UN interventions: Are there regional preferences?[*]

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Abstract

What leads the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to intervene in one conflict, but remain inactive in another? This paper analyzes all 221 documented conflicts since 1945, trying to unveil the characteristics associated with UN intervention. Including geographical aspects, we find that proximity to two the five permanent members of the UNSC has a significant and meaningful effect on the probability of intervention. For every 1,000 kilometers of distance from France or the United Kingdom the probability of intervention decreases by up to 73 percent. In general, UN interventions are significantly more likely in smaller, poorer, less democratic, and less open economies.

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The United Nations is designed to make possible lasting freedom and independence for all its members. Harry S. Truman

1   Introduction

The United Nations name as one of their four main purposes "To keep peace throughout the world." The following pages focus particularly on the second portion of this statement – *throughout the world.* Why does the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) intervene in one conflict, but not in others of similar magnitude. In general, calls for a reform of the UNSC, especially with regards to the powers of the five permanent members, are becoming louder.[1]

This paper aims to provide a better understanding of UN interventions, analyzing all registered 221 interstate, internal, and internationalized conflicts between 1945 and 2011. The UN intervened in 30 of these and 112 conflicts were marked by extreme violence of at least one year with over 999 battle-related deaths. So, what do the intervention cases have in common and how does the UNSC decide whether to intervene or not?[2] Beyond this general question, we focus on geographical conditions, such as the continent of the conflict and the distance to the five permanent members of the UNSC.

The general literature on determinants of third-party interventions has established various insightful claims. Butler (2003) finds considerations of justice to play an important role in decisions to intervene by the United States. Mullenbach and Matthews (2008) for the U.S. and Mullenbach (2005) in general distinguish between domestic and international factors, suggesting ideological linkage and geographical proximity as dominant arguments. While geographical proximity can be an understandable factor for intervention by a single country like the U.S., it should not play a role for UNSC decisions to intervene.

Focusing on the UN, Diehl et al. (1996) examine the short- and long-term success of interventions, whereas Gilligan and Sergenti (2008) or Smith and Smith (2011) focus on their (sometimes unintended) consequences. Lebovic (2004) analyzes the nations participating in an intervention and Jakobsen (1996) discusses potential drivers of five UN peace enforcement operations.

To our knowledge, no paper has focused on the geographical proximity of conflict nations

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[1]See Beaumont (2013), Rohde (2013), Annan (2005), or Childers (1994) for instance.

[2]Voeten (2001) provides a game-theoretic approach to explain voting in the UNSC.

to the five permanent members of the UNSC in a comprehensive regression framework. Neack (1995) has hinted that states might participate in UN interventions predominantly for selfish reasons. Geographic proximity has been suggested as a determinant for foreign military intervention, both in general (Pearson, 1974) and in the context of the United States (Mullenbach and Matthews, 2008).

However, selfish reasons for a UNSC member to push a UN intervention close to its own borders are easy to find. The conflict may spill over to closer countries or even to the own country. Intensive political and economic relationships with countries in their proximity are also likely. This argument follows naturally from the first law of geography that "Everything is correlated with everything else, but close things are more correlated than things that are far away." (Tobler, 1970).

Our results from logit regressions suggest that the probability of UN intervention increases substantially for countries closer to the two European UNSC members, France and the United Kingdom. That probability decreases by up to 73 percent for every 1,000 kilometers of distance from France or the United Kingdom. This result is robust to different specifications, the addition of numerous control variables and continental fixed effects. Although we find weak evidence for an intervention bias against Africa and Asia, the distance findings are noticeably more robust.

Further, conflict countries with smaller populations, lower income per capita, less openness to trade, and lower democracy scores (higher autocracy) are more likely to become subject to a UN intervention.[3]

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the sample, whereas section 3 briefly discusses our empirical methodology. Section 4 provides an overview of the data and section 5 presents our empirical findings. Finally, section 6 concludes.

2   Conflicts

Since the foundation of the UN in 1945, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) counts 221 conflicts until the year 2011, defined as interstate, internal, or internationalized internal

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[3]In a seminal paper, Fearon and Laitin (2003) conclude that poverty, political instability, and large populations can explain the onset of civil war. Our analysis does not consider conflict determinants, but UN intervention determinants given the conflict already occurred.

armed conflicts. Our analysis excludes extrasystemic armed conflicts between a state and a non-state group outside its own territory, as the UN did not intervene in any of these. The UNSC intervened in 30 conflicts in one or several of the following ways:

- military intervention for peacebuilding,

- military intervention for peacekeeping, or

- sanctions or embargoes.

We categorize a fourth method measurement of interference as demanding to cease hostilities or to establish an observer mission. However, given the low commitment associated with these measurements (economically, militarily, and politically) we categorize these cases as nonintervention.

Table 1 provides a list of all 221 conflicts, indicating whether the UN did intervene – according to our above definition– or not.[4] The overwhelming majority of conflicts in the second part of the 20th century occurred on the African and Asian continents. Even though Asia was subject to more conflicts (90) than Africa (81), the UN intervened more often in Africa: 18 times versus 5. The formation of some post-Soviet states and the dissolution of Yugoslavia marked a series of European conflicts in the early 1990s. Finally, the UN only intervened once on an American continent, namely in Haiti around the 1990s, when "...a military faction led by Raoul Cédras managed to oust the government of popularly elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide." (UCDP website).

3   Methodology

Our dependent variable is whether the UN intervenes or not. Although one could intent to specify the level of intervention further (e.g. financial or military commitments by the participating nations), it is difficult to impossible to disentangle and measure the exact level of involvement, especially considering different time frames and circumstances under which these decisions have taken place. Thus, we model the UN decision as a binary outcome, in line with our categorization of intervention.

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[4]Notice that there are several double entries, meaning that some countries incurred various conflicts within a year.

Table 1: Conflicts since 1945. *IV* stands for UN intervention.

Country	Year	IV	Country	Year	IV	Country	Year	IV
		Africa					**Asia**	
Cambodia	1946		Egypt	1981		Iran	1945	
Egypt	1948		Gambia, The	1981		Russia	1945	
Egypt	1951		Somalia	1982	yes	Russia	1946	
Egypt	1956		Ethiopia	1982		China	1946	
Congo (DR)	1960		Kenya	1982		Philippines	1946	
Ethiopia	1960		Chad	1983		Iran	1946	
Congo (DR)	1960	yes	Burkina Faso	1985		China	1947	
Cameroon	1960		Togo	1986		Myanmar	1948	
Ethiopia	1961		Chad	1987		Israel	1948	
Algeria	1963		Burkina Faso	1987		Myanmar	1948	
Sudan	1963		Senegal	1988		India	1948	
Ethiopia	1964		Comoros	1989		Myanmar	1948	
Congo (DR)	1964	yes	Rwanda	1990	yes	Myanmar	1948	yes
Gabon	1964		Mali	1990		India	1948	
Ethiopia	1964		Algeria	1990		China	1949	
Burundi	1965	yes	Ethiopia	1991		Myanmar	1949	
Ghana	1966		Djibouti	1991		North Korea	1949	yes
Zimbabwe	1966	yes	Angola	1991		Indonesia	1950	
South Africa	1966		Niger	1991		China	1950	
Chad	1966	yes	Sierra Leone	1991	yes	Thailand	1951	
Nigeria	1966		Congo, Rep.	1993		Indonesia	1953	
Nigeria	1967		Eritrea	1993		Vietnam	1955	
Egypt	1967		Cameroon	1994		India	1955	
Cambodia	1967	yes	Niger	1994		Myanmar	1957	
Madagascar	1971		Niger	1995		Malaysia	1957	
Uganda	1971		Comoros	1997		Oman	1957	
Morocco	1971		Congo (DR)	1998		Lebanon	1958	yes
Sudan	1971	yes	Lesotho	1998		Iraq	1958	
Ethiopia	1974		Eritrea	1998	yes	Lao PDR	1959	
Angola	1975	yes	Guinea-Bissau	1998	yes	China	1959	
Morocco	1975		Guinea	2000		Myanmar	1959	
Mauritania	1975		Central African Republic	2001	yes	Nepal	1960	yes
Cambodia	1975		Cote d'Ivoire	2002	yes	Iraq	1961	
Ethiopia	1975		Nigeria	2003		Indonesia	1962	
Cambodia	1975		Nigeria	2004		Indonesia	1962	
Mozambique	1977		Djibouti	2008		Malaysia	1963	
Ethiopia	1977		Mauritania	2008		Vietnam	1965	
Tanzania	1978		Libya	2011	yes	Thailand	1965	
South Africa	1978		Sudan	2011	yes	Indonesia	1965	
Tunisia	1980		Sudan	2011		Syria	1966	
Liberia	1980	yes				India	1966	

Table 1 cont.: Conflicts since 1945. *IV* stands for UN intervention.

Country	Year	IV	Country	Year	IV	Country	Year	IV
Asia cont.			Yemen	1994		Haiti	1989	yes
Israel	1967		Myanmar	1997		Panama	1989	
Israel	1967		Russia	1999		Trinidad & Tobago	1990	
Oman	1968		Uzbekistan	1999		Mexico	1994	
China	1969		Iraq	2003		United States	2001	
China	1969		India	2004				
Philippines	1970		India	2005		**South & Middle America**		
Sri Lanka	1971		Russia	2007		Bolivia	1946	
Pakistan	1971		Myanmar	2009		Paraguay	1947	
Iran	1972					Costa Rica	1948	
Iran	1972		**Europe**			Guatemala	1949	
Pakistan	1973		Greece	1946		Argentina	1955	
Myanmar	1973		Albania	1946		Venezuela	1962	
China	1974		Hungary	1956		Colombia	1964	
Bangladesh	1975		France	1961		Peru	1965	
Sri Lanka	1975		France	1961		El Salvador	1969	
Indonesia	1975		Spain	1968		Uruguay	1970	
Afghanistan	1978	yes	United Kingdom	1970		El Salvador	1972	
India	1979		Cyprus	1974		Chile	1973	
Afghanistan	1979		Romania	1989		Nicaragua	1974	
Iran	1979		Georgia	1991		Argentina	1982	
India	1979		Azerbaijan	1991		Suriname	1986	
Saudi Arabia	1979		Serbia	1991		Ecuador	1995	
India	1981		Georgia	1991				
Lao PDR	1982		Serbia	1991	yes	**Oceania**		
Turkey	1983		Moldova	1991		Papua New Guinea	1989	
India	1983		Bosnia & Herz.	1992	yes			
India	1984		Bosnia & Herz.	1992	yes			
Israel	1986		Georgia	1992				
Turkey	1987		Croatia	1992	yes			
India	1989		Bosnia & Herz.	1993	yes			
Indonesia	1989		Azerbaijan	1993				
Russia	1990		Serbia	1996	yes			
Russia	1990		Macedonia	2000				
Pakistan	1990							
Iraq	1990	yes	**North America**					
Tajikistan	1992		Cuba	1953				
Tajikistan	1992		Honduras	1957				
India	1993		Dominican Rep.	1965				
Russia	1993		Grenada	1983				
Russia	1994		Panama	1989				

We choose a logit regression model as our econometric tool. The resulting marginal effects allow us to express the effect of a change in any independent variable on the probability of UN intervention, holding all other variables at their means. Our model is specified as

$$logit(p)_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 GEO_i + \alpha_2 X_i + \alpha_3 Z_i + \epsilon_i, \tag{1}$$

where $(p)_i$ is the probability of intervention (IV) by the UNSC in conflict i, with $i \in \{0, N\}$ for $N = 221$ total conflicts. GEO_i addresses the geographical aspect of the conflict country. We will start by including continental fixed effects and whether the conflict country is landlocked or an island. We then move to a more defined measurement regarding the relationship to the UN, using the distance to each of the five permanent UNSC members.

X_i contains intensity ($intense$) and form of the conflict ($interstate$, $internal$, or $internationalized$), whereas Z_i describes the following features of the conflict country: population ($lnpop$), GDP per capita ($lngdp$), and openness to trade ($lnopen$) in the starting year of the conflict. Further, Z_i includes dummies for (former) colonies ($british$, $french$, $portuguese$, and $dutch$) and the political regime ($polityIV$).[5]

Regarding population size, one could think of two intuitions. First, a bigger society means a bigger potential human loss in a conflict. Second, the more people live in a country, the more potential soldiers there are, which may lower chances of success and raise costs of an intervention. The first argument promotes a positive relationship between population size and probability of intervention, whereas the second argument suggests a negative effect. These intuitions are also closely related to income per capita, as the opportunity cost of joining an army could naturally be lower when income is low. As for trade openness, conflict countries with stronger international economic ties could be more important, as other countries may be affected economically by the conflict. Thus, there could be a stronger international interest to intervene in more open countries.[6]

Another reason for the importance of basic macroeconomic factors is the notion of the UN

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[5]Including a dummy for Spanish colonies predicts failure perfectly, as the UN did not intervene in any Spanish colony.

[6]Regarding the relationship between conflict and country size, see Alesina and Spolaore (2005). Martin et al. (2012) points out the connection between regional trade agreements and conflicts. For an excellent review on the potential economic causes of civil war, one might consider the work of Paul Collier and specifically Collier and Hoeffler (1998).

having a paternalistic view in trying to defend people that otherwise are not able to defend themselves. This philosophy is currently being underlined by the UN initiative "responsibility to protect" (R2P).[7] The fact that UN members have accepted the declaration of human rights and international humanitarian conventions reinforces this philosophy. Along these lines, we also include the Polity IV index measuring a country's degree of democracy.

4   Descriptive Statistics

Tables 2 and 3 show summary statistics of all variables and a comparison of intervention versus nonintervention cases. Our binary dependent variable *IV* comes directly from the UNSC resolutions.[8]

Regarding the form of conflict, intervention occurs more often in internationalized conflicts, relative to interstate and internal conflicts. In terms of the conflict intensity (*intense*), the UCDP database allows us to distinguish the severity of the conflict into "between 25 and 999 battle-related deaths" and conflicts with 1,000 and more battle-related deaths. One would expect the violence of a conflict to play an important role when considering intervention. Indeed, the average intervention case is substantially more violent than the nonintervention case, as shown in table 3.

Further, pure statistical comparison reveals that intervention cases are more frequent in African and European countries, but less common in Asia. Comparing the conflict's distance from the five permanent UNSC members suggests that the Council intervenes in conflicts closer to the United Kingdom and France. However, distances to China, Russia, or the U.S. are not significantly different along the lines of intervention.

Considering the macroeconomic fundamentals, we use the Penn World Table version 7.1 to incorporate population size, GDP per capita, and openness to trade at the beginning of the conflict (*lnpop*, *lngdp*, and *lnopen*). In our main specifications, we employ the natural logarithm of each of these to achieve better comparability of results, although not using logs does not change our general conclusions. Table 3 reveals that interventions tend to happen in

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[7]See http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/. One may also consider Beaumont (2013) for a recent comment on R2P.

[8]Source: http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/past.shtml

Table 2: Summary statistics

Variable	Mean	(Std. Dev.)	N	Source	Description
IV	0.14	(0.34)	221	UN	dummy = 1 if economic sanctions or arms embargo, peacekeeping operations, and/or military intervention (peacebuilding)
interstate	0.19	(0.40)	221	UCDP	dummy = 1 if interstate armed conflict
internal	0.6	(0.49)	221	UCDP	dummy = 1 if internal armed conflict
internationalized	0.2	(0.40)	221	UCDP	dummy = 1 if internationalized internal armed conflict
intense	0.51	(0.50)	221	UCDP	dummy = 1 if over 999 battle-related deaths
africa	0.37	(0.48)	221	own	dummy = 1 if country in Africa
asia	0.41	(0.49)	221	own	dummy = 1 if country in Asia
europe	0.10	(0.31)	221	own	dummy = 1 if country in Europe
namerica	0.05	(0.21)	221	own	dummy = 1 if country in North America
oceania	0.00	(0.06)	221	own	dummy = 1 if country in Oceania
smamerica	0.07	(0.26)	221	own	dummy = 1 if country in Latin America
ukdist	5.40	(2.72)	221	own	distance to the United Kingdom in thousand kilometers
fradist	4.87	(2.85)	221	own	distance to France in 1,000 km
chinadist	4.31	(4.05)	221	own	distance to China in 1,000 km
rusdist	3.41	(2.92)	221	own	distance to Russia in 1,000 km
usdist	7.96	(3.00)	221	own	distance to the United States in 1,000 km
lnpop	16.60	(1.85)	215	PWT	ln(population); variable POP
lngdp	7.44	(1.08)	199	PWT	ln[PPP Converted GDP Per Capita (Laspeyres) at 2005 constant prices]; variable $rgdpl$

Notes: UN = UN Security Council resolutions; UCDP = Uppsala Conflict Data Program

Table 2 cont.: Summary statistics

Variable	Mean	(Std. Dev.)	N	Source	Description
lnopen	3.62	(0.83)	203	PWT	ln(openness at 2005 constant prices in %); variable *openk*
british	0.28	0.45	221	own	dummy = 1 if (former) British colony
french	0.27	0.44	221	own	dummy = 1 if (former) French colony
portuguese	0.03	0.18	221	own	dummy = 1 if (former) Portuguese colony
dutch	0.14	0.34	221	own	dummy = 1 if (former) Dutch colony
landlocked	0.19	(0.39)	221	own	dummy = 1 if country is landlocked
island	0.10	(0.30)	221	own	dummy = 1 if country is an island
polityIV	-0.94	(6.46)	204	Polity IV	level of democracy, ranging from -10 (totally autocratic) to +10 (total democracy); variable *polity2*
year	1975.44	(17.50)	221	UCDP	year of the intervention
ivprev	0.05	(0.23)	221	UCDP, own	dummy = 1 if UN intervened in country before
ownint	0.11	(0.31)	221	own	dummy = 1 if one of the 5 UNSC permanent members intervenes independently in the conflict as a third party
opec	0.08	(0.27)	221	own	dummy = 1 if the conflict country is member of the OPEC at the beginning of the conflict
coldwar	0.80	(0.40)	221	own	dummy = 1 if the conflict started before 1992
relfrac	0.004	(0.002)	162	ADEKW[1]	religious fractionalization of the conflict country
catholic80	0.22	(0.32)	172	QoG[2]	fraction catholic in society in 1980
muslim80	0.30	(0.36)	172	QoG[2]	fraction muslim in society in 1980
protestant80	0.05	(0.10)	170	QoG[2]	fraction protestant in society in 1980

Notes: PWT = Penn World Table Version 7.1; UCDP = Uppsala Conflict Data Program. [1]Alesina et al. (2003).
[2]QoG = Quality of Government index from Teorell et al. (2011).

Table 3: Comparing UN intervention cases to nonintervention cases

Variable	IV μ (σ) [N]	Non-IV μ (σ) [N]	Difference IV to Non-IV
interstate	0.10 (0.31) [30]	0.21 (0.41) [191]	-0.11
internal	0.37 (0.49) [30]	0.64 (0.48) [191]	-0.27***
internationalized	0.53 (0.51) [30]	0.15 (0.36) [191]	0.38***
intense	0.73 (0.45) [30]	0.47 (0.50) [191]	0.26***
africa	0.60 (0.50) [30]	0.33 (0.47) [191]	0.27***
asia	0.17 (0.38) [30]	0.45 (0.50) [191]	-0.28***
europe	0.20 (0.41) [30]	0.09 (0.29) [191]	0.11*
namerica	0.03 (0.18) [30]	0.05 (0.21) [191]	-0.01
oceania	0 (0) [30]	0.01 (0.07) [191]	-0.01
smamerica	0 (0) [30]	0.08 (0.28) [191]	-0.08
ukdist	4.48 (2.24) [30]	5.54 (2.76) [191]	-1.06**
fradist	3.80 (2.32) [30]	5.04 (2.89) [191]	-1.24**
chinadist	4.98 (2.81) [30]	4.20 (4.20) [191]	0.78
rusdist	3.31 (2.23) [30]	3.42 (3.01) [191]	-0.11
usdist	8.08 (2.27) [30]	7.94 (3.11) [191]	0.14
lnpop	15.66 (0.80) [29]	16.75 (1.92) [186]	-1.08***
lngdp	7.19 (0.99) [28]	7.48 (1.09) [171]	-0.30

Notes: IV = UN intervention; μ = mean; σ = standard deviation; * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 3 cont.: Comparing UN intervention cases to nonintervention cases

Variable	IV μ (σ) [N]	Non-IV μ (σ) [N]	Difference IV to Non-IV
lnopen	3.62 (0.96) [28]	3.62 (0.82) [175]	0.00
british	0.13 (0.35) [30]	0.30 (0.46) [191]	-0.17*
french	0.20 (0.41) [30]	0.28 (0.45) [191]	-0.08
portuguese	0.07 (0.25) [30]	0.03 (0.16) [191]	0.04
dutch	0.07 (0.25) [30]	0.15 (0.35) [191]	-0.08
landlocked	0.30 (0.47) [30]	0.17 (0.38) [191]	0.13*
island	0.03 (0.18) [30]	0.11 (0.31) [191]	-0.08
polityIV	-4.16 (4.14) [25]	-0.59 (6.60) [179]	-3.67***
year	1982.6 (16.68) [30]	1974.31 (17.40) [191]	8.29**
ivprev	0.13 (0.35) [30]	0.04 (0.20) [191]	0.09**
ownint	0.20 (0.41) [30]	0.09 (0.29) [191]	0.11*
opec	0.07 (0.25) [30]	0.08 (0.27) [191]	-0.01
coldwar	0.63 (0.49) [30]	0.82 (0.38) [191]	-0.19**
relfrac	0.006 (0.002) [16]	0.004 (0.002) [146]	0.002***
catholic80	0.24 (0.28) [23]	0.21 (0.33) [149]	0.03
muslim80	0.32 (0.33) [23]	0.29 (0.37) [149]	0.03
protestant80	0.08 (0.11) [22]	0.04 (0.09) [148]	0.03

Notes: IV = UN intervention; μ = Mean; σ = standard deviation; * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

smaller countries, which may be related to the chances of success and the financing aspect – everything else equal, it may be easier and cheaper to deal with a smaller country.

In addition, we consider the colonial heritage and whether the country is landlocked or an island. To capture the level of democracy, we incorporate the Polity IV index ($polityIV$), in particular the variable polity2, ranging from -10 (totally autocratic) to $+10$ (total democracy). In fact, there is a remarkable difference between the average intervention case ($polityIV = -4.16$) and the average nonintervention case (-0.59), indicating interventions to be more likely in autocratic nations. Further, the UN seems to intervene more in recent conflicts ($year$). The final eight variables ($ivprev$ to $protestant80$) will serve as control variables in several robustness checks at the end of the paper.

Although these numbers provide some interesting insights into the features of interventions, one should be careful in drawing conclusions solely based on these comparative statistics. The following regression analysis will provide a much more rigorous insights into filtering out the determining characteristics of UN interventions.

5 Empirical Results

Tables $4 - 9$ show our main results from logit regressions. In all tables, we display six regressions with marginal effects of the respective variables and standard errors. In each table, we add regressors moving from left to right, predicting the probability of UN intervention.

5.1 Using Continental Fixed Effects

We first focus on the location of the respective conflicts by introducing continental dummies in table 4. Although African conflicts seem to increase the probability of intervention at first, this impression quickly fades when controlling for population size, GDP per capita, and openness to trade. Further including the Polity IV index in column (5) pushes the coefficient well below zero, indicating that being in Africa actually decreases the probability of intervention. However, this result is not significant. Further, $asia$ is never close to significance in any specification.

The results for Europe on the other hand are stronger. Throughout the first five regressions, the European dummy is positive and significant on conventional levels, indicating a positive

Table 4: Logit regressions considering continents. Dependent variable is intervention (IV).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
africa	1.622	1.812*	-0.175	0.093	-1.502	-2.121
	(1.073)	(1.089)	(1.327)	(1.701)	(1.848)	(2.162)
asia	0.242	0.245	0.013	0.413	-0.729	-2.078
	(1.134)	(1.139)	(1.390)	(1.721)	(1.800)	(2.085)
europe	1.926*	2.044*	2.915**	4.182**	3.182*	3.562
	(1.149)	(1.162)	(1.285)	(1.689)	(1.784)	(2.250)
interstate	-1.838***	-1.667**	-2.135**	-1.910*	-2.309**	-3.678**
	(0.691)	(0.706)	(0.966)	(0.977)	(1.134)	(1.504)
internal	-1.571***	-1.248**	-1.173*	-1.308*	-1.795**	-2.374**
	(0.461)	(0.490)	(0.629)	(0.718)	(0.824)	(1.011)
intense		1.115**	1.356**	1.492**	0.746	2.850**
		(0.484)	(0.610)	(0.662)	(0.724)	(1.237)
lnpop			-0.744***	-1.009***	-1.328***	-1.930***
			(0.251)	(0.313)	(0.394)	(0.587)
lngdp			-1.000**	-1.495**	-1.906**	-2.249**
			(0.436)	(0.661)	(0.830)	(1.030)
lnopen			-0.464	-0.581	-0.819*	-3.258***
			(0.420)	(0.441)	(0.494)	(1.222)
landlocked				-0.839	-1.492	-2.136*
				(0.772)	(0.913)	(1.106)
island				-2.308	-2.799*	-3.748**
				(1.533)	(1.698)	(1.775)
british				-0.897	-0.591	-1.349
				(0.903)	(0.994)	(1.205)
french				-0.630	-0.665	-1.071
				(0.863)	(0.946)	(1.026)
portuguese				-1.571	-2.518	-5.248**
				(1.461)	(1.584)	(2.381)
dutch				2.704*	4.598**	8.386***
				(1.389)	(1.958)	(2.995)
polityIV					-0.122*	-0.218**
					(0.072)	(0.094)
year						0.178***
						(0.062)
N	221	221	165	165	157	157

Notes: Displaying marginal effects. Standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

intervention bias for European conflicts. Only the inclusion of the starting year of the conflict renders *europe* barely insignificant. Notice however that we are losing almost 30 percent of observations along the way, owed mostly to missing data on the macroeconomic fundamentals. We will get back to this problem at the end of the robustness checks in section 5.4.

The remaining regressors mostly confirm our initial suspicions. The UN is less likely to intervene in interstate and internal conflicts, relative to internationalized conflicts (the omitted variable). Higher conflict intensity increases the probability of intervention. Further, the UN is significantly more likely to intervene in (*i*) smaller, (*ii*) poorer, and (*iii*) less open economies. These results are robust throughout various specifications, with the exception of trade openness, which only gains significance after controlling for political regime form of the conflict nation.

Further, remote countries seem to be less prone to intervention, presumably because of the increased difficulties of reaching landlocked countries as well as islands. The UN is also less likely to intervene in Portuguese colonies and more democratic nations, but more likely to consider Dutch colonies for intervention. Finally, the positive and significant coefficient on *year* indicates a stronger UN involvement in recent times.

Note that the regional findings do not imply a negative bias against African or Asian countries, but rather a positive bias in favor of intervention in European conflicts. However, a closer look at table 1 reveals that UN intervention in Europe exclusively took place throughout Yugoslav wars in the 1990s (interventions three times in Bosnia and Herzegovina, twice in Serbia, and once in Croatia). If we were to broadly consider the Yugoslavian wars as one major conflict zone, then our results with respect to European conflicts may be driven by this one big conflict only. Thus, we now move to a more sophisticated measurement of the geography of conflicts by considering the geographical proximity of the conflict nation to each of the five permanent members in the UNSC.

5.2   Using The Geographical Distance to UNSC Members

We start by including the distance to the United Kingdom (*ukdist*), measured in 1,000 kilometers, in table 5. Throughout all specifications, we find a negative effect of *ukdist* on the probability of intervention. In fact, taking into account other control variables further strengthens significance and magnitude of the effect. For every 1,000 kilometers of distance to the United

Kingdom the chances of UN intervention decrease by up to 73 percent.

Considering the measurement of distance, we also experimented with a quadratic distance term and interactions with $year$, but the effect seems to be linear and does not change over time. Regarding the other regressors, coefficients are generally in line with the ones found in table 4. Smaller, poorer, and less open economies continue to raise the chances of UN intervention. Also notice that the negative coefficient on Portuguese colonies becomes insignificant, while French colonies now seem to have a lower probability of intervention.

Moving to another permanent member of the UNSC, we now consider the geographical proximity to France in table 6. We find results almost identical to the previous findings, as $fradist$ remains significant throughout. Once again, every 1,000 kilometers of distance lowers the probability of intervention substantially, this time by up to 68 percent in column (6). However, given the strong correlation between distances to Britain and France, these results mostly serve as a confirmation of the findings in table 5. The remaining variables confirm the findings from table 5.

Turning to the remaining permanent UNSC members, table 7 replicates specifications (1) and (6) of table 6 for distances from China, Russia, and the United States. Interestingly, those coefficients are insignificant and also substantially smaller in terms of magnitude. Thus, the distance to China, Russia, or the U.S. does not seem to play any role in determining the probability of UN intervention. This is especially interesting in the context of the United States with their strong involvement in many conflict areas worldwide. One explanation could be that the U.S. tend to pursue their international interests in a more direct way, not always looking for the UN as the primary organization of intervention. These claims are highly speculative of course. Finally, we also tried a variable measuring the distance to the closest UNSC member nation. However, this variable was not significant.

The following section will now address the question whether the continent of conflict or the distance to the European UNSC members (or both) are the dominant geographical aspects associated with intervention probability.

Table 5: Logit regressions considering the geographical distance from the United Kingdom (distances in 1,000km). Dependent variable is intervention (IV).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ukdist	-0.148*	-0.151*	-0.363**	-0.564***	-0.591***	-0.730**
	(0.085)	(0.086)	(0.145)	(0.201)	(0.222)	(0.302)
interstate	-1.968***	-1.895***	-2.027**	-2.068**	-1.676	-2.490*
	(0.679)	(0.688)	(0.884)	(1.002)	(1.048)	(1.413)
internal	-1.782***	-1.589***	-0.994*	-1.209*	-1.350*	-1.472*
	(0.447)	(0.459)	(0.596)	(0.697)	(0.765)	(0.884)
intense		0.895*	1.339**	1.278*	0.633	2.682**
		(0.464)	(0.600)	(0.665)	(0.716)	(1.143)
lnpop			-0.796***	-1.038***	-1.274***	-1.868***
			(0.242)	(0.293)	(0.357)	(0.514)
lngdp			-0.702**	-1.120***	-1.203**	-1.294**
			(0.306)	(0.399)	(0.488)	(0.571)
lnopen			-0.597	-0.605	-1.005*	-3.571***
			(0.431)	(0.472)	(0.557)	(1.259)
landlocked				-0.321	-0.980	-1.363
				(0.705)	(0.872)	(1.060)
island				0.130	0.163	-0.382
				(1.380)	(1.589)	(1.852)
british				-1.046	-1.265	-1.496
				(0.914)	(1.046)	(1.247)
french				-1.929**	-2.028**	-2.390**
				(0.803)	(0.881)	(0.990)
portuguese				-1.101	-2.099	-3.376
				(1.391)	(1.563)	(2.279)
dutch				2.276*	4.168**	7.094***
				(1.293)	(1.740)	(2.602)
polityIV					-0.103	-0.180**
					(0.074)	(0.084)
year						0.166***
						(0.057)
N	221	221	165	165	157	157

Notes: Displaying marginal effects. Standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 6: Logit regressions considering the geographical distance from France (distances in 1,000km). Dependent variable is intervention (IV).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
fradist	-0.161*	-0.166*	-0.336**	-0.534***	-0.538**	-0.676**
	(0.085)	(0.086)	(0.139)	(0.194)	(0.210)	(0.289)
interstate	-1.955***	-1.885***	-1.998**	-2.013**	-1.610	-2.452*
	(0.681)	(0.689)	(0.883)	(1.005)	(1.046)	(1.416)
internal	-1.761***	-1.560***	-0.957	-1.140	-1.286*	-1.419
	(0.448)	(0.461)	(0.597)	(0.695)	(0.761)	(0.876)
intense		0.909*	1.341**	1.305*	0.691	2.678**
		(0.465)	(0.598)	(0.667)	(0.714)	(1.122)
lnpop			-0.776***	-1.019***	-1.227***	-1.843***
			(0.239)	(0.290)	(0.349)	(0.515)
lngdp			-0.632**	-1.015***	-1.090**	-1.148**
			(0.296)	(0.377)	(0.467)	(0.538)
lnopen			-0.600	-0.605	-0.951*	-3.558***
			(0.429)	(0.470)	(0.543)	(1.254)
landlocked				-0.324	-0.993	-1.347
				(0.702)	(0.867)	(1.047)
island				0.156	0.133	-0.489
				(1.379)	(1.578)	(1.879)
british				-1.137	-1.376	-1.608
				(0.906)	(1.036)	(1.245)
french				-1.978**	-2.075**	-2.461**
				(0.803)	(0.880)	(0.990)
portuguese				-1.186	-2.143	-3.577
				(1.391)	(1.545)	(2.306)
dutch				2.218*	3.921**	6.926***
				(1.291)	(1.697)	(2.595)
polityIV					-0.098	-0.184**
					(0.073)	(0.085)
year						0.167***
						(0.057)
N	221	221	165	165	157	157

Notes: Displaying marginal effects. Standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 7: Logit regressions considering the geographical distance from China, the US, and Russia (in 1,000km). Dependent variable is intervention (IV).

	(1) chinadist	(2) chinadist	(3) usdist	(4) usdist	(5) rusdist	(6) rusdist
dist	0.057	-0.017	-0.019	-0.223	-0.005	-0.294
	(0.053)	(0.131)	(0.071)	(0.160)	(0.078)	(0.204)
Control set 1	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Control set 2		yes		yes		yes
N	221	157	221	157	221	157

Notes: Displaying marginal effects. Standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.
Control set 1: *interstate* and *internal*. Control set 2: *intense*, *lnpop*, *lngdp*, *lnopen*, *landlocked*, *island*, *british*, *french*, *portuguese*, *dutch*, *polityIV*, and *year*.

5.3 Continents or Distance?

Table 8 replicates our basic tables, this time including both continental dummies and the distance to the United Kingdom (*ukdist*). We notice that at first all location variables are insignificant, although carrying the previously suggested signs. After controlling for other geographical aspects and colonial fixed effects in column (4) however, the distance to the U.K. recovers its significance and magnitude from earlier. As for the continental fixed effects, only the negative coefficient on Africa briefly gains significance in column (5), but then loses it again. Notice that *europe* remains a nonfactor throughout table 8.

Next, table 9 considers the distance to France together with continental dummies. We notice the same development for the distance variable, but this time Africa and eventually Asia also turn negative and significant. Thus, we find evidence of a bias against interventions in Africa and Asia, although the results are mixed. The distance to France and the United Kingdom on the other hand are more prevalent, implying a decrease in the intervention probability of over 70 percent for every 1,000 kilometers of distance from either country.

Also, it is interesting to see how the grand majority of the remaining variables keep their effects from the very beginning in table 4, strengthening their conclusions. The following section

Table 8: Logit regressions considering the distance to the U.K. and continental fixed effects. Dependent variable is intervention (IV).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ukdist	-0.046	-0.040	-0.296	-0.462*	-0.707**	-0.741**
	(0.108)	(0.111)	(0.190)	(0.268)	(0.310)	(0.356)
africa	1.501	1.709	-1.364	-1.504	-3.820*	-3.601
	(1.111)	(1.127)	(1.557)	(2.066)	(2.095)	(2.210)
asia	0.162	0.179	-0.523	-0.590	-2.301	-3.245
	(1.153)	(1.158)	(1.473)	(1.912)	(1.921)	(2.088)
europe	1.657	1.810	1.267	1.516	-0.985	0.565
	(1.310)	(1.329)	(1.644)	(2.278)	(2.491)	(2.793)
interstate	-1.848***	-1.687**	-2.271**	-2.221**	-2.267**	-3.313**
	(0.692)	(0.709)	(0.970)	(1.044)	(1.134)	(1.578)
internal	-1.583***	-1.252**	-1.259*	-1.441*	-1.843**	-2.129**
	(0.462)	(0.490)	(0.644)	(0.736)	(0.845)	(1.021)
intense		1.113**	1.325**	1.320*	0.408	3.383**
		(0.485)	(0.622)	(0.687)	(0.747)	(1.507)
lnpop			-0.852***	-1.097***	-1.550***	-2.219***
			(0.270)	(0.331)	(0.441)	(0.670)
lngdp			-1.279***	-1.848**	-2.305**	-2.586**
			(0.486)	(0.740)	(0.921)	(1.122)
lnopen			-0.491	-0.635	-1.179*	-4.235***
			(0.449)	(0.488)	(0.611)	(1.600)
landlocked				-0.802	-1.355	-2.025*
				(0.794)	(0.957)	(1.223)
island				-1.224	-1.156	-1.883
				(1.738)	(1.929)	(2.057)
british				-0.755	-0.589	-1.369
				(0.959)	(1.146)	(1.344)
french				-1.087	-1.329	-1.793
				(0.938)	(1.062)	(1.152)
portuguese				-1.081	-1.952	-4.353
				(1.473)	(1.685)	(2.778)
dutch				2.869**	5.617***	9.939***
				(1.437)	(2.146)	(3.537)
polityIV					-0.125	-0.194**
					(0.080)	(0.093)
year						0.199***
						(0.073)
N	221	221	165	165	157	157

Notes: Displaying marginal effects. Standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 9: Logit regressions considering the distance to France and continental fixed effects. Dependent variable is intervention (IV).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
fradist	-0.044	-0.040	-0.304	-0.478*	-0.739**	-0.782**
	(0.107)	(0.110)	(0.192)	(0.275)	(0.322)	(0.378)
africa	1.466	1.675	-1.650	-1.958	-4.565**	-4.353*
	(1.139)	(1.155)	(1.651)	(2.199)	(2.261)	(2.367)
asia	0.145	0.161	-0.692	-0.859	-2.701	-3.646*
	(1.162)	(1.167)	(1.506)	(1.970)	(1.989)	(2.157)
europe	1.644	1.793	1.054	1.159	-1.647	-0.161
	(1.337)	(1.357)	(1.720)	(2.408)	(2.693)	(2.978)
interstate	-1.846***	-1.685**	-2.270**	-2.227**	-2.263**	-3.314**
	(0.691)	(0.709)	(0.974)	(1.054)	(1.141)	(1.609)
internal	-1.582***	-1.251**	-1.251*	-1.422*	-1.832**	-2.098**
	(0.462)	(0.490)	(0.645)	(0.736)	(0.847)	(1.023)
intense		1.113**	1.325**	1.332*	0.392	3.364**
		(0.485)	(0.623)	(0.690)	(0.754)	(1.518)
lnpop			-0.849***	-1.093***	-1.566***	-2.246***
			(0.269)	(0.331)	(0.448)	(0.681)
lngdp			-1.274***	-1.848**	-2.325**	-2.579**
			(0.483)	(0.735)	(0.922)	(1.120)
lnopen			-0.500	-0.641	-1.177*	-4.249***
			(0.450)	(0.490)	(0.611)	(1.606)
landlocked				-0.826	-1.383	-2.040*
				(0.795)	(0.959)	(1.224)
island				-1.175	-1.062	-1.791
				(1.757)	(1.944)	(2.087)
british				-0.789	-0.649	-1.400
				(0.961)	(1.161)	(1.359)
french				-1.123	-1.418	-1.902
				(0.946)	(1.083)	(1.182)
portuguese				-1.071	-1.922	-4.358
				(1.470)	(1.685)	(2.819)
dutch				2.819**	5.555***	9.902***
				(1.433)	(2.138)	(3.557)
polityIV					-0.125	-0.194**
					(0.080)	(0.093)
year						0.199***
						(0.074)
N	221	221	165	165	157	157

Notes: Displaying marginal effects. Standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

will now consider several robustness checks.

5.4   Robustness Checks

Tables 10 turns to different specifications and the addition of several other potential factors. Each of the eight columns replicates column (6) of table 5 using a different definition of a variable or adding explanatory variables. We display the coefficient on *ukdist* to demonstrate its robustness, but the general conclusions from the remaining variables generally prevail. Table 11 repeats the same exercise for the distance to France. The following results are also robust to the inclusion of continental fixed effects.

First, we address our definition of intervention. Specifically, we include sanctions and embargoes in our main specifications as interventions, even though one could argue that these measures not nearly resemble the commitment of a military intervention. Thus, column (1) reruns our main result defining sanctions and embargoes as noninterventions. Columns (2) − (5) include dummies for whether (*i*) the conflict country experienced a UN intervention previously, (*ii*) one of the five permanent members of the UNSC intervened independently as a third-party, (*iii*) the conflict country was an OPEC member by the beginning of the conflict, and (*iv*) the conflict began before 1992 (*coldwar*). None of these variables shows significance however and the coefficient on *ukdist* remains significant on the five percent significance level with its magnitude varying between 0.63 and 0.79.

Specifications (6) and (7) include the religious fractionalization of the conflict country and the percentage of three major religious groups. We find indeed evidence of higher fractionalization of the society in terms of religion raising the probability of intervention. Inserting the percentage of three major religions on the other hand does not return significant results. Note however that we are losing another 25 percent of our observations when adding specific religious fractions (over 46 percent compared to the most basic specification). Thus, one should be careful in interpreting these final specifications. Further, we could not find any evidence of ethnic fractionalization playing a role, as these regressions did not produce significant results.

Finally, the regression displayed in column (8) addresses the loss in observations in our main results from initially 221 to 157. Especially the early conflicts have missing data, mostly for the macroeconomic variables and the Polity IV index. For this regression we substitute the missing

Table 10: Robustness checks considering the distance to the U.K. Dependent variable is IV.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
ukdist	-0.630**	-0.794**	-0.722**	-0.730**	-0.722**	-1.201*	-1.675**	-0.551**
	(0.320)	(0.336)	(0.302)	(0.302)	(0.302)	(0.730)	(0.784)	(0.254)
Control set 1	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Control set 2	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
ivprev		-0.964						
		(1.528)						
ownint			1.831					
			(1.496)					
opec				0.013				
				(2.914)				
coldwar					-0.675			
					(1.210)			
relfrac						1369.504*		
						(705.992)		
catholic80							3.536	
							(4.096)	
muslim80							-5.074	
							(3.323)	
protestant80							0.108	
							(11.660)	
N	157	157	157	157	157	131	119	185

Notes: Displaying marginal effects. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.
Control set 1: *interstate* and *internal*. Control set 2: *intense*, *lnpop*, *lngdp*, *lnopen*,
landlocked, *island*, *british*, *french*, *portuguese*, *dutch*, *polityIV*, and *year*.

Table 11: Robustness checks considering the distance to France. Dependent variable is IV.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
fradist	-0.578*	-0.733**	-0.674**	-0.676**	-0.670**	-1.074	-1.446**	-0.527**
	(0.306)	(0.322)	(0.289)	(0.289)	(0.289)	(0.696)	(0.660)	(0.244)
Control set 1	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Control set 2	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
ivprev		-0.893						
		(1.513)						
ownint			1.867					
			(1.478)					
opec				-0.068				
				(2.884)				
coldwar					-0.678			
					(1.200)			
relfrac						1345.108*		
						(709.525)		
catholic80							3.351	
							(3.825)	
muslim80							-4.690	
							(3.122)	
protestant80							-1.586	
							(10.973)	
N	157	157	157	157	157	131	119	185

Notes: Displaying marginal effects. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.
Control set 1: *interstate* and *internal*. Control set 2: *intense*, *lnpop*, *lngdp*, *lnopen*,
landlocked, *island*, *british*, *french*, *portuguese*, *dutch*, *polityIV*, and *year*.

values of population, GDP per capita, openness, and democracy level by the closest value for the specific country within 10 years of range. For example, if values for Guatemala in 1949 are missing, we replace them by the closest available value: Guatemala in 1950. Although this is not entirely accurate of course, it allows us to recover observations at the risk of introducing measurement error. Column (8) shows that our main result still holds.

In summary, the importance of the geographical distance to France and the United Kingdom are robust to the inclusion of various controls and an alternative definition of intervention. In addition, we do not find any remarkable differences to our main results regarding the effects of population size, income level, trade openness, or political regime form (not displayed).

6   Conclusions

This paper pursues two main objectives. First, we wish to shed light on the general characteristics of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) interventions. We find that a UNSC intervention tends to be more likely in smaller and poorer countries. Although speculative, potentially lower costs and higher chances of success may be important in this context. Interventions are also more probable in autocratic (less democratic) societies and countries, which are *less* open to international trade. We also find evidence that interventions are more likely in recent years, but there seems to be no difference between Cold War and post Cold War conflicts.

Second, we analyze whether the geographical proximity to any of the five permanent members of the UNSC plays a role. Given the United Nations' goal "To keep peace throughout the world," the decision to intervene, both militarily (peacebuilding and peacekeeping) and by sanctions, should in theory not be affected by the conflict's geographical location relative to the five permanent UNSC members. However, our results suggest that the larger the geographical distance to France or the United Kingdom, the lower the probability of UN intervention. For every 1,000 kilometers of distance, the probability of intervention decreases by up to 73 percent, everything else equal. Interestingly, we do not find any significant results for distances to the other three permanent members China, Russia, and the United States. These findings are robust to the inclusion of numerous other potential factors and different specifications.

Finally, we want to stress that any conclusions regarding the political motivations of these

findings are highly speculative. Our results suggest that intervention becomes less likely with further distance to France and the United Kingdom, but the goal of this paper is not to explore the potential reasons of this phenomenon. Detailed analyses of this phenomenon may provide interesting avenues for further research.

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