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# Why Intervene? An Examination into the Causes for United States Government-biased Military Interventions in Intrastate Wars

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*Why Intervene?*

*An Examination into the Causes for United States Government-biased*

*Military Interventions in Intrastate Wars*

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**Abstract:** From 1945 to 1999, United States has used its military might to support an incumbent government in 16% of all civil wars. This paper seeks to understand what factors cause the United States to intervene militarily on behalf of the government in some civil conflicts but not in others. Understanding the causes for this armed response provides insight into the relationship between the hegemon and the client state. While there is an extensive literature looking at intervention in general, there is a dearth of information solely looking at United States military interventions. Moreover, the prevalent literature on intervention fails to address political proximity as a potential cause. This study assesses key elements that might affect the United States' decision to intervene. In doing so, it adjusts prior measurement errors and fills the political proximity void. To foreshadow the results below, this study finds that political proximity, the measured difference in policy ideal points revealed through United Nations General Assembly voting trends, is a significant factor in the United States' decision to provide military aid to an incumbent government.

## *Introduction*

Intrastate war is an increasingly common phenomenon in the years following World War II. Established governments and rebel groups are sacrificing blood and treasure in hopes of gaining or maintaining their respective political objectives. From 1945 to 1999, there were 150 intrastate wars (Regan 2002) resulting in an estimated 16.2 million deaths (Fearon 2004). Civil wars often draw attention from the global community, which increasingly leads to third party military interventions. Interested third party states intervene in civil conflicts to shape the outcomes. Third party military interventions, however, extend the duration and costs—material and human—of these conflicts (Balch-Lindsey & Enterline 2000; Regan 2002; Fearon & Laitin 2003; Hegre 2004; Collier et al. 2004; Regan & Aydin 2006; Cunningham 2010). Therefore, it is important to scrutinize the conditions under which a powerful state, such as the United States, would choose to intervene militarily on behalf of an incumbent government.

The efficacy of intervention has drawn considerable attention from scholars. Researchers demonstrate that third party military intervention into civil wars complicate the bargaining process, which increases the costs associated with settlement (Walter 2009; Cunningham 2010). Further, an intervening party with a heavily mechanized force structure—tanks, helicopters, armored personnel carriers, etc.—significantly decreases the likelihood of success (Lyll 2010; Lyll & Wilson 2009). These conditions, however, tend to be present in conflicts in which the United States intervenes, so why intervene? What are the most prevalent factors that cause the United States to intervene militarily on behalf of the government in some civil conflicts but not in others?

Scholars show that third party states often intervene in civil conflicts to secure their preferred outcomes (Cunningham 2010). The outcomes of civil wars can have profound impacts

on the international political order. By strengthening the incumbent government's position at the bargaining table, powerful states, such as the United States, are intervening to ensure their interests are protected (Cunningham 2010). From 1945 to 1999, the United States used its military might to bolster a beleaguered government, and in turn protect its interests, in 16% of all civil conflicts (Regan 2002). This paper argues that political proximity—a measure of a client state's willingness to support the intervener's global agenda—is the main factor triggering this armed response.

Many scholars have examined the dynamics leading to third party military intervention, but few have isolated the United States (Fordham 2008 and Yoon 1997 are notable exceptions). Furthermore, all fail to measure political proximity as a potential cause. Additionally, some studies inadequately measure other potential leading reasons for intervention. This paper assesses key elements that might affect the United States' decision to provide an incumbent government with military support; it adjusts prior measurement errors to reflect reality better, and it fills the political proximity void.

The United States' status as a hegemonic Super Power places it in a position in which it can attempt to influence the outcome of any civil war. In fact, the United States intervenes more than any other state. By not inquiring specifically into the elements influencing these decisions, scholars might overstate the effects of key variables in all instances of military intervention. Moreover, the paucity of studies strictly looking into the cause for United States government-biased military interventions could lead to a misunderstanding of the hegemonic order, which could render many foundational international relations theories void. In isolating instances of United States military interventions on behalf of an incumbent government and testing the

importance of political proximity, this paper advances the literature on the relationship between a hegemon and its client states.

In the sections that follow, I first provide a parsimonious explanation, grounded in bargaining theory, for the *purpose* of third party intervention; I then review the prevailing literature on why the United States might intervene in general. Second, I present and explain my hypotheses and arguments for each school of thought. Third, I explain my data collection and methods. Then, I present and analyze my results. Finally, I conclude with a summary and a discussion on the implications of my findings. To foreshadow the results below, political proximity, as measured by United Nations General Assembly voting trends, is a significant factor in the United States decision to intervene militarily on behalf of a government.

From this perspective, it appears that the United States is intervening in civil wars not to secure or protect the general welfare of the international community, as hegemonic stability theory purports, but for national gain. If hegemonic stability theory were to hold true, the United States, in an attempt to secure global public goods, would intervene regardless of United Nations voting patterns. The hegemon would seek to restore and secure stability around the globe to maintain an environment that will foster economic, technological, and political growth. This study, however, shows this is not the case.

## *Literature Review*

### *Definitions*

Before this study proceeds, civil war and military intervention need to be defined. In defining the former, scholars are hard pressed to find agreement. The main disagreement focuses on where to place the threshold of violence that distinguishes a civil war from other forms of political violence. (For an in-depth discussion on how different coding methods of civil wars

affects analysis outcomes see: Sambenis 2004). The Correlates of War project (COW) sets the high mark. Their coding methods require 1000 battlefield deaths within a 12 month period for an internal dispute to be classified a civil war. Other scholars place the threshold much lower. The International Peace Research Institute, Oslo allows for conflicts that surpass 25 battlefield deaths per year per dyad to be classified an intrastate war (Gleditsch 2002). For the purpose of this study, I use a middle ground definition. In accordance with Regan's (2002) study, my operational definition of a civil war is an armed resistance that surpasses a threshold of 200 fatalities that resulted from organized combat between the belligerents throughout the duration of the conflict.

The definition of military intervention is less divisive. Scholars define military intervention as any third party military act—from arms trades to naval and air support to the deployment of regular or covert military agents—that are convention breaking (above the current or conventional level supplied) and that target, either in support or in opposition of, the authority structure of the intervened state (Regan 1998; Aydin 2010). My study focuses on government-biased military acts, military interventions in support of the incumbent government. With these definitions established, I can move to explaining a framework useful in understanding the purpose for United States government-biased military interventions.

### ***Bargaining Theory***

In order to understand *why* the United States would choose to intervene militarily on behalf of an incumbent government, we must first understand the *purpose* for intervention. The foundational school of thought on the purpose of intervention is bargaining theory. Bargaining theory demonstrates that belligerents predict the probability of winning, the likely gains and losses from fighting, and the compromise, if any, they are willing make in lieu of fighting

(Fearon 1995; Powell 2002; Reiter 2004; Wagner 2007; Salehyan 2007; Walter 2009). The overlapping area of these compromise positions is the settlement zone—the policy area where the two sides can find agreement short of conflict. As Wagner (2007) explains, if the belligerents hold inaccurate beliefs about the other side’s capabilities (asymmetric information), one or both may overestimate their probability of winning and demand more in compromise. Moreover, if a belligerent is unsure of the other parties ability to follow through with negotiated compromises (credible commitments), or if a warring faction is unwilling to budge from their stated position (indivisible stakes), a peaceful settlement will be allusive. The ensuing conflict, however, will reveal a more accurate picture of the other side’s relative strength (their probability of winning) and the likely gains or losses from continuing the fight (their opportunity costs), which could force one side to make concessions. This information will reset the settlement zone to reflect the true costs of continued warfare (Fearon 1995; Powell 2002; Reiter 2004; Thyne 2006; Wagner 2007; Salehyan 2007; Walter 2009).

The nature of civil war exacerbates all of the above-mentioned bargaining problems. The true strength of a rebel group is often hard to ascertain resulting in asymmetric information. The lack of in-group policing within a rebel group, the result of the often-decentralized organization of insurgencies, and the fear that the incumbent government will not follow through with its obligations in the negotiated settlements all create an environment unsuitable for credible commitments (Fearon & Laitin 1996). Moreover, intrastate conflicts are often fought over issues in which neither side is willing to concede (Walter 2009). Third party interventions seek to address one or more of these problems, but in doing so, intervening third parties are also attempting to influence the outcome of the conflict to benefit their interests (Salehyan 2007).

If the incumbent government's capabilities and likely losses move the settlement zone beyond the point the United States deems as in its national interests and if the benefits of intervening surpass the costs, the United States is more likely to intervene. United States government-biased military interventions aim is to shift the government's compromise position by increasing its military capabilities. This increases the incumbent government's likelihood of victory, fortifies its compromise position, and moves the settlement zone closer to the United States preferred policy outcome—the preservation of the status quo.

The policy and situational nuances, which result in the United States providing military aid to an embattled government, are diverse and interacting. Nonetheless, the national interests of the United States are the driving force behind its decision. While this explanation provides a basic model for the intervention decision criteria—they seek to adjust the incumbent governments bargaining position to protect the status quo and the national interests of the United States—it does little to explain what these interests are. In the sections that follow, I explore the different schools of thought on the elements of national interest that might provoke the United States to provide an incumbent government military aid.

### ***Political Proximity***

On the international stage, states seek support for their actions or purposed actions as a way to help legitimize the stance they are taking. Nations rely on the consent, tacit or explicit, of other nations to advance their global agenda. This consent is an invaluable asset to nations—even lone Super Powers, and many states will do all they can to ensure they gain political consent for their favored actions. In order to maintain international political backing, a nation will involve itself in an internal conflict to protect a favorable government. Therefore, if a nation is politically close to the United States, there will be an increased likelihood that the United

States will provide military support to the incumbent government. However, this seemingly crucial factor is missing in the prevalent literature on intervention.

Political proximity is an indicator of a nation's willingness to agree with or capitulate to another nation's political wishes and interests. This willingness could influence the United States' intervention decision-making. That is, in protecting its national interest on the international stage, the United States may intervene in civil wars to secure those leaders whom they find to be useful in advancing the United States' agenda. While ideology may influence nations' political proximity to each other, it is not a component of it. Nations with differing governing practices—Saudi Arabia and the United States (-10 and 10 respectively on the Polity IV scale)—may share common interest, may vote in similar ways in international organizations, may join trading blocs together, and may form alliances with each other. Therefore, while their governing methods may differ, their political proximity to one another will be close.

While there is a dearth of literature regarding the relationship between political proximity and interventions, other fields in international relations have looked into the effect of political proximity to the United States and the increased likelihood of terrorist attacks. Using voting trends in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) as a proxy for political proximity, Dreher and Gassebner (2007) show that nations who vote more in line with the United States are more likely to be a victim of a terrorist attack. Their study does not differentiate between terrorist acts by external actors and those conducted by internal agents. Therefore, political proximity to the United States could be a cause for civil strife. Nonetheless, if the United States sees a government's political proximity as important in securing or advancing its global agenda, it may be more willing to provide military support to combat insurgent groups.

Alliances are another component of political proximity and could determine whether the United States conducts a government-biased military intervention. Alliances are binding political agreements. Not all alliances are the same, but they all share one common thread. They show a willingness of parties to align with each another on certain issues (Leeds 2003). With no international enforcement mechanism, alliances must provide relative benefits to all parties. States will fulfill their alliance obligations only when it is in their national interest (Morrow 2000). Fulfilling alliance obligations provides information about the commitment to and willingness of the intervening state to use force to protect its allies and interests (Morrow 2000). Alliances, however, might oblige a nation to enter a war it would not otherwise enter.

Not fulfilling a commitment has political consequences and inflicts considerable costs on future actions. Not following through on obligations causes a state to lose credibility on the world stage—creating future commitment problems. The potential loss of credibility manipulates the costs to benefits equation. This makes states more likely to form alliances with other states who are closer politically, who possess something the stronger state has an interest in protecting, and/or who are less likely to see conflict (Leeds 2003). In this view, alliances should work as a pulling mechanism, making United States government-biased military interventions more likely to occur.

Alliances, however, pose difficult problems. As mentioned above, while alliances provide a strong indicator as to the closeness of two states, parties only form alliances, and only honor the obligations imposed on them, when it is in their self-interest to do so. That is, if the United States joins a defensive alliance, it is joining because it is in its self-interest to do so, and fulfilling its obligations serves to protect these interests. Economic ties increase the likelihood of

alliances forming (Fordham 2008); therefore, alliances could be an intervening variable between economic factors and the increase likelihood of intervention.

### ***Prior Interventions***

The knowledge provided by prior IGO and state interventions offer critical information in determining the projected costs of future interventions. Further, this historical context shows the tenaciousness of the belligerents involved and serves as a prediction for the likelihood of future success (Aydin 2010). These figures could hold sway over the United States' decision to intervene militarily on behalf of an incumbent government.

The projected cost of intervening is a clear component in determining the gains to losses ratio. Of the two types of intervening parties, IGOs and states, Aydin demonstrates that successive third party interventions are less likely to occur when the prior intervening party was an IGO (2010). IGOs are able to distribute the costs of interventions across the coalition. This allows IGOs to enter more costly conflicts. Therefore, prior interventions by IGOs demonstrate not only the likelihood of success, but also the exponential costs associated with intervening (Aydin 2010). This projected increase in costs should make United States government-biased military intervention less likely.

The relative intensity of a conflict shows the potential probability for losses, both monetary and human, that the intervener might incur. Scholars examine the intensity of the conflict—average number of deaths per month over the course of the conflict—as a cause for intervention, and show mixed results. Some scholars demonstrate that the intensity of the conflict does not reduce the likelihood of intervention (Aydin 2010), while others indicate that intensity does reduce this likelihood (Regan 1998). In the former, Aydin (2010) shows that the frequency

of interventions by states and IGOs increases with intensity because intervening parties are concerned with the brutality of these wars.

In her study, Aydin shows that decision-makers gain knowledge of intensity from other interventions; they use this information to reveal potential costs and the likelihood of success (Aydin 2010). In this manner, intensity could be a leading factor in the United States' decision to intervene. However, in intrastate conflicts, accurate death tolls are hard to determine. To hinder the government's ability to assess properly the relative strength and capabilities of the rebellion, an insurgent group has an incentive to distort or conceal information about their total losses (Walter 2009). As shown above, this information asymmetry has a dynamic effect on bargaining positions.

Moreover, scholars show that intensity increases the duration of the conflict, which further increases the total cost (Hegre 2004; Regan 2002; Fearon and Laitin 2003). This line of reasoning stands in contradiction to Aydin's findings. If intensity increases duration and costs, and prior interventions provide an indicator for the likelihood of success, then the United States should be less likely to intervene in conflicts with prior interventions and higher intensity rates. However, if other benefits gained from intervening are substantial and outweigh the projected costs, United States government-biased military intervention might be the course of action.

### ***Humanitarian***

Humanitarian crises and the public outcry they create can force the hand of political actors. In order to gain reelection, officials in democracies such as the United States must respond to their constituents' demands. Media coverage of humanitarian crises—famines, heavy refugee flows, mass killings—affects public opinion and can help drive policy decision to intervene. If public opinion in favor of intervention is strong, the United States government will

be more likely to intervene. However, a cursory glance at United States interventions shows a level of vacillation in how the United States government responds to humanitarian crises.

Scholars posit that interventions into conflicts that have sparked humanitarian crises are the result of general concern for the wellbeing of non-combatants (Aydin 2010). Researchers find that humanitarian concerns significantly increase the probability of intervention. Regan (1998) explains that governments could be intervening in response to domestic pressures. As humanitarian crises unfold and as media agencies broadcast the plight of the people, public support for intervention grows. This support could force the United States government to respond with a government-biased military intervention. These studies, however, encompass all forms of interventions—military, economic, diplomatic, and peacekeeping—from all third parties. By including all forms of interventions, scholars are able to show which form of involvement produces the most favorable outcome. This is helpful in providing policymakers a greater understanding on the effects of their potential courses of action, but a dataset that comprises all forms of intervention might be overstating the affect humanitarian crises have on the United States government's decision to use its military complex in support of an embattled government.

In a study examining the effects of refugee flow on the onset and continuation of intrastate wars, Salehyan (2007) shows that refugees contribute significantly to the duration of the conflict. He shows that refugee camps provide fertile soil for rebel recruitment. The conditions in the camps and the events that forced their creation lower the opportunity costs of the potential recruit (Salehyan 2007). Further, a large number of refugees increase the potential for diasporas. This pool of willing fighters and the increased remittances rebels may receive extend the duration of the conflict (Salehyan 2007). Similar to other causes that prolong internal

violence, heavy refugee flow increases the potential costs associated with intervention, which could result in the government not receiving United States military aid.

Moreover, when the United States does take action, the response to these humanitarian crises may not be as altruistic as it looks. Motives other than humanitarian concerns could be the true causes of government-biased military intervention. While United States politicians often present interventions to the public as a means to address humanitarian concerns, international political benefits are likely candidates for the true motives behind these actions. The 1948 United Nations Convention on Prevention and Punishment of Genocide demonstrates the near global commitment of eliminating this scourge. However, collective action problems are present. In conflicts where more than one outside party will benefit from intervention in a humanitarian crisis, we see an increased probability that no party will intervene in hopes that the others will do so (Gent 2007). They hope to gain the benefits without sacrificing the costs. Interventions in humanitarian crises are therefore more likely to be unilateral and self-interested (Gent 2007). This could indicate that, while the United States is intervening in humanitarian crises, the purpose for this intervention could be something entirely different.

While the United States intervenes to address humanitarian concerns—famine in Somalia, it also has other incentives for doing so—protecting the shipping lanes in the Gulf of Aden. These self-interested motivations for intervention are lacking in cases of non-intervention like Darfur and Rwanda. It could be that these cases are examples of when the potential losses outweighed the projected gains from intervening. International political and economic motives rather than domestic political incentives and humanitarian concerns could be the true causes of United States government-biased military intervention. Thus, while humanitarian concerns may play a part in the decision to intervene, their true effects are unknown.

## *Economic*

If a nation becomes embroiled in a civil war, trade dependence and other economic factors might warrant the United States to provide the incumbent government with military aid. If the incumbent government has strong trade ties with the United States, it might seek to stabilize the nation in order to protect its economic interests. Based on the rational choice model of intervention—third party nations only involve themselves in conflicts that benefit their national interests (Lemke & Regan 2004)—intuitively, it would seem that countries rich in strategic natural resources (oil and gas) and/or that have strong trade ties with the United States would be likely recipients of military support. Bueno de Mesquita and Downs (2006) provide a theoretical explanation for this. They posit that leaders in the United States will find intervention a more attractive option if the target state is rich in goods such as energy resources or if it is critical in securing trade routes, both of which lower the costs of private and public goods in the United States thus benefiting large portions of their electorate.

A study, however, looking into the likelihood of intervention in countries at-risk of civil war indicates this is not the case. Regan (2010) shows that trade openness is not a factor in the decision to intervene before the outbreak of civil war. This study, however, only examines trade openness and does not exclusively look at trade ties between the target state and the intervening party. The failure to examine trade ties and trade dependency could result in a misrepresentation of the importance trade has on the decision to intervene.

A related study also demonstrates that economic ties were not a significant factor in the United States' decision to intervene in either civil or international war (Fordham 2008). This study, however, only recorded United States exports to the target state, which may also misrepresent the importance of economic ties. While exports do represent economic ties, they are

only part of the story. The weight of the United States' import reliance is missing in this equation. Imports play a key role in the smooth functioning of the United States economy; therefore, by excluding this element, scholars might be missing an important causal relationship. While the importance of trade has not been fully examined in relation to the United States interventions in civil conflicts, trade relations during the Cold War have been shown to effect the Soviet Union's decision to intervene. Closeness of trade ties helped predict whether the Soviet Union would intervene in internal or international disputes (Kaw 1990).

Other studies examining the effects trade has on conflict initiation provide intriguing results. The literature on international behavior provides evidence of the effects trade ties and trade networks have on the onset of militarized interstate disputes. Dorussen and Ward (2010) advance the Kantian peace theory by showing a relationship between the density of trade networks and the reduced likelihood of militarized interstate disputes. They show that there is a decreased likelihood of war between dyadic trading partners directly (direct trade) and triadic trading relationships indirectly (trade networks). They explain that the causes for this pacification are national interest and the positive effects trade networks have on communication/information gathering—an element established as critical to a proper understanding of each other's bargaining position (Dorussen & Ward 2010). While this study only looks at interstate dispute initiation, its findings may be applicable to civil war interventions. An increase in communication also increases the potential for cooperation. Therefore, having strong dyadic ties might encourage the United States to support a government's effort against an internal combatant.

Scholars also deliver evidence that economic ties, via export figures, have an indirect role on intervention decision-making. Economic ties increase the likelihood of an alliance forming

between the United States and the trade partner, and alliances increase the likelihood of intervention when civil violence breaks out. Therefore, economic ties are indirectly related to interventions (Fordham 2008) and could play a central role in the decision of the United States to provide the incumbent government military aid.

### ***Liberal Democratic Ideals***

An often-asserted interest of the United States, which might lead to military intervention, is the advancement of liberal democratic ideals. The promotion of liberal ideals throughout the world has been a cornerstone of United States foreign policy since the Wilson administration (1913-1921). The notion of “making the world safe for democracy” has influenced the actions and developed the stated interests of the United States for nearly a century. Theories to justify these actions abound. Democratic peace theory—democracies seldom fight each other—addresses this specifically. The United States gains added benefit in assuring a nation is and remains under a government that does not have drastically differing governing principles. If these more democratically likeminded governments become threatened, the United States has an interest in protecting them and thus will be more likely intervene on their behalf.

Policies and practices of the United States during the Cold War help support this line of thought. Many scholars posit that United States military interventions during the Cold War were most likely a factor of containment politics—the prevention of the spread of divergent ideals (Yoon 1997; Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom 2004, Fordham 2008). During the Cold War, the official explanation for United States intervention was to prevent the spread of communism. Scholars, policymakers, and politicians established the domino theory—if one country falls to communism so too will its neighbors—as justification for interventions. The Cold War eased constraints on decisive unilateral decision-making and domino theory justified it. Nations do not

operate in a vacuum. The actions of a country affect the behavior of its neighbors and other interested third parties, particularly the United States and the former Soviet Union.

In the post-Cold War era, the effect that liberal democratic ideals have on the decision to intervene has not received much direct attention. The ever-looming threat of a rival Super Power has disappeared taking with it defining ideological monikers, thus domino theory subsided as an impetus for intervention. Ideology, however, might still play an important role in the decision to intervene. One of the stated interests of the United States in the 2003 war with Iraq was to make it a “beacon of democracy in the Middle East”. However, the extent to which this mattered in the decision to intervene seems to be slight. Further, there are examples of United States interventions on behalf of governments whose governing ideals venture far from the liberal democratic ideals the United States seems to promote.

A recent study refutes the theories that the United States intervenes to establish democracies and that they intervene more often when the potential target state scores higher on the Polity IV scale (Bueno de Mesquita & Downs 2006). The study states that the United States has an interest in making sure target states remain marginally democratic and shows that the United States is more likely to intervene in nations that are less democratic (Bueno de Mesquita & Downs 2006). The study uses time series analysis to look at the growth of democratic principles (using Polity IV scores) in nations ten years after an intervention through the ten after the end of occupation—in cases of no intervention, the study looked at the growth of democracies ten years after the end of hostilities.

In analyzing their findings, Bueno de Mesquita and Downs (2006) show why this is. They point to the idea that less democratic regimes have a smaller selectorate—the population that keeps officials in power—to please than democratic regimes. These regimes are therefore

more able to ensure that the United States will receive a favorable portion of the private goods the state produces, which will help please the selectorate in the United States (Bueno de Mesquita & Downs 2006). Moreover, the United States is more likely to intervene in less democratic states because, by allowing a target state to advance on the democratic scale slightly, they are able to please other portions of the United States selectorate (Bueno de Mesquita & Downs 2006). Further, in intervening and supporting less-than-democratic governments, the United States is more able to ensure, because of the lack of liberal democratic ideals such as elections, that the established relationship—the distribution of power and resources—will remain intact. Through this study, it seems that the government-biased military intervention decision criteria used by United States officials is not affected by concerns regarding the promotion or preservation of liberal democratic ideals, but is more concerned with securing the status quo.

From a hypothetical prospective, one can see why this might be the case. The United States will be more willing to support and protect a friendly but non-democratic government with military aid because it has confidence that the embattled state will remain loyal after the conflict has ended. By nature of being non-democratic, the incumbent government does not have to fear losing power in an election, and the United States does not have to worry that an election will result in an anti-American regime replacing a cooperative government. Therefore, once the rebellion is put down, there is added confidence that a non-democratic government will secure and maintain the status quo distribution for the foreseeable future. This non-democratic dynamic serves as an insurance plan for the United States. The lack of elections and the private goods a non-democratic government can promise underwrite the cost of military intervention. Conversely, if the embattled government is more democratic, regardless of the outcome of the civil war, there is a strong likelihood that the government, loathed by a portion of the selectorate,

could be voted out of office and replaced with a government hostile to the United States. Therefore, in intervening to protect a more democratic government, the United States runs the risk of forfeiting the costs and projected gains of providing military support to a government.

Despite previous finding, the role liberal ideals play in the decision to provide an incumbent government military aid deserves further review. If, however, the findings of Bueno de Mesquita and Downs (2006) hold, other factors and benefits must be the cause for United States government-biased military interventions. It could be that, regardless of a government's ideology, the decision to intervene might be a product of the favorable political actions or positions the targeted government makes or takes. Ideology could be giving way to political proximity.

### ***Geopolitical***

Geopolitical issues—shared borders, regional stability, and cross-border sanctuary—might factor into the United States' decision to intervene. Spillover theory states that conflict in one state might incite conflict in a neighboring state (Gleditsch 2007; Salehyan 2007). Conflict in adjacent states increase the availability and decreases the cost of weaponry. Further, these conflicts can provide effective training for potential rebels, all of which lowers the opportunity costs of a rebellion (Collier et al 2004; Hegre 2004). Likewise, conflicts in neighboring states might provide a rebel group an opportunity to take advantage of a weak neighbor's inability to patrol and secure its borders, allowing rebel factions to gain sanctuary (Gleditsch 2007; Salehyan 2007; Lyall & Wilson 2009; Lyall 2010).

To protect against the spread of rebellion, neighboring countries should intervene more regularly. Hence, as the number of contiguous states increases, so to should the likelihood of third party intervention. Recent literature, however, demonstrates that an increase in the number

of bordering states *reduces* the likelihood that the country will receive third party support (Regan 1998). Regan (1998) shows the presence of a collective action problem—each neighbor state is expecting the others to do the work for all. Regan’s study looks at all conflicts and all potential third party interventions. This approach, however, may mask the effect geopolitical conditions have on United States military involvement on behalf of the government. The United States might intervene because of the concern of spillover and others’ inaction. Hegemonic stability theory supports this notion. The theory posits that a hegemon, the United States, will involve itself in conflicts to secure the global welfare; it will intervene to ensure regional stability, which promotes economic advancements. Therefore, to prevent civil conflicts from disrupting the economic and technological advances that stabilize and “locks-in” the international order, which promotes the global welfare, the United States should intervene more regularly. Therefore, the likelihood of intervention for stability concerns should be commensurate to the number of contiguous states.

In addition, an increase in the number of bordering states also increases the chances of the rebel group finding cross-border sanctuary. Cross-border sanctuaries increase the duration and costs of civil wars (Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000; Fearon 2004; Gleditsch 2007; Salehyan 2007; Lyall & Wilson 2009; Lyall 2010). The chances of an insurgent group finding cross-border sanctuary increase if a neighboring state is politically and/or militarily weak or if it is sympathetic to the rebel cause. Sympathies might rise out of shared ethnic identities—Ugandan sanctuary of Rwandan Tutsi—or from shared rivalries—Liberia’s sanctuary of rebels from Sierra Leone (Salehyan 2007). Further, weak governments in neighboring countries cannot patrol border frontiers sufficiently. Therefore, the greater the number of bordering states, the more likely rebel groups will find sanctuary (Salehyan 2007; Lyall & Wilson 2009; Lyall 2010).

Due to sovereignty considerations, cross-border sanctuaries limit the embattled government's ability to pursue rebels (Salehyan 2007). Consequently, civil wars in which the rebel group gains sanctuary last longer than those where no sanctuary is provided (Fearon 2004; Salehyan 2007). Additionally, rebellions with safe havens are more successful than those without them (Lyll and Wilson 2009; Lyll 2010).

By increasing the duration and decreasing the probability of success, cross-border sanctuary and outside support increase the costs associated with intervention, which might reduce the likelihood of United States intervention. However, if hegemonic stability theory is correct, these geopolitical dynamics should not affect the likelihood of United States government-biased military intervention. That is, regardless of these cost-increasing components, the hegemon, the United States, will intervene to bring peace to the region, which will allow states to enter the global economic system. If, however, these elements discourage United States interventions or if they are insignificant, hegemonic stability theory might be flawed.

### *Arguments and Hypotheses*

The literature points to a number of leading causes that might result in the United States using its military might to protect a government engaged in battle with an internal enemy. The literature, however, leaves questions unanswered and causes unexplored. Most notably, the literature fails to examine the effect of political proximity on the United States' decision to provide military aid to an incumbent government. Moreover, some schools of thought have held truer through time, while others seem to have diminished as history moved forward. Additionally, a number of studies have failed to measure adequately certain phenomena when the decision to intervene is made, have failed to take a complete measure of projected causes, or have overlooked a promising potential cause all together. While the leading schools of thought

show many important elements, they overlook the importance of political proximity, shown below to be a significant element in the United States' government-biased military intervention decision criteria.

What follows are arguments and hypotheses for the leading schools of thought. I place these hypotheses in an order that represents what I feel will be the general importance of the variables—most likely to be significant first and least likely to be significant last. A notable deletion from these hypotheses is one related to humanitarian concerns. For reasons associated with data availability and reliability, this study cannot provide a testable hypothesis for humanitarian factors for United States military involvement i.e. refugee crises or genocide.

Regan (1998) and Salehyan (2007) both acknowledge the difficulty in examining the effects of humanitarian crises. For example, Regan's coding methods for refugee crises provide an indicator *ex post* of the decision to intervene. In coding for the presences of a refugee crisis, he investigates to see if the civil war triggered the migration of at least 50,000 citizens (Regan 1998). This measure is taken after the fact and it is unknown if the refugee flow met this threshold before or after the decision on intervention was made. By not providing a measure at the point in time when the decision to intervene is made, these figures do little to advance our understanding of the elements that lead to intervention. Other variables, however, lend themselves to easier operationalization and can provide clues regarding the leading causes for United States government-biased military intervention.

Favorable voting trends in international institutions and contractual alliances might also explain intervention. The United States might see the distressed state's revealed political position in the international fray as strategically important and an alliance treaty might obligated it into action. The state might continually vote in line with the United States on important issues in

international institutions. These voting patterns reveal nations relative position in policy debates in ways that proclaimed or measured ideology cannot. Voting trends provide the United States with information regarding a nation's ideal point—the policies and actions they find worthy of support. When compared against the United States' voting patterns, the voting trends of a state reflect its political proximity to the United States. The political proximity of a nation to the United States could provoke it to action. This provides the foundation for hypothesis 1:

H1. As political proximity components increase—UNGA voting patterns and alliances, so too will the probability of United States government-biased military intervention.

The United States will intervene in losing causes to protect vital political alliances—institutional and contractual. These voting patterns and contractual obligations are seen as valuable in the promotion of the United States interest and must be protected.

The likelihood of success and the costs of an intervention are prevalent factors in all schools of thought; however, few provide a more adequate projection of these two determining factors than prior interventions. The decreased probability of success could deter the United States from intervening. As a democratic nation, the risk of failure lingers heavy on the minds of politicians. The domestic political fall-out from engaging in a losing government-biased military intervention could result in the elected leaders losing the subsequent election. Prior interventions also provide information on the relative costs associated with intervention. As stated above, IGOs are more willing to take on costly endeavors. Therefore, prior interventions by IGOs signal to the United States that any intervention is going to be very costly. This leads to hypothesis 2:

H2. An increase in the number of prior IGO interventions will decrease the probability the government will receive United States military aid.

If the United States has strong economic ties with the state in distress, it may be more willing to intervene. Economic concerns are often major components of international policies, and economic gains are always on the minds of political leaders. Trade ties and dependencies are of great importance to the United States. When these elements are properly measured and understood, their significant impact should be seen. Therefore:

H3. As economic ties increase, United States government-biased military intervention will be more likely.

During the Cold War, the United States maintained a strict containment policy. It sought to ensure that non-aligned and pro-Western countries remained under the control of neutral or friendly governments. Therefore, in civil wars that took place from 1945 to 1990, ideology should be a determining factor in the United States decision to intervene militarily on behalf of the incumbent government. After the Cold War, ideology became harder to define, but if the incumbent government shares similar liberal democratic ideals the United States might seek to secure that government from danger, which establishes hypothesis 4:

H4. The more liberal the incumbent government ideology is the more likely the government will receive United States military support.

As mentioned above, with an increase in the number of shared borders, the risk of rebel groups gaining cross-border sanctuary also increase. Moreover, if the government in a neighboring state is a rival of the incumbent government in the target state, rebels will have a greater chance of finding cross-border sanctuary. If a rebel group gains sanctuary, the conflict is more likely to last longer than average. This duration increasing element makes intervention more costly. Therefore:

H5. As the number of shared borders increases, the likelihood of the United States intervening militarily will decrease;

H6. if a neighboring state is a rival, the likely probability of United States government-biased military intervention will decrease.

### *Data and measures*

#### *My Sample and Dependent Variable*

Time and resources limited my ability to collect original data. The data I organized for this paper were collected and coded by multiple scholars for many different uses. Many scholars use different coding rules and thresholds making merging datasets difficult. Further, while I took care to ensure I organized these data to represent the most accurate picture possible, for many of my independent variables, I have missing cases.

Regan's 2002 work on third party intervention is the base of my dataset. In his 2002 work "Third Party Intervention and the Duration of Intrastate Conflict", Regan records all internal conflicts that breach the 200 fatalities threshold and any interventions—military and/or economic—that took place during the course of the conflict.

His observations, however, are in conflict-months. My observations are the conflicts themselves. Therefore, in order to get an accurate picture, I use Regan's work to build a dataset that encompasses all civil wars and any United States government-biased military interventions. To do so, I selected the first observation provided in which the United States militarily intervened on behalf of the government. In cases of no U.S. intervention, I selected the first reported observation, selecting IGO interventions (coded 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9 unique to Regan 2002) over other third parties. This process produced a unique dataset of 150 civil conflicts from 1945 to 1999. Regan (2002) specifically coded for military government-biased intervention and

provided the Correlates of War country code for the intervener. With this, I was able to compile my binary dependent variable. I code a 1 for all instances in which there was a United States government-biased military intervention. All other conflicts are coded 0. Of the 150 conflicts, there are 24 instances of my dependent variable.

### ***Independent Variables***

*UN Roll Call (Ideal Points)*. The literature on political proximity uses United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voting records as a measure. A nation's proximity to the United States is the ratio of UNGA votes it casts in alignment with the United States over those it casts in opposition (Reed et al 2008; Dreher & Gassebner 2007). UNGA voting trends in favor of United States policies and/or initiatives shows a tacit alignment with the United States agenda. This orientation shows the willingness of a nation to yield to the wishes of the United States.

My main variable to indicate political proximity is the divergence of preferences, revealed ideal points gained through United Nations General Assembly roll call voting trends, of target states to the United States. To figure out the revealed ideal point of all nations, Reed et al (2008) set states on a -1 to 1 spectrum. All NATO members are coded as -1 and Warsaw Pact member-states are code as 1. Non-aligned states are coded as 0. All votes a state made in a particular year in support of the status quo are scored as -1 and those in support of revisionist policies are scored 1. These figures give the nation's average voting score per year, which reveals its ideal point on the -1 to 1 spectrum. I subtracted the target nations average score for the year prior to the start of the conflict to the United States average score (U.S. mean score for all years in my sample is -.865). I then took the absolute value of the difference. This gave me a 0 to 2 spectrum, with 0 equaling close alignment to the United States and support of the status quo

and 2 equaling complete diversion from the United States and support of revisionist policies. The range of this variable was .006 (Paraguay in 1946) to 1.7813 (Soviet Union in 1987).

*Allied status.* Allied status is a dummy variable showing whether the target government had an alliance with the United States the year prior to the start of conflict. This information was compiled using data from the COW project. The conflict was coded a 1 if an alliance—defensive or entente—was in place in the year prior and 0 otherwise (Gibler & Sarkees 2004). As mentioned above, alliances indicate a level of political proximity the United States has with a nation.

*Prior IGO Interventions.* Using Regan's 2002 dataset, I was able to form a variable indicating the total number of IGO interventions a conflict received. If the conflict witnessed a United States government-biased military intervention, I entered the number of IGO interventions that occurred prior to United States involvement. If there was no United States government-biased military intervention, I recorded the total number of IGO interventions.

*Trade Dependence.* Trade dependence is calculated using data from the Correlates of War project (Barbieri et al. 2008). This project collected data on national trade and dyadic trade. Once I segregated the United States' information, I calculated the total trade of the United States (exports + imports = Total U.S. trade) for each year of my sample. Further, I added the imports and exports that the target state had with the United States to get a figure representing the total flow of goods between the two states (U.S. imports from Country B + U.S. exports to Country B = U.S. Trade with Country B). I then divided this number by the total trade the United States had in that particular year. This gave me a figure indicating the total trade dependence the United States had with the target state (U.S. Trade with Country B/Total U.S. trade = Total U.S. trade

dependence). To avoid the endogenous problems the conflict might have on trade, I used the trade figures for the year prior to the start of the conflict.

*Liberal Democratic Ideals.* I measure this variable using Polity IV scores. This score measures the presence of liberal government practices. It places states on a -10 to 10 scale. -10 represents non-liberal government policies and practices and 10 represents democratic liberal government policies and practices. I have two testable variables here. (1) I recorded the average score the state received throughout the duration of the conflict or up until the United States intervened. (2) Acknowledging that conflicts are more likely to take place in states in the middle of the polity scale, I took the mean of all polity scores at the beginning of the conflict and then recorded the difference of the states' score to the mean. This allows me to set a baseline and then measure deviation from it. By reordering the scale in this manner and taking difference from the mean, I am able to determine the extent liberal democratic ideals play on my dependent variable.

Due to dataset coding irregularities, I cannot form a variable indicating if a rebel group did indeed receive cross-border sanctuary. I am however, able to present proxies for this; shared borders and rival neighbors will serve as strong indicators.

*Shared Borders.* For each conflict, I referenced a map for the year before the conflict started. From here, I was able to determine the total number of neighboring state. This variable will allow me to see if a collective action problem is a pull or push factor for the United States.

*Rival Neighbor.* Drawing from Salehyan's (2007) work, I was able to develop a variable indicating whether one of the neighboring states was a rival to the incumbent government. This will provide information on key geopolitical factors.

## *Methods*

Due to the binary nature of my dependent variable, I use probit regression models to assess the correlation between the United States' decision to provide government-biased military aid in a civil war and my explanatory variables. Moreover, because some countries seem more prone to civil wars than others do, I use Stata to cluster my observations.

To assess which of my independent variables have the greatest influence on the decision of the United States to conduct a government-biased military intervention, I ran a number of probit regression models. The first is a model consisting of all variables of interest. After which, I systematically removed variables shown to be insignificant and/or those that are duplicate proxies for the same underlying school of thought i.e. the number of shared borders and neighbor rivals. Both of these variables seek to prove the geopolitical line of reasoning—cross-borders sanctuary reduces United States involvement. Therefore, if one or both are insignificant, I removed the variable that has the largest  $p$  value from the model to see if it was interfering with the other(s).

## *Findings and Analysis*

This study seeks to determine what factors contribute to the decision of the United States to use its military might in support some of incumbent governments in their fight against internal belligerents and not others. Table 1 shows the results of the probit models. The models provide interesting conclusions. In particular, they show the importance of political proximity in the decision of the United States to provide government-biased military support. Below, I discuss the implications these results have on my hypotheses. Three hypotheses deal with cost-increasing elements—collective action problems, cross-border sanctuary, and prior intervention, and three deal with benefit gaining factors—economic trade, democracy, and political proximity. I address

each of these hypotheses directly. The models show support for some hypotheses, while others are left wanting. Moreover, the results show the interaction between variables.

**Table 1. Probit Regression: U.S. Government-Biased Military Interventions in Intrastate Wars (1945-1999) (Robust Clusters)**

<b>U.S. Interventions</b>	Model 1 (Std. Err.)	Model 2 (Std. Err.)	Model 3 (Std. Err.)	Model 4 (Std. Err.)	Model 5 (Std. Err.)	Model 6 (Std. Err.)
<b>U.N. Roll Call (Ideal Points)</b>	-.938** (.416)	-.940** (.418)	-.974** (.416)	-1.108*** (.409)	---	---
<b>Trade Dependence</b>	-13.552 (12.266)	-13.419 (12.474)	-12.632 (12.371)	-9.906 (12.116)	-6.175 (10.622)	2.536 (9.807)
<b>Number of Borders</b>	-.062 (.071)	-.066 (.067)	-.057 (.064)	-.066 (.063)	-.062 (.071)	-.088 (.071)
<b>Prior IGO interventions</b>	-.265* (.133)	-.266* (.134)	-.257* (.134)	-.272** (.130)	-.147 (.098)	-.183* (.096)
<b>Allied Status</b>	.432 (.365)	.409 (.392)	.395 (.375)	---	.816** (.337)	---
<b>Average Polity Score</b>	-.001 (.028)	.000 (.028)	---	---	.008 (.026)	.015 (.025)
<b>Rival Neighbor</b>	-.061 (.350)	---	---	---	.002 (.324)	.121 (.328)
<b>Constant</b>	.31535 N=107	.30932 N=107	.27633 N=111	.54729 N=111	-.78885 N=123	-.56703 N=123
	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : =.1428	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : =.1433	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : =.139	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : =.128	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : =.098	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : =.0505

\*p< .10; \*\*p< .05; \*\*\*p< .01

*Political Proximity.* I have two variables with which to test the importance of political proximity: allied status and ideal points as revealed through United Nations General Assembly roll call votes. Ideal points are the most fruitful variable in my set. Allied status, however, is significant only when I *remove* ideal points from the model. When I remove allied status from my test, the coefficient and *p* value of ideal points rise; therefore, it would seem that allied status is an intervening variable. This is consistent with the theory that states only form alliances with nations that are close to them and that are less likely to go to war.

Political proximity as measured by ideal points revealed through UNGA voting trends is an understudied variable in determining when the United States will conduct a government-biased military intervention. The results of the probit regression models show how important this variable is in the decision-making process. Ideal points outperformed all other variables in all

models. These findings provide strong support hypothesis 1: as political proximity decrease, so too will the probability of United States government-biased military intervention.

I use a Stata program, *Clarify*, to determine the probability of U.S. government-biased military intervention. Figure 1 provides a graph of this near linear correlation. While holding all variables to their mean levels but adjusting the level of political proximity, I am able to determine the probability of United States government-biased military interventions. The results show that as a state moves away from the United States in its UNGA voting trends, so does the likelihood of government-biased military intervention. In relation to government-biased military interventions, political proximity is a determinate in the United States' decision-making process.

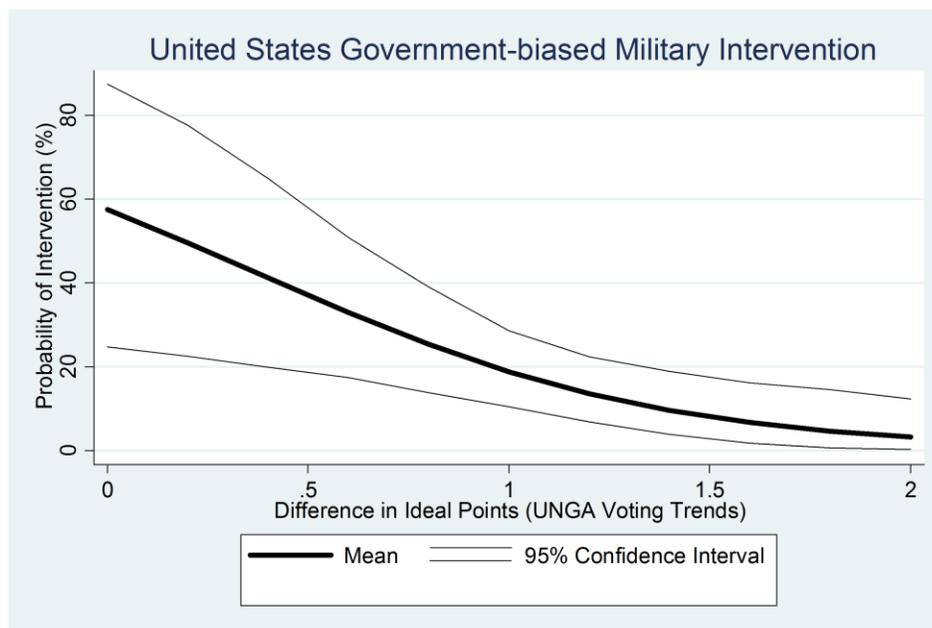


Figure 1.

*Prior IGO Interventions.* Because IGOs are able to divide the costs of intervention with all of the members, IGOs are able to intervene in more costly endeavors. Prior IGO interventions therefore serve as a great indicator for the potential costs of a subsequent intervention. Further, prior interventions provide the United States with information regarding the likelihood of success. Therefore, with an increase in prior IGO interventions, the probability of United States

intervention should decrease. The probit regression results show this to be the case, and thus I find support for hypothesis 2. The coefficient points in the right direction, and it is significant, albeit at the .10 level. Therefore, this cost-predicting and success-predicting variable has a role in determining whether the United States will conduct a government-biased military intervention.

There are, however, interesting dynamics occurring with regard to this variable, which could indicate that other endogenous elements not examined in this study might be skewing this finding, or other variables included in this study are intervening. It is unclear from the sources I consolidated these data from if prior IGO interventions include the United States in their coalition. If they did, then United States intervention, under the penumbra of an IGO intervention, has already occurred. Therefore, further United States involvement in the civil war would not be likely. Using the data I have to assess these claims, I can see that this might be the case.

When I *do not* include ideal points, allied status gains importance, which I discuss below, and prior IGO interventions loses significance. When I *do not include* allied status but *leave in* ideal points, both ideal points and prior IGO interventions gain in significance. In fact, the  $p$  levels and the coefficients decrease when I remove allied status from the model. Moreover, when I *do not include* ideal points or allied status, prior IGO intervention becomes significant. This shows that allied status might be influencing the significance of prior IGO interventions, which could indicate that the United States was involved in these prior interventions. That is, allied status could be an intervening variable in relation to prior IGO interventions and United States government-biased military interventions, or there could be a level of collinearity between these and other variables. To test for this, I ran a correlation model, presented in table 2, which indicates this is not the case. Table 2 shows that there is no covariance between prior IGO

interventions, allied status, or political proximity. However, the potential for an intervening effect with these factors is still a possibility, which requires further examination beyond the scope of the project. Nevertheless, these findings provide support for hypothesis 2; prior interventions seem to affect the likelihood of United States government-biased interventions.

**Table 2: Correlation Table of Key Variables**

	<b>U.N. Roll Call (Ideal Points)</b>	<b>Allied Status</b>	<b>Prior IGO Interventions</b>
<b>U.N. Roll Call Votes (Ideal Points)</b>	1.000	---	---
<b>Allied Status</b>	-0.389	1.000	---
<b>Prior IGO Interventions</b>	0.094	-0.135	1.000

*Trade dependence.* Economic factors, imports and exports, drive many domestic policy decisions, but according to these data, they do not affect United States foreign policy decisions regarding government-biased military interventions. The results of the probit regression models are surprising in two ways. Not only is this factor insignificant, the coefficient in most models is in the opposite direction of what would make intuitive sense. Economic ties present an interesting problem however. Civil wars are not spontaneous events. The internal problems that lead to many civil wars develop over time. Minority group complaints of elite depravity fester and generate discontent. The run-up to civil war, the increased activity of agitated masses and propaganda, create an environment that might stifle economic ties and trade years before the outbreak of armed resistance. This may dampen the effects of economic elements in the years before a conflict reaches the 200 fatalities threshold. These problems require further examination and greater data collection efforts. Nevertheless, with the data collected for this study, I find no support for hypothesis 3.

*Liberal Democratic Ideals/Polity Scores.* The average Polity IV scores of the nation throughout the conflict or until the United States intervened is the most underperforming variable

tested. It is insignificant and the coefficient is near or at zero in all models. To see if there is a measurement error creating these results, I ran two other models (not listed). In the first model, I took the states Polity IV score for the year prior to the start of the conflict. For the second model, I figured out the mean of the average scores in my original variable and took the difference from the mean for each of my observations. Neither of these models resulted in a significant correlation. With these results, I can rule out hypothesis 4; the level of democratic ideals present in a nation does not have an effect on the likelihood of United States government-biased military intervention.

*Shared Borders.* The number of borders is not a leading factor in the United States' decision to provide government-biased military aid. While the coefficient is in the right direction, the results show that an increase in the number of borders does not significantly reduce the probability of government-biased military intervention. Further, as I remove other potential intervening variables, there is little change in both the coefficient and significance level. Therefore, I find no support for hypothesis 5.

*Rival Neighbor.* Much like the number of shared borders, having a rival neighbor can increase the likelihood that a rebel group will find cross-border sanctuary. This increases the duration and thus cost of the conflict and intervention. This, however, does not seem to matter to United States decision-makers. Similar to an increase in borders, results are in the right direction, but are insignificant. Further, after running models (not listed) in which potential intervening variables are removed, having a rival neighbor remains insignificant. Therefore, these findings seem to rule out hypothesis 6.

With these findings in hand, I explore the implications of the relationship between United States government-biased military intervention and political proximity. Once these implications are established, I conclude with a summary.

### *Implications*

These results have stark implications regarding United States foreign policy. They show that the theories espoused by politicians in the United States for intervening on behalf of incumbent governments in civil wars serve as façades for the true cause—political proximity. Promoting democracy abroad and advancing the economic well-being and stability of the target state and the overall global order are often leading reasons political leaders in the United States give for their decisions to intervene in foreign internal conflicts. These ostensible causes, however, are little more than window dressings, serving to enhance the politicians standing with the public while the true causes for action remains behind closed doors.

The stability of a nation is of some importance to the United States. This stability, however, is not dependent on maintaining or advancing either economic ties or liberal ideals nor is this stability a function of regional concerns. The United States is more concerned with stability when the state helps promote its global agenda.

The findings of this study show that the decision to intervene, the decision to expend blood and/or treasure in another nation's civil conflict, is made for *realpolitik* causes rather than for stability, economic, or moralistic concerns. These findings show the role *realpolitik* dimensions play in institutional politics. Moreover, these findings are in contrast to the projected outcomes of the more established theories, such as hegemonic stability and Kantian or democratic peace theories.

The United States often holds itself as the defender and promoter of the moral right, and its leaders portray its foreign policy as such. This study, however, shows that morally just liberal ideals and the advancement of the economies in these developing nations are not factors in determining whether a government will receive United States military aid in its fight against internal enemies. The findings of this study instead show the self-interested motives behind interventions. They show the interplay between power and politics in international institutions, such as the United Nations. They show the importance of institutional standing and politics in the realist political order.

### *Conclusion*

This study sought to understand the relevant factors that decision-makers in the United States rely upon in determining whether to supply an incumbent government with military aid in its fight against an internal foe. In short, it sought to answer the question: Why intervene? To gain a greater understanding, I explored traditional as well as nontraditional answers to this problem. In doing so, I find that the most prevalent cause for United States government-biased military interventions is not one of the traditionally held causes, but rather an understudied nontraditional factor: political proximity.

This study shows that a state's preferences in the international political order, revealed through UNGA voting trends, serve to either implicitly align itself to or against the United States' global agenda. These revealed preferences are significant factors in determining if the United States will intervene on behalf of the government. As governments move farther away from the United States on the political proximity scale, they are significantly less likely to receive military aid. Exploring the effects of political proximity on the decision to intervene

advances the literature on hegemonic relations with client states and establishes a new chapter in the intervention literature.

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