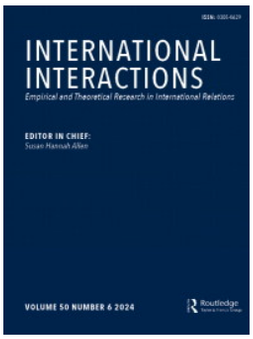

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ABSTRACT

Why are some national leaders more likely to intervene in a civil war than others? In this paper, I suggest that prior military service and combat experience can influence leaders' risk perception by altering what they expect the result of their (in) action to be, as well as making militaristic means more mentally accessible, creating a militaristic heuristic for judgments. Analyzing national leaders from 1875 to 2004, I find that 1) leaders who have a military service background are about 3.86 percent more likely to engage in third-party intervention compared to those without; 2) leaders who were deployed in combat are around 4.53 percent more likely to intervene than those who either do not have any military experience at all or have military service experience but were never deployed; and 3) leaders' military service experience without deployment in combat shows almost no impact especially when the standard error was taken into consideration. By examining how individual leaders' experiences impact third-party intervention, this study aims to contribute to the agent-structure debate in IR and the debate on political decision-makers and their personal backgrounds.

KEYWORDS

individual-level analysis; military intervention; political leadership

RÉSUMÉ

Pourquoi certains dirigeants nationaux ont-ils plus de chances d'intervenir dans une guerre civile que d'autres ? Dans cet article, je suggère qu'un passé militaire et une expérience du combat peuvent influencer la perception du risque d'un dirigeant en modifiant les résultats qu'il attend d'une (in)action, ainsi qu'en rendant les moyens militaires mentalement plus accessibles, ce qui crée une heuristique militariste pour le jugement. En analysant les dirigeants nationaux entre 1875 et 2004, j'observe que 1) les dirigeants qui ont une expérience dans l'armée ont environ 3,86 pour cent plus de chances de prendre part à une intervention tierce que ceux qui n'en ont pas ; 2) les dirigeants qui ont été déployés pour combattre ont environ 4,53 pour cent plus de chances d'intervenir que ceux qui n'ont pas d'expérience militaire du tout ou ceux qui en ont, mais qui n'ont jamais été déployés ; et 3) l'expérience militaire des dirigeants qui n'ont pas été déployés au combat n'a pratiquement pas d'incidence, surtout après prise en compte de l'erreur type. Par l'analyse des répercussions de l'expérience de chaque

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dirigeant sur l'intervention tierce, cette étude vise à contribuer au débat agent/structure en RI et au débat sur les décideurs politiques et leur expérience personnelle.

RESUMEN

¿Por qué algunos líderes nacionales son más propensos a intervenir en una guerra civil que otros? En este artículo, argumentamos que las experiencias previas de los líderes, como el hecho de haber realizado el servicio militar y tener experiencia en combate, pueden influir en la percepción del riesgo por parte de los líderes ya que alteran lo que esperan que sea el resultado de su (in)acción y provocan que los medios militaristas sean más accesibles a nivel mental, creando, de esta forma, una heurística militarista para los juicios. Analizamos líderes nacionales desde 1875 hasta 2004, y concluimos que 1) los líderes que cuentan con antecedentes en el servicio militar tienen aproximadamente un 3,86 por ciento más de probabilidades de participar en una intervención de terceros en comparación con aquellos líderes que no tienen esos antecedentes; 2) los líderes que fueron desplegados en combate tienen alrededor de un 4,53 por ciento más de probabilidades de intervenir que aquellos que no tienen ninguna experiencia militar en absoluto o que tienen experiencia en el servicio militar pero nunca fueron desplegados; y 3) la experiencia de los líderes que realizaron el servicio militar pero que no llegaron a ser desplegados en combate no muestra casi ningún impacto, especialmente cuando se tiene en cuenta el error estándar. Estudiamos cómo las experiencias de los líderes individuales impactan sobre la intervención de terceros, con el objetivo de contribuir al debate sobre la estructura del agente en las RRII y al debate con respecto a los tomadores de decisiones políticas y sus antecedentes personales.

Introduction

Understanding third-party intervention in civil conflicts is crucial in making sense of global security today. Among the forty nine ongoing conflicts globally in 2016, forty seven were civil wars (SIPRI 2017), and in 2021, conflicts within a single state continue to be the most common form of war (SIPRI 2022). Moreover, from 2011 to 2017, the number of battle deaths in major civil wars showed a six-fold increase (von Einsiedel et al. 2017). The existing academic literature, in its attempt to understand this alarming trend, has found that third-party intervention can influence the outcome of a civil war in different ways. Given that interventions can prolong conflicts (Balch-Lindsay, Enterline, and Joyce 2008; Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000), decrease the overall number of casualties (Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon 2014), and reduce the risk of conflict recurrence (Fortna 2004), we must understand why some national leaders decide to take the risk and send troops to a conflict zone abroad while others do not.

In this light, this paper focuses on national leaders from intervening countries to understand third-party intervention. I propose that if the head of government has served in a national military and was deployed in actual combat s/he is subsequently more likely to intervene in another state's civil war. Prior combat experience can influence a leader's risk perception by altering his/her expectation of the probable consequences of his/her action or inaction. Based on my findings, I argue that this can be attributed to these leaders' exposure to extreme threat and stress in combat, and their training and socialization on the battlefield. These factors influence how these leaders assess risk and make militaristic means more cognitively available, creating a militaristic heuristic, that affects these sorts of judgments once s/he enters the office. People are products of their experiences and their backgrounds influence their decisions. In fact, many psychologists agree that decision-makers rely heavily on their memories and experiences and that the heuristics formed out of these become stronger when the memory is more powerful and easier to retrieve (J. R. Anderson 1991; Gigerenzer 1991; 1996; Tversky and Kahneman 1973). In the same way, military experience should have a unique impact on leaders, for military experiences can be particularly acute or traumatic and, as a result, military and civilian elites may think differently about military options in the face of crisis (Horowitz and Stam 2014).

In the following section, I provide an overview of the existing literature on third-party intervention and explain how and why a national leader's military experience can influence his/her decision to engage in third-party intervention. Next, I offer my research design and hypotheses, describing the data I use and how I operationalize my variables. Lastly, I lay out the results before concluding with a discussion of my findings and future pathways for research.

Alternative Explanations of Third-Party Intervention

The overwhelming majority of third-party intervention studies have focused on structural factors. Many scholars emphasize the potential intervener's militaristic capability, which can be influenced by several elements, including the intervener's current involvement in other major military operations (Fordham 2004; Ostrom and Job 1986) and its great power status (Aydin 2012; Biddle, Friedman, and Long 2012; Findley and Teo 2006; Gent 2007; Young 1968). Others argue that the relationship between the potential intervener and the targeted state is important, such as ideological ties (Corbetta 2010; Fordham 2004; Mullenbach and Matthews 2008; Saideman 1997; 2007), ethnic ties (Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000; Biddle, Friedman, and Long 2012; Bove and Böhmelt 2019; Carment and James 1997; Jones and Linebarger 2021; Nome 2013; Saideman 1997), the strategic

importance of the targeted state to the intervener (Heraclides 1991; Shirkey 2016; Suhrke and Noble 1977), and geographical proximity (Findley and Teo 2006; Khosla 1999; Pearson 1974b; Regan 1998). Lastly, some scholars suggest that global norms on humanitarian interventions or, on the contrary, those on state sovereignty may also affect intervention decisions (Fierke 2005; Finnemore 1996; 2004; Young 1968). For example, Mitchell (2002) finds that the democratic norm of peaceful third-party settlement has spread as the proportion of democratic countries increased.

Furthermore, domestic-level theories focus on internal political structure of states. Some researchers suggest that certain regime types, especially democracies, have a strong impact on the decision to intervene. Kegley and Hermann (1996) claim that nondemocratic countries have historically intervened in foreign conflicts more regularly than democratic ones. Bélanger et al. (2005) note that democracies rarely support secessionist movements within other democratic countries, whereas autocracies are not bounded by a state's regime type in the same way. Other scholars see domestic political situations such as presidential approval rate, public opinion, and the electoral cycle as crucial (Chiozza 2017; Chiozza and Goemans 2011; Gowa 1998; James and Oneal 1991; Meernik 2018; Yoon 1997). Similarly, several studies propose that the domestic economic situation plays a primary role in intervention decisions, with these decisions being made to divert public or elite discontent (Meernik 2018; Morgan and Bickers 1992; Ostrom and Job 1986; Yoon 1997).

In addition to these structural theories, some studies focus on psychological variables to explain third-party intervention. For instance, Saunders (2011) suggests that American presidents' orientation of threat perception influenced their thinking about whether to pursue transformative strategies against other states' institutions during the Cold War. Also, Vertzberger (1998) argues that leaders' perceptions, organizational constraints, and their cultural environment shape the process of making high-risk decisions. Thus, whether a risky situation is framed and understood as a threat or an opportunity is important, as well as how uncertain the potential intervener perceives a possible outcome to be.

Although these studies provide valuable insights, they also have limitations. First, as structural theories, they neglect individual leaders' volition and decision-making power. By putting more emphasis on external factors, they omit individual variations and assume actors behave in similar ways when put into a similar situation. For instance, that Al Gore would have reacted to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in precisely the same way that George W. Bush did, and Nixon would have made the same decisions as Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis. In many cases, leaders bring about outcomes that can transcend the situational context. Second, structural explanations analyze underlying conditions that create an environment in which

an event is likely to take place. However, they are less capable of explaining what the critical triggering point of any particular event is, which can be as simple as a single person's predilections or the result of chance in many cases. Third, most of the existing individual-level explanations lack cross-national data and focus on leaders from a few specific countries, especially the United States (Greenstein 1967; 2000; Saunders 2011; Winter 1991). While in-depth examination has its merits, systematically analyzing leaders across different countries, political institutions, and personal traits can provide comprehensive, complementary, insights into the subject. Lastly, most scholars study militaristic behavior and war in general instead of treating third-party intervention as a separate category. However, in most cases, intervening in another state's intrastate conflict entails different sets of risks and gains, such as humanitarian values, than do wars in which the state is directly in conflict with other members of the international system.

Leaders' Experience and Intervention Decisions

Why are some national leaders more willing to engage in military intervention in another country's civil conflict while others refrain from it? No complete understanding of third-party intervention is possible without scrutinizing national leaders, who have great influence over foreign and military policies. I therefore suggest that *ceteris paribus*, a national leader with military service experience prior to holding office will be more likely to engage in third-party military intervention. The difference in a leader's assessment of risks is the central factor that connects military experience to civil war intervention. Third-party intervention, especially the ones including military support, comes with a significant level of risk. Military intervention is "a deviation from the internationally acknowledged norm of non-intervention, but it is also a deviation from the normal pattern of the relations between the intervener and the target state." (Dorman 1995, 5) While all military actions involve risks, the risks anticipated in civil war intervention uniquely differ from those in armed warfare directly involving the actor (Pearson 1974a; Woo 2017). In terms of financial and human costs, wars of direct involvement typically garner more public support even when they entail higher costs. Defending the homeland often justifies the economic burden and casualties associated with the war. In comparison, the costs of civil war intervention stand on shakier ground because such operations lack an immediate impact on the intervener's *raison d'etat*. Military expenditure, humanitarian aid, and casualties among the intervening forces become harder to justify when the sovereignty, security, and possibly its very existence at stake do not belong to the potential intervener. Similarly, wars of foreign intervention entail a much

higher political risk for a leader. Intervening in another country's civil war and spending resources on it often evoke significant domestic opposition mainly because the benefits are unclear and less directly associated with the intervener's vital interests (N. Anderson 2019). Ethical considerations also connect to political costs. While self-defense is a relatively clear and widely accepted motivation to deploy arms, third-party intervention is generally under heavier scrutiny given its possibility of the intervener having ulterior motives or causing unintended harm. Therefore, a decision to use military force abroad requires a higher risk-taking threshold for a leader than fighting militarized warfare in general. This is especially pertinent when a leader chooses to openly support another country's civil conflict rather than remaining covert. Among the various intervention options, ranging from diplomatic support to economic and arms support, direct deployment requires the highest level of risk and commitment. Therefore, it is theoretically significant when a leader decides to engage in a policy with such high-level risks.

There are largely two ways in which a leader's military background can impact his/her decision to intervene in a civil conflict abroad. First, the self-selection hypothesis posits that individuals with certain worldviews and policy preferences are drawn into the military. While there is a correlation between individuals with a military background and their policy preferences, it is not the experience they get from serving in the military that meaningfully alters their perspectives. Instead, people who already have positive affection towards the use of military means and armed forces, in general, are more likely to be a part of the national military force (Dempsey 2010; Teachman and Call 1996).

Second, receiving military education and training serves as a socialization process that can systematically impact individuals with such experiences. More specifically, military experience makes actors more familiar with the effectiveness of using militaristic means in conflict resolution, as opposed to other means. Soldiers are socialized into perceiving "military force as standard operating procedure" (Weeks 2012, 344) and sometimes even "oversocialized" to focus on threat and conflict (Snyder 1989). In this context, Brecher (1996) argues that military officials consider military options to be effective and legitimate, and thus more likely to use and encourage the means that they are more accustomed to. Sechser (2004) also demonstrates that left unchecked, military officers are more prone to use force, and it is the degree of civilian control over the government that influences its propensity to use force. Similarly, a survey conducted on elites and the general public finds that 98.3 percent of the civilian elites with military experience agreed that military force is an important tool of foreign policy while 82.8 percent of the nonveteran civilian elites agreed (Feaver and Gelpi 2004). Again, we can see clear discrepancies between

the way civilians and soldiers view the world. Militaristic means becomes more mentally accessible to leaders with military backgrounds, and this availability serves as a heuristic for judgments (Dougherty, Gronlund, and Gettys 2003; Kahneman 2011). In fact, in an attempt to argue against the self-selection hypothesis, some studies isolate the impact of socialization in the military from veterans' pre-service political tendencies (Roberts, Caspi, and Moffitt 2003; Teachman and Call 1996).

Given this discussion on the impact of military experience on a national leader's propensity to engage in a third-party intervention, I propose the following hypothesis:

> **H1.** A national leader with military service experience is more likely to intervene than the one without military service experience.

While going through formalized military education and training is important, not all military personnel are deployed and exposed to an active combat zone (Feaver and Gelpi 2004; Horowitz, Stam, and Ellis 2015). Although all soldiers go through certain military training and are socialized in a certain way, being in active combat is a uniquely galvanizing experience, which is likely to influence their behavior and decisions later in life. Nonetheless, being part of combat provides a fundamentally more impactful effect on individuals that cannot be mimicked in any military education and training. In fact, being exposed to life-threatening experiences of active combat can have a much stronger impact on a person than simply receiving military education. There are mainly two ways that leaders' experience being in active combat can impact their decision to intervene in a civil conflict abroad later in office. First, prior combat experience can alter their expectations of what their action or inaction will result in. Soldiers in combat are put into a unique environment where they are required to react swiftly to unexpected threats while being under extreme pressure and stress. Hesitation and indecisiveness can easily result in severe consequences, including the death of oneself or one's comrades. This intense experience leads a person to see risks entailed in inaction (i.e. maintaining the status quo) to be more significant than a potential problem caused by a quick response to the threat. As Huntington (1957) explains, a soldier's sense of responsibility and urgency "leads him to feel that if he errs in his estimate, it should be on the side of overestimating the threat" (66). Relatedly, Voors et al. (2010) find that individuals who were exposed to civil war violence were more likely to be risk-acceptant and less patient than those who were not. Temporary external shocks, they write, can induce a long-term or even a permanent effect on people's decision-making. Brunk et al. (1990) also report that individuals with military experience are more accepting of violence and less likely to agree to moral values that prohibit killing in absolute terms.

In contrast, in the case of people without any combat experience, it is more cognitively acceptable to not act in the face of uncertainty. People generally have a strong aversion to uncertainty and risks, and seek ways to minimize it. Changing the course of events by injecting their action, in many cases, entails more uncertainty on what the results will be compared to following the course of events. Rather than navigating the anxiety that acting brings, people prefer not to take risks that may bring more uncertainties (Kahneman and Miller 1986; Zeelenberg et al. 2002). Action also adds personal accountability and makes one responsible for a given result (Landman 1987; Weiner 1980). Not doing anything and 'letting nature take its course' can relieve one from the burden of being held accountable by letting the blame fall on external factors. These differences between people's perceptions of inaction and action lead actors to be more regretful about past actions, as opposed to past inaction, even when the results are identical (Gilovich and Medvec 1995; Gleicher et al. 1990; Kahneman and Miller 1986; Landman 1987; Zeelenberg et al. 2002). As a result, in a given situation an individual's decision to respond with (in) action will be influenced by this potential for action-specific regret (Kahneman 2011, 346–48). Compared to individuals with combat experience, action as opposed to inaction carries more emotional connotation and uncertain risks for a civilian.

Second, some studies indicate that exposure to combat can enhance certain forms of altruism, particularly towards in-group members, such as fellow soldiers. This phenomenon is often attributed to the intense bonds and solidarity formed under life-threatening conditions, which can foster a strong sense of camaraderie and mutual support (Hinde 1993; Stern 2013; Voors et al. 2010). Being exposed to combat violence can shape individuals' normative beliefs by making them more altruistic and compassionate toward humanitarian causes. In survey research, 99.8 percent of the civilian elite respondents with military experience agreed that the military being engaged in humanitarian needs abroad was important while 70.2 percent of the nonveteran civilian elites agreed (Feaver and Gelpi 2004). In a survey conducted vis-à-vis retired military veterans, fifty three percent of them disagreed that use of force should only be restricted to vital interests that concern *raison d'état* while 40.9 percent of them agreed to the same statement (Brunk, Secrest, and Tamashiro 1990). In addition, Staub (2003) introduces a concept called "altruism born of suffering," describing a situation in which individuals who suffer are more motivated to display altruistic behaviors because of what they have experienced. Moreover, Qirko (2013) suggests that "kin-cue manipulation" comprised of shared combat experiences and military culture can induce altruism among soldiers, while Rachman (1979) argues that soldiers in combat develop "required helpfulness" as a result of collective suffering.

Kishon-Barash, Midlarsky, and Johnson (1999) describe that veterans with combat PTSD can "transcend their own distress, and to feel the desire to help on behalf of the other, rather than for egocentric reasons" (660).

In this light, I suggest that there is a significant difference between leaders' experience serving in the military in general versus having been exposed to active combat. I test the effects of combat experience and general military service experience separately for the purpose of isolating the theorized effect of combat experience from the broader effect of military education and socialization. The theoretical expectation of this argument will be:

H2. A national leader deployed in combat is more likely to intervene than the one who was never deployed in combat.

H3. A national leader who has military service experience but was never deployed in combat is not as likely to intervene as someone who has military service experience and was deployed in combat.

Research Design

To empirically assess the proposed hypotheses, I examine national leaders' military background (IV) and civil war intervention (DV) from 1875 to 2004. I mainly use the relogit (rare events logistic regression) method which involves using penalized likelihood methods to ensure more accurate coefficient estimates and predictions (King and Zeng 2001). For robustness checks, I also use standardized logit and probit models, of which the results are presented in the *Appendix*.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study is whether a national leader decides to conduct a third-party intervention or not, which I define as *a short-term, coercive usage of military means to influence an outcome of another state's intrastate conflict*. This definition excludes intervention using solely economic and/or diplomatic means; military operations have a higher cost compared to non-military ones and, as a consequence, the decision to deploy troops has a different set of mechanisms. It also differentiates intervention from colonialism or imperialism, which are aimed to be more long-term or even permanent in many cases (Rosenau 1969; Saunders 2011). Moreover, cases in which a state decides to be involved in another state's *inter*state or *extra*state conflict are not part of this study, the former being conflicts between more than two members of the international system and the latter being conflicts between a member and a non-state political entity such as some contemporary terrorist groups. I examine

interventions carried out by great powers and minor powers together, as well as *ad hoc* alliances and alliances formed through international organizations. Moreover, I analyze the Correlates Of War Intrastate Wars dataset to examine when third-party interventions took place, and who occupied the role of a national leader and authorized such a decision (Sarkees, Wayman, and Singer 2003). Intrastate wars that were intervened in by more than one member state of the international system comprise the largest part of the data, but I also included wars that are categorized as interstate wars when they had their roots in intrastate wars.[1] After the adjustment, thirteen wars that were originally not categorized as intrastate conflicts were added to the dataset. A list of added wars and the justifications for why they were added to the analysis are provided in the *Appendix*. Moreover, as a robustness check, I provide results with the original COW Intrastate Wars dataset without my adjustment. *Intervention* is coded 1 if a national leader was both in office during the conflict in question and intervened in it and 0 otherwise. When there was more than one foreign intrastate conflict taking place during the leader's time in office and s/he chose to intervene in at least one of them, the *Intervention* variable was coded 1.

Figure 1 shows a descriptive analysis of leaders who intervened in another state's intrastate conflict more than once, broken down by their respective polity scores. Notably, third-party intervention is a relatively rare event that not many leaders engage in, for both authoritarian and democratic leaders—either because they lack the will or chances to do so. None of the polity score groups have more than three percent of leaders who intervened, except for full democracies (10). The overall average across the different polity scores was 0.38. This result partially supports the existing studies that see domestic political institution to be the most important explanatory variable in assessing third-party intervention (Chiozza and Choi 2003; Debs and Goemans 2010; Weeks 2012).

Independent Variables

A "national leader," the main unit of analysis of this study, is defined as the head of government with the highest executive/military authority in making decisions regarding foreign policy. His/her titles vary depending

[1]In setting the criteria of an intrastate war transforming into another type of war, the COW dataset uses two principles: the mutual exclusivity of wars and determining who does the bulk of the fighting (Sarkees, Wayman, and Singer 2003). Although this categorization can be useful in understanding war as a continuous event, I only examine the initial intervention decisions made by national leaders. These wars developed from intrastate conflicts and the intervention decision was made by a third party regardless of who does the bulk of the fighting in the process. With this principle, a few adjustments were made by consulting other datasets on third-party intervention, including Doyle and Sambanis' (2000) international peacebuilding dataset and Mullenbach and Matthews' (2008) third-party peacekeeping dataset.

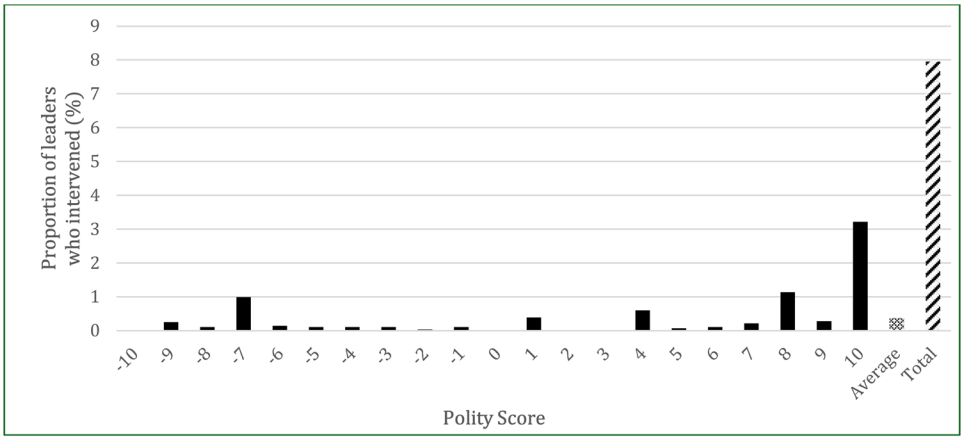

Figure 1. Proportion of national leaders who intervened in another state's civil war, by polity.
Note: This graph shows the scarcity of positive cases (interventions) in the dataset. Of 21 different polity scores, only full democracies (polity score 10) have more than 3% of interveners.
Source: Leader Experience and Attribute Description (LEAD) dataset (Ellis, Horowitz, and Stam 2015) and Correlates of War (COW) dataset (Sarkees, Wayman, and Singer 2003).

on the regime type and the government's institutional structure: the president in presidential systems, the prime minister in parliamentary systems, and the party leader in communist states.[2] To distinguish between, first, leaders with any sort of military experience, combat or otherwise, and second, those with military combat experience and those without it, I will analyze three independent variables in this study: military service experience, deployment in combat, and military service experience without deployment in combat. Leaders' "military service experience" refers to their background of having served in the national military. Leaders with "combat experience" are those who have been deployed to an actual combat zone. "Military service experience without combat" means that although the leader served in a national military before coming into office, s/he was never deployed in an actual combat zone. For example, George W. Bush served in the Texas Air National Guard but was never deployed. For my purposes, he would fit in the first and third of my categories.

I use the Leader Experience and Attribute Description (LEAD) dataset, which includes traits of national leaders around the world from 1875 to 2004 (Ellis, Horowitz, and Stam 2015). *Military Service Experience* is coded 1 if the leader had any experience in the national military before entering office and 0 otherwise. *Combat Experience* is coded 1 if the leader was deployed to an active combat zone and 0 otherwise. *Combat Experience* is a subset of *Military Service Experience*. *Military Service Experience without Combat* is coded 1 if the leader served in the military but was

[2]In more complicated cases, such as states with a de facto strongman/woman leader who is not officially in office or a constitutional monarchy, leaders with the greatest control over foreign policy were counted (Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza 2009).

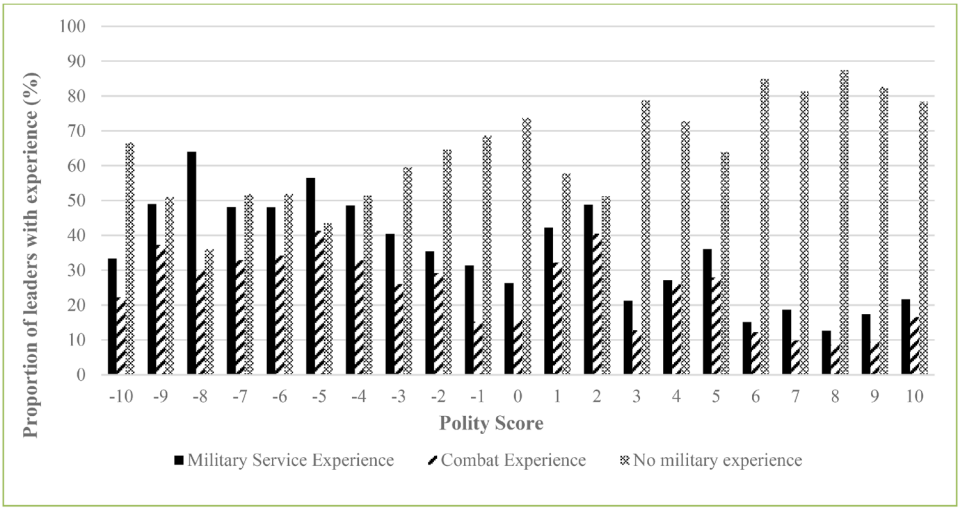

Figure 2. National leaders and military experiences by polity, 1875–2004.
Note: This graph demonstrates the proportion of national leaders with different military experiences within each polity score grouping. The number of units with "military service experience" includes those with "combat experience."
Source: Leader Experience and Attribute Description (LEAD) dataset (Ellis, Horowitz, and Stam 2015).

never exposed to any actual combat and 0 otherwise. Among 2,820 national leaders in the final dataset, 30.27 percent had prior military experience, 21.18 percent were deployed in combat, and 69.73 were civilians.[3] Broken down by polity scores, Figure 2 shows the percentage of national leaders with different military experiences. The proportion of leaders with military service and combat experiences is generally higher for those from less democratic states.

Control Variables

Six additional variables are included in each model to control for other factors that might influence the relationship between leaders' attributes and their intervention decisions. First, as previously observed, how democratic a leader's state is can affect the possibility of them having a military background and his/her decision to intervene. Democratic leaders usually have more institutional hurdles in carrying out their policies compared to nondemocratic ones (Horowitz, Stam, and Ellis 2015, 7) and are also known to be more sensitive to domestic audience costs (Eyerman and Hart Jr. 1996; Kertzer and Brutger 2016; Partell and Palmer 1999; Tomz 2007; Weeks 2008). On the contrary, some scholars claim that nondemocratic leaders also have elite groups as their

[3]Original dataset has 2,965 observations. However, this counts leaders who re-entered office after being out as two separate cases. I also excluded observations with missing values in any of the variables.

domestic audience and that they suffer from a harsher punishment should they lose power (Weeks 2008). Whatever the case may be, we can anticipate there to be systematic differences between democratic and nondemocratic leaders. *Polity* variable varies from -10 to 10, -10 being the most authoritarian and 10 being the most democratic (Horowitz & Stam, 2014).

Second, the models use the CINC Score, the relative shared capability of a state each year within the international system, to control for the difference in leaders' material capabilities (Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972). Although some leaders could be more determined to intervene in war than others, material capabilities realistically constrain the feasibility of the intervention in most cases. *Material Capability* ranges from 0 to 1, a higher score meaning that the country is wealthier.

The third control variable is leaders' age, which has been found by other studies to impact leaders' military decisions (Bak and Palmer 2010; Potter 2007). For instance, Horowitz, McDermott, and Stam (2005) suggest that older leaders are more likely to initiate and escalate militarized conflicts in an institution with a check-and-balance system. In contrast, younger leaders are more likely to engage in armed conflicts in a personalist or authoritarian regime without such institutional challenges. *Age* is an integer variable that ranges from nineteen to ninety three.

I also control for leaders' gender. Although the conventional notion is that women are innately peaceful and cooperative, Schramm and Stark (2020) find that female leaders are more likely to initiate armed conflicts due to the pressure to perform gender. This result was especially more pertinent in an institution with more constraints on executive power in a society with a lower level of female empowerment. *Gender* is coded 0 for females and 1 for males. There were only 46 female leaders in the dataset of 2,820 national leaders.

The fifth control variable is leaders' experience of military success or failure before entering office. In making strategic decisions, individuals tend to rely on heuristics based on their previous experience of what has worked or not worked (Horowitz, Stam, and Ellis 2015; Tversky and Kahneman 1973). If a leader has successfully implemented militaristic means in the past or has witnessed one leading to success in a war, s/he is more likely to see efficacy in the military. S/he is also likely to be more risk-accepting due to this past success (Xue et al. 2010). For instance, Colgan and Weeks (2015) find that a leader in a personalist dictatorship with a successful revolution experience is more likely to use force. Having experienced success in the past "empower[s] and ensconc[es] leaders with revisionist preferences and high risk-tolerance." (163) *War Win* is coded 1 if the leader has experience of military success before entering the office and 0 otherwise.

The last control variable is whether the leader was in office during the Cold War or not. A leader's last year in office is the standard for determining the era in which s/he served; however, his or her first year in office was used when the last year's value was missing. *Cold War* is coded 1 when the leader was in office from 1945 to 1988 and 0 otherwise. A table with the descriptive statistics of the variables used is in the *Appendix*.

Results and Discussion

As the first two hypotheses suggest, both military service and combat experiences have a positive influence on a leader's propensity to make a third-party intervention decision. However, having military experience without being deployed to combat does not show a meaningful influence on third-party intervention. Figure 3 demonstrates the difference in the predicted probability of intervention between leaders with and without military and combat experiences, holding all other control variables at their average. *Ceteris paribus*, predicted probability shows that compared to those without experience (5.39 percent), decision-makers who have a military service background (9.25 percent) are about 3.86 percent more likely to engage in a third-party intervention. This result supports *H1*. The figure also shows a positive and significant association between deployment in combat and the possibility of deciding to intervene, as *H2* posited. Leaders who were deployed in a combat zone in the past are around 4.53 percent more likely to intervene than those who either do not have any military experience at all or have military service experience but were never deployed (10.13 versus 5.60 percent). The impact size of combat experience was larger than that of military experience in general. This indicates that the acute experience of having witnessed and participated in combat may have a more direct connection with a leader's third-party intervention decision.

Similarly, Table 1 shows the result of relogit analysis using the same data source. *Model 1*'s results indicated a significant positive association between leaders' military experience and the likelihood of third-party intervention, with a coefficient of 0.582 ($p < 0.001$).[4] This coefficient translates to an odds ratio of approximately 1.79, suggesting that leaders with military experience are about seventy nine percent more likely to engage in military interventions compared to their counterparts without such experience. In addition, a leader's combat experience (*H2*) specifically has an even stronger effect than military service experience in general. *Model 2* produced a coefficient of 0.642 for combat experience, with a

[4]To test for the models' heteroskedasticity, I employed the Breusch-Pagan test. Model 1 (BP = 3.6326; p-value = 0.821), Model 2 (BP = 4.2894; p-value = 0.7459), Model 3 (BP = 4.6658; p-value = 0.7007), and Model 4 (BP = 3.8889; p-value = 0.867).

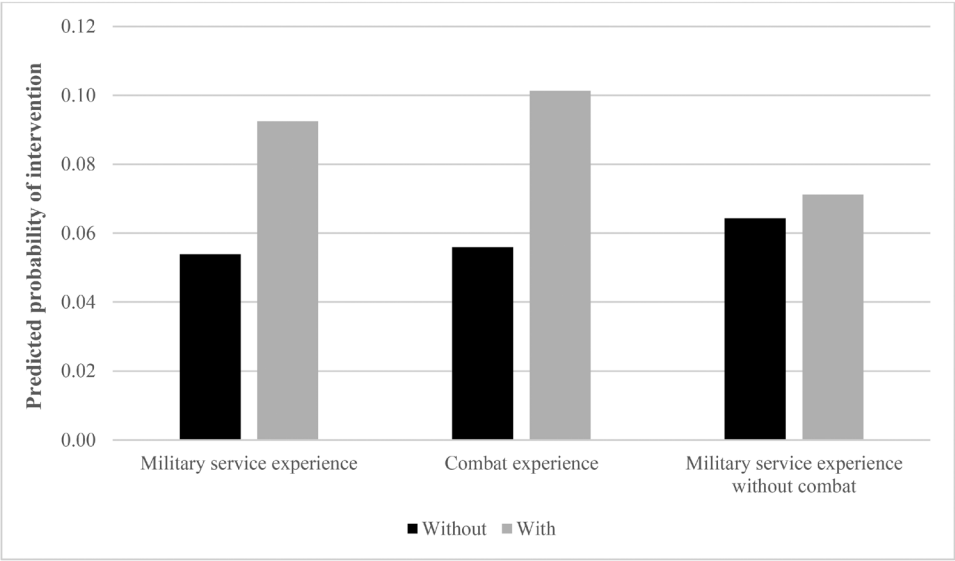

Figure 3. Effect of each independent variable on the probability of intervention (with rare event correction).

standard error of 0.175 and a p-value smaller than 0.001. This coefficient indicates a significant positive association between a leader's combat experience and the propensity to engage in third-party interventions. The odds ratio is approximately 1.90, suggesting that leaders with combat experience are about ninety percent more likely to initiate military interventions compared to those without such experience. Moreover, in a robustness check (Table 2) where I only use the COW Intrastate Wars dataset without any data modification explained in the above research design section, leaders' military (*H1*) and combat experience (*H2)* still show statistical significance. Military service experience (*H1*) demonstrates a similar coefficient value of 0.511 (versus 0.582 of the modified dataset) while that of combat experience (*H2*) decreased slightly from 0.642 to 0.516.

To further explore the unique impact of combat experience on third-party intervention, I added *Model 4* which includes both *Combat Experience* and *Military Service Experience without Combat*. Similar to the previous models, *Model 4* also shows that national leaders with combat experience are significantly more likely to engage in third-party intervention, with a coefficient of 0.686 ($p < 0.001$). In contrast, military service experience without combat is not likely to impact a leader's intervention decision. At the same time, the linear hypothesis test of *Combat Experience* and *Military Service Experience without Combat* in this model yielded a p-value of 0.193. This result fails to reject the null hypothesis of the two variables having the same effect on the dependent variable. In other words, given

Table 1. Relogit analysis of the impact of military experience on leaders' decision to intervene.

	Dependent variable: Decision to Intervene			
	Military Service Experience (*H1*)	Combat Experience (*H2*)	Military Service Experience Without Combat (*H3*)	Combat Experience vs. Service Experience Without Combat
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Military Service Experience	0.582*** (0.164)			
Combat Experience		0.642*** (0.175)		0.686*** (0.180)
Military Service Experience without Combat			0.109 (0.263)	0.328 (0.270)
Material Capability	9.083*** (1.340)	9.203*** (1.343)	9.220*** (1.330)	9.135*** (1.343)
Polity	0.037** (0.012)	0.034** (0.012)	0.028* (0.012)	0.036* (0.012)
Gender	−1.386** (0.420)	−1.347** (0.419)	−1.236** (0.417)	−1.381** (0.420)
Age	0.031*** (0.007)	0.030*** (0.007)	0.030*** (0.007)	0.031*** (0.420)
Cold War	0.481** (0.149)	0.489** (0.149)	0.537*** (0.148)	0.479** (0.149)
War Win	0.744*** (0.206)	0.684** (0.212)	1.001*** (0.192)	0.677** (0.211)
Constant	−3.847*** (0.561)	−3.777*** (0.559)	−3.735*** (0.559)	−3.816*** (0.560)
Observations	2,820	2,820	2,820	2,820

Note: Each cell contains coefficients and parentheses contain standard error for each value.
Significant levels: ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05.

the current model and data, both types of military experience may contribute similarly to the decision-making process regarding intervention.

The only independent variable without any meaningful association with the predicted possibility of intervention is military service experience without deployment in combat (*H3*). The difference between leaders with military service experience but no combat (7.21 percent) and those without such experience (6.44 percent) remains less than 0.1 percent, showing almost no impact especially when the standard error was taken into consideration. Similarly, in the relogit test, the coefficient of 0.109 suggests a very slight positive association between a leader's military experience without combat and the likelihood of military intervention; however, this relationship is not statistically significant. Moreover, the null hypothesis of no effect cannot be rejected given the p-value of 0.68, which is well above the significance threshold of 0.05. The standard error of 0.263 indicates a relatively high degree of uncertainty around the coefficient estimate. In the robustness check (Table 2), a leader's military service experience without combat shows a coefficient value of 0.194 which was a slight increase compared to 0.109 of the modified dataset models.

Table 2. Robustness Check (COW intrastate dataset only): Relogit analysis of the impact of military experience on leaders' decision to intervene.

	Dependent variable: Decision to Intervene			
	Military Service Experience (*H1*)	Combat Experience (*H2*)	Military Service Experience Without Combat (*H3*)	Combat Experience vs. Service Experience Without Combat
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Military Service Experience	0.530**			
	(0.194)			
Combat Experience		0.533*		0.590**
		(0.208)		(0.214)
Military Service Experience without Combat			0.233	0.413
			(0.300)	(0.304)
Material Capability	11.080***	11.161***	11.139***	11.096***
	(1.400)	(1.402)	(1.392)	(1.401)
Polity	0.015	0.012	0.008	0.015
	(0.573)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.014)
Gender	−0.934	−0.887	−0.811	−0.931
	(0.574)	(0.571)	(0.570)	(0.573)
Age	0.037***	0.036***	0.036***	0.038***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Cold War	0.010	0.023	0.060	0.009
	(0.181)	(0.181)	(0.180)	(0.181)
War Win	0.439	0.406	0.682**	0.399
	(0.255)	(0.260)	(0.237)	(0.260)
Constant	−4.765***	−4.701***	−4.679***	−4.749***
	(0.726)	(0.723)	(0.724)	(0.725)
Observations	2,820	2,820	2,820	2,820

Note: Each cell contains coefficients and parentheses contain standard error for each value.
Significant levels: ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05.

However, the result remains statistically insignificant, failing to reject the null hypothesis.

This is an interesting departure from Horowitz and Stam (2014) who find the strongest correlation between a leader's military experience without combat and leaders' propensity to initiate militarized conflicts in general. Their analysis of militarized disputes and wars shows the leader's combat experience to have the weakest impact and his/her military service without combat experience to have the strongest correlation. The authors explain this result by distinguishing the role of military experience in general and combat experience. They suggest that "direct exposure to combat should therefore generate more sensitivity to risk in the future" (534) but the impact of having gone through military training yields ambivalent results. On the one hand, civilian leaders are more likely to demonstrate "chicken-hawk" aggressiveness due to their lack of knowledge of the risks of armed conflicts. On the other hand, familiarity with the use of force can lead leaders with military experience to see it as a more viable, effective policy option. Comparing this result to my analysis of third-party

intervention, it is reasonable to conclude that there is a fundamentally different causal mechanism between a leader's decision to intervene in another country's civil war and a decision to initiate militarized conflict in general. As discussed above, sending troops for civil war intervention generally involves a much higher risk compared to fighting a war in that the leader's country is directly related. Moreover, in many cases, third-party intervention requires a certain level of altruism, which some scholars argue that having been in a combat situation may help one develop (Bodziany and Kałużny 2021; Brunk, Secrest, and Tamashiro 1990).

In addition to the main explanatory variables, all control variables show statically significant effects on the dependent variable with varying degrees of significance level. First, across all models, *Material Capability* has the strongest significant effect on the dependent variable in all three models. For instance, when there is a leader with combat experience in power, an increase in military capacity is associated with a nearly 9,873-fold increase in the odds of military intervention, with a positive coefficient of 9.203. Even in the case of *Model 3* (*H3*) where the main independent variable shows no effect, *Material Capability* demonstrates a strong positive effect on the dependent variable. This result is not surprising given that military intervention requires a significant amount of material resources. However, it is important to note that even after controlling for a leader's material capacity, whether s/he had military experience or not continues to show a significant effect. Moreover, *Material Capability* has the largest standard error values compared to all other variables in all three models.

In addition, *Polity* has a statistically significant positive effect across all three models at varying levels. The positive coefficients of all the models suggest modest but statistically significant associations between higher polity scores and the likelihood of military intervention. Nonetheless, in *Models 1* (*H1*) and *2* (*H2*) in which the main explanatory variables show strong effects, the impact size of polity scores is relatively smaller than that of the main explanatory variables. Additionally, in the robustness check (Table 2), *Polity* shows no statistical significance in any of the models.

Third, leaders' *Age* and *Gender* both show statistical significance across all three models. In all cases, older leaders were slightly more likely to engage in third-party intervention compared to younger leaders. For instance, in the case of *Model 2*, the positive coefficient of 0.030 indicates a slight but significant increase in the likelihood of military intervention with the increasing age of the leader. For each additional year in a leader's age, the odds of military intervention increase by approximately 3.1 percent. While I also tested for possible interactions between leaders' age and polity (Horowitz, McDermott, and Stam 2005), I did not include them in the results due to the interaction terms having almost no effect on the

models. They were statistically not significant with p-values higher than 0.01 and coefficient values close to 0 in all models.

In addition, female leaders were significantly more likely to deploy troops in a foreign civil war compared to their male counterparts. For instance, in *Model 2*, *Gender* shows a coefficient value of -1.347, meaning that a female leader is approximately seventy four percent more likely to intervene. However, it is crucial to note that in the whole dataset, there were only forty six female leaders and none of them had any type of military experience. Therefore, while a leader's gender shows a significant correlation with his/her likelihood of third-party intervention, there is a strong chance that this result is skewed due to the lack of cases in which a female leader has military experience.

Moreover, a leader's experience participating in an armed conflict that resulted in a victory had a strong significant impact across all three models. In *Model 1*, for example, the positive coefficient of 0.744 indicates a strong positive association between a leader's experience in winning a war and the likelihood of military intervention. Leaders who have experience in winning a war prior to entering office are approximately two times more likely (odds ratio = 2.104) to engage in military interventions compared to those without such experience. This result indicates that a leader's previous experience of winning a war can lead to having familiarity with military means and gaining confidence in using it as a policy tool, resulting in a higher propensity to engage in military intervention.

Lastly, *Cold War* has highly a significant effect across all three models, which implies that more third-party intervention was likely to take place, on average, during the Cold War as compared with other periods of time. For instance, in *Model 1*, during the Cold War period, the odds of a leader conducting a military intervention were approximately 1.618 times higher compared to other periods. This could be due to the superpower competition during the Cold War era when both blocs actively engaged in military intervention, and the widespread prevalence of civil conflict, facilitated by both the Soviet Union and the United States' efforts to selectively stabilize or destabilize governments across the world as it suited their purposes. However, in Table 2 robustness check, *Cold War* did not show any statistical significance in any of the models.

Conclusion

As Vertzberger (1998) rightly observes, "no intervention decision is intended to be carried out at any and all costs." (5) Whenever a leader decides to use force abroad, s/he is exposing him/herself to potential risks such as mass casualties, entrapment into the conflict, and political denouncement (Taliaferro 2004). In many cases, third-party

intervention is not directly linked to a state's *raison d'état*. We must expect then that a large part of the variation we perceive in the decision to intervene will be accounted for by the variation in how different leaders perceive these risks. Therefore, a leader's prior experience should be seen as a crucial component of how we understand third-party interventions.

I want to conclude by suggesting two final avenues that future studies might seek to expand the findings of this study and provide further analyses on the importance of differences among national leaders and his/her individual experiences in making security decisions. First, how does the specific combat role that an individual leader holds uniquely affect his/her foreign policy decision-making? Truman was a captain in the artillery and was unfazed by violence and also the decision to intervene in Korea. However, Eisenhower was the Supreme Commander of Allied forces in Europe and was far more reluctant to intervene, refusing to go along with Nixon in using conventional or nuclear force to aid the French in Vietnam. Eisenhower did promulgate the doctrine that bears his name, giving the US a blank check to intervene during the Cold War. He eventually invoked it in spectacular fashion in his intervention in Lebanon, committing around 14,000 troops to quell a comparatively minor uprising (Smith 2012). This makes it possible to further question whether commanding a brigade in combat produces a different perspective in a future leader than commanding entire armies does.

In addition, although this study accounts for leaders with the greatest power in making foreign policies, these decisions are often influenced by other members of the government such as high-ranking military commanders or vice presidents. Analyzing the interaction between leaders and these others will provide a more nuanced understanding of third-party intervention (Markwica 2018; Post 2003). To illustrate, Truman was distrustful of the military bureaucracy, and eventually, the generalship of his armies abroad, while Eisenhower was at home with them: Even as he would eventually, famously, question their political influence. Both had struggles with Congress and their domestic political institutions, and in Eisenhower's case, a vice president that he was deeply suspicious of. How do these institutions moderate or otherwise influence a leader's decision to intervene, and does this effect vary among the three categories—no military experience, experience without combat, and combat experience? Do combat-tested leaders feel more comfortable "pulling the trigger" while civilian leaders need to be reassured by the other players in the domestic political system? The rise in intrastate conflicts that I began with, and the pressure faced by Great Powers to intercede in them, suggests this is a very timely question.

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