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Detering Intervention: The Stakes of War and Third-Party Involvement

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Why does a third party become involved in an ongoing dispute? One important reason for involvement is often the third party's perception that the attacking country poses a significant threat to the status quo. Given the aggressor's aims in the war vis-à-vis a particular target, the third party worries that the changes wrought by the war will be too extreme. He enters an ongoing war in order to defend the threatened status quo. The attacking country, however, chooses the magnitude of the demands she makes of a targeted state. By moderating her demands, she can influence a third party's perception of the threat she poses and thereby influence the third party's willingness to intervene. The aggressor's ability to choose the stakes of the war thus creates the interesting possibility that demands can be chosen strategically in order to deter third-party intervention. In this article, I modify the classic extended-deterrence game in order to explore the implications of this strategic logic. My modified extended-deterrence model suggests that the attacker's ability to choose the stakes of war can weaken the third-party defender's ability to deter an attack. An attacker may not be deterred from attacking because the *attacker* can deter the *third party* from intervening. The model suggests several important implications for both the stakes of war and the probability of third-party intervention.

Blainey (1988) devotes a chapter in his now classic book, *The Causes of War*, to what he calls "The Mystery of Wide Wars." His explanation for why some wars in Europe became multilateral while others did not is worth quoting at length. He explains third-party involvement in what originally seemed to be just another regional dispute between Russia and Turkey as follows: "It [the Crimean War] began as a war between Russia and Turkey, but the destruction of a division of the Turkish fleet at the Black Sea harbor of Sinope in November 1853 aroused fears that *Russia might crush Turkey and so penetrate at last into the Mediterranean and become more powerful than ever before*" (Blainey 1988, 233, italics mine). He contrasts this multilateral war with two other wars that remained bilateral even though the potential for intervention seemed high: "... the Franco-Austrian [War] of 1859 and the Austro-Prussian [War] of 1866—did not last long enough to establish a decisive superiority on one side. Austria lost both wars but remained a great power; *it had not lost by such a margin that the ladder of European power seemed likely to be altered drastically*" (Blainey 1988, 34, italics mine).

Blainey's argument is both noteworthy and novel because he assumes that a third party's incentive to intervene depends very much on what happens *inside* the conflict. Outsiders intervened in the first instance because they feared that Russia intended to substantially revise the status quo. Intervention did not occur in the latter instances because both France's and Prussia's demands vis-à-vis Austria were modest, resulting in few changes to the status quo. The possibility that the decision to intervene in an ongoing dispute is driven in part by what happens inside the conflict creates interesting strategic possibilities that could impact our understanding of the potential diffusion of war. Most important, it raises the interesting possibility that an attacker could intentionally alter his demands in order to influence the likelihood of third-party intervention. As I and others have argued, the stakes of war can often be thought of as endogenous to the conflict (Goemans 2000; Wagner 2000; Werner 1998, 1999). If the stakes of war are strategically chosen, then the classic extended-deterrence relation-

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ship between a potential attacker and a potential third-party defender is more complicated than typically envisioned. Not only can the third party impact the attacker's strategy, but the attacker can alter the third party's strategy as well. In the preceding examples, for instance, France and Prussia may have intentionally limited their demands because they knew that if they did not, a costly multilateral war would ensue.¹

The article proceeds as follows. I first review the classic extended-deterrence model. While several important implications follow from that model, it has two potential weaknesses. First, the classical model does not incorporate the possibility that the third party's willingness to intervene depends in part on the strategic interaction between the attacker and the target. Instead, the third party's decision to intervene in an ongoing conflict is assumed to depend entirely on factors external to the strategic interaction. Second, the model does not allow for the possibility that the attacker can choose the stakes of the ensuing conflict and thus severely curtails the attacker's potential range of choices. The attacker is assumed to only have the option to attack a particular target or not.

Next, I develop a simple game-theoretic model that incorporates both of these possibilities. The game explores the strategic interaction between a potential attacker who can choose the stakes of the conflict and a potential third-party defender whose willingness to intervene depends in part on those stakes. The model suggests the very interesting possibility that deterrence can be a two-way street. While a potential third party can sometimes deter a potential attacker by threatening higher costs and a lower probability of victory, the attacker can also deter the third party by lowering the potential benefits from intervention. Since the attacker can choose the stakes of the conflict, she can undermine the third party's incentives to intervene and thereby avoid the potential of a costly multilateral war. In an ironic twist of the extended-deterrence logic, the attacker sometimes deters the third-party defender.² The paucity of third-party interventions we observe empirically is then not simply a result of the attacker's avoidance of targets

with powerful and reliable third-party defenders, as noted by Fearon (1994), Smith (1996), and Gartner and Siverson (1996). It is *also* a consequence of the attacker's ability to undermine a third party's incentives to intervene. If third parties do intervene in an ongoing dispute, we should expect that the intervention was provoked by an attacker that inadvertently demanded too many changes to the status quo.

In the next section, I explore the model's implications for both the stakes of war and the probability of third-party intervention. Among other things, the comparative static results suggest that while the third party's marginal effect on the attacker's probability of victory is an important determinant of the stakes of war, his ability to influence the probable outcome of the war does not have a clear impact on the probability he actually intervenes in the ongoing dispute. Problems of inference created by the biased sample of third-party alignments are also considered.

In the concluding section, I highlight the implications of this argument. The stakes of war are rarely treated as a consequence of strategic choice. However, if the magnitude of an attacker's demands influence the willingness of third parties to intervene, the attacker has a keen incentive to carefully select the demands she makes. By moderating her demands, the attacker can undermine the defender's willingness to intervene and thereby avoid the costs of a multilateral war. While the model does not refute the basic logic of the classic extended-deterrence model, it does suggest that it may be more difficult to deter an attack than previously anticipated.

Extended-Deterrence Theory

The logic of extended deterrence is straightforward and compelling. Imagine that there are three states: a potential attacker, a potential target, and a potential third-party defender. The attacker must decide whether or not to attack the target, which then must decide whether or not to resist. After observing both the attacker's and the target's actions, the third party must decide whether or not to come to the aid of the target if the target has in fact been attacked (Huth and Russett 1984, 1988; Fearon 1994; Smith 1996). If we assume that the third-party defender has a capable retaliatory threat, then the attacker would prefer not to attack the target if she anticipates that the target's defender will actually follow through on his threat to intervene. The attacker's decision thus rests critically on the credibility of the third party's threat to intervene. If the threat is credible enough, the attacker

¹The neutrality pacts negotiated between France and Prussia on February 17, 1866 and France and Austria on June 12, 1866 reveal just such calculations. In both instances, France promised to remain neutral in any ensuing conflict between Austria and Prussia with the understanding that neither state would significantly alter the status quo if they were victorious (Weill 1972). I thank Ashley Leeds for pointing out these pacts to me.

²Here, the attacker "deters" the third party from taking an undesirable action (intervention) by reducing the expected benefits rather than by increasing the expected costs.

will be deterred and will not attack the target. If the threat is not credible enough, the attacker will attack the target. If the attacker correctly estimates the third party's credibility, the war (assuming that the target retaliates) remains bilateral. If the attacker is wrong, the war becomes multilateral as the third party unexpectedly follows through on his threat to intervene.

The logic of extended deterrence has several interesting implications. Most important, if the attacker does condition her behavior on the expected response of a potential third party, then the instances of overt aggression we see are a biased sample (Fearon 1994). Attackers only take aggressive action if they do not think that it is likely that a third party will intervene. Instances of peace then do not simply represent cases where a state did not have a motive for aggression but also include those cases where the motive existed but the state was effectively deterred. Given that the instances of deterrence failure are a biased sample, we must be very cautious in the conclusions we draw from such a set of cases. As Fearon (1994) points out, indicators of a third party's resolve available to the attacker prior to the conflict should not be good predictors of the ultimate success of deterrence since such factors were available to the attacker when she initiated the crisis. If an attacker initiated a crisis despite such signals, she must be very resolved and unlikely to be subsequently deterred. Only those factors that become available to the attacker after the onset of the crisis should likely influence the ultimate success of deterrence.

Smith (1996) points out a similar selection effect. If attackers condition their behavior on the expected response of the defender, then attackers are unlikely to attack unless they anticipate that the third party's threat to intervene is not credible. As a result, the set of cases in which an attacker actually challenges a target produces a set of potential third-party defenders that is generally less credible than third-party defenders in the true population. It should thus not be surprising that most wars remain bilateral and that multilateral wars like World War I and World War II are considered exceptional. Likewise, it is not surprising that alliances appear to be very unreliable—only about one of every four alliances are honored when challenged (Sabrosky 1980).³ While we might conclude from this that alliances are not worth the scrap of paper on which they are written, more likely, the appar-

ent unreliability of alliances is due to the fact that only alliances that are perceived to be unreliable are challenged in the first place. Effective alliances are never put to the test and thus do not have the "opportunity" to demonstrate their true effectiveness.

Gartner and Siverson (1996) extend this logic even further. In the spirit of extended-deterrence theory, they maintain that potential attackers select themselves into conflicts in which they anticipate a high probability of success. Since the probability of success is lower if a third party is likely to intervene on behalf of a targeted state, attackers actively avoid targets with credible defenders and intentionally prey on vulnerable targets. This logic implies that if the attacker accurately estimates the probability of success, she should generally win the war. It is only when the attacker overestimates the probability of success by underestimating the credibility of third-party intervention, for instance, that the attacker should lose. They thus anticipate that attackers will tend to lose multilateral wars because they are essentially "mistakes." As anticipated, the historical evidence suggests the overwhelming tendency for the initiator to win wars that remain bilateral but to lose wars that become multilateral because a third party joins the target's side.

Recognition of the conditionality of the attacker's behavior on expectations about third-party intervention has thus given us considerable leverage on such important questions as the possibility of war, the likelihood of intervention, and the chances of victory. Although important in its own right, this simple logic of extended deterrence likely overstates the constraints imposed on the aggressor. In particular, this logic assumes that the *attacker* has no influence on the *third party's* incentives to intervene. While the third party's decision to intervene is clearly conditioned on whether or not the attacker has actually attacked, his decision to intervene once there has been an attack is assumed to be determined by factors outside of the model. A defender's decision to intervene, for instance, is often assumed to be based on his value for the target, the expected costs of war, and his marginal contribution to the probability of victory (Altfeld and Bueno de Mesquita 1979). None of these factors are influenced by the particulars of the strategic interaction between the attacker and the third-party defender. The strategic interaction between the attacker and the third-party defender is reduced to the third party's ability to manipulate the attacker by persuading her not to attack.

A more complex possibility exists. In this instance, not only do expectations about the third party's actions influence the attacker, but the attacker's actions also influence the third party. In this scenario, the third party's

³It may also very well be the case that our data on alliance reliability is extremely poor. As Leeds, Long, and Mitchell (1999) suggest, alliances may appear to be unreliable only because we have not been very careful to identify the actual commitments made in each specific alliance. An alliance then may not be "honored" because the alliance members never promised aid in the particular set of circumstances that arose.

resolve, or willingness to intervene, is not exogenous to the interaction, but determined in large part by it. Consider, for instance, the U.S. decision to intervene in the recent crisis in Kosovo. Was the United States resolved in this instance? Ultimately, it appears that the United States and the NATO contingent it led were resolved to defend the Kosovars against Serbian aggression. However, when Serbian forces launched their initial onslaught against Kosovo, U.S. resolve seemed weak. It was only the magnitude of the violence perpetrated against civilians that hardened U.S. resolve and encouraged intervention. U.S. resolve was not fixed but critically dependent on what happened *inside* the conflict; the intervention decision was endogenous to the dispute.

If this is true (or sometimes true), then an interesting possibility emerges. If the third party's willingness to intervene is not absolute but depends instead on the magnitude of the threat posed to the target, then the attacker could intentionally choose the magnitude of the threat to forestall third-party intervention (see also Goemans 2000). Examples of just such calculations abound. In both the Korean and Vietnam Wars, fears of Chinese intervention critically affected the execution of the war. In the Seven Weeks' War, Bismarck was careful to moderate his demands against Austria in order to forestall French intervention (Goemans 2000). Ikke likewise recounts how in the Finnish Winter War of 1939 the Soviet Union moderated its terms in order to ensure the war remained bilateral. He notes that "this felt risk [fears of Western intervention] caused Stalin to refrain from occupying all of Finland, which he could have done within a few months, given his overwhelming military superiority" (1991, 51). Blainey (1988) contends that such strategic calculations were evident in many European wars. He writes, "In at least half of the European wars after 1815 the losing nation, when the armistice was signed, was still capable of continuing to fight vigorously. The victors however offered them moderate terms partly in fear that an outside nation might interfere and snatch away their gains" (Blainey 1988, 208). Note that he posits a reciprocal relationship between the attacker and the potential third-party defender. The attacker is clearly influenced by the potential intervention of the third party, but the attacker can also influence the third party's incentive to intervene by moderating its terms and accepting a quick settlement.

The above examples provide at least anecdotal evidence that belligerents are often able to influence the prospects of third-party intervention. This is an interesting and important possibility that may significantly weaken a third party's ability to prevent an aggressive state from attacking a vulnerable target. If attackers can undermine the third party's incentive to intervene, then an at-

tacker may not be deterred from aggression despite the presence of a concerned and interested third party. Although the third party is willing to come to the target's aid in the event of a major attack, the attacker's effective use of "salami tactics" results in paralysis (Schelling 1966).

I explore just such a possibility in the next section by devising a game theoretic model that incorporates the possibility that the intervention decision is endogenous to the nature of the dispute. The model enables me to explore the conditions under which a third party can effectively deter aggressive action and the conditions under which deterrence fails because the attacker is able to undermine the third party's resolve.

Detering Third-Party Intervention

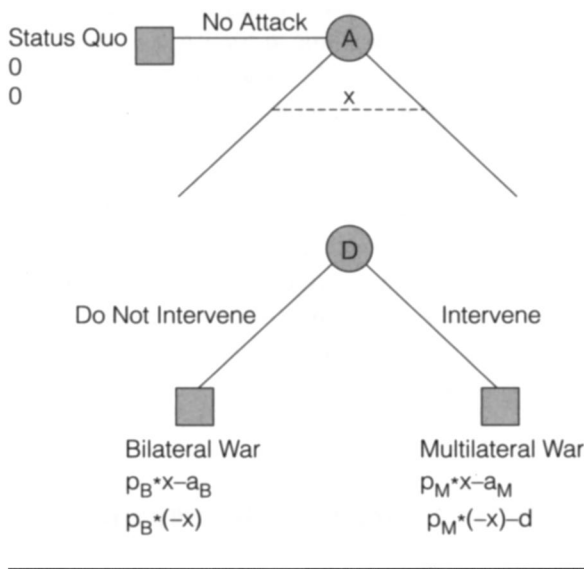
The Strategic Structure

The basic structure of the model I present here is a simplified version of the familiar extended-deterrence model.⁴ First, I focus solely on the strategic interaction between a potential Attacker *A* and a potential Third-Party Defender *D*. I thus assume that the immediate target of *A*'s attack always retaliates if he is attacked. Since the target's decision does not change, he is not an integral part of the strategic calculation. Second, I blur the distinction often drawn between general deterrence and immediate deterrence by assuming that there are only two stages to the conflict. In this game, *A* chooses simply whether or not to attack and the third-party defender chooses whether or not to intervene on the behalf of the target. A preliminary crisis stage brought on by a threat of attack is thus not explicitly modeled.

While the basic structure of the model is a simplification of the generic extended-deterrence game, I complicate the game in one important way. In this game, if *A* decides to act aggressively towards the target, she can choose *how* aggressively she acts. She may choose to demand only modest revisions to the status quo or she may demand profound changes. The potential third-party defender then observes not only the decision to attack but the level of threat posed to his client as well. After observing *A*'s decision, *D* decides whether or not to intervene on behalf of the targeted state (See Figure 1).⁵

⁴ This modeling design presumes that *D*'s alignment decision is motivated by a desire to balance against *A*'s aggressiveness. The possibility that the third party shares revisionist objectives with *A* is thus not considered at this time (Schweller 1994, 1998).

⁵ Importantly, the games presented here ignore the real possibility that the third party may not be able to completely observe the attacker's true aims. While future extensions will deal with this

FIGURE 1 Modified Extended Deterrence Game

There are three generic outcomes of the game. The game could end in a continuation of the *Status Quo* if A chooses not to make a demand of the target, in a *Bilateral War* if A chooses to attack and D chooses not to intervene, or in a *Multilateral War* if A attacks and D subsequently intervenes. The attacker's ability to choose the magnitude of the threat, however, creates in reality a plethora of possible outcomes. While D's decision to intervene or not differentiates whether the war is bilateral or multilateral, A's decision differentiates the aims or stakes of each war. A bilateral or multilateral war thus could be fought over modest aims or more total aims depending on A's initial decision.⁶

issue in greater detail, a couple of interesting possibilities emerge. First, one might expect that third parties would not necessarily intervene as soon as a target is attacked, but would instead wait until the attacker has in fact taken from the target more than the third party is willing to accept. Second, one might expect that the target would have a large incentive to attempt to make the attacker's aims appear particularly egregious in order to incite third-party intervention. The target, for instance, might intentionally lose ground initially or intentionally exacerbate the suffering of its own civilian population to influence the third party's perception of the attacker's true aims. Just such calculations may have been present during the Nigerian civil war where efforts to alleviate the suffering of the Biafran populace were apparently rebuffed by Biafran leaders (O'Connell 1993).

⁶If, as suggested here, the attacker chooses the stakes of the conflict when she decides to attack, then it is also possible that the attacker may alter those demands as the war progresses and she learns more about the target's capabilities and about the third party's intervention decision. Likewise, third parties may alter an initial decision to intervene or to remain neutral as the war progresses and the stakes of the war vary. Although such complexities are beyond the scope of this article, such a possibility suggests that it is necessary to consider in greater detail the process by which a war unfolds rather

The Payoffs

I normalize the status quo payoff for both A and D to (0;0) for convenience, where the first component reflects A's payoff and the second reflects D's payoff. The players' payoffs for the conflict outcomes depend not only on whether or not D intervened but also on the magnitude of the threatened change to the status quo. If the war remains bilateral, the players' expected payoffs are $(p_B \cdot x - a_B; p_B \cdot (-x))$, where p_B denotes the attacker's probability of victory in a bilateral war, x denotes the magnitude of the proposed change, and a_B denotes A's costs for fighting a bilateral war.⁷ Note that while A's utility increases with x , D's utility decreases with x . The players' expected payoffs thus reflect the notion discussed above that the type of war might very well impact their decisions. If the war becomes multilateral as a consequence of D's decision to intervene, A's and D's expected payoffs, respectively, are $(p_M \cdot x - a_M; p_M \cdot (-x) - d)$, where p_M denotes the attacker's probability of victory in a multilateral war, x again denotes the magnitude of the proposed change demanded by A, a_M denotes A's costs for fighting a multilateral war, and d denotes D's costs of fighting a multilateral war.

I place several important restrictions on these payoffs in order to motivate the game. First, I assume that there exists an upper bound on the possible stakes over which the disputants can fight: $0 \leq x \leq \bar{x}$. If the prize at stake is the target's resources, for instance, then it is reasonable to presume that the potential gains of the war for the attacker are limited by the total resources held by the target. Imposing such an upper bound on the potential stakes of the war proves important later as it helps to limit the analysis to those situations in which the attacker can in fact be deterred by the threatened intervention of a third-party defender. If the stakes of the war were potentially unlimited, then there would always be some stakes over which the attacker would be willing to fight even if she were certain that the third-party defender would intervene.

I also assume intuitively that A's probability of successfully realizing x is greater if the war remains bilateral than if the war becomes multilateral: $p_B > p_M$. Finally, I assume that third-party intervention increases the costs

than treating war, as is conventionally done, as a simple lottery between winning and losing. Wagner (2000) represents an important step in this direction.

⁷This utility function presumes that in the event of a loss, the target reinstates the status quo and does not demand any concessions from A beyond the costs she has suffered from involvement. The aggressor A is the only player with revisionist aims. The expected value of losing, $(1 - p_B)(0)$, thus can be omitted from the players' payoffs.

of war for both the attacker and the third-party defender: $a_M > a_B$ and $d > 0$. Attackers thus reasonably anticipate that third-party intervention not only reduces the likelihood that they will successfully realize their objective but increases their costs of fighting as well.

Whereas these adverse consequences to A from third-party intervention ensure that A always prefers to fight a bilateral war than a multilateral war over the same stakes, D 's preference ordering between a bilateral and multilateral war over the same stakes is indeterminate. On the one hand, D endures costs of d in a multilateral war. He can avoid those costs by not intervening. The greater the costs, the greater the desire to avoid those costs if possible. On the other hand, the probability that A successfully alters the status quo in a manner considered undesirable by D is less if the war is multilateral. Since D 's intervention reduces A 's probability of victory from p_B to p_M , D can reduce the likelihood that A succeeds by intervening. The greater D 's marginal contribution to the probability of victory, the more worthwhile intervention becomes. Whether or not D 's desire to avoid the costs of intervention is offset by his desire to reduce A 's probability of success depends critically on what is at stake in the war, or the value of x . The greater the stakes, the more relevant D 's ability to influence A 's probability of success. The smaller the stakes, the more relevant the expected costs of involvement. D 's decision to intervene thus can be critically affected by A 's decision about the stakes of war, x . Note that this strategic structure as well as the nature of the payoffs creates a tradeoff for A . She must find an optimal balance between the desire for greater spoils and the risks of third-party intervention.

Equilibrium with Complete Information

If both A and D know each other's preferences, then the game is one of complete and perfect information and is straightforward to solve. D intervenes if his expected utility for the intervention outcome exceeds his expected utility for the nonintervention outcome: $p_m \cdot (-x) - d > p_b \cdot (-x)$. Rearranging terms, this implies that D inter-

venes if $x > \frac{d}{p_B - p_M}$. I denote the critical value of x

that makes D just indifferent between intervening or not as x_{crit} , where $x_{crit} = \frac{d}{p_B - p_M}$. If the stakes of the war

are sufficiently high, such that $x > x_{crit}$, then D is willing to bear the costs of intervention in order to lower the probability of A 's successful change to the status quo

from p_B to p_M . In contrast, if the stakes of the war are low enough, such that $x \leq x_{crit}$, then the costs of intervention outweigh D 's desire to influence the outcome.

Anticipating D 's calculus, A must choose x . If we limit the analysis to the substantive case where A can be deterred by D 's threat of intervention, A balances two objectives.⁸ On the one hand, A wants to effect as great a change to the status quo as possible. On the other hand, she wants to avoid a multilateral war. She balances these objectives by choosing the greatest value of x that will not provoke third-party intervention. This value is equal to

$$x^* = x_{crit} = \frac{d}{p_B - p_M}. \text{ Note that in an ironic twist of the}$$

logic of extended-deterrence theory, A 's choice of x^* effectively deters the third party. If A chooses x^* , D does not intervene because A has intentionally limited the stakes of the conflict to ensure that D 's potential benefits from intervention do not justify the expected costs.

The attacker knows that if she chooses to attack, her maximum expected utility from the war is $p_B \cdot x^* - a_B$. A chooses to challenge the target only if $p_B \cdot x^* - a_B > 0$, or if the expected value of challenging the status quo exceeds A 's value for the status quo. If the constraints of potential third-party intervention are great enough, then A will not be able to demand enough from the target to ensure that the expected benefits from war, $p_B \cdot x^*$, exceed the expected costs, a_B . The equilibrium of this game can thus be stated simply in terms of A 's decision regarding the aims of war and D 's decision whether or not to intervene.

$$A: x^* = \frac{d}{p_B - p_M} \text{ if } p_B \cdot x^* - a_B > 0; x^* = 0 \text{ otherwise.}$$

$$D: \text{Intervene if } x > \frac{d}{p_B - p_M}; \text{ Do Not Intervene otherwise.}$$

This equilibrium suggests three propositions. Proposition 1 delimits the possible outcomes that can arise under complete information.

Proposition 1. Under conditions of complete information, multilateral wars do not occur.

⁸ A can be deterred by D 's intervention if A would not attack if she were sure that D would intervene. In the context of the model, this means that A 's expected return from a multilateral war over the maximum possible stakes is less than her maximum expected return from a bilateral war: $p_m \cdot \bar{x} - a_m < p_B \cdot x^* - a_B$. If the preference ordering were reversed such that A could not be deterred regardless of D 's actions, then A would always demand the maximum possible stakes from the target and D would always intervene.

Multilateral wars do not occur if there is complete information because the attacker can anticipate exactly how much to demand of the target in order to forestall third-party intervention.⁹ Since the attacker can strategically undermine the third party's resolve by limiting her demands, a continuation of the status quo or a bilateral war fought between the attacker and the target are the only possible outcomes of the game. The status quo outcome occurs when the potential for third-party intervention is so constraining that the attacker's expected spoils from war do not exceed her expected costs. This is an instance of successful deterrence in the traditional sense. While this expectation parallels that derived from traditional extended-deterrence models, note that the causal mechanism is somewhat different. Traditionally, the attacker does not attack because she is deterred by the expectation of a costly multilateral war. Here, the attacker knows she can avoid the costs of a multilateral war but is deterred because the potential for third-party intervention makes the *bilateral* conflict she could fight without intervention unprofitable.

The model predicts a bilateral war, in contrast, when the attacker expects that the spoils of war will exceed the costs. The attacker successfully prevents intervention by the third party, however, by limiting the stakes of the war and thereby undermining the third party's resolve; the *attacker* deters the *defender*. On the one hand, this suggests that revisionist states may be less constrained by the potential of third-party intervention than previously thought; deterrence is difficult if the attacker can manipulate the third party's resolve. On the other hand, this does not imply that the attacker's actions are not in fact constrained by the third party. While the third party may be unable to prevent an attack, the third party has likely ensured that the attacker's revisionist demands were less than they otherwise would be. The actual impact of the third party thus can only be viewed indirectly by evaluating what the attacker's demands would have been in the absence of the concerned third party. Importantly, this implies that it is problematic to infer the third party's level of resolve or commitment in the event of an attack by simply observing whether or not it actually intervened when the target was attacked.

Propositions 2 and 3 summarize the impact of the third party's costs and relative power, respectively, on the stakes of the war.

⁹This result presumes that *A* can be deterred (see footnote 8). If *A* attacks even if she is sure to face third-party intervention, then multilateral wars can arise under conditions of complete information. Despite *A*'s knowledge that *D* will intervene, *A* still attacks because *D*'s intervention does not inflict sufficient costs to offset the potential gains from the war.

Proposition 2. An increase in *D*'s costs of intervention, *d*, will increase the stakes of war, *x*.

Proposition 3. An increase in the marginal impact of *D* to the attacker's probability of victory, $(p_B - p_M)$, will decrease the stakes of war, *x*.

Propositions 2 and 3 are intuitive and can be proved simply by differentiating x^* with respect to *d* and *p*, where $p = p_B - p_M$. The greater the defender's costs for intervention, the greater the threat the attacker can pose before the defender becomes resolved enough to intervene. In addition, the more powerful the third party or the more capable the third party is of altering the attacker's probability of success by intervening, the less able the attacker is to make large demands of the target. In this scenario, the stakes of the war become endogenous to the dispute and are driven by *A*'s evaluation of *D*'s cost-benefit intervention calculation.

Although straightforward, these results are very important. In most models of international conflict, the stakes of war are treated as exogenous (Powell 1990; Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1992; Fearon 1994; Bennett and Stam 1996; Stam 1996). By doing so, however, we are setting aside one of the most important questions about war. Why are some wars fought with fairly limited goals while other wars are fought with more total aims? By assuming that the aggressor chooses the stakes of war conditioned on his strategic environment, particularly upon the prospects of third-party intervention, this analysis provides a partial answer to this important question (see also Werner 1998 and Wagner 2000). Leaders may often limit their aims in order to forestall third-party intervention.

One immediate application of this logic might be to the difference often noted between the scale of civil and interstate wars (Pillar 1983; Walter 1997). One reason that civil wars may often be more extreme and of a greater magnitude than interstate wars may be that interested and powerful potential third parties have paid scant attention to domestic disputes historically. While interstate wars are often fought under the watchful eye of interested third parties, many civil wars are fought with little attention whatsoever from outside parties. As a result, domestic actors often have much greater freedom to pursue revisionist aims than do their international counterparts.¹⁰ Inter-

¹⁰A similar logic would suggest that civil wars in minor states are likely to be over greater stakes and more intense than civil wars in larger or more strategically located states. If third parties are particularly unlikely to become involved in civil disputes of minor powers, then conflicts in those states could occur with few restraints on either side's actions. The disputants of a high-profile state, however, may often have to restrain their behavior in order to prevent third-party intervention.

estingly, this difference may very well change as increased concern for human rights focuses more and more attention on the conduct of intrastate affairs.

Equilibrium with Incomplete Information

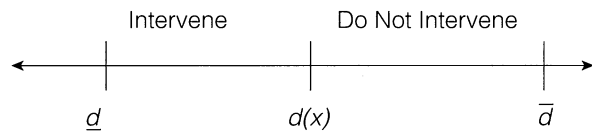
In the complete information version of the game, the probability of third-party intervention is zero since the attacker can always choose the stakes of the war effectively so as to deter intervention. Expectations about potential third-party intervention, however, can be derived once incomplete information is introduced. In this game, the third-party defender has private information about his costs of intervening, d . While D knows the value of d , A only has an estimate of what d likely is. I assume that A believes that d is distributed over the interval $[\underline{d}, \bar{d}]$, where $\underline{d} \geq 0$ and the distribution function $F[d]$ is assumed to have a monotone hazard rate and a bounded and continuous density function $f[d]$ such that $f[d] > 0$ over $[\underline{d}, \bar{d}]$. While d directly denotes D 's cost of fighting, d can also be interpreted more broadly as representing D 's willingness to use force to protect the target from attack (Powell 1999). As d approaches 0, intervening becomes the defender's dominant strategy. A 's uncertainty about D 's costs of fighting thus translates directly into an uncertainty about D 's willingness to use force.

Because the defender's type is determined by his costs of intervention, each type has a unique critical value that makes him just indifferent between intervening and not intervening. A defender with cost d compares the expected value of not intervening $p_B \cdot (-x)$ with his expected value for intervening, $p_M \cdot (-x) - d$. If we set these two payoffs equal to each other and solve for d , we can define:

$$d(x) = x \cdot (p_B - p_M). \quad (1)$$

The defender with costs $d(x)$ is just indifferent between intervening and not intervening given a threat of magnitude x posed by the attacker to the target. Since defenders with costs less than $d(x)$ face lower costs to intervening, all defenders with $d < d(x)$ refuse to accept the demanded change of x and intervene. In contrast, defenders with $d > d(x)$ do not intervene because their costs are too high to justify intervention given the issues at stake. The defender with costs $d(x)$ then is the borderline type for a demand x that splits the defender population between those defenders that do intervene from those that do not (See Figure 2). Equation (1) suggests that the position of the borderline type is a function of the stakes

FIGURE 2 The Choice of $d(x)$ and the Probability of Intervention



of war, x , and the third party's marginal effect on the attacker's probability of victory, $p_B - p_M$.¹¹

Consider now A 's strategy. With the introduction of uncertainty, her choice is now more complicated. Since she is unsure of D 's willingness to fight, she cannot choose x to ensure that D is deterred from intervening. Instead, A faces a risk-return tradeoff between greater spoils and a potential multilateral war. To determine her optimal choice, consider the attacker's expected value for the subgame following a demand x . If the attacker makes a demand x , the probability that the defender will intervene is $F[d(x)]$, and the probability that he will not intervene is $(1 - F[d(x)])$. Associated with these probabilities of intervention is A 's utility for a multilateral war and a bilateral war, respectively. Her utility can thus be represented below:

$$V(x) = F[d(x)](p_M(x) - a_M) + (1 - F[d(x)])(p_B(x) - a_B) \quad (2)$$

Equation (2) nicely reveals the attacker's dilemma. The greater the value of x , the greater her return if successful. But the more she demands, the more likely it is that the defender intervenes. The attacker's problem is to choose the x that maximizes $V(x)$. If we assume that the hazard rate of the distribution of defender types is increasing, then the maximization problem has a unique solution.

Differentiating $V(x)$ with respect to x and rearranging terms shows that $V'(x)$ is equal to:

$$\{F[d(x)]p_M + (1 - F[d(x)])p_B\} - \{f[d(x)]d'(x)((p_B - p_M)x + (a_M - a_B))\}. \quad (3)$$

The interpretation of Equation (3) is straightforward. The first expression represents the benefits to A of a marginal increase in x . The second expression represents the cost to A of a marginal increase in x . The attacker's optimal demand x^* implicitly solves the following equation where the marginal cost and the marginal benefit of increasing the demand are equal:

¹¹This relation between x and $d(x)$ implies that when A chooses x she is likewise choosing or determining the borderline type $d(x)$.

$$F[d(x^*)]p_M + (1 - F[d(x^*)])p_B \\ = f[d(x^*)]d'(x^*)((p_B - p_M)x^* + (a_M - a_B)) \quad (4)$$

Given her expected value for attacking, $V(x^*)$, the aggressor now must decide whether to attack or to stay at the status quo. In order to determine whether or not she is better off attacking the target or remaining at the status quo, the attacker compares her expected value for war with the value of the status quo. She remains at the status quo if $V(x^*) \leq 0$ and challenges the status quo with demand x^* if $V(x^*) > 0$.

This version of the game suggests several additional implications. I consider first the implications for the stakes of the war and then consider the implications for the probability of third-party intervention.

Aims of war. As in the complete-information game, the stakes of the war, x , decline as the power of the third party increases (see Proposition 3). In addition to this effect, in the incomplete-information game, the stakes of the war are also affected by the *attacker's* marginal costs of fighting a multilateral versus a bilateral war.¹² This relationship is summarized in Proposition 4.

Proposition 4. An increase in the attacker's marginal costs of fighting a multilateral versus a bilateral war, $(a_M - a_B)$, will decrease the stakes of war, x .

In the complete-information game, the attacker's costs were irrelevant to the stakes of war because the attacker could ensure that she would not bear the costs of a multilateral war. In contrast, when uncertainty about the third party's commitment to the target exists, the attacker's marginal costs become very relevant to her choice. As the third party becomes more capable of imposing costs on the attacker (and of reducing the attacker's chances of victory), the attacker becomes much less willing to risk fighting a multilateral war. To decrease this risk, she reduces her demands in order to increase the chances that she successfully deters third-party intervention.

These results suggest two things. First, attacks against targets with powerful defenders capable of altering the balance of forces and/or imposing significant costs are likely to be about much more moderate stakes than are attacks against targets with less capable patrons. The attacker knows she is on a fairly short leash. The potential cost of a mistake, i.e., making too large a demand, ensures that the attacker is far more cautious than she would otherwise be. Consider for instance the game being played between China, Taiwan, and the United States. While

China ultimately wants to regain control of Taiwan, the potential target enjoys the benefits of having a very powerful defender in the United States. Thus, while China often acts in an aggressive manner vis-à-vis Taiwan, her demands are severely limited by the hovering presence of the U.S.

Second, and implied by the first point, attacks against targets with powerful and capable defenders are more likely to be deterred than are attacks against targets that do not enjoy such support. The more constraints placed on the possible benefits from war, the more likely it is that the attacker's expected benefits will not exceed her expected costs. Under these conditions, the attacker prefers to remain at the status quo rather than fight a bilateral war over limited stakes. Since attackers are more likely to be deterred from attacking targets with powerful and capable defenders, states without potential defenders or states with only weak and incapable defenders are those most likely to be attacked. Gartner and Siverson's (1996) results provide preliminary support for this contention. They show that 71.2 percent of states attacked between 1816 and 1975 did not have formal allies. War initiators apparently seek out states that do not have an apparent defender and generally avoid those that do. Interestingly, this logic also implies that there are likely important links between the onset of one conflict and the possible onset of a subsequent dispute. As Blainey (1988) remarks, fishermen often spread their nets while waterbirds fight. If intervention in one conflict depletes the third party's ability to project its resources elsewhere, then success in one arena may come at the expense of successful deterrence elsewhere. For instance, Blainey (1988) connects the American Civil War with the onset of the Franco-Mexican war. Although Britain and France had previously accepted American dominion over Mexico, the European powers became bolder and invaded Mexico in 1862, confident that U.S. attention was otherwise diverted. This link between the onset of different conflicts is particularly relevant to contemporary foreign policy debates in the U.S. If intervention in a European conflict, for instance, reduces the resources the United States could devote elsewhere, then effective action in one arena may increase the vulnerability of potential targets elsewhere.

Probability of intervention. Unlike in the complete-information game, wars can become multilateral when uncertainty is introduced.¹³ What factors influence the prob-

¹³If uncertainty about the third party's commitment to the target creates the possibility of a multilateral war, it seems reasonable to presume that the third party would attempt to reduce this uncertainty by "drawing a line in the sand." By delineating the actions that would provoke intervention, the third party could ensure that intervention would not be necessary. Eliminating this uncertainty

¹²Proofs for the propositions from the incomplete-information game are provided in the appendix.

ability that a war that begins bilaterally will then extend to include a third actor? Two conclusions can be drawn from the model. Proposition 5 links the observed stakes of the war with the probability of third-party intervention while Proposition 6 raises doubts about the oft-asserted link between the third party's power and the probability of intervention.

Proposition 5: An increase in the stakes of the war, x , increases the probability of third-party intervention.

This relationship between the stakes of war and the probability of third-party intervention is in some ways a presumption of the model and not derived from it. The basic model revolves around the attacker's tradeoff between greater war spoils and the risks of a multilateral war. This relationship, however, summarizes well the dynamic by which third parties become involved in what are otherwise bilateral disputes. Here, wars diffuse as a result of a *calculated risk* by the attacker. The attacker recognizes that she courts some risk of third-party intervention when she attacks a target, but is willing to bear that risk in the hopes that she will receive large concessions from the target. Multilateral wars then are not "mistakes" or a result of the attacker's unwillingness or inability to recognize the real possibility that a third party is likely to become involved (Jervis 1976; Lebow 1981). Rather, the attacker acknowledges the risk and rolls the dice, calculating that the potential gains if the war were to remain bilateral are worth the possibility of diffusion.¹⁴ Just such a calculation seems to describe very well Germany's decision making prior to World War I, where Germany accepted the risk of a continental war in order to obtain the benefits of a bilateral war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia (Goemans 2000).

Proposition 6: An increase in the marginal impact of D to the attacker's probability of victory, $(p_B - p_M)$, has an indeterminate effect on the probability of third-party intervention.

Proposition 6 is particularly interesting because it challenges the intuitive conjecture that powerful defend-

ers are more likely to intervene than weak defenders since they can make a bigger contribution to the ultimate outcome (Altfeld and Bueno de Mesquita 1979; Walt 1987, 1992; Labs 1992). The attacker's ability to manipulate the third party's incentives to intervene, however, complicates what otherwise would seem to be a reasonable expectation. On the one hand, D is more likely to intervene the more powerful she is, *ceteris paribus*. As Equation (1) shows, the more powerful the defender (i.e., the higher $p_B - p_M$), the greater the borderline type, $d(x)$, if we hold the stakes of the conflict constant. The power of the third party thus directly shifts $d(x)$ in Figure 2 to the right, increasing the range of intervening types and thus the probability of intervention as well. On the other hand, as D becomes more powerful, the risks to A of fighting a multilateral war increase. If D is powerful, A anticipates that her probability of victory in a multilateral war is much less than her probability of victory in a bilateral war. In order to counter these increased risks, A reduces the demands she makes of the target in order to reduce the chances that D will intervene. This effect shifts the borderline type $d(x)$ to the left. The net effect of these two considerations on $d(x)$ and the probability of intervention is unclear. The modified deterrence game thus suggests that the power of the third party is most relevant to the decisions leading up to the crisis. A defender capable of significantly altering the attacker's probability of victory has a large initial impact by increasing the chance that the attacker is deterred and by reducing the stakes of any war that does ensue. The power of the defender is less relevant once an attack has occurred, however, because greater capabilities do not necessarily make it more likely that the defender intervenes in an ongoing war. There is some existing empirical support for this counterintuitive result. Huth and Russett (1984) find that while the military capabilities of the third party did impact the probability of successful deterrence, the third party's capabilities did not influence the third party's decision to aid a target that had been attacked. The model provides an explanation for why this might be so.

More generally, the possibility that the attacker can influence the third party's incentives to intervene by manipulating the stakes of the crisis implies that the *observed* instances of third-party intervention are special or unique in many ways. Existing work on third-party intervention that does not consider the strategic interaction between the attacker and the third party thus may have some important limitations. Consider, for instance, the extensive work on balance-of-threat theory. Balance-of-threat theory directly addresses the question of third-party alignment. Walt (1987) argues that states are primarily concerned about the level of threat posed by other states in the system. He maintains that the threat a state

by such declarations, however, seems extremely difficult. The third party recognizes that the attacker's incentive is to go right up to the line, but not to cross it. As a result, the third party has an incentive to say the line is actually much closer than it in fact is. Such incentives to bluff reduce what the attacker is able to learn from such rhetoric.

¹⁴ The results indicate that the size of the marginal effect of x on the probability of intervention depends very much on the power of the third party (see the appendix); increasing the stakes of the war is much more likely to incite third-party intervention if the defender is powerful than if he is weak. An empirical evaluation of this proposition should then take into account the interactive relationship between the stakes of the war and the power of the defender.

poses is a function not only of its power, but its ideology, aggressive intentions, and geographical proximity as well. In the classic realist tradition, Walt argues that all states, but especially powerful states, tend to balance against the greatest threat they face (Walt 1987, 1988, 1992; Garnham 1991; Labs 1992). Fearful of their ultimate survival, states attempt to dissuade aggressors and, if that fails, defeat aggressors who threaten the survival of other states in the system. Like the third-party defender in the extended-deterrence game, states tend to align with potential targets against potential aggressors.

On the one hand, this is an important modification of balance-of-power theory because it embraces the notion of interests. Both preferences and capabilities matter. On the other hand, balance-of-threat theory presumes that the level of threat posed by states in the system is exogenous.¹⁵ This is problematic if states are capable of manipulating the threat they pose to other states (see also Kydd 1997). As the modified extended-deterrence game suggests, states with revisionist aims have an incentive to limit the threat they pose in order to forestall the very balancing behavior that Walt predicts. Recognizing that third parties are likely to intervene if it appears too threatening, an aggressive state has an incentive to appear less so.

If states can forestall balancing behavior as the model predicts, then it is impossible to infer the actual prevalence of balancing behavior in international interactions. Many cases of balancing that would otherwise have occurred do not because the aggressor has strategically limited his demands. Paralysis, rather than balancing, is likely the most common occurrence. As Gartner and Siverson (1996) make clear, most wars remain bilateral; intervention is the exception rather than the rule. This also implies that ongoing debates between those who maintain that balancing is more common than bandwagoning and those who believe the opposite are not likely to be settled empirically (Walt 1987, 1988, 1992; Garnham 1991; Labs 1992; Kaufman 1992; Schroeder 1994). The set of empirical cases is a biased sample. We cannot know from the data whether balancing is more common because balancing behavior is conditioned on the actions of the aggressor state.¹⁶

¹⁵ Note that some confusion arises because Walt frequently conflates preferences and strategies. A state is threatening not only because its preferences differ from those of other states but because of the way in which the state intends to pursue those preferences (Lake and Powell 1999).

¹⁶ Note that bandwagoning behavior is likely to be endogenous to the strategic interaction as well. An attacker state can affect the prevalence of bandwagoning behavior by offering select incentives to key allies. Many of Schweller's (1994) examples of bandwagoning behavior highlight the aggressor's ability to bribe potential allies.

The analysis presented here also raises questions about the cases that are often used as evidence to demonstrate the prevalence of certain types of alignment behavior. In particular, in order to test balance-of-threat theory, scholars often examine cases where one state appears particularly threatening. Walt (1987), for instance, limits his cases to where a "real threat" existed. The modified extended-deterrence game, however, would suggest that these cases are in many ways exceptional. According to the model, if third parties perceive a state as particularly threatening and are consequently motivated to align against it, then the threatening state's calculated risk has not paid off. As a consequence of her uncertainty about the defender's commitment, the attacker has overstated her demands and unintentionally provoked third-party involvement. By considering only those cases where a "real threat" existed, scholars are excluding the broader set of cases that include instances where the aggressor successfully moderated her demands to forestall intervention. This sample bias encourages scholars to overstate the prevalence of third-party intervention; non-alignment is rarely considered.

Conclusions

The extended-deterrence logic is quite familiar. The credible threat of third-party intervention can successfully deter an aggressive state from attacking. This logic, however, assumes that the defender's incentives for intervention are not affected by the nature of the crisis. Historical anecdotes at least suggest that defenders do care. While third party's are often willing to accept some change to the status quo rather than pay the costs of intervention, they are ready to come to a target's aid if the threat becomes too great. If the third party's willingness to intervene is determined in part by the nature of the crisis between the attacker and target, the strategic structure of the interaction between the third party and the attacker changes considerably. By manipulating the nature of the crisis, the attacker can directly impact the third party's resolve. In an ironic twist to the extended-deterrence logic, the aggressor can deter the third-party defender.

This possibility is important because it suggests important limits to the effectiveness of deterrence. While third-party defenders may be able to deter some types of wars, they are incapable of deterring all wars. Even committed third party's are unwilling to pay the costs of intervention if the aggressors' goals are modest enough. This analysis also implies that the stakes of wars will vary depending upon the prospects for third-party interven-

tion. Aggressors who do not fear third-party intervention are more likely to demand greater changes to the status quo than those who fight under the watchful eye of third parties. Finally, this analysis also raises important questions regarding our ability to infer the prevalence of certain types of alignment behavior. Since attackers can influence the behavior of third parties, the sample of cases is biased.

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Appendix

Proposition 4 can be proved by differentiating Equation (3) with respect to a , where $a = a_M - a_B$. Differentiation shows

that $\frac{dx^*}{da} = \frac{\partial^2 V}{\partial x \partial a} = -f[d(x)](p_B - p_M) < 0$. Differentiating

Equation (3) with respect to p , where $p = p_B - p_M$, also

shows that the attacker's aims decrease with p : $\frac{dx^*}{dp} = \frac{\partial^2 V}{\partial x \partial p} = -F[d(x)] - f[d(x)](3px + a_M - a_B) - f'[d(x)](p^2x + p(a_M - a_B))x < 0$.

The proofs of propositions 5 and 6 are obtained by differentiating Equations (1) and (3) with respect to x and p , respectively, where $p = p_B - p_M$. Differentiation shows that

$\frac{dd(x^*)}{dx} = (p_B - p_M) > 0$ but that $\frac{dd(x^*)}{dp}$ may be greater

than or less than 0:

$$\frac{dd(x^*)}{dp} = p \frac{dx^*}{dp} + x = p(-F[d(x)] - f[d(x)](3px + a_M - a_B) - f'[d(x)](p^2x + p(a_M - a_B))) + x$$

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