TO INTERVENE OR NOT TO INTERVENE: 
THE ROLE OF HUMANITARIANISM, U.N. APPROVAL, 
AND ECONOMIC INCENTIVES 
IN DETERMINING NATO MILITARY INTERVENTION IN CONFLICT

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Abstract

The North American Treaty Organization (NATO) was founded at the outset of the Cold War and served as a collective defense alliance of states in North America and Western Europe against the Soviet bloc. However, following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the role of NATO evolved and the organization began to take part in military interventions. This paper examines the impact of three variables on determining NATO intervention: human rights violations in a conflict, U.N. calls for action, and economic incentives measured in terms of trade. Using a qualitative case study analysis in which four conflicts were examined – two in which NATO intervened and two in which it did not – this paper found that a positive correlation does exist between economic incentives and NATO intervention.

Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a military alliance based on the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949. The organization constitutes a system of collective defense: member states agree to mutual defense in the event of attack by an external party (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2012). NATO began primarily as a political association but grew more militaristic as a result of the Korean War, the Cold War, and the formation of the Warsaw Pact. NATO’s first military intervention in a conflict took place in Bosnia from 1991 to 1995. Since then, NATO has been involved in several other conflicts,
including Kosovo in 1999, Afghanistan in 2001, and Libya in 2011 (Ibid.). The number of NATO interventions remains small, though there have been many conflicts in the world since NATO’s formation in which international assistance may have helped end violence. Why then, does NATO intervene in some conflicts but not others?

While the interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo could be explained by the conflicts’ proximity to the North Atlantic region and therefore proximity to NATO member states, and the military action taken in Afghanistan can be explained by the events of 9/11, the intervention in Libya stands out as unique. Libya lies outside the geographic sphere of NATO members and yet NATO did intervene. However, the ongoing conflict in Syria, which began in 2011, has had no such intervention, despite the country’s close proximity to NATO member state Turkey. It would seem that there is more to NATO’s involvement in a conflict country than its location alone. This is not to say that the location is unimportant. Rather, it would seem that more factors are at play. What then, are the other factors that determine whether or not NATO will intervene in a conflict?

This study will seek to fill a gap that exists in the literature dealing with the motivations behind NATO interventions. The first section of this paper presents an overview of previous studies that pertain to aspects of this question. The study then posits that a combination of factors makes intervention more likely. Three particular factors are identified, which together may be essential for a NATO intervention to occur: humanitarian incentives, U.N. approval, and NATO member states’ economic interests. Four case studies – two in which NATO did intervene and two in which the organization did not – will provide the sample data for correlative analysis between these three factors and the probability of intervention.

While causation cannot be determined, the analysis conducted in this study provides some insight into the motivations behind NATO interventions. This study concludes by presenting other potential factors that could be considered in future research. Determining the factors that are most important in influencing NATO to intervene in a conflict will provide a better understanding of the organization. In turn, this understanding will allow for more accurate prediction of NATO behavior in the future.

Literature Review

As an important topic with foreign policy ramifications, NATO interventions have been studied and written about in depth. The breadth
of research related to the question at hand can be distilled into four main categories: (1) literature on the legality of NATO intervention, tied closely to coordination with the U.N. and receiving U.N. permission; (2) research looking closely at specific NATO interventions individually; (3) factors that influence interventions in general; and (4) factors that influence NATO in particular. However, there is a lack of research into whether NATO interventions occur for a purely humanitarian reason, with the goal of achieving a collective good, or if other factors – such as national interests – play a significant role.

The first relevant category of study focuses on the legality of NATO interventions. In particular, this category covers the role the U.N. has played in coordinating with NATO and granting the alliance permission to conduct its missions. J. D. Godwin (1999) looked at the NATO-U.N. relationship and determined, through examining NATO’s role in Bosnia and Kosovo in 1992 and 1999 respectively, that NATO enjoys certain advantages that the U.N. and other regional organizations do not share. The alliance is grounded in the moral strength of a common democratic ideology. However, NATO lacks the political will and freedom of action required to perform peace operations without U.N. oversight (Ibid.). Godwin contributes to the literature the idea that U.N. approval is necessary in order for NATO’s actions to be viewed as legitimate. The likelihood of U.N. permission might be an important factor in determining whether or not NATO will intervene militarily in a conflict.

Other relevant literature falls into the category of case-specific studies. While there are few studies comparing NATO interventions and looking for commonalities, there are many more articles that examine individual conflicts and the role of NATO interventions in them. Two articles that looked at the case of Libya give competing explanations for the Libya intervention. One article argues that Western intervention is ideological in origin and derived from liberal interventionism, but there may have been an imperialistic drive behind the Libya mission motivated by securing access to oil (Pfaff 2011). The other article argues that there was a moral justification for the intervention in Libya. It addresses the contested viewpoint that there was a just cause for forcible regime changes. It also argues that, at least initially, the mission goal was to protect civilians and not to overthrow Qaddafi (Pattison 2011).

One final category of relevant research consists of studies on the significant factors in interventions in general. Patrick M. Regan (1998) examined the conditions under which third parties decide to intervene in intrastate conflicts in his article “Choosing to Intervene: Outside Interventions in Internal Conflicts.” He determined that the decision results from a mixture of domestic political considerations and strategic interests. Additionally,
Realism alone cannot account for interventions, which can occur not simply when national interests are at stake. This argument would lend itself to the idea that humanitarian and ethical concerns are the major factor behind an intervention. However, the study looks at interventions in general and not NATO specifically.

Similarly, another article looks at U.N. involvement in international crises. The authors compare two models of explaining U.N. behavior and determine that the organization is more likely to get involved in conflicts based on their escalatory potential and severity, suggesting that the U.N. adheres to the humanitarian and security missions laid out in its Charter rather than following the interests of the five permanent Security Council members (Beardsley, Schmidt 2012). This indicates that humanitarianism might in fact be more important in determining likelihood of intervention than states’ interests. However, an important thing to note is that the article again focuses on the U.N. and not NATO specifically.

There are also studies that focus on NATO in particular, as opposed to interventions in general. An article entitled “Explaining Wars of Choice: An Integrated Decision Model of NATO Policy in Kosovo,” discussed factors that influence why member states had varying degrees of support for NATO’s Kosovo intervention, including balance of threat, Neo-Realism, public opinion, and governmental institutional structures. The article also points out that member states’ desire to present a unified front even when they may disagree internally with one another. This might be indicative of the idea that interventions are typically driven primarily by the desires of a small number of member states (Auerswald 2004). This same idea is echoed in B.K. Shrivastava and Manmohan Agarwal’s (2003) article where they examined the role of NATO in the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict, and determined that the US was the driving force behind this intervention. Both of these studies are limited in scope because they only address one intervention each, and do not compare across cases. Furthermore, Auerswald draws no conclusion as to the relative importance of the factors analyzed.

A final article of importance is “NATO’s ethnic cleansing: The Kurdish question in Turkey” by S. Esim (1999). The article brings into question NATO’s humanitarian intentions through pointing out that, while NATO intervened to stop human rights abuses in Kosovo, a NATO member state, Turkey, has perpetuated human rights abuses against Kurds within the country and NATO has done nothing. This article raises an important point with regards to intervention motivations. If NATO interventions were executed on purely humanitarian grounds, NATO would necessarily have intervened in many
more conflicts than it has. Therefore, there must be other factors that influence the decision to intervene.

In sum, the existing literature provides many clues as to what the most important factors in influencing interventions may be. Research into the legality of NATO interventions contributes to the literature the importance of U.N. coordination and approval of missions. Case studies focusing on specific interventions provide a more in-depth examination of NATO’s role in certain conflicts, and provide potential explanations for intervention beyond the humanitarian. Research on the motivating factors behind interventions in general, and NATO specifically, brings to light the importance of national interests.

The biggest problem with the literature is that a gap exists when it comes to why NATO intervenes in some conflicts but not others. As stated previously, this study will attempt to provide an answer to this question through exploring the importance of three factors: U.N. permission, humanitarian concerns, and national interests in terms of economics.

**Hypothesis and Theoretical Model**

Under NATO’s current treaty, if conflict occurs within the North Atlantic region, NATO will intervene for collective self-defense (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2012). If a conflict occurs that results in high numbers of casualties, this could trigger a call for international assistance from within the conflict-torn country. This, in turn, could lead to a demand for action from the public of the international community, which might incentivize NATO to intervene. However, in all instances of conflict outside of the North Atlantic region, NATO members are bound only to consult with one another regarding intervention when member states’ interests are threatened (Ibid.).

While NATO interventions have historically claimed to benefit the collective good by fulfilling humanitarian purposes, humanitarianism is not enough. Often, the interests of NATO member states must also be at stake. The theory that this study will seek to address is that interventions are more likely to occur when intervening in a conflict within another country would serve to protect the economic interests of NATO member states. Furthermore, NATO is more likely to intervene if a member state is partially reliant upon a natural resource within the conflict-torn country.

Additionally, due to the restrictions of international law, NATO will be much more likely to intervene in a conflict if the intervention has been
sanctioned by the U.N. This is essential because without U.N. approval any military action taken by NATO in another country can be deemed in violation of international law (Henkin 1999).

The model below demonstrates the theory to be analyzed:

The central hypothesis of this paper, then, is that NATO will be much more likely to intervene militarily in a conflict if three conditions are met: A) there are humanitarian incentives for intervention, B) the intervention has been sanctioned by the U.N. or U.N. support is likely, and C) the economic interests of NATO member states would be furthered through military intervention.

**Methodology**

**Variables**

The hypothesis has three conditions – or independent variables – that must be met in order for a NATO intervention to occur.

The first independent variable is whether or not there is a humanitarian incentive for intervention in a conflict. Humanitarian incentive will be operationalized as the presence of violence and human rights abuses in a conflict situation. Violence will be measured in terms of deaths. Any number of deaths over 1,000 will constitute an incentive to intervene. The greater the number of reported casualties, the higher the incentive for intervention. The presence of violence will be determined through news sources, the United Human Rights Council, and the Center for Justice and Accountability. Information on human rights abuses will be gathered from Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and news sources. If both violence and human rights abuses occurred in a conflict, then it can be said that a humanitarian incentive for intervention existed.
Along with humanitarian incentive come two intervening variables: (1) a call for international aid from within the conflict-torn country, and (2) demand for action by the public in the international community. If a conflict is causing deaths and human rights violations to occur, this will likely lead to a call for assistance from within the country, which will in turn lead to a demand for action among the public. Historical records and news sources can provide data on these intervening variables.

The second independent variable is the presence or absence of U.N. approval for a NATO intervention. This will be measured in terms of whether or not the U.N. called for a NATO intervention. Data for this variable can be found in U.N. and NATO records. This variable can have one of two values: “yes” or “no”.

The third independent variable is NATO member states’ interests, which will here be conceptualized in terms of economic power. That is to say, if the aggregate sum of NATO member states’ trade with a country in conflict were substantial – higher than $15 billion USD annually – then it would be in NATO’s interest to intervene so as to protect their members’ economic interests. Trade is measured as the sum of all imports and exports between NATO nations and the country in conflict. Data is taken from the year prior to conflict manifestation, since this is theoretically before the conflict would affect trade. Economic data demonstrating trade interests can be found through the IMF and the CIA World Factbook.

Tied to this variable is yet another intervening variable: reliance on a particular resource. If any NATO states are partially reliant on the natural resources of the state in conflict, it would be in NATO’s interest to intervene.

The dependent variable in this hypothesis is the presence or absence of a NATO military intervention in a conflict. A NATO intervention will be defined by the presence of NATO troops within a country or the use of NATO military force, i.e. air strikes. Information on NATO interventions can be found in historical NATO records. This variable can have only two values: “yes”, an intervention occurred or “no”, an intervention did not occur.

Additionally, one control variable will be examined: the geographic location of the country experiencing conflict in relation to the location of NATO states. The probability of intervention is likely to be higher in a conflict located in close geographic proximity to NATO member states due to security concerns. Countries that share a border with a NATO member state will be considered very close. Those countries that are located in the region but do not share a border will be considered relatively close, and those that are outside the region will not be considered close.
Cases and Observations

There is a vast number of cases that could have been selected for analysis in this paper, as there have been hundreds of conflicts presenting a humanitarian incentive for NATO to intervene. For reasons detailed below, the cases chosen for this analysis were Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992, Rwanda in 1994, Libya in 2011, and the ongoing Syrian civil war.

These four cases have been chosen because there are some interesting parallels. The Bosnia and Herzegovina war was the first conflict in which NATO ever intervened militarily. The war has been described as genocide. Rwanda, meanwhile, was also a case of genocide but it saw no NATO intervention. In fact, the international community largely ignored the Rwandan genocide until after most of the violence had already occurred. Additionally, both the Bosnia intervention and the Rwandan genocide occurred in close chronologic proximity and both countries were situated in conflict-torn regions.

The Libyan and Syrian conflicts also occurred within the same timeframe, as part of the Arab Spring, and both conflicts began as uprisings against the government and eventually turned into civil wars. However, despite the similarities between the two conflicts, only one – Libya – saw a NATO intervention. This is most interesting when one considers the fact that, of the two cases, Syria is located in closer geographic proximity to a NATO member state than is Libya, but it was Libya, not Syria, that experienced intervention.

While there are a whole host of other cases that could potentially be included in this study, this symmetry in cases will best highlight the differing reasons why NATO intervenes while displaying the least disparity in evidence. Providing another case in which intervention did or did not occur would only bias the study in one direction or another and the connection between these cases will serve to ensure there are as few intervening variables in the analysis as possible.

In all four cases chosen, there was a humanitarian incentive for NATO to intervene in order to achieve a common good. However, NATO only intervened in two cases. Therefore, it would seem that some factor beyond humanitarianism – or even geographic location – plays a role in whether or not an intervention will occur. Member states’ interests are likely the cause.

Methodology

A qualitative method of analysis will be employed, using the four observations stated above – Bosnia in 1992, Rwanda in 1994, Libya in 2011, and Syria in 2011. Because of the small number of NATO interventions that
have occurred, and the difficulty that would therefore exist in finding cases that control for other variables, a comparative case study analysis would not be a viable method. As a result, case study analysis will be used.

**Data Analysis**

*Bosnia and Herzegovina*

The first case analyzed was that of Bosnia and Herzegovina where, in March of 1992, a territorial war broke out between the Bosniaks and the Serbs and Croats as a result of the breakup of Yugoslavia. The conflict ended in December of 1995 with the signing of the Dayton Agreement (Cutts 1999). Estimates put the number of deaths that occurred during the war between 97,000 and 110,000, 40% of whom were civilians (Center for Justice and Accountability 2012). Additionally, records show that human rights abuses did occur, in the form of indiscriminate killings and sexual violence (Amnesty International 2012). Because the conflict lead to well over 1,000 deaths and human rights violations did occur, it can be said that there was a humanitarian incentive for NATO to intervene in the conflict. This satisfies the first of the three conditions that, according to the hypothesis, must be met for a NATO military intervention to occur.

The second condition of the hypothesis is U.N. approval of NATO action. This condition was also met in Bosnia when the U.N. Security Council passed a number of resolutions that sanctioned NATO military action. NATO involvement in Bosnia began as a result of UNSC Resolutions 713, 757, and 787 under which NATO forces enforced the U.N. arms embargo and sanctions, and monitored operations in the Adriatic (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2012). UNSC Resolution 781 expanded NATO involvement to include monitoring and enforcing a no-fly zone; the Alliance’s first military engagement occurred in 1994 when NATO shot down four planes for violating the no-fly zone (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2012).

The third and final condition that must be met in order for NATO intervention to occur, according to the hypothesis, is that the economic interests of member states must be at risk. If the aggregate sum of trade between the country in conflict and NATO member states is greater than $15 billion USD, then it can be said that an economic incentive for intervention to protect states’ interests existed. In the case of Bosnia, trade data indicates that, in the year prior to the Bosnian civil war, the aggregate sum of NATO states’ trade with Yugoslavia was $18,805.891 billion USD (International Monetary Fund 2011). It is important to note that trade data for 1991 had to be determined based
on NATO states’ trade with Yugoslavia rather than Bosnia and Herzegovina because, prior to the start of the Bosnian civil war, Bosnia and Herzegovina was a part of Yugoslavia. It is therefore possible that a key factor in NATO involvement was the protection of the economic interests of its member states.

The case of Bosnia and Herzegovina found support for the hypothesis; all three conditions – humanitarian incentives, U.N. approval, and economic interests – were met, and a NATO intervention did in fact occur. The theory behind the hypothesis, however, finds less support. This study theorized that humanitarian incentives in terms of deaths and human rights abuses leads to a call for help from within the conflict-torn country, which in turn leads to public demand for action among the international community, precipitating NATO intervention. Historical accounts indicate that there was a call for help from within Bosnia; however, there is less evidence indicating a demand for action among the international community (Cutts 1999). There is also no evidence indicating that this sequence of events in any way strongly influenced NATO to intervene.

Additionally, while the analysis shows that the economic interests of NATO member states were in fact at risk due to trade value, there is no evidence to indicate that any NATO member states were particularly reliant on any resources within the former Yugoslavia (Mongabay.com 1990). Therefore, in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it does not appear that the intervening variables identified had much of an impact.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, while it does not share a border with any of the pre-1992 NATO states, is located in relativity close geographic proximity to Italy. Moreover, at the time, Eastern Europe was the focus of much attention due to the recent collapse of the Soviet Union and the breakup of Yugoslavia. Therefore, it made sense that NATO would be apt to intervene in a conflict located not too far from its member states’ borders, and more importantly, located within the sphere of Western European and American interest.

Rwanda

The second case analyzed was that of Rwanda where, between April and July of 1994, genocide occurred when long-standing ethnic tensions culminated in the murder of thousands of Tutsi by the Hutu ethnic group (Eriksson 1996). Rwanda, unlike Bosnia and Herzegovina, is not located in close proximity to the North Atlantic region. That being said, over 800,000 deaths and countless human rights violations occurred during the approximately 100 days of genocide, which indicates a strong humanitarian incentive for intervention (Human Rights Watch 1996). However, while this first condition
necessary for a NATO intervention to occur is met, conditions two and three are not met. The U.N. never sanctioned an intervention in Rwanda, and trade data indicates that NATO member states did not have a significant economic interest to protect in Rwanda. The sum of aggregate trade with Rwanda in 1993 was only $148.163 million USD (International Monetary Fund 2011). The case of Rwanda would therefore also support the hypothesis. Only one of the three necessary conditions was met and as expected, no intervention occurred.

The intervening variables also show less support for validating the causal story in Rwanda. While the death and human rights abuses that occurred did lead to a call for aid from within Rwanda, there was no subsequent demand for action from the international community until after the genocide had occurred, at which time many asked why nothing had been done sooner (Eriksson 1996). In the case of economic interests; however, the theory does hold. As NATO member states did not have significant economic ties to Rwanda, they also did not rely on any particular natural resource provided by the country. It therefore makes sense that they would not intervene, as they had no interests to protect.

In terms of geography, there is also a correlation here between location and intervention. Rwanda, located in central Africa, is far from the North Atlantic region. If the claim that interventions are more likely in conflicts that occur closer to the region immediately surrounding NATO member states is true, then the lack of intervention in Rwanda appears to support this.

**Libya**

The third case analyzed was that of Libya, where in February of 2011, a civil war began between forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi and those seeking to overthrow his government in a revolution. The conflict ended in October 2011 after Gaddafi was killed and the National Transitional Council declared Libya to be liberated (BBC News 2012). Prior to NATO intervention in Libya, between 1,000 and 2,000 deaths had occurred; and, over the course of the conflict, human rights violations took place (Milne 2011). This constitutes a humanitarian incentive for intervention. However, it should be noted that NATO air strikes that took place during intervention raised the death toll even higher. By the end of the conflict, over 30,000 people had died (Laub 2011). Additionally, NATO forces have also been accused of war crimes and human rights violations within Libya, so while there may have been a humanitarian incentive for intervention, NATO’s main goal was clearly not to protect Libyans (Grey 2012).
The second condition for intervention, U.N. approval, was met when the U.N. Security Council issued Resolution 1973. This resolution authorized NATO to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas under attack within Libya (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2012). While this may have been the initial goal, the damage done as a result of NATO air strikes indicates that a larger goal may have been at play, namely ending the conflict and removing Gaddafi from power.

Trade data indicates that the third condition of the hypothesis, economic interests, was also met in Libya. Aggregate trade data between NATO member states and Libya totaled $46,820,524 billion USD in 2010 (International Monetary Fund 2011). It can therefore be inferred that NATO had an economic incentive to intervene and end the conflict, in order to protect the economic interests of member states.

The hypothesis is supported in the case of Libya. All three of the conditions identified as necessary for an intervention to take place – humanitarian incentives, U.N. approval, and economic interests – were met. That being said, it is likely that some other factors not taken into account by the hypothesis may also have been at play – prominent among them being the objective of removing Gaddafi from power.

The case of Libya also supports the theory presented in this paper. As a result of the violence occurring within the country, there were calls from the rebels for assistance from the international community in removing Gaddafi from power (Posner 2011). In response to both the violence and the call for aid, there was at least some level of public demand for action within the international community (Pew Research Center 2011). However, it is less certain that public demand for action played an important role in influencing NATO to intervene. It is possible that the economic incentives and U.N. sanctions alone were enough to initiate intervention.

In terms of economics, Libya is an exporter of oil which a few NATO member states – notably France and Italy – are partially reliant upon (CIA 2012). This indicates that the economic intervening variable identified previously is significant in the case of Libya. This could also explain why France took a leading role in calling for the Libyan intervention.

Geographically, Libya does not share a land border with any NATO member states, though it is in closer proximity to the North Atlantic region than Rwanda. However, Libya does have a presence in the Mediterranean through trade routes, thus affecting NATO members in the area. For this reason, there is a possible correlation between location and probability of intervention in the case of Libya.
Syria

The fourth and final case analyzed was that of Syria, where in March of 2011, a civil war began between the forces of the Ba’ath Party government and those wishing to overthrow it and end nearly five decades of rule by the party. The conflict is still ongoing. President Bashar al-Assad has refused to relinquish power. While it is impossible to know for sure how many people have lost their lives to the war, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon estimated that the death toll had exceeded 100,000 as of July (BBC News 2012). Additionally, human rights violations have been committed by both pro- and anti-Assad forces (Nichols 2012). The large number of deaths indicates a strong humanitarian incentive for intervention, yet no such intervention has occurred.

The U.N. has not sanctioned an intervention in Syria to date. Nevertheless, there have been multiple attempts to call for sanctions against the Assad government. However, the resolutions have been vetoed within the Security Council by Russia and China. The lack of U.N. approval for an intervention means that one of the necessary conditions has not been met. Part of the reason that an intervention has not yet occurred is that the rebel forces are divided. As there is no cohesive opposition to the Assad regime, it would be hard for NATO or any other international entity to decide on whose behalf to intervene.

Likewise, trade data indicates that there is not a strong economic incentive for intervention. Aggregate trade between Syria and NATO member states in 2010 was only $11,909,231 billion USD (International Monetary Fund 2011). This indicates that there are no significant economic interests to protect through a NATO intervention. Because only one of the three conditions identified by the hypothesis as necessary for a NATO intervention is present within Syria, and no intervention has occurred, the case of Syria shows support for the hypothesis.

The theory behind the hypothesis also holds true to an extent. This study theorized that violence would lead to a call for assistance from within the country, which would in turn lead to public demand for action within the international community. News sources indicate that there have been calls for international aid by the Syrian combatants (Foster 2012). Additionally, there has been some level of demand for action (Miks 2012). However, this has not led to an intervention – which makes sense considering the other two necessary factors for intervention have not been met. Furthermore, economically, it does not appear that any NATO member states are partially reliant upon a resource provided by Syria, meaning there is not another economic incentive to intervene.
Syria presents an interesting case with regards to the potential correlation between geographic location and intervention. Unlike any of the other three cases, Syria actually shares a land border with a NATO member state: Turkey. However, despite its close proximity, Syria has not experienced intervention. This would seem to indicate that in this particular case, other factors might have been more important than geographic proximity in determining NATO action.

**Discussion**

Overall, the four cases examined show support for the hypothesis posited in this study. In all four cases, there was a humanitarian incentive for intervention. However, in only two cases was there also U.N. approval for intervention and economic interests to protect. All three conditions of the hypothesis were met in Bosnia and Libya, and these were also the only two cases in which NATO intervened.

However, the causal story identified by the theory finds less support. In all four of the cases analyzed, there was a call for international assistance from within the conflict-torn country. Nevertheless, this only led to public demand for action in two cases (Libya and Syria), and in only one of the two (Libya) did an intervention occur. In addition, reliance on a particular resource within the country in conflict does not seem to be a necessary condition for intervention as evidenced by Bosnia. Rather than being a necessary condition for intervention, reliance on a resource appears to provide an extra impetus for action. In the case of Libya, for example, France took the lead on calling for and carrying out the NATO intervention (Erlanger 2011). It was France that was one of the NATO members most reliant upon Libyan oil. The intervention protected French economic interests.

The control variable analyzed, geographic location, also found mixed results in terms of its correlation with intervention. Syria, the only country out of the four analyzed that shares a land border with a NATO member has not experienced intervention, which would seem to disprove the notion that conflicts in countries located closer to NATO members would be more likely to experience intervention. While Bosnia and Herzegovina did not share a border with a NATO member state, its location in Europe likely impacted the mindset of NATO member states and influenced the decision to intervene. The Rwandan case also supports the idea that geographic proximity plays a role. It is located so far from NATO member that what happened within the country was of little importance to NATO, overshadowed by other international issues until after the genocide had ended.
Conclusion

The cases analyzed support a correlation between the combined factors of humanitarian incentive, U.N. approval, and economic interests and the occurrence of a NATO intervention. However, the small number of cases analyzed, a result of the small number of NATO military interventions that have occurred, makes it impossible to determine causation. Furthermore, also as a result of the small number of cases, this study’s findings cannot be accurately generalized. Applying the hypothesis to future NATO interventions, and additional cases in which NATO does not intervene, could provide more evidence to support or discredit it.

There are also other factors that could be considered in future research, such as the potential geo-political threat (i.e. in the event of a nuclear Iran) posed by a conflict, and whether or not that influences NATO to intervene. Additionally, the regime type that exists within a conflict-torn country, or the type of conflict occurring, may have something to do with whether or not NATO becomes involved. Determining what other factors, in addition to the three analyzed in this study, are most important in determine NATO intervention in conflicts will allow for better prediction of NATO behavior in the future, and will provide a better understanding of the organization’s past actions. Understanding these factors could be valuable for scholars and policymakers alike who wish to understand the decision-making process within NATO. ✽
Bibliography


