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## Proxy Wars & Sovereignty: The Ethics and Impacts of Proxy War on State Sovereignty

Catherine Latchford  
*Liberty University*

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## Introduction

Proxy war has existed since the time of the Roman Empire. From the Byzantine-Sassanian Wars to the twenty-first century's War on Terrorism, states have intervened in other countries' conflicts for centuries. However, involvement in proxy war opens vast ethical considerations, from conduct to implications on the internal resources and the national security interests of a state. Furthermore, proxy warfare can impact the sovereignty of both the warring states and the countries "pulling the strings"; thus, it is necessary to evaluate and understand the impact proxy war has on state sovereignty. This paper will seek to identify the impact of proxy war on state sovereignty and evaluate the ethical viability of proxy warfare in relation to Just War Theory through a cross-comparison of the Libyan and Yemen Civil Wars. However, to determine the ethics of proxy war and its impact on sovereignty one must first define proxy war and comprehend the factors separating a proxy conflict from traditional conflict.

## Proxy War

Though it holds multiple interpretations, proxy war is commonly defined as a war between regional states where each side has a supporting superpower supplying indirect military intervention.<sup>1</sup> For a conflict to be considered proxy, it must involve the intervention of another state in the form of either arms deals and/or military support. This definition may also expand to the direct intervention of other states in the conflict of two other warring nations, depending on the extremity and duration of their direct involvement. This is highlighted by the Vietnam War, wherein the United States never formally declared war yet provided troops and weapons to assist the South Vietnamese in their efforts against the Soviet-backed Vietcong.<sup>2</sup> For continuity, this paper will utilize the terms "principal actor" to refer to superpowers contributing to a conflict and "secondary actor" for countries influenced by a superpower's indirect involvement and support.

Proxy war differs from conventional war as the influencing principal actors do not formally declare war on their adversaries; rather, states engage indirectly in combat to further their interests.<sup>3</sup> The key component of proxy warfare is the intervening state's motivation to preserve its national security interests.<sup>4</sup> As a result of this motivation, proxy environments evolve into conflicts fueled by external-state aspirations, consequently creating two models of proxy conflict: the transactional and the exploitative models.<sup>5</sup> The transactional model highlights the mutual benefit consideration of proxy involvement, with both the principal actor and the secondary actor state receiving benefits from their involvement. In contrast, the exploitative model emphasizes the role of the intervening state, inferring that the principal actor serves as the primary source of survival for the secondary actor, thus resulting in the intervening state holding

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<sup>1</sup> Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, "The Strategy of War by Proxy," *Cooperation and Conflict* 19, no. 4 (1984): 263.

<sup>2</sup> Seyom Brown, "Purposes and pitfalls of war by proxy: A systemic analysis," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 2 (2016).

<sup>3</sup> Dylan Craig, *Sovereignty, War, and the Global State* (Cham, CH: Palgrave Macmillan), 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Abbas Farasoo, "Rethinking Proxy War Theory in IR: A Critical Analysis of Principal-Agent Theory," *International Studies Review* 23, no. 1 (2021): 1837.

<sup>5</sup> Amos C. Fox, "Conflict and the need for a theory of proxy warfare," *Journal of Strategic Security* 12, no. 1 (2019), 61.

unlimited influence over the actions of the intervened state.<sup>6</sup> Through the exploitative model, the relationship between proxy and superpower is temporal, dependent only on whether the proxy's conflict can advance the superpower's objectives.<sup>7</sup> An example of this model is the Russian support of the Ukrainian Donbas region, as the separatist region is financed and politically recognized by the Russian government to counter Ukrainian movements on Russia's eastern border.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the transactional model emphasizes equal power between the proxy and the principal actor, as the secondary actor's goal is not to receive full support but simply to acquire assistance in obtaining a common goal.<sup>9</sup> This common interest allows for the proxy to determine who they associate with, thus the proxy maintains its sovereignty and negates the exploitative model's emphasis on subjugation by the principal actor.

These two models of proxy war reveal the impact of proxy warfare on state sovereignty. Sovereignty is crucial component of a government's survival, as it establishes legitimation of authority to represent national interest.<sup>10</sup> The exploitative model highlights how proxy war can undermine state sovereignty, as in this approach an internal state conflict is influenced by external powers. Absolutized proxy war creates a scenario where a country no longer has sovereignty over its actions or its ability to provide for its population, for the principal actor holds significant leverage over the actions (or inactions) of the proxy state. Furthermore, proxy war compromises the sovereignty of a state because it mitigates a state's territorial integrity and political authority.<sup>11</sup>

### **Ethics of Proxy Wars**

To discern if a proxy war is justifiable, one must also determine the ethical components of proxy conflict. To do so, the motivating features and subsequent effects of a proxy conflict should be assessed. Proxy war generally involves a principal actor's indirect support of a conflict without declaring war or formally allying with the party they support. This indirect support may result in arms deals and political support, thus further fueling the conflict and prolonging its effects on the proxy's stability and population. Consequently, proxy involvement can result in more collateral damage to a population than an isolated conflict would.

Given these effects, it is possible to determine the ethics of proxy wars. The exploitative model of proxy war aligns with Machiavellian ethics. Niccolò Machiavelli, an Italian philosopher, emphasized the use of secular realist approaches to international relations to obtain national security objectives. Machiavelli's *The Prince* frames the use of contractual strategic relationships between a principal actor and a secondary actor, with the principal actor subcontracting warfighting to obtain their goals.<sup>12</sup> This realist perspective affirms the existence of the anarchical structure within international affairs and claims preemptive action can serve as

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>8</sup> Maria Tsvetkova, "Fog" of the Ukraine's War: Russian's Death in Syria Sheds Light on Secret Mission, *Reuters*, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Fox, Conflict and the need for a theory of proxy warfare.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Eric Bronner, "Sovereignty, Interference and Crisis," in *Rethinking Peace: Discourse, Memory, Translation, and Dialogue*, ed. Alexander L. Hinton, Giorgio Shani, Jeremiah Alberg (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 16.

<sup>11</sup> C. Anthony Pfaff, "Proxy War Ethics," *Journal of National Security Law & Policy* 9, no. 2 (2017): 307.

<sup>12</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, (New York, NY: Signet Classic, 1999), 73.

a defensive protection for national power.<sup>13</sup> With this perspective, it can be determined that proxy war, while undesirable, is not unfathomable – so long as it pursues the protection and obtainment of a state’s objectives. Historic and current events emphasize the use of proxy war as a method to obtain national security objectives, as seen through the Libyan Civil War and the current situation surrounding the state of Yemen’s civil war and humanitarian crisis.

### Libyan Civil War

Though Libya has experienced several civil wars throughout its history, this paper will focus primarily on the conflict that occurred from 2014 to 2020. The Second Libyan Civil War began in 2014 with the launch of *Operation Dignity* by General Khalifa Haftar against the General National Congress.<sup>14</sup> The fragile state of the General National Congress and Libyan government in 2014 is attributed to the death of dictator Muammar Gaddafi, whose passing resulted in the downfall of his regime and consequently the institutional infrastructure of Libya, providing ample room for rebels with varying objectives to fill the power vacuum left in Gaddafi’s absence.<sup>15</sup> Though there was a proposal for a government of national unity in 2015, the lack of established sovereignty and authority of this government resulted in ISIS territorial gains and escalated tribal conflict.<sup>16</sup> Since *Operation Dignity*, the Government of National Accord (GNA) and the Libyan National Army (LNA) have been at odds, with each seeking to control the Libyan government. Throughout the conflict, outside forces sought to influence the conflict through airstrikes, operational support, and political support.<sup>17</sup> To identify the impacts of the Second Libyan Civil War on the country’s autonomy, one must identify the actors in the conflict and their respective interests. The actors involved in this conflict included the Government of National Accord (GNA), the Libya National Army (LNA), Islamist militants, Russia, and Turkey.

The primary actors in the Libyan Civil War were the GNA and LNA. Fundamental differences between the two organizations instigated extensive party divides, and the initial limited power of the LNA motivated their desire to shift the balance of power within Libya.<sup>18</sup> The GNA was established in 2015 with the assistance of the United Nations to unify the Libyan government’s rival administrations.<sup>19</sup> The LNA, however, was led by General Khalifa Haftar, whose disbandment of the General National Congress led to the Libyan Civil War. Though both sides sought to hold full control of the Libyan government, each had differing ideas on the future of Libya. Consequently, the relationships between both groups devolved into a conflict that gained international attention. The LNA’s support system stemmed from international involvement by Egypt, France, the United Arab Emirates, and Russia.<sup>20</sup> International interest in

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<sup>13</sup> Adam Paffenroth, “Outsourcing Conflict: An Analysis of the Strategic Underpinnings of Proxy Warfare,” *Johns Hopkins University*, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> James Ratcliff, “Weak States and Political Grievances: Understanding the Causes of the Second Libyan Civil War,” *Journal of Global Affairs* 26, no. 1 (2017).

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Chivvis and Jeffrey Martini, “Libya after Qaddafi: Lessons and Implications for the Future,” RAND Corporation, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Bronner, *Sovereignty, Interference and Crisis*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> Frederic Wehrey, “This War is Out of Our Hands”: The Internationalization of Libya’s Post-2011 Conflicts from Proxies to Boots on the Ground, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Mikael Eriksson and Elias Bohman, “The Second Libyan Civil War: Security developments during 2016-2017,” *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia* 65, no. 3 (2018).

<sup>19</sup> Kali Robinson, *Who’s Who in Libya’s War*, *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2020.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

this conflict stemmed from the conflict's impacts on civilians and the importance of Libyan oil fields to the global economy. Libya's oil production accounted for approximately 347,200 exported barrels of crude oil per day at the tail-end of the civil war, making it one of the world's top exporters.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the Libyan Civil War quickly was influenced by outside actors to prevent Libya's oil supply from being monopolized by another entity.

In addition to domestic actors, non-state actors impacted the trajectory of the Libyan Civil War. Key non-state actors included al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), ISIS, and Ansar al-Sharia. Throughout the conflict, Islamic militant groups sought to establish *shari'a* law and influence politics in Libya to implement the caliphate.<sup>22</sup> The most prominent of these organizations was ISIS, who held control of a sizable portion of southern Libya and utilized traditional terrorism methods to progress the conflict towards an end with Islam emerging as the primary influencer on Libyan government and politics.<sup>23</sup>

Russian and Turkish involvement in the Libyan Civil War assisted in its qualification as a proxy war. Russia's support included arms trades and sending mercenary groups, such as the Wagner Group, to provide tactical support to the LNA.<sup>24</sup> In exchange for their economic and military support of the LNA, Russia sought to secure oil deals in Libya to further its economic enterprise.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Russia's support undermined the capabilities of International Organizations (IOs) to intervene in matters of sovereignty. Russia's position on the United Nations (UN) Security Council forced the UN allowed the state to veto a vote to condemn the LNA for their actions in Libya, consequently keeping the IO from making a formal statement on the Libyan Civil War.

Similarly, Turkey's involvement in the Libyan Civil War serves as an example of the impact of proxy intervention within a conflict. Turkey's support of the GNA in Libya manifested in troops and arms trades, with Turkey providing more than one hundred officers, thousands of militants, and shipments of drones to support the GNA in the conflict.<sup>26</sup> Through its involvement in the Libyan Civil War, Turkey held aspiration to reassert itself as a major player in the Eastern Mediterranean region.<sup>27</sup> This highlights the ability of proxy warfare to yield results, as Turkish involvement within the war enabled the GNA to re-establish their boundaries and pursue maritime activity to support its effort.<sup>28</sup> Turkey's proxy involvement in the Libyan Civil War was integral in the GNA's success, thus highlighting how proxy support can determine a conflict.

### Yemen Civil War

The Yemen Civil War began in 2014 with the seizure of Sana'a by Houthi rebels. The Houthi's siege of Sana'a was inspired by the failures of Yemen's transitional government to establish lasting change after the Arab Spring.<sup>29</sup> After the Houthis overtaking of Sana'a and exile

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<sup>21</sup> Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), "Libya facts and figures," *OPEC Member Countries*, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> Mary Fitzgerald and Mattia Tolado, "A Quick Guide to Libya's Main Players," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Eriksson and Bohman, *The Second Libyan Civil War*.

<sup>24</sup> Robinson, *Who's Who in Libya's War*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Ahmed Helal, *For Turkey, the Libyan conflict and eastern Mediterranean are inextricably linked*. *The Atlantic Council*, 2020.

<sup>29</sup> Asher Orkaby, *Yemen: A civil war centuries in the making*, *Origins* 12, no. 8 (2019).

of President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, Saudi Arabia created a coalition of Middle Eastern and Western countries, including Egypt, Bahrain, and the United States, to combat the Houthi occupation.<sup>30</sup> The motivation behind the Saudi coalition is attributed to the Houthi movement, as the Houthis are a Shi'ite Islamic group backed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. As the civil war progressed, the impact of foreign powers within the country's conflict became increasingly evident, thus evolving the conflict from a civil war to a proxy war between the Saudi-backed Yemeni government and the Iranian-backed Houthi movement. To better comprehend the sovereignty implications of the Yemen Civil War, it is imperative to identify and understand the actors in the conflict. The primary actors identified in the Yemen Civil War include the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Houthi rebels, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and the Yemeni government.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is the main supporter of the Houthi rebels in Yemen due to their mutual Shi'ite origin, their disdain for the Western world, Saudi Arabia's Sunni Islamic alignment, and their embracing of Western interaction.<sup>31</sup> Through the Yemen Civil War, Iran can indirectly oppose Western intervention in the Persian Gulf and simultaneously support another Shi'ite group that has been labeled as terrorists by the West. Iran already opposes the West through their support of Hezbollah in Lebanon and other groups who seek to destabilize the West and empower the caliphate. However, Iran's support of the Houthis in Yemen holds an additional motivation for involvement. This motivation is Yemen's proximity to a critical geopolitical chokepoint: the Bab el-Mandeb strait. Should the Houthis gain control of Yemen, they would have a direct link to the third-most active oil chokepoint in the world, as well as an avenue to expand arms trafficking.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the Yemen conflict serves as an opportunity for Iran to simultaneously oppose Western society, impact global trade networks, and expand their influence in the Arabian Peninsula without risking their own soldiers in a conflict.<sup>33</sup>

The Houthis are a Shi'ite rebel group based in Yemen that emerged in 2003 in light of the US invasion of Iraq, which they opposed.<sup>34</sup> Throughout the Arab Spring the Houthi movement grew in popularity, particularly with Yemen's younger population as it was seen to combat the regime's infrastructural tactics of repression.<sup>35</sup> The Houthis gained substantial power in the social arena after the events of the 2011 Arab Spring, which ousted Saleh's government and resulted in a transitional government.<sup>36</sup> Despite the popular support of the Arab Spring and the growing status of the Houthis within social spheres, the results of the Arab Spring in Yemen paralleled the outcome of the Arab Spring in Egypt, where the transitional government resulted in little positive change to the country's constitution. This instigated further unrest and animosity, resulting in the Houthi takeover of Sana'a. Today, the Houthi objective in Yemen

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<sup>30</sup> Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), War in Yemen, *Global Conflict Tracker*, 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Kali Robinson, "Yemen's Tragedy: War, Stalemate, and Suffering," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2022.

<sup>32</sup> Justine Barden, "The Bab el-Mandeb Strait is a strategic route for oil and natural gas shipments," *U.S. Energy Information Administration*, 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Robinson, Yemen's Tragedy.

<sup>34</sup> Stephen W. Day, Noel Brehony, *Global, Regional, and Local Dynamics in the Yemen Crisis*, (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 235.

<sup>35</sup> Lucas Winter, "Yemen's Huthi Movement in the Wake of the Arab Spring," *Combatting Terrorism Center Sentinel* 5, no. 8 (2012).

<sup>36</sup> Robinson, Yemen's Tragedy.

remains the same: to establish an internationally recognized Houthi government in Yemen through economic, military, and political victory.<sup>37</sup>

Saudi Arabia's approach to the conflict is in stark contrast with Iran's anti-Western rhetoric. Saudi Arabia's influence in the Arab Peninsula is unparalleled, as it holds the highest GDP in the Persian Gulf<sup>38</sup> and produces some of the highest numbers of crude oil exports in the world.<sup>39</sup> Considering the historical conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia in both political and religious fronts, the Iranian support of the Houthis in Yemen and the possibility of Houthi success pose threats to Saudi Arabian hegemony in the region. Consequently, Saudi Arabia's involvement in the conflict by leading an oppositional coalition and supporting the Yemen government is now viewed more as a movement to combat Iran and secure their borders.

The United States has also established itself as a stakeholder in the Yemen conflict. The United States, along with several other Western countries, joined the Saudi coalition to combat the Houthis in 2015. US-Yemen relations are unstable at best, as highlighted by Yemen's support of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in the Gulf War and its multiple coup attempts with anti-Western sentiments.<sup>40</sup> Despite this history, President Obama's support of UN Resolution 2216 resulted in US involvement in the Yemen conflict via expressed support of the Yemeni government in 2015. Additionally, the United States sought to impact the conflict due to its counterterrorism objectives. The US saw that a failed Yemen would result in a power vacuum that anti-Western actors would inevitably attempt to fill. Consequently, the US joined Saudi Arabia in the conflict and aided via logistics, weapons trading and intelligence sharing.<sup>41</sup>

The Yemeni government also plays a critical role in this conflict. Although they have been exiled in Saudi Arabia since 2014, Yemen's government seeks to reestablish their control over the country with the help of the Saudi coalition and other actors. However, this objective has become increasingly difficult to obtain as the years have progressed. Since the conflict has endured for so long, the costs have begun to outweigh the benefits for the Yemeni government's benefactors.<sup>42</sup> With a stalemate in the peace process and the increased need for financial, military, and political support for the Yemeni government, formerly involved parties such as Morocco and the United States have begun to withdraw from the conflict to preserve their resources and pursue other national security objectives.<sup>43</sup>

The Yemen Civil War highlights the evaluated complications that arise from proxy intervention for both the principal state and the secondary state. If the costs of intervention begin to outweigh its benefits, principal states are able to rescind their support and resources easily because of the indirect nature of the proxy cooperation. This withdrawal can diminish any form of responsibility a state might have for the damage that their resources and intervention may inflict on a state's population, thus enabling the principal actor to avoid responsibility for mistakes and humanitarian failures.

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<sup>37</sup> CSIS Briefs, "The Iranian and Houthi War against Saudi Arabia," *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, 2021.

<sup>38</sup> World Bank, "GDP (current US\$) – Saudi Arabia," *The World Bank*, 2022.

<sup>39</sup> Energy Information Administration (EIA), "Oil and Petroleum Products Explained," *U.S. Energy Information Administration: Independent Statistics and Analysis*, 2022.

<sup>40</sup> Bruce Reidel, "A brief history of America's troubled relationship with Yemen," *The Brookings Institution*, 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Mary Louise Kelly, "Critic of U.S. role in Yemen responds to Biden's plan to pull back," *NPR: All Things Considered*, 2021.

<sup>42</sup> Robinson, *Yemen's Tragedy*.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

Additionally, the Yemeni government's current situation highlights the impact of proxy involvement on conflict progress. Although the war is ongoing ten years later, the motivation for other nations to contribute and help has decreased, thus resulting in an exponentially decreased level of support by the international community. For example, the Yemen Humanitarian Fund created by the UN Crisis relief has received a lack of funding by other states as a result of the ongoing (and seemingly never-ending) nature of the conflict.<sup>44</sup> This emphasizes the impacts proxy wars have not only on the internal politics of a country or the external interactions between states, but also on the general livelihood and overall longevity of a nation. Furthermore, proxy warfare in the context of the Yemen Civil War has immense potential to further conflict progression. As Iran and Saudi Arabia continue to provide financial and military support to their respective side, the conflict will continue to develop and grow in scale and in its overall impact on the population. Arms and technology trade provides advantages over an opponent and opens an avenue for continued conflict. Indirect involvement in proxy wars can result in an endless supply of weaponry to one side, thus allowing the fight to continue until the other side eventually runs out of resources or morale.

### Just War Theory

In reviewing proxy wars ethical considerations, one must also evaluate the applicability of Just War Theory to proxy warfare. Formulated by St. Augustine and outlined by Thomas Aquinas, Just War Theory establishes the principles of an ethically justified war through the three primary concepts: *jus ad bellum* (justice before war), *jus in bello* (justice in war), and *jus post bellum* (justice after war). Though the principles of ethical conflict existed centuries prior to Augustine or Aquinas, the formulation of Just War Theory emphasized Christian approaches to armed conflict and peaceful resolution. Each concept of Just War Theory (*ad bellum*, *in bello*, and *post bellum*) allows actors to determine whether a conflict is both valid and necessary and outlines the obligations states have in combat.<sup>45</sup> *Jus ad bellum* denotes that for a state to go to war, it must have a just cause (i.e., acting in defense) and have pursued methods of peace prior to declaring war on another state.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, *jus ad bellum* asserts that a war must be declared by a proper authority for an armed conflict to be justified.<sup>47</sup> The nature of proxy warfare as an undeclared war against a particular adversary creates a line of contention with Just War Theory, as a country's indirect support through political, economic, and military means constitutes involvement without formal declaration. An intervening country must also consider the *jus ad bellum* qualifications of the side which they support; the proxy power must also align with the criteria of *jus ad bellum* to solicit outside support of their cause.<sup>48</sup> Further, the motivations for a principal-actor's involvement in a proxy war may not be categorized as defensive. The Libyan

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<sup>44</sup> United Nations (UN), "\$4.5 billion needed to help over 17 million people across Yemen," *United Nations News: Humanitarian Aid*, 2022.

<sup>45</sup> Casten Stahn, "'Jus ad bellum', 'jus in bello'...jus post bellum'? – Rethinking the Conception of the Law of Armed Force," *European Journal of International Law* 17, no. 5 (2006).

<sup>46</sup> Geoffrey S. Corn, "Self-defense Targeting: Blurring the Line between *Jus ad Bellum* and the *Jus in Bello*," *International Law Studies U.S. Naval War College*, 88, no. 1 (2015).

<sup>47</sup> "Just War Theory," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

<sup>48</sup> C. Anthony Pfaff, Proxy War Ethics, *Journal of National Security Law and Policy* 9, no. 1 (2017): 309.

Civil War serves as an example of this, as Russia's motivations to support the GNA was not for defensive reasons but for offensive gain in oil trade.<sup>49</sup>

Though a state may enter a war under the requirements of *jus ad bellum*, this does not ensure that a state will uphold the principles established by *jus in bello* in the conflict. *Jus in bello* principles include proportionality and discrimination – the amount of force used in the conflict and the state's discernment of legitimate targets of war.<sup>50</sup> Just War Theory's foundations in biblical principles are especially emphasized by *jus in bello*, as the book of Jeremiah proclaims that a state should do what is right and just, to not wrong the innocent and to protect the weak from unjust suffering.<sup>51</sup> Because proxy war may include the use of non-state actors (e.g., mercenaries, terrorist cells, etc.), it is increasingly difficult to maintain the principle of discrimination. The lack of uniformed and established soldiers makes it nearly impossible to distinguish between civilians and combatants. As a result, proxy war holds an increased risk of civilian casualties, negating the principle of *jus in bello* within proxy war conflict. The principles of proportionality and discernment not only apply to the conduct of the conflict, but also to the conflict's collateral damage as well. In terms of proxy warfare, collateral damage refers to the conflict's impact on livelihood and displacement. While the conflict is still ongoing, Yemen serves as an unequivocal representation of proxy war's collateral damage.

While the primary focus in proxy war is *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, the third principle *jus post bellum* is equally important. *Jus post bellum* refers to the responsibility of the victor to ensure justice after victory and to establish peace. Although it is often overlooked in favor of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, *jus post bellum* is critical for the longevity of peace in domestic and international spheres. Without ensuring justice to both the victor and the conquered and giving consideration of post-war environments, peace will not endure. The aftermath of World War I emphasizes this point, as the Treaty of Versailles resulted in optimal gain for the victors and left the conquered German state destitute, thus fueling an economic crisis and Hitler's eventual rise to power.<sup>52</sup> In relation to this cross-comparison, the continued principal actor involvement in Libya serves as an example of misguided *jus post bellum*. Though the Second Libyan Civil War ended in October 2020 with a permanent ceasefire, principal actors continue to influence the state and impact the domestic stability of Libya to this day. Turkey is actively engaged in Libyan domestic affairs through thematic discourse, utilizing the 'Blue Homeland doctrine' to justify its activism in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Russia remains involved in post-civil war Libya by utilizing the Wagner group to support the LNA throughout key oil facilities in Libya.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, *jus post bellum* can be considered the restorative arm of Just War Theory, as *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* focus on right intention while *jus post bellum* encompasses reconciling action.<sup>55</sup> *Jus post bellum* is especially relevant to proxy war conflict. Since injustice

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<sup>49</sup> Akram, Kharief, "Libya's Proxy War: International Guns for Hire in post-Gaddafi Conflict," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 2020.

<sup>50</sup> Jeff McMahan, "Proportionality and Necessity in *Jus in Bello*," In *The Oxford Handbook of Ethics in War*, ed. Seth Lazar and Helen Frowe (New York, NY: Oxford University Press), 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Jeremiah 22:3, ESV.

<sup>52</sup> Lousi V. Iasiello, *Jus Post Bellum*, *Naval War College Review* 57, no. 3 (2004).

<sup>53</sup> M. Cüneyt Özşahin & Cenap Çakmak, "Between defeating "the warlord" and defending "the blue homeland": a discourse of legitimacy and security in Turkey's Libya Policy," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2022.2089545>.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Uniacke, "Libya Could be Putin's Trump Card," *Foreign Policy*, 8 July 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/07/08/wagner-group-libya-oil-russia-war/>.

<sup>55</sup> Iasiello, *Jus Post Bellum*.

after a war would result in further strife, a country involved in a proxy conflict cannot simply leave when the fighting is done – they must ensure that the objectives they fought for will withstand the test of time. Therefore, Just War Theory holds that a principal-actor in a proxy war has an ethical responsibility to establish and maintain peace once the conflict is resolved, to provide for its own goals and to ensure the implementation of justice in the aftermath.

### **Conclusion**

Proxy warfare is a term which holds several definitions. From the transactional model to the exploitative, the overarching component of proxy conflict is a superpower's indirect support to progress either an individual or mutual interest. The impacts of proxy war on individual state sovereignty is exemplified in the Libyan and Yemen Civil Wars, wherein external support shifted power dynamics from the parties in the conflict to the intervening states. Just War Theory determines that proxy warfare is problematic under *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* qualifications; however, should a country partake in a proxy war, they are ethically obligated to provide for *jus post bellum*.

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