

# Proxy Conflicts and the Use of Surrogates

Mitchell Deleel

## **Introduction**

The usage of proxies in warfare has been a constant method throughout history. From the usage of condottieri in medieval Europe, to the Cold War shift to militias and insurgencies, the nature of proxy warfare has evolved to meet new challenges and goals of governments and individuals alike. The usage of transnational military organizations such as terrorist organizations and private military companies has created a situation in which the nature of proxy warfare has fundamentally changed. Nations have turned to a new actor, surrogates, as the main method of fighting wars and achieving strategic goals. Surrogates are ambiguous in that they can participate in proxy wars but are also inherently different than proxies due to their transnational nature, and their ability to act outside of a traditional principal-agent relationship. Using the definition of proxy warfare provided by Amos Fox as well as a definition of surrogate warfare provided by Krieg and Rickli, this paper hopes to show the distinct differences between proxy and surrogate warfare, and then use those differences to show the difference in violence of these wars as a result. To aid in this analysis, four cases, Libya, Syria, Angola, and Vietnam will be used to demonstrate not only the difference in tactics, but the difference in the level of violence created by the use of surrogates and surrogate warfare in general. As such, surrogate warfare is a new form of international war which has made conflicts deadlier and longer than contemporary proxy wars.

## **Proxy Warfare**

Amos Fox provides a two-part definition of proxy warfare. First, Fox defines a proxy environment which is, “an environment characterized by two or more actors working towards a common objective; the relationship between the two actors is hierarchical and the principal actor is working by, with, and through another actor (an agent, or proxy) to accomplish its objective,” (Fox 2019). As such, proxy warfare is defined as an associated theory of action for proxy environments. In this case, proxy warfare is a practical implementation and manifestation of dominant actors who operate through non-dominant actors against an adversary to achieve objectives. This definition allows for many different degrees of proxy warfare which indicates that any major deviations from this model would justify a classification of a new type of warfare, either under the lens of similar concepts such as hybrid warfare or newer forms of warfare such as surrogate warfare (Fox 2019). Fox’s definition also allows for a deeper delve into different models of proxy warfare which provide a direct comparison method for different kinds of involvement in proxy situations. Specifically, the breakdown into two types of proxy relationships generates a hard model to compare certain aspects of conflicts to in order to see which aspects of the conflict fit into contemporary understandings of proxy warfare and which aspects fall into the definition of surrogate warfare.

Fox breaks proxy warfare down into two kinds of relationships between the principal and the agent; transactional relationships, and exploitative relationships. Transactional relationships are when a proxy requests the aid of a principal to achieve a strategic goal. In this case, the agent does not necessarily bind itself to the principal to achieve its goals, and the agent can subsequently place restrictions upon the principal force in order to mete out strategic goals in its own manner. This model is used to limit influence by the principal while allowing the principal to operate in the agent’s war. Here, Fox does not provide direct examples of this particular

model, however, he notes that China and Russia have both undercut America's usage of this model in Iraq by supplying their own arms and support with fewer caveats than American support (Fox 2019). The second model, exploitative relationships, are relations in which the agent is a parasitic partner in a relationship with the principal having most if not all control over the actions of the agent. This method of proxy warfare is mainly for the principal to find some method in order to effectively work within the region of interest, and the relationship is based on the agent's ability to fulfill the principal's goals (Fox 2019). This method is far more common in conflicts such as Russia's involvement in Ukraine and the US usage of the Syrian Democratic Forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

When it comes to the observation of the four cases presented at the beginning of the paper, the parameters for evaluation under a proxy war fall under whether the conflict has a clear principal and agent. If this dynamic exists, then it defaults to whether the agent-principal dynamic fits one of the two models of proxy relationships. If these cases fail to satisfy either condition, then may fall under a different form of warfare such as surrogate warfare, or another distinct form of warfare. This definition becomes particularly controversial when it comes to the involvement of Russia in Crimea, or with the usage of PMCs in proxy wars as Russia's involvement in the Donbass region of Ukraine may not fall directly under either model of proxy warfare provided by Fox as it includes the aiding of militia groups in the region by the Russian government as well as direct contributions by the Russian military through government special forces, or direct involvement of Russian generals (Rauta 2016).

### **Surrogate Warfare**

Challenging contemporary concepts of proxy warfare is the concept of surrogate warfare. Given the general climate of international politics as well as domestic politics at the end of the

Cold War, a new emphasis was given to the alleviation of casualties as well as the general need to follow international law and general human rights norms (Waldman 2019; Hyde 2020; Gilder 2017). The implementation of these aspects is varied at best, but the general questions of what to do in the face of a growing need for less casualties, increasing success, and plausible deniability, made it abundantly clear that contemporary proxies such as militias and military insurgencies may not be the best places to win a war, especially if one required speed. The 1990s and early 2000s saw sharp rise in the usage of non-state actors to complete strategic tasks in certain regions. Nations like the United States, Angola, and Sierra Leone used mercenaries such as Blackwater and EO to fight against stronger forces to create favorable conditions (Faulkner 2019). Mercenaries are not the only non-state actor involved, however, as nations like Iran heavily used agents such as Hezbollah to increase their own influence in the Middle East, particularly in Syria (Hyde 2020). Furthermore, the rise of the Islamic state also gave way to the potential for an international non-state proxy conflict between the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda (Cragin 2014). Overall, these conflicts and agents are entirely unique in their usage which gives rise to the concerns brought about by Krieg and Rickli when it comes to the idea of surrogate warfare.

Surrogate warfare is a broad term which encompasses many different forms of warfare which may fall under proxy conflicts, hybrid conflicts, or exist as its own separate entity. Krieg and Rickli define it as, “the conceptual umbrella for all forms of externalization of the burden of warfare to supplementary as well as substitutionary forces and platforms,” (Krieg and Rickli 2018). Under their definition surrogates are usable in proxy war, but surrogates are also useful outside of proxy warfare. Krieg and Rickli give examples of surrogates which include human surrogates such as terrorist organizations, insurgency groups, transnational movements,

mercenaries, or private military and security companies, and nonhuman surrogates such as drones and cyberwarfare. The concept of surrogate warfare is not directly in contention with the definition of proxy warfare, but the definition of surrogate warfare gives it an independent quality to proxy warfare because its definition is not limited to an agent-principal relationship in the same conflict. While surrogate warfare may fall under a transactional understanding of proxy warfare, the general difference between transactional proxy warfare and surrogate warfare comes in the alignment of goals within the region. Fox's definition suggests that the goals of both actors in the region are similar if not the same, but surrogate relationships do not follow a similar concept (Fox 2019). Agents in this situation are only at the behest of a principal when the principal asks for the agent to adhere to its priorities either through direct payment or through other forms of influence, but the agent would not participate in the conflict either way if it were not for the request of the principal (Krieg and Rickli 2018). This understanding is particularly true of mercenary companies as well as terrorist organizations who may appreciate the support of state actors as a result of helping principals achieve their goals, but have no independent reason to commit to acts of war in these regions in the first place. Consequently, the goals of the principal and the agent are not inherently aligned but can become aligned given proper support (Fox 2019). This analysis may not apply to insurgencies due to a lack of a transnational nature, but the proclivity of nations to use mercenaries, private military contractors, and terrorist organizations suggests that this objection will not apply to the cases reviewed in this particular instance (Waldman 2019).

Many modern conflicts which can be defined as proxy conflicts may be better defined as surrogate wars. Explicit examples include Syria and Yemen which have fallen under the definition of a "semi-proxy" war by authors such as Cragin, but the nature of involvement in

these regions, including the US usage of PMCs versus the Iranian and Russian backed usage of Hezbollah indicate that these conflicts are diverging from a traditional proxy war (Cragin 2014). That is not to say that these conflicts may not fall under the definition of a proxy war, but the usage of certain actors in this conflict muddle the situation to an extent that may indict the ability to strictly apply the term proxy war to them. In particular, the usage of drones in the Yemeni Civil war has proven an inability for Saudi Arabia to contain the war to a traditional proxy sense, i.e., keeping the war within Yemen's borders (Krieg and Rickli 2018).

### **Effects of Increasing Surrogate Warfare**

Regardless of whether surrogate warfare exactly fits the definition of the current conflicts around the world as of now, the increased usage of surrogates has led to direct effects on conflicts. Some of these situations see surrogates as nothing more than intermediary help or technical advice, such as with US PMC usage (Maddocks 2020). Other cases have seen the usage of surrogates for much more violent means. For instance, many nations use surrogates to fill in the roles that it would normally take if it were to directly involve itself in a conflict. This results in a state using surrogates to enact violence on other states without any form of liability or threat of harm to itself. Surrogates offer a convenient method by which one can fight a war without needing the traditional requirements for a transactional or exploitative proxy relationship which means that they can operate on a much better and more acceptable scale for the nations that use them (Fox 2019; Maddocks 2020). Surrogates display this advantage in a couple of ways. First, the transnational nature of surrogates means that they can operate in any combat zone without an attachment to culture, religion, etc..... As such, nations who use surrogates need not worry about the failure of the relationship for ethical considerations, although that relationship may be less true when it comes to terrorist organizations and insurgencies (Rauta 2016). Second, the fact that

surrogates are harder to account for internationally makes them an easy choice for plausible deniability. For instance, Iran can use Hezbollah as an acceptable surrogate because it does not define Hezbollah as a terrorist organization (Maddocks 2020).

In the case of hybrid wars, surrogates can act as auxiliary forces, or frontline forces depending on their relative strength to the nation that hires them. In this case, surrogate forces can train the military of a nation that hires them such as the case of Angola after the end of the first civil war, or the nation may hire/use surrogates in order to fill gaps in a line. This effect can either be the case of using militia forces to garrison town and villages, or the usage of surrogate forces to takeover frontline fighting from militias to accelerate the war to victory (Aliyev 2019). In these cases, the usage of surrogates is an attempt to externalize the burden of warfare away from the state itself, which means that surrogate warfare operates on a fundamentally different, and less internationally regulated level than traditional proxy conflict. Because surrogates are less regulated, their usefulness in conflicts only increases.

These upsides are wrought with disadvantages however, and the most obvious disadvantage comes from the bloodiness involved in the usage of surrogate forces (Aliyev 2019). For instance, the usage of surrogate forces creates an ambiguity in force calculations which confuses those who use surrogate forces as well as those fighting against surrogate forces (Anderson 2019). Surrogate forces disrupt the concept of burden sharing which destroys the ability for nations to accurately predict the end of a war. Furthermore, multiple surrogate actors in a conflict create an ambiguous situation where the state of enemy forces is never truly known. Actors who hire surrogate forces may overestimate their position while the other side may underestimate theirs, leading to a greater reason to attack the other side in order to secure victory or to deal massive blows to the enemy forces in an attempt to reinstate the balance of power.

These situations have come to light in the Ukrainian civil war where Ukrainian forces have been surprised by Russian forces in the region. Ukrainian armed forces have had to deal with Russian special forces several times in the Donbass region of Ukraine, and the continued interaction of Russian soldiers with Russian funded militias has extensively increased the amount of ambiguity in the conflict (Anderson 2019). Surrogates also lead to bloodier and longer wars precisely because they are expendable to the principal that hires them. Due to the nature of their use, surrogates often participate in bloodier battles to pursue decisive victories, and this results in bloodier battles, and more violent incidents (Aliyev 2020). Surrogates also lead to longer sieges during warfare (Fox 2019). These factors together suggest that there is a material cost to using surrogates which increases the more heavily they are used.

Surrogate warfare also has a unique downside in that it does not fall under Fox's model of proxy warfare. One of the major parts of proxy warfare is the agent-principal interaction that underlies both of Fox's models of proxy warfare, which means that any actors not bound in this style of relationship are more likely to fail. Surrogates often have no reason to stay in a conflict beyond monetary reasons, and this results in a relationship even weaker than one under a transactional proxy warfare model (Fox 2019). The first aspect of this weakness comes in the fact that surrogates often join conflicts because of a monetary or influential gain in the area, and not for the same reason as the principal in this situation. There is no direct consequence for the surrogate should the surrogate wish to remove themselves from the situation. This situation leads surrogates to operate on a competitiveness principle, and there may be situations wherein surrogates need not act in line with the principal's desires simply because they may have no one else to turn to (Faulkner 2019). Surrogates may use this lack of care to commit human rights abuses against those they protect which risks increasing the severity of civil conflicts (Aliyev



2020) (Krieg and Rickli 2018). This dynamic is more dangerous if these surrogates gain access to nations who have stockpiles of WMDs as seen in the case of Syria with the possibility for either Hezbollah, the Islamic State, or Al Qaeda to get ahold of these weapons. (Cragin 2014).

Surrogate warfare ultimately leads to the retrenchment of the wars surrogates are involved in. In this case, surrogates may win wars faster and with relatively few casualties, but they do not stay for the nation-building aspects of a post-war environment, and most peace agreements usually require the removal of surrogates in order to be considered legitimate in the first place (Faulkner 2019). This failure to prevent future wars is usually down to the calculations described earlier. If it stands to reason that one side lost the war because the other had a surrogate, then the removal of that surrogate after peace is cause to go to war again because of the shift in force calculations (Faulkner 2019). This calculation makes surrogates a detriment when it comes to solving wars for small nations as well as large ones. Even the United States' use of surrogates forced it back into Iraq and Afghanistan after the usage of surrogates failed to produce a stable result (Waldman 2019).

The final aspect surrogates present a significant challenge to is the legal ramifications of proxy war in general. Surrogates are not well defined under international law, and this lack of definition has material impacts on the people who are directly affected by surrogates. For instance, international law has little ability to designate occupation by surrogate to occupation of the country who hired or supported the surrogate (Gilder 2017). The implications of using a surrogate are that there is little legal protection for those under the occupation of one. International law acknowledges the fact of an occupying force in the region, but the nature of the force makes it inherently different from that of a military occupation (Gilder 2017). The natural result of this oversight is the inability to cleanly apply laws of military occupation to those

occupied by surrogates, and it puts these populations at a massive risk. Given the propensity for surrogates to violate human rights norms, it means that these individuals will be less likely to be prosecuted on an international level which gives them license to commit abuses (Aliyev 2020). Furthermore, attribution is also at the heart of this discussion, as the usage of surrogates distances countries from the need to adhere to international arms law. For instance, international law bans the sale of arms to terrorist organizations, but the lack of a unified, practicing definition of a terrorist makes this law extremely weak to nations who need to empower surrogates to gain influence in regions (Maddocks 2020). This weakness makes it harder to stop the usage of surrogates, but also makes it easier for surrogates to gain international aid because of their international nature and the ability for nations to define terrorism in ways that would allow them to supply surrogates they require for strategic purposes.

## **Case Analysis**

With all of these factors in mind, the second half of this paper will analyze four civil wars (Vietnam, Angola, Libya, and Syria) to show the differences between a contemporary proxy war and a newer surrogate war. These analyses will assume a general background knowledge of each conflict, but each case will include all relevant actors in the conflict as well as a justification for including the case in either a surrogate context or a contemporary proxy war context. Once these differences are established, all cases will include length, and deaths, but there will also be an observance of whether the conflict restarted after its initial resolution if applicable. All death per day numbers are measured with the inclusion of both civilian and military deaths as the literature emphasizes a focus on the impact of surrogates on civilians, so their inclusion in the death count is mandatory.

## **Vietnam**

The Vietnam War embodies the textbook definition of a contemporary proxy war. It has clear principal-agent relationship with the United States and the South Vietnamese government with many of the interactions falling under the lens of an exploitative proxy relationship (Fox 2019). The actors included in this war are mostly state actors, with the Khmer Rouge being a significant outlier in this case as they had no direct control over Cambodia until 1975. The simplest breakdown of the actors included in the war would be North Vietnam led by Ho Chi Minh on one side, and South Vietnam and the United States on the other (Peace et. al. 2017). North Vietnam would receive most of its support from the Soviet Union and communist parties in the region while South Vietnam received material as well as direct troop aid from the United States, and its allies including Australia, South Korea, and Cambodia (Peace et al. 2017). One important note, however, is that this analysis of the Vietnam war only goes from 1965 to 1975. While the United States was involved in Vietnam before this point, the United States fully devoted itself to the war in 1965, and death count in this timeframe may be more accurate than the amount of deaths counted before this timeframe (Hirschman et al. 1995). Furthermore, the inclusion of United States intervention before 1965 would muddle the definition of Vietnam as a blatant proxy war as it would need to include CIA intervention in the region as well as Kennedy's deployment of 500 Green Berets in the region for secret missions. While this may fall under the definition of proxy conflict as well, it lacks any inherent usefulness for this analysis (Peace et al. 2017).

With the actors and background out of the way, the metrics for the Vietnam War are muddled at best. In terms of deaths, Vietnam was particularly horrible with deaths from civilian massacres to strategic bombing as well as the deployment of napalm and agent orange which resulted in massive civilian casualties (Peace et al. 2017). Given the scenario provided, the

Vietnam war lasted ten years with an estimated 1.41 million deaths including both civilian and military deaths (Hirschman et al. 1995). Assessments by the Vietnamese government push this number up to about 3 million dead, although this number is likely including the deaths from the 1950s to 1965, so it is likely that these extra 2 million deaths would not fit this metric. With these metrics, the deaths per years comes out to about 114,000 per year or about 312 deaths per day. If one wishes to use the extended timeframe provided by the Vietnamese government, however, the metric changes to a total of 3.1 million deaths over 19 years, which puts the deaths per year at about 163,000 or about 447 deaths per day. In either case, the war ended in 1975 with no significant recurrences of war as Ho Chi Minh successfully reunited North and South Vietnam.

## **Angola**

The case for Angola is controversial in a couple of ways, but the definition of this war, and the actors involved, pushes this war into the category of a contemporary proxy war. First, the description of this war can either include the war from 1994 to 2002 as part of the original 1975 conflict, or it may be separated into two parts (“The Angolan...” 2019: “Angola – First...” 2017). For the purposes of this analysis, the Angolan Civil War will be classified as the first Angolan Civil War from 1975 to 1994. The reasoning for this classification is twofold. First, this section of the war does not include any external non-state actors. At this point UNITA and the MPLA were only aided by state actors such as Cuba, the United States, and China and external help from South Africa was still government related (“Angola – First...” 2017). After the failure of the 1994 ceasefire, however, the MPLA hired an external mercenary organization known as Executive Outcomes, or EO (Faulkner 2019). This mercenary organization would play a major role in the post 1994 conflict, and heavily influenced the relations between the MPLA and

UNITA in future peace deals which makes the second civil war inherently different from the first. In this case, the conflict falls out of the region of a contemporary proxy war and falls in line with concepts of surrogate warfare precisely because of this actor, so including death metrics for the entire stretch of conflicts between UNITAS and the MPLA as one centralized war would be misleading at best. Second, including these other conflicts as part of the same general war would disrupt the metric of state actor influences in the conflict. For instance, the United States removed its support from the conflict in 1991 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Therefore, defining the Angolan Civil War as all the conflicts between 1975 and 2002 would inherently harm the validity of the analysis.

With this definition established and the actors included, the metrics for the First Angolan Civil War are hard to evaluate. Much of this ambiguity is due to the different definitions of the Angolan Civil war, and estimates vary wildly as a result. For instance, some estimates put the total death count at about 300,000 total deaths for a period of 16 years (Angola – First... 2017). This estimate puts the deaths per year count at about 19,000, with a death per day count of about 51. Other estimates put the total death count slightly higher at about 350,000 while another estimate puts deaths at about a third of these two estimates at 100,000. (World Peace 2015). One important note is that this conflict reignited after its resolution. After the peace agreement signed in 1991, elections in 1992 saw UNITA lose to the MPLA, leading UNITA to denounce the results of the election and return to a civil war. Here, the nature of the conflict shifted when UNITA hired EO, and defeated the MPLA for a second time, although this peace would also fail after EO left and the MPLA found a new opportunity to strike (Faulkner 2019). As such, the future wars in Angola may fall under the surrogate model, but the first war does not.

## **Libya**

If Vietnam represents the truest form of a proxy war, then Libya represents the truest form of surrogate warfare in action. For this analysis, the case of Libya is the Second Libyan Civil War which began in 2014. Due to the nature of UN involvement in the first Libyan Civil War, that conflict could be described as a proxy war at best, and intervention at worst. The Second Libyan Civil War, however, is a vastly different conflict with an exceptional number of actors and surrogates in the region. Before discussing these surrogates however, there are a few state influences in the region that must be addressed. These actors include countries such as Iran, Egypt, the Gulf States, and France. They have involved themselves for a myriad of reasons, but the main conflict centers around the removal or support of jihadists and fundamental Islamists in government positions and general positions of power (Souleimanov and Aslan 2019). While many of these state actors work to influence this region through things such as direct military aid or material support, states have also used a plethora of surrogates to achieve strategic goals in the region. For example, Russian mercenaries known as the Wagner Group have allegedly been seen in the region and the chaos in Libya has proven a hotspot for terrorist organizations (“Wagner...” 2020). Al-Qaeda and ISIS have both taken refuge in Libya and have both fought for influence in the region (Roggio and Gutowski 2018). Furthermore, Libya has also been host to nonhuman surrogates as well as the UAE has been investigated recently for using drones in Libya (“UAE...” 2020). In either case, the number of surrogates operating in Libya is high even with the high level of state influence in the region.

Given the inconclusiveness of the Libyan Civil War at the time of writing, there is no set end date for this war. As of now the war has been progressing for about six years with no real signs of stopping. As such, the metrics for this conflict are incomplete currently, but current estimates vary wildly. Some reports only have 2,500 to 25,000 deaths as an estimate for the

conflict, but recent estimates suggest that the actual number of deaths totals to about 470,000. Given that the estimate of 470,000 is the most recent one, it will be the one used for the purposes of this paper. This number puts the number of deaths per year at about 78,000 with the number of deaths per day reaching about 215 (“Libyan Civil War” 2020). Furthermore, there is no way to tell if this war will reignite or not considering it has yet to come to a ceasefire agreement. The literature would suggest that this war may reignite given the massive number of surrogates in the region, but no definitive measures exist to know for sure. The only real measure of whether this conflict will reignite is based on the end of the first Libyan Civil War, which ended in hard divisions between ethnic and geographic groups despite the unity required to defeat Gadhafi.

## **Syria**

The final conflict to analyze is the Syrian Civil War. Given the unique nature of the conflict including the usage of Kurdish militias and the emergence of ISIS, the Syrian Civil War can shift between the definition of a proxy war and the definition of a surrogate war depending on the angle one looks at it from. While this war may initially appear as a simple United States versus Russia proxy war, the details of the conflict push it more towards the side of a surrogate war. First, the definition of Syria as a proxy war would have to have the United States pick a proxy to go through which it never achieved. The United States helped the Kurds in the region, but that support was more to go against ISIS than it was to overthrow Assad. The only real conventional proxy assistance against Assad was provided by Turkey to Syrian rebels. The biggest issue in Syria, however, comes from the massive amount of surrogate forces in the region and how they interacted with each other regarding this new unstable hotspot. The main surrogate actor in the region for much of the war was ISIS, who worked within Syria to establish its caliphate. The main surrogates in this region, however, are Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah. The

emergence of the Syrian Civil War was massive for both sides as Hezbollah worked with Russia and Iran in order to aid the Assad regime while Al-Qaeda attempted to reestablish its credibility after losing much of its power after the lessons learned from the Arab Spring (Cragin 2014). In any case, these regional actors represented a transnational interest in the region distinct from the individual goals of conditions they worked in.

While the Syrian Civil War is a debatable war in terms of whether it directly falls under a surrogate or proxy war, the central metrics of the war are still a central point. As of now, the Syrian Civil War is still ongoing so the death total for the war is not complete, but there have been 400,000 deaths since the war began in 2011, which puts it at its ninth year of action (“Civil War...” 2020). These metrics put the Syrian Civil War at 44,000 deaths per year which is about 121 deaths per day. Overall there is no telling if stability will inherently return to Syria, but given the recent decreases in American intervention in the region, and the general defeat of ISIS, it would appear that Assad will keep control of Syria for now. Of course, this metric fails to account for the massive exodus of refugees, but the aspects of bloodiness, time, and reignitions do not allow for the accounting of such a factor.

### Summary of Analysis

Case Name	Case Type	Deaths Per Day
Vietnam	Proxy War	312
Angola	Proxy War	51
Libya	Surrogate War	215
Syria	Surrogate War*	121



## Conclusion

From the cases shown above there is an incredibly different rate for each case and for both kinds of conflict. For instance, Vietnam's deaths per day of 312 massively outweigh Libya's 215, or Syria's 121, but Libya and Syria both outweigh the first Angolan Civil War. Furthermore, it appears that time has no direct impact on the amount of deaths per day as Angola, the longest war, had the least deaths per day. On the other hand, the scale of these wars varies in scope and this factor cannot be readily accounted for by a simple deaths per day analysis. Any future measure of this violence would need a more advanced set of variables to properly account for the scale of the conflict. Finally, the overall method of determining what counts as a surrogate in a conflict and what counts as a proxy is ad hoc at best, but the overall definition of surrogate warfare calls for a rather subjective interpretation of combatants and actors within a region.

Proxy wars and surrogate wars are hard to inherently separate due to the nature of one being closely intertwined with another. The differences, however, are distinct enough to show that surrogate warfare has a fundamentally different shape than proxy warfare in both aspects of motive and actors which make them far more unique than traditional proxy wars. Furthermore, the increase in use of surrogates has made war more dangerous in the long run and has led to the retrenchment of war due to the inability to create lasting peace after the end of a conflict. Also, surrogates in conflict have been shown to lead to human rights abuses and more violence for the communities they protect. Surrogates are also relatively unregulated in international law standards which drastically impacts their ability to operate and allows them to function with little to no oversight. These factors make the wars that surrogates participate in more deadly and leads to the possibility of creating new wars which implicates future conflicts and interventions.

As of now, there are very few solutions to the usage of surrogates beyond their ban or restriction in international law. As the literature review showed, there are major areas where surrogates can operate under the radar both figuratively and literally, which makes them perfect candidates for state actions. For this reason it may be best to invest time and effort into reevaluating international law and the usage of surrogates in order to limit their use, or limit their usefulness for state actors so that they may no longer have the opportunity to inflict unjust harm upon populations. This solution is hardly applicable to terrorist organizations, but such organizations already fall under a different part of international law. The only other way to reduce the usage of surrogates in a region is to simply discourage nations from using them by setting our own examples. The more states suffer no repercussions for using surrogates, the more states will see surrogates as a useful alternative, and while the cases may show that contemporary proxy warfare can be just as dangerous, the usage of surrogates has yet to decrease the severity of conflicts by such a significant margin to justify their human rights abuses.

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