

The Impact of External Interventions on Governance Outcomes in Fragile and Non-Fragile States

1. Introduction

In the post-Cold War era, external interventions in fragile states have become a prevalent tool of international diplomacy, development aid, and peacebuilding efforts. These interventions are often aimed at stabilizing conflict zones, improving governance structures, and fostering economic growth. However, the long-term efficacy of such interventions remains a contentious issue. While some argue that external assistance is crucial for state-building in fragile contexts, critics contend that it often fosters dependency, undermines state sovereignty, and fails to produce sustainable governance outcomes.

The debate is particularly pronounced in fragile states where governance structures are weak, and international involvement is pervasive. Interventions, whether through peacekeeping missions, economic aid, or governance reforms, may provide immediate relief but can also inadvertently destabilize local political systems. This has led to an increasing body of literature questioning the ability of external actors to create lasting governance improvement.

In contrast, non-fragile states receiving external support may have stronger governance structures, potentially leading to different outcomes from similar interventions. This raises a critical question: **Do external interventions have distinct impacts on governance depending on whether the recipient state is fragile or non-fragile?**

By examining the relationship between external interventions and governance outcomes across both fragile and non-fragile states, this research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on international intervention. Specifically, it seeks to understand whether interventions improve

political stability, government effectiveness, and the rule of law, or if they exacerbate fragility and governance challenges in certain contexts. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for informing future international policy and intervention strategies.

2. Literature Review

According to Collier (2007), external interventions, particularly peacekeeping operations, can temporarily reduce violence and bring stability to conflict-ridden countries. However, the long-term governance outcomes of these interventions are less certain. While international forces can secure fragile states temporarily, they do not always create conditions for sustainable governance, often leaving states reliant on continued foreign presence and support.

Paris (2004) argues that many externally driven nation-building efforts suffer from a "liberal peacebuilding" model, where democracy and market institutions are transplanted without sufficient regard for local contexts. This has led to fragile states adopting superficial reforms that do not translate into long-term governance improvements. Paris calls for more localized, context-sensitive interventions to address underlying causes of fragility.

Chauzal and van Damme (2015), in their study of Mali, highlight how international interventions, while essential in addressing immediate security concerns, often fail to address the deeper governance issues that sustain fragility. They argue that while short-term stability is achieved, the long-term governance structures remain weak, limiting the effectiveness of external aid in fostering sustainable reforms.

Kaplan (2008) criticizes the tendency of international interventions to undermine state sovereignty and foster dependency. The author points out that many fragile states, such as Afghanistan, become reliant on foreign aid and governance support, which weakens the state's

own capacity to govern effectively. This dependency can erode the legitimacy of the government, as citizens perceive the state to be propped up by foreign powers rather than serving their interests.

Moreover, Duffield (2010) highlights how prolonged international involvement in fragile states tends to breed new forms of instability. For instance, interventions often displace local actors and institutions, fostering governance vacuums that may be exploited by insurgents or corrupt elites. This critique aligns with a broader debate on whether foreign-led interventions truly foster governance improvements or create a cycle of instability.

While much of the literature focuses on fragile states, non-fragile states receiving external support also warrant attention. Chauvet and Collier (2008) demonstrate that the impact of foreign aid is conditional on the initial institutional quality of the recipient state. In non-fragile states, where governance structures are stronger, external interventions may reinforce existing institutions, leading to more positive governance outcomes. In contrast, in fragile states with weak institutions, similar interventions can exacerbate governance challenges by empowering corrupt elites or perpetuating inefficiency.

Manning and Malbrough (2012) extend this argument, suggesting that non-fragile states can better absorb external interventions without becoming dependent, as they already have relatively strong governance systems. As a result, interventions in non-fragile states are more likely to result in sustainable reforms compared to fragile states, where interventions risk weakening governance further.

The long-term impact of interventions on governance remains a critical question. Tschirgi (2010) argues that while short-term stability gains are often achieved, external interventions rarely lead to lasting improvements in governance. The results suggest that international actors focus too

much on immediate security outcomes, neglecting the deeper political and institutional reforms required for sustainable governance.

This sentiment is echoed by Fortna (2008), who points out that interventions often create an "illusion of peace" by focusing on immediate stabilization rather than addressing the root causes of governance failure. This often leaves fragile states in a cycle of intervention and instability.

The existing literature highlights the complex and often contradictory effects of external interventions on governance in fragile and non-fragile states. While interventions can provide short-term stability, their long-term effects on governance, particularly in fragile states, remain uncertain. The literature underscores the need for more context-specific approaches to intervention, suggesting that while external support can help stabilize governance in non-fragile states, its impact in fragile states is far more limited and potentially harmful.

3. Hypothesis Development

3.1. Alternative Hypotheses

3.1.1. Hypothesis H1. External Interventions have a negative relationship with State Legitimacy

The first hypothesis examines the relationship between **external intervention** and **state legitimacy**. It posits that higher levels of foreign involvement are associated with a decline in state legitimacy, particularly in fragile states. This relationship reflects how external influence can undermine the public's trust in their government by challenging the sovereignty and the authority of domestic institutions.

3.1.2. Hypothesis H2. External Interventions have a negative relationship with Political Stability & Absence of Violence

The second hypothesis investigates the link between **external interventions** and **political stability**. Here, the expectation is that increased external intervention correlates with greater political instability in fragile states. Interventions, while often intended to stabilize, may inadvertently disrupt the balance of power, fuel internal conflicts, or exacerbate tensions, leading to a destabilized political environment.

3.1.3. Hypothesis H3. External Interventions have a negative relationship with the Rule of Law

The third hypothesis explores how **external interventions** impact the **rule of law**. The hypothesis suggests that greater foreign involvement weakens legal institutions and adherence to laws, potentially by undermining domestic legal frameworks or introducing competing systems of governance. This erosion of the rule of law has serious implications for governance, institutional integrity, and the protection of citizens' rights.

4. Data and Methodology

4.1. Data and Variables

4.1.1. Data Description

The dataset comprises the Fragile States Index (FSI) and World Governance Indicators (WGI) values for 30 countries, divided into 15 fragile and 15 non-fragile states. The data spans from 2006 to 2022, providing a longitudinal view of governance indicators over time.

Fragile States Index (FSI) data is provided by The Fund for Peace, the FSI assesses the levels of stability and pressures faced by countries, considering social, economic, and political factors. It includes metrics such as external intervention, state legitimacy, and public services. **World Governance Indicators (WGI)** data is compiled by the World Bank, the WGI includes indicators of governance performance, such as political stability, government effectiveness, and rule of law.

The FSI data were collected annually, covering multiple aspects of state fragility. The WGI data were also gathered yearly, measuring various governance dimensions for each country. Min-max normalization was implemented for the World Governance Indicators to scale the data, as some of the original values were negative.

4.1.2. Variables

External Intervention variable serves as a key predictor of governance outcomes, as it reflects the extent of external influence on the country. Higher values indicate greater levels of foreign military and economic involvement in the country.

State Legitimacy variable helps assess the impact of external interventions on public trust in the government and the state's perceived legitimacy. Higher values indicate

a worse perception of state legitimacy, meaning the state is seen as less legitimate or has lower public trust.

Public Services variable captures the state's capacity to deliver healthcare, education, and infrastructure, which are often targeted in interventions. Higher values indicate worse provision of public services, suggesting the state is less effective in delivering essential services.

Political Stability & Absence of Violence variable measures the success of interventions in stabilizing fragile states. Higher values indicate better political stability, with less violence and fewer conflicts.

The **Government Effectiveness** variable provides insights into the overall quality of governance structures post-intervention. Higher values indicate better governance, including efficient public service delivery and effective government operations.

Rule of Law variable reflects the strength of legal institutions, which is often a focus of international interventions. Higher values indicate a stronger rule of law, meaning stronger legal institutions and better adherence to laws.

The **Total FSI** variable represents the overall fragility of the state. Higher values indicate greater fragility of the state.

Table 1*Summary Statistics*

	Total FSI	State Legitimacy	Public Services	External Intervention	Political Stability & Absence of Violence	Government Effectiveness	Rule of Law
Count	510.00	510.00	510.00	510.00	510.00	510.00	510.00
Mean	64.99	5.30	5.15	5.21	0.58	0.53	0.58
Std Dev	38.34	3.84	3.70	3.66	0.30	0.32	0.34
Min.	14.60	0.20	0.60	0.30	0.00	0.00	0.00
25%	27.08	1.10	1.50	1.40	0.30	0.22	0.26
50%	57.55	5.65	4.20	5.70	0.68	0.55	0.60
75%	103.78	9.20	9.00	8.78	0.87	0.84	0.92
Max.	114.90	10.00	10.00	10.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

Note. Std Dev = Standard Deviation; Min. = Minimum; Max. = Maximum

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 highlight significant variability in governance and intervention levels across the countries studied. External Intervention exhibits a wide range, from as low as 0.3 to a maximum of 10.0, with a median of 5.7 and a standard deviation of 3.66. This variation underscores the differing levels of foreign involvement among countries, from minimal to intensive intervention. The Total FSI Score averages 64.99, spanning from 14.6 to 114.9, reflecting a diverse dataset that includes both highly fragile states and relatively stable ones.

State Legitimacy displays a similar degree of variability, with a mean of 5.30, a standard deviation of 3.84, and a maximum score of 10.0. This suggests significant differences in political legitimacy and governance across countries. Public Services also shows notable disparities, with

an average of 5.15 and a range from 0.6 to 10.0, indicating that some countries deliver well-developed services while others struggle to provide even basic public goods.

Political Stability and Absence of Violence presents a mean score of -0.438, with values ranging as low as -3.31, highlighting stability challenges in several countries. Meanwhile, Government Effectiveness and Rule of Law hover around an average near zero, demonstrating considerable variation in governance quality. Some countries exhibit positive governance scores, but others face profound institutional weaknesses.

The substantial standard deviations across these variables illustrate the wide disparities in governance outcomes and external interventions. Notably, countries experiencing high levels of external intervention do not consistently show improved governance outcomes. Some heavily intervened states continue to face severe challenges in political stability and governance effectiveness, emphasizing the complexity of the relationship between external involvement and governance performance. These findings suggest that the impact of external interventions is highly context-dependent, with significant variation in their effectiveness across different countries and governance dimensions.

4.2. Methodology

The study investigates the impact of external interventions on governance outcomes by leveraging fixed effects regression models, which provide a robust framework for analyzing panel data spanning 30 countries over the period from 2006 to 2022. By focusing on within-country variations over time, fixed effects regression effectively accounts for unobserved, country-specific factors that remain constant, such as cultural or historical influences. This methodological approach enables a more precise examination of how external interventions

influence governance outcomes, offering insights that are not obscured by cross-country differences. The analysis thus isolates the dynamic relationship between external interventions and governance indicators, ensuring that the findings reflect the true effects of foreign involvement on the internal governance structures of these nations.

4.2.1. Relationship between External Intervention and State Legitimacy

The relationship between external intervention and state legitimacy is analyzed by modeling state legitimacy as the dependent variable and external intervention as the key independent variable. To provide a comprehensive understanding, the analysis incorporates control variables such as the total fragility of the state (Total FSI) and the capacity to deliver public services. These controls help account for broader structural factors that influence governance. By employing a fixed effects regression model, the study isolates the specific impact of external interventions on state legitimacy, controlling for unobservable country-specific characteristics, such as historical and cultural factors, that remain constant over time. This methodological approach enables a nuanced understanding of how variations in external interventions influence the perception of state legitimacy within each country over time, independent of other contextual variables.

4.2.2. Relationship between External Intervention and Political Stability

The relationship between external intervention and political stability is examined by using political stability and the absence of violence as the dependent variable, with external intervention serving as the primary independent variable. To provide a comprehensive analysis, the model incorporates control variables such as the overall fragility of the state

(FSI Total), the capacity to deliver public services, and the level of trust in governance (state legitimacy). Recognizing that political stability is deeply context-dependent and influenced by unique national histories and institutional legacies, a fixed effects regression model is employed. This approach allows for a focused examination of how changes in external interventions align with shifts in political stability over time within each country, while accounting for unchanging, country-specific characteristics. By isolating these effects, the analysis provides critical insights into the temporal dynamics between external interventions and political stability.

4.2.3. Relationship between External Intervention and Rule of Law

The relationship between external intervention and the rule of law is explored by using the rule of law as the dependent variable and external intervention as the primary independent variable. To ensure a thorough analysis, the model incorporates control variables such as FSI Total, public services, and state legitimacy to account for the state's fragility, its capacity to deliver essential services, and the perceived legitimacy of its governance. Recognizing that the rule of law is often shaped by deep-rooted institutional factors and historical legacies unique to each country, a fixed effects regression model is employed. This method enables the analysis to control for these stable, country-specific influences, allowing a clear focus on how changes in external interventions within a country over time influence the rule of law. By isolating these effects, the model provides valuable insights into the impact of external interventions on the strength of legal institutions and the protection of individual rights.

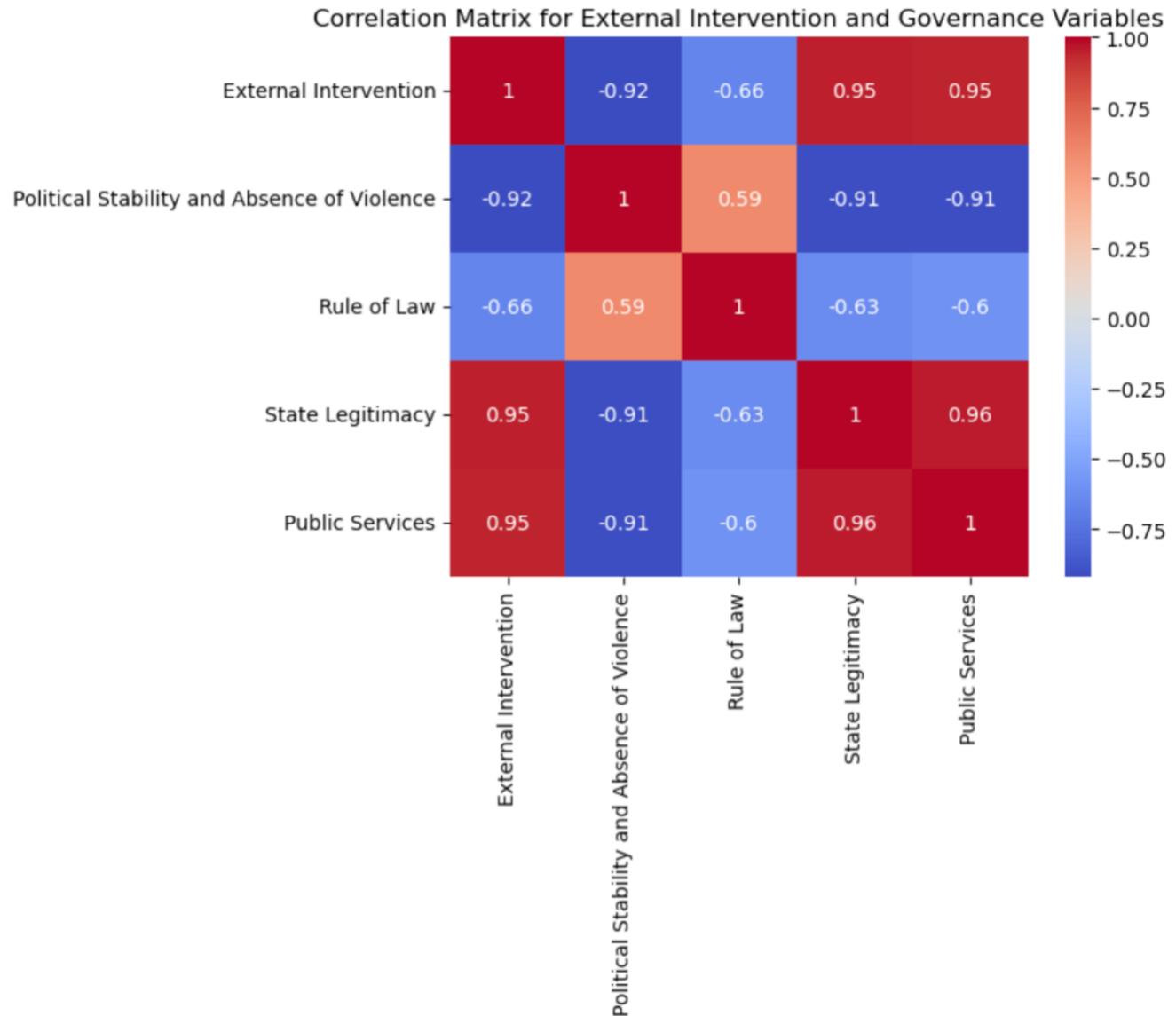
5. Results

5.1 Preliminary Analysis

5.1.1 Visualizations

Figure 1

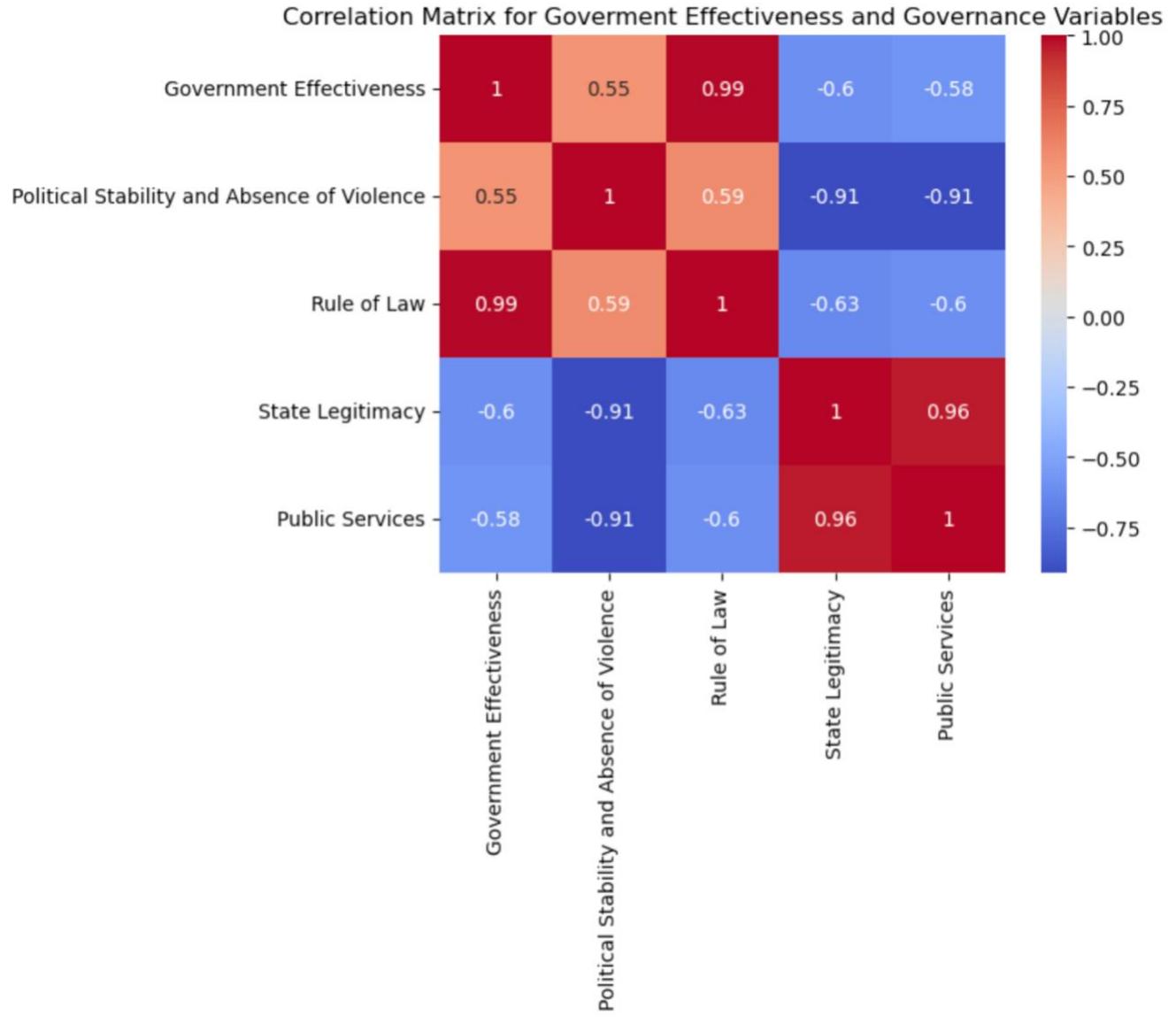
Correlation Matrix Heatmap for External Intervention and Governance Variables



The heatmap in Figure 1 provides a comprehensive visualization of the correlation matrix between external intervention and key governance variables, including Political Stability and Absence of Violence, Rule of Law, State Legitimacy, and Public Services. The intensity of the colors reflects the strength and direction of these relationships, with darker shades representing stronger correlations and lighter shades indicating weaker ones. Notably, external intervention shows a strong positive correlation (0.95) with both State Legitimacy and Public Services, suggesting that higher levels of external intervention are associated with improvements in these governance indicators. However, the relationship is not uniformly positive. A strong negative correlation (-0.92) emerges between external intervention and Political Stability and Absence of Violence, indicating that increased intervention is linked to reduced political stability, potentially underscoring its destabilizing impact. Similarly, the moderately negative correlation (-0.66) between external intervention and Rule of Law suggests that higher levels of intervention are associated with weaker legal institutions and governance challenges. These mixed findings highlight the dual nature of external interventions: while they may bolster state legitimacy and public services, they can simultaneously erode political stability and rule of law, particularly in fragile states, raising important questions about their overall effectiveness and unintended consequences.

Figure 2

Correlation Matrix Heatmap for Government Effectiveness and Governance Variables



The heatmap in Figure 2 illustrates the correlation matrix between Government Effectiveness and key governance variables, using a gradient color scale to represent the strength and direction of these relationships. Red hues indicate positive correlations, while blue hues signify negative correlations. A striking observation is the strong positive correlation (0.99) between Government

Effectiveness and Political Stability and Absence of Violence, highlighting that countries with more effective governments are often more politically stable and experience lower levels of violence.

In contrast, there is a moderate negative correlation (-0.6) between Government Effectiveness and Rule of Law. This suggests that in some instances, improvements in government effectiveness may coincide with weaker adherence to legal frameworks, possibly reflecting trade-offs or uneven progress in governance reforms. The correlation between Government Effectiveness and State Legitimacy is relatively weak, indicating that enhanced governmental efficiency does not necessarily translate into increased public trust or legitimacy. Similarly, the weak correlation between Government Effectiveness and Public Services suggests that improvements in government functioning may not consistently lead to better delivery of essential services across the analyzed countries.

While strong positive correlations, such as that between Government Effectiveness and Political Stability, emphasize the potential stabilizing influence of effective governance structures, the negative correlation with Rule of Law highlights the importance of addressing imbalances in governance development. These nuanced relationships suggest that efforts to strengthen government effectiveness should be accompanied by measures to reinforce legal institutions and public trust to ensure holistic governance improvements.

Figure 3

Scatter Plot of External Intervention vs. Government Effectiveness

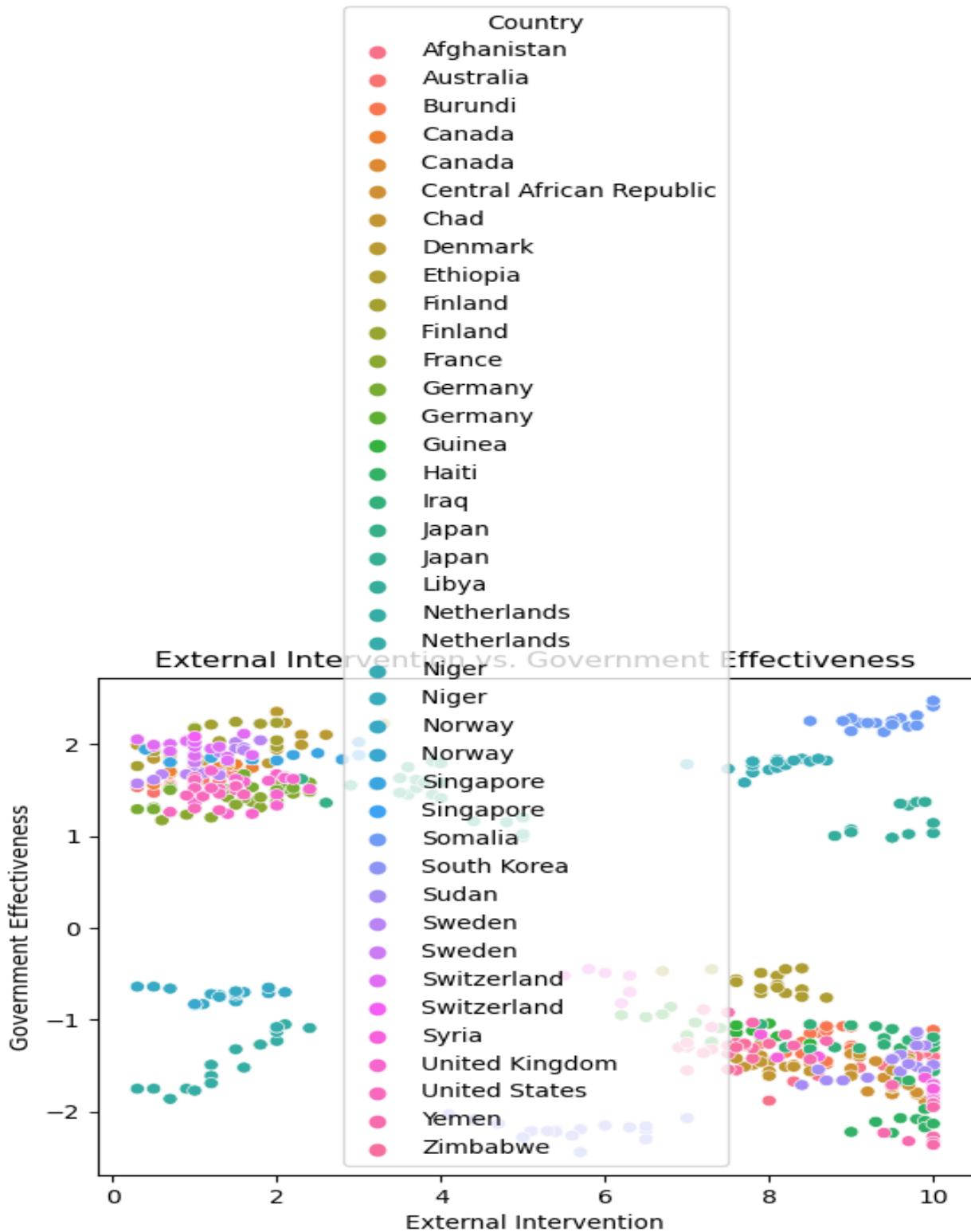


Figure 3 presents a scatter plot illustrating the relationship between external intervention (x-axis) and government effectiveness (y-axis) across different countries, with each color representing a specific country and each dot corresponding to an annual observation. The plot highlights a clear distinction between more stable, non-fragile states such as the United States and Norway, and fragile states like Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. Non-fragile states generally cluster on the left side of the plot, characterized by lower levels of external intervention (closer to 0) and higher government effectiveness (values nearing 2 or above). Conversely, fragile states are concentrated on the right side, exhibiting higher levels of external intervention alongside significantly lower government effectiveness (values approaching -2). The scatter plot suggests a negative association between external intervention and government effectiveness, particularly pronounced among fragile states. For instance, Somalia and Yemen, despite receiving substantial external intervention, continue to demonstrate extremely low government effectiveness. This pattern implies that external intervention alone may not be sufficient to improve governance outcomes in fragile states. Notably, some fragile states with similar levels of external intervention show variability in government effectiveness, indicating that the impact of intervention may depend on country-specific factors such as institutional capacity, historical context, or the type and focus of the intervention. This visualization supports the hypothesis that higher external intervention correlates with lower government effectiveness, especially in fragile states. It underscores the complexity of governance reform and the potential limitations of external interventions in fostering sustainable improvements in government functionality without addressing underlying structural and contextual challenges.

Figure 4

Scatter Plot of External Intervention vs. Political Stability

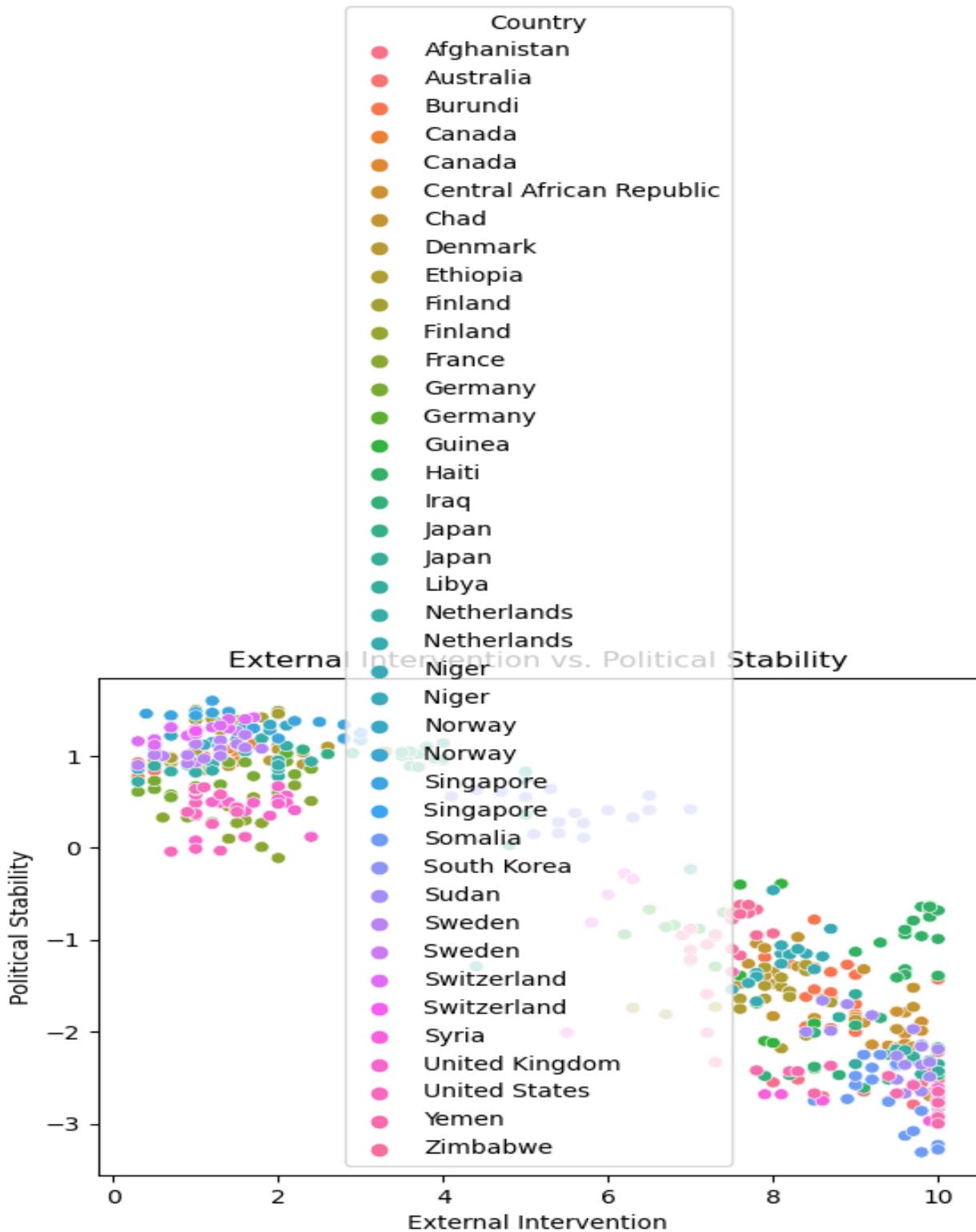


Figure 4 explores the relationship between external intervention and political stability and absence of violence across multiple countries, represented by distinct colors. The scatter plot reveals a noticeable negative trend: as external intervention increases, political stability tends to decline. This pattern is particularly evident in fragile states such as Yemen, Somalia, and Sudan, which are located on the right side of the plot. These countries experience high levels of external intervention yet exhibit low political stability, with stability values ranging from -1 to -3 on the y-axis. This observation reinforces the notion that external intervention alone is insufficient to enhance stability in fragile states.

In contrast, non-fragile states such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Singapore cluster in the top-left quadrant of the plot. These countries show minimal external intervention alongside high political stability, suggesting that their governance systems are resilient without substantial external support. Interestingly, countries receiving moderate levels of external intervention, such as Iraq and Libya, display a wide spectrum of outcomes in terms of political stability, ranging from relatively stable to significantly unstable. This variability highlights the context-dependent nature of intervention outcomes and suggests that internal dynamics and specific circumstances of each country play a crucial role in shaping political stability.

The visualization underscores a broader trend: higher levels of external intervention are often associated with lower political stability. However, it also points to the complexity of the relationship, as some countries with similar levels of external intervention exhibit vastly different stability outcomes. This finding suggests that while external intervention may aim to stabilize fragile states, its success heavily depends on additional factors such as internal governance capacity, historical context, and the nature of the intervention itself.

Figure 5

Scatter Plot of External Intervention vs. Rule of Law

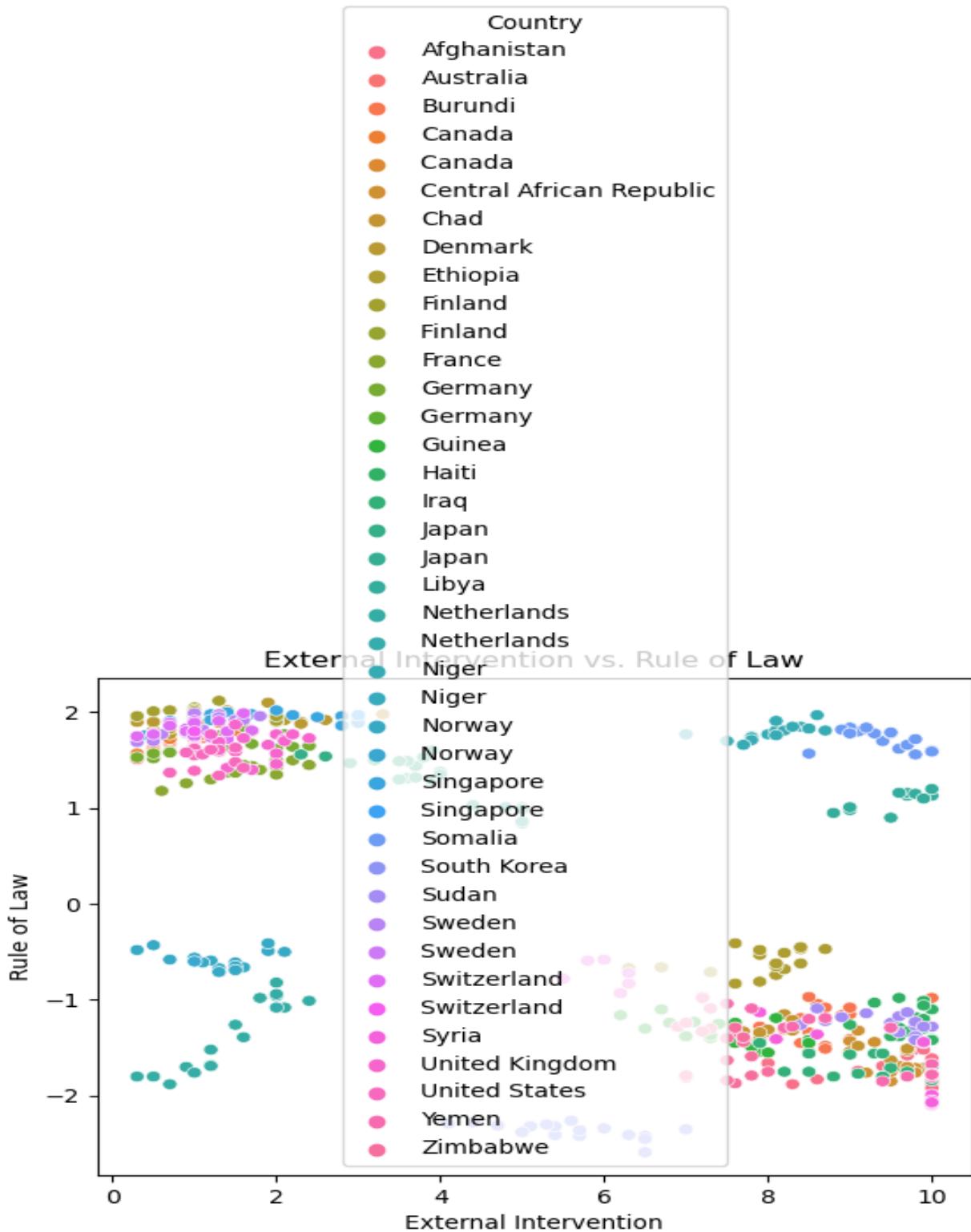


Figure 5 explores the relationship between external intervention and the rule of law across various countries, using a scatter plot where each country is represented by a unique color. Countries with lower levels of external intervention, such as the United States, United Kingdom, and other non-fragile states, are concentrated on the left side of the graph. These countries generally exhibit higher rule of law scores, ranging from 1 to 2 on the y-axis, suggesting that stronger governance systems and robust legal frameworks are often associated with minimal external involvement.

In contrast, countries experiencing high levels of external intervention, such as Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, and Zimbabwe, are clustered on the right side of the graph. These fragile states tend to have negative rule of law scores, falling below 0 on the y-axis. Despite receiving significant external support, these countries face persistent challenges in establishing strong legal systems and governance frameworks. This pattern reinforces the notion that extensive external intervention does not necessarily lead to improvements in the rule of law, particularly in fragile states.

Some countries, such as Iraq, Libya, and Haiti, fall in the middle range of external intervention but exhibit diverse outcomes in terms of the rule of law. While some achieve moderate rule of law scores, others perform poorly, highlighting the role of internal governance structures and country-specific contexts in shaping legal system outcomes.

The visualization reveals a general trend: fragile states with high levels of external intervention often struggle with weak rule of law, while non-fragile states with limited external involvement demonstrate stronger legal frameworks. These findings suggest that external intervention alone may not be sufficient to enhance governance quality. Instead, the success of such interventions may depend on the interaction between external support and internal governance capacity, institutional resilience, and the nature of the interventions themselves.

Figure 6

Box Plot of Government Effectiveness at Different Levels of External Intervention

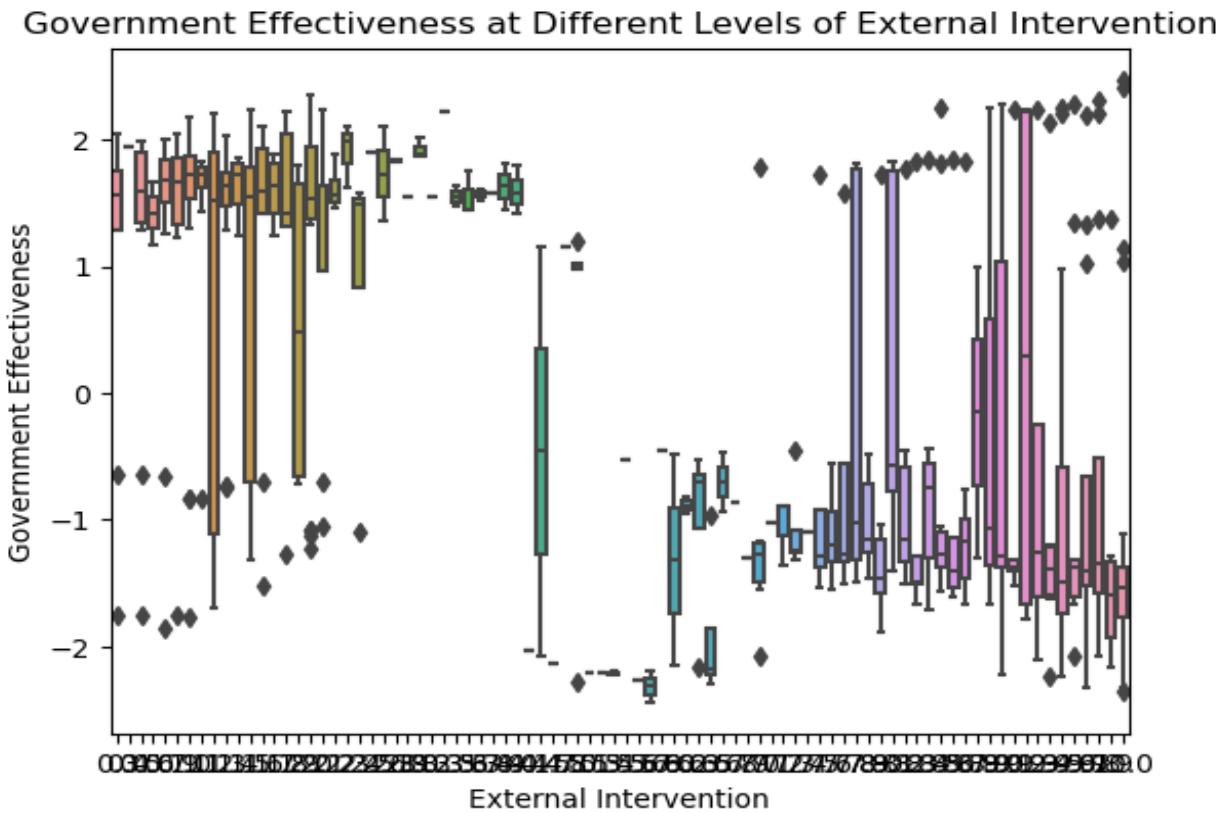


Figure 6 illustrates the relationship between government effectiveness and external intervention using a box plot. Government effectiveness, displayed on the y-axis, is analyzed against varying levels of external intervention, categorized along the x-axis. The visualization reveals a general trend: as external intervention levels increase (moving from left to right), government effectiveness tends to decline. Countries with high external intervention levels (closer to 10) often exhibit low government effectiveness scores, with many falling below zero. This indicates poor governance outcomes in these states, potentially stemming from dependency on foreign support or disruptions in local political systems caused by interventions.

On the left side of the plot, representing countries with low levels of external intervention, government effectiveness scores are higher, ranging between 1 and 2. These countries are likely non-fragile states that maintain strong governance structures with minimal reliance on external support. In contrast, the middle range of the plot, where intervention levels fall between 5 and 7, presents a more varied picture. Some countries in this range achieve relatively high governance effectiveness, while others continue to struggle, highlighting the mixed outcomes of moderate intervention. This suggests that the impact of intervention at these levels is context-dependent and may vary based on factors such as internal governance capacity, institutional resilience, and the nature of the intervention.

Outliers are also evident, particularly at higher levels of external intervention, where a few countries manage to achieve relatively high government effectiveness scores. These exceptions demonstrate that effective governance can still be achieved under certain conditions, even in the presence of significant external support. However, such cases are rare and do not represent the general trend.

The box plot underscores the variability in governance outcomes across countries with similar levels of external intervention. While high external intervention is generally associated with lower government effectiveness especially in fragile states, moderate levels of intervention show mixed results. This variability suggests that the effectiveness of external intervention is not uniform and is heavily influenced by the specific context and implementation strategies employed.

Table 2

PanelOLS Estimation Summary for H1

	State Legitimacy
External Intervention	0.0720** (0.0363)
Public Services	- 0.1393*** (0.0374)
Total FSI	0.0782*** (0.0074)
Number of Observations	510

Note. Standard errors in paratheses; * indicates $0.05 < p < 0.10$; ** indicates $0.01 < p < 0.05$; *** indicates $p < 0.01$

The analysis (Table 2) reveals that external intervention positively influences state legitimacy. A coefficient of 0.0720 suggests that for every 1-unit increase in external intervention, state legitimacy improves by 0.072 units. This indicates that external support can contribute to enhancing the perceived legitimacy of governments in fragile states. Additionally, the Total FSI Score, which measures overall state fragility, has a positive and highly significant impact on state legitimacy, with a coefficient of 0.0782 and a P-value of 0.0000. This finding suggests that more fragile states may exhibit slightly stronger state legitimacy, possibly reflecting external efforts to bolster legitimacy in response to fragility.

However, public services demonstrate a negative relationship with state legitimacy. The analysis indicates that as public services improve, state legitimacy might decline slightly. This counterintuitive result may stem from inefficiencies in governance or mismatches between service delivery and public expectations. While external interventions appear to strengthen state legitimacy, the unexpected negative effect of improved public services highlights the complexities of governance dynamics in fragile states. These findings suggest that while external intervention

can play a positive role, the interplay between different governance factors, such as public service delivery and state legitimacy, requires careful consideration to ensure sustainable outcomes.

Table 3

PanelOLS Estimation Summary for H2

	Political Stability & Absence of Violence
External Intervention	- 0.0307*** (0.0066)
State Legitimacy	0.0006 (0.0084)
Public Services	- 0.0269*** (0.0069)
Total FSI	- 0.0033** (0.0015)
Number of Observations	510

Note. Standard errors in paratheses; * indicates $0.05 < p < 0.10$; ** indicates $0.01 < p < 0.05$; *** indicates $p < 0.01$

The analysis (Table 3) demonstrates that external intervention has a negative and statistically significant impact on political stability. With a coefficient of -0.0307 and a P-value of 0.0000, the results suggest that as external intervention increases, political stability tends to decrease. This finding highlights the destabilizing effects that external involvement may have on fragile states, potentially due to disruptions in local governance or the intensification of internal conflicts.

Similarly, the Total FSI Score, a measure of state fragility, shows a negative and significant relationship with political stability. This indicates that more fragile states are more prone to political instability, reinforcing the challenges these states face in maintaining peace and order.

Interestingly, public services also exhibit a negative and significant effect on political stability, suggesting that higher levels of public service delivery may coincide with greater

instability. This counterintuitive result may reflect governance inefficiencies or tensions arising from uneven service distribution.

Overall, the findings indicate that external interventions are linked to worsened political stability, particularly in fragile states. Moreover, the association between improved public services and instability underscores the complex and often paradoxical dynamics of governance in these contexts. These results suggest that while external interventions and public services aim to stabilize fragile states, their implementation may inadvertently contribute to instability under certain conditions.

Table 4

PanelOLS Estimation Summary for H3

	Rule of Law
External Intervention	0.0079** (0.0036)
State Legitimacy	- 0.0018 (0.0046)
Public Services	- 0.0097** (0.0038)
Total FSI	- 0.0035*** (0.0008)
Number of Observations	510

Note. Standard errors in parentheses; * indicates $0.05 < p < 0.10$; ** indicates $0.01 < p < 0.05$; *** indicates $p < 0.01$

The analysis (Table 4) reveals that external intervention has a positive and statistically significant effect on the rule of law, with a coefficient of 0.0079 and a P-value of 0.0306. This suggests that external interventions may contribute to strengthening legal institutions or improving the enforcement of laws in some contexts. The finding highlights the potential for targeted external support to foster improvements in governance by bolstering legal frameworks.

However, the Total FSI Score, which reflects state fragility, exhibits a negative and highly significant relationship with the rule of law. This indicates that more fragile states generally experience weaker legal enforcement and governance structures, underscoring the persistent challenges these states face in building robust legal systems.

Interestingly, public services show a negative and significant relationship with the rule of law, implying that improvements in public service delivery may coincide with weaker legal governance. This paradoxical finding suggests potential trade-offs, where efforts to enhance service capacity might divert resources or attention from strengthening legal institutions.

Overall, while external interventions appear to have a slight positive impact on the rule of law, their effectiveness is limited in highly fragile states, where weak legal systems persist. Furthermore, the negative association between public services and the rule of law highlights the complex and interconnected nature of governance outcomes, where progress in one area may come at the expense of another. These results underscore the importance of a balanced and context-sensitive approach to governance reform.

Table 5

PanelOLS Estimation Summary with Interactive Effects for H1

	State Legitimacy
External Intervention	0.1486*** (0.0462)
Public Services	- 0.0452 (0.0514)

Total FSI	0.0804*** (0.0074)
External Intervention x Public Services	- 0.0144*** (0.0054)
Number of Observations	510

Note. Standard errors in paratheses; * indicates $0.05 < p < 0.10$; ** indicates $0.01 < p < 0.05$; *** indicates $p < 0.01$

This model (Table 5) explores the relationship between state legitimacy and several key factors: external intervention, public services, the total fragility score (FSI Total), and an interaction term (External Intervention x Public Services) representing the combined effect of external intervention and public services.

External intervention emerges as a positive and significant factor influencing state legitimacy, with a coefficient of 0.1486 and a p-value of 0.0014. This suggests that increased external intervention is generally associated with enhanced perceptions of state legitimacy. However, public services exhibit a negative but non-significant effect, as reflected by a p-value of 0.3798, indicating that variations in public services do not have a strong or consistent impact on state legitimacy within this framework.

FSI Total, which measures the overall fragility of a state, shows a strong and highly significant positive relationship with state legitimacy (p-value = 0.0000). This counterintuitive finding suggests that in fragile states, factors associated with higher fragility scores might also strengthen perceptions of legitimacy, possibly reflecting external efforts or domestic strategies aimed at bolstering governance in response to crises.

The interaction term between external intervention and public services introduces an important nuance. Its negative and significant coefficient (p-value = 0.0082) indicates that while external intervention generally enhances state legitimacy, this positive effect diminishes in

contexts where public services are well-developed. This finding suggests a potential trade-off or competing dynamic, where improvements in public services might shift public expectations or governance priorities, reducing the perceived benefits of external intervention.

In summary, the analysis reveals that external intervention has a generally positive impact on state legitimacy, but its effectiveness is moderated by the level of public services. This highlights the complexity of governance dynamics in fragile states, where interventions and domestic governance factors interact in ways that may amplify or counterbalance each other.

Table 6

PanelOLS Estimation Summary with Interactive Effects for H2

	Political Stability and Absence of Violence
External Intervention	0.0080 (0.0079)
Public Services	0.0206** (0.0088)
Total FSI	- 0.0021* (0.0013)
External Intervention x Public Services	- 0.0073*** (0.0009)
Number of Observations	510

Note. Standard error in paratheses; * indicates $0.05 < p < 0.10$; ** indicates $0.01 < p < 0.05$; *** indicates $p < 0.01$

This model (Table 6) investigates the relationship between political stability and key factors, including external intervention, public services, FSI Total (a measure of overall fragility), and their interaction (External Intervention x Public Services).

External intervention shows a small, positive, but statistically non-significant effect on political stability, as evidenced by its p-value of 0.3100. This suggests that, on its own, external intervention has a limited and inconclusive direct impact on enhancing political stability. Conversely, public services demonstrate a positive and statistically significant effect (p-value =

0.0194), highlighting their important role in promoting political stability. Improved service delivery appears to strengthen stability within countries, emphasizing the value of governance capacity in mitigating instability.

Total FSI has a marginally negative but statistically non-significant effect on political stability, with a p-value of 0.0959. While more fragile states may exhibit greater political instability, this relationship is not robust in this model.

The interaction term between external intervention and public services provides a critical insight. The negative and highly significant coefficient (p-value = 0.0000) suggests that the stabilizing effect of improved public services is weakened in contexts with high external intervention. This indicates a potential trade-off: while public services typically support political stability, their positive impact diminishes when paired with extensive foreign intervention, potentially due to governance disruptions, resource dependencies, or conflicting objectives between domestic and external actors.

In summary, the findings indicate that public services play a significant role in fostering political stability, while external intervention alone does not have a strong direct effect. However, the interaction between external intervention and public services reveals complexities, where high levels of both can undermine stability, underscoring the need for careful coordination between external support and domestic governance efforts.

Table 7

PanelOLS Estimation Summary with Interactive Effects for H3

	Rule of Law
External Intervention	0.0307*** (0.0044)
State Legitimacy	0.0175*** (0.0047)

Total FSI	- 0.0031*** (0.0007)
External Intervention x State Legitimacy	- 0.0039*** (0.0004)
Number of Observations	510

Note. Standard errors in paratheses; * indicates $0.05 < p < 0.10$; ** indicates $0.01 < p < 0.05$; *** indicates $p < 0.01$

This model (Table 7) explores the relationship between the rule of law and key variables: external intervention, state legitimacy, FSI Total (state fragility), and an interaction term (External Intervention x State Legitimacy).

External intervention shows a positive and statistically significant effect on the rule of law ($p\text{-value} = 0.0000$), suggesting that foreign involvement may contribute to the development or strengthening of legal systems. This finding highlights the potential for external support to enhance institutional frameworks, especially in fragile states. State legitimacy also demonstrates a positive and significant relationship with the rule of law ($p\text{-value} = 0.0002$), indicating that when citizens perceive their state as legitimate, there is a stronger foundation for effective legal governance and institutional integrity.

Conversely, FSI Total has a negative and highly significant effect on the rule of law ($p\text{-value} = 0.0000$). This suggests that more fragile states, characterized by higher FSI scores, struggle with weaker enforcement of laws and less robust legal systems. This finding aligns with expectations, as fragility often undermines institutional capacity and the enforcement of legal frameworks.

The interaction term between external intervention and state legitimacy reveals a more nuanced dynamic. The negative and statistically significant coefficient ($p\text{-value} = 0.0000$) indicates that while external intervention and state legitimacy independently support the rule of

law, their combined influence weakens the overall effect. This diminishing return could reflect the complexities of governance in fragile states. For instance, high levels of external intervention may overshadow or undermine the positive impact of state legitimacy on legal structures, potentially due to perceptions of foreign influence interfering with domestic governance or diminishing trust in local institutions.

In summary, the findings indicate that both external intervention and state legitimacy independently strengthen the rule of law, but their combined effects are less straightforward. The interaction suggests that excessive external involvement, even when coupled with high state legitimacy, can dilute the perceived or actual impact on legal governance, underscoring the importance of balancing foreign support with domestic authority.

6. Final Results

The results reveal nuanced relationships between external intervention and various governance outcomes. External intervention is positively associated with state legitimacy, indicating that under certain conditions, foreign involvement can enhance how citizens perceive the legitimacy of their government. However, the interaction between external intervention and public services has a negative effect, suggesting that the legitimacy gains from intervention diminish in contexts where public services are already well-established. This could reflect a perception that foreign intervention offers little added value in countries with functioning domestic services.

The relationship between external intervention and political stability is not statistically significant, indicating that intervention alone does not directly influence stability. However, the interaction between external intervention and public services has a negative impact on political stability, suggesting that when both external involvement and domestic service provision are high, political stability may actually decline. This finding points to potential governance disruptions caused by external involvement, such as dependency on foreign aid or conflicts between external and domestic authorities.

For the rule of law, both external intervention and state legitimacy show positive effects, highlighting their individual contributions to strengthening legal systems in fragile states. However, the interaction between external intervention and state legitimacy is negative, implying that while each factor independently supports the rule of law, their combined influence weakens the overall impact. This could suggest that excessive foreign involvement may undermine the domestic authority necessary for enforcing laws effectively, possibly due to perceptions of diminished sovereignty or over-reliance on external actors.

These results highlight the complex dynamics of external intervention in fragile states. While foreign involvement can contribute positively to governance outcomes like state legitimacy and the rule of law, its effectiveness is tempered by the interplay with domestic factors, such as public service provision and state legitimacy. These findings underscore the importance of balancing external support with strengthening domestic governance capacities to achieve sustainable improvements in fragile states.

7. Conclusions

This study delved into the impact of external interventions on governance outcomes in fragile and non-fragile states, focusing specifically on state legitimacy, political stability, and the rule of law. By employing fixed-effects regression models, the analysis revealed significant relationships between external interventions and governance indicators, offering nuanced insights into the complexities of foreign involvement in fragile contexts. The findings suggest that external interventions often undermine governance outcomes in fragile states. First, there is clear evidence that increased foreign involvement negatively affects state legitimacy. When external powers exert influence over domestic affairs, it can erode citizens' trust in their governments, as such interventions are often perceived as a challenge to sovereignty. This diminished legitimacy has profound implications for the authority and stability of fragile states, particularly those already struggling to maintain internal coherence. The analysis also showed that external interventions are associated with a decline in political stability. Contrary to the intended goal of fostering peace and stability, interventions can disrupt existing power dynamics and exacerbate tensions. This instability may stem from the creation of dependency, the fueling of opposition movements, or the unintended consequences of reshaping local governance structures. These findings align with broader critiques of international interventions that question their long-term efficacy in stabilizing fragile states. In terms of the rule of law, the results reveal another significant negative relationship with external intervention. Foreign involvement appears to weaken legal institutions and adherence to the rule of law, potentially by introducing competing systems of governance or undermining the credibility of local legal frameworks. The erosion of the rule of law not only hampers governance but also threatens citizens' fundamental rights and the broader social contract within these states. These findings highlight the need for policymakers and international organizations to carefully consider the long-term consequences of external interventions. While

the immediate goals of stabilizing fragile states or providing aid may be well-intentioned, the broader implications for governance and institutional integrity cannot be ignored. Interventions that diminish sovereignty, destabilize political systems and erode legal institutions risk perpetuating the very fragility they aim to address. Moving forward, it is essential to explore alternative strategies that prioritize empowering local governance structures rather than imposing external solutions. Policymakers must strike a balance between offering necessary support and preserving the autonomy and capacity of domestic institutions. Additionally, future research should investigate the interactive effects between external interventions and governance indicators, such as whether improvements in public services can mitigate some of the adverse outcomes observed. By refining our understanding of the mechanisms at play, we can work toward more effective and sustainable approaches to addressing fragility in states around the world.

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