

# Intervention, War Expansion, and the International Sources of Civil War

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## **Abstract**

Why do some civil wars turn into interstate wars? I argue that two factors are important: the domestic government's ability to credibly threaten to retaliate against a third-party intervener, thereby expanding the conflict and raising the stakes; and whether the rebels prefer fighting alone or with external support. I analyze a formal model of civil war onset, intervention, and retaliation that shows interstate war happens when (a) the local stakes are moderately high, (b) the costs of fighting are low, and (c) the domestic government has some retaliatory capabilities. The model also has implications for the onset of civil war, providing an international and informational explanation for civil war. Lastly, when accounting for the strategic interaction, common predictors of civil war, such as intervener-rebel relations, change directions depending on the credibility of retaliation and rebel aims.

# 1 Introduction

Why do some civil wars turn into interstate wars while others do not? In this paper I focus on retaliation against external rebel supporters, because domestic governments differ in how they respond to third-party interventions. During the U.S. occupation of Iraq, coalition troops were frequently targeted by Iranian and Iranian-supported militia. Yet despite this deadly intervention that lasted several several years, the Bush administration decided not to retaliate against Iran. Other states have been more forceful in responding to interventions. The Soviet Union conducted cross-border shelling and a wide range of covert operations against Pakistan in response to their support for the Afghan Mujahideen. Sometimes intervention triggers interstate war. During South Africa's military conflict against the African National Congress (ANC) in the 1970s and 1980s, South Africa waged war against both Angola and Mozambique in response to their support for the ANC, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths.

To explain these wars, we need a theory of interstate war based on the international dynamics of civil war. In other words, we need a nested theory of intra- and interstate war. We know that the threat of intervention can cause civil war (Cetinyan 2002, Thyne 2006), and third parties intervene to pursue a wide range of policy objectives (Findley and Teo 2006, Choi 2013, Aydin 2012, e.g.). However, it is not clear when the domestic government is willing to retaliate against external rebel supporters, thus prompting an interstate war, and how the threat of retaliation affects the decision to intervene. Most work assumes that retaliation is suboptimal (Schultz 2010, p. 285) and that governments must be pushed into retaliating, for instance by domestic political pressures (Carson 2016, pp. 111-4). These assumptions narrow the scope conditions to states who are either unwilling or unable to retaliate, which elides the possibility that states

might prefer fighting an interstate war to the alternative, namely tolerating intervention. Furthermore, existing theories of retaliation do not account for domestic bargaining (Maoz and San-Akca 2012, pp. 722-4), so they cannot explain why these conflicts start in the first place, and why some become civil wars while others become international conflicts.

To resolve this puzzle, I construct a formal model of civil war onset, intervention, and retaliation that considers the actors' incentives for maintaining or remaking both the domestic and international status quo, and in which the domestic government is uncertain about the prospects of intervention. To explain the expansion of civil war into interstate war, two factors are important. First, we must consider the domestic government's ability to credibly threaten to retaliate against a third-party rebel supporter and expand the conflict. By retaliating against the third party, the domestic government raises the stakes of the conflict, thus potentially increasing the benefits of fighting, but also the cost of fighting by expanding the war. Second, the rebels either prefer to fight alone in a civil war or with external support. Fighting alone means they are less likely to win the war, but fighting together with a third party means giving up some of their autonomy. I refer to these two kinds of rebels as having local or expansive war aims, respectively.

Interstate war occurs in equilibrium when (a) the domestic government is uncertain about the prospects of intervention, but can credibly threaten to retaliate in the event of intervention; (b) the rebels have expansive aims; and (c) the third party is willing to bear the costs of retaliation. These conditions hold when the relative size of the local stakes are neither too small nor too great; war expansion raises stakes sufficiently for the domestic government and the rebels prefer fighting internationally, but not so much that the third party would prefer to stay out of the conflict. Furthermore, interstate war only occurs when the costs of fighting are suf-

ficiently low for all actors, but the domestic government has some retaliatory capabilities. In other words, it must be able to deter some types of third parties with threats of retaliation, but not all.

The results help explain why stronger domestic governments do not necessarily retaliate against interveners. The United States did not retaliate against Iran because it worried about the costs of escalation (Filkins 2013), and my theory also suggests that the local stakes of the Iraqi conflict were too high relative to the stakes of fighting an interstate war to make expansion worth it. South Africa, on the other hand, had lots to gain from fighting in Angola and Mozambique, as it sought to stem the tide of African nationalism in the region (Minter 1994). Furthermore, the model implies that exogenous events that raise the stakes of a local conflict can have paradoxical effects, because it affects the two sides differently. The unexpected Soviet invasion of Afghanistan made the central government stronger, militarily speaking, but it also raised the stakes of the Afghan conflict. This shift made rebel-sided intervention more attractive, while reducing the credibility of retaliatory threats against Pakistan.

The model also has implications for explaining and predicting civil wars. First, when rebels have local aims, uncertainty about intervention can cause the outbreak of local-only civil war. This happens when the domestic government thinks intervention is relatively likely, but the third party ends up not intervening. The model therefore provides an informational and international explanation for civil war. Second, when we account for the triadic interaction, common predictors of conflict have different effects on the probability of civil war onset. For instance, stronger rebels make intervention less likely under non-credible retaliation, as assumed by most relevant work, but more likely or less likely under credible retaliation, depending on the relative size of the domestic stakes and the rebel-intervener relationship. Since the model

shows that there are few consistent, unconditional relationships between the explanatory variables and the outbreak of civil war, omitting the dimensions of retaliation and rebel preferences can lead to biased estimates of conflict onset and outcomes.

## **2 Explanations for intervention and retaliation**

To explain how and why civil wars become interstate wars, we first have to consider how the threat of intervention can affect domestic bargaining, as it affects the options available and choices made by the actors involved. First, the potential but uncertain intervention by a third party can cause the outbreak of civil war by disrupting domestic bargaining (Thyne 2006, pp. 942-5) or emboldening rebels (Kuperman 2008).<sup>1</sup> Thus, some of the civil wars we observe come as the result of international threats. Second, interventions are not done at random. While earlier work on third-party interventions assumed that intervention was as conflict management tool (Regan 1996), later research has shown that states pursue a wide range of objectives, often connected to interstate disagreements. States intervene in civil wars to defeat rivals (Findley and Teo 2006, Maoz and San-Akca 2012), promote their ideology (Choi 2013, pp. 128-9), and ensure access to economic markets (Aydin 2012). Furthermore, intervention is also a product of the intervener's affinity for the rebels, as some are done in order to help ethnic brethren (Gleditsch 2007, p. 298). These insights suggest that the expansion of domestic conflicts is the product of a strategic interaction between domestic governments, rebels, and third parties.

What most of the studies on intervention omit, however, is an explicit theory of the rebels' calculus. As Salehyan and co-authors show, we can think of rebel support as a supply-and-

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<sup>1</sup>Cetinyan shows that under complete information, the presence of a third party intervener does not affect the likelihood of rebellion, only the demands made in equilibrium (Cetinyan 2002, pp. 647-8).

demand dynamic, where third parties prefer to support strong rebels, but strong rebels prefer to go it alone because they can win on their own (Salehyan et al. 2011, p. 711). As such, intervention is a product of both intervener and rebel preferences, and the latter should also affect how conflicts start and develop. Buhaug and Gleditsch find that the contagion effect of civil wars is conditional on whether or not the rebels are secessionist or center-seeking (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008, p. 229). This finding suggests that the internationalization of civil wars hinges on the war aims of rebels, because they define what domestic bargains are possible and what the outside options are, be it civil war or some international conflict.

Even if a third party can find a willing recipient, however, these interventions are not without risks. Supporting rebels can empower a rebel group so much so that the outside supporter can no longer control it (Salehyan 2010, Bapat 2012). Furthermore, there are numerous ways a civil war can become an interstate conflict. Some forms of externalization are intentional while others are not (Gleditsch et al. 2008, pp. 483-7). There might be unintended consequences, such as refugee flows (Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006, pp. 344-7), but the most severe risk for a third party is that a domestic government can retaliate specifically against it for supporting rebels. This threat could ostensibly deter intervention, if the third party is unwilling to fight an interstate war. Gartner and Siverson (1996, p. 5) argue that few interstate wars expand beyond their original participants because initiators act as predators and pick targets unlikely to receive external support. While their work is on interstate conflicts, their logic suggests that the interventions we observe should be due to deterrence failure. A credible threat of intervention should deter governments from starting civil wars, while a credible threat of retaliation should deter intervention.

However, we still observe both intervention and retaliation, so we have to explain why we

would ever observe retaliation given that intervention has already occurred. Existing work on civil war intervention and escalation offer some explanations. Maoz and San-Akca (2012, pp. 720-5) argue that retaliation might deter intervention, particularly in the context of interstate rivalries. Retaliation happens when an intervener is uncertain about the target state's willingness to retaliate. However, their theory does not specify rebel preferences over conflict expansion, so it does not distinguish between deterring intervention and deterring civil war onset. Furthermore, by having private information about the threat of retaliation, rather than the threat of intervention, the model does not explain the breakdown of domestic bargaining. As such, it is a model of interstate conflict, rather than variations in the internationalization of civil war.

Other theories focus on the role of secrecy as the mechanism of escalation. Carson argues that the ability to intervene covertly allows states to manage unintended escalation (Carson 2016, pp. 111-4). Specifically, by intervening covertly, the intervener allows the target state to skirt public pressures to escalate the conflict. Retaliation happens because of overt intervention, when the intervener is not interested in managing escalation. With these assumptions, however, it is not clear how a target state can purposefully deter intervention in the first place.<sup>2</sup> Carson says overt intervention, and thus a risk of escalation, is most likely if "low technological sophistication, local conflicts with no or one-sided outside interest, and if intervening powers are domestically insulated and lack alliance considerations" (Carson 2016, p. 115). None of these factors can be influenced by the target state within the scope of his theory, which suggests that it only explains a subset of cases where the domestic government is restrained from retaliating, thus making secrecy a key mechanism of escalation control.

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<sup>2</sup>Carson suggests that leaders "may feel trapped into escalating their involvement in a particular conflict to avoid damaging their reputation for support of partners and allies" (Carson 2016, p. 113).

Schultz models the dyadic interaction between two rivals in the context of interventions and counter-interventions. In his theory, escalation and retaliation happens because states can intervene covertly in another state, making agreements difficult to monitor and enforce (Schultz 2010, p. 284). Conflicts thus expand due to states' ability to intervene and their inability to observe non-intervention. Schultz's formulation also does not consider the role of substate actors, and thus does not explain the full variation in civil war internationalization. Moreover, Schultz treats retaliation, and therefore war expansion, as suboptimal (Schultz 2010, p. 285). While this assumption helps explain how secrecy fuels conflict escalation, it does not explain cases where expansion of a conflict can be beneficial for some or all involved parties. Some domestic governments might prefer fighting a third-party intervener directly, rather than tolerating intervention.

To understand why actors purposefully choose conflict escalation and expansion, we have to think of these interactions as domestic conflicts nested inside an international context. A third party might intervene because it wants to help the rebels, defeat the domestic government, or both. As the literature on extended deterrence implies, conflicts between three actors mean different stakes (Gartner and Siverson 1996, Werner 2000, e.g.), depending on the level of conflict and participation. Therefore, retaliation can mean increasing the stakes and thus the payoffs of a conflict. These interactions affect both the actors' willingness to fight and their bargaining behavior. However, the existence of a nested conflict does not necessarily imply an increased preference for war, so we have to explain not only when actors prefer war over peace, but also when the actors prefer more fighting to some fighting.

Models of intervention and civil war onset both imply that war is driven by a third party's or the rebels' wish to remake political order, because they fight to defeat the sitting government.

However, they are not the only actors with preferences over the maintenance or remaking of order through violence. We should also consider what conflict escalation entails in the eyes of the domestic government. It means rather than fighting for the status quo against the rebels and an intervener, the government forces the third party's territory or resources into the stakes of the conflict by launching an interstate war. It is potentially remaking the international political order, rather than fighting over the maintenance of its own, and such a theoretical extension has clear implications. It conditions the behavior of both rebels and the third party by raising the stakes of fighting, and so they must react accordingly. We can think of civil war onset, intervention, and retaliation as manifestations of different constellations of preferences, and without accounting for the domestic government's preferences, we therefore cannot explain the variation in the internationalization of civil war.

Explaining retaliation and its effect on civil war onset and intervention might be moot, if the ability to wage interstate war is entirely endogenous to a state's ability to deter or fight rebellion. The literature on state formation and war suggest that local and international conflict are two distinct, but potentially related, processes. Geopolitical insecurity and severe resource constraints can produce developmental states (Doner et al. 2005, p. 328), and fighting international wars can strengthen a state's capacity and thus its ability to deter rebellion, per Tilly, but only when certain factors are present, such as prior institutional development (Centeno 1997, p. 1569). As such, external threats might make states more or less able to prevent civil war. Furthermore, domestic conflict might also make a state stronger. Contentious domestic politics can, under certain circumstances, produce authoritarian leviathans capable of fighting external threats (Slater 2010, ch. 1). Taken together, this scholarship suggests that we must treat a state's ability to wage civil war and interstate war as conceptually distinct, even if they interact

over time.

We therefore have two parts of the explanation for why some civil wars become interstate wars. First, we have to consider the domestic government's preferences for expanding a civil war, and how the threat of retaliation affects the rebels' and the intervener's subsequent decisions. Second, we have to consider the rebels' preferences, and how they affect domestic bargaining. In the next section I specify a formal model where the three actors can compete over two sets of stakes.

### **3 Modeling onset, intervention, and retaliation**

In this section I describe a finite game of civil war onset, intervention, and expansion in Country  $A$  with three actors: the domestic government  $D$ , a dissatisfied group  $R$ , and a third-party state  $T$  potentially supporting  $R$ . There are two main innovations in the model. First, the actors can fight over two sets of stakes; either they fight over a local set of stakes, or they fight over the local stakes plus an international set of stakes (combined, I refer to them as the total stakes).  $D$  effectively decides which one is being fought over by either retaliating against  $T$ , which prompts an interstate war, or tolerating intervention, which keeps the fighting contained to Country  $A$ 's territory. Second, I do not assume that the rebels strictly prefer external support to fighting alone. Intervention increases the likelihood of rebel victory, but it also imposes some costs in the form of a loss of autonomy.

**Definition 1** *Retaliation: The use of force against the third party intervener outside of the original civil war, which escalates the conflict to an interstate war.*

The game starts with nature drawing  $T$ 's type, as defined by its cost of intervening in the

domestic government's territory ( $c_T > 0$ ). These costs can represent the cost of sending arms or the loss of troops sent across the border. I assume that  $D$  does not know  $T$ 's intervention costs.  $D$  knows its domestic adversary quite well, but it does not know whether outside actors would be willing to intervene on the side of  $R$ .<sup>3</sup> Therefore, going into the bargaining stage that opens this game,  $T$  has some private information about its intervention costs not shared with  $D$ . I also assume that  $T$ 's type is uniformly distributed. The model will work for other distributions as well, as long as there is a non-trivial probability of low and high cost types.

I assume that the domestic government is the only actor uncertain about the intervener's type.<sup>4</sup> I make this assumption because opposition groups often times communicate with third parties before the start of a civil war. For instance, the Palestine Liberation Organization had extensive political and military connections with other Arab countries before the start of the First Intifada. Often times, ethnic or ideological ties across borders can help facilitate these networks, but I presuppose that this relationship holds in general. Rebels might ask for help, and a third party might offer support in exchange for influence in a new regime or simply want to defeat the domestic government through a civil war. While the rebels might not be perfectly informed about the intervener's war costs, I assume that they are better informed than their domestic opponent because of these opportunities for communication. Therefore, to simplify the analysis, I assume that the rebels are perfectly informed, whereas the domestic government

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<sup>3</sup>It might be quite costly for  $T$  to intervene because of internal problems unknown to other actors. In those settings,  $T$  has an incentive to keep this information private, since it might reveal weakness if intervention costs are high, which implies that a lower-cost  $T$  might lack a cheap or credible way to separate itself from a high-cost  $T$ .

<sup>4</sup>This assumption is different from the private information posited by Thyne, who argues that governments should be better informed than opposition groups "because interstate relations happen almost exclusively between the governments of states due to internationally recognized norms of sovereignty" (Thyne 2006, p. 942). While that might hold in general, my model focuses on rebel-sided interventions, and as such the rebels should be better informed than the target of such an intervention. Regardless of the specific nature of the information asymmetry, it should still lead to bargaining breakdown under similar circumstances.

is not.

Once  $T$ 's type has been drawn,  $D$  makes some take-it-or-leave-it offer, symbolized by  $x \in [0, 1]$ , to an opposition group  $R$ , and the offer can be a power-sharing agreement or part of the territory of Country A. Because the two actors are only bargaining over the local stakes, which I define as  $\pi \in (0, 1)$ ,  $R$  gets  $x\pi$  and  $D$  gets  $(1-x)\pi$  in the event of a peaceful settlement.<sup>5</sup>  $T$ 's utility for peace is a function of what  $R$  accepts and  $T$ 's affinity for  $R$  ( $b \in (0, 1)$ ). We can think of  $b$  as representing some influence  $T$  achieves by having  $R$  either in a position of power or controlling some territory, and so the better  $R$  does in bargaining or the more  $T$  likes  $R$ , the better off the third party is. The actors' payoffs for peace are:

$$U_i(\text{Peace}) = \begin{cases} (1-x)\pi, & \text{if } i = D \\ x\pi, & \text{if } i = R \\ (1-\pi) + xb\pi, & \text{if } i = T \end{cases}$$

If the group rejects the offer, a civil war starts. I therefore refer to  $R$  as the rebels. Once the civil war has started,  $T$  must decide whether to intervene on the side of the rebels or stay out. If  $T$  stays out,  $D$  and  $R$  continue fighting over  $\pi$ . The likelihood of prevailing in the civil war is a costly lottery based on the two sides' military capabilities ( $m_D > 0$  and  $m_R > 0$ ), defined as  $\Pr(D \text{ victory}) = \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R}$  with the complementary probability of rebel victory. Because fighting a civil war is inefficient, both sides pay some cost in terms of destruction that is unique to each

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<sup>5</sup>An alternative modeling choice would be to allow  $D$  to make an offer to  $T$  as well, in the hopes of buying off the third party and thus removing the threat of intervention. However, this would introduce a commitment problem into the model, because it is unlikely that a third party could credibly commit not to intervene once a civil war breaks out. Given that I focus on private information as a cause of bargaining breakdown, including another mechanism for war would make the analytics needlessly complicated. Furthermore, it would not change the basic answer as to why interstate war happens, because as I show in the following section, war expansion hinges on a domestic government's willingness to retaliate once intervention has already taken place.

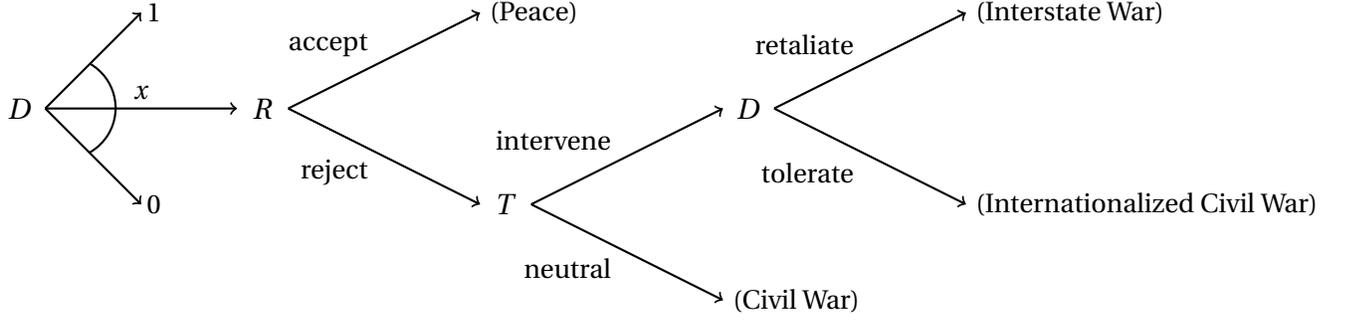
of them, namely  $c_D$  and  $c_R$ . In a civil war,  $T$ 's payoff is dependent on  $R$ 's probability of winning and its affinity for the rebels, but it pays no costs. Therefore, in the event of a civil war without intervention, the actors' payoffs are as follows:

$$U_i(\text{Civil War}) = \begin{cases} \left(\frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R}\right)\pi - c_D, & \text{if } i = D \\ \left(\frac{m_R}{m_D+m_R}\right)\pi - c_R, & \text{if } i = R \\ (1 - \pi) + \left(\frac{m_R}{m_D+m_R}\right)b\pi, & \text{if } i = T \end{cases}$$

If  $T$  decides to intervene, the level of intervention is a portion ( $w \in (0, 1)$ ) of its military capabilities  $m_T$ . I assume the level of intervention is exogenously determined. For instance, geography or other factors might put constraints on how much  $T$  can intervene in a given conflict. If intervention takes place,  $D$  must fight both  $R$  and  $T$  in its territory, and its likelihood of victory is lowered with the inclusion of  $w(m_T)$  on the side of the rebels, resulting in  $\text{Pr}(D \text{ victory}) = \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+wm_T}$ .  $R$  is aided in its civil war effort commensurately, but intervention comes at a cost. The third party gains influence over the rebels when it intervenes, resulting in a loss of autonomy for the latter ( $a > 0$ ). The extent of this loss depends on the affinity, or policy alignment, between the two actors. The higher the affinity, the smaller the loss of autonomy, so  $R$  pays  $\frac{a}{b}$  when intervention happens.

One way of thinking about this assumption is that when rebels and interveners share the same ideology or policy preferences, the latter is less likely to dominate the former or dictate the political order in the event of military victory. An example of this would be rebels and interveners of the same ethnicity fighting together to defeat a government. The rebels have less to lose in terms of autonomy if they are receiving support from a state consisting of ethnic brethren

Figure 1: Domestic bargaining, intervention, and expansion



compared to receiving support from some indifferent third party that simply wants to defeat the domestic government through proxy war. While intervention improves  $R$ 's chances of winning,  $T$  must pay intervention costs ( $c_T$ ), and its utility of victory is still a product of its affinity for the rebels.

**Definition 2** *Internationalized civil war: A civil war becomes internationalized when a third-party intervenes militarily in the conflict.*

Once intervention has taken place, the domestic government must decide whether to retaliate against the intervener or not. If it does not retaliate, the conflict continues as an internationalized civil war, and we get the following payoffs:

$$U_i(\text{Internationalized Civil War}) = \begin{cases} \left(\frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+wm_T}\right)\pi - c_D, & \text{if } i = D \\ \left(\frac{m_R+wm_T}{m_D+m_R+wm_T}\right)\pi - c_R - \frac{a}{b}, & \text{if } i = R \\ (1 - \pi) + \left(\frac{m_R+wm_T}{m_D+m_R+wm_T}\right)b\pi - c_T, & \text{if } i = T \end{cases}$$

If  $D$  chooses to retaliate, the conflict is expanded so that  $D$  is attacking  $T$  directly, either against the third-party territory or some other object of interest, such as an ally or client state

of  $T$ . In effect,  $D$  raises the stakes of the fighting to include what  $T$  otherwise controls ( $1 - \pi$ ), so that all the actors are fighting over the total stakes (normalized to 1). The domestic government's payoff is potentially greater since victory means defeating both the rebels and the intervener, eliminating both an internal and an external threat. If  $\pi$  is particularly low,  $D$  has much to gain from defeating  $T$  and vice-versa. However, there are additional costs associated with retaliation. Fighting two wars at once comes with an additional escalation cost ( $e_D > 0$ ). We can think of these additional costs as representing  $T$ 's ability to impose costs in its own territory.  $T$  might have particularly strong defensive structures or the ability to wage guerrilla warfare against  $D$ 's troops. Furthermore, because the conflict is now an interstate war, all of  $T$ 's resources are mobilized, so the domestic government must fight against the full military strength of the intervener, with  $\Pr(D \text{ victory}) = \frac{m_D}{m_D + m_R + m_T}$ .

Retaliation and war expansion affect the other two actors differently. For the rebels, escalation is beneficial when compared to fighting an internationalized civil war. It does not pay any additional costs of fighting, because it is still fighting in Country A, and whatever escalatory capabilities  $D$  has, those costs are borne by  $T$ . Furthermore,  $R$  gets the full military support of  $T$ . Thus,  $R$  may or may not prefer fighting alone to receiving external support (with or without retaliation), but they always prefer an interstate war to fighting an internationalized civil war.

For the third party, however, escalation may or may not be beneficial. With fighting now extended to its own territory,  $T$  must pay some escalatory costs ( $e_T > 0$ ) on top of the intervention costs. These additional costs represent what destruction the domestic government can cause in the intervener's territory or against its interests outside of Country A. For instance,  $D$  might be able to use proxy forces, such as rebel groups in  $T$ 's territory, and so because  $D$  imposes these costs of retaliation on  $T$ , it is fully informed about them.

In the same way that  $D$  might have an incentive to change the stakes of the conflict,  $T$  might also benefit from fighting an interstate war rather than fighting an internationalized civil war. In addition to mobilizing its entire military against  $D$ , when  $T$  is fighting over the entire set of stakes, its utility for the local stakes is no longer moderated by  $b$ , the influence it would have in the event of rebel victory. This shift is meant to capture the changing nature of the conflict. By going from an internationalized civil war to an interstate war, the two states become the dominant actors, as  $T$  is no longer reliant on its relationship with  $R$  to make gains in Country A. We therefore get the following payoffs for the actors in the event of an interstate war:

$$U_i(\text{Interstate War}) = \begin{cases} \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - c_D - e_D, & \text{if } i = D \\ \frac{m_R+m_T}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - c_R - \frac{a}{b}, & \text{if } i = R \\ \frac{m_R+m_T}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - c_T - e_T, & \text{if } i = T \end{cases}$$

#### 4 Explaining interstate war

In this section I analyze the model to explain when interstate war occurs (see Supplementary Appendix for proofs). I identify a Perfect Bayesian Equilibrium (PBE) where domestic bargaining breaks down, a third party intervenes, and the domestic government retaliates. This equilibrium requires that the threat of retaliation is credible, the rebels prefer fighting with a third party (i.e. they have expansive aims), and the third party prefers fighting an interstate war to staying out of a civil war.

Because this is a game with private information, I will note how the specific structure of the information asymmetry shapes the domestic government's strategies. While  $T$ 's type is contin-

uous,  $R$  only cares if intervention is coming or not. Likewise,  $D$  does not care about  $T$ 's specific costs of intervention, but only whether or not the third party prefers intervention to staying out.  $D$ 's strategies are therefore defined by cut-points, and whether it believes  $T$ 's type lies above or below that point. Since it knows  $R$ 's decision-rules,  $D$  in the bargaining stage makes offers to  $R$  for all or some range of types  $T$ .

**Proposition 1** *The following strategies and beliefs constitute a Perfect Bayesian Equilibrium where interstate war occurs with positive probability:*

- When the threat of retaliation is credible ( $\pi \leq \frac{\left(\frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - e_D\right)(m_D+m_R+wm_T)}{m_D}$ ) and the rebels have expansive war aims ( $\pi \leq -\frac{(m_D+m_R)((a-b)(m_R+m_T)+am_D)}{bm_R(m_D+m_R+m_T)}$ ),
- $D$ , which does not know  $T$ 's type and whether it will intervene, makes a small offer to  $R$  ( $x_{local} = \frac{m_R}{m_D+m_R} - \frac{c_R}{\pi}$ ) when  $a \leq \gamma^*$ . Otherwise, it makes a large offer ( $x_{inter} = \frac{\frac{m_R+m_T}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - \frac{a}{b} - c_R}{\pi}$ ).
- If  $x_{inter}$  is offered,  $R$  always accepts, resulting in peace. If  $x_{local}$  is offered,  $R$  accepts if  $T$  is not intervening, but otherwise rejects the offer.
- $T$  intervenes if  $\pi \geq \frac{c_T + \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T} + e_T}{1 - \frac{bm_R}{m_D+m_R}}$ , and otherwise stays neutral.
- If  $T$  intervenes,  $D$  updates its beliefs about  $T$ 's type, now certain that  $T$  is of a type that prefers intervention to staying neutral. Because  $D$  prefers interstate war to internationalized civil war, it retaliates, thus resulting in the expansion of the civil war.

To explain why interstate war happens, we have to consider how bargaining breaks down under these circumstances, despite fighting being inefficient. Domestic bargaining breaks down when the domestic government makes an offer that is less than what the rebels would get fight-

ing an interstate war. The government sometimes makes an insufficient offer because it is uncertain about whether intervention is coming or not. It only makes one of two offers in equilibrium: a large offer that rebels for all types of third parties accept, or a smaller one that the rebels will accept for some types of interveners but reject for others. Only one of two offers are made because while the government does not know the third party's type, it does what the rebels will accept when intervention is coming and when it is not. Therefore, the government's dilemma is clear: it can guarantee peace, but at a premium, or it can make a smaller offer that comes with some positive probability of interstate war because its threat to retaliate against the intervener is credible.

In this case,  $R$  prefers fighting an interstate war against  $D$  to fighting a civil war alone. Rebels have expansive preferences when the local stakes are relatively low, the rebels' autonomy loss is relatively low, and  $T$  is militarily strong. Under this constraint,  $D$  can make two offers: a large offer  $x_{\text{inter}}$  and a small offer  $x_{\text{local}}$ . The former is equivalent to what  $R$  would get in the event of interstate war, so it will buy off  $R$  for all types  $T$ . The latter, however, means risking war, because it is the minimum deal  $R$  will accept if intervention is not coming, but will reject if intervention is coming, thus prompting civil war.

$D$  weighs the costs and benefits of this smaller offer against the safe, larger offer.  $D$  would prefer peace to waging a civil war, but would also prefer giving  $R$  the smallest piece of the pie possible. As such, making a small offer comes with both benefits and risks, and the smaller the domestic stakes, the more attractive this risky move becomes. If a small offer is made,  $R$  rejects when intervention is coming.  $T$  decides to intervene because the local stakes are sufficiently high, because intervening means triggering an interstate war. When  $D$  retaliates, it imposes war costs both in its own and  $T$ 's territory. Furthermore, by expanding fighting,  $D$  puts  $T$ 's

territory or resources  $(1 - \pi)$  into play. Therefore, the increase in stakes has to be sufficient to make up for the additional costs of fighting an interstate war against  $T$ .

These dynamics imply that interstate war is more likely to happen for some intermediary range for the value of the domestic stakes.  $\pi$  cannot be so low that  $T$  prefers to stay out, but it cannot be so high that  $D$  prefers tolerating intervention,  $D$  makes a large offer, or  $R$  prefers fighting alone because the larger  $\pi$  gets, the smaller  $1 - \pi$  becomes. Which of these upper bounds are more constraining depend on the specific value of various other parameters.

The various costs of fighting help explain the occurrence of interstate war. The costs of fighting in the civil war territory has to be relatively low for all three actors. The less destructive fighting is, the more likely  $D$  is to risk interstate war and  $T$  to intervene.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, retaliation has to be relatively inexpensive for  $D$ . In other words,  $T$  must have limited abilities to impose escalation costs in its own territory. However, because  $D$  does not know  $T$ 's costs of intervening, it must have some moderate capabilities of imposing escalation costs on  $T$  in its territory. Put differently,  $D$  must have some deterrence against  $T$ , but it cannot be so strong that  $T$  never wants to intervene, for interstate war to happen in equilibrium.

Another necessary condition for this PBE to exist is that  $R$ 's and  $T$ 's incentives are sufficiently aligned. In the above model, the incentives for  $R$  and  $T$  to fight are interdependent because in the event of an interstate war, they fight in a coalition together against  $D$ . This might be an unreasonably strong assumption, or limit the scope of the model. An alternative assumption could be that instead of them fighting together, in an interstate war, the conflict becomes a free-for-all, where each of the actors fight alone for their share of the larger stakes. Instead of fighting

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<sup>6</sup>  $R$ 's war costs also factor in to the decision to risk interstate war, because the higher they are, the smaller  $D$ 's safe offer becomes, and vice-versa. As such, inexpensive fighting makes peace overall less attractive.

over the political order of one country, Country A, the actors are now potentially remaking the political order of both countries. We can think of this reordering as warring parties carving out territory, but it can also mean fighting over power or autonomy.

With this change, however, interstate war cannot happen in equilibrium. The reason why is straightforward. For this potential equilibrium to hold, the size of the local stakes have to be high enough to make up for the third party's costs of fighting ( $c_T$  and  $e_T$ ), but low enough so that the rebels' relative gain from increased stakes makes up for them fighting alone. Under free-for-all fighting, the size of  $\pi$  is never high enough to satisfy the third party while also low enough to make the rebels fight. Put differently, interstate war is too costly for the third party, while fighting a civil war is not expensive enough for the rebels to want to fight for the larger stakes.

**Lemma 4.1** *When the rebels' and the third party's military capabilities do not accumulate, and the actors fight in a free-for-all, interstate war does not happen in equilibrium because the rebels' ( $\pi \leq \rho^*$ ) and the third party's threshold ( $\pi \geq \tau^*$ ) for fighting cannot be met simultaneously ( $\rho^* > \tau^*$ ).*

The lack of an interstate war equilibrium suggests that war expansion is conditional on not just the domestic government's incentives to fight, but whether the rebels' and the third party's incentives for fighting align sufficiently. Coalition fighting might therefore be a necessary condition for civil wars escalating to interstate war. Alternatively, we might be dealing with two distinct sets of cases that require two different models, and additional assumptions are required to explain interstate war under free-for-all fighting.

## 4.1 Internationalized civil war

When the threat of retaliation is not credible, the dynamics change. I identify an equilibrium where the domestic government risks an internationalized civil war by making an offer ( $x_{local}$ ) to expansive-aim rebels that they only accept if intervention is not coming. Proposition 2 lays out the formal logic of the equilibrium.

**Proposition 2** *The following strategies and beliefs constitute a Perfect Bayesian Equilibrium where internationalized civil war occurs with positive probability:*

- When the threat of retaliation is non-credible ( $\pi \geq \frac{\left(\frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - e_D\right)(m_D+m_R+wm_T)}{m_D}$ ) and the rebels have expansive war aims ( $\pi \geq \frac{a(m_D+m_R)(m_D+m_R+wm_T)}{bwm_Dm_T}$ ),
- D, which does not know T's type and whether it will intervene, makes a small offer to R ( $x_{local} = \frac{m_R}{m_D+m_R} - \frac{c_R}{\pi}$ ) when  $a \leq \alpha^\ddagger$ . Otherwise, it makes a large offer ( $x_{interciv} = 1 - \frac{a}{b\pi} - \frac{c_R}{\pi} - \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+wm_T}$ ).
- If  $x_{interciv}$  is offered, R always accepts, resulting in peace. If  $x_{local}$  is offered, R accepts if T is not intervening, but otherwise rejects the offer.
- T intervenes if  $\pi \geq \frac{c_T(m_D+m_R)(m_D+m_R+wm_T)}{bwm_Dm_T}$ , and otherwise stays neutral.
- If T intervenes, D updates its beliefs about T's type, now certain that T is of a type that prefers intervention to staying neutral. Because D prefers internationalized civil war to interstate war, it decides to tolerate the intervention, resulting in an internationalized civil war.

Under non-credible retaliation, and unlike Proposition 1, rebels are more likely to have expansive aims the larger the domestic stakes are. The intuition behind this is as follows: As the

domestic stakes grow larger,  $R$ 's autonomy loss from receiving external support becomes an ever-decreasing proportion of its payoff in internationalized civil war. This change affects the offers  $D$  can make. As the domestic stakes increase, the larger offer  $x_{\text{interciv}}$  increases relative to the small offer  $x_{\text{local}}$ , making  $R$  more likely to hold expansive war aims. The third party intervenes, prompting the rebels to reject a small offer, when it can help the rebels enough to win to offset the costs of intervening. The bigger the local stakes, the more beneficial the intervention is for the third party as it is helping capture a larger win ( $\pi \geq \tau^\dagger$ ).

These constraints suggest that internationalized civil war is more likely the greater the domestic stakes are relative to the international stakes, because the decisions to reject an offer, intervene, and not retaliate all depend on them being sufficiently high. However, they also make  $D$  less inclined to risk internationalized civil war by making a low offer in the first place. As  $\pi$  increases, the larger, safer offer to  $R$  becomes increasingly attractive. This upper bound on  $\pi$  constrains the equilibrium, so that  $D$  does not make a small offer when the local stakes are so large that intervention is near certain. Therefore, increases in the relative size of the local stakes make internationalized civil war more likely if civil war has broken out, but decreases the probability of civil war starting in the first place.

**Lemma 4.2** *Increases in the relative size of the local stakes make internationalized civil war more likely conditional on civil war happening, but makes the onset of civil war less likely.*

If we compare the equilibrium constraints of this PBE to the one described in Proposition 1, we see that they do not overlap for values of  $\pi$ . In Proposition 1, the credible threat of retaliation defines an upper bound of the relative size of the local stakes, whereas in Proposition 2, the non-credible threat defines a lower bound. Other than the trivial circumstance of when

$$\pi = \frac{\left(\frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - e_D\right)(m_D+m_R+wm_T)}{m_D},$$

the equilibria for internationalized civil war and interstate war cannot exist simultaneously. Internationalized civil war occurs for higher values of  $\pi$  than interstate war, which implies that when the local stakes of a potential conflict increase (decrease), they make internationalized civil war more (less) likely while making interstate war commensurately less (more) likely.<sup>7</sup>

**Lemma 4.3** *Increases in the relative size of the local stakes make internationalized civil war more likely relative to interstate war, and vice-versa.*

Consider the local stakes from the differing perspectives of the domestic government and the third party. When the local stakes are low relative to the international stakes, it means the domestic government has much to gain from defeating the other state, but the third party has little to gain from intervening. As the local stakes increase relative to the international stakes, winning the civil war becomes increasingly important for both. One example of this could be the discovery of oil reserves in  $D$ 's territory. While such a discovery would not necessarily impact the military balance of power immediately, it would affect the balance of benefits between the two states. Under such circumstances,  $D$  would be less willing to fight an interstate war than before because the local stakes have become more valuable relative to what  $T$  controls, but this change would also make  $T$  more willing to intervene as it has more resources to gain.

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<sup>7</sup>Note that these are relative changes in likelihood. The likelihood of interstate war is not strictly decreasing in the size of  $\pi$  because at some point the stakes are so low that  $T$  would never intervene (lower bound of  $\pi$ ), and therefore  $R$  would never reject a low offer. Similarly, the likelihood of internationalized civil war is not strictly increasing in the size of  $\pi$  because when the stakes are too high,  $D$  would never risk war because intervention is but certain (upper bound of  $\pi$ ).

## 4.2 Cases of war expansion

With the equilibrium logic laid out above, I now turn to cases of expansion and non-expansion to illustrate what this strategic interaction looks like in practice. The relative size of the local stakes ( $\pi$ ) plays a crucial part in determining all three actors' preferences, and in particular when we get interstate war and when the domestic government tolerates intervention. During the American Civil War, Great Britain considered intervening on the side of the Confederacy. It was militarily stronger than the United States, in particular at sea with its large navy, but ended up staying out of the conflict. It remained neutral because in large part because it would have prompted an interstate war, including a naval war and an invasion of Canada.<sup>8</sup> Even though Great Britain might have prevailed in such a conflict, my model suggests that we have to consider what it already controlled and whether it was willing to risk it ( $1 - \pi$ ). In this particular case, the United States did not threaten Britain's home territory, but it threatened Canada. Furthermore, the ongoing Taiping Rebellion threatened British access to Chinese markets (Platt 2012, p. 233), so the opportunity costs of intervening in the American Civil War were potentially significant. In line with the expectations of the model, the local stakes of the American conflict were relatively low when compared to other strategic considerations.

Considering the role of local stakes is difficult without a proper comparison, but cases with exogenous shocks can help us leverage variation over time, per Lemma 4.3. The Afghan Civil War, which started in 1978 as a peasant rebellion (Gibbs 1986), suffered at least one major shock,

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<sup>8</sup>The British government was keenly aware of the risks of getting involved in the American Civil War. In fall 1861, Prime Minister Palmerston declared that British policy should be to "keep quite clear of the conflict" to avoid war (Carroll 2012, p. 94). In the following years, however, several incidents, including the so-called Trent Affair later that year, almost brought the countries to war with each other. While the British government was ultimately willing to go to war with the United States, they recognized that Canada was particularly vulnerable to a U.S. invasion and that escalation would entail war at sea, potentially even against British colonies (Bourne 1961, pp. 621-8).

the Soviet invasion in December 1979. Before the invasion, various neighbors, including Pakistan and Iran, offered support to rebels, but there is little evidence of the Kabul government conducting retaliation against those third parties. Following the Soviet invasion, we would expect to see less intervention, if the military balance of power is a key determinant, and retaliation if intervention happened. Instead, the invasion prompted the United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia to form an intervention coalition that resulted in billions of dollars in arms and money flooding into the conflict over the next decade or so, despite concerns about Soviet retaliation, primarily against Pakistan.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, there was only limited retaliation, which included the shelling of Pakistani border posts and covert operations inside Pakistan.<sup>10</sup>

Why was a stronger domestic government unable to deter intervention? My model suggests that by invading Afghanistan, the Soviet Union increased the local stakes relative to the international stakes. This change made intervention more attractive to third parties, even compensating for the increased escalation costs potentially imposed by Soviet military attacks against Pakistan. Furthermore, this increase in  $\pi$  commensurately made the benefit from defeating

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<sup>9</sup>In his famous memo immediately following the invasion, U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski explicitly conceded that the rebels were "badly organized and poorly led," but that the United States should support them. Later on, the Reagan administration decided to escalate its involvement in the conflict. Primary documents from the period suggest that the White House increasingly came to see the Kremlin as weak on Afghanistan and worried about the war's effect on efforts to renew detente. See: Telegram, Secretary of State to American embassy in Moscow, October 1981, folder "Afghanistan (07/14/1981-12/26/1981)," box 34, Executive Secretariat, National Security Council: Country File, Ronald Reagan Library; Memo, C. Hill to Robert C. McFarlane, November 29, 1983, folder "Soviet Project," RAC box 14, Donald Fortier Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library; Memo, Herbert E. Meyer to William J. Casey, June 21, 1984, folder "Soviet Union - US Policy Toward the Soviet Policy," RAC box 15, Donald Fortier Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>10</sup>Early examples of the assessment of cross-border intimidation can be found in: "An Intelligence Assessment, July 1982," 1982. "Pakistan: Tough Choices on Afghanistan," NES 82-10366. Central Intelligence Agency Electronic Reading Room. [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/89801/DOC\\_0000534961.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000534961.pdf); "Special National Intelligence Assessment, 14 August 1984," 1982. "Soviet Policy Toward the United States in 1984," SNIE 11-9-84. Central Intelligence Agency Electronic Reading Room. [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0000518055.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000518055.pdf). In the early 1980s, Moscow started funding various insurgents in Baluchistan and Sindh, Furthermore, Soviet and Afghan agents conducted information operations within Pakistan, but also more serious ones, including the hijacking of a Pakistani flight and two unsuccessful assassination attempts against President Zia himself. See: (Andrew and Mitrokhin 2005, pp. 355-67).

the interveners, especially Pakistan, smaller. This implies that government-sided intervention can actually encourage rebellion and rebel-sided intervention, while reducing the risk of war expansion.

Besides the role of the local stakes, the costs of fighting, and in particular the costs of escalation, play an important role in determining war expansion. During the U.S. occupation of Iraq, Iran intervened extensively on the side of rebels, including arming and training Shiite militias. Both the Bush and Obama administrations considered retaliating at several points, but always decided against crossing into Iran and striking training camps or bomb factories, because of the escalatory costs Iran could impose.<sup>11</sup> The restraining effect of escalation costs become apparent when we compare the Iraq case to the situation the United States found itself during the Vietnam War. There, the United States was also fighting a counter-insurgency with external rebel supporters. In particular, insurgent forces used both Laos and Cambodia as sanctuaries from which they launched attacks. While both Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon were hesitant to retaliate, after opposition forces launched several offensives in from Cambodia starting in February 1969, Nixon eventually approved of a response.<sup>12</sup> Later that spring, the United States started bombing targets in Cambodia, and In total, Strategic Air Command flew 3,800 sorties and dropped 108,823 tons of ordinances (Morrocco 1985, p. 13). The bombing campaign was later accompanied by an invasion. One explanation for the difference in these two cases, and supported by the predictions of the model, is that Cambodia, unlike Iran, did not have the ability to impose significant escalation costs on the United States if it retaliated.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Given the recency of these events, primary sources are sparse. This account of the the administrations' deliberations is taken from a newspaper article about Qassem Suleimani, the head of Iran's Quds Force, which is alleged to have run the Iranian operation supporting Shiite militias in Iraq (Filkins 2013).

<sup>12</sup>For details on Johnson's decision-making, see Herring (2002, ch. 6). For discussions of Nixon's change of course, starting with the "Madman theory," see: Dallek (2007, pp. 104-109).

<sup>13</sup>There are some indications that the Cambodian King was not able to kick the communists out of Cambodia

In some cases, both the relative size of the local stakes and escalation costs play a significant role in the expansion of civil war. Similar to the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and the United States in Iraq, South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s enjoyed military superiority relative to its neighbors, while fighting a rebellion. Its response to other African countries' support for the African National Congress (ANC), however, was drastically different. Following decolonization, South Africa engaged in a wide range of military operations against both Angola and Mozambique, to compel them to stop supporting the ANC. Other countries supported the ANC too, but the white nationalist government saw the two countries as good targets to coerce other states too, especially members of the British Commonwealth that it could not attack directly (Minter 1994, pp. 117-120). The rise of African nationalism was particularly threatening to South Africa. It therefore had a lot to gain by potentially stemming the revolutionary tide in southern Africa. Another important aspect of South African behavior during this period was that in both Angola and Mozambique it had allies or proxy forces it could delegate fighting out to, particularly UNITA and RENAMO. Its escalation costs were thus moderated, while fighting for relatively large international stakes.

These contrasting cases illustrate the utility of the theory. The relative size of the local stakes and the escalation costs associated with retaliation provide a more intuitive explanation for war expansion than the military balance of power between the actors. Specifically, we should understand the decision to expand a conflict as weighing the potential benefits against the potential costs, and these parameters are not strictly defined by the characteristics of the civil war.

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and did not have extensive control of the country's territory. See: Isaacs et al. (1987, p. 89).

## 5 Explaining civil war

The model presented in this paper also has implications for our understanding of civil wars. In particular, the model produces novel results about the causes of civil war. One of the equilibrium constraints for interstate to occur was that the rebels must have expansive aims. When they do not (i.e. they prefer fighting alone), civil war without intervention can occur in equilibrium because of uncertainty over intervention (regardless of whether the threat of retaliation is credible or not). As such, the model produces an international and informational explanation for civil war.

**Proposition 3** *The following strategies and beliefs constitute a Perfect Bayesian Equilibrium where civil war occurs with positive probability:*

- When the threat of retaliation is credible ( $\pi \leq \frac{(\frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - e_D)(m_D+m_R+wm_T)}{m_D}$ ) and the rebels have local war aims ( $\pi \geq -\frac{(m_D+m_R)((a-b)(m_R+m_T)+am_D)}{bm_R(m_D+m_R+m_T)}$ ),
- $D$ , which does not know  $T$ 's type and whether it will intervene, makes a small offer to  $R$  ( $x_{inter} = \frac{\frac{m_R+m_T}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - \frac{a}{b} - c_R}{\pi}$ ) when  $a \geq \gamma^\dagger$ . Otherwise, it makes a large offer ( $x_{local} = \frac{m_R}{m_D+m_R} - \frac{c_R}{\pi}$ ).
- If  $x_{local}$  is offered,  $R$  always accepts, resulting in peace. If  $x_{inter}$  is offered,  $R$  accepts if  $T$  is intervening, but otherwise rejects the offer.
- $T$  intervenes if  $\pi \geq \frac{c_T + \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T} + e_T}{1 - \frac{bm_R}{m_D+m_R}}$ , and otherwise stays neutral.
- If  $R$  rejects the offer,  $D$  updates its beliefs (trivially), but since  $T$  is not intervening, a local-only civil war ensues.

To explain how, we have to consider the rebels' preferences. If its autonomy loss in the event of intervention is particularly high, it might prefer fighting alone to receiving external support. For example,  $R$  and  $T$  might subscribe to different political ideologies, or  $T$  might simply be so powerful so that it will dominate any political process after the end of the civil war. The rebels' preferences affect bargaining. When  $R$  prefers fighting a civil war alone to fighting with  $T$ 's support, and the threat of retaliation is credible, the large offer  $D$  makes is equivalent to what  $R$  gets in the event of civil war without intervention ( $x_{\text{local}}$ ), while the smaller offer is equivalent to what  $R$  gets in an interstate war ( $x_{\text{inter}}$ ). In other words, when the rebels have local war aims, the relative size of the offers are flipped compared to Proposition 1. Civil war occurs with some positive probability in this equilibrium when  $D$  makes a small offer. It does so when it thinks intervention is likely, but if  $T$  decides not to intervene ( $\pi \leq \tau^*$ ),  $R$  rejects the low offer.  $D$  expecting intervention thus sets off a local-only civil war. This equilibrium suggests how a domestic government can exploit potential intervention to get a better deal in bargaining with opposition groups, but if it overestimates the risk of intervention, this gamble can backfire.

As with Proposition 1, civil war occurs for some intermediary range for the value of the domestic stakes, but the upper and lower bounds of  $\pi$  are different. When the rebels prefer fighting alone locally to fighting an interstate war, then they determine the minimum value of  $\pi$ . Another important distinction between the PBE in Proposition 1 and this equilibrium, is  $D$ 's decision to risk civil war. Whereas in the former, the risking-war constraint imposes an upper bound on  $\pi$ , here, the domestic stakes have countervailing effects on the decision to risk civil war. Greater values of  $\pi$  make the larger offer more attractive, thus making the equilibrium less sustainable. However,  $D$  only risks civil war when the domestic stakes are above a certain value ( $\pi > \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T}$ ). The reason why is because when  $\pi$  is too low,  $T$  is highly unlikely to intervene.

When intervention is unlikely,  $R$  is likely going to reject a small offer. Therefore, there has to be a sufficient likelihood of  $T$  intervening for  $D$  to risk civil war with  $R$ .

I identify an additional PBE, defined by non-credible retaliation, that results in local-only civil war in the appendix. The logic of that equilibrium is similar, but with some differences in the constraints.

## 6 Empirical implications

The nested model of domestic and international conflict shows how expectations about intervention and retaliation affect domestic processes. This interaction has clear empirical implications, because when and why domestic bargaining breaks down depends on what happens after fighting breaks out. To show this, I calculate the comparative statics of the probability of civil war (with or without subsequent intervention and retaliation), which is the probability of rebels rejecting a low offer from the domestic government.<sup>14</sup> All equilibria offer substantively different predictions on key parameters, and several have non-monotonic effects. The varying predictions depend on the two dimensions of interest: retaliation and rebel aims. One noteworthy feature of the model, which has a significant impact on empirical prediction, is that when rebels have local aims, the probability of civil war is equivalent to the probability of the third party *not* intervening. As such, some predictors flip direction depending on whether retaliation is credible or not, but all predictors turn on the aims of the rebels.

The rebels' aims determine how the local stakes affect the probability of war. When the

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<sup>14</sup>Because intervention and retaliation follow the onset of a civil war, when I refer to the probability of war, I mean the likelihood of civil war breaking out following a low offer from the domestic government, regardless of what happens afterwards. Even if the conflict starts out as a civil war, a low offer might prompt different types of war, depending on the two dimensions of retaliation and rebel war aims. As such, war is meant as a catch-all term for the different types of conflict that may result from the breakdown of domestic bargaining.

Table 1: Probability of war: Increase in size of local stakes

	Credible retaliation	Non-credible retaliation
Local-aims rebels	↓ (Civil war)	↓ (Civil war)
Expansive-aims rebels	↑ (Interstate war)	↑ (Intern. civil war war)

rebels have expansive aims, the risk of either interstate war or internationalized civil war increases in the relative size of the local stakes. The intuition is straightforward. The greater  $\pi$  is, the more the third party has to gain from intervening, and the more likely it is to intervene. Since the rebels prefer help to fighting alone, higher likelihood of intervention means higher likelihood of bargaining breakdown. Conversely, when the rebels have local war aims, countries are at greater risk of civil war when the local stakes are relatively low.

Contrary to existing studies (e.g. Gleditsch 2007, p. 298), the relationship between the rebels and the third party is not a consistent predictor of intervention. Under credible retaliation,  $T$  is increasingly willing to intervene and start an interstate war when it does not particularly like the rebels. The intuition is as follows: the less it likes the rebels, the larger the marginal benefit is of fighting over a large set of stakes than staying out and holding some influence in the event of a rebel victory. Therefore, stronger affinity makes the third party less likely to intervene. However, whether and what type of war breaks out depends on the rebels' aims. If the rebels have expansive aims, weaker affinity makes interstate war more likely because they prefer external support. In other words, the more likely intervention is, the more likely interstate war is. However, when the rebels have local aims, stronger affinity makes civil war more likely, because they prefer not to fight alongside an intervener. Therefore, under a credible threat of retaliation, stronger affinity makes interstate war less likely, but civil war more likely.

The expectations are reversed when the threat of retaliation is non-credible. Greater affin-

Table 2: Probability of war: Increase in rebel affinity

	Credible retaliation	Non-credible retaliation
Local-aims rebels	↑ (Civil war)	↓ (Civil war)
Expansive-aims rebels	↓ (Interstate war)	↑ (Intern. civil war)

ity makes internationalized civil war more likely when the rebels have expansive aims, but civil war less likely when the rebels have local aims. The intuition is as follows: Because fighting is exclusively in Country  $A$ 's territory,  $T$  only cares about whether  $R$  wins the local conflict. Therefore, the third party's and rebels' goals align as affinity increases. However, when the rebels have local aims, their goals diverge. These results suggest that predicting civil war is conditional on the rebels' preferences and the ability of the domestic government to impose costs on the intervener.

Related to intervener-rebel affinity is the question of military strength and the likelihood of winning a war. The balance of power is important for predicting the onset of civil war (with or without subsequent intervention and/or retaliation), but the effects are non-monotonic and conditional on the credibility of retaliation, rebel war aims, and the stakes of the conflict. In short, the military strength of the domestic government and the rebels can either make war more or less likely depending on these factors, and their effect varies across types of war. For instance, under credible retaliation, increasingly powerful domestic governments make intervention less likely, as expected, except when  $\pi$  or  $b$  are relatively high. This result suggests that there are substitution effects when  $T$  is facing a very strong opponent. The third party prefers fighting weaker governments, but sees intervention as an imperative when the (domestic) stakes are high or it really likes the rebels. Therefore, stronger governments may make interstate war more

or less likely, depending on how much is at stake for the third party.<sup>15</sup> Under non-credible retaliation, the effect of  $D$ 's military strength on the likelihood of war is strictly conditional on the balance of power. A stronger  $D$  makes  $T$  more willing to intervene, thus starting an internationalized civil war, unless  $D$  is especially strong. This result implies that  $T$  wants to intervene in order to win the war, unless  $D$  is so strong that intervention does not tip the balance of power in their favor.

Rebel strength is also not a consistent predictor of war. For instance, when the threat of retaliation is credible, stronger rebels make intervention more likely, but only for particularly high values of  $\pi$  and  $b$ , similar to effect of  $D$ 's military strength.<sup>16</sup> When retaliation is not happening, stronger rebels make the third party less willing to intervene. The logic is as follows:  $T$  is less likely to support stronger rebels than weaker ones because stronger rebels are more likely to win on their own, so they do not need the external support. Therefore, when the rebels have expansive aims, stronger rebels make intervention and thus internationalized civil war less likely, but civil war more likely. In other words, stronger rebels are left to fend for themselves, but they also prefer fighting alone.

These predictions have implications for existing research. Salehyan et al. (2011, p. 711) argue that medium-strength rebels are more likely to get external support because of supply-and-demand dynamics. By endogenizing rebel preferences in the model, I show how important they are for explaining variation in the internationalization of civil war. Including rebel preferences in the model also illustrate that Salehyan and co-authors' theory hinge on an unreasonably strong assumption. They assume that third parties strictly prefer to support stronger rebels, but

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<sup>15</sup>Conversely, when the rebels have local war aims, the direction of these effects flip, so when  $T$  has much to gain, civil war becomes less likely relative to peace.

<sup>16</sup>Rebel aims thus determine what type of conflict is started, as strong rebels make interstate war more likely when the local stakes and chances of winning are high (expansive aims), but civil war less likely (local aims).

my model shows that this only holds under certain conditions. Third parties make decisions not just on what will improve the chances of winning, but also the costs of doing so, particularly in the shadow of retaliation, and the stakes at hand. Therefore, their empirical results might be due to factors other than supply-and-demand dynamics.

The results presented here imply selection bias in our observational data. Civil war might not break out because the opposition has no interest in picking up arms, but it might also be because the government has successfully deterred a third party from intervening and the opposition prefers fighting an interstate war to fighting over the local stakes. Similarly, civil war might break out, but without intervention, for at least two reasons. One, the third party might simply not have an interest in the conflict, or two, it might be successfully deterred from intervening and the rebels prefer fighting on their own. Thus, accounting for dyadic relations alone does not capture the strategic interaction.

## **7 Conclusion**

This paper has presented an asymmetric information model of civil war onset, intervention, and retaliation with varying stakes for fighting to help explain why some civil wars expand while others do not. I focused on uncertainty about the third party's costs of intervention in order to isolate an international cause of civil war and conflict expansion. Furthermore, I linked domestic and international conflict by allowing the domestic government to raise the stakes of fighting through retaliation, and I allowed the rebels to hold varying preferences over external support. These modeling decisions allowed me to examine how all three actors' preferences on maintaining or remaking political order affect conflict behavior.

The model thus explains when civil wars become interstate wars. Some of the key takeaway results are:

- Interstate war occurs when (a) the local stakes are moderately high, (b) the costs of fighting are low, and (c) the domestic government has some retaliatory capabilities.
- For interstate war to occur, the rebels' and the third party's incentives to fight have to be sufficiently aligned.
- Higher local stakes make internationalized civil war more likely, conditional on a civil war having broken out, but makes it less likely that a civil war starts in the first place.
- Higher local stakes make internationalized civil war more likely relative to interstate war, and vice-versa.

As I have discussed above, this nested model of conflict helps explain several cases of expansion and non-expansion. In particular, the model shows that exogenous shocks, such as a government supporter intervening, can have unanticipated effects. For instance, by raising the local stakes in Afghanistan, the Soviet invasion in 1979 both made intervention on the side of the rebels more appealing and the threat of retaliation less credible. Today, we observe a similar dynamic in Syria, where intervention has begotten intervention.

The model also sheds light on the importance of war costs for the actors involved, and the distinction between those borne domestically and those imposed externally. Both equilibria predicting interstate war and internationalized civil war exist under conditions of low costs in the civil war country. If we consider those costs a function of what can be destroyed, then the model hints at a potential explanation for why civil wars cluster spatially in underdeveloped

countries and why so many of them tend to attract external interveners. Civil war becomes relatively more attractive for the actors involved when there is less to lose from fighting. This logic extends to war expansion and the costs of retaliation. Intervention, even in the face of a credible threat of retaliation, should be more attractive when the third party has fewer assets to be lost. As such, war costs are not only defined by an attacker's ability to impose costs, but also by a target's vulnerability. Poorer countries might therefore be at an advantage relative to richer ones, when considering the willingness to intervene.

A broader theoretical contribution of my model is that it offers an explanation for civil war onset separate from the commitment problem. Uncertainty over intervention can disrupt domestic bargaining. We might then think of some set of civil wars as the product of its international circumstances, rather than exclusively domestic processes. Existing empirical work raises doubts about whether there is a justification for treating interstate and intrastate wars separately (Cunningham and Lemke 2013, p. 617), and my model provides a link between the two by showing how actors can transition from one to the other.

Another important insight provided by the model is that there is no consistent relationship between many common predictors of conflict, be it civil war or interstate war, and the onset of fighting. Comparative statics show that the effect of rebel-intervener ties and relative military strength on the probability of war depend on the credibility of the threat of intervention and rebel war aims. Consistent with existing explanations for interstate war (Powell 1999, e.g.), power imbalance is not sufficient to explain war.

The distinction between credible and non-credible threats of retaliation has implications for theories of intervention and their effects. Existing work suggests that transnational ties would make intervention more likely (Gleditsch 2007, p. 298), but this does not account for the poten-

tial intervener's tradeoff between intervention or staying on the sidelines. Intervention might be prohibitively costly under the shadow of retaliation, especially if the third party expects to hold influence over a new rebel government. By failing to account for this dimension, we fail to account for important selection effects. For instance, if a third party has strong ethnic ties with an opposition group in a neighboring country, and the domestic government has a credible threat of retaliation, we would observe peace because of successful deterrence. Under similar circumstances, but with the third party having weak affinity for the opposition, we could observe the onset of a civil war, resulting in both intervention and retaliation. This suggests that there are civil wars off the equilibrium path; not because of domestic dynamics, but because of the potential international dimension of those conflicts.

Retaliation also matters for estimating conflict outcomes. The literature on third-party interventions has shown that external support can have varying effects on conflict duration, but the observational data suffers from selection bias (Regan 1996, Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000, Regan 2002, Balch-Lindsay et al. 2008, Gent 2008, Cunningham 2010, Sullivan and Karreth 2014, e.g.). For instance, Gent (2008, p. 725) shows that external support helps rebels gain victory but not governments. This might be because third parties prefer to intervene when the rebels are strong, whereas only weak governments get external support, but my model suggests that rebel strength is not a straightforward predictor of intervention. The threat of retaliation might bias intervention towards weak domestic governments and against strong ones, but a key factor is whether the third party can tip the balance of power in the rebels' favor. Furthermore, under non-credible retaliation, third parties should be less inclined to intervene the stronger the rebels are, because they do not need help.

Future research should focus on the specific characteristics of expansion, in both spatial

and temporal terms. I have assumed that escalation means interstate war, but retaliation might be of less severity or even asymmetric in character. The variation in expansion should affect outcomes of interest, such as duration. One can imagine sudden expansion having a different effect on civil war termination than a gradual escalation, but both the choice of intervention strategy and retaliation might interact in ways not captured by the model presented here. Once again, cases such as the civil wars in Afghanistan and Syria show how strategies change over time, in response to both changes on the ground and external factors.

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## 8 Appendix

### 8.1 Proposition 1

Interstate war happens with some positive probability when the value of the size of the local stakes is in some intermediary range. Specifically, for the equilibrium to exist, there is a lower and an upper bound of  $\pi$ . The lower bound is defined by  $T$ 's willingness to intervene despite it triggering retaliation and interstate war. It prefers interstate war to staying out when

$$\frac{m_R + m_T}{m_D + m_R + m_T} - c_T - e_T \geq \frac{b\pi m_R}{m_D + m_R} + (1 - \pi), \text{ which can be simplified to } \pi \geq \frac{c_T + \frac{m_D}{m_D + m_R + m_T} + e_T}{1 - \frac{bm_R}{m_D + m_R}} = \tau^*.$$

This constraint is more likely to hold the lower  $T$ 's war costs and escalation costs are ( $c_T$  and  $e_T$ ).

The upper bound of  $\pi$  is defined either by  $D$ 's willingness to retaliate or  $R$ 's war aims, depending on which is the stronger constraint as expressed by the local stakes. The threat of retaliation is credible when  $\frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - c_D - e_D \geq \frac{\pi m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - c_D$ , which can be rewritten as  $\pi \leq \frac{\left(\frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - e_D\right)(m_D+m_R+m_T)}{m_D} = \delta$ . This constraint holds for smaller values  $D$ 's escalation costs ( $e_D$ ).

$R$  prefers fighting an interstate war to fighting alone in a civil war when  $\pi$  is sufficiently low. Specifically,  $R$  has expansive aims when the offer from  $D$  equivalent to what it gets in an interstate war is greater or equal to the offer it would get in the event of civil war without intervention,  $-\frac{\frac{a}{b} + c_R + \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - 1}{\pi} \geq \frac{m_R}{m_D+m_R} - \frac{c_R}{\pi}$ , which we can rewrite as  $\pi \leq -\frac{(m_D+m_R)((a-b)(m_R+m_T)+am_D)}{bm_R(m_D+m_R+m_T)} = \rho^*$ . This inequality holds the the smaller  $R$ 's autonomy costs are ( $a$ ).

Formally, the constraints hold jointly when  $\tau^* < \min\{\delta, \rho^*\}$ . Because the lower and upper bounds on  $\pi$  do not share  $c_T$ ,  $e_T$ ,  $c_D$ , and  $a$ , the inequality holds when one or more of these parameters are sufficiently low. For instance, if  $\rho^* < \delta$ , then the following must be true:  $e_T \leq \frac{m_D(a(b-2)m_R+(b-a)m_T)+(b-1)(a-b)m_R(m_R+m_T)-am_D^2}{bm_R(m_D+m_R+m_T)} - c_T$ .

Whether war breaks out or not depends on the offer  $D$  makes in equilibrium. Because  $D$  knows  $R$ 's decision-rules, it knows the minimum offers it can make that  $R$  will accept conditional on whether  $T$  is intervening. When intervention is coming,  $R$  gets  $\left(\frac{m_R+m_T}{m_D+m_R+m_T}\right)\pi - c_R - \frac{a}{b}$ , so it will not accept anything less than  $x_{\text{inter}} = \frac{\frac{m_R+m_T}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - \frac{a}{b} - c_R}{\pi}$ . When intervention is not coming, the best  $R$  can get fighting a civil war alone is  $\left(\frac{m_R}{m_D+m_R}\right)\pi - \frac{c_R}{\pi}$ , so the minimum it will accept from  $D$  is  $x_{\text{local}} = \frac{m_R}{m_D+m_R} - \frac{c_R}{\pi}$ . Because  $R$  has expansive aims ( $x_{\text{inter}} > x_{\text{local}}$ ),  $R$  will always accept the former, but only the latter when intervention is not coming.

Therefore, there are two potential offers  $D$  can make. It knows that  $x_{\text{inter}}$  will be accepted for sure, because it satisfies  $R$  for all types  $T$ , but it will offer  $x_{\text{local}}$  when the expected utility of making a low offer outweighs the additional costs of offering  $x_{\text{inter}}$ . It decides between the two offers depending on the probability of  $T$  intervening.  $T$  is indifferent at cut point  $\hat{z} = m_D \left( \frac{b\pi}{m_D+m_R} - \frac{1}{m_D+m_R+m_T} \right) - b\pi - e_T + p$ , and because the types are uniformly distributed, the probability of intervention is  $\frac{\hat{z}}{\bar{z}}$  with the complementary of non-intervention being  $\frac{\bar{z}-\hat{z}}{\bar{z}}$ . Thus,  $D$  risks war with a small offer when:

$$\frac{\hat{z} \left( \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - c_D - e_D \right)}{\bar{z}} + \frac{(\bar{z} - \hat{z}) (\pi(1 - x_{\text{local}}))}{\bar{z}} \geq \pi(1 - x_{\text{inter}}). \quad (1)$$

Because solving the above for  $\pi$  involves multiple solutions, I rewrite the inequality as:

$$\begin{aligned} a \leq & \frac{b}{\bar{z}} \left( - \frac{(m_D(c_D + c_R + e_D + \pi) + m_R(c_D + c_R + e_D))(m_D(\pi - e_T) - m_R((b-1)\pi + e_T))}{(m_D + m_R)^2} \right. \\ & + \bar{z} \left( \frac{\pi m_D}{m_D + m_R} - \pi + 1 \right) - \frac{m_D^2}{(m_D + m_R + m_T)^2} + \\ & \left. \frac{m_D(m_R(-\bar{z} - b\pi + c_D + c_R + e_D - e_T + p) + m_D(-\bar{z} + c_D + c_R + e_D - e_T + 2p))}{(m_D + m_R)(m_D + m_R + m_T)} \right) \\ & = \gamma^* \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

This constraint implies that risking war becomes increasingly attractive the smaller  $R$ 's autonomy costs become because it makes the larger offer less attractive relative to risking war with a smaller offer. As noted above, the constraint on  $R$ 's war aims also hold for smaller values of  $a$ , so we are more likely to see both  $D$  risking war and  $R$  have expansive aims the smaller the autonomy loss is.

I have now shown that  $D$  can make two offers in equilibrium, and for some values of  $a$  it

risks war. However, because interstate war means raising the stakes of the conflict, we have to make sure that  $D$  will not knowingly provoke war by offering something it know will be rejected. In equilibrium,  $D$  will never do so, and the reason why is straightforward. When  $D$  offers  $x_{\text{local}}$ , which is the smaller offer, interstate war occurs with some probability while  $R$  accepts with complementary probability. If it offers less than that, interstate war happens with the same probability, but instead of  $R$  accepting with complementary probability, civil war breaks out. Therefore, provoking war in equilibrium would imply:

$$\frac{\hat{z} \left( \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - c_D - e_D \right)}{\bar{z}} + \frac{(\bar{z} - \hat{z}) (\pi(1 - x_{\text{local}}))}{\bar{z}} \leq \frac{\hat{z} \left( \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - c_D - e_D \right)}{\bar{z}} + \frac{\bar{z} - \hat{z} \left( \left( \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R} \right) \pi - c_D \right)}{\bar{z}}, \quad (3)$$

which can be simplified as  $\pi(1 - x_{\text{local}}) < \left( \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R} \right) \pi - c_D$ , or  $\left( \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R} \right) \pi + c_R < \left( \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R} \right) \pi - c_D$ , which is by assumption never true.

## 8.2 Proposition 2

When  $D$  cannot credibly threaten to retaliate and  $R$  has expansive war aims, breakdown in bargaining leads to internationalized civil war. In this PBE, the lower bound of  $\pi$  is defined by the non-credible retaliation,  $T$ 's incentive to intervene, and  $R$ 's expansive war aims. For retaliation not to be credible,  $\pi$  must be greater than  $\delta$ . When that is the case, the inequalities for both  $T$  and  $R$  change.  $T$  prefers fighting an internationalized civil war to staying out when

$$\frac{b\pi(m_R+wm_T)}{m_D+m_R+wm_T} - c_T + (1-\pi) \geq \frac{b\pi m_R}{m_D+m_R} + (1-\pi), \text{ which can be simplified to } \pi \geq \frac{c_T(m_D+m_R)(m_D+m_R+wm_T)}{bwm_Dm_T} =$$

$\tau^\dagger$ . Under non-credible retaliation,  $R$  has expansive aims when  $-\frac{a}{b\pi} - \frac{c_R}{\pi} - \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+wm_T} + 1 \geq$

$$\frac{m_R}{m_D+m_R} - \frac{c_R}{\pi}, \text{ which simplifies to } \pi \geq \frac{a(m_D+m_R)(m_D+m_R+wm_T)}{bwm_Dm_T} = \rho^\dagger. \text{ Formally, } \pi > \max\{\delta, \tau^\dagger, \rho^\dagger\}$$

has to be true, and which lower bound is more restrictive depends on  $e_D$ ,  $c_T$ ,  $a$ ,  $b$ , and  $w$ .

These bounds suggest that the PBE is more likely to exist for higher values of  $\pi$ . However, since  $R$  prefers intervention to non-intervention, the higher  $\pi$  is, the more likely intervention is. Specifically, the cut point for  $T$ 's indifference between intervening or not is  $\hat{y} = \frac{b\pi w m_D m_T}{(m_D + m_R)(m_D + m_R + w m_T)}$ , and with the uniform distribution of types, the probability of war is  $\frac{\hat{y}}{\bar{y}}$ , and the complementary probability of non-intervention being  $\frac{\bar{y} - \hat{y}}{\bar{y}}$ . As with the previous proposition,  $D$  can make a small offer or a large offer. In this case, a small offer is  $x_{\text{local}}$ , while the larger offer is  $x_{\text{interciv}} = 1 - \frac{a}{b\pi} - \frac{c_R}{\pi} - \frac{m_D}{m_D + m_R + w m_T}$ , which is the equivalent of what  $R$  will get if an internationalized civil war breaks out. Therefore, for  $D$  to risk war, the following inequality has to hold:

$$\frac{\hat{y} \left( \frac{\pi m_D}{m_D + m_R + w m_T} - c_D \right)}{\bar{y}} + \frac{(\bar{y} - \hat{y}) (\pi (1 - x_{\text{local}}))}{\bar{y}} \geq \pi (1 - x_{\text{interciv}}) \quad (4)$$

can solve the inequality for  $a$ , so that the following has to be true:

$$b \left( \frac{\frac{\pi(\hat{y} - \bar{y}) m_D}{m_D + m_R + w m_T} - \hat{y} (c_D + c_R) - \frac{\pi \hat{y} m_D}{m_D + m_R}}{\bar{y}} + c_R + \frac{\pi m_D}{m_D + m_R} \right) \geq a = \gamma^\ddagger. \quad (5)$$

Since  $\rho^\dagger$  is the only other constraint with  $a$ , I can rewrite that as  $a \leq \frac{b p w m_D m_T}{(m_D + m_R)(m_D + m_R + w m_T)} = \alpha^\ddagger$ .

For the PBE to exist then,  $a < \min\{\gamma^\ddagger, \alpha^\ddagger\}$  has to be true along with the constraint for  $\pi$ . As with the above equilibria,  $D$  will not knowingly provoke a war because it prefers  $R$  accept  $x_{\text{interciv}}$  to fighting an internationalized civil war.

### 8.3 Lemma 4.1

When escalation to interstate war no longer means that  $R$  and  $T$  are fighting in a coalition together, interstate war does not happen in equilibrium. For  $T$  to intervene, it has to prefer fighting an interstate war alone to sitting out a civil war, meaning  $\frac{m_T}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - c_T - e_T \geq \frac{bpm_R}{m_D+m_R} + (1 - \pi)$  has to be true. This inequality can be rewritten as  $\pi \geq \frac{c_T + \frac{m_D+m_R}{m_D+m_R+m_T} + e_T}{1 - \frac{bm_R}{m_D+m_R}} = \tau^*$ .

For  $R$  to have expansive aims under free-for-all-fighting, they have to prefer fighting an interstate war, against two opponents, over fighting a civil war against  $D$  alone. Specifically,

$-\frac{\frac{a}{b} + c_R - \frac{m_R}{m_D+m_R+m_T}}{\pi} > \frac{m_R}{m_D+m_R} - \frac{c_R}{\pi}$ , which can be rewritten as  $\pi \leq \frac{(m_D+m_R)\left(\frac{m_R}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - \frac{a}{b}\right)}{m_R} = \rho^*$ . These

two inequalities are never jointly true under the assumptions set out in the model. We can see

that by checking whether  $\frac{(m_D+m_R)\left(\frac{m_R}{m_D+m_R+m_T} - \frac{a}{b}\right)}{m_R} > \frac{c_T + \frac{m_D+m_R}{m_D+m_R+m_T} + e_T}{1 - \frac{bm_R}{m_D+m_R}}$  is ever true, leaving some

positive range of  $\pi$  for the PBE to exist. However, the inequality reduces down to

$$b(m_D + m_R) \left( (m_D + m_R) (m_R (a + b(c_T + e_T)) + am_D) + b^2 m_R \right) < 0, \quad (6)$$

which is by assumption never true. As such, there is no range of values for  $\pi$  in which  $R$  has expansive aims and  $T$  prefers fighting an interstate war over staying out when the two do not fight in a coalition together. Furthermore, if I remove the autonomy-loss term from  $R$ 's utility function, given that they should not incur any such cost under free-for-all, the inequalities still do not hold at the same time.

### 8.4 Proposition 3

When  $D$  can credibly threaten to retaliate but  $R$  has local war aims, the war outcome in equilibrium is civil war. As above, this PBE exists for some intermediary values of  $\pi$ , but now the

lower bound is defined by  $R$ 's war aims. If it is too low, then interstate war will become too attractive. The upper bound of  $\pi$  is defined by  $T$ 's willingness to stay out of the conflict (if it is too high, then intervention becomes too attractive) or  $T$ 's ability to credibly retaliate. As such, the following must hold:  $\rho^* < \min\{\delta, \tau^*\}$ .

If  $\tau^* < \delta$ , then  $\frac{c_T + \frac{m_D}{m_D + m_R + m_T} + e_T}{1 - \frac{bm_R}{m_D + m_R}} > -\frac{(m_D + m_R)((a-b)(m_R + m_T) + am_D)}{bm_R(m_D + m_R + m_T)}$  must be true for the PBE to exist. Higher values of  $b$  make both intervention and local aims less likely, but the inequality holds for higher values of  $c_T$  and  $e_T$  because  $T$  is deterred from intervening and higher values of  $a$  because intervention becomes too costly for  $R$ .

As in Proposition 1,  $D$  only makes two offers in equilibrium, but in this PBE  $x_{\text{local}} > x_{\text{inter}}$ , so the latter comes with the risk of civil war.  $D$  will offer  $x_{\text{inter}}$  when the expected utility of risking civil war is greater than the cost of buying off  $R$  with  $x_{\text{local}}$ , which depends on the likelihood of  $T$  intervening. In contrast with Proposition 1, the risk of  $R$  rejecting the smaller offer is inversely proportionate to the likelihood of  $T$  intervening:

$$\frac{\hat{z}(\pi(1 - x_{\text{inter}}))}{\bar{z}} + \frac{(\bar{z} - \hat{z})(\pi(\frac{m_D}{m_D + m_R}) - c_D)}{\bar{z}} \geq \pi(1 - x_{\text{local}}). \quad (7)$$

Because increased values of  $\pi$  makes both risking war and offering  $x_{\text{inter}}$  increasingly attractive, I rewrite the above inequality as  $a \geq \gamma^\dagger$ , which suggests that increased autonomy loss for  $R$  makes  $D$  more likely to risk war. For  $R$  to have local war aims,  $a$  has to be sufficiently high, so I rewrite  $\pi > \rho^*$  as  $a > \alpha^*$ . For the PBE to exist,  $a$  has to be sufficiently high, or  $a \geq \max\{\gamma^\dagger, \alpha^*\}$  has to be true. It is for sufficiently low values of  $\bar{z}$ , meaning that when the upper bound of potential destruction for  $T$  is sufficiently low, it is relatively more likely to intervene. In other words, when intervention is sufficiently likely, the inequality holds and the PBE exists. As with

Proposition 1,  $D$  never knowingly provokes war because it strictly prefers  $R$  accepting  $x_{\text{inter}}$  to fighting an interstate war.

Civil war also happens in equilibrium when  $D$  cannot credibly threaten to retaliate and the rebels have local aims. This PBE is similar to the one described in Proposition 3, except since retaliation is no longer credible,  $D$ 's strategy imposes a lower bound on  $\pi$ . Specifically,  $\pi \geq \delta$  has to be true. Since civil war breaks out when  $R$  has local war aims and rejects a low offer when  $T$  is not intervening, the equilibrium has an upper bound on  $\pi$ . Therefore,  $\delta \leq \min\{\tau^\dagger, \rho^\dagger\}$  has to be true for the equilibrium to exist. This constraint holds for higher values of  $e_D$ ,  $c_T$ , and  $a$ , and lower values of  $b$ . For instance, if  $R$ 's war aims is a stronger constraint than  $T$ 's non-intervention ( $\tau^\dagger > \rho^\dagger$ ), which it is when  $a$  is less than  $c_T$ , then  $\delta \leq \rho^\dagger$  is true when either  $e_D$  or  $a$  are sufficiently high. When  $e_D \geq \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T}$ ,  $a$  simply has to be positive, which it is by assumption. If  $e_D < \frac{m_D}{m_D+m_R+m_T}$ , then  $a > -\frac{bwm_T(e_D(m_R+m_T)+(e_D-1)m_D)}{(m_D+m_R)(m_D+m_R+m_T)}$ . These constraints therefore hold when  $T$  is successfully deterred from intervening.

Civil war breaks out when  $D$  offers  $R$   $x_{\text{interciv}}$ , but  $T$  is not intervening. Therefore, the probability of war is the inverse of the probability of intervention. For  $D$  to risk war, the following has to be true:

$$\frac{(\bar{y} - \hat{y}) \left( \frac{\pi m_D}{m_D+m_R} - c_D \right)}{\bar{y}} + \frac{\hat{y}(\pi(1 - x_{\text{interciv}}))}{\bar{y}} \geq \pi(1 - x_{\text{local}}). \quad (8)$$

I can rewrite this inequality as  $a \geq b \left( \frac{\bar{y}(c_D+c_R)}{\hat{y}} - c_D - c_R + \frac{\pi w m_D m_T}{(m_D+m_R)(m_D+m_R+w m_T)} \right) = \gamma^*$ . This constraint therefore holds for higher values of  $a$  because it makes risking war more attractive by making  $x_{\text{interciv}}$  larger. For  $R$  to have local war aims,  $\pi \leq \rho^\dagger$ , which can be rewritten as  $a \geq \frac{b\pi w m_D m_T}{(m_D+m_R)(m_D+m_R+w m_T)}$ , has to be true. Therefore, for  $D$  to risk war and the equilibrium to ex-

ist,  $R$ 's autonomy loss has to be sufficiently high. As with the previous propositions,  $D$  will not knowingly provoke war, because it strictly prefers  $R$  accepting  $x_{\text{interciv}}$  to fighting an internationalized civil war.