



Proxy warfare.

The Changes

in United States policy

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Afghanistan

United States

Syria

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Abstract

Proxy warfare has been an important factor in international relations since the Cold War. This thesis builds on that while researching the United States policy regarding proxy warfare. This will be done with two case studies: the Soviet- Afghan War and the Syrian Civil War. Through these two case studies a comparison and a contradistinction will be made in which the policy of the United States and its changes since the end of the Cold War will be looked at. The research question will thus be: What are the differences and comparisons between the Soviet Afghan War and the Syrian Civil War regarding US foreign policy?

The first chapter is about the definition of proxy warfare and how it has changed over the years. It states that the definition of proxy warfare has changed significantly over the years with several key factors added to the definition. Chapter two is about the Soviet- Afghan War with the case study explained and analyzed. This is also the case with chapter three which is about the Syrian Civil War. Chapter four is the analysis of the two case studies in which the United States policy regarding proxy warfare is looked at.

Keywords: Proxy warfare, proxy war, Afghanistan, Syria, United States, policy, Cold War, Soviet- Afghan War, Syrian Civil War.

Preface

This topic came to my attention due to my interest in conflict studies. I wanted to write about something that was close to my interests in American Studies, Russia Studies and Conflict Studies. It was not difficult to see that the connection was the Cold War. This conflict which took place from immediately after World War II lasted until 1991. The connecting aspect between those three factors became my topic for this thesis: proxy warfare. I immediately realized that this was going to be a difficult topic to write about as I did not know a great amount about it but I was interested in it.

Finding a topic turned out to be an easier aspect of writing a thesis. Specifying this topic into something which was suitable to research was a large task. Eventually I received a suggestion by my supervisor to write my thesis with two case studies to compare with each other. These case studies were the Soviet- Afghan War and the Syrian Civil War. Comparing these two would give me a great picture of how proxy warfare and the United States policy had changed.

From there on it was all about reading and writing, trying to understand all the actors involved with the different ideals, goals and targets. This was difficult for me to follow at some times. It was a long and sometimes difficult and tiring process, spending almost every day for over two month in the University library without fresh air and natural sunlight. I was lucky though, that I had several friends who joined me in missing out on lovely weather to write something that everybody has to write at University: a thesis. I am however proud of what I have achieved and I hope that the reader does so too. Enjoy!

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Introduction

‘Let’s call it what it is: a proxy war’ (Ingersoll, par.1). These words were used by CNN reporter Ben Brumfield on the fourth of January 2013. He used these words to describe the heightening tension between the United States and Russia due to the conflict in Syria. Proxy warfare is a tool that has been used by many countries over the years in order to solve a conflict without starting a full scale war and without directly facing each other. The aim is to gain territory or to change the government of a country. Proxy warfare has become a more constant factor in international politics since the end of World War II and the start of the Cold War. The problem with proxy warfare is however that despite its regular use, it lacks a definition and a clear policy. There are numerous examples of proxy wars that are turned into a full scale war or remain in a stalemate for a long period of time. This is in a sharp contrast with the idea that proxy warfare is a short and quick solution to a conflict. The lack of policy makes it possible for countries to deny any accountability and responsibility for the human suffering that it has caused. Permission by Congress is not always necessary due to the fact that a proxy war is not a full scale war. It is thus important to study this topic in order to see how proxy warfare has developed and whether the United States government has changed its policy based on the past.

This thesis will specifically look at the United States foreign policy regarding proxy warfare while looking at the definition. This will be done with two case studies that will be compared with each other. These case studies are the Soviet Afghan War and the Syrian Civil War. The Soviet- Afghan War was at the end of the Cold War. The US interfered here to remove the Soviets from Afghanistan and to try to damage USSR government itself. At the same time they also wanted to protect several allied nations that were close to Afghanistan. The Syrian Civil War is as of writing still going on. The United States wants to remove President Assad from power while also fighting Islamic State Group ISIL. This group has attacked several European and American cities and wants to create a state under the Caliphate.

Through these case studies there will be an extensive impression about the foreign policy of the United States from the Cold War (Soviet-Afghan War) to the current Syrian Civil War. The research question will thus be: What are the differences and similarities between the Soviet Afghan War and the Syrian Civil War focusing on US proxy war policy? This will specifically focus on the changes in policy regarding proxy warfare.

There has been a significant amount of research done on proxy warfare and its start and current use. One of these is the book 'proxy warfare' by Andrew Mumford. Mumford has specialized in proxy warfare and has subsequently written a book about its history, definition and use. He was one of the first to do so and is thus seen as a leading expert on this topic. In his book he gives an extensive history of proxy warfare and where the definition (or lack thereof) comes from. He explains that proxy warfare was first used by the Americans during the Cold War. He writes extensively about the initial lack of definition and how that has developed over the years. His book is one of the primary sources used for chapter one of this thesis (Mumford 40).

Apart from Mumford, Seyom Brown has also written about proxy warfare in an article called 'purposes and pitfalls of war by Proxy: A systemic analysis' in 2016. He specifically focuses on the appeal of proxy warfare in recent times. Brown is looking at the effects of the Afghanistan and Iraq war under the presidency of George W. Bush. He claims that proxy warfare was an option that was chosen more frequently after this due to the high costs and the long duration of the wars. This creates the public opinion against full scale interference. However, he also claims that this effect is temporary and that public opinion will swing back to support a full scale war. Brown also explains in his article that proxy warfare is also a more popular choice at the moment due to the lack of explanation that needs to be given to citizens and opposition by the government. Lastly, Brown writes about how it is possible for proxy warfare to be used by so many countries without justification. He states that he thinks that this is due to a lack of major power players that control world politics. There is no clear first, second and third world system anymore and that creates an unbalance (Brown 252). This unbalance was created due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the colonization era.

Lastly Geraint Hughes has written extensively about proxy warfare. His article called: 'Syria and the perils of proxy warfare' is about the case study of the Syrian Civil War and how the conflict is going. Hughes first writes about the definition of proxy warfare and its use in the Middle East. He later writes about the complications and the difficulty surrounding the proxy war that is going on in Syria. The war has been going on for several years without a result or solution. At the same time the alliances that are needed for proxy wars are muddled and confusing. Due to this complicated and confusing conflict Hughes also writes about the severe consequences for Syria and its population. Examples of this are the refugee crisis and the complete collapse of the Syrian economy.

He thus specifically focuses on the repercussions of proxy warfare and the consequences for the civilian population in the country itself. This aspect is something that can be overlooked quite easily. Hughes does not give a specific solution to the problems in Syria but he does give a warning about the consequences of proxy warfare and that the case study of Syria shows these consequences to a broader public (Hughes 523).

Through the use of these sources a research based on literature will be done with a historical and political perspective. The historical perspective is to look at the changes in the policy regarding proxy warfare since the Cold War. The political perspective is to look at the policy and the definition of proxy warfare specifically.

The outline of this research will start with a chapter about the difficulty of establishing a definition of proxy warfare. The term is relatively new and subject to constant changes. The second and third chapter will be about the two case studies that were used during this research. These case studies are the Soviet- Afghan War and the Syrian Civil War. The last chapter will be a comparison between the two with a specific focus on changes in foreign policy regarding proxy warfare and whether the past has an effect on the current proxy war in Syria. The comparison will be based on key factors like accountability, type of involvement, role of proxies and success rate. Lastly there will be a conclusion and an extensive works cited list.

Chapter one: definition of a proxy war

Proxy warfare has been difficult to define due to its fluid concept. This is because every conflict is different: the actors involved, goals, reasons and location are all changeable aspects. Due to these different aspects the definition given by researchers is also different. In this chapter I will try to construct a definition of proxy warfare by explaining the different factors that are involved in the term. This definition will be mentioned throughout the rest of this thesis.

One of the first definitions was written by political scientist Karl Deutsch in 1964. He states: “proxy wars are an international conflict between two foreign powers, fought out on the soil of a third country; disguised as a conflict over an internal issue of that country; and using some of that country’s manpower, resources and territory as a means for achieving preponderantly foreign goals and foreign strategies.” (Mumford 3).

The definition written by Karl Deutsch would drastically change after the end of the Cold War. The United States and Russia had wanted to achieve influence by placing someone in charge who was supported by the foreign nation. An example of this is the Shah in Iran who was placed into power by the United States. Neither of the two superpowers wanted to gain territory, occupy the areas in which they fought or start a nuclear war. Their ultimate goal was to stop the other nation from spreading their ideologies and to expand their sphere of influence. These aspects became key characteristics for proxy warfare during the Cold War.

These goals thus changed after the end of the Cold War when it became less necessary to maintain close ties with other smaller foreign nations to protect the sphere of influence. Despite the end of the Cold War proxy wars were still used to achieve goals quickly and without spending too much money on resources like army equipment. Proxy warfare thus became a synonym to cheap and quick, in and out warfare that could be done covertly. Another positive aspect of proxy wars for the invading nation is that it could be done without the full support of the government. The President of the United States does not need consent for all the actions he undertakes while involved in a proxy war. Examples are arms deals, cyber-attacks and the use of private army staff (Mumford 43/44).

Andrew Mumford gives the following definition of proxy warfare in article written in 2013: “a third party intervenes indirectly in order to influence the strategic outcome in favor of its preferred faction” (Mumford 40).

He furthermore states that proxy wars are the product of a relationship between a benefactor, who is a state or non-state actor external to the dynamic of an existing conflict, and the chosen proxies that are the conduit for the benefactor's weapons, training and funding (Mumford 40). This definition given by Andrew Mumford is more recent than the definition given by political scientist Karl Deutsch. His new definition is more elaborate because he adds several new key aspects. The definition by Deutsch shared the similarities of the third country involvement and the achievement of goals but lacked the inclusion of the non-state actors which became an important factor in recent history. This means that the definition of Deutsch is too much based on international politics instead of local actors. He also adds that the definition lacks the focus on the proxies in a conflict as well (Mumford 40).

Geraint Hughes has also written extensively about the topic proxy wars with a specific focus on the conflict in Syria. He writes that it is not surprising that there are claims about a possible proxy interference in Syria. He also states that the conflict is fluid and subject to a great amount of changes (Hughes 523). This makes writing literature about this topic difficult due to the many changes that take place and the unstable situation. Hughes gives three basic principles regarding proxy warfare.

The first principle is that foreign actors might use proxy warfare as a way of coercion. A proxy warfare is used to coerce a different country or group into a change of policy. This might be giving up territory or signing a law or peace agreement. The second principle is that of disruption. This means that a state actor is in a war and intends to win the war by supporting local non state actors with money and weapons to win the war for them. This tactic has been used by Syria in the past against Israel. The third principle is about transformation. This means that a foreign state tries to achieve a significant political change. This can be a new regime or the creation of a democracy. These three principles are part of the definition that Hughes gives of a proxy warfare. He states: "A proxy war is defined here as one in which states (or sponsors) aid and abet non state proxies involved in a conflict against a common adversary, or a target. The sponsors involved will usually be motivated by three distinct strategic goals." (Hughes 523). These aspects were later added to the definition because they were not always common during the Cold War. A significant difference between the definition by Hughes and other definitions mentioned in this chapter is the use of the term 'sponsors'. Hughes appears to say with this that foreign (non) state actors who are planning a proxy warfare interference do this by sponsoring a (local) actor in with money and weapons.

He thus places this kind of proxy warfare next to the common definition in which a (non) state actor involves itself in the conflict as well as supporting a local non state actor.

In his general definition of proxy warfare Hughes writes about the difficulty of forming a definition (Hughes 524). He states that due to the secrecy and covert operations that are used during proxy warfare it is difficult to write and analyze them. The actors involved try to remove any accountability from their presence. This means that research on proxy warfare is difficult to verify due to the lack of a 'paper trail'. A second factor is the claims made by the government about the internal conflict. Governments are able to claim that protesters are rebels and dangerous and that actions against them are warranted.

Through the research done by Mumford and Hughes a new definition can be created that shows the differences and changes in the definition of proxy warfare since the end of the Cold War.

The first aspect that is subject to change in the new definition is the role of actors. As mentioned before, Andrew Mumford writes that the definition by Karl Deutsch only has a focus on international actors and ignores the role of local proxies (Mumford 40). This thus has changed since the end of the Cold War because their role in proxy wars has now been acknowledged and part of the current definition.

The involvement of actors is not the only aspect that is subject to change. The motivation for the use of proxy warfare is also subject to change. Human suffering is not always the primary reason to intervene. Strategic and idealistic goals were the reasons for interfering in other countries during the Cold War. Examples of this are the Soviet-Afghan War during the Cold War and the Angolan war. According to Mumford, one of the primary reasons for interfering is natural resources. The decreasing amount of natural resources like oil and gas allow countries to interfere to make sure that there is unlimited access to these resources. An example of this is the inferences in Iraq during the Gulf War, although this was not a proxy war due to the full scale invasion by the US. There were in this case other reasons for interfering, but gaining access to oil fields was a goal in this war.

Another possible reason for proxy warfare since the Cold War is the rise of the 'failed states'. These states fell into an economic depression when a power vacuum arose after the end of the Cold War. This power vacuum allowed several high profile dictators to gain support and leadership.

It became clear that some new countries were unable to support themselves. Examples of this were Rwanda and Congo. In some cases interference by proxy war is necessary to guarantee safety for its citizens. Economic reasons are also motivations to interfere. In some cases however the interference in failed states lead to a full scale interference with military presence and UN missions (Angstrom 375).

The appeal of proxy warfare also lies in the economic and political arguments. Due to the economic recession in recent year it has been complicated to find support for a complete military invasion. A complete war is expensive and receiving support from the citizens is also difficult. Fighting a war is also expensive with a large risk of human loss. The new technologies surrounding warfare like drones are also expensive and thus a short proxy war is an ideal solution.

The last issue regarding a definition of proxy warfare is what the role of alliances between countries add to the definition. Are states that interfere in a conflict that includes an alliance state engaging in a proxy warfare? Mumford seems to suggest they are as alliances in proxy wars are more common now due to the multilateral world position and the lack of two dominant countries (Mumford 45). They do this to show their collective security but there are boundaries in that support with only support from a distance given (Mumford 45).

The location of proxy warfare has also changed the definition. During the Cold War two major countries fought against each other in smaller post- colonial countries like Vietnam. This aspect has partly changed. Proxy warfare's are still mostly fought in post-colonial countries but these countries are mostly already in some sort of conflict before interference. Examples of this is Syria which was already in a Civil War before foreign countries started to bomb different targets.

All these different aspects lead to a new definition of proxy warfare by Andrew Mumford. It shows that there have been a great amount of changes in the what proxy warfare means and what it entails. The term is still subject to change as warfare in international politics is also constantly changing. New developments in war technology like drones and in-and-out runs can possibly change the definition of proxy warfare again in the future. The question that will be looked at further in this thesis is whether the changes in definition have had any effect on the proxy war policy of the United States. In this thesis the definition by Andrew Mumford will be used in trying to explain this.

Chapter two: Soviet- Afghan War case study

Chapter one started with a discussion about the definition of proxy warfare. This was necessary in order to explain the difficulty of the term while at the same time pointing out the flexible use of proxy wars. Pointing out the difficulty of the research will help in understanding how and why proxy wars are used. Their lack of a definition makes it easier for them to be used without the repercussions of a full scale war. Trying to explain the terms of proxy wars will also show the pros and cons of proxy warfare in general. In order to understand the changes in foreign policy regarding proxy warfare, one has to use case studies to underline its claims.

This chapter will be about the first of two case studies used in this thesis, the other being the Syrian Civil War. These two case studies were specifically chosen to show the contrast and similarities between the two, while maintaining a similar geographical location. The two case studies are not neighboring nations but are both in the Central Asia. This geographical location has always played an active role in the US foreign policy and that is why they were chosen. Another reason why these two case studies were chosen was to compare and contrast the time frame during which these two case studies took place. Aspects that will be looked at in this time frame are the political situation in the world, military developments, use of mercenaries and historical events that might have contributed to changes.

The Soviet- Afghan War took place during the Cold War and was one of the last conflicts in which the Soviet Union and the United States indirectly fought a war with each other. It is thus interesting to compare this conflict with the current conflict in Syria, which has also turned into an indirect war between the two nations. The two countries are on speaking terms but are supporting different groups and have different goals in this conflict. This first chapter will be about the Soviet- Afghan conflict due to the fact that the conflict is older and comparisons and differences are more easily to note working from past to present. The following chapter (chapter three) will be about the Syrian Civil War.

The proxy war in Afghanistan started in 1979 and ended in 1989. The war was a pivotal moment in the ongoing Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States and the Soviet Union were initially reluctant to actively start a war with each other.

The Soviet Union did not trust the Communist regime that had gained power in Afghanistan either and was also wary of the intentions of Iran regarding the ongoing hostage crisis (Westad 315). Along with the ongoing economic crisis in the country, the USSR initially did not feel an intervention was necessary or helpful (Westad 315). There were also the tense relations between the US and the USSR that played a role in the reluctance to go to war. This was due to the large amount of nuclear ammunition that was created earlier during the Cold War. The fact that the US was hesitant to ratify the SALT II agreement, the already tense relationship with Europe and NATO's decision to place a new kind of nuclear missiles in Europe pushed the Soviet Union towards an invasion. Several high place military officials felt that these factors removed any effects an invasion would have on the détente (Westad 318).

The United States also found reasons to fear an invasion in Afghanistan. There were several high profile incidents with one example being the murder of American ambassador Adolph Dubs. Another cause for tension was the close relationship between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. This was because of the close proximity of the two countries that share a border region with each other. The United States was worried about the strong relationship between the two countries. The foreign policy of the United States was at that moment largely based on the 'Domino Theory' of President Eisenhower. It became even more difficult for the United States to maintain their control in the area after the US backed shah of Iran was ousted after a revolution in February 1979. The loss of this ally made the US decide to send more troops and ships to the region. The US also tried to improve relations with other countries in the region like Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. President Carter also wanted to improve the relations with Afghanistan's neighbor Pakistan after the loss of Iran as an ally. This was seen as a provocation and a military pact by the Soviet Union who felt cornered by these developments. The United States meanwhile also felt threatened by the close relations and thus President Carter turned to the CIA to control the situation in Asia (Hughes 333).

At the same time the US saw an ideological opportunity to change the face of Afghanistan by creating a Capitalist country shaped like the US and relieved from Communism according to Odd Arne Westad (Westad 24). The US government saw during the Cold War the chance to reform the world to Capitalism and remove all other ideologies (Westad 24). They had done so with Japan after the end of World War II. The US policy about interfering in Third World countries during the Cold War was thus to interfere in all the countries in which Communism was a threat (Westad 38).

The Soviet Union started its invasion in December 1979 to remove Hafizullah Amin from power by killing him. He had been unable to deal with the anti- Communist protests that had been going on in Afghanistan. The USSR then installed Babrak Karmal as the new Communist leader of Afghanistan. The USSR stayed in the region to support the new Communist regime against the US backed anti- Communist group called the Mujahideen. The US supplied the Mujahideen with weapons and money to fight against the USSR. Due to the support given by the United States, the number of fighters and the amount of weapons they had grew which led to a large losses for the Soviet army. This led to a stalemate in the conflict in which the Soviet Union only made minimal gains while taking heavy losses. This was somewhat similar to the Vietnam War in which the United States was struggling for gains against the Vietcong. The military tactics used by the Soviet Union were also similar with carpet bombing and the removal of people from their homes. Due to the stalemate and the constant stream of new weapons from the United States, the Soviet support for the war was diminishing. The country itself was also struggling with maintaining the army in Afghanistan and eventually signed a peace agreement with the US, Afghanistan and Pakistan, having failed in its primary goal of implementing a Communist friendly government. The last Soviet Union troops left the country on the 15th of February 1989, which marked the end of the conflict.

It was later revealed that President Carter had been asked by Pakistani intelligence officials to support Islamic groups who were against the newly formed and Soviet backed government in Afghanistan. The aid that was supplied by the US to the Mujahideen is still cause for debate. The Americans claimed that the aid was necessary due to provocation by the USSR and that President Carter acted accordingly by supplying the Mujahideen with weapons. European countries however were less alarmed by this and reluctant to do anything against this due to the already tense relations between Europe and the USSR (Hughes 333/334).

One of the reasons why this case study is interesting for this thesis is the due to the success of the interference by the United States. The US managed to remove the Communist regime from power without the use of their own military. This success was considered proof in the success of proxy wars and the use of proxies or mercenaries. The loss of the conflict was also a heavy blow to the already damaged economic stability of the USSR. The loss of the Soviet- Afghan War was followed by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Eastern European part of the Soviet Empire in the same year.

The USSR collapsed in 1991 and became a Capitalist country. It was then included in Western politics with agreements like the NATO- Russia Founding Act (Ratti 142). This further showed the success of the intervention by the United States.

Another reason why this case study is interesting in the context of proxy warfare is the use of the Mujahideen. The use of the Mujahideen by the United States is a clear example of mercenaries who are used to achieve one's goals. The use of mercenaries is an aspect which developed during the Cold War. In his article Klaas Voß tries to explain the development of the use of mercenaries in proxy wars. Mercenaries were first used during the so-called Simba Rebellion in 1964 and used throughout the Cold War by the United States (Voß 38). It is interesting to note that the success rate of the mercenaries was unpredictable. Mercenaries were known to switch alliances, were unsuitable for fighting or took the money and then left (Voß 39). The concept of mercenaries also stems from the idea that there are limited consequences and accountability at home. This concept is also an important reason why governments favor proxy wars instead of a full scale war. This comes from the concept of plausible deniability. The foreign actor can deny any involvement in the conflict because they are not actually participating in the conflict, instead they are supporting a local group in the conflict (Voß 40).

To conclude this chapter, the Soviet- Afghan War is an interesting case study for this thesis. The war ended the overt operations during the Cold War and was the start of the collapse of the Soviet empire. The end of the operations in Afghanistan also led to political instability which later led to the Taliban rising to power. This then led to the second invasion by the United States after 9/11 (Hughes 326/327). The war itself was thus not extreme, the consequences however were, and led to a new phenomenon in the world: the war on terror. The United States and USSR had fought proxy wars against each other before, but this conflict continues to have an influence on the actions of US foreign policy up to this day (Hughes 326). There is no other proxy war in the history in which the consequences of the actions by the US were this large and unpredictable. This case study and a comparison with the political situation in the Middle East at the moment show what an impact a proxy war can have on a region that was targeted by two major international actors.

This chapter and the next chapter in this thesis are used to show the differences and similarities regarding proxy war policy in past and present. This chapter showed that the United States was willing to intervene in a country to damage an enemy with the use of proxy war techniques like mercenaries.

It also shows that the US had ideological reasons to start an intervention in Afghanistan as Odd Arne Westad showed in his book 'The Global Cold War'. It also showed the success that the US had with the use of mercenaries during that conflict. Lastly, this case study could be considered a success for the United States. The success of this war was used again as a foundation for future proxy wars (Rich 9). These last two aspects will return in the next chapter about the Syrian Civil War and chapter four.

Chapter three: Syrian Civil War case study

The second case study used in this thesis is the Syrian Civil War. This case study is specifically chosen to reflect on the differences between the Cold War conflicts and the current proxy wars.

The Syrian conflict started during the Arab Spring in 2011. Protests started in Damascus when several boys were arrested after they sprayed graffiti in support of the Arab Spring campaign. It was revealed that the boys were tortured and this was fatal for one of them. President Bashar Al-Assad responded by firing on protesters and killing civilians. Protesters and defectors of the Syrian Army created the Free Syrian Army in protest against Assad.

The conflict is difficult to grasp due to the many different (local) actors which are involved. There are several groups whom either support Assad or not or have different goals in the conflict. There are also religious differences within those groups with a majority of Sunni Muslims in Syria wanting to remove Assad from power. They have however different opinions what has to be done after Assad is removed from power. A portion of the group wants to create a democracy while others want a theocracy. President Assad is part of the Alawite sect. This group is the major power player in Syrian government and is the richest population group in Syria. They want to maintain their power position and remove all the foes from Syria. Another group that has gained power is ISIL. Their goal is to create a new country based on the Sharia Law. They also plan terrorist attacks on Western countries to 'kill all infidels'. Lastly there are the Kurds, who have been fighting for an independent state for years (Laub, par.1/2). Several of these groups have fragmented which leads to more factions with different goals.

Active foreign involvement has also contributed to the escalation of the conflict. The initial consensus was to support the uprising to overthrow Assad. The goal was to create a new Syrian democracy. This stance became unattainable due to the internal conflicts and the use of violence against Western nations. Examples of this violence were the bombings in Paris, Nice, Brussels and the beheadings of Western people in Syria. Western countries started to get actively involved with the bombings on ISIL targets in Syria due to these attacks. These bombings meant that the Western coalition was helping Assad to retain his power despite his use of nerve gas on his own population and despite their earlier opinions against Assad. Despite the bombings of ISIL targets the Western coalition is reluctant to get actively involved. There appeared to be a strong consensus that there should not be any Western ground troops in Syria.

The rebel faction has fallen apart since the start of the war in 2011. There are a great amount of different groups that each have a different goal. Some of those groups are supported with Western money while others are specifically targeting the West with terror attacks. The Western Coalition meanwhile is bombing specific targets in Syria and Iraq while also stipulating that it wants Assad removed from power. Russia meanwhile is supporting Assad publicly and bombing ISIL and other groups against Assad as well (Marshall 183/184).

The country has been ravaged by the civil war that has been going on. The initial goals of democracy and freedom have been unreachable for the Syrians opposing Assad. There are millions of refugees who fled the country because of threats by all kinds of different groups. There has been near constant fighting in large cities like Homs and Aleppo. These fights led to the capture and recapture of these cities by ISIL and the Syrian army.

The use of proxy warfare by the United States in this conflict is well documented. President Obama has said in the past that interference was possible if President Assad went too far. When there were reports of nerve gas attacks on civilians this interference did not happen however. President Obama decide to support Syrian rebel groups by training them and supplying them with weapons but decided against a direct interference in the region. This was met with criticism and praise. There was praise for the support given but also fear for the possibility of a proxy war with Russia in Syria (Ingersoll par.7). His successor President Trump stated even before his campaign started that there would be no interference in Syria during his Presidency. He broke that promise after another nerve gas attack took place. Instead of a full interference however he bombed several high profile ISIL targets (Fandos par.2).

Syria is an interesting case study due to the internal conflicts with the different actors and the reluctant international involvement in the conflict. The international organization like the United Nations feel that they should interfere due to the human suffering and the refugee crisis that is going on in Europe. They also feel however that they should remain reluctant in interfering because of the history with interventions in the Middle East. An example is the interference in Afghanistan after 9/11. It was supposed to be a short term interference. The goals were to remove the Taliban from power and establish a stable democracy. The war in Afghanistan eventually officially ended for the United States in 2014 after more than a decade. The example of Afghanistan shows the failure of the proxy war under President Bush's government. These mistakes were costly for the US and its government. President Bush's approval rates are among the lowest of all the Presidents in history. His successor President Obama was also criticized for not being able to end the war sooner.

This example shows the reluctance of the Western nations to interfere in Syria. They feel that there are too many risks involved and that a short term interference might turn into a long-term presence. The most important argument against a long-term interference is the economic strain on the budget. A great amount of countries were hit hard by the economic crisis and were forced to slash the military budgets. Raising these budgets will most likely receive criticism from the people who have not forgotten the Afghanistan war and its failure.

The public perception is also a reason against interference in Syria. The general public in the US has not yet recovered from the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. These two wars were a strain on the budget, the government and on the families of the soldiers. There was a strong stance against the wars during the Presidency of President Bush. The general consensus was that there was no reason to be in the Middle East without a result and far from home. The opinion was that rebuilding should not be a part of the plan as it was taking too long without the effects and the results. The general public also had the feeling that there was no clear depiction of what was going on in these two regions. The soldiers were sent to those countries on a peace and rebuilding mission but came back with injuries and PTSD.

Another factor that contributes to the indecisiveness of the Western countries is the lack of insight in the country. The foreign actors could start with an interference but do not appear to have a clear goal in sight. This is vital when starting a proxy war in a different country. Another factor that is vital is the support from a local group or faction. This is difficult in Syria due to the splintering factions in the country. There are many small rebel troops who each have a different target or goal in the conflict. Choosing a small group to support is a time consuming process that requires a great amount of patience and faith. There have been cases in which foreign backed actors choose the money and then left or joined another group. Trust is thus difficult to gain in conflicts like these. The foreign backers might want guarantees before the support is given (Marshall 189).

Another issue with trust is the support of other foreign nations who appear to support the United States in their goal of achieving peace in the region. There might be widespread support in governments of other nations but this support can disappear quickly. This might be because of the time frame, costs or public perception in those countries. A change of government or leader does also influence the way in which an intervention like Syria is supported. Examples of dissolving support are the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The coalition of the willing decreased in number over the years in which the conflict continued.

The last factor that might contribute to the possible use of proxy warfare is the position of Russia. Russia has openly supported the government of Assad after the country was victim of several attacks by ISIL on planes and metro stations. The other European countries are reluctant to openly support Assad due to the fact that he is willing and able to use violence against his own citizens. The goal of achieving a democracy in Syria is also impossible to achieve with Assad still in power after the war. This makes the position of the Western countries difficult in relation to Russia. The relations between the West and Russia have already been complicated due to other incidents like the internet hacks from Russia, the Crimea Crisis and the excessive use of doping by Russian athletes that led to the exclusion of the Athletics squad from competing during the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. Lastly, the position and safety of opposition leaders in Russia has shrunken to a low point. All these factors lead to a tense relationship between the Western countries and Russia. Western countries are taking a careful approach to Russian business and politics due to fears of a new Cold War and nuclear arms race (Sakwa 255/256) (Cimbala and McDermott 103).

As mentioned before Russia is supporting Assad and bombing ISIL targets. Supporting Assad is a step backwards for the Western countries. The support would make a governmental change in Syria almost impossible. At the same time an open declaration of war against the government of Assad could lead to more tension in the relationship between the west and Russia. This scenario would then be similar to the proxy warfare's that were fought during the Cold War in Vietnam and Korea. This does not appear to be an option for the western countries and leaves them in limbo without a suitable option for resolution.

Solving the conflict in Syria is not the only issue that has to be resolved. Due to the ongoing war in Syria there has been a spill over in neighboring countries like Turkey and Lebanon. Lebanon has taken in a large amount of Syrian refugees which has made the country unstable. There have also been several terrorist attacks on civilians which were claimed by ISIL.

Chapter four: changes in United States policy regarding proxy warfare

The second and third chapter of this thesis were about the case studies in which proxy warfare was used as a tool to achieve one's goals. This chapter will look at the policy of the United States surrounding proxy warfare and whether it has learned from past mistakes and incidents. This chapter will also look at changes in policy regarding modern developments and how that has changed the concept of proxy war.

Proxy warfare has been rising up on the political agenda in recent years for the first time since the end of the Cold War (Brown 243) (Mumford 45). Brown claims that proxy warfare is used more frequently due to the aftermath of the war in Afghanistan. The general public opinion is against full military interference due to the high costs and the excessive amount of time that it takes. This is temporary however and the public opinion will swing back to active US involvement in foreign countries according to Brown (Brown 243). Mumford states something similar. He states that people were fed up with the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and that that aspect caused changes in the war policy (Mumford 44). From these two articles it can thus be concluded that changes regarding proxy warfare policy can be from public opinion and perception.

Brown and Mumford also state that they think proxy warfare is used more commonly now due to the fact that there is a polyarchic global system instead of for example a multi-polar or uni-polar global system (Brown 244) (Mumford 44). This is a difference from the Cold war which took place in a multi-polar global system. A polyarchic system stands for a highly interactive and interdependent system with many different actors which can be state and non-state. Brown thus claims that the rise of proxy warfare is due to the rise of many non-state actors that have difficult relationships with other state and non-state actors (Brown 245). Mumford adds that due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War there are more (non) state actors wanting to control. This adds tension and due to the difficulty of trying to control all these actors, the US is reluctant to get involved. Part of this problem is solved by outsourcing operations to other countries or mercenaries. This aspect is not new regarding proxy warfare but is now part of the US proxy war policy to avoid any kind of complete interference in a conflict. This is a significant change since the end of the Cold War for the US (Mumford 45). Brown also thinks that it is used so frequently because no state in the world has the power and the ability to control neighboring nations and the world. He gives examples of the three large nations in Asia: China, Japan and India. None of these three states are able to control each other or willing to relinquish their position to each other.

This examples confirms Brown's idea that we live in a polyarchic world system. This example also shows why proxy warfare is used more frequently these days. Not a single country in the world has the military capability to control the other countries in the world as armies are equal to each other. The amount of nations with strong weapons like nuclear weapons is also rising which means that controlling that aspect is also impossible (Mumford 45). This makes proxy warfare an easy solution to the problem. It is cheaper, needs less weapons and people and is lastly not an official declaration of war. This aspect is a significant difference from the Cold War proxy warfare's. These wars were fought between the two major power players of that time: the United States and the Soviet Union. This time can be seen as a multi- polar global system. Europe was still recovering from World War II. Africa, Southern America and Asia were still colonized or in the process of decolonization and thus did not have a role in international politics.

Another difference in policy regarding proxy warfare since the Cold War is the technical development. Part of this revolution is the development of targeting, drones and remote basing. Proxy warfare is the best option to use all these new developments without the possible military and civilian casualties. The new developments in proxy warfare also limit collateral damage and are easily accessible for the President to use. The use of drones decreases the number of soldiers necessary to carry out these actions on foreign soil. Instead of using military bases in foreign countries the drone pilots are stationed in the United States. This aspect again limits the amount of direct involvement in proxy wars (Brown 247).

An aspect that is not highlighted as much in the literature is the role of the proxies used in the war. Brown and Klaas Voß warn that the reasons for the native people to get involved in the conflict should have a solid base. Examples of this are historic, religious and emotional reasons for participating. Mercenaries hired to fight the proxy wars have no such base or an emotional tie to the cause. They are there for the money and the risk is that they will leave once they feel that they have earned their money (Brown 247). An example of this aspect are the mercenaries hired by the Iraqi army to fight IS. They left when things got complicated and took their money with them. This meant that IS seized control of the region (Brown 247). Klaas Voß has done extensive research on this topic and he stated that despite the unreliability of mercenaries, they are still frequently used in proxy wars. He states that despite the difficulty of mercenaries the benefits weigh up against this. The use of mercenaries is cheaper than a full scale war (Voß 39). This aspect shows that despite the modern developments the use of mercenaries has not changed at all.

They are still hired to fight for money or with one goal. At the same time the risks of using mercenaries also has not changed. All these aspects show that the American proxy war policy has not changed regarding the use of mercenaries and the risks they take with them. This is thus one aspect in the policy that has not changed at all since the Cold War.

The risk of becoming too involved in a proxy war has not changed or decreased since the Cold War. Over- commitment and over- involvement are two of the main risks that can be encountered during proxy wars. A Cold War example of this is the Vietnam War in which the US went from proxy to active involvement because their South Vietnam proxies were unable to win the war. The war in Afghanistan that took place from 2001 until 2014 is a more recent example of over- commitment and over- involvement in a conflict which caused a short term plan to spiral into a full scale war.

Brown spends a considerable part of his article writing about the “Vietnam syndrome”. This syndrome was the aftermath of the failure in Vietnam and the following reluctance of US government to get involved in other proxy warfare’s. Although the proxy warfare in Afghanistan could be seen as a success, the US still remained on the fence about returning to the warfare. This is a significant change in policy that is still going on to this day. Although the start of the change in policy was not due to the Cold War in Afghanistan, it did not change the policy either. Vietnam Syndrome shaped US foreign policy for many years after the Cold War. Examples of this change in policy are the Gulf War and the Balkan War. In both of these conflict the Presidents at the time (George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton) were reluctant to bring ground troops to the conflict. Instead they decided to reach their goals through excessive bombing and short military operations with limited military casualties. The US also refused to take sides in the Balkan War for a long time, claiming it was not their fight (Brown 252). The US appeared to have learned not only from their own mistakes but also from the mistake of relying on military proxies without being prepared to bring in ground troops (Brown 252).

9/11 was a major turning point regarding the policy of proxy warfare. After the war the US had to react due to the first major attack on US soil since Pearl Harbor in 1941. The new policy to use proxy warfare even went further than the Cold War ever had. An example of this is the broadening of the term ‘enemy’ by President George W. Bush. Anyone who had the global range of hitting the US, state or non-state, small or large was considered an enemy of the state. At the same time however some of the aspects of proxy warfare did not change. The term responsibility still was not a major player in proxy wars.

The US did a large part of the war but still used proxies for several other functions like rebuilding Iraq and removing the Taliban from Afghanistan entirely (Brown 252). When something would go wrong the US army had no responsibility for those parts because the proxies were fighting those battles. This is where the policy of the Bush administration made a critical error that changed the war completely. The policy had been to never trust proxies to fight the war alone. The Bush administration did that. Firstly the exit strategy was based on the use of proxies who were ill equipped, not trained and sometimes unreliable. Second, the US army was at first unwilling to support the proxies. The strategy was to go in and get out quickly. This led to the Taliban getting back to power and Saddam Hussein escaping. Thirdly, the US did not use all the different proxies in the area. Taliban leaders like Osama Bin Laden escaped to Pakistan while the US was unable to approach them for cooperation (Brown 252/253).

What Vietnam is to the United States is Afghanistan to the USSR. Brown briefly writes about the case study of this thesis. He uses this example as a way to exemplify over involvement in a conflict. In this case Russia, just like the US, thought that a proxy war was a short conflict in which the sphere of influence could be expanded without much effort. Like in Vietnam however, the native population was not willing to accept the Russian backed government Communist government. This led to a full scale invasion which was not well received at all. Nationalists' protests against the invading Russians led to a bloody war which then attracted the attention of the US. The US supported the nationalist Mujahideen and supported them with weapons and tanks. The USSR realized that their army and their proxies were unable to win the war and left Afghanistan behind. Brown sees this conflict as the start of the destruction of the Soviet Empire (Brown 251).

The three examples of the Vietnam War, Soviet- Afghan War and the war in Afghanistan all have in common that they were initially not supposed to be long term conflicts. The two conflicts during the Cold War were about establishing a friendly regime in Vietnam and Afghanistan. The war in Afghanistan in 2001 was to remove the Taliban from power and find Osama Bin Laden. These three conflicts went from proxy wars (Vietnam and Soviet- Afghan) to full scale interventions with a large army presence and a large amount of damage and casualties. This shows how easy it is to get too involved in a conflict without an exit strategy in place that can be sustained. This aspect is one of the most important and dangerous risks that still surround proxy warfare up until today. This is also one of the reasons why the United States is reluctant to get involved in Syria. Brown briefly writes about the second case study of this thesis.

He writes that President Obama learned a lesson from the conflict in Afghanistan. He wanted to acknowledge this risk of proxy warfare and was unwilling to intervene in Syria with ground troops. He realized that throughout history there were too many non-state small actors in conflict that were difficult to control during a proxy warfare with escalation as a consequence. He persisted in his reluctance to intervene after the nerve gas attack by Assad on his own people and again when ISIL rose to prominence. Brown states however that despite Obama's resistance the temptation of proxy warfare still remains but that the negative aspects of proxy wars are also known (Brown 255).

These three authors show that there are many similarities and differences between US foreign policy regarding proxy wars. On the one hand there have been major developments regarding proxy wars like the invention of drones. On the other hand there are also major factors in the United States proxy war policy have not changed. The risks of over-involvement and mercenaries that are linked to proxy warfare are still present. This can be shown by comparing the case studies in this thesis.

In the case study of the Soviet-Afghan War the US supported the Mujahideen. The war was a success and the US did not need to involve any of their own ground troops. The downside of the use of the Mujahideen however was that they kept the weapons that they were supplied with by the US. These weapons were used against the US during the war in Afghanistan that started in 2001. This aspect was not something that was looked at after the end of the Soviet-Afghan War. It does not appear that the US has changed its policy regarding distributing weapons to mercenaries. The proxy war policy at the moment supports the use of mercenaries and the supply of weapons to avoid active participation in a conflict. The US at the moment is supplying several rebel groups in Syria with weapons while also training them in Jordan. Due to the instability of the country and the shifting alliances of the rebel groups this is not without risk.

The Soviet-Afghan War started after the Vietnam War had ended. This war originally started as a proxy war but developed into a full scale war with a great amount of human losses and political chaos in the US. After the war had ended an evaluation took place to determine what went wrong and how to improve this. The conclusion was drawn that the US should stand back from proxy wars to recover from the Vietnam War and to regain the trust of the people. This aspect is called the Vietnam Syndrome. The US however got involved in the Soviet-Afghan War without appearing to think about what could happen.

In this case study the war ended relatively well for the US, with a major blow dealt to the USSR and the Communist regime in Afghanistan removed from power. But given the US history it could have ended differently as shown by the USSR and the similarities between the Soviet- Afghan War and the Vietnam War. The 2001 Afghanistan War is an example in which a lack of policy regarding over- involvement became visible to the world. The war was supposed to be a short term conflict but instead the US remained there until 2014. This is an example in which the over- involvement did not end well for the United States as it left Afghanistan in ruins and without a stable government. The country has since the departure of the US been partially reclaimed by the Taliban.

Given the history of repeating the mistake of over- involvement there is a substantial risks that this might happen in Syria. The US is however reluctant to get actively involved in the Syrian Civil War. Due to the failed interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan the government is reluctant to start a military invasion in Syria. There are however also signs in the Trump government that a more active involvement in Syria is something that is being looked at. This despite Trump's stance against any involvement in Syria during the election campaign (Ingersoll par.7) (Fandos par.3).

It can thus be concluded that the US proxy war policy has changed somewhat since the Cold War but that the risks that surround proxy wars have not changed or resulted in policy changes. Technical developments like drones have made it possible for the US to remove itself more from an active intervention by the army. The use of mercenaries and the risk of over- involvement have however not changed the US proxy war policy since the end of the Cold War. These two factors have played a negative role in several proxy wars during and since the end of the Cold War. Despite their constant presence they have not been addressed directly with a policy change, leaving the US still exposed to these threats.

Conclusion

In this thesis the difficulty of proxy warfare was explained while looking at two case studies. The Soviet Afghan war and the Syrian Civil War are compared and contrasted with each other to try to understand the US policy regarding proxy warfare and how that has changed since the Cold War.

The first chapter is about the difficulty of the term proxy warfare and how it has been shaped in history. To understand the policy of proxy warfare one has to understand the term proxy war itself. The chapter shows how fluid the definition is and that is subject to change in the course of history. There are also multiple factors involved which shape the definition of proxy warfare. Those factors are for example: actors, goals, reasons, targets and location. The term proxy warfare itself was first used during the Cold War. During this time proxy warfare was used by the United States and the Soviet Union to fight each other while avoiding a full scale official war. Neither of the countries wanted to gain territory, instead they wanted to spread their idealism and protect their interests.

One of the first definitions given is by political scientist Karl Deutsch. He said that proxy wars are “an international conflict between two foreign powers, fought out on the soil of a third country; disguised as a conflict over an internal issue of that country; and using some of that country’s manpower, resources and territory as a means for achieving preponderantly foreign goals and foreign strategies.” (Mumford 3).

Andrew Mumford gives the following definition to proxy warfare: “a third party intervenes indirectly in order to influence the strategic outcome in favor of its preferred faction” (Mumford 40). He also states that proxy wars are about a relationship between a benefactor and a chosen proxy. The benefactor can be a state or non- state actor. The proxy is the conduit for the benefactors’ weapons, training and funding.

The definition given by Karl Deutsch changed after the Cold War. Proxy warfare was still used but the goals and reasons changed. There was no need to protect foreign countries from a different ideology. The fall of the Soviet Union caused the end of the Cold War and the competition of influence. The new use of proxy warfare was a quick and cheap option for war. There was no need for extensive resources and finances with proxy wars. Another change was that proxy wars became more covert and without the consent of government. As mentioned before the reasons for proxy warfare has also changed since the end of the Cold War.

During the Cold War idealistic and strategic goals were the primary targets during this time. After the Cold War ended goals like improving human suffering and gaining natural resources became more important. Another reason for interference that became more important after the Cold War ended are the 'failed states'. These states became politically disorganized after the decolonization. Proxy wars in these countries are mainly used to create peace and democracy. This is to avoid countries that turn into dictatorships. The last aspect named are economic reasons. This aspect also became more prominent after the end of the Cold War.

Another aspect that significantly changed the definition of proxy warfare is the addition of the role of non- state actors. Karl Deutsch talked about 'an international conflict between two foreign powers' (Mumford 3). Up until that time proxy warfare was mainly used between states with the support of mercenaries or other local support. Nowadays however, most proxy wars are fought between two non- state actors.

The chapter is also about the economic and political arguments in the United States and how they developed. Since the Cold War, there has been significant backlash against the use of full scale war. Publicly and politically, there has been difficulty gaining full scale support for a war. That is why proxy warfare has become a solution. This type of war is cheaper and with a decreased risk of human loss. The new technologies that were developed like drones are expensive but less so than a full scale war. They also decrease the loss of human life for the armies.

All these developments show how the definition of proxy warfare has changed since the Cold War. There are a great amount of aspects that are always subject to change. At the same time there have to be clear boundaries between what a proxy war is and what not. This is mostly visible when looking at wars that involve alliance states. When alliance states are included in the definition most conflicts in the world would automatically turn in to proxy wars. This would damage the importance of the other factors that go into the definition because they become secondary. This means that there has to be a line in what a proxy war is and what a normal war is.

The conclusion of the first chapter is that the definition of proxy war is fluid and always subject to change. There are constant developments which change the definition. There are also several factors that are important in the definition like the role of state and non- state actors, goals and targets.

These aspects have all changed significantly since the first definition of proxy warfare was written during the Cold War and the definition that is used today.

The second and third chapter of this thesis are descriptions of the case studies that were used. Chapter two is about the Soviet Afghan War while chapter three is about the Syrian Civil War. These two case studies were chosen to reflect the changes in the definition of proxy warfare as well as to show the differences in proxy war policy of the United States.

The second chapter is about the Soviet- Afghan War which was fought during the Cold War between 1979 and 1989. The war was a key moment in the ongoing battle between the United States and Soviet Union. At the time proxy warfare was a relatively new phenomenon that was still in the process of development. The idea was to strengthen their position of power and influence without the threat of active war and the need for support from the government. This meant that many of the operations were at first covert. Proxy warfare was developed as a way to avoid a direct conflict with each other and to thus avoid a nuclear war.

There were several incidents that led up to the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union and the involvement of the United States. An example of this was the murder of the American ambassador. The United States became even more concerned when the Shah of Iran was removed from power. This made the US decide to send more troops to the region and improve relations with other countries. This was however seen as a provocation by the Soviet Union. They started their invasion in December 1979 with a newly formed Communist regime. The US meanwhile supported the local Mujahideen. This led to a stalemate in the conflict with minimal gains made. This led to a decrease in support in the US and the Soviet Union. The USSR was also struggling with maintaining its large army in Afghanistan. This led to a peace agreement signed by the US, USSR, Afghanistan and Pakistan and the withdrawal of troops from the region. As mentioned before the war was at a pivotal moment during the Cold War. The Soviet Union was during and after the war struggling to maintain the

The use of mercenaries like the Mujahideen was not new in proxy wars. There was however the question whether it was a good idea. President Carter claimed it was necessary due to the provocation of the USSR while European leaders were more hesitant to take action (Hughes 333/334). The development of mercenaries is one of the reasons why this case study is used in this thesis.

At the time the use of these paid armies was a new development and not without risks. Despite these risks mercenaries are still used during proxy wars and have become an important part in the definition of proxy warfare.

Another reason why this war is such an interesting case study is the consequences this war had on the world. The Soviet Afghan war inadvertently led to the Taliban's rise to power and its hate against the Western world and the United States specifically. The war on terror developed due to their hatred of the US, which is something that is still going on today. This leads to the question whether the war was worth the trouble and whether the interference of the United States was necessary.

The third chapter is about the Syrian Civil War. This case study was specifically chosen to compare and contrast between conflict during the Cold War and in the present.

The conflict started during the Arab Spring in 2011. Protests in Damascus against the oppressive regime of President Bashar Assad grew over several weeks into a national event after it was revealed that several boys were arrested, tortured and murdered after showing their support for the Arab Spring. These protesters and defectors of the Syrian Army created the Free Syrian Army in protest against the regime of Assad. This group split however in several smaller factions due to differences about government, money and religion. Due to the many different groups, international support was difficult. Foreign nations like the United States wanted to support the opposition to remove Assad from power but the alliances were constantly shifting and changing. The international coalition started to play a more active role after several terrorist attacks on Western targets. The coalition started to bomb ISIL targets while at the same time trying to find a faction whom they could support in their goal of removing Assad from power. Due to the splintering of groups the goals in this Civil War have increasingly been ignored or changed. The Free Syrian Army initially wanted to remove Assad from power to create a democracy. Nowadays however ISIL is targeting a country with a strong Sharia Law while other groups are now fighting both against Assad and ISIL.

This case study is interesting due to the fact that there is a proxy war going on without it being recognized as such (Ingersoll par.1). Western leaders have stated that they do not want a full scale war in Syria but they also want to stop the rise of ISIL. There have been instances in which leaders have contradicted themselves by claiming they do not want to get involved while training rebels in Jordan (Fandos par.2). ISIL targets.

This makes this proxy war messy and chaotic. It does not help that Russia and the United States are again on opposite sides with many other factors contributing to their tense relationship. Neither of the two countries wants an active war but they are fighting at two different sides at the moment. Russia is supporting their friend Assad while the US supports several factions in their fight against Assad. The US is also bombing ISIL targets in collaboration with Russia. This makes relations tense and confusing with no one completely trusting each other. These tense relations can be compared with the Cold War and the tense relations then. That makes this case study interesting to incorporate in this thesis.

Chapter four is about the differences and comparisons between the two case studies and how they have affected US proxy war policy.

An explanation for the common use of proxy warfare is the fact that the world is divided in a polyarchic system with many different actors having control. This makes a full scale war more difficult because there is no country in the world that has the most military power. Countries are afraid for the consequences and lack of support which means that no country has all the power it needs to control. This is something that has changed in proxy warfare since the end of the Cold War. This thus also changed US proxy warfare policy.

Another aspect that has changed is the technical developments since the Cold War. Nowadays proxy wars are fought with the support of drones, targeting and remote basing. There is thus less need for mercenaries (although they are still necessary) and other forces on the ground. These new developments decrease the number of military and civilian casualties. This aspect also decreases the need for troops on the ground during a proxy war as the drone pilots for example are mostly based in the United States. This decreases the risk of army casualties.

Accountability is something that has not changed much either since the Cold War. Proxy warfare is still about merely supporting without being held responsible. That is why the role of proxies or mercenaries has not changed much since the Soviet- Afghan War. There are still significant risks to the use of mercenaries with the possibility that they leave and take the money they have been given. The mercenaries also keep a large supply of weapons from the United States which can also be high- risk.

The aspect of proxy warfare that brings the most risk due to the lack of changes is the factor of over- involvement. There does not appear to be any policy regarding proxy wars which turn into an active war and how to avoid that.

This feat is still common today with the Afghanistan War that started in 2001 being an example. The lack of policy in this aspect is a danger because an escalation of the conflict is possible and this is frequent throughout the history of US proxy wars (Rich 9). This aspect does not appear to be changing any time soon because the Syrian Civil War also has the risk of becoming a full scale war due to the struggle to remove ISIL and the goal to create a democracy.

To conclude this thesis it is interesting to note that there appears to be a policy of repeating mistakes regarding proxy warfare. Mistakes are made during these conflict like in Vietnam and Afghanistan. These mistakes turn a proxy war into a full scale war with a great amount of suffering. When these wars are ended an evaluation takes place with the public opinion turned against full scale war. This stalemate remains for several years until there is a new conflict which escalates due to unreliable mercenaries, failing goals and changing targets. This thus sets of the cycle all over again without much of a change in the policy. The escalated conflicts are put away as mistakes that will not be repeated ever again but the history of proxy warfare tells a different story.

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