

MUTUALLY ASSURED SURVIVAL:
DETECTING INADVERTENT CONFLICT ESCALATION
THROUGH STRATEGIC RESTRAINT SIGNALING

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Art of War Scholars

by

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 10-06-2022		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) AUG 2021 – JUN 2022	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Mutually Assured Survival: Deterring Inadvertent Conflict Escalation Through Strategic Restraint Signaling				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Travis Zahnow, MAJ, USA				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT The ability to understand escalation dynamics around foreign military interventions is of vital interest to any major power that believes it will intervene in a foreign war in the future. Major powers, which often take part in risky military interventions on the periphery of their empire, want to avoid escalating war with other major powers. This thesis explores the dynamic of restraint signaling as a means of avoiding conflict escalation. The thesis demonstrates four restraint signals present in the case studies that potentially helped reduce the risk of an inadvertent escalation. They are: restraining weapons shipments and other military aid, restraining the timing of arms shipments, restraining what type of military forces, advisor vs combat soldier, that were deployed, and placing geographic and/or targeting restraints on forces. A theory that avoids escalation is useful as a tool for policymakers and strategic planners to understand the impact that foreign military interventions have on the possibility of an inadvertent conflict escalation. It also allows those charged with planning an intervention to develop a strategic plan that uses the appropriate level of support of clients without escalating the conflict.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Deterance, Restraint, Foreign Intervention, Proxy War					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			(U)	109	

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

MUTUALLY ASSURED SURVIVAL: DETERRING INADVERTENT CONFLICT ESCALATION THROUGH STRATEGIC RESTRAINT SIGNALING, by MAJ Travis M. Zahnow, 109 pages.

The ability to understand escalation dynamics around foreign military interventions is of vital interest to any major power that believes it will intervene in a foreign war in the future. Major powers, which often take part in risky military interventions on the periphery of their empire, want to avoid escalating war with other major powers. This thesis explores the dynamic of restraint signaling as a means of avoiding conflict escalation. The thesis demonstrates four restraint signals present in the case studies that potentially helped reduce the risk of an inadvertent escalation. They are: restraining weapons shipments and other military aid, restraining the timing of arms shipments, restraining what type of military forces, advisor vs combat soldier that were deployed, and placing geographic and/or targeting restraints on forces. A theory that avoids escalation is useful as a tool for policymakers and strategic planners to understand the impact that foreign military interventions have on the possibility of an inadvertent conflict escalation. It also allows those charged with planning an intervention to develop a strategic plan that uses the appropriate level of support of clients without escalating the conflict.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There were many contributors to the successful completion of this thesis. This is my humble attempt to say thank you to all of them. First, I would like to thank my thesis committee, including the chair Dr. Jack Kem, and readers, Dr. John Modinger and Dr. Jim Marrone for their guidance and support through this work. Thanks to Dr. Sean Kalic for always having an open office chair ready to discuss my ideas. This thesis would not have been possible without the direction and mentorship of the four of them.

I was honored to have been selected as a 2022 Art of War Scholar. This work would not be the same without the intellectual endeavor of the program. To that end, I am indebted to the “Ike Skelton Distinguished Chair for the Art of War” Dr. Dean A. Nowowiejski, the guest lecturers, and my colleagues for the outstanding seminars. The “Open Book Group” deserves special recognition for their ability to wade through a MMAS that was very much in draft form, offer comments that were immensely helpful, and create a far better piece of written work than I possibly could have on my own.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. To my parents, thank you for supporting me and instilling the values and work ethic that has allowed me to become the husband, father, and Army Officer that I am today. To my wife, Allie, and our son, Emmett, thank you for your years of continued support and sacrifice that you have allowed me to excel in both my academic goals and military service. After two years of school in Washington D.C. you did not bat an eye when I said I wanted to pursue another Master’s degree at CGSC. You are everything to me, and you hold our new family together. I will never be able to express my gratitude enough.

When all is said and done, everything I do is for them, and this was no different.

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ACRONYMS

CIA	United States Central Intelligence Agency
FNLA	<i>Frente Nacional de Libertacao de Angola</i> (National Liberation Front of Angola)
MPLA	<i>Movimento Popularde Libertagdo de Angola</i> (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola)
SADF	South African Defense Force
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
UNITA	<i>Unido Nacional para a Independancia Total de Angola</i> (The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola)

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PREFACE

This is a thesis about deterring conflict, and about how limited wars escalate, or better yet, do not escalate. The idea for this project came about during my graduate studies at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in the now defunct Strategic Studies department. There, I sought to understand the generalities of proxy warfare. How did they start? How did they end? Why would smaller powers allow themselves to become a proxy of a larger power? From that base, I began to explore differing dimensions of proxy warfare, eventually stumbling onto proxy war escalation. Proxy war escalation, like the broader field of proxy warfare, is less researched than it needs to be—especially in light of current global conflicts.

Of note, I use the term “Third World” throughout this work. A product of the international competition that was a hallmark of the Cold War, the term admittedly marginalizes the agency these nations had in the bloody conflicts that subsumed their nations. Yet, the term is indicative of the colonial and post-colonial thinking of the time, and it has been widely used within the academic and policy communities to describe old war countries other than the United States or the Soviet Union. For the sake of simplicity, I have chosen to use it in this work.

While I have had significant help on this journey, any errors of my scholarship, for better or worse, are mine alone.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Of all manifestations of power, restraint impresses men most.
—Thucydides

Background

More than a dozen conflicts erupted globally during the two decades following the rise of decolonization and nationalism across the globe in the mid-twentieth century. Most of these conflicts took place in what was, at the time, referred to as the Third World. Places like Angola, the Middle East, Central America, and Afghanistan become the hotbeds of the final phase of the Cold War—interventions and conflicts more about East-West ideological dispute than anything else. Within these conflicts, Cold War major powers saw opportunities to support individual sides while trying to preserve the global peace. In the grand scheme of the US-Soviet competition, the Cold War was remarkable for the stability that was a four-decade-long struggle of ideological and geopolitical differences. Viewed from twenty-thousand feet, the Cold War was very much the “long peace” it appeared to be (Brands 2012, 1).

In the Third World, it was less the “long peace” and was more like the “long war.” Despite the alleged existence of a stable period between major powers, the Cold War in the Third World was far from peaceful. Major powers found the greatest dangers of the Cold War in the intense rivalries of the Third World. Nuclear parity and the threat of mutually assured destruction drove belligerents to achieving geo-political aims through other means, including the indirect use of foreign forces. Conflict may have never materialized between the major powers, but it did between their clients. During the

decade of the 1970s, the United States and the Soviet Union intervened abroad repeatedly. While violent, these local conflicts remained within their borders, never escalating into a larger conflict, and never drawing in the intervening powers into a larger conflict between themselves.

While there was no true major power conflict, there were several asymmetric low-level conflicts in which the major powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, interfered. In the decades following the 1940s, nearly three dozen African and Asian nations found themselves throwing off the yoke of colonialism and embracing their own freedoms. Washington and Moscow prepared to contest for power in almost all of them (Weiner 2022). During the Cold War, foreign military intervention and war by proxy were key strategies of the indirect conflict between the major powers, all done to change the balance of power in the only place they could—outside of Europe. Within Europe, the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union had become almost predictable: rhetoric exchanged, but little physical space moved. But, within the developing nations of the Third World, major power expansion among post-colonial states was anything but predictable. The decades of the 1970s represented the peak of major power efforts to provide military support to Third World regimes at war (Porter 1986, 6).

The purpose of this thesis is to understand how major powers avoided conflict during the foreign military interventions of the 1970s. Drawing on archival and documentary sources, as well as building off relevant scholarship, this thesis develops a theory that explains the behaviors of major powers who serve as third party interveners. In doing so, this research sheds new light on the international dimension of foreign

military intervention and exposes underlying trends in how major powers signal intent during interventions in both interstate and intrastate conflicts. The research uses two illustrative historical case studies—the Yom Kippur War and The Angolan Civil War—to highlight the role that restraint signaling plays in preventing conflict escalation.

Primary Research Question

The primary research question seeks to understand how major powers can display verifiable restraints to signal major power interveners to avoid conflict escalation. The primary research question is:

Did signals of strategic restraint present between the United States and the Soviet Union during indirect foreign military interventions between the years 1970 and 1980 prevent inadvertent conflict escalation?

Secondary Research Questions

In order to answer the primary research question, several secondary questions deserve exploration. These questions will help drive an understanding of competitive foreign interventions and strategic restraint signaling.

This Thesis will explore the following secondary research questions:

1. How does escalation in foreign military interventions occur?
2. How does the risk of escalation and the security dilemma dynamic play a role in foreign military interventions?
3. What are examples of restraint signals that help control conflict escalation?

Assumptions

This thesis makes the following assumptions. They are:

1. Any translated primary documents were translated correctly and factually.
2. Any secondary sources used for this work are factually correct and accurately represent the sources the original author used.
3. The author has assumed that the data available through the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) are accurate. Where possible, the author tried to balance SIPRI data against primary and secondary sources.
4. The research assumes that all parties involved are rational actors, in that they “are aware of their external environment and they think strategically about how to survive in it. In particular, they consider the preferences of other states and how their own behavior is likely to affect the behavior of those other states, and how the behavior of those other states is likely to affect their own strategy for survival” (Mearsheimer 2014, 31).¹ As rational actors, intervening major powers want to avoid conflict escalation and the destructive major power conflict that would follow.
5. The author assumes major power interests are equal in so much that major powers have mutual interests in avoiding a conflict escalation that leads to mutual destruction. (Fearon 1995, 279).
6. Within the mixed motive game presented, it is necessary to assume two game elements:
 - a. That the repeatable game reaches a defined endpoint of conflict.

The number of repetitions to the end point is undefined. Each iteration of the game increases the risk of an inadvertent conflict escalation.

- b. Player choices are limited to two options: show restraint or do not show restraint. In reality, there are nuances of each, but for this work, the assumption will be the binary choice given above.
7. As major powers increase support for a client, the risk of escalation rises.

Definition of Terms

To ensure uniformity and understanding of the terms throughout the thesis, the author used the following definitions throughout the thesis. The author developed all definitions not accompanied by a citation.

Competitive intervention restraint: the signals one or both intervening major powers undertake to delimit the scope of the escalation and signal to the opposing side that they are not trying to escalate the conflict (Anderson 2019, 691).²

Direct foreign military intervention: the provision of combat and non-combat related aid by a major power to a state or non-state participant that includes the direct combat engagement of the intervening state in hopes of influencing the outcome of the conflict.

Escalation: “an increase in the intensity or scope of conflict that crosses thresholds considered significant by one or more of the participants” (Morgan et al. 2008, xi).

Horizontal Conflict Escalation: refers to “expanding the geographic scope of a conflict (for example, by conducting operations in or through territory previously treated as neutral by the combatants)” (Morgan et al. 2008, 18; Kahn 1965, 4–6).

Intervention: refers to one state’s interference in the domestic affairs of another nation. (Lockyer 2018; Rosenau and Gold, 2019, 149; Tillema 1989, 149).

Indirect foreign military intervention: the provision of combat and non-combat related aid by a major power to a state or non-state participant that does not include the direct combat engagement of the intervening state in hopes of influencing the outcome of the conflict. Also referred to as a competitive foreign military intervention or a competitive intervention (Anderson 2019; Carson 2018).³

Restraint: in the context of this thesis, restraint is the act of holding back some parts of intervention.

Tacit Bargaining: Bargaining that takes place between adversaries capable of watching and interpreting each other's behavior, each aware that their own actions are being watched, interpreted, and anticipated (Schelling 1981, 21). A key characteristic of tacit bargaining is that communication occurs through behavior and not directly.

Vertical Conflict Escalation: refers to the escalation that “involves an increase in the intensity of armed conflict or confrontation, such as employing types of weapons not previously used in the conflict or attacking new categories of targets (Morgan et al. 2008, 18; Kahn 1965, 4–6).

Scope and Delimitations

The author has identified the following elements as falling outside the scope of the project:

1. This research explicitly looks at the strategic level, the interactions between states as major powers. It does not look at the tactical or operational level in detail, though the thesis draws some examples from them to explain strategic points.

2. This research does not look at cases when a major power is the conflict belligerent, i.e., one side fighting in the conflict, such as the U.S. in Korea and Vietnam, or the Soviets in Afghanistan.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. None of these limitations hinder the ability of the study to draw conclusions to the primary or secondary research questions. The reader of this study will still be able to understand the dynamics of competitive foreign military intervention in war and the role strategic restraint signaling plays in the outplay of that conflict, despite these limitations.

1. While the research presented is as thorough as possible, the author does not speak nor read the Russian language. This required the use of already translated primary documents, or the use of secondary sources which cite primary documents. Therefore, some parts of the research are at the interpretations of the secondary source authors. Where that is the case, the thesis author has annotated in the footnotes that such has occurred.
2. This study only looks at unclassified information in order to ensure that this thesis remains at the unclassified level.
3. The study does not contain interview accounts from key leaders involved in the struggle. The inability to collect firsthand accounts means the study relies on either works by key leaders, or the interpretations of others who used firsthand accounts for their work.
4. This study presents a plausibility probe of the theoretical game model rather than an exhaustive mathematical analysis intended to prove the model.

5. This thesis makes correlational connections between signals and outcomes.

Without access to archival documents from both sites, it is challenging to inviolably link those signals to leader decisions.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this paper is: to identify a gap in escalation literature related to small wars and indirect foreign military interventions; to propose a theory on how restraint signaling could be used to prevent escalation; and to probe the plausibility of that theory to see if it is viable for future research. This study will also help policymakers understand how restraint signals can prevent intervener escalation during foreign military interventions. Of equal significance is the desire to help strategy makers understand the role foreign influence plays in the complex interaction between major powers during times of competition. Major powers often involve themselves in foreign interventions, at times, with what appears to be minimal thought as to the impact that intervention has on other major powers. The significance, and goal of this research, is to help policy and strategy makers understand the impact of foreign military interventions and provide the knowledge necessary to craft effective strategies that avoid a conflict escalation scenario.

The threat of escalation—within this thesis explored as a conflict between two major intervening powers—looms large in the background of any intervention. As interveners face the dilemma of growing their intervention to help their client, they must be conscious of how other states may perceive this growth. Intervening major powers have both competitive and aligned interests. On one hand, major powers have competing interests in seeing their client be successful. On the other hand, major power interests align in the desire to avoid a conflict escalation that leads to mutual destruction.

Therefore, managing dangerous escalation dynamics, while pursuing individual state interests, becomes important.

Strategic restraint signaling offers intervening powers the ability to signal the limits of their intervention to avoid escalation. This signaling helps to communicate restraint by drawing distinctions between the type of weapons and aid shipped, the timing of those shipments, the types of deployed military forces, and geographic factors that help to communicate intervener restraint.

Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter provides the reader with the necessary background for understanding how conflict escalation in foreign military interventions might occur. This thesis is further organized into five sections. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on foreign military intervention and exposes the theoretical gaps that are worth exploring further. The chapter expands on previous works covering foreign military interventions and proxy wars, explores the conceptual role of escalation in literature, examines limited war theories developed during the Cold War, and explores risk and the Security Dilemma. Throughout the literature review, the thesis analyzes lessons from previous research and considers how lessons are still applicable to the way major powers approach foreign military interventions.

Chapter 3 covers the research methodology used to study competitive foreign military interventions. The chapter outlines how the author collected and analyzed the data for the thesis. Chapter 4 discusses the theoretical framework that underpins the research within the thesis. The thesis presents the theory in three parts: first, it introduces intervention scenarios, then it discusses restraint signaling and the risk of escalation, and

finally it details the four strategic restraint dynamics that are present in competitive interventions used to signal intention. In this chapter, the thesis will also present the data and its analysis towards developing a theory of intervener restraint.

Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the thesis by reviewing the fundamental theory used throughout the thesis and its theoretical findings. Chapter 5 moreover provides the conclusion and practical policy recommendations for international engagements. The chapter closes by recommending ideas for further research.

¹ The rational actor model assumes that the main foreign policy actor in a given situation is rational in so much as they can be relied on to make informed decisions that are in the best interest and maximize the value of their state. Its main unit of analysis is at the individual state-level where governments behave as a unit.

² This definition is modified from Noel Anderson's definition of competitive interventions.

³ My definition of competitive foreign military intervention is my own thought but influenced by the work of Noel Anderson and Austin Carson.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Introduction

This thesis explores how major powers avoid conflict during indirect foreign military interventions. It works towards developing a generalizable theory that explains strategic restraint signaling in foreign military interventions as a means of preventing inadvertent conflict escalation. In doing so, it identifies verifiable ways that major powers can signal restraint during indirect foreign military interventions.

To lay a foundation for this work, it is necessary to review the existing literature as it relates to the theories presented. The exploration of four distinct areas of research is necessary to develop the conceptual assumption behind the research questions. They are: the foreign military intervention and proxy war literature; escalation literature; limited war theory literature; and security dilemma literature. These four areas provide a conceptual foundation to understanding the theory presented in the thesis and its application to the two case studies. Following a critical review of the literature, the author highlights the limitations of the current literature through its gaps and illustrates where the new research presented within this thesis fits within the previous literature.

Concepts

This thesis uses the concept of competitive foreign military intervention. As presented in Chapter 1, the author defines competitive foreign military intervention as the provision of combat and non-combat related aid by major powers to a state or non-state participant actively engaged in an intrastate or interstate conflict, hoping to influence the

outcome of the conflict (Anderson 2019; Carson 2018; Regan 2002, 2).¹ Interventions are competitive because interveners share “competing, rather than shared interests in the outcome of [the war]” (Anderson 2016, 24). Competitive foreign military interventions, therefore, involve two states competing to support opposite sides, not two states competing to be the sole supporter of the same side of an inter or intrastate war. To fall within the definitions presented in Chapter 1, combatants need to be opposed to each other and receive external support from two opposed major powers.

To capture interventions correctly, this thesis adopts a broad definition of external aid. Noel Anderson correctly notes that narrowing the scope of aid to only the deployment of combat forces misses many third-party interventions (Anderson 2019). Anderson’s definition involves combat or advisor forces, as well as support with weapons and ammunition, non-lethal aid, or logistical support. Throughout this research, the broader approach to the treatment of external aid is used to assess interventions that involve more than just combat forces.

The Existing Literature

Many scholars have already produced a variety of research and literature examining elements that contribute to theories of military intervention. This section explores existing contributions to the field by reviewing the literature on foreign military interventions and proxy war, escalation theory, limited war theory, and the security dilemma. The chapter summarizes existing theories through an evaluation of the strengths and limitations of the literature, while identifying where the gaps in knowledge exist.

Foreign Military Interventions and Proxy War

As a concept, the term competitive foreign military intervention is tied to the term proxy war, yet it has important differences. There is no standard definition for the term proxy war. As shown below in the literature review on proxy wars, early Cold War literature treated almost all conflicts as proxy wars. Any intervention by the United States or Soviet Union in regional conflicts earned the label proxy war (McMahon 2013; Westad 2007, Westad 2019). This led to a conceptual stretching and diminishment of meaning of the term proxy war (Carlsson 2017).

To explore the role of escalation in competitive interventions, this work builds upon and explains the working definitions of proxy warfare. Andrew Mumford, in his work *Proxy Warfare: War and Conflict in the Modern World*, defines proxy war as an intervener's indirect engagement in a conflict by those who wish to influence its strategic outcome (Mumford 2013, 11). Tyrone L. Groh in *Proxy War: The Least Bad Option*, thinks of proxy warfare as any intervention in an ongoing civil war by a state that provides aid, arms, military advisors, or air power (Groh 2019). Many of the accepted definitions of proxy war have similarities in what proxy war requires, but disagreement arises over forms and intention of interventions. Proxy war definitions lack an understanding of the how, not the what.

As noted above, the differing definitions have led to a lack of defining properties related to the term proxy war. This has led to a conceptual stretching of the term proxy war and its application to a myriad of often dissimilar cases. Berman et al. describe proxy warfare from a principal-agent framework where alignment of interests between principal and agent in a proxy war is of paramount importance (Berman and Lake 2019). Others,

like Geraint Hughes have developed more prescriptive outlines of what proxy war is, outlining that proxy warfare must include external support for one faction in a civil war, help to an insurgency against another power, or state sponsorship of terrorism in another country (Hughes 2014). The proxy war definitions presented above are in general agreement that proxy war requires some form of foreign intervention, but in disagreement over the form of intervention, for example the supplying of arms or material or deployment of troops, and the intention that interveners have concerning the intervention. Because of this definitional disagreement, this thesis uses the more specific term “foreign military intervention” to describe the conflicts studied in this thesis.

Intervention in international relations refers to one state’s interference in the domestic affairs of another (Lockyer 2018; Rosenau and Gold 2019; Tillema 1989, 180). Foreign military interventions, or the use of an outside military force to aid a contesting party, are a common form of intervention found throughout history. As Levite et al. noted in *Foreign Military Intervention*, Thucydides wrote in his study of the Peloponnesian Wars that those that wanted change could call on outside interveners (Levite, Jentleson, and Berman 1994). Hans Morgenthau notes interventions can be useful for both sides, but interveners are seldom altruistic in their efforts (Levite, Jentleson, and Berman 1994, 3). Foreign military intervention is most often the use of force abroad in the pursuit of a state’s objectives. Therefore, nations that conduct foreign military interventions primarily do so in pursuit of their own objectives versus those of the client.

There is a risk of conflict escalation during any foreign military intervention. This thesis strengthens the general proxy war theories presented by Mumford by integrating and expanding on Noel Anderson’s theory of competitive intervention. Both authors

tackled proxy war thematically, though Anderson differentiates between competitive intervention and the more general definitions of proxy warfare that Mumford provides. While Anderson's work outlined competitive interventions in intrastate civil wars, the author believes that there is further refinement, and some expansion, necessary to understand how nations attempt to avoid conflict escalation in indirect foreign military interventions.

Foreign *military* interventions, or the use of an outside military force to aid a contesting party, are a common form of intervention found throughout history. Like the varying definitions of proxy warfare, foreign military intervention definitions cover a wide conceptual gamut. Adam Lockyer, in *Foreign Intervention, Warfare and Civil War: External Assistance and Belligerents' Choice of Strategy*, defines foreign intervention as "the transfer of resources from an external state to a contesting party in a civil war" (Lockyer 2018, 14). Others, like Frederick Pearson and Robert Baumann, approach foreign military intervention with a focus on the size of the intervention, measuring the robustness of the intervening force. Earlier work does not adequately capture interventions not focused on changing a government (Pearson and Baumann 1974). This thesis will use the broader treatment of intervention first introduced, the use of an outside military force to aid a contesting party, throughout the research. The research further delineates military interventions as either direct or indirect as referenced in Chapter 1. The intervention theory presented in Chapter 4 focuses on indirect foreign military interventions, also referred to as a competitive foreign military intervention, or more simply, a competitive intervention.

The term military *intervention* also differs from military *involvement* in some key areas worth noting. The literature establishes that interventions involve the direct and overt deployment of arms, equipment, and sometimes men. Involvements, on the other hand, differ in a few key ways. Primarily, with military involvement, the risk of conflict escalation is low, and interveners view involvement as relatively risk free. Involvement tends to be extensive and long term, while military interventions trend shorter and are typically centered on a specific issue or specific time (Porter 1986, 126). Due to their escalatory nature, interventions tend to be shorter and riskier for the major power involved while involvements tend to carry less risk to any outside major powers.

As presented, the existing literature on proxy war and foreign military intervention lacks definitional precision. This definitional morass, as Noel Anderson notes, has led academics to stretch both terms to encompass many types of outside involvement in conflict. However, whereas Anderson explores competitive intervention in terms of civil wars, this research considers intervention in most interstate conflicts, not just civil wars (Anderson 2019). Through this alternative approach to looking at competitive interventions, the research hopes to contribute to our understanding of how both the United States and the Soviet Union avoided conflict escalation in competitive foreign military interventions.

Limited War Theory

Much of what we know about contemporary limited war theory evolved from a desire to understand how escalation in war happens, as well as a need to understand ways of controlling escalation to ensure that war did not evolve to total war. Limited wars are

those which are “vital but not existential” and do not require the utilization of all resources in pursuit of victory (Bakich 2014, 5).

Limited war theorists like Bernard Brodie, Thomas Schelling, Robert Osgood, Henry Kissinger, and others all had to contend with a new reality: that the political aims they had previously fought wars for were not worth the cost of total destruction due to nuclear weapons. Nuclear parity with the Soviets meant that total war would be catastrophic. Cold War thinking on escalation and mutually assured destruction centered on the eventuality that a conventional war was bound to go nuclear. These new theories on limited war were counter to the earlier focus on destroying the military will power of an adversary. This was no longer tenable once your enemy could use a nuclear weapon to “destroy the destroyer” (Flynn 1994, 4).

Scholars began to theorize about limited war in response to the consequences of nuclear weapons; intent on finding a successful way to wage conflict without escalating a war to total nuclear destruction. Robert Osgood offers a concise definition that is useful when exploring a nation’s objectives: “a limited war is generally conceived to be a war fought for ends far short of the complete subordination of one state’s will to another’s, and by means involving far less than the total military resources of the belligerents” (Howard 1979, 79). Kissinger offered a differing definition of limited war, contrasted with total war, within *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*:

A limited war... is fought for specific political objectives which, by their very existence, tend to establish a relationship between force employed and the goal to be obtained. It reflects an attempt to *affect* the opponent’s will, not to *crush it*, to make the conditions to be imposed seem more attractive than continued resistance, to strive for specific goals and not for complete annihilation. (Kissinger 1969)

Escalation control within limited wars grew from a belief that both sides were not interested in mutually assured destruction—that not all wars had to be “total.” Wars could remain limited in nature—fought with limited means in the pursuit of limited political goals. Therefore, it was necessary to pursue warfare in a way that limited the chance that they could escalate into larger wars. It was necessary to explore methods that could hobble the sizeable forces on both sides (Brodie 2007, 311). Put another way, to maintain the limitedness of future war, belligerents would need to restrain their forces in a way that still allowed them to effectively pursue goals but constrained the ability of the fight to not evolve into the full potential of any one side’s capabilities. A hallmark of limited war is that belligerents refrain from using all available military power (Howard 1979, 83). How both sides establish these limits, however, is a question that remains unanswered by the academic literature.

A major contribution to the literature on limited war was the role tacit bargaining played in communications between sides. A limited war requires establishing limits (Schelling 1957, 20). To achieve limits in war, belligerents have to bargain (formal, informal, tacit) to prevent escalation, as noted by Henry Kissinger in *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*.² Schelling identified a similar phenomenon, calling them focal points—a solution to a coordination problem that somehow stands out as the natural answer even if the participants don’t arrange it beforehand—that could coordinate two people’s actions (Schelling 1981). Scholars have noted that the Korean War offers a few examples of focal points that limited the conflict. Natural terrain-based boundaries, as well as man-made separations, were used to separate combatants throughout the war. The Korean War also saw a delineation between weapons that could achieve strategic effects

(in this case nuclear weapons) and conventional weapons. The Korean War offered limited war theorists an understanding of the role that tacit bargaining and mutual recognition could play in limiting war.

Limited war theory was very much a product of the nuclear-focused Cold War. The theory's development was heavily focused on the avoidance of a nuclear war. As previously identified, limited war theory offered valuable insights as it relates to communication through both explicit and tacit bargaining (Anderson 2016, 34; Schelling 1981, 21). Limited war theory is also valuable for an understanding of how policy makers of the period approached controlling escalation in conflict.

Escalation

Escalate- to increase in extent, volume, number, amount, intensity, or scope
—Merriam-Webster

The definition of escalation presented above seems simple enough. Yet it has differing definitions within the literature and is often tied to the concepts of limited war. In broad terms, escalation is “an increase in the intensity or scope of conflict that crosses thresholds considered significant by one or more of the participants” (Morgan et al. 2008, xi). Escalation has been a wartime consideration throughout history. The Prussian theorist Karl von Clausewitz proposed in his seminal work *On War* the difficult balance between ends versus means and the difficulty in balancing exertion in achieving political ends. In essence, he was discussing escalation in limited war:

Since, in war, too small an effort can result not just in failure, but in positive harm, each side is driven to outdo the other, which sets up an interaction. Such an interaction could lead to a maximum effort if maximum effort could be defined. But in that case all proportion between action and political demands would be lost: means would cease to be commensurate with ends... (Clausewitz 1989, 585)

This thesis bases conflict escalation in war off the interaction of the two sides, whether they be the sides fighting the war or the intervening nations. Escalation can occur through inadvertence—meaning that one side cannot understand the pressure their actions place on their opponent. This connection identifies a linking between escalation dynamics and the security dilemma and the ability of both to increase the possibility of escalation in war (Jervis 1978, 167–214; Talmadge 2019, 868). The threat of inadvertent escalation could lead to the increased need to manage the risk of escalation. While existing scholarship does an excellent job of describing how escalation can happen, it does not look at specific ways to *avoid* escalation; controlling the risk of escalation that intervention brings on. Instead, Smoke, Khan, and others took a more holistic and wide approach to exploring the prevention of a conventional war from escalating to a nuclear war. This thesis therefore explores the gap in the previous escalation literature

Contemporary escalation theory as we currently know it is focused on avoiding nuclear war and saw its start during the Cold War as a means of countering bipolar superpower confrontation. As the proliferation of nuclear weapons among the major powers increased, both sides came to the realization that an uncontrolled escalation could lead to a horrific nuclear war. Much of the early writings on escalation management centered on how to prevent conventional wars from turning nuclear. As concerns of conventional war turning nuclear rose, the debate on how to control conflict escalation “drew the attention of policymakers, strategists, and scholars” (Morgan et al. 2008, 7).

One of the first was Herman Kahn, researcher at RAND, and intellectual heavyweight in the study of nuclear war and its prevention. He set the stage for the study of escalation in *On Escalation: Metaphors and Scenarios*. Kahn’s work would serve as

one of the earliest, and best-known, models on escalation. Within *On Escalation*, Kahn uses the metaphor of a ladder to describe war escalation as a linear arrangement of increasing levels of escalation (Karasik et al. 2018, 38). Each vertical rung stands for an increase in conflict escalation. He includes an analysis of three categories of escalation: “compound escalation, increased intensity, and widen area escalation” (Kahn 1965, 5). Kahn’s work also contributed to the understanding of conflicts widening, which he addressed in both the compound and widen area parts of his theory. Of value to this thesis is Kahn’s thoughts on exporting conflicts outside their original area. *On Escalation* acknowledges that the purpose of expanding conflicts is twofold. First, it is to allow for the attainment of a state’s objectives. Second, and important to this work, it is a response to an escalation, perceived or actual, by an opponent.

Conflict escalation is perceived as usually occurring as an interactive process involving two competitors, each escalation carrying the threat of the use of force or the actual use of force, all in response to the other belligerents’ actions (Morgan et al. 2008, 9). Escalation does not always present as a tit-for-tat model, where one side carries out an escalatory action and then the other side responds, though it can involve this scenario, as discussed in Chapter 4. Escalation also can and does occur as unilateral action, completely independent of the other side’s actions. This thesis will focus on the dynamic between both a tit for tat and unilateral escalation, though these are not the only forms, since even in a unilateral escalation there is often a delayed reciprocal action that results in an escalatory response.

Conflict conditioning often shapes how interveners will perceive escalatory patterns of behavior within a conflict. Richard Smoke, in *War: Confronting Escalation*,

identifies that “there are different ladders for every conflict, and they bear only a loose resemblance to one another” (Smoke 1978, 252). According to Smoke, understanding each intervener’s escalatory threshold, or the line where a combatant, or in this research’s case, interveners, crosses as established threshold of scope or intensity in the conflict is crucial. Smoke addresses this through understanding the limits (salient) of a conflict prior to the start. Defining limits, even roughly, usually occurs during the posturing before a conflict. Smoke defines escalatory action as crossing or expanding these pre-established limits (Smoke 1978; Fralen 1994, 8). For Smoke, the management of escalation focuses on avoiding a vertical escalation in violence to the level of direct conflict (Talmadge 2019, 867). For example, the decision to ship more technologically advanced weapons that a client could use to target civilians is escalatory, even if their use did not result in a nuclear war.

The Soviets also understood and feared conflict escalation. Fears that limited wars, what the Soviet military called local wars, could grow into a world war influenced Politburo intervention thinking. The danger of local wars, wrote Colonel V. Larionov in November 1968, was their possible escalation to a world war if the nuclear powers became involved (Katz 1982, 16). In the years before the period in question, Soviet military thought identified that some ways to limit wars were to limit the participants and the types of weapons used. Specifically, General of the Army I. Shavrov (commandant of the General Staff Academy) believed that local wars could be “limited by the number of participant countries and the limits of a defined geographic region of military actions and, as a rule, is waged with conventional weapons” (Katz 1982, 69). By 1975, the Politburo understood from experience that establishing limits on the intervention was the best way

to keep wars limited. To establish limits, the Soviet military offered credible signs of restraint in hopes they would prevent a competitive intervention escalation.

Earlier escalation work does not adequately address the interaction of major powers that choose to intervene in a conflict. Instead, much of the previous literature has focused on escalation as it relates to nuclear war. As Austin Carson points out in *Secret Wars: Covert Conflict in International Politics*, it is appealing to control escalation in conflict (Carson 2018, 11). Prior work has helped to explain how control happens at a nuclear weapon level. How major powers control escalation during more conventional wars is not. Even less explored is escalation control during indirect foreign military interventions. While limited war theory literature offers important lessons, it does not adequately trace the importance of controlling escalation at a more conventional level. This thesis works to fill that gap by offering a theory to explain why escalation control is necessary and addresses ways major powers can control escalation during interventions.

Risk and the Security Dilemma

The concept of the security dilemma is a classic international relations theory lauded by Charles Glasser as the “key to understanding how, in an anarchical international system, states with fundamentally compatible goals still end up in competition and war” (Glaser 1997, 171). The basic premise of the security dilemma, first developed by Herbert Butterfield and John Herz, posits that “what one does to enhance one’s own security causes reactions, that in the end, can make one less secure” (Brown 1993, 104). In a typical security dilemma scenario, insecurity by a state leads to escalating competition between states as they strive to increase security. This increased competition leads to the possibility of increase tensions, culminating in war. This

phenomenon occurs even when both sides enter the competition with defensive intentions and neither seeks to spark a conflict.

The logic of the security dilemma is best understood as a behavioral dynamic where the insecurity breeds competition with escalatory effects. Adam Liff and G. John Ikenberry, in “Racing toward Tragedy? China’s Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma,” noted that states would prefer to avoid a conflict brought about by the security dilemma if they could receive credible commitments of the other side’s peaceful, or status quo, intentions (Liff and Ikenberry 2014, 58). Liff and Ikenberry went on to highlight that states who find themselves in a security dilemma situation are “not pursuing offensive or revisionist strategies and do not seek domination or conquest” over the other state (Liff and Ikenberry 2014, 58). Instead, states are often just status quo security seekers.

Earlier scholarship on the security dilemma, most noticeably that completed by Robert Jervis, attempted to identify the historical circumstances and variables that created, intensified, or downplayed the role of the security dilemma in given historical events. Jervis’ work is the most well-known and remains the most easily digestible work on the topic. Jervis identifies two key variables in the security dilemma. The first and most important of these variables is the difficulty in distinguishing between a state’s offensive and defensive postures. The second is the degree to which an offensive weapons technology gives the owning state an advantage over its adversary. Jervis argues that when states fail to distinguish the separation of offensive and defensive forces, weapons, or state intentions the possibility of a conflict intensifies (Jervis 1978). Jervis’ key insight concerning the security dilemma debate centers on the fact that as it becomes

more difficult for states to find any distinguishing features between the offensive and defensive measures of an adversary, the greater the intensity of the spiral into a security dilemma. This is key to the thesis because it demonstrates the necessity of restraint signaling as a means of distinguishing the separation between the two interveners.

Charles Glaser's contribution to the security dilemma literature is as equally important as that of Jervis. Glaser, in his work "The Security Dilemma Revisited," examined whether the character of adversarial states involved affects the dynamics of the dilemma. He found it was important to consider the perceptions of the states entering the competition as a predictive tool to evaluate the outcome of entering a security dilemma scenario (Glaser 1997). In his work, Glaser identified the key element of states entering a security dilemma as whether or not adversaries had an accurate knowledge of the other states' motives. Second, Glaser, like Jervis, identifies two key variables necessary to assess the potentiality of a security dilemma scenario manifesting. First, Glaser finds distinction between status quo states, or those who are just security-seeking states, and states that are greedy states, intent on fulfilling revisionist goals through an associated military buildup (Liff and Ikenberry 2014, 60). Glaser found that security dilemmas occur most often between two states when "interests are otherwise largely aligned and that have a shared interest in avoiding war" (Liff and Ikenberry 2014, 60). Glaser's second contribution deals with the information realm of the security dilemma. When states enter competition, the chances of entering a security dilemma scenario are influenced by the information adversaries have about the other competitor. Transparency of intentions, or lack of transparency, can lead to a lack of signaling, or cross signaling of

adversary intentions. This lack of or crossed signaling can drive a descent into a security dilemma.

Recent scholarship by Andrew Mumford has tried to link the security dilemma to proxy warfare. Mumford identified that any gains made by a state would often throw off the delicate alliance politics and regional power balances, and therefore be perceived as a threat (Mumford 2013, 43). This creates vulnerability and risk, which states must act and make decisions on. Therefore, Mumford felt that proxy warfare could circumvent the security dilemma by choosing to use indirect foreign military intervention to minimize the vulnerability to risk (Mumford 2013, 43-44).

Mumford and others have identified that risk is the binding variable between the security dilemma and proxy warfare but left some conceptual gaps over where the risk exists. They have linked risk and proxy war in relation to the minimized vulnerability of escalation that the execution of a proxy war takes over a direct foreign military intervention. Mumford and others do not identify the risk of escalation *once* an indirect foreign military intervention takes place. The connection between proxy war and the security dilemma does not only exist in proxy war's ability to circumvent the security dilemma. In fact, it exists within the escalatory dynamic that occurs when a major power chooses to intervene in a conflict. Therefore, this thesis will build on the important lessons provided by Jervis, Mumford, and others concerning the security dilemma, while building upon their research to further explore the risk-restraint dynamic inherently present in an indirect foreign military intervention.

A Brief History of the Conflict Case Studies

The Yom Kippur War

The Yom Kippur War, or the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, was a nineteen-day long conflict between Israel and an Arab coalition led by Egypt. On October 6, 1973, the Arab militaries launched a surprise attack against the state of Israel. Their initial goal of the conflict was the return of Arab territories seized by Israeli forces in an earlier 1967 conflict.

Egyptian military forces crossed over the Suez Canal and raced East through Israeli defensive lines and the Israeli-occupied Sinai Peninsula. In the East, Syria simultaneously invaded the Golan Heights in a bid to recapture lost territory. Syrian forces were unusually successful in the opening days of the conflict. Israel was able to stalemate the conflict within 72 hours of the start of the invasions, though at substantial cost of material and forces.

Both the Soviet Union and United States would choose to intervene with massive arms shipments after the first couple of days of fighting. By the fifth day of fighting, Israel had lost over 500 tanks, the Syrians, over 900, and both sides were running dangerously low on ammunition and anti-aircraft missiles (Porter 1986, 114). Starting on the 10th of October, both Soviet and American arms began to flow into their respective sides, the Soviets backing the Arabs, and the U.S. backing Israel. Initial shipments and advisors flew in on air bridgeheads with subsequent shipments flowing in over sea. By the 14th, large-scale airlifts had begun on both sides.

The large-scale arms shipments from the major powers were beneficial for both sides. For the Arabs, it prevented an embarrassing defeat at the hands of the Israelis. For Israel, it helped turn the tide from stalemate to victory in the desert.



Figure 1. Israel and Occupied Territories, October 1973

Source: Doyle 2016, xv.

The Angolan Civil War

The Angolan Civil War began in 1975 and continued until 2002. Scholars break the conflict into three periods. The first, and shortest, lasted from the end of Portuguese colonial rule through to 1976 and the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) victory over its rivals. While the civil war would continue for another twenty years, the first few years of the conflict saw the greatest foreign intervention of the war and is the key period of focus for this thesis.

Angola gained its independence from Portugal in November 1975 following a military coup in Portugal. Prior to the coup, Portugal's military proved effective at fighting the nationalist counterinsurgency within Angola. Early on, foreign military powers showed little interest in Portugal's war. Only the Soviets were sending aid to the MPLA, totaling roughly \$63 million (Legum and Hodges 1976, 10–15). The coup in Lisbon changed that as the new regime declared an immediate end to the colonial wars and a yearlong liberation of its imperial holdings. Portugal's sudden shift touched off a civil war and caused a dramatic change. Now, increased quantities of weapons, money, and aid flooded into the region as major powers were eyeing new opportunities on the African continent (NSC 1970).

With liberation and a Portuguese withdrawal on the horizon, the war shifted from a colonial war to a three-way civil war amongst the three national liberation movements: the Marxist *Movimento Popularde Libertagdo de Angola* (MPLA), the *Frente Nacional de Libertacao de Angola* (FNLA), and the *Unido Nacional para a Independancia Total de Angola* (UNITA).

Each of the three factions signed peace agreements with the new Portuguese government. Portugal and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) vainly hoped that a three-way peace agreement signed in Alvor, Portugal on January 15, 1975, would limit the infighting between the three rebel factions since each would have an equal say in the new government. The ink on the Alvor Agreement had hardly dried before the new government fell apart. Fighting between the MPLA and FNLA again broke out around the capital, spilling across Angola. By late 1975, the warring factions had each established distinct areas of operation and cemented their legitimacy among their people, and with it, a loss of any hope of a peaceful colonial transition within Angola.

At its core, the Angolan conflict was a civil war. The power vacuum left behind after the Portuguese withdrawal in 1975 left three competing factions, the FNLA, MPLA, and UNITA all vying for control. This fresh conflict was just the precursor to a much longer military struggle about to descend across Angola. Each of the three factions had its benefactors, the MPLA had support from the Soviets, and the FNLA and UNITA each received outside support from Western backers. Support for the factions started as early as the 1960s, often as cash payments, advisor support, or covert weapons shipments.³ As the Portuguese prepared to pull their final troops from Angola, the size of the major power intervention within Angola increased. As intervention increased, so did the possibility of an intervention escalation.

The collapse of the Alvor agreement precipitated an explosion in the conflict. Angola quickly became a battleground of the larger long war taking place in the Third World. Angola represented access to natural resources, strategic basing facilities, and a chance to sway the balance of power in Southern Africa. Portugal's decolonization

struggles in Africa came at the same time that Leonid Brezhnev, Soviet premier, was hoping to embrace a more global role. The Soviets keenly watched the United States military withdraw from Vietnam, judging that U.S. foreign policymakers were uninterested in intervening abroad after such a disastrous defeat. Even though détente talks were well underway, The Soviets misinterpreted détente talks as a recognition of the viability of the USSR as a global power (Garthoff 2015, 73).

For the Western Powers, the U.S. and South Africa, Angola represented both a geopolitical and existential threat. The U.S. worried about the strategic status quo in Southern Africa, and the U.S. maintained a strong desire for political stability in the region. South Africa feared the existential threat they believed communism and the Marxist threat could bring on South Africa and Namibia. Competing ideologies concerning the future of Angola, coupled with exploding regional violence, made the country ripe for an indirect foreign military intervention by both the U.S. and Soviet Union.



Figure 2. Map of Angola

Source: CIA 1990.

Chapter Summary

This chapter covered the relevant literature in the realm of foreign military interventions, proxy war, escalation, limited war theory, and the security dilemma. Yet, theoretical gaps in the literature remain. Scholars have conceptually stretched the term proxy war to a point that it has become a catch-all term for any war that involves foreign involvement. Defining the term *competitive foreign military interventions*, and returning to its use over proxy war, is necessary to accurately capture the conflicts this research

studies. Escalation, historically concerned with preventing nuclear war, has a secondary role in understanding how intervention does or does not escalate. Also important is an innate understanding of limited war theory, as it is necessary to recognize the many approaches that nations take to signal their intentions to not escalate a conflict into a major war. Finally, the risk of intensifying military competitions between intervening foreign military powers risks spiraling into a security dilemma scenario, where the actions of one status quo adversary, a security seeker, risks intensifying the risk of competition through an inadvertent escalation. The next chapter introduces the theory behind the research, discusses the role of game theory in competitive interventions, and demonstrates the power that verifiable limits can have on preventing conflict escalation in the security dynamic present in a competitive foreign military intervention.

¹ Carson points out in *Secret Wars* that there are multiple different definitions of what a foreign military intervention includes. Patrick Regan defines third-party intervention as “the supply or transfer of troops, hardware, or intelligence and logistical support to the parties in a conflict. My definition closely aligns with Regan’s.

² Kissinger felt that nuclear threats were a meaningful method of restraint, but that the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) would lead to catastrophic destruction. Kissinger pursued a more strategic limited nuclear plan that Nixon would support in 1974.

³ The Soviet Union, as well as other Warsaw bloc countries, supported the MPLA efforts, while China supported Savimbi and the UNITA. At the time, the U.S. was actively backing the FNLA.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter Introduction

The focus of this research project is to understand how major powers constrain their interventions to prevent escalation. The goal is to begin to develop a generalizable theory of strategic restraint signaling in foreign military interventions. Therefore, this research project will explore examples of restraint signaling to address the primary and secondary research questions. The purpose of this chapter is to apply a research methodology to answering the primary research questions.

Chapter 1 introduced the concept of competitive foreign military interventions. Chapter 1 also introduced the primary research question: Did signals of strategic restraint between the United States and the Soviet Union during competitive foreign military interventions between the years 1970 and 1980 prevent inadvertent conflict escalation?

The secondary research questions are:

1. How does inadvertent escalation in foreign military interventions occur?
2. What is the role of restraint in preventing conflict escalation?
3. What are examples of commodities that help control conflict escalation?

Chapter 2 reviewed the existing body of literature as it relates to competitive foreign military interventions. Chapter 2 also analyzed the rich body of literature covering foreign military interventions and proxy war, escalation, and limited war, while exposing theoretical gaps in the literature concerning how escalation within foreign military interventions is mitigated. The chapter also looked at the conceptual stretching of the term proxy war to a point that it has become a catch-all term for any war that involves

either direct or indirect foreign military intervention. Chapter 2 identified the need to separate the terms competitive foreign military interventions from the broader term of proxy war, as necessary to focus upon the conflicts this research paper studies.

Research Methodology

This thesis is a *theory-proposing* thesis. It advances a hypothesis through a deductive argument. The thesis uses illustrative case studies within this research, discussed below, to demonstrate the theory's plausibility. The research does not conduct strong empirical tests within this thesis (Evera 1997, 89). The study highlights the centrality of restraint signals within indirect foreign military interventions. To effectively analyze how major powers signal restraint in foreign military interventions, the author conducted a qualitative meta-synthesis of available primary and secondary sources.¹ The methodology for this thesis relies on case studies because they allow for the most precise observation of restraint signals, as well as identifying any causal relationship between signals and restraint.

The thesis tests the theory against a structured analysis of restraint signals, highlighting similarities and differences between the illustrative case studies. The thesis uses a modified George and Bennett structured and focused approach of question application. Where their method presents case studies as discrete, this thesis treats the restraint signals as discrete, yet interconnected in their final impact, i.e. deterring conflict.

The George and Bennett approach allows for “standardize[d] data collection, thereby making systematic comparison and cumulation of findings of the cases possible” (George and Bennett 2005, 67). While the thesis only uses two case studies, it is still possible to draw out the process tracing that demonstrates the explanatory power of the

illustrative case study examples. The thesis does not take a between-case-study approach in so much as it does not use present or non-present signals in one case to explain their use or lack of use in another. Instead, it uses between-case explanations to demonstrate the power of present signals in given cases to help explore the theory presented.

Data Collection and Analysis

The thesis will use an illustrative case study method to describe and demonstrate the instances of verifiable intervener limits in the two conflicts presented. Illustrative case studies are primarily descriptive studies that use an instance or two of an event to illustrate a situation. Illustrative case studies are descriptive in nature and are intended to add realism and validity through in-depth examples to the limits discussed (Baškarada 2014, 3). The illustrative case study method helps to bridge the gap between researcher and reader, which allows for a common understanding of the topics discussed.

The descriptive nature of the theory, combined with using illustrative case studies, is an attempt to develop a progression from the descriptive and analyzed meta data to a definable relationship between restraint signals and the avoidance of inadvertent escalation of a conflict. The restraint signals introduced in Table 1 were partially drawn from the work of Noel Anderson with additions. Anderson's original work identifies the following restraints: Advisors versus combat troops, geographic area of operations, weapons, lethal versus non-lethal aid, and targeting (Anderson 2019, 701-702). This thesis further refines and builds off Anderson's restraint signals to better capture the dynamic of restraint signaling present within the research question.

This thesis differentiates itself from the restraint signals introduced in Anderson's work in two main areas. First, Anderson names five restraint examples, as outlined

above, but does not equally apply to his two case studies. He introduces his restraint signals as examples that “can help elucidate the form and function of these credible signs of restraint” (Anderson 2016, 50). Therefore, he uses only the ones that apply to a specific case, versus applying all the signals to show where escalation control does not take place. This is an important departure my work makes to demonstrate instances that missing restraint signals may have led to conflict escalation. Second, this thesis combines some similar signals (geographic limits and targeting) and adds one (timing of arms shipments). Anderson leaves the dynamic of restraint signals concerning arms shipment timing and, when interveners sent clients shipments, unexplored. This restraint signal provides a verifiable restraint behavior, that when evaluated against timelines of major conflict negotiations, demonstrates another important signal worth exploring. This dynamic is clear in of the conflict case studies. Like Anderson, this thesis takes the position that these signals help interveners signal intention through actions and through patterned behavior.

Escalation limiting signals are evident within the specific geographic and temporal context of the case studies presented through the thesis but are not indicative of all restraint signals present through all interventions. The four signals presented in this thesis are applicable to the time period found within the case studies.

To visualize this methodology, the thesis will use the following restraint signal descriptive analysis matrix (Table 1), further described below:

Table 1. Restraint Signal Descriptive Analysis Matrix

Conflicts		Restraint Signals							
		Weapons Shipments and Aid		Timing of Arms Shipments		Advisor versus Combat Troops		Geographic Limits and Targeting	
		US	USSR	US	USSR	US	USSR	US	USSR
		Yom Kippur War							
Angolan Civil War									

Source: Created by author.

The descriptive analyses portion of this study explores how major powers utilize intervener restraint, the act of carrying out the signaling described above, by evaluating the credible restraint limits each side displays. There are four verifiable limits researched in this work. They are: the types of arms and equipment shipped, the timing of arms agreements and shipments, the difference between deployed forces as advisors or combat forces, and the use of geographic boundaries and targeting to curtail interactions (Anderson 2019).

The thesis analyzes the verifiable intervener limits explored in this research paper through a mix of primary and secondary sources from both national strategic levels of leadership within the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as accounts of individuals on the ground during the conflicts. The author verified any data collected on arms shipment quantities and timing against open-source data available through the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). The thesis analyzes the verifiable intervener limits against two conflicts within the timeframe outlined in the

primary research question: The Yom Kippur War and The Angolan Civil War. The results of the descriptive analysis will be analyzed at the end of Chapter 4, drawing a logical conclusion concerning the presence of restraint signals in the three foreign military interventions.

Threats to Validity

A valid study is one in which “measures actually measure what they claim to, and if there are no logical errors in drawing conclusions for that data” (Garson 2016, 11). There are eight areas that David Garson identifies as raising questions of validity. He identified three important ones. First, “the level of the item or measure” evaluates validity based on the content of the study. Second, the “level of construct” is concerned with “whether the indicator measures cohere well within the construct they are intended to measure” and not associated as indicators for other identified constructs within the study (Garson 2016, 12). The final area of concern is “at the level of study,” where the threat to validity is concerned with the process of research, whether the research design is sound, and whether any generalizations made during the study were appropriate (Garson 2016, 12).

Chapter 4 addresses Garson’s second and third validity concerns. The thesis presents two case studies, a successful and almost unsuccessful example, to demonstrate the theory and establish the coherence of the construct being measured. The use of a qualitative illustrative case study method to evaluate the primary research question helps to reduce the validity concerns by meeting the value validity concern. Throughout the research, the author presents other smaller examples of the theory not in full case study form, but to help reduce concern of selection bias.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 presented the research methodology for the thesis. The focus of this research project is to understand how major powers avoid conflict escalation when intervening in foreign conflicts, with the goal of developing a generalizable theory of strategic restraint signaling in foreign military interventions. The research paper explores competitive foreign military interventions through a meta-synthesis approach to answering the primary research question: Did signals of strategic restraint between the United States and the Soviet Union during competitive foreign military interventions between the years 1970 and 1980 prevent inadvertent conflict escalation? Chapter 3 identified the threats to validity that could affect this thesis while Chapter 4 addresses these concerns. Chapter 4 presents the theory of intervener restraint signaling during competitive foreign military interventions as well as the two case studies. Chapter 5 presents conclusions, discussions, and recommendations for future research.

¹ There are two important points to keep in mind related to qualitative research methodology. First, qualitative research is concerned with *how* people see and understand data. Secondly, and importantly, is that studying qualitative data comes in many forms. For this thesis, the author chose to complete a meta-analysis, a subset of meta-synthesis.

A qualitative meta-analysis is the attempt to conduct a “rigorous secondary qualitative analysis of primary qualitative findings,” with the purpose of providing a “comprehensive description of a phenomenon” followed by an assessment of the influence of the findings on the situation in study (Timulak 2009, 1). This approach also allows for the systematic combining of pertinent qualitative and quantitative study data from several studies to develop a single conclusion that has greater interpretative power. Meta-analysis allows for the complex analysis of data not easily quantified, as is the case when looking at deterring conflict escalation.

Within the field of meta-analysis, there exists the subfield of meta-synthesis, or the act of “bringing together qualitative data to form a new interpretation of the research field” (Roth n.d.; Atkins et al. 2008, 1–2). Meta-analysis, presented above, and meta-synthesis differ in one important way. Meta-synthesis does not test the hypothesis using quantitative data. Meta-synthesis is useful for generating theories that are explanatory in

nature, and help re-interpret meaning from already established information. The value of conducting a basic form meta-synthesis analysis is the ability to identify findings across different studies and bring their inferences together in the development of a new theory.

CHAPTER 4

THEORY AND ANALYSIS

Chapter Introduction

This chapter develops a logic for intervener restraint signaling based on major power fears of large-scale conflict escalation. The thesis anchors the theory in the nature of escalation. It is also grounded in the fear that the decisions major powers make are bounded by their individual fears over the vulnerability they feel during an intervention (Jervis 1978). Restraint signaling helps to explain how major powers could control conflict escalation. As introduced previously, nuclear parity made large-scale major power conflict less likely, yet did not prevent conflict outright. In fact, the acute fear that an escalation would spiral into a larger conflict helps leaders prioritize actions that signal restraint. While overt interventions are risky, leaders can prioritize escalation controls and embrace restraint signals that communicate a constrained intervention is taking place. This logic makes sense of the initial choice to intervene in a foreign conflict and the dynamics that prevent the acute escalation risk stemming from the intervention.

The first section of Chapter 4 defines intervention scenarios, identifies the actors involved in terms of local actors and major powers, and reiterates the research question. Next, the chapter outlines the risk of escalation in competitive foreign military interventions and introduces competitive intervention restraint as a means of controlling conflict escalation. The last section of Chapter 4 explores the role of restraint signaling. It introduces four means of restraint signals that major powers could use to show intervention restraint: the type of weapons and equipment a major power gives their client, the timing of the arms agreements and shipments, the advisor versus combat troop

distinction, and geographic spatial limitations, including targeting, that limit and signal restraint. This chapter uses illustrative case studies to demonstrate the validity of the used signals. It also evaluates the times that the lack of signaling, or misinterpreted signals, almost led to a conflict escalation.

Intervention Scenarios

How major powers signal each other during an intervention inform the dynamics behind an escalation. Intervening powers face the possibility that their intervention could escalate into a greater conflict. As interveners raise the stakes of the interventions by providing greater and greater support to their clients, the risk of conflict increases.

Figure 3 identifies the type of intervention towards which the theory presented applies. Two major powers (A and B) are each expressing their support for their clients. Within this thesis, that support is through supplying forms of aid—the provision of combat and non-combat related aid by major powers to a state or non-state participant actively engaged in an intrastate or interstate conflict hoping to influence the outcome of the conflict. For this thesis, a major power is one that can wage sustained conflict beyond its immediate periphery (Carson 2018, 27; Danilovic 2002). The major powers must be providing aid to opposed local actors (X and Y) who are engaged in a conflict within a specified and bounded geographic space, noted by the grayed in circle as local area L within Figure 3 (Carson 2018, 27). Local actors X and Y may either be two sovereign states (e.g., Israel and Egypt) or a government and rebel group (e.g., MPLA and UNITA) (Carson 2018, 27). Of key distinction is the restriction of the original conflict between actors X and Y to within geographic area L. This is a key distinction born out in Figure 3 since other territories, designated peripheral area P, surround geographic area L. These

peripheral areas may be political borders, geographic zones, or territorial waters (Carson 2018, 27). Any conflict outside of local area L may indicate a conflict escalation.

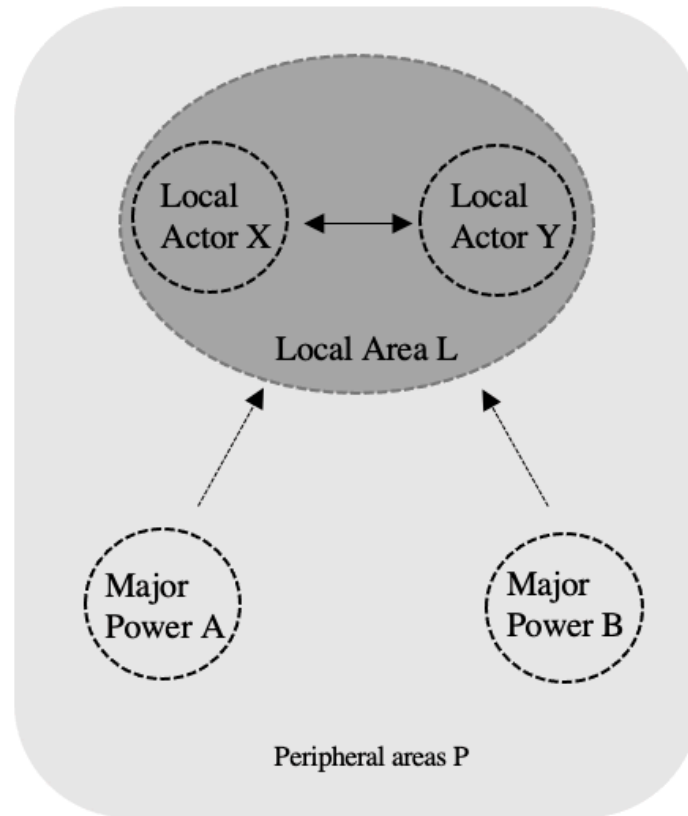


Figure 3. Local War and Major Power Foreign Military Intervention

Source: Modified by author from Carson 2018, 28.

Major Powers A and B both support their local actor client, either actor X or actor Y, themselves in conflict, as represented by the solid arrow between local actors. Chapter 2 outlined the types of support provided through aid represented by the dotted arrows in Figure 3. The actions the major intervening powers take can be observed by other intervening powers. Therefore, major power A can see the intervening steps major power

B undertakes and vice versa. This observation happens in three ways: interveners announce them in a public manner, intelligence resources detect covert intervention, or covert intervention occurs but is widely exposed by third parties like the media (Carson 2018, 28).¹ It stands to reason that if either major power increases their support for their client, the other major power would also increase their support for their client. This would occur in a sequential tit-for-tat method. This unconstrained action raises the risk of an inadvertent escalation.

The central problem facing any intervention scenario is how the intervening states control conflict escalation. Escalation takes many forms. As addressed in the escalation literature, it often takes the form of expanding the intensity of the conflict (vertical escalation) or the expansion of the actual location that the combat occurs in, out of area L and to a new area, peripheral areas P (horizontal escalation) (Carson 2018, 29; Kahn 1965). Escalation dynamics can differ between conflict, as evident in Khan's stepwise ladder in the context of the Cold War (Kahn 1965). For this research, the author will simplify escalation to that of *large-scale escalation*, or "a war that has spread to a regional or larger scope and/or features direct, large-scale, and publicly acknowledged combat among major powers" (Carson 2018, 29). This spreading of conflict outside the confines of the original local area is the type of escalation major powers try to avoid when intervening in a conflict.

Robert Jervis's previously defined concept of security dilemma applies to an analysis of escalation in foreign military interventions by major powers. The concept is generally understood as opposing major powers, each regarding their own security moves as defensive in nature, and their opponents as offensive, whether actual or perceived

(Mitchell 2019, 1). The influential gains made by the Soviets and US in the post-colonial power grab increased each side's perceived defensive security while being perceived as offensive in nature by adversaries. President Dwight Eisenhower's 1953 'domino theory,' which assumed that Soviet expansion would decrease the security of the United States, is evidence of such. The Eisenhower administration worried that as nations came under Soviet control, surrounding nations and regions would follow, ultimately giving the Soviets a marked offensive advantage in terms of the greater Cold War competition.

Jervis continued his argument, stating that "decision makers act in terms of the vulnerability they feel," based primarily "on the price they are willing to gain increments of security," and then on "the perception of threat" (Jervis 1978, 169; Mumford 2013, 44). Inadvertent escalation mirrors the security dilemma because intervening major powers are taking actions that are not meant to be provocative. Yet, major powers may interpret these moves as provocative, thus reducing the sense of security of the other intervening major power. These accidental provocations can occur for a multitude of reasons to include the misinterpretation of signals from either side. Violating pre-established norms or signals may also escalate the conflict. Risk mitigation, the action of preventing an inadvertent escalation becomes important.

The conceptualized security dilemma does not account for risk mitigation or the signaling of restraint major powers can undertake in an attempt to prevent an inadvertent escalation. Fighting conflict through a client is meant to reduce the risk of an escalation, a form of risk management, but can, in fact, increase the risk of an inadvertent conflict escalation by perpetuating the security dilemma scenario (Mumford 2013, 44).

The Risk of Escalation

During an intervention, major powers often face a dilemma concerning how they intervene in a conflict; clients want victory and often ask for more sophisticated supplies to accomplish that goal. Major powers, which use foreign military interventions as a way to achieve goals without escalating a conflict, are often in a bind. Clients need or demand intervening states provide increasing amounts of military aid in order to gain advantages over their enemy, even if that advantage is brief (Anderson 2016, 46; Kaufmann 1956, 112). Major powers often provide this increased amount of aid, so the conflict does not escalate because of major power involvement. This increased aid creates a secondary security dilemma that indirect foreign military intervention was meant to avoid. As greater quantities of weapons, regardless of sophistication, or greater quantities of intervener aid or presence flows into a country, the risk of an intervener escalation naturally increases. The requirement of victory for a client or intervener often encourages an expansion of the conflict into an area previously unaffected by the fighting. This goes counter to the fundamental appeal of war by proxy, the avoidance of a large-scale escalation response by other actors.

Conflict escalation often equals an expansion of the scope or scale of the conflict, typically tied to an increase in the magnitude of the destruction as well (Kahn 1965; Smoke 1978). Expansion occurs during a conflict in two forms: the expansion of intervener involvement, which Kahn terms vertical escalation, or an expansion in the physical space, or horizontal escalation (Kahn 1965). Conflict escalation can also mean an escalation of the conflict between the intervening major powers, the focus of this work, and what the author calls *Intervener Escalation*. Intervener escalation is a

secondary conflict that arises directly between two intervening major powers that feature a direct, large scale, and publicly acknowledged conflict. Figure 4 develops Figure 3 by showing how inadvertent escalation occurs. The intervening major powers now find themselves in direct conflict with each other in the peripheral area P. The grey conflict circle surrounding peripheral area P represents the conflict escalating and widening past the original local area. The arrows linking major powers represents the emergence of a direct large-scale escalation conflict (Carson 2018, 30).

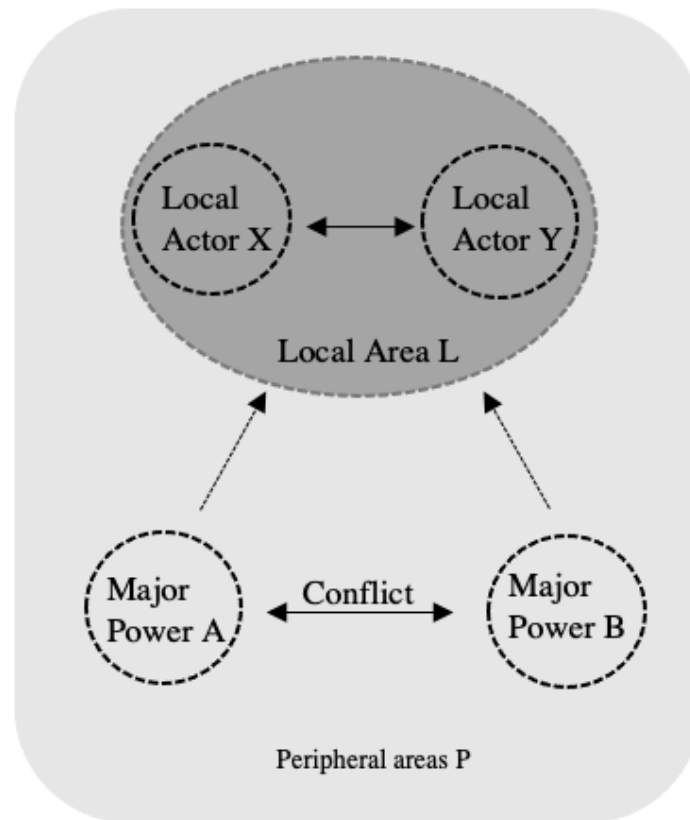


Figure 4. Local War and Intervener Escalation

Source: Modified by author from Carson 2018, 29.

When major powers decide to increase their military support to a client, they risk entering an escalation/ counter escalation dynamic, similar to the dynamic action-reaction cycle found within the security dilemma. Each intervener would observe the increased support, subsequently increasing their support to their respective client. The escalation/counter-escalation dynamic is open-ended since there is no visible limit to the actions. As one intervener escalates, the other responds at a greater level, and so on. Since limits of the escalation are not clear to observers, there is a spiral towards conflict: intervener actions drive an increased reaction by the other intervener. Thomas Schelling called this classic case of brinkmanship—both sides continuously escalating actions—the “threat that leaves something to chance” (Schelling 1981). Since major power interveners are unaware of the level of escalating support their opposite is providing, they respond with their own unmediated increases in support. These escalatory actions purposely exploit the new security dilemma present, and inevitably raise the risk of escalation.

A 2008 Rand study, *Dangerous Thresholds: Managing Escalation in the 21st Century*, describes inadvertent escalations as occurring when:

...combatant’s intentional actions are unintentionally escalatory, usually because they cross a threshold of intensity or scope in the conflict or confrontation that matters to the adversary but appears insignificant or is invisible to the party taking the action. Such a failure to anticipate the escalatory effects of an action can result from a lack of understanding of how the opponent will view the action, it may result from incorrectly anticipating the second- or third-order consequences of the action in question, or both (Morgan et al. 2008, 23).

Major power interveners risk escalation when they increase their support to their clients with no visible restraint. The central challenge of an intervening major power, therefore, is to intervene in a way that does not cause their adversary to escalate the conflict. Major powers cannot deter or prevent all inadvertent escalations. This is because

escalation is often a result of decision makers failing to choose the best actions during an intervention (Morgan et al. 2008, 24). Therefore, to reduce the risk of an inadvertent escalation and prevent a wider conflict, interveners must be “enlightened” through restraint signaling (Figure 5). This is primarily a coordination challenge in which the major powers must signal their interventions limits to avoid potential intervener escalation. Once a major power can accomplish a level of coordination, they can now achieve their intervention’s political goals while avoiding the possibility of widening hostilities.

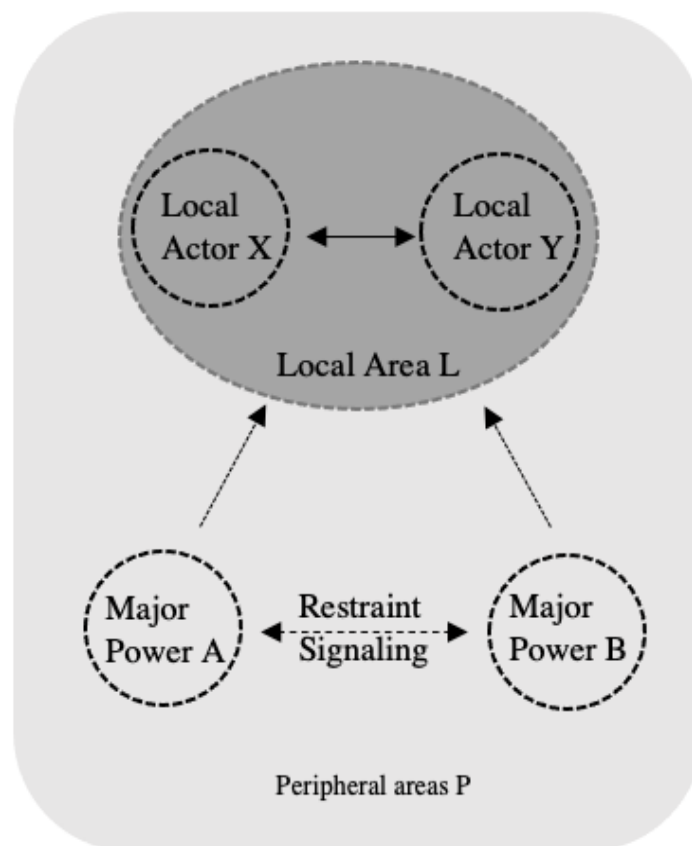


Figure 5. Local War and Intervention Restraint Signaling

Source: Modified by author from Carson 2018, 29.

Restraint Dynamics in Competitive Foreign Military Interventions

The dynamics of how third-party major powers approach avoiding inadvertent escalation while engaging in a foreign military intervention is best modeled using a conceptual discussion of game theory. Game theory is useful because a game can serve as a formal model of a strategic situation. Strategic situations are those in which the player's actions depend on those of their opponent (Schipper 2021, 1). The scenario in question is one of strategically interdependent behavior, in that what one player does affects the outcomes of the other and what the other player does affects outcomes of the first player. Simply put, what Player A does affects Player B and vice-versa. It is not just about winning and losing. By looking at the theory of interactive behavior through the lens of game theory, the thesis can more quickly draw parallels between one situation of intervention and another, and more closely draw a generalizable theory of escalation restraint in foreign military interventions.

To visualize a possible scenario, envision two major powers, the United States and Soviet Union, intervening in some local situation that falls within Third World Cold War dynamics. As noted in the thesis above, each side views the situation in terms of relative gains (domino theory) as well as within the security dilemma, that the actions of one decreases the security of the other (Maass 2021, 38). Both sides in this scenario exist under a status quo of the desire to avoid conflict between the major powers.

The dynamics of how third-party major powers approach foreign military interventions, as described conceptually above, are best modeled as a repeatable mixed motive restraint game (the 2x2 stage game) where each player does or does not show intervention restraint (Figure 6). A game is considered mixed motive for two reasons.

First, the preferences of players within a mixed motive game are partly in cooperation (coincident) and partly opposed (competition) (Gallo and McClintock 1965, 68–78). This means that players could cooperate or could compete within the scenario. Second, game players make decisions independent of each other. A mixed motive game best represents the scenario in question for two distinct reasons. First, a pure coordination game would be one in which there is no conflict of interest between the players, and payoffs for each player are identical. This type of game does not describe competitive foreign interventions, which are defined by conflicts of interest and variable payoffs between opposing sides. Second, a zero-sum game would model player interests diametrically opposed to each other. What is beneficial to one player is necessarily bad for the other. A mixed motive game models payoffs between these two extremes. The mixed motive game in this scenario differs from a zero-sum game in that the sum of the payoffs differs between the outcomes. This is most important because a mixed motive game is a non-zero-sum game, in that one player does not gain at the expense of the other.

Major powers in a mixed motive game make decisions interdependent from and simultaneous to each other's decision. The preferences of the players involved would no longer be either purely competition or cooperation. Players instead have preferences that are mixed. In a mixed strategy approach, the best choice of an intervener (player) is to do the same that the other player does.

Within the mixed motive restraint game (Figure 6) there are two Nash Equilibria (NE) in Box A (Restraint, Restraint) and Box D (No Restraint, No Restraint). Both are Nash Equilibria because they are the mutual best responses to the game, or the no-regret outcome.² Within the two Nash Equilibria, the Pareto optimal solution is Box A

(Restraint, Restraint) because no intervener can do better without the other doing worse. This is true because either Box B, C, or D makes one intervener better while making the other worse, leading the game to continue toward a possible escalation scenario and major power conflict. Box D is Pareto inefficient or Pareto suboptimal, since the possibility to improve exists within Box A.

		Major Power B	
		Restraint Signaling	No Restraint Signaling
Major Power A	Restraint Signaling	A <u>Strong</u> intervener restraint Outcome: Low chance intervener escalation	B <u>Mixed</u> intervener restraint Outcome: Medium chance intervener escalation
	No Restraint Signaling	C <u>Mixed</u> intervener restraint Outcome: Medium chance intervener escalation	D <u>Weak</u> intervener restraint Outcome: High chance intervener escalation

Figure 6. Mixed Motive Intervention Restraint Game

Source: Created by author.

Players in the mixed motive restraint game are going to signal. How those signals are interpreted and understood is important. If restraint signals are always understood, and the assumptions concerning the desire not to go to war are held, then major powers will not exist outside of Box A. There would simply be no reason for them to exist in any other Box within the 2x2 game. But if a major power doesn't understand or misses the restraint signal, then players will find themselves in other boxes. Missing or

misinterpreting signals would mean that players could end up in Box B or C, with an eventual shift to Box D if each side fails to recognize the escalation. This highlights the difficulty in demonstrating credible restraint signals to your adversary so that they will not be misinterpreted.

Since the mixed motive game presented within this thesis repeats, Figure 6 represents the base game, or the stage. The stage represents a single iteration of the repeated game. Repeated games consider that players need to recognize the impact that their decisions take in so much that their reputation is formed during each stage of the game. This becomes important within the mixed motive game presented in this thesis because player reputation is connected to signaling receptiveness and could affect the long-term play of the repeated game.

Therefore, players will pursue a strategy that gives them a best outcome within the game. That best outcome, the one that is best for both players, is displaying a level of restraint within their individual intervention as a way of avoiding potential escalation. By modeling a major power's attempt at conducting intervener restraint, this thesis identifies clear conditions, the desire to avoid escalation resulting in major power conflict, that incentivize major powers to display restraint.

Coordination

The challenge for major power interveners is coordinating their decision of restraint in order to avoid a conflict escalation. When actual communication between opposition interveners is unlikely or impossible, interveners must communicate the decision of restraint through actions that establish limits. To do this successfully, major powers also must overtly communicate these limits in recognizable and verifiable ways.

This verifiable coordination signals to other interveners that the major powers do not wish to escalate the conflict. Tacit coordination is one way to communicate the intervener limits that convey restraint.

Thomas Schelling introduced tacit coordination in 1960 to describe communication through deeds over words (Schelling 1981, 53). A sequenced pattern of behavior allows intervening nations to find limits and regulate the competition in a way that avoids escalation. Limits are different for each conflict and dependent on intervener interests and the strengths and weaknesses of the client. These verifiable limits show the restraint that a major power is displaying. Limits, according to Schelling, need to be “objective,” in that both sides are aware of them, and “unique,” in that they are easily identifiable (Schelling 1981, 57–58).

Once major powers identify limits, they can signal intervener restraint through their actions or by behaving in predictable patterns that are verifiable. Major powers can measure intervener restraint by evaluating the verifiability of the following credible restraint limits. They are: types of arms and equipment shipped, the timing of arms agreements and shipments, the difference between deployed forces as advisor or combat forces, and the use of geographic boundaries.

Weapons Shipments and Other Military Aid

Weapons and military aid transfers from intervener to client have been a usual hallmark of most interventions in the time period in question. Two types of distinctions regarding weapons systems are important: quantitative and qualitative. The volume and types of weapons and military aid passed to clients can show the level of support provided by the intervener, as well as communicate any restraint the intervener is taking

(Porter 1986, 63). Quantitative transfers, such as large amounts of small arms, including rifles, ammunition, rocket launchers, and even tanks and some aircraft do not seem to be useful as a restraint signal. For example, during the interwar years, 1930-1939, between the World Wars, the Soviets made up just 6% of the world arms trade (Porter 1986, 37). By the 1970s, the Soviets made up a third of all arms transfers worldwide, with 31% of all Soviet arms transfers being sold to the Third World, much of it to Africa.

Interveners communicate restraint through the qualitative distinction between weapon systems as well. Interveners can signal levels of restraint through the type of weapons shipped. Even though volume and sophistication may increase as the conflict continues, shipping only weapons not capable of delivering strategic effects tacitly signals restraint. The provision on non-strategic weapons brings with it less escalation risk since adversary interveners may not view their shipments as raising a security risk in the intervention. This security risk comes from the nature of the weapons effects the shipped weapons are capable of achieving.

Interveners tacitly communicate restraint through the types or mix of weapons shipped and their level of sophistication and capability. This qualitative distinction between weapon types, lethal effects (strategic vs tactical) and non-lethal, can signal restraint. Small arms, such as rifles and ammunition, differ from bombers or missiles capable of deep strikes against population centers or against strategic targets, thus inflicting strategic effects.³ Advanced weapons transfers come with a security risk. The transfer of some types of sophisticated weapons, those capable of an increased destructive power or those that change the strategic outlook of the conflict, can increase the risk of intervener escalation. For example, the United States understood this

predicament in Afghanistan as it approached supplying the Stinger missile system to the Afghan Mujahedin. Shipping more than what the client needed to harass the Soviets, and the risk of the “pot boiling over” into intervener escalation, was too great (Kuperman 1999, 225).

Non-lethal military aid occupies another class of distinction that can signal restraint. Lethal aid is used to destroy the enemy while non-lethal aid, such as radars, medical, or communication equipment, is used to preserve or help friendly forces, not directly destroy the enemy. Delineating a distinction between lethal aid and non-lethal aid helps identify the scope of an intervention and helps prevent an intervener escalation scenario.

The Yom Kippur War is an example of the Soviets’ and Americans’ misunderstanding of the dynamic of restraint signaling and its role in controlling escalation. Conversely, the Angolan Civil War is an example of both sides understanding the restraint dynamic that arms shipments held in controlling escalations.

Table 2. Arms Shipment Descriptive Analysis Matrix

Conflicts	Arms and Aid Shipments	
	US	USSR
	Yom Kippur War	
	Angolan Civil War	

Source: Created by author.

The Yom Kippur War

Both the United States and Soviet Union flooded the Middle East with arms during the three-week Yom Kippur War. The massive support on both sides seriously damaged détente between Washington and the Kremlin. It was during the three-week conflict that the Soviets learned firsthand the risk of not restraining weapons shipments.

Early on, the Soviets refused to give the Arabs any long-range heavy bombers, afraid that any destruction of Israeli towns and cities would escalate the conflict to an unsustainable level. The Soviets feared that transferring such weapons capable of strategic effects would drive the U.S. to become involved to protect Israel. But the Soviets came perilously close to escalating that regional conflict when they transferred sophisticated Soviet surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), Sagger anti-tank weapons, and TU-16 medium bombers, capable of launching large munitions (Porter 1986, 129; Kissinger 1999). What follows is a sample of what the Soviets also transferred: 300 T-55 tanks, 500 T-34 and T-54 tanks, 30 Mi-8T transport helicopters, 25 TU-16 medium bombers, 100 BRDM-2s, and 250 assorted MiG short range fighter aircraft, withholding the newer and more capable MiG-23 and MiG-25 (SIPRI 2021; Scherer 1978, 8). Of note, not transferred to either the Egyptians or Syrians were TU-22 Soviet long range heavy bombers, capable of striking at the heart of Israel. By the end of the short conflict, the Soviets shipped 12,500 tons of equipment by air and another 63,000 tons by sea (Quandt 1977, 602).

The United States focused much of its transfers on replacing the arms and equipment the Israelis lost in the conflict. Shortly after the Soviets started shipping arms to the Arabs, Washington approved arms shipments to Israel. Israeli El Al planes

appeared at Oceana naval air station near Norfolk, VA to begin Operation Nickel Grass, the strategic airlift of arms and aid to Israel. Initial U.S. shipments to Israel were covert in nature and shifted to direct arms shipments on October 9th, ostensibly because the Soviets had increased their arms shipments. Washington's effort to resupply Israel was massive. Purportedly, Kissinger wanted to out ship the Soviets by 25% (Porter 1986, 136). Washington placed a heavy emphasis on shipping missile replenishment, sending 700 Air to Ground Missiles (300 AGM-45A Shrike and 400 AGM-65 Maverick), 2250 AIM-9D Sidewinder missiles, 46 A-43 Skyhawk light attack aircraft, 2010 BGM-71 TOW anti-tank guided missile system, 12 C-130E Hercules transport aircraft, and 1 M-163 VADS Vulcan Air Defense System which uses a 20mm cannon for air defense. Nothing shipped to the Israelis was capable of eliciting strategic affects as outlined earlier in this work. It is important to note that both Moscow and Washington rushed weapons to the region so quickly to try to make up for battlefield losses that it is hard to make a complete analysis of exact numbers of arms shipped. Sifting through the available after-the-fact primary documents, allows for a good understanding of the arms shipped to both sides. The American resupply effort entailed 51 C-5As and 177 C-141s delivering 22,497 tons of material, though only about 8774 tons would reach Israel before the ceasefire (Scherer 1978, 6).

The Yom Kippur War provides a second example of a failure to avoid escalation. The largest escalation scare of the war came when the CIA told Henry Kissinger that they believed the Soviets had potentially shipped a nuclear weapon to Egypt. Intelligence at the time was sparse, and has contemporarily been called into question, but a CIA Intelligence Bulletin dated October 24, 1973 outlined that five Soviet merchant ships,

carrying 12,000 tons of arms, had made port in Egypt on October 22, 1973 (CIA 1973, 3). One of the ships, the *Mezhdurechenak*, was of concern, believed to be containing nuclear weapons, though the CIA said there were no outward markings to demonstrate such a weapon was on board (NIC 1973a, 2).⁴ Reports also indicated that The *Baltimore Sun* reported in May 1983 that U.S. Air Force General George Keegan, then serving as the director of air intelligence and privy to the top secret intelligence concerning the alleged nuclear weapon, was convinced that a “Soviet freighter moving from a black Sea port towards Egypt... absolutely contained a nuclear weapon...[and the] ship anchored off Alexandria, [Egypt]” (*The Baltimore Sun* 1983). The arrival of the ship coincided with U.S. intelligence observing “a brigade of Soviet officers of the Strategic Rocket Forces arriving at Cairo International Airport” (*The Baltimore Sun* 1983).

Aviation Week and Space Technology magazine, a reliable source at the time, also reported the possibility of a nuclear weapon. Their evidence was a triangulation of sources. Prior to the breakout of hostilities, U.S. intelligence reported that the Soviets had shipped Scud missile systems, capable of carrying a nuclear tip, to Egypt as part of normal aid packages (NIC 1973a, 5). A CIA memo dated 30 October 1973, written in the tone of an after-the-fact assessment, confirmed “Scud associated equipment at two different locations in Egypt,” which added “seriousness to the evidence that Moscow introduced nuclear weapons into the Middle East. The Scud equipment...includes a transporter-erector-launcher unique to the Scud missile in an area near the Tura caves some 10 miles south of Cairo, and two resupply vehicles at Cairo international airport, one of which is carrying a probably canvas-covered missile” (NIC 1973b, 2–4).⁵ The November 5th issue of *Aviation Week* flatly stated that the “the Soviets had sent two

brigades of armed SCUD missiles to Egypt and that the US Government had satellite pictures to prove it” and that “a parallel study conducted within the NSC carried an even more alarmist tone,” on the distinct possibility that nuclear weapons existed in Egypt (NSC 1970, 25). Multiple sources, to include the CIA, reported that the Soviets maintained technical control of the possible nuclear weapons, matching the earlier reporting by the CIA and that found in secondary sources. This is further evidence that the Soviets understood the escalatory nature of such a weapons system (CIA 1973, 2; Porter 1986).

The Angolan Civil War

Unlike the escalation scenario during the Yom Kippur War, the arms and aid intervention in the Angolan Civil War presented a less escalatory situation. Both the United States and the Soviet Union both intervened in the conflict on their respective client’s side; the Soviets on the side of the MPLA and the U.S. supporting the FNLA. The Angolan Civil War would be the Soviet’s debut as a major power in Africa (Porter 1986, 147).

Soviet arms shipments to Angola were expansive.⁶ CIA estimates placed Soviet arms shipments between April and October 1975 at 27 shiploads and 30 to 40 planeloads of arms (Porter 1986, 160). By March 1976, 19 more shiploads and 70 more flights of arms reached the MPLA in Angola. By the end of 1977, the Soviets had sent \$300 million worth of arms and equipment to Angola (Klinghoffer 2019, 28). Agostinho Neto, leader of the MPLA, confirmed in a radio interview that the Soviets supplied him with aircraft, tanks, armored personal carriers, SAM missile systems, and small arms (Risquet 1976; Porter 1986, 115). In the few years of major intervention, the MPLA would receive

22 Mig-17/22 aircraft, 80 T-34 tanks, 150 T-54 tank main battle tanks, 198 APCs, 100 BM-21 122mm mobile rocket launchers, 40 ZSU-57-3 anti-aircraft guns, and large quantities of bazookas, AK-47s, and 122-mm mortars (SIPRI 2021). Vladimir Kostrachenkov backs up the arms transfers in his memoirs on Soviet tanks (T-55 and T-62) as well as fighter aircraft (MiG 17 and MiG 21) arriving in Angola (Tokarev and Shubin 2011, 18). In terms of arms, the Soviets supplied the Angolans everything they needed to win the war. The MPLA also made good use of the stockpiles of arms left by the departing Portuguese Army (Klinghoffer 2019, 41).

Mixed among the small arms and tanks were advanced fighter systems as well. MiG-21 fighter aircraft, earmarked for the MPLA, arrived in the Congo in October 1975 and made their way to Luanda, Angola. The aircraft would not see combat use until March 1976, after most major fighting was complete. Bruce Porter in *The USSR in Third World Conflicts: Soviet Arms and Diplomacy in Local Wars 1945-1980* raises the possibility that Soviet advisors restricted aircraft use to prevent escalation, fearing that the “introduction of advanced fighter aircraft would give Washington justification for shipping more advanced weapons” to their client and raise the possibility of intervener escalation (Porter 1986, 163).

The United States’ intervention in Angola really ramped up when the Soviet client, the MPLA, saw early success in the civil war. Initially, U.S. involvement in the conflict was through money, passed on to UNITA and the FNLA, through the CIA and supported by the 40 Committee, the secret government organization that oversaw all U.S. covert operations. In January 1975, the 40 Committee set aside just \$300,000 to be sent to Holden Roberto for political action; hardly an amount that would make the Soviet

Politburo think the U.S. government was interested in the region (Davis 1978). Early intervention was timid. CIA advisors on the ground reported that shipping the MPLA a “modern weapon system such as a gunship” could overcome their battlefield weaknesses and make a major difference in the conflict (Stockwell 1978, 88, 134). That type of aid would never come. In July 1975, Kissinger would direct the 40 Committee to oversee a hasty increase of covert action under IAFEATURE, all meant to precipitate what Kissinger saw as an unfolding Soviet advancement in Angola in the lead up to the November independence date. U.S intervention under IAFEATURE would last only five months, until December 1975, as available funds for covert action ran out and Congress refused to appropriate any more funding for operations in Angola.⁷

The CIA heavily shrouded their arms shipments to their clients in Angola in secrecy, which makes finding out exactly what arms the CIA shipped challenging. News reporting from as early as September 1975 began to cover covert aid shipments from the U.S. to Angola identifying some types of arms (Gelb 1975). Declassified CIA documents and SIPRI data helps to fill in the holes on shipments. By November 1975, the U.S. had sent 31.7 million dollars in arms, ammunition, and other aid (Porter 1986, 171–72; Isaacson 2005, 678). The United States primarily focused its intervention on monetary contributions to client efforts, eventually transitioning to shipping arms directly to Angola. Early shipments by plane, and routed through Zaire for the CIA’s Angola Program, comprised 12 M-113 APC, 50 SA-7 ‘Grail’ anti-aircraft (SAM) missile systems, assorted small arms including 14 106mm recoilless rifles, 17,258 5.56 and 7.62 rifles, 28,800 .30 cal carbines, 96,300 hand grenades, 60 ¼-ton trucks, almost four million rounds of varying types of ammunition, and significant communications

equipment (Stockwell 1978, 267–68). A sea shipment aboard the SS *American Champion* followed the airlift. The SS *American Champion* arrived in Matadi between 3-9 August with another 9000 M-16 rifles, 6,000 LAW rockets, over 5 million rounds of ammunition, another 160 vehicles, and two shipments referred to Stockwell as “30 Cal. Package Plus Excess” and “7.62 Cal Package” which each consisted of assorted arms and ammunition of each respective caliber potentially packed to outfit a single formation of soldiers (Stockwell 1978, 263–64). A careful examination of multiple sources, from news articles, memories, declassified intelligence documents, as well as secondary sources, demonstrates that, like the Soviets, the United States never shipped weapons capable of causing strategic effects to their clients in Angola.

Both the U.S. and the Soviets seemed to have tailored their arms shipments to Angola to avoid escalation, while just the U.S. did it in the Yom Kippur War. As evident by the illustrative case study, Soviet shipments to Egypt and Syria came perilously close to escalating the conflict. In Angola, both the U.S. and the Soviets withheld weapons capable of strategic effects as well as the latest generation of weapons. Shipments to Egypt were originally restrained, but at one point, the CIA believed that the Soviets had lifted restraints and potentially shipped weapons capable of strategic effects. These illustrative case studies demonstrate how quickly shipping arms capable of strategic effects can shift the escalation dynamic.

Timing of Arms Agreements and Shipments

The types of weapons or military aid shipped from intervener to client are important, but so is the timing of those agreements and shipments. Timing of agreement or shipments can take a few different forms. They could look like transfers before or after

key regional dynamics have occurred (war or peace outbreaks), western power involvement or withdrawal, or they could be delayed around key major power negotiations. The key negotiations do not need to be concerned with the conflict at hand. They could be negotiations on other issues related to the major power relationship (Porter 1986, 64). Rapid shipments may show a firm intervener commitment, while leisurely shipments may show a level of uncertainty surrounding the success of the client in the intervention (Porter 1986, 64).

The consideration of arms agreement timing and shipments shows an appreciation for the consequences of how these shipments might be interpreted. Arms shipment agreements could serve as an instigator of escalation if not carefully managed. Arms shipment timing also reveals policy ideals centered on establishing tacit limits to the intervention, bounding the scope in an easily verifiable way. For example, in the Nigerian Civil War, the Soviet Union held off signing an arms agreement with the Nigerian Federal Military Government (FMG) until after the United States had declared neutrality in the conflict (Porter 1986, 106–9).

Table 3. Timing of Arms Shipments Descriptive Analysis Matrix

Conflicts	Timing of Arms Shipments	
	US	USSR
	Yom Kippur War	
	Angolan Civil War	X X

Source: Created by author.

The Yom Kippur War

Both Washington and Moscow risked escalating the conflict during the Yom Kippur War through a mismanagement of arms shipment timing. Neither side was particularly concerned with controlling when arms shipments flowed into their client since the conflict was so short and appeared, at least in the beginning, existential for Israel. The Soviets seemed the most cognizant of the timing of shipments, but even their usual restraint was absent during this conflict. As demonstrated in other parts of this thesis, the Yom Kippur War very nearly escalated into a larger conflict through restraint mismanagement.

Soviet airlifts to both Egypt and Syria began on October 10, 1973, four days after the conflict started and four days before the United States sent its first shipments. The Soviets shipped over seventy flights of supplies a day, totaling an immense amount of supplies. The only indication the Soviets delayed any shipments was the large sealift that

contained the possible nuclear weapon on October 23rd, the day after United Nations resolution 338 called for a joint ceasefire.

Washington okayed Operation Nickel Grass, the U.S. resupply of Israel, on October 12, 1973, and the first airlift loaded with supplies departed the U.S. on October 14th. From the start to the end, the American resupply of the Israelis was stable and constant, occurring daily. There seemed to be little regard for any of the negotiations concurrently taking place during the resupply. The sole focus seemed to be on preventing the overwhelming defeat and collapse of the Israeli military. U.S. shipments to Israel peaked on October 21st, only a day before the UN passed Resolution 338, indicating that shipments were undertaken during the lead up to the first ceasefire.

The Angolan Civil War

The Soviets were the first nation outside continental Africa to ship arms to Angola after the Portuguese coup. Soviet arms shipments happened in three distinct phases. The first shipment in August 1974 contained mostly small arms and ammunition for about 5000-7000 MPLA soldiers and occurred after the Lisbon coup and months before the Alvor agreements (Porter 1986, 159). This was the time period during which the MPLA was jockeying for power. The Soviets sent a second, larger shipment of small arms in March 1975, roughly three months after the Alvor agreement and two months after the first 40 Committee approval of \$300,000. A third, and what would become the final large shipment, took place in late October 1975, two months after signing the Helsinki Accords, the détente negotiations, a mostly European driven agreement focused on reducing tensions between the Soviets and Western nations. Shipping the third, and largest, shipment of arms to the MPLA, while in the process of signing the Helsinki

accord, did not help the Soviets during negotiations. The final large arms shipment differed for two reasons. First, the Soviets shipped it on their own aircraft. Second, it was the first to contain heavy weapons (tanks, artillery, and aircraft). Moscow cancelled a fourth arms shipment scheduled for December 1975 for two reasons. First, U.S. President Gerald Ford proposed peace negotiations through Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin, which would fall apart and lead nowhere, after which Soviet willingness to ship the fourth weapons shipment began to gain momentum again. Second, and the deciding factor on its cancellation, was MPLA battlefield successes, negating the need for a massive influx of arms through another shipment.

There is no evidence that the Soviets withheld or delayed arms shipments from the MPLA to coerce their clients' actions during the civil war. There is, however, a level of significance in the timing of Soviet arms shipments as they related to the involvement of the United States in Angola. The first two arms shipments, August 1974 and March 1975, took place before the United States became involved in Angola. The 40 Committee set aside just \$300,000 for American political action for Angola in January 1975, hardly an amount that would make the Soviet Politburo think the U.S. government was interested in the region (Davis 1978). These shipments were in line with Soviet practices of heavy involvement before or after the U.S. got involved, timing their shipments so as not to antagonize the U.S. and possibly escalate the conflict.

The United States' timing of arms was less predictable. The first \$300,000 discussed above had no discernable connection other than the fact that it was very close to the signing of the Alvor agreement. This shipment seems to have been a bid to help the FNLA secure a better bargaining position going into the Alvor negotiations. In July and

August 1975, the 40 Committee would authorize a total of \$24.7 million dollars in aid and arms, all before signing the Helsinki CSCE act that the Soviets avoided shipping arms around. The Tunney amendment, signed into law on December 19, 1975, curtailed CIA covert appropriations for the FNLA, but not before the CIA made two more appropriations, one on November 14th and a second on November 21st. Only the final amount of all aid is unclassified, both November aid amounts remain classified, but the author was able to calculate the total to be around \$6.7 million between the two appropriations (Bush 1976). Both of these monetary allotments and arms purchases occurred before Ford proposed peace through Dobrynin in December 1975.

The instances discussed in both wars shows how timing of arms shipments plays a role in controlling the escalation dynamic. The Yom Kippur War demonstrates a case of not monitoring timing while the Angola case is an example of monitoring timing. Both cases also show the value of timing as a restraint signal, both in a positive and a poor way. By comparing the two case studies, the value is clear. Without controlling timing, intervening nations risk escalating the conflict regardless of other restraint dynamics used.

Advisor versus Combat Troops

Within competitive interventions, major powers often provide combat forces to their client. Interveners accomplish this in many ways. It might be for an advise/train or advise/assist role, where clients are provided strategic advice, campaign planning, guidance during field operations, and training. This is exemplified by the provision of U.S. help to the Mujahadeen in Afghanistan. It can also occur in a surrogate or direct

combat role, where clients are provided covert or overt forces to augment or fight on their client's behalf.

It is often the case that when one major power deploys maneuver forces in support of a client, the other does not. That was evident in Korea, Vietnam, and the Soviet-Afghan war. The 1967 Six-Day War is another example of an aversion by major powers to introducing combat forces. In May 1964, Deputy Undersecretary of State Raymond L. Garthoff met with KGB officer and Second Secretary of the Soviet Embassy, Boris N. Sedov, who passed on to Garthoff the message that if the "United States were to become directly involved militarily in the escalating Middle East Conflict, the Soviet Union, too, would have to become involved" (Ginor 2020). While "become involved" was ill defined, it is reasonable to assume that the Soviets meant a widening of the conflict.

Often deployed as part of an intervention, and not accounted for in the above scenarios, is non-combat military advisors. As Anderson has pointed out, this appears to be because they fill a "non-combat" role (Anderson 2016, 52). So, even though major powers supply personnel, direct conflict between interveners in a competitive intervention is rare.

The Soviet military, for example, often deployed combat personnel abroad within Warsaw Pact countries, but not as maneuvering ground forces outside of Europe. They would sometimes deploy fighter pilots or anti-aircraft missile operators, but their contribution to Third World conflict was marginal (Porter 1986, 217). Often, Soviet military contributions were with military advisors, those capable of conducting routine technical assistance, intelligence support, transportation, distribution of weapons, or combat advisor roles (Porter 1986, 229). For the Soviets, advisors did not mean frontline

combat troops. A correspondent from the *London Times* reported that the “major advantage” of the MPLA, “which did not possess any significant weaponry superiority” over its competitors, was its “manifestly superior organizational and infrastructural capability” (Lockyer 2011, 2357). Often, Cuba would fill the void of Soviet ground forces outside of Europe. By 1978, over 40,000 Cuban troops operated abroad in different post-colonial spaces. The Cubans would support when asked by the Soviets, but they also sent forces abroad, particularly to Angola, without asking for Soviet permission (Gleijeses 2003; Porter 1986).

The United States seemed to have been more judicious with its advisors. As the case studies show, American advisors often avoided the front lines, choosing to do their advising from the safety of bases far from the front line or from another country.

Restraining those who serve abroad, with limits on the type of troops deployed to an intervention, serves as a form of tacit communication. Drawing distinctions between advisors and combat troops provides a level of visible restraint in the intervention. These discrete limits are easily recognizable and, even in the absence of direct communication, they are not easily misrepresented (Anderson 2016, 52). These discrete limits also provide the opposing side with a verifiable limit that, if violated, is more easily discernable.

While it would be tactically advantageous to deploy combat forces to support a client and lead to the end of the conflict faster, doing so could risk an inadvertent escalation of the conflict. The distinction between forces serving only in advisor roles, serving only a non-combat training role, and combat troops who exist to engage directly with the enemy helps to regulate the intervention in a recognizable way, even without

explicit communication as seen in the below illustrative case studies (Anderson 2016, 52).

Table 4. Advisor vs Combat Troops Descriptive Analysis Matrix

Conflicts	Advisor versus Combat Troops	
	US	USSR
Yom Kippur War	X	
Angolan Civil War	X	X

Source: Created by author.

Yom Kippur War

The Soviets maintained a healthy advisor presence in Egypt prior to the outbreak of hostilities, even with the thorny relationship between Cairo and Moscow. Sadat, then president of Egypt, was growing wearisome over Egypt's survival singularly tied to the Soviets (CIA 1972, 3). Prior to the outbreak of the conflict, 3,000 to 4,000, and up to 10,000 to 20,000, Soviet military advisors and technicians were present in Egypt and Syria (Quant 1976, 6; CIA 1972, 6). The Soviets also flew in advisors once the fighting started in a bid to keep the Egyptian and Syrian military afloat:

Plainclothes Russian air force technicians reassembled the MiG-21s that were shipped to Syria in the airlift; Russians drove tanks...; air traffic controllers flew to Egypt and Syria to operate radar equipment that was flown in; Soviet engineers repaired military equipment damaged in the fighting (Porter 1986, 134).

There is little to no evidence that the Soviets took part in front line conflict on either the Suez or Golan Heights front. Soviet advisors were present in command posts of both the Egyptians and Syrians, as well as accompanying ground units that were away from the front line of combat.

The largest risk of conflict escalation came on October 24, 1973 when Kissinger received a call from Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin relaying a message from Brezhnev indicating that the Soviet Union planned to unilaterally intervene in the conflict. Ostensibly, the note relayed that the Soviets had grown tired of Israel continuing to “drastically ignore the ceasefire decision [of the United Nations] Security Council” (Brezhnev 1973). In reality, the Soviets were hoping the US would step in and secure peace before the military defeat of both the Egyptians and Syrians. Brezhnev’s message relayed that he hoped that joint action could be taken, or, in its absence, that the Soviets would be taking “appropriate steps unilaterally” (Brezhnev 1973). Coupled with the rumors of the shipment of a nuclear weapon to Egypt, discussed earlier in this work, Kissinger had little reason to disbelieve the conflict was escalating. Consequently, he placed the U.S. military on alert. Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Thomas Moorer received Kissinger’s order to place the military on Defense Condition III (DEFCON III) on the 25th of October. DEFCON III tightened communications networks, “plac[ed] Strategic Air Command (SAC) and the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) in control of American strategic nuclear forces,” deployed nuclear armed B-52 bombers to secondary airfields, and deployed nuclear missile firing submarines into the oceans around Europe (Lebow and Stein 1995, 247). In the U.S.’s view, Soviet threats of unilateral action were unacceptable. The U.S. took a massive step toward escalation in

response to the Soviet threats to deploy ground forces, recognizing that the action of introducing Soviet combat forces to the conflict would no longer fall within the realm of restraining the intervention. This dynamic demonstrates the power that differentiating advisor versus combat forces has in preventing conflict escalation.

The United States did not seem to have supported a sizable advisor force in Israel during the conflict. This could be for a few reasons. First, the United States may have known that the Soviets would see advisors as escalatory, but this is unlikely. Second, and more plausible, was that because the October War happened so suddenly, catching both the Israelis and Americans off guard, there was no time to get advisors into the conflict. Unlike the Arab armies, there was little doubt that Israel's military could operate the sophisticated equipment that the U.S. shipped them during the conflict.

Angola

Neither the Soviets nor the Americans ever committed ground forces to the Angolan conflict just as neither did in Yom Kippur. As seen in other Cold War hotspots, the risk of escalation from direct confrontation informed major powers that sending forces that filled a combat role would shift the balance of power in the Third World. Both sides recognized that deploying large amounts of military forces could shift the escalation calculus of all interveners and change the limited nature of the conflict.

That does not mean that both sides' military forces were not present in Angola. In the case of the MPLA, as in almost all Soviet Third World interventions, the Politburo feared that client forces were incapable of handling the influx of weapons. The same fears existed in the U.S. as John Stockwell showed when he explained the CIA's fear that domestic forces "were not able to organize the logistical systems necessary to deploy

[weapons] or to develop the communications, maintenance, combat leadership, and discipline to organize an effective military effort” (Stockwell 1978, 176). In the case of the Soviets, the Politburo considered troop deployments but feared that such a brazen escalation would damage the revitalized policy of détente between Moscow and Washington (Gleijeses 2003, 231; Porter 1986, 163; Westad 2007, 232–233). Both Moscow and Washington now faced a dilemma: how to provide their African clients with needed support, while not committing their own forces and preventing an inadvertent escalation of the conflict (Stockwell 1978, 176). That solution was the stark distinction between those forces sent as advisors and those sent for a combat mission. Advisors were present to train local forces, while combat forces would directly take part in the fighting. As others have noted, distinguishing between advisors and combat forces has long been a way to “communicate restraint—ostensibly because of the ‘non-combat’ role played by advisers” (Anderson 2016, 105).

The Soviet military never committed Soviet ground combat forces to the Angolan intervention. The Soviet military recognized that deploying large amounts of Soviet military forces would shift the escalation calculus of all interveners. No longer would the conflict be a limited war if that happened. To overcome this, the Soviets deployed thousands of advisors during their intervention in Angola instead. Soviet military advisors were necessary to MPLA success since they could translate the technical weapons systems supplied by the Soviet Union. Soviet military advisors also helped with strategic planning, as well as helping MPLA cadre plan combat operations.

However, the Soviets had an ally that was more willing to intervene directly with combat force: the Cubans. Cuba’s motivations for its involvement in the Angolan Civil

War are more challenging to ascertain. American policymakers at the time believed that Fidel Castro was a puppet of the Soviet Union, simply doing Brezhnev's bidding in the region. President Jimmy Carter shared his feelings with Brezhnev in Vienna: "The extensive military activities of Cuba [are] of deep concern to the American people, we [regard] Cuba as a proxy of the Soviet Union" (Carter and Brezhnev 1979, 2). While the common belief after the Angolan Civil War was that the Cubans were proxy surrogates, archival research demonstrates otherwise. The work of Piero Gleijeses challenges this assumption and gives Cuba its own agency over the decision.

Gleijeses brings to light that Castro "was no client" (Gleijeses 2003, 379). Castro considered sending troops to support the MPLA in August 1975, but delayed in order to seek Soviet endorsement because such an intervention carried with it an immense amount of risk (Gleijeses 2003, 379–81). When South Africa launched Operation Savannah, its surprise military incursion into Angola in late 1975, they presented Castro with a stark choice: intervene or watch the MPLA get destroyed by South Africa's military (Gleijeses 2003, 379). Castro sent Cuban troops on Cuban planes, motivated by the ideology of the socialist struggle against the West in Africa.

Cuba's involvement did not go over well with Kissinger. Evidence points to Kissinger considering a military strike on Cuba over their incursion. Kissinger, along with the Washington Special Actions Group, an elite national security team, feared Cuba's involvement would turn the tide in Angola. An April 1976 contingency plan outlined escalatory actions starting with political and economic up to "[destroying] selected Cuban military and military-related targets in response to combat troop presence" (CIA n.d., 4).

Despite the amount of communist manpower present in Angola, the Soviet Politburo prohibited their advisors from participating in frontline combat missions. Soviet and Cuban advisors were intended to support their MPLA client in ways that did not risk intervener escalation. The Soviet military separated their advisors from combatants to signal their role in the intervention, a non-direct combat role. Sergey Kolomnin, a senior member of the Soviet military mission in Angola, wrote “as a rule, our advisers in the Angolan brigades moved to the rear when there were military operations” (Kolomnin 2005, 13). Another Soviet officer serving in Angola echoed the same when he wrote that Soviet advisors were told that they “should only instruct, train and advise... but not fight” (Gleijeses 2016, 187). Similar to the Soviets, Cuban advisors took steps to distance themselves from direct combat as a means of preventing escalation. Drawing a strong distinction between Soviet and Cuban forces serving as advisors to MPLA forces versus combat forces established a visible limit that could help prevent escalation: advisors were acceptable, combat troops were not (Anderson 2019).

The Americans accomplished a similar separation by using a different means—they avoided being on the front lines at all. The CIA oversaw the advising mission for the United States, choosing to operate outside Angola. Former Director of Central Intelligence William Colby outlined that the CIA’s training mission between 1975 and 1976 occurred outside of Angola “as no CIA officers were permitted to engage in combat or train there” (Colby and Forbath 1978, 78). Stockwell similarly backed this up when he outlined CIA restrictions that prevented any staffers from being killed in Angola, and that they had no “discomfort worse than malaria.” (Stockwell 1978, 177). The CIA, Stockwell explained, allowed others to run the serious risk in country while they conducted training

from outside Angola (Stockwell 1978, 247). This dynamic is most noticeable directly around the time of the Alvor agreements when the CIA hired western mercenaries, South African Officers, and CIA paramilitary officers to embed with FNLA forces. This was done in a bid to help Western clients achieve a better negotiating position prior to the start of negotiations (Gleijeses 2003, 350–54). With the passage of the Clark Amendment, Congress barred further US money and involvement in Angola, permanently affecting CIA operations in the country. Drawing a distinction between fighter and advisor seems to have prevented escalation: once again, advisors were acceptable, combat forces were not.

Drawing a stark distinction between advisors and combat forces is essential. The two case studies demonstrate that indirect foreign military interventions are less escalatory when combat forces are not deployed. Both the U.S. and the Soviet military deployed forces, but they filled a technical or advisor role versus combat role. This distinction helped both sides discern the restraint signal and played a role in preventing a confrontation between major powers. While outside combat forces were deployed to the region by Cuba and South Africa, other restraint signals, like geographic and targeting dynamics, were used to prevent escalation.

Geographic Limits and Targeting

Geographic limits offer another observable limit to major powers that intervene in foreign military interventions. Geography provides focal points that can be used to identify limit to the scope of a conflict. As Noel Anderson points out in his work, “bodies of water, rivers, deserts, and mountains can serve to delimit areas of operation and control” (Anderson 2019, 50). Cartographic demarcation lines can also serve as man-

made focal points separating forces. The escalation of the Korean War provides an example of a failure to recognize the role of geography in preventing escalation. As UN forces neared the Yalu River, which served to geographically separate combatants during the war, the Chinese threatened an intervention. Ignored and dismissed, the approaching UN forces pushed the Chinese to invade into North Korea, prolonging the war. Observable limits can serve to temper belligerents and help to prevent an intervener escalation, but only if interveners respect limits.

Establishing geographic limits provides a secondary way of limiting conflict escalation, that of targeting, or the selection of sites for military action. Indiscriminate targeting, or the striking of intervener targets, at a minimum, risks retaliation in kind. In order to avoid the risk of an inadvertent escalation devolving into a direct confrontation, interveners can draw distinctions between targets. Examples of legitimate targets during an intervention would be those of the client forces, or supply facilities supporting client forces. Illegitimate targets would be population centers or armed confrontations with major power forces intervening on behalf of client forces.

Table 5. Geographic Limits and Targeting Descriptive Analysis Matrix

Conflicts	Geographic Limits and Targeting	
	US	USSR
	X	X
	X	X

Source: Created by author.

The Yom Kippur War

Soviet forces in Egypt and Syria operated away from the front lines in order to keep them outside the range of fighting. Within Syria, they operated in the ports and in the capital, Damascus, or within higher command echelons as combat advisors to Syrian commanders, but not below the battalion level and never at the front (Porter 1986, 134). A Soviet Interpreter, Aleksy Vasiliev, who operated in Syria during the time in question outlined that “Soviet military personnel unloaded the tanks in port, transferred them to the front, operated the radar systems, [and] repaired tanks and other technical equipment” (Ginor and Remez 2017, 341). Soviet advisors also performed guard duty on weapons systems loaned to the Egyptian government. These advanced weapons systems were controlled by the Soviets to ensure their use only when critically needed.⁸ Soviet ground forces also followed behind Egyptian forces to assess damage and collect destroyed Israeli weapons to transport back to Soviet Russia for analysis.

Soviet fighter pilots were reportedly operating within Egypt years before the 1973 start of the conflict. News reports from the 1970s place hundreds of Soviet pilots in defensive positions in Egypt, focused on the defense of the Egyptian interior (Beecher 1970). Moscow established a Soviet air group in Cairo under the command of Major General M.S. Dvornikov to serve as advisors and instructors to Egyptian aircrews. While Soviet aircrews flew sorties during the war, they all operated West of the Suez Canal to deconflict air roles between legitimate targets, Egyptian air crews, and the Israelis (Ginor and Remez 2017, 340–44).

The Angolan Civil War

Natural and man-made delineations imposed upon forces helped to separate combatants. These focal points were used to limit the conflict by preventing direct engagement between intervening parties, thus avoiding an escalation caused by direct engagement. While both the Soviets and the U.S. kept only advisors in Angola, the Cubans and the South African Defense Forces (SADF) each deployed direct ground forces. As the Angolan Civil War progressed into phase two, Cuban and SADF soldiers regularly targeted adversary's client forces, MPLA and UNITA, while avoiding striking each other. This is most evident in January 1979 onward with the defensive line the Cubans established bisecting Angola (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Cuban Defensive Line Bisecting Angola

Source: Anderson 2016, 110.

Cuban forces primarily operated in or around Luanda, the capital and major supply point, in a defensive garrison environment (George 2012, 120). The largest concentration of Cubans outside the capital was on the defensive line shown above. Nearly 10,000 Cuban soldiers were “located along the 400-mile defensive line (Agrupación de Tropas del Sur, Southern Troop Grouping) which ran from Namibe along the railway line to Menongue” (George 2012, 120). MPLA forces often operated south of the defensive line as they fought SADF forces, but Cuban forces rarely if ever strayed past the defensive line. Noel Anderson conducted an interview with SADF Major General (ret.) Johann Dippenaar, who shared that “Cuban forces were positioned behind Angolan units all the time, or sometimes in the front in the defensive positions, but in an advisory capacity, not behind the weapons” (Anderson 2019, 702). When SADF forces retreated from Angola in 1976, Cuban forces kept pressure on retreating forces in such a way as to “give them an opportunity to withdraw” without engaging in direct contact (Gleijeses 2016, 34).

SADF forces carried out similar restrictions, primarily operating in Southern Angola near their basing in Namibia. While SADF operations strayed north, they rarely ventured close to the Cuban defensive line. In another interview with SADF forces, Anderson noted that “there were constraints placed on the tactical commanders . . . in terms of how far you could go. Can you attack Menongue? No. Can we attack Cuito Cuanavale from the west? No. Rather, stay on the eastern side of the river so that the war does not escalate” (Anderson 2019, 702). This buffer zone eliminated the chance of military confrontation between Cuban and SADF military forces, and by second order, prevented U.S. and Soviet forces from engaging in a military confrontation.

Focal points around target discrimination also played a role in controlling the confrontation and escalation. Targeting distinctions primarily focused on nationality. Striking African targets such as the MPLA or UNITA was acceptable, but striking advisor targets was unacceptable. Each side understood that targeting major power forces could lead to escalation.

[The Russians] made sure that you could see from the air which was their camp- they had big hammers and sickles on their tents. They knew that there were Canberra and other aircraft flying over them photographing them every day...So they knew they were being targeted, identified, photographed, and they knew that an attack was going to come. So they would make sure that they were a few kilometers off to the side [so as not to be struck]. (Anderson 2016, 112)

South African Ambassador Victor Zazeraj went on to explain “Our Air Force [SADF] would be told not to hit the Russian camp. Take out the ammo dump, go take out the armed soldiers that pose a threat to you. But the Russian officers- you don’t want to have a missile go in their direction and upset them, because then you would have a crisis.”

The buffer zones and targeting decisions made by both sides in the Yom Kippur and Angolan Wars helped to prevent escalation by eliminating the risk of confrontation.

Forces were allowed to operate within their respective areas, and even when supporting clients, refrained from targeting major power adversaries. Targeting adversary troops risked escalation due to in-kind retaliation. This was avoided in both conflicts.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 has presented the theory and the qualitative research findings addressing the primary and secondary research questions. This thesis examines the primary research question of: “Did signals of strategic restraint present between the United States and the Soviet Union during indirect foreign military interventions between the years 1970 and 1980 prevent inadvertent conflict escalation?” Based off the analysis above, yes, strategic restraint signals were in fact present. As presented in Table 6 below, some signals of strategic restraint were present in both conflicts. Restraint signals between the major powers were most noticeable in the Angolan Civil War and least noticeable in the Yom Kippur War, where some strategic restraint signals were missing. Consequently, the Yom Kippur War case study demonstrates a failure of restraint signaling and came closest of the two cases to an inadvertent escalation.

Table 6. Restraint Signals Descriptive Analysis Matrix

Conflicts	Restraint Signals							
	Weapons Shipments and aid		Timing of Arms Shipments		Advisor versus Combat Troops		Geographic Limits and Targeting	
	US	USSR	US	USSR	US	USSR	US	USSR
Yom Kippur War	X				X		X	X
Angolan Civil War	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Source: Created by author.

Progressing the Theory

The threat that a local intervention might escalate into a broader conflict looms over any intervention. Major power interveners need to identify the limits of their intervention and need to coordinate their interventions in time and space to deconflict with battlefield events. Drawing distinctions between the types of weapons and aid shipped, the timing of those shipments, and the deployment of specific military forces to support the client, all help regulate the competition. Establishing limits, verifiable and recognizable to all sides intervening, helps to potentially avoid conflict escalation. These limits establish verifiable and recognizable means of tacitly communicating intervener restraint.

Chapter 5 will discuss the conclusions derived from this study as well as offer other areas of research worth exploring, as well as recommendations made for policymakers and strategists as they develop foreign military interventions in the future.

¹ How interventions are observed and how secrecy can be used to control escalation is an important feature of Carson's work. Carson identifies and describes the usefulness of secrecy as a method for maintaining limits on conflict. The role of secrecy in intervention is not central to my research.

² While a no restraint/ no restraint scenario seems sub optimal in real life as it results in potential nuclear war, in terms of game theory it is an optimal solution. Nash Equilibrium simply states that an optimal solution is one in which players can stay the course of their initial strategy while knowing their opponent's strategy. All players would maintain the same strategy.

³ These classes of weapons differ from nuclear weapons, even the tactical kind, whose shipment to a client would undoubtedly cause an intervener escalation.

⁴ It is important to recognize that what is unclassified is inconclusive. Matched against other unclassified reporting and recent document books produced by the Richard Nixon Presidential library gives credence to the argument that Kissinger at least believed Moscow might have authorized the sending of a nuclear bomb to Cairo.

⁵ It is truly challenging to ascertain exactly what Henry Kissinger thought the Soviets were carrying out in regard to sending a nuclear weapon. Too many of the reports of that time period are still redacted in key sections. Kissinger himself says that the decision to place U.S. forces on DEFCON III was related to the call he received from Anatoly Dobrynin with the memo from Brezhnev about the Soviets seriously considering a unilateral military intervention. While that is plausible, too many memos around that October 22-24 time period indicate at least some assumption that a nuclear weapon may have been introduced into the Middle East.

⁶ Known weapons transfers figures were compiled from multiple sources around the time of the intervention and cross-referenced against an arms transfer database from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) reports from the time. Even after reviewing available sources, weapons shipment numbers are approximations.

⁷ On December 19, 1975, the Tunney Amendment passed in the U.S. Senate. The amendment effectively cut off any Defense funding for the Angolan conflict. It was closely followed by the Clarke amendment, which cut off all U.S. aid. Since the gross amount of 31.7 million dollars had already been appropriated in November, funding would continue to trickle into Angola, though no new funding could be appropriated.

⁸ It appears that the Soviets brought in Spetsnaz, or drew soldiers from those already present, to guard the SCUD missile systems, which do not appear to have been under direct Egyptian control before or during the October 1973 war (Ginor and Remez 2017, 343).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Introduction

This study examined the question, “Did signals of strategic restraint between the United States and the Soviet Union during competitive foreign military interventions between the years 1973 and 1980 prevent inadvertent conflict escalation?” Based on the analysis above, the answer is that signals of strategic restraint were present in the time period in question. This thesis examined two cases with differing results. In the case of the Yom Kippur War, the lack of signaling on the part of the Soviets led to a conflict escalation. In the case of the Angolan Civil War, the presence of signaling prevented the escalation of the conflict. While the thesis only used two cases in the research, the differences allowed for the level of analysis necessary to draw generalizable conclusions that are presented in this chapter.

Foreign military interventions within inter and intra state wars are an effective way to shape the outcome of the conflict. They were an especially effective, and greatly practiced, strategy used by both sides in the Cold War. Ostensibly, these wars offered major power interveners a less risky alternative to engaging in conflict themselves. Instead, these interventions bore the risk of escalation—a local war could become a global war. Yet, in the two instances of foreign military intervention explored in this thesis, the wars never became global, even if the threat of an inadvertent escalation existed. Instead, through the calculated display of strategic restraint, both the United States and the Soviet Union were able to conduct their intervention without eliciting a major escalatory response by the other major power.

Some important results of this work may be impactful in contemporary foreign military interventions. Presented below are four lessons as well as further ideas for research.

Lessons

As foreign military interventions continue, the American and Soviet experience offers four important lessons:

1. Major powers who intervene in wars do not necessarily want to go to war with other interveners. They are interested in seeing their client win and their prestige grow but may try to limit their interventions to both achieve victory and prevent any escalation.
2. Interventions by major powers carry inherent risks. Both the United States and Soviet Union believed that interventions during the time period of this study were worth the potential risk of escalation, even if they didn't actually want that escalation to occur. Understanding what risks are worth taking in regard to escalation, and what risks are not worth taking is key to any future intervention scenario.
3. Open and direct communication between major power interveners is not always possible. Instead, as both major powers demonstrated, interveners may choose to communicate their limits tacitly—communication through deeds over words. Intervenors do not need direct communication to signal a desire to constrain intervention to prevent escalation. Instead, the act of restraint is the signal. Equally important is the receptiveness of receiving a signal. When interveners are unable to see the signal, or worse, unreceptive to the signal of strategic restraint, there is a high possibility of intervener escalation.

4. Strategic restraint signaling can take many forms. In the case studies presented, four restraint signals were readily visible in all or some of the wars. They are: restraining weapons shipments and other military aid, restraining the timing of arms shipments, restraining what type of military forces, advisor vs combat soldiers deployed, and placing geographic and/or targeting restraints on forces. There are most likely other restraint factors that could be used to expand the theory.

Proposed Future Research

This thesis was able to address the primary and secondary research questions within the constraints outlined in Chapter 1 of this work. While answering the provided questions, the work also created more questions that are worth exploring through avenues of future research on foreign military interventions. Future work on this subject could look at:

1. Analyze other foreign military interventions throughout history and apply this methodology to see if results remain consistent. This is important to investigate the role that détente may or may not have played on the explanatory nature of this theory.
2. Examine the growing conflict in Ukraine (2022) based on the recommendations on conducting foreign military interventions in a way that avoids inadvertent conflict escalation.
3. Conduct a mathematical evaluation of the game theory to establish a formal model of the value of restraint signaling within a foreign military intervention consisting of two major powers.

4. Examine additional foreign military interventions to identify other possible restraint signals that are consistent across conflicts. This could help identify why some restraint signals work while others do not.

5. Evaluate the cost of action, benefit of action, cost of restraint, and benefit of restraint of the indirect foreign military interventions that occurred between the U.S. and Soviets from 1970 to 1979.

6. Explore the role of cyber space signals of restraint. Signaling opportunities have drastically evolved from the Cold War years examined in this thesis, when cyberspace and cyber security were not considerations.

7. Examine how inadvertent escalation is studied and explored in the Western way of war, the focus of this work, versus the Eastern way of war.

Parting Thoughts

This study examined the role that major power restraint signals play in avoiding inadvertent conflict escalation during the period of the Cold War from 1973 to 1980. However, this thesis also developed conclusions about the role of signaling, and specifically, what signals are historically valuable to pursue.

In the future, foreign military interventions in inter- and intrastate wars will continue. The research presented in this paper will help to draw clear distinctions around conflict escalation and hopefully help to prevent escalation wars between major powers. Major power interveners, armed with an understanding of limits and the power of strategic restraint, may be more apt to identify the necessary signals and avoid future intervener escalations. In the future, research applying strategic restraint to foreign military interventions is necessary. The prevalence of war is not diminishing. Major

powers are bound to intervene in wars on opposing sides of a foreign military intervention. To avoid conflict escalation in interventions in the future, the research presented in this work is worth expanding to other examples outside those presented within this work. This thesis can also serve as a baseline study that can be used to evaluate other foreign military interventions to better understand the impact restraint signals may play in preventing inadvertent conflict escalation.

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