

The London School of Economics and Political Science

*When Elites Fight: Elites and the Politics of U.S.
Military Interventions in Internal Conflicts*

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Declaration

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Abstract

Military intervention in internal conflicts represents a recurrent practice in international history. This thesis provides a theoretical framework for the study of the political and sociological processes that lead political elites to militarily intervene in internal conflicts. Following the renewed interest in political elites both in Sociology and International Relations, the thesis draws on Elite Theory to address the dual nature of political elites as both domestic and international actors. In doing so, it develops a framework for the study of military intervention centred on political elites that overcomes the limits of existing contributions on the subject. In particular, the thesis highlights how interventionary policies are shaped by three overlapping causal antecedents: elites' contending ideological claims; elites' struggle for both domestic and international power; and the relationship established by the intervener's elite with elite and counter-elite groups in the target state.

The thesis tests the plausibility of the proposed framework by examining US decisions in three cases: US intervention in the Cuban War of Independence (1898-1902); US intervention in the Russian Civil War (1918-1920); and US non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). This analysis highlights three elements. First, ideological considerations set significant limits to US cooperation with leaders in the target country despite the strategic rationale for cooperation against common enemies. Second, the interplay between international and domestic political considerations represented a fundamental 'push factor', shaping the objectives US elites sought. Third, foreign elite groups played a crucial role in 'pulling' US interventions, both by representing local allies instrumental to Washington's objectives and by directly accessing and influencing US decision-making processes. For the same reasons, the lack of these push and pull factors are key to explaining US non-intervention in the Spanish case.

Overall, the thesis offers a twofold contribution to the study of military intervention. First, it explores how military intervention permits decision-makers to affect the 'circulation of elites' in both their own societies and in other societies. Second, it indicates how military intervention affects the international system by altering ideological homogeneity, international alliances and hierarchical relations between elites.

to my parents, Margherita and Idelbo

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Introduction

The Eternal Return of Intervention

Throughout history, states have repeatedly intervened in the internal conflicts of other communities. From the early external involvement in the civil strife of the Greek poleis during the Peloponnesian War to the recent operations in North Africa following the so-called Arab Spring, military interventions have profoundly affected the course of civil wars and revolutions, favouring certain domestic actors instead of others, whether the democratic factions supported by Athens or the Libyan opposition supported by NATO in 2011. Notably, Theban intervention in Plataea in support of a local faction represented the very opening scene of the Peloponnesian War: while the former intervened to secure an ally, the latter used external intervention to secure power for itself:

A Theban force...made an army entry into Plataea,...an ally of Athens. They came at the invitation of a Plataean party...who opened the gates for them. The aim of this party was to gain power for themselves by getting rid of their own political opponents and bringing Plataea over into the Theban alliance. The plan had been arranged with...Thebes. For, realizing that war was certain to come, the Thebans were anxious to get control of Plataea first.¹

In the prosecution of the conflict, Athens and Sparta repeatedly intervened in the internal conflicts of the neighbouring cities to secure existing alliances.² Similar practices characterise different historical periods and geographical contexts. The pattern of external interference and domestic strife characterised: the rivalry between the Empire and the Papacy during the Middle Ages and the overlapping conflict between Guelfs and Ghibellines in the Italian cities;³ the French wars of religion, the English support for the Dutch rebels during the

¹ Thucydides 1972: II.2.

² Vincent 1974: 11; MacFarlane 2002: 20.

³ Waley 1988: 145-156.

Eight Years War, and the Hapsburg efforts to counter Reformation in Bohemia igniting the Thirty Years' War;⁴ as well as the counterrevolutionary interventions of the Concert of Europe during the 19th Century. In the East Asian context, interventions shaped the military and political balance of the region, including Qin's internal meddling into other Chinese warring states of the 4th Century BC and Chinese interventions within its tributary states during the 18th and 19th Century, such as Vietnam and Korea.⁵ US interventions in the Caribbean were key to the emergence and maintenance of American hegemony over the Western Hemisphere; during the Cold War, they were an integral part of the global competition with the Soviet Union.⁶

In all these instances, military intervention responded to the interests of the intervener but also profoundly affected the interests and domestic position of local factions.⁷ Even in the humanitarian interventions of the 1990s, Western operations favoured certain political actors instead of others.⁸ In more general terms, interventions and discourses on intervention include local groups and leaders that are preferred over others. Despite the humanitarian intentions behind Western intervention in Libya in 2011, military operations favoured the opposition and stopped only with the removal of Muammar Qaddafi. In short, the interests of the intervener cannot be disentangled from the question of who rules the target state. Recently, this link between external interests and local leaders explicitly emerged in former British Prime Minister Tony Blair's remarks on the ongoing civil war in Syria:

...these are struggles in which our own interests, quite apart from the humanitarian aspect, are dramatically engaged. And I still think, in respect of Iraq and Afghanistan, once those conflicts got beyond the regime change stage – Saddam was toppled, the Taliban driven out of Afghanistan – and they then change into these deep-seated sectarian conflicts, we have an interest in ensuring that the sensible people win those conflicts.⁹

⁴ Krasner 1995: 235; MacFarlane 2002: 21-22; Nexon 2009a.

⁵ Wohlforth *et al.* 2007: 69; Westad 2012: 91, 95-103.

⁶ Westad 2005.

⁷ *Ibid.*; Grow 2008.

⁸ On how humanitarian interventions also encompass a decision over the groups the intervener decides to support, see Betts 1994: 21.

⁹ Blair 2013.

Despite the unfavourable economic conditions in which Western states operate and despite the costs incurred in recent and ongoing interventions, notably Iraq and Afghanistan, military intervention remains on the agenda of major international actors.

The Research Question and its Relevance

This link between the intervener's interests in an internal conflict and in supporting one of the factions involved represents the central theme of this study. The thesis examines the causes of military intervention in internal conflicts. Why do foreign actors decide to fight for others? In particular, this study addresses three interrelated research questions: first, why do states militarily intervene in some domestic conflicts and not others? Second, why do states intervene in support of a particular foreign actor instead of other actors involved in the conflict? Third, why do states opt for a particular mode of military intervention (direct overt intervention) instead of other forms of influence or intervention available to them? In developing a theoretical framework to address these questions, the thesis sheds light on the constant political and sociological processes leading states to intervene to support a foreign actor's internal struggle – it is these processes that make intervention a recurrent practice in history.

In empirical terms, this project examines the causes not only of a recurrent, but also of a consequential, practice for both international and domestic politics. As stressed in the examples above, military intervention represents a recurrent practice in international affairs widely recognised in the field of International Relations (IR).¹⁰ It has been defined as 'une pratique courante, constante et universelle';¹¹ a practice more common than war itself;¹² an 'ubiquitous', 'inherent feature' of the international itself.¹³ These observations have been

¹⁰ Young 1968: 178.

¹¹ Trolliet 1940: 14.

¹² Wight 1978: 191.

¹³ Bull 1984a: 2. See also Guelke 1974: 122.

supported by more recent empirical surveys underscoring how military interventions have been historically frequent not only during the 20th Century but also in previous centuries.¹⁴ For instance, J.H. Leurdijk identifies 45 cases of interventions between 1815-1975 aimed at the domestic institutions of a foreign state. From a broader historical perspective, John Owen lists 198 cases of foreign imposed institutions and related interventions between 1555 and 2000.¹⁵

Shedding light on the causal mechanisms leading states to intervene in internal conflicts is useful to clarify this historical recurrence of intervention. At the same time, it helps to define a more accurate theoretical framework to examine both recent cases of intervention as well as the possibility of foreign intervention in ongoing internal conflicts. Intervention in internal conflicts remains consequential for today's international relations. First, intervention represents the most direct way, together with outright occupation, through which the international affects domestic politics.¹⁶ Furthermore, not only actual interventions but also the expectations of foreign interventions alter the political and strategic calculus of domestic actors, for instance by creating moral hazard that facilitates rebellion.¹⁷

Second, the assumption that international security is linked to domestic security and affected by the increasing instability of foreign societies permeates the current debate. There is no consensus either on whether the number of civil wars are on the rise or not;¹⁸ or whether current civil conflicts are qualitatively different from 'old' ones or not.¹⁹ Nonetheless, civil wars, as exemplified by the ongoing conflict in Syria, represent major international security issues with profound regional and international implications. In more general terms, civil wars and revolutions have shaped the domestic as much as the international

¹⁴ Calvert 1984: 172; Tilly 1991: 22; Regan 2000; Owen 2002: 375; Balch-Lindsay *et al.* 2008: 348.

¹⁵ Leurdijk 1986; Owen 2002: 376; 2010a.

¹⁶ Gourevitch 1978: 883.

¹⁷ Kuperman 2008: 49-50. On this point, see also Rowlands and Carment 1998; Cetinyan 2002; Jenne 2004.

¹⁸ For a view on the rise of civil wars, see Kaplan 2000; for a contending view, see Regan 2000.

¹⁹ Kaldor 1999; Kalyvas 2001.

politics of the 20th Century and before.²⁰ Today, the transnational dimension of radical religious ideologies such as Islamism, the critique of Liberal tenets following the conflict in Iraq in 2003 and of its Neoliberal political economy following the financial crisis, the alleged rise of authoritarianism, and the weakness of state structures in the Third World – all indicate the opening of new spaces of contestation and the possibility of radical change in contemporary politics.²¹ Examining which political pressures states will be subjected to in case of domestic conflict or revolutionary change abroad is therefore of particular importance to better understand not only past interventions, but also current and future ones.

In theoretical terms, this thesis contributes to the ongoing debate on the practice and causes of military intervention. First, the thesis draws on the renewed interest in the discipline on the practice of military intervention, which has followed major Western operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, and, more recently, in Libya and Mali. The literature initially focused on two issues of major relevance for both the academic and policy debate: the key normative issues concerning intervention raised by humanitarian intervention;²² and, the linked question of the imposition of democratic institutions via forces, particularly following US regime change operation in Iraq in 2003.²³ In particular, the thesis follows more recent attempts in the discipline that have examined military intervention on its own without confining its study to either the normative or policy dimension of intervention. In doing so, recent works have underscored the historical roots of intervention and its evolution as a practice in international relations. Notably, in their efforts to historicise intervention, these works have argued against the presentism of past works on

²⁰ Hobsbawn 1994: 54.

²¹ On the alleged authoritarian revival, see Gat 2007.

²² Humanitarian interventions are defined by Holzgrefe (2003: 18) as 'aimed at preventing or ending widespread and grave violation of the fundamental human rights of individuals other than its own citizens, without permission of the state within whose territory force is applied'. On the evolution of humanitarianism, see Finnemore 2003; Bass 2008; Barnett 2011; Simms and Trim 2011. On the normative issues concerning humanitarian intervention, see Wheeler 2000. On the Responsibility to Protect and its partial adoption by the international community, see International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) 2001; Weiss 2007: 177; Hehir 2012.

²³ On the link between intervention and democratisation, see Bueno de Mesquita and Downs 2006; Downs and Monten 2013.

humanitarian intervention.²⁴ At the same time, they have underscored how states recurrently intervene, exploring the causal mechanisms leading to waves of military interventions.²⁵ A greater awareness of the international and transnational dimension of civil conflicts, which took shape first during the Cold War, still underlies current analyses.²⁶ In more general terms, intervention rests at the intersection of international actors' attempts to order these domestic and transnational phenomena.²⁷

Second, this study aims to systematise and develop the insights offered by recent works drawing attention to the link between intervention and political elites. As Martha Finnemore points out, despite changing historical and normative contexts, '[s]tates continue to care deeply about who governs other states' and use military force in this regard.²⁸ As a result, throughout history, state rulers have repeatedly authorised interventions to either change or secure the political leadership of other polities.²⁹ Further, various contributions have connected the decision to intervene to the key role played by political elites, specifically: (i) elites' interest in maintaining their position to explain the use of force in the pursuit of irredentist objectives in the presence of transnational ethnic ties, particularly within democratic regimes;³⁰ (ii) the competition among advocacy groups formed by elites and their ability to gain the support of the public;³¹ (iii) and, political leaders' definition of the national interest in response to systemic pressures and domestic constraints.³² Recently, Owen has stressed how the interplay between state rulers' pursuit of both external (state) and internal (regime) security within periods of 'transnational ideological struggle' triggers waves of interventions throughout history.³³ Finally, Elizabeth

²⁴ Finnemore 2003; Simms and Trim 2011; Lawson *et al.* 2013.

²⁵ Owen 2010a.

²⁶ Gleditsch 2007. On precedents, see Deutsch 1964; Modelski 1964; Brown 1996.

²⁷ MacMillan 2013.

²⁸ Finnemore 2003: 108.

²⁹ Owen 2010a; Sullivan and Koch 2009.

³⁰ Saideman 1997, 2001; Koga 2011.

³¹ Western 2005.

³² Dueck 2009.

³³ Owen 2010a.

Saunders has highlighted the role played by executive leaders' causal beliefs in shaping interventionary policies.³⁴

However, this rather rich literature has omitted important cases and issues. For instance, Owen's analysis does not address cases of intervention taking place in ideologically non-polarised contexts, for example American interventions in Latin America before the Cold War.³⁵ At the same time, Saunders' analysis discards the role played by leaders in the target state on the intervener's decision.³⁶ The latter is of particular relevance as various works have shown how intervention constitutes a specific form of both confrontation and cooperation between an intervening political elite and elite/counter-elite groups in the target country.³⁷ In other words, although recent works have convincingly shown that rulers' interests and ideas are central to the decision to intervene, these results have yet to be systematised under a consistent and comprehensive theoretical framework clarifying how and in what ways causal processes involving state rulers matter in shaping interventionary policies.

The Argument and its Contribution

This thesis provides a theoretical framework for the study of the political and sociological processes that lead political elites to militarily intervene in internal conflicts. Despite a more general 'return to elites' taking place not only in the study of intervention but also in Sociology and IR, scholars have not looked in any depth at the concept of 'elite' itself.³⁸ As such, there is considerable scope for building on the renewed interests on political elites and for linking the study

³⁴ Saunders 2011.

³⁵ Owen 2010a: 32.

³⁶ Saunders 2011: 47.

³⁷ This point is highlighted not only by Owen (2010a: 49) but also by other major historical and theoretical work, including: Westad 2005; Findley and Teo 2006; Gent 2008; Grow 2008; Salehyan *et al.* 2011.

³⁸ The most recent example within the sociological literature is represented by Higley and Burton 2006. See also the special issues of *Comparative Sociology*: Sasaki 2007; Best and Higley 2009. Some of the key works in IR beyond the study of intervention putting leaders and elites back at the centre of their analyses, include: Byman and Pollack 2001; Schweller 2006; Trubowitz 2011; Jervis 2013.

of intervention to an elite theory of the state centred on Classic Elite Theory (CET) as well as from some of its more recent contributions to elite theory.³⁹ In particular, the thesis draws on elite theory to address the dual nature of political elites as both domestic and international actors. In doing so, it develops a framework for the study of military intervention based on a Realist theory of the state centred on political elites that overcomes the limits of existing Neorealist and Neoclassical Realist contributions on the subject.

As I will argue, political elite dynamics are central to explaining military interventions, with political elites acting as both the main actors and key targets of military interventions. Specifically, three elite dynamics – elites' contending ideological claims; elites' struggle for both domestic and international power; and the relationship established by the intervener's elite with elite and counter-elite groups in the target state – shape the defining causal mechanisms leading to the decision to intervention, respectively: the pattern of cooperation with elite groups in the target country; the push factors driving intervention; and the pull factors shaping intervention.⁴⁰

Bringing the study of elites into IR offers a threefold contribution. First, it offers the possibility of placing the study of elites on more systematic bases and of contributing to ongoing efforts within the discipline aimed at examining leaders' role by clarifying the political and sociological contexts in which political leaders operate. Therefore, an elite theory helps clarify the relatively stable political and sociological dynamics that subsume specific instances of intervention and enable these interventions to take place over time. In particular, it provides a compelling theoretical toolbox for the study of how elites' competition for power both at the domestic and international level shapes the decision to intervene.

Second, it explores how military intervention permits decision-makers to affect the 'circulation of elites' in both their own societies and in other societies. In doing so, it indicates how military intervention affects the international system by altering ideological homogeneity, international alliances and hierarchical

³⁹ CET encompasses the works of Mosca 1923; Michels 1915; Pareto 1935.

⁴⁰ On intervention as resulting from both push factors (originating in the intervening country) and pull factors (originating in the target country), see Little 1975; Wight 1978; Jentleson *et al.* 1992.

relations between elites. As such, it provides a means of examining the international consequences of domestic elite circulation, i.e. the effects of elite change on international society in terms of increased or decreased levels of homogeneity.⁴¹ Thus intervention operates simultaneously as a tool for the imposition of specific political elites alongside seeing military intervention as a 'homogenising instrument' of international relations.

Third, it contributes to ongoing efforts to better define Realist theories of the state.⁴² Interestingly, Neoclassical Realism has drawn on the 'return to the state' begun within sociology during the 1970s to define its intervening variables, yet it has so far failed to fully engage with the elite tradition underpinning the statist approach.⁴³ In bringing elites in, the thesis offers the possibility to overcome a twofold limit in the study of intervention: the limited conceptualisations of the state that have hampered the study of intervention; and, the rigid distinction between international and domestic that has hampered the development of a Realist contribution to the study of intervention.⁴⁴ Notably, this project seeks to open a constructive dialogue between Realism and Political Sociology over the role of elites in foreign-policy making and over intervention. For this purpose, I will first define the key terms used in this study as well as the scope of the research here conducted.

Defining Intervention

Disagreements over the definition of intervention have set significant obstacles in the past for research on the subject.⁴⁵ Definitional problems arise from the vague boundaries of the concept, itself the result of two issues: the complexity of the phenomenon in terms of its multiple causes and forms; and, its being a

⁴¹ Aron 1966a.

⁴² Lobell *et al.* 2009.

⁴³ This is particularly evident in Zakaria 1998. On the return to the state, see Evans *et al.* 1985.

⁴⁴ Little 1975, 1987; Rosenberg 1994. On Realism's neglect of intervention, see Krasner 1995: 232.

⁴⁵ Holsti 1972: 278.

'twilight area' standing at the intersection of power, morals, interests, and legal considerations.⁴⁶ Because of this ambiguity, the concept of intervention has been stretched to include any type of interference by an external actor.⁴⁷ A definition of intervention is therefore necessary in order to restrict the scope of inquiry to manageable limits.⁴⁸ Defining intervention equates mainly to the identification of 'criteria for inclusion and exclusion' needed to formulate a 'nominal' – i.e. stipulative – definition that can be held relatively constant over time and across the debates surrounding the issue.⁴⁹ At the same time, in order to avoid the arbitrary imposition of a definition over the meaning attached to it by practitioners, the proposed definition needs to identify a consistent set of activities while being related to the historical use of the term.⁵⁰

Definitions of intervention can be clustered in two main groups. A first group of definitions broadens the concept of intervention to equate it either to any use of military force or to any foreign policy decision. On the one hand, intervention is defined in such a way to include any military operation, thus becoming a synonym of war or of the decision to use force in the international sphere.⁵¹ In this sense, the term 'intervention' is used instead of 'war' simply to underscore a higher degree of freedom in the choice to participate in the conflict.⁵² Following the same logic, the term intervention has been used to define military interference in the ongoing wars of two or more states, e.g. American intervention in the First World War.⁵³ As a consequence, interventions in the domestic affairs or intra-state conflicts of other polities are not distinguished from interventions in others' inter-state conflicts.⁵⁴ On the

⁴⁶ Schwarz 1969: 30; Pearson 1974: 268.

⁴⁷ Paquin and Saideman 2010.

⁴⁸ Hoffmann 1984: 9. On the question of the definition of *humanitarian* intervention, see Lang 2003.

⁴⁹ Young 1968: 177.

⁵⁰ Weber 1992: 206.

⁵¹ For instance, Tillema (1973: 3; 1989: 181, 187) defines military intervention as any regular military operation conducted in another country. Sullivan and Koch (2009: 709) define intervention 'as a use of armed force that involves the official deployment of at least 500 regular military personnel (ground, air, or naval) to attain immediate-term political objectives through action against a foreign adversary'. Similarly, see Millar 1980; Taliaferro 2004; Dueck 2009.

⁵² Wight 1978: 192.

⁵³ Winfield 1923: 131.

⁵⁴ Saunders 2009: 122-123.

other hand, other authors define interventions as any act of interference in *both* the internal *and* the external affairs of other states. Max Beloff, for instance, defines intervention as ‘the attempt by one state to affect the internal structure and external behaviour of other states through various degrees of coercion’.⁵⁵

However, accepting such a broad definition of intervention presents two problems. First, starting from the early 1800s, the term intervention has acquired a peculiar meaning denoting the ‘use of force by one state in the internal affairs of another’ and in this sense it was clearly distinguished from war in both politico-diplomatic circle and academic debate.⁵⁶ Second, broadening the concept of intervention to include interference in both the domestic and external affairs of other states would ultimately equate intervention to any foreign policy activity. As a result, every foreign policy decision could be constructed as an instance of intervention, thus making the analytical category of intervention pointless.⁵⁷

Rejecting the conceptual ambiguity inherent in the previous usage of the term, a second group of definitions limits the use of the term intervention to any interference in the domestic affairs of other states. For instance, Stanley Hoffman defines intervention as those ‘acts which try to affect not the external activities, but the domestic affairs of the state’.⁵⁸ Similarly, Deen Chatterjee and Don Scheid note that intervention ‘in the context of international affairs, usually means a coercive action of some kind by an outside party (or parties) that takes place within a sovereign state’. In more specific terms, drawing mainly on Lassa Oppenheim, various authors define intervention in terms of its violation of the *domestic jurisdiction* of other states. For instance, Hedley Bull defines intervention as ‘dictatorial or coercive interference, by an outside party or parties, in the sphere of jurisdiction of a sovereign state, or more broadly of an independent political community’. Similarly Robert Jackson defines

⁵⁵ Beloff 1968: 198. Similarly, see Schraeder 1989: 2; Otte 1995: 10.

⁵⁶ Bullen 1979: 54. In this sense, the use of the term intervention is a recent development. Previously, both Grotius and Vattel and the more general practice before the 18th Century did not distinguish a separate category of intervention from war. See Winfield 1923: 135-136; Trollet 1940: 14; Finnemore 2003: 10, 96; Keene 2013.

⁵⁷ This point is raised by a variety of authors, including: Schwarz 1970: 84; Younger 1971: 12; Hoffmann 1984: 7-8; Little 1987: 49; Finnemore 2003.

⁵⁸ The definitions are taken from Hoffmann 1984: 9; and, Chatterjee and Scheid 2003: 1. See also Mitchell 1970: 167-168; Bullen 1979: 54.

intervention as 'interference..., involving the threat or use of force or some other means of duress, in the domestic jurisdiction of an independent state against the will or wishes of its government'.⁵⁹ However, domestic jurisdiction may include a vast array of sovereign rights, such as defence policy, arms build-up, right to conclude alliances, trade policy that have immediate international effects.⁶⁰ Once again, considering interference on these policies as an act of intervention entails the risk of broadening the concept of intervention to untenable limits.

In order to overcome these problems and avoid possible confusion among the terms used in this study *vis-à-vis* the abovementioned definitions, I will first distinguish between three categories of activity: influence, interference, and intervention with influence and intervention resting at the extremes of a continuum.⁶¹ At the most general level, we can identify the overall *influence* states exert over each other affecting their status, identity, material resources, internal and external policies. This is the least problematic level since it includes the very interactions that manifest the existence of a system at the international level whereby state actions reverberate on others' decisions, a level at which no significant issue of legitimacy is raised.⁶² *Interference* refers to the forms of influence and interactions in the domestic jurisdiction and affairs of other independent political communities that exclude inter-state wars but include those areas and policies that independent political actors consider to be part of their sovereign domains and that change over time, which may include forms of influence over other states' fiscal policy.⁶³

Finally, *intervention* represents a most obtrusive form of interference.⁶⁴ It results from an actor's purposeful attempt to shape the internal structures of another community. It represents a conscious response to specific pressures (incentives

⁵⁹ Bull 1984a: 1; Jackson 2000: 250. For the original definition, see Oppenheim 1905.

⁶⁰ Trachtenberg 1993.

⁶¹ Lyons and Mastanduno 1995: 10.

⁶² Aron 1966a; Bull 1977; Waltz 1979; Brown 2002: 79.

⁶³ Higgins 1984: 31.

⁶⁴ Defined in these broad terms without reference to its exact forms and objectives, the term intervention as used here is similar to what Mitchell (1970: 169, fn.3) defined as 'involvement', 'which can concern both political authorities and socio-economic groupings'.

or threats) emanating from other communities. As John MacMillan has recently argued, intervention manifests a 'will to order', i.e. the attempt to regulate tensions emerging from the interplay between 'bounded political entities' and 'transnational social forces ' broadly defined.⁶⁵ It is first and foremost an exercise in control over another community that leaders of the intervening actor consider to be affecting the latter.

As intervention responds to different exigencies and forces, it can take different forms. As Richard Little notes, imposing a definition of intervention that restricts intervention solely to military interventions excludes *a priori* other forms of intervention that are relevant in international relations.⁶⁶ Intervention can be either coercive or non-coercive.⁶⁷ In particular, drawing on Amitai Etzioni, we can distinguish different forms of intervention in terms of the source of power employed and the immediate objective affected by the external actor.⁶⁸ Intervention can take three forms: economic, ideological, and military. *Economic interventions* denote the use of economic tools to affect the economic structures and policies of a foreign country.⁶⁹ *Ideological interventions* (or intervention on opinion) refer to the use of cultural, media and propaganda tools aimed at shaping the structure of the public opinion and discourse of the target.⁷⁰ Finally, *coercive or military interventions* refer to the use of military force to affect the political authority of the target and its relationship with its society or segments thereof. Specifically, I will define military intervention as the coercive and organised interference by one or more external actors aimed at either the preservation or alteration of the existing political order of the target community.

⁶⁵ MacMillan 2013.

⁶⁶ Little 1987: 52. For instances of use of the term intervention to purely military interventions, see Saunders 2009: 122; Owens 2002.

⁶⁷ Gurr 1974: 71.

⁶⁸ Etzioni (1965: 37) identifies three forms of intervention: coercive (military), utilitarian (economic) and identitive (propaganda). See also Little 1975: 9; Krasner 2013.

⁶⁹ See, for instance, the European Recovery Program (ERP). As in the case of the ERP, economic interventions may serve broader political goals. The distinction simply serves to highlight the immediate type of domestic structures affected by external action. On the political objectives of the ERP, see Cox and Kennedy-Pipe 2005.

⁷⁰ See, for instance, the US 'Scare Campaign' during the 1964 presidential elections in Chile, and Qatar's use of al-Jazeera. On the latter, see Halliday 2009.

The proposed definition underscores four important aspects. First, military intervention represents an attempt to safeguard or impose a specific political order in an independent political community.⁷¹ If intervention expresses a will to order, military intervention expresses a will to order the political space of the target. Intervention in this sense can be used either as a preventive tool, that is to impose a new political authority over a society not affected by domestic disputes, or as a reactive tool, interfering with ongoing internal conflicts. In both cases 'the notion of intervention includes the idea of change – that outsiders are responding to or anticipating events within another country'.⁷² In more specific terms, as Oran Young argues, military interventions are characterised by the use of military force to affect the 'political authority structures' in charge of another community.⁷³ Specifically, military intervention targets 'the identity of those who make the decisions that are binding for the entire society and/or...the processes through which such decisions are made'.⁷⁴ At minimum, military interventions affect the identity and composition of the political personnel of the target; at maximum, they result in regime change operations, targeting both the political personnel of the target and the political institutions through which political leaders are selected. Interventions aimed at regime change need to be examined as a particular case of coercive intervention in which the intervener does not limit its action to the political leadership of the target but explicitly aims at favouring a political reordering of the domestic institutions of the latter.⁷⁵ In both cases, however, political leaders represent the key target of military intervention.

Second, whilst influence and interference may take place accidentally and unintentionally, military intervention is an organised activity on the part of the

⁷¹ Bull 1984a: 1.

⁷² Paquin and Saideman 2010.

⁷³ Young 1968: 178. See also Gurr 1974: 71; Vincent 1974: 13; Calvert 1984: 165; Jentleson and Levite 1992: 5-7. Thus, military interventions as defined in this study refer to the subsets of interventions recently surveyed by Sullivan and Koch (2009), including military operations aimed both at preserving and altering existing regimes and excluding operations aimed at imposing foreign policy change or directly annexing territory.

⁷⁴ Rosenau 1968: 169.

⁷⁵ By doing so, external interventions have historically favoured the reproduction of the sovereign state model beyond Europe. See Chong 2012 and, for a broader treatment, Lawson *et al.* 2013.

intervener. It is organised in the sense that it results from a clear decision made by the political leaders of the intervener, thus it does not refer to acts of intervention conducted without the authorisation or the support of the former.⁷⁶ Interventions, as any decision to use force, are ultimately high-risk and high-level decisions, taken by political leaders. In other terms, 'military intervention does not just happen. ...Statesmen define the kind of events that warrant the dispatch of armed forces'.⁷⁷ In this sense, political leaders represent both the key target of intervention and its key decision-makers.

Third, it is coercive in terms of the tools it uses, whether by intervening directly or by supporting one of the military groups involved in a domestic conflict, yet it does not by definition entail the lack of consent on the part of the target. As Stephen Krasner notes, '[d]omestic authority structures can be infiltrated through both coercive and voluntary actions, through intervention and invitation'.⁷⁸ Thus, intervention is not necessarily 'dictatorial' in forcing a decision over the existing and legitimate authorities of the target country.⁷⁹ It is coercive only as far as it uses coercive forms of intervention to affect the political authority of another country. In fact, military interventions can take place with the consent and the invitation of the incumbent authorities, as in the case of Russian intervention against the Hungarian Revolution in 1849.⁸⁰

Fourth, in line with the theoretical framework adopted in this study, the definition of military intervention is not limited to operations conducted by states. Military interventions may be conducted by both supra-national organisations and sub-state actors. In particular, military intervention refers to any act of intervention conducted by an international actor, with the latter defined as a political elite, that is a political group and its leadership controlling a state, or a counter-elite involved in a conflict for the control of the state and

⁷⁶ In this sense, the adopted definition follows the use made in empirical studies and datasets that underscore the 'purposeful, not accidental' nature of intervention. For example, the dispatch of volunteers represents a case of military intervention only when authorised and/or favoured by the political leaders of the intervener. See Kisingani and Pickering 2008.

⁷⁷ Van Wingen and Tillema 1980: 295.

⁷⁸ Krasner 1999: 20.

⁷⁹ Vincent 1974: 8; Wight 1978: 192; Bull 1984a: 1.

⁸⁰ Bullen 1979: 54; Krasner 1999: 20.

controlling key sources of social power, whether political, military, economic or ideological.⁸¹

The modality of military intervention

Military intervention can take different forms. A first distinction can be drawn between unilateral and multilateral interventions, depending on the number of the intervening actors. Unilateral interventions often reveal contexts of hierarchical power relations where other actors are not willing or capable of interfering. For instance, Bull associates intervention with instances of either dominance (e.g. US interventions in Central America and Caribbean countries before 1933) or hegemony (Soviet interventions in Eastern Europe and US intervention in Central and Caribbean countries in the Cold War).⁸² Nevertheless, this distinction between unilateral and multilateral intervention does not necessarily indicate the effect of different causal mechanisms, as unilateral intervention are also influenced by actual or possible interventions by other states.⁸³ First, states' decisions concerning unilateral interventions inevitably take into account both the possible competing interventions of other states and the support they may or not receive from other states.⁸⁴ Second, unilateral interventions may be conducted in order to counter others' interference or pre-empt their interventions in the first place. For instance, US intervention in Haiti in 1915 was influenced by both actual and perceived French and German interference over the island's economy and politics.⁸⁵ Interaction and strategic considerations between actual and potential interventions are thus important in unilateral interventions. As a result, unilateral interventions tend to be rare. According to a recent estimate, three-

⁸¹ On the role of international organizations, see Hoffmann 1984: 9. On interventions conducted by sub-state actors and their impact, see for instance the case of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) role in the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) or, more recently, Hezbollah's intervention in the Syrian Civil War. Both represent international actors as they control significant military power and put forth a claim over their communities and states.

⁸² Bull 1977: 213-219.

⁸³ Duner 1985: 7.

⁸⁴ As I will indicate in Chapter 4, the possibility of European intervention in Cuba affected US calculations.

⁸⁵ Schmidt 1995: 34-35, 52-56.

fifths of the interventions conducted after 1945 were multilateral.⁸⁶ This is due primarily to the fact that also unilateral decisions tend to drag other states to intervene in order to check possible unilateral interventions.⁸⁷

A more useful analytical distinction can be drawn with regard to the different coercive tools interveners can use that highlight the inherent ‘polimorphy of intervention’.⁸⁸ While military intervention is usually associated with the direct dispatch of military units, relevant cases of intervention have entailed instances of indirect or covert military intervention. In this regard, interventions can use a vast array of tools: they can involve the dispatch of military troops, the provision of military aid, be conducted clandestinely, etc.⁸⁹ To simplify, military interventions can be distinguished according to two categorisations: the involvement or absence of combat troops of the intervener; and, the degree of publicity that characterises the military intervention. The resulting typology is presented in *Fig.1*.

Figure 1 - Types of Military Intervention

	Direct	Indirect
Overt	Overt Direct	Overt Indirect
Covert	Covert Direct	Covert Indirect

First, interventions can be either direct or indirect. *Direct military interventions* involve ‘the movement of regular troops or forces (airborne, seaborne, shelling, etc) of one country inside another, in the context of some political issue or

⁸⁶ Findley and Teo 2006: 829. See also Saideman 2002.

⁸⁷ Wight 1978: 196. For example, British interventions in the Iberian Peninsula and in the Greek Revolution in the first half of the 19th Century were conducted in part to forestall unilateral French and Russian interventions. See Anderson 1979; Sked 1979a; Bullen 1979: 66-67, 73.

⁸⁸ Duner 1985: 61. See also Hoffmann 1984: 9-10; Schraeder 1989.

⁸⁹ Bull 1984a: 1. See also Rosenau 1964; Calvert 1984: 165-166, 176; Hoffmann 1984: 9.

dispute', e.g. Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.⁹⁰ *Indirect military interventions* refer to the provision of military aid to groups in the target involved in an internal conflict. Military aid includes the 'provision of arms, bases, financial aid or credits for arms purchase, [and] instructors...' as well as the provision of intelligence, e.g. the support provided by outside actors to both the Syrian regime and the opposition in the ongoing civil war.⁹¹

Second, interventions can be either overt or covert. Direct or indirect intervention are *overt* when they entail the public dispatch of regular troops or the public provision of military aid as per official agreements and declarations, as in the case of American interventions in Vietnam. *Covert* intervention is when political leaders do not officially acknowledge the presence of the intervener's troops in the target or the provision of military aid to one of the sides in an internal conflict. Indirect covert interventions involve the undeclared dispatch of military aid, such as the covert military aid provided by the US to UNITA and FLNA during the Angolan Civil War.⁹² Covert direct forms of intervention, albeit rarer, include: the dispatch of irregular units, such as mercenaries under intervening state's general or operational command;⁹³ the recruitment and/or dispatch of volunteers organised by state authorities, e.g. the use of volunteers by Italy in the Spanish Civil War;⁹⁴ granting permissions for the draft of the intervener's citizens to foreign states, e.g. the British and French decision to allow Spain to recruit soldiers in Great Britain and France during the Carlist revolt;⁹⁵ and, the use of unmarked military units drawn from regular forces operating within a foreign army for combat purposes, e.g. the dispatch of unmarked American pilots to operate Laotian fighters during the civil war in Laos.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Pearson and Baumann 1993: 1; see also Pearson 1974: 261; Calvert 1984: 165. In this sense, I would not limit direct interventions to the deployment solely of ground troops as this would unnecessarily and arbitrarily exclude air, naval and artillery operations from the category of direct intervention despite the relevance of the latter in both past and recent cases of Western intervention. Cf. Saunders 2009: 122-123.

⁹¹ Mitchell 1970: 169. See also Vincent 1974: 9.

⁹² Gleijeses 2002: 293-296, 334.

⁹³ Duner 1985: 17.

⁹⁴ Coverdale 1975.

⁹⁵ Bullen 1977: 388; 1979: 74.

⁹⁶ Castle 1993: 34-35.

Different tools of intervention can be used at the same time, usually with direct intervention coupled with the provision of indirect support. Far from being static forms of interventions, states often shift from one form of intervention to another due to changing conditions. For instance, escalatory processes lead states to shift towards more direct/overt forms of intervention, as exemplified by the expanding US involvement in Vietnam.⁹⁷

What is non-intervention?

Having defined intervention and its modalities, what constitutes non-intervention? The question of non-intervention raises two orders of problems, an empirical and a normative one. While I will address the normative aspect in greater detail in the following chapter, the question of non-intervention raises an important and often overlooked empirical issue. The main problem stems from treating non-intervention exclusively in normative terms. In history, non-intervention has been used to define a vast array of categories, not purely a norm. Hence, the term non-intervention has been used to define: a foreign policy doctrine, most notably British foreign policy in the 19th Century and more recently Chinese foreign policy towards Africa and Myanmar;⁹⁸ a principle of conduct enshrined in the UN Charter and in regional agreements and treaties such as the Helsinki Final Document (1975), the Charter of the Organisation of American States (OAS) (1948) and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (1976).⁹⁹ What is often left aside is the analysis of non-intervention either as a policy outcome or as a form of intervention in its own right.

First and foremost, non-intervention should be examined as a policy outcome resulting from two non-mutually exclusive dynamics. On the one hand, non-intervention may mirror not simply a state's adherence to the norm of non-intervention and long-standing principles of foreign policy but also the

⁹⁷ Little 1975: 9.

⁹⁸ On British non-intervention policy, see Stapleton 1866; Vincent 1974: 74-90; Bartlett 1979: 150; Hefner 1980. On Chinese non-interventionism, see Cohen 1974; Alden 2005; Li and Zheng 2009.

⁹⁹ The principle of non-intervention was reiterated within the UN system both by the UN General Assembly and by the International Court of Justice. See Wheatley 1993.

conscious policy adopted to pursue specific interests.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, non-intervention may represent the unintended result of failed efforts to intervene along certain preferred modalities. For instance, American military non-intervention in Nicaragua in 1978-79 resulted from the failure of US attempts to organise a multilateral intervention under the OAS flag willing to impose the US preferred political solution rather than from a principled non-interventionary policy on the part of the US.¹⁰¹

Second, as already underscored by Hoffmann, 'even non-acts constitute intervention'.¹⁰² In this regard, non-intervention represents a way to favour the stronger party involved in any exchange.¹⁰³ Examples or accusations of biased non-interventions abound: British non-intervention in 1860 *vis-à-vis* Giuseppe Garibaldi's actions in Sicily, favouring Italian unification; non-intervention on the part of Western democracies in the Spanish Civil War in 1936-39, favouring the Nationalist forces of Francisco Franco; France's non-interventions allowing the removal of Fulbert Youlou in Congo-Brazzaville and Hamani-Diou in Niger.¹⁰⁴ It is exactly this ambiguous nature of non-intervention that led to Charles Maurice de Talleyrand's famous remark that non-intervention is 'a term of political metaphysics signifying almost the same thing as intervention'.¹⁰⁵

What this set of empirical qualifications indicates is the necessity to approach non-intervention primarily in empirical terms to evaluate what conditions and factors led a particular actor to opt for non-intervention instead of military intervention. For this reason, any theoretical framework aimed at shedding light on the causal mechanisms leading to intervention needs to be able to clarify also the causal mechanisms leading to the decision not to intervene.

¹⁰⁰ In the case of US non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War addressed in Chapter 6, as I will indicate, non-intervention was a choice resulting from wider specific political and elite dynamics.

¹⁰¹ Dumbrell 1993: 152-157; Goodwin 2001: 188.

¹⁰² Hoffmann 1984: 8.

¹⁰³ Modelski 1964.

¹⁰⁴ On British non-intervention, see Wight 1978: 199. On Spain, see Falk 1959: 169; Cohen 1974: 355; Little 1985; Anievas 2011. On French non-intervention in Africa, see Moisi 1984: 73.

¹⁰⁵ Wight 1978: 199. On the context of Talleyrand's remarks, see Swain 1938: 41.

Defining the Scope and Limits of the Research

The primary object of study of this thesis will be the causal mechanisms driving political elite members to opt for overt-direct military interventions in internal conflicts.¹⁰⁶ In particular, I will try to highlight the processes through which leaders decide either to overcome two possible alternatives – a non-interventionary position and indirect/covert forms of intervention – or opt for one of the latter instead of authorising the dispatch of military units in ongoing internal conflicts.

First, the choice of focusing on direct-overt interventions stems from two considerations. The decision to dispatch armed forces in a foreign country represents not only a decision that questions the norm of non-intervention but also a particularly revealing political choice about the intervener and what the leaders consider worth the use of force.¹⁰⁷ Further, such choices are revealing of power asymmetries and patterns of hierarchy in the international sphere. Direct military intervention, more than all other forms of intervention, is made possible by a condition of power asymmetry between the intervener and the target. For this reason, great powers have represented the ‘great intervening parties of modern history’.¹⁰⁸ Focusing on direct intervention allows first and foremost the examination of a practice that is characteristic of great powers’ action in international affairs, a point that is of primary concern for the Realist framework adopted in this thesis. Yet, selecting direct intervention as the primary focus of this study does not limit the utility of the proposed framework only to great powers. Power asymmetries exist between all states and actors, thus allowing regional or lesser powers to intervene in weaker states. Cases such as Egypt’s intervention in Yemen (1962), Syrian intervention in Lebanon

¹⁰⁶ Hence, the use of the term intervention in this study, when not qualified otherwise, will refer to this modality of military intervention.

¹⁰⁷ Finnemore 2003: 2.

¹⁰⁸ Bull 1984a: 1. See also Wight 1978: 194; Patman 1990: 7; Aron 1966b: 487; Owen 2002: 376. On the link that emerged during the 19th Century between great powers’ status and the practice of intervention, see Lawson and Tardelli 2013. On the limits of great powers’ interference and intervention, see Berry 1973.

(1976), Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia (1978), Tanzania's intervention in Uganda (1979) as well as the intervention in Bahrain in 2011 organised by the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) indicate that intervention is not the exclusive practice of great powers.¹⁰⁹

Second, this study will focus on cases of intervention in ongoing internal conflicts for both empirical and theoretical reasons. Interventions in cases of internal conflicts represent the most common form of intervention, representing 'the rule rather than the exception'.¹¹⁰ According to Patrick Regan, nearly two-thirds of all domestic conflicts after 1945 were characterised by outside intervention; as he notes, 'with some regularity decision-makers around the globe are contemplating an intervention in a civil conflict'.¹¹¹ In addition, internal conflicts can create temporary conditions of power asymmetry unfavourable to great powers. Revolutions and full-fledged civil wars have often created windows of opportunity for external intervention by lesser powers in the internal affairs of other states, including great powers, as exemplified by multiple interventions in the Russian Civil War.¹¹² Finally, linking the study of intervention to internal conflicts allows drawing on the literature addressing the international dimension of civil conflicts and specific forms thereof (e.g. revolutions, ethnic conflicts, secessionist conflicts). Reference to this literature is necessary for the present study since, as Little points out, dealing with intervention in domestic conflicts requires a preliminary and acceptable definition of civil conflict able to take into account the vast array of phenomena and forms it subsumes.¹¹³

For the purpose of this study, internal conflicts will be defined by three elements. First, internal conflicts take place within a formerly united and independent polity, such as city-states, nation-states, and empires. Second, they emerge when the domestic scene is characterised by 'multiple sovereignty',

¹⁰⁹ This point has been underscored by numerous authors, including: Tillema and Van Wingen 1982; Duner 1985: 67-69; Pearson *et al.* 1994; Khosla 1999; Regan 2002. Major studies on the examples mentioned in the text include: Weinberger 1986; Quinn-Judge 2006; Ferris 2012.

¹¹⁰ Wippman 1998: 8. See also Mitchell 1970: 167; Rosenau 1974: 132; Hoffmann 1984: 21.

¹¹¹ Regan 2000: 1. See also Forman 1972; Eckhardt and Azar 1978; Kende 1978; Duner 1985: 2; Owen 2002.

¹¹² Owen 2002: 375; Walt 1996.

¹¹³ Little 1987; Kalyvas and Kenny 2010.

whereby 'at least two distinct blocs of contenders make incompatible claims to control the state, and some significant portion of the population subject to the state's jurisdiction acquiesces in the claims of each bloc', with 'both or all of which may possess significant means of coercion'.¹¹⁴ Third, internal conflict results when these blocs take part in acts of 'organised violence...directed against people or property'.¹¹⁵

These three elements define internal conflicts in broad terms to include internal revolutionary conflicts, ethnic strife, wars of independence and decolonisation. To simplify, I will distinguish only two broad categories: revolutionary internal conflicts, when at least two blocs fight for the control of the state;¹¹⁶ and a secessionist conflict involving the 'creation of a new State upon territory previously forming part of, or being a colonial entity of, an existing state'.¹¹⁷ Despite the difference existing between these two categories of internal conflict, ultimately all types of internal conflicts will determine 'who rules when the fighting stops...'.¹¹⁸ Whereas in revolutions and other forms of civil conflicts the blocs of contenders make incompatible claims for the state, in secessionist conflicts one bloc – a nationalist, secessionist movement, or ethnic group – makes a claim to a separate state within the existing territory and polity. As Susan Woodward argues, 'the essence of civil war, regardless of substantive goals, is a contest for power – over who rules, who gets to define policies for their group or goals, and above all, the very rules over who rules'.¹¹⁹ In all these cases, domestic actors struggle for state power, more specifically they either fight for *the* state or fight for *a* state.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ Tilly 1993: 8-10; 1978: 191. On internal conflicts as entailing the 'bifurcation' of formerly united polities, see Little 1975.

¹¹⁵ Mitchell 1970: 171, fn.5; Gurr 1974: 70.

¹¹⁶ Although controlling the state is not the sole goal of revolutionaries, it is a necessary condition for their success. See Goodwin 2001: 40-43.

¹¹⁷ Radan 2008: 18.

¹¹⁸ Betts 1994: 21.

¹¹⁹ Woodward 2007: 159.

¹²⁰ Furthermore, the two categories cannot always be distinguished. In the case of the Cuban War of Independence addressed in Chapter 4, the Cuban actors fighting for independence from Spain were driven by nationalist, secessionist, and also revolutionary intentions.

In this regard, the causal mechanisms leading to military intervention need to be examined *vis-à-vis* the political and military conditions in the target country shaped by revolutionary and secessionist dynamics. The existing literature has extensively examined the international dimension of domestic conflict and the role played by foreign interventions.¹²¹ Recent works have particularly focused on the impact of military interventions on the duration and the levels of violence of domestic conflicts.¹²² Similarly, the way interventions affect the outcome of civil conflicts as well as the possibility of a negotiated settlement has been addressed.¹²³ Although this set of works offers an essential analysis of the patterns of third-party interventions in civil conflicts, on the conditions favouring it and on the likely impact of outside actors, its reliance on large-*n* analyses inevitably eschews an in-depth examination of the political processes and interests underlying specific instances or types of interventions. An important complementary contribution in this sense is provided by the literature addressing the international dimension of revolutions and secessionist conflicts, which brings into the analysis a more sociological approach as well as an appreciation of the political conditions and interests behind interventionary policies in revolutions and secessionist conflicts.¹²⁴

Therefore, military intervention in internal conflicts can be rephrased as an attempt to favour one political order over others when the original political order has collapsed and is contested by different internal actors. In this sense, military intervention in civil conflicts includes ‘any military action...which is calculated to affect favourably the situation of one or the other faction...’ involved in domestic strife.¹²⁵ Through intervention external actors can alter the balance of forces between the parties in order to favour the authority claim of one of the parties involved and/or deny the authority claim of other parties.¹²⁶ As a result, intervention is *always* for someone as it either directly supports one

¹²¹ Rosenau 1964; Young 1968, 1974; Deutsch 1974; Calvert 1984; Brown 1996; Lahneman 2004.

¹²² Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000; Elbadawy and Sambanis 2000; Regan 2002; Hironaka 2005; Cunningham 2006; Balch-Lindsay *et al.* 2008.

¹²³ Rosenau 1964; Zartmann 1993; Holbrook 1998; Luttwak 1999; Mason *et al.* 1999; Regan 2000, 2002; Balch-Lindsay *et al.* 2008.

¹²⁴ Kim 1970; Mayer 1971; Skocpol 1979; Armstrong 1993; Walt 1996; Halliday 1999; Bisley 2004: 50-54; Lawson 2005; Fabry 2011.

¹²⁵ Mitchell 1970: 169, fn.3.

¹²⁶ Regan 2000: 10. See also Duner 1985: 14.

of the factions or prevents another to reach its goals. The eventual neutrality of foreign intervention, already contested by Richard Betts, needs to be evaluated *vis-à-vis* the actual military support provided by an external actor to one of the factions in its attempts to secure state power.¹²⁷

Consequently, military interventions act as externally imposed political revolutions so far as they influence the selection of the political elite of the target and, by doing so, help bring about together with domestic constituencies a rapid, forceful, and systemic reconstruction of the 'system of political authority, rule and coercion' of the target.¹²⁸ In the case of secessionist conflicts, foreign military intervention affects the existing political authority over a specific portion of territory and population while acting to empower (or avoid the empowerment) of an alternative political authority over that territory. Similarly, humanitarian interventions can be conceptualised as a peculiar form of military intervention, conducted without the consent of the political authorities of the target, that directly questions the sovereign authority of the target's political leadership by claiming for the intervener the responsibility and right to safeguard the target's polity or parts thereof.¹²⁹ Furthermore, humanitarian interventions target local political authorities by identifying the source of violations of human rights in specific, non-democratic or non-Liberal forms of governments, and in seeking an alteration of such structures, such as in Libya in 2011.¹³⁰ Once again, despite their differences, military interventions target either explicitly or implicitly the political authorities of the target.

¹²⁷ Betts 1994.

¹²⁸ Lawson 2005.

¹²⁹ On humanitarian intervention as an exercise of authority within the jurisdiction of another state, see Nardin 2006: 1. On humanitarian intervention and the question of the target's consent, see Wheeler 1992; Dunne *et al.* 2001; Bellamy 2003a: 5; Wheeler and Bellamy 2005; Sarkin 2009: 5. On intervention as responsibility, see ICISS 2001.

¹³⁰ On the link between humanitarian intervention and regime change, see for instance Rawls 1999: 81; Finnemore 2003: 137; Teson 2003; Bellamy 2004a: 131-132.

Chapter Outline

The thesis is divided in two parts. In Part I, I develop the theoretical framework that will inform the empirical analysis offered in Part II. In particular, Chapter 1 explores not only the emerging trends pointed out in this introduction but also the persistent gaps that affect the existing literature on military intervention in IR. In doing so, Chapter 1 highlights both contemporary Realism's silence on the subject and the broad defining features of a reformulated Realist theory of military intervention. In Chapter 2, I present the basics of the theory of the state and of state action that will inform the subsequent analysis. This includes defining the term 'elite' and highlighting the political and sociological mechanisms on which a more explicit theory of intervention could draw. The chapter addresses how elite politics create the incentives political leaders face when confronted with an internal conflict and how intervention responds to such incentives. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework for the study of the causal mechanisms leading political elites to intervene. As I will argue, three dynamics operating at the elite level represent the causal antecedents of the decision to intervene: elites' political ideology (formula), elites' twofold struggle for power, and elites' relations between the intervening and target country.

In Part II, three empirical chapters provide a plausibility probe of the proposed framework by examining cases of US military intervention in three different types of internal conflicts. Chapter 4 examines US policy towards the Cuban War of Independence (1895-1898) and the decision to intervene resulting in the so-called Spanish-American War. As I show, rephrasing the conflict as a case of intervention is not only more accurate given the historical record but also allows a more thorough examination of the key role played by Cuban elite actors in shaping the American decision to intervene. In Chapter 5, I examine US policy towards the two-stage Russian Revolution in 1917 and the resulting decision to intervene in 1918. This case tests the proposed framework *vis-à-vis* the antithetic challenge posed by the Bolshevik elite and how intervention allowed the US to influence the political trajectory of the Russian Revolution. In Chapter 6, I test the proposed framework on a negative case, that is US non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Often overlooked within the discipline of IR, the Spanish conflict represented a major international issue at the time, led multiple countries to intervene and sparked tremendous interest

within European and American societies. As I indicate, US policy, usually explained through the lenses of appeasement and isolationism, is better explained when taking into account both the domestic political ramifications of US policy towards Spain and the lack of feasible interlocutors in Spain from Washington's perspective.

In the concluding chapter of the thesis, I draw on the results obtained to show how the proposed framework could be applied to more recent periods, including the Cold War, the humanitarian interventions of the 1990s, and recent cases of intervention in North Africa and the Middle East.

Part I

Intervention and Elite Politics

Chapter 1

Emerging Trends, Persistent Gaps: Towards a Realist Theory of Intervention

The main objective of this thesis is to outline a theoretical framework that explains the causal mechanisms leading to the decision to military intervene in internal conflicts. For this purpose, in the following chapter, I will first situate this study within the broader waves of research on military intervention. Second, I will examine the contributions offered by the major approaches in IR on the causes of military intervention in order to illustrate two elements: the recurrent issues highlighted by recent works on the subject, primarily the central role played by political elites; and, the persisting gaps existing in the literature. Third, I will argue that there is considerable scope for a Realist framework drawing on existing Realist insights on the subject in order to overcome the limits of both Neorealism and Neoclassical Realism on the subject and address the role played by political elites in shaping military intervention.

The Study of Intervention in International Relations

This thesis on military intervention needs to be contextualised within the emerging fifth wave of research on the subject. The first wave of reflections on the practice of intervention emerged in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Whereas the practice of intervention itself predates the 19th Century, it is only with the French Revolution and the emerging nationalist principles that the practice of intervention becomes contested. Debates on intervention were fuelled by the subsequent revolutions of the 19th Century, particularly among Liberal authors such as Thomas Paine, Edmund Burke, Richard Cobden, John

Stuart Mill and Giuseppe Mazzini discussing the traditionalist monarchies' interventions to suppress Liberal movements in Europe, the possibility of intervention in support of the latter, and the merits of the British policy of non-intervention.¹

At the beginning of the 20th Century, interest in the subject of intervention crystallises within a second set of works primarily within International Law. This body of literature provided a first systematic attempt to define the conditions for justified intervention as well as a first look at the actual practice and political dimension of intervention.² The development of this literature was driven primarily by contemporary cases of intervention: the allied intervention in China to suppress the Boxer rebellion (1900); the numerous US interventions in Latin America; and, Western interventions aimed at debt collection.³

A third wave of works followed the numerous American and Soviet direct interventions during the Cold War, such as in the Korean Civil War (1950), East Germany (1953), Hungary (1956), Lebanon (1958), Vietnam (1960s), Dominican Republic (1965), Czechoslovakia (1968), and eventually Afghanistan (1979) and Grenada (1983).⁴ Key works on the subject published in this period represent the core of the existing theoretical efforts on intervention. Attention was devoted to definitions of intervention;⁵ the systemic determinants of intervention;⁶ the interplay of systemic and sub-systemic conditions favouring intervention;⁷ the relationship between interveners and target countries;⁸ and, the interplay between normative, political, and ideological considerations in an

¹ Paine [1791] 1993; Burke 1989, 1991; Cobden [1835] 1903; Mill [1859] 1984; Stapleton 1866. On Mazzini and intervention, see Recchia and Urbinati 2009; Keene 2013.

² Oppenheim 1905; Stowell 1921; Mosler 1937. On the early works underscoring the political dimension of intervention, see Lingelbach 1900; Hodges 1915; Cavaglieri 1928; Trolliet 1940.

³ Lingelbach 1900; Hershey 1907; Martin 1921; Beman 1928; Strupp 1928.

⁴ Among the most important works on the subject, Rosenau 1964, 1968; Morgenthau 1967; Moore 1974; Vincent 1974; Little 1975; Bull 1984a; Hoffmann 1984.

⁵ Beloff 1968; Rosenau 1968; Young 1968.

⁶ Modelski 1964; Rosenau 1964; Young 1968; Pearson 1974; Piotrowski 1989.

⁷ MacFarlane 1985.

⁸ Mitchell 1970; Eley 1972.

effort to address the practice of intervention within broader theoretical and historical perspective.⁹

Overall, as pointed out by Little, two approaches emerged within this third wave: a behaviouralist approach and a traditional approach.¹⁰ Behaviouralist studies, exemplified by James Rosenau's work, focused on the empirical regularities of the practice of intervention, attempting to analyse the 'behavioural characteristics' of intervention without taking into account actors' motivations.¹¹ This approach has been supported by an extensive set of empirical studies providing an examination of: the peculiarities of superpowers' interventions in a nuclear and bipolar context;¹² superpowers' intervention in the Third World;¹³ and, interventions by second-rank powers such as Britain and France.¹⁴ On the contrary, the traditionalist approach studied intervention as an 'evolving political idea', adopting a 'normative perspective' that could address the meaning given by the practitioners to the practice of intervention and the constraining effects of the norm of non-intervention.¹⁵

With the end of the Cold War, empirical, ideological and normative considerations become strictly entwined thus making the behaviouralist/traditionalist divide less relevant. A fourth wave of works emerged driven by the issues raised by the increasing number of Western interventions. First, the practice of humanitarian intervention and its critique took central stage in the debate, with related questions on the implications of it for state sovereignty and the alleged move beyond state sovereignty.¹⁶ Second, the 'unipolar moment' and its Liberal character led analyses towards the

⁹ Morgenthau 1967; Vincent 1974; Bull 1984a.

¹⁰ Little 1987: 50.

¹¹ *Ibid.*: 51.

¹² Windsor 1984; Tillema 1989.

¹³ Weede 1978; Barnett 1980; Girling 1980; Klare 1981; Matheson 1982; Bull 1984b; Falk 1984; Schmid 1985; Schraeder 1989; Patman 1990; Feste 1992. Later works include Westad 2005; Grow 2008.

¹⁴ Van Wingen and Tillema 1980; Wyllie 1984; Moisi 1984; Weinberger 1986; Levite *et al.* 1992.

¹⁵ Little 1987: 50, 53-54. See, for example, Thomas 1985; Weber 1995.

¹⁶ Teson 1997; Wippman 1998; Wheeler 2000; Lang 2003; Bellamy 2003a, 2004a. On the issue of intervention and sovereignty, see Donnelly 1995; Onuf 1995; Rosenau 1995; Krasner 1999.

specificity of US interventions.¹⁷ Particular attention has been given to the American policy of democracy promotion and the relationship between democracy and intervention both before and after the US intervention in Iraq in 2003.¹⁸

The impact of Western interventions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, and, more recently, in Libya have renewed academic interest in the practice of intervention. The limits of both humanitarian interventions and US efforts at democracy promotion have led to normative reconsiderations and policy reformulations, notably the promotion of the doctrine of the 'Responsibility to Protect' and the rejection of the Bush Doctrine in the US under the Obama administration. More importantly, the debate around US interventions from Kosovo to Iraq has demanded further theoretical work to examine the causes of intervention and its function in international relations. In particular, US interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq have interrupted the normative fixation characterising the fourth wave, raising once again the curtain over the role played by power and ideological dynamics in shaping intervention.

As a result, a significant and growing body of literature within a fifth wave of research has focused on the recurrent factors favouring and affecting third-party interventions or, specifically, US interventions. Particular attention has been given to the assessment of the causal impact played by factors characterising the target state and internal conflict, such as its regime type or the intensity of the conflict.¹⁹ At the same time, a number of authors have examined the practice of intervention in broader theoretical and historical terms. In doing so, they have both historicised the practice of intervention and identified the causal dynamics shaping policymakers' interests *vis-à-vis* internal conflicts and intervention. Thus, the behaviouralist/traditionalist divide becomes even more blurred within more recent works due to their efforts to situate and analyse the practice of intervention within a broader historical and conceptual perspective, in which the analysis of political, strategic and material

¹⁷ Scott 1996; Yoon 1997. On the unipolar moment, see Krauthammer 1990.

¹⁸ Peceny 1995, 1999; Kegley and Hermann 1996; Cox *et al.* 2000; Hermann and Kegley 2001; Bellin 2004; Quinn and Cox 2007; Bueno de Mesquita and Downs 2006; Pickering and Peceny 2006; Downs and Montan 2013.

¹⁹ Aubone 2013: 281-282.

factors shaping interventionary policies does not preclude an evaluation of the changing normative and ideological factors affecting them.²⁰

A more relevant distinction today is the one delineated by Findley and Teo between *phenomenon-centric* and *actor-centric* approaches, depending on whether the analytical focus of the study is on the phenomenon of intervention itself, whether in empirical or normative terms, or on the actors' decisions, interactions and conceptualisations of their interventions.²¹ This thesis relates to these two approaches in different ways. On the one hand, it draws on the insights offered by phenomenon-centric studies on the function and role played by intervention both historically and conceptually for its general definition of intervention.²² On the other hand, it follows primarily an actor-centric approach drawing on recent works focusing on political actors' role in shaping interventionary policies as well as on the relations between the intervening actors and the actors in target states.²³

In this regard, the thesis draws on the theoretical works and the emerging trends that have characterised this fifth wave in order to contribute to its further development by sketching a Realist theory of intervention. It does so by addressing some of the gaps that characterise the major contributions offered within IR to the study of intervention. Therefore, the contributions reviewed in the following section will be drawn mainly from the last two waves of research as they provide both the main theoretical background of the present study and the main contending explanations offered within the discipline to the Realist framework I will outline in the next two chapters.

²⁰ See, for instance, MacFarlane 2002; Finnemore 2003; Lahneman 2004; Westad 2005; Kinzer 2006; Owen 2010a; Lawson *et al.* 2013.

²¹ Findley and Teo 2006.

²² The most recent attempt is provided by Lawson *et al.* 2013.

²³ Krasner 1999; Findley and Teo 2006; Owen 2010a; Saunders 2011. Precedents of this approach can be identified in the increasing focus during the 1990s on the opportunities and motives shaping actual actors' decisions to intervene. See Starr 1994; Smith 1996; Werner 1996; Regan 1998; Regan 2000; Lemke and Regan 2004; Findley and Teo 2006.

Intervention and IR Theories

Recent works on the causes of military intervention can be distinguished in terms of the main theoretical approaches that inform their analytical frameworks. Four theoretical approaches, in particular, have contributed to the study of military intervention within IR: the English School; Marxism; Liberalism; and, Constructivism. In the following section, I will provide a brief assessment of the main works offered by each approach before addressing Realism's contribution.

The English School: early insights, missed opportunities

The utility of the English School approach for this study stems from its treatment of intervention as a distinct practice in international relations.²⁴ The rich historical and normative analysis offered by the English School on the subject reveals important aspects of the function of intervention and the factors that shape this practice.

The English School stresses the connection existing between intervention and international order.²⁵ First, this link is revealed in normative terms. The norm of non-intervention is examined as part of the fundamental rules protecting states' sovereignty and sustaining international society.²⁶ As John Vincent argues, the function of the norm of non-intervention is 'to draw attention to and require respect for the principle of state sovereignty'.²⁷ At the same time, whilst non-intervention provides a normative guarantee to shield new states from outside intervention, states have intervened both to uphold the principle of self-determination and manage the consequences of their recognition of new states, as exemplified by the Western intervention in Bosnia.²⁸

²⁴ Early works include: Vincent 1974; Little 1975; Bull 1977: 70, 213-219; 1984a; Wight 1978:191-199. Later works include: Watson 1992; Jackson 2000; Wheeler 2000; Little 2007. More recently, see Lawson *et al.* 2013.

²⁵ Vincent 1974.

²⁶ *Ibid.*: 14; Bull 1977: 70.

²⁷ Vincent 1974: 333.

²⁸ Fabry 2010: 2, 10-14, 222.

Second, intervention results from the need for – or the ‘will to’ – order.²⁹ Intervention, in this sense, serves the function of ordering a socio-political space by managing the actual or potential consequences resulting from change in the target. In particular, Little argues that an ‘intervention stimulus’ arises when there is the potential for ‘systemic transformation’ resulting from an internal conflict, for instance when regime change might affect the balance of power.³⁰ In this regard, intervention acts as a tool for great powers’ management. While great powers intervene to preserve a balance of power among them, they also use intervention to establish or preserve an ‘imbalance of power’ with lesser powers, as exemplified during the Cold War by US and Soviet interventions in Latin America and Eastern Europe respectively.³¹

Furthermore, English School authors, particularly within its solidarist strand, have focused their attention on the normative underpinnings of intervention.³² In an often explicit link with Constructivism, the English School draws attention to the way in which norms, rules, and discourses shape, enable, and constrain the practice of intervention.³³ For example, Nick Bisley notes how revolutions disrupt international systems by questioning their underlying normative framework, thus igniting counter-revolutionary responses.³⁴ In a compelling critique of Neorealist explanations, Little makes clear the way in which normative considerations trumped power calculations in the formulation of British non-intervention in both the American and Spanish Civil War.³⁵ Given this analytical focus, the English School has occupied a central role in the debate on the question of humanitarian intervention.³⁶ In particular, in his influential work, Nicholas Wheeler maps the emergence of a norm of humanitarian

²⁹ Watson 1992: 313; MacMillan 2013.

³⁰ Little 1975: 8.

³¹ Bull 1977: 213-219; Wight 1978: 196; Watson 1992: 53.

³² On the differences between the solidarist and the pluralist conceptions of international society, see Wheeler 1992, 2000; Dunne 1995; Bellamy 2004b.

³³ Dunne 1995; Jackson 2000: 254-255.

³⁴ Bisley 2004.

³⁵ Little 1975; 2007.

³⁶ Bellamy 2003b.

intervention and the way in which this norm enabled and constrained Western interventions during the 1990s.³⁷

Despite this broad contribution, the English School present three problems in regard to intervention. First, the main strength of the English School, that is its theoretical eclecticism, comes at the expense of rather 'thin' explanatory theories, failing to clarify the causal processes leading to either intervention or non-intervention and the way in which intervention produces balances or imbalances of power.³⁸ The partial exceptions still present important explanatory limits. For example, Little's analysis successfully highlights the role played by normative considerations in *shaping* London's day-to-day policy towards the US during the American Civil War. Yet, as his empirical analysis reveals, the US threat to Canada in case of its loss of the Southern states or British intervention appears to have played a greater role in *explaining* British non-intervention.³⁹ Further, the norm of non-intervention itself responded to British interests in Latin American, as it represented a normative guarantee against possible European interventions.⁴⁰ Put differently, while offering a cogent critique of *Neo-realist* explanations of British non-intervention, Little's explanation rests mainly on Realist factors and state interests.

Second, the plurality of voices within the English School provides alternative accounts to Wheeler's normative analysis of humanitarian intervention. Notably, Jackson downplays the normative change Wheeler identifies in the Western imposition of safe zones in Northern Iraq to protect the Kurds (Operation Provide Comfort, 1991). Similarly, Jackson stresses the limits of humanitarian motivations in Somalia and the role played by prudential ethics both in Bosnia and Kosovo.⁴¹ From Jackson's perspective, what the case of Kosovo highlights is Western willingness to remove authoritarian regimes in Europe and create new protectorates. In turn, this indicates a possible return to the establishment of new spheres of influence, hence a possible return to the

³⁷ Wheeler 2000.

³⁸ On this as a general limit of the English School, see Suganami 2004: 30-34.

³⁹ Little 2007.

⁴⁰ Fabry 2010.

⁴¹ Jackson 2000: 260-288.

past rather than an advance towards a solidarist international society.⁴² Further, Western selectivity in the case of Operation Provide Comfort – protecting the Iraqi Kurdish population in the North but not the Iraqi Shia in the South – may not infringe Wheeler’s argument on the ground-breaking nature of Western decision but stresses the role played by ‘logistical and political reasons’ – to use Wheeler’s words – in preventing intervention in similar contexts.⁴³ If these reasons make a difference between intervention and non-intervention, they should be examined in greater detail.

Finally, English School authors have offered a broad set of observations concerning elites’ role in intervention, yet so far they have failed to link these observations and develop them within a general theoretical framework. Numerous authors within the English School have noted how rulers and elites more generally shape intervention, hence the need to take into account: the values and views of elites;⁴⁴ the way in which different leaders respond to internal conflicts;⁴⁵ and, the way in which domestic institutions and politics affect also humanitarian interventions.⁴⁶ Which states, hence which elites, are granted recognition, which states should be shielded by the norm of non-intervention, etc. – all these questions are ultimately framed and solved by state rulers.⁴⁷ As Jackson argues, international relations are primarily relations of ‘statespeople’ acting as the ‘organizers and managers who attend to the ordering and operating of the state system...to ignore them would be to disregard the leading actors on the stage of world politics’.⁴⁸ This is of central importance to explain both political action and normative frameworks, as international ethics corresponds to the ‘distinctive ethics of the men and women who wield the power of states’.⁴⁹

⁴² Ibid.: 289-291.

⁴³ Wheeler 2000: 169.

⁴⁴ Watson 1992: 105, 307.

⁴⁵ Vincent 1974: 15-16.

⁴⁶ MacMillan 2012. On this issue, see also Kaufmann and Pape 1999.

⁴⁷ Vincent 1974: 15-16; Fabry 2010: 8; Jackson 2000: 9-10.

⁴⁸ Jackson 2000: 34-35.

⁴⁹ Ibid.: 85. Bull and Watson (1984) noted the commonality of values and norms between statesmen, not necessarily between cultures and people.

In addition, English School authors have noted the role played by elites in the target state in favouring intervention.⁵⁰ For example, Martin Wight argues, the call for external intervention represent a 'last resource' political actors have to secure their domestic position and aims.⁵¹ Similarly, Little points out that the 'intervention stimulus' emerges not only from the potential for systemic transformation but also from the 'bifurcation' of the target polity. As a result, intervention is conceptualised as 'maintaining a relationship with one side of a bifurcated actor'.⁵² In this sense, intervention represents an 'interactive' practice, connecting the intervener to the politics of the target, also in cases of humanitarian and Liberal interventions.⁵³ In more general terms, as noted by Barry Buzan, states have a 'sustained interest' in other countries' internal affairs.⁵⁴ However, the way in which this 'sustained interest' is formed and shapes the decision to intervene needs to be further examined.

Marxism and economic factors

The common element underlying Marxist theories of intervention is the link established between economic interests and interventionism. Intervention and foreign expansion are treated as the inevitable result of the need of the capitalist system to find new markets and new investment opportunities. Military interventions, from this perspective, serve primarily the interests of private economic actors interested in opening up new markets, ensuring access to raw materials, and keeping reluctant actors within a global capitalist system of production and consumption.⁵⁵ This approach has influenced numerous revisionist explanations of US military interventions, particularly with regard to the case studies examined in this thesis.⁵⁶ While the eventual applicability of revisionist explanations will be the subject of empirical assessment within each case study, from a general perspective such explanations have been subject to

⁵⁰ Wight 1978: 196-197; Watson 1992: 53; Jackson 1990; 2000: 258.

⁵¹ Wight 1978: 196-197.

⁵² Little 1975: 8.

⁵³ MacMillan 2012.

⁵⁴ Buzan 2007: 88.

⁵⁵ Kemp 1972: 17; O'Connor 1972; Magdoff 1974; Kinzer 2006.

⁵⁶ For instance, see Williams 1988; LaFeber 1993.

significant criticism. For example, Stephen Krasner underscores how US policymakers have repeatedly selected US foreign policy objectives concerning raw material markets in contrast to class or private economic interests.⁵⁷

More nuanced accounts of interventions are offered by Structuralist and neo-Gramscian works within the Marxist literature. Such theories examine the close relationship between domestic and international orders, the interplay of both material and ideological factors in fostering patterns of domination, and the reproduction of social structures at both the international and domestic level. Particular attention is given to the role played by members of the broader 'transnational class', instead of political leaders, and the way in which internal changes affect global capitalist circuits and *vice versa*.⁵⁸

Drawing on these assumptions, William Robinson has offered an important neo-Gramscian contribution to the study of intervention and of US democracy promotion.⁵⁹ First, Robinson provides an analytically valuable distinction for the study of intervention, stressing the need to address not only the *foreground* of intervention, that is the actual policymaking process of US intervention in a specific instance, but also the *background* to such a policy, that is 'the international political economy and world system...which constitutes the structural underpinning of policymakers' perceptions and policies'.⁶⁰ Second, Robinson examines the emergence of a new form of US 'political intervention' at the beginning of the 1980s. The main tool of this new policy was the 'promotion of democracy'. However, according to Robinson, what Washington really promoted was a form of 'low-intensity democracy', or polyarchy, alleviating the political and social costs produced by the exploitative global system in the periphery, yet conducive to the interests of transnational capital.⁶¹

Whilst Robinson's analytical distinction between the background and foreground of intervention remains heuristically valuable, a point which I will come back to, the centrality given to economic causal factors as well as his

⁵⁷ Krasner 1978: 24-25.

⁵⁸ Rosenberg 1994: 48-49; Van der Pijl 1998; Anievas 2011.

⁵⁹ Robinson 1996.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 18.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*: 2-4, 6. For a recent reformulation of Robinson's position, see Sullivan 2004.

empirical account are less convincing. Although Robinson is correct in pointing out the emergence of a more formalised and active effort aimed at democracy promotion in the 1980s, his reconstruction runs the risk of overstating this historical passage, ignoring the various direct and indirect ways through which the US has promoted forms of 'polyarchy' before the 1980s, starting from its repeated interventions in Latin America both before and during the Cold War. More importantly, the harmony of interests assumed from Robinson's Marxist perspective between (transnational) capital and US (state) interests is empirically problematic. In this regard, as already pointed out by Krasner, the main empirical shortcoming of Marxist theories of intervention stems from their denial of any substantial autonomy to the political sphere *vis-à-vis* capitalist structures or economic actors. What they do not take into account is the possibility of intervention where economic considerations are negligible, such as in the case of Western interventions in the former Yugoslavia. Even more difficult to explain are cases in which political leaders and economic leaders' interests and opinions diverge over intervention. For instance, the cases of Nicaragua and Chile addressed by Robinson provide compelling evidence in favour of the primacy or at least the critical relevance of strategic and political considerations over economic considerations.⁶² Similar observations can be made for other relevant cases of US intervention. In the case of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), US companies pressured President Woodrow Wilson to authorise an all-out military intervention to support the autocratic regime of Victoriano Huerta; Wilson first resisted such pressures and ultimately, through the limited intervention in Vera Cruz, irremediably severed Huerta's supply lines and chances of military victory against the revolutionaries.⁶³

Recently, Peter Trubowitz and Benjamin Fordham have offered a compelling argument concerning the role played by economic considerations in shaping foreign policy. First, Trubowitz underscores the way foreign policy decisions entail different costs and benefits for different geographical regions and socio-economic groups, thus arguing that the varying distributive effects of foreign policy over domestic groups affect the position they take in foreign policy

⁶² Downes and Lilley 2010.

⁶³ Steigerwald 1999.

debates, including on the use of force.⁶⁴ Second, Fordham argues in favour of a re-evaluation of the revisionist account of US decision to enter the First World War, stressing the role of economic interests in that decision. An important point raised by Fordham is the indirect effect of economic interests on political decisions: state leaders take into account threats to economic growth and trade insofar as they limit the resources the state can extract and endanger political support at home. According to this account, far from being the result of the pressures of bankers and arms manufacturers, the US decision to intervene in the First World War stemmed from an appreciation of the extensive effects of German submarine warfare on the American economy given the relevance of exports to the US GDP at the time and the consequences any slowing down of the related 'export boom' could entail in political terms for Wilson's chances of re-election in 1916.⁶⁵ Thus, economic factors matter in indirect terms, through the political repercussion they might have over political leaders' position.

Liberalism and democracy

The centrality of intervention to the debates among Liberal thinkers such as Cobden, Mill, and Mazzini during the 19th Century has offered some of the first insights on the intervention problematique. While Classical Liberal thinkers focused primarily on the advisability of intervention, recent contributions in IR have addressed the question of intervention by taking into account primarily the role played by democratic regimes. First, works on intervention informed by a Liberal approach examine the effect that different regime types and particularly democracies have on the formulation of interventions. In general terms, regime differences seem not to explain variations of the propensity to intervene; all types of regimes take part in the practice of intervention.⁶⁶ Yet, drawing from Democratic Peace Theory (DPT), Liberals stress the way in which democratic regimes constrain interventionary practices towards other democracies. While democratic states intervene against other states including democracies, democratic regimes are considered to be less likely to intervene

⁶⁴ Trubowitz 1998.

⁶⁵ Fordham 2007: 279-280.

⁶⁶ Doyle (1986: 1154-1155) notes that democracies conduct interventions with regularity. See also Jentleson and Levite 1992: 14.

against other democracies and more likely to demonstrate a higher degree of restraint in the use of force when compared to interventions against non-democracies.⁶⁷

However, empirical analyses present a less clear picture in this regard. For instance, Kegley and Hermann question the validity of the DPT when applied to military interventions, showing that democracies intervene frequently also against other democracies.⁶⁸ Notably, democracies may be more likely to intervene in support of Liberal-democratic polities.⁶⁹ In addition, democracies often intervene through covert modalities when operating against other democratic or semi-democratic regimes.⁷⁰ Overall, what these empirical studies suggest is a complex relationship between democracy and intervention: democracies are recurrent interveners in international affairs, yet any shared democratic nature between the intervener and the target could affect the direction and modality of intervention.

A related set of studies stresses the link between democracies' interventions and democracy promotion. As previously noted, democracies have been found to intervene to support democratic states in their efforts to remain or become democratic.⁷¹ However, empirical results concerning the effectiveness of democracy promotion by Liberal states are less conclusive. For instance, Hermann and Kegley indicate the way in which US military intervention can foster liberalisation processes in the target country. Yet, both Pickering and Picensy, as well as Downs and Monten, do not find that interventions by Liberal states promote significant increases in the democratic levels of the target state. Furthermore, similarly to the conclusions reached by Robinson, Bueno de Mesquita and Downs argue that interventions conducted by democracies usually support only the introduction of superficial and symbolic democratic reforms while reducing actual democratic levels in the target country.⁷² The empirical indeterminacy of these studies point out the limit of explanations

⁶⁷ Tures 2001; Koga 2011.

⁶⁸ Kegley and Hermann 1996, 1997.

⁶⁹ Hermann and Kegley 2001.

⁷⁰ Doyle 1986: 1154-1155, 1166; Forsythe 1992; Downs and Lilley 2010.

⁷¹ Kegley and Hermann 1997.

⁷² Bueno de Mesquita and Downs 2006. See also Meernik 1996; Hermann and Kegley 1998; Pickering and Picensy 2006; Downs and Monten 2013.

based on purely institutional factors, hence the need to integrate them with the role played by other causal factors. For example, as noted in other works, both the decisions to intervene to promote democracy as well as the outcome of democracy promotion are influenced by two factors: first, the subjective construction of the target state as non-democratic by the intervener; second, the interplay between security interests as defined by democratic regimes and the need for political leaders to gain support among domestic constituencies.⁷³

In more general terms, whilst the observation that regime type affects the likelihood and modality of intervention can be subject to empirical analysis, it is worth noting that these works do not explain *why* democracies decide to intervene in other democratic states' affairs in the first place. A notable exception in this regard is represented by Jon Western's Liberal theory on the causes of US interventions.⁷⁴ According to Western, the decision to intervene (or not) stems from the competition among advocacy groups formed by elites holding contending beliefs about international affairs and their ability to gain the support of the public. Such support depends on two factors: the kind of information the public receives from both the media and the elites; and 'latent public opinion', namely the general predisposition of the public.⁷⁵ In this regard, Western treats latent public opinion together with the information advantages shaped by the media as the intervening variables between agents, elite advocacy groups, and the eventual decision to intervene.

Western's theoretical framework provides valuable insights on the role played by the competition between elite groups on the decision to intervene as well as the interplay between elite and public opinion. However, the relationship between political elites and public opinion and the causal weight of these two factors is not always clear. On the one hand, the actions of the elite groups seem to be significantly constrained by public opinion. In this regard, public opinion seems to represent more than a simple intervening variable. For example, in the case of US non-intervention in Vietnam in 1954, it is not clear whether more effective information campaigns on the part of Eisenhower and the hardliners would have succeeded in overcoming the resistance of the American public at

⁷³ Peceny 1995, 1997; Owen 1997.

⁷⁴ Western 2005: 5-9.

⁷⁵ Ibid.: 4-5, 20-22.

the time to another military engagement in Asia.⁷⁶ On the other hand, Western draws attention to the information and resources advantages of *political* elites over society and the fundamental impact this has over the decisions to intervene. Members of the political elite are capable of framing conflicts in ways that favour their vision of the latter and support their preferred policy course. In this sense, the model of the state that emerges from Western's analysis, while highlighting policymakers' response to societal pressures, also underscores the asymmetric influence exerted by political elites in terms that do not fully coincide with the Pluralist state model that he implicitly refers to.

Constructivism, norms, and ideas

Constructivism provides some of the most comprehensive studies of the practice of intervention. In particular, Constructivist works on intervention stress the importance of two factors: norms and ideas. Norms play a role in constraining the possibility of intervention and in legitimising intervention in specific cases. Martha Finnemore has examined how normative changes have affected the practice of intervention across history. In particular,

normative context...shapes conceptions of interest and gives purpose and meaning to action. It shapes the goals they value, the means they believe are effective and legitimate to obtain those goals, and the political costs and benefits attached to different choices.⁷⁷

For instance, expanding conceptualisations of 'humanity' in the West activated interventionary policies in the 19th Century and the related norm of humanitarian intervention.⁷⁸ Finnemore's approach provides a compelling framework to analyse how evolving norms transform the practice of intervention. However, normative explanations seem to be less useful in addressing one of the key empirical regularities that Finnemore highlights in her work. As Finnemore notes, throughout the historical periods examined in her work and despite changing normative frameworks, 'states continue to care deeply about who governs other states' and to authorise military intervention

⁷⁶ Ibid.: 42.

⁷⁷ Finnemore 2003: 53.

⁷⁸ Ibid.: 54.

in that regard.⁷⁹ This represents a recurrent feature of the practice of intervention yet Finnemore's focus on *change* precludes an analysis of the *constant* factors fuelling leaders' interest in the identity of the political personnel of other states and how this leads to favour intervention.

Two other authors operating within the Constructivist literature, Anthony Lang and John Owen, have addressed this issue. According to Anthony Lang, intervention is linked to norms in a twofold way. First, norms affect the decision and modality of intervention in that agents either abide to established norms concerning intervention or justify their intervention according to certain 'standards of behaviour', for example norms such as democracy promotion.⁸⁰ Second, norms construct the identity of the agents. In this sense, intervention represents a form of political 'action' in Arendtian terms that crosses pre-established boundaries and through which the political identity of the agent is revealed.⁸¹ In this regard, Lang suggests integrating a normative approach with the study of the politics of intervention centred on the state's national purpose, in a theoretical move that connects Constructivism to Morgenthau's Political Realism. As Lang argues,

military intervention is a moment in a nation's history when the national purpose becomes both extremely important and also highly contested.... it is particularly relevant in an intervention precisely because there is an attempt to create a functioning political system where all [leaders] see is anarchy and chaos. Thus the model of their own society and political system...becomes the model upon which this new system is created.⁸²

The link between intervention and political identity sketched by Lang is broadly convincing, a point to which I will come back later. However, the major limitation of Lang's study stems from its reduction of political action to domestic and normative drives, thus leaving aside the way in which power relations, both between potential interveners and with political actors in the target, affect the decision to intervene.⁸³ In this regard, a focus on the political

⁷⁹ Ibid.: 108.

⁸⁰ Lang 2002: 5.

⁸¹ Ibid.: 9-12.

⁸² Ibid.: 18.

⁸³ Owens 2004.

dimension of intervention should not come at the expenses of the international dimension of intervention.

John Owen's theoretical contribution succeeds in overcoming this limitation by focusing primarily on the role played by both power and ideational factors across the international-domestic divide.⁸⁴ As Owen argues, intervention is a 'phenomenon in which ideas and material power interact'.⁸⁵ Specifically, he underscores that 'rulers seek to gain, hold, and extend their states' power' with ideas and transnational networks exerting direct effects over rulers' struggle for power.⁸⁶ States care about other states' regime up to the point of using force and they do so for both material and ideational reasons. Elites' decisions to promote regime change in other societies are driven by three broad dynamics: first, by the interplay of external security and internal (regime) security considerations; second, by the way in which regime change alters alliance portfolios; third, by the influence allied rulers and transnational groups exert on the intervener by exaggerating threats to their own regime and showing themselves as worthy recipients of the intervener's support respectively.⁸⁷ In particular, Owen argues, regime change 'is more likely when elites across their region are highly polarized along an ideological axis'. This polarization occur in periods of 'transnational ideological struggle' during which transnational ideological networks (TINs), such as the Comintern or the Muslim Brotherhood, operate to foster regime change in different states, thus triggering a reaction by state rulers opting for intervention when the latter consider TINs to have a chance of success. What makes them essentially transnational is the fact that their members 'recognize their common interests and interdependence across states' thus providing support to each other.⁸⁸

The Realist theory of intervention that I present in the following chapters reaches similar conclusions with regard to the interaction between ideational factors and power, the effects of regime change on alliances, and the role played by external groups. Nevertheless, there are four significant differences between

⁸⁴ Owen 2010a: 9.

⁸⁵ Ibid.: 27.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.: 43, 45-46, 49.

⁸⁸ Ibid.: 32, 34-35.

the approach taken in this thesis and Owen's theory. First, Owen's framework focuses on cases of ideologically radicalised and polarised international systems; his theory does not apply to cases of intervention taking place in ideologically homogenous international or regional systems, such as the repeated US interventions in Latin America in the early 20th Century. The theoretical framework presented in the following chapters offers the possibility of explaining intervention with reference to a single and consistent theory of the state that takes into account variations in terms of ideological homogeneity. Second, in non-ideologically polarised contexts the role played by TINs is by definition minimal. By Owen's own admission, even in ideologically polarised contexts, TINs are neither sufficient nor necessary to cause regime change.⁸⁹ It is therefore necessary to explore in greater detail the relationship established by the intervener with the leadership groups operating in the target in order to clarify which relations matter most and how. Third, the transnational nature of these networks should be carefully evaluated. The Comintern was a transnational tool set up by a national government and formed by the leaderships of national Communist parties. The various Muslim Brotherhood branches present significant differences among them. Rather than nodes of single transnational networks, these formations can be more accurately defined as alliances between kin national elite or counter-elite groups characterised by different degrees of institutionalisation and of power asymmetry among them. In this regard, I will argue in favour of a theoretical framework stressing the primarily national dimension of political elite and counter-elite groups in the target. Fourth, according to Owen, only elites belonging to TINs are always ideologically polarised. Yet, rulers do not only control the coercive apparatus of the state; they are also inextricably linked to specific political ideological principles that legitimise their power and inform their political views. As later chapters will discuss, all state rulers are influenced, in various degrees, by ideological factors. In this sense, there is no such thing as normal, non-ideological elites as claimed by Owen.⁹⁰

Recently, Elizabeth Saunders has drawn on both Constructivist and Liberal elements to evaluate the role played by leaders' beliefs in shaping both the

⁸⁹ Ibid.: 32.

⁹⁰ Ibid.: 43.

decision to intervene and its modality during the Cold War. According to Saunders, presidents' beliefs of the sources of foreign states' external behaviour shapes intervention in profound ways. Specifically, 'externally focused' leaders focus mainly on the foreign policy behaviour of other states, whereas 'internally focused' leaders explicitly link foreign policy behaviour to domestic institutional settings. Therefore, internally focused leaders are more likely to intervene by adopting highly transformative strategies to alter the domestic arrangements of the target and redress what they perceive to be the primary source of threatening foreign policy behaviour.⁹¹

Saunders' micro-level analysis of leaders' beliefs underscores once more the pervasive impact of elite members' ideas and interests when it comes to the decision to intervene. At the same time, there are two limits in Saunders' framework. First, it is not clear what the relationship is between leaders' belief systems and other factors, such as international security concerns, questions of credibility and commitment linked to alliance systems, domestic politics and ideological drivers. Top executive leaders may have a disproportionate impact on decision-making yet this does not automatically translate into a decisive impact of executive leaders' *causal beliefs* on interventionary policies. In addition, as Saunders notes, presidents' causal belief systems are embedded within broader ideological frameworks that shape their belief systems in the first place, hence indicating the potential causal precedence of elites' ideology over leaders' specific beliefs.⁹² Second, despite being centred on the impact of political leaders on intervention, Saunders' framework significantly overlooks the role played by political leaders in two regards. On the one hand, Saunders' framework does not fully address the role played by leaders in the target state on the intervener's decision.⁹³ Yet, various works examining US interventions during the Cold War have shown how intervention constitutes a specific form of both confrontation and cooperation between an intervening political elite *and* elite/counter-elite groups in the target country.⁹⁴ On the other hand, if leaders

⁹¹ Saunders 2011: 3-6, 22-23.

⁹² Ibid.: 8-9.

⁹³ Ibid.: 47.

⁹⁴ This point is highlighted not only by Owen (2010a: 49) but also by other historical and theoretical works on third-party interventions, including: Westad 2005; Findley and Teo 2006; Grow 2008; Gent 2008; Salehyan *et al.* 2011.

matter, leadership change should matter even if not accompanied by institutional change. Yet, by not counting leadership change as transformative if not accompanied by institutional change, Saunders works towards a paradoxical conclusion: underscoring leaders' importance whilst overlooking the transformative impact leadership can have.⁹⁵

Realism's silence on intervention?

Compared to the other major theoretical approaches, Realism has been relatively silent on the practice of military intervention. Yet, there are two significant differences in this regard. First, while Realist *theories* have been relatively silent on the study of intervention, Realist *authors* have been vocal opponents of contemporary US interventions – whether in Vietnam, in Iraq and now in Syria.⁹⁶ Second, Realism's limited theoretical contribution characterises mainly contemporary Realist works, not Classical or Political Realism. Notably, Classical Realist authors offer valuable insights on intervention. Similarly to the English School authors, Classical Realists, such as Raymond Aron, Henry Kissinger, and Hans Morgenthau, treat intervention as a distinct practice alongside war and diplomacy, linking domestic and international order.⁹⁷ Further, they draw attention to the political and ideational factors shaping statesmen's decisions in general and intervention in particular. Notably, Aron points out the way in which ideological heterogeneity blurs the distinction between external and internal enemy, fuelling interventionary practices.⁹⁸

On the contrary, both Neorealism and Neoclassical Realism have contributed little to the study of intervention. This is the result of both an unnecessary conceptual choice and a self-imposed theoretical straightjacket that preclude a detailed and comprehensive study of military intervention within contemporary Realist works. At the conceptual level, Neorealist and Neoclassical Realist authors have been reticent in addressing intervention as a distinct practice in international relations. Military intervention has been

⁹⁵ Saunders 2011: 47.

⁹⁶ Morgenthau 1965; Mearsheimer and Walt 2003; Kissinger 2012; Walt 2013.

⁹⁷ Aron 1966a; Kissinger 1964, 1966; Morgenthau 1967.

⁹⁸ Aron 1966a: 99-101.

examined within broader cases of the use of military force in international affairs without reference to the specificity of the practice and the definitional problems addressed in the introduction. Thus, intervention has been linked to wars ignited by domestic changes or to cases of the use of force by great powers in the periphery. The term 'military intervention' simply underscores the degree of choice leaders have with regard to the use of force.⁹⁹

From these conceptual lenses, intervention is treated mainly as the result of leaders' own calculation of the national interest in secondary theatres, itself informed by ideological and domestic factors rather than relevant security and political interests. Consequently, Realist authors have treated major interventions such as in Vietnam and Iraq as a pointless or, worse, counterproductive exercises in power directed at non-vital interests, imperial adventures driven by leaders' *choices* or domestic factors rather than a *necessity* resulting from state's security or interests. While it can be easily argued that Realists' concerns have been vindicated in both Vietnam and Iraq, Neorealists are nonetheless left in a predicament at the theoretical level. If ideological crusading or public opinion drive military interventions, then these factors must play a far greater role than Neorealist theories are willing to admit.

At the theoretical level, this lack of attention to intervention originates from the particular problems that intervention poses for Neorealism. The rigid boundary between international and domestic politics crystallised within contemporary Realism poses an initial obstacle – albeit not impossible to overcome – for the analysis of a practice that by definition connects international military action with domestic political dynamics.¹⁰⁰ Connected to this, a more challenging problem is represented by the unitary state that Neorealism takes as its principal analytical unit, which by definition leaves the study of internal variables out of its purview. For the same reasons, Neorealism finds it difficult to explain why revolutions matter for international politics up to the point that states are willing to use military force to address domestic change abroad.¹⁰¹ As pointed out by Owen, 'when states incur expected costs by using force to alter other states regimes, they are doing something beyond the predictive power of

⁹⁹ See, for example, Walt 1996; Taliaferro 2004; Dueck 2009.

¹⁰⁰ Little 1975.

¹⁰¹ Rosenberg 1994: 34. Although see Walt 1996.

realism'.¹⁰² Attempts to apply Realist categories to civil wars, while useful, simply adapt Realist concepts to domestic settings but do not address intervention *per se*.

Major examples of recent Realist works trying to overcome the theoretical obstacles of Neorealism to the study of intervention further underscore the need to overcome basic assumptions in order to better grasp the causal dynamics leading to intervention. Drawing on his refinement of the balance-of-power theory, Stephen Walt explains the link between revolutions and the use of force with reference to the 'windows of opportunity' offered by revolutions to expansionist neighbouring states as well as to the perceptions of the offensive character of revolutionary states.¹⁰³ Despite adopting a quintessentially Neorealist theoretical framework, Walt's empirical analysis qualifies Neorealist expectations in two ways. First, Walt does not find extensive support for the Neorealist theses on the eventual socialisation of revolutionary states. Revolutionary states, as in the cases of the Soviet Union and Iran, continue to be influenced by the ideological outlook of their revolutionary elites pursuing a radical foreign policy despite its military and economic costs. Second, Walt is forced to include domestic political considerations in his empirical analysis, particularly the internal power struggle within the revolutionary state and the direct threat posed by revolutionary regimes to the legitimacy and rule of other political elites.¹⁰⁴

Recently, Neoclassical Realist works have included domestic variables within their theoretical constructs in order to explain specific foreign policy outcomes, including the decision to intervene. Within Neoclassical Realism, factors operating at the state and sub-state level represent a set of intervening variables transforming systemic pressures and incentives into policy outcomes to explain variations from Neorealist expectations.¹⁰⁵ The main agent of Neoclassical Realism is not the state *per se* but its foreign policy executive (FPE) that operates between the international and domestic arenas, including the head of

¹⁰² Owen 2010a: 8.

¹⁰³ Walt 1996: viii, 30-33. On Walt's balance-of-threat theory, see Walt 1987: 22-26, 165.

¹⁰⁴ Walt 1996: 43, 56.

¹⁰⁵ Rose 1998; Taliaferro *et al.* 2009, in particular Lobell 2009: 44. On Neoclassical Realist works explaining states' overexpansion or underbalancing, see Snyder 1991; Schweller 2006.

government and those officials responsible for the formulation of foreign and security policy, and excluding other ministers, political actors such as parliamentarians or political party members.¹⁰⁶

Colin Dueck, for example, has used the Neoclassical Realist model of state action to examine the causes of military intervention.¹⁰⁷ Dueck describes a two-stage process: first, presidents define the national interest in a specific situation which might require military intervention; second, presidents try to implement their definition of the national interest given domestic constraints and opportunities. According to Dueck, 'domestic politics "matters", not as a primary cause of intervention, but rather as a powerful influence on its exact form'.¹⁰⁸ When domestic conditions are permissive, interventions will be conducted according to political leaders' conceptualisation of the national interest; when they are not, policymakers either give up or shape intervention in a way that rallies the necessary domestic support.

Although Dueck provides a parsimonious model that links international and domestic factors, the relative causal weight of the two sets of factors is not entirely clear. Dueck argues that domestic factors cannot be considered as the 'ultimate cause' of intervention. Yet, the same applies to international factors or leaders' perceptions: they are not sufficient to explain either the form of intervention or the decision to intervene; in fact, leaders' action regarding military intervention is defined as 'semi-constrained'.¹⁰⁹ What Dueck seems inadvertently to suggest is that the domestic arena 'shapes and shoves' policy outcomes more than international factors since the latter only provides the triggering factors, i.e. cases where military intervention may be required. Furthermore, Dueck discards two possibilities: first, cases where non-FPE members of the political elite exert significant pressure on a reluctant president to intervene, as exemplified by US interventions in Somalia and Bosnia during the 1990s;¹¹⁰ second, cases where the domestic context, not the international

¹⁰⁶ Lobell 2009: 43; Ripsman 2009: 171.

¹⁰⁷ Dueck 2009.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*: 139.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*: 146-148.

¹¹⁰ On the pressure exerted by US Congressmen and political opponents on US presidents' decisions regarding Somalia and Bosnia, see Patman 1990; Halberstam 2001; and the Conclusion of this thesis.

context, creates powerful incentives to intervene, as exemplified by the Cuban case examined in Chapter 4.

This last point highlights a more general limit within 'orthodox' Neoclassical Realist theories. The latter do not fully take into account the role of domestic factors and politics, which cannot be reduced purely to the issue of the mobilisation of public support or the issue of the modality of intervention. What is missing is a full appreciation of the complex relationship existing between the international and the domestic whereby state elites do not only use domestic resources to pursue international objectives but can also use foreign policy (and intervention) for domestic purposes.¹¹¹ For instance, considerations connected to domestic political competition – not simply the support of the American public over an operation against Iraq – exerted a significant impact over the Bush administration's construction of the case against Iraq in 2003.¹¹² In this way, domestic political struggle can create an interest driving elites to intervene, not simply a constraint on leaders' preferred policy.

In this sense, Neoclassical Realism does not fully overcome the theoretical assumptions that limit Neorealism's utility in regard to the study of intervention. In order to address this issue, Fordham has suggested overcoming the 'additive model' used by Neoclassical Realism – adding intervening domestic variable to the initial systemic pressures – as the latter necessarily places its entire theoretical edifice onto Neorealist assumptions about state motives.¹¹³ In contrast, Fordham suggests exploring the explanatory pay-offs of an 'interactive' model of the state action, inviting 'scholarly research into the sources of motives and interests across states and domestic political factions'.¹¹⁴ In such models, international and domestic factors do not simply add up; on the contrary, 'the external and the internal events are linked and feed back on one another'.¹¹⁵ Importantly, as noted by Fordham, 'the nature of international

¹¹¹ Mastanduno *et al.* 1989; Lobell 2009: 52; Trubowitz 2011.

¹¹² Snyder *et al.* 2009.

¹¹³ Fordham 2009: 253.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*: 278.

¹¹⁵ Sterling-Folker 2009: 116

threats is determined to a great extent by the interests of the domestic coalition that governs the state'.¹¹⁶

In particular, both authors within the Neoclassical Realist framework and their critics have noted the role played by the interests of the ruling coalition in shaping both a state's grand strategy and its foreign policy choices, hence the need to examine the domestic balance of power between various elite factions to explain foreign policy outcomes.¹¹⁷ In this regard, policymakers' definitions of the national interests are not independent from domestic and political considerations. Importantly, as domestic and international considerations intertwine at the level of political elites, political elites offer a theoretical vantage point by which to reconcile both international and domestic factors.

This thesis, therefore, argues in favour of a reformulated Realist framework based on: a reconceptualisation of intervention as a distinct practice serving distinct objectives and shaped by distinct casual dynamics; and, a reformulation of the factors shaping political elites' decisions rooted in Realist assumptions about the state and politics as well as early Realist insights regarding the practice of military intervention. This approach provides a comprehensive study of military intervention by taking into account three elements highlighted by other theoretical approaches on the subject: first, the key role played by political elites; second, the interplay between international and domestic factors affecting elites' decisions; third, the interplay between ideational and material factors in shaping elites' interventionary policies. In regard to the latter, a dialogue can be established between Realism and Constructivism, by incorporating the role played by ideas within Realist frameworks.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Fordham 2009: 251.

¹¹⁷ Within the Neoclassical Realist camp, see Schweller 2006; Lobell 2003, 2009; for authors beyond the Neoclassical Realist framework, see Fordham 1998, 2009; Trubowitz 1998, 2011.

¹¹⁸ Neoclassical Realism points out the instrumental role that ideology can play in shaping group identities and in mobilising domestic support. See, for example, Schweller 2009: 228; Sterling-Folker 2009; Kitchen 2010. Owen (2010a), in particular, has showed the utility of linking Realist elements within broader Constructivist frameworks to study the causal dynamics of military intervention and regime change. Similarly, see Byman 2013: 315. On a possible synthesis between Realism and Constructivism, see Williams 2004; Barkin 2010.

Towards a Realist Theory of Intervention

The possibility of a Realist theory of intervention should not come as a surprise. As already noted by Little, classical authors that have informed the Realist tradition such as Thucydides and Niccolò Machiavelli made clear in their work the link existing between inter- and intra-state politics and the recurrent interventions states conducted in each others' internal affairs.¹¹⁹

The Realist nature of the theoretical framework defined in this section and the following chapters derives mainly from five elements. First, it is based on Realist assumptions about the drivers of human action in the public sphere, primarily the 'centrality of conflict groups', the related 'immutability of tribalism', and the centrality of power considerations driving political action.¹²⁰ Second, it looks at military intervention as a tool available to state leaders to pursue political and strategic interests. In particular, following Krasner, this thesis treats state leaders or rulers, not states, as the key international actors.¹²¹ In more general terms, I will follow Krasner's attempt to overcome Neorealist starting assumptions while maintaining Realism's basic premises regarding political action, interests, and power competition.¹²² Third, as I indicate in Chapter 2, the framework underpinning the thesis is based on a Realist theory of the state. Fourth, it focuses on the *constant* mechanisms driving leaders to intervene in internal conflicts, despite historical, institutional and normative settings. Finally, the starting point of the theory is represented by the early insights offered by Realist authors such as Morgenthau and Krasner on the subject on the practice of military intervention and its normative dimension.

¹¹⁹ Little 1975: 4.

¹²⁰ Sterling-Folker 2009: 103. On 'conflict groups', see Dahrendorf 1959; Gilpin 1996. On the link between power and politics, see Morgenthau 1985.

¹²¹ Krasner 1999: 7.

¹²² On Krasner's Realism, see Finnemore and Goldstein 2013; Keohane 2013.

Intervention, historical practice and the balance of power

Both Morgenthau and Krasner offer a first set of Realist considerations concerning the practice of intervention. In particular, alongside war and diplomacy, military intervention represents one of the main tools available to states to pursue their own interests. In this sense, Morgenthau sees the practice of intervention as primarily serving the interests of the state.¹²³ Similarly, as Finnemore and Goldstein point out in regard to Krasner's view of intervention:

in an anarchical world, altering the domestic authority structures of other states and violating their autonomy could be more attractive strategies for states than war or diplomacy, the conventional tools of realist statecraft among sovereigns.¹²⁴

Conceptualising intervention as a distinct, yet recurrent, practice serving state leaders' interests better encapsulates the struggle for power at the international level that is central to Realism. In this regard, military intervention is central to power dynamics at the international level; similarly, states care deeply about who governs other states, therefore, intervening in the internal affairs and conflicts of other states to influence the identity of the political leaders of the latter.

Furthermore, intervention represents one of the tools used by great powers for the management of the international system. That is the case not only during the 19th Century and the Cold War usually associated with repeated cases of military interventions, but also in historical periods usually described in terms of rigid balance of power mechanisms. Notably, during the 18th Century, whilst the balance of power mechanism was silent regarding the possibility of intervention to redress imbalances of powers caused by internal modifications (dynastic successions, centralisation processes, etc.), states repeatedly intervened to counter such developments in the name of the balance of power and the stability of the European system.¹²⁵ As William Lingelbach notes, intervention represented one of the central tools to enforce the balance of power

¹²³ Morgenthau 1967: 425.

¹²⁴ Finnemore and Goldstein 2013: 19.

¹²⁵ Haas 1953: 464; Sheehan 1996: 113.

and perpetuate the state system.¹²⁶ Indeed, 'the very independence of such [sovereign] states depended upon the absence of a ruler who could aspire to such power'. Thus, whilst the balance of power system worked against the establishment of a universal *monarchy*, intervention was one of the tools available to rulers to avoid the emergence of a universal *monarch* via successions, alliances, and domestic reforms.¹²⁷

In particular, the numerous wars of succession and interventions that characterised the 18th century indicate the importance of this practice. The War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713) highlights the close relationship between balance of power and leadership change at the time. The war resulted from external intervention to counter the potential unification of the Spanish and French crowns that could have altered the European balance of power in dramatic ways.¹²⁸ The terms of the ensuing Treaty of Utrecht of 1713, which sanctioned the balance of power as the ground rule of European international politics, explicitly forbade any unification of the thrones of Spain and France to preserve the balance of power. The War of Polish Succession (1733-1738) and the ensuing partitions of Poland during the second half of the 18th century further underscores the consequences of intervention in internal conflicts, leading in the Polish case to a major redrawing of the political map in Europe. Importantly, Russia's repeated interventions in the ongoing internal conflicts in Poland were vital to securing the position of pro-Russian leaders and Poland's position as a subordinate ally.¹²⁹ During the same period, the rivalry between France and England was also shaped by, and took advantage of, internal conflicts. During the early 18th Century, France supported the Jacobite rebellions in Great Britain, recognising Prince James as the rightful heir to the English throne in 1701 and planning to intervene in England in 1708 in support of its plans.¹³⁰ Subsequently, France intervened in support of the British colonies during the American War of Independence. France first intervened covertly and

¹²⁶ Lingelbach 1900: 4-10. For a contemporary treatment of the question, see Haas 1953: 471-472; Wight 1978: 194; Hefner 1980: 75; Hoffmann 1984: 18; Trachtenberg 1993.

¹²⁷ Lingelbach 1900: 4-5.

¹²⁸ Friedrich and Blitzer 1965.

¹²⁹ Lukowski 1999: 13, 30-41, 132-141.

¹³⁰ Wight 1978: 193.

indirectly via the provision of weapons, gunpowder and equipment, and ultimately directly in 1778.¹³¹

Considerations of the importance of domestic factors for the balance of power were thus not new features in the 19th Century. Yet during the 19th Century both regime change and intervention acquired different meanings and importance. Whilst in the 18th Century intervention operated as a *fortuitous* mechanism of the balance of power whose utility and necessity arose from specific contingencies, in the 19th Century intervention became *institutionalised* within the Concert of Europe.¹³² Faced with the threat of republican revolution, domestic order became central to great powers' new international order with intervention becoming, in turn, a central tool by which the monarchies of great and small powers managed and forestalled revolutionary change.¹³³ Regime security and international security became explicitly linked. It is precisely due to the link established between domestic and international order in the 19th Century both by legitimist monarchies and Liberalism that the 'problem' of intervention was addressed '...with more conscious thoroughness than any before or since'.¹³⁴ It was the realisation that domestic regimes represented the main threat to international order that led to the constitution of intervention as a distinctive mode of action.¹³⁵

The interplay between international and domestic considerations during the 19th Century also revealed how ideological links between elite and counter-elite groups abroad could shape foreign policy and interventionary decisions. The presence of Liberal groups across Europe affected external balancing calculations among policymakers. Liberals in Europe tended to look at Britain as a model, creating opportunities for increased influence (and allies) for Britain in case of a takeover by moderate Liberal factions abroad.¹³⁶ For instance,

¹³¹ Record 2006: 39-40.

¹³² Finnemore 2003: 121; Bullen 1979: 55. The explicit reference here is to Bull's (1977: 104-106) distinction between *fortuitous* and *contrived* balance of power.

¹³³ Seabury 1965: 205-206; Bullen 1979: 58-59; Sked 1979b.

¹³⁴ Wight 1966: 115. On the Liberal problematisation of intervention, see Morgenthau 1967: 425; Hoffmann 1984: 12; Kratochwil 1995: 32. On the different positions of Liberal authors regarding the issue of intervention, see Varouxakis 1997; Walker 2000, 2008; Jahn 2005, 2007; Recchia and Urbinati 2009.

¹³⁵ Bullen 1979: 54; Finnemore 2003: 117-118.

¹³⁶ Sked 1979b: 181.

constitutional and Liberal states were considered by Lord Palmerston to be more 'compatible with British interests', 'the natural Allies [sic]' of Great Britain.¹³⁷ For the same reason, following the July Revolution of 1830, French Liberals looked at the English Whigs for a Liberal alliance that would allow them to intervene in support of like-minded movements in other countries.¹³⁸ In particular, exponents of the French *parti du mouvement* favoured French intervention in defence of oppressed nationalities in Poland, Italy and Belgium. The point was underscored also by Liberal thinkers of the time. John Stuart Mill argued that a Franco-British reaction to Russian intervention in Hungary in 1849 could have prevented the latter and favoured the establishment of an independent and allied Hungary. In turn, this would have contributed to late wars against Russia.¹³⁹ In case of aggression by reactionary powers, Mill argued, Britain would have had to consider every 'popular party' in Europe as its 'natural ally'; 'the Liberals should be to it [Britain], what the Protestants of Europe were to the Government of Queen Elizabeth'.¹⁴⁰

During the Cold War, the interplay between international competition, domestic change and ideological factors became even more evident. Specifically, Morgenthau saw intervention as the result of the interplay between power politics and ideological competition. Ideology, according to Morgenthau, worked as an 'independent motivating force' operating across state boundaries. The Cold War represented a 'revolutionary era', in which domestic change entailed foreign policy change thus becoming a source of concern for the superpowers. Furthermore, Morgenthau noted the way in which decolonisation affected interventionary practices. The weaknesses of newly decolonized states created a need for external support. Morgenthau drew attention to the ways in which the provision of military and economic aid created patterns of power and dependency that the provider could exploit by either supplying or withdrawing such aid: 'if a foreign nation supplies aid it intervenes; if it does not supply aid it also intervenes'.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Bartlett 1979: 152.

¹³⁸ Bullen 1977: 365.

¹³⁹ Varouxakis 1997: 62-68.

¹⁴⁰ Mill 1859: 123.

¹⁴¹ Morgenthau 1967: 426, 428.

To sum up, intervention as a practice responds to power considerations that in turn are shaped not only by material factors but also by three other dynamics as highlighted by Morgenthau and the historical practice of intervention: ideology; the effects of domestic change in other states on the interests of political elites; and the relationship established between elite groups across states.

Intervention, norms, and sovereignty: a Realist perspective

Despite being a common practice in international history, the legitimacy of intervention had been questioned after the French Revolution, that is after the emergence of a new form of political order based on Liberal values and nationalism.¹⁴² Since then, one of the quintessential features of intervention has been characterised as that of being ‘convention-breaking’.¹⁴³ In normative terms, intervention violates what is considered to be the cornerstone of international relations, i.e. sovereignty and the related norm of non-intervention. The violation of the norm of non-intervention is particularly important given the centrality of non-intervention to international order, representing one of the ‘rules of coexistence’ which international society is based on.¹⁴⁴ While other forms of interference may infringe non-intervention, ‘[i]t is threats and acts of military intervention in state sovereignty in violation of the norm of non-intervention that is of fundamental concern to international society’.¹⁴⁵

Although this thesis addresses the political and empirical processes that lead to interventionary policies, the ‘convention-breaking’ nature of intervention raises important questions. On the one hand, intervention questions the norm of state sovereignty, whose violation is of particular importance for Realism, which sees states – sovereign and autonomous states – as the key units in international relations. On the other hand, as Krasner argues, despite the persistence of the norm of non-intervention and its centrality within international society, the norm seems to exist only to be violated as indicated by the repeated

¹⁴² Ibid.: 425.

¹⁴³ Rosenau 1968.

¹⁴⁴ Bull 1977: 69-70; Wight 1978; Hoffmann 1984: 11; Thomas 1985: 86.

¹⁴⁵ Jackson 2000: 251.

interventions in history.¹⁴⁶ It is with regard to this contradiction between the norm of non-intervention and the recurrent practice of intervention that '[...] the very old problem of military intervention' emerges posing inextricable strains on IR theory.¹⁴⁷ The persistence of the norm of non-intervention and its violation are both regular features of international politics.

Intervening is indeed about questioning sovereignty, since it puts into question more than any other international action – apart from outright conquest – the control and authority a state exercises not simply over its own territory but over its ability to define its governance structures. Sovereignty, simply put, implies non-intervention.¹⁴⁸ As Krasner argues, intervention violates first and foremost 'Westphalian sovereignty', based on the principles of 'territoriality and the exclusion of external actors from authority structures within a given territory'.¹⁴⁹ In this regard, sovereignty can be defined more precisely as a '*claim to autonomy*' rather than the autonomy actually enjoyed by a political actor.¹⁵⁰ At the same time, sovereignty refers to the authority exercised within a specific political community rather than actual control.¹⁵¹ According to Jackson, '[s]overeignty can be defined...as a single governing authority which is acknowledged to be supreme over all other authorities within a certain territorial jurisdiction and is independent of all foreign authorities'.¹⁵² Therefore, sovereignty entails both a claim to autonomy (from external authorities) and as well as a claim to authority (over one's own territory and population).¹⁵³ Intervention violates both claims.

From a Realist perspective, the persistence of the norm of non-intervention and its recurrent violations stem from the contending rights that originate from

¹⁴⁶ Krasner 1999: 39. See also Weber 1992: 201.

¹⁴⁷ Finnemore 2003: vii, 4.

¹⁴⁸ Jackson 1990: 6; Brown 2002: 79; Finnemore 2003: 7.

¹⁴⁹ Krasner 1999: 20. Krasner (ibid.: 3-4) distinguishes four conceptualisations of sovereignty: international legal sovereignty, Westphalian sovereignty, domestic sovereignty and interdependence sovereignty.

¹⁵⁰ Brown 2002: 5.

¹⁵¹ Vincent 1974: 40.

¹⁵² Jackson 2000: 156-157. Similarly, Weber (1992: 200-201) argues that 'what a state must do to be sovereign is to organize its domestic affairs in such a way so that its ultimate source of sovereign authority is authorized to speak for its particular domestic community in international affairs'.

¹⁵³ Bull 1977: 8.

states' claim to autonomy and authority. On the one hand, the persistence of the norm of non-intervention stems primarily from the normative guarantees it provides on states' claims of autonomy. In this sense, Morgenthau saw the use of the norm of non-intervention as serving the interests of the state.¹⁵⁴ On the other hand, violations of non-intervention originate from the primacy of states' interests and claims to authority. As underscored by Krasner, intervention is the manifestation of those violations of Westphalian sovereignty characterised by an international realm in which the dominant logic of consequences leads statespeople to violate Westphalian sovereignty whenever it is in their 'material and ideational interests'.¹⁵⁵ States – *recte* rulers – abide by the norms of international conduct for the same interests that drive them in different situations to violate them, hence, the 'organized hypocrisy' that characterises the international sphere.¹⁵⁶

In this sense, sovereignty is linked to specific limitations imposed by the international society states establish.¹⁵⁷ Not surprisingly, the European system of international relations is based on a reduction of 'interference to a minimum' – not on the complete elimination of all forms of interference.¹⁵⁸ International law, from its inception, has recognised – either implicitly or explicitly – the limits on sovereignty imposed by the practice of intervention and tried to identify cases in which the infringement of sovereignty could be considered legitimate. Exceptions to the norm of non-intervention have always been part of the norm itself. First, the norm of non-intervention originally applied only to European states since non-European states were not considered as fully sovereign.¹⁵⁹ Second, the founders of modern international law recognised such exceptions. Grotius, whilst denying any right to revolt against tyrants, allowed the right to intervene on the behalf of these subjects. Vattel argued that intervention was legitimate to support the 'just' side in a civil conflict, i.e. against an unjust rule, and to redress an altered balance of power. Von Martens

¹⁵⁴ Morgenthau 1967.

¹⁵⁵ Krasner 1999: 6-7, 9, 220.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*: 9, 24.

¹⁵⁷ Kratochwil 1986: 41-50; 1995.

¹⁵⁸ Stowell 1921: 2; Trachtenberg 1993.

¹⁵⁹ Bull 1984b: 136; Brown 2002: 141-145; Krasner 1999; Keene 2002. Notably, see Mill 1859 on this point. Not surprisingly, the non-intervention norm found receptive ears in the Western Hemisphere. See Trolliet 1940: 15; Zuniga 1991.

allowed for intervention on the 'just' side of civil wars and for self-preservation. Finally, James Kent denied the existence of a right of intervention meddling with domestic administration and rulers-ruled relationship though countenanced intervention for balance of power considerations.¹⁶⁰

Third, international law distinguished between the different status of a domestic actor involved in civil wars, attaching different rights to outside actors in an attempt to regulate the practice of supporting insurgents in domestic conflicts.¹⁶¹ Far from being shaped by a norm proscribing any interference or intervention, the international legal system left – and still leaves – significant normative loopholes through which states can validate their sovereign rights in opting for the practice they consider to best serve their autonomy, independence, security, and identity.¹⁶² Why, when and how they choose to do so is a question that needs to be addressed with reference to the interests – whether material or ideational – shaping rulers' decisions.¹⁶³

Both the recurrence of intervention and the exceptions characterising the norm of non-intervention underscore a more fundamental normative and political issue. Ultimately, the normative ambiguity of the norm of non-intervention – a cornerstone of the international system and yet violated to uphold that very system – stems from the contradictory rights derived from sovereignty as a claim to autonomy in an anarchic environment and sovereignty as a claim to authority. As stressed by Hoffmann, the international system based on sovereignty is both a system based on the 'illegitimacy of intervention' and on the 'legitimacy of self-help'.¹⁶⁴ It is precisely this right of self-help in anarchy that gives sovereign actors the right to take all necessary measures to tackle what they define and perceive as sources of threats to themselves and their sovereign authority. Whereas the norm of non-intervention acts as a safeguard to states' claims to autonomy, intervention mirrors and responds to states' claim to authority at the international level.

¹⁶⁰ Winfield 1923: 133; Vincent 1974: 24-33; Krasner 1999: 74.

¹⁶¹ Falk 1971; Higgins 1984: 40; Kratochwil 1995: 32; Little 2008.

¹⁶² On intervention as an expression of identity and national purpose, see Lang 2002: 17, 200.

¹⁶³ Krasner 1999: 9.

¹⁶⁴ Hoffmann 1984: 11; Vincent 1974: 30; Waltz 1979.

Importantly, this claim to authority is connected to the position and interests of the political elites controlling state institutions. As Morgenthau argues, the very 'political fact' to which sovereignty needs to be conducted is

the existence of a person or a group of persons who within...a given territory are more powerful than any other competing person or group of persons and whose power, institutionalized as it must be in order to last, manifests itself as the supreme authority to enact and enforce legal rules within that territory.¹⁶⁵

It is this group that makes a claim to authority, which in a self-help system leaves to the sovereign actor the right to take all necessary measures to tackle what is defined and perceived as sources of threats to their sovereign authority. As a result, intervention contains two aspects. First, intervention questions the claim to autonomy of the target incumbent elite while supporting the claim to authority of other existing or emerging elite groups. Second, intervention represents a claim to authority by the intervener over the targeted polity, a *de facto* expansion of the intervener's sovereign rights, through which the intervening elite influences the selection of the political authorities that would ultimately define the identity and direction of the targeted political unit's action in international affairs. In this regard, intervention is an act to politically order an external community by defending the existing order or by promoting an alternative elite.

Therefore, intervention is a primarily political act: chosen by political actors, targeting political actors, revealing the contending authority claims of competing political elites. As such, it needs to be examined in relation to the interests of these political elites; the political context in which the decision to intervene is taken, in both the intervening and target state; and, the political function intervention performs. As Trachtenberg argues:

the way we think about intervention is often too narrow and apolitical. There is a common tendency to think of 'legitimate' intervention as divorced from normal political life – that a line has been crossed, that the normal rules no longer apply...to the contrary ... as a rule the problem of intervention is not to be

¹⁶⁵ Morgenthau 1985: 335.

treated in a political vacuum, and that broad political considerations are not to be ignored.¹⁶⁶

As such, the analysis of intervention should be connected first and foremost to the political context shaping elites' interests in the struggle for power taking place in other polities.

¹⁶⁶ Trachtenberg 1993.

Chapter 2

Elite Politics

As discussed in the previous chapter, studies of military intervention have underscored three important elements. First, intervention represents a practice that connects international politics with domestic politics. In this sense, theories that focus exclusively on either the external or internal determinants of intervention are bound to provide only partial explanations.¹ From a Realist perspective, this requires moving beyond Neorealism's rigid distinction between the international and domestic realm, and internalising the causal role played by domestic factors.

Second, as underscored by Realist authors such as Morgenthau and Krasner and supported by historical evidence, intervention is shaped by, and shapes, power relations in the international sphere. Yet, the decision to intervene is influenced not only by material and security factors but also by ideological and political factors that need to be taken into consideration. Related to this, the previous chapter also drew attention to the secondary causal impact that both economic and institutional factors play with regard to military intervention. Both institutional and economic factors matter as far as they relate to the political elites' position.

Third, political elites and elite dynamics are at the centre of the practice of military intervention. This focus on political leadership and the politics of intervention permeates not only Realist works on the subject but also most of the recent non-Realist contributions to the study of intervention.² In particular, political elites represent both the key decision-makers and the principal targets of interventions. Despite changing historical and normative contexts and the

¹ Aubone 2013: 279.

² Cf. Western 2005; Owen 2010a; Saunders 2011.

varying objectives pursued by interveners, over time '[s]tates continue to care deeply about who governs other states'.³ As Buzan notes, it is exactly because of this '[...] sustained interest in each other's domestic affairs' governments have that they '[...] interfere in each other's domestic politics'.⁴ Overall, these aspects stress the need to examine the question of intervention from an explicitly political perspective centred on political elites. In this regard, it is necessary to analyse why political actors embedded in a specific political context have or develop a 'sustained interest' in the domestic affairs of other polities and why they opt for intervention in order to support or forestall political change abroad.

In this chapter, I will sketch the defining features of a consistent theory of the state based on political elites in order to contextualise elites' role at the domestic level and the socio-political processes through which elites maintain their position and compete with both domestic and international actors. For this purpose, I will draw on CET and recent reformulations in order to place the study of political elites on a more systematic basis. Bringing elites and elite theory into IR provides two main advantages. First, elite theory offers a coherent theory of the state that is of fundamental importance for the study of a practice that by definition connects the decision-making process of the intervener to the domestic politics of the target state. In this regard, a theory of the state is necessary to clarify which actors and causal mechanisms matter in both the intervening and target state in shaping interventionary policies. Defining a clear theory of the state overcomes 'the restricted theory of the state which prevails in international relations' and which, according to Little, has hampered the study of intervention in IR.⁵ Second, an elite theory of the state offers the opportunity to advance a consistent and more accurate Realist theory of the state.⁶ In particular, CET draws on specific assumptions derived from the tradition of Political Realism: a pessimistic view of people as driven by a 'natural passion for power';⁷ the 'natural inclination to struggle' that characterizes politics, a struggle that people conduct in groups due to their

³ Finnemore 2003: 108.

⁴ Buzan 2007: 86, 88.

⁵ Little 1987: 54. On the centrality of the 'question of the state' within IR, see Halliday 1987: 215.

⁶ On CET as a *Realist* theory of the state, see Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987: 137.

⁷ Mosca 1923: §I.7.2, I.7.5; 1925: §I.5; Michels 1959, 205. See also Morgenthau 1985; Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987: 148; Gambino 2005: vii.

social nature;⁸ and, as I will indicate in the following section, the primacy of the political over institutional considerations.⁹

In defining a Realist theory of the state, CET provides a twofold contribution. First, it offers the possibility of overcoming the rigid distinction between international and domestic spheres that has hampered the development of a Realist contribution to the study of intervention.¹⁰ Thus, it is possible to avoid the distinction made by Waltz between domestic politics as the 'realm of authority, of administration, and of law' and international politics as the 'realm of power, of struggle, and of accommodation', which is of little use in cases of domestic conflicts where authority breaks down and conflict engulfs an entire polity.¹¹ For the same reason, it avoids leaning towards a 'legalistic notion of sovereignty' in which political agency and conflict find little if no space within the restrictive framework of the state as a legal-territorial unit.¹² Second, CET contributes to ongoing efforts to better define Realist theories of the state.¹³ Interestingly, Neoclassical Realism has drawn on the 'return to the state' begun in Sociology during the 1970s to define its intervening variables.¹⁴ Yet, Neoclassical Realism has so far failed to fully engage with the elite tradition underpinning the statist approach.¹⁵

This chapter first presents the main tenets of CET and of more recent elitist developments in order to define political elites and their characteristics. Second, it examines domestic elite politics, i.e. how political elites' relationship with

⁸ Mosca 1923: §I.3.2, I.7.1; Meisel 1962: x. In this regard, see also Weber 1978; Gilpin 1996; Sterling-Folker 2009: 103.

⁹ Mann (1993: 49) notes the relationship existing between elite theory of the state and Realist theory of international politics. '[E]litists are reinforced by "realist" international relations theorists', with 'statesmen...empowered to represent internationally an overall "national" interest'.

¹⁰ Little 1975, 1987; Rosenberg 1994.

¹¹ Waltz 1979: 113.

¹² Milner 1993: 154.

¹³ Lobell *et al.* 2009.

¹⁴ Starting from the 1970s, in contrast to the society-centred approaches offered by Pluralism and Marxism, authors such as Peter Evans, Stephen Krasner, Michael Mann, and Theda Skocpol have brought the state back to the centre of political analysis. These statist authors have underscored the autonomy of the state and its power based on its administrative and coercive organizations. See Krasner 1978; Skocpol 1979; Evans *et al.* 1985; Mann 1986, 1993; Evans 2006: 48.

¹⁵ This is particularly evident in Zakaria 1998.

their societies and their interest in securing their power affect elite action. Third, it addresses the international dimension of elite politics in order to clarify how domestic change abroad affects elites' position and how intervention may serve the interests of political elites in this regard.

The Inevitability of Elites

Between the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th Century, three authors, Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto and Robert Michels, lay the bases for what is now defined as CET. The works of these three authors represent the first modern attempt to systematise a tradition of political thought on the political and social role of minorities that dates back to early philosophers and political thinkers.¹⁶ Recently, there has been a renewed interest in elite studies that has further developed some of CET earlier insights while maintaining its basic assumptions.¹⁷

The distinction between rulers and the ruled defines the central argument of CET. According to Mosca, the presence of a ruling class and the distinction between a ruling and a ruled class are universal and 'constant facts' of all societies. The ruling class 'performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantages that power brings whereas the second ... is directed

¹⁶ Notably, Plato, Aristotle, Kautilya and Ibn Khaldun underscored the role of minorities in leading societies. See Lipset 1968: 121; Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987: 137-138. In the American context, Alexander Hamilton (quoted in Dye 2002: 2) noted that 'all communities divide themselves into the few and the many'. In later developments, elite theory has followed rather distinct paths in Europe and the US. While in Europe elite theory focused on the differences between different elite groups, in the US elite theory became informed by Marxist approaches underscoring the primacy of economic stratification and the close relationships between political, military and economic elites. See, for example, Mills 1956.

¹⁷ The theoretical and empirical observations of the CET were first developed by: Dorso 1946; Aron 1950; Mills 1956; Lipset 1968, 1983; Putnam 1976. Recent reformulations of the CET and contributions include: Stoppino 2000; Higley and Burton 2006; Hartmann 2007; Sasaki 2007; Best and Higley 2009. Other authors draw from CET such as: Mann 1986, 1993; Tripp 2000. While not being an elitist author, Michael Mann's work is informed by both Realist and elitist elements. For instance, Mann (1986: 218) states that '[m]inorities usually make history' and frequently refers to CET in his work.

and controlled by the first'.¹⁸ This is the result of both social and organisational dynamics. The ruling class' dominance derives first and foremost from society itself, since it is thanks to their possession of 'social forces' (i.e. sources of social power) that members of the ruling class obtain the material, intellectual and even moral superiority to rule; thus, changes in these social forces will affect the political class and its composition.¹⁹ The power of the ruling class rests also on the advantages that every organised minority enjoys over a disorganised majority.²⁰ Robert Michels developed this argument into his renowned 'iron law of oligarchy', stressing 'the immanent oligarchical tendencies in every kind of human organisation which strives for the attainment of definite ends'. Simply put, 'organization implies the tendency to oligarchy' with power increasingly concentrated in the upper strata due to organisational requirements.²¹

The empirical observation regarding the stratification present in every society defines the central argument of CET: the inevitability of elites.²² The inevitability of elites represents an axiom for subsequent theoretical development; it is a constant that shapes societies despite different historical and geographical settings. As in Krasner's work, rulers represent the 'ontological givens' of political analysis.²³ Thus, CET authors openly question the validity of both Marxist and Liberal-democratic assumptions about the state. On the one hand, CET questions Marxist claims over the possibility of classless societies. From a CET perspective, Communist societies would not have escaped the presence of an elite, something borne out by the experience of 'actual existing Socialism'. On the other hand, CET authors provide a corrosive critique of Liberal-democratic regimes as well. Elites are present within pluralist democracies since even these societies cannot work without a governmental

¹⁸ Mosca 1923: §I.2.1; 1925: §I.2 [translated in Mosca 1939: 50]. Similarly, see Pareto 1935: §2027-2028, 2031-2032.

¹⁹ Mosca 1923: §I.2.3; Hartmann 2007: 10. According to Mosca (1923: §I.2.4-I.2.5), sources of power have in fact changed in history, shifting from the primacy of military power to wealth, thus increasing the social role and influence of the holders of economic power. Pareto (1935: §2031) on the contrary, defines the elite in qualitative terms as composed of all the individuals that achieve 'the highest indices in their branch of activity'.

²⁰ Mosca 1923: §I.2.1-I.2.3.

²¹ Michels 1915: 11, 31-33, 40. See also Mann 1986: 6-7; Piven and Cloward 2005: 37.

²² Higley and Burton 2006: 4-7; Hartmann 2007: 36.

²³ Krasner 1999: 7.

machine and a political class.²⁴ As summarised by Aron, in democracies governments can be *of* or *for* the people, but not realistically *by* the people, '[...] for it is quite impossible for the government of a society to be in the hands of any but a few'.²⁵ In this sense, CET essentially questions the myth surrounding the democratic model, the 'democratic fallacy' that governments are run by the governed.²⁶

The central claim by CET has been questioned primarily by Pluralist authors.²⁷ Three elements characterise Pluralist theories of the state: the emphasis on the diffused distribution of power among different groups, not just in one single elite; the multiplicity of cleavages hence the impossibility of reducing social conflict and political dynamics to one single dimension; the process of competition and negotiation taking place between interests groups.²⁸ No single group, according to the Pluralist perspective, controls decision-making. A multitude of groups shape the political process hence assuring that power is dispersed among them.²⁹ Therefore, the state is not autonomous from societal pressures; if not a fiction, the state at maximum is a cipher or a 'pawn', the passive target and translator of interests arising exogenously in the society.³⁰ In particular, in his renowned analysis of the policy making process in New Haven, Robert Dahl's question – 'who actually governs?' – offered a critique of elitist positions by arguing that no single elite exercised overall influence on every aspect of decision-making, but a differentiated set of political parties, interest groups, economic associations and bureaucratic actors influenced the

²⁴ Mosca 1925: §I.2; Michels 1915: 21.

²⁵ Aron 1950: 9. Similarly, from a Marxist perspective, see Hobsbawm 1994: 559.

²⁶ Laswell and Daniel 1965: v. See also Wintrop 1992: 465-468; Jackson 2000: 133.

²⁷ On Pluralism and the influence on Western and particularly American Political Science, see Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987: 13-23; Schmidt 2002: 15-18.

²⁸ Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987: 23.

²⁹ Polsby 1960; Dahl 1961; Smith 2006: 26.

³⁰ Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987: 43. The same logic has been applied to the study of the state's position *vis-à-vis* increasing economic interdependence and globalisation. Philip Cerny's (2010) Neopluralist analysis underlines how sub- and supra-national actors, involved in a process of competition and negotiation with one another including the state, increasingly shape world politics.

policymaking process, each on specific issue areas, thus defining the power structure of New Haven – and by extension of the US – as a polyarchy.³¹

Despite the theoretical and empirical critique put forth by the Pluralists, the central claim of CET has not been fundamentally questioned. Specifically, Pluralist positions present four limits. First, their focus on the actual observable bargaining process among social groups inevitably leaves aside any analysis of those policy outcomes that are not explicitly negotiated and that result from the undisputed assumptions of the actors – hence with no or little competition involved.³² Second, Pluralism seems ‘to mistake...plurality with pluralism’, as if the mere existence of a multitude of actors entails decentralisation of power. In this regard, Pluralism downplays the asymmetric power relations existing within society and among different interest groups.³³ Third, Pluralist theory fails to account for policymakers’ actions that are not driven by societal groups or interests but by state rulers’ interests or ideology.³⁴ Simply put, the role of state leaders as autonomous actors cannot be fully portrayed by Pluralist theories. Finally, the analysis offered by Pluralist authors to demonstrate the empirical absence of an elite does not dispel all the doubts. According to Dahl’s own analysis, political leaders exert a constant and relatively high influence on policy, a point that is consistent with CET claims.³⁵

Further, the Pluralist critique points in the direction of a more general and persisting misunderstanding regarding CET and its original formulations, summarised by Meisel’s description of elites as characterised by ‘the three C’s: group consciousness, coherence, and conspiracy’.³⁶ However, CET sustains that elites are inevitable, not that elites are always cohesive and unified.³⁷ Notably, Pareto stated that ‘the governing class is not a homogenous body’ and that ‘they hold no meetings where they congregate to plot a common accord’.³⁸ As Ferdinand Kologar notes, the elite ‘is a social category rather than a genuine

³¹ Dahl 1961: 1.

³² Schattschneider 1960; Lukes 2005; Smith 2006: 28.

³³ Smith 2006: 27-30.

³⁴ Krasner 1978: 31.

³⁵ Dahl 1961: 90-91; Dunleavy and O’Leary 1987: 19.

³⁶ Meisel 1962: 4.

³⁷ Zuckerman 1977: 33; Mann 1993: 50-51; Higley and Burton 2006: 4-5.

³⁸ Pareto 1935: §2254.

group'.³⁹ Hence, elites' cohesion, coherence and conspiracy are variables, not constants. Unified and cohesive domestic elites are historically rare since they are the product of either political settlements between former warring or conflicting elites or the result of a long-term process of political convergence between domestic political actors.⁴⁰

The question is not whether an elite defined as a social category exist but what forces shape social stratification and what elite groups are established as a consequence. Where CET sees social stratification as the result primarily of groups hold on social power and organisational specialisation, Marxist theories stress the role played by economic structures and class differences as the key drivers of social stratification. Importantly for this study, where CET authors focus primarily on the governing elite or political class,⁴¹ Marxism relegates the state to an instrumental role, acting as a tool not of the *political* class running state institutions but of the *ruling* class controlling the means of production.⁴²

Marxist analyses present two sets of problems. On the one hand, both Pluralist and Statist authors criticise Marxism for reducing social competition and conflict to economic cleavages. Multiple cleavages instead operate and shape groups formation, identity and interests.⁴³ On the other hand, more recent Marxist formulations of the state take into account the relative autonomy of political actors from economic actors and forces. Ralph Miliband already acknowledged that the state – *recte* the state elite – is driven also by interests not originating in society or by capitalism.⁴⁴ This point is further developed by structural Marxists. While underscoring the state's key role in sustaining the capitalist system, they recognise the state's relative autonomy from the economic upper class whilst still performing a key function in the long-term working of the capitalism mode of production.⁴⁵ Notably, Nicos Poulantzas

³⁹ Kolegar 1967: 357.

⁴⁰ Higley and Burton 2006: 3-4, 21-22. See also Aron 1950: 10, 141.

⁴¹ The terms governing elite and political class are used respectively by Pareto and Mosca.

⁴² Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987: 209; Hay 2006: 61. On instrumentalist views, see Mills 1956; Domhoff 1967; Miliband 1969, 1970, 1973, 1983.

⁴³ Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987: 59; Krasner 1978: 26

⁴⁴ Miliband 1969; 1977: 87; Hay 2006: 71.

⁴⁵ Krasner 1978: 25; Hay 2006: 62.

recognises that the state is a relatively autonomous entity and the fact that the ruling class and the political governing class do not coincide.⁴⁶ More recently, in his Strategic Relational Approach (SRA), Bob Jessop rephrases the relative autonomy of the state by stressing the dependency of the state on the wider society in material terms whilst acknowledging its operational autonomy. As Jessop argues, 'although the state apparatus has its own distinctive resources and power, which underpin its relative autonomy, it also has distinctive liabilities or vulnerabilities and its operations depend on resources produced elsewhere in its environment'.⁴⁷

The analysis conducted so far has underscored two elements. First, the CET central claim of social stratification represents an 'ontological given' that is not fundamentally questioned by contending theories of the state once the plurality of elites is taken into account. Second, not all political and state dynamics can be reduced to economic drivers and actors. The state elite enjoys at minimum relative autonomy.

Political Elites

The debate between Elite, Pluralist and Marxist positions led to more detailed analyses of the plurality of cleavages and elites characterising modern societies. The plural character of domestic elites is stressed particularly by functionalist elite research, which explicitly focuses on the different types of elites characterising modern societies.⁴⁸ While accepting the inevitability of social stratification, functionalists have criticised CET for not fully addressing the fact that such a process affects different segments of society producing different types of elites.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Poulantzas 1972: 246-247; 1973.

⁴⁷ Jessop 2008: 6.

⁴⁸ Hartmann 2007: 3, 21.

⁴⁹ Functionalist works focus on three different aspects: the difference between separated or functionally different elite types (Dahrendorf 1959; Keller 1963; Giddens 1974: 4-8, 12; Hartmann 2007: 28); sub-elite groups or dynamics (Aron 1950: 9; Mills

In order to reconcile the more parsimonious CET framework with the richer functionalist differentiations, I will follow Guido Dorso's suggestion to ameliorate Mosca's definitions by distinguishing between the *ruling elite* and the *political elite* in order to differentiate political power from economic power, thus reconciling CET with both neo-Marxist and Statist conclusions over the autonomy – albeit relative – of the state from economic structures and ruling classes.⁵⁰ The ruling elite represents the broad, composite category including individuals exerting asymmetrical influence over societies thanks to their command of the key sources of social power, including economic, ideological, military, and political leaders.⁵¹

While the ruling elite defines the more general category of individuals that exert 'social influence' over society, the term political (or state) elite will identify exclusively 'that part of the ruling class [i.e. elite] that has strictly political functions'.⁵² The following study will take the latter subset of the ruling elite, i.e. state or political elites, as its object of inquiry.⁵³ The analysis of political elites is preferred on three grounds. First, political elites can be distinguished from other elites on the basis of the autonomy – albeit relative – of political power from other forms of power, which results from the support provided by non-elite groups and the control of state institutions by political elites.⁵⁴ Second, members of the political elite are ultimately responsible for a state's decision to

1956: 6; Kornhauser 1960); and, the link between elites and economic-class structures (Mills 1956; Stammer 1965).

⁵⁰ On the need to differentiate between political and economic power, see Aron 1950: 16, 130; Skocpol 1979: 26; Mann 1986.

⁵¹ Dorso 1947: 127; Putnam 1976: 21-44. On political, economic, military and ideological power as the main sources of social power, see Mann 1986: 2, 10-27. For instance, Dye (2002: 207-208) lists roughly 6.000 individuals in the US under what is here defined as the ruling elite. Albeit substantial, they still represent a tiny minority of the wider American society.

⁵² Dorso 1949: 127, my translation. See also Mills 1956: 11, 366 fn.6; Higley and Burton 2006: 7. Note that Dorso uses Mosca's terms political class (*classe politica*) and ruling class (*classe dirigente*). However, I prefer the term 'elite' in order to avoid the strictly economic connotation that the term 'class' has acquired. In this regard, see Mills 1956: 277; Mann 1986: 24-25.

⁵³ Hence in this paper, unless specified, the term elite will not refer to the following categories: economic elites or transnational economic elite groups (Van der Pijl 1998); supranational set of politically or economically influential leaders forming a global power elite (Rothkopf 2008); or epistemic communities (Haas 1992).

⁵⁴ Aron 1950: 16, 130; Poulantzas 1972: 246-247; Mann 1986. On leadership as relational, see Ahlquist and Levi 2011: 5.

authorise the use of force and, more generally, for the definition of state objectives.⁵⁵ Third, from a sociological perspective, political elites represent a social category that can be distinguished from both wider society, given the restricted social composition of the former, and the broader ruling elite, particularly in more institutionalised and democratic settings where a separate class of professional politicians exists.⁵⁶ Thus, the term political elite identifies the social category encompassing the holders of top political positions, including members of a state's government and of legislative assemblies, as well as those organised actors involved in the competition for political power and operating through existing institutions and selection processes, such as party leaders.⁵⁷ The term 'counter-elite', on the contrary, will identify those groups formed by contenders for state power that are excluded from political institutions and their official selection mechanisms but that are in control of significant non-elite support and other sources of social power (military, ideological, economic).

Although executive leaders exert asymmetric influence over the decision-making process compared to the rest of political elite members, this study will examine broader political elite dynamics for two reasons.⁵⁸ First, non-executive members of the political elite play an influential role in terms of the provision of policy input, influence over non-elite groups, and the implementation of decisions. Particularly within democracies, not only presidents and cabinet ministers but also members of legislatures may exert significant influence on foreign policy, as exemplified by the role played by US Congressmen.⁵⁹ Second, as underscored by Robert Jervis, the arguments adduced to question the importance of leaders in explaining foreign policy decisions rest on three elements: ideological homogeneity; socialisation; constraints on leaders.⁶⁰ Elite

⁵⁵ Krasner 1999: 7; Morgenthau 1985: 119.

⁵⁶ Putnam 1976: 37; Blondel and Müller-Rommel 2007: 822-824. As noted by Dye (2002: 55-96), most US political leaders, including both Congressmen and former presidents such as Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton, do not originate from well-off families. In this regard, as Lerner *et al.* (1996) argue, differences in terms of race and gender are more significant. For studies of the American upper class, see Burch 1981; Domhoff 1983; Dye 2002.

⁵⁷ Putnam 1976: 14; Higley and Burton 2006: 7; Blondel and Müller-Rommel 2007: 829.

⁵⁸ Blondel and Müller-Rommel 2007: 822.

⁵⁹ Carter and Scott 2009; Marshall and Prins 2011.

⁶⁰ Jervis 2013: 155-156.

dynamics matter exactly because they help contextualise leaders' decisions as they shape the immediate ideological, social, and relational context that influences and constrains leaders' decisions both prior to and after taking office. In particular, the broader political elite represents the immediate relational context from which leaders can extract political support and from which contenders emerge. Importantly, other political elite members represent the first competitors for political power that leaders face. It is a contest where political actors strive to gain and maintain the support and allegiance of non-elite groups in order to gain or preserve their political power.⁶¹

By focusing on political elites, this approach differentiates itself from two contending explanatory frameworks. First, it looks primarily at state leaders as political elite members not as bureaucratic actors, thus differentiating itself from the Bureaucratic Political Paradigm (BPP) explaining policy outcomes via the process of negotiation and competition involving bureaucratic actors.⁶² According to this approach, the organisational position of the actors involved determines their policy stance as well as their perceptions and the power resources available to each actor.⁶³ As a result, the executive leader acts as the receptor of inputs generated by the cabinet, administrative units, and their experts.⁶⁴ Examining executive leaders as members of the political elite, however, allows for the overcoming of the main shortcomings of the BPP by taking into account three important elements left aside by it: the role played by common political values that inform political elite members' action;⁶⁵ the way in which domestic political competition affects policy decisions;⁶⁶ and, the role played by party leaders and Congressmen.⁶⁷

Second, this approach questions the model of state action offered by Neoclassical Realism. As noted in Chapter 1, the additive model used by Neoclassical Realism – adding intervening domestic variables to the initial

⁶¹ Mosca 1923: §I.2.1; Higley and Burton 2006: 4.

⁶² Allison 1971; Allison and Halperin 1972; Halperin 1974.

⁶³ Welch 1992: 128.

⁶⁴ Krasner 1978: 27.

⁶⁵ Ball 1974: 92; Freedman 1976: 445-449.

⁶⁶ Art 1973: 467, 486.

⁶⁷ Freedman 1976.

systemic pressures – necessarily means that the entire edifice of Neoclassical Realism rests on Neorealist assumptions about state motives.⁶⁸ In particular, restricting the analysis to the FPE, i.e. exclusively to the members of political elite dealing with foreign policy formulation, may be both problematic and misleading. On the one hand, it runs the risk of leaving aside the role played by important political actors, such as Congressmen.⁶⁹ On the other hand, by defining the relevant political actors as part of the FPE an assumption is made that their key concern is the ‘national interest’ and foreign policy. Yet, members of the FPE are political actors competing with other political actors for state power, leadership, partisan gains, and influence. Similarly, FPE members are subject to the influence and pressures of the political actors to whom they owe their position. For these reasons, partisan politics matters in the formulation of foreign policy.⁷⁰ Hence, reducing the scope of state leaders’ action to national interest calculations runs the risk of leaving an important dynamic out of the explanatory framework. As John Lewis Gaddis notes with regard to the limitation of paradigms offered by both IR and International History on the Cold War,

[s]omehow, in our preoccupation with archives, theory, quantification, methodology, and historiography, we’ve lost sight of something Presidents Roosevelt and Truman never forgot: that they operated within a highly contentious domestic political environment from which they could rarely insulate the conduct of foreign policy.⁷¹

As a result, we need to treat political leaders as politicians first and foremost.

Political Elites and Power

A focus on political elites is a focus on the primacy of political interests. As both Mosca and Pareto underscore in their works, members of the elite act in order to preserve their position within their societies. Specifically, political elites’

⁶⁸ Fordham 2009: 253.

⁶⁹ Schwartz 2009; Trubowitz 2011.

⁷⁰ Schwartz 2009: 189.

⁷¹ Gaddis (2000: x) quoted in Logevall 2004: 494-495.

action is aimed at the preservation of their political power. As Thomas Schwartz argues, members of the political elite are 'ambitious people seeking office for individual recognition, career advancement, and the power to affect societies'.⁷² As political power is always contested, the minimal objective driving political elites is to stay in power. Krasner provides a minimalist account in this regard, by sketching a 'homo politicus' that nonetheless is sufficient for the purpose of this study.⁷³ It is a useful simplification: political elite members may pursue different objectives, but the preservation of their power position – or the acquisition of political power – is a quintessential precondition for any other action. Whether this translates within democratic settings in actual office-seeking, policy-seeking, or vote-seeking behaviour by various factions or parties depends on short-term situational factors as well as on the interplay of political, institutional and economic factors.⁷⁴

Therefore, the theory of state presented here is consistent with the central role assigned by recent theories to the compatibility of policymakers' decisions with their interest in securing their own political position, primarily selectorate theory defined by Bueno de Mesquita *et al.* and Mintz' polyheuristic theory. For Bueno de Mesquita *et al.*, it is possible to assume that every political action made by leaders will be 'intended by them to be compatible with their desire to retain power'.⁷⁵ According to Mintz, in choosing a policy, executive leaders follow a two-stage process whereby leaders ultimately choose a policy in terms of the national interest after having discarded options that would be costly in terms of domestic support.⁷⁶

Taking into account the role played by domestic political considerations is the key to better situating the decisions of political leaders. In particular, the role played by domestic politics in US foreign policy formulations has been

⁷² Schwartz 2009: 177.

⁷³ On Krasner's definition of a 'homo politicus' and a critique, see Katzenstein 2013: 141.

⁷⁴ Muller and Strom 1999. For instance, given the role played by ideologies in legitimising and mobilising political support, specific identitary policies may result from both policy-seeking and vote-seeking behaviour.

⁷⁵ Bueno de Mesquita *et al.* 2003: 9.

⁷⁶ Mintz 2004.

repeatedly stressed.⁷⁷ However, both selectorate and polyheuristic theories present significant limits on the study of foreign policy in general and intervention in particular. On the one hand, in contrast to polyheuristic theory's expectations, policymakers often pursue high-risk international political adventures.⁷⁸ Leaders care about their state's international position yet it is not fully clear when change abroad is likely to trigger these high-risk responses. In addition, policy formulation can hardly be conceived as a two-stage process where leaders ultimately define what they consider to be in the national interest. In this regard, polyheuristic theory overlooks the way in which leaders' formulation of the national interest itself is shaped by partisan considerations and the interests of the ruling coalition.⁷⁹

On the other hand, selectorate theory offers a more detailed account of military interventions that nonetheless needs further elaboration. Selectorate theory stresses the different impact regime differences have on leaders' decision to use force abroad. In democratic regimes, according to Bueno de Mesquita *et al.*, leaders tend to be more sensitive to foreign policy failures. The need for public policy success for democratic leaders leads to selection effects on the conflicts democratic leaders choose. Yet, this presents two problems. First, autocratic leaders too can risk their political position and even the collapse of their regimes in the aftermath of military defeats or as a result of foreign adventurism. Second, as the review of the Liberal position on intervention has showed, regime differences do not substantially matter with regard to causes of military intervention.⁸⁰

In more general terms, what these approaches fail to take into consideration is the incentive political elites have to preserve their influence and control over *both* the domestic *and* international environment which they operate in. Similarly to authors within the Realist tradition, CET authors recognise how a struggle for power characterises domestic politics, both in democratic and

⁷⁷ For recent contributions in this regard, see Small 1996; Logevall 2004: 490-496; Schwartz 2009.

⁷⁸ Stern 2004: 110.

⁷⁹ Trubowitz 1998; Schwartz 2009.

⁸⁰ See Chapter 1: 51-54.

autocratic settings, as much as international politics.⁸¹ In this regard, I follow Trubowitz' recent contribution in examining foreign policy decision at the intersection of both international and domestic politics.⁸² In doing so, the following approach rejects the competing strands assigning analytical priority to either international or domestic factors, i.e. that between Neorealist theories stressing the role played by international factors (*primat der aussenpolitik*) and those stressing the role played by domestic factors (*primat der innenpolitik*).⁸³ When transplanted to IR, the debate has led to a conflation of international factors with security concerns and of domestic factors mainly with economic or societal interest groups. Having chosen security as the prime mover of state action, Neorealism has fallen back on the primacy of international factors, thus having to reconcile domestic factors as intervening variables within Neoclassical Realism. Yet, in doing so, domestic factors have been added by focusing on societal interest groups (the primary focus of Pluralist, not of Realist theories of the state), economic factors (the primary focus of Marxist and Revisionist account), and ideational factors (the primary focus of Constructivist theories), without reconciling the latter with the interests of political leaders. This has led to the overlooking of a more basic assumption underlying Realism – the autonomy and primacy of the political. It is this autonomy that defines the scope of this thesis, and it is this primacy that makes political elites the analytical focus of this thesis.

Therefore, leaders aim at securing their power over both their international and domestic settings. Specifically, an elite's power is intended in terms of an elite's ability to control both its domestic and international environment and the actors that populate them.⁸⁴ The link between domestic and international power stems from two dynamics. First, foreign policy and military success abroad and, even more so, foreign policy failures and military defeats damage the position and credibility of leaders at home and often irremediably weaken it.⁸⁵ More

⁸¹ Morgenthau 1985; David 1998: 84.

⁸² Trubowitz 2011: 4.

⁸³ For an overview of the origin and key aspects of the debate between these two approaches, see Simms 2003. For the relevance of this debate within IR and Realism, see Zakaria 1992; Rose 1998; Trubowitz 2011: 2-3.

⁸⁴ On social power as the '... ability to pursue and attain goals through mastery of one's environment', see Mann 1986: 6.

⁸⁵ Trubowitz 2011: 3-6, 17-18.

importantly, as I will indicate in the following sections, elites' international and domestic power positions are inextricably linked.

Coercion and Consent

In order to maintain their position, political elite members need to secure the allegiance of non-elite strata. As recognised within the elite theory literature, elites acquire meaning only with regard to non-elite groups that are willing to accept the position of the former. Simply put, '[l]eadership is relational; one cannot be a leader without followers'.⁸⁶ The link existing between elites and the social types they represent led Mosca to underscore the fact that society exerts significant influence over their rulers.⁸⁷ As discussed in more recent elitist works, elites 'must obtain non-elite support for most undertakings', thus limiting the scope of political leaders' action.⁸⁸ For this reason, political elites act in order to secure the allegiance of their respective societies. Specifically, political elite members manage their relationship with society through both coercion and consent.

First, a political elite's relationship with its society is hierarchical and channelled through the coercive apparatus of the state. Military and police force can be used directly to suppress revolts and revolutionary attempts. At the same time, the possibility of coercion affects the political and strategic calculus of counter-elites and society at large, operating as a background tool always available to state leaders.⁸⁹ Notably, the use of military force for internal purposes is not confined to autocratic and totalitarian regimes but also characterises democratic regimes. For instance, US political leaders have

⁸⁶ Ahlquist and Levi 2011: 5.

⁸⁷ Mosca 1923: §I.2.1.

⁸⁸ Higley and Burton 2006: 4, 27.

⁸⁹ On the pervasive role played by coercion in establishing and securing leaders' political power, see Machiavelli 1988; Stoppino 1968. On the state as claiming the monopoly over the use of force, see Weber 1978. For more recent positions in this regard, see Skocpol 1979: 29-31; Tripp 2000: 214-215; Ahlquist and Levi 2011.

authorised the use of military force for internal purposes with remarkable consistency across the 19th and the 20th Century.⁹⁰

Second, elites' position is assured through the consent of non-elite groups. This point has been widely addressed by early thinkers within various philosophical and theoretical traditions.⁹¹ Within the Realist tradition, Niccolò Machiavelli argued that force alone could not sustain leaders' rule. In this regard, Machiavelli suggested the prince not only to be feared but also to be loved.⁹² Max Weber distinguished power from authority, with the latter including 'a minimum of voluntarily compliance...an interest (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance) in obedience'.⁹³ Consent of the ruled and the mechanisms through which an elite ensures the former are central to CET's analysis. As Pareto underlines, 'consent and force appear in all the course of history as instruments of governing'.⁹⁴ Mosca, in particular, developed this point by stressing the role played by 'compliance' and consent in explaining society's obedience to a particular regime. According to Mosca, political elites try to rationalize their rule through a *political formula*, a set of ideas providing a legal basis to their power as well as the legitimating principle of an elite's political order.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ David Adams (1995) shows that on average US federal troops and the National Guard have been employed for internal security duties nearly 18 times per year across the selected timeframes (1886-1895, 1921-1935; 1943-1990).

⁹¹ David Hume (1985: 32) argues that '[n]othing appears more surprising...than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and the implicit submission, with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. When we enquire by what means this wonder is effected, we shall find, that, as force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion'. Similarly, within the Marxist tradition, Antonio Gramsci argued that domination rests on both coercion and consent yet with different degrees in different societies. According to Gramsci (2001), the ruling class exerts hegemony, sustained by civil society (e.g. Church, schools, etc.), when the subordinate class shares the values of the dominant class as if they were inevitable, thus becoming 'common sense'. See also Femia 1975; Abercrombie *et al.* 1980: 12; Hay 2006: 69-70.

⁹² Machiavelli 1988: Ch.17, Ch.19.

⁹³ Weber 1978: 212, 941-946.

⁹⁴ Pareto 1935: §2251, §2257.

⁹⁵ Mosca 1923: §I.3.1. For a contemporary use of the concept of the political formula within elite studies, see Lasswell and Kaplan 1950: 126-133; Higley and Burton 2006.

At a macro-level, the political formula represents the principle of sovereignty.⁹⁶ Elites need to rationalise their claims to power and their associated political order to transcend a situation of perpetual warfare at home, with these rationalisations representing the 'claim to authority' over non-elite groups.⁹⁷ At a micro-level, the political formula is a legitimating principle of an elite's power, yet not simply a 'mystification' or an invention to secure obedience.⁹⁸ As noted also by Michels, the political formula represents a 'constant fact' related to a human need to rule and be ruled on the basis of some 'general ethical principle'.⁹⁹ Similarly to authors such as Karl Mannheim and Gramsci, Mosca stresses that political formulas and ideologies are the product of specific historical and national settings. They are not universally valid *per se* but inform nonetheless leaders' mental schemes and their perceptions of their power position.¹⁰⁰ In this sense, Mosca's political formula is coincident with C.J. Friedrich's definition of ideology as a 'set of ideas related to existing social and political order and aimed at changing or defending it'.¹⁰¹ In other words, political ideologies matter in shaping political elites' position and policies aimed at securing the latter.¹⁰² From this perspective, the creation and management of political consensus represents a central task for members of the political elite.¹⁰³ Yet, from an elite perspective, not all ideas matter, but just those ideas that can mobilise political support, strengthen the elite's role, and either legitimise or contest an elite's political order.¹⁰⁴

The political formula represents the set of fundamental principles of political order that the political elite recognises and accepts. It is by definition a composite concept, framed by consensual yet very broad principles including a vast array of different positions. Despite contrasting political platforms, both incumbent factions and opposition groups belonging to the same political elite

⁹⁶ Mosca 1923: §I.3.1.

⁹⁷ Williams 2005: 6.

⁹⁸ Mosca 1923: §I.3.1; 1925: §I.7.

⁹⁹ Michels 1915: 15-16.

¹⁰⁰ Mannheim 1991; Femia 1993; Gambino 2005: xii.

¹⁰¹ See Friedrich 1963: 89. On the link between ideology and legitimacy, see Stoppino 1968: 129-139.

¹⁰² Mosca 1923: §I.8.1, I.4.3.

¹⁰³ Pareto 1935: §2251, 2257.

¹⁰⁴ Similarly, see Schweller 2009: 228; Owen 2010a: 251.

accept the legitimacy of the general political formula. On the contrary, counter-elites explicitly profess an alternative political formula legitimising their own claim to the state. In order to differentiate between the consensual and conflicting elements within the same elite, we might then distinguish between the *general* political formula characterising the overall political elite's relationship with society and the *specific* political formula or platform on which a certain faction or coalition within the political elite bases its consensus. While different factions within the elite accept the general principles of the formula, they might centre their political platforms on specific ideational subsets that both help define the identity of these coalitions and rally political support from non-elite groups.

For instance, in the American case the general political formula is represented by Liberal-democratic principles informing US leaders' views on: legitimate political order (democracy); socio-economic order (market economy); and, the US role in world affairs (US exceptionalism).¹⁰⁵ This is not to say that certain dimensions of the American formula have not shifted over long periods of time or that there were not significant differences among US elite factions.¹⁰⁶ Both general and specific political formulas mirror the subset of ideas that matter for the elite coalitions struggling for political power in specific historical timeframes. However, the concept of the political formula allows taking into account both the consensual elements within American political ideology and US leaders' vision of the country's role abroad. In doing so, it is possible to take into account, to use Arne Westad's words, '...the remarkable consistency with which the U.S. foreign policy elite has defined the nation's international purpose over the past three to four generations'.¹⁰⁷ This point is also picked up within the sociological literature. In his study of the American ruling elite, Dye notes the consensus existing within the US elite on basic ideas of socio-political

¹⁰⁵ On the Liberal foundations of the American formula, see Hartz 1955. For a critique and re-evaluation of Hartz' argument, see Abbott 2005; Desch 2007/2008; Hulliung 2010. On US exceptionalism, see Brands 1998; Monten 2005.

¹⁰⁶ Notably, US leaders' formula has been informed to varying degrees over time by basic assumptions about racial differences and the legitimacy thereof. On this point and the multiple traditions characterising the American polity and US elites' views, see Hunt 1987; Smith 1993; Mead 2002; Katzenstein 2013.

¹⁰⁷ Westad 2000: 553-554. On the common Liberal ideological framework informing US foreign policy, see also Monten 2005; Kagan 2006; Desch 2007/2008.

order as limited government and private enterprise.¹⁰⁸ As Moore and Mack have found, while different members of the US political elite hold different ideas on the use of force in specific foreign policy issues, over time these differences are not significant and, importantly, they tend to co-vary.¹⁰⁹

By distinguishing between the general formula and the specific platform of an elite faction, it is also possible to take into account both the consensual ideological elements underlying elites' beliefs and the ideological expression of elite factionalism. As noted in the previous sections, political elites' cohesion is variable. This in turn varies according to ideological but also changing patterns of relations among elite members. The cohesion of an elite is lower in cases of increased ideological polarisation and in the absence of thick elite relations. On the contrary, cohesion increases as a result mainly of two processes: via a process of political convergence, as exemplified by the gradual rapprochement by Christian Democrats and the Communist Party in Italy during the Cold War; or via political settlements resulting from recent conflicts or the threat of renewed civil conflict forcing elite groups to come to a common understanding.¹¹⁰ However, even in the case of cohesive elites, the attempt by elite members to maintain their power position and the contemporary drive for power among political actors fuels elite factionalism.

Domestic Elite Politics

Driven by the need to secure coercive tools and maintain their authority, elites are interested in controlling state institutions for two reasons. First, institutions provide elites with state power hence the ability to mobilise material resources and coercive tools to control and shape both their own societies and the international arena in which they operate.¹¹¹ Second, institutions stabilise a

¹⁰⁸ Dye 2002: 209.

¹⁰⁹ Moore and Mack 2007.

¹¹⁰ Higley and Burton 2006: 3-4, 21-22. See also Aron 1950: 10, 141.

¹¹¹ Within the elite theory literature, the point is underscored primarily in Dorso 1949: 134. For recent overviews of the role played by institutions in this regard, see Nordlinger 1981: 9-11, 92-132; Lachmann 2003: 352. On state power and institutions'

political elite's rule by legitimising and extending the political elite's formula to an entire community, thus making elites' rule more acceptable to non-elite groups.¹¹²

Given the advantages offered to elite groups by institutions, the control of state institutions represents a key objective of elites' action.¹¹³ Specifically, the struggle for the control of state institutions represents the main driver of the process of 'elite circulation'.¹¹⁴ As Pareto famously noted, history is nothing more than a 'graveyard of aristocracies' holding the remains of once powerful elites.¹¹⁵ Pareto distinguished three types of circulation of elite: first, the entry of non-elite individuals to the elite stratum; second, the inner circulation between different factions of the political elite; third, the creation of new (counter) elite groups in the non-elite stratum engaging the existing elite in a struggle for power.¹¹⁶ The first process is shaped by people's 'natural passion for power', driving individuals to access the elite strata and the countervailing attempts of existing elite members to preserve their power.¹¹⁷

On the contrary, the struggle for the control of state institutions represents a key political mechanism fuelling the more consequential competitions taking place at the other two levels: first, the attempts by opposition factions within the elite to take control of governmental positions via institutionalised channels set by the polity to select its governing elite; second, the attempts by counter-elites excluded from political power to take control of state institutions, as in the cases of revolutions or secessionist conflicts.¹¹⁸ In this regard, the leadership of revolutionary and secessionist groups constitutes a counter-elite making an alternative claim for either the entire state or sections thereof and aiming to supplant existing political leaders. As Mosca notes, even in revolutionary processes when masses play a major role in overthrowing a political elite, a new

ability to transform and affect their own societies, see Mann 1986; Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987: 192.

¹¹² Mosca 1923: §I.7.10. See also Huntington 1968: 9; Goodwin 2001: 37-40.

¹¹³ Mosca 1923: §I.2.7

¹¹⁴ Ibid.: §I.7.2, I.7.5; Michels 1915: 205.

¹¹⁵ Pareto 1935: §2026, 2053.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.: §2041-2042, 2056, 2319. See also Michels 1915: 378; Bottomore 1964: 43.

¹¹⁷ Mosca 1923: §I.2.4-I.2.8, II.4.1; 1925: §I-5. See also Michels 1915: 12; Bottomore 1964: 54; Mann 1986: 15.

¹¹⁸ Mosca 1923: §I.4.6, §I.8.1.

organised minority originating from the leadership of the revolutionary groups will emerge to take over the state.¹¹⁹ Importantly, counter-elites may lead to the creation of a state within the legal state and thus to the condition described by Tilly as ‘multiple sovereignty’ characterising the internal conflicts examined in this study.¹²⁰

As the previous analysis highlights, state institutions favour some actions and groups instead of others, that is the political elite that controls them and, in particular, the elite faction that temporarily runs the state’s executive bodies. In this sense, state institutions are not neutral as they embody specific elite interests and ideas.¹²¹ The state embodies ‘distinctive ideas of social order’ and of domestic arrangements between groups that are the result of past conflicts.¹²² Therefore, from an elite perspective, political regimes represent specific arrangements determining power relations both among elite members and between elite members and non-elite groups.¹²³ In particular, political regimes are defined by three co-constitutive elements: a political formula setting the boundaries of legitimate political action;¹²⁴ ‘selection institutions’ regulating the contest for political power, that is the circulation of elite among existing and new elite factions;¹²⁵ and, a specific elite structure giving ‘sociological content’ to the overall institutional framework.¹²⁶ The latter refers to the characteristics of the actual elite members running state institutions and the pattern of relations established by elite members within the same regime. As Aron notes, ‘the real

¹¹⁹ Ibid.: §I.2.1. Although controlling the state is not the sole goal of revolutionaries, it is a necessary condition for their success, see Mosca 1923: §I.8.1; Goodwin 2001: 40-43. On revolutions’ mass dimension, see Lawson 2005.

¹²⁰ Mosca 1923: §I.4.5-6; Dorso 1949: 165-166. On multiple sovereignty, see Tilly 1993: 8-10.

¹²¹ Amenta 1985: 99-100; Skocpol 1985: 21; Tripp 2000: 213-220.

¹²² Tripp 2000: 213, 220. See also Mann 1993: 52-53.

¹²³ Higley and Burton 2006: 15; Mann 1993: 18; Tilly 2005: 429.

¹²⁴ Higley and Burton 2006: 15.

¹²⁵ Bueno de Mesquita *et al.* 2003: 9.

¹²⁶ Wintrop 1992: 466. See also Joseph 1981. On the characterisation of regimes as structures of elite rule encompassing political formula, selection mechanisms and structure, see Higley and Burton 2006: 15-18. Overall, these three elite dynamics are co-constitutive as they mutually influence each other. For example, political formulas shape a more cohesive elite structure. The selection mechanisms through which elites secure a stable elite circulation are informed by principles of legitimacy enshrined in political formulas. Elite structures are affected by political formulas and the competition for power but, in turn, affect the validity of political formulas and the competition for power at the domestic level.

nature of a constitutional system [...] can only be understood when the men who in fact operate the system are taken into account'. Further, Aron stresses the need to take into account the structure of the elite, in other terms 'the relationship between the groups exercising power, [and] the degree of unity or division between these groups'.¹²⁷ In this sense, the forms and functioning of the regimes vary according not only to political formulas and selection mechanisms but also to 'the prevailing mode of elite interaction'.¹²⁸ For instance, from an elitist perspective, democratic regimes are defined by three elements: a democratic political formula 'specifying which institutions – political parties, a free press, and so forth – are legitimate';¹²⁹ a selection mechanism of the political elite based on regular, free and open elections;¹³⁰ and, consensually united political elites, where no single faction dominates the other and where both formal and informal 'networks of communication and influence' exist between the various elite factions.¹³¹

Such a perspective on state institutions highlights two important consequences for the study of elites and military intervention. First, it helps specify the elite dynamics that are central to domestic regimes, hence shaping the decision-making process taking place within them: political formulas, the process of elite selection and circulation, and the pattern of elite relations. Second, an elitist perspective rests upon the causal priority of elites and the political imperatives driving their actions. Elite characteristics and dynamics 'predate' the associated regime, since elites establish, shape and provide sociological content to the regime.¹³² For the same reasons, elite change analytically predates regime change as regimes vary according to their new elite's formula, preferred selection institutions and structure. As a consequence, personnel and leadership change may have a significant impact even when not accompanied by formal institutional change. In terms of the study of military intervention, this stresses

¹²⁷ Aron 1950: 141.

¹²⁸ Higley and Burton 2006: 15.

¹²⁹ Lipset 1983: 27.

¹³⁰ In this sense, Schumpeter (1976: 242, 269) describes democracy as a 'political method', 'an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote'. See also Lipset 1983: 27, 71.

¹³¹ Higley and Burton 2006: 7, 9-14.

¹³² *Ibid.*: 19.

the importance of looking at how intervention affects the political personnel rather than the formal political institutions of the target state.¹³³

International Elite Politics

Political elites operate in both their domestic and international environment. In this regard, their power position is affected not only by the circulation of elites taking place within their own polity but also by the opportunities and challenges arising from the international sphere. Specifically, domestic change and internal conflicts in other polities have both a direct and indirect influence over the circulation of elites at home. As I will demonstrate in this section, the interplay of elite dynamics at both levels begets the systemic incentives shaping elites' policies towards domestic change abroad and, in particular, the 'sustained interest in each other's domestic affairs' leading policymakers to 'interfere in each other's domestic politics' highlighted by Buzan.¹³⁴

In general terms, the elite dynamics highlighted in the previous section – political formulas, power competition, and elite relations – are affected by the opportunities offered at the international level. First and foremost, foreign actors can strengthen elites' hold over state institutions and their societies. As underscored by Mastanduno *et al.* in their efforts to outline a Realist theory of state action, policymakers' decisions reflect the twofold competition taking place at the domestic and international level, hence they take into account the material and ideational resources available in both arenas. Importantly, policymakers can uphold their domestic position by relying on external sources to strengthen both their coercive tools and their legitimacy: by collecting material resources and support from other states (external extraction); and, by reinforcing their domestic status and legitimacy through diplomatic and political relations with other elites (external validation). The latter consists of 'attempts by state officials to utilize their status as authoritative international

¹³³ In this sense, an elite perspective distances itself from works on the subject of intervention assigning analytical priority to formal institutions and institutional change as in the works informed by Liberal approaches or, more recently, by Saunders (2011).

¹³⁴ Buzan 2007: 86, 88.

representatives of the nation-state to enhance their domestic political positions'.¹³⁵ External validation can be derived also from establishing relations with foreign elite groups whose rule is predicated upon a similar political formula and foreign counter-elites that share the elite's formula. As pointed out by Fred Halliday, social cohesion rests also on a dominant ideology '[b]ut for an ideology to be dominant it must not just be instilled into a society by those with power within it, but also reinforced from outside by an appearance of naturalness'.¹³⁶ Second, cohesion among elite factions at the domestic level can be strengthened by the presence of common external foes as well as of common allied elite groups providing incentives for increased elite cohesion.¹³⁷ Importantly, the pattern of relations established by elite groups at the international level may reinforce the cohesion between the latter and foreign elites.

For the same reason, external factors can negatively affect all three dimensions of an elite' regime. Importantly, the process of elite circulation is more likely when an incumbent elite's grip on state coercive means or its legitimacy become contested. First, given the twofold nature of political elites as both international and domestic actors, elites' claims can hardly be confined to the domestic sphere. Principles of domestic political order inform foreign policy values and a state's national purpose abroad.¹³⁸ For example, Liberal principles inform political institutional order at home as well as US leaders' views of the specific role for America in world affairs. Related to this, principles of political order can be – or claim to be – universal, hence they can apply to different polities; and, importantly, political principles can question the validity of other types of political order. For example, Communism questioned the validity of Liberal-democratic and capitalist systems. At the same time, even non universalistic principles can question the authority claim of an elite. For example, nationalist

¹³⁵ Mastanduno *et al.* 1989: 458, 464-465.

¹³⁶ Halliday 1999: 316.

¹³⁷ On the role of external enemies and the resulting in/out-group dynamics, see Coser 1956. Foreign elite groups can provide incentives for elite cohesion in case of peace settlements and transition governments, as exemplified by US and European efforts aimed at maintaining closer relations between Bosnian and Croatian elites as well as among different Bosnian elite factions of different ethnic groups during and after the conflict in Bosnia. See Daalder 2000: 26-27.

¹³⁸ Rathbun 2004: 2, 21-25. On national purpose, see Lang 2002, discussed in Chapter 1, and Reus-Smit 1997: 565-569.

elites can question both the legitimacy of imperial orders and extend a claim of authority over foreign territories inhabited by kin ethnic groups.

Second, the relative position of domestic elites can be affected by the erosion of state resources in external military actions or by the provision of external support to internal counter-elite groups.¹³⁹ In particular, in cases of internal conflict, the military balance between the two contenders can be altered by both the indirect and direct military intervention of an external actor in favour of either the government or the rebels. In these cases of 'domestic anarchy', international and domestic political struggle become inextricably connected, revealing both the international projection of elite groups fighting for the state and the domestic projection of external elite groups intervening in internal conflicts.¹⁴⁰ Third, domestic elite cohesion may be reduced in times of impending threats in cases where ideological polarisation, limited resources and the different distributional effects of various policies lead elite factions towards different policy solutions and increased elite divergence.¹⁴¹

In particular, domestic change abroad can either strengthen or weaken an elite's hold over its domestic and international position. First, the emergence of foreign elite and counter-elite groups abroad holding *antithetic* and *competing* political formulas may challenge the legitimacy of incumbent elites: antithetic formulas contest the claim to authority of an elite over the entire polity; competing formulas contest the claim to authority of an elite at the international level or over segments of the populations that do not belong to an elite's main ethnic group. On the one hand, as underscored by both Aron and Owen, what is particularly threatening for an elite is the emergence of counter-elite groups abroad promoting antithetic and exportable political formulas, that is formulas that explicitly challenge the legitimacy of an elite's order by calling for an alternative political order that can appeal to domestic groups.¹⁴² For instance, the French and Russian revolutionary principles represented a direct threat to the legitimacy of European absolute monarchies and of capitalist governments

¹³⁹ On how the military, human, and material losses caused by wars lead to the weakening of elites' positions and eventually to revolutionary outcomes, see Tilly 1975: 74; Skocpol 1979.

¹⁴⁰ Vinci 2008: 296-297, 306-307.

¹⁴¹ Levy 1989; Schweller 2006.

¹⁴² Aron 1966; Owen 2010a.

respectively. On the other hand, an elite's legitimacy and influence can be questioned by the emergence of elite and counter-elite groups expressing competing claims over specific territories. For instance, during the 19th Century, Austrian authority over its regions in the Italian peninsula was challenged by competing Italian nationalist and irredentist claims, which in turn served the purpose of strengthening the legitimacy of the newly established Italian political elite. At the same time, competing formulas can question an elite's claim over territories and preferred regional orders to which elites attach particular political value. In the abovementioned example, irredentist claims were central to the Italian elite's legitimacy and leadership role in the peninsula. Similarly, the Russian and Iranian revolutions posed a challenge not only to neighbouring regimes but also to US visions of post-war order in Europe and the Middle East respectively.

Second, the emergence of new elites abroad through revolutionary or secessionist processes affects the scope of external extraction and validation available to state elites. They affect the former because successful revolutions and secessionist conflicts create new international political actors characterised by different foreign policy interests. They affect the latter because successful revolutions and secessionist conflicts create a new political elite characterised by a new political formula.¹⁴³ As a result of both dynamics, domestic change abroad affects the degree of influence state elites enjoy over foreign states as well as the pattern of elite relations across state borders.

Therefore, elite change abroad produces three systemic consequences. First, it affects the relationship existing between the domestic character of the states and the international society they form.¹⁴⁴ As Halliday argues, the success of antithetic elites poses a challenge to 'the established ideas of statehood and sovereignty', thus opening 'alternative conceptions of international relations themselves'.¹⁴⁵ Thus, elite change affects the homogeneity of the international system, i.e. the degree of commonality between the principles of legitimacy on which domestic regimes are based. This, in turn, has profound for international stability as homogenous systems increases the possibility of consensus building

¹⁴³ Mosca 1925: §VII.11.

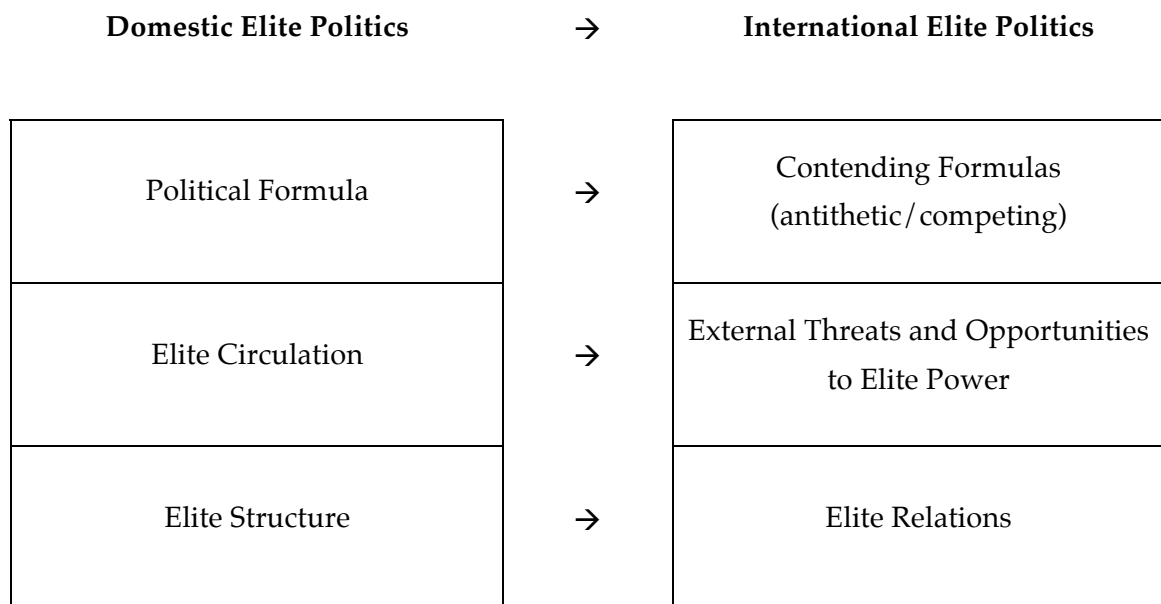
¹⁴⁴ Buzan 2001: 487.

¹⁴⁵ Halliday 1999: 11.

and compromise among state elites, since 'states belong to the same type, [and] obey the same conception of policy'.¹⁴⁶ On the contrary, in heterogeneous systems, consensus is lacking over the appropriate 'rules of the game' and the 'permissible aims and methods of foreign policy'.¹⁴⁷ Second, domestic change abroad affects the exchange of resources and validation elites have established, thus affecting the alignments and the pattern of alliances in the international sphere. Third, domestic change affects the pattern of actual relations elites have established. As I will indicate in the next chapter, this relates not only to existing alliance patterns but also to the established hierarchical relations elites have established.

To sum up, as summarised in *Fig. 2*, the interplay between domestic elite politics across different polities leads to specific elite dynamics at the international level that in turn shape the context in which political elites operate.

Figure 2 - From Domestic to International Elite Politics



¹⁴⁶ Aron 1966a: 99-104. See also, Hall and Paul 1999: 70-74; Cesa 2009: 182.

¹⁴⁷ Kissinger 1966: 503.

Importantly, domestic change produces broad systemic consequences that shape elites' interests in the utility of military intervention to fence off an unfavourable domestic change or secure a more favourable elite in the target state.

Back to Intervention

Elites act to maintain their political power position in a context where their position is actually or potentially under challenge by both internal and external rivals. As such, elites act at the juncture of a twofold struggle for power, both internal and external, where it is in their interest to influence the power competition taking place in both environments. Political leaders' action is thus 'Janus-faced' given the pressures originating from both domestic and international politics and the constant interaction between the two.¹⁴⁸ Elites and their factions are primarily power-seeking in both the domestic and international arena as their power position depends on their ability to secure favourable conditions in both arenas. Elites' action is projected on the international sphere not only because their credibility as leaders can be questioned by failures abroad but also because their domestic position can be affected by domestic change in other polities: indirectly, via decreased opportunities for extraction and validation abroad; directly, via the challenge posed by new elite groups, their acts of interference or even their interventions.¹⁴⁹

As a result, political elites have an incentive to exert control not only over their domestic environment but also over the international system since the latter presents them with both opportunities and challenges to their power position. From a systemic perspective, an international environment characterised by antithetic and competing formulas and offering few opportunities for external extraction or validation represents an inherently more hostile setting for

¹⁴⁸ Skocpol 1979. See also Lobell 2009: 52; Sterling-Folker 2009: 116; Trubowitz 2011.

¹⁴⁹ On the link between leaders' international and domestic credibility and political survival, see Trubowitz 2011: 3, 17-18.

political elites. Therefore, elites will seek to manage foreign domestic change according to their specific interests in support of allied elite groups.

Notably, cases of internal conflict abroad present political elites with both opportunities and threats. On the one hand, internal conflicts provide external elites with the opportunity to shape a friendlier international environment as well as increase their ability to extract resources and validation from the target elite and, in more general terms, secure the emergence of more favourable elites in the target state. On the other hand, internal conflicts can endanger an elite's position, by removing local allies or favouring the emergence of rival elite groups. In both cases, the provision not only of external validation but also of military support to local groups, either via indirect or direct military intervention, can alter the balance of power in the target state in ways favourable to both the local elite group and the intervening elite. As noted by Mosca, foreign countries can affect processes of elite selection abroad by either supporting domestic factions in their local struggle or forcibly imposing new political elites.¹⁵⁰ In this sense, military intervention acts as a policy tool available to policymakers to affect the circulation of elites in foreign polities in ways favourable to the intervening elite's domestic and international power position. In the next chapter, I examine how these incentives produce the causal mechanisms leading political elite members to intervene in internal conflicts.

¹⁵⁰ Mosca 1923: §I.2.8, I.7.10. I.8.

Chapter 3

When Elites Fight: The Politics of Military Intervention

Following Little's suggestion of the necessity for a theory of the state that can drive the study of intervention, in the previous chapter I outlined an elite theory of the state that will inform the following analysis of the drivers of military intervention.¹ This provided the opportunity to define a theory of the state that could be consistently linked to: basic Realist assumptions; earlier attempts to define a Realist theory of state action; and, importantly, to Realist insights of the practice of military intervention offered by Morgenthau and Krasner. As discussed in the previous chapter, political elites operate in both the domestic and international environment to sustain their power position. In doing so, their action is influenced by the power competition taking place in both arenas.

In particular, the previous analysis has highlighted the elite dynamics that inform elite action across the domestic-international divide: the clash of political formulas; the interplay between domestic and international power struggle; the pattern of relations across borders between elite and counterelite groups. These elite dynamics represent the constant factors shaping both leaders' 'sustained interest' in the identity of the political leadership of other polities and the utility of military intervention in supporting or forestalling political change abroad.² From this perspective, military intervention represents a tool through which political elites influence and control the circulations of elites in other societies in order shape a more favourable international and domestic political order better suited to the maintenance of their power position.

¹ Little 1987: 54.

² Buzan 2007.

In the following chapter, I will examine in greater detail the specific causal processes shaped by the elite dynamics highlighted in the previous chapter that drive leaders to opt for direct military intervention. For this purpose, I will first present the general features of the proposed framework. Second, I will address the underlying causal mechanisms shaping leaders' interventionary processes. Third, I will examine the way in which these dynamics coalesce at specific junctures into actual decisions to intervene. Finally, I will outline the methodological features that will guide the subsequent empirical analysis.

Elite Politics and the Drivers of Intervention

The previous chapters have stressed the primary role played by political elites as both the key decision-makers and the principal targets of interventions. Therefore, this thesis places political elites at the centre of its theoretical framework in order to examine the quintessentially political nature of military intervention and, specifically, the way intervention is shaped by elite politics.³ Central to the argument is the observation that military intervention represents the tool through which states can influence the circulation of elites abroad, thus shaping political change in other polities according to their interests.⁴ Overall, this study puts forth a Realist framework highlighting the constant causal processes affecting political elites' reaction to internal conflicts.

In doing so, it differentiates itself from the alternative theoretical approaches presented in Chapter 1. First, contrary to Marxist and revisionist accounts, it gives analytical priority to security and political dynamics instead of economic factors.⁵ Second, contrary to Liberal theories focusing on the specificity of democratic interventions, the framework outlined in the thesis applies to different types of regime. Like democratic elites, authoritarian leaders need to take domestic politics into account; at the same time, they respond to similar

³ On the political dimension of military intervention, see Trachtenberg 1993. For a more general discussion, see Chapter 1: 65-75.

⁴ Mosca 1923: §I.2.8, I.7.10, I.8.1.

⁵ Chapter 1: 48-51.

external opportunities and challenges.⁶ In this way, the thesis accepts the argument that there is a limited relationship between regime types and practice of intervention.⁷ For the same reason, the thesis differentiates itself from Neoclassical Realist works assigning causal effects to state institutions and their 'strength'.⁸ Furthermore, when states intervene with the explicit objective of regime change, as in the cases of democracy promotion, an elite perspective suggests distinguishing between the public objective of elites' intervention and the concrete actions and results pursued in the target. In this regard, the framework highlights both the role played by political formulas and associated ideological claims in shaping elites' public action as well as the need to examine the way in which elites use military intervention to secure favourable elites rather than favourable democratic institutions.⁹

Third, political ideas play an instrumental, if important, role for political elites: they matter as far as they help secure or endanger an elite's claim to legitimate authority. In this sense, military intervention results from and exemplifies not a 'clash of ideas' over the best domestic regime (as indicated by Owen) but a more prosaic clash of elites not only over foreign societies but also over elites' domestic societies.¹⁰ At the same time, the focus of the thesis is on political elites rather than top executive leaders and their belief systems.¹¹ This is not to deny the asymmetric influence enjoyed by presidents and prime ministers, which as I will indicate is particularly relevant at specific junctures, but it is intended to better address the broader domestic political setting within which decisions to intervene are taken and to take into account the decisions of other influential political actors beyond the executive circle.¹²

Specifically, as noted in Chapter 2, three dynamics operating across the international/domestic divide shape the incentives elites face when confronted

⁶ Waltz 1967a: 306-311; Trubowitz 2011: 31, fn.26.

⁷ Chapter 1: 51-54.

⁸ Cf. Zakaria 1998; Taliaferro 2006.

⁹ As previously noted, interventions aimed at democracy promotion have usually achieved limited results in terms of increasing the liberal character of the target state. See Chapter 1: 51-54.

¹⁰ Owen 2010a. See Chapter 1: 54-59.

¹¹ Cf. Saunders 2011.

¹² Chapter 2: 86-87.

with domestic change and internal conflict abroad: the clash of political formulas; the interplay between the struggle for power at the domestic and international level; and, the pattern of elite relations. Specifically, the adopted framework highlights how elite dynamics (political formulas, struggle for power, elite relations) shape specific instances of intervention.

By focusing on these three elite dynamics, it is possible to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the causal factors driving leaders to opt for military intervention. In his seminal study on intervention, Little distinguishes theories of intervention focusing on *push factors*, originating in the intervening state itself, and those focusing on *pull factors*, originating in the target state. For instance, according to Little, while Morgenthau stressed how interventions responded to states' interests and motivations, Thucydides underscored the role played by domestic factions in the target state in inviting external intervention, as in the example of the Plateaian faction inviting Theban forces that opened this thesis.¹³ At closer look, however, both authors recognised the role played by push and pull factors: Morgenthau underscored the need for external support of Third World countries after decolonisation and local elites' requests for external support, a point further reinforced by historical works of the Cold War;¹⁴ and, Thucydides noted how Athenian and Spartan interventions were driven by the need to secure existing or new allies. In more general terms, while heuristically useful, the difficulty in identifying the primacy of either push and pull factors point in another direction, that is the self-reinforcing dynamics between push and pull factors, hence the need for a theoretical framework that can encompass both. Importantly, the link between the two sets of factors sheds light on the often under-theorised dimension of the *direction* of military intervention. Policymakers' do not solely decide whether to intervene or not; any decision about intervention is also a decision about whom to support or whom to fight. The two decisions develop together and can hardly be disentangled. As I will show in the next sections, the proposed schema allows shedding light not only on the push and pull factors behind intervention but also on the direction of elites' intervention. Specifically, while political formulas affect the direction of military intervention by hampering the

¹³ Little 1975: 3; Jentleson *et al.* 1992; Introduction: 11.

¹⁴ Notably by Westad 2005; Grow 2008.

prospects for cooperation between the intervener and elite groups in the target, the struggle for power taking place at both the international and domestic level and the pattern of elite relations generate respectively the push and pull factors shaping interventionary policy.

Political Formulas: Elite Cooperation

As both Constructivist and Realist works have underscored, ideas play an important role in shaping intervention.¹⁵ From an elite perspective, the effect of political formulas on intervention is twofold: while the political principles shaping an elite's domestic regime inform leaders' views, the interplay between elites' political formulas at the international level shapes interventions in more direct ways.

Political formulas exert an indirect influence on intervention by shaping the belief systems of the members of the political elite concerning both intervention and its legitimacy. First, political formulas shape the identity of political agents. In this sense it is possible to connect political formulas to Lang's description of military intervention as a political action revealing the 'national purpose' and political identity of the agent.¹⁶ From the elite perspective adopted in this study, military intervention mirrors the general formula as well as the more specific values shaping the political platform of an incumbent coalition. By clarifying what they are willing to support via the use of force, state leaders make explicit in the most forceful way the enemies they want to fight, the allies they seek, and the values they stand for, hence strengthening processes of domestic identity formation and cohesion. For this reason, military intervention represents a starkly political moment when a foreign crisis raises politico-ideological issues that resonate with the elite's general formula or a faction's specific platform. For the same reason, intervention may become a moment of high political

¹⁵ In this regard, the utility of combining Realist and Constructivist elements in the study of intervention has been already noted. See Chapter 1: 64, fn.118.

¹⁶ Lang 2002: 9-12; Finnemore 2003: 2; Chapter 1: 54-59.

contestation.¹⁷ As exemplified by both US operations in Vietnam and Egypt's operations in Yemen in the 1960s, military interventions abroad can reverberate on domestic society in ways that can leave the political fabric of the intervener profoundly altered.

Second, as general political formulas inform the norms and institutions considered legitimate at the domestic level, they also shape the kind of norms and institutions political leaders consider as legitimate at the international level. Following Reus-Smit, it is possible to argue that the political formula is part of the complex set of values defining 'hegemonic beliefs about the moral purpose of the state... providing the justificatory foundations for the principle of sovereignty and the prevailing norm of pure procedural justice'.¹⁸ In particular, norms of procedural justice 'define the cognitive horizons of institutional architects', not only at the domestic but also at the international level.¹⁹ In this sense, political formulas shape the type of regime elites are likely to publicly support when intervening in another polity.²⁰ The combination of both dynamics can be seen in US interventions aimed at promoting democracy. In general terms, the US political formula helps explain why US leaders tend to opt for the promotion of democratic institutions when intervening abroad, despite the limits of this practice and the recurrent support offered *de facto* to non-democratic leaders. Importantly, as an expression of 'America's own values and ideals', democracy promotion has provided a powerful tool for American elites to forge political consensus and foster mobilisation over US interventions.²¹

While these dynamics influence leaders' general interventionary policies, the clash of political formulas exerts a more direct influence over specific instances of intervention. The existing literature has usually focused on the ideological clashes arising when elites or counter-elites holding antithetic political formulas

¹⁷ Lang 2002: 18.

¹⁸ Reus-Smit 1997: 565-566.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 568-569.

²⁰ *Ibid.*: 556. See also Goodwin 2001: 12-13; Lang 2002: 18; Chapter 1: 51-54.

²¹ Cox *et al.* 2000: 10. See also Peceny 1999; Lang 2002: 5.

emerge and directly threaten existing regimes.²² Notably, antithetic formulas represent a direct challenge to an elite's domestic rule when such formulas exert influence over domestic social groups. At the same time, they can pose an international challenge when such formulas exert influence on elite and counter-elite groups in other states. When both challenges arise, the increased political heterogeneity in the system links internal and international conflict, as in the case of the Cold War. As Aron notes, increased heterogeneity blurs the distinction between 'enemy state and [domestic] political adversary', thus leading to the exacerbation of internal rivalries.²³ In heterogeneous systems,

[w]hen the enemy appears also as an adversary...defeat affects the interests of the *governing class* and not only of the nation. Those in power fight for themselves and not only for the state. ...The adversaries of the faction in power become, whatever their stripe, the allies of the national enemy.²⁴

Revolutions, in particular, exacerbate this threat given the validation they offer to domestic counter-elite groups. As pointed out by Halliday, 'revolutions, by dint of their example and the ideas they diffuse, undermine the control of established states and social orders'.²⁵ Examples are numerous. The French revolutionary principles regarding people's right to directly govern themselves and French claims over territories on the bases of popular sovereignty represented a direct threat to the legitimacy of European monarchies.²⁶ Similarly, the Russian Revolution directly challenged the legitimacy of all existing capitalist governments and their international treaties. Finally, the Iranian Revolution posed a threat to the rule of its neighbouring Sunni or atheist regimes given the presence in those countries of significant Shia minorities and the support Shia groups received from Teheran.²⁷ In such cases, intervention against the revolutionary state directly links international and domestic struggles.

²² This has been underscored particularly by Owen 2010a. On the counterrevolutionary nature of intervention, see Bisley 2004. In addition, Walt (1996) stresses the impact revolutions have on perceptions of aggressive intentions.

²³ Aron 1966a: 100-103. See also Morgenthau 1967: 428.

²⁴ Aron 1966a: 101, emphasis added.

²⁵ Halliday 1999: 143. A point exemplified by the demonstration effect of the recent revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt.

²⁶ Walt 1996: 56.

²⁷ Ehteshami 2002: 286-288.

Whilst relevant and historically recurrent, these ideologically polarised contexts represent an exceptional case of a wider confrontation between elites' formulas. In fact, important instances of intervention take place also in non-ideologically polarised contexts where antithetic formulas are absent, as in the case of US repeated interventions in Latin America. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter 1, ideological clashes and the presence of connections between foreign revolutionary elites and domestic counter-elite groups do not *per se* explain cases of military intervention.²⁸ Political formulas exert a significant causal effect in specific sets of cases but a more limited causal role in general terms. In order to reconcile these two observations, we might hypothesise that both antithetic and competing political formulas play a more limited yet still important role on the prospects of cooperation between elite groups before the decision to intervene is taken.

First, the possibility of reconciling elite groups based on different political formulas will be more difficult the more the two formulas are antithetic, i.e. when both explicitly deny the legitimacy and validity of the other. While the presence of antithetic political formulas may not suffice to explain the decision to intervene, at minimum they will reduce the possibility of cooperation between elite groups. In homogenous systems, ruling elites respond to similar principles of legitimacy, thus favouring the emergence of a consensus over the appropriate 'rules of the game' and the 'permissible aims and methods of foreign policy', which in turn increases the possibility of understanding and compromise among elites.²⁹ Simply put, antithetic elites will find it more difficult to identify common values and shared rules. For the same reason, they will not be interested in supporting elites that profess antithetic claims and that could endanger their own power position.

Second, competing formulas are likely to exert the same effect on elite cooperation.³⁰ For instance, as pointed out by Owen, Liberal elites in different states do not usually cooperate in the face of direct threats to one's own

²⁸ For instance, Owen's framework (2010a) leaves aside the repeated cases of US interventions in the Caribbean. At the same time, he underscores how TINs are not necessary to ignite interventionary reactions. See Chapter 1: 57.

²⁹ Kissinger 1966: 503.

³⁰ On the difference between antithetic and competing formulas, see Chapter 2: 102-103.

territory. Underlying this phenomenon are not only national security interests but also competing claims over the same territory and considerations of status.³¹ In particular, competing claims may represent a challenge to the legitimacy of an elite's claim over an external territory. In this case, competing claims will reduce the prospect for cooperation between state elites or between elites and competing counter-elite groups, such as nationalist movements, as they necessarily put them on a collision course over the preferred end state of the relevant territory. The prospect for cooperation will be further reduced if such ideological claims serve important legitimising functions for political leaders at home, as might be the case for nationalist leaders. These claims are crucial not only to the identity of the communities that express them but also to the status and role of the leadership that sustains them as they can be used by elites to mobilise their society in order to strengthen their hold on power. This is reinforced when ethnic ties across borders exist that political actors can exploit for both domestic and international objectives.³² In more general terms, secessionist elite and counter-elite groups represent a direct challenge to an elite's authority over one of its territories or over segments of its social groups, as exemplified by Italian irredentist claims over the Austrian Empire's southern regions. The competing Austrian and Italian claims over these territories played a legitimising role for both elites, particularly the Italian elite, significantly constraining cooperation between Vienna and Rome in 1914 despite the formal military alliance linking the two at the time.

By altering the prospects for cooperation between elites, competing and antithetic formulas produce two consequences. First, they reduce the space for the peaceful resolution of ongoing crises, thus opening up the possibility for the use of force. Second, whilst reducing the possibility of an accommodation between antithetic and competing elite groups, they also open up spaces for dialogue and cooperation between those elite and counter-elites whose ideological claims are consistent or reconcilable.

³¹ Owen 1997: 179, 229.

³² Levy 1989: 270; Saideman 2001; 2011: 278-279; Duffy Toft 2002: 84. In contrast to Duffy Toft, I consider claims over territory as relevant when put forth by state elites and counter-elites rather than ethnic groups. On the relevance of ethnic ties for US foreign policy, see Mullenbach and Matthews 2008.

The Struggle for Power: Push Factors

Whereas political formulas shape the prospect for cooperation between political elite members and foreign elite groups, the struggle for power both at the international and the domestic level creates a set of powerful incentives driving states toward military intervention. As underscored in Chapter 2, I follow recent attempts that see political elites' actions as influenced by both international and domestic political objectives. In this regard, military intervention represents a useful policy tool in a twofold sense: it is a tool elites can use to shape a more favourable interventional environment, including the suppression of direct challenges to their domestic position; and it is a tool elite factions can use to strengthen their political position at home.

At the international level, intervention can alter the possibilities of material extraction and ideational validation from other polities. In general terms, regime change can lead to the reshuffling of alliances due to the increased or decreased opportunities of extraction and validation that a new leadership may offer.³³ For instance, by removing allied elites from power (or taking them to power), revolutions reduce (or increase) the possibility of external extraction and validation available to foreign states. In addition, new international actors may emerge from a secessionist or independence struggle with which external elite can establish new political and strategic relations, hence increasing the possibility of both external extraction and validation. At the same time, leadership change abroad alters the possibility for other states to widen their alliance portfolios by easing cooperation between domestic elites and the newly established elite. Therefore, military intervention allows external actors to secure the position of incumbent allied elite or counter-elite groups either by supporting their fight for the state or their secessionist objectives. As a result, military intervention is central to the creation of new allies or the protection of existing allies from revolutionary or secessionist threats. In this sense, military intervention allows states to shape a more favourable balance of power.³⁴

³³ On the correlation between regime change and the reshuffling of 'alliance portfolios', see Siverson and Starr 1994: 149-150.

³⁴ Owen 2010a: 4.

For the same reasons, interventions take place in a strategic setting where the decision to intervene reflects the actual or potential intervention of other state elites. As stressed by Findley and Teo, this interaction with actual and potential interveners often leads to cases of multiple interventions in the same internal conflict.³⁵ Examples range from cases of concurring interventions, such as the allied intervention in the Russian Civil War examined in this thesis, to cases of competing interventions, such as Soviet, German and Italian interventions during the Spanish Civil War or US support to the *mujahedeen* in Afghanistan after the Soviet intervention in 1979. In these cases, intervention served the function of supporting local allies, while confronting and weakening international rivals.

At the domestic level, military intervention can serve two purposes depending on the type of elite circulation that is prevalent at a given historical moment. When an elite is confronted with an actual or potential counter-elite receiving external support, intervention becomes a tool for elite survival. Yet, even in the absence of counter-elites, with elite factions struggling within institutionalised selection mechanisms, intervention can still represent a tool elites factions can use to foster their hold on domestic institutions.

First, as Machiavelli noted, a leaders' position can be directly challenged by both domestic opponents and external powers.³⁶ Both challenges can coalesce when an external elite provides material or political support to internal counter-elite groups. In this regard, state elites may decide to intervene in order to counter the potential or actual threat posed by a foreign elite. Military intervention will thus be aimed at removing a threat to one's own domestic rule given the material support and external validation a domestic counter-elite receives. Revolutions, in particular, exacerbate this threat given the support revolutionary regimes often provide to foreign revolutionary movements, both in material terms and in terms of external validation. In addition, nearby internal conflicts are likely to produce negative effects on domestic stability particularly when nearby regimes are home to similar political, ethnic and

³⁵ Findley and Teo 2006. See also Duner 1985: 7; Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000: 617; Salehyan *et al.* 2011: 712.

³⁶ 'For rulers should have two main worries: one is internal, and concerns his subjects; the other is external, and concerns foreign powers', Machiavelli 1988: 64. For a more recent reformulation of this observation within IR, see Trubowitz 2011.

social cleavages, thus endangering an elite's power position.³⁷ In general terms, interventions will be more likely when foreign elite and counter-elite groups support domestic opponents and when a foreign antithetic or competing political formula appeals to domestic groups, thereby fuelling domestic tensions.³⁸

Second, military intervention can still serve elite and factions' interests by providing political payoffs that can strengthen leaders' political position at home. Specifically, elite groups and incumbent factions might opt for foreign intervention in order to both increase their domestic support and counter domestic opponents.³⁹ Fascist regimes, for instance, forged part of their domestic legitimacy in the fight against Communism both domestically and internationally, such as during the Spanish Civil War.⁴⁰ This is more likely when the issues ignited by a foreign crisis resonate with core principles of an elite's political formula, thus becoming material for partisan politics. At the same time, the control that incumbent factions enjoy over executive institutions allow them to use military intervention as a tool to increase their own position *vis-à-vis* competing factions. As I will indicate in the following case studies, partisan considerations played an important role in putting military intervention on the political agenda. This last function is particularly pressing in moments of heightened political competition and when polities select elite members via institutionalised channels. Thus, in democratic settings, elections are likely to have an effect on the *timing* of elites' decisions concerning possible interventions.⁴¹ For the same reason, securing non-elite support is particularly important during such periods.⁴²

³⁷ Kathman 2010. For example, the Lebanese Civil War posed a threat to the domestic stability of the Syrian regime and, in turn, this shaped Damascus' decision to intervene. See Weinberger 1986.

³⁸ Walt 1996: 43; Halliday 1999: 257. As Levy (1989: 274) notes, revolutionary outcomes may not be imminent or even realistic, yet political elites often overreact to an exaggerated revolutionary threat.

³⁹ On the use of military intervention to mobilise broader domestic support, see Halliday 1999: 138-139.

⁴⁰ Stone 2005; Preston 2006.

⁴¹ Cf. Gaubatz 1999.

⁴² On elites' need for non-elite support, see Chapter 2: 92-93.

While underlining the political function of military intervention and the role domestic politics can play, the causal mechanisms originating at the level of elite power differ from similar frameworks stressing the link between international and domestic factors in explaining decisions over the use of force. First, in line with the elite theory of the state outlined in Chapter 2, this thesis does not assign primary causal effects to domestic socio-economic actors and interest groups. Related to this, it does not take into account the way in which military interventions redistribute national resources and income. Although political economic considerations matter in the formulation of a state's 'grand strategy', this thesis focuses primarily on the political factors pushing elites to intervene.⁴³

Second, while non-elite support matters for elites, this does not mean that public opinion directly shapes the decision to intervene. Political elites, in particular, play an intervening role with regard to the impact of public opinion and its formation. As V.O. Key argues, public opinion matters primarily in terms of the perceptions that political leaders hold of the segments of society that can shift as a result of elite factions' positions during elections.⁴⁴ Moreover, political elites play an important role in shaping the views of other elite groups, of media representatives, and ultimately of the general public in the initial stages of an internal conflict.⁴⁵ Importantly, disagreements within elites may produce divisions within public opinion through the 'cues' that elites and partisan divisions provide to the public.⁴⁶ Political leaders can also play a more direct informative role about internal conflicts and the possible use of force. For instance, the hearings on Vietnam of the US Senate Committee for Foreign Relations in 1966 shaped the initial public debate on the conflict by providing significant information and cues to the American public.⁴⁷ In other words, even if elite factions strive to mobilise non-elite strata, this should not lead to expectations that political leaders will respond automatically to public opinion

⁴³ On the role played by political economic factors in grand strategic choices, see Narizny 2007; Fordham 1998; Trubowitz 1998, 2011.

⁴⁴ Key 1961.

⁴⁵ On the supportive relationship between the US press and different US administrations in regard to military interventions, see Bennett *et al.* 2007; Hallock 2012.

⁴⁶ Berinsky 2007.

⁴⁷ Small 2005: 65-68.

with regard to the decision to intervene. As exemplified also in the case of Western humanitarian interventions, political leaders often take the lead despite reluctant publics.⁴⁸ What matters from an elite perspective is whether intervention allows elite factions to secure the support not of public opinion *tout court* but of relevant domestic groups whose support is crucial to strengthen their political position.

Third, as discussed in Chapter 2, the importance of leaders' action abroad stems primarily from the need to secure more favourable international and domestic environments. In this regard, the credibility and reputation leaders enjoy at the international level, albeit important, does not play a primary causal role. What matters from an elite perspective is the ability of leaders to use intervention to reinforce their position or weaken that of their opponents. For example, reputational goals and issues of credibility have been used to explain different cases of intervention, from Fidel Castro's decision to intervene in the Angolan Civil War to the repeated interventions by the US during the Cold War.⁴⁹ Yet, in both cases, the importance of leaders' credibility in the Cold War context was shaped by the interplay between the contest for power taking place not only at the international level but also at the domestic level. For Castro, appearing as the leader of Leftist movements served immediate political objectives at home, as Castro's support for the creation of 'other Cubas' was germane in strengthening his domestic position.⁵⁰ While reputational goals played a role in Lyndon Johnson's decisions concerning Vietnam, Johnson's concerns for his own credibility as leader cannot be detached from the domestic political game played in Washington by both the Republican opposition and Johnson's Democratic competitors at the time.⁵¹ Issues of credibility, reputation and ultimately of success are directly related to two factors highlighted in this framework: the saliency of a particular internal conflict abroad to the political

⁴⁸ Wheeler 2000: 300-301.

⁴⁹ On Castro's decision, see Kupchan 1992: 248. On the role played by presidents' credibility in shaping decisions to intervene during the Cold War, see Grow 2008.

⁵⁰ Halliday 1999: 197; Gleijeses 2002: 21.

⁵¹ Small 2005: 63-100.

formula of an elite and of its incumbent faction; and, the utility of intervention in securing domestic political objectives.⁵²

Fourth, the causal mechanism originating from elite power struggle qualifies the expectations drawn from diversionary theory of war.⁵³ On the one hand, when intended at diverting attention from internal problems, military intervention appears to be a problematic form of diversion due to its highly political dimension.⁵⁴ Elites' ability to use intervention to take advantage of the 'rally-around-the-flag' effect and strengthen both elite and public cohesion is dependent on the nature of the internal conflict the elite is facing, the legitimacy of the intervention itself, and the mobilisation provoked in different domestic groups.⁵⁵ Intervention, in fact, may alienate significant segments of an elite society and exacerbate domestic divisions.⁵⁶ Thus, incumbent factions are more likely to authorise intervention only when this decision is supported by relevant social groups whose allegiance is essential to secure the incumbent faction's control of domestic institutions. On the other hand, the prospects of military intervention can pose political problems for an elite faction. Because of this, military intervention can be used to mobilise political support as much as to divide and weaken domestic political opponents.⁵⁷

⁵² Trubowitz 2011: 3, 17-18.

⁵³ For a review of the key tenets of diversionary theory as well as of its theoretical and empirical limits, see Levy 1989; DeRouen 2000.

⁵⁴ In fact, domestic turmoil may raise additional obstacles against foreign action and force elites to focus on containing domestic opponents. See Blainey 1973: 81; Sirin 2011.

⁵⁵ Therefore, I do not assume that all foreign internal conflicts will attract the interest of the elite or of non-elite groups to the same degree. On this, see Levy 1989: 279; Tir 2010. On the utility of external action to increasing domestic cohesion rather than diverting public attention from domestic problems, see Sirin 2011.

⁵⁶ Coser 1956: 93; Levy 1989: 260-261, 272.

⁵⁷ This is related to what is commonly referred to as 'wedge politics'. As summarised by Trubowitz (2011: 28), 'wedge politics involves framing issues to divide the opposing coalition, either by appealing to its core constituencies or by peeling away "swing" voters or groups who might otherwise align with it'.

Elite Relations: Pull Factors

Domestic push factors alone cannot account for the drivers and timing of military intervention. Elite relations with local political actors shape both the legitimacy and the interests of the intervener. As Geoffrey Blainey argues, the use of force in international affairs is better conceptualised as a *relationship* between two actors.⁵⁸ This applies especially to military interventions given the support an external intervener provides to elite groups in the target. In this regard, the importance of political elites is not confined to the intervener; if political elites matter, political elite and counter-elite groups in the target are likely to matter as well. In particular, the relationships established between elite members in the intervener state and elite/counter-elite groups in the target state represent an important pull factor that drives political elites toward military intervention.⁵⁹ Elite relations affect the decision to intervene in both indirect and direct ways.

The political landscape of the target state is of central importance not only in creating an initial context of multiple sovereignty but also in opening up spaces of contestation and of political alternatives that can be exploited by foreign actors. The very possibility of intervention depends on the availability of local allies with which the intervener can establish a rewarding political alliance. The viability of a political alliance between external and local elite groups is shaped by the effects exerted by political formulas and the push factors highlighted in the previous sections: external elites will likely support those elite and counter-elite groups that do not contest the intervener's ideological claims and that could help the intervener secure its own international and domestic objectives.

Nonetheless, the pattern of elite relations responds also to the interplay between the intervener's objectives and the local actors' need for external support. Therefore, we can hypothesise that external elite groups would likely support local elite and counter-elite groups that are more dependent on external support. As George Modelski points out, internal wars create 'a

⁵⁸ Blainey 1973: 68-86.

⁵⁹ This has been underscored not only within the historical literature (Westad 2005; Grow 2008) but also by different theoretical approaches in IR, as discussed in Chapter 1.

demand for foreign intervention'.⁶⁰ In internal conflicts, both local elites and insurgents are often forced to seek foreign assistance due to their lack of access to the territory held by the insurgents or to state resources respectively.⁶¹ Importantly, political elites' preferences will be shaped by elite dynamics determined by the intervener's formulas and objectives as well as by the availability of elite groups in the target rather than by *a priori* preferences regarding the types of formal regimes that could guarantee the intervener's interests. The defining factor is represented by a local elites' dependency on external support, both ideological and material, rather than the institutional differences in which they operate.⁶²

Consequently, military intervention plays a twofold role: it alters the balance of power in the internal conflict, via the provision of resources and military support; and, in doing so, it reinforces patterns of dependency.⁶³ As Morgenthau argues, the provision of military and economic aid represents a form of interference creating patterns of power and dependency that the provider can exploit by promising increased support or by denying such aid.⁶⁴ Direct military intervention, in this sense, represents an extreme case of external military support.⁶⁵ Intervention *per se* creates room for an asymmetrical political exchange as a state elite's provision of direct support in an ongoing internal conflict may result in the recipient's compliance with the former's objectives as well as increased external extraction (strategic access to the recipient's territory, the provision of raw materials, etc.) and external validation for the intervening state elite. Hence, internal conflicts provide powerful incentives for external intervention when local elites and counter-elite groups need external support and provide external elites with the opportunity to increase the latter's

⁶⁰ Modelski 1964: 20.

⁶¹ Jentleson *et al.* 1992: 309; Salehyan *et al.* 2011: 716-717. In this regard, the key variable is represented not by the presence or absence of material sources of power in the target state rather by the control exerted on them by contending factions. Cf. Aydin 2010.

⁶² On the advantages provided by authoritarian leaders to democratic interveners, see Bueno de Mesquita and Downs 2003: 631-632; Krasner 2013: 350-351. On the advantages of democratic settings, see Pickering and Piceny 2006; Downs and Lilley 2010: 282.

⁶³ Saideman 2002.

⁶⁴ Morgenthau 1967: 426.

⁶⁵ Salehyan *et al.* 2011: 712-713.

influence over the target.⁶⁶ In turn, military intervention creates and increases the dependency of the receiver since the very provision of material and military support increases the costs for the receiver of foregoing external support at a later stage.

In doing so, military intervention both responds to and reinforces asymmetrical alliances. Such alliances usually originate in situations of asymmetric capabilities between the contractors and are based on the provision of security by the most powerful actor (in this case the intervening elite) in exchange for greater influence and control over the supported actor's policies and territory.⁶⁷ Conceptualising elite relations as asymmetrical alliances highlights the hierarchical relations inherent to military intervention. In particular, an elite perspective delivers insights on the way in which relationships of dependency stemming from an exchange of resources, validation, and security between political elite groups shape military interventions. It is important to stress that such asymmetric relations, whilst internalising a coercive dimension or at least the possibility of coercion, at the same time include a voluntary dimension whereby the weaker elite group accepts subordination in exchange for support for their own regime.⁶⁸

From this perspective, interventionary policies are more likely when they are establishing as well as securing patron-client relationships.⁶⁹ Intervention, in this regard, operates as a form of security transfer during internal conflicts through which state elites can either extend their influence over existing clients or establish new clients; in both cases, intervention provides the means for state elites to increase their power, i.e. control over their international environment.⁷⁰ Specifically, patrons seek to achieve three objectives through intervention: politico-ideological convergence between the intervener's and the target's domestic regime, hence increased homogeneity; the establishment of an asymmetric alliance in return for increased diplomatic support for the

⁶⁶ Young 1974: 113-114.

⁶⁷ Morrow 1991: 905, 908-913.

⁶⁸ Lake 2009: 7.

⁶⁹ On patron-client relationships in international relations, see Eisenstadt and Roniger 1980: 47-51; Shoemaker and Spanier 1984; Carney 1989: 43-45; Nexon 2009a: 41.

⁷⁰ Carney 1989: 47.

intervener's foreign policy; and strategic advantage, through increased access to various resources (territory, raw materials, etc.).⁷¹ From the clients' perspective, a patron's support provides an external source of resources and validation, with external military intervention representing the most radical form of military support in times of internal conflict.

However, despite their dependency from external support, local elites and counter-elites can retain significant room of manoeuvre. Specifically, they remain relatively autonomous actors that can directly influence the decision to intervene and the course of military intervention. This is the case for two reasons. First, elite and counter-elite groups in the target state can favour external intervention in direct ways. As Machiavelli notes, foreign elite members and exiles often play a key role in influencing the intervener's decision by advocating military interventions in their polities in order to secure or retake their position within their state.⁷² Specifically, both local elites and counter-elites can promote external intervention by trying to affect all three elite dynamics. Local elites can appeal to the intervening political elite's ideological claims, thus reinforcing ongoing processes of identification between the intervener and local domestic conflicts. Related to this, they can provide legitimacy to external interventions via a public endorsement and invitation.⁷³ Further, local actors can take advantage of the partisan competition and intra-elite divisions characterising the intervener's elite in order to either increase domestic divisions to fence off the possibility of an adversarial intervention or support the elite faction that favours intervention. Finally, local elite groups can try to influence the decision-making process more directly by establishing direct relations with the intervener's political elite members and by lobbying legislative and executive leaders. In this regard, elite and counter-elite groups in the target can provide valuable intelligence to both the elite and public opinion on the local military and political conditions that can be used to ease the decision to intervene. In more general terms, as domestic political elites provide

⁷¹ Shoemaker and Spanier 1984.

⁷² Machiavelli 1996: II.31.

⁷³ Cases of intervention by invitation are not rare in international history. Russian intervention in the Austrian empire to suppress the Hungarian revolt in 1849 followed Vienna's request. Recently, French intervention in Mali followed the government's request for military support.

cues to their own domestic public opinion, foreign elite groups can also access the elite and public debate and help frame these in terms favourable to them.⁷⁴

Second, given the importance of clients' compliance for the patrons' position, clients may retain some degree of influence towards their patrons during military interventions. This reflects what Anthony Giddens defines as the 'dialectic of control' whereby the ruled manages to keep some leverage on the ruler when the latter requires the active compliance of the former.⁷⁵ The relative autonomy of local elite groups might be reinforced by two factors: the ability of local elite groups to secure new sources of internal validation; and, the inability of the intervener to provide sufficient military and material support to its local allies. As a result, external interveners may find allied elite and counter-elite groups in the target to be less responsive to the intervener's requests despite the local elite groups' dependency on the intervener's support.⁷⁶ Yet, the opposite situation may not guarantee better results for the intervener. First, the inability of the local elite group to win or mobilise significant domestic support could frustrate the attainment of the external intervener's objectives. Second, the provision of additional external support can discredit the local ally in front of local nationalist groups, by underscoring the local ally's dependency on external support.⁷⁷

To conclude, political elite relations operate as a number of pull factors for military intervention. First, they create the conditions for intervention and provide opportunities for alliances between elite groups in the intervening and target states. Second, elites and counter-elites can affect the intervener's decision-making process by influencing political elite members and the political context in which they operate. Finally, by taking into account the asymmetrical relations elites establish, it is possible to address the way in which intervention

⁷⁴ Berinsky 2007.

⁷⁵ Giddens 1984: 16; Rosenberg 1994: 49.

⁷⁶ Notably, Machiavelli (1996: II.31) explicitly alerted his readers to the risks posed by supporting exile leaders in their efforts to retake the state as the ability of these leaders to muster domestic support would have likely led them to abandon their initial supporters or become less responsive to the intervener's requests. In this regard, see the US reduced influence over both Iraqi leaders and Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan.

⁷⁷ Jentleson *et al.* 1992: 309.

both responds to the incentives arising from these asymmetrical relations and affects patterns of dependency between the intervener and the target elite.

The Decision to Intervene

The discussion above has pointed to the three ways in which elite dynamics influence the decision to intervene: (i) by altering both the threat perceived by elites when confronted with antithetic and competing political formulas as well as the prospect for cooperation with them, thus shaping the eventual cooperative or confrontational nature of their military intervention; (ii) by creating powerful incentives for elites to intervene given perceived returns in terms of increased power and influence; (iii) by pulling states into internal conflicts given the political and strategic relations established by elite groups in the intervening and target state and the asymmetric power relations intervention can reinforce.

Yet, we are still left with the question of how these three elite dynamics lead to actual decisions to intervene. The three elite dynamics highlighted above explain the causal drivers that lie behind military intervention yet they do not tell us *when* military intervention will take place. To borrow Robinson's distinction, these factors represent the causal *background* to intervention; it still necessary to explain how these causal factors are productive of the immediate process driving leaders to intervene.⁷⁸ Importantly, as noted in empirical studies on military interventions, the decision to intervene is often the result of a longer engagement with the target, stressing the need to focus on the 'process by which the critical threshold is crossed from other forms of intervention to the direct and massive commitment of combat troops'.⁷⁹ In particular, while intervention is the subject of broader causal mechanisms and objectives, the actual decision to intervene often results from shifts in both the intervening and/or the target country that makes direct military intervention a feasible or even a necessary option. As Jentleson *et al.* note, at the moment of intervention

⁷⁸ Chapter 1: 49.

⁷⁹ Jentleson and Levite 1992: 17.

the 'common assumption [is] that more [is] to be lost by not militarily intervening than by doing so'.⁸⁰

Therefore, the decision to militarily intervene in an ongoing internal conflict is better conceptualised as the end result of both a longer term causal process and a response to changing conditions. In order to take into account both aspects, I borrow from comparative historical analysis the distinction between *critical antecedents* and *critical junctures*.⁸¹ The three dynamics operating at the elite level do not act as the independent variables of intervention but more accurately serve as the critical antecedents of intervention, with the resulting decision to intervene taking place during specific critical junctures.

Critical antecedents represent 'factors or conditions preceding a critical juncture that combine with causal forces during a critical juncture to produce long-term divergence in outcomes'.⁸² Importantly, 'critical antecedents shape the choices and changes that emerge during critical junctures in causally significant ways'.⁸³ Such critical junctures represents 'periods in history when the presence or absence of a specified causal force pushes...a single case onto a new political trajectory that diverges significantly from the old'.⁸⁴ Importantly, while being characterised by rapidly changing events, these periods present leaders with new opportunities and challenges; as a result, they are 'typically moments of expanding agency, not complete contingency'.⁸⁵ During critical junctures, 'the range of plausible choices open to powerful political actors expand substantially and the consequences of their decisions for the outcome of interest are potentially more momentous'.⁸⁶ In these junctures,

[g]roups and individuals are not merely spectators as conditions change to favor or penalize them in the political balance of power, but rather

⁸⁰ Jentleson *et al.* 1992: 310; Kupchan 1992: 244-245.

⁸¹ Slater and Simmons 2010; Rohlfing 2012: 164-166. On critical junctures, see Collier and Collier 1991; Thelen and Steinmo 1992; Capoccia and Klemen 2007.

⁸² Slater and Simmons 2010: 889.

⁸³ *Ibid.*: 887.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*: 888.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*: 890.

⁸⁶ Capoccia and Kelemen 2007: 343.

strategic actors capable of acting on 'openings' provided by such shifting contextual conditions in order to enhance their own position.⁸⁷

Specifically, critical junctures represent rapidly changing periods shaped by recent and impending events where political agents, particularly executive leaders, can exert disproportionate influence thanks to the advantages offered by their institutional position within a rapidly changing context.

With regard to intervention, elite politics act as causal antecedents in two ways: by selecting and discarding other possible courses of action; by shaping the objectives, interests and relations driving states to intervene. As argued by Salehyan *et al.*, state elites will opt for diplomatic solutions or indirect forms of intervention whenever possible due to the relatively low costs and risks such a course of action entails.⁸⁸ Hence, direct military interventions are likely to result from specific critical junctures during which changing conditions in the intervening and/or target state open up new possibilities that political actors can grasp, precipitating the decision to intervene by: reducing the costs and risks of external intervention; and/or reducing the possibility of securing the intervener's objectives via diplomatic means or indirect military options. For example, critical junctures may be represented by: the increased threat posed by local elites to the intervening elite's domestic or international position; the emergence of an allied elite group in the target; or the deteriorating conditions of the intervening elite and/or of the allied elite.

Elite dynamics, however, remain critical in causal terms for three reasons. First, elite dynamics are fundamental not only in making military intervention one of the options considered by political elites but also in underscoring the opportunities and challenges presented by critical junctures to the intervening elite. For example, the dependency of actors in the target on external support plays an important role in highlighting the opportunities offered by particular junctures. As Stephen Gent points out, states are more likely to intervene 'when it counts', that is in situations where local actors are more dependent on

⁸⁷ Thelen and Steinmo 1992: 16-18.

⁸⁸ Salehyan *et al.* 2011:713.

external support and the intervener can extract greater control over local events and actors or at least expect to do so.⁸⁹

Second, elite dynamics shape the modality, size, and specific form of military intervention.⁹⁰ They shape preferences over the overt or covert modality of military operations, depending on the legitimacy of the military operations and the political utility they can offer elite factions. Further, incumbent factions will opt for forms of military intervention that maximise their influence over other political actors at home. In addition, the size of military operations will be affected by the degree of elite cohesion over the decision to intervene and the actual or perceived effect the dispatch of military troops abroad is likely to have on an elite or its incumbent faction's domestic position.⁹¹ This is connected to the problems military deployments abroad can present elites with. On the one hand, they may diminish the number of military units necessary for internal security purposes. During the 19th Century, for example, French interventions in the Iberian peninsula were questioned by important members of the elite on the basis of the diminished number of troops that would have been left in France to thwart possible insurrections.⁹² On the other hand, large-scale interventions can increase the human and material costs non-elite groups pay for ongoing interventions, thus running the risk of alienating their support, as exemplified in the case of US and Soviet interventions in Vietnam and Afghanistan respectively. Finally, elite dynamics shape elites' preferences for forms of direct intervention that can strengthen the position of allied local elite groups and/or weaken that of local competitors.

Third, by informing elites' interests and policy toward the internal conflict, the modality and form of intervention, and the patterns of dependency between elite groups, elite dynamics exert a 'roll-on' effect on intervention, continuing to shape the intervener's policy also in the aftermath of the critical juncture. In this sense, the decisions taken by the intervener after the deployment of its troops offer an opportunity to assess the continued role played by elite dynamics in

⁸⁹ Gent 2008.

⁹⁰ On the different modalities of military intervention, see Introduction: 27.

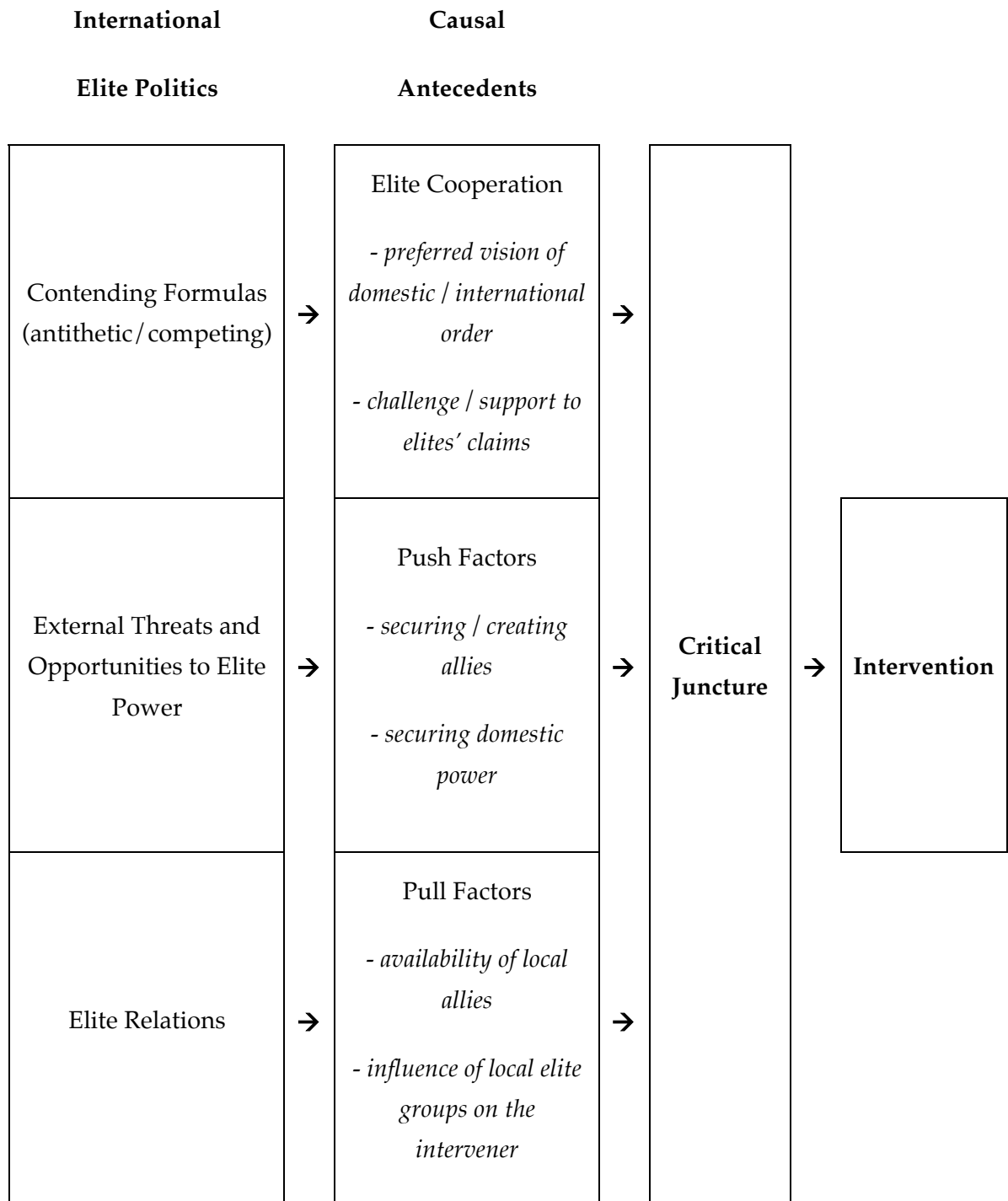
⁹¹ On the relationship between elite cohesion and states' ability to balance and implement the necessary military investments, see Schweller 2006.

⁹² Bullen 1979: 59.

affecting military operations. If the proposed framework is valid, external interveners will try to influence the composition and selection process of the political elite of the target by: supporting a specific elite group in its effort to take power; and forestalling rival groups. For these reasons, elite politics will continue to shape the intervener's military operations and involvement in the target. Hence, the empirical chapters will focus on both the historical phase preceding the decision to intervene as well as the immediate aftermath of intervention in order to offer a more robust test of the causal mechanisms highlighted in this chapter.

To conclude, Chapter 2 showed how basic elite dynamics create incentives for leaders' intervention in internal conflicts. Importantly, as explored in this chapter, they shape the critical antecedents that constitute specific instances of intervention, which are ultimately ignited by changing conditions that make direct intervention a feasible if not necessary option to secure elites' objectives. The overall framework is summarised in *Fig.3*. In the following case studies, I apply the proposed framework to two instances of US intervention and one instance of non-intervention. In doing so, I will demonstrate how an explanation centred on political elites provides a valuable explanation of the causal processes leading to the decision to intervene and how this eventually sheds light on the practice and consequences of military intervention.

Figure 3 - From International Elite Politics to Military Intervention



Methodology

In Part II, I will provide a plausibility probe of the theoretical framework proposed in this chapter through the analysis of three case studies of US policy towards internal conflicts.⁹³ In focusing on more than one case, I will follow the existing consensus about linking ‘within-case analysis and cross-case comparisons within a single study’.⁹⁴ In particular, a process-tracing method will be adopted for each case in order to include a diachronic dimension through the analysis of the decision-making process and, in doing so, identify the relevant causal mechanisms driving political leaders to directly intervene in an internal conflict.⁹⁵ By focusing on a limited number of cases it is possible to examine in greater detail not only the exact historical passages leading to such decision but also other important aspects: first, the direction of intervention, that is the calculations leading selected leaders to support one side involved in an internal conflict instead of others; second, the exact modality of intervention; third, the aftermath of intervention. In addition, focusing on a restricted number of cases instead of a large-*n* study offers the opportunity of evaluating the explanatory power of the proposed framework *vis-à-vis* other possible explanations.

Cases of intervention conducted by the same country within a precise historical timeframe are preferred in order to keep key variables pertaining to the intervener’s elite politics relatively constant while maximising variance in terms other relevant dimensions, in particular: the geographical setting of the target; type of internal conflict in which the intervention is taking place; and policy outcome (intervention/non-intervention). The choice of the selected timeframe (1898-1939) responds to both methodological and theoretical considerations.

Historical cases of interventions allow the research to draw on the extensive secondary literature on the selected case studies while evaluating the contribution of the proposed framework *vis-à-vis* existing contending explanations offered within IR and International History. Importantly, by opting for historical cases it is possible to examine relevant primary sources that would have not been fully available for more recent cases of intervention. In

⁹³ Eckstein 1975.

⁹⁴ George and Bennett 2005: 18.

⁹⁵ George and McKeown 1985: 35.

particular, the review of the relevant primary sources allows examining in greater detail two elements: the information policymakers were receiving from the target state, especially how they portrayed local political actors; and, in turn, the way in which policymakers in the intervening state perceived and framed political developments in the target state.⁹⁶

Furthermore, the selected timeframe presents significant theoretical advantages. First, the pre-Cold War period offers a set of most difficult cases if compared to the Cold War given the lack in the former timeframe of any oversimplifying bipolar dynamic, that is the absence of any automatic identification of domestic political change with foreign policy change and of domestic adversaries with international foes typical of the Cold War.⁹⁷ Second, in contrast to the post-Cold War period, such periodisation offers the possibility of addressing cases of revolutionary change that are largely absent from the post-Cold War period, with the exception of the recent, yet ongoing, revolutions in the Arab world. In addition, it allows examining the relative weight of eventual humanitarian motivations *vis-à-vis* different explanations whilst avoiding a narrow focus on the question of humanitarian intervention. Third, studying the pre-Cold War period allows the examination of the political dynamics of interventions within a historical and systemic setting that presents affinities to the existing international order, characterised by a shifting distribution of power, evolving yet contested normative frameworks, and increasing ideological heterogeneity. Finally, choosing to focus on pre-Cold War cases provides the opportunity to examine US policy before Washington acquired a position of international primacy that could lift the US from systemic constraints and introduce a bias against the impact of international and security factors over US foreign policy.⁹⁸

I have opted for cases of US military intervention for both empirical and theoretical reasons. First, the study of US cases is preferred in terms of the relevance of US interventions to both past and current international affairs. In this regard, cases of US interventions prior to the Cold War are selected to

⁹⁶ In this regard, I will rely primarily on the 'Foreign Relations of the United States' (FRUS) series of the U.S. Department of State.

⁹⁷ The limits posed by bipolar systems to the study of the causes of military intervention have been noted by Little (1975: 4-5) with reference to Thucydides' analysis of the interventions characterising the Peloponnesian War.

⁹⁸ Krasner 1978; Katzenstein 2013: 143.

explore the origins of American interventionism and to historically contextualise subsequent US interventions. In doing so, it highlights how elite dynamics shaped US policymakers' reaction to the emergence of nationalist and Communist revolutions already before the Cold War, thus setting the stage for later US interventionism.

Second, as a democratic state, the US offers a particularly challenging test for a theoretical framework focused on elite dynamics usually associated only with authoritarian regimes. By addressing cases of US intervention, this study aims at taking into account the role played by political elite dynamics not only in authoritarian but also in democratic regimes. Whereas the role of ideas in US foreign policy has been widely recognised and eventually allowed to overcome the past tendency to make 'the other side "ideological" – and one's own side only too logical or interest driven', analyses of US foreign policy still need to overcome the limits intrinsic in the ability to identify the role played by foreign elites – often closed, authoritarian elites – without recognising the elite dynamics operating in democratic states as well.⁹⁹

Specifically, in its empirical section, this thesis examines US decisions in three historical cases of internal conflict: US intervention in the Cuban War of Independence (1898-1902); US intervention in the Russian Civil War (1918-1920); and, US non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). The first two cases have been selected to test the proposed framework *vis-à-vis* two dissimilar cases of military intervention in terms of both strategic setting and of the type of internal conflict examined: a case of a secessionist revolution leading to a war of independence in the Cuban case and ultimately a military confrontation between the US and the incumbent Spanish authorities on the island; and a case of a major revolution leading to a full-fledged civil war in the Russian case.

Although the conflict over Cuba has usually been described as a war, it will be examined here as a case of military intervention since the US intervened in an ongoing internal conflict between the Spanish incumbent authorities supported by loyalist Cubans on one side and the forces led by a Cuban nationalist

⁹⁹ Westad 2000: 554. On the role played by ideology in US foreign policy, see Hunt 1987.

counter-elite on other in order to secure different authority structures over the island.¹⁰⁰ This choice responds also to the need to overcome the rather problematic definition of the 1898 conflict as a strictly Spanish-American War, which overlooks the preceding Cuban War of Independence and excludes Cuban insurgents from the conflict, itself a by-product of US policy in 1898 as I will show in Chapter 4.¹⁰¹ In addition, as a case of successful military intervention, it allows the evaluation of how US military intervention in Cuba permitted the US to pursue its objectives in the island.

The choice of the Russian case responds to similar empirical and theoretical considerations. In contrast to the Cuban case, the Russian case allows the studying of US intervention in a civil war targeting a great power and involving other great powers' interventions. Importantly, it examines US leaders' reaction to revolutionary change driven by a closed elite group imposing and promoting a completely antithetic political order. Finally, it allows the evaluation of a case of direct intervention resulting in US failure to achieve its initial objectives.

The third case study, US non-intervention in Spain, responds mainly to theoretical exigencies. As previously underscored, non-intervention can be examined as either a form of intervention itself or, more generally, as a specific policy outcome. In this sense, the negative case offered by US non-intervention in Spain works to further test the accuracy of the proposed framework and evaluate whether the latter can shed light on US decision not to intervene – as well as to maintain that policy for more than two years.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ On US operations in Cuba as a case of intervention, see also Kinzer 2006; Aubone 2013.

¹⁰¹ For this reason, different authors have suggested more accurate definitions of the conflict, such as the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War or the Spanish-American-Cuban War. See Peterson 1998; Perez 1998b.

¹⁰² The utility of addressing cases of non-intervention *vis-à-vis* cases of intervention has been underscored in particular by Western 2005: 24, 26-61; Saunders 2011.

Part II

The Politics of US Military Interventions

*I want to recall everything, right from the beginning, the details, chance, the flow of events.
Before distance obscures my backward glance, muffling the hubbub of voices, of weapons,
armies, laughter, shouts. And at the same time only distance allows us to go back to a likely
beginning.*

(Luther Blisset, Q)

Chapter 4

Forbidden Fruit: US Intervention in the Cuban War of Independence, 1898-1902

'...if an apple severed by the tempest from its native tree cannot choose but fall to the ground, Cuba, forcibly disjoined from its own unnatural connection with Spain,...can gravitate only toward the North American Union...'

(John Quincy Adams, Secretary of State, 1823)

Introduction

In February 1895, the Cuban revolutionaries called for the island's independence from Spain, igniting the Cuban War of Independence. Madrid responded by dispatching up to 150.000 troops to Cuba headed by General Valeriano Weyler. The *reconcentrado* policy implemented by Weyler forced the rural population into garrison towns, resulting in the collapse of the Cuban economy and 170.000 victims. When the new conflict erupted in Cuba, US authorities could hardly ignore it for three reasons: the humanitarian disaster brought by Weyler's reconcentration policy; the destruction of agricultural and sugar industry activities on the island; and, the damage inflicted to US citizens' property on the island as well as the arrest of US citizens by Spanish authorities.¹

Despite these tensions and the longstanding US interests in the island, the Republican administration of William McKinley, as the Democratic administration of Grover Cleveland before it, initially opted for non-intervention, offered US mediation in the conflict and refused to officially recognise the Cuban rebels. Following increasing tensions between the US and Spain, rising domestic pressures to act and the infamous explosion of the US

¹ Between 24th February 1895 and 25th January 1897, Spanish authorities arrested 74 US citizens and expelled 9 newspapers correspondents from Cuba. FRUS 1896: 746-750.

battleship *Maine*, the US officially opted for direct intervention in Cuba on 11th April 1898, resulting in the so called Spanish-American war. With 345 US soldiers killed in action and an overall cost of \$250 million, the US first occupied and subsequently established a protectorate over of Cuba, in addition to acquiring control of the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico.²

As noted in Chapter 3, the conflict will be examined here as a case of military *intervention* since the US intervened in an ongoing internal conflict between the Spanish incumbent authorities supported by loyalist Cubans on one side and the forces led by a Cuban nationalist counter-elite on the other in order to secure different authority structures over the island. This also responds to the need to take into account the important role played by Cuban actors in shaping US policy and operations on the island.³ The selection of the Cuban case for this study responds to both empirical and theoretical considerations. At the empirical level, US intervention in Cuba is of particular relevance for two main reasons: first, given the impact of the conflict on subsequent US-Cuban relations; second, given the importance attributed by subsequent historiography to 1898, considered as a watershed in American history marking the emergence of the US as a great power – if not of an empire.⁴ In addition, the Cuban case offers a valuable probe for the theoretical framework presented in the previous sections for two reasons.

First, it allows for an evaluation of a case of intervention typical of a category of cases left outside by Owen's general framework. In the Cuban case, US intervention took place within a non-ideologically polarised setting characterised by competing yet not antithetic claims by the main actors (US, Spain, Cuban nationalists) over the same territory.⁵ In this regard, US intervention in Cuba allows the examination of the reaction and the political processes affecting the US decision to intervene when faced with a secessionist rebellion posing no explicit and immediate threat to the US elite's domestic rule. Second, it offers a challenging test to evaluate the impact of elite politics

² Healy 1963: 9; Offner 1992: 7-13; Tone 2006: 8-9; Herring 2008: 316.

³ On the conflict in Cuba as a case of intervention rather than war, see Kinzer 2006; Aubone 2013. On the need to address the role played by Cuban actors, see Peterson 1998; Perez 1998b; Tone 2006.

⁴ Heiss 2002.

⁵ Owen 2010a. On the distinction between competing and antithetic political formulas, see Chapter 2: 102-103.

vis-à-vis the wide range of competing explanations offered in the literature. On the one hand, it is possible to compare the analysis presented here with the analyses provided by other works in IR that have directly addressed the Cuban case.⁶ On the other hand, it represents a challenging test for this thesis given the causal priority assigned in numerous historical works to the humanitarian, economic, and public opinion drivers of US intervention instead of political and elite factors.

As I will highlight in the following chapter, the decision to intervene as well as the modality of US military operations and occupation derive from three dynamics: first, the limited cooperation between the US and the Cuban insurgent leaders given the US leaders' long-term interests and views about Cuba; second, US objectives towards Cuba resulting from the interplay of foreign and domestic politics; third, the specific relations between members of the US and Cuban elite factions, which represented an important pull factor for the US intervention in Cuba and which shed light on the subsequent US policy towards the political elite of the new Cuban Republic. For this purpose, I will first provide an overview of the contending explanations of US intervention in Cuba. Second, I will examine the causal antecedents set by elite politics drawing on the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3 in order to assess how the interplay between political formulas, power struggle, and elite relations shaped US interventionary stance. Third, I will examine in greater detail the decision to intervene itself and its modality. Finally, given the success of the US operations and the ensuing occupation of the island, I will address the way in which elite dynamics continued to inform US policy in Cuba until the US withdrawal in 1902. In doing so, I will show how elite dynamics provide a more detailed account for the shift towards intervention and how the same factors coalesced at the critical juncture of 1898 to explain not only timing of the US decision but also its specific objectives in Cuba after the end of hostilities.

⁶ Owen 1997; Zakaria 1998; Trubowitz 2011.

Contending Explanations

The Cuban case has been subject to extensive historical and theoretical examination. Initially, historical accounts of US intervention in Cuba stressed the altruistic and humanitarian concerns driving US action: halting the humanitarian disaster resulting from the Spanish reconcentration policy; and, promoting Cuban independence.⁷ Humanitarian considerations were explicitly included in president William McKinley's 11th April war message in 1898. Further, humanitarian considerations were coupled with the support for 'Cuba Libre' in the elite discourse as much as in the wider public.⁸

Offering a first and influential critique of these explanations, revisionist authors underscore the role played by economic interests in driving US action in Cuba. US intervention was ascribed to three elements: the need to protect American investments, properties and commercial interests in Cuba; the American upper class' influence on the Republican administration; and, the need to find new markets to prop up US domestic economy after the 1893 depression.⁹ Related to these explanations, a number of authors identify in the combined effect of economic depression and social tensions the sources of US expansionist policy in the 1890s, with the latter representing a useful diversion for the 'crisis of confidence' that engulfed American society at the time.¹⁰ Overall, these revisionist accounts successfully question the altruistic and humanitarian motivations of US actions, stressing the interested motives of Washington's action towards Cuba and the Philippines. The humanitarian explanation, for instance, fails to explain why the US did not intervene when the *reconcentrado* policy was implemented whilst it intervened in April 1898, after Spain had already decided to suspend the *reconcentrado* policy.

However, revisionist accounts also present significant explanatory shortcomings. First, Cuba's importance for the overall American economy should not be overstated: at the time of intervention, more than 75-80% of US exports were directed to Europe and only half of the exports to Latin America

⁷ Freidel 1958; Bradford 1993; Smith 1994b: 5; Sewell 2011.

⁸ Perez 1998a: 24-27, 40-41.

⁹ Beard 1934; McCormick 1963; LaFeber 1963; Foner 1972: 282-310; Williams 1988: 27-57.

¹⁰ Linderman 1974: 5. For similar accounts, see Hofstadter 1967; Healy 1970; Beisner 1986; Benjamin 1990: 31; LaFeber 1993: 60-82.

were directed to Cuba.¹¹ Second, the US economic elite did not achieve a clear consensus on the benefits of military intervention prior to 1898 as important segments of the business and financial community were concerned about the instability that a war would bring, with the risk of endangering the post-1896 recovery.¹² Significantly, the Democrats accused McKinley of not intervening in Cuba in order to protect the interests of the upper class.¹³ When members of the US upper class began to favour a less passive policy towards Cuba, their preferences remained ambiguous on how to bring the conflict to an end; what they requested was a solution to the crisis, not necessarily intervention or annexation.¹⁴ Finally, the economic crisis of 1893 that the intervention was sought to solve according to certain revisionist accounts was essentially over by 1898. At the same time, the economic crisis started in the 1870s did not produce similar expansionist outcomes.¹⁵

In contrast to previous analyses, both historical works on the Cuban case and Classical Realist authors argued that the conflict resulted not from a rational understanding of the national interest but rather from the irrational pressures of a war-prone public opinion.¹⁶ Considering Cuba as having a marginal strategic and intrinsic value, these works stress how two factors fuelled a belligerent sentiment in the US public opinion and Congress: the daily stories of Spanish atrocities published by the sensationalist press of the *New York Journal* of William R. Hearst and the *New York World* of Joseph Pulitzer;¹⁷ and, the impact of two events, the diplomatic incident sparked by the publication on 9th February 1898 of a private letter written by Enrique Dupuy de Lome, Spanish minister in Washington, and the explosion of US battleship *Maine* in the port of Havana on 15th February.¹⁸

¹¹ Hoganson 1998: 210 fn.14.

¹² Pratt 1936: 42, 235; Holbo 1963; Healy 1963: 9-12, 21; Benjamin 1990: 30-36.

¹³ McCartney 2006: 124.

¹⁴ Pratt 1936: 143-149; Foner 1972: 231-232; Benjamin 1990: 40-47.

¹⁵ Holbo 1963; Zakaria 1998.

¹⁶ Kennan 1951; Morgenthau 1951: 4, 23; Leuchtenburg 1957.

¹⁷ For historical analyses centred on the role played by public opinion and the press, see Wilkerson 1932; Wisan 1934; May 1961: 237.

¹⁸ In the letter, de Lome described President McKinley as 'weak and catering to the rabble...and besides, a low politician...' (quoted in Foner 1972: 232, 235). The explosion of the *Maine* killed 250 US sailors. The US official investigation, on 28th March,

Interestingly, Classical Realist authors seem to support an explanation that is essentially consistent with recent Liberal analysis stressing the role played by public opinion rather than security or power calculations.¹⁹ Yet, these analyses focusing on the press tend to overrate both the role played by public opinion as well as the impact and reach of the sensationalist newspapers. First, not all US newspapers endorsed the Cuban cause and not all newspapers adopted Hearst's sensationalism. Importantly, the influence of the Hearst and Pulitzer's newspapers was limited by their geographical reach, as both were mainly New York newspapers, and by their partisan affiliation, as both were prominently Democratic.²⁰ Second, these accounts do not fully explain why Cuba played such an important role in American politics in the first place. As stated by Offner, 'Hearst played on American prejudices; he did not create them'.²¹ Third, the actual impact of public opinion and of events in tilting the US public opinion and its leaders towards intervention is not convincingly demonstrated. It rather serves to prove an assumption – the influence of the public over elected officials – more than providing clear evidence. As Perez astutely notes,

the linkage of the *Maine* with public opinion and the connection of both to the coming of war...is a causal proposition whose plausibility is derived mainly from normative democratic theory than from a body of verifiable evidence.²²

Fourth, these explanations are based on the assumption of Congress' acquiescence to public opinion and particularly McKinley's weakness as a political leader.²³ On the contrary, more recent historical works reveal a less passive president who eventually steered events in Cuba to pursue specific domestic and international objectives.²⁴ At the same time, they do not consider the possibility of an opposite causal direction, that is how US political leaders as well as members of the Cuban counter-elite influenced US public opinion regarding Cuba. In doing so, they fail to take into account the fact that

identified in an external cause – hence in Spanish authorities – the cause of the explosion. See Benjamin 1990: 45.

¹⁹ Western 2005; Chapter 1: 51-54.

²⁰ Hamilton 2006: 159-157, 208-209.

²¹ Offner 1992: 229.

²² Perez 1989: 304-305.

²³ Fry 1979; Zimmerman 2002.

²⁴ Gould 1982; Offner 1992; Morgan 2003; Phillips 2003.

McKinley and Congressmen were discussing the possibility of intervention even before the report on the explosion of the Maine was published.²⁵

Recently, Neorealist and Neoclassical Realist accounts have treated the conflict as the inevitable result of the clash between a rising great power and the declining Spanish empire, with Cuba representing simply a geopolitical opportunity for the US to grasp. From a Neorealist perspective, John Mearsheimer examines Cuba within the broader expansion of US power, with Cuba representing an inevitable step in the US drive towards regional hegemony.²⁶ Yet, explanations focusing purely on the rise of US power during the second half of the 19th Century can hardly explain the Cleveland administration's decision not to intervene in Cuba in 1895-1896. Cleveland's decision is significant since his administration was clearly aware of the US power position in the Western hemisphere, as indicated by Secretary of State Richard Olney's famous remarks in July 1895 that the US was 'practically sovereign' over the American continent.²⁷

Zakaria's Neoclassical Realist analysis overcomes this limit by highlighting the institutional conditions that allowed the US to increase its state power at the end of the 19th Century. According to Zakaria, the institutional and administrative reforms of the late 19th Century enabled US leaders and especially the presidency to mobilise the national resources necessary for an expansionist foreign policy. While enriching Neorealist explanations with a more accurate explanation of the timing of US expansion, Zakaria's account presents three problems. First, his conceptualisation of the US as a weak state is open to question.²⁸ As Mearsheimer points out, the US managed to expand before 1898 whilst being able to manage the internal consequences brought by expansion, including a devastating civil war. Second, some of the most important reforms strengthening US institutions took place after 1898 and in

²⁵ Foner 1972: 243.

²⁶ Mearsheimer 2001: 234-252.

²⁷ Benjamin 1990: 39; Nichols 2011: 6.

²⁸ For instance, Novak (2008: 763) qualifies the definition of the US as a 'weak state', highlighting how the American state was weak in terms of 'despotic power' but not in terms of 'infrastructural power'. On the difference between despotic and infrastructural power, see Mann 1986.

case were partially ignited by the conflict in Cuba itself.²⁹ Third, the increase in state power and mobilisation capabilities highlighted by Zakaria was more the result of both an improvement in the conditions of the US economy at the end of 1890s and the emergence of a more cohesive political landscape, with the Republicans controlling both the Presidency and Congress in 1896.³⁰

The following chapter contests also Zakaria's explanation of the timing of US intervention. Zakaria argues that the US grasped an opportunity in 1898 as it fought the weakest of all European great powers and did so after years of Spanish operations and exhaustion in Cuba, when Madrid was 'almost ready to surrender anyway', that is when the threat was receding.³¹ On the contrary, as I will show, Cuba did not represent simply an opportunity for expansion but a long-coveted strategic and political interest for the US. Importantly, the US intervened when Spain was losing control of the situation in favour of Cuban actors unfavourable to the US and before imminent development in Cuba could favour such local competitors. In other terms, the US opted for intervention to forestall a possible threat.

Owen and Trubowitz offer a more comprehensive analysis by addressing the role played by political agents and their own views at the time.³² According Owen, US intervention resulted from the effect exerted by perceptions of Madrid's illiberalism on Spanish-American relations.³³ On the contrary, Trubowitz highlights the role played by partisan politics in the US within a permissive international context. In doing so, they both take into account the interplay between internal and external developments, whether in Spain, in the case of Owen's analysis, or in the wider international setting, in Trubowitz' work. However, what both Owen and Trubowitz fail to take into account is the role played by Cuban actors and how developments in Cuba affected US elite's interests. As I will show in the following section, US-Cuban relations represent

²⁹ Cf. Zakaria 1998: 90-127. On the limited impact of pre-1900 reforms compared to the reforms of the Progressive Era, see Skowronek 1982.

³⁰ This point is clear also in Zakaria's empirical analysis (1998: 60-61).

³¹ Zakaria 1998: 174-176.

³² Owen 1997; Trubowitz 2011.

³³ Specifically, Owen (1997: 143-144) underscores how the establishment of the First Spanish Republic (February 1873 - December 1874) eased cooperation between Washington and Madrid during the first Cuban crisis, whereas perception of Spanish illiberalism impeded cooperation during the Cuban War of Independence.

one of the critical antecedents driving US intervention. Furthermore, actual and imminent developments in Cuba involving Cuban actors shaped the critical juncture within which the US opted for direct intervention.

In order to overcome the limits of the previous analyses and probe the theoretical framework presented in Part I, the present chapter follows more recent approaches that take into account not only the interplay between international and domestic political dynamics but also the role played by Cuban actors.³⁴ In particular, it examines the way in which leaders' political ideas, power competition, and elite relations, in Washington as much as in Cuba, shaped the decision to intervene. In this regard, the impact of events in Cuba needs to be examined *vis-à-vis* both political actors' own decisions as well as their interpretations of such events. In doing so, it defines an explanatory framework to connect leaders' own objectives to the political necessities that shaped their actions and objectives. This is intended both to avoid the overly deterministic accounts of the conflict describing it as inevitable and to address the causal dynamics that gradually drove US policymakers towards intervention and that have led other authors to describe McKinley as a 'reluctant expansionist', the conflict as an 'unwanted war' and the resulting US empire as acquired 'by default'.³⁵

An elite perspective offers a twofold advantage: it incorporates the empirically valid observations provided by previous historical and theoretical works; and, it sheds light on the fundamental dimension of elite relations. First, US elite's political formula needs to be taken into account to explain both the importance of Cuba for American leaders – thus allowing for Cuba to easily become material for partisan politics – and the prospects for cooperation with different Cuban leaders. Second, the interplay of international and domestic power struggle made Cuba both a possible and necessary objective for US leaders. Finally, US-Cuban elite relations and Cuban actions are key to explain not only the US shift towards a more pro-Cuban policy but also the importance of the

³⁴ On the role of US domestic politics, see Faulkner 1959: 228; Karp 1979: 74; Offner 1992: 180-181; Hamilton 2006; Trubowitz 2011. On the role of Cuban actors, see Perez 1983; Tone 2006.

³⁵ On the inevitability of US intervention, see Mearsheimer 2001; Tone 2006: 13. On McKinley as a 'reluctant expansionist', the conflict as an 'unwanted war', and the empire as obtained 'by default', see respectively Trubowitz 2011: 90; Offner 1992: 230; Musicant 1998.

events of early 1898. As I will discuss in the final section of this chapter, an elite perspective provides a more convincing analysis not only of the timing but also of US policy during the occupation of Cuba, further highlighting the effect exerted by elite politics on US policy.

Political Formulas: Competing Claims over Cuba

US decisions regarding Cuba need first of all to be examined *vis-à-vis* the specific ideological framework in which elite members were enmeshed. During the 1890s, long-standing symbols of American identity were recast and adapted to a changing domestic environment and to an ever competitive international system. This set of ideas reinforced the US elite's rule as it perpetuated social hierarchies at home, providing US policymakers with new tools to mobilise consensus in a dynamic yet unquiet society, and offered authoritative rationales for US primacy and expansion abroad. These ideas shaped the identity of the American polity at large as well as defined the appropriate role for its political leaders.³⁶ In particular, they affected US policy towards Cuba. First, they directly influenced US leaders' views of Cuba and of the preferred outcome of the Cuban crisis. By attaching a specific value to Cuba, the island became more than just a foreign policy issue; it became an object of political contest. Second, it set the stage for the McKinley administration's decision to intervene by influencing the prospects for cooperation with the Cuban counter-elite.

At a general level, the ideas that shaped the US political formula provided useful ideological tools not only for the management of a changing domestic society but also to forge a consensus over foreign policy objectives and the extension of US influence abroad. At the end of the 19th Century, the Liberal principles informing the American political formula coalesced in an explicit foreign policy formulation centred on the US mission to promote its values and freedom. In particular, the rise of US power in the second half of the Century fostered an expansionist outlook among US leaders. A new foreign policy discourse emerged that adapted familiar concepts and doctrines such as the

³⁶ McCartney 2006: 2.

Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine to the 1890s, in an effort to provide renewed coherence to an otherwise contradictory set of objectives that tried to combine principles with interests, the American commitment to the expansion of freedom with the expansion of US military and economic presence, imperialism with anti-colonialism.³⁷ As Mary Ann Heiss argues, by the 1890s, Manifest Destiny had become an 'idea rather than a policy', a 'reflection of the national mood – and indeed, national identity' providing US leaders with a persuasive justification for further advancements.³⁸ Having acquired the capabilities to enforce the Monroe Doctrine, US policy shifted from a commitment to contrast European interference to the expansion of US influence in the Western Hemisphere and the elimination of the remaining European colonial outposts.³⁹ In turn, members of the US intellectual elite, such as John Burgess, John Fiske, Alfred T. Mahan, and Josiah Strong developed these principles to promote the idea of American expansion, of a 'large policy', in the Western hemisphere and beyond.⁴⁰

The American political formula mirrored also more specific ideological assumptions of the period. In particular, racial and gender assumptions reinforced long-standing social hierarchies within the American polity.⁴¹ On the one hand, racial assumptions helped to maintain racial hierarchies within the US society, through a *de facto* process of disenfranchisement of black voters and the legalisation of segregation. Such assumptions also postulated racial hierarchies at the international stage envisaging the superiority of the Anglo-Saxons over allegedly inferior races.⁴² On the other hand, gender convictions profoundly informed American political culture at the time. In particular, gender arguments served a domestic political function, as they were used both to contain the mounting requests for the enfranchisement of women and as a 'coalition-building political method' among the jingoists, who stressed the need to overcome the decadent and effeminate nature of American society after the

³⁷ Heiss 2002: 528; Nichols 2011: 3; Sewell 2011.

³⁸ Heiss 2002: 520.

³⁹ *Ibid.*: 515-518; Nichols 2011: 42-43.

⁴⁰ Pratt 1936; Beisner 1986: 78-94; Nichols 2011: 22-47.

⁴¹ Hunt 1987; Hoganson 1998; McCartney 2006: 48-64.

⁴² McCartney 2006: 57-64.

closure of the frontier in 1890.⁴³ Importantly, the same convictions fuelled a militarist rhetoric that could be marshalled to promote military endeavours and gain consensus. As Kristin Hoganson argues, 'the links between manhood, military service, and political authority led a number of political leaders to think that they would enhance their political standing if they supported martial policies'.⁴⁴

The interplay between the abovementioned ideas about US mission, race and gender and the awareness of US new capabilities fostered an expansionist outlook primarily directed towards the Caribbean. By shaping a paternalistic view of the American mission, both racial and gender assumptions shaped a self-serving image of Cuba as requiring US tutelage and guidance.⁴⁵ Furthermore, expansion toward Cuba fit within the 'caribbeanized' version of the Manifest Destiny rhetoric that survived the closure of the frontier.⁴⁶ Importantly, these views of Cuba were consistent with the enduring vision of island's future in the culture of the US political elite. Already in April 1823, few months before President James Monroe's proclamation of his well-known doctrine, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams reflected the same sense of entitlement and inevitability characterising the Manifest Destiny discourse in what was later described as the 'ripe fruit theory':

there are laws of political as well as physical gravitation; and if an apple severed by the tempest from its native tree cannot choose but fall to the ground, Cuba, forcibly disjoined from its own unnatural connection with Spain, and incapable of self-support, can gravitate only toward the North American Union, which by the same law of nature cannot cast her off from its bosom.⁴⁷

According to such view, Cuba could be either Spanish or American; no third option was envisaged.⁴⁸ In this regard, Spanish sovereignty over Cuba represented an asset for US policymakers, an insurance against the transfer of the island to any other foreign or local actor in view of the inevitable absorption of Cuba into the American union. By the end of 1869, the Grant administration

⁴³ Benjamin 1990: 30; Hoganson 1998.

⁴⁴ Hoganson 1998: 10.

⁴⁵ Perez 2008.

⁴⁶ Merk 1963: 210.

⁴⁷ Benjamin 1990: 8.

⁴⁸ Perez 1998a: 5-6.

had formalised this view in the so-called 'non-transfer' principle, whereby Cuba could not be transferred to any another foreign power.⁴⁹ The 'ripe fruit theory' rested on the assumption that the eventual result would be the annexation of Cuba, not Cuban independence.⁵⁰ As summarised by Perez, 'opposition to Cuban independence was a proposition with a past, possessed of a proper history, one that served to form and inform the principal policy formulations of the nineteenth century'.⁵¹ As a result, such view became an 'inextricable part of the American political culture'.⁵²

The widespread sympathy for the Cuban rebels' cause within segments of the US society and the US support for Cuban independence from Spain was not in contradiction with this view. In fact, Cuban independence was conceptualised as freedom from Spanish tyranny – not necessarily from US influence. In addition, Cuban independence was not inconsistent with a future annexation of the island. The expansion of the Union could still be consistent with the tenets of the American Liberal formula if resulting from a new state's request for annexation, as in the case of the Republic of Texas, which joined the US ten years after its declaration of independence. Thus, US policymakers did not consider the use of military force as inevitable to secure control of the island. Yet, as the war against Mexico before and soon the new conflict in Cuba made clear, a 'gentle shaking of the tree' could become necessary to force events and ensure a political order in the island conducive to US interests.⁵³

The overall principles characterising the US political formula and the resulting vision of Cuba informed both the Republican and Democratic Party. During the 1890s, the two major parties appropriated these ideas and symbols for electoral purposes. For instance, both the Democratic and Republican party platforms in 1896 and 1900 included explicit references to the two parties' adherence to the Monroe Doctrine. In 1896, McKinley and the Republicans won the presidential elections with a platform that explicitly contained a commitment to diplomatic

⁴⁹ Sexton 2006: 355.

⁵⁰ Perez 1983: 59-65.

⁵¹ Perez 1998a: 12-13.

⁵² Morales Dominguez and Prevost 2008: 24.

⁵³ Merk 1963: 221.

solution of the Cuban crisis 'to restore peace and give independence to the island' of Cuba.⁵⁴

At the same time, there were differences between the two parties in regard to the issue of US expansion. On the one hand, these ideas shaped an expansionist 'large policy' that found fertile soil particularly but not exclusively within the Republican Party that gained the presidency in 1896.⁵⁵ Expansionist ideas became influential particularly among the emerging leaders of the party: Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (R-Massachusetts), Senator Albert Beveridge (R-Indiana), Senator Elihu Root (R-New York), and Theodore Roosevelt.⁵⁶ On the other hand, intra-elite differences materialised when the US political elite was faced with the question of which kind of control – annexation to the Union, direct colonial rule, protectorate – the US could exercise over territories that were not on the continent.⁵⁷ These tensions produced divisions within the elite and provided new rallying cries that could be exploited for political purposes. A determined anti-imperialist front emerged, primarily within the Democratic Party, which could mobilise public support against the expansionists' imperial dreams by claiming stricter adherence to values embodied in the US republican model.⁵⁸

However, these differences should not be exaggerated. Despite partisan and ideological differences, political elite members framed the situation in similar terms of US duty to save Cuba from the oppression and cruelty of Spanish colonial rule. In line with the Liberal principles of the general political formula, proponents of the 'large policy' did not exclude the possibility of a democratic and independent evolution for the newly acquired territories after an initial phase of US 'democratic tutelage'. Similarly, although anti-imperialists rejected the idea of annexing or colonising foreign communities, they did not advocate a radical isolation for the US. On the contrary, they accepted forms of economic and cultural influence, supported the Cuban fight for independence and,

⁵⁴ U.S. Democratic Party 1896, 1900; U.S. Republican Party 1898, 1900; Herring 2008: 308-309.

⁵⁵ Pratt 1936; Merk 1963: 233-237; Zimmerman 2002; Nichols 2011: 22-47. For a critical assessment of the influence of expansionist ideas, see Field 1978; Hamilton 2007: 33-53.

⁵⁶ Nichols 2011: 24.

⁵⁷ Healy 1963: xi; McCartney 2006: 77-86.

⁵⁸ Merk 1963: 237; Benjamin 1990: 31, 39.

importantly, favoured forms of limited humanitarian intervention.⁵⁹ In this sense, humanitarian motivations could provide a legitimate rationale for intervention, a politically sensible compromise solution. By expressing the higher motivation of US intervention, humanitarianism reaffirmed the exceptional nature of the US mission abroad whilst forging a domestic consensus between the expansionists and the sceptics of American expansion.⁶⁰

In the early stage of the internal conflict in Cuba, the US general political formula shaped in important ways the possibility of political dialogue with the three factions that composed the Cuban counter-elite contesting Spanish authority on the island. First, wealthy Creoles supporting the fight against Spain looked favourably to a possible annexation of the island to the US as a way to guarantee the existing social order in Cuba in case of Spanish withdrawal. For a second group composed of moderate separatists, independence represented a long-term objective that required a transition period under US guidance or protectorate. A third faction, the *independentistas*, sought outright independence not only from Spain but also from the US. This last group coalesced around three institutions: Jose Marti's *Partido Revolucionario Cubano* (PRC); the Liberation Army (LA) conducting military operations against Spain on the island led by general Maximo Gomez and its second-in-command Antonio Maceo; and, the insurgents' provisional government.⁶¹ Marti's premature death in May 1895 deprived the insurgents of a charismatic political leader yet his ideas remained highly influential, gradually reducing the space for annexationist and moderate positions within the Cuban political formula after Spanish withdrawal.⁶²

The control exerted by *independentistas* over the revolutionary organisations conducting the rebellion in Cuba, primarily the LA, significantly limited the possibility of a full-fledged cooperation between the US and Cuban military leadership as the idea of Cuban independence went against the image of Cuba's future held by the American elite. US leaders and the *independentistas* simply held *competing* claims over Cuba that could not be reconciled. Furthermore, the

⁵⁹ Nichols 2011: 7, 24.

⁶⁰ Perez 1998a; McCartney 2006: 107-112; Nichols 2011: 7, 48.

⁶¹ Perez 1995: 3-5; Tone 2006: 19-28.

⁶² Benjamin 1990: 25; Perez 1995: 5.

rebels' tactics *per se* – a scorched-earth policy aimed at destroying the economic base of the Cuban economy as to reduce Spanish revenues and the resource base of the annexationist forces – reinforced US misgivings about them.⁶³ Not surprisingly, former president Cleveland saw in the LA men 'the most inhuman and barbarous cutthroats in the world'.⁶⁴ Concerns for an eventual victory of the rebels coupled with racial considerations had initially led US policymakers to value continued Spanish authority on the island. As Secretary of State Olney expressed to the Spanish ambassador de Lome in April 1896, the administration feared that a possible Spanish withdrawal might lead to a civil strife along racial lines between the rebels, the 'establishment of white and black republic' on the island and an inevitable and prolonged conflict between the two.⁶⁵ As a result, both Cleveland and McKinley maintained US policy of non-recognition of the rebels. Importantly, by enforcing its proclaimed neutrality in the conflict, the McKinley administration put considerable obstacles to the provision of aid and military support from US private actors to the Cuban rebels.⁶⁶ At the same time, however, the presence of annexationist and moderate positions among the Cuban counter-elite provided the American elite with potentially valuable interlocutors.

Power Struggle: The Primacy of Cuba and of Domestic Politics

The sense of inevitability of the eventual acquisition of Cuba permeating US policymakers' views and the obstacles to full-fledged cooperation with Cuban *independentistas* shaped the US elite's preference for an initial non-interventionist policy exemplified by McKinley's conviction that time would have eventually forced Spain to give up Cuba.⁶⁷ At the same time, the caution of the McKinley administration resulted from the interplay between international and domestic competition.

⁶³ Healy 1963: 8-9; Hunt 1987: 105; Perez 1995: 6; Tone 2006: 58, 94; McCartney 2006: 126.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Benjamin 1990: 38, 53.

⁶⁵ FRUS 1897: 540-544.

⁶⁶ Foner 1972: 178, 199-201; Perez 1998a: 14-15.

⁶⁷ Gould 1982: 30.

The international struggle for power taking place on a global scale at the end of the 19th Century among great powers shaped US policy in indirect ways. Contrary to Realist accounts, Cuba represented neither an easy opportunity to grasp for its expansionist aims nor an irrational deviation from US strategic interests. First, US ambitions over Spanish colonies in the Pacific, usually ascribed to the need to secure coaling stations for the navy and access to Asian markets, should not be overstated.⁶⁸ In all contingency plans devised by the US Navy before 1898, military operations against Spanish units stationed in the Philippines and Puerto Rico were considered in conjunction to the main operations against Spanish forces in Cuba and the objective of securing an early termination of the conflict with Spain.⁶⁹ Expansion towards the Pacific derived primarily from the rapid – and not entirely foretold – collapse of the Spanish forces. International competition shaped US decisions primarily after the conflict, creating a powerful incentive to retain US control over these territories once they were acquired. As McKinley explained, ‘it is no longer a question of expansion with us; we have expanded. If there is any question at all, it is a question of contracting; and who is going to contract?’⁷⁰

Second, US military plans mirrored the importance of Cuba for both US political leaders and strategists. Primarily because of its position guarding the main sea lanes of the Caribbean Sea and the estuary of the Mississippi, Cuba represented a ‘strategic key’ to the nation’s Gulf coast, essential to safeguard the main outlet for the goods originating from the American inland.⁷¹ A 1895 document prepared by the US Naval War College considered ‘the strategic relation of Cuba to the United States in a military and naval way’ as ‘invaluable’.⁷² In this sense, Cuba did not represent an irrational deviation from US national interests as suggested by the early Classical Realist critique, at least not in the way in which US policymakers defined US interests at the time.

In case, considerations of the international setting in which the US operated reinforced US caution in the early stage of the Cuban War of Independence. First, despite the increase in US power, the US Army still did not exceed 30.000

⁶⁸ Foner 1972: 307-310.

⁶⁹ Trask 1981: 74-77, 382-383.

⁷⁰ Benjamin 1990: 59.

⁷¹ Healy 1963: 5; Falk 1986: 4; Morales Dominguez and Prevost 2008.

⁷² Quoted in Trask 1981: 74.

men in 1898 whereas Spain could count on at least 150.000 troops in Cuba supported by local loyal units.⁷³ Second, fear of possible European interventions heightened US concerns over Cuba. Spain's inability to restore order in the island represented a source of concern for Washington since it could lead either to a European multilateral intervention following Spanish invitation or, more worryingly, to the transfer of Cuba to another European power. American fears were also exacerbated by Spanish initiatives aimed to enlist the support of the other European powers in solving the Cuban crisis.⁷⁴

However, Spanish calls for European support did not bear any fruit mainly for two reasons. During 1896 and 1897, the US not only contrasted Spanish diplomatic initiatives to secure European support but also sought to ease European fears concerning Washington's objectives in Cuba, denying its intention to either annex or establish a protectorate over Cuba.⁷⁵ Importantly, the emerging British-American alignment prevented any decisive British action against the United States. Lacking British support, Russia, France, and Germany did not oppose US plans, thus removing a key obstacle to an eventual American intervention.⁷⁶ With European powers out of the equation, the main challenge to US interests in Cuba were limited to both Spanish and Cuban provisional authorities. Within this increasingly permissive international setting, pressures emanating from domestic considerations gradually took centre stage in US policymakers' calculations.

In particular, domestic politics played a key role in pushing the US towards an increasingly interventionary policy.⁷⁷ The Cuban rebellion aroused strong and contrasting sentiments in different segments of the American society. On the one hand, lower social classes and discriminated groups – blacks, farmers in the West and workers – identified with the Cubans' fight against oppression and actively supported their cause. This in turn took place in the midst of the heightened social tensions that characterised the 1890s and that involved

⁷³ Smith 1994a: 48-72.

⁷⁴ Benjamin 1990: 58-61; Offner 1992: 29-30, 59.

⁷⁵ See, for example, the meetings held by Stewart Woodward, US minister in Madrid, with his European counterparts between September and October 1897. FRUS 1898: 562-565; 573-581.

⁷⁶ Foner 1972: 254-255; Offner 1992: 59-60.

⁷⁷ Offner 1992; Small 1996: 30; Trubowitz 2011.

primarily these social groups.⁷⁸ On the other hand, Cuba represented the perfect cause for the more nationalist elements in the United States that could spark an uncontrollable jingoist surge.⁷⁹ Therefore, by mobilising its political extremes, the Cuban crisis essentially problematised the US elite's rule over an already turbulent society that was still experiencing the dislocating effects of rapid industrialisation, depression, and deep social changes. These concerns found expression also in official documents. In the instructions prepared in July 1897 for the new US Minister to Spain, Stewart Woodward, the State Department clarified that the possibility of military intervention could not be eschewed due not only to the conflict's economic and humanitarian consequences but also to its impact on the US domestic context. As stated in the instructions,

the chronic condition of trouble and violent derangement in that island constantly causes disturbance in the social and political condition of our own people. It keeps up a continuous irritation within our own borders...⁸⁰

The attachment of significant segments of the working classes and Western farmers to the Cuban cause was particularly consequential to domestic elite politics. Workers and farmers, together with new immigrants, represented the constituencies providing the bases for the emergence of the People's or Populist Party in 1891. In the context of 1898, Populism and the support of these social constituencies could still play an important role. The previous presidential election of 1896 saw American politics overcome the strict margins of the Gilded Age, in a heated contest between the Republican McKinley and the Democrat William Jennings Bryan, endorsed by the People's Party. Despite their presidential victory, the Republicans lost ground in the West as well as among the workers' vote in the North, which represented not only those social groups that helped the Republicans secure a landslide in 1894 but also those groups that identified with the plight of the Cubans rebels. These results, in turn, indicated to the incumbent party that the Democratic-Populist alignment led by Bryan could still represent a significant challenge in view of the 1898

⁷⁸ Foner 1972: 171-174; Benjamin 1990: 34. For example, 1,400 strikes took place in 1894 alone, with the Pullman strikes halting railroad communications in the Midwest and leading to the dispatch of US troops to suppress it. See Herring 2008: 301; Nichols 2011: 27.

⁷⁹ Beisner 1986: 114.

⁸⁰ FRUS 1898: 560.

midterm elections and the presidential elections of 1900.⁸¹ Not surprisingly, the Democrats used the Cuban card against the Republican administration in order to intercept the discontent of the lower classes. For instance, the Democrats accused McKinley of not intervening in Cuba given the president's disinterest in stopping the killing of lower classes in Cuba.⁸²

The fear of losing the support of these constituencies in favour of the Democrats raised significant concerns among Republican ranks. The 1897 off-off year elections already provided negative indications to the Republicans.⁸³ Political concerns for the domestic consequences of the Cuban conflict translated into specific pressures within the Republican Party where McKinley's inaction over Cuba fuelled internal divisions.⁸⁴ As Senator Lodge made clear to McKinley in discussing the need for the president's leadership on Cuba,

whether that lead will be given is the crucial question. If it is not we shall go to pieces with bitter debates in Congress, party divisions and the consequent ruin of the party...if the break comes...we shall all go down in the wreck, Senator[s] and Representatives alike.⁸⁵

Democrats took advantage of McKinley's inaction to criticise the president's non-intervention and ongoing negotiations 'with the butchers of Spain'.⁸⁶ Republican pressures to take a more active role in Cuba became particularly pressing after the events of February 1898.⁸⁷ At the end of March 1898, Lodge restated the point in a letter to McKinley:

if the war in Cuba drags on through the summer with nothing done...we shall go down in the greatest defeat ever known..., it will be deadly. I know that it is easily and properly said that to bring on or even threaten war for political reasons is a crime and I quite agree. But to sacrifice a great party...for a wrong policy is hardly less odious.⁸⁸

⁸¹ Linderman 1974: 4; Benjamin 1990: 34; McCartney 2006: 114-115.

⁸² Offner 1992: 17-31; Hamilton 2006: 232-233; McCartney 2006: 124-125.

⁸³ Saldin 2011: 51.

⁸⁴ Offner 1992: 43; McCartney 2006: 127.

⁸⁵ Linderman 1974: 34, 187 fn.83.

⁸⁶ Representative Joseph Bailey (D-Texas), quoted in Perez 1983: 174.

⁸⁷ Morales Dominguez and Prevost 2008: 28.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Perez 1983: 174.

Expressing these concerns, forty members of the Republican caucus asked McKinley to act to avoid a likely electoral defeat.⁸⁹

Thus, partisan competition compelled McKinley to act and recalibrate US policy toward Cuba in more interventionist terms to: ensure the cohesion of the Republican Party and its survival;⁹⁰ and counter a possible Democratic-Populist resurgence led by Bryan in the upcoming 1898 midterm and 1900 presidential elections.⁹¹ This last objective was evident already in July 1898: on the same day in which John Hay was famously congratulating Theodore Roosevelt for the administration's 'splendid little war' in Cuba, the future Secretary of State in a letter to Lodge could exclaim: 'how splendidly things have moved our way! I do not see the ghost of a chance of Bryanism in the next few years'.⁹² Yet, while domestic push factors help explain the increased interests towards Cuba in 1898, they do not explain why intervention was authorised in the spring of that year. In this regard, elite relations are of fundamental importance to explain US concerns in the critical juncture of March 1898.

Elite Relations: A Success of the Cuban Counter-elite?

The political context shaped by the Cuban crisis made the US political leaders particularly responsive to the views of the Cuban actors involved as well as to initiatives of the Cuban counter-elite. In particular, the Cuban counter-elite facilitated US intervention in two ways.

First, Cuban Creoles looked favourably to US guidance. Following the sugar boom and the dislocating effects of the Ten Years War (1868-78) on the island, the Creole upper class became increasingly dependent on the US market and investments. Many of its members took US citizenship and were educated in the US, granting them access and exposure to US policymaking and values.⁹³

⁸⁹ Lindermann 1974: 34.

⁹⁰ McCartney 2006: 124-125.

⁹¹ Offner 1992: 153; Trubowitz 2011: 93-94.

⁹² Thayer 1915: 172-173, 337; Trubowitz 2011: 94.

⁹³ FRUS 1898: 574; Healy 1963: 7; Benjamin 1990: 19.

Linked to American society via multiple channels, the Cuban upper class saw in Washington a possible guarantee for their own socio-economic position in Cuba against the more radical elements of the revolution. As a consequence, the more Spanish control over the island weakened the more the idea of US control of the island became attractive to them.⁹⁴ In contrast to what predicted by John Quincy Adams, it was not Cuba itself that was finally falling into the hands of US leaders; it was its Creole elite and its representatives within the Cuban revolutionary leadership that were gravitating towards the US.

As much as the Cuban Creole elite gravitated toward the US, US leaders began to gravitate toward them identifying in this group the most suitable elements to both administer the island after the end of Spanish rule and secure channels for US influence.⁹⁵ US policymakers increasingly acquired the perspective of the Cuban Creoles. The Creoles' views influenced US policymaking mainly through the US consul in Habana whose main local intelligence sources were represented by Creoles and the Habana urban elite. Moreover, US policymakers' missions and reports from Cuba in 1897 proved extremely influential in reinforcing the emerging consensus within the political elite regarding the Cuban actors involved in the fight. Submitted in July 1897, the report of William Calhoun highlighted two important elements: the limits of the rebel insurgency and of its leadership; and, the fact that Cuban Creoles welcomed US intervention, favouring some form of US hegemony if not outright annexation to the LA's control of the island.⁹⁶ As they looked at Cuba through the eyes of the local upper class, US policymakers inevitably overestimated the political role the Cuban annexationists and moderates could play whilst underestimating the support enjoyed by the leaders of the Cuban *independentistas*.⁹⁷ As a result, the US locked itself into a potentially useful yet problematic relationship with local actors whose ability to exercise control over Cuba was hampered by their wealth and distance from other social groups, particularly the small peasants that made up the bulk of the LA.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Benjamin 1990: 11-13, 19-22; Tone 2006: 19, 27-28.

⁹⁵ Benjamin 1990:21.

⁹⁶ Foner 1972: 213-214; Perez 1983: 157-158; Offner 2004: 47-53.

⁹⁷ Millett 1968: 28; Benjamin 1990: 33-36

⁹⁸ Benjamin 1990: 21; Tone 2006: 94.

Second, Cuban representatives in the US actively promoted the Cuban cause and reinforced US views given their predominantly annexationist and moderate positions. To secure American recognition and support, already in September 1895 the Cuban provisional government decided to rely on the PRC leaders in New York to act as the Cuban revolution's representatives in the US. The so called New York *junta* was led by Tomas Estrada Palma and included Gonzalo de Quesada, Ricardo Diaz Albertini, Benjamin Guerra, and Horatio Rubens, a US lawyer that had previously represented Marti.⁹⁹ Giving expression to those positions that sought annexation to the US at maximum, a US protectorate at minimum, these representatives fostered the idea that calls for Cuban independence – that is, independence from Spain – could be compatible with the eventual US control of the island. In doing so, they became a politically valuable interlocutor for Washington.

The New York *junta* played a crucial role in this regard. First, it fuelled a pro-Cuban sentiment in segments of the American society, for example by providing the sensationalist 'yellow press' with reports on Spanish atrocities on the island that were often published without any confirmation of their accuracy.¹⁰⁰ This was accompanied by an extensive propaganda campaign through the distribution of pamphlets and the organisation of events, such as the so called 'sympathy meetings'.¹⁰¹ Notably, the *junta* was responsible for leaking de Lome's letter to Hearst's New York *Journal*, sparking a diplomatic incident between the US and Spain and arousing anti-Spanish sentiments in the American public opinion.¹⁰² Second, the *junta* succeeded in establishing direct relations with members of the US political elite. Whilst Estrada Palma operated in New York, another member of the *junta*, de Quesada, worked in Washington where he established fruitful contacts with US Congressmen of the two major parties, such as Senator Lodge, John Morgan (D-Alabama), and Joseph Bailey (D-Texas), leader of the House Democrats.¹⁰³ Although it is difficult to prove the exact impact of the *junta's* pressures on US policymakers, it is noteworthy that after 1896 US Congressmen in contact with the *junta* began to support

⁹⁹ Auxier 1939; Foner 1972: 163-164.

¹⁰⁰ Healy 1963: 9; Foner 1972: 163.

¹⁰¹ Auxier 1939.

¹⁰² Foner 1972: 232, 235.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*: 166; Offner 1992: 43; Tone 2006:222.

resolutions in favour of the insurgents' cause.¹⁰⁴ Notably, Cuban pressures favoured the inclusion of the Cuban issue in the 1896 Republican platform and the promotion of non-binding resolutions in the Congress such as the Morgan-Cameron resolution in early 1896, requesting the administration to grant belligerent rights and support to the rebels.¹⁰⁵

The impact of the *junta's* actions is exemplified also by Spanish authorities' repeated attempts to limit its influence. Already in 1896, Spanish Prime Minister Antonio Cánovas asked Secretary of State Olney to counter the views spread by the Cuban delegation and complained about the liberty accorded to its members.¹⁰⁶ In October 1897, Madrid asked the US to halt the *junta's* 'armed hostility and constant provocation against the Spanish nation'.¹⁰⁷ Still in January 1898, the Spanish Queen Regent asked the US President 'to destroy the Junta of New York'.¹⁰⁸ Finally, in the infamous de Lome's letter, the Spanish ambassador asked Madrid to 'send...a man of importance that I may use...to create propaganda among the Senators and others in opposition to the Junta and to win over exiles'.¹⁰⁹

The Decision to Intervene: 'Neutral' Intervention

Elite dynamics gradually led the US from a non-interventionist stance toward a more activist and intrusive policy toward Cuba. Yet, this did not automatically translate into US military intervention. McKinley's reluctance to intervene at the end of 1897 despite mounting political pressures resulted from the plan of reforms issued by the new Spanish government of Praxedes Mateo Sagasta, which opened the possibility for a peaceful solution of the crisis. As a result of the assassination of the Spanish Prime Minister Canovas, in November 1897 the newly proclaimed Liberal government of Sagasta pledged autonomy for Cuba

¹⁰⁴ Auxier 1939: 291.

¹⁰⁵ Healy 1963: 10; Foner 1972: 185-190; Benjamin 1990: 35.

¹⁰⁶ Offner 1992: 27-29.

¹⁰⁷ FRUS 1898: 582-589.

¹⁰⁸ Foner 1972: 226; Offner 1992: 90.

¹⁰⁹ Foner 1972: 233.

in a an effort to win the consent of the more moderate wing of the Cuban separatist movement. In addition, Sagasta recalled Weyler in Spain and eventually terminated the reconcentrado policy.¹¹⁰

The contrast between the calls for intervention and the possibility of a peaceful solution of the conflict offered by Sagasta's reform plan were evident in McKinley's annual message to the Congress in December 1897. In his speech, McKinley confirmed the US refusal to recognise the insurgents as belligerents. The president also identified two possible military options for the US: either 'intervention in favour of one or the other party', without specifying whether in favour of the Cuban rebels or of Spain; or 'a neutral intervention to end the war by imposing a rational compromise between the contestants', in other words a form of unilateral intervention to enforce Washington's preferred solution to the conflict.¹¹¹ At the time, McKinley discarded these two possibilities in order to give the new Spanish government sufficient time to put in effect the proposed autonomy plan. In this sense, US non-intervention was dependent on the achievement of concrete results through reforms. As McKinley made clear, US intervention would ensue in case of failure of the Spanish efforts.¹¹²

However, Sagasta's reforms backfired. On the one hand, the Creole upper class began to look even more favourably to a US protectorate as the new Cuban Assembly established by Sagasta's reforms did not provide the Cubans with any real political power.¹¹³ On the other hand, the weakening of Spanish sovereignty on the island raised concerns among the Spanish property holders and soldiers in Cuba, the so called *voluntarios*: the former increasingly requested an American intervention and protectorate to avoid the establishment an independent Cuba headed by the PRC and LA leaders; the latter mutinied sparking widespread riots in January 1898.¹¹⁴ The events ignited by the munity of the *voluntarios* in Cuba (January-April 1898) are of central importance as they represent the critical juncture in which the US decided to intervene. They highlight the important role played by developments in Cuba and how US

¹¹⁰ Tone 2006: 234-235.

¹¹¹ FRUS 1897: vii-xxxiv.

¹¹² *Ibid.*: xxi.

¹¹³ Benjamin 1990: 42; Perez 1983: 137, 154-156.

¹¹⁴ Perez 1983: 161-162.

leaders reacted primarily to concerns regarding the Cuban counter-elite. At the same time, the critical antecedents examined in the previous section shed light on the form taken by US intervention as well as on the immediate objectives sought in Cuba after the end of hostilities with Spain.

The revolt of the *voluntarios* raised fears in Washington about possible anti-US riots and led the administration to authorise the dispatch of the battleship *Maine* to Havana, whose accidental explosion on 15th February offered a *casus belli* for US intervention.¹¹⁵ Rather than Spanish complicity, what both the explosion of the *Maine* and the previous riots highlighted to US policymakers was the diminishing control exerted by Spanish authorities over the island and the possibility of a further erosion of Spanish authority that could pave the way for further advances of the LA, whose forces were benefiting from General Weyler's removal. The instability produced by Spanish reforms stressed the need for more incisive measures on the part of the US. At the same time, Lodge and the other members of the Republican Party increasingly pressured the administration to act. On 9th March 1898, Congress authorised \$50 million in military appropriation and subsequently the dispatch of additional naval units to the Caribbean.¹¹⁶

Military intervention was hastened also by the impossibility at this stage of achieving US objectives through diplomatic means alone. In March 1898, McKinley attempted a final diplomatic plan that would have put the US as the arbiter of the Spanish-Cuban conflict.¹¹⁷ Despite US pressures, both the *junta* and LA leaders rejected a last American diplomatic initiative, stressing the limited political and material tools Washington controlled to influence the Cuban counter-elite.¹¹⁸ In the meantime, the report of Senator Redfield Proctor (R-Vermont) proved extremely influential in forging a consensus within the political elite and the broader ruling elite over the need for US action in Cuba. On 17th March 1898, Senator Proctor offered a diagnosis of the situation in Cuba, drawing attention to four important elements: the human costs of the war of independence; the impossibility for both sides to win the conflict; the costs

¹¹⁵ Ibid.: 137, 154-162.

¹¹⁶ Foner 1972: 225-229; Tone 2006: 238-239.

¹¹⁷ Perez 1983: 174-175.

¹¹⁸ Offner 1992: 83; Tone 2006: 243.

brought by a continuation of the conflict on the island; and, the limited costs of an eventual US operation. The speech had great resonance both within Congress and within the business community. By presenting the conflict in Cuba as a struggle for freedom and by stressing the costs of a continuation of the conflict on the island and the viability of an American intervention, Proctor's report succeeded in erasing the remaining concerns within the political and economic elite over the use of force.¹¹⁹

Given the impossibility of a diplomatic solution to the crisis, concerns for the eventual collapse of the Spanish authority and possible LA victory compelled the US government to act quickly. Within the historical debate on the subject, a general consensus lacks on whether these concerns were real and supported by actual developments in Cuba or whether the contestants had reached a *de facto* stalemate on the ground.¹²⁰ Public speeches and reports, such as Proctor's report, described the situation in Cuba in terms of a stalemate. Similarly, in his 11th April war message, McKinley argued that 'a final military victory for either side seems impracticable'.¹²¹ Zakaria, on the contrary, stresses the impending surrender of Spanish forces and how this provided the US with the opportunity to intervene at a moment when the Spanish challenge was receding.¹²² Yet, these two interpretations result from two different evaluations: on the one hand, a tactical assessment of the military balance on the island; on the other hand, a strategic assessment of Spain's position. While Spanish military forces and the LA had reached a *de facto* stalemate on the island, this essentially equalled to a strategic defeat for Spain. As US policymakers admitted in diplomatic dispatches, three years of conflict and two years of reconcentration policy made clear that Spanish forces could not defeat the rebellion. The poor conditions of the Spanish forces and their failure to launch a new offensive in January 1898 simply confirmed the point. The instability produced by Spanish reforms on the island had already made US concerns more concrete, stressing the need for more incisive measures on the part of the US.¹²³ In particular, the US needed to

¹¹⁹ Linderman 1974: 37-47; O'Toole 1984: 146-147; Offner 2004: 57.

¹²⁰ On the impending Spanish defeat, see Perez 1983: 175-180. On the stalemate reached by the two sides, see Offner 1992: 227-228; Tone 2006: xii, 238.

¹²¹ FRUS 1898: 754.

¹²² Zakaria 1998: 174, 176.

¹²³ Perez 1983: 166-168.

act before May, that is: before the start of the rainy season on the island, when the US feared the Spanish army could not sustain a renewed offensive of the LA; and, before the scheduled local elections on the island envisaged by Sagasta's reform plan. Faced with the prospect of the LA's victory and of an independent Cuba ruled by a local leadership not favourable to Washington yet legitimised by the upcoming elections, the administration opted for direct intervention.¹²⁴

McKinley requested the authorisation to intervene in his message to Congress on 11th April. McKinley's message is revealing of how the same elite dynamics that led the US towards intervention, particularly pattern of elite relations, informed also the actual form taken by US intervention. First, the administration refused to recognise the Cuban provisional authorities in order to maintain US autonomy in the ensuing operations and avoid negotiating US objectives with the LA and the Cuban provisional government. Simply put, the administration was rejecting the possibility of an outright alliance with the LA and the Cuban provisional authorities. As McKinley explained,

to commit this country now to the recognition of any particular government in Cuba might subject us to embarrassing conditions of international obligations toward the organization so recognized. In case of intervention our conduct would be subject to the approval or disapproval of such government. We would be required to submit to its direction and to assume to it the mere relation of a friendly ally.¹²⁵

Second, the president called for a 'forcible intervention of the United States as a neutral'. As such, US intervention would involve 'hostile constraints upon *both* the parties to the contest as well as to enforce a truce as to guide the eventual settlement'.¹²⁶ In this sense, the US intervention not only took place within a context of multiple sovereignty but was also intended to defuse the competing claims of sovereignty on the island and enforce an American one over Cuba.¹²⁷ Finally, the only solution to the Cuban crisis was identified in the 'enforced pacification' of the island and the 'establishment of a stable government,

¹²⁴ Ibid.: 170-178; Tone 2006: 243.

¹²⁵ FRUS 1898: 757.

¹²⁶ Ibid., emphasis added.

¹²⁷ Healy 1963: 21; Perez 1983: 181.

capable of maintaining order and observing its international obligations, insuring peace and tranquillity...'.¹²⁸

McKinley's message responded also to internal political considerations. First, the Cuban crisis itself, McKinley reminded its audience, entailed political consequences at home which intervention would solve:

the temper and forbearance of our people have been so sorely tried as to beget a perilous unrest among our own citizens which has inevitably found its expression from time to time in the National Legislature.¹²⁹

Second, to bridge the gap between the expansionists and the anti-imperialists and gain consensus within the Democratic camp, McKinley stressed three aspects: the continuity of the proposed action with the precedents set by former presidents, particularly Democratic ones; the noble cause of the Cuban revolution portrayed as a struggle for freedom of a 'dependent people'; and the humanitarian concerns driving US action. As indicated in the address, the US was intervening 'according to the large dictates of humanity' to 'put an end to the barbarities'.¹³⁰

Congress authorised the president to intervene with the Joint Resolution of 20th April 1898. In doing so, it also approved the Teller Amendment impeding the US to exercise direct sovereignty over the island after its pacification. While apparently inconsistent with the longstanding US objectives in Cuba by rejecting the possibility to annex the island, the adoption of the Teller amendment responded to political considerations. First and foremost, its pledge of eventual Cuban independence proved useful to secure support for Washington's intervention from both the anti-imperialist camp within the US elite as well as from the *junta* and the LA.¹³¹ Further, the amendment did not deprive the US from the possibility of establishing forms of indirect control over

¹²⁸ FRUS 1898: 759. As clarified by Second Assistant Secretary of State Alvey Adee (quoted in Perez 1983: 182), the US 'could hold the Cuban territory in trust until, with restored tranquillity a government could be constitutionally organized which we could formally recognize and with which we could conclude a treaty regulating our future relations to and guarantee of the Republic'.

¹²⁹ FRUS 1898: 751.

¹³⁰ Ibid.: 751, 755-759.

¹³¹ General Calixto Garcia (quoted in Kinzer 2006: 38) made this clear: 'it is true that they have not entered into an accord with our government...but they have recognized our right to be free, and that is enough for me'.

Cuba nor the possibility of an eventual annexation via Cuban request, that is with the consent of Cuban leaders.¹³² As Jules Benjamin points out, annexation was still possible through 'a natural rather than a forced process...Nobody spoke of ruling the island (for very long) without the consent of its people. The trick was to obtain that consent'.¹³³

This meant primarily the establishment of a new political order on the island in line with US interests and values. According to Senator Joseph Foraker (R-Ohio), the US promise of independence to the Cubans 'did not mean that we would or should be indifferent as to the kind of government they established'. Similarly, for Senator Orville Platt (R-Connecticut), pacification ultimately meant a specific type of government, precisely the 'establishment in that island of a government capable of adequately protecting life, liberty and property'.¹³⁴ For these reasons, the eventual composition of the new Cuban elite became a critical concern for the administration; ensuring the control of Cuba to the pro-American segments of the Cuban counter-elite became necessary to keep the door open to American influence and an eventual request of annexation. In this regard, the concomitant rejection of the Turpie-Foraker Amendment, requesting US recognition of the existing revolutionary institutions on the island, avoided empowering those Cuban actors contrary to annexation or a US protectorate.¹³⁵ In line with the traditional US policy towards Cuba, the US political elite recognised the Cubans' right to independence but not Cuba's revolutionary institutions. Put differently, the US was intervening in favour of the revolution's basic objective, i.e. the expulsion of Spain, but not of its revolutionary leaders.

Elite dynamics also shaped the US mobilisation effort and eventually the modality of US operations. First, domestic political considerations influenced military mobilisation. Whilst the US Navy enjoyed a significant build-up during the 1880s and 1890s, the US Army consisted only of 28.000 men in the first

¹³² Perez 1998a: 20-21, 30; Benjamin 1990: 60; Perez 1995: 37.

¹³³ Benjamin 1990: 60.

¹³⁴ Both Senator Foraker and Platt are quoted in Perez 1998a: 31.

¹³⁵ Offner 1992: 187, 193; Perez 1995: 37. It is noteworthy that also the proponents of the Turpie-Foraker Amendment questioned neither the objective of US policy – ending Spanish sovereignty over Cuba and establishing an American claim on it – nor the decision to use military force to achieve this objective. See Holbo 1967: 1322.

months of 1898.¹³⁶ The risks of engaging the 150.000 Spanish troops present in Cuba were obvious, especially for an army whose main operations after the Civil War had been conducted primarily within US borders against relatively small-sized contingents of Native Americans. An expansion of the US army was therefore necessary. However, Southern Democrats and Populists blocked the possibility of creating an all regular army mainly out of concerns for its possible internal use.¹³⁷ To obviate these obstacles and take advantage of the widespread enthusiasm for the war, McKinley issued a call for 125.000 volunteers to be added to the regular army and the estimated 100.000 men of the National Guard. By May, the US government succeeded in recruiting 200.442 volunteers later assigned to the regular army, the National Guard and to all-volunteers units, the most famous of which was represented by the 1st United States Cavalry Volunteer led by Brigadier General Leonard Wood and Theodore Roosevelt, better known as the *Rough Riders*.¹³⁸ In addition, the administration took advantage of the mobilisation efforts to foster its electoral position among those groups it lost in the 1896 elections: military expenditures were channelled in a naval build-up that provided employment for northern workers; the budgetary surplus was invested in the West to gain consensus in the Populist strongholds.¹³⁹

Second, the US military had to adapt its contingency plans in Cuba in order to take into account both the non-recognition of the Cuban LA and the political interests of the administration. All pre-1898 military plans prepared by the US Naval War College and Navy Department were centred on the possibility of indirect intervention in Cuba, providing military aid to support the land operations conducted by the LA.¹⁴⁰ The administration's non-recognition of the rebels, however, led to the abandonment of US plans for indirect intervention despite the reduced military costs and risks involved compared to a direct

¹³⁶ Smith 1994a: 48-72.

¹³⁷ Trask 1981: 150. As a result, the regular army reached only 44.125 men in May and 65.000 men in August.

¹³⁸ Linderman 1974: 60-64; Trask 1981: 155-156; Smith 1994a: 98-101.

¹³⁹ Trubowitz 2011: 94-95.

¹⁴⁰ Trask 1981: 74-78.

ground intervention of the US Army.¹⁴¹ Cooperation with the LA remained limited at the tactical level throughout the US operations on the island. The US army relied on the LA men mainly for support roles and as guides, leaving Cuban troops outside US major military engagements. Military relations between the two forces increased US doubts about Cuban rebel's ability to rule Cuba and reinforced longstanding racial stereotypes about the rebels.¹⁴² Finally, the decision to land US forces in the Eastern province of Cuba, instead of the closer Northern shores, stemmed from the administration's intention to engage with the bulk of Spanish troops and end the operations as quickly as possible in order to focus on the campaign pledges in view of the November 1898 midterm elections.¹⁴³

On 14th June, US troops landed at Guantanamo Bay, Daiquiri and Siboney, with the major battles taking place in Las Guasimas, El Caney and San Juan Hill between 24th June and 1st July. Finally, between 3rd and 16th July, US naval units destroyed the Spanish fleet in Santiago, leading to a quick Spanish surrender. Often uncritically attributed primarily to the superiority of US forces, the rapid Spanish defeat on all theatres of operations derived from a more complex set of factors: the poor choices made by Spanish commanders; the logistical problems experienced by the Spanish navy in operating on long distances; the devastating impact that three years of counterinsurgency campaign against the LA; and, the effects of the yellow fever on the organisation and morale of Spanish troops.¹⁴⁴ Following US landings in Puerto Rico, an armistice was declared on 12th August with negotiations finalised in December 1898 with the Treaty of Paris. Significantly, the US excluded the LA and PRC representatives from both the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Paris as well as from the ceremony for the official transfer of power to American authorities in Habana.

¹⁴¹ Significantly, this decision went against the advice of the army top echelons, including General Nelson Miles, Commanding General of the US Army at the time. See Holbo 1967: 1329; Tone 2006.

¹⁴² Healy 1963: 32-34; Benjamin 1990: 53; Perez 1995: 8-11.

¹⁴³ Trask 1981: 168; Smith 1994a: 106-112; Tone 2006: 273-274.

¹⁴⁴ Smith 1994a: 49; Tone 2006: 13, 97-99.

After Intervention: Selecting the Cuban Elite

Elite dynamics shed light also on the subsequent steps the administration took in Cuba as well as on the underlying objective of securing a favourable political elite on the island. In turn, the latter provide additional evidence of the 'roll-on' effects exerted by the elite dynamics highlighted in the previous sections.

On 1st January 1899, the government of the island was officially transferred to a US military administration led by Major General John R. Brooke. The Philippines insurrection begun in February 1899, however, raised concerns in Washington over a similar outcome in Cuba and immediately led the administration to reconsider its military presence on the island.¹⁴⁵ American fears in this regard were substantiated in the fall of 1899 when rumours concerning the US plan to establish an American permanent civilian government in Cuba sparked demonstrations in Habana. Contemporarily, the strengthening of the anti-imperialist camp in Washington further stressed the political risks the administration could incur, particularly the risk of a Democratic victory in the 1900 presidential elections.¹⁴⁶ As summarised by the journalist and historian Henry Adams in February 1899,

the President and everybody else are almost as eager to get out of Cuba as they were a year ago to get into it. They are as docile as lambs. The thought of another Manila at Havana sobers even an army-contractor. If the Democrats were united....I think Bryan might be President after all...¹⁴⁷

In the autumn of 1899, Elihu Root, the newly appointed Secretary of War, accelerated US efforts to militarily disengage from the island, reducing American troops from 45.000 men to 11.000 men by the end of 1899. At the same time, Root stepped up US plans to establish an effective 'suitable government' in Habana with the appointment on 20th December 1899 of Leonard Wood as the new military governor of Cuba to replace the more moderate General Brooke.¹⁴⁸ Wood led US efforts into two directions.

¹⁴⁵ Millett 1968: 36, 42.

¹⁴⁶ Healy 1963: 142; Foner 1972: 514-524.

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Haley 1963: 72.

¹⁴⁸ Healy 1963: 58, 153; Millett 1968: 36.

The US quickly began a process of Americanisation of the island through economic and ideological intervention.¹⁴⁹ US economic intervention consisted primarily of economic investments in Cuba and eventually the signing of the Reciprocity Treaty in 1903, opening up the US market to Cuban cane sugar and the Cuban market to US products.¹⁵⁰ In addition, the military government on the island made significant efforts to promote American values in Cuba. Similarly to what US authorities were implementing in Puerto Rico and the Philippines, the US sought to shape the political culture of the Cuban elite and of its society.¹⁵¹ In particular, the US identified in the educational system the most important conduit for channelling US values in Cuba, promoting the establishment of Protestant schools on the island as well as training programmes for Cuban teachers in the US. These initiatives were aimed at reducing the cultural and social heterogeneity between the two polities and showing Cubans the benefits of joining the American polity.¹⁵²

At the same time, the US acted swiftly to favour the emergence of a pro-US political elite that could guarantee US influence over Cuba. This process took three forms. First, the US disbanded the LA and dissolved the existing revolutionary institutions on the island. In a classic example of divide-and-rule tactic, the McKinley administration took advantage of the ongoing tensions between the civilian leadership of the Cuban revolution, coalesced under the new Cuban Assembly of Santa Cruz, and the LA, intentioned to bypass the authority of the Assembly and already working through the New York *junta* to secure a direct channel of communication with the US administration. The administration first isolated the Cuban Assembly and subsequently negotiated the disbandment of the LA directly with general Gomez. Gomez accepted the

¹⁴⁹ On the definition of both economic and ideological intervention, see Introduction: 23.

¹⁵⁰ It is worth noting that, in contrast to the expectations of the revisionist accounts, US economic intervention was rather limited at this stage. The 1903 Reciprocity Treaty resulted primarily from Cuban requests and the administration's intention to use the Treaty to secure Cuban elite's support over the final settlement of US-Cuban relations. Furthermore, the adoption of the Foraker Amendment in 1899 constrained the military government's autonomy in granting concessions to private companies in Cuba, significantly limiting US economic penetration during the occupation. See Healy 1963: 189-206, 211-215; Millett 1968: 32; Benjamin 1990: 65-69, 76.

¹⁵¹ On the case of US ideological intervention in Puerto Rico and the Philippines, see Go 2008.

¹⁵² Benjamin 1990: 61; Perez 1995: 38-50.

US offer in exchange of a direct presidential guarantee for Cuban independence in order to facilitate the pacification of the island and eliminate the conditions that prevented the US to fulfil the pledge included in the Teller Amendment. Yet, the deal made the LA increasingly dependent on the US, as Washington provided the necessary support for the maintenance of the LA, setting up a \$3 million fund for its demobilisation. Left outside the agreement and ostracised by both the military leadership and the *junta* in New York, the Assembly became increasingly marginal and was dissolved in March 1899.¹⁵³

Second, the US co-opted both former Cuban exiles and members of the New York *junta* within the newly established civilian administration set by US authorities in Cuba.¹⁵⁴ Of the four departments of the civilian administration established by the US, three went to former members of the *junta* and of the PRC in New York; only one to a leader of the Assembly.¹⁵⁵ As pointed out by Perez, 'in selecting Cubans from the expatriate ranks, Americans recruited allies from within the most ideologically compatible sector of the separatist polity'.¹⁵⁶ In addition, in order to fill the gap left by Spanish forces and the LA, the US reorganised Cuban military forces into the newly established Rural Guard and helped train its new military elite.¹⁵⁷

Third, the US military government in Cuba oversaw the process of institution building of the new Cuban republic to ensure a political order in the island compatible with the American model and to support those elements that favoured close links with the US, namely the Cuban Creoles and annexationists. On 25th July 1900, the US started the process for the selection of the Cuba's Constitutional Convention. In this regard, US authorities actively interfered with the political competition in Cuba, which revolved around three formations: the Union Democratica, which included the upper class representatives and controlled the conservative vote; the Nationalist Party,

¹⁵³ Haley 1963: 45-46; Benjamin 1977: 7; Perez 1983: 250-267.

¹⁵⁴ Perez 1983: 250-267; Benjamin 1990: 62, 72-73.

¹⁵⁵ Specifically, the Department of Justice and Public Instruction went to Jose Antonio Gonzales Lanuza; the Department of Agriculture, Commerce, Industries, and Public Works to by Adolfo Saenz Yanez; and the Department of Finance to Pablo Desvernine. Only the Department of State and Government went to Domingo Mendez Capote, former vice-president of the Assembly. See Haley 1963: 56-57; Perez 1983: 290.

¹⁵⁶ Perez 1983: 289.

¹⁵⁷ Perez 1995: 18-24.

supported by Maximo Gomez, which advocated Cuban independence but also included veterans who cooperated with the US military government; and, the Federal Republicans of Jose Miguel Gomez, who were contrary to continued US presence in the island and controlled most of the black vote. The US provided direct support to the Union Democratica, in the hope that they could take control of the new Cuban institutions and eventually lead Cuba towards annexation.¹⁵⁸ For this purpose, the US worked through a form of 'electoral intervention'.¹⁵⁹ To counter the Nationalist party in view of the elections for the Constitutional Convention scheduled in September, Wood toured the island to campaign for what he described as the 'best men', that is the conservative candidates.¹⁶⁰ In addition, given the overall support for US presence among the local upper class, the US military administration devised an electoral law that limited the franchise via literacy and property requirements, denying the vote to two-thirds of all adult men in Cuba. As the only concession made to secure the legitimacy of the new electoral law, Wood allowed the right to vote to veterans of the LA.¹⁶¹

However, US efforts in this regard utterly failed. Already at the municipal elections of June 1900, the Union Democratica obtained a poor electoral result, with the Nationalists winning most of the local competitions thanks to the support of the veterans of the LA. The elections for the Constitutional Convention in September 1900 resulted in an even more striking defeat for the Union Democratica: 30 of the 31 elected members were either Nationalists or Federal Republicans, all favouring outright independence.¹⁶² The failure of US efforts in securing a victory of the Union Democratica sanctioned the failure of US projects of annexation by Cuban invitation.¹⁶³ The defeat of the Union Democratica resulted from the influence of the nationalist political formula set by Marti within the Cuban society as well as from the Union Democratica's inability to gain the vote of the LA veterans, mainly small peasants who actively participated in the destruction of the upper class' property during the

¹⁵⁸ Healy 1963: 144-152; Millett 1968: 44-45; Foner 1972: 534-558; Perez 1995: 39.

¹⁵⁹ Wright 1939.

¹⁶⁰ Quoted in Perez 1983: 313.

¹⁶¹ Benjamin 1990: 62-63; Perez 1983: 310-311.

¹⁶² Millett 1968: 45; Perez 1983: 316.

¹⁶³ Healy 1963: 143; Millett 1968: 45; Foner 1972: 530.

war.¹⁶⁴ It also indicated US leaders' inability to understand the consequences of their support to their local allies. The Union Democratica, in fact, suffered from its association with the US. In other words, the US support did not provide any significant external validation to the Union Democratica; on the contrary, it represented a liability for its leaders. In this sense, the US decision to rely on the Cuban upper class as its main political interlocutor and get rid of the revolutionary institutions pushed American leaders into blind alley. On the one hand, it supported a faction on which it could exercise significant influence mainly because of shared values and interests but that held scarce political legitimacy. On the other hand, this entailed limiting US influence over the wider nationalist front, that is the only leaders having political legitimacy within Cuban society.¹⁶⁵

As a result, the US had to recalibrate its support toward the more moderate *independentistas* within the Nationalist Party who were willing to cooperate with the US. As Wood recollected, in the Convention there were 'about fifteen men of doubtful qualifications and character and about six of the worst rascals and fakirs [*sic*] in Cuba', yet there were also 'about ten absolutely first class men', with whom he could still work.¹⁶⁶ This possibility of cooperation was also eased by the condition of the Cuban elite factions at the time. Deeply divided among them and lacking control of the highest positions in Cuba controlled by US officials, the Cuban elite factions soon began to seek US support as a way to compensate for their own political weakness and enlist Washington in their own struggle for power in Cuba.¹⁶⁷ The importance of securing American aid was exemplified by the presidential elections of 1901, where US support proved to be crucial to ensure the election of the former leader of the *junta*, Estrada Palma, as Cuba's first president. Favoured by the extensive contacts established with US political elite members, the US administration fully supported his election. On the contrary, Wood contrasted Estrada Palma's main opponent, General Bartolome Maso, who advocated less strict relations with the US.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Tone 2006.

¹⁶⁵ Foner 1972: 456-462, 545; Benjamin 1990: 67.

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Healy 1963: 148.

¹⁶⁷ Benjamin 1990: 68-73.

¹⁶⁸ Millett 1968: 47-48.

Finally, in order to secure US influence on more permanent bases before withdrawal, the administration pushed for the approval of the so-called Platt Amendment.¹⁶⁹ Attached to the new Cuban constitution, the amendment formalised an American protectorate on the island by guaranteeing US control over Cuban foreign policy as well as basing rights. Importantly, the amendment's Article III allowed the US to directly influence the new political order established on the island. In this regard, it accorded the US an unprecedented 'right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty'.¹⁷⁰ Once approved, the US proceeded with the withdrawal of its troops and the proclamation of the new Cuban Republic on 20th May 1902 with the former *junta* leader Estrada Palma as its first president.¹⁷¹

Conclusions: The Consequences of Intervention

The present case study has examined the role played by elite dynamics operating at three different levels in shaping the US decision to intervene. First, the core ideas of the American political creed defined Cuba as a primary objective for US political leaders. Cuba came to represent a political prize that specific international and domestic conditions allowed the Republican Party to grasp. At the same time, the challenge posed by the competing formula of the Cuban *independentistas* significantly reduced the possibility of cooperation between Washington and one of the leading Cuban factions, despite the military and strategic rationale for increased cooperation with the LA in an anti-Spanish function. As noted in Chapter 3, not just antithetic but also competing political formulas can reduce the room for diplomatic and political relations among elite groups when such ideological claims serve the legitimacy and political support enjoyed by elite groups.

¹⁶⁹ At the time, the American press attributed Democratic acquiescence to the Platt amendment to the concomitant provision of funds to the South; similarly, the promise of a tariff reduction, later enshrined in the 1903 Reciprocity Treaty, eased Cuban concerns. See Healy 1963: 165; Foner 1972: 619.

¹⁷⁰ Millett 1968: 41.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*: 42-46.

Second, Cuba's future mattered not only in ideological and strategic terms. Cuba mattered also for the ongoing political confrontation in Washington, primarily for the Republicans concerned by a rising Democratic opposition that was using the Cuban card to gain control of US institutions. Military intervention in Cuba secured not only US elite's control over the island and the wider region, but also reinforced the Republicans' domestic position. In this regard, intervention served a twofold objective: establishing an American order over Cuba and the Caribbean; and, securing Republican control in Washington.¹⁷²

Third, contrary to historical and theoretical explanations focusing primarily on causal factors originating in the US or in its relations with Spain, Cuban political actors played a decisive role in favouring US intervention. The role played by the Cuban counter-elite needs to be taken into account in order to develop more accurate explanations of the drivers of US intervention, its timing, and the objectives sought by the US on the island during the occupation. The timing and modality of US intervention resulted from the interplay of elite politics and relations between Washington and Habana, favouring military intervention in two ways: first, these dynamics foreclosed spaces for cooperation between the US and the Cuban revolutionaries; second, they favoured the identification of shared interests between US policymakers and those Cuban actors and representatives favouring US presence in Cuba. The US intervened when all other options to secure its influence over Cuba failed and when faced with the prospects of a possible LA victory. As a result, the US intervened bypassing the LA and Cuban provisional institutions, while acting to secure the power position of its local allies. Who ruled Cuba mattered for US policymakers and intervention, despite all its limits on the ground, served the purpose of selecting the new political authorities of the island.

The consequences of the Cuban intervention for the US were significant. First, by fencing off an outright victory of the Cuban counter-elite and of its competing claim, the US succeeded in projecting its vision of an American order in the Caribbean in line with the American mission and its longstanding principles. Moreover, by formalising a US right to intervene as enshrined in the

¹⁷² Offner 1992; LaFeber 1993.

Platt Amendment, the US military victory in Cuba represented a step towards a more ambitious interpretation of the Monroe doctrine, as later exemplified in the Roosevelt Corollary.¹⁷³

Second, US intervention in Cuba had an indirect effect on the US power position. The intervention had lasting consequences for US armed forces given the expansion of the regular army it produced, the establishment of important naval bases in the Caribbean and the Pacific, and the reforms it sparked in 1903 establishing a General Staff and an Army War college.¹⁷⁴ Importantly, the US erased the presence of a European state from its southern border while securing a new ally in Cuba which provided material support to Washington during subsequent US military efforts, for example during the First World War.

Finally, having grasped Cuba as well as the other fruits fallen off the Spanish empire, the US laid the foundations of its own empire. US intervention ensured American indirect control over the island and shaped a client political elite in Cuba. The Platt amendment shaped US-Cuban relations in important yet unintended ways. It did so by providing Washington with the legal means to either militarily alter an unfavourable situation in Cuba in case of political change in Habana (*ex post*) or to exert pressure on the incumbent elite through the threat of military intervention (*ex ante*). Yet, as predicted by Senator Foraker at the time, the various Cuban elite factions could take advantage of the provisions of the Platt amendment to enlist the US support in their political struggle for the Cuban state: the incumbent faction by formal invitation; the opposition by rebellion.¹⁷⁵ It was a lesson that the US political elite began to realise soon, when renewed unrest in the island led to a second US intervention in 1906, encouraged this time by the Liberal Party in order to solve the ongoing political crisis and depose Estrada Palma.¹⁷⁶ As frankly stated by Eduardo Guzman, LA veteran and representative of the 1906 rebellion, rebel forces were acting

with the sole end that the Americans shall come as quickly as possible, as we prefer to live under the shelter of the justice of a foreign power than

¹⁷³ Healy 1963: 213-214.

¹⁷⁴ Millett 1968: 6; Skowronek 1982: 112-118; 215-216.

¹⁷⁵ Millett 1968: 42; Falk 1986: 8.

¹⁷⁶ Falk 1986: 9; Benjamin 1990: 78.

submit ourselves to tyranny under the flag which has cost us so much to acquire.¹⁷⁷

For the US political elite, the cycles of instability on the island perpetuated a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby Cuban leaders continued to show their inability to rule Cuba thus requiring US intervention, which in turn created the bases for further military interventions, not only in 1906 but also in 1912.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, intervention enforced a dependency pattern that guaranteed US influence over the circulation of elites in Cuba and that Cuban factions were able to manipulate in order to enlist American support for their own purposes.¹⁷⁹ As suggested in Chapter 3, intervention both strengthened the intervener's influence over the target while leaving the local elite relatively autonomous and able to influence the intervening elite in significant ways.¹⁸⁰

Interestingly, the experience of military intervention in Cuba influenced the selection and context of US leaders themselves. If the conflict brought about the first glimpse of a new empire, it also favoured the emergence of an imperial aristocracy and discourse. On the one hand, as underscored by Zakaria, the conflict led to the 'birth of the modern presidency', establishing a 'symbiotic relationship between national executive power and foreign policy activism that continued throughout the twentieth century'.¹⁸¹ On the other hand, the Cuban crisis proved valuable for the imperialist front by providing its advocates with new rallying cries.¹⁸² As May argues,

an imperialist movement had come into being and was not to be demolished...Its leaders had discerned that public opinion could be captured for an imperialist cause, if only that cause could be clothed in the rhetoric of piety.¹⁸³

It was a set of political symbols that could be used by those political leaders whose emergence had been favoured by the Cuban intervention itself. The most striking case is represented by Theodore Roosevelt, whose role in the conflict

¹⁷⁷ Millett 1968: 68.

¹⁷⁸ Millett 1968; Benjamin 1977: 26, fn. 63-64; Falk 1986: 10.

¹⁷⁹ Perez 1995: 24.

¹⁸⁰ Chapter 3: 122-127.

¹⁸¹ Zakaria 1998: 12.

¹⁸² Tone 2006: 224.

¹⁸³ May 1961: 23-24.

helped him to secure his nomination to the Republican ticket in 1900. Similarly, William Taft before becoming president had been Governor-General of the Philippines between 1901 and 1903 and subsequently provisional Governor of Cuba in 1906. Within the Democratic Party, Bryan enthusiastically supported the war and volunteered in the conflict, further contributing to its political career.¹⁸⁴ The impact of the conflict was effectively grasped by another Democrat, Woodrow Wilson. According to Wilson, 'no war has ever transformed [the US] quite as the war with Spain...We have witnessed a new revolution. We have seen the transformation of America completed'.¹⁸⁵ Soon Wilson would witness an even more challenging revolution.

¹⁸⁴ Falk 1986: 7; Saldin 2011: 58.

¹⁸⁵ Quoted in Smith 1994b: 38.

Chapter 5

To Start a Republic in Siberia: US Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1918-1920

‘— I am going to buy Siberia and start a republic...In those mines and prisons are gathered together the very finest and noblest and capablest multitude of human beings that God is able to create. Now if you had that kind of a population to sell, would you offer it to a despotism? No, the despotism has no use for it; you would lose money. A despotism has no use for anything but human cattle. But suppose you want to start a republic?

— Yes, I see. It’s just the material for it.’

(Mark Twain, *The American Claimant*, 1891)

Introduction

In 1917, Russia experienced two revolutions. The February Revolution (March 1917) led to the establishment of a Provisional Government dominated by the representatives of the Constitutional Democrats (Kadets) and of the Socialist-Revolutionaries (SRs). Welcomed in Washington as the realisation of the Liberal-democratic principle of government, president Woodrow Wilson identified the Provisional Government as ‘a fit partner for a league of honour’, a new Liberal-democratic partner that could follow the American model.¹ As such, the US was the first government to recognise the Russian Provisional Government on 22nd March 1917. The administration also provided support to the nascent Russian democracy in its ongoing conflict against the Central Powers mainly in the form of US political guidance, propaganda initiatives, and financial and material support.²

On the contrary, following the Bolshevik Revolution (November 1917) and the

¹ Filene 1967: 12; Goldhurst 1978: 17; Saul 2001: xi-xii.

² The US disbursed up to \$450 million to the Russian Provisional Government, see Filene 1967: 18-21; Davis and Trani 2002: 36-45, 84.

ensuing civil war between the Bolsheviks and the White forces, Wilson approved the disbursement of up to \$190.2 million in aid to anti-Bolshevik forces and authorised military intervention in Russia on 17th July 1918 via two expeditions: the American Expeditionary Force Siberia (AEF) (August 1918 - winter 1920), consisting of 9.000 men; and the American Expeditionary Force North Russia (September 1918 - July 1919) of nearly 5.000 men. The following analysis will address the causes of this shift leading the US from its support of the Provisional Government to its decision to intervene.

The case of US intervention in the Russian Civil War is selected for both its theoretical and empirical relevance. At the empirical level, US intervention in Russia is of particular relevance given the subsequent evolution of US-Soviet relations after the Second World War. In addition, it allows the examination of the Wilsonian experience from the perspective offered by the theoretical framework outlined in Part I as a way to evaluate Wilson's motivations within the political context and elite dynamics affecting his decisions. In overcoming the usual analytical focus on Wilson's own motives and idealist vision, the following analysis follows previous efforts to 'vindicate Wilson' by evaluating the various sources of Wilson's interventionary policy.³ At the theoretical level, US intervention in Russia offers an interesting case to evaluate the reaction and the political processes affecting the US decision to intervene when faced not only with a revolution in an allied country but also with the emergence of an *antithetical* elite group explicitly questioning the legitimacy the US elite's domestic and international order. In this regard, it offers an alternative test compared to the mechanisms activated by the Cuban War of Independence examined in the previous chapter.

As I argue in the following chapter, US policy needs to be examined in regard to the elite dynamics ignited by both Russian revolutions. Military intervention ensued as a result of concurring processes shifting US policy from embracing the February Revolution to indirect forms of intervention and eventually to the dispatch of US troops on Russian soil. In particular, drawing on the framework developed in Chapter 3, I argue that the US decision was shaped by three interrelated elite dynamics. First, both the general and specific political formula of the incumbent coalition not only informed the overall political objective

³ Steigerwald 1999.

sought by the US elite in Russia but also dramatically hampered the possibility of accommodation with the Bolshevik elite. Second, military intervention allowed the US elite to respond to the effects of the Bolshevik Revolution on both the US international and domestic order. Third, the relationships established between the members of the US elite and the leaders of the Kadets and SRs *before* the Bolshevik Revolution continued to influence US policymaking *after* the Bolshevik takeover. Importantly, political developments in Siberia linked to Washington's allies in Russia proved decisive to pull the US towards intervention in 1918.

In order to clarify this, I will first address the contending explanations offered in the literature. Second, I will examine the causal antecedents shaped by elite dynamics. Third, I will clarify the policymaking process taking place in the first half of 1918 leading to the decision to intervene. Finally, I will evaluate how the same elite dynamics continued to influence US policy during US intervention in Siberia.

Contending Explanations

The literature on US intervention has underscored various and often conflicting objectives affecting the US decision to intervene in the Russian Civil War. In particular, intervention in Russia has been explained with reference to the US and its allies' interests in ensuring Russian war effort against Germany as well as in preventing Germany from acquiring allied military supplies present in Russia.⁴ Peter Filene, for instance, stresses how in 1918 concerns for the ongoing military operations in Europe were of primary importance for the majority of US policymakers when dealing with the Russian question.⁵ These works point out how the idea of revitalising first and then re-opening an Eastern front after Russian withdrawal from the First World War ran through allied decision-making and military planning throughout the post-revolutionary period.

Albeit sensible, the anti-German explanation for US intervention in Russia presents significant explanatory limits at closer scrutiny. Already at the time,

⁴ Kennan 1958a: 63; Ullman 1961: 74; Filene 1967; Swettenham 1967: 30-38; Pipes 1990: 606-670; Halliday 1999: 222.

⁵ Filene 1967: 39.

US military leaders, such as General Peyton March, US General Chief of Staff, contested the strategic rationale of reviving the Eastern Front via military intervention in Russia, arguing that such operation would only entail the dispersal of troops from the Western front.⁶ In fact, purely strategic motivations would have called to focus all military efforts on the Western front whilst trying to reach an accommodation with the Soviets to prevent any German-Soviet agreement and secure the Soviets' support. In addition, the anti-German explanation does not fully account for the presence of US troops in Siberia, away from the Eastern front. Further, by the time US troops arrived in Northern Russia and Siberia, the German threat to Russia was waning and military depots were either far from possible German operations or empty due to Bolshevik action.⁷ Importantly, after the armistice of November 1918 ending the First World War, any rationale for continued Allied intervention in Russia linked to the war effort against Germany would have lost any factual basis, yet Allied troops remained on Russian soil until 1920.⁸ As General William Graves, commander of the US Siberian expedition recalled, 'the Armistice had absolutely no effect in Siberia'.⁹

A second set of explanations, informed by early Soviet and revisionist works, explain US intervention in relation to the anti-Bolshevism of the US elite due to the threat posed to US investments and the broader capitalist circuits by the Bolshevik Revolution.¹⁰ Whilst anti-Bolshevism played an important role in determining US decisions towards the Bolshevik elite, as an explanation for US intervention it is limited. First, the anti-Bolshevism of the American elite does not prove by itself that intervention was conducted with the explicit aim of removing the Bolsheviks from power. As Maddox argues, 'that the President, detesting Communism, hoped for a successful counterrevolution is incontrovertible but in itself does not prove he conspired to promote one'.¹¹ Furthermore, if crushing the Bolshevik experiment was so important, then it is

⁶ Goldhurst 1978: 19. On the different yet initially cautious positions taken by General John J. Pershing, US commander in chief in Europe, and General Tasker H. Bliss, US representative to the Supreme War Council, see Manning 1952: 66; Unterberger 1956: 21.

⁷ Saul 2001: 310.

⁸ Brinkley 1966: 73-76.

⁹ Graves 1931: 144.

¹⁰ Ibid.; Williams 1963; Leffler 1994; Foglesong 1995.

¹¹ Maddox 1967: 436.

not clear why the US did not commit the necessary troops and support to the anti-Bolshevik forces to enforce such outcome. As argued by Davis and Trani, Wilson was anti-Bolshevik enough to try to counter it whenever possible, but not to start a crusade against it.¹² Finally, this approach fails to explain why Wilson rejected the possibility of intervention for considerable time after the Bolshevik Revolution.¹³

A third set of explanations stresses the anti-Japanese objectives of US intervention.¹⁴ Japan intervened in Siberia on 5th April 1918, deploying more than 70.000 men and pursuing a clear expansionist agenda. American concerns for the presence of Japanese troops in Siberia have been extensively documented. In this sense, the anti-Japanese explanation is not incorrect. Yet, as I will argue, it needs to be contextualised within the broader strategic setting shaping US intervention, including Tokyo's operations as much as other US allies' actions. In addition, the anti-Japanese explanation presents two explanatory limits. First, it is indeterminate as to the timing of US decision to intervene insofar as it does not explain why the US opted for intervention only four months after the allied authorisation for Japanese intervention in Siberia.¹⁵ Second, if Washington's objective was to keep Tokyo in check, the anti-Japanese explanation does not fully explain the reason why the US did not keep its forces in Siberia until the complete withdrawal of all Japanese troops in October 1922.¹⁶

Finally, linked to both the anti-Bolshevik and the anti-Japanese function of US intervention, other works have drawn attention to the economic drivers of US policy towards Russia. According to this interpretation, American intervention aimed both to 'preserve the open door in Siberia and North Manchuria, without interfering in the factional disputes of the Russians' and to reintegrate the Siberian region in an open international economic system.¹⁷ According to Leo Bacino, the anti-Bolshevik efforts in Siberia were subordinated to efforts to enforce the 'open door' principle against both Japanese and European

¹² Davis and Trani 2002: 205-206.

¹³ Steigerwald 1999: 89.

¹⁴ White 1950; Unterberger 1956; Kennan 1958a: 328-329; Davis and Trani 2002: 124-125.

¹⁵ Saul 2001: 229-230, 261.

¹⁶ Clements 1992: 112.

¹⁷ Unterberger 1956: 70; Bacino 1999.

imperialist designs of closed spheres of influence in Russia. In this sense, limited military intervention represented a compromise solution between the allies' plans for all-out military intervention and Wilson's plans for economic intervention in Siberia.¹⁸ Although this objective appears more consistent with US foreign policy tenets and investments in the area, it presents two problems. First, economic intervention needs to be analysed within the wider political goal pursued by the US in Russia.¹⁹ Economic intervention, as I will point out, represented a policy tool rather than the objective of US presence there. Second, as I will argue in the following sections, contrary to Bacino's account, the revolt of the Czech legion provided the US with more than just the 'moral grounds' to align with allied pressures for intervention and start its economic intervention.²⁰

In contrast to explanations focusing on US objectives, other works have centred their attention on the role played by president Wilson and his ideological outlook, given the numerous interventions he authorised while in office, including not only intervention in Russia but also in Mexico and Haiti.²¹ While the image of Wilson as a crusader and an interventionist is still prominent, recent works have offered a more nuanced assessment of Wilson's foreign policy, highlighting his reluctance to intervene as well as the non-idealist and strategic sources of his foreign policy.²² In fact, the image of Wilson as a Liberal crusader misses the complex, problematic and often contradictory view he held of military intervention.²³ In his encounter with foreign revolutions, the president often rejected options of all-out military interventions.²⁴ Importantly, the limited interventions Wilson authorised in Mexico reinforced his view on the limits and negative consequences of military interventions in revolutionary contexts.²⁵ The president's views of a possible intervention in Russia remained negative also in 1918. As Williams Wiseman, a British diplomat, remarked at the beginning of July 1918, 'the [US] President remains quite unconvinced by all

¹⁸ Bacino 1999: 3-5.

¹⁹ Davis and Trani 2002: 183.

²⁰ *Ibid.*: 73.

²¹ Knock 2009: 31.

²² Link 1979; Cooper 1983; Clements 1987; Calhoun 1986; Knock 1992; Smith 1994b; Schild 1995; Steigerwald 1999.

²³ Clements 1992: 111-113; Benbow 2010.

²⁴ Knock 2009: 32-33.

²⁵ Maddox 1967: 436; Knock 2009: 31.

political arguments in favor of Allied intervention, nor was he more impressed by the military arguments in favor of re-creating an Eastern Front'.²⁶ Given Wilson's personal evaluation of the limited utility of military interventions, the study of the sources of his interventionism needs to incorporate but at the same time move beyond Wilson's personal views. This is particularly important for the Russian case, since Wilson did not always play an active role in the formulation of US Russian policy, often delegating it to his advisor Edward House.²⁷

The IR literature on the subject has drawn on these historical accounts to propose various explanations for the military interventions taking place in Russia at the time. Classical Realists have focused on the role played by Wilson's inherent interventionism and ideological crusading.²⁸ Recently, Saunders explained the president's decisions concerning US interventions with reference to his causal beliefs about the domestic sources of foreign policy conduct.²⁹ As previously noted, the problem with these explanations focusing on Wilson stems from the negative views Wilson held on intervention, particularly in Russia, as well as from the role played by broader strategic factors highlighted in other explanations. At the same time, Wilson's ideological views needs to be evaluated *vis-à-vis* the general ideological framework shaped by the Liberal political formula. Not just Wilson, but Liberalism *tout court* connects domestic arrangements with foreign policy behaviour.³⁰ It is this focus on the domestic sources of foreign conduct and the possibility of using force to alter constitutional arrangements for the security of democratic states that makes Liberalism an essentially interventionist project.³¹

Other IR authors have focused on the function performed by US military intervention in Russia. Nick Bisley treats the intervention in Russia as an example of the counterrevolutionary efforts stemming from the very attack brought by the Bolsheviks to the common normative basis of the international

²⁶ Quoted in Melton 2001: 32.

²⁷ McFadden 1993: 9, 39-40.

²⁸ Kennan 1951; Levin 1968; Gardner 1984.

²⁹ Saunders 2011: 189-191.

³⁰ Hoffmann 1984: 12; Doyle 1986.

³¹ Jahn 2005: 177-178; Desch 2007/2008.

order at the time.³² Albeit a more nuanced version of the anti-Bolshevik argument, Bisley's analysis presents the same limit of the latter. Furthermore, it does not provide a detailed explanation of the US decision to intervene. On the contrary, Walt offers one of the most extensive theoretical and empirical analysis in IR of the drivers of US and Allied intervention in Russia. Walt discusses the strategic objectives of the Allied intervention, aimed at keeping Russia in the conflict rather than waging a war against Bolshevism or influencing the selection of the new rulers of Russia.³³ In this regard, Walt points out the limits of explanations relying solely on Allied hostility to Bolshevism, arguing in favour of an evaluation of how the Bolshevik Revolution affected balance of power dynamics and how these in turn pushed the US to intervene.

Despite the convincing empirical analysis provided, Walt's study presents two problems. First, the main limit of Walt's analysis stems from the attempt to force a complex domestic and international history, presented in great detail in his case study, into the theoretical straightjacket offered by Neorealism. Despite the valuable addition of his valuable balance-of-threat framework, Walt fails to take fully into account the causal impact of numerous factors presented in this empirical analysis. For instance, Walt mentions but fails to contextualise and explain Wilson's orders clarifying that the US intervention in Siberia was aimed at supporting the 'any efforts at self-government or self-defense in which the Russians themselves may be willing to accept assistance'.³⁴ While not driven exclusively by anti-Bolshevism, who ruled Russia mattered for US policymakers. *Pace* Walt, US policy was indeed affected by changes in Russia and by the elite circulation taking place there.³⁵ In addition, Walt notes the role played by the Russian ambassador and prominent Russian exiles over US Russian policy, yet it is not clear how this fits into his theoretical model.³⁶ Second, Walt highlights the role played by both the lack of reliable information from Russia and by misunderstandings and misperceptions produced by the Bolshevik Revolution, which raised the levels of hostility between the US and

³² Bisley 2004.

³³ Walt 1996: 133.

³⁴ *Ibid.*: 139, fn.35.

³⁵ *Ibid.*: 134-135.

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 140.

the Bolsheviks. However, Walt cannot fully explain the origins of such misperceptions, arising from the threat the Bolshevik regime posed to US leaders' domestic and international position. As I will argue, rather than from misinformation or lack of understating of the nature of Russian political actors, US policy was guided by close links with Russian actors.³⁷

The following analysis aims to overcome these limits by taking into account the twofold challenge posed by the Bolshevik Revolution and the way in which intervention allowed the US to shape a more favourable domestic and international environment. In doing so, it highlights the broader elite dynamics that influenced US policy. First, this allows moving beyond the analysis of Wilson's personal views to take into account the broader ideological and political framework that informed US intervention. Second, this allows taking into account the role played by Russian actors and the pattern of elite relations that favoured US intervention and informed its timing. In turn, both allow overcoming the confusion about US objectives in Russia. This confusion stems not only from Wilson's attempts to phrase what the US presence in Siberia as 'non-intervention', but also from the fact that the US did not intervene simply to counter the revolutionary process taking place in Russia.³⁸ On the contrary, the US administration intervened in favour of what they considered an ongoing revolutionary project: to support the political project which started with the February Revolution. In this regard, the major limit of previous explanations derives from their focus on the negative objectives of US intervention. Yet, the US intervention should not be seen exclusively in negative terms – as anti-German, anti-Japanese, or anti-Bolshevik – but also as a positive political project pursued via intervention and consistent with the US formula, the US elite's international and domestic objectives, and US policymakers' interest in supporting the leaders of the February Revolution in their ongoing struggle for Russia.

³⁷ Ibid.: 146.

³⁸ Clements 1992: 113.

Political Formulas: From Cooperation to Confrontation

US policy needs to be evaluated, first and foremost, within the general ideological framework shaped by the Liberal political formula on which the American model was founded and that defined US international purpose. The Liberal premises of the American formula provided US elite with its most basic and constant ideological assumption, 'the belief that the nation's security is best protected by the expansion of democracy worldwide'.³⁹ It is a belief that shapes a self-assumed and proclaimed 'responsibility' for the US hence for its leaders 'for the global expansion of freedom' according to the American political and economic model.⁴⁰

While present from its inception, this Liberal vision for the ordering of other communities assumes increased centrality at the beginning of the 20th Century and especially with the Wilson administration. Wilson operated and contributed to shape a specific historical passage characterised by the definite emergence of the US as a great power, in both military and economic terms, which removed the 'physical constraints' on American Liberalism.⁴¹ As seen in the previous chapter, in the second half of the 19th Century, US leaders began projecting onto the Western Hemisphere the principles and rallying symbols that had previously informed US expansion westwards. As a result, the US moved from the early 18th Century separation from European power politics and concerns about European interference in the Western Hemisphere, enshrined in the Monroe Doctrine, to a power position that allowed the US elite to fulfil the America's mission in the American continent and beyond.⁴² This process reached its ultimate consequences at the beginning of the 20th Century. In particular, the First World War, by engulfing the European system in a struggle that ultimately consumed its material and political legitimacy, provided an unprecedented opportunity for the US to reshape the European system in its own image.⁴³ The consequences of America's rise to great power status and of the context created by the Great War were increasingly evident to the US political leadership. As both Howard Zinn and Kendrick Clements note,

³⁹ Smith 1994b: 9.

⁴⁰ Westad 2000: 554-555; Foglesong 2007: 3-5.

⁴¹ Desch 2007/2008: 9. See also Molten 2005.

⁴² Vincent 1974: 103-104; Quinn and Cox 2007: 503-504.

⁴³ Quinn and Cox 2007: 507.

the rise of US power at the end of the 19th Century brought a 'new consciousness' of the US strength in the minds of its political leadership; a 'newfound sense of economic and military maturity that justified claiming a place among the great powers'.⁴⁴

With the Wilson administration, the idea of a Liberal peace, that is the promotion of the Liberal political and economic model to other societies as a tool to establish peace, both internationally and domestically, took a central place in the American foreign policy agenda.⁴⁵ This passage was favoured by a set of Progressive ideas that became influential within the American political elite in the first decade of the 20th Century. Progressives advocated a more activist role for the state both at home, via incisive domestic reforms, as well as abroad, via a more internationalist foreign policy that connected imperialist endeavours with the promotion of democratic reforms.⁴⁶ In particular, Progressive ideas occupied a central position within Wilson's specific political platform thanks to the role independent Progressives and Progressive internationalists played in assuring Wilson's election in 1916. As a consequence, Wilson endorsed a set of Progressive domestic reforms and, in foreign policy, embraced Progressive Internationalists' demands for the expansion of democracy abroad as well as for New Diplomacy, arms reduction, self-determination, and collective security.⁴⁷ The resulting foreign policy, while rejecting outright militarism, was also characterised by marked activism on the international scene and reformist ambitions, willing to support similar 'revolutionary' – i.e. reformist and progressive – efforts abroad.⁴⁸ Importantly, the exiguous majority enjoyed by the Democrats in the House of Representatives and the challenge posed by William Jennings Bryan after 1916 made Wilson increasingly dependent on this specific platform.⁴⁹

It is through this ideological outlook that both the US political elite and the incumbent Democratic faction responded to the events in Russia in 1917. Russia had already represented a possible objective for US liberalisation projects before

⁴⁴ See Zinn (2003: 299) and Clements (1992: 93) respectively.

⁴⁵ Quinn and Cox 2007: 501-506.

⁴⁶ Leuchtenburg 1952: 485; Dawley 2003; Monten 2005: 133-134.

⁴⁷ Cooper 2008: 10-11; Knock 2009: 39.

⁴⁸ Gardner 1984; Knock 1992.

⁴⁹ Cooper 2008: 12-13.

1917 given the peculiar image of Russia held by the American ruling elite as the optimal target for the implementation of the American model.⁵⁰ When the February Revolution led to the collapse of the Tsarist regime and opened the possibility for a Liberal order in Russia led by the Kadets and the moderate SRs, US policymakers fully embraced the new regime.

The February Revolution was welcomed in Washington as the realisation of the Liberal-democratic principle of government.⁵¹ As Wilson stated in April 1917, Russia 'was always in fact democratic at heart...and the great, generous Russian people have added...to the forces fighting for freedom'.⁵² In moving away from autocracy towards what seemed to be a democratic future, Russia provided the US with material that could be modelled according to American lines; a Liberal-democratic partner that could serve both Wilson's international agenda and strengthen its political message. As Norman Saul argues, US-Russian relations were thus premised on a 'mirror image', based on the assumption of a 'common relationship' whereby the US expected Russia to follow the American model.⁵³ The very process through which the new regime came to power reinforced this identification, distinguishing the February Revolution from previous revolutionary attempts that ended in violence and tyranny. A report from the US Embassy in March 1917 stated 'this is undoubtedly a revolution, but it is the best managed revolution that has ever taken place for its magnitude. The Duma is assuming control and is exercising its authority in Petrograd with rare good judgment'.⁵⁴ As a result, Wilson identified the Provisional Government as 'a fit partner for a league of honour'.⁵⁵

In turn, the similarity between the American political formula and the principles of the Russian regime had an immediate effect on the levels of cooperation between the two states. The US was the first government to

⁵⁰ US vision of a Liberal future for Russia and previous attempts to liberalise the country have been extensively addressed in Foglesong 2007. The quote from Mark Twain's *The American Claimant* that opened this chapter is one of the numerous representations of this broader yet often overlooked fascination with Russia and the similarities drawn between the US frontier and Siberia.

⁵¹ Goldhurst 1978: 17; Boyle 1993.

⁵² Quoted in Levin 1968: 42-43. See also Unterberger 1956: 8-10.

⁵³ Saul 2001: xi-xii.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Saul 2001: 89. For an overview of US negative views of radical revolutionary processes, see Hunt 1987.

⁵⁵ Filene 1967: 12.

recognise the Russian Provisional Government on 22nd March 1917. US aid immediately followed recognition by providing humanitarian relief through the Red Cross, limited financial assistance and military supplies, and logistical support to ensure the functioning of the Trans-Siberian Railway through the Steven Railway Commission. This was coupled with political and propaganda support through the Commission headed by Elihu Root in May 1917 and Edgar Sisson's mission to establish a section of the Committee on Public Information (CPI) in Russia in order to assist the Provisional Government's internal front in its struggle against Germany.⁵⁶ As Davis and Trani note, the limited material support offered by the US government at this stage stemmed from the general confidence of the American elite in the prospects of Russian democracy, an approach that ultimately created a mismatch between the ambitious US objectives in Russia and the limited tools used to support them.⁵⁷ Related to this, the US identification with the Provisional Government led US policymakers to ignore the multiple and increasing fissures emerging in the new Russian regime. In other words, US officials did not see the October Revolution coming.⁵⁸

The contrast between US reaction to the February and the October Revolution is significant. The very nature of Bolshevik rule and the clash between the American and the Bolshevik formulas dramatically reduced the possibility of cooperation between the two elite groups. According to Wilson, Bolshevism represented the 'negation of everything that is American', 'the negation of democracy'.⁵⁹ It was 'an "experiment" that tested a political, economic, and ideological system antithetical to American values'.⁶⁰ Further, US policymakers increasingly identified the Bolshevik regime with the rule of a tyrannical 'minority', 'a close monopoly of power by a very small group'.⁶¹ On the one hand, this discourse resonated within the US political formula, shaped by the longstanding Liberal tendency to treat autocratic regimes as an alien,

⁵⁶ Ibid.: 18-21; Boyle 1993: 3; Saul 2001: 95, 117; Davis and Trani 2002: 36-45, 84.

⁵⁷ Davis and Trani 2002: 57. American optimism regarding the prospects of democracy in Russia was still evident in 1918. As noted by Walt (1996: 138), Wilson's call for the evacuation of all foreign armies from Russia in his Fourteen Points mirrored his belief that a democratic Russia would eventually emerge without external assistance.

⁵⁸ McFadden 1993: 52-53.

⁵⁹ Wilson quoted in Foglesong (1995: 24) and Strakhovsky (1937: 73).

⁶⁰ Filene 1967: 3.

⁶¹ U.S. Department of State 1919b.

untrustworthy and threatening agent. On the other hand, it resonated with the Progressive critique of reactionary elites and 'personal revolutions' as compared to progressive social revolutions.⁶² This 'anti-elite' discourse was also consistent with the overall US military effort against the similarly described 'unaccountable' and 'dictatorial' elite ruling Germany.⁶³ In this sense, the anti-German and anti-Bolshevik wars were not in contradiction from the perspective of a leadership conducting a war against 'autocratic elites'.

Spaces for cooperation with the Bolsheviks were severely reduced by the Bolsheviks' own public revolutionary and ideological stance. The closing of the democratically elected Constituent Assembly in January 1918 by the Bolsheviks and the Soviet response to Wilson's 1918 message crystallized American views on the despotic and untrustworthy nature of the Bolshevik regime, making subsequent attempts to reach a more pragmatic arrangement politically intricate.⁶⁴ Notably, Bolsheviks' calls for world revolution further stressed the hostile intentions of the new Russian elite thus fuelling adversarial responses in the US. As Richard Pipes argues, 'by challenging the legitimacy of all foreign governments, the Bolsheviks invited all foreign governments to challenge theirs'.⁶⁵

This reaction to the Bolsheviks coupled with the Bolsheviks own public revolutionary stance severely limited the spaces of cooperation between the US and the Soviet leaders. This did not represent a foregone conclusion as purely strategic motivations would have called for an accommodation with the Bolsheviks in order to prevent any German advance or any German-Soviet alignment. Indeed, both the US and the Bolshevik leaders initially followed a flexible and pragmatic approach.⁶⁶ Leon Trotsky, for instance, sought Allied and specifically US support to reorganise the Russian Army against the German advances along the Russian Western borders.⁶⁷ In addition, the Allies and the Bolsheviks reached an 'oral agreement' for the protection of the strategic Northern region of Murmansk from German and White Finns' operations.

⁶² Foglesong 1995: 3; Desch 2007/2008: 11, 17; Knock 2009: 31.

⁶³ Quinn and Cox 2007: 508.

⁶⁴ FRUS 1918a: 29-32, 399-400.

⁶⁵ Pipes 1990: 669.

⁶⁶ Saul 2001: 206-212, 226-227.

⁶⁷ McFadden 1993: 57-78; Walt 1996: 135.

However, the case of Murmansk indicates the difficulty in maintaining also limited forms of cooperation. The 'oral agreement' was ultimately abandoned due to the divisions between the Bolshevik elite and the regional Murmansk Soviet and following the Allied recognition of the latter.⁶⁸ Soon, the Bolsheviks' agreement with Germany signed at Brest-Litovsk Treaty in March 1918 precluded the possibility of further collaboration between the US and the Bolsheviks against Germany. In more general terms, these tactical attempts at cooperation exemplified the underlying obstacles to a full-fledged recognition between the two elite groups. On the one hand, Soviet willingness to cooperate with the allies in 1918 emerged out of strategic necessity due to the compound threat posed externally by Germany and internally by the anti-Bolshevik forces supported by the Allies. On the other hand, US limited attempts to cooperate represented a compromise between the need to find an accommodation with an elite group that controlled the major Russian centres, and whose collaboration was needed for the war effort against Germany, and the 'intense moral antipathy' towards the Bolsheviks.⁶⁹ Only strategic necessity and concerns for survival forced these attempts; yet, these concerns were insufficient to overcome mistrust between the two elite groups. As a result, proponents in the US of expanded support to the Bolsheviks in an anti-German function were quickly dismissed.⁷⁰ Similarly, the Wilson administration rejected the idea of further collaboration with the Soviets on the bases of the 'ideological menace' posed by the Soviet regime.⁷¹ Two factors contributed to this approach. First, Soviet overtures were treated mainly as tactical overtures by the State Department.⁷² Second, the possibility of strengthening collaboration with the Bolsheviks – up to an eventual intervention by Soviet invitation to counter Germany before the Brest-Litovsk Treaty – was not endorsed also for fear of alienating the support of anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia.⁷³

The anti-Bolshevism of the US elite does not explain by itself the US decision to intervene, yet it provides an important intermediate passage reducing the

⁶⁸ Strakhovsky 1937; Kennan 1958b: 376.

⁶⁹ McFadden 1993: 9, 33.

⁷⁰ Saul 2001: 285-286.

⁷¹ Foglesong 1995: 66.

⁷² FRUS 1918a: 397-398; Filene 1967: 32.

⁷³ Kennan 1958b: 349-350; Saul 2001: 214.

policy options available to US leaders. The inability to reach a compromise with the Bolshevik significantly reduced the possibility of affecting events in Russia through peaceful channels. As a consequence, coercion became the only viable option to address the consequences of political change in Russia. Furthermore, this dynamic hampered later attempts to find a diplomatic accommodation between the US and Soviet leaders. The twofold international and domestic challenge posed by Bolshevism reduced the possibility to create sufficient domestic political support and consensus within the US political elite to promote more pragmatic solutions to the Russian question.

Power Struggle: A Twofold Threat

While the limits of cooperation with the Bolsheviks became increasingly evident to US policymakers, intervention became a compelling option as inaction could endanger the position of both the US elite and of its incumbent faction. The Bolshevik Revolution represented a twofold challenge for the power position of the US political elite, both an international and a domestic threat.

The Bolshevik takeover altered the international environment in which US leaders were operating. The shift from the February to the October Revolution deprived the US of a newly acquired yet important ally. Specifically, with the Bolshevik Revolution, Washington lost an ally from which the US could derive external validation and strategic assistance and on which American leaders hoped could exert significant political influence.⁷⁴ Given the impossibility of establishing any profitable political and security exchange with the Bolshevik elite, the US found itself with limited tools to influence events in Russia after the Bolshevik takeover. As a consequence, the US administration had to look for new political interlocutors. In this regard, the direct and indirect support provided to anti-Bolshevik forces was aimed at securing a degree of influence in the post-revolutionary Russia and establishing a dialogue with those forces that could put Russia back on the democratic track set by the February Revolution.

In turn, the US support to the anti-Bolshevik groups responded to a broader

⁷⁴ Foglesong 2007: 50. At the time, the US press repeatedly marked the pro-Allied stance of the Russian Provisional Government, see *The New York Times* 1917a, 1917d.

strategic dynamic characterised by the competing influence, interference, and eventually intervention by other states, including both US adversaries and allies. This struggle for Russia pushed US leaders towards a more intrusive policy in Russia in order to limit the actual and perceived influence exerted by other states on the various Russian factions. Particularly in the early stage of the Bolshevik Revolution, US leaders were concerned with the influence Germany was exerting on the Bolshevik leadership, concerns that fuelled a more activist policy aimed at contrasting Berlin's control over the new rulers of Russia.⁷⁵ Yet, US concerns were not limited to Germany. Despite their war alliance, US policymakers grew increasingly aware of the various attempts made by their allies – France, Britain, and Japan – to influence events in Russia via the support provided to their allies within the various Russian factions. A complex struggle for influence over the different anti-Bolshevik forces ensued between Washington and its allies, with the US, Britain, France, and Japan providing aid to different and often competing anti-Bolshevik groups and military leaders in an effort to identify and support the next rulers of Russia.⁷⁶ Responding to other states' initiatives allowed US leaders both to limit the influence of other states and extend their own influence over Russia. As Walt argues, 'by preventing foreign powers from controlling Russia's destiny, the U.S. presence would help bring the liberal forces in Russia to the fore'.⁷⁷ As a result, the Wilson administration tried to shape events in Russia and channel them along a path between the socialist adventurism of the Bolsheviks and the reactionary ambitions of the members of the old regime, in an attempt to save what was left of the Liberal revolution in 1917, which the US administration hoped it could ensure US influence.⁷⁸

Ensuring US influence in Russia was also key to secure Washington's broader foreign policy objectives. The Bolshevik Revolution put into question the US political leaders' ability to shape an international and European system according to their vision and interests. With the Bolshevik Revolution the US

⁷⁵ Walt 1996: 135-136. Concerns about Germany's influence were reinforced by the so-called Sissons Papers, allegedly demonstrating Berlin's control over the Bolsheviks. On the controversy regarding the Sisson Papers, see Kennan 1958a: 441-457.

⁷⁶ Goldhurst 1978: xiii; Walt 1996: 152-153.

⁷⁷ Walt 1996: 140.

⁷⁸ Levin 1968; Foglesong 2007: 50.

had lost what represented a 'precedent for the republicanizing (Americanizing?)...of Europe and much of the rest of the world'.⁷⁹ Fear of the spread of Bolshevism was reinforced by reports of Communist advances in Europe.⁸⁰ By threatening the world with revolution, the Bolsheviks were endangering the Liberal international order the Wilson administration was trying to forge at Versailles.⁸¹ As Somin argues,

a system based on the enforcement of shared liberal values through the League of Nations...could not easily function effectively if one of the most powerful European states was led by a political movement that not only rejected those values but openly proclaimed its intentions to actively undermine them.⁸²

The second paramount concern pushing the US administration to reject any accommodation with the new Russian elite and pushing US leaders towards a more interventionary stance was the threat posed by the Bolsheviks to the US domestic order. There was a shared conviction within the American political elite that the Bolshevik Revolution represented a threat to the American political order, the domestic cohesion of the American polity as well as a direct attack on its ideological foundations.⁸³ In particular, Wilson frequently commented on the vulnerability of the American polity to foreign and subversive propaganda.⁸⁴ Further, Secretary of State Robert Lansing claimed that the danger posed by the Soviets was even greater than the German one given not only Bolsheviks' rejection of key tenets of the American formula but also because they explicitly 'threatened [the US] with revolution'.⁸⁵

Concerns over the domestic threat posed by Bolshevism and the subversive propaganda emanating from Russia grew considerably during 1918. Political tensions coupled with tense industrial and racial relations.⁸⁶ The resulting Red Scare (1918-20) amplified the US political elite's apprehension for the mounting

⁷⁹ Saul 2001: 59.

⁸⁰ These concerns grew between 1918 and 1919, following the general strike in Germany in 1919 and the success of Ben Kula in Hungary. See Ashmead-Bartlett 1919; Grayson 1919c.

⁸¹ Vincent 1974: 146-147. See also U.S. Department of State 1919b: 20.

⁸² Somin 1996: 1.

⁸³ Foglesong 1995: 4-5; Fischer 2006: 69-71, 100-101.

⁸⁴ Foglesong 1995: 1.

⁸⁵ Ibid.: 66.

⁸⁶ Fried 1990: 41; McKillen 2010: 658.

social unrest in the country and the alleged threat posed by European immigrants and radical Socialists. The Espionage Act (1917) and Sedition Act (1918) represented the legal expression of an important political passage whereby the distinction between domestic opponent and external enemy became increasingly blurred and US radicals became increasingly identified with foreign agents.⁸⁷ In turn, fear for Bolshevism at home favoured a powerful anti-Communist rhetoric that political leaders could use as a tool to mobilise domestic support against their adversaries.⁸⁸

With the worsening of the Russian crisis and its negative international and domestic effects on the US political order, the Russian question quickly became material for partisan politics. Theodore Roosevelt as well as William Taft and other Republican leaders requested more resolute action in Russia.⁸⁹ Republican calls for action in Russia sparked concerns both in the Democratic Party and in the Wilson administration, forcing both not to leave the initiative on the question of intervention in the hands of the opposition in view of the upcoming mid-term elections in the autumn of 1918.⁹⁰ In tackling the Russian issue, however, the Wilson administration had to confront not only the 'hawkish' demands of Roosevelt but also the 'dovish' demands of Bryan, his main competitor in the Democratic Party.⁹¹ Pressured by both, Wilson followed the Progressive platform of his coalition to fence off both challenges, by adopting a more interventionist stance towards Russia while following a Progressive reformist agenda in line with both the general US formula and his specific platform.⁹²

Elite Relations: Russian Allies, American Friends

While international and domestic objectives pushed the US towards

⁸⁷ Murray 1955; Theoharis 1971: 6, 101; Schrecker 1998: 46-48.

⁸⁸ Leffler 1994: 25.

⁸⁹ Goldhurst 1978: 15. Requests for intervention became significant particularly in March-April 1918 following Soviet withdrawal from the First World War. See Filene 1967: 42.

⁹⁰ Kennan 1958b: 385-386; Goldhurst 1978: 16.

⁹¹ Cooper 2008: 12-13.

⁹² Gardner 1984; Knock 1992.

intervention, the relations established by US leaders with the leaders of the February Revolution represented a decisive pull factor for US intervention. By linking the two groups, elite relations provided an important factor reinforcing both US policymakers' interests in the fate of the Kadet and SR leaders and their confrontational policy against the Bolsheviks.

In the first half of 1917, the response to the February Revolution both within the US political and broader ruling elite had been enthusiastic. US sympathy was directed both towards the principles inspiring the revolution and its leaders. US politicians and diplomats praised the Liberal character of the new Russian elite. The former US Consul General in Moscow, John H. Snodgrass, stressed the longstanding Liberal credentials of Prince Georgi Lvov, head of the Provisional Government between March and July 1917, and Paul Miliukov, leader of the Kadets. As Snodgrass marked,

nowhere in the country could the Russian people have found better men to lead them out of the darkness of tyranny...Lvoff [*sic*] and his associates are to Russia what Washington and his associates were to America when it became a nation.⁹³

Already in March 1917, members of the US ruling elite established numerous committees in support of the emergent Russian democracy, such as the American National Committee for the Encouragement of the Democratic Government in Russia, including former diplomats, businessmen, and intellectuals. State legislatures responded quickly to calls from these groups, with nineteen US states welcoming the February Revolution and supporting the provision of financial assistance to the Provisional Government.⁹⁴ US politicians, such as Senator William Borah (R-Idaho) and former President William Taft, joined renowned Russian experts such as Charles Crane and Samuel Harper in the American League to Act and Cooperate with Russia.⁹⁵ Overall, these committees and groups played a twofold role. First, they lobbied US policymakers to support the Russian Liberal leaders. Second, they acted as a transmission belt for the requests of the leaders of the February Revolution, either via the direct contacts they established with US politicians or the

⁹³ The New York Times 1917b.

⁹⁴ The New York Times 1917c.

⁹⁵ Saul 2001: 215. On the broader connections between US Liberals and Russia, see Lasch 1962.

influence exerted by Crane and Harper, who enjoyed direct access to US policymakers and who were involved in the formulation of US Russian policy at the State Department.⁹⁶

Moreover, the American favourable approach to the leaders of the February Revolution both before and after the Bolshevik takeover was reinforced by the connections – personal and professional – existing between the leaders of the February Revolution and US decision-makers, business representatives and members of the intellectual elite. Prince Lvov was related to the American consul general in Russia, while other members of the Provisional Government had previously worked in the Russian embassy in Washington. Miliukov enjoyed connections with US policymakers via Crane and Harper. Alexander Guchkov, Provisional Government's war minister, had previous connections with the American business elite.⁹⁷ At the same time, members of the US political elite were involved in the promotion of closer links with the various political forces of the February Revolution. While Senator Root continued to promote close links with the Kadets, the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom, headed by former Representative Herbert Parsons (R-New York), provided financial support to the SRs and Alexander Kerensky, head of the Provisional Government from July to November 1917.⁹⁸

Relations between the two elite groups were also sustained by the incessant activity of the Russian Ambassador in the US, Boris Bakhmetev, himself a member of the Kadets and acting as both the official Russian representative and as the unofficial representative for the Russian Liberals.⁹⁹ Bakhmetev established good relations with Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long as well as with Colonel House. As House pointed out, he and Bakhmetev spoke 'the same language'.¹⁰⁰ The fact that Bakhmetev remained as the official Russian ambassador in Washington also after the Bolshevik takeover exemplifies a crucial element in the attitude of US policymakers at the time: they continued to

⁹⁶ Crane was a businessman, promoter of Russian Studies in the US and later Democratic campaign contributor; Harper was an academic, later involved with the State Department as an advisor. See McFadden 1993: 37.

⁹⁷ McFadden 1993; Saul 2001: 9, 89.

⁹⁸ Kennan 1958b: 323-326.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Killen 1978: 237; McFadden 1993: 48. On the role played by the Russian Embassy, see also Maddox 1967.

treat the leaders of the February Revolution as the legitimate Russian representatives and the Bolshevik regime as transitory.¹⁰¹

The pattern of elite relations established between the American political elite and the elite group leading the February Revolution had a pervasive impact on US policy towards Russia. First, elite relations acted as an additional disturbing factor in the ongoing attempts to find an accommodation with the Bolsheviks. In particular, both the Russian embassy and the Kadets lobbied against any form of recognition of the Bolshevik regime. Bakhmetev's influence in the formulation of the early US policy towards the Bolshevik regime was particularly significant in forestalling any substantial rapprochement with the Bolsheviks.¹⁰² Notably, before the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, the possibility of strengthening collaboration with the Bolsheviks – up to an eventual intervention by Soviet invitation to counter Germany – was not endorsed also for fear of alienating the support of the Liberal forces in Russia thus reducing US influence over them.¹⁰³ Russian Liberals' allies in the US, such as Harper, played an important role in this regard. US officials, Harper advised, could 'get in touch with' Soviet officials, yet they should neither 'recognize' nor 'cooperate with' them.¹⁰⁴

Second, Kadets and SRs actively lobbied US policymakers for increased support and eventually for US intervention. Bakhmetev lobbied to promote US support for the Kadets.¹⁰⁵ Karensky, as well as various Kadet leaders, repeatedly pressured US leaders and public opinion on the advisability of an allied intervention that could muster anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia.¹⁰⁶ In addition, Thomas Masaryk, advocate of Czechoslovakia's independence, represented an influential voice in Washington in favour of allied action in Siberia, particularly when the fate of the Czech legion present in Siberia became of primary importance to US leaders.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Killen 1978; McFadden 1993.

¹⁰² Killen 1978. According to Colonel House, Bakhmetev was partly responsible for the inclusion of a pledge to support Russia in Wilson's Fourteen Points. See McFadden 1993: 48-49.

¹⁰³ Kennan 1958b: 349-350; Saul 2001: 213-214.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in McFadden 1993: 38.

¹⁰⁵ Kennan 1958b: 322-323.

¹⁰⁶ Saul 2001: 280-291.

¹⁰⁷ Kennan 1958b: 360-361; Saul 2001: 331-332; Davis and Trani 2002: 134-135.

Third, favoured by the existing relations with US policymakers, the Kadet and SR representatives that were organising anti-Bolshevik forces in Southern Russia and Siberia used the available communication channels with American officials to stress their democratic credentials as well as their intentions, as the natural heir of the Provisional Government, to maintain Russia's alliance with the US.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, representatives of the cooperatives present in the Siberian region such as the All-Russian Union of Cooperative Societies requested US military aid and intervention to resist both German and Japanese influence.¹⁰⁹ In Mid-June 1918, leaders of the cooperatives tried to promote closer relations with both the US as well as with Kadet and SR leaders. As later communication from Siberia made clear, Kadets, SRs and cooperatives were coalescing in the first half of 1918 into a political coalition sustaining the emergence of new provisional governmental authorities in Siberia.¹¹⁰ As I will indicate in the following section, this last element represented a defining pulling factor in the critical juncture of spring 1918.

The Decision to Intervene: From Indirect to Direct Intervention

In order to save the political project begun with the February Revolution and secure its objectives, the US administration needed to manage the consequences of the Bolshevik Revolution and steer events towards a more favourable outcome. As cooperation with the Bolsheviks proved to be impracticable, the administration eschewed any possibility of co-opting the Bolsheviks in a comprehensive political process to lead Russia back to a more stable and democratic track. As a result, the administration was left with the only option of forcing events through the use of force, especially as Russia became engulfed in an all-out civil war fought by the Red Army organised by the Bolsheviks and the emerging White forces encompassing the various anti-Bolshevik units present in Russia.

Calls for direct intervention emanating from the Russian representatives

¹⁰⁸ Pereira 1988: 75-76.

¹⁰⁹ FRUS 1918b: 205-206; Kennan 1958b: 309; Bacino 1999: 72; Davis and Trani 2002: 142-143.

¹¹⁰ FRUS 1918b: 215-216.

coupled with increasing allied requests for intervention and domestic pressures. However, allied pressure for the deployment of US troops in Russia did not produce any tangible result: the Wilson administration rejected all six official requests made by its allies during the first five months of 1918.¹¹¹ At this stage, Wilson was still rejecting the hypothesis of direct military intervention for fear of alienating Russian support as well as given the assessment of General March, Chief of Staff, who argued that no US military contingent could produce any significant result in Russia at that stage.¹¹²

While rejecting direct intervention, the Wilson administration decided to offer clandestine financial support to the anti-Bolshevik forces in Southern Russia regions operating under the command of Alexey Kaledin. Support for Kaledin's Cossacks in Southern Russia was first suggested by Lansing in December 1917 and approved in the same month. Two elements account for this decision. First, it was a limited form of assistance entailing few risks for the administration but necessary in keeping alive a military force that overtly optimistic reports described as being capable of mounting an effective resistance against both German and Bolshevik units.¹¹³ Second, Kaledin's forces acted as a first centre of opposition to the Bolsheviks to which both army officers and Kadet leaders gravitated, including former Provisional Government leader Miliukov.¹¹⁴ However, the limits of this formation and Kaledin's suicide in February 1918 put an end to this form of indirect intervention.

The actual decision to directly intervene in Russia and its timing resulted from the new spaces of political contestation created in Russia in the spring of 1918. In May 1918, the revolt against the Bolsheviks of the volunteer pro-Allied Czech and Slovak troops present in Siberia – the so-called Czech Legion – created the critical juncture that opened up the possibility of direct intervention for the US.¹¹⁵ The Czech revolt eased the US decision to intervene in three ways, by making direct intervention logistically possible, ideologically attractive, and

¹¹¹ Kennan 1958b: 345-346; Filene 1967: 43; Steigerwald 1999: 89.

¹¹² Kennan 1958b: 328, 353; Fic 1995.

¹¹³ Filene 1967: 39-40; Boyle 1993: 9.

¹¹⁴ Kennan 1958a: 163; Davis and Trani 2002: 95.

¹¹⁵ The Provisional Government had allowed the Czech and Slovak units already present within the Russian army (*Druzhina*) to reach an army corps size. In March 1918, an agreement with the Soviets allowed the Czech Corps to reach the European Western front via Siberia and Vladivostok. See Kennan 1958b: 136-139.

politically viable. First, the Czech revolt provided the US with a local and already armed ally, 'a strategically located cadre for anti-Communist activities', thus making the option of a limited direct intervention logistically and militarily viable.¹¹⁶ Already before taking the decision to intervene, US officials had looked at the Czech troops as offering the possibility of a more 'moderate course' compared to the ones advocated by US allies.¹¹⁷ As Paul Reinsch, US Minister in Beijing, noted, 'with only slight countenance and support they [Czech] could control all of Siberia...'.¹¹⁸

Second, the Czech revolt offered a rationale for intervention consistent with both the US war effort against the Central Powers – as the Legion could be used against the Central Powers – and the principle of self-determination – as the Czech struggle against the Central Powers could lead to Czech independence.¹¹⁹ For the same reasons, US officials were concerned that failure to intervene to save the Czechs would entail a tremendous blow to the American prestige in Russia and among Slavic people more generally. For this reason, according to Lansing, the Czech revolt introduced a 'sentimental element' into the equation; or, in Kennan's words, a 'responsibility to aid' the Czechs.¹²⁰

Third, the Czech revolt offered the 'catalytic ingredient' to the ongoing acts of resistance to the Soviet government in Siberia.¹²¹ As Norman Pereira observes, by taking the Trans-Siberian out of the control of the Soviets, the revolt 'created political vacuums all along the lines from the Urals to the Pacific Ocean'.¹²² It was the very infrastructural power of the newly established Soviet state that was hammered, hampering the Bolsheviks' ability to reach the vast Eastern regions in which their political opponents could find opportunity to thrive. Importantly, by weakening the Bolsheviks' control over Siberia, the Czech revolt created a new political landscape in Siberia conducive to US interests and objectives. Specifically, by taking the Trans-Siberian railway out of the control of the Soviets, the revolt created a political void in which the so-called

¹¹⁶ Maddox 1967: 442; Saul 2001: 328.

¹¹⁷ Kennan 1958b: 308.

¹¹⁸ FRUS 1918b: 206-207.

¹¹⁹ Walt 1996: 140; Lang 2002: 33.

¹²⁰ Kennan 1958b: 395.

¹²¹ Pereira 1988: 74.

¹²² Ibid.

'democratic counterrevolution' in Siberia could emerge.¹²³ Revolts, led primarily by the SRs but including representatives of the major leading forces of the February Revolution, took place in Samara and in Central Siberia in concomitance with the Czech revolt and often supported by the Czech units. The emerging political landscape was immediately evident to US policymakers. On 26th June 1918, Admiral Austin Knight informed the US Secretary of Navy that

the Soviets have been overthrown in region controlled by the Czech and largely as a result of their presence, but without their active assistance, and replaced by a new government wholly Russian but anti-Bolshevik and made up largely of delegates elected some months ago to Constitutional Convention...¹²⁴

By allowing multiple groups and provisional institutions to emerge in Siberia in June 1918, the Czech corps could work for the allies and the US in particular as a 'nucleus of a new Russian opposition to the Bolsheviks'.¹²⁵ On the one hand, the various autonomist and separatist Siberia movements coalesced first in the Provisional Government of Autonomous Siberia led by Peter Derber (PGAS) in January 1918 and later in the Omsk Provisional Siberian Government (PSG) in June 1918. On the other hand, in June 1918 former SR and Kadet leaders as well as former members of the Constituent Assembly established the *Komuch*, i.e. the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly. In September 1918, after the deployment of the first US troops in Siberia, the PSG and the *Komuch* merged in the so called Ufa Directory thus establishing the Provisional All-Russian Government (PA-RG) in Omsk, soon to become the leading anti-Bolshevik centre during the civil war and including both SR and Kadet representatives.¹²⁶

Often overlooked, the Siberian democratic counterrevolutionary phase lasted from May to November 1918, the period when the US decision to intervene was taken and implemented. Wilson looked with favour at these 'nuclei of self-government authority' in Siberia, requested additional information to identify the potential recipient of US support, and eventually opted for intervention in

¹²³ Kennan 1958a: 162, 277; Silverlight 1970: 38; Pereira 1988: 74.

¹²⁴ FRUS 1918b: 230.

¹²⁵ Saul 2001: 302.

¹²⁶ FRUS 1918b: 386-387, 405-409, 428-429; Pereira 1988.

order to secure the Siberian political experiment. The US administration acknowledged the continuity between the governments in Siberia and the previous Provisional Government, clearly indicated by the presence of former members of the latter within the Siberian institutions.¹²⁷

The democratic counterrevolution eased US decision to intervene in two ways. First, representatives of the democratic counterrevolution used the available communication channels with American officials to stress their democratic credentials and their pro-US stance. On 19th July 1918, Lansing received a letter from Derber providing reassurances about the 'reconstitution of united Russia into a democratic federal republic' to fight alongside the allies for 'the triumph of democratic principles in international relations'. Derber also clarified the priorities of the PGAS as being the establishment of an assembly 'elected by universal suffrage', guaranteeing individual and property rights, and ensuring the 'revival' of the laws promulgated by the Provisional Government.¹²⁸ In addition, the representatives of the Siberian cooperatives both requested the 'reestablishment of normal economic order' while agitating the possibility of siding with any external power (i.e. Germany) to achieve this end, thus playing on the fear of German influence.¹²⁹

Second, the leaders of the provisional institutions in Siberia invited openly external intervention. The Supreme War Council in Paris reported that

there is much evidence...that the most liberal and democratic elements in Russia are beginning to lift their heads and to get in touch with one another....The Liberal and democratic elements urgently ask for Allied intervention, and make it clear while they desire economic assistance, the essential need is military support.¹³⁰

In doing so, Russian Liberals reinforced the views held by both US diplomats and policymakers regarding the likely support US troops would have enjoyed in Siberia. According to the US Diplomatic Liaison officer to the Supreme War Council in Paris, the Czech revolt and the ensuing political development 'remove[d] the apprehension that Allied intervention will meet with such

¹²⁷ Maddox 1967: 443; Kennan 1958b: 354.

¹²⁸ FRUS 1918b: 293-294.

¹²⁹ Ibid.: 205-206.

¹³⁰ Ibid.: 242-243.

serious opposition from local population east of the Urals...'.¹³¹ As Kennan concluded, Wilson expected that the intervention 'would elicit so powerful and friendly a reaction among the population that a pro-Allied authority would be initiated throughout Siberia and in North Russia by spontaneous democratic action'.¹³²

For the abovementioned reasons, the revolt of the Czech Legion in Siberia represented more than a pretext for US intervention; it altered the administration's decision-making more than domestic and allied pressures as indicated by US documents.¹³³ In the new conditions emerging in Siberia, the Wilson administration could identify the 'shadow of a plan' for direct intervention.¹³⁴ As a result, Wilson overcame his previous reluctance and officially decided for direct intervention on 17th July 1918. In opting for military action, Wilson authorised two distinct military operations: an intervention in the Northern Russia (Archangel) and a second one in Siberia (Vladivostok). The two interventions were perceived as two separate efforts by the US administration, with the expedition in the Archangel representing the less problematic of the two to justify. The northern expedition, in fact, had a clearer military objective, being responsible for the protection of the military supplies in the Kola Peninsula and of the only harbour that could be used also during winter to provide supplies and access to Russia.¹³⁵ On the contrary, intervention in Siberia escaped an immediate military justification.¹³⁶ Not surprisingly, the Wilson administration devoted most of its official explanations on the purpose of US intervention in Russia to clarify the set of objectives the US was trying to achieve in Siberia.

An analysis of the key documents produced in early July helps shed some light on these objectives. The decision to intervene was finalised during a high-level meeting on 6th July 1918 between Wilson, Lansing, Newton Baker (Secretary of

¹³¹ Ibid.: 241-242.

¹³² Kennan 1958b: 404.

¹³³ Lang 2002: 33. For different positions on this issue, see Unterberger 1956; Kennan 1958b: 388-391; Foglesong 1995; Goldin 2000: 91.

¹³⁴ Maddox 1967: 442. On the similarities between this and of the 'psychological moment' Wilson sized in Vera Cruz in April 1914, see Clements 1992: 99.

¹³⁵ FRUS 1918b: 287-290; Goldhurst 1978: 13; Goldin 2000: 91; Saul 2001: 266.

¹³⁶ Silverlight 1970: 42.

War) and General March Peyton. In the memorandum written on the meeting, the participants made clear that intervention did not serve the purpose of establishing a new Eastern front as advances beyond Irkutsk were deemed unfeasible. The operations of the US forces would have been limited to the Siberian Eastern regions and to support the Czech units that revolted against the Bolsheviks. They also noted that failure to act would have infringed US stance *vis-à-vis* 'friendly Slavs everywhere'.¹³⁷ In the following *aide memoir* sent to the allied ambassadors on 17th July 1918, Wilson affirmed that US military units were sent to Russia

to help the Czecho-Slovaks consolidate their forces and get into successful cooperation with their Slavic kinsmen and to steady any efforts at self-government or self-defense in which the Russians themselves may be willing to accept assistance.¹³⁸

Since Wilson used the term 'self-government' to indicate forms of constitutional or representative governments,¹³⁹ the US administration identified the ultimate beneficiary of its intervention, that is the panoply of non-Soviet institutions present at the time throughout Siberia and representing the democratic alternative to the Soviet elite. One year after the decision had been taken, this objective was confirmed in a response to a Senate resolution, where the White House justified US presence in Siberia with the need to protect the Czech Legion, support Russian efforts at self-defence, secure the functioning of the Trans-Siberian railway in order to avoid further anarchy in Siberia, and ensure the political and economic survival of the opposition forces in Siberia.¹⁴⁰

US troops landed in Siberia in September 1918. Military operations were limited

¹³⁷ FRUS 1918b: 262-263; Kennan 1958b: 396.

¹³⁸ FRUS 1918b: 287-290, emphasis added. In the same document, the administration stressed the need to protect the Czech units primarily from Central Powers' prisoners of war (POWs). This, however, is empirically problematic if not entirely misleading: as the administration was aware of, the real threat to the legion was represented by the Bolshevik forces. It is against the Bolsheviks that the legion revolted and it is against them that the Czech legion needed support. See Kennan 1958a: 283; 1958b: 392; Filene 1967: 45.

¹³⁹ Bacino 1999: 18.

¹⁴⁰ The White House 1919; FRUS 1919a: 391-394. As the French *chargé d'affaires* in the US, Charles de Chambrun, made clear in December 1918, defending the railway was of fundamental importance to preserve the logistical and military unity of the entire Siberian region, thus allowing for the transfer of resources and men from the Siberian Eastern region to the Western Siberian front. See FRUS 1919a: 459-460.

to the Eastern regions and to support the Czech units.¹⁴¹ Following specific orders from the State Department, US troops neither operated in the interior nor moved to Omsk, thus stationing in Vladivostok and the area around Archangel. As a consequence, US troops did not take part in the operations against the Red Army, thus having limited impact on the military balance in Western Siberia.¹⁴² US diplomats and military commanders present in Siberia promptly stressed the need for a more active role for US troops to boost the morale of the Russian troops and extend US influence over the provisional government in Omsk, yet the administration maintained its caveats on the employment of US forces.¹⁴³ The administration's reluctance to engage in military combat or increase its troops during the summer and autumn of 1918 responded to three factors. First, US intervention resulted from the conditions shaped by the Czech revolt. From its inception, the AEF was conceived as having exclusively an indirect and supporting role: securing the rear of the Czech forces to allow them to operate in the Western regions of Siberia. Furthermore, at this stage a full-fledge military role in Western Siberia was out of question given the concurring US operations in Western Europe and the limited achievements obtained in Archangel, which did not permitted US commander to link the Northern and Siberian fronts.¹⁴⁴

Second, US limited operations responded also to political and domestic considerations. In line with the self-determination principle and the importance it occupied within the specific formula supporting Wilson's platform, the administration was keen on reducing the active interference of US troops with the internal politics of Russia.¹⁴⁵ It was evidently a contradiction if not an exercise in self-delusion. Yet, it responded both to the constraints posed by Progressive ideas and the broader Liberal assumptions that allowed Wilson to see his attempts to 'steady any efforts at self-government or self-defense' in Siberia as in the interest of the Russian *people*, not in the interest of the US or of any elite faction involved in the Russian civil war.

¹⁴¹ FRUS 1918b: 262-263.

¹⁴² Kennan 1958b: 419; Saul 2001: 330, 326-327.

¹⁴³ FRUS 1918b: 386-387, 404-405, 411.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 392-393, 410-411.

¹⁴⁵ In July 1919, the administration was still denouncing the limits of all-out intervention as a tool of coercion and interference in Russian politics. See The White House 1919.

Finally, US prudence resulted also from the changing situation within the democratic counterrevolution after the arrival of US troops. At this stage, the US administration was not granting official recognition to any government in Siberia, not because of its lack of sympathy for the 'distinguished men' that were behind the Ufa Directorate but because of the confusion due to the numerous contending claims made by various actors in the region.¹⁴⁶ Related to this, concerns grew for the possible secessionist aims of the Siberian government and for the influence exerted by the Left SRs on the PA-RG.¹⁴⁷ More importantly, the events of November 1918 dramatically ended the democratic phase of the Siberian counterrevolution that eased US intervention in the first place.

After Intervention: White Flag

In November 1918, Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak took control of the Omsk government, removed the SR leadership from the PA-RG institutions, and declared himself Supreme Ruler, opening the more properly defined 'White' phase of the anti-Bolshevik counterrevolution in Siberia.¹⁴⁸ The failure of the SR and Kadet elite groups and Kolchak's takeover deprived the US of a legitimate domestic interlocutor able to mobilise the Russian peasantry against the Bolsheviks and committed to continue the basic agenda of the Provisional Government.¹⁴⁹ With his coup, Kolchak eliminated the possibility of a 'third path' between Socialism and autocracy, that is the very political alternative that pulled the US into Russia.

Initially, the Wilson administration opted to maintain its troops in Siberia. US presence in early 1919 responded primarily to two objectives. First, continued military intervention allowed supporting the anti-Bolshevik forces in a moment

¹⁴⁶ As a result, Lansing requested US Consul Ernest Harris to 'keep in touch with the leaders of all movements' in Siberia and 'report regularly the progress of their endeavors, the development of the various efforts to establish law and order which are being made, and the strength and character of support from the Russian population which they attract'. See FRUS 1918b: 413, 416.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 420-421.

¹⁴⁸ Pereira 1988; Saul 2001: 325; On the possible British involvement in Kolchak's coup, see Graves 1931: 99; Ulmann 1961: 279-284.

¹⁴⁹ Mawdsley 1987: 134-137; Pereira 1988.

where US leaders became increasingly concerned about the possible spread of Bolshevism in Europe, particularly in Germany and Hungary. Second, US military presence allowed US policymakers to influence Russian actors and events in a highly strategic environment shaped by the interventions of Washington's allies: Britain, France, and Japan. On the one hand, the AEF allowed the US to maintain a channel of influence over Kolchak and limit the competing influence exerted over Kolchak's government by Britain and France, as indicated by London and Paris' support for Kolchak's rejection of US diplomatic initiatives in 1919.¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, it allowed US leaders to contrast Japanese influence exerted mainly via the support provided to a Cossack leader, Grigory Semenov, who was challenging Kolchak's authority in Eastern Siberia.¹⁵¹ As Richard Goldhurst points out, 'there were many reasons why [the US] came to Russia, but there was only one reason why they stayed: to intervene in a civil war to see who would govern the new Russia – the largest country in the world'.¹⁵²

However, Kolchak's coup problematised US position in Siberia, endangering the possibility of securing the political order in Russia that US leaders considered to be conducive to both their international and domestic interests. At this stage, US policymakers were left with three options to lead Russia toward a different political outcome: attempting a diplomatic solution to reconcile the various Russian factions; sending a larger interventionary force to either support Kolchak's reactionary government or even imposing an halt to the hostilities in Russia; exerting pressures on Kolchak to liberalise the Omsk government.¹⁵³ The effects produced by the elite dynamics highlighted in the previous sections substantially affected US policy throughout 1919 by hampering all three solutions.

The possibility of diplomatic solution to the Russian civil war had been opened by the November 1918 Soviet 'peace offensive', driven by the need to put an end to the twofold threat posed by the White forces and foreign intervention. In January 1919, Wilson took the opportunity by calling the different Russian factions, including the Bolsheviks and the White leaders, to a peace conference

¹⁵⁰ Maddox 1967: 445.

¹⁵¹ FRUS 1918b: 448, 454-456, 461-466; Graves 1931: 107-108, 145; Unterberger 1956: 154.

¹⁵² Goldhurst 1978: xiii.

¹⁵³ FRUS 1919a: 345-346.

to be held at Prinkipo Island.¹⁵⁴ The failure of the Prinkipo proposal as well as of the subsequent attempts to devise a bilateral agreement with the Bolsheviks through William Bullitt's mission resulted from two factors. First, Kolchak, with the support of the British and French governments, rejected any power-sharing agreement with the Bolsheviks. Second, the Red Scare and the heightened anti-Bolshevik rhetoric in the US impeded any substantial concession, raising significant elite and public opposition in the US to any agreement with the Bolshevik leaders.¹⁵⁵ Ideological differences and the antithetic challenge posed by the Bolshevik regime represented once again an obstacle to substantial public cooperation. With a diplomatic solution off the table, a military victory of the White forces and the possibility for Kolchak to establish a democratic regime acceptable to the US became the only alternatives for continued US presence in Siberia.¹⁵⁶

Kolchak's renewed military operations against the Red Army in May 1919 – the so-called 'Ufa Offensive' – raised the question of increasing allied military deployments in Russia as a way to tilt the military balance in favour of the White forces.¹⁵⁷ Yet, Washington responded with scepticism to allied requests to increase its troops in Siberia.¹⁵⁸ US leaders' caution responded to both international and domestic considerations. In part this reflected US concerns that increased US troops would lead to a Japanese response thus igniting a dangerous military build-up in the region.¹⁵⁹ More importantly, the Wilson administration was fully aware of the domestic consequences of increased involvement in Russia. First, calls for US withdrawal appeared both within the administration as well as in the broader political elite. At the beginning of 1919, opposition in Congress to Wilson's foreign policy started to grow, with the first requests for the withdrawal of US troops appearing in the Senate.¹⁶⁰ In particular, Progressive representatives began to attack Wilson's Russian policy

¹⁵⁴ Grayson 1919a; 1919b; Wilson 1919b.

¹⁵⁵ Walt 1996: 158-163; Saul 2001: 360-361; Alston 2006: 27. On the details of these two diplomatic initiatives as well as on the ensuing Hoover-Hansen plan, see McFadden 1993: 191-217, 218-243, 244-263.

¹⁵⁶ Davis and Trani 2002: 174.

¹⁵⁷ For instance, London and Paris considered this possibility after the initial success of Kolchak's offensive. See Alston 2006: 27.

¹⁵⁸ FRUS 1919a: 421-422; Saul 2001: 366-367.

¹⁵⁹ FRUS 1919a: 345-346.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 323-324; Maddox 1967: 437, 446; Saul 2001: 372.

despite their early support for intervention.¹⁶¹ This demonstration of the 'critical spirit in Congress' convinced the acting Secretary of State, Frank Polk, and ultimately the administration that the room for maintaining US military presence in Russia was shrinking at a fast pace.¹⁶² Second, the Red Scare gradually pushed the members of the US political elite to a more inward-looking approach regarding Communism; to fight Bolshevism at home rather than abroad.¹⁶³ Notably, as pointed out by Colonel House in January 1919, sending additional troops to Russia would have not only exacerbated the situation in Russia but also fuelled social tensions ('labour troubles') in the US.¹⁶⁴

Unable and unwilling to deploy the necessary troops in Russia, the Wilson administration tried to find a *modus vivendi* with Kolchak and push the Supreme Leader towards democratic reforms. The emerging pattern of relations between the US leaders and the White leaders shaped the last significant US initiative in the Russian Civil War before the withdrawal of US troops. In the early phase of Kolchak's rule, between the end of 1918 and early 1919, the administration tried to get a better grasp of the nature of Kolchak's leadership in order to assess its democratic credentials and the appropriate policies towards his government. Initially, both Bakhmetev and Prince Lvov expressed a positive assessment of Kolchak's coup to US policymakers, stressing Kolchak's ability to unify all Russian factions.¹⁶⁵ Diplomatic dispatches from US diplomats found Kolchak 'as a man in the...[best] class where one would group Milyukov [*sic*], Alexeev [*sic*], Guchkov, Lvov...he represented no upper-house [class] party, was neither Social Revolutionary nor reactionary'.¹⁶⁶

However, reports regarding Kolchak and his government became increasingly divergent during 1919. While Consul General Harris provided a positive picture of Kolchak and his government, Ambassador Roland Morris and Major General Graves raised doubts about Kolchak's leadership.¹⁶⁷ Diplomatic

¹⁶¹ Filene 1967: 51-53.

¹⁶² Foglesong 1995: 71.

¹⁶³ Filene 1967: 61.

¹⁶⁴ Saul 2001: 357.

¹⁶⁵ Killen 1978: 246.

¹⁶⁶ FRUS 1918b: 444.

¹⁶⁷ FRUS 1919a: 200-201, 210-213, 333-336, 466-467.

dispatches in the first half of 1919 increasingly noted the duplicitous nature of Kolchak's government: stressing its Liberal stance in its public statements directed at the US and Allied policymakers while implementing starkly conservative policies in Russia.¹⁶⁸ In particular, diplomatic dispatches denounced the presence of reactionary and Tsarist military leaders in Kolchak's government.¹⁶⁹ As a result, there were divisions in the US on whether to aid and recognise Kolchak.

At the end of May 1919, US opted for conditional support. The Wilson administration managed to rally Allied power behind a common dispatch stating the conditions for providing aid to Kolchak, including: reviving a democratically-elected constitutional assembly once taken control of Moscow; and, allowing democratic elections for selecting local governments. Following Kolchak's acceptance of these requests, the US authorised the provision of material support and humanitarian relief yet refusing to extend formal recognition and increased military aid.¹⁷⁰ Before proceeding with the eventual military aid and recognition, in July 1919 Wilson decided to send Ambassador Morris a mission to Omsk to evaluate both the sincerity of Kolchak's democratic intentions and his prospects of success against the Bolsheviks. The US mission highlighted that Kolchak's democratic intentions were weak at best: Kolchak suppressed local institutions, lacked popular and particularly peasants' support, and was increasingly reliant on the support provided by the Russian reactionaries. As Morris concluded, Kolchak's government 'had failed to command the confidence of anybody in Siberia except a small discredited group of reactionaries, Monarchists, and military officials'.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, Kolchak's government was judged as ineffective and its survival strictly linked to the Czech presence. Although Morris' personal judgment of Kolchak remained positive, he stressed Kolchak's limits as a leader, his lack of control over his ministers and the inability of the whole government to implement the reforms they promised. Inefficiency, corruption and detachment from significant and moderate social groups were the characterising element of

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.: 213.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.: 327; Unterberger 1956: 149-150.

¹⁷⁰ FRUS 1919a: 367-370, 374-379; 383-384; Maddox 1967: 445-446.

¹⁷¹ FRUS 1919a: 395; Graves 1931: 101, 143; Unterberger 1956: 156-161; Davis and Trani 2002: 175-179.

Kolchak's government.¹⁷² This became evident also at the military level. Kolchak's military advances in May 1919 did not reverse the course of the civil war; after the initial success, the Red Army pushed back Kolchak's units.¹⁷³

Given its deteriorating position, Morris suggested strengthening Kolchak's government by providing both external validation via formal recognition and increased external resources and military support via the dispatch of 40,000 US troops.¹⁷⁴ However, US inability to send additional troops to Siberia prevented such course of action. In turn, this prevented the US to force Kolchak towards any meaningful democratic or administrative reform, stressing the limits of US influence over Kolchak and the White military leaders in general. By failing to send combat troops at the front and provide critical material and political support, White forces became less dependent on US support thus reducing US controls over Kolchak's decisions.

Left with a reactionary ally that it could not fully support, influence or reform without deploying a larger contingent and incurring in significant political costs at home, the Wilson administration decided to put an end to military intervention. US troops withdrew from Northern Russia in June 1919. A first agreement within the administration on the withdrawal of US troops from Siberia was reached at the end of September 1919 and approved in December.¹⁷⁵ Eventually, US forces were kept longer in Siberia to keep Japanese forces under control, safeguard the remaining Czech units as well as avoid hastening the demise of Kolchak's government.¹⁷⁶ However, the collapse of Kolchak's authority in December 1919 and his capture and execution in February 1920 led to the demise both of the White counterrevolution in central Siberia and of the US illusion of revitalising the February Revolution in the Siberian plains, thus leaving no other rationale for US operations. By February 1920 half of US troops had already left Siberia, with remaining units leaving Vladivostok in August 1920.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² FRUS 1919a: 403-405; Saul 2001: 332-333.

¹⁷³ Mawdsley 1987: 134.

¹⁷⁴ FRUS 1919a: 395, 407-410.

¹⁷⁵ Davis and Trani 2002: 193-195.

¹⁷⁶ Saul 2001: 372.

¹⁷⁷ Davis and Trani 2002: 193-195.

Conclusion: The Consequences of Intervention

This chapter has underscored the role played by elite dynamics in shaping the US decision to intervene. The interplay of these elite dynamics increasingly reduced the feasibility of alternative courses of action for the Wilson administration and eventually offered it the possibility to shape the internal conflict in Russia through limited military measures.

First, ideological affinities and differences affected the decision to intervene only in an indirect but important way. Ideological commonality reinforced the identification of US leaders with the political project set in motion by the February Revolution. At the same time, ideological differences limited the possibility of cooperation with the Bolsheviks. Similarly to the Cuban case, the clash of contending political formulas reduced the room for cooperation between US leaders and local elite groups. In this case, however, the antithetic conceptions of political order held by the two elites represented an insurmountable obstacle to even limited forms of cooperation not only in 1917-1918 but also in the subsequent years. Second, the actual threat posed by the Bolshevik Revolution to the US elite' position both at home and in Europe made inaction an unfeasible policy for Washington, pushing American leaders towards an increasingly interventionist stance as a way to preserve the results of the February Revolution and shape a more favourable domestic and international environment. Importantly, US policymakers tried to secure the position of their Russian allies as a way to secure both their domestic and international position. Third, relations between the US political elite and the leaders of the February Revolutions were of paramount importance in shaping US intervention in 1918. The leaders of the February Revolution enjoyed direct relations with US policymakers and could also take advantage of their contacts with the members of the wider US ruling elite who in turn enjoyed access to US politicians. In particular, elite relations produced three effects: they reinforced existing ideological ties with the leaders of the February Revolution; they provided a channel Russian leaders could use to influence the US policymaking process towards Russia; and, they acted as a disturbing factor in US-Bolshevik

relations. When the Czech revolt allowed these Russian actors to take centre stage once again in the struggle for Russia, US leaders opted for direct intervention as a way to secure a Liberal political order in Russia.

Changing political conditions in both Russia and the US ultimately reduced the possibility for the Wilson administration to exert any significant influence over the Russian Civil War and support the establishment of a more democratic order. Significantly, US policymakers refused to fully embrace Kolchak. Support for the White forces was linked to attempts to influence not only Kolchak's policies but also the nature of his government. This dynamic presents significant parallels with the Cuban case. Similarly to the US intervention in Cuba, US objectives in the target state prevented US policymakers from siding with the more relevant military forces on the ground: the LA in Cuba and the White forces commanded by Kolchak in Russia. Similarly to Cuba, US policymakers used their military presence to shape the identity of the political actors the US supported. Yet, in the Russian case, fear of the domestic political costs of an all-out intervention profoundly limited US ability to deploy the military forces that would have made Kolchak dependent on US support and increased Washington's influence. Eventually, the impossibility of restoring a reformist 'third path' in Siberia, the break-up of US elite consensus over Wilson's internationalist agenda, and Kolchak's defeat made it clear to US policymakers that intervention had become nothing more than a political and military burden.

Without adventuring into a fully developed counterfactual analysis, it is difficult to underestimate the potential systemic impact that a successful US intervention would have brought. The Bolshevik Revolution interrupted a political process that was leading towards closer ties between the US and Russia, diverting it towards increased confrontation. In this regard, the eventual victory of the forces supported by the US would have ensured greater ideological homogeneity and a more favourable balance of power from the perspective of US leaders. While a successful intervention would have secured such process, US failed intervention contributed to poison US-Soviet relations, with formal recognition of the Soviet Union taking place only in 1933. US recognition was extended only after Moscow's pledge

to respect scrupulously the indisputable right of the United States to order its own life within its own jurisdiction in its own way and to refrain from interfering in any manner in the internal affairs of the United States, its territories or possessions.¹⁷⁸

The failure of US intervention reflected a more profound limit originating from the systemic incentives shaped by elite politics. While intervention was the result of specific conditions, US support for the Provisional Government and its adversarial stance towards the Bolshevik regime responded respectively to the security and political benefits originating from a Liberal Russia and the impossibility of finding a rewarding accommodation with the Soviets, both during and after US intervention. The twofold challenge posed by the Bolshevik elite was still clear to US policymakers in 1920. According to Lansing,

a limited group of men in Moscow are endeavoring to impose upon the civilized world by opportunism and force a new order of existence of their own conceiving. The more destructive forms of the unrest now existing in this country cannot be disassociated from the inspiration of their propaganda and example...They challenge us to the defense of our well-being and institutions.¹⁷⁹

What changed at this stage in US policy was not the overall objective pursued in 1918 rather the tactics employed to pursue it. After the withdrawal of US troops from Siberia, Washington opted for non-recognition of the Soviet Union as indicated in the Colby note on non-recognition of August 1920.¹⁸⁰ Non-recognition represented the inevitable diplomatic result of a policy shaped by the impossibility of cooperation with the Communist leadership and the failure of military action in Russia.

Furthermore, when military intervention failed to secure a more favourable elite instead of the Bolsheviks, US policymakers reverted to economic intervention as a way to conquer the 'hearts and minds' of the Russian people and forestall the spread of Bolshevism in Russia and beyond. As Lansing had noted in a report to Wilson in December 1919, there was a distinction between the Bolsheviks and their political formula. Against the Bolsheviks and the Red Army only force could prevail. On the contrary, Bolshevism could not be countered by force as it represented 'pre-eminently an economic and moral

¹⁷⁸ FRUS 1933: 28.

¹⁷⁹ FRUS 1920: 444.

¹⁸⁰ Davis and Trani 2002: 198.

phenomenon against which economic and moral remedies alone will prevail'.¹⁸¹ A form of economic intervention had been pursued in Siberia alongside military intervention from the early phases of US involvement in the Russian conflict. Already in the *aide memoir* of July 1918, Wilson made clear his intention to intervene in Siberia also 'to relieve the immediate economic necessities of the people there'.¹⁸² As military intervention had its interlocutors primarily among the Liberal and White forces, economic intervention was conducted in collaboration with the cooperatives present in Siberia. The immediate objective of such efforts was not just purely economic assistance but the 'industrial and economic rehabilitation' of the region.¹⁸³

Economic intervention became prominent as military intervention showed all its limits. The economic measures approved by the administration became strictly linked to a food relief operation organised via the American Relief Administration (ARA) established in February 1919 and headed by Herbert Hoover. The importance of this operation can hardly be overstated, as food allocation became a fundamental tool in the view of US policymakers to counter the revolutionary wave in Europe and compensate for the limits of military intervention.¹⁸⁴ In urging the Congress to approve Hoover's requests, Wilson stated that

food relief is now the key to the whole European situation and to the solutions of peace. Bolshevism is steadily advancing westward, has overwhelmed Poland, and is poisoning Germany. It cannot be stopped by force, but it can be stopped by food.¹⁸⁵

Military intervention, economic assistance and the food relief programme were aimed at exactly the same political objective the administration was trying to pursue via military intervention: saving the democratic revolution in Russia.¹⁸⁶ While at the diplomatic level the US opted for non-recognition, economic collaboration and humanitarian assistance continued with the Harding administration. Following the so-called Hoover's 'Treaty' with the Soviet Union

¹⁸¹ FRUS 1920: 440-441.

¹⁸² FRUS 1918b: 287-290.

¹⁸³ The White House 1919; Bacino 1999: 72; Davis and Trani 2002: 142-143.

¹⁸⁴ U.S. Department of State 1919b.

¹⁸⁵ Wilson 1919a.

¹⁸⁶ Filene 1967: 78.

(August 1921), the Congress agreed to provide ARA with nearly \$19 million to deliver food and medical aid to Russia.¹⁸⁷ At this stage, the food relief and economic assistance programmes represented the only tool left to the US political elite to maintain its influence over the Soviet Union. As such, both non-recognition and economic relations were simply the continuation of intervention by other means.

¹⁸⁷ Weissmann 1969.

Chapter 6

The Greatest Error: US Non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939

'The position adopted by [the US] government with regard to the Civil War in Spain...constitutes the greatest error in the foreign policy of this country during the past twelve years'

(Sumner Wells, former Under Secretary of State, 1944)

Introduction

After having examined two instances of direct intervention, the following chapter will address a *negative* case. Specifically, this last case study is intended to examine whether and how the three dynamics operating at the elite level (political formulas, power struggle, and elite relations) influenced the US non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War.

The Spanish Civil War resulted from the rebellion of military forces on 17th July 1936 against the Spanish Republic ruled by the Popular Front coalition. The conflict between the rebel forces – the Nationalists led by General Francisco Franco – and the Republican forces – the so called Loyalists – lasted for nearly three years and left more than half a million casualties.¹ The war ended with the victory of the Nationalist forces in March 1939 and the eventual recognition by all powers of the Nationalist regime of Franco. The relevance of this case stems from two factors. First, the Spanish Civil War represented a major international issue during the late 1930s. The conflict not only raised concerns across governmental and diplomatic circles but also led to widespread mobilisation in

¹ Clodfelter 2002.

European and American societies. Second, the conflict itself had a quintessentially international dimension: it was primarily a 'European phenomenon' that soon sparked contrasting sentiments across the Atlantic.²

The international nature of the conflict derived from two elements. First, the conflict marked the end point of the long crisis of the Spanish monarchy, caused by both the loss of its empire in 1898 addressed in Chapter 4 and the dynamics ignited by the Bolshevik Revolution addressed in Chapter 5.³ The attempts aimed at modernising the Spanish economy after the loss of the colonial market, the concomitant rise of the Leftist forces, and an increasingly inward-looking military elite altered an already fragile political and institutional equilibrium. This led first to the establishment of the Republic in 1931 and later the victory of Spain's Popular Front in February 1936, against whom the military revolted in the subsequent July. Second, external powers directly influenced the course of events via their interventions. Whilst German and Italian support ensured the initial success of the military coup, Soviet support ensured the Loyalist defence of Madrid in November 1936.⁴ Foreign troops as well as thousands of volunteers took part in the war, affecting it in dramatic ways.⁵

Despite the international dimension of the conflict, Western democracies opted for non-intervention. This position was enshrined in the Non-Intervention Agreement of September 1936, signed by 27 European countries, and the related Non-Intervention Committee established in London. The position taken by Western democracies was subject to intense criticism both during the crisis and in subsequent evaluations as it prevented the legitimate Spanish government at the time from acquiring substantial aid for its defence.⁶ Officially, the US administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) that came to power in 1933 did not sign the Non-intervention Agreement yet it immediately adopted a strict neutral position in the Spanish conflict. Its intention not to become involved in Spain was first formulated under a 'moral embargo' aimed at impeding the provision of war material to Spain from American citizens and

² Graham 2005.

³ Townson 2000; Graham 2005: 1-3; Preston 2006: 135.

⁴ Salvado 2005; Graham 2005: 24.

⁵ Preston 2006: 136.

⁶ Guttman 1962; Preston 2006: 136.

companies. Later this position was officially proclaimed by the US Congress in its Spanish Embargo Act in January 1937 and reaffirmed in the Neutrality Act of May 1937.

The US response to the Spanish conflict represents a valuable case for four reasons. First, the US position has not been subject to extensive examination within IR theory. As Richard Little notes, the Spanish Civil War has assumed a key importance for statesmen in the years preceding the Second World War and yet it has gained very little attention within IR Theory.⁷ Second, although usually referred to as the manifestation of US isolationism during the 1930s, with Spain representing a secondary issue for US policymakers, a closer look at the case highlights the profound interest the Spanish conflict sparked both within American society and among US policymakers.⁸ If non-intervention did not originate from US policymakers' disinterest, its causes need to be carefully examined. As argued in the Introduction of this thesis, non-intervention represents a political decision and should be treated as such. Third, despite the firm policy of neutrality towards Spain, key figures in the administration, including FDR himself, already in 1939 came to consider US non-intervention as a 'grave mistake'.⁹ An accurate explanation of this case needs to shed light on how US top policymakers' negative assessment of US neutrality did not prevent them from altering US policy. Fourth, as a negative case, US policy towards the Spanish Civil War provides a challenging probe for the theoretical framework outlined in Part I. If elite dynamics matter to explain intervention, they should also elucidate cases of non-intervention. Further, elite dynamics should shed light not only on US non-intervention in 1936 but also on the reasons that led US policymakers to maintain US neutrality until 1939. Thus, in this Chapter, I will devote particular attention to evaluate the explanatory payoffs of elite dynamics for the 1937-1939 period.

In order to provide a detailed analysis of the factors leading to US decision, after a review of the explanations offered in the literature, I will examine how political ideologies, power struggle, and elite relations affected US policy in the run up and during 1936. In addition, I will also highlight how the same

⁷ Little 2008.

⁸ Flynn 1976.

⁹ Tierney 2007: 151.

dynamics help shed light on both the continued non-interventionist policy maintained in 1937-1939 and the limited yet important shift that takes place within this period.

Contending Explanations

Detailed explanations of US policy towards the Spanish Civil War are lacking within IR. This is particularly surprising given not only the importance of the conflict at the time but also the various IR works on great powers' policy during the 1930s, centred mainly on the study of appeasement.¹⁰ In particular, Realist works have addressed the question of appeasement from the perspective of balance of power mechanisms and alliance politics, giving preference to a purely strategic reading of US policy during this period while essentially overlooking the Spanish case.¹¹

The main exception to IR silence on the case is represented by Richard Little. Little shows not only the impact of systemic pressures on British decision but also how entrenched norms regarding internal conflicts and non-intervention constrained British decision-makers. These societal practices proved to be 'sticky' especially for status quo states such as Britain.¹² When applied to the US case, it can be easily noted that the Roosevelt administration referred to the US longstanding adherence to the principles of neutrality when formulating its policy. However, this presents significant explanatory limits at closer scrutiny. In the case of the Spanish conflict, the US did not follow customary international law that allowed for the provision of arms to legitimate governments, in this case the Loyalist government.¹³ Notably, the difference

¹⁰ Dimuccio 1998; Anievas 2011.

¹¹ Morgenthau 1985: 77-82; Waltz 1979: 165-169; Mearsheimer 2001: 308-309, 349. The major exception to Realist neglect of the Spanish Civil War is represented by Carr 1984. For a recent example of the continued interest in appeasement within IR and the strategic drivers thereof, see Ripsman and Levy 2008.

¹² Little 2008; 2013.

¹³ Tierney 2007: 46.

with traditional norms on neutrality was repeatedly noted during the formulation of US neutrality.

On the contrary, numerous historical works have examined the causes of US non-intervention in Spain. The main historical accounts of US non-intervention can be divided in four groups. A first set of explanations focuses on the impact that economic and commercial interests in Spain had on both British and US decision on non-intervention.¹⁴ US direct investments in Spain, connected mainly to the ITT, equalled more than \$80 million in 1936 with more recent estimates pointing to \$100 million.¹⁵ In particular, Douglas Little stresses the impact of two factors. First, successive Spanish Republican governments aggravated Spanish trade relations with the US during the 1930s given their attempts to nationalise US assets and redress Madrid's trade imbalance with Washington.¹⁶ These attempts represented a twofold concern for US policymakers as they considered increased international trade as necessary to stabilise both the international system and the US economy during the Great Depression.¹⁷ Second, US initial response to the civil war was shaped by the expropriation of US companies and plants in the areas held by the Loyalists where the majority of US investments were located, causing significant economic losses to US companies.¹⁸ Related to this, US policymakers and business representatives were also concerned about the repercussions that a possible Socialist takeover in Spain could have on US economic interests in Latin America given the existing ties between Spain and Latin America.¹⁹ Hence, according to Douglas Little, US non-intervention represented a case of 'malevolent neutrality': officially avoiding any entanglement in the Spanish conflict yet favouring a Nationalist victory in Spain.²⁰ According to this account,

¹⁴ Duner 1985; Little 1985; Preston 2006. See also the historical materialist analysis of the sources of British appeasement recently offered by Anievas (2011), explaining British appeasement policy and its non-intervention in Spain with the need to co-opt Germany in the containment of Bolshevism.

¹⁵ Little 1985: 91, fn.1; Stone 2005: 15-16; Preston 2006: 144.

¹⁶ US foreign direct investments in Spain had risen from \$3.7 billion in 1919 to \$7.5 billion in 1929. See Little 1985: 25.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 18, 27-30.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 228-229.

¹⁹ Puzzo 1962: 165. In 1936, US foreign direct investments in Central and South America accounted for 32% of all US foreign direct investments, see Jolliffe 1938.

²⁰ Little 1985.

not only the US denied the possibility of arms sale to the legitimate Spanish government, as permitted under customary international law, but American private companies also directly supported the Nationalist war effort, as in the case of the Texaco Oil Company, which sold oil on credit to Franco's forces.²¹

Douglas Little's analysis offers a valuable contribution, particularly in stressing the way in which pre-1936 US-Spanish relations influenced US non-intervention, a point to which I will come back in the following sections. Yet, the economic explanation of US non-intervention presents five limits. First, US economic interests in Spain were not significant in relative terms, accounting for only 7% of all US foreign direct investment in Europe, 1.3% worldwide.²² Second, despite the alleged US preference for the Nationalist cause, US policymakers did not establish significant political and economic relations with the provisional government the Nationalists set up in Burgos. For example, the administration did not recognise the Nationalist government and US diplomats were given clear instructions to avoid any sign of recognition of the rebels.²³ Third, the provision of material aid to the Nationalists by Texaco Oil and other US companies indicates the support enjoyed by the Nationalists within the American economic elite, not necessarily among the members of the US political elite.²⁴ Notably, the Roosevelt administration acted to curb these initiatives, resulting in fines being imposed on Texaco for its violation of the US embargo. Fourth, non-intervention hardly helped Washington to defend its economic interests in the country. In case, it left ample room for growing economic ties between Spain and the intervening powers, mainly Germany and Italy.²⁵ In particular, a lift of the embargo could have advantaged US arms manufacturers who were willing and ready in the summer of 1936 to respond to the Loyalists' requests for airplanes and weapons. Finally, explanations focusing on economic factors do not fully explain the increasingly anti-Nationalist stance taken by the Roosevelt administration after 1936. As I will discuss, throughout 1937 and 1938, US policymakers became increasingly

²¹ Preston 2006: 145.

²² Jolliffe 1938: 153.

²³ Puzzo 1962: 150; Traina 1968: 64-65.

²⁴ It is also worth noting that the support provided to the Nationalists by Texaco Oil derived primarily from the pro-Fascist ideological stance of Thorkild Rieber, president of Texaco Oil. See Thomas 1986: 417, 574.

²⁵ Stone 2005: 211-212.

concerned about a possible Nationalist victory in the Spanish conflict, given its potential impact on US strategic and political interests in Latin America, rather than about a Socialist victory.

In more general terms, the central role played by capitalism within the American political formula and the concurring antithetical challenge posed by Communism makes it difficult to distinguish the causal impact of economic factors from the causal impact of ideological differences. Not surprisingly, both Douglas Little and recent historical materialist analyses treat economic and ideological considerations as part of the same causal dynamic.²⁶ As such, US concerns for its economic interests cannot be disentangled from the Communist menace Washington perceived arising in Spain during the 1930s and in the summer of 1936. As I will indicate in the following section, ideological considerations are central to explain the lack of cooperation between US policymakers and the Loyalists. In this sense, US-Spanish trade tensions during the 1930s mattered primarily because they reinforced these ideological concerns.

A second set of works stresses the role played by international objectives and security interests in shaping US non-intervention. As highlighted by a number of authors, one of the key reasons for US and more generally Western democracies' non-intervention was their fear of further internationalising the conflict in Spain, hence igniting a general war in Europe.²⁷ In this regard, US policy responded to the need to support Britain and France in their efforts to appease Germany and contain the conflict.²⁸ These explanations have been subject to two types of critiques. First, the impact of the 'war scare' in the summer of 1936 should not be overestimated. Although democracies were interested in avoiding direct clashes with the revisionist powers, we should be careful in projecting onto 1936 concerns about a possible international conflagration that became more pressing only during 1937-1938, that is after the Japanese attack on China in 1937 and the crisis over Czechoslovakia in 1938.²⁹ Second, the US did not participate in the Non-Intervention Committee Britain

²⁶ Little 1985; Anievas 2011.

²⁷ Traina 1968: 227-228; Divine 1962: 223; Dallek 1995: 143, 161; Stone 2005: 210-211.

²⁸ Puzzo 1962: 161; Traina 1968.

²⁹ Little 1985: 238.

and France organised and adopted its official policy before London and Paris formally agreed on the non-intervention position.

A third set of explanations highlights the need to take into account domestic factors. Particular attention has been given to the influence of isolationism on both the US Congress and public opinion.³⁰ According to Paul Preston, 'the United States was too wrapped up in its New Deal isolationism to be overly preoccupied by what was happening in Spain'.³¹ Another important factor has been identified in the influence of the Catholic vote, which generally supported Franco, on FDR and the Democratic Party.³² While adding a fundamental corrective to previous explanations, these works raise further questions. First, isolationism does not explain important aspects of US policy, such as: the rapidity of the US decision in 1936; its deviation from traditional forms of neutrality; and, FDR's increasing interventionist stance in 1938.³³ Second, if Catholic votes mattered, it is necessary to explain why this exerted such a significant impact given the limited number of potential swing votes within the Catholic communities.³⁴ Related to this point, it is necessary to explain why influential pro-Loyalist Liberal and Protestant voters did not shift US policy towards greater support for the Spanish Republic.³⁵ FDR himself was sympathetic to the Spanish Republic and yet the non-intervention policy was not altered.³⁶ Third, these two elements (isolationism and the Catholic vote) need to be reconciled as they refer to different constituencies; it is important to clarify how and, importantly, when they mattered most. Finally, these explanations overlook the role played by Spanish actors in affecting US policymakers' calculations.

Existing historical accounts of both the interventionist and non-interventionist powers' decisions have already discussed the need to address the interplay between ideological factors, international and domestic interests as well as the

³⁰ Taylor 1956; Traina 1968; Cole 1983; Payne 2012: 147.

³¹ Preston 2006: 144.

³² Flynn 1976; Thomas 1986: 825; Kanawada 1982; Esenwein and Shubert 1995: 189-190.

³³ Puzzo 1962: 159-160; Tierney 2007: 10.

³⁴ Chapman 2011.

³⁵ Preston 2006: 144.

³⁶ Pike 1982: 28.

pattern of relations between external powers and the Spanish actors. On the one hand, ideology, strategic interests and domestic considerations fuelled the direct interventions by Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union.³⁷ Similar factors played an important part behind British and French decisions. For instance, British policy originated not only from the need to avoid another general war but also from the need to deactivate the possibility of further political polarisation within Britain.³⁸ Moreover, multiples links existed between the British elite and the Spanish conservatives. Related to this, it is worth noting the mismatch between elite and public opinion in Britain: while the latter clearly sided with the Republic, British policymakers sided with the Nationalists. Ideological and class differences as well as elite relations played a fundamental role in shaping British elite views.³⁹ French positions were influenced by the need to preserve its alliance with London as well as by the French elite's concerns that intervention in Spain could have exacerbated the divisions within the French elite and society.⁴⁰ Yet close diplomatic and political relations between French and Spanish leaders tilted French neutrality in favour of the Republic.

In the following sections, I will try to highlight how similar elite dynamics can be applied to elucidate US response to the Spanish conflict. In this regard, an elite framework provides three possibilities. First, it allows systematising the various factors highlighted in the existing literature. Second, it draws attention to the contrasting incentives such elite dynamics provided, thus explaining both the continuation of non-intervention throughout the conflict and the more interventionist stance taken by the US administration in 1938. Third, it contextualises the role played by US-Spanish elite relations. As I will show, that pre-1936 US-Spanish relations and events in 1936 hampered any possibility of support to the Spanish Republic is out of question. Yet, that US neutrality was intended to favour the Nationalists is a more difficult conclusion to sustain. US policy in 1936 denied US support to the Republicans; it was not intended to favour Franco. Despite the indirect advantage that non-intervention accorded to

³⁷ On the drivers of German, Italian, and Soviet interventions in Spain, see Coverdale 1975; Alpert 2004; Payne 2004; Graham 2005; Stone 2005.

³⁸ Stone 2005: 54.

³⁹ Graham 2005: 38-39; Preston 2006: 137-139.

⁴⁰ Salvado 2005: 62-63; Preston 2006: 143-144.

the Nationalist forces, the problem was that any other options would have dragged the US into the conflict, forcing it to support local actors led by unfavourable elites for US interests. Only when international priorities and events in Spain started to change their strategic calculus, US policymakers began shifting their position against Franco. Once again, elite dynamics impeded the completion of this shift.

Political Formulas: Communism, Fascism, and Progressivism

Spain itself, contrary to Cuba and Russia analysed in the previous chapters, did not play a central role in the imagination of US policymakers. Left to a marginal position within Europe and in the international arena following 1898, Spain did not represent a key objective for US political and strategic ambitions. If anything, the image of Spain remained tainted by the very assumptions of Spanish backwardness that informed US policymakers' views in 1898.⁴¹ It was an image that endured amongst US policymakers. In 1941, Cordell Hull, the US Secretary of State, did not hesitate to begin his discussion with the Spanish ambassador with a self-explanatory remark: 'in all of the relations of the [US] Government with the most backward and ignorant governments in the world...'.⁴² Yet, these views *per se* do not explain the US's non-interventionary position. Images of backwardness can easily reinforce the mirror image of a leadership role for great powers and shape a more interventionist approach aimed at modernising the target state, as exemplified not only by the Cuban case but also by numerous interventions in history.⁴³ On the contrary, US political elite's restraint in 1936 was profoundly shaped by its ideological framework. On the one hand, the diffusion of antithetic formulas in Spain as well as the emergence of new ones altered the prospects of US cooperation with the main Spanish actors associated with those formulas. On the other hand, ideas that were instrumental to the position of the US incumbent faction constrained US policy towards Europe.

⁴¹ Owen 1997.

⁴² Smyth 1999: 194.

⁴³ Lawson and Tardelli 2013.

As underscored in Chapter 5, Communism represented an *antithetic* formula that challenged the basic tenets of the US liberal order, both at home and abroad. Despite the recognition of the Soviet Union in 1933, Communism was still perceived as a fundamentally antithetic order during the 1930s.⁴⁴ American fears regarding the spread of Communism were reinforced during the late 1920s and early 1930s by instability in Latin America, particularly in Mexico, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Peru. But US policymakers were also concerned about possible Communist advances in Europe.⁴⁵ In particular, US views of Spain were filtered through the actual and supposed control exerted by Communist and Socialist elements over the Spanish Republic. Since its establishment, developments in the Spanish Republic painted the picture of a regime markedly influenced by Socialist, Anarchist and Syndicalist groups.⁴⁶ Notably, it was a picture portraying an unstable regime that could easily slide into the hands of more radical elements. Instead of welcoming the establishment of a Republican and democratic regime, US leaders quickly drew an analogy with the February Revolution in Russia, which reinforced mistrust towards those political forces that were feared to be unable to contain a possible shift to the left. Repeated revolts in Spain, primarily the violent revolt of October 1934 ignited by the more radical Socialist forces led by Largo Caballero, reinforced US fears about an eventual Communist takeover in Spain.⁴⁷

US leaders were also confronted with the question of Fascism's grip on Spain as a result of the increased challenge posed to the Spanish Republic by the extreme right, the rebellion of the Nationalist forces in July 1936 and the support the rebels received from Berlin and Rome. However, in 1936 US leaders' concerns for the diffusion of Fascism were mitigated by various factors. First, the Falange Espanola, the 'nearest approach to a Fascist party in Spain' established in October 1933, took centre stage in Spanish politics only in April 1937, after Franco's decision to merge it with the Carlist forces to become the only political formation in Franco's regime, the *Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista* (FET y de las JONS).⁴⁸ Second, from the

⁴⁴ Schmitz 1999.

⁴⁵ Little 1985: 19-24.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 52-61.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 23, 53, 64-71, 189.

⁴⁸ Carr 1986: xii.

perspective of the US elite, at this stage Fascism represented a *competing* political formula, which showed both the scope of its challenge and its fundamentally antithetic character only gradually.⁴⁹ Specifically, US perceptions of the threat posed by Fascism became clearer only between 1936 and 1939, in the midst of the Spanish Civil War. Yet, American views of Italian Fascism were not completely negative in the early 1930s.⁵⁰ Starting in the 1920s, the US policymakers began to develop a policy of support for right-wing regimes when considered necessary to contain the more pressing danger posed by Communism.⁵¹ From this early perspective, authoritarianism could be co-opted in order to contain the diffusion of Communism both at home and abroad.⁵² As a result, while aware of the challenge posed by the Fascist regimes, in 1936 the US leaders' views of the right-wing forces in Spain were informed by the prioritisation of the Communist over the Fascist challenge.

The belated realisation of the Fascist threat owed also to the ideological tenets of US leaders at the time. During the 1930s, the emergence of an 'Americanist' creed stressing the US distance from European actors and their values became influential within segments of the US elite. In turn, this responded the so-called isolationism characterising the US polity during the 1930s.⁵³ The term 'isolationism' itself and its utility have been repeatedly questioned.⁵⁴ First, various works have described American *isolation* as a 'myth', observing that the US was far more engaged with international affairs during the 1920s and 1930s than usually assumed.⁵⁵ As these works point out, the US opted to stay aloof in the 1930s, but it was hardly isolated. Second, according to these authors, *isolationism* is better conceptualised as a form of unilateralism, of 'exemplarism', and of restraint from direct interventionary policies in Europe.⁵⁶ It represented a

⁴⁹ The view of Fascism as a competing political formula challenging US preferred international order was confirmed by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 and its increasing association between Fascism and German National-socialism. See Pike 1982: 24.

⁵⁰ Pike 1982: 22-23.

⁵¹ Schmitz 1999.

⁵² Anievas 2011: 603.

⁵³ Chapman 2011.

⁵⁴ Williams 1988: 109-161.

⁵⁵ Dunn 2005; Braumoeller 2010.

⁵⁶ Cole 1983: ix; Jonas 1990; Brands 1998.

form of prudent and selective engagement based on strict priorities, informed by a nationalist outlook, and focused primarily on the Western Hemisphere.⁵⁷

In addition, these works stress the need to contextualise American isolationism within the historical and political setting where it originated. First, isolationism responded to influential symbols and domestic exigencies. It spoke to longstanding tenets of US identity and foreign policy, which linked American exceptionalism and US avoidance of entangling alliances with Europe. It was inward-looking in a moment when US society was focused on recovery from economic depression. It was the expression of US disillusionment with international developments but also of an elite that was called to address the effects of the great depression on US society.⁵⁸ Second, albeit linked to broader pacifist ideas advocated by numerous groups such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, isolationism was first and foremost linked to Progressive ideas and politicians, primarily from Western and rural states.⁵⁹ The primacy of domestic economic reforms, distrust of Northern 'big business', and concerns about private interests' influence on foreign policy characterised the Progressives' reaction against the foreign policy decision of the previous decades.⁶⁰ The Senate Investigation of the Munitions Industry led by Senator Gerald P. Nye (R-North Dakota) marked the climax of the so-called isolationism advocated by Progressive leaders. The findings of the Nye Committee on arms manufacturers' profits reinforced American public opinion on establishing controls on US politicians' ability to declare war.⁶¹ Importantly, the findings of the Nye Committee were key in securing public attention on the debate over Spain and the neutrality laws between 1935 and 1937.⁶²

Progressive ideas became particularly influential due the critical support Western Progressives provided to FDR's candidacy in 1932. FDR included clear references to these anti-business feelings in his inaugural address. Further, FDR

⁵⁷ Trubowitz 1998: 151-152.

⁵⁸ Taylor 1956: 42-43.

⁵⁹ Coulter 1997; Trubowitz 1998: 145-168.

⁶⁰ Coulter 1997: 14.

⁶¹ Taylor 1956: 41; Cole 1983: 141, 162.

⁶² Cole 1983: 170.

nominated Harold Ickes, a Progressive Republican, as his Secretary of the Interior and followed Progressive suggestions in nominating a Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, who was not linked to Wall Street and major corporations.⁶³ Between 1932-1937, that is when US policy towards Spain was formulated, FDR and the Progressives remained in an 'uneasy alliance', until domestic and international developments eroded this association.⁶⁴

While isolationist positions were closely related to the incumbent coalitions' position at home, they were also linked to preserve US leaders' influence abroad. Isolationism entailed first and foremost military non-interventionism, both in Europe and Latin America. Washington's non-interventionism was reinforced by the repeated military operations the US conducted in Latin America during the previous decades, such as in Haiti and Nicaragua, which made the US elite and the public aware of the costs, risks, and limits of military intervention.⁶⁵ Already the Republican administrations before FDR realised that US military interventions themselves were part of the problem in Latin America.⁶⁶ This, coupled with Latin American states' reactions against US interventionism, led to the formulation of the 'Good Neighbor Policy' enshrined in the 1933 Montevideo Treaty.⁶⁷ The 'Good Neighbour Policy' became soon a foreign policy priority for the Roosevelt administration as it allowed for the securing of multiple objectives: improving trade relations with Latin America in a time of economic crisis; strengthening Western Hemispheric solidarity in view of a common defence against external threats; and, appeasing pacifist and Progressive sentiments in the US.⁶⁸ As such, it responded to domestic ideals as much as to US attempts to maintain its hegemonic position in the Western Hemisphere.⁶⁹

Therefore, 'isolationism' became a useful ideological and policy tool for an elite interested in ensuring its influence over the Western Hemisphere and for an

⁶³ Ibid.: 17-27, 34-35; Coulter 1997: 15.

⁶⁴ Cole 1983; Trubowitz 1998: 139-140.

⁶⁵ Pike 1982: 27; Dunn 2005: 255-256.

⁶⁶ Schmitz 1999: 48-49.

⁶⁷ Taylor 1956: 58.

⁶⁸ Dallek 1995: 124.

⁶⁹ Traina 1968: 144; Dura 1985: 37.

incumbent faction led by FDR intentioned to secure his domestic position. The centrality of Progressive ideas and of the 'Good Neighbor Policy' was evident in the Democratic electoral platform of 1936:

In our relationship with other nations, this Government will continue to extend the policy of the Good Neighbor...We shall continue to observe a true neutrality in the disputes of others;...to work for peace and to take the profits out of war; to guard against being drawn, by political commitments, international banking or private trading, into any war which may develop anywhere.⁷⁰

The Republican Party followed similar lines in his 1936 platform, indicating the widespread consensus within the US elite on this issue and how both parties tried to lure so called isolationist sentiments in view of the upcoming elections in November 1936.⁷¹ Therefore, when the Spanish conflict started, both the general and specific formula of the incumbent coalition did not favour any substantial involvement in Spanish affairs. Importantly, challenging its non-interventionist policy entailed both negative international and domestic consequences.

Power Struggle: Limiting the Impact of the Spanish Conflict

What the US political elite and, specifically, its incumbent faction faced in the 1930s was a changing international and domestic context. US policy in this period and towards Spain in particular need to be examined through the attempts made by US policymakers to navigate these challenges by maintaining their position both abroad and at home while limiting the impact of the Spanish Civil War. In this regard, the Spanish Civil War did not activate any particular incentive for US policymakers. On the contrary, the conflict in Spain acted as a disturbing factor that could have endangered recently acquired positions.

At the international level, the Spanish Civil War represented a problem for the US position both in Europe and in Latin America. Non-intervention, in this

⁷⁰ U.S. Democratic Party 1936.

⁷¹ U.S. Republican Party 1936.

regard, allowed US leaders to secure a twofold objective. First, neutrality allowed the US to support the French and British initiative on non-intervention in the Spanish conflict.⁷² Despite all its limitations, which became increasingly evident after 1936, the non-intervention agreement provided the status quo powers with an institutional mechanism for containing the revisionist powers' activities in Spain. In other words, since the Western powers were unable or unwilling to intervene, non-intervention represented a tool to curb German, Italian, and Soviet interventions.⁷³ As the French Prime Minister Leon Blum pointed out, 'non-intervention was essentially an attempt to prevent others from doing what we were incapable of accomplishing'.⁷⁴

Second, non-intervention in Spain allowed US policymakers to secure its newly found position in Latin America through the 'Good Neighbour Policy'. The importance of this policy stemmed from the objectives it served: strengthening the cohesiveness of the American states; reinforcing US hegemony in the hemisphere; securing a defensible perimeter in the Western Hemisphere; and, shielding Latin America from the contending European models, whether Communist or Fascist.⁷⁵ Improving US relations with Latin American countries was of paramount importance in this regard; avoiding any divisive policy its necessary corollary. In this sense, the Spanish conflict represented a challenging test for the US as Latin American states adopted contrasting positions towards Spain. Whilst Mexico embraced the Loyalist cause and provided material support to the Republic, other states such as Argentina and Brazil did not hide their preferences for the Nationalist regime.⁷⁶ Taking sides in the Spanish conflict would have embittered US relations with key countries in Latin America and endangered the US attempts' to form a cohesive Western hemispheric bloc.⁷⁷ Consequently, the international scenario in the mid-1930s reinforced caution among US policymakers with regard to Spain. In this, they were influenced also by domestic political considerations.

⁷² Dura 1985: 31.

⁷³ Moradiellos 1999: 105.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Salvado 2005: 71.

⁷⁵ Pike 1982: 29-30; Alpert 2004: 162.

⁷⁶ Powell 1981; Dura 1985: 38-39; Saz 1999.

⁷⁷ Traina 1968: 144-157; Cortada 1978: 197-198.

As previously noted, both domestic isolationism and the importance of the Catholic vote have been used to explain US non-intervention. However, the impact of these two domestic factors varied during the Spanish conflict. Whereas concerns for the Catholic vote entered in the administration and Congress' calculations in the 1937-1938 period, they were less preeminent in the summer of 1936 when the US political elite formulated its policy towards the Spanish conflict.

The Spanish Civil War started in the midst of a political context shaped by domestic imperatives, with the administration focusing on its demanding economic programmes. FDR was already requesting significant support from Congress for its domestic reforms, thus the administration could hardly extract additional support for any substantial foreign policy initiative in Europe.⁷⁸ This was due mainly to the resistance FDR met in Congress to major domestic reforms of his New Deal, confronted not only by sections of the Republican Party but also by a conservative bloc within his own party.⁷⁹ Consequently, the support of the Progressives for both its domestic reforms and for the upcoming presidential elections in 1936 became of central importance to the Roosevelt administration and the New Deal coalition.⁸⁰ The results of the Nye Committee had just been released, fuelling both the isolationism sentiment in the country and the importance of the Progressive leaders' support in Congress. By courting a non-interventionist position, FDR could appeal both to the Progressives that had just reached the apex of their influence as well as to a wide array of positions on the left that favoured detachment from European adventures and pacifist positions.⁸¹

As I will show, the importance of Progressives' support became evident in the summer of 1936 during the formulation of FDR's own response to the crisis in Spain. What is worth noting at this stage is that neither the international nor the domestic struggle for power in which the US elite was enmeshed provided significant push factors for US interventionism in 1936. On the contrary, they shaped a non-interventionist policy that provided better prospects to secure the

⁷⁸ Alpert 2004: 109.

⁷⁹ Patterson 1967: 1-16, 18-31.

⁸⁰ Cole 1983: 190-193.

⁸¹ Doenecke 1977; Jonas 1990: 5-23, 32-69.

objectives of the US elite and of its incumbent coalition, both at the international and domestic level. Simply put, a strong initiative towards Spain would have entailed risks both at home and abroad.⁸²

Elite Relations: Not our 'SOB'

At the same time, the Spanish Civil War did not offer any significant pull for US policymakers. US-Spanish relations before the civil war are key to understanding the lack of cooperation and established relations between American and Spanish policymakers.⁸³ US political leaders' relations with their Spanish counterparts were minimal; when they existed, they further convinced US leaders that there was little to gain in Spain. Ideological clashes and repeated crises further distanced US leaders from the Spanish Republic. Importantly, developments in Spain likely deprived the US of the only alternative to the extreme factions that took the lead in the subsequent war. Once the war started, the Spanish elite could do little to pull the US in the conflict and what it did was probably counterproductive.

As previously noted, fear of Spain's shift to the left after the establishment of the Republic affected US views of the Republican regime. When the Republic was established in 1931, Irwin Laughlin, the American ambassador to Spain, first suggested non-recognition and later advocated it with the sole purpose of avoiding 'a further shift to the extreme left'.⁸⁴ These concerns were coupled by negative assessments of the new Spanish policymakers. As Irwin noted, 'the men composing [the Spanish government]...are not credited with distinctive ability'.⁸⁵ In November 1932, Laughlin defined the *Cortes* as 'ruled by mob psychology'.⁸⁶

⁸² Cortada 1978: 191.

⁸³ Ibid.: 176; Little 1985: 11.

⁸⁴ FRUS 1931: 986, 994.

⁸⁵ Ibid.: 992.

⁸⁶ FRUS 1932: 568.

US concerns for the Spanish Republic were reinforced by the repeated tensions originating from Spain's attempts both to redress the trade imbalance with the US and to take control of the Spanish subsidiary of the ITT in 1931-32, resulting in a 'commercial cold war' that poisoned Spanish relations during both the Hoover and Roosevelt administration.⁸⁷ The problematic trade relations highlighted, in fact, was the Spanish leaders' attraction to forms of collectivism that could be hardly reconciled with the US formula. Internal violence in Spain confirmed the weakness of the democratic regime. During the so-called October Revolution of 1934, the newly appointed American ambassador, Claude Bowers, noted 'the lack of parliamentary spirit' in Spain.⁸⁸ Overall, 'the Republic did not appear to represent American democratic values'.⁸⁹

In more general terms, what is striking in US-Spanish relations before the civil war is not only their unfriendly nature but also the absence of significant political dialogue between the two elites. Trade relations represented the only substantial channel between the political leaders of the two countries. Organic political relations were missing from the picture.⁹⁰ This resulted mainly from the interplay of ideological and policy clashes. Yet, it was also the result of Spanish Republican elite's decisions. The focus of Spanish foreign policy on the League of Nations, from which the US was absent, did not offer any substantial channel of communication with Washington.⁹¹ In particular, there is evidence that Spanish Republican leaders did not prioritise political relations with the US. As Augusto Barcia Telles, Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1936, argued before the civil war, 'we can deal in a business way with the United States without involving ourselves politically because the United States is remote from the intrigues of European politics'.⁹² Albeit correct in its evaluation of US deliberate distance from European affairs, the Spanish Republic's lack of substantial links

⁸⁷ Little 1985: 28-29, 95-99, 111; Stone 2005: 14.

⁸⁸ Traina 1968: 9.

⁸⁹ Alpert 2004: 109.

⁹⁰ Traina 1968: 10; Payne 1993: 160; Stone 2005: 9. For example, the entirety of US diplomatic exchanges with Spain in 1932 is centred on trade issues and only other minor issues. A review of the subsequent years' exchanges (FRUS 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935) confirms the lack of other major links between the two elites.

⁹¹ Payne 1993: 156; Saz 1999: 75-76.

⁹² FRUS 1937: 364.

within the American political elite proved consequential for the Loyalist cause during the civil war.

Furthermore, in the run up to the conflict, the polarisation taking place in Spain deprived US leaders of a possible political interlocutor. In September 1935, the collapse of the Spanish Radical Party led by Alejandro Lerroux under repeated scandals opened the last crisis of the Republic, leading to the elections of February 1936. Often overlooked, the demise of the Radical Party deprived the political scene of a moderate centrist party, a 'third-way' representative of an essentially Liberal-democratic position, contrary to collectivist solutions advocated by leftist forces, aiming at an inclusive parliamentary democracy, and that already demonstrated its pro-allied position during the First World War.⁹³ US diplomats expressed positive views of Lerroux, as his government had managed to improve US trade relations with the US, leading to the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act in 1934. As a result, there was optimism in the US about the new Lerroux government in 1935. Importantly, the demise of the Radical Party was clearly perceived in the US as the disappearance of a more reformist right that could contain both the extreme right and the extreme left.⁹⁴

On the contrary, the formation of the Popular Front in Spain after the Comintern's call reignited fears in the US about a shift to the left and of Soviet subversion.⁹⁵ US policymakers quickly viewed the Popular Front as a 'stalking-horse for the Soviet Union'.⁹⁶ The victory of the Popular Front coalition in the general elections of February 1936 further reinforced US concerns.⁹⁷ The decisions of the Popular Front, its composition, the early violence portrayed the image of a fragile democracy that was easily sliding towards anarchy or Communism.⁹⁸ Also a sympathetic observer of the Republic such as ambassador

⁹³ Townson 2000: 6-8; 2012: 97-98.

⁹⁴ Little 1985: 77, 144-146, 152-183; Stone 2005: 15.

⁹⁵ Little 1985: 184-185, 195.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*: 201; Alpert 2004: 109.

⁹⁷ Little 1985: 208, 212.

⁹⁸ Dura 1985: 15-17; Schmitz 1999: 98-99; Stone 2005: 16.

Bowers in the spring of 1936 observed the presence of 'communistic elements in Spain...working towards another French Revolution with its Terror'.⁹⁹

Notably, US policymakers increasingly viewed Spain through the prism of US experience in Russia. Already in May 1931, when Madrid made public its intention to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, former ambassador Laughlin cautioned against a possible 'Kerensky interlude' in Spain.¹⁰⁰ The positions of prime minister Manuel Azana and of President Alcala-Zamora y Torres were compared to that of Kerensky and of the Russian Provisional government, a weak Liberal government that could not withstand the challenge of Communism. This idea informed also the views of FDR, who came to believe that the 'Kerensky phase' of the Republic could not last.¹⁰¹ When Azana became President and Santiago Casares Quiroga prime minister in May 1936, the Kerensky analogy was quickly applied to Quiroga.¹⁰² The contrast with the Russian experience is significant. Whereas in 1918 the US intervened to secure the political project represented by the Provisional Government and its last president, in 1936 every moderate Republican leader in Spain revived the ghost of Kerensky in the American leaders' psyche and, with it, the failure of US intervention in Russia.

When the conflict started in July 1936, US policymakers lacked a political interlocutor with whom they could establish any meaningful political and strategic dialogue. What they confronted was, on the one hand, a legitimate government ruled by a mistrusted elite that they feared could pave the way to Communism and, on the other, extreme right-wing rebel forces supported by Fascist powers. Contacts established by the Spanish Loyalists in the US could not overcome this basic problem. When the Loyalist representative in the US, Ambassador Fernando del los Rios, approached US political figures, he did so through two channels: via official diplomatic channels; and, via the American Socialist and Communist groups. In particular, American Communists led by Earl Browder and the American Socialists led by Norman Thomas actively

⁹⁹ Quoted in Stone 2005: 17.

¹⁰⁰ Little 1985: 69; Saz 1999: 81-82.

¹⁰¹ Stone 2005: 16-17.

¹⁰² Little 1985: 206-207.

supported the Loyalist forces and worked closely with Rios.¹⁰³ While important in promoting the Loyalist cause in the American public opinion, these efforts did not alter the lack of identification of the US political elite with the Spanish Republic. Importantly, they showed two limitations. First, Rios' attempts to influence the administration via diplomatic channels ended up in direct contacts with Hull and State Department's officials, who were interested primarily in securing the existing US policy towards both Europe and Latin America. Second, Rios' political relations were directed primarily at members of the American counter-elite, thus reinforcing the idea of the Loyalists' radical nature. As Puzzo later commented, Rios was simply 'turning the wrong key in the wrong lock'.¹⁰⁴

Only the Liberal elements within the broader US ruling elite identified with the Spanish Republic.¹⁰⁵ Yet the majority of US policymakers did not see any automatic identification with the various Spanish sides. As Chester Rowell of the *San Francisco Chronicle* argued in relation to the likely approval of the Spanish embargo act in January 1937, 'we have no avowed communists and few conscious Fascists [in the Congress] to try to get us into the Spanish War on one side or the other'.¹⁰⁶ Although FDR expressed sympathy for the Spanish Republic, he clearly identified his distance from both Franco and the Leftists in the Republican side. In 1936, FDR defined the Spanish government as 'far from "democratic" as we understood the term'. He then explained his decision in January 1937 by remarking that he was 'not a Fascist, but...not a Communist either'.¹⁰⁷

To sum up, US policymakers framed the conflict as between two extremes with which they could hardly cooperate, a conflict in which they had no clear local ally. Given US policymakers' distance from both contenders, there was no local actor providing sufficient incentives to pull the US in the conflict. To

¹⁰³ FRUS 1936: 623-624; Venkataramani 1961: 405; Carr 1986: 232

¹⁰⁴ Puzzo 1962: 154.

¹⁰⁵ Writing in the Summer of 1937, a young John F. Kennedy made clear his support for the Spanish as he considered 'its program [to be] similar to the New Deal'. See Guttman 1962: 29.

¹⁰⁶ Taylor 1956: 84.

¹⁰⁷ Tierney 2007: 34-35.

paraphrase FDR's remarks, from the perspective of US policymakers there were many SOB in Spain but none was 'their' SOB.¹⁰⁸

The Decision Not to Intervene: Beyond Neutrality

Given the lack of any significant push or pull factors, it is not surprising that neither direct nor indirect military intervention entered the list of policy options evaluated by US political leaders in the second half of 1936.¹⁰⁹ Non-intervention became a default choice in July-August 1936 and the conditions that motivated this stance reinforced US policy as the preferable option in both late 1936 and early 1937.¹¹⁰

US non-intervention allowed the administration to achieve two objectives. First, it was in line with both the administration's international and domestic interests. While it helped secure the adopted foreign policy towards Latin America, it also secured the support of different US elite members: of the more internationalist members, given the support it provided to British and French policy towards Spain; and of the pacifists and Progressives in Congress.¹¹¹ Second, non-intervention denied US support to both sides of the conflict while keeping the door open for a dialogue with both. In essence, the decision allowed US policymakers to contain the conflict in Spain, secure US-Latin American relations, and muster domestic support.¹¹² Importantly, the interplay of the elite dynamics helps explain the exact form US non-intervention took and how concurring developments reinforced US policy in late 1936 and the beginning of 1937.

The initial response of US authorities to the civil war was hastened by the Loyalists' intention to acquire weapons from US private companies, with the

¹⁰⁸ Referring to Anastasio Somoza Garcia, FDR allegedly argued that 'he may be a son-of-a-bitch, but he is our son-of-a-bitch'. See Schmitz 1999: 4.

¹⁰⁹ Tierney 2007: 39.

¹¹⁰ Traina 1968: 13.

¹¹¹ Hull 1948: 479; Puzzo 1962: 161-162; Dallek 1995: 127-128.

¹¹² Tierney 2007: 53.

Glenn Martin Company requesting a clarification on the administration's position regarding the sale of bombing planes to Spain.¹¹³ Given that FDR was on a cruise and with Congress already adjourned for the summer, the State Department took the lead in the first formulations of the policy.¹¹⁴ Two sets of factors informed US policy formulation at this stage. First, US response was calibrated to ensure US foreign policy objectives. Aware of both the European efforts to contain the conflict and of the different Latin American positions on Spain, the State Department considered rigid neutrality as a way to support European initiatives and avoid divisions with the Latin American countries.¹¹⁵ As Hull commented in 1936, 'sentiment in Latin America regarding the Spanish situation is highly combustible' and for that reason neutrality was necessary.¹¹⁶ Second, developments in Spain suggested implementing exceptional restraint in the provision of weapons by US private actors despite the legitimate requests of the Spanish government under customary international law. As argued by undersecretary of State William Phillips in early August, the issue of Spanish acquisition of weapons in the US represented a problem as American weapons were ultimately 'destined for what amounts to a communistic government'.¹¹⁷ In particular, the decision of the Loyalist government led by Jose Giral to provide weapons to popular militias and the occupation of American factories raised fears in Washington about ongoing anarchic conditions and possible Communist takeover.¹¹⁸ The problem, as Hull stated in a message to FDR on 24th July 1936, was not the provision of weapons to the population but specifically to 'irresponsible members of Left-wing political organisations'.¹¹⁹

As the existing neutrality law adopted in August 1935 did not apply to civil conflicts, US authorities needed to formulate new policies. On 5th August 1936, Hull clarified that the US would follow a non-interventionist policy set in the Montevideo Treaty of 1933 denying any 'right to intervene in the internal or

¹¹³ Little 1985: 233; Taylor 1956: 59; Tierney 2007: 47.

¹¹⁴ Little 1985: 238.

¹¹⁵ Traina 1968: 145-155; Dura 1985: 19-20, 37-38; Dallek 1995: 136.

¹¹⁶ Traina 1968: 150.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Little 1985: 234; Schmitz 1999: 100-101.

¹¹⁸ FRUS 1936: 459; Little 1985: 222-229; Stone 2005: 68-69.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Stone 2005: 69.

external affairs of another [state]'.¹²⁰ On 7th August 1936, Phillips and Hull prepared a telegram for US officials in Spain, made public on 11th August, stating the

necessity of maintaining a completely impartial attitude with regard to the disturbances in Spain...in conformity with its well-established policy of non-interference with internal affairs in other countries, either in the time of peace or in the event of civil strife, this Government will...scrupulously refrain from any interference whatsoever in the unfortunate Spanish situation. We believe that American citizens...are patriotically observing this well-recognized policy.¹²¹

It was a 'moral embargo' that the US government was asking its citizens to follow, yet by definition it lacked the legal means to be enforced as the Neutrality Act applied only to interstate conflicts.¹²² A political confirmation of the policy adopted by the State Department came directly from the president. Domestic political considerations shaped by the upcoming presidential elections significantly influenced FDR's response at this stage. On 14th August, in a speech at Chautauqua, the president confirmed the general policy of neutrality as well as the 'Good Neighbor Policy'.¹²³ In doing so, FDR fully embraced the position of the Progressives on war and war profits, enriching his speech with Progressive refrains:

we shun political commitments which might entangle us in foreign wars...We are not isolationist except in so far as we seek to isolate ourselves completely from war...Nevertheless, if war should break out again in another continent, let us not blink the fact that we would find in this country thousands of Americans who, seeking immediate riches – fools' gold – would attempt to break down or evade our neutrality.¹²⁴

Both FDR's speech and his choice of words were not accidental. As Wayne Cole argues, it 'was part of [FDR] continuing efforts to win and retain the political support of western progressives'.¹²⁵ Notably, FDR's speech fully embraced the ideas of Nye's Committee. There is evidence that before 14th August Secretary Ickes tried to co-opt Nye within FDR's camp linking Nye's endorsement for the

¹²⁰ Taylor 1956: 57.

¹²¹ FRUS 1936: 471.

¹²² Alpert 2004: 110; Preston 2006: 145.

¹²³ Dallek 1995: 128.

¹²⁴ Quoted in Taylor 1956: 44, 59.

¹²⁵ Cole 1983: 200.

presidential election to a peace statement by FDR.¹²⁶ Although Nye did not officially endorse FDR, Nye and other nine Congressmen supported the administration's embargo.¹²⁷ Political concerns were therefore of primary importance in pinpointing the policy adopted by the State Department and securing the political conditions that kept US neutrality in place.

Yet, continued attempts to circumvent the moral embargo by US private actors forced US policymakers to formulate binding rules prohibiting the sale of US weapons to Spanish forces. This was translated first in the Spanish Embargo Act (January 1937) and eventually in the Neutrality Act (May 1937).¹²⁸ The impending shipment of planes to the Spanish Republic hastened the discussion in Washington. As a result, Congress passed an embargo directed only at Spain and FDR decided to give up presidential discretionary powers on the issue in order to ensure a quick agreement, thus ensuring Congress' control over the Spanish embargo.¹²⁹ The Spanish Embargo Act prohibited not only the sales of weapons and munitions in the Spanish Civil War but also hampered the provision of credit and loans. Limited non-military goods could be provided on a 'cash-and-carry' basis, that is all material had to be purchased in the US and transported to Spain on non-American ships.¹³⁰ Haste and a broad consensus within the US political elite on the need to avoid US involvement in Spain explain the widespread agreement on the embargo.¹³¹ Notably, Senator Key Pittman (D-Nevada) argued that the embargo was in the interest of the US as the contending sides in Spain represented 'foreign theories of government'.¹³²

This widespread consensus, however, did not erase the doubts about the exact formulation of the Spanish embargo. To US Congressmen, it was clear that the adopted policy marked a departure from traditional neutrality. Representatives Hamilton Fish (R-New York) and Maury Maverick (D-Texas) as well as a few Progressive Congressmen, including Senator Nye and Thomas Amlie

¹²⁶ Coulter 1997: 134.

¹²⁷ Little 1985: 238.

¹²⁸ Salvado 2005: 72.

¹²⁹ Dallek 1995: 136; Tierney 2007: 50-51.

¹³⁰ Cortada 1978: 193.

¹³¹ The resolution was passed by 81 to 0 (12 not voting) in the Senate and 400 to 1 by the House. See Stone 2005: 66.

¹³² Quoted in Tierney 2007: 52.

(Progressive-Wisconsin), objected that the usual neutral practice of the US allowed for weapons to be sold to the legitimate government. Further, they noted that the proposed solution was unfavourable to the legitimate government of Spain, since the Nationalist rebels could count on German and Italian support.¹³³ These criticisms show that the adoption of the embargo did not rest on a principled attachment to existing norms, but to specific conditions shaping US elite's interests at that time. In fact, these legitimate observations about the novelty of US policy could not overcome US elite members' interests as well as their concerns over both sides of the Spanish conflict. As a result, Congress confirmed US non-intervention by adopting a new Neutrality Act in May 1937 including general provisions for all civil wars.¹³⁴

During this period, developments in Spain did not provide any incentive to alter a policy that served multiple elite interests at once. On the contrary, they reinforced it. The attack on the US destroyer *Kane* on 29th August 1936 by a Spanish plane sparked a public reaction in the US, yet it was downplayed by US policymakers. The contrast with US politicians' reaction to the sinking of the *Maine* in 1898 is striking. While US reaction in 1898 was fuelled by clear interests in Cuba, in 1936 incidents such as the attack on the *Kane* had the opposite effect, raising fears of another *Maine* and confirming US policymakers' views on the need to remain neutral in the conflict.¹³⁵

Reports from Spain reinforced US leaders' position on the need to stay aloof. First, the new Loyalist government formed in September 1936 by the radical Socialist leader Largo Caballero did little to erase US concerns. Despite Caballero's reassurances on Spain's rejection of Communism, Bowers described Caballero as aiming at 'proletarian dictatorship'.¹³⁶ In November 1936, Bowers reported that, while President Azana wanted closer relations with the US, Socialist actors that had entered the government shifted Loyalist requests towards Russia and Mexico.¹³⁷ Bowers also noted that the increasing violence of the conflict could increase Communist influence in Spain. As he concluded,

¹³³ Taylor 1956: 78-80.

¹³⁴ Ibid.: 86; Tierney 2007: 52-53.

¹³⁵ Taylor 1956: 60-61.

¹³⁶ FRUS 1936: 524-525; Schmitz 1999: 99-100.

¹³⁷ FRUS 1936: 555-557.

'this war is making Communists'.¹³⁸ In the meantime, reports concerning the Nationalists actors were mixed. They stressed how a Nationalist defeat might lead to a Communist Spain.¹³⁹ However, Nationalists' attempts to establish friendly relations with the US failed.¹⁴⁰ After initial positive assessments of Franco, initially described by Bowers as 'a man of keen intelligence and common sense', opinions of Franco became markedly negative by the end of 1936.¹⁴¹

At the same time, the ongoing external interventions by Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union began to affect both the situation on the ground and US calculations. In particular, foreign interventions stressed the marginal role US support could play given the already substantial aid sent by the revisionist powers to both contenders. As Michael Alpert points out, while Roosevelt's victory in the presidential elections of 1936 might have persuaded the president to relax the embargo towards Spain to favour the Loyalists, the beginning of Soviet intervention in September 1936 underscored the limited impact such a decision would have had.¹⁴² In this regard, the growing presence of German, Italian and Soviet personnel reinforced the administration's sense of caution.¹⁴³

Loyalists' attempts to court US support did not produce any tangible result either. The meeting of Rios with Hull in October 1936 is particularly instructive of the limits of Loyalist diplomacy at this time. First, Rios described the conflict as one between two 'theories of government', democracy and totalitarianism. Second, Rios noted that given the existing links between Spain and Latin America, the fall of the Spanish Republic would have had significant repercussions on Latin American regimes.¹⁴⁴ Rios' remarks were both premature, as US concerns over the repercussions of a Loyalist defeat on Latin America did not inform US policy until 1938, and tardy, as US policymakers

¹³⁸ Ibid.: 563-565.

¹³⁹ Ibid.: 578-579.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.: 449.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.: 569.

¹⁴² Alpert 2004: 111. As the Spanish Loyalists controlled the major cities and held the nation's gold reserves, they appeared in a stronger position in the early stage of the conflict, hence less dependent on external support. See Vinas 1984: 267; Moradiellos 1999: 101.

¹⁴³ FRUS 1936: 600-605.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.: 536-538.

had already developed an image of the conflict that did not coincide with the democracy-totalitarian dichotomy cited by Rios. From the perspective of US policymakers, there was no democratic side in the Spanish conflict. The report of the US consul in Barcelona, Mahlon Perkins, on the situation in Catalonia in April 1937 is enlightening in this regard:

we do not have a clear cut issue of right or wrong, but the deplorable existence of excesses on both sides and the complete absence of what we understand by democratic government. The choice at the moment may be briefly described as the alternative between 'tyranny' and 'chaos'.¹⁴⁵

What US political leaders lacked was a clear alternative to two equally unfavourable political solutions.

After Non-Intervention: A Second Chance

Between the second half of 1937 and early 1939, the Spanish Civil War increasingly took centre stage in the American political elite's discourse and calculations. This led to a partial yet significant shift in US policy. As I will show in this section, the same causal mechanisms that shaped US non-intervention in 1936 subsequently led to contradictory incentives. As the Fascist challenge emerged more clearly during 1937-1939, the Roosevelt administration began to evaluate ways to contrast a Nationalist victory in Spain given the repercussions this might have on the US position in Europe and Latin America. However, domestic elite politics and elite relations constrained any substantial policy change. The combined effect of these dynamics locked the US into its policy of non-intervention until the end of the Spanish conflict but also resulted in the Roosevelt administration's attempts to devise indirect schemes to support the Loyalists.

¹⁴⁵ FRUS 1937: 286.

Political formulas: prioritising the Fascist challenge

Beginning in 1937, the revisionist threat posed by the Axis emerged more clearly, starting with Japan's attack on China.¹⁴⁶ German annexation of Austria, the crisis opened by Hitler's ambitions towards Czechoslovakia in early 1938 and the following agreement reached in Munich in September 1938 clarified Adolf Hitler's aggressive intentions to FDR. Japanese and German revisionist attempts forced FDR and his administration to realise the threat Fascist powers could pose to the US position. Whereas in 1936 Fascism could still be perceived as a competing yet containable challenge, events in 1937 and 1938 stressed the irreconcilable nature of the Fascist regimes and the impossibility of co-opting an increasingly antithetic challenge that could threaten the foundations of the US political and economic model.¹⁴⁷

US perceptions of the Nationalist forces shifted according to the ideological challenge posed by Fascism and its advance in Spain. The formation of the *FET y de las JONS* in April 1937 marked the Nationalist government's shift towards a more clearly Fascist regime. In October 1937, Bowers noted that Franco's government increasingly resembled the Grand Fascist Council in Rome.¹⁴⁸ The same developments raised concerns among sections of the wider American political elite. Already in early 1937, given the extensive German and Italian intervention, Congressmen on the left but including also Senator Nye started to consider an extension of the embargo to Fascist powers.¹⁴⁹ At this stage, the idea of extending the embargo to Germany and Italy was dropped in order to avoid any further internationalisation of the Spanish crisis.¹⁵⁰ However, pressures to allow the flow of arms towards Spain continued in late 1937, fuelled by concerns that the ongoing policy increased Fascist take on Spain.¹⁵¹ Importantly, these concerns fuelled US unease with the Nationalist government in Burgos denying any possibility of recognition or substantial contacts.

¹⁴⁶ In his 'quarantine speech' in October 1937, FDR decided not to apply the neutrality law to China, which was allowed to buy material in the US.

¹⁴⁷ Casey 2001; Tierney 2007: 29.

¹⁴⁸ FRUS 1937: 434-438.

¹⁴⁹ Taylor 1956: 88-91.

¹⁵⁰ Dallek 1995: 142-143; Stone 2005: 66-67.

¹⁵¹ Taylor 1956: 168-171.

Power struggle: contrasting push factors

Given the growing challenge posed by the Fascist regimes, the question of who would rule Spain at the end of the civil war acquired renewed importance. First, a Nationalist victory could affect the strategic balance in Europe. Despite Spain's marginal military capabilities, who ruled Spain mattered due to the strategic location of the country, its mineral reserves, and the access to both the government in Madrid could provide to its allies. Specifically, the US administration began to fear that a Nationalist government could bring Spain into an alliance with Germany and provide Berlin with access to Spanish territory and its raw materials in case of war. This fear was fuelled by the growing German and Italian involvement in Spain and the resulting grip Hitler and Benito Mussolini had on the Nationalists. By April 1937, evidence of German and Italian involvement in military operations became more substantial, as exemplified by the operation of Italian troops at Guadalajara and the German bombing of Guernica. From this support, Germany was already extracting significant concessions on Spanish mines to support its rearmament programme.¹⁵²

Second, the Roosevelt administration was also confronted with the potentially negative repercussions of a Nationalist victory on Latin America. While in 1936 US policy towards Latin America strengthened the administration's policy of non-intervention, the same interest for US position in the Western Hemisphere forced a reconsideration. FDR and Hull grew increasingly concerned of the attraction exerted by the Fascist model in the Western Hemisphere, especially to the 1 million Germans present in Latin America. These fears were the result of the undergoing ideological shift that increasingly led the US to give priority to the Fascist challenge but they were also fuelled by the recent events, such as the attempted coup by a Fascist group in Brazil in May 1938.¹⁵³ In particular, the administration feared the replication of the Spanish conflict in the Western Hemisphere, with a series of internal conflicts in Latin America ignited by local Fascist groups or military rebellions followed by subsequent German military

¹⁵² FRUS 1937: 280-281; Dallek 1995: 140; Graham 2005: 79-81, 109; Tierney 2007: 33, 78-80.

¹⁵³ Puzzo 1962: 149; Pike 1982: 24, 29; Tierney 2007: 8, 80-82.

intervention.¹⁵⁴ Gradually these concerns spread to the wider political elite, particularly among those Congressmen for whom separation from European conflicts could only be sustained by US hegemony in Latin America and a hemispheric defence perimeter.¹⁵⁵

Despite the shifting ideological and strategic calculations of the Roosevelt administration and of segments within the US elite, concurrent developments at the domestic level represented an insurmountable obstacle, primarily for the majority of US Congressmen, to any major revision of US policy. During 1937 and 1938, the civil conflict in Spain mobilised an increasing number of activists within the American society as well as among the members of the American intellectual elite.¹⁵⁶ Divisions between the pro-Nationalists and the pro-Loyalists became tense as the conflict increasingly mobilised the extremes of the American political spectrum.¹⁵⁷ Pro-Nationalists included conservatives, the Catholic hierarchy, a relative majority of Catholics, and the most anti-Communist elements within American society and ruling elite. In addition, Hearst's journals and a significant section of economic elite supported Franco, as exemplified by the case of Texaco's President Thorkild Rieber.¹⁵⁸ Pro-Loyalists in the US included not only Socialists and Communists but also Liberals, members of Protestant clergy as well as the relative majority of both the African American and Jewish community.¹⁵⁹ Throughout 1937 a growing number of volunteers with the help of Socialist and Communist organisations in the US joined the International Brigades fighting alongside the Loyalists. Eventually, up to 2.800 American volunteers fought in Spain within the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and other formations, nearly as many as the Soviet citizens present in Spain at the time.¹⁶⁰

From the perspective of the US political elite, the situation was different. The views of US politicians towards the Spanish conflict were more nuanced. While

¹⁵⁴ Traina 1968: 155-156; Tierney 2007: 80-81.

¹⁵⁵ Pike 1982: 44, fn.73; Tierney 2007: 28.

¹⁵⁶ Taylor 1956: 137; Pike 1982: 30-37; Carr 1986: 232-233; Alpert 2004: 161-162.

¹⁵⁷ Stone 2005: 68.

¹⁵⁸ Pike 1982: 25; Chapman 2011.

¹⁵⁹ Venkataramani 1961; Guttman 1962; Carr 1986: 237; Collum 1992.

¹⁶⁰ Pike 1982: 24; Collum 1992; Carroll 1994; Payne 2004: 165.

American citizens and intellectuals identified more easily with the Loyalist cause, US policymakers remained wary of the role played by extreme left groups within the Loyalist camp.¹⁶¹ The difference between public and elite opinion on this point was underscored by Undersecretary Welles in a meeting with Rios in October 1937, when the former noted that the American people might have been in favour of the Republic but the US Congress remained for strict neutrality.¹⁶² This, in turn, resulted from the twofold problem that the increased polarisation concerning the Spanish conflict posed to the US elite.

First, the sentiments and mobilisation sparked by the Spanish conflict created significant tensions within American society in 1937-1938, primarily between Catholics on the one hand and Protestants and Liberals on the other.¹⁶³ As the correspondent for the *New York Times*, Herbert Matthews, argued, 'no event in the outside world, before or since, aroused Americans in time to such religious controversy and such burning emotions'.¹⁶⁴ Senator Pittman feared that these tensions could escalate if debate on the Spanish embargo and its repeal continued.¹⁶⁵ Any interventionist position in the Spanish conflict would have further exacerbated these tensions, thus making it an unappealing option for an elite already focused on absorbing the socio-political consequences of the depression and the polarisation of the New Deal period.

Second, the polarisation created by the conflict between Liberals and Catholics represented a political challenge for the New Deal coalition in power. During 1937, the coalition that helped shape a non-interventionist policy in 1936 started to crumble. Relations between the administration and the Progressives deteriorated after FDR's attempt to liberalise the Supreme Court, in what became known as the 'court-packing attempt'. FDR's alliance with the Progressives was shaken, leaving the president and the Democratic Party increasingly dependent on their supporters among the urban Liberal vote and the Catholic vote that had sided with FDR in the presidential election of 1936.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Pike 1982: 26.

¹⁶² FRUS 1937: 426.

¹⁶³ Traina 1968: 47.

¹⁶⁴ Tierney 2007: 4.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.: 63-64.

¹⁶⁶ Cole 1983: 211-222; Coulter 1997: 135; Trubowitz 1998: 163; Tierney 2007: 64.

Thereafter, publicly siding with one of the two Spanish factions ran the risk of alienating the support of one of the two key constituencies of the New Deal coalition given the bitter debate over Spain between the two.¹⁶⁷

This mattered primarily for Democratic Congressmen and party leaders intentioned to secure their position in view of the upcoming mid-term elections in November 1938.¹⁶⁸ Fears concerning the possibility of losing the Catholic vote were discussed in a meeting between FDR and House Democratic leaders in May 1938.¹⁶⁹ As reported by Ickes, FDR commented that 'to raise the embargo would mean the loss of every Catholic vote next fall and that the Democratic Members of Congress were jittery about it and didn't want it done'.¹⁷⁰ In a more forceful tone, he allegedly concluded: 'if I lift the embargo, the Catholics will crucify me!'¹⁷¹ The predicament FDR and the New Deal coalition were in was evident to its adversaries. In May 1938, Nye introduced Senate Joint Resolution 288 requesting the lifting of the embargo against the Spanish Loyalists on a cash-carry basis while keeping the embargo against the Nationalist rebels. Nye's resolution had a clear political objective: forcing FDR to either side with the Loyalists, thus losing the Catholic vote, or against them, thus alienating the Liberals.¹⁷² As an American diplomat at the time, Jay Pierrepont Moffat, commented,

few if any documents are *politically* as dangerous[,] for the bitterness inspired by this Spanish strife among the Left Wingers on the one hand and the Catholic conservative elements on the other surpasses anything I have seen for years.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁷ Carr 1986: 237; Tierney 2007: 90-91.

¹⁶⁸ Taylor 1956: 186-189; Alpert 2004: 109; Esenwein and Shubert 1995: 189-190; Tierney 2007: 115.

¹⁶⁹ Dallek 1995: 161.

¹⁷⁰ Tierney 2007: 100.

¹⁷¹ Quoted in *ibid.*

¹⁷² Cole 1983: 236; Stone 2005: 67; Tierney 2007: 98-99.

¹⁷³ Cole 1983: 236, emphasis added.

Elite relations: Loyalist limits, Nationalist success?

Spanish actors also affected both the administration's and Congress' position, reinforcing US caution. While developments in Spain allowed the administration to consider new ways to contrast the Nationalists, Franco's representatives in the US operated effectively in securing that no major alteration of US policy took place.

While the US Congress was adopting its Neutrality Act, the clashes that took place in May 1937 within the Loyalist camp in Spain marginalised Caballero and the anarchic groups, leaving the more moderate Left forces led by Juan Negrin in control.¹⁷⁴ Initially, diplomatic dispatches from Spain as well as the American press stressed three elements: the more moderate positions of the new government; its more effective war effort; and, its intention to establish a more constructive dialogue with foreign powers, primarily the US and Britain.¹⁷⁵ Yet, reports from Spain also raised the issue of increasing Soviet influence on the Negrin's government, exerted through the Spanish Communist party and the Russian Embassy.¹⁷⁶ The eventual formation of a second Negrin government in April 1938, marked by increased Communist and Soviet influence, confirmed the composite picture of a non-democratic government that nonetheless could mobilise its internal front to resist the Nationalist advance and that was interested in seeking help abroad.¹⁷⁷

This had a twofold effect on the Roosevelt administration. On the one hand, it stressed the difficulty of an open and *public* embrace of the Loyalist government. Despite the May 1937 events, there were still significant concerns over the nature of its regime and leaders. On the other hand, it was clear to the Roosevelt administration that the Negrin's government could mount a significant resistance against the Nationalists and that the impossibility of acquiring weapons from Western democracies made Madrid more dependent on Soviet support, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy: continued US non-intervention would have only pushed Negrin further to the left and into

¹⁷⁴ Payne 2012: 177-178.

¹⁷⁵ FRUS 1937: 293, 298-299, 459-461.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*: 434-438.

¹⁷⁷ Alpert 2004: 160-161; Payne 2012: 180.

Moscow's arms.¹⁷⁸ Given the impossibility of full-fledged cooperation with Negrin, the administration had to explore new ways to contrast the Nationalists and increase its influence over the Loyalist government.

While the administration considered these new options, the broader US political elite's caution over Spain was reinforced by the direct and indirect influence exerted by Spanish actors. While the Loyalist won the confrontation for the hearts and minds of the majority of the American public, the results with regard to elite opinion were different.¹⁷⁹ The perceptions of US politicians were filtered through not only the domestic political considerations highlighted earlier but also through contacts with the representatives and lobbyists of the two Spanish sides.¹⁸⁰ While relations between the Loyalists and US officials continued to be mediated by Rios, Juan Francisco de Cardenas, former Spanish ambassador in the US, became the unofficial representative of the Nationalist government in the US.¹⁸¹ Both established contacts with the respective pro-Loyalist and pro-Nationalist groups in the US.¹⁸² However, the impact of these relations was markedly different.

In the Loyalist front, Rios continued to work closely with American Socialist and Communist leaders such as Thomas, who in turn continued to lobby FDR for US action in Spain and actively helped the Loyalist cause by organising the recruitment of volunteers to fight in the international brigades.¹⁸³ Whilst able to target the Liberal impulses of the American society, Rios did little to erase US policymakers' concerns over the Republic's leftist tendencies. More importantly, Rios failed to establish significant relations with US Congressmen, whose support was crucial to remove the embargo. The limits of the Republic's representatives in the US during the civil war were pointed out by Thomas himself, who in 1938 criticised the Republic's decision to rely on an academic

¹⁷⁸ Thomas 1986: 934; Little 1985: 248.

¹⁷⁹ On the propaganda war waged by both the Loyalists and the Nationalists during the conflict, see Taylor 1956: 120; Esenwein and Shubert 1995: 243-252; Payne 2012: 160-168.

¹⁸⁰ Cortada 1978: 202-203.

¹⁸¹ Tierney 2007: 82.

¹⁸² The major groups were the pro-Loyalist North American Committee to Aid the Spanish Democracy and the pro-Nationalist American Committee for the Spanish Relief. See Taylor 1956: 129-131.

¹⁸³ FRUS 1937: 495-496; Taylor 1956: 106; Tierney 2007: 59-61.

such as Rios instead of sending a more politically savvy ambassador to work alongside the arms manufacturers in lobbying Congress.¹⁸⁴

Cardenas' action, on the contrary, proved to be more effective. First, Cardenas worked with Catholic groups that were exerting pressure directly on Congressmen.¹⁸⁵ Second, Cardenas established good relations with a series of influential pro-Nationalist lobbyists in the US, such as John Eoghan Kelly, W. Cameron Forbes, and Ellery Sedgwick, who were driven in their efforts by their anti-Communism and anti-New Deal stance.¹⁸⁶ Cardenas' ability consisted in targeting members of the wider US ruling elite, who in turn had privileged access to US politicians. As pointed out by Michael Chapman, 'Forbes's and Sedgwick's primary concern was to influence elites, the sector of opinion that policy makers, many of whom were old stock like themselves, judged to be the most weighty'.¹⁸⁷ During 1938-1939, pro-Nationalist lobbyists targeted ruling elite members and Congressmen alike, following a plan put together by both Kelly and Cardenas. Notably, they succeeded in liaising with Sen. David Walsh (D-Massachusetts), chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee, and were partly responsible for his shift towards a non-interventionary and increasingly pro-Nationalist position.¹⁸⁸

From non-intervention to failed intervention

To sum up, during the 1937-1939 period elite dynamics provided contrasting incentives with regard to the Spanish Civil War. Domestic considerations and elite relations reinforced US non-intervention. For the Democratic Party direct intervention as well as public forms of support for the Loyalists represented a political risk. In more general terms, taking sides in the Spanish conflict ran the risk of exacerbating existing domestic divisions.¹⁸⁹ Negrin's reliance on

¹⁸⁴ Alpert 2004: 112.

¹⁸⁵ Taylor 1956: 155-157; Tierney 2007: 63.

¹⁸⁶ Chapman 2011: 18-23.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.: 26.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.: 99-104.

¹⁸⁹ Interestingly, controls against American volunteers fighting in Spain were not particularly strict. This resulted both from FDR's sympathies for the Loyalist cause but also from the need to let the more radical pro-Loyalist sentiments with American

Communist and Soviet support made a public embrace of the Loyalists even more problematic. In addition, while pro-Nationalist actors maintained their pressure on Congress, Loyalists' activities in the US failed to alter the image of the Loyalists held by the majority of US politicians. Similarly to FDR in 1936, members of the political elite still failed to identify any significant political return for either themselves or the US from providing military support to either Spanish faction. As late as in January 1939, Senator Borah made this clear:

I want nothing to do with either outfit and I do not want, if it is possible, to favor either of these forces. The fascists and communists are all the same to me when I come to consider the interests of my own country.¹⁹⁰

However, the administration had become concerned of the challenge posed by the Fascism and the need to contrast the Nationalist forces. Importantly, the Negrin government seemed capable of mobilising sufficient resources to confront the Nationalists. At the same time, the administration was aware that the US rigid neutrality was only increasing Moscow's influence on the Loyalists. The resulting policy adopted by the Roosevelt administration in 1938 mirrored the interplay of these contradictory impulses. Constrained by these considerations yet pushed towards a more interventionary position due to the evolving international context, the Roosevelt administration could act in Spain only through indirect and covert means in order to: avoid a victory of the Nationalists; support the Negrin government's renewed military efforts; and, create a new channel for US influence over the Loyalists.¹⁹¹ This resulted in two decisions in early 1938.

First, FDR supported the plan devised by Henry Morgenthau, Secretary of Treasury, to acquire \$14 million of Spanish silver in 1938. As Morgenthau informed the Spanish ambassador, 'we can give you cash...and you could do whatever you wanted with the cash'.¹⁹² Second, there is now sufficient evidence to affirm that in the spring of 1938 FDR attempted to provide covert military aid to the Loyalists. FDR's scheme entailed the secret transfer of 150 US airplanes to

society steam off and not to further alienate Liberals' support. As Browder noted, 'no official wanted to test how deep American sympathy was for the beleaguered Spanish Republic'. See Tierney 2007: 66-67.

¹⁹⁰ Quoted in Cole 1983: 237-238.

¹⁹¹ Cortada 1978: 196-197.

¹⁹² Quoted in Stone 2005: 67. See also Vinas 1984: 271.

France to be transported to Republican Spain.¹⁹³ While the covert modality of this interventionary scheme resulted from the necessity to avoid any public commitment in favour of the Loyalists, its timing resulted from the evolving situation in Spain. As Tierney points out, the French decision to open the frontier with the Spanish Republic in March 1938 'created the possibility for American intervention in the Spanish Civil War'.¹⁹⁴ The scheme was favoured by FDR's awareness that the Spanish Republic depended on aerial support from the US to reverse its worsening military position in early 1938. In this sense, FDR's initiative guaranteed a greater relative impact and influence on both the conflict and the Loyalist forces. However, the plan was first slowed down by the opposition from within the State Department and then failed due to the closing of the French frontier in June 1938.¹⁹⁵

The failure of the covert aid plan left the administration with two possibilities: either embarking in a domestic contest to repeal the embargo; or finding a diplomatic solution to the Spanish conflict. Domestic political developments hampered the possibility of a repeal of the embargo. As a result of the 1938 elections, a significant number of Liberal and pro-Loyalist Democrats had not been re-elected, leaving their seats to Republicans and conservative Democrats who would not have supported FDR in his attempt to revise US policy towards Spain.¹⁹⁶ Given the impossibility of repealing the embargo, the administration attempted a last diplomatic initiative. This solution was encouraged by Negrin's diplomatic initiative in summer 1938, inviting external mediation in the conflict.¹⁹⁷ FDR tried to enlist the Vatican and Latin American countries to strengthen his initiative and secure both Catholic support at home and broader consensus within the Western hemisphere.¹⁹⁸ Yet, continued Latin American divisions on the Spanish conflict precluded a concerted initiative and led FDR to abandon his plans.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹³ Friedel 1990: 271-272; Stone 2005: 67; Tierney 2007: 102-108.

¹⁹⁴ Tierney 2007: 85.

¹⁹⁵ Stone 2005: 67.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*: 68; Tierney 2007: 124-125.

¹⁹⁷ Stone 2005: 68; Tierney 2007: 118.

¹⁹⁸ FRUS 1938: 255.

¹⁹⁹ Taylor 1956: 184; Stone 2005: 68; Tierney 2007: 118-120.

Despite his repeated failures in pushing US policy towards the Loyalists, FDR remained convinced of the need to change track. In his State of the Union address in January 1939, FDR openly questioned non-intervention and US neutrality arguing that they favoured ongoing acts of aggressions at the international level. A last battle over the embargo ensued in January 1939. Once again, the strong reaction by pro-Nationalist and Catholic groups led senators to drop attempts to change policy over Spain.²⁰⁰ As Senator Pittman argued:

the conflicting avalanche of telegrams from both sides had convinced individual senators that they were on too hot a pot to sit with ease and the sooner they could get it off it by avoiding the issue the happier they would be.²⁰¹

At this stage, however, US intervention could have achieved little. By January 1939, FDR and his administration were aware that the situation of the Loyalists was desperate. Soon, the last advances of the Nationalist front led to the fall of Barcelona and eventually Madrid, with Franco declaring the war over on 1st April 1939.

Conclusion: The Consequences of Non-Intervention

The case analysed in this chapter represents an outlier with respect to all three elite dynamics (ideas, power, relations) analysed in the previous two cases. First, whereas in both the Cuban and Russian case the interplay between the political ideas held by the US elite and those held by local leaders helped to shape US cooperation with the local counter-elite groups, in the Spanish case political formulas represented an obstacle to US leaders' cooperation with either Loyalist or Nationalist leaders. Second, whereas international and domestic political competition created strong incentives for the US elite to intervene in Cuba and Russia, the same factors provoked restraint in the Spanish case. Notably, in the Spanish case, non-intervention and the peculiar form it took allowed US leaders to secure both their international and domestic position.

²⁰⁰ Dallek 1995: 179; Tierney 2007: 128.

²⁰¹ Dallek 1995: 180.

Third, whereas relations established with local leaders created a decisive pull for US intervention in the previous two cases, in the Spanish case US policymakers lacked any clear ally in the conflict. Furthermore, the lack of substantial political relations between the two elites and the inability to establish fruitful relations during the civil war significantly hampered Loyalists' ability to influence US decisions and pull US political leaders, particularly within Congress, towards a more interventionist policy.

In addition, the same elite dynamics shed light on the partial shift that took place in 1938. The growing Fascist challenge, heightened international competition and changing conditions in Spain opened the possibility for a more active US role. Nevertheless, domestic political concerns, amplified by the role played by pro-Nationalist groups, represented an insurmountable obstacle for any major revision of US policy or any public embrace of the Loyalists. FDR's scheme for covert aid to the Loyalists as well as the administration's additional attempts to support the Loyalists in 1938 resulted from the combined effect of these elite dynamics. Similarly to the Cuban and Russian cases, the administration's plans for intervention were favoured by developments on the ground, primarily the opening of the French border with Spain.

FDR's sympathy for the Loyalist cause and his repeated attempts to circumvent the embargo did not result in any substantial alteration of US policy or any improvement for the Loyalists forces. This case shows the limits of explanations of intervention and non-intervention centred primarily on executive leaders' preferences.²⁰² To explain non-intervention in the Spanish case, it is necessary to take into account the missing political conditions in both the US and Spain. The lack of fundamental push and pull factors at the elite level prevented the formation of a broader consensus within the American political elite on an interventionary policy. Further, US leaders did not identify any leadership group in Spain that could guarantee their interests and influence. Put differently, once the Roosevelt administration shifted towards a more interventionist policy in 1938, it lacked the necessary allies both within the American political elite and among the contending factions in Spain to implement an interventionary policy.

²⁰² Byrnes 1999; Tierney 2007; Saunders 2011.

Moreover, the Spanish case offers the opportunity to evaluate US policymakers' attitude when confronted with two opposing political formulas. On the one hand, the US political elite's views responded to relative evaluations, with its overall approach towards Fascism initially influenced by the concurrent Communist challenge. While both were perceived as un-American, the antithetic threat posed by Communism initially held priority over the competing Fascist challenge, hampering US cooperation with the Loyalists. On the other hand, events forced US leaders to reconsider their views. During the 1936-1939 period, Fascism was increasingly perceived first as a threatening competing formula and later as a clearly antithetic one. This led FDR and increasingly the entire US elite to prioritise the Fascist challenge over the Communist challenge. Once this shift had taken place, it proved difficult to overcome and continued to inform US views of the Nationalists.

As a result of the Nationalist-Fascist connection, US recognition of the new Spanish regime set up by Franco after its victory was not easily granted. Suspicion of Franco remained strong among US leaders both during and at the end of the Second World War. Initially, Franco attempts to portray himself as a credible ally for Washington went without success.²⁰³ FDR still considered the regime in Spain as 'repugnant to American ideas of democracy and good government'.²⁰⁴ In 1945, both FDR and former pro-Loyalists within the American political elite called for further anti-Franco policies including support for anti-Nationalist forces and regime change.²⁰⁵ Significantly, Franco's regime could be reconciled within the American international order only at the end of the 1950s, in the heightened political climate of the early Cold War when the Communist challenge took centre stage once again in the views of the US policymakers. Ensuring the stability of the Spanish regime became necessary to reduce the possibility of Communist subversion and of an eventual shift to the left that could alter Spain's international alignment and create repercussions in France and Italy.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Preston 1993: 519-521.

²⁰⁴ Quoted in Tierney 2007:144

²⁰⁵ Dura 1985: 76-79; Tierney 2007: 9.

²⁰⁶ Liedtke 1999.

Furthermore, the interplay between international and domestic power struggles in the Spanish case reveals important elements. Similarly to the previous two cases, the policy adopted by the US in 1936 served both domestic and international objectives: securing the US position abroad, while securing the position of the US elite and of its incumbent faction at home. However, international and domestic pressures began to diverge in 1937-1938. The majority of US Congressmen continued to perceive the Spanish conflict as a conflict between two equally extreme factions, with which the US could hardly establish any beneficial political alliance. In addition, involvement in the Spanish conflict would have exacerbated domestic tensions and reduced their political capital. US executive leaders, on the contrary, were also aware of the growing challenge posed by Germany to US security and power position and the limited influence the US could exert on Spain due to its strict neutrality. But these considerations coalesced in FDR's covert aid scheme only in 1938, exactly when electoral priorities forced US Congressmen and Democrats in particular to avoid the Spanish issue. In this regard, the Spanish case reinforces an element already highlighted in the previous case studies, that is the pervasive influence exerted by domestic political considerations in the formulation of US policy towards foreign internal conflicts.

Yet, FDR's concerns for the eventual international alignment of the Spanish regime proved vindicated, leading Welles to define US non-intervention in Spain as the greatest foreign policy mistake of the Roosevelt administration. Throughout the Second World War, US relations with Franco's regime remained bitter, due to the *de facto* support Spain provided to the German war effort. Franco continued to represent an additional problem for US operations during the conflict, particularly after the landing of Allied forces in North Africa, when ensuring Franco's neutrality for Allied operations became of paramount importance. Washington opted for a carrot-and-stick approach, providing food and oil to Spain to reduce its dependency on the Axis, while imposing an oil embargo on Madrid in both 1940 and 1944 to force Franco's hand when necessary.²⁰⁷ Only the strategic necessities shaped by the zero-sum calculations of the Cold War led policymakers in Washington to hasten Spain's inclusion within the security architecture the US was setting up in Europe. The

²⁰⁷ Dura 1985: 49-51; Smyth 1999.

process was completed with the signing of the US-Spanish Treaty of Mutual Defence in 1953, securing US military access to Spain in exchange for economic aid.²⁰⁸

Finally, in the absence of established and organic relations between political elites in the US and Spain, ruling elite members (economic elite representatives, intellectuals, etc.) acted as influential mediators between the Nationalist leaders and the American political elite. In particular, Cardenas' success in liaising with members of the US ruling elite who had direct access to US Congressmen amplified the actual influence exerted by Nationalist leaders over US policymaking. In turn, this shaped the contours of the group of pro-Nationalist US politicians, including both Republican and Democrat representatives such as Senator Walsh, who first contrasted any intervention in the Spanish conflict and later supported the recognition of Franco's regime.²⁰⁹ Subsequently, this formed the basis for the network of US policymakers put together after the Second World War by the new inspector at the Spanish Embassy in the US, Jose Lequerica. The so-called 'Spanish lobby' included among others Joseph McCarthy (R-Wisconsin) and played a crucial role in the late 1940s and early 1950s in promoting the inclusion of Franco's regime within the international institutional arrangements set up by US policymakers in the aftermath of the Second World War.²¹⁰

As with the Spanish Republic in 1931, US recognition of Franco's regime was a half-hearted embrace forced by a *de facto* situation that left US leaders with no feasible alternative. Worse, this situation was the result of a strategic mistake to which US non-intervention had contributed and that US policymakers had to confront in the midst of a world conflict. Eventually, the Cold War favoured Franco's inclusion within the American international order, giving the upper hand to those members of the US political elite for whom supporting Franco was part of a broader anti-Communist crusade.

²⁰⁸ Liedtke 1999.

²⁰⁹ Taylor 1956: 200-203; Byrnes 2000.

²¹⁰ Preston 1993: 580-581; Byrnes 1999; Liedtke 1999: 233-234.

Conclusion

An Intervention in History and Theory

Summary of the Theoretical Framework

Military intervention stands out as one of most recurrent forms of the use of force in history. From the early interventions in Ancient Greece to the cases examined in this thesis, from the Cold War to the recent interventions in North Africa, intervention represents a persistent practice in international relations. Given the recurrent nature of this practice and its effects, the study of the causes of intervention is – and should remain – central to the field of IR. As I discussed in Chapter 1, the contending explanations offered in the literature focusing on either the primacy of material or ideational factors are not entirely satisfactory. Similarly, both economic and institutional factors alone are of limited utility to explain the specific cases of intervention presented in this thesis. English School and particularly Constructivist works provide relevant observations on the function and drivers of intervention, yet they also leave important issues aside. Realism, despite its early insights to the subject, has offered only a limited contribution to the study of intervention.

At the same time, the existing literature has repeatedly underscored the crucial role played by political elites in shaping the practice of intervention. In spite of this, existing works adopt a rather unproblematic approach to elites. Elites are rarely defined and, when they are, they are conceptualised with no or scant reference to the vast literature in Political and Historical Sociology on the nature and role of elites. This is part of a wider gap. While works in other disciplines have revitalised interest in elites and political leaders, IR has only partially engaged with elite theory. Hence, there is still the need in IR to take elites seriously and fully engage with the concept of elites and related works. This is particularly striking for Realism given not only the frequent references to elites

within Neoclassical Realism but also the shared assumptions about power and political action underlying both elite theory and Realism.

In this regard, this thesis had a primarily theoretical objective, aimed at contributing to the existing literature on intervention in three ways: i) bringing the study of elites into IR, by exploring the insights offered by elite theory to clarify the concept and the underlying dynamics driving political elites' actions; ii) systematising the existing contributions on the subject, particularly with regard to the role played by political ideology and power considerations, within a consistent theoretical framework; iii) and, offering an original theoretical and empirical contribution on the often overlooked role played by elite relations between the intervening and target state. As I have showed in this thesis, despite the different motivations pursued in specific instances of interventions, political elites' views and interests profoundly affect the decision to intervene. In focusing on the centrality of political elites for the practice of military intervention, I do not claim that elite dynamics are the only reason why states intervene. However, I maintain that despite different contexts and motivations, elite dynamics represent constant causal mechanisms affecting not only the decision to intervene but also the direction, modality, and timing of intervention.

To demonstrate this, in Chapter 1 I drew on earlier Realist works to develop an alternative Realist-inspired approach to the study of intervention that could overcome contemporary Realism's self-imposed silence on intervention. Not only a Realist theory of intervention is possible but it also allows for: a fruitful dialogue with competing theoretical approaches, particularly Constructivism; and, exploring the relationship between the centrality of political elites both for explaining the practice of military intervention and addressing the normative problematique of intervention. In focusing on the former, this thesis argued in favour of a reconceptualisation of military intervention as a tool for the management of the consequences that elite circulation abroad entails for the intervening elite's position, both at home and abroad.

In Chapter 2, I developed a theory of the state drawn from CET and later contributions to elite theory in order to define both the basic assumptions of the proposed framework and the key actors of this study: political elites. In doing

so, I elucidated the defining features of elite politics by identifying three co-constitutive elite dynamics: political formulas, elite circulation, and elite structure. These dynamics are co-constitutive as all three mirror the underlying drivers of elites' action and mutually influence each other. Importantly, by clarifying the dual nature of elites as political agents acting in both the domestic and international sphere, I have explored how domestic change abroad affects elites' interests and position elsewhere. Who rules other countries matters as the circulation of elites in other societies influences the position of other political elites. Specifically, the interplay between elite dynamics at the domestic level (*domestic elite politics*) creates challenges and opportunities at the international level that affect political elites' positions and decisions (*international elite politics*). In this regard, military intervention represents one of the tools available to policymakers to respond to such pressures and incentives, and affect the circulation of elites abroad accordingly.

Drawing on the underlying incentives resulting from international elite politics, in Chapter 3 I defined the main causal mechanisms shaping an elite's interventionary policy with regard to specific instances of internal conflict. In particular, I argued that the three political elite dynamics identified in Chapter 2 represent a set of critical antecedents driving states to intervene in internal conflicts. In this regard, decisions to intervene result from the interplay of: the ideological frameworks informing elites' belief systems; elites' considerations for *both* state *and* regime security; and, the influence exerted by foreign political groups striving for power in the target state.

First, political formulas exert a twofold effect. At a general level, they provide the ground for the political value assigned by political elites and its various factions to specific cases of internal conflicts abroad. At a more specific level, the interplay between political formulas affects the degree of cooperation between elite groups in the intervening and target state. Second, political elites' response to internal conflicts is informed by elites' interest in securing both their domestic and international power position. As a result, the struggle for power taking place both at the domestic and international level represents a set of push factors driving states to intervene. Third, as the pattern of relations established between elite members matter at the domestic level, elite relations between elite members with foreign elite or counter-elite groups act as a pull

factor for external intervention. This can have both an indirect effect on elites' decision, by providing them with local allies easing the decision to intervene, and a direct effect, by establishing close relations with the intervener's decision-makers in order to promote their intervention.

While the interplay between these three elite dynamics is likely to drive elites towards an interventionist position, such an interventionist stance can take different forms (military, economic, ideological) and different modalities (direct/indirect; over/covert). Given the greater material costs and risks the decision to directly intervene in an internal conflict entails, the decision to directly intervene needs to be examined in regard to the opportunities and challenges shaped by contingent conditions, events, and local actors' decisions, making direct and overt intervention the preferable solution over other modalities of intervention. In order to take this into account, I adopted the distinction between causal antecedents and critical junctures. On the one hand, elite dynamics act as the critical antecedents driving states towards an interventionist position. On the other hand, critical junctures represent historical passages characterised by rapidly changing conditions that force the intervening elite to confront the increasing costs of non-intervention or the increasing return of military intervention. In turn, these critical junctures are connected to critical antecedents as the former acquire meaning only given the interests and relations with the target state shaped by elite dynamics.

An Assessment

In the second part of the thesis, I offered a plausibility probe of the theoretical framework based on US policy towards three major internal conflicts taking place between 1898 and 1939: the Cuban War of Independence, the Russian Civil War, and the Spanish Civil War. The empirical analysis provided in Part II permits a first assessment of the causal impact of elite dynamics. In addition, the case studies offered additional elements that qualified some of the expectations of the theoretical framework.

General considerations

The case studies have confirmed two broader expectations drawn from the theoretical framework. First, military intervention allowed the US political elite to influence the circulation of elites in the target state by favouring one of the sides involved in the conflict. Importantly, military intervention provided US leaders with the opportunity to influence the allied elite group in order to shape its identity and policies (Russia) and select the actual members of the emerging political elite (Cuba). Similarly, intervention was still considered in the Spanish case as a way to both deny the victory of the Nationalists and increase US influence over the Loyalists.

Second, elite dynamics shed light not only on the function performed by intervention but also on the details of US interventions, specifically its direction (which group the US supported), its timing (when the US shifted from non-intervention to intervention), and its modality and actual form. While elite dynamics were crucial in shifting US policy from non-intervention to intervention in the Cuban and Russian cases, changing conditions in the target state played a critical role in accelerating the decision to intervene due to the threats (Cuba) and opportunities (Russia) offered by possible or actual developments in the target. Notably, in all three cases, the critical juncture allowing for US intervention was represented by changes in the target state (January-March 1898, May-July 1918, spring 1938), rather than in the intervening state (as also hypothesised in Chapter 3). While it is not possible to generalise solely from these three cases, the evidence provided in this thesis does point to the need to focus on the interplay between the intervener and the target state in elucidating the timing of intervention. In addition, given the 'roll-on' effect produced by the causal antecedents, the case studies showed how elite dynamics continued to shape US intervention after the critical juncture up to the withdrawal of US troops.

The case studies have also indicated how the proposed framework adds to the existing literature on intervention. In particular, the three case studies have drawn attention to the limits of explanations based exclusively on: economic factors and objectives (cf. Cuba, Russia, Spain); the strategic, state security and

international objectives of the US elite (cf. Cuba, Russia); the effects of the ideological clash between the intervener and the target, particularly US anti-Communism (cf. Russia, Spain); and, the role played by the US President (cf. Russia, Spain). Further, the factors central to Liberal theories (regime type and domestic public opinion) did not provide satisfactory explanations of the cases analysed in this thesis. While the American Liberal formula informed both the degree of cooperation with local elite groups and the institutions the US attempted to promote in Cuba and Russia, the three cases show that the US intervened ultimately to secure the position of elite groups aligned with Washington's objectives, connected with US leaders, and responding to US influence rather than the imposition of democratic regimes *tout court*. In Cuba, US authorities interfered with the electoral process in order to secure a position of power for its local allies. In Russia, ensuring the success of a third way between the old regime and the emerging Socialist regime responded to US interests. Only by saving the February Revolution (and its leaders) could the US secure its influence and objectives in Europe. Notably, in Spain, the US did not extend its support to the democratically elected government. In all three cases, elite ideology and interests played a greater role compared to the formal regime of the target states.

The three case studies also stress the co-constitutive nature of the critical antecedents. Similarly to the elements defining domestic elite politics, international elite dynamics represent mutually reinforcing mechanisms shaping political leaders' stance on intervention. First, there is a self-reinforcing relationship between political formulas and the pattern of elite relations: on the one hand, political formulas either favour or hamper the possibility of establishing substantial elite relations; on the other hand, elite relations ease the tensions arising from different ideological backgrounds. In the Cuban case, the relations established between US leaders and the more moderate representatives of the Cuban nationalists relaxed the obstacles to cooperation during the US occupation in the aftermath of the electoral defeat of the Union Democrática. Second, general and specific formulas informed elites' views of the target state and of its domestic political value. Both Cuba and Russia mattered to US political leaders before the beginning of the internal conflict. This in turn raised the political costs of non-intervening and the political return

from intervention. On the contrary, Spain did not represent a valuable political objective in 1936. Third, the push factors emanating from international and domestic politics were reinforced by the presence of potential or actual allied elite groups in the target. Intervention in both Cuba and Russia served US leaders' international and domestic interests because of the presence of pro-US actors in the target states that could secure US objectives. Similarly, the lack of push factors in 1936 was due also to the lack of an elite group with which US leaders could establish a strategically and politically valuable relationship.

Furthermore, the three case studies permit the evaluation of the effect exerted by each elite dynamic. In this regard, they highlight important additional elements.

Political formulas

The effect exerted by elites' political formulas corresponds to the expectations presented in Chapter 3. Both general and specific political formulas informed US leaders' views of the US role in regard to the internal conflicts they were facing and the relative importance of the target state for US leaders' position. As noted in Chapter 4, the idea of Cuba's eventual integration within the American union became part of the political culture of the US elite. Cuba mattered not only for its strategic and economic value but also for its political value in terms of the realisation of a longstanding objective held by US leaders. In addition, the set of ideas informing US leaders' views of domestic order at the time (frontier, race, gender) allowed them to envision a guidance role for the US in regard to the Cuban struggle for independence. In the Russian case, not only did Russia represent a target for US civilising mission before 1917, but the February Revolution also created the possibility for US leaders to assist the new Russian elite in its efforts to construct a Liberal-democratic regime. Both situations allowed the US political leaders to extract political validation from these conflicts, while reinforcing their leadership role both at home and abroad. Put differently, political formulas help explain why the question of who rules certain states acquires particular importance for a political elite. The specific political platforms of the incumbent US factions further reinforced this mechanism. While the influence of nationalist and expansionist ideas reinforced

Republicans' views of the US role in the Caribbean, Progressive ideas were crucial to explaining Democrats' search for a 'reformist' alternative in Russia as well as their non-interventionism in 1936.

Furthermore, the interplay between political formulas profoundly affected the pattern of cooperation between the US elite and the elite and counter-elite groups in the target states. This dynamic entailed direct consequences for the resulting intervention. In the two cases of intervention examined here, the challenge posed by either the competing formula of the Cuban counter-elite or the antithetic formula of the Bolshevik elite significantly hampered cooperative solutions despite the presence of shared strategic interests in both cases. In the Cuban case, US leaders opted for a unilateral intervention in order to marginalise the Cuban nationalist leaders despite existing military plans calling for an indirect intervention in Cuba via the provision of arms to the LA. In the Russian case, the limited attempts to cooperate with the Bolsheviks against German advances were soon abandoned. In the Spanish case, concerns over Socialist influences on the Spanish Republican leaders hindered cooperation with the Loyalists despite the growing concerns over the Fascist challenge in 1937-1939. In this regard, general political formulas operated primarily as a *negative* mechanism, impeding cooperative and diplomatic solutions with local actors.

Overall, political formulas exerted a twofold effect: favouring the emergence of domestic interests in specific internal conflicts abroad; and, precluding diplomatic and peaceful solutions to secure those interests. Yet, the Spanish case highlights additional points of interest. When confronted with both an antithetic and a competing formula, respectively the Communist formula of the Soviet regime and the Fascist formula of the German and Italian regimes, US leaders initially prioritised the challenge posed by the former. This is consistent with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 and 3, as we would expect antithetic formulas to pose a more threatening model to an elite's rule compared to a competing formula targeting external or peripheral territories controlled or claimed by an elite. However, this underscores two elements. First, political elites evaluate the challenge posed by concurrent contending formulas in relative terms, favouring the possibility of co-opting a contending elite group against the other. Second, elites' evaluations shift over time

depending on the actual threat posed by the states upholding those contending formulas. Thus, the Spanish case indicates the need for further research to examine elites' changing perceptions of contending political formulas and how these shifts affect the decision-making process.

Power struggle

US decisions in all three cases have been shaped by the interplay between the competition for power taking place at the international level and at the domestic level. When confronted with an internal conflict, US leaders had to assess the costs and benefits that elite change in the target state would entail on both their international and domestic power position. In the two cases of intervention examined in this thesis, the twofold struggle for power in which US leaders were enmeshed created powerful incentives to intervene in order to secure their position both at home and abroad. This is particularly evident in the Russian case, where intervention allowed the US political elite to fence off a challenge to both their domestic rule and international influence. In the Spanish case, non-intervention allowed both the US elite to avoid endangering its influence over its European and Latin American allies as well as its incumbent coalition to risk its control of US institutions.

Importantly, international and domestic considerations exerted a diverse effect in the three cases. In the Cuban case, fear of European intervention initially acted as an obstacle against US intervention. Once the international setting became more permissive, domestic political considerations dramatically pushed the McKinley administration towards intervention due to the repercussions non-intervention could have on the Republicans' position. In this case, contrary to the expectations of Neorealist and Neoclassical Realist theories, domestic political interests and necessities took precedence over international pressures or evaluations of the US national interest. On the contrary, in 1938 partisan politics constrained the Roosevelt administration while heightened international competition pushed FDR to consider new ways to intervene in Spain as a way to curb German advances. The difference between the Cuban and Spanish cases stresses the need to further examine the diverse role played by international and domestic politics in particular cases. However, in contrast

to Neoclassical Realism, the theoretical framework provided in Chapter 3 takes into account not only how domestic politics constrain leaders from pursuing international objectives but also *vice versa*, how international factors either constrain leaders from or ease leaders towards intervention to pursue domestic objectives.

The three cases also highlight further elements concerning the US elite's evaluations of its international and domestic position. In both the Russian and Spanish case, the key aspect of US international evaluations concerned the possibility of securing an allied elite in the target state (Russia) or denying the same to rival states (Spain). In the Cuban case, once Washington's initial projects failed, US leaders froze Cuba's alignment with the US through the Platt Amendment. Overall, these case studies stress the need, especially for Realist theories, not to take allies as a given but to examine the mechanisms through which military intervention can create alliances by securing the position of allied or dependent elites.

In regard to the domestic considerations affecting elites' decisions, the case studies confirmed the twofold challenge a foreign elite or emerging counter-elite can pose: to the overall elite's domestic rule; and, to the incumbent faction's hold over domestic institutions. The two are not mutually exclusive. In the Russian case, the Bolshevik elite represented both a general threat to the US elite's rule and a specific challenge for the Democratic coalition. The direct threat posed by the Bolsheviks was due to the far-reaching challenge arising from an antithetic elite that intended to export its revolution. Yet, the case studies highlighted also an indirect yet pervasive effect on US leaders' domestic position. The Cuban War for Independence, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the Spanish Civil War gradually problematised US elite's rule by mobilising segments of US society and contributing to the polarisation of the US political spectrum – farmers, blacks and workers in the Cuban case; urban workers in the Russian case; Liberals and Catholics in the Spanish case. In this regard, intervention served not only the purpose of fencing off direct threats to the US elite's rule or to its incumbent faction. It also helped elites to manage the consequences produced by those internal conflicts on the social fabric of the US

polity. Intervention represented a tool not only for the management of domestic change abroad but also for the management of US society.¹

In turn, this dynamic shaped partisan competition by providing opposition factions with the opportunity to mobilise those groups against the incumbent faction. Elections in 1898, 1918, and 1936 informed the decision to intervene (or not) as well as its timing, as incumbent factions were pressed to assess the impact that non-intervention (or intervention) could have on their electoral success. Notably, this concerned both the president, for instance in 1936, and the wider political elite, as represented in the impact of mid-term elections in 1898, 1918, and 1938 on US decisions. Nonetheless, elections *per se* did not represent the underlying dynamic pushing US leaders to intervene. The driving causal mechanism was represented by the competition for power expressed via open elections in democratic settings, imposing recurrent tests on the support enjoyed by competing factions.²

Elite relations

The three case studies have examined the pervasive role played by the indirect and direct relations established by members of the US political elite and members of the local elite or counter-elite groups. On the one hand, the moderates within the PRC and the political leaders of the February Revolution not only created the conditions of multiple sovereignty by contesting Spanish and Bolshevik authority but also represented local allies that could ensure the establishment of a political order in line with US leaders' interests. Importantly, the presence of actual or potential allies in the target state reinforced the idea of the feasibility of military intervention. On the other hand, PRC, SR, and Kadet leaders established direct relations with US policymakers, conveying an image of the Cuban and Russian counter-elites as in accordance with US values and

¹ On this point, there are significant overlaps with the conclusions reached within Neo-Marxist studies. See for instance Rosenberg 1994.

² It is worth noting that the US presidential system does not provide a robust test for the impact of elections on intervention as the other possible causal dynamic (i.e. the impact of intervention on elections) cannot be tested since the timing of elections are fixed in advance. Contrary to parliamentary systems, US presidents cannot call elections in the aftermath of successful interventions. See Gaubatz 1999.

interests, and lobbying successfully for support and, eventually, intervention. In doing so, they provided legitimacy for US interventions and created political ties that US leaders could activate and benefit from. In turn, the limits of US interventions in both Cuba and Russia confirm the lasting validity of Machiavelli's remarks concerning the ability of foreign elite groups to drag great powers into problematic – even potentially disastrous – interventions.³

The Spanish case provides an instructive contrast in this regard. Simply put, the US elite could not identify a pro-US ally in the fight for the Spanish state. From the perspective of US leaders, both factions were considered as 'un-American'. This was the result of both ideological differences and the lack of sustained relations between US and Spanish policymakers during the early years of the Spanish Second Republic. Subsequent Loyalist attempts at establishing constructive relations with US politicians proved to be ill-advised, especially if compared to the Cuban and Russian actors' ability to work with those US policymakers that could use the Cuban and Russian card for their own political objectives. Norman Thomas' remarks on Rios' inability to establish relations with arms manufactures to lobby Congress stands as a reminder on the need for foreign groups to understand the political game in Washington and act accordingly to advance their requests.

At the same time, the case studies provide further evidence of the importance of elite relations and related dynamics. First and foremost, the three case studies stress the underlying effect exerted by patterns of dependency. As discussed in Chapter 3, local leaders were pushed to look for external support to sustain their fight against their adversaries. This reinforced their dependency from external actors. Cuban moderates increasingly relied on the US given the greater military resources and legitimacy enjoyed by nationalist leaders in Cuba. Anti-Bolshevik also became dependent on US and Allied support and manoeuvring. Spanish Nationalists and Loyalists' need for external assistance increased German, Italian, and Soviet influence, which in turn confirmed US leaders' views of the lack of actors in Spain that could respond to US influence. Both intervention and non-intervention reinforced these processes. In the Cuban and Russian cases, local leaders became even more dependent on US

³ On Machiavelli's remarks, see Chapter 3: 125-126, fn.76.

support, the only state that could guarantee their own military and political position. In the Spanish case, US non-intervention increased the Loyalists' dependency on Soviet support, further reinforcing US concerns about the Socialist tendencies of the Loyalists.

Yet, US intervention did not deprive local leaders of all autonomy. This resulted from two factors. On the one hand, external control was limited by the availability of alternative external sources of support for local actors, as exemplified by the British and French support for Kolchak, and by the autonomous sources of power local actors enjoyed, as exemplified by the ability of the Cuban nationalists to win the support of the majority of Cuban constituencies. On the other hand, the material and political costs that a longer military occupation in Cuba and increased troops in Russia entailed constrained US options, limiting their ability to force the hand of local leaders. Thus, the autonomy of local leaders resulted from the interplay of three elements: the availability of multiple sources of external support; autonomous sources of power in the target state; and, the possibility for the US to mobilise additional resources.

Second, in both the Russian and Spanish case, Kadet and Nationalist representatives ensured their influence over the political debate in the US by accessing the members of the wider US ruling elite. In particular, Russian democratic leaders and Spanish Nationalists established fruitful contacts with members of both the US upper class and intellectual elite who were involved in the formulation of US policy towards the target state, as in the Russian case, or that had direct access to US policymakers, as in the Spanish case. The influence of these ruling elite members was not direct but acted as an important transmission belt between the foreign leaders' views and US policymakers.⁴ Although this is consistent with the premises of the theoretical framework probed in this thesis on the centrality of elite relations and of political elites in particular, it nevertheless points in the direction of further study on the

⁴ This could be broadened to the PRC's efforts to work with the US press and Hearst's journals to influence US public opinion.

relationship between political elites and ruling elites and the different nature of this relationship beyond the American context and in non-democratic settings.⁵

Finally, the role played by local elites in US leaders' calculations made local developments central to the decision to intervene. In this regard, the fate of local allies was consequential to US objectives both in the Cuban and Russian case. As a result, the pattern of elite relations established between US leaders and local leaders help to further elucidate the timing of US decisions to intervene. While partisan competition and elections raised the stakes for US leaders during election years, developments in the target state played an even greater role in forcing US decisions in specific junctures to either avoid the emergence of an unfavourable political order, as in the Cuban case, or to promote a more favourable political order, by taking advantage of the Czech revolt in the Russian case. Both junctures were central in tilting the balance in favour of direct military intervention. In turn, these junctures acquired significance in light not only of US leaders' domestic objectives but also of the stake they had on local elites.

Concluding observations and future research

Overall, the plausibility probe offered in Part II has substantiated the theoretical elements presented in Chapter 3, stressing the analytical payoffs resulting from examining US decisions to intervene from the perspective offered by elite dynamics. However, both the methodological choice operated in favour of historical cases of US interventions and the theoretical focus on the causes of intervention suggest the need to explore: first, the applicability of this framework to different case studies; second, the utility of the results of this thesis for further study of the practice of military intervention and its consequences. As clarified in Part I, the theoretical framework presented in this thesis is intended as a general schema applicable to different historical, systemic, and institutional settings. The generalisability of this schema rests not

⁵ In particular, cross comparison is needed in order to examine whether the close relations existing between members of the political elite and ruling elite in the US represent a distinguishing feature of the American polity or of democratic settings *tout court*.

only on the general elite dynamics highlighted in Chapters 2 and 3 characterising all social and political settings but also on the possibility of applying this theoretical framework both to later cases of US intervention and to other states' interventionary practices. In the following sections, I will provide first an evaluation of the analytical prospects offered by an elite perspective on cases of intervention beyond the timeframe selected in this thesis. Subsequently, I will indicate the theoretical prospects offered by an elite perspective on the consequences of intervention.

Beyond 1939: Implications for the Study of Intervention

Although the following section allows only for an exploratory assessment of the applicability of the proposed framework to different contexts and states, both the Cold War and more recent cases of intervention suggest the utility of an elite perspective for a thorough comprehension of the causal mechanisms driving interventions also in more recent historical settings.

Elite dynamics and Cold War interventionism

This thesis offered a twofold contribution concerning the study of intervention during the Cold War, both at the empirical and theoretical level. At the empirical level, this thesis stressed the need to explore the roots of US interventionism with regard to the early years of US-Soviet relations. Both the Russian and Spanish cases emphasised the US elite's confrontational reaction to the antithetical challenge posed by the Bolshevik elite and the spread of Communist influence *before* the Cold War. Far from resulting exclusively from bipolar competition, the new regime in Moscow posed immediately both an international and a domestic challenge to the US elite. Importantly, US policymakers used military intervention to respond this twofold challenge.

When faced with the failure of their intervention to revitalise the political project of the February Revolution, US policymakers did not abandon their

attempts to steer Russia away from Bolshevism. They simply opted for economic intervention, as they later used the European Recovery Plan (ERP) on a broader scale to reduce the appeal of Communism in Europe after the Second World War. Yet the rationale behind these instruments had been developed in the aftermath of the Siberian adventure: military intervention against Communist elites, economic intervention against Communism. Furthermore, in the Cuban case, US leaders had already experimented with a vast array of interventionary tools that became part of the 'technology' of US Cold War interventionism, including not only military intervention but also economic, ideological and 'electoral' interventions. The Cuban case also highlighted the US elite's early problematic relationship with nationalist revolutions and longstanding concerns for external interference in the Western Hemisphere. Similarly to the Cuban case, where the conflict initially raised the possibility of European interventions, repeated revolts and financial instability in Latin American countries opened the possibility for renewed European meddling in American affairs, which in turn fuelled US interventionism in the region, for example in the case of Haiti (1915).⁶ What changed during the Cold War was the ideological reach and resources the Soviet Union enjoyed, which allowed Moscow to influence and interfere in Latin American politics without directly intervening. The concerns this raised in Washington led to renewed interventions, as exemplified by the case of Guatemala (1954) and US attempts to remove Castro in Cuba.⁷

At the theoretical level, this thesis explores the elite dynamics that shaped interventions also during the Cold War. This is not to argue that the Cold War did not have an impact in and of itself on US interventionism. However, what Cold War interventions reveal are not so much distinct causal mechanisms but the self-reinforcing and heightened effects of the causal mechanisms presented in this thesis: ideological heterogeneity, resulting from antithetical political formulas; global competition for power under bipolarity in the midst of profound social changes; and, following decolonisation, the appearance on the world scene of weak state elites in the Third World requiring external assistance. The resulting systemic conditions reinforced underlying elite

⁶ Schmidt 1995; Introduction: 26.

⁷ On the difference between influence, interference, and intervention, see Introduction: 22.

dynamics resulting in the third major wave of intervention and regime change in modern history.⁸

First, the interplay between political formulas and the struggle for power removed the distinction between internal opponent and external foe.⁹ Second, the conditions deriving from the struggle for power and elite relations resulted in zero-sum calculations affecting superpowers' decisions in regard to internal conflicts.¹⁰ With international alignments resting on domestic arrangements, who ruled European and Third World states mattered even more to US and Soviet elites, as elite change could entail not only the loss of an ally but also a net gain for the only rival that could threaten the other superpower.¹¹ In addition, the zero-sum calculations of the Cold War favoured forms of intervention specifically aimed at weakening the other superpower by raising the costs of the rival's interventions. For example, in response to renewed Soviet interventionism in the 1970s, the US embarked in a 'counterforce strategy' leading to the provision of aid to the Islamist forces in Afghanistan in order to wear down Soviet resources and military forces.¹² Third, intervention in the Third World was a result of both the weakness of local elites and their ability to shift their allegiance, as exemplified by the shifting position of Ethiopian and Somali elites in the 1970s.¹³ Despite their limited economic and military resources, Third World countries could yield significant returns to the superpowers in the Cold War context in terms of validation (for their proclaimed modernisation and revolutionary models) and resources (such as raw materials, access to strategic territory, etc.).¹⁴ As pointed out by Finnemore, 'Africa, south and southeast Asia, the Middle East...were prizes to be gained, and much of the cold war was a struggle for the allegiance of these states'.¹⁵

⁸ Owen 2010a.

⁹ Aron 1966a: 99-101. See also Chapter 2.

¹⁰ Kaplan 1964: 110-111.

¹¹ Finnemore 2003: 86, 94-95, 127; Hook and Spanier 2004: 79-80.

¹² Westad 2005: 331-332, 354. In this regard, these counter-interventions served a 'negative balancing' function aimed at undermining the rival superpower. See He 2012.

¹³ On the structural weakness of Third World states as favouring external intervention, see Morgenthau 1967: 426.

¹⁴ David 1989.

¹⁵ Finnemore 2003: 128.

Therefore, the conditions of the Cold War exacerbated the effects of the more general causal mechanisms that underlie intervention. But the same elite dynamics continued to operate informing not only US but also other powers' interventions. First, Cold War interventions were characterised by the interplay between ideological confrontation and power competition. On the one hand, superpowers' interventions responded to the deeply entrenched modernising and revolutionary ethos of the American and Soviet elites.¹⁶ Having secured their respective spheres of influence under military alliances, the Third World represented the ground for confrontation and the exportation of their respective models. On the other hand, the mutually antithetic challenge posed by the two models hampered substantial cooperation between US and Communist regimes, fuelling a confrontational rhetoric both abroad and at home. For example, the delay with which US policymakers took advantage of the first signs of the Soviet-Chinese split is instructive of the influence exerted by ideological rivalry during the Cold War.¹⁷ Notably, increased US cooperation with Chinese leaders starting from the 1970s and then the Soviet leadership during the 1980s was accompanied by domestic reforms that increasingly aligned the Chinese and Soviet regimes to the principles of the US formula, particularly but not exclusively in regard to its socio-economic tenets.

Second, major military interventions during the Cold War responded to both international and domestic factors. Interventions responded to the exigency of supporting allied elite and counter-elite groups. Specifically, it served three objectives at the international level: i) securing existing allied elites, as exemplified by repeated US interventions in the Western Hemisphere or Asia and Soviet interventions in Eastern Europe;¹⁸ ii) supporting allied counter-elite groups in taking over state structures, as exemplified by multiple interventions in Angola starting from the 1970s; iii) denying the imposition of allied elites to the counterpart or raising the costs of such efforts, as exemplified by US indirect

¹⁶ Morgenthau 1967: 428; Westad 2005.

¹⁷ Christensen 1996.

¹⁸ In this regard, the two formal alliance systems in Europe were functional not only in deterring a conventional or nuclear attack against their members but also any intervention within each alliance by the rival superpower. Similarly, they provided strategic and political support for superpowers' interventions aimed at their allies, for instance in the case of Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia (1968). See Bull 1977: 210-218; Wight 1978: 199.

intervention in Afghanistan. The fight for allies characterised also non-superpowers' interventions. For instance, China's 1979 intervention against Vietnam, a Soviet ally, responded to the exigency both of confronting Hanoi for its intervention against Cambodia, Beijing's main ally in Indochina, and of reducing Soviet influence in the region.¹⁹

At the same time, elites' domestic position and partisan calculations shaped those interventions in profound ways. In this regard, Vietnam stands as an example of the overlapping effects of both international and domestic factors on US leaders. While US intervention responded to the zero-sum calculations expressed in the so-called 'domino theory', partisan antagonism as well as the competition for power within the Democratic Party pushed Lyndon Johnson towards a more interventionist stance in Vietnam.²⁰ Elites' considerations for their domestic position influenced also the interventions of lesser powers. Such interventions responded partly to attempts to strengthen the legitimacy of the interveners' regimes; partly to fence off threats to the stability of those regimes posed by internal conflicts in neighbouring countries. The former is exemplified by Cuba's decision to intervene in Latin America and Angola, which reinforced the regime's revolutionary credentials; the latter by Syrian intervention in the Lebanese Civil War, which resulted from Damascus' hegemonic objectives as much as its need to control the spill-over effects of the civil war on Syrian internal stability.²¹

Third, local elites continued to act as a decisive 'pull' factor for foreign interventions. Both Arne Westad and Michael Grow have shown the influential role played by Third World elites in inviting American and Soviet interventions.²² Latin American leaders repeatedly accessed policymakers in Washington to lobby for US intervention in order to secure their own domestic position and projects. Similarly, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (1979) cannot be examined without taking into account political developments in Kabul and Afghan Communist leaders' requests for Soviet intervention. Similar dynamics characterised also non-superpowers' interventions. Chinese covert

¹⁹ Scobell 2003: 119-129.

²⁰ Small 2005.

²¹ On Cuba, see Gleijeses 2002. On Syria, see Weinberger 1986.

²² Westad 2005; Grow 2008.

direct intervention in Korea (1950) and its indirect intervention in Vietnam were both shaped by the close elite ties existing between Chinese leaders and their Korean and Vietnamese counterparts.²³ The existing ties with allied local elites likewise informed French interventions in Africa.²⁴

In general terms, allied elites represented channels for superpowers' influence, as exemplified by US relations with political actors in West Germany and Italy.²⁵ As such, securing the position of allied elite groups and of specific leaders within them represented an important objective of third party interventions during the Cold War. On the one hand, interventions could help secure the intervener's influence over local elites and counter-elites. For example, the multiple and overlapping indirect US, Soviet, and Chinese interventions in the Angolan Civil War responded to the intervening states' interest in securing the allegiance of national liberation movements in Africa.²⁶ On the other hand, interventions could help secure the position of specific factions and preferred leaders. For example, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan allowed Moscow to interfere in the struggle for power within the Afghan Communist Party and favour a more amenable leadership.²⁷

The politics of humanitarian interventions

The framework presented in this thesis can also shed light on the causal mechanisms that shaped the so called humanitarian interventions of the 1990s. Hailed as a major shift both in normative terms and in terms of states' practice, recent studies have stressed the numerous precedents of humanitarian interventions in both European and non-European history.²⁸ The empirical analysis presented in Part II confirms the need for further research on this issue, in particular to assess the role played by humanitarian motivations in specific cases. In the Cuban case, there are no reasons to doubt that humanitarian

²³ Chen 2001: 7, 54; Record 2006: 44-45.

²⁴ Moisi 1984.

²⁵ Krasner 1999: 207-212.

²⁶ Glejseis 2002; Westad 2005: 131-143; 160-170, 210-241.

²⁷ Westad 2005: 300-326.

²⁸ Finnemore 2003; Bass 2008; Barnett 2011; Simms and Trim 2011.

concerns informed US elite views, yet humanitarian motivations alone fail to explain the timing and modality of US intervention. At the same time, humanitarian considerations played an important instrumental role as they helped McKinley to forge a broader consensus by bridging the expansionist/anti-imperialist divide within the US elite. In the Russian case, the US 'responsibility to aid' the Czech units in Siberia can hardly be disentangled from the opportunity offered by the Czech revolt. Further, the case of the US relief operation in Russia underscores the need to examine the way in which humanitarian efforts can serve broader political objectives.

In more general terms, the conceptual and theoretical perspective presented in the Introduction to this thesis and in Chapter 1 reinforces these conclusions. Despite their self-declared altruistic motivations, humanitarian operations share with other forms of intervention the extensions of the intervening elites' authority over the target state. Through humanitarian intervention, the intervening elite arrogates for itself the right – *recte*, the responsibility – to protect the target population thus infringing the target elite's claim to autonomy. In practice, this translates in the coercion or removal of local leaders considered to be responsible for human rights abuses. For this reason, similarly to other interventions, neutrality in these conflicts is nothing more than a delusion.²⁹ Despite their motivations, humanitarian interventions represent an exercise in control through which the intervening elite ensures a political re-ordering of the target. For these reasons, the analysis of humanitarian interventions, including the recent developments related to the Responsibility to Protect, cannot and should not eschew the political dimension underlying these interventions.³⁰

At a more specific level, the practice of military intervention in this period indicates the role played by elite dynamics. Although further empirical research is needed, a cursory examination of major interventions during the 1990s suggests the applicability of the proposed framework to humanitarian interventions.

²⁹ Betts 1994.

³⁰ On how political and strategic considerations shape humanitarian interventions, see Trachtenberg 1993; Betts 1994. On the antipolitical theory underlying the Responsibility to Protect, see Brown 2013.

The norm of humanitarian intervention was not immediately embraced by Western elites. For example, neo-isolationist impulses emerged both within the elite and public opinion in the US in the aftermath of the Cold War. For instance, a broad consensus initially existed within the US political elite over non-intervention in Somalia (1991-1992). Subsequent US losses in Somalia reinforced such stance, as evident in US non-intervention in Rwanda (1994).³¹ However, as Western policymakers lost the framing provided by the notion of the 'free world' against the Soviet challenge and humanitarianism continued to filter into Western political formulas, Western elites' leadership was increasingly called into question when failing to prevent mass atrocities. Similarly to the Cuban case, genuine humanitarian concerns coupled with deep-rooted ideas of US exceptionalism and of its guidance role *vis-à-vis* the target communities. As such, they served both altruistic and imperial objectives.³²

In particular, the Liberal tenets of the US political formula continued to inform US policymakers' views of foreign non-democratic elites. Similarly to the Russian case examined in Chapter 5, the discourse underpinning US intervention continued to target local dictators and autocratic elites, held responsible for humanitarian disasters and instability. As Western notes, requests for US intervention in Somalia became gradually informed by a description of the conflict as the result of

violent campaigns orchestrated by ruthless elites to advance their narrow political ambitions. Based on this portrayal, [liberals] argued that U.S.-led intervention targeted against these political elites would quickly mitigate the humanitarian catastrophe.³³

In an increasingly homogenous system centred on Liberal values, such a discourse became predominant, reducing the space for cooperation with local leaders who were rejecting both US hegemony and its ideological tenets. In addition, the specific political platforms of the incumbent elites both in the US and Europe at the time reinforced these dynamics. As Brian Rathbun argues, the specific political platforms of the incumbent coalitions shaped European

³¹ Klinghoffer 1998: 91-96; Herring 2008: 921.

³² Sewell 2011.

³³ Western 2005: 137.

leaders' acceptance of humanitarian norms and of the utility of force in this regard, which in turn affected their decisions to intervene.³⁴ Similarly, the neo-Wilsonian platform with which Bill Clinton was elected in 1992 led to a public commitment for the enlargement of the perimeter of democracies, linking US security to the nature of foreign regimes.³⁵

Interventions were driven also by elite's calculations of power. In this regard, focusing exclusively on the humanitarian motivations of these operation risks overlooking the power dynamics underlying US and Western interventions during the 1990s. Although the US elite for the first time in its history faced no direct threat to either its international or domestic power, US policymakers still had to confront a twofold challenge: the consequences of the Soviet collapse and of the Cold War system on former clients and Third World states; and, the domestic consequences of US action and inaction in regard to the resulting conflicts.

The removal of the Soviet Union further weakened state elites in the Balkans and the Third World, fuelling the disintegration of numerous state structures. In this regard, US interventions responded to the US elite's attempt to both manage the consequences arising from this process and retain its newly acquired power position in the aftermath of the Cold War. An increasing awareness of the position of the US characterised the discourse of the American elite, especially after the economy began to grow again under the Clinton administration. As Senator Jesse Helms (R-North Carolina), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, noted in 1996:

we remain uniquely positioned, not only geographically, but strategically, politically and economically at the center. The United States, in that, remains the world's anchor. And that is where we must stay.³⁶

Stabilising such international order allowed US leaders to prolong the 'unipolar moment'.³⁷ Ensuring US leadership in security affairs became of paramount importance, although this resulted in contrasting incentives. While intervention

³⁴ Rathbun 2004.

³⁵ Lake 1993.

³⁶ Helms 1996.

³⁷ Krauthammer 1990.

in Somalia responded to requests to uphold the Bush administration's vision of a 'new world order', the possibility of fracturing the Atlantic Alliance initially led the Clinton administration to refrain from a more forceful policy in the Bosnian conflict (1992-1995).³⁸

Yet, partisan competition at home provided additional push factors in both the case of Somalia and Bosnia. Pressures arising from US Congressmen and Bill Clinton, the presidential candidate at the time, reinforced the Bush administration's decision to intervene in Somalia.³⁹ Similarly, domestic political considerations played an important role in the decision of the Clinton administration to authorise US intervention in Bosnia in 1995. While concerns that intervention would endanger Clinton's domestic plans reinforced the US initial cautious stance in Bosnia, the Republican victory in the 1994 mid-term elections changed the political calculus for Clinton and the Democrats.⁴⁰ Weakened and increasingly under attack by the Republicans also on its Bosnian policy, Clinton took control of the Bosnian dossier in order to strengthen the president's image as a credible leader in view of the upcoming presidential elections. Republicans, in the meantime, further restricted the administration's options. In 1995, majority leader and future presidential candidate Bob Dole coalesced a group of US policymakers behind intervention, attacking the president's inaction. Subsequently, Congress passed a bill put forth by Dole and Helms extending military assistance to Bosnia.⁴¹ Eventually, both Republican pressures and Clinton's attempts to restore its position eased US support for NATO air operations against the Serbs in the summer of 1995.

Finally, elite relations shaped Western and US interventions during the 1990s in important ways. The availability of local allies – or lack thereof – helps clarify the pattern of intervention and non-intervention during this period.⁴² For example, the usual focus on US non-intervention in Rwanda overshadows how elite ties between French and Rwandan political elites contributed to the French decision to intervene in Rwanda both in 1990 (*Operation Noroit*) and in 1994

³⁸ Daalder 2000: 35-36; Patnam 2010.

³⁹ Patnam 2010.

⁴⁰ Daalder 2000:17-18.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*: 63-64; Halberstam 2001: 306-309.

⁴² Notably, Robert Pape (2012) included the availability of allied groups in the target state as part of his proposed 'pragmatic standard' of humanitarian intervention.

(*Operation Turquoise*).⁴³ Importantly, in the early phase of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, Washington lacked clear allies in the struggle for the remnants of Yugoslavia. As former Secretary of State James Baker noted in June 1991, US leaders simply did not 'have a dog in that fight'.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the pre-existing US ties with Serb authorities initially hampered cooperation with Croatian and Bosnian representatives. Concerns about the leadership groups of the three sides involved in the war in Bosnia continued to reinforce US caution. As John Deutsch, Deputy Secretary of Defence at the time, noted:

one of the reasons that it was hard to have a good policy there is how terrible all sides were...To whom would you give a Thomas Jefferson Award? Not Milosevic certainly. And not Tudjman, equally certainly. Izetbegovic? Not a great candidate himself....Probably Izetbegovic would kill the fewest, but perhaps only because he lacked the means. It took a long time for arms to get to the Bosnian Muslims.⁴⁵

With the prosecution of the conflict, US leaders gradually sided with both the Croatian and Bosnian leaders. Elite relations played an important role in this regard. On the one hand, cooperation with Croatia was eased by the Croatian defence minister at the time, Grojko Susak, who requested US military support and made clear his intention to lead Croatia into NATO.⁴⁶ On the other hand, support for the Bosnians responded to Muslim Bosnian leaders' lobbying on US Congressmen as much as from the isolation in which they operated in Western Europe, which made them more dependent on US support.⁴⁷ Notably, by helping negotiate a peace between the Bosnians and the Croats in March 1994, the US could promote the formation of a local military ally.⁴⁸ Local actors played a major role also in 'pulling' intervention in Kosovo in 1999. In this regard, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and Albanian leaders played two specific roles: first, by attacking Serb positions in Kosovo, the KLA induced further Serb reprisals that reinforced a compelling narrative of victimhood that in turn legitimised intervention against Belgrade; second, similarly to the Muslim Bosnians, they lobbied Congress for increased support and

⁴³ Callamard 2000; Prunier 2000.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Halberstam 2001: 46.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 91-92.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 334-335.

⁴⁷ Woodward 2013.

⁴⁸ Daalder 2000: 26-27.

intervention.⁴⁹ In more general terms, as Susan Woodward argues, the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo represent the last examples of a recurrent historical pattern that has seen Balkan elites exerting an important pulling effect on foreign intervention since the 19th Century.⁵⁰

Moreover, both cases indicate the utility of taking into account how developments in the target state act as critical junctures opening up the possibility for intervention. As Ivo Daalder notes, the summer of 1995 represented a window of opportunity for the Clinton administration.⁵¹ In 1995, the improved military positions of all three sides involved in the Bosnian conflict could have brought the conflict to a quick end.⁵² Importantly, Croatian and Bosnian concomitant ground offensives during the summer allowed the US to rely exclusively on air operations, which entailed inferior material costs and political risks.⁵³ In turn, military intervention served the purpose of favouring a new political settlement devised by US policymakers and imposed by US policymakers, resulting in the Dayton Agreement.⁵⁴ Similarly, events on the ground pulled US intervention in Kosovo, particularly the massacre in Račak, which tilted the international and domestic balance in favour of intervention.⁵⁵

Intervention today

The 9/11 attacks created new push factors for US interventionism. Faced with both a rising Islamist challenge to its position in the Middle East and a direct security threat, US policymakers embarked in an ambitious interventionist project to shape a more favourable international system and a more secure domestic context. Enjoying unprecedented military capabilities coupled with the renewed domestic elite consensus on military operations, the Bush administration used military intervention to reshape those countries in the

⁴⁹ Halberstam 2001: 397, 409-411; Woodward 2013.

⁵⁰ Woodward 2013.

⁵¹ Daalder 2000: 167.

⁵² *Ibid.*: 37-38.

⁵³ Halberstam 2001: 424-425; Trubowitz 2011: 124-125.

⁵⁴ Daalder: 179-180. On the democratisation process implemented in Bosnia and its limits, see Chandler 2000.

⁵⁵ Halberstam 2001: 397, 409-411.

image of US values and interests. Removing radical Islamist or authoritarian elites not aligned with the US represented the first step towards the imposition of new elites that could respond to US ideological, strategic, and political objectives.⁵⁶ In this regard, US interventions in Afghanistan (2001) and especially in Iraq (2003) represented the highest manifestation of US Liberal interventionism, aimed at establishing democracies entrusted to new political elites drawn from both opposition forces with which the US had already established relations in the past, such as the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan and the Kurd leadership in Iraq, and the Afghan and Iraqi exiles.

The potential utility of an elite perspective on these interventions stems from two elements. First, recent studies on US intervention in Iraq have pointed out the need to move beyond explanations focusing exclusively on either security factors or the role played by the neoconservatives within the Bush administration in order to take into account the elite dynamics examined in this thesis, specifically: the broader consensus within the American political elite on US Iraqi policy and the ideological underpinnings of US leaders' policy towards Iraq;⁵⁷ the interaction between international and domestic political considerations;⁵⁸ and, the relationship established by US policymakers with Iraqi exiles and how the former saw the latter as the nucleus of the post-Baathist Iraqi political elite.⁵⁹ Notably, the case of Ahmed Chalabi and his connections with both US political leaders and members of the ruling elite stands as a powerful reminder of the influence members of the Iraqi counter-elite at the time had on US decision-making.⁶⁰

Second, an elite perspective helps to shed light on the limits of US interventions. Similarly to the US experience in Cuba and Russia, US leaders had to confront local elites whose autonomy from US power rested on both local sources of political power and foreign powers. For example, the ideological and political relations established by Iraqi Shia leaders with the

⁵⁶ Dodge 2010.

⁵⁷ Ibid. On the consensus on Iraq existing within the US political elite, see Harvey 2011.

⁵⁸ In particular, Snyder *et al.* 2009 have pointed out how the Bush administration's Iraqi policy worked as a tool of wedge politics against the Democrats.

⁵⁹ Dodge 2005: 710-712; Vanderbush 2009.

⁶⁰ Roston 2008.

Iranian elite during Saddam Hussein's regime help explain Teheran's influence over the new political leaders in Baghdad. In more general terms, the difficulties experienced in Afghanistan and the shift towards authoritarianism in Iraq are a stark reminder of how the functioning of formal institutional arrangements, including democratic ones, rests primarily on the quality, structure and interests of the elites that sustain and staff them.⁶¹

Similarly to previous experiences in the interwar period and the Cold War, the costs and failures of US operations in Afghanistan and Iraq coupled with the effects of the financial crisis wore down the domestic consensus for full-scale unilateral interventions. Yet, when faced with the revolutionary wave of the so-called Arab Spring, intervention became once again a tool not only Western powers but also Middle Eastern states could use to manage the consequences of domestic change and support favourable elites. Both democratic and authoritarian states intervened to either uphold the position of their allied elites or to remove rival leaders. Importantly, a narrow focus on either humanitarian motivations or formal institutional differences can hardly explain the different policies pursued by democratic and authoritarian states during the Arab Spring. In March 2011, following Bahrain's request, Saudi Arabia and the other countries of the GCC intervened in Bahrain in order to secure the position of the al-Khalifa family, threatened by a domestic uprising. The intervention of the GCC responded to both international objectives (securing an allied elite in Manama) and domestic concerns (quelling an uprising that could be spread and challenge the stability of the regimes of the GCC). While the existing security and political relations with the Bahraini elite prevented any major Western involvement in support of the Bahraini protesters, Western states with the support of the GCC countries intervened in the Libya Civil War on the side of the anti-governmental forces.

In particular, the case of Western intervention in Libya offers a challenging test for the framework presented in this thesis. Krasner has recently pointed out that Western countries not only did not know much about the Libyan opposition and but also that they did not have much confidence in it.⁶² However, further research is needed on this point to assess how elite relations

⁶¹ Dodge 2013.

⁶² Krasner 2013: 339-340.

affected Western elites' decision-making process. Notably, Western intervention acted in favour and was itself eased by the formation of the National Transitional Council (NTC) in Benghazi, which was first recognised as the legitimate authority in Libya and subsequently went to establish the new governmental and legislative bodies of the Libyan state. In addition, three elements suggest reconsidering Krasner's observation: first, the NTC's professed democratic credentials, as enshrined in its 'Vision of a Democratic Libya' released on 29th March 2011, and its public requests for UN-backed air strikes and no-fly zones;⁶³ second, NTC's diplomatic activism in early 2011 and the resulting contacts with Western policymakers in the days preceding Western intervention leading to the early recognition of the NTC; finally, the identity of the NTC leaders, well-known to Western policymakers, as exemplified by the early positive views of Mahmoud Jibril, head of the NTC provisional government, expressed by the US ambassador in Libya in 2009.⁶⁴

Finally, elite dynamics can elucidate the various positions of external countries regarding the ongoing conflict in Syria. The struggle for power taking place in the region coupled with the pattern of relations and dependency established by elite groups has provided significant push and pull factors to Middle Eastern actors to intervene. As a result, regional actors are considerably involved in the Syrian Civil War by supporting their local allies in the struggle for Syria: Russia, Iran and the Lebanese Hezbollah supporting the incumbent elite; Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey supporting different factions within the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (or Syrian National Coalition, SNC).⁶⁵

On the contrary, elite dynamics provide contrasting incentives in the case of the Western powers' policy towards Syria. On the one hand, elite dynamics gradually led the US and its European allies towards a more active role in Syria. First, the repeated human rights violations and the fight of the SNC against an authoritarian regime resonated with the tenets of the Western elites' formulas

⁶³ National Transitional Council 2011; Fadel and Sly 2011; Pfeiffer 2011.

⁶⁴ In a 2009 cable released by Wikileaks, the US ambassador concluded a note on her meeting with Jibril by noting that 'with a PhD in strategic planning from the University of Pittsburgh, Jibril is a serious interlocutor who "gets" the U.S. perspective'. See The Telegraph 2011.

⁶⁵ On the regional dimension of the Syrian Civil War, see Hokayem 2013: 105-148.

and foreign policy discourse, placing significant obstacles to any collaboration with the Syrian elite from an early stage on the conflict.⁶⁶ Second, the provision of support to the SNC offered the possibility of weakening Iran's main ally in the region and, in case, secure the position of a more favourable leadership in Damascus. Third, members of the SNC have established direct relations with Western policymakers, particularly with members of the French elite, the first Western elite to recognise the SNC as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people, and of the US Republican Party, as exemplified by Senator John McCain's visit to Syria in May 2013, which in turn helped to project the Syrian question onto the US political debate. On the other hand, the same elite dynamics help explain Western reticence in Syria. In particular, the domestic economic and political costs direct forms of intervention might entail and the presence of radical Islamist groups within the opposition prevented a more direct Western involvement. As a result of the contrasting incentives shaped by elite dynamics, Western elites have, so far, opted for limited indirect intervention in Syria, primarily via the provision of arms to secular and moderate insurgent groups. In the US case, this resulted in a bipartisan pull in the Senate for a 'Syrian Transition Support Act' (May 2013) to ensure the provision of defence material and training to vetted groups in Syria.⁶⁷

The recent debate in Western capitals over a possible limited strike following the use of chemical weapons in Syria (August 2013) further underscored the need to take into account broader elite dynamics to account for the decision to intervene or not, including Western elites' domestic political concerns and the perceived lack of reliable allies in Syria. Yet, both the theoretical and empirical results of this thesis suggest focusing on the way in which both evolving elite relations and conditions in the target state could provide new critical junctures and precipitate foreign intervention.

In more general terms, the ongoing interventions in the Syrian conflict by regional actors and the debate over possible Western direct intervention draw attention to the continued interest decision-makers attach to 'who rules' other states and the continued availability of intervention as a policy tool to influence

⁶⁶ In this regard, see president Obama's call for Bashar al-Assad's resignation in August 2011 in Wilson and Warrick 2011.

⁶⁷ U.S. Senate 2013.

the circulation of elites in such states. In turn, this stresses the need to refine the theoretical tools to examine this practice and its links with political elites' views, interests, and relations across different political and institutional contexts. This is particularly relevant today, as Western elites are confronted with the expanding interests of emerging powers and their evolving interventionary practices. In this regard, Russia's ongoing support for the Syrian elite and, before that, its direct intervention in Georgia in 2008 stress the need to examine the way in which existing elite ties shape Moscow's interventionism and how both intervention and its defence of the non-intervention norm, in turn, allows Moscow to secure its allies in its 'near abroad' and beyond. Similarly, the expanding international interests and ties of the Chinese elite as well as China's increased participation in UN peacekeeping operations suggest exploring the way in which elite dynamics may affect Beijing's traditional non-interventionist stance.⁶⁸

The Consequences of Intervention: Implications for Theory

In the previous section, I highlighted the utility of the proposed framework for the study of military interventions conducted by both democratic and autocratic regimes beyond the timeframe selected in this study. In this regard, further research is needed to evaluate in greater detail the role played by elite dynamics in specific instances of intervention both during and after the Cold War. At the same time, both the case studies analysed in Part II and the analytical overview presented in the previous section suggest the utility of the theoretical framework presented in this thesis for the study of the consequences of intervention. As discussed in Chapter 2, elite change produces significant systemic consequences that in turn shape the interests elites face when confronting internal conflicts. For the same reason, military interventions are likely to produce three significant systemic effects connected to the three elite

⁶⁸ On China's increasing participation in UN operations and its position regarding the Responsibility to Protect, see Gill 2007: 113-121; Pang 2009; Suzuki 2011. For an analysis of the trajectory of Soviet/Russian interventionism as well as of the relationship between China's traditional non-interventionism and its emerging interventionism, see Lawson and Tardelli 2013.

dynamics highlighted in this study. In turn, these consequences highlight avenues of future theoretical research.

First, by operating as a tool for the management of political change abroad, intervention influences the degree of ideological homogeneity in the system, thus affecting the degree of stability and patterns of cooperation within it. In this sense, intervention acts as a tool for the forceful homogenisation of the international system or for its forceful heterogenisation when conducted by revolutionary states. The question remains whether elites based on different principles of legitimacy can overcome their differences and reach an acceptable accommodation. As noted in Chapter 2, two processes can lead to such an outcome: formal settlements or processes of political convergence.⁶⁹ Both Neorealism and the English School have – albeit with different terms – usually focused on the possibility of convergence between different states induced by the international system (or society) via processes of emulations and socialization.⁷⁰

Both historical evidence and the analysis presented in this thesis, however, depict a less straightforward process. For instance, Western recognition of the Soviet Union and cooperation during the Second World War do not negate the decades of political, ideological and military confrontation that continued up to the collapse of the Soviet state itself in the early 1990s.⁷¹ Similarly, the shift of the early interventionist foreign policy of the Iranian Islamic Republic towards the more pragmatic foreign policy of the 1990s following the Iraq-Iran War needs to be reconciled with the continued confrontational posture characterising US-Iranian relations.⁷²

As Halliday argues, there is no inevitable shift from confrontation to accommodation; on the contrary both tendencies persist.⁷³ From the theoretical perspective presented in this thesis, the point overlooked by both Neorealist and English School perspectives is how systemic incentives shaped by elite

⁶⁹ Higley and Burton 2006: 3-4, 21-22; Chapter 2: 82-83, 96.

⁷⁰ Waltz 1979: 105-106, 111; Armstrong 1993.

⁷¹ On the Soviet Union's struggle for recognition, see Ringmar 2002.

⁷² Ehteshami and Nonneman 1991: 100-101; Bakhash 2006: 252-253.

⁷³ Halliday 1999: 134-137, 153-154.

dynamics could work in the opposite direction, by pressuring a revolutionary state not to come to terms with the limits and costs of a continued interventionist foreign policy but to support foreign revolutionary groups as a means of strengthening its domestic status and create more favourable external conditions. In this regard, the elite perspective adopted in this thesis reinforces the Burkean view on the intractability of fundamental domestic and ideological differences.⁷⁴ In addition, it complements the observations offered by elite theory on the processes that can lead elites to settle ideological differences, beyond settlements and convergence. In the case of elites operating in an anarchic environment or involved in an internal conflict, an additional course of action is available, that is military intervention. In this regard, further research is needed to evaluate both the additional contribution that elite theory can provide to the study of the elite ideologies and socialisation processes and the contribution that IR theory can offer to the study of elites and their dynamics.

Second, by supporting a local elite group's bid for the state, intervention can generate allies, thus affecting the international or regional balance of power. Internal conflicts allowed the possibility to create new allies, deny new allies to rival states, and, in case, undermine existing alliances. In the Spanish case, the US administration attempted to curb Nationalist advances in order to avoid the creation of regime in Madrid allied to Berlin that could weaken the position of the US in both Latin America and Europe. During the Second World War, US concerns regarding Spain's support for Germany were vindicated, representing an additional strategic issue for US war plans. Other cases of intervention had greater impact. For instance, Soviet external support to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during the Chinese civil war (1946-1950) favoured the victory of the CCP. In turn, this led to the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance signed by the Soviet Union and China in February 1950, which initially established China as a key Soviet ally.⁷⁵

This is of particular importance to Realist theories and ongoing efforts to refine existing theories of balancing.⁷⁶ Realist authors have usually questioned the impact internal conflicts can have on the balance of power, except in limited

⁷⁴ Ibid.: 135, 153-154.

⁷⁵ Westad 2012: 292-293.

⁷⁶ Nexon 2009b.

number of cases. As Waltz argued in 1967, 'the revolutionary guerrilla wins civil wars, not international ones, and no civil war can change the balance of world power unless it takes place in America or Russia'.⁷⁷ This argument, however, presents a number of problems. Regime changes and internal conflicts are recurrent events in international politics; hence they cannot be discarded easily. In fact, civil wars took place in both states mentioned by Waltz and had (or would have had) significant systemic consequences. In particular, the Bolsheviks' success had profound foreign policy implications for both the US-Russian rivalry and the Cold War. Today, the civil war in Syria makes clear the relevance of domestic change and internal conflicts in terms of: the opportunity provided by the war to Iran's regional (Saudi Arabia) and international (US) competitors; and, the different degree of influence that groups within the opposition may grant to their external patrons if they win the war. As a consequence, Realist authors such as Kissinger and Walt might well argue that vital security interests are not at stake in Syria. But, by ignoring the influence of civil wars on balancing mechanisms in the Middle East and historical development more generally, they run a double risk: failing to examine why policymakers repeatedly consider the outcome of internal conflicts as a vital interest; and, of making Realism redundant in the explanation of important power and security dynamics in a highly strategic region.⁷⁸

Finally, by establishing and reinforcing elite relations, intervention helps shape patron-client relations thus affecting the degree of hierarchy in the international system. As Daniel Nexon points out, the social interactions between state elites and non-ruling groups constitute the 'structural context' within which political elites operate.⁷⁹ Thus, by strengthening or loosening patron-clients relations, intervention ultimately strengthens or weakens broader patterns of hierarchy. As indicated by the Cuban case, military intervention was key to establishing imperial relations between the US and Cuba reinforcing the dependency of the Cuban elite on US support. In turn, these relations increased the likelihood of subsequent US interventions in Cuba due both to US interest in securing more amenable leaders on the island and to the Cuban factions' attempts to enlist US

⁷⁷ Waltz 1967b: 205.

⁷⁸ Kissinger 2012; Walt 2013.

⁷⁹ Nexon 2009a: 25.

support in their own struggle for power. In this regard, further research is necessary to investigate the way in which military intervention and political elite relations interact not only to establish but also to replicate and preserve imperial domains. Therefore, a fruitful dialogue can be established: on the one hand, with works that have examined the role played by the 'pull factors' in the periphery on imperial expansion;⁸⁰ on the other hand, with works that have explored how clienteles and military interventions shaped imperial rule and its eventual decline.⁸¹

These three consequences stress once more the 'roll-on' effect of elite dynamics. While in the short-term elite dynamics inform the timing, modality and objectives of intervention, in the long-term elite dynamics continue to influence the intervener's relationship with the target by affecting the degree of homogeneity between the two, the power position of the elites involved (both at home and abroad), and the asymmetrical relations between the two. As a result, international homogeneity, the balance of power, and imperial relations result affected. In this regard, the same dynamics that maintain intervention as a constant practice also make intervention a consequential practice for international relations. Ideologies, power, empires: ultimately, the fate of all three hinges on political elites.

⁸⁰ Galbraith 1960; Woodward 2013.

⁸¹ Lake 2009; Nexon 2009a; Go 2011.

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