

Strange Bedfellows:
The Strategic Dynamics of
Major Power Military Interventions *

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Abstract

Intuition suggests that major powers should be more likely to pursue joint military intervention when their preferences are most similar, but empirically, joint interventions are least likely in these cases. The solution to this puzzle lies in the strategic interaction between interveners. When states agree over policy, they face a free rider problem. A state is more willing to join an intervention as its preferences with the initial intervener diverge because doing so allows it to affect policy outcomes. To test the theory, a statistical model derived from the theoretical model is used to estimate the factors that affect the decisions of major powers to intervene in civil conflicts.

Despite the existence of a norm of nonintervention in modern international law, major powers often intervene to affect the domestic policies and authority structures of less powerful states. However, the propensity of states to intervene varies. In 2003, the United States and some of its allies were willing to intervene militarily to install a more preferred regime in Iraq despite cries by many that such an action was illegitimate. At the same time, the major powers found themselves unwilling to intervene to end the genocide in Darfur, even though such an action may save thousands of lives and would be considered legitimate under international law. These recent examples highlight that intervention decisions, rather than being based largely upon legal or moral principles, are largely political in nature.

The Iraq and Darfur examples also point to the fact that the propensity of major powers to pursue joint intervention is not necessarily related to the similarity of their preferences over the issues at stake. Despite some differences of opinion, the United States and Britain were willing to form a coalition to intervene in Iraq. On the other hand, while a majority of the countries in the world have signed the genocide convention, the major powers are unwilling to intervene jointly to stop the genocide in Darfur.

Since states generally agree on many humanitarian issues, one might expect that major powers would be likely to pursue joint intervention in response to a humanitarian crisis, like genocide. Given the international consensus on the immorality of genocide and the high costs of intervention in such cases, major powers would be better off if they could act together and share the costs of ending a genocide. As Power (2002, 263) argues, "Genocide prevention is an immense burden that must be shared." However, as the Rwanda genocide illustrated, the world community has generally failed to intervene and end mass killing (Valentino 2003).

This disjuncture between the desire of states to end humanitarian crises and their actual behavior can be explained once one considers the strategic environment in which major powers interact. The analysis that follows shows that states are less willing to intervene jointly when they have similar preferences over the issues at stake. The reason behind this finding is intuitive. If states agree on an issue, they have incentives to free ride and let other

states bear the costs of intervention. Joint intervention should be unlikely in cases where there is complete consensus on the issue at stake. Instead, states will be willing to intervene jointly when they disagree on some aspect of the issue. This divisive dimension provides a selective incentive that allows states to overcome the free rider problem. By intervening jointly, states gain benefits that they would not receive if they stayed out.

To examine the strategic factors that lead major powers to intervene, as well as join or counter the interventions of others, I model the decision of two major powers to intervene in a third target state. The theory indicates that a major power is more likely to join or counter an intervention the farther its preferences are from the intervening power. To test the theory, a strategic choice statistical model derived from the theoretical model is used to estimate the factors that affected the decisions of major powers to intervene in countries undergoing civil conflicts from 1944 to 1998. The results provide strong support for the theory, indicating the utility of using game theory to examine the intervention decisions of states. The implications of the theoretical and statistical analysis also help to explain the intervention behavior of major powers, including the unilateral and counter-interventions of the superpowers during the Cold War and the reluctance of states to intervene in humanitarian crises.

Background

The consensus among international law scholars is that intervention is the “*dictatorial* interference by one state in the affairs of another state for the purpose of either maintaining or changing the existing order of things” (von Glahn 1992, 171, emphasis in original). As de Lima (1971) adds, the essence of intervention is compulsion. Using force, an intervening state aims to preserve or change the existing domestic political structures of the target state. Thus, intervention is both “authority-oriented” and “convention-breaking” (Rosenau 1969).

Scholars have proposed various explanations for the intervention decisions of states. Some argue that states primarily intervene for humanitarian or normative purposes. Regan (2000) argues that intervention is primarily a conflict management tool and that states intervene to

end civil conflicts. Butler (2003) finds that just war considerations have played a significant role in U.S. intervention decisions. Other scholars have argued that states intervene for domestic political purposes. Saideman (2001) finds that in order to maintain domestic political support, leaders often choose to intervene in ethnic conflicts on behalf of combatants that share ethnic ties with their constituents. In his study of the Reagan Doctrine, Smith (1996) argues that U.S. intervention policy has largely been the result of the interactions of various foreign policy elites. In addition to normative and domestic factors, intervention decisions may be affected by the structural relationship between the potential intervener and the target. Many have noted that intervention requires an asymmetry in power between intervener and target (Krasner 1999, Dorman and Otte 1995, Bull 1984). As Ignatieff (2002, 240) states, “intervention occurs, in general, where states are weak, too friendless to resist.”

Intervention decisions, however, do not only depend upon the power relationship between a potential intervener and a target state. Major powers also take into account the anticipated actions of *other* powers when deciding whether to intervene. As Balch-Lindsay and Enterline (2000, 619) note, “the effect of actions pursued by a single third party actor is contingent upon the behavior of these other actors.” For example, if one major power decides to intervene, then other powers may join or counter the intervention. Since a credible threat of counter-intervention can be used as a form of extended deterrence, Krasner (1999) argues that interventions to change the constitutional structures of states are only pursued when there is no credible threat of great power counter-intervention or when there is the formation of a great-power condominium. Other scholars, such as Feste (1992) and Smith (1996), have noted that the strategic relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union was a primary factor influencing superpower intervention decisions during the Cold War. These cases indicate that inter-power strategic concerns play a role in intervention decisions, and the analysis below systematically examines such relationships. Though primarily focused on strategic factors, the analysis does not exclude the possibility that other factors such as the domestic characteristics of major powers or their relationships with target states influence

intervention decisions. While it is assumed that the relative preferences of states over the issues at stake affect intervention decisions, there is no assumption as to how preferences are formed. Instead, the analysis aims to examine to what extent, given those preferences, inter-power strategic factors affect intervention decisions.

Given that previous scholars such as Krasner (1999) and Hoffman (1984) have underscored the importance of strategic interaction between potential interveners, one would expect that game theory would be a useful method to study intervention decisions. Surprisingly, few authors have used such methods to investigate the decision to intervene in the domestic affairs of other states. Cetinyan (2002) develops a game-theoretic model to analyze the effect of a potential external intervention on domestic bargaining between ethnic groups, and Carment and Rowlands (1998) use game theory to examine the decision of an external actor to intervene in an ongoing civil war. However, none of these previous studies have explicitly modeled how the expected or realized actions of other potential interveners affect intervention decisions. Additionally, quantitative empirical studies of intervention have generally examined the intervention decisions of individual states and/or the propensity of states to be targets of interventions, ignoring the strategic interaction of potential interveners.¹ The analysis that follows develops a game theoretic model to examine the strategic intervention decisions of major powers and then tests the theory using data on interventions in civil wars.

The Intervention Game

Since game theory allows one to formally examine how changes in preferences affect actors' decisions in a strategic setting, it provides a useful framework to examine the relationship between the types of issues at stake in a given situation and states' decisions to intervene. To model different types of issues, it is assumed that each issue has two dimensions—one in which potential interveners agree and one in which they do not—and that issue type depends upon the relative importance (i.e., weight) of each dimension. By varying the weight placed on the two dimensions, one can examine how the extent to which states agree on an issue

affects their decisions to pursue unilateral, joint, and counter-interventions.

The intervention game captures the fundamental strategic elements that underlie the intervention decisions of major powers. During the play of the game, two powers (1 and 2) must decide whether to intervene in a target state, T . I assume that T is sufficiently weak that it cannot prevent the major powers from intervening. Given this, T is not explicitly modeled as a player in the game.² Powers 1 and 2 want to change the domestic policy, π , on some issue in state T . However, they may or may not agree about ideal policy on the issue at question. If the powers are in complete accord as to what the ideal policy on an issue should be, then I call the issue a *consensus issue*. On the other hand, when their preferences on how the policy should be changed are diametrically opposed, the issue is labeled a *divisive issue*. Issues that have both divisive and consensus elements are denoted *intermediate issues*.

To capture the variety of issues that could be faced, the relevant policy space is assumed to be a two-dimensional space defined on the unit interval. On one dimension, X , the powers have conflicting preferences. For $0 \leq x \leq 1$, let $x = 1$ and $x = 0$ be the most preferred policies for Powers 1 and 2, respectively. On the other dimension, Y , the powers have the same preferences: $y = 1$ is the most preferred policy for both powers. Let $P \equiv X \times Y = [0, 1]^2$ denote the entire policy space, where $\pi \in P$. A graph of the space can be found in Figure 1.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

An issue is defined by a level of divisiveness, $\delta \in [0, 1]$. The weight δ indicates the relative importance of the x -dimension in the issue. Thus, the higher is δ , the more opposed the powers are on the issue at hand. In the terminology outlined above, the value $\delta = 0$ corresponds to a consensus issue, while when $\delta = 1$, the issue is divisive. Values of δ strictly between 0 and 1 refer to intermediate issues. Let π_i refer to player i 's ideal policy. Given the parameters defined above, $\pi_1 = (1, 1)$ and $\pi_2 = (0, 1)$. While Power 1 prefers higher values of x and Power 2 prefers lower values of x , both players prefer higher values of y . Let s_i be the salience of the issue to player i . That is, the higher the value of s_i , the more i cares about the issue. To incorporate all of these factors, the utility functions of Powers 1 and 2

over a policy π are $u_1(\pi) = s_1[\delta x + (1 - \delta)y]$ and $u_2(\pi) = s_2[\delta(1 - x) + (1 - \delta)y]$, respectively. Given these utility functions, Power i 's ideal policy (π_i) gives the greatest possibility utility, s_i . The utility for other policies is determined by the distance from the ideal policy on each dimension and the relative weight of the x -dimension (δ).

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

The game tree for the model can be found in Figure 2. Prior to play, the status quo policy in the target state T is $\pi_Q = (\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$. In the first move, Power 1 decides whether to intervene. If Power 1 does not intervene, Power 2 has the option to intervene unilaterally or take no action. If Power 2 intervenes unilaterally, it imposes its ideal policy, π_2 . If Power 2 opts to not intervene, the status quo policy is maintained. If, at the first node, Power 1 decides to intervene, Power 2 can join, counter, or acquiesce to Power 1's intervention. If Power 2 joins, the policy outcome, π_J , is a compromise between 1 and 2. Assume that π_J is located on the contract curve between the players' ideal points and is a function of their relative power. If $r_i \in (0, 1)$ is the relative power of i , such that $r_1 = 1 - r_2$, then $\pi_J = (r_1, 1)$. On the other hand, if Power 2 counters the intervention, then a conflict ensues between the two. I assume that the probability that a player wins the conflict is equal to its relative power and that the winner is able to impose its ideal policy. Thus, in a counter-intervention, the final policy is π_1 with probability r_1 and π_2 with probability r_2 . Finally, if Power 2 decides to stay out, the result is a unilateral intervention in which Power 1 imposes its ideal policy, π_1 .

In addition to gaining policy benefits, interveners must also pay costs. Thus, I assume that if Power i intervenes unilaterally then it pays a cost of military intervention, $m_i > 0$. In the case of a counter-intervention, Powers 1 and 2 pay a cost of c_1 and c_2 respectively. Finally, when they intervene jointly, the powers pay positive costs of k_1 and k_2 . For each outcome γ , let $U_i(\gamma)$ represent player i 's utility. Table 1 lists the players' utilities for each of the possible outcomes, including both the policy benefits and any incurred costs.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The subgame perfect equilibrium of the game can be solved by backwards induction.

Rather than outlining the entire solution of the equilibrium, I focus on how the level of divisiveness affects the equilibrium strategies of the players. First, consider the strategy of Power 2. Since the level of divisiveness does not affect the relative utility of unilateral intervention and the status quo, the level of divisiveness will only affect Power 2's decision to intervene in cases where Power 1 has already decided to intervene. As the level of divisiveness increases, the utility for Power 2 of the expected policy resulting from a joint- or counter-intervention increases relative to the policy resulting from a unilateral intervention by Power 1. Given this, an increase in the level of divisiveness increases the likelihood of that Power 2 will join or counter an intervention by Power 1.³

Now consider Power 1's decision at the beginning of the game. The relationship between the level of divisiveness and Power 1's decision to intervene depends upon Power 2's expected action if Power 1 stays out. If Power 2 will intervene if Power 1 does not, then Power 1's choice is to intervene or accept Power 2's ideal policy. In this case, the further apart the preferences of the major powers, the greater the incentive for Power 1 to preempt a unilateral intervention by Power 2 and intervene itself. On the other hand, if Power 2 will not intervene if Power 1 stays out, then the failure of Power 1 to act will result in the maintenance of the status quo. In this case, Power 1 will choose to face a joint or counter-intervention only if the powers' preferences are close enough that such an outcome will make Power 1 better off than the status quo. Thus, if Power 2 will counter or join an intervention but is not willing to pursue unilateral intervention, Power 1 will be more likely to intervene if the level of divisiveness is low. The model, then, predicts that the types of interventions that states will pursue depend upon the types of issues that they face. The next section, I more closely examine this relationship, illustrating the predictions of the model with historical examples.

Issues and Intervention

Major powers face various types of issues when they decide whether to intervene militarily. On some issues, like resource allocation or territorial control, states generally have opposing

interests. On the other hand, there are other issues, such as the termination of humanitarian crises, upon which states generally agree. Finally, there are issues, such as the protection of property rights, that are neither purely divisive nor purely consensus issues. In this section, I examine how the types of issues that states face affect their intervention decisions.

Divisive Issues

When the issues at stake are completely divisive ($\delta = 1$), policy is zero sum—a change in policy in favor of one power necessarily makes the other power worse off—and thus Power 2's incentive to counter or join an intervention is greater. As previously noted, the effect of the level of divisiveness on Power 1's decision depends upon the expected action of Power 2 if Power 1 stays out. If Power 2 will intervene if Power 1 does not, then the more divisive an issue, the greater the incentive for Power 1 to preempt a unilateral intervention by Power 2 and intervene first. On the other hand, if Power 2 will not intervene unilaterally, Power 1 will be less likely to intervene if Power 2 will join or counter.

As noted, when issues are divisive, Power 2 is more likely to counter-intervene. If Power 2 will counter an intervention by Power 1 but will not intervene unilaterally, then Power 1 will often prefer to not intervene. Thus, when major powers have deterrent capabilities, they reduce the likelihood of unilateral intervention. For example, consider the case of Belgium during the nineteenth century. When Belgium became independent in 1831, the major powers agreed to respect its neutrality. Given its strategic location, a number of powers would have benefited from intervening unilaterally in the relatively weak state of Belgium. By imposing a more preferred regime in Belgium, a major power such as France or Germany could potentially tip the balance of power in Europe in its favor. However, such an intervention would leave other European powers worse off. Thus, each of these potential interveners knows that if it intervened unilaterally, this action would likely be countered by another power. Unwilling to risk a major conflict, the powers instead preferred to stay out. Thus, from 1831 until World War I, mutual deterrence prevented the European powers from

intervening and violating the sovereignty of Belgium.

Now consider the case where Power 2 will intervene if Power 1 does not. In this case, when the issue is divisive, Power 1 has an incentive to intervene preemptively, even if Power 2 will counter. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union had opposed ideological preferences, and this period led to a large increase in military intervention by the major powers (Feste 1992, Hoffman 1984, Regan 2000). Both superpowers felt that if they did not intervene militarily in a country, then the rival power might take advantage of the situation and intervene itself. Additionally, the divisiveness of the issues at stake increased the likelihood of counter-intervention by the other superpower. Given the option between letting the other power intervene unilaterally or facing a counter-intervention, the superpowers often opted for the latter. The cost of countering an intervention was much less outside of the opposing power's immediate sphere of influence. In fact, most cases of major power counter-intervention in civil wars during the Cold War occurred in the areas that were the most "up for grabs" for the superpowers: Africa and Asia.

Even if there is no possibility of counter-intervention, the threat of a unilateral intervention by Power 2 still increases the likelihood that Power 1 will intervene. Since the powers have opposing policy interests, a unilateral intervention by Power 2 will result in a policy unfavorable to Power 1. This gives Power 1 an incentive to intervene preemptively and impose its most preferred policy. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union often intervened unilaterally in their respective spheres of influence in the Caribbean Basin and Eastern Europe. If no other power is willing to pursue countermeasures in another's sphere of influence, a regional hegemon can pursue unilateral interventions at will. However, if the hegemon opts to not intervene in a crisis, it may open up an opportunity for intervention by other powers. This fear often led the superpowers to pursue preemptive interventions in their spheres of influence: the United States to prevent Communist influence in states like Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Grenada, and the Soviet Union to forestall Western advances in Eastern European countries such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

Consensus Issues

Of course, states do not disagree on all issues in international politics; there are issues upon which the major powers generally agree. When $\delta = 0$ in the model, powers have the same preferences over policy. Since a change favorable to one power is beneficial to all powers, the policy benefits of intervention in this case are a public good. Thus, the players face a collective action problem due to the incentive to “free ride” on the actions of others (Olson 1965). Given that intervention is costly and a unilateral intervention by 1 brings about 2’s most preferred policy, Power 2 will *always* choose to acquiesce when Power 1 intervenes. Power 1’s must then choose between intervening unilaterally and staying out. This decision in turn depends upon what Power 1 expects Power 2 to do if Power 1 stays out. If Power 2 will intervene, then Power 1 will opt to stay out and free ride on Power 2’s intervention. On the other hand, if Power 2 will not intervene, then Power 1 will choose to intervene if the costs of intervention are not too high. Thus, intervention on consensus issues will only occur if one of the powers is willing to bear the costs of unilateral intervention. Most importantly, due to the temptation to free ride, even if both states prefer joint intervention to the status quo, joint intervention can never occur in equilibrium when $\delta = 0$.

This collective action problem that states encounter when faced with a consensus issue provides an explanation for the empirical regularities concerning intervention for humanitarian purposes. The prevention of genocide is a prime example of a consensus issue in international relations. Scholars have noted that the prevention of genocide is a core human rights value that “states of all traditions agree upon” (Murphy 1996, 370) and that there is no “individual morality” in the case of genocide (Walzer 2002). This is underscored by the international community’s acceptance of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. Given the consensus on the issue, Power (2002, 263) argues that “genocide prevention is an immense burden that must be shared.” Given this, one might expect the abatement of a humanitarian crisis such as genocide to be a case in which states would intervene often and that such interventions would be joint endeavors. However, the

theoretical model predicts that the opposite should be the case. As Trachtenberg (1993, 26) notes, “at no point has the actual use of force for humanitarian purposes been a familiar feature of the international scene.” Moreover, when humanitarian interventions are pursued, “unilateralism is far more common than its opposite” (Walzer 2002).

The lack of willingness of major powers to intervene during large-scale humanitarian crises is perhaps best illustrated by the case of the Rwandan crisis in the mid-1990s (Barnett 2000, Melvern 2000). Scholars, journalists, and human rights activists alike have lamented the inability of the international community to prevent the genocide in Rwanda (Valentino 2003). One possible reason for the unwillingness of the major powers to intervene and stop the crisis was the existence of a collective action problem. While everyone may have agreed that ending the genocide would be a beneficial change, given the high costs of such an activity, states were unwilling to intervene unilaterally. Additionally, multilateral action may have not been possible because even though it may have provided a mutually beneficial outcome, each state had an incentive to free ride and let the other powers pay the costs of intervention.

There is evidence that free-riding behavior contributed to the international community’s nonintervention in Rwanda. Barnett (2002, 170) notes, “Most states issued urgent calls for dramatic action, but they always imagined others doing the action.” In a more specific example, Melvern (2000, 228) claims, “The Americans, liable for the lion’s share of the peacekeeping bill, were adamantly against UN intervention, but were happy for the French to take action since they were willing to pay for themselves.” All states agreeing on an issue is not a sufficient condition for multilateral intervention. The observation that major powers often sit on the sidelines and refrain from intervening in humanitarian crises does not necessarily imply that they prefer the maintenance of status quo to multilateral intervention. Instead, the powers may face a collective action problem.

Intermediate Issues

Given the anarchic nature of the international system and the constant struggle for power and security among states, few issues in international relations are pure consensus or divisive issues. Most issues are multidimensional: a unilateral intervention often brings about some changes that are favorable to all powers as well as other changes that are only in the interest of the intervening power. The more divisive an issue, the more the latter effect outweighs the former. Therefore, as the level of divisiveness increases, the temptation of powers to free ride on the actions of others decreases. The presence of a policy dimension on which the powers have opposing preferences can provide a selective benefit that allows them to overcome the collective action problem faced when there is complete consensus over policy.

Some intermediate issues are largely public in nature. When the value of δ is low, states may not have the same ideal policy, but they generally agree on the issue. In this case, the temptation to free ride is sufficiently high that intervention is often only possible when one power is willing to intervene unilaterally. As hegemonic stability theorists argue, these largely public goods are most often provided when a hegemonic state with a preponderance of resources that is willing to provide the benefit to the entire international community (Kindleberger 1973, Gilpin 1981). An example of this is the protection of property rights. When one power intervenes to protect the property rights of foreign investors, it provides benefits to other states as well. In his study of the protection of foreign capital, Lipson (1985) finds that the use of military intervention to enforce international property rights was most prevalent during the nineteenth century, when Great Britain had a preponderance of naval power, and during the first decades after World War II, when the United States had a monopoly on the capacity to intervene. In both cases, the hegemonic states were willing to bear the costs of intervention to provide the public good of secure property rights.

However, even when a power intervenes to provide a largely public good, the intervention also provides the intervening power with an opportunity to gain additional influence and make other changes that benefit it privately. For example, while interventions to protect

property rights benefit all international investors, the intervening power can use such an opportunity to take actions that privilege its own investors over others. Moreover, once a power has already absorbed the fixed costs of intervention, it may find it cost effective to pursue additional policy changes in its own private interest. Given that other powers anticipate that an intervening power may make policy changes against their interests, they may be willing to join in an intervention in order to ensure a more beneficial outcome. For this reason, other European powers were at times willing to assist the British navy in “gunboat diplomacy” to protect the rights of foreign investors (Lipson 1985).

As issues become more divisive, an intervening power may not want other states to participate since this may prevent it from imposing its most preferred policy. When a rival power does not have a credible counter-intervention threat but may intervene unilaterally, this may lead a power to pursue a preemptive unilateral intervention. This logic is similar to the case described above in which the United States and the Soviet Union intervened in their own spheres of influence. In the early twentieth century, the United States began to establish a sphere of influence in the Caribbean and thus wanted to limit European influence in the region. However, chronic instability in the Caribbean threatened foreign investments, providing an incentive for European intervention. To forestall intervention by other powers, the United States was willing to bear the costs of unilateral intervention to protect the property rights of foreign investors and ensure the implementation of its most preferred policy. Thus, it preferred to intervene alone rather than jointly with a European power. Since unilateral U.S. intervention provided sufficient protection of European investments and counter-intervention would have been too costly, the European powers were willing to acquiesce to U.S. hegemony in the region (Lipson 1985, Bemis 1943).

However, as an issue becomes more divisive, powers have a greater incentive to prevent unilateral intervention by either joining or countering. Suppose Power 2 will join an intervention. Power 1 must decide between joint intervention or acquiescing to a unilateral intervention. If the policy benefits are great enough, Power 1 might be willing to pursue joint

intervention. On an intermediate issue, both powers would like to move the status quo closer to their mutual ideal policy on the y -dimension, but neither wants the other to impose its ideal policy on the x -dimension. Thus, they may both prefer intervening jointly and settling on a compromise policy on the y -dimension to acquiescing to a unilateral intervention by the other power. Krasner (1999) claims that in the absence of a sphere of influence, intervention to alter the constitutional structures of states is only possible when there is a great power condominium. The multidimensional nature of the issues at stake explains why major powers are often willing to form condominiums when facing an intermediate issue. Consider the joint intervention of Russia, Britain, and France during the Greek rebellion against the Ottoman Empire from 1821 to 1832. While all of the parties supported the establishment of a stable Greek state, none wanted another power to gain unchecked influence over the structure of that state. For this reason, none of the powers were willing to acquiesce to a unilateral intervention by another power in Greece. Instead, the powers chose to intervene jointly to ensure the establishment of an acceptable regime in Greece that was not dominated by any single European power. A similar logic underlies many of the multilateral interventions of European powers to alter the constitutional structures of the newly independent states in the Balkan region during the nineteenth century (Krasner 1999). The multidimensional nature of intermediate issues helps to promote the pursuit of joint intervention by major powers.

Empirical Test of the Model

The theoretical model provides a clear expectation as to the relationship between joint and counter-intervention and the level of divisiveness: joint and counter-intervention should be more likely for intermediate and divisive issues than consensus issues. This hypothesis is tested by examining the decisions of major powers to intervene in civil conflicts. While the logic underlying the theoretical model does not apply solely to interventions in civil conflicts, civil conflicts do provide an opportunity for major power intervention, and such an analysis can examine whether major power behavior in these cases is consistent with the theory.

Strategic Choice Statistical Model

If the decision to intervene is strategic, traditional models for discrete dependent variables, such as logit, could provide biased estimates of the effects of the hypothesized parameters on intervention outcomes because such models do not incorporate the strategic nature of the data generating process (Signorino 1999, Signorino and Yilmaz 2003). Therefore, the theory outlined above is tested using a strategic choice estimator based upon the logit quantal response equilibrium (LQRE) (McKelvey and Palfrey 1998). The structure of this estimator has the same structure as the theoretical model, which allows for a more direct test of the theory.

To be incorporate uncertainty into the statistical model, it is assumed that there is random error in the players' decisions. (McKelvey and Palfrey 1998, Signorino 1999).⁴ Given this, a player's true utility for an action j , $U_i^*(j)$, is a function of both the observed expected utility ($U_i(j)$) and a random component (α_j) that is observable only to player i . For example, Power 2's utility for not intervening after Power 1 has chosen not to intervene is

$$U_2^*(NI) = U_2(NI) + \alpha_3 = U_2(SQ) + \alpha_3.$$

The numerical subscript for α refers to the number of the branch of the game tree that corresponds to the action. The utilities for Power 2's other possible actions can be defined similarly. However, while Power 2's actions are not strategic—the game ends after Power 2 moves—the same cannot be said for Power 1. Power 1's utilities are contingent upon the expected actions of Power 2. Let p_j be the probability that a player chooses the action that corresponds to branch j of the game tree. (See Figure 2.) For example, Power 1's utility for not intervening is

$$U_1^*(NI) = U_1(NI) + \alpha_1 = p_3U_1(SQ) + p_4U_1(I_1) + \alpha_1.$$

Assuming that the α_j are independent and identically distributed with density $f(\alpha)$, the one can derive the equilibrium probabilities. For example, the probabilities that Power 1 will not intervene is $p_1 = \Pr[U_1(NI) > U_1(I)]$. Given these equilibrium action probabilities, one can derive the probabilities of the each of the outcomes of the game by multiplying the

probabilities of the actions that lead to the relevant outcome. For example, the probability of the status quo occurring is the product of the probability that both Power 1 and Power 2 do not intervene: $p_{SQ} = p_1 p_3$.

Before estimating the strategic model, one must specify the utilities for the outcomes in terms of regressors. To ensure identification, the utility for one of the outcomes considered at each decision node must be normalized to zero. Figure 2 shows the game tree with the regressors used in the analysis. Power 1's utility for the status quo is used as the baseline for the first decision node. Similarly, Power 2's utilities for the status quo and unilateral intervention by Power 1 are the baselines for his respective decision nodes. This leaves seven sets of regressors to be estimated via maximum likelihood. The analysis assumes that the α_j are i.i.d. Type 1 Extreme Value, implying that the action probabilities are logistic.⁵

Data and Operationalization

The set of potential intervention targets in the analysis is taken from Regan's (2002) intrastate conflict intervention data set. In all, there are 75 different targets and 963 target-years for the period from 1944 to 1998.⁶ The potential interveners (Powers 1 and 2) are the major powers as defined by the Correlates of War Project.⁷ This list of major powers was used to construct all major power directed dyads for each year, and the target-years are then matched with all major power directed dyads for that year. Each observation is thus a "directed major power dyad"-target-year.

To determine the outcome of each case, one must code the decisions of both powers for each observation. Regan (2002) provides both the date of each military intervention as well as the side on behalf of which the major power intervened. This information is then used to code the "outcome of the game" for each observation: status quo, unilateral intervention by Power 1, unilateral intervention by Power 2, joint intervention, counter intervention. Divisiveness of the issues at stake is measured as the difference between the S scores of the major powers with the target state (Signorino and Ritter 1999). It is assumed that if the

major powers in question have different levels of foreign policy similarity with the target state, then they will have more divergent preferences about the issues at stake in a potential intervention. This variable is calculated as

$$Divisiveness = |S(Power1, Target) - S(Power2, Target)|.$$

Other independent variables for the analysis are determined by operationalizing the parameters in the utility functions of the theoretical model. I hypothesize that a number of factors would increase the saliency of a civil conflict to a potential intervening power (s_i). First, the possibility of refugees and contagion make civil wars in contiguous countries salient to potential interveners. Second, major powers generally have a vested interest in their former colonies, which should increase the salience of conflicts in those countries. Finally, civil wars that claim more lives generate greater international attention and therefore would be of greater interest to major powers. Relative power (r_i) is operationalized as the relative capabilities of the major powers, using the COW Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC). The distance from the potential intervener to the target country is used as a measure of the cost of all types intervention. Also, it is assumed that the cost of unilateral intervention is inversely related to the relative capability of the intervener to target.

To estimate the strategic choice model, these independent variables must be matched with the regressors in Figure 2. $X_{15}\beta_{15}$ and $X_{24}\beta_{24}$ represent the utility to a major power of intervening unilaterally relative to maintaining the status quo:

$$X_{15}\beta_{15} = U_1(I_1) - U_1(SQ) = s_1/2 - m_1,$$

$$X_{24}\beta_{24} = U_2(I_2) - U_2(SQ) = s_2/2 - m_2.$$

As saliency increases and the cost of intervention decreases, the utility of unilateral intervention versus the status quo increases. To test these predictions, the variables associated with s_1 and m_1 are used as X_{15} and those associated with s_2 and m_2 are used as X_{25} . According to the theory, the coefficients for contiguity, former colony, deaths, and relative capability (i vs. Target) should be positive, while the coefficient for distance should be negative.

$X_{26}\beta_{26}$ and $X_{27}\beta_{27}$ represent Power 2's utility of pursuing a joint or counter-intervention

relative to acquiescing to a unilateral intervention by Power 1:

$$X_{26}\beta_{26} = U_2(JI) - U_2(I_1) = \delta s_2 r_2 - k_2,$$

$$X_{27}\beta_{27} = U_2(CI) - U_2(I_1) = \delta s_2 r_2 - c_2.$$

Joint and counter-intervention are more likely as divisiveness, salience, and the relative power of 2 increase and the cost of intervention decreases. I include variables associated with d , s_2 , and r_2 as regressors associated with joint and counter-intervention. Given the theoretical model, coefficients for divisiveness, contiguity, former colony, deaths, and relative capability (2 vs. 1) should be positive, while the coefficient for distance should be negative.

$X_{16}\beta_{16}$ and $X_{17}\beta_{17}$ represent Power 1's utility of joint or counter-intervention relative to the status quo:

$$X_{16}\beta_{16} = U_1(JI) - U_1(SQ) = s_2 [0.5 - \delta(1 - r_1)] - k_1,$$

$$X_{17}\beta_{17} = U_1(CI) - U_1(SQ) = s_2 [0.5 - \delta(1 - r_1)] - c_1.$$

Note that since the baseline category is the status quo, rather than unilateral intervention by Power 2, the comparative statics of the theoretical parameters are different than the case of Power 2. Power 1 is more likely to prefer joint and counter intervention to the status quo as the level of divisiveness decreases and its relative power increases. Measures of divisiveness and the relative capability of Power 1 are used as X_{16} and X_{17} in the statistical estimation. Since the effect of salience is conditional upon the values of other parameters, these variables are not included. According to the theory, the effect of divisiveness should be negative, while the effect of relative capability should be positive. Finally, the regressor $X_{14}\beta_{14}$ represents Power 1's utility for a unilateral intervention by Power 2 relative to the status quo:

$$X_{14}\beta_{14} = U_1(I_2) - U_1(SQ) = s_1(0.5 - \delta).$$

Since divisiveness decreases Power 1's utility of unilateral intervention by Power 2, this variable is used as X_{14} in the analysis. The effect of salience is conditional upon the value of divisiveness and is not included in this part of the model. Once the variables are associated with each of the regressors, the model can be estimated via maximum likelihood.

Results

The results of the statistical analysis can be found in Tables 2 and 3.⁸ Since the observations concerning intervention in a particular target state in a given year are likely to not be independent, standard errors clustered on the target-year are reported. The coefficients for Power 2's utilities can be found in Table 2. First, consider the variables related to unilateral intervention by Power 2 (X_{24}). All of the coefficients are statistically significant and in the expected direction. Major powers were more likely to prefer unilateral intervention in closer, weaker, and contiguous states, as well as in former colonies. They were also more likely to prefer intervention during more deadly conflicts. For unilateral intervention, the analysis supports the prediction that this decision largely depends upon the power of the intervener relative to the target and salience of the target to the intervener.

[TABLES 2 AND 3 ABOUT HERE]

The results also provide support for the theoretical predictions associated with Power 2's decision to join or counter an intervention. All of the coefficients for the variables related to joint intervention are in the expected direction; however, only divisiveness and the number of deaths reach standard levels of statistical significance. As for counter intervention, all but one of the coefficients are statistically significant. Interestingly, distance from the target has a positive effect on the likelihood that a state will counter an intervention. This runs counter to the expectation that distance increases the cost of counter intervention. Most importantly, the results indicate that the farther apart a major power's preferences concerning the target state are from its rival, the more likely it is to join or counter an intervention. The results concerning the effect of divisiveness are discussed in more detail below.

The model also provides support for the theoretical predictions concerning Power 1's decision to intervene. As one can see in Table 3, the coefficients for Power 1's utility for intervening unilaterally generally mirror those of Power 2 described above. An increase in the salience of a conflict increases the utility of military intervention, while an increase in cost decreases the utility for military action. There is also some support for the theoretical

predictions concerning Power 1's utility for joint and counter-intervention. A state is more likely to intervene, when it expects that another state will join or counter that intervention, as its relative capability increases. Secondly, a major power is more likely to prefer the status quo to a counter intervention as its preferences diverge from the other potential intervener. The coefficient for divisiveness in the estimated utility of joint intervention relative to the status quo for Power 1, however, is not statistically different from zero.

Given that the focus of the theoretical argument on the effect of divisiveness on the intervention behavior of major powers, a more detailed examination of the findings of the statistical analysis along these lines is warranted. First, consider Power 2's decision to join or counter an intervention by Power 1. As the level of divisiveness increases, Power 2 is more likely to intervene, either to join or counter Power 1's intervention. Since the coefficients do not give a clear sense of the magnitude of this effect, one way to examine the substantive effect of divisiveness on intervention behavior is to calculate the predicted probability of intervention decisions at different levels of divisiveness. Figure 3 plots the predicted conditional probability that Power 2 will join an intervention by Power 1 (i.e., p_6) with simulated 95% confidence intervals. When all of the other continuous and dichotomous variables are held at their mean and mode, respectively, an increase in the level of divisiveness from zero to two standard deviations above the mean (0.6) increases the conditional probability that a state will join an intervention from .01 to .10. As the theory predicts major powers are more willing to join an intervention when their preferences diverge from other interveners.

[FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

The expected probability of joint intervention, however, is a function of the decisions of both powers. According to the estimation, divisiveness does not have a significant impact on Power 1's utility for joint intervention or unilateral intervention by Power 2 (relative to the status quo). Divisiveness does have a negative and significant effect on Power 1's utility for counter intervention. These effects do not have a substantively noticeable effect on the likelihood of joint intervention, as the effect of divisiveness of predicted probability of joint

intervention is largely determined by Power 2's decision.⁹ Holding other variables at the values indicated above, an increase in the level of divisiveness has a monotonically positive effect on the predicted probability of a joint intervention outcome.¹⁰ Thus, the empirical model predicts that the probability of joint intervention is increasing in the level of divisiveness.

To illustrate the implications of the theoretical and empirical model about the relationship between divisiveness and joint intervention, consider the behavior of China and the United States, who both intervened to support the opposition in the Cambodia civil war of the late 1970s and 1980s. As Garrett (1981) notes, inter-power strategic considerations played an important role in decisions to intervene in this conflict. China intervened to support the Khmer Rouge and other rebel groups that opposed the Vietnamese-backed People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). The US also opposed the PRK government and gave military aid to the opposition (Regan 2002). Most of this aid, however, was directed at the noncommunist rebel forces (KFNLF and ANS) that joined the Khmer Rouge in forming the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (Brown and Zasloff 1998). Both China and the U.S. opposed the Soviet and Vietnamese-backed PRK government. However, the U.S. preferred that non-communist groups play an important role in any post-war government, which would probably occur if China were the only major power involved in supporting the rebel forces. This divergent interest gave the U.S. an incentive to join China in supporting the rebel groups opposing the PRK government, rather than just free ride on China's actions.

The results of the statistical analysis help to provide a better understanding of the factors that influence interventions in civil wars. Previous quantitative studies of civil war intervention decisions have generally focused on the characteristics of conflicts (Regan 2000) and potential interveners (Findley and Teo 2006, Lemke and Regan 2004). The findings that variables such as deaths, contiguity, former colonial status, distance, and the relative capability of targets influence intervention decisions support the conclusions of these previous studies. However, less focus has been placed on the relationship between potential interveners. A notable exception is Findley and Teo (2006), who investigate whether a pre-

vious intervention by an ally or a rival affects the likelihood that a state will intervene on behalf of the government or opposition in a civil war. The measure of divisiveness used here builds upon this previous work by incorporating a target-specific measure of the relative preferences of potential interveners. Also, the analysis here is the first to examine how the relative capability of potential interveners affect civil war intervention decisions. The significant findings regarding divisiveness and the relative capabilities of potential interveners illustrate in a large-N setting the claims in previous qualitative studies that strategic interaction between potential interveners plays an important role in major power intervention decisions (Feste 1992, Hoffman 1984, Krasner 1999, Smith 1996).

Conclusion

The theoretical and statistical analysis presented here highlights the strategic conditions that influence the intervention decisions. These findings illustrate the benefit of using game theory and a strategic choice framework to model intervention decisions. Previous empirical studies of intervention have not generally incorporated either strategic interaction or key variables that measure the relative power and preferences of potential interveners. As the above analysis shows, these factors play a key role in the intervention decisions of states.

The insights of the theoretical model also help to account for the nonintervention of major powers in response to large-scale humanitarian crises such as genocide. The unwillingness to intervene may not solely be due to the fact that major powers “do not care” about genocide. Instead, the general consensus on the immorality of genocide may actually inhibit the ability of states to act collectively. Given incentives to free ride, humanitarian intervention will only be pursued when a “privileged” state is willing to bear the costs of intervention or when private policy benefits provide selective incentives to intervene. If the inability of major powers to act in response to humanitarian crises is due to a collective action problem, the solution does not lie in the development of shared core values about human rights, as many liberal theorists would argue. Instead, members of the international community should

take actions to alter the strategic incentives of states to pursue intervention in such cases.

Two possible strategies would be to strengthen international institutions or increase the legitimacy of unilateral action. Institutions provide repeated interaction, coordination, and enforcement mechanisms that can help states overcome free rider problems. However, the ineffectiveness of international institutions at addressing recent humanitarian crises, such as Darfur, indicates that current institutions may not be sufficient to solve such problems. Increasing the legitimacy of unilateral action might encourage states to assume the burden of intervening alone. Unilateral intervention is often viewed negatively in the international community, even in cases when multilateral intervention would be considered legitimate.¹¹ This is due to fears that when states intervene unilaterally they will often pursue actions that are not in the interest of the international community. However, this may also discourage states from pursuing actions that would be beneficial to the international community.

Finally, this analysis shows the importance of viewing intervention as a political phenomenon. Many studies on intervention focus on the moral and legal aspects of the subject. However, these approaches cannot explain the intervention behavior of states. First, intervention decisions are often at odds with the dictates of international law. While the legitimacy or legality of an action may enter into the decision calculus of states, states consistently pursue activities that are in violation of international law. Second, while investigating the moral and ethical aspects of intervention may be a fruitful exercise, it is not clear that moral factors guide intervention decisions, as there appears to be little correlation between the legitimacy of intervention and state decisions. Moreover, even if moral or ethical concerns do affect intervention decisions, the analysis here shows that moral consensus on an issue does not necessarily imply that states will be able to intervene together in order to achieve their goal. Thus, studies of intervention should focus on the political and strategic factors that lead states to intervene. To ignore the political nature of intervention would prevent scholars and policy practitioners alike from understanding the incentives that lie behind what Morgenthau (1967) called an “ancient and well established” instrument of foreign policy.

Notes

¹A notable exception is Findley and Teo (2006), who incorporate the characteristics of previous interveners into their analysis of civil war interventions. However, they do not consider how the future actions of potential interveners affects such decisions.

²While T is not a player in the game, characteristics of T do affect the decisions of Powers 1 and 2. For example, it may be more or less costly to intervene in some states than others.

³In the model, the choice between joint and counter intervention is not affected by the level of divisiveness. In general, the choice between these intervention strategies is a function of their relative costs.

⁴The assumption of uncertainty due to agent error is made for mathematical convenience. See Signorino (2003) for a discussion of sources of uncertainty in discrete choice models.

⁵The complete maximum likelihood function is derived in the web appendix.

⁶I omit civil conflicts within major powers from the analysis.

⁷I do not include Japan in the analysis for the 1990s since that its constitution prohibited the use of military force.

⁸Former colony is not included as a variable in X_{27} for identification purposes. There were no observations of Power 2 countering an intervention in its former colony.

⁹While the coefficients for Power 1's utilities for joint intervention, counter intervention, and unilateral intervention by Power 2 are larger than the coefficients for Power 2's utilities, in the likelihood function these coefficients are weighted by the conditional probability that Power 2 will choose such an action. Thus, the substantive effects of these variables may not be as large as one might expect given the magnitude of the coefficients.

¹⁰Though not included here, a graphical representation of these predicted probabilities can be found in the web appendix.

¹¹This sentiment is not universal. Walzer (2002) argues that unilateral intervention may be the normatively optimal action, even in cases of humanitarian intervention.

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Table 1: Players' Utilities for Outcomes

Outcome (γ)	$U_1(\gamma)$	$U_2(\gamma)$
Status Quo (SQ)	$s_1/2$	$s_2/2$
Intervention by 2 (I_2)	$s_1(1 - \delta)$	$s_2 - m_2$
Intervention by 1 (I_1)	$s_1 - m_1$	$s_2(1 - \delta)$
Joint Intervention (JI)	$s_1[1 - \delta(1 - r_1)] - k_1$	$s_2[1 - \delta(1 - r_2)] - k_2$
Counter-Intervention (CI)	$s_1[1 - \delta(1 - r_1)] - c_1$	$s_2[1 - \delta(1 - r_2)] - c_2$

Table 2: Strategic Model Estimation (Power 2's Utilities)

	<i>Unilateral Intervention by 2</i> $\hat{\beta}_{24}$	<i>Joint Intervention</i> $\hat{\beta}_{26}$	<i>Counter Intervention</i> $\hat{\beta}_{27}$
Divisiveness	—	4.286* (1.240)	2.414* (.509)
Relative Capability (2 vs. Target)	12.588* (4.296)	—	—
Relative Capability (2 vs. 1)	—	3.189 (0.890)	-0.428 (0.446)
Former Colony	0.715* (.234)	0.276 (.473)	—
Contiguous Target	0.960* (.294)	-0.710 (.726)	1.633* (.507)
Log(Deaths)	0.245* (.060)	0.235* (.095)	0.204* (.049)
Log(Distance)	-0.398* (.202)	-0.536 (.356)	0.962* (.292)
Constant	-14.449* (4.135)	-3.818* (1.647)	-13.754* (2.634)

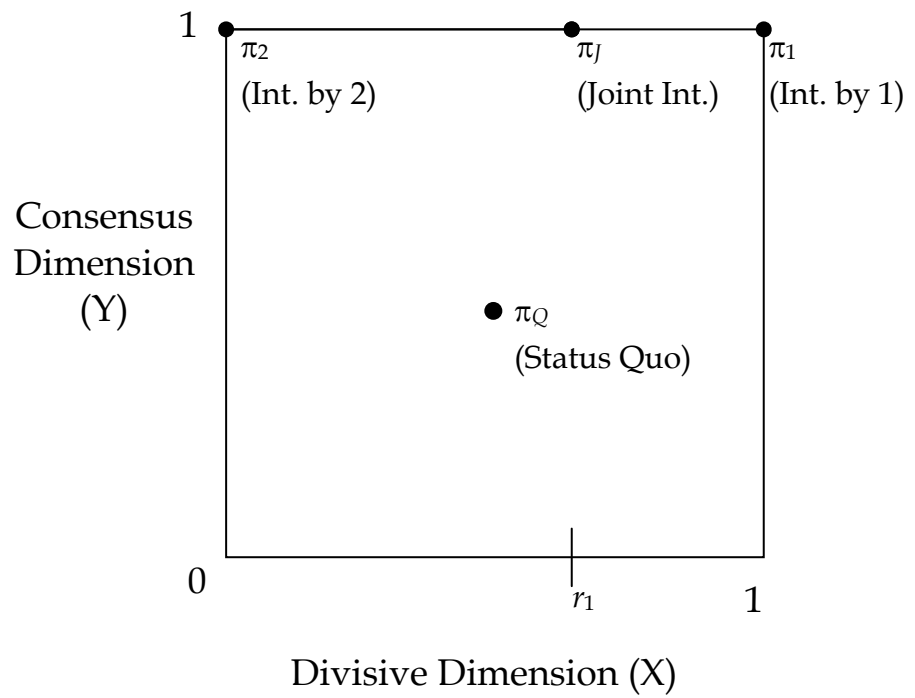
* $p < .05$. Robust standard errors clustered on target-year in parentheses.

Table 3: Strategic Model Estimation (Power 1's Utilities)

	<i>Unilateral Intvn. by 2</i> $\hat{\beta}_{14}$	<i>Unilateral Intvn. by 1</i> $\hat{\beta}_{15}$	<i>Joint Intvn.</i> $\hat{\beta}_{16}$	<i>Counter Intvn.</i> $\hat{\beta}_{17}$
Divisiveness	-6.117 (16.941)	—	-7.225 (7.442)	-66.846* (26.132)
Relative Capability (1 vs. Target)	—	11.444* (3.726)	—	—
Relative Capability (1 vs 2)	—	—	31.937* (15.425)	55.276* (15.170)
Former Colony	—	1.409* (.252)	—	—
Contiguous Target	—	0.604 (.313)	—	—
Log(Deaths)	—	-0.029 (.118)	—	—
Log(Distance)	—	-0.966* (0.168)	—	—
Constant	3.987 (5.320)	-7.885* (3.404)	0.748 (6.721)	14.533 (15.459)
N		21964		
Log Likelihood		-5766.58		
Wald χ^2 (d.f. = 26)		1073.91*		

* $p < .05$. Robust standard errors clustered on target-year in parentheses.

Figure 1: Policy Space and Outcomes



π_1	1's ideal policy
π_2	2's ideal policy
π_J	Joint intervention policy
π_Q	Status quo policy
r_1	Relative power of 1

Figure 2: Intervention Game Tree with Utilities and Regressors

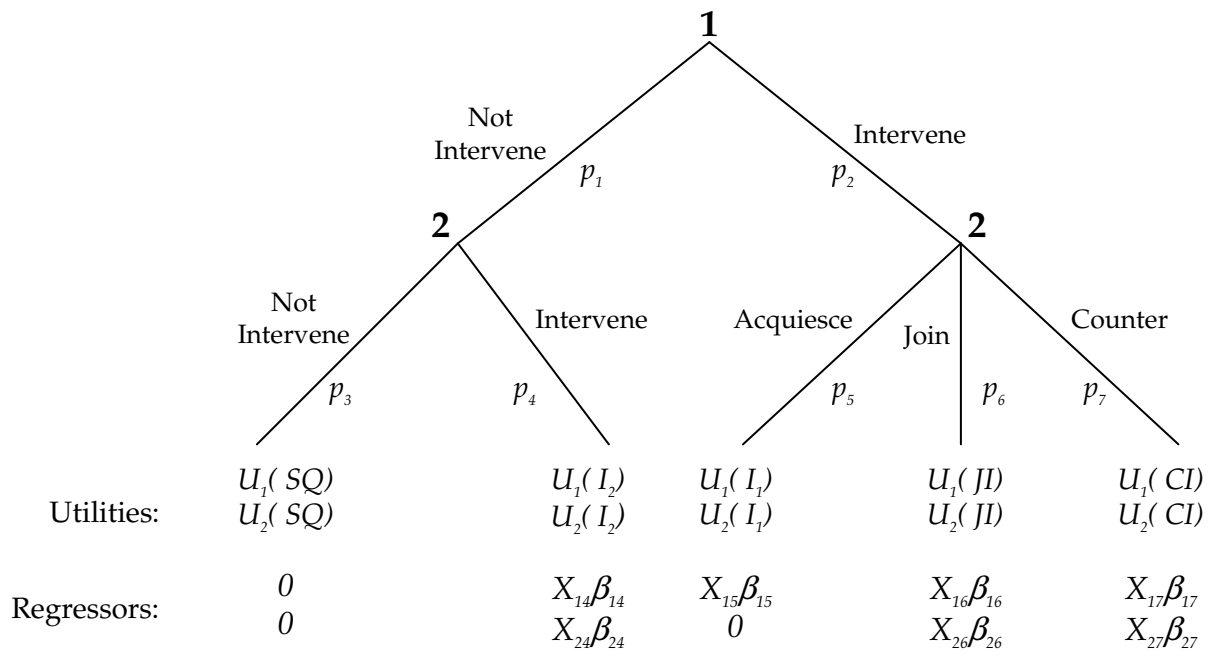
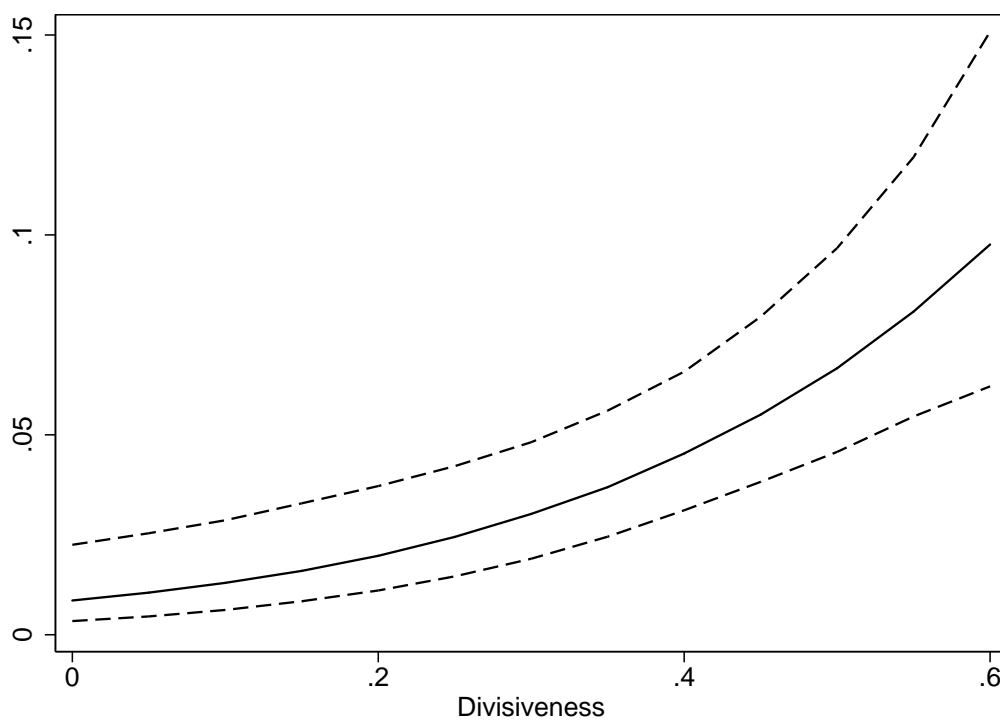


Figure 3: Conditional Probability of Joint Intervention



Predicted probability that Power 2 chooses joint intervention given that Power 1 intervenes (i.e., p_6) with simulated 95% confidence interval. Other variables held at mean (continuous) or mode (dichotomous).