports and will continue to support peoples fighting for their freedom. In so doing, the Soviet Union does not look for

Figure 2. Soviet Pathway to Intervention and Withdrawal in Afghanistan
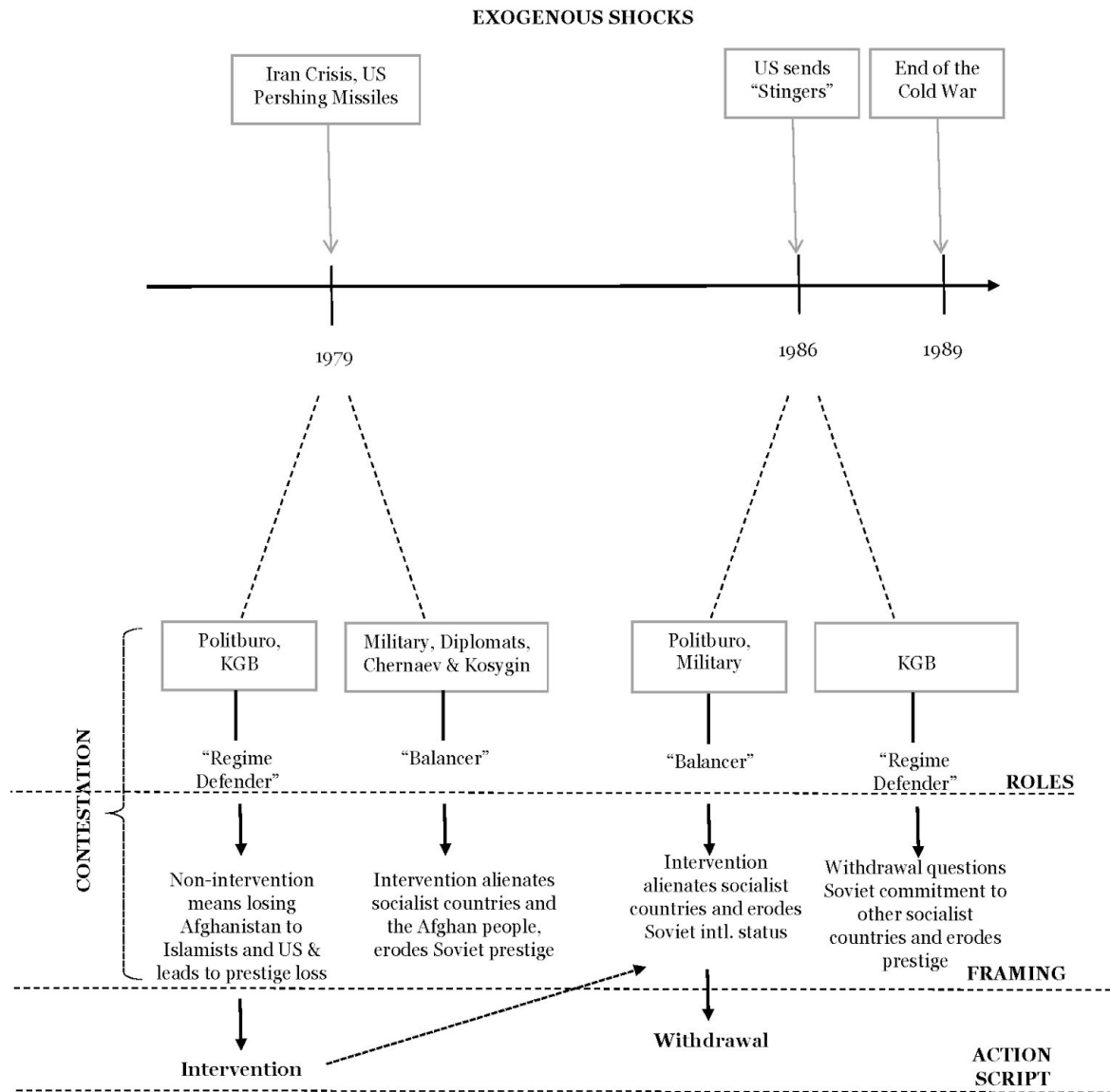
advantages, does not hunt for concessions, does not seek political domination and is not after military bases. We act as we are bid by our revolutionary conscience, our communist convictions."[17] On a separate occasion, he stated that, "Our militant union with peoples which still have to carry on an armed struggle against the colonialists constitutes an important element of our line in international affairs." [CITE] Regime defense thus implies an expansionary, offensively-oriented action script requiring the Soviets to promote and

___

[17] Conflict and Consensus in South/North Security edited by Caroline Thomas, Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, p. 151.

defend communist regimes throughout the world, through methods up to and including the use of military force.

The first push for the Soviet invasion came during the series of Politburo meetings in 1979. In a March 17 politburo meeting, Andrei Gromyko, Yuri Andropov, Dmitry Ustinov pushed for military intervention after the Afghan government lost Herat to the mujahideen. Although acknowledging that they would, in the words of Andropov, "be labeled an aggressor," they nonetheless declared that "under no circumstances can we lose Afghanistan." However, the long serving foreign policy advisor, Andrey Aleksandrov-Agentov, managed to convince Brezhnev to overrule their initiative.[18] In lieu of an invasion, Brezhnev approved the delivery of wheat, arms and advisers to prop up the embattled communist regime in Kabul.[19] Prime Minister Kosygin explained that, at the time, Brezhnev was reluctant to pursue military intervention in Afghanistan because he believed that the situation was similar to the US war in Vietnam:

> The Vietnamese people withstood a difficult war with the USA and are now fighting against Chinese aggression, but no one can accuse the Vietnamese of using foreign troops. The Vietnamese are bravely defending by themselves their homeland against aggressive encroachments. (...) The deployment of our forces in the territory of Afghanistan would immediately arouse the international community and would invite sharply unfavorable multipronged consequences.[20]

The Soviets sought to draw a negative lesson from US engagement in Vietnam by refraining from invading in Afghanistan.

However, the Soviet position on Afghanistan underwent a U-turn following a series of exogenous shocks: (1) the US failure to ratify SALT II, (2) the anticipated deployment of Pershing missiles in Europe, and (3) the murder of Nur Taraki by his rival Hafizullah Amin.[21] Four of the most influential Soviet advisors--Andrei Gromyko, Yuri Andropov, Dmitry

---

[18] Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), pp. 260--261; Westad, *Global Cold War*, pp. 288-330.
[19] Record of Conversation between Brezhnev and Taraki 20 March 1979.
[20] Meeting of Kosygin, Gromyko, Ustinov, and Ponomarev with Taraki in Moscow on 20 March 1979.
[21] Artemy Kalinovsky. 2009. Decision-Making and the Soviet War in Afghanistan From Intervention to Withdrawal, The Journal of Cold War Studies, 11(4): 46--73, at 50.

Ustinov and Boris Ponomarev---circulated a report to the Politburo in June 1979, portraying Afghanistan as a country where "all power in fact is concentrated in the hands of N.M. Taraki and H. Amin, who none too rarely make mistakes and commit violations of legality."[22] As soon as Amin removed Taraki and assumed supreme power in the country, the troika led by Andropov became concerned that he might deviate from a pro-Soviet foreign policy and throw himself into the arms of the US.[23] If Amin could betray his closest colleague, their reasoning followed, then he also "might change the political orientation of the regime."[24] There were concerns that Amin's purges "were for the most part directed towards active participants in the April revolution, persons openly sympathetic to the USSR, those defending the Leninist norms of intra-party life."[25] This gave birth to suspicions that Amin's removal of the Moscow loyalists was the first step towards Afghanistan's defection from the Soviet sphere. Reportedly, Amin's request from the Politburo to sack the Soviet ambassador was the last straw.[26] To prevent Amin's defection and secure the communist regime, Andropov, Ustinov, Aleksandrov-Agentov, and Gromyko---who changed sides when he noticed the turning tide in the Politburo (Westad 2005: 318)--- were poised to do "everything possible not to allow the victory of counterrevolution in Afghanistan or the political reorientation."[27] The group regarded the potential defection of Afghanistan as a serious blow to the Soviet international prestige. While each of them supported detente and were concerned about the costs of a military invasion, they were also worried that failing to intervene would demonstrate Soviet decline.[28]

The key to moving the consensus to a different role---that of regime defender---was winning over the cautious Brezhnev and countering opposition from the Politburo (most

---

[22] Excerpt from Minutes #156 of the CC CPSU Politburo meeting of 29 June 1979.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Excerpts from Minutes #172 of the CC CPSU Politburo meeting of 31 October 1979.
[25] Andropov-Gromyko-Ustinov-Ponomarev Report on Events in Afghanistan on 27-28 December 1979, dated 31 December 1979.
[26] Westad, Global Cold War, 318--319.
[27] Ibid
[28] Kalinovsky, Decision-Making and the Soviet War in Afghanistan, 49--50.

notably Kosygin and Kirilenko) as well as the military. The first task was accomplished in early December, when Andropov took the lead in exploiting the narrative of Amin's defection to US in order to convert Brezhnev. He informed Brezhnev about "Amin's secret activities, forewarning of a possible political shift to the West [including] contacts with an American agent about issues which are kept secret from us."[29] Andropov framed the conflict as a simple problem of the leadership, claiming that Soviet intervention would be limited to overthrowing Amin.[30] Brezhnev appears to have bought the argument, not least because he could not forgive Amin for ruining his international reputation by having Taraki killed.[31] Another step was to suppress the dissenting voices in the Politburo, most notably Konstantin Chernenko, Kirilenko and Kosygin who had warned that sending troops to Afghanistan would turn world opinion against the USSR.[32] These voices were diminished by ensuring that anti-interventionist intelligence and military reports failed to reach the Politburo. According to Chernaev (2008) and Westad (2005), Aleksandrov-Agentov switched sides and was now the most critical actor in this vetoing process. He systematically neutralized the opposition by censoring anti-intervention reports from the Politburo discussions.[33]

On December 8, 1979, nearly a month before the intervention, Brezhnev organized a private meeting of a small circle of the Politburo members: Andropov, Gromyko, Mikhail Suslov and Ustinov. Andropov and Ustinov spoke in favor of the intervention, citing a range of security threats from CIA plans to form a "new Great Ottoman Empire" that would encompass the Southern republics of the USSR to the American stationing of Pershing missiles in Afghanistan to the uranium deposits in Afghanistan falling into Pakistan's hands and Islamist opposition winning power in Kabul.[34] Kornienko notes that Ustinov particularly emphasized the stationing of American warships in the Persian Gulf in 1979 and alarming

---

[29] Personal memorandum, Andropov to. Brezhnev. n.d. [early December 1979]
[30] Westad, Global Cold War, 319.
[31] Ibid, 318
[32] Excerpts from the CC CPSU Politburo meeting on Soviet Invasion of 18 March 1979
[33] Westad, Global Cold War, 318.
[34] Alexander Lyakhovsky, The Tragedy and Valor of Afghan GPI Iskon, Moscow, 1995, pp.109.

intelligence reports on the US preparations for the invasion of Iran, suggesting that the Reagan administration might also interfere in the Afghan turmoil.[35] In the end, Brezhnev accepted the credibility of the framing, meaning that the Soviets should act as regime defenders. He approved a Soviet plan to topple Amin and prepare at least 70,000 Soviet troops for an invasion.

Countering the small cabal of political advisors was the International Department of the Central Committee and the high-ranking military officials who opposed military intervention. Chief of General Staff, Nikolai V. Ogarkov, framed the decision as "reckless", arguing that Moscow should choose political over military means because the Afghans had never tolerated foreign invaders and that they would put up a strong resistance to Soviet troops.[36] Another high-ranking military official, General-Major V. P. Zaplatin, an adviser to the Chief of Political Administration of the Afghan army, raised a similar concern, declaring that the KGB threat assessment of the Afghan crisis was exaggerated.[37] The Head of Main Operations Department V. I. Varennikov was also opposed to the intervention. The generals cited the American ominous experience in Vietnam as well as the ensuing strategic vulnerability on the volatile Sino-Soviet border from which Moscow aimed to commit troops for the Afghanistan intervention.[38]

In the end, the Politburo overruled the military's concerns with the December 12 executive order and an "unanimous" decision on the intervention.[39] Framing the conflict as a leadership crisis calling for regime defense had become a successful story that convinced Brezhnev. On December 24, the Defense Ministry issued the first official decision to intervene in Afghanistan

---

[35] Georgy M. Kornienko, The Cold War: Testimony of a Participant, Moscow, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1994, pp. 193.
[36] Lyakhovsky, The Tragedy and Valor, 110.
[37] Lyakhovsky, The Tragedy and Valor, 111.
[38] Kornienko, The Cold War, 194.
[39] It is worth noting that the Politburo members generally refrained from opposing the documents that received the Secretary General's endorsement. The USSR Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin, who was against the intervention, did not attend the session.

> for the purposes of rendering internationalist assistance to the friendly Afghan people, and also to create favorable conditions to prevent possible anti-Afghan actions on the part of the bordering states.[40]

On December 27, 1979, the Politburo adopted a report that promoted the offensive action script by framing Amin as an existential threat to the revolution and Soviet intervention as a remedy to the mallace. Their final report approved Soviet involvement in Afghanistan due to

> intervention from without and the terror unleashed by Amin within the country have actually now created a threat to liquidate what the April Revolution brought to Afghanistan.[41]

Gorbachev's "Perestroika" and the Withdrawal from Afghanistan

As the Soviet military became bogged down in Afghanistan, another national role conception came to the fore--that of power balancer. This role derived from the USSR's status as one of the world's two biggest nuclear armed superpowers, which recognized the risks involved in bipolar conflict between nuclear powers on hair-trigger alert. This global balancer role implied defensive rather than expansionary aims, acknowledging the unwinnability of the nuclear arms race. It also allowed greater room for withdrawing from the conflict in the interests of stability. This national role conception became more salient during the period of detente. Alex George writes that in the first articles of the Nixon-Brezhnev Basic Principles Agreement of 1972, the superpowers "agreed on the need to moderate their global competition so as not to allow themselves to be drawn into dangerous crises." It set out areas of high versus lower interests of the two powers, spheres of interest that should not be traversed by either party, and a regime for limiting conflict between the two sides. Hence, this role conception implied a commitment to resolving such struggles through defensive rather than offensive means.

On October 17, 1985, the newly appointed Secretary General of the Communist Party, Mikhail Gorbachev, became the first high-ranking Soviet leader since the 1979 intervention

---

[40] Kornienko, The Cold War, 195.
[41] Politburo decree P177/151 of 27 December 1979.

to openly propose withdrawal in a meeting with the Afghan leader Babrak Karmal.[42] Gorbachev particularly saw the continuing engagement in Afghanistan as detrimental to the Soviet reputation: "We have been fighting in Afghanistan for already six years. If the approach is not changed, we will continue to fight for another 20-30 years. This would cast a shadow on our abilities to affect the evolution of the situation"[43]. Eduard Shevardnadze, the Soviet Foreign Minister, even argued that the military intervention was ill-prepared and that "everything that we've done and are doing in Afghanistan is incompatible with the moral character of our country."[44] Simultaneously, Gorbachev was aware that if Moscow pulls out hastily it would harm both its international prestige in the developing world as well as the domestic legitimacy of the Soviet communist party:

> (...) it would be a blow to the authority of the Soviet Union in the national-liberation movement; the imperialism would start its offensive in the developing countries if we leave Afghanistan.[45]

> We could leave quickly, not thinking about anything and making reference to everything which the previous leadership started. But we can't act that way. India would be concerned, and they would be concerned in Africa. They think this would be a blow to the authority of the Soviet Union in the national liberation movement. And they tell us that imperialism will go on the offensive if you flee from Afghanistan.[46]

Gromyko, an early architect of the intervention, now advocated a slow and cautious withdrawal that would preserve a neutral Afghanistan at a minimum.[47] There is significant evidence that Gorbachev was persuaded by a new framing of the conflict that saw it as unwinnable and a lost cause:

> When we went into Afghanistan we were wrapped up [zakol'tsovany] in the ideological aspects and calculated that we could jump over three stages right away: from feudalism to socialism. Now we can look at the situation openly and follow a realistic policy. For we accepted everything in Poland —the Church, the individual peasant farms, the ideology, and political pluralism. Reality is reality. The comrades speak correctly: it is better to pay with money than with the lives of our people.[48]

---

[42] Anatoly Chernyaev's Notes from the Politburo of the CC CPSU Session of October 17, 1985
[43] Meeting of CC CPSU Politburo, 13 November 1986.
[44] Notes from Politburo Meeting, 21-22 January 1987
[45] Minutes of the Politburo of the CC CPSU Session of February 23-26, 1987
[46] Notes from Politburo Meeting, 23 February 1987 (Excerpt)
[47] Ibid
[48] Notes from Politburo Meeting, 21-22 January 1987

In this process, Gorbachev concurred with Gromyko that they should make sure that the Soviet withdrawal does not leave a power vacuum that would allow "the Americans (...) get into Afghanistan." This frame favors a balancer role that seeks to manage conflicts rather than achieve expansionary goals. There is also evidence that Gorbachev followed up on this discussion with the associated action script by reaching out to Pakistan and US for the inclusion of their clients into the national unity government; he also became convinced that there was no viable alternative to a complete pullout.[49] In a subsequent conversation with Reagan, Gorbachev reiterated his support for the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, provided that the US ceased its support for the mujahideen.[50] Following a more expansionist role conception for the United States, however, Reagan was reluctant to commit to the transition and insisted on a complete Soviet withdrawal before pulling back support. In the end, Gorbachev failed to persuade either Reagan or George HW Bush about the necessity to support the neutrality of Afghanistan; for US leaders, this was a non-issue, the only bone of contention being the Soviet withdrawal.[51]

Pressed by mounting battle losses and escalating US support for the mujahadeen in the late 1980s, Gorbachev cleaved to the role of balancer, insisting on inscribing the terms of Soviet withdrawal into an international agreement. The resulting Soviet-backed Geneva talks on forming a national unity government in Afghanistan included the Afghan government and opposition as well as the United States and Pakistan. Gorbachev relentlessly supported the Geneva talks as a face-saving device even when it was obvious that US remained committed to helping Afghan "freedom fighters" punish the Soviets as much as possible prior to their

---

[49] Notes from Politburo Meeting, 26 February 1987 (Excerpt)
[50] Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan on Afghanistan, 9 December 1987 (Excerpt).
[51] Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev and US Vice President George H. W. Bush, 10 December 1987

scheduled withdrawal.[52] Gorbachev not only declared that the Soviets "don't want a pro-Communist regime in Afghanistan,"[53] but he went as far as to suggest putting back word "Islamic to the official name of Afghanistan. Ultimately, he framed the withdrawal as "honourable and dignified"[54] act by a responsible major power. In many ways, the two superpowers were engaged in solitary role performances in Afghanistan.

United States

In the 1970s, US President Richard Nixon championed the national role conception of global balancer. Although there was a bipartisan consensus that the United States had a special responsibility to support democracy and liberalism around the world, Kissinger and Nixon championed a more defensive intervention role for the US based on a narrower interpretation of national interest. While never rejecting America's leadership role, the Nixon administration embraced détente and toned down the crusading elements of US foreign policy rhetoric (Kissinger 1994: 706-709). Following Nixon's resignation, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (who continued to serve in President Gerald Ford's cabinet) maintained a defensive orientation for US foreign policy, emphasizing the importance of acting as responsible superpower, manager of global order, and overall power balancer (although as Holsti notes [1970: 271], the latter is rarely an openly acknowledged role). US President Jimmy Carter relied on this defensive role conception in the context of arms control negotiations and the Helsinki Accords.

Nonetheless, US roles of humanitarian protector and democracy promoter were far from dormant, and were set to make a big comeback in US foreign policy in the early 1980s. Carter, in fact, would play a key role in preparing the ideological ground for a more offensive

---

[52] Record of a Conversation of M. S. Gorbachev with the General Secretary of the Italian Communist Party [PCI] Alessandro Natta.
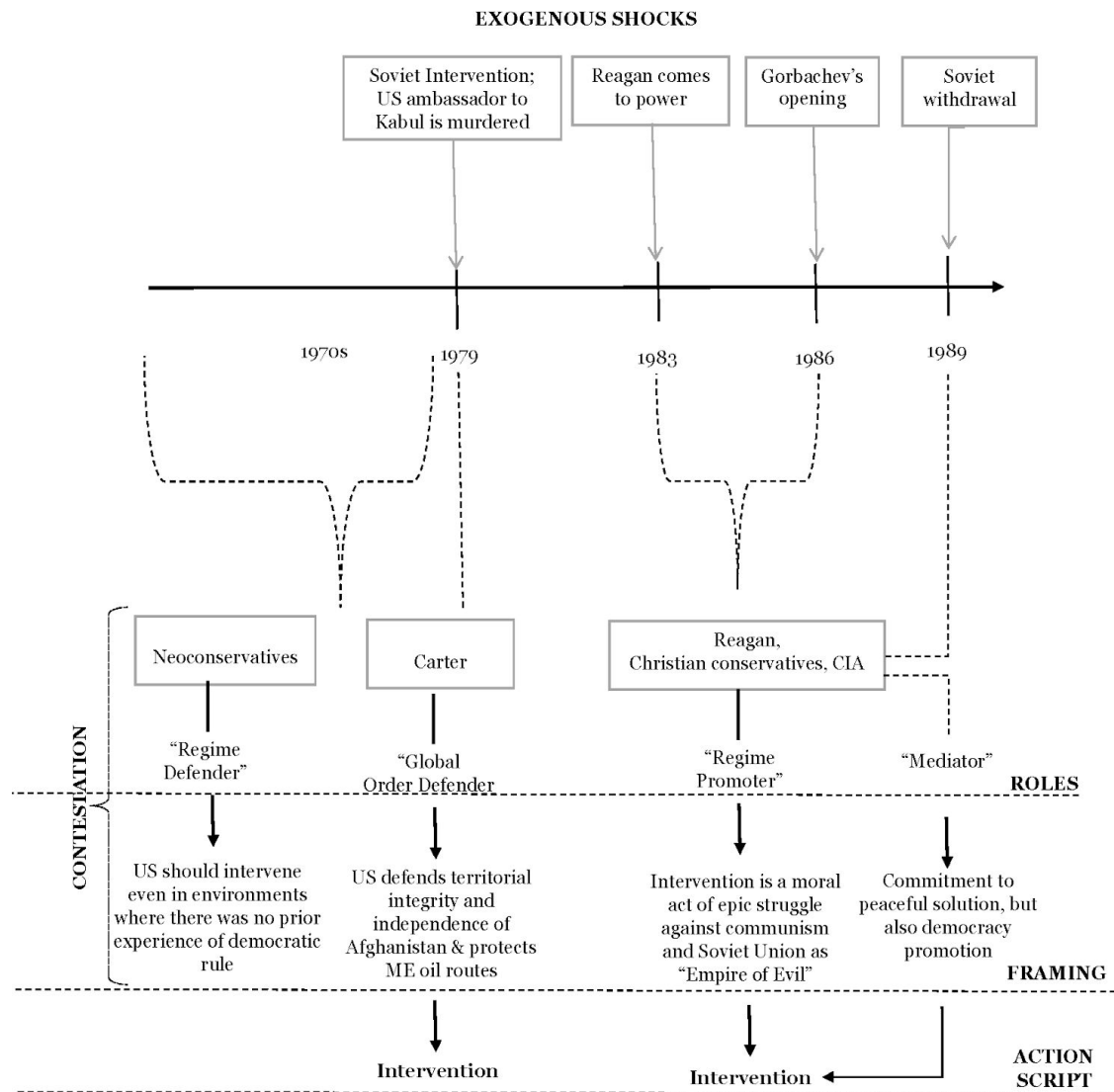[53] Ibid
[54] February 17, 1989 Report of the Central Committee of the CPSU on the Current Situation in Afghanistan

intervention role in which the US sought to promote democracy and liberalism around the world--through coercion if necessary. This can be seen in Carter's passionate arguments that the US had a responsibility to champion human rights around the world.[55] US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski argued that the United States as an indispensable country, which had an obligation to remain internationally engaged despite its previous failures (1976: 90-92). Meanwhile, a group of former liberals labeled "neoconservatives" revived an idea that the America had to promote democracy even in hostile environments where such institutions were unlikely to take root (Moynihan 1975; Podhoretz 1976). Jeane Kirkpatrick (1979), the future Ambassador to the United Nations for the Reagan administration, criticized the human rights based approach of the Carter administration, arguing that Soviet-style totalitarianism regimes presented a far greater threat to freedom than traditional right-wing dictatorships. This foreshadowed a return to the early Cold War rhetoric in which the US pursued interventions against communist regimes worldwide.

These competing national role conceptions shaped foreign policy debates over the appropriate US response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. We now examine the decision-making period following the exogenous shock of the Soviet invasion to show how defensive intervention roles gained interpretive dominance in the Afghan conflict, paving the way for limited, covert US intervention.

---

[55] Moore, Raymond (1984) The Carter Presidency and Foreign Policy, in Abernathy, M. Glenn; Hill, Dilys M. and Williams, Phil (Eds.) The Carter Years: The President and Policy Making, New York, St. Martin´s Press, pp. 54-83; Kaufman, Burton (1993) The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr., Lawrence, Kansas, University Press of Kansas;

| Soviet Intervention; US ambassador to Kabul is murdered | Reagan comes to power | Gorbachev's opening | Soviet withdrawal |

1970s　　1979　　　1983　　1986　　　1989

| Neoconservatives | Carter | Reagan, Christian conservatives, CIA |

CONTESTATION

"Regime Defender"　　　"Global Order Defender"　　　"Regime Promoter"　　"Mediator"　　ROLES

US should intervene even in environments where there was no prior experience of democratic rule

US defends territorial integrity and independence of Afghanistan & protects ME oil routes

Intervention is a moral act of epic struggle against communism and Soviet Union as "Empire of Evil"

Commitment to peaceful solution, but also democracy promotion

FRAMING

Intervention　　　　Intervention　　ACTION SCRIPT

US as Power Balancer in Afghanistan (1979 - 1989)

The 1978 pro-Soviet coup in Afghanistan elicited considerable concern in Washington, as it did in other Western capitals. However, overt military intervention was never on the table. With escalating revolutionary tensions against the US-backed Shah in Iran and complicated relations with Pakistan due to the human rights record of President Zia's regime--not to mention its post-Vietnam malaise--US leaders ruled out military engagement in the country, but grew increasingly convinced that something had to be done. Already in December 1978, National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski declared the situation an "arc of crisis"

through which the Soviets could best the US by identifying "weak spots." When the US Ambassador to Kabul was kidnapped and murdered in February 1979 (the day of the first attacks against the Tehran embassy), the US government expressed further concern, with President Carter warning of the "uncertainty and turmoil that come with change." Nevertheless, no intervention was on the table, even as Afghanistan began to fall into civil conflict as rebels took up arms against the socialist regime.[56]

All of this changed with the Soviet invasion in December 1979. The United States immediately condemned the Soviet action as a "blatant violation of accepted international rules of behavior." Carter declared the Soviet Union had violated the basic principles of the UN, which the United States vowed to defend. By framing Soviet behavior as brutal and irresponsible, the American government presented its role as defending both international stability and human rights. At the United Nations Security Council meeting convened to discuss the Afghan situation, Donald McHenry, US ambassador to the UN, repeated Carter's words by calling the Soviet intervention a "blatant act of aggression" that threatened "the viability of the fundamental principles that underlie the Charter of the United Nations." (S/PV.2187, January 6, 1980, p. 2). He accused the Soviet Union of using an "uninvited occupation force" to install a more stable communist "puppet regime" (Ibid, pp. 2-3). McHenry warned the Soviets that "no State, not even a great Power, can be allowed to ignore with impunity the responsibilities, obligations and commitments it assumed when it became a Member of the United Nations," and called for the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan (Ibid, p. 3).

In his 1980 State of the Union Address later that month (which became known as the Carter Doctrine speech), President Carter argued that the invasion "could pose the most

---

[56] While Tass, the Soviet press agency, had already accused the United States of arming the opposition in a statement in June 1979, the first decision that approved the CIA's provision of non-lethal aid Afghan rebel was signed by President Carter on July 3, 1979 (Coll 2005, 46; Gates 1997, 150). However, Afghanistan was not a prominent topic in American foreign policy discussions this time and the action by the CIA was not yet part of a systematic policy [REVISE]

serious threat to the peace since the Second World War" (Carter 1980). In this speech, Carter spoke of the US as a responsible superpower, which exercises restraint in its use of military force, while also defending the territorial integrity of Afghanistan. There were hints of latent anti-colonialism in Carter's speech: he emphasized that the Soviets wanted to "subjugate the fiercely independent and deeply religious people of Afghanistan," thus the US served as a defender of independence and religion too. However, the bulk of the speech referenced the strategic importance of Afghanistan, emphasizing the threat of Soviet intervention, which "pose[d] a great threat to the free movement of Middle East oil." Connecting the stable flow of oil to a wider understanding of stability, Carter announced that an aggression that threatened the Persian Gulf region would be considered a threat to the "vital interests" of the United States, thus "such an assault w[ould] be repelled by any means necessary, including military force." Therefore, the Carter Doctrine outlined a further role for the United States: regional defender (and the defender of the stable access to a key commodity), which – while not directly referred to the intervention in Afghanistan – also suggested a long-term engagement in the region to defend US interests.

The Soviet invasion was thus framed as an attempt for colonial expansion, which was countered with the sanctions that the Carter Administration announced during January.

Action Script: Limited, defensive aims

Framing the problem as Soviet imperialism and the US as defender of the global order required a response that directly pushed back against the Soviets without running the risk of appearing expansionist to the international community. Just days after the invasion started, Brzezinski employed this national role conception in a secret memorandum to Carter in which he stated, "[w]e should concert with Islamic countries both in a propaganda campaign and in a covert action campaign to help the rebels." (Coll 2005, 51) In late December 1979, Carter signed a presidential finding which allowed the CIA to secretly provide the rebels with

weapons. In 1980, the US imposed an economic embargo on certain products and boycotted the Moscow Olympics.

Carter's covert action was reauthorized by Ronald Reagan in 1981 and extended into the 1980s (Coll 2005, 58). Although the US government did not officially confirm the weapon supply, it did not remain secret for long. While in mid-January 1980, Carter administration officials still denied the Soviet allegations about the arm provisions, a month later, on February 16, The New York Times already had sources confirming that "the United States began an operation to supply light infantry weapons to Afghan insurgent groups." Furthermore, in April, an article in The New York Times Magazine gave details about the early January meeting where CIA leaders presented their plans for the covert operations in Afghanistan to a group of US Senators.

US as Regime Promoter (1983-1989)

Several factors came together to catalyze a more aggressive US engagement in the late 1980s. Most were connected in one way or another to new US President Ronald Reagan, who came to power with Christian conservative base at his back. For the first few years his presidency, US foreign policy on Afghanistan was barely changed. However, he brought with his a number of appointments and advisors who, together with a virulently anti-communist group of representatives in the House, served to escalate the US involvement.

Reagan articulated his commitment to promoting anti-communism throughout the world, most notably by assisting "freedom fighters" against communist regimes everywhere. It was of no great consequence what their ideological flavor was---what mattered was that they were fighting communist-style governments. Seen through this prism, the Afghan conflict was not a lost cause (the Soviet Union's Vietnam), but rather a cosmic struggle between religious warriors and Soviet invaders over the political future of the people of Afghanistan. In his 1985 State of the Union address, he declared that Americans had to

"stand by all our democratic allies," mentioning Afghanistan and Nicaragua in particular where the US must "not break faith with those who [were] risking their lives … to defy Soviet-supported aggression" (Reagan 1985a). Reagan made a case for regime promotion more clearly in 1986 :

> To those imprisoned in regimes held captive, to those beaten for daring to fight for freedom and democracy -- for their right to worship, to speak, to live, and to prosper in the family of free nations -- we say to you tonight: You are not alone, freedom fighters. America will support with moral and material assistance your right not just to fight and die for freedom but to fight and win freedom -- to win freedom in Afghanistan, in Angola, in Cambodia, and in Nicaragua. This is a great moral challenge for the entire free world. (Reagan 1986a)

In this and other presidential statements, Reagan told a "successful story" about the plight of anti-Soviet freedom fighters. When Ronald Reagan addressed the British Parliament in June 1982, he contrasted Soviet aggression with the "consistent restraint and peaceful intentions" of the West. A day later in Bonn, he referred to the Afghan rebels as "freedom fighters" (Reagan 1982a, 1982b). That same month Reagan spoke in front of the United Nations General Assembly, stating that "communist atrocities in Southeast Asia, Afghanistan, and elsewhere continue to shock the free world as refugees escape to tell of their horror" (Reagan 1982c). Echoing Truman's "two competing ways of life," Reagan framed the Soviet Union as a tyrannical power, an "evil empire." By contrast, the United States was a major power with "special responsibility"--a defender of freedom, religion and human rights. The Afghan regime was rarely mentioned, but when it was, it was a "puppet" of Moscow. The focus was squarely on assisting the "freedom fighters" in their struggle against Soviet occupiers.

Throughout his speeches in 1983-84, Gorbachev emphasized the "inhuman brutality" of the atrocities committed by Soviet troops (including the use of toxic agents). In addition, both Reagan personally, and his CIA director, William Casey saw the struggle in Afghanistan as one between religion and atheism, where the United States had a duty to side with the Islamic rebels to facilitate the "moral mission to defeat communism" (Coll 2005, 93). Even CIA officers were convinced that the covert American intervention to help Afghan

self-determination was "morally just, even righteous" (Coll 2005, 182). Thus, the American government – both in external rhetoric and in its internal convictions – saw their interventions (even those that were illegal or covert) in firmly moral terms.

Action Script

Having achieved interpretive dominance over the Soviet-Afghan conflict, anti-communists in the Reagan administration and their allies in Congress set about enacting the role of regime promoter by accelerating their assistance to the mujahadeen. In 1986, the CIA began to funnel Stinger missiles to the Afghan insurgents (Coll 2005, 127; 149-151). At the same time, the program became less covert; as the above-mentioned quotes from Reagan's State of the Union speeches from 1985 and 1986 testify, the administration began to speak openly of their support for the rebels. To illustrate, whereas Jeane Kirkpatrick said in a 1981 NSC meeting that US officials "don't have to talk about it – just do it," by 1985-86 senior officials talked frankly about the US role in the conflict (Brands 2016, 340).

Defensive realism would predict the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev and attempts to engineer Soviet withdrawal to lead to a diminishment of US support. However, the role of regime promoter implies a commitment to the people and the regime--going far beyond balancing against Soviet influence. Indeed, this script began to take on a logic of its own. In the final years of his presidency, Reagan began to speak about how Americans could facilitate the creation of peace in the region of the Middle East. In a 1986 national security speech, the President claimed that US "military strength and national will" was "the only guarantee of peace and freedom," later the same year, after meeting Gorbachev at the Reykjavik summit, he also declared that "the principal objective of American foreign policy was not just the prevention of war, but the extension of freedom." (Reagan 1986b, 1986c) In this speech, Reagan reiterated the American commitment to spreading democracy in the world, thus they "assisted

freedom fighters who are resisting the imposition of totalitarian rule in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Angola, Cambodia, and elsewhere." In 1987, he again praised the "brave people of Afghanistan [who were] showing resolve," and announced that the US was ready to support a political solution in case of a Soviet withdrawal (Reagan 1987), and in his final State of the Union address, he declared,

> in Afghanistan, the freedom fighters are the key to peace. We support the Mujahidin. There can be no settlement unless all Soviet troops are removed and the Afghan people are allowed genuine self-determination. (Reagan 1988)

As the Soviets prepared to exit Afghanistan in 1989, the US began to pivot to the role of mediator. However, US leaders continued to view the Soviet Union as a brutal aggressor of religious freedoms, requiring ongoing military aid to the rebel fighters. This is a break from the early 1980s, when US leaders viewed the conflict as an opportunity to undermine the Soviet Union, but funded the rebellion on the cheap. By the mid-80s, anti-communist hawks and Christian hardliners in the Reagan administration and congress had successfully reframed the conflict as an epic struggle between religious freedom fighters and Soviet occupying force, leading to massive infusion of military aid to the mujahadeen, even as the Soviets pursued a negotiated withdrawal.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that great power proxy warfare is undertheorized in the international relations literature, partly because the dominant understandings of these conflicts offer reasonable facsimiles of an adequate account. We demonstrate the shortcomings of the most promising theories in one of the most studied conflicts of the Cold War period--the ten-year US-Soviet proxy war in Afghanistan during the 1980s.

An ideological account of this case has considerable face validity, correctly predicting that the Soviets would be inclined to support Amin's beleaguered Soviet-style regime in its

mission to export communism to the world. It likewise accords with US President Ronald Reagan's pledged assistance to "freedom fighters" against communism around the world. Nonetheless, it fails to explain why ideological considerations were a secondary driver of US support until the mid-1980s, several years after the US had already begun to funnel aid to the mujahadeen. Nor can it easily account for the waning interest of the Soviets in securing a communist regime in Afghanistan, despite its escalating military commitment to the conflict.

A defensive realist account helps to account for these irregularities. For instance, both the Soviets and US perceived each other's intervention into Afghanistan as an event that would weaken their position in a geopolitically vital region. The Soviets believed that they could not afford a destabilized Afghan state. They further feared the spread of radicalized Islamism and desired to gain a foothold in Southwest Asia. The US, meanwhile, worried that a destabilized or hostile Afghanistan could threaten their Pakistani allies. These constraints help to explain why neither superpower was eager to dive into the conflict. However, there are holes in this explanation as well. Specifically, it tells us little about why the two superpowers would intervene in the first place. The Soviet and US military high commands argued against any form of military engagement, pointing out that the expected benefits were unclear and the relative costs (both in material and reputational terms) too high to justify an open-ended military engagement. Defensive realist considerations provide a better account for US engagement, which was never overt (entailing fewer risks) and relatively cheap in material terms. However, US military leaders still opposed it, arguing that the expected costs of such an intervention--particularly of provoking Soviet retaliation or destabilizing Pakistan--was not outweighed by its expected benefits. Instead, those favoring military engagement were from the sloganeering political class rather than the generals.

Our blended role theory capitalizes on the insights of both accounts by showing that these logics can exist side-by-side as part of a state's "intervention role set." Whichever intervention role comes to the fore during a decisional period shapes the subsequent

interventions. Decisional periods, in turn, typically emerge in response to exogenous shocks (and sometimes endogenous developments) that lead to a new leadership struggles over the appropriate way to understand, and respond to, a given conflict. To Illustrate, the emergence of the neoconservative Reaganite right in the 1980s led to reframing the Afghan civil war less as a struggle for regional dominance and more as an opportunity to support religious "freedom fighters" against an atheistic "evil empire." This led to a greater focus on assisting the mujahadeen, lending greater urgency to escalating military aid to the fighters in the late 80s. Gorbachev's rise to power offered a significant structural opening for the US to negotiate a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. However, this opening was disregarded by an administration invested in a Manichean image of the war as religious freedom fighters versus their communist oppressors.

This investigation offers several potential lessons for resolving or managing great power proxy conflicts. First, it is clear that telling a "successful story" of a regime conflict has the effect of "selecting" intervention roles that identify and prescribe appropriate clients and methods of support. Once selected, a role can "lock in" intervention policies until such time that another shock produces the next decisional period when the conflict frames and/or intervention roles are reexamined. This produces a kind of punctuated equilibrium of external intervention, with long periods of the same policy suddenly disrupted, only to be replaced by a new set of intervention priorities and policies.

Second, this analysis suggests that so-called proxy warfare (at least between great powers) may be less calculated to achieve certain military ends in the conflict state than to "perform" a great power role. Using scholarly accounts as well as internal records of decision-making in the Kremlin and Washington, we show that the architects of the Soviet and US interventions were rather more concerned with the reputational effects of their intervention policies than strategic or tactical war considerations. The Soviets were concerned with keeping the faith of the peoples of the Global South, while the

neoconservatives and born-again Christians in the Reagan administration (while ideologues themselves) were committed to maintaining the support of their Moral Majority base. In general, performative considerations appear to have prevailed over more sober calculations about how their actions might impact their geopolitical position in Southwest Asia. Moreover, US and Soviet decisions were to a great extent debated through metaphors and stories rather than arrived at through cost-benefit calculations.

Finally, great power predisposition toward offensive versus defensive intervention roles appears strongly conditioned by the international structure. The emergence of Gorbachev and his 'New Thinking' in 1985 surely coincided with an awareness that the Soviet forces were stretched to capacity and that the Soviets would no longer be able to afford the luxury of supporting communist regimes in the neighborhood, particularly when doing so was rapidly draining their coffers. Likewise, the US shift from a global balancing role to regime promotion under the Reagan administration surely coincided with the emerging unipolar moment (Monteiro 2014)--an awareness that the Soviet state was under severe stress, giving the US an opening for engaging in more offensive interventions in support of democracy promotion. If true, this means that such interventions are strongly conditioned by international constraints, but that seemingly "one-off" choices undertaken in constrained circumstances can have enormous consequences, by reinforcing a certain interpretation of the conflict and intervention role that may be "locked in" for a period of months if not years.

References

Carter, Jimmy. 1980. State of the Union address. January 23, 1980. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33079

Clinton, Bill. 1998. Remarks in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan. August 20, 1998.

Clinton, Bill. 1999. Statement on the National Emergency With Respect to the Taliban. July 6, 1999.

Fulbright, J. William. 1966. The arrogance of power. New York: Random House.

Kirkpatrick, Jeane. 1979. "Dictatorships and Double Standards." Commentary (November 1979)

Moynihan, Daniel Patrick. 1975. "The United States in Opposition." Commentary (March 1975)

Podhoretz, Norman. 1976. "Making the World Safe for Communism." Commentary (April 1976)

Reagan, Ronald. 1982a. Address to the British Parliament. London, June 8, 1982.

Reagan, Ronald. 1982b. Address to the Bundestag. Bonn, June 9, 1982.

Reagan, Ronald. 1982c. Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations. New York, June 17, 1982.

Reagan, Ronald. 1983. Remarks to American troops at Camp Liberty Bell, Republic of Korea. November 13, 1983.

Reagan, Ronald. 1985a. State of the Union address. February 6, 1985.

Reagan, Ronald. 1985b. Remarks at the Annual Dinner of the Conservative Political Action Conference. Washington, March 1, 1985. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38274

Reagan, Ronald. 1986a. State of the Union address. February 4, 1986.

Reagan, Ronald. 1986b. Address to the Nation on National Security. February 26, 1986.

Reagan, Ronald. 1986c. Address to the Nation on the Meetings with Gorbachev in Iceland. October 13, 1986.

Reagan, Ronald. 1987. State of the Union address. January 27, 1987.

Reagan, Ronald. 1988. State of the Union address. January 25, 1988.

Secondary literature

Allison, R. (2013). Russia, the West, and Military Intervention. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Arbatli, C. E., & Arbatli, E. (2016). External threats and political survival: Can dispute involvement deter coup attempts? Conflict Management and Peace Science, 33(2), 115-153.

Bell, Daniel. 1975. "The end of American exceptionalism." The Public Interest 41 (Fall 1975): 193-224.

Besley, T. and T. Persson (2011). Fragile states and development policy. Journal of the European Economic Association 9(3), 371–398.

Butler, M. J. (2003). Us military intervention in crisis, 1945-1994 an empirical inquiry of just war theory. Journal of Conflict Resolution 47(2), 226–248.

Borgwardt, Elizabeth. 2005. A New Deal for the World: America's vision for human rights. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Brands, H. W. 2016. Reagan: The Life. New York: Anchor Books.

Coll, Steve. 2005. Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001. New York: Penguin Books.

Crile, George. 2003. Charlie Wilson's War: The Extraordinary Story of the Largest Covert Operation in History. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.

Carment, D. and P. James 2000; "Explaining Third-Party Intervention in Ethnic Conflict: Theory and Evidence", Nations and Nationalism 6 (2000): 173-202

Carment, D., P. James and Z. Taydas. 2006. (with David Carment and Zeynep Taydas) Who Intervenes? Ethnic Conflict and Interstate Crisis. (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press).

Chiozza, G., & Goemans, H. E. (2003). Peace through Insecurity. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 47(4), 443-468.

Choi, S.-W. and P. James (2014). Why does the united states intervene abroad? democracy, human rights violations, and terrorism. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 0022002714560350.

Collier, P., A. Hoeffler, and M. Söderbom (2004). On the duration of civil war. Journal of peace research 41(3), 253–273.

Corbetta, R. (2010). Determinants of Third Parties' Intervention and Alignment Choices in Ongoing Conflicts, 1946–2001. Foreign Policy Analysis, 6(1), 61-86.

Cox, R. and H. Jacobson (1973). The anatomy of influence: decision making in international organization. Cambridge (Mass.): Cambridge University Press.

Cunningham, David E. 2006. "Veto Players and Civil War Duration." American Journal of Political Science 50 (4):875-92. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00221.x.

Cunningham, David E. 2010. "Blocking resolution: How external states can prolong civil wars." Journal of Peace Research 47 (2):115-27. doi: 10.1177/0022343309353488.

Daalder, Ivo H. and James M. Lindsay. 2005. America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.

Dixon, P. (2000). Britain's 'vietnam syndrome'? public opinion and british military intervention from palestine to yugoslavia. Review of International Studies 26(01), 99–121.

Downes, A. B. and J. Monten (2013). Forced to be free?: Why foreign-imposed regime change rarely leads to democratization. International Security 37(4), 90–131.

Dube, O. and J. F. Vargas (2013). Commodity price shocks and civil conflict: Evidence from colombia. The Review of Economic Studies 80(4), 1384–1421.

Evans, G. and M. Sahnoun (2002). The responsibility to protect. Foreign affairs, 99–110.

Falk, R. (1995). Toward obsolescence: Sovereignty in the era of globalization. Harvard International Review, 34–75.

Findley, M. G. and T. K. Teo (2006). Rethinking third-party interventions into civil wars: An actor-centric approach. Journal of Politics 68(4), 828–837.

Finnemore, M. (1996). Norms, culture, and world politics: insights from sociology's institutionalism. International organization 50(02), 325–347.

Finnemore, M. (2004). The purpose of intervention: changing beliefs about the use of force. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Fournier, D. A., H. J. Skaug, J. Ancheta, J. Ianelli, A. Magnusson, M. N. Maunder, A. Nielsen, and J. Sibert (2012). Ad model builder: using automatic differentiation for statistical inference of highly parameterized complex nonlinear models. Optimization Methods and Software 27(2), 233–249.

Gaddis, J. L. (2005). Strategies of containment: a critical appraisal of American national security policy during the Cold War. Oxford University Press.

Gent, S. E. (2007). Strange bedfellows: The strategic dynamics of major power military interventions. The Journal of Politics 69(4), 1089–1102.

Gent, S. E. (2008). Going in when it counts: Military intervention and the outcome of civil conflicts*. International Studies Quarterly 52(4), 713–735.

Gilpin, R. (1983). War and change in world politics. Cambridge University Press.

Goldgeier, J. M. and M. McFaul (1992). A tale of two worlds: core and periphery in the post-cold war era. International Organization 46(02), 467–491.

Gvalia, G., D. Siroky, B. Lebanidze, and Z. Iashvili (2013). Thinking outside the bloc: explaining the foreign policies of small states. Security Studies 22(1), 98–131.

Gates, Robert M. 1997. From the shadows: The ultimate insider's story of five presidents and how they won the Cold War. New York: Touchstone.

Hinds, Lynn Boyd and Theodore Windt. 1991. The Cold War as rhetoric: the beginnings, 1945-1950. New York: Praeger.

Hoffmann, Stanley. 1978. Primacy or World Order: American Foreign Policy since the Cold War. New York: McGraw-Hill.
Holsti, K. J. 1970. "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy." International Studies Quarterly 14(3): 233-309.

Hoffmann, S. (1995). The politics and ethics of military intervention. Survival 37(4), 29–51.

Högbladh, S., T. Pettersson, and L. Themnér (2011). External Support in Armed Conflict 1975-2009. Presenting New Data. In 52nd Annual International Studies Association Convention, Montreal, Canada, March, pp. 16–19.

Huth, P. K. (1998). Major power intervention in international crises, 1918-1988. Journal of Conflict Resolution 42(6), 744–770.

Jo, Dong-Joon, and E. Gartzke. (2007). Determinants of nuclear weapons proliferation. Journal of Conflict Resolution 51(1), pp. 167-194.

Kennan, G. F. (1989). The decision to intervene. Princeton University Press.

Keohane, R. (1984). After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy. Princeton University Press.

Knudsen, T. B. (1996). Humanitarian intervention revisited: Post-cold war responses to classical problems. International Peacekeeping 3(4), 146–165.

Koch, M. T. and P. Sullivan (2010). Should i stay or should i go now? partisanship, approval, and the duration of major power democratic military interventions. The Journal of Politics 72(03), 616–629.

Levitsky, S. and L. A. Way (2010). Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War. Cambridge University Press.

Linz, J. J. and A. Stepan (1996). Problems of democratic transition and consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and post-communist Europe. JHU Press.

Lo, N., B. Hashimoto, and D. Reiter (2008). Ensuring peace: foreign-imposed regime change and postwar peace duration, 1914-2001. International Organization 62(04), 717–736.

Luttwak, E. N. (1999). Give war a chance. Foreign affairs, 36–44.

Mansfield, E. D. and J. Snyder (1995). Democratization and the danger of war. International security 20(1), 5–38.

Monteiro, N. P. (2011). Unrest assured: Why unipolarity is not peaceful.

Morgenthau, H. (1967). To intervene or not to intervene. Foreign Affairs 45(3), 425–436.

O'Donnell, G., P. C. Schmitter, and L. Whitehead (1986). Transitions from authoritarian rule: comparative perspectives, Volume 3. JHU Press.

Oneal, J. R. and B. Russett (2001). Clear and clean: The fixed effects of the liberal peace. International Organization 55(02), 469–485.

Owen, J. M. (1994). How liberalism produces democratic peace. International security 19(2), 87–125.

Pearson, F. S. (1974). Geographic proximity and foreign military intervention. Journal of Conflict Resolution 18(3), 432–460.

Peceny, M. C. Beer and S. Sanchez-Terry (2002). Dictorial Peace? The American Political Science Review. 96(1): 15-26.

Peic, G. and D. Reiter (2011). Foreign-imposed regime change, state power and civil war onset, 1920-2004. British Journal of Political Science 41(03), 453–475.

Pettersson, T. and P. Wallensteen (2016). Armed conflicts, 1946-2014. Journal of Peace Research 52(4), 536–550.

Pickering, J. and E. Kisangani. (2005). Democracy and Diversionary Military Intervention: Reassessing Regime Type and the Diversionary Hypothesis. International Studies Quarterly, 49(1), 23-43.

Pickering, J. and E. Kisangani. (2010). "Diversionary Despots? Comparing Autocracies' Propensities to Use and to Benefit from Military Force." American Journal of Political Science 54 (2): 477-93.

Pickering, J. and M. Peceny. (2006). Forging Democracy at Gunpoint. International Studies Quarterly, 50(3), 539-559.

Przeworski, A. (1991). Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Cambridge University Press.

Resende-Santos, J. (2007). Neorealism, States, and the Modern Mass Army. Cambridge University Press.

Roberts, A. (1993). Humanitarian war: military intervention and human rights. International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), 429–449.

Rodogno, R. (2012). Personal identity online. Philosophy & Technology 25(3), 309–328.

Rose, G. (1998). Neoclassical realism and theories of foreign policy. World politics 51(01), 144–172.

Russett, B. (1994). Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles For a Post-Cold War World. Princeton university press.

Salehyan, I., D. Siroky, and R. M. Wood (2014). External rebel sponsorship and civilian abuse: A principal-agent analysis of wartime atrocities. International Organization, 1–29.

San-Akca, B. (2009). Dangerous companions. Journal of Strategic Studies 32(4), 589–613.

San-Akca, B. (2016). States in Disguise: Causes of State Support for Rebel Groups. Oxford University Press.

Skidmore, D. (1997). Introduction: Bringing social orders back in. In D. Skidmore (Ed.), Contested Social Orders and International Politics. Vanderbilt University Press. Smith, M. J. (1986). Realist thought from weber to kissinger.

Snidal, D. (1985). The limits of hegemonic stability theory. International Organization, 39, pp 579-614

Svolik, M. W. (2015). Which democracies will last? coups, incumbent takeovers, and the dynamic of democratic consolidation. British Journal of Political Science 45(04), 715–738.

Taliaferro, J. W. (2004). Power Politics and the Balance of Risk: Hypotheses on Major Power

Intervention in the Periphery. Political Psychology, 25(2), 177-211.

Tannenwald, N. (1999). The nuclear taboo: The united states and the normative basis of nuclear non-use. International Organization 53(03), 433–468.

Teorell, J. and A. Hadenius (2009). Elections as levers of democracy: a global inquiry. Democratization by elections: A new mode of transition, 77–100.

Walt, S. M. (1990). The origins of alliance. Cornell University Press.

Waltz, K. N. (2000). Structural realism after the cold war. International security 25(1), 5–41.

Waltz, K. N. (2010). Theory of International Politics. Mass: Reading.

Weiss, T. G. (2005). Military-civilian interactions: humanitarian crises and the responsibility to protect. Rowman & Littlefield.

Welsh, J. M. (2013). Norm contestation and the responsibility to protect. Global Responsibility to Protect 5(4), 365–396.

Werner, S. (1996). Absolute and limited war: the possibility of foreign-imposed regime change. International Interactions 22(1), 67–88.

Werner, S. and D. Lemke. (1997). Opposites Do Not Attract: The Impact of Domestic Institutions, Power, and Prior Commitments on Alignment Choices. International Studies Quarterly, 41(3), 529-546.

Wohlforth, W. (2012). Realism and foreign policy. In A. H. Steve Smith and T. Dunne (Eds.), Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zachary, P., K. Deloughery, and A. B. Downes (2015). No business like firc business: Foreign-imposed regime change and bilateral trade. British Journal of Political Science, 1–34.

Zeigler, S., J. H. Pierskalla, and S. Mazumder. (2014). War and the Reelection Motive: Examining the Effect of Term Limits. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 58(4), 658-685.