Outside Options and the Logic of Security Council Action

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I examine if and how a superpower can use its asymmetric power to achieve favorable outcomes in multilateral bargaining between states that have conflicting interests and veto power. Using a game-theoretic framework, I show that the ability to act outside, either unilaterally or with an ally, helps the superpower to reach agreements that would be vetoed in the absence of the outside option. These agreements, however, are usually not at the superpower's ideal point. Under some conditions, uncertainty about the credibility of the outside option can lead to unilateral action that all actors prefer to avoid. In other circumstances, this uncertainty results in multilateral actions that the superpower (and the ally) would not initiate without multilateral authorization. The model provides useful insights that help explain patterns of decision-making in the United Nations Security Council in the 1990s, including the failed attempt to reach agreement over the Kosovo intervention.

The number of military interventions authorized by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) increased dramatically in the past decade. Observers claim that the UNSC is finally, as envisioned by the UN Charter, initiating emergency responses in crises that threaten international peace and stability (Fromuth 1993).[1] The Kosovo crisis demonstrates, however, that the UNSC is not the sole international actor with the ability to intervene militarily in conflicts. After consecutive attempts to reach a compromise failed, the NATO allies circumvented the UNSC. Moreover, the United States has an unprecedented decisive preponderance in all underlying components of power (Wohlforth 1999), and unilateral American intervention often is a realistic possibility. The variety of multilateral institutions combined with the U.S. capability to act alone frequently creates situations in which the United States has a number of options for intervening in international conflicts. The United Nations is usually the first venue for coalition building (Baker 1995, 278), but if the member states cannot reach consensus, it need not be the sole recourse.

I argue that asymmetric outside options profoundly affect the logic of UNSC action and multilateral action more generally. I develop and analyze a game-theoretic framework that examines the strategic problem of bargaining in an abstract multilateral institution modeled after the UNSC. In the model, states have conflicting preferences over outcomes, and a superpower can pursue a costly outside option, either unilaterally or with an ally. If this option is credible, it creates a bargaining range that would not exist in the absence of outside options. Uncertainty about its credibility may dissolve this bargaining range, however, and lead to outside action that all actors would prefer to avoid. The thesis is that it is helpful to have one dominant power to generate multilateral actions is not new. Hegemonic stability theorists have long argued that a dominant state allows large-scale international cooperation to emerge (Kindleberger 1973; Krasner 1976), but the theory applies only if international cooperation is a public good. Here, I explain under what conditions a dominant state can use its outside power to satisfy its private interests through multilateral actions.

This article also contributes to a more general critique of the institutionalist literature, which mostly treats international institutions as potential vehicles for overcoming problems of monitoring and enforcement. Largely neglected is the important role of international organizations as forums for bargaining to resolve distributional conflicts between states (see Fearon 1998; Garrett 1992; Krasner 1991; Morrow 1994b). Institutionalists believe that power asymmetries are important, but their consequences are rarely explicitly modeled. I integrate realist concerns about the consequences of power asymmetries with institutionalist concerns about incomplete information and Pareto-inferior outcomes (e.g., Axelrod and Keohane 1985; Martin 1992).

Furthermore, my view of the use of power in determining the outcome of distributional conflict differs from earlier accounts. In the dominant treatment of the subject, Krasner (1991) argues that relative capabilities mostly matter in determining bargaining outcomes along the Pareto frontier.[2] In contrast, I find that the asymmetric ability to use outside options helps the superpower establish the Pareto frontier but is of no use when bargaining over outcomes along the

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The author is greatly indebted to Thomas Romer and Howard Rosenthal, who provided invaluable comments on several versions of this research. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 31–September 3, 2000, Washington, DC. I thank the participants in this seminar, Michael Doyle, Aaron Friedberg, Joanne Gowa, David Malone, Kevin Narizny, Anne Sartori, Kenneth Schultz, David Yang, and three anonymous referees for helpful suggestions, comments, and discussions. I gratefully acknowledge financial support from the Research Program in International Security at Princeton University. All errors are my sole responsibility. Proofs for propositions in this article are available from the author or at the web site http://www.princeton.edu/~evoeten.

[1] See also UN Charter, Chapter V, Articles 24–6, and chapters VI and VII.

[2] The Pareto frontier is the set of all possible outcomes that are Pareto optimal. This means that there is no outcome that is not on the Pareto frontier, which makes all players equally well off and at least one player better off than an outcome along the Pareto frontier.

frontier. Instead, bargaining costs and the ability of actors to make partial commitments determine the final outcome. Less powerful states may be able to gain considerable concessions from the superpower. Thus, the Security Council does not merely do the bidding of the United States. The United States needs to make compromises in order to achieve multilateral authorization of interventions. Therefore, interventions authorized by a multilateral institution such as the UNSC will differ from unilateral or bilateral action.

The model accounts for several observable patterns in UNSC decision making hitherto unexplained. It accounts for the absence of vetoes in combination with a large number of abstentions from member states with veto power. Moreover, the model stipulates conditions under which to expect multilateral authorization for interventions. The role of international organizations in general and the United Nations in particular is largely neglected in the recent theoretical literature on global institutions (Abbott and Snidal 1998).[3] There is some research on UNSC reform (e.g., Russett 1997) and specific episodes of UNSC decision making (e.g., Malone 1998). Winter (1996) and O'Neill (1996) formulate models that examine the relative power of veto players vis-à-vis nonveto players in the UNSC, but they do not explore how asymmetric capabilities among veto players may affect the bargaining process, and they do not explain if and when agreement can be reached.

I begin by illustrating the ways in which the other permanent members of the UNSC have diverged from the U.S. position during the post–Cold War period, and I then derive the main assumptions about the constellation of preferences in the model. I explore the basic assumption that the United States often views UNSC authorization as desirable but not imperative. Next, I show that when the United States has a credible outside option, there exists a set of negotiated agreements that rational states would prefer to the outside action. I derive how allies, nonpermanent members, and additional veto players can affect the range of possible agreements. I then analyze the way states bargain over the different possible agreements along the Pareto frontier. Finally, I introduce incomplete information to the model and show how the framework provides valuable insights into bargaining over the Kosovo intervention.

THE OTHER PERMANENT FOUR: SOURCES OF DISAGREEMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES

Since the end of the Cold War, UNSC action has not been routinely blocked by the exercise of vetoes. From 1946 to 1990, 279 vetoes were issued on substantive issues. From 1990 to 1998 this happened only eight times, whereas the UNSC has adopted a growing number of resolutions that actually matter. Between 1990 and 1998 the UNSC authorized 31 peacekeeping missions and adopted 145 resolutions under Chapter VII; such decisions are binding to all members and can only be taken if international peace is seriously endangered.[4] In contrast, before 1990 the UNSC authorized only 15 peacekeeping missions and adopted only 22 resolutions under Chapter VII. Agreement among the five veto powers on multilateral action does not imply that these states have harmonious interests now that the Cold War has ended. China, Russia, and to a lesser degree France have clashed with the United States over UNSC policy on a variety of occasions. States with the ability to veto UNSC action often abstain on resolutions, which allows them to pass without expressions of explicit support. From 1991 until 1995 China abstained 26 times, often on important matters. On 38 out of 97 Chapter VII resolutions in this period, the Chinese either abstained or expressed reservations (Thalakada 1997). From 1995 to 1998 China and Russia each abstained 15 times, compared to two abstentions among the other three members with veto power.[5]

The disagreement between the United States and the other permanent members stems from a variety of sources. UN interventions have not threatened Chinese territorial integrity or physical security, but China considers "nontraditional" aspects of peacekeeping as immical to its interest (Fravel 1996) because they infringe on national sovereignty.[6] Nevertheless, the desire to be viewed as the representative of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) in the UNSC usually leads China to support intervention in civil wars in Africa and parts of Latin America. The Chinese have most strongly objected to operations initiated by the United States and its allies, such as those in Iraq, the Balkans, and Haiti. China's record of respecting UN resolutions, even those it opposes, is seen by some as evidence that China has no ambitions of becoming a dominant world power (Lampton 1998). Others argue more convincingly that its UNSC behavior fits well within the "maxi-mini" foreign policy strategy, that is, maximize security and economic benefits and minimize responsibilities (Thalakada 1997).[7] China has been able to achieve both economic side payments and security guarantees in exchange for its behavior in the UNSC.[8] This prompted Christensen (1996) to call China "the high church of realpolitik in the post–Cold War world."[9]

[3] For example, in a recent book-length review of developments in the study of international institutions, the UN is not even mentioned in the index (Hasenclever, Mayer, and Rittberger 1997).

[4] These include military actions as well as nonmilitary sanctions against states and even nonstate entities, such as UNITA in Angola. See Bailey and Daws 1998, 271.

[5] France and the United States each abstained once. See U.S. Department of State various editions, 1995–98.

[6] See, for instance, Crossette 1999.

[7] The "maxi-mini" characterization of Chinese foreign policy strategy stems from Kim 1994.

[8] For instance, in exchange for a Chinese abstention on the landmark resolution 678, which authorized the use of all necessary means to restore Aristide to power in Haiti, the United States abstained in a World Bank vote on Chinese loans. The security guarantees mostly relate to concessions made by the United States and other nations in relation to Taiwan and substantive changes in various resolutions. Former Secretary of State James Baker (1995, 370–4) mentions that the Chinese insisted on eliminating "the use of force" from the text of a resolution. Concessions on Taiwan were acquired on negotiations over Haiti (Malone 1998) and Guatemala (e.g., Goshko 1997).

[9] A number of authors refer to the realpolitik nature of Chinese

Russia's abstentions in the UNSC began when Yevgeni Primakov replaced Andrei Kozyrev as foreign minister in 1993. This shift, and the growing influence of nationalistic figures in the Yeltsin government, led at least rhetorically to a more anti-Western foreign policy strategy, which included advances toward China (McFaul 1997; Waller 1997). Russia's prime goals became to reassert itself as an important power and establish some distance from the West (Kubicek 1999, 594). In 1994, divisions in the Western alliance over policy for Bosnia gave the Russians an opportunity to further these goals. They wanted to avoid unilateral actions by NATO on which they were not consulted and over which they had no influence, so they sought to subordinate NATO to other organizations, such as the UN and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, leveraging their influence with the Bosnian Serbs (p. 552).

This strategy yielded short-lived success in February 1995, when Russian envoy Vitaly Churkin convinced the Serbs to pull back from the Sarajevo area. UN peacekeeping forces, mostly Russian troops, were supposed to monitor the situation. This settlement initially prevented NATO air strikes against the Serbs, but Serbian attacks on the UN-declared safe haven of Gorazde in April made air strikes inevitable, and Russia had to cede the military and diplomatic offensive to the West. This episode illustrates the behavior of Russia in the UNSC more generally. On the one hand, it tries to pursue the goals noted above but, on the other hand, often is willing to compromise in exchange for economic or other benefits, especially when confronted with the inevitability of intervention (MacFarlane 1999, 241).[10]

The French generally support peacekeeping missions and humanitarian interventions with generous contributions of troops and finances.[11] The permanent seat in the UNSC is regarded as a precious asset by the French, and French political leaders are expected to express a global vocation and exercise international influence. "The worst criticism the French can make of their leaders' foreign policy is not that it is expensive and hazardous, but that it is flat and lacking in style" (Smouts 1998, 7). France often takes an independent stance in the UNSC, or at least a position distinct from that of the United States. The latest expression of this is the French alliance with the Russians and the Chinese over the renewal of weapons inspections in Iraq. By far the most serious conflict between the United States and its European allies concerned the Bosnian crisis, in which the British also clashed with the Americans (e.g., Papayoanou 1997).

THE CONFIGURATION OF STATE PREFERENCES IN THE MODEL

According to Huntington (1999, 42) from the end of the Cold War to the second half of the 1990s the central lineup among permanent members of the UNSC has shifted from 3:1:1 (the United States, France, and Britain against the Soviet Union, with China in the middle) to 2:1:2 (the United States and Britain opposing China and Russia, with France in the middle). In many cases in which the United States has actively sought UNSC authorization for the use of force, it has had to satisfy an ally with diverging preferences as well as at least one veto player with preferences at the opposite end of the spectrum. This observation motivates the basic assumption about the configuration of preferences in my model. In its simplest version, there are three strategic veto players: superpower S, its ally A, and a potential challenger to the superpower, C. These players have ideal points on a unidimensional policy space X, such that $x_S = 0$, $0 < x_A < 1$, and $x_C = 1$. I also assume a fixed status quo point, $x_{SQ} \in X$. I am mostly interested in the situation in which $0 < x_{SQ} < 1$, which means there is conflict over the direction in which the status quo should be shifted.[12] As in most spatial models, the negative Euclidean distance between the outcome of the game ($x \in X$) and the ideal point of the player defines the payoffs for the player.

In decision making over interventions we can conceptualize the U.S. ideal point for a hypothetical military intervention as an intervention under U.S. command that seeks to achieve goals set by U.S. policymakers. France wants an intervention with joint control, perhaps with a more limited authorization and/or somewhat different goals from the United States. Russia and China may prefer no intervention or at least the allied operation, since this would force the United States to make concessions and limit U.S. influence and/or weaken the intervention. If unilateral action were no more costly than multilateral action, then there would be no incentive for the United States to resort to multilateral action, because the latter implies compromises away from the U.S. ideal point. In the next section, I argue that American decision makers perceive circumventing the UN and NATO as costly.

INCORPORATING COSTS INTO THE MODEL

A central and recurring issue in debates on U.S. foreign policy in the post–Cold War period is whether to act alone or with others (Tucker 1999). The advantage of independence is that no compromises need to be made about objectives or the division of spoils. Yet, in UNSC and NATO operations, the US bears a smaller share of the financial burden and needs to

foreign policy in the post–Cold War period (e.g., Johnston 1999; Nathan and Ross 1997; Segal 1995).

[10] These benefits usually encompass U.S. support for International Monetary Fund (IMF) or World Bank loans, but small security compromises also have been reached. For instance, it is alleged that in exchange for Russian support of resolution 678, the United States approved the deployment of a small UN mission in Georgia (Malone 1998, 107).

[11] France even initiated its own mission in Rwanda with the approval of the UNSC.

[12] This does not severely limit the analysis, because if $x_{SQ} < 0$ or $x_{SQ} > 1$, there is always a compromise x that all actors prefer to x_{SQ}, such that $0 < x < 1$.

deploy fewer American soldiers than in unilateral undertakings (Sandler and Hartley 1999).

Political benefits also accrue from UNSC authorization. First, the legitimacy of the UNSC can attract domestic support for decisions to intervene, especially if Congress is recalcitrant. James Baker (1995, 278) emphasizes in his memoirs that this was the main reason for a multilateral approach to the Gulf War. Malone (1998, ix) argues that it was easier for the Clinton administration to get support for military intervention in Haiti from the UNSC than from Congress. Moreover, opinion polls consistently show stronger public support for U.S. participation in multilateral actions than unilateral actions (Schultz n.d.; Sobel 1998). For instance, approval ratings for the Haitian intervention never exceeded 20% when the mission was explicitly phrased as unilateral but were as high as 60% for a multilateral undertaking (Schultz n.d.). By acting unilaterally, the president risks the domestic political cost of going against popular opinion.

Second, it may be beneficial to use means perceived as legitimate by the international community. Not only liberals and constructivists but also some realists claim that approval for an action by an organ of the UN is a valuable asset, even for a major power. Mastanduno (1997) argues, for instance, that the use of multilateral institutions as instruments of foreign policy by the United States may dampen the incentives for other states to balance its preponderant power. Many analysts and politicians perceived the cost of damaged relations with Russia as so high that the Kosovo operation should have been avoided altogether.[13] The administration took a less extreme position and considered UNSC authorization highly desirable but not imperative (Daalder and O'Hanlon 2000).

In my model, there are two costs of unilateral action: circumventing the UN and ignoring allies (NATO). First, the superpower pays a cost $c_A > 0$ for bypassing its ally. Second, there is an additional cost $c_C > 0$ for excluding the challenger from the coalition. I define the costs in terms of their equivalent outcomes in the policy space (Morrow 1986, 1141). For example, acting unilaterally generates a policy outcome at the superpower's ideal point ($x = 0$), but the superpower's utility for this outcome is equivalent to that of a compromise at $x = c_A + c_C$. If the superpower and the ally decide to act bilaterally, the superpower only incurs cost c_C, but a compromise is involved. I assume for simplicity that this compromise is always at the midpoint of the ally's and the superpower's ideal points ($x = \frac{1}{2}x_A$), although more elaborate models of bargaining between the ally and the superpower could be developed.[14]

The assumption that ceteris paribus, unilateral action is more costly than multilateral action implies that the United States considers authorization of an operation by an international organization as desirable but not essential. In terms of the model, if the UNSC is willing to approve an intervention at the U.S. ideal point, then the United States prefers authorization to no authorization. This assumption is important, as it will drive much of the results. It is also a reasonable assumption, and its consequences are worth investigating. From the perspective of the superpower, the decision-making problem involves a tradeoff between the costs of acting alone and the policy loss from preserving the status quo or acting at some compromise point, either bilaterally or multilaterally. This tradeoff captures well the actual decision-making dilemmas the United States has faced. In the case of Kosovo, for instance, most debates revolved around whether the situation was bad enough to warrant the cost of intervention, including the risk of a troubled relationship with Russia. From the perspective of the challenger and the ally, the dilemma involves accepting either a compromise or the possibility of outside action over which they have no influence.

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENTS IN THE PRESENCE OF CONFLICT

Does the availability of a credible outside option for one actor or subset of actors create a situation in which a multilateral compromise can be reached that is not be possible in the absence of an asymmetric option? To answer this question, let us first define the conditions under which options are credible. Lemma 1 presents these conditions for unilateral and bilateral action, respectively. Throughout the article I make the tie-breaking assumption that indifferent players choose UNSC action over bilateral action over the status quo.

LEMMA 1. *Unilateral action is a credible outside alternative if and only if* $c_A + c_C < x_{SQ}$. *Bilateral action is a credible outside alternative if and only if (i)* $c_C + \frac{1}{2}x_A < x_{SQ}$ *and (ii) (a)* $1\frac{1}{2}x_A < x_{SQ}$ *or (b)* $c_A + c_C < x_{SQ}$).

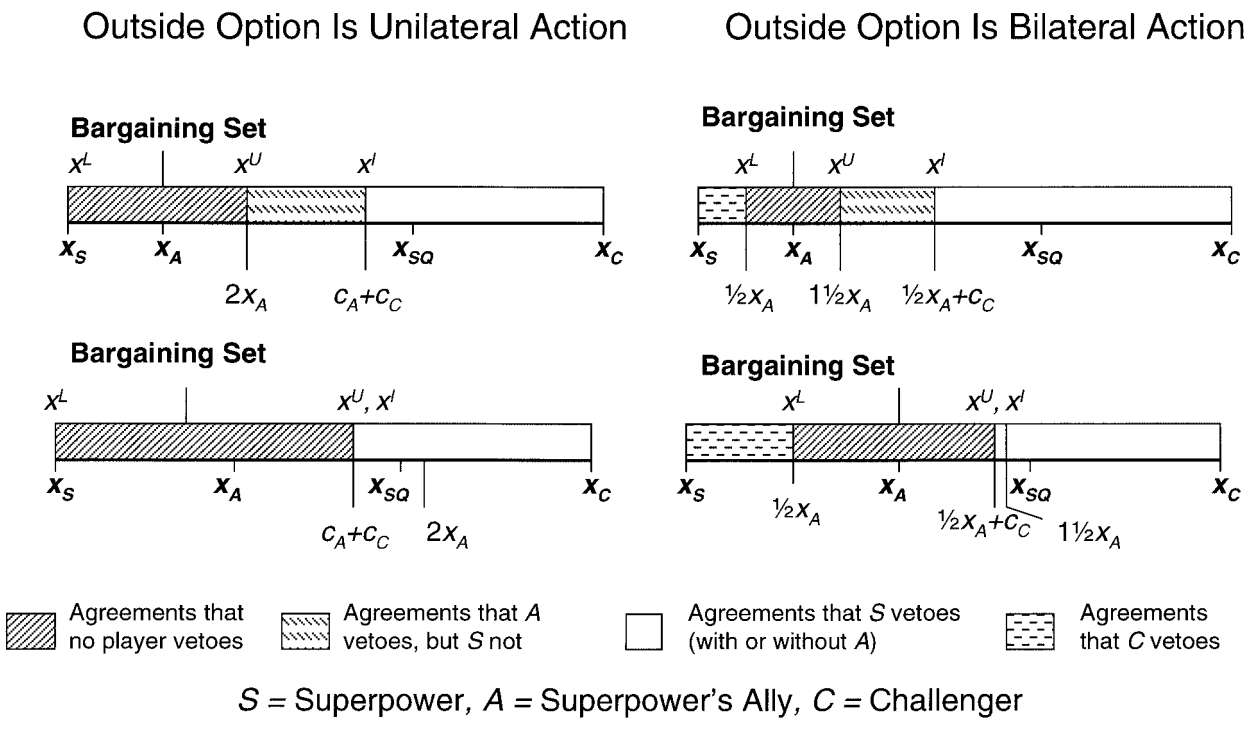
The proof is straightforward and can be presented informally. Unilateral action is credible whenever the superpower prefers the costs of unilateral action to the utility loss represented by the status quo. Bilateral action is slightly more complicated. It requires (i) that the superpower prefers to incur the cost of excluding the challenger (c_C) plus the utility loss of the bilateral policy ($\frac{1}{2}x_A$) to the utility loss represented by the status quo. It also requires (ii) that the ally prefers bilateral action. This can occur in two ways. The ally either prefers the compromise policy to the status quo or prefers the compromise to the credible unilateral alternative.

Suppose that at least two veto players have conflicting preferences about the direction in which the status quo should be moved ($0 < x_{SQ} < 1$). In the absence of a credible outside option, this means that the status quo is stable. When either outside alternative is credible, however, the superpower will exercise the outside option if the challenger vetoes a multilateral

[13] Prominent politicians who openly opposed the NATO intervention include Trent Lott, Jimmy Carter, James Baker, Dan Quayle, and Pat Buchanan. The divide was not completely along party lines. Among others, presidential hopefuls Elisabeth Dole and John McCain favored the intervention. See Cohen 1999; Mandelbaum 1999; Whitney 1999.

[14] For an application of an intraalliance bargaining model to the Bosnia case, see Papayoanou 1997.

FIGURE 1. The Set of Feasible Bargaining Outcomes with Different Positions of Superpower's Ally



agreement. The players no longer evaluate their payoff from a multilateral compromise against their payoff from the status quo outcome but, instead, against their payoff from the outside option. It is easy to verify that if both outside options are credible, then the superpower prefers bilateral to unilateral action if $\frac{1}{2}x_A \leq c_A$. The credible and preferred outside option redefines the disagreement outcome. I now can show that there is a range of multilateral agreements that save the superpower the cost of acting unilaterally and that save the challenger potentially bad outcomes, such as an intervention over which it has no control. Proposition 1 defines the range of multilateral agreements that all players prefer to the disagreement outcome.

PROPOSITION 1. *If either outside option is credible, then there is a set of multilateral compromises $X_p \subset X$ that all players strongly prefer to their alternative courses of action and that makes the superpower better off and the challenger worse off than the status quo.*

i. If unilateral action is the preferred outside option: $X_p = [0, min\ (c_A + c_C, 2x_A)]$.

ii. If bilateral action is the preferred outside option: $X_p = [\frac{1}{2}x_A, \frac{1}{2}x_A + min(c_C, x_A)]$.

Proofs are available from the author or at http://www.princeton.edu/~evoeten.

A credible outside option creates a bargaining range that otherwise would not exist. Figure 1 illustrates how the bargaining set is determined by the different variables in the model. The lower bound (x^L) is determined by the outcome point associated with the outside action. By assumption, if unilateral action is the alternative, this corresponds to the superpower's ideal point, and if bilateral action is the preferred outside option, it is the midpoint between the superpower's and the ally's ideal point. The point closest to the superpower's ideal point at which either the ally or the superpower is indifferent between outside and multilateral action determines the upper bounds of the bargaining set (x^U).

The upper part of Figure 1 shows that if the ally's ideal point is close to the superpower's ideal point compared to the cost of outside action, there is a range of multilateral agreements that will be vetoed by the ally but not the superpower. The ally does not have concerns equal to those of the superpower about the cost of excluding the challenger from a coalition. The ability of the ally to veto proposals the superpower will not veto may help the latter achieve more favorable compromises. That is, x^U is closer to the superpower's ideal point than to the point that corresponds to the agreement at which the superpower is indifferent to outside action (x^I). This analysis implies that a close ally is particularly important to the superpower when it is relatively costly to exclude the challenger from the coalition. It should be noted that all multilateral agreements make the superpower better off than the status quo and at least as well off as the outcome associated with the outside option.

The central prediction of proposition 1 is that a credible outside option helps the United States obtain a favorable UNSC agreement in the absence of har-

monious interests among the veto powers. There is substantial anecdotal evidence that outside options have indeed been important in overcoming disagreement among the five permanent members. The diplomacy surrounding the building of the Gulf War coalition illustrates the validity of both proposition 1 and the essential assumption in the model that UNSC agreement has some value to the United States. After Iraq invaded Kuwait in summer 1990, the international community was unified in condemning Saddam Hussein and in demanding unconditional withdrawal.[15] The Soviets and the Chinese, however, were not willing to back this demand with the use of force. The United States easily could have acted outside the UNSC with the help of the British, and Margaret Thatcher publicly stated she preferred this option (Baker 1995, 278–9). This indicates that it may indeed sometimes be easier for an ally to reject an inclusive multilateral option than for the superpower to do so, as suggested by the analysis in Figure 1. The Americans cared more about keeping others involved, especially the Russians, and struggled to build the UNSC coalition. They also incurred the cost of compromise, in terms of both the resolution text and debt concessions, support for World Bank loans, and financial aid (Baker 1995, 260–309; Goldstein 1995). Eventually a compromise was achieved, even though a Chinese abstention and a "no" vote from Yemen on the final roll call could not be avoided. According to Baker (1995, 282) the U.S. ability to act alone played a large role in achieving the compromise.

The Haitian intervention is another example in which the United States had a clear unilateral alternative. The United States had not sought authorization for the use of force to overthrow regimes in Grenada (1983) or Panama (1989). After the breakdown of the Soviet Union had left the United States the only superpower, the Americans took considerable trouble to garner support from the UNSC to overthrow the Haitian regime. In particular, they had to overcome resistance from the Chinese, who did not want to establish a precedent for interference in the domestic affairs of a country. According to a careful study by Malone (1998, 104–5), the U.S. decision to consider military intervention a serious option in spring 1994 was crucial to passage of UN resolution 940.[16]

If two superpowers with opposing preferences have outside options, then UNSC authorization for intervention can prevent a direct confrontation between the two.[17] Indeed, during the Cold War, the purpose of most UN missions was to maintain the status quo (e.g., Lebanon, Cyprus). Since then, most missions have moved the status quo toward the ideal point of the United States. For example, in 1988, when the Cold War was ending, the UNSC initiatives to monitor the Cuban withdrawal from Angola and the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan (Durch 1993, 21) clearly served the purposes of the one remaining superpower.

Another piece of evidence that UNSC agreement in the post–Cold War period is often not merely the result of harmonious preferences is the dramatically different voting records of states in the UNSC and the General Assembly (UNGA). The United States usually has no outside options for matters decided in the UNGA. Moreover, contrary to many UNSC resolutions, UNGA resolutions are nonbinding, which allows states to vote according to their preferences. The United States votes in favor of only 25% of resolutions adopted by roll call vote in the UNGA, compared to virtually 100% in the UNSC.[18] China votes for 83% of UNGA resolutions and Russia for 50%, but in the UNSC they abstain much more frequently than the United States. Moreover, on procedural issues in the UNSC, cases in which the United States has no veto power and no outside options, the Americans often concede on sensitive matters, such as allowing Palestinian delegations to attend UNSC meetings. This suggests that outside options are indeed essential in order for the United States to negotiate multilateral compromises in its favor.

NONPERMANENT MEMBERS AND ADDITIONAL VETO PLAYERS

Besides the five permanent members that have veto power, the UNSC has ten members that have neither permanent membership nor veto power.[19] These nonpermanent members may, however, block passage of resolutions. Under current procedures, passage of substantive resolutions requires nine affirmative votes, including the concurring vote of the five members with veto power. I simplify this by adding two nonveto players to the model with three veto players. For passage of a resolution, four out of the five players have to vote in favor, and no veto player can exercise its veto power. I assume that the nonpermanent members have ideal points somewhere on the policy continuum between the ideal points of the challenger and the superpower. Earlier analyses using a different framework revealed that nonpermanent members have only a very small probability of influence (O'Neill 1996; Winter 1996). Proposition 2 defines the conditions under which nonpermanent members can influence the bargaining range and shows that if they do so the superpower benefits, not the challenger.

PROPOSITION 2. *Nonpermanent members can affect the bargaining set only if the ideal points of both nonpermanent members are closer to the ideal point of the superpower than the ideal point of the ally is to the superpower's ideal point. The consequence can only be a shift in the upper bound of the bargaining set toward the superpower's ideal point.*

[15] The UNSC resolution with this implication, SR660 (August 2, 1990), was adopted with one abstention: Yemen.

[16] The first public mention of military action as a serious option was made by Clinton's special advisor to Haiti, William Gray III, in testimony before the House Committee of Foreign Relations on June 8, 1994. The final passage of resolution 940 was on July 31, 1994.

[17] This situation is modeled explicitly in the working paper version.

[18] Based on my computations from voting records for 1991–96.

[19] These members are elected out of the general membership of the UNGA for two-year terms that are not immediately renewable. The elections are organized by regional groupings.

Proposition 2 implies that nonpermanent members may help but not hurt the superpower. They do not have concerns equal to those of the superpower about the cost of excluding the challenger from a coalition. Therefore, a nonpermanent member with preferences close to those of the superpower may vote against proposals that the superpower would not veto. Nonpermanent members who are close to the superpower thus may constrain the bargaining set in a way similar to that of a close ally (see Figure 1). Of course, this only helps the superpower if it constrains the bargaining set beyond the extent to which the preferences of the ally already constrain it.

Proposition 2 implies that when the United States and its allies have divergent preferences, nonpermanent members who are close to the United States can help it achieve favorable multilateral agreements. An example is lifting the weapons embargo against the Bosnian Muslims, which was favored by the United States but strongly opposed by NATO allies. The U.S. threat to lift the embargo unilaterally and support from the majority of nonpermanent members (including many Muslims) proved decisive in achieving a UNSC compromise on the matter (Christopher 1998, 344–50). In general, however, it is rare for a sufficient number of nonpermanent members to have preferences closer to the U.S. ideal point than do Britain and France.

The same logic that applies to nonpermanent members can be extended to the introduction of additional veto players, a major issue in current debates surrounding UNSC reform. If a new veto player's preferences are closer to the superpower's ideal point than to the ideal points of the other veto players and the pivotal nonpermanent member, then the introduction of an additional veto player may help the superpower. It is not surprising that the United States has decided to support the candidacy for permanent membership in the UNSC of its close allies, Japan and Germany. Ceteris paribus, the introduction of "hostile" veto players does not affect the set of bargaining outcomes, but this assumes that the superpower incurs no additional cost from excluding these new players from a winning coalition.

ABSTENTIONS

China and Russia frequently abstain from UNSC votes and often issue a statement that indicates sharp disagreement with the resolution. In the model I do not specify any incentives for the challenger to abstain. It is imaginable, however, that a challenger would choose to abstain rather than vote in favor of a resolution from the bargaining set defined by proposition 1, which outlines an agreement that the challenger does not prefer to the status quo. Such an abstention signals discontent, not indifference. At the same time, an abstention indicates impotence. Why else would a state with formal veto power not exercise it on a resolution that it dislikes?

If this reflects the actual use of abstentions, China and Russia should abstain only when the United States and its allies have credible outside options. Otherwise, they could veto any proposal they dislike, and only proposals that reflect true great power harmony could be adopted. Evidence from the UNSC voting records supports this assertion. From 1990 to 1998, on resolutions that initiated, extended, expanded, or terminated a mandate for the use of force or enforceable sanctions,[20] there were multiple Chinese and Russian abstentions in the cases of Albania, Bosnia, the Gulf War, Haiti, Kosovo, and Macedonia, as well as the monitoring of the sanctions and embargo on Iraq. In each instance a clear outside alternative was either exercised or explicitly available.[21]

Over the same period, UN missions or sanctions were authorized without great power abstentions in Angola, Cambodia, Central African Republic, El Salvador, Lebanon, Liberia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and the western Sahara as well as in Afghanistan, Georgia, Nagorno-Karabach, and Tajikistan. In most cases the country either requested UNSC assistance, about which there has been little or no great power disagreement since the end of the Cold War, or bordered Russia, which makes acting alone extremely costly to the United States. The only obvious exceptions are El Salvador and Nicaragua, where small and relatively uncontroversial observer missions were based. China abstained on two occasions with respect to operations in Africa, and in both cases Western powers had outside alternatives. The first involved France's Operation Turquoise in Rwanda and Eastern Zaire (SR929, June 22, 1994), and the second was U.S. aircraft sanctions against Sudan in 1996 (SR1070, August 16, 1996). These sanctions compelled states to deny aircraft permission to take off from, land in, or fly over their territories if the aircraft was registered in the Sudan, or owned, leased, or operated or substantially owned or controlled by the government or public authorities of the Sudan.

BARGAINING ALONG THE PARETO FRONTIER

It appears that a credible outside option allows the United States to shift the disagreement outcome in UNSC bargaining, that is, creates a bargaining range that would not exist in the absence of such an option. Since the United States strongly prefers all outcomes in the bargaining set to the status quo, the outside option lends it considerable bargaining power. But not all outcomes in the bargaining set are equally desirable for all players. The superpower prefers outcomes at the lower end of the bargaining range drawn in Figure 1,

[20] The total was 365 UNSC resolutions from 1990 to 1998. I included mandates for observer missions, unless they were explicitly purely civilian.

[21] Bosnia represents a difficult case as NATO troops exceeded the UNSC mandate in 1995 but did not totally circumvent the UN. The credibility of NATO threats for outside action was in doubt before 1995, but the threats were always there. Albania (SR 1101, March 29, 1997) is a somewhat distinct case because it was not the United States but an ally (Italy) that took the initiative and assumed leadership of the intervention (Operation Alba). It was clear when China abstained on the Albanian resolutions that the relief mission, led by Italy, would continue with or without UN authorization.

whereas the challenger prefers outcomes at the upper bound. How do the players agree upon an outcome from the bargaining set, given their conflicting interests? What tactics can they employ to obtain more favorable outcomes? In this section I provide answers to these questions.

To simplify, I model the process as a bilateral bargaining game in which the superpower and the challenger alternate offers. Although bargaining between the superpower and its allies may be interesting, most UNSC agreement hinges on a deal struck between the United States and Russia and/or China. If the superpower and the challenger agree on a compromise in the bargaining stage, then all players vote on its acceptance in the voting stage. The game is a variant of the Rubinstein (1982) bargaining model with outside options, except that players have spatial utilities and the outcome needs to be approved by a vote. The separation into a bargaining and a voting stage reflects actual decision-making procedures well (Bailey and Daws 1998).

The outcome in a Rubinstein bargaining model depends on other game structures, in particular, who makes the initial offer and the players' respective haggling costs. In this analysis, the structure follows logically from the bargaining situation I investigate. Because the superpower seeks to alter the status quo, whereas the challenger prefers to maintain it, it is reasonable to assume that the superpower always makes the initial offer. There is no particular advantage in this, so there is no reason for the challenger to propose a preemptive compromise. It is also reasonable to assume that delay in agreement is costless for the challenger. Indeed, it can be argued that the challenger could benefit from delay, although I do not analyze the reasons here.[22] The superpower, however, is likely to incur a positive cost of delay. While UNSC negotiations last, a situation undesirable to the superpower continues to evolve. For example, the human rights violations in Kosovo prompted domestic and international pressure on the U.S. government to act, and this pressure grew as time went on. The increasing flow of refugees from Haiti also imposed a delay cost on the United States. The superpower incurs delay costs regardless of whether it eventually intervenes alone or through multilateral action.

A general result from the Rubinstein (1982) model is that if one player is infinitely patient but the other is not, then the player least eager to reach agreement—in this case the challenger—receives all that is at stake in the game.

PROPOSITION 3. *With complete information, the challenger and the superpower will agree on a proposal* $x = x^U$ *in the first round of bargaining, and the UNSC will vote in favor of that proposal.*

The proof of this proposition follows directly from Rubinstein (1982).[23] The proposition implies that the credible outside option helps the superpower establish a favorable bargaining set, but the option cannot be used as a strategic asset in the bargaining process over the set of Pareto-efficient compromises.[24] The underlying intuition is that the superpower can only use the option to gain leverage over the challenger by making a threat to go it alone if the challenger does not accept a proposal. This threat is only credible if the outside option gives the superpower a higher payoff than continued bargaining. At any point in the process, however, the superpower prefers any outcome from the bargaining set to the outside action, so the latter gives the superpower no bargaining power over the set of Pareto-efficient agreements. In contrast, patience gives the challenger quite a bit of bargaining power. These insights are contrary to Krasner (1991), who argues that differences in capabilities matter when bargaining over outcomes along the Pareto frontier; I suggest that asymmetric capabilities can be used to establish the frontier but not to gain leverage when bargaining along it.

Can the superpower use bargaining strategies to achieve a more favorable outcome than x^U? A frequently discussed issue is intentional actions that partially commit states to a strategically chosen bargaining position. Schelling (1960, 28) observes: "When national representatives go to international negotiations knowing that there is a wide range of potential agreement within which the outcome will depend on bargaining, they seem often to create a bargaining position by public statements, statements calculated to arouse a public opinion that permits no concessions to be made." This course can be costly. When leaders implicitly or explicitly link their political fate to a specific bargaining position, backing down may jeopardize their survival. The utility of partially committing to a bargaining position, or creating "audience costs," has received widespread attention (Fearon 1994, 1997; Schultz 1998, 2001; Smith 1998). Much of this literature argues that leaders can create larger audience costs in a democracy than in other political systems because their survival is more directly dependent on how voters perceive them. In these models, the stronger the ability to make partial commitments, the better is the bargaining outcome.

To study the effect of partial commitments, I add a stage to the model that allows players to set their commitment level. Let us assume that before embarking on negotiations the superpower takes some action to communicate that it will accept compromise x only if

[22] In general, bargaining power is strictly increasing in such an inside option. See Muthoo 1999, chap. 6, for an analysis of inside options in Rubinstein bargaining models.

[23] It is straightforward to see that Rubinstein's original analysis applies here, where the pie is defined by the bargaining interval from proposition 1. The result holds both if we use discount factors as well as fixed costs to model the cost of delay. With fixed costs the result is even stronger: The player who is more patient than the other player receives the entire pie.

[24] The result that outside options do not lead to greater bargaining power over a set of Pareto-efficient outcomes also is found in theoretical and experimental studies in economics (e.g., Binmore, Shaked, and Sutton 1989).

$x \leq z_S$. If it reneges and accepts $x > z_S$, it incurs a cost $k_S(x - z_S)$, with $k_S > 0$.[25] It becomes more costly to revoke the partial commitment as the final agreement moves farther from the publicly stated target. The coefficient k_S determines the extent to which the superpower ties its hands by partially committing. Proposition 4A states the main result of this analysis.

PROPOSITION 4A. *A unilateral ability to make a partial commitment does not help the superpower achieve a more favorable outcome but may be used to hurt the challenger.*

Because the challenger is infinitely patient and the superpower is not, the challenger can always respond with counteroffers that give the superpower exactly its reservation value. Thus, for any commitment $z_S < x^U$, the challenger can find a proposal x that it prefers to $x = z_S$ and that the superpower prefers to the outside option. Although partial commitment does not affect the utility of the superpower, it can affect the final agreement and thus the utility of the challenger. This is true because there are equilibria in which the superpower makes a partial commitment, $z_S < x^U$, and accepts the agreement $z_S < x^* < x^U$, which makes it just as well off as not making a commitment and proposing $x = x^U$. Because the challenger's utility is increasing in x, the challenger is clearly not indifferent between these options. The competitive nature of international politics makes it reasonable to assume that when the superpower is indifferent regarding various possible multilateral agreements, it prefers the agreement x^{**} that makes the challenger worse off.[26] In other words, the superpower may use a partial commitment strategy to hurt the challenger, but it cannot use such a strategy for its own benefit.

Can the challenger use a partial commitment tactic to exclude such disadvantageous equilibrium agreements? We may assume that in response to the superpower it can partially commit to compromise $x \geq z_C$ and incurs cost $k_C(z_C - x)$ if the target is not met. Proposition 4B states the main result.

PROPOSITION 4B. *If the ability of the challenger to incur audience costs is sufficiently high, the challenger can prevent the superpower from using commitments to punish the challenger.*

The intuition behind proposition 4B is that the challenger can use a commitment strategy credibly if the cost of reneging is so high that the outside option would be preferable. If the ability of the challenger to create audience costs is sufficiently great, it can achieve absolute gains from a partial commitment strategy. Russian leaders frequently make statements that stir national sentiments and tie their hands in UNSC negotiations. This is particularly effective in UNSC negotiations over operations in the Balkans, since the Russian people genuinely care about the issue and audience costs are easily engendered, as opposed to an issue such as intervention in Haiti.

A general insight from the analysis thus far is that it is difficult for the United States to win concessions when bargaining over outcomes along a Pareto frontier that basically exists because of coercion. In cases such as Haiti, Bosnia, and Kuwait, the American bargaining position was weakened because the United States was much more eager to intervene than at least one of the states with veto power. Hold outs could demand concessions or economic benefits. Side payments are one way a preponderant economic power can achieve a favorable multilateral compromise. When side payments are equally valuable to all players, they do not change the outcome in terms of utility. When they have a different marginal rate of substitution for the superpower and the challenger, there is an opportunity for Pareto improvement.[27] For example, World Bank International Monetary Fund loans are often much more valuable for China and/or Russia than they are costly for the United States, and U.S. backing virtually guarantees loan approval. Both sides have something to trade, and there is ample evidence that deals were made with respect to the Gulf War and the Haitian intervention.[28] In principle, side payments also can be used to break deadlock in the absence of credible outside options, but in these situations the United States holds no additional advantages because it lacks outside options. Obtaining a given policy outcome is much less expensive when a credible outside option is available.

INCOMPLETE INFORMATION AND THE POSSIBLE FAILURE OF MULTILATERAL AGREEMENTS

So far I have assumed that all actors have complete information about one another's preferences and costs. I now relax the assumption of complete information. In particular, I assume that other states are uncertain about the extent to which the superpower is willing to compromise to keep the challenger in the multilateral coalition. In the case of Kosovo, for example, there was much public debate within the United States about the costs of acting without Russian approval relative to the benefits of intervention. Some argued that these costs were so high that they outweighed the benefits. Others thought the United States should intervene, regardless of the Russians.[29] This kind of dispute is likely to make other actors uncertain about the true intentions of the executive, especially because the president has incentives to misrepresent the true value of these costs.[30]

[25] This is a fairly standard way of modeling the cost of partial commitments with continuous outcomes (see Muthoo 1999, chap. 8). Many models restrict the analysis to two possible outcomes.

[26] Even though the players in this model care about absolute rather than relative gains, the spatial utilities of the model are relative by nature; a gain for the superpower means a loss for the challenger.

[27] See Morgan 1990 for a similar argument on the effectiveness of issue linkage.

[28] On the Gulf War, see Baker 1995, 275–300; Goldstein 1995. With respect to Haiti, see Malone 1998.

[29] See the discussion in the section on costs.

[30] I assume that the final decision-making power lies with the executive, who may or may not be influenced by Congress and other domestic actors.

I assume that actors other than the superpower believe that c_C takes on the value c_H with probability π, and the value c_L with probability $(1 - \pi)$, where $0 < c_L < c_H < 1$ and $0 < \pi < 1$. This assumption establishes that there are two types of superpower: S_H (the high compromise type) and S_L (the low compromise type).[31] The challenger and the ally both have the initial belief π that $S = S_H$. After each move by the superpower, they update this belief using Bayes's rule. I limit the analysis to the case in which S_L prefers either unilateral and/or bilateral action to the status quo, but S_H prefers the status quo to both.[32] Thus, if the superpower proposes any $x < x_{SQ}$, the challenger and the ally are uncertain whether the proposal will be credibly backed up by outside action. The threat is credible from a superpower of the low-cost type but not from a superpower of the high-cost type. Proposition 5 summarizes the outcomes in the sequential equilibrium of this game.

PROPOSITION 5. *If the ally and the challenger are uncertain about the credibility of the outside option, there exists a sequential equilibrium where the outcome depends on whether their initial belief π that the outside option is not credible exceeds some threshold p_1. The outcomes can be summarized as follows:*

(1) If $\pi \leq p_1$: The superpower makes an initial proposal x that all players accept.*

(2) If $\pi > p_1$: No multilateral agreement can be reached. Depending on the true type of the superpower, either the status quo is maintained, or outside action is initiated.

If unilateral action is the preferred outside option for S_L: $p_1 = \dfrac{c_A + c_L}{x_{SQ}}$.

If bilateral action is the preferred outside option for S_L: $p_1 = \dfrac{c_L}{x_{SQ} - \frac{1}{2}x_A}$.

The proposition states that multilateral agreement breaks down if the ally and the challenger believe that the superpower's outside option is not credible above a critical threshold p_1. In this scenario, the challenger prefers the lottery between the status quo outcome and the outside action to any agreement that is acceptable to S_L. The outcome will be the status quo if the superpower is of the high-cost type (S_H) and outside action if the superpower is of the low-cost type (S_L). In equilibrium, S_H always pools with S_L. The payoff for S_H when negotiations break down is the same payoff for its outside option: the status quo. The payoff for a compromise $x < x_{SQ}$ is better than that. S_H therefore has no incentive to reveal any information about its true resolve, so the challenger cannot learn during the bargaining process. As long as $\pi \leq p_1$ this may lead to the authorization of a multilateral intervention even if the superpower is of the high-cost type and would not resort to outside action in the absence of a multilateral agreement. This result is important because it implies that incomplete information about the willingness of the superpower to compromise may lead to interventions authorized by a multilateral institution that would not have been initiated in the absence of this institution. If $\pi > p_1$, the incomplete information about the true intentions of the superpower may lead to outside action that all actors would prefer to avoid.

The initial belief π about the credibility of the outside option and the threshold belief p_1 thus play decisive roles in determining the outcome of the bargaining process. The threshold belief p_1 indicates the degree to which the challenger may doubt the true intentions of the superpower before multilateral agreement breaks down. This critical value depends on three variables. First, the threshold belief decreases as the status quo point moves farther from the outcome point with outside action. Thus, for multilateral agreement to be achievable, the superpower's outside options need to be more credible when the challenger has more to gain from preserving the status quo vis-à-vis the outside action. This result predicts that doubt about the threat of exercising outside options reduces the chance of obtaining UNSC authorization more in a case such as Kosovo, because Russia had a lot to gain from preventing an intervention, than in a case such as Haiti, because neither Russia nor China had much at stake. In the latter instance it would be easier for the United States to "fool" Russia and China into adopting multilateral action, even if the United States were not willing to act without UNSC authorization.

Second, the smaller is c_L, the lower the threshold belief. The presence of a domestic coalition with little willingness to compromise increases the likelihood that multilateral cooperation will collapse in the event of uncertainty about the superpower's true intentions. If a multilateral deal is reached, however, it will be more favorable to the superpower when the value of c_L is low. Thus, there is a clear tradeoff between the ability to reach multilateral agreements, and the ability to reach favorable ones.

Third, if the preferred outside option is bilateral rather than unilateral action, the closer the ally's ideal point is to that of the superpower, the lower is the threshold belief. The intuition here is that when the ally and the superpower are close, there is little room

[31] This is a standard modeling strategy (see Morrow 1994a).

[32] In an earlier version, I examined the case when both S_H and S_L prefer outside action to the status quo. In this scenario, the uncertainty is not about the credibility of the outside option but about the extent to which S is willing to compromise. The possibility of more favorable multilateral compromises provides S_H with an incentive to misrepresent its true willingness to compromise by making the same offers that S_L makes in equilibrium. I show that as long as C's belief that $S = S_H$ is below some critical threshold, C always accepts this initial offer. When C's belief is above that threshold, a mixed strategy sequential equilibrium exists in which C learns about the superpower's true willingness to compromise. In this equilibrium, C rejects the superpower's proposals with positive probability and makes counteroffers that S_L does not accept, but S_H accepts with positive probability.

for the challenger to negotiate a favorable multilateral compromise, so the challenger is more likely to accept the risk of outside action. This may partly explain why Russia and China did not veto any resolutions with respect to the Bosnian crisis when the United States and its allies disagreed considerably, but threatened to veto the intervention in Kosovo when NATO was more unified. For the superpower, the obvious disadvantage of a difference of opinion with its ally is that more extensive compromises are required to obtain agreement. This may weaken the size and scope of an intervention.

THE KOSOVO CRISIS: UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE CREDIBILITY OF OUTSIDE ACTION

In the Kosovo case all conditions were present that decrease the threshold belief p_1 and thus increase the likelihood that no multilateral compromise can be achieved if a veto player doubts the credibility of the outside option. At least one veto player (Russia) cared a great deal about preserving the status quo. The United States was internally divided about support for intervention, and the Clinton administration regarded UNSC authorization as highly desirable but not imperative (Daalder and O'Hanlon 2000, 36). Moreover, NATO members were not in complete agreement but were fairly close in terms of their preferred UN policy, certainly in comparison to the Bosnia crisis. Although the French were somewhat hesitant to participate in NATO action, President Chirac believed "the humanitarian situation constitutes a ground that can justify an exception to the rule" (quoted in Guicherd 1999, 8).

In accord with proposition 5, these conditions establish that the threshold belief p_1 is low, which implies that Russia's doubt about the credibility of outside action need not be very great in order for UN agreement to collapse. I maintain that Russia had good reason to question NATO's resolve and that NATO had difficulty communicating its true willingness to act without UNSC authorization.

In early August 1998, the use of force by the West in the Kosovo crisis first became a realistic option when NATO approved concrete plans for military action and scheduled military exercises in Albania and Macedonia to warn Slobodan Milosevic (see Erlanger 1998; Reuters 1998). Yevgeni Primakov admitted that it was urgent not to allow a dangerous precedent: a unilateral armed operation by NATO without UN blessing and without concern for the Kremlin.[33] Primakov wanted to keep alive Moscow's opportunity to influence the course of armed intervention. Most NATO countries also preferred UNSC action to their own intervention. On September 23, UNSC resolution 1199 demanded that Milosevic stop the Kosovo offensive but did not mention the use of force, which allowed Russia to support the resolution. Only China abstained, stating that the Kosovo crisis was an internal matter for Yugoslavia (Crossette 1998).

On the eve of the adoption of this resolution, U.S. Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen was clearly concerned about the perceived credibility of the NATO threat to use force. He argued that the alliance would "rightly face severe criticism for issuing empty threats" in case it was not prepared to go forward (Myers 1998). When it became clear that resolution 1199 was ineffective, the United States and its allies increasingly indicated their willingness to circumvent the UNSC. On October 8, NATO's secretary general, Javier Solana, said: "NATO takes the decision on its own. We have finalized our military plan. We are ready to act. That is now clear" (Lockwood 1998). Later that month, renewed efforts to obtain UNSC agreement led to the adoption of resolution 1203 on October 24, which again fell short of authorizing the use of force, on Russia's insistence (Ibrahim 1998). This led to several diplomats to doubt NATO's willingness to act outside the UN framework. Why would the resolution be necessary if the Western powers believed they had the right to act militarily anyway (Ibrahim 1998)?

As the atrocities continued, the pressure upon the Western powers increased. In January and February 1999, NATO issued more threats and prepared its troops for combat, without abandoning efforts to reach a UNSC deal. Some observers still questioned the credibility of NATO's threat. Robert Kagan, a critic of the Clinton administration's foreign policy, drew a comparison with earlier negotiations: "This is precisely what happened last October, when NATO last went through this complex little dance. And the reason is the same now as it was then. Neither the allies nor the Clinton administration actually want to go ahead with military action against Milosevic."[34] The UNSC resolutions were heralded in the Russian press as a sign that Russia still mattered as a force in world politics.[35] Both the October 24 and the September 23 resolutions essentially preserved the status quo, in that they refrained from authorizing the use of force in Kosovo.[36] Primakov was convinced that Russia's success in pre-

[33] See Yusin 1998; Primakov's statements were made in relation to the participation of a platoon of Russian paratroopers in the NATO maneuvers in Albania.

[34] Robert Kagan (1999a) repeated his doubts about the credibility of NATO military action one month later. Kagan was not the only one doubting the credibility of the NATO threats. See for instance, Krauthammer 1999. In the Russian press, see, for instance, Petrovskaya 1999.

[35] See, for example, Lexis-Nexis 1998, p. 4. Foreign minister Igor Ivanov proclaimed to the Duma: "In the Kosovo crisis, Russia has demonstrated that it is a great power, that it is not going to make any deals to get new [IMF] tranches and that it will not give up its national interests."

[36] Chinese concerns were more normative and related to interference in domestic affairs. Even though China threatened to use its veto against any UNSC resolution that authorized military means in Kosovo, it is generally assumed that its abstention could have been acquired through the same means used in other cases (Bosnia, Haiti): side payments and compromise.

venting an intervention was because NATO perceived the alienation of Russia as too costly.[37] Given the uncertainty about NATO's willingness to circumvent the UNSC, it seems plausible that the Russians believed they could continue to forestall action, but on March 24 NATO started its bombing campaign.

The United States and its allies did not credibly communicate to Russia that they would act in the absence of UN approval. Russian agreement to UNSC authorization might have been obtained had the Russians been convinced from the start that NATO's threats were credible. Evidence for this interpretation is that in early March the Russians tried hard to regain some control of events. Foreign minister Ivanov traveled to Belgrade on March 12 to persuade Milosevic to accept a peacekeeping force, which the Russians had resisted thus far in the UNSC (Smirov 1999). Some newspaper reports even suggested that Russia was already cooperating with NATO by allowing its vessels to transport military supplies (Golotyuk 1999). After bombing began, Russia tried desperately to regain influence and even participated in the peacekeeping process under UNSC authorization, but its worst-case scenario had already materialized: NATO troops were in Yugoslavia (Levitin 2000).

CONCLUSION

My theoretical model not only accounts for observable patterns in UNSC decision making but also provides insights about how the dominant superpower and the unipolarity in the current system affect the opportunities for and consequences of multilateral actions when states have conflicting preferences over outcomes. In the absence of a Pareto frontier, the first condition for multilateral action is that the United States be willing and able to act alone or with close allies. This cannot be taken as a given and depends strongly on how decision makers perceive the interests of the United States in a particular situation. A U.S. president who is reluctant to engage U.S. troops in foreign conflicts can profoundly affect the opportunities for multilateral action.

Outside options may more generally be important to create multilateral agreements among veto players with conflicting interests. For example, Garrett (1992) shows that the threat by France and Germany to create a free trade zone with the Benelux countries proved to be a major incentive for British agreement on major institutional reforms in the Single European Act. Another example is the current debate regarding missile defense systems. President Bush is threatening to unilaterally break the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty but is at the same time seeking support from the Europeans and the Russians to redesign this treaty multilaterally. Following the logic of my model, the attempt to achieve a multilateral compromise will depend on the ability of the Americans to communicate that the unilateral option is credible. Of course, not every multilateral action is the result of a threat to exercise an outside option. In the absence of credible outside options, agreement between sovereign states depends on the existence of a Pareto frontier and the bargaining mechanisms that facilitate achieving an outcome along that frontier. We may also have pure public good problems, such as relatively uncontroversial but costly interventions. A good illustration is the intervention in East-Timor, which was made possible by the willingness of Australia to shoulder a disproportionate share.[38] Yet, when there is sharp disagreement between states with the ability to block a multilateral agreement, understanding their asymmetric abilities to achieve their objectives outside the multilateral framework becomes crucial.

The second condition for multilateral action is that states with a credible outside option must have some incentive not to exercise it. In my model this is captured by the assumption that it is costly for the superpower not to include other states in the winning coalition. If these costs did not exist, the superpower would have no reason to seek multilateral authorization and make compromises. In many situations this assumption is reasonable. UNSC authorization may be useful to the United States for burden sharing, or to lend legitimacy for domestic and international purposes. Similarly, there were advantages for France and Germany in a single market that included Britain (ceteris paribus). Moreover, the assumption about costs does not imply that multilateralism is a necessity for a powerful state, merely that it is desirable, and the extent of that desirability is an important variable in the model. It determines the likelihood and scope of compromises and, in case of uncertainty about the perceived benefits of multilateralism, it partly determines the likelihood of unilateral action. To some degree the costs for circumventing the UNSC are self-induced. Therefore, it would be interesting to formulate a model in which the costs for circumventing a multilateral institution are determined endogenously, either as a function of domestic politics or by past experience and/or expectations about the future. This topic is left for future research.

[37] See Sysoyev 1998, which quotes Primakov saying: "It is obvious now that there will be no strike. . . . We openly stated that if a strike is dealt on Yugoslavia, our attitude to NATO will change drastically, and there will be a lot of changes in our orientation. This was the main argument which had had an effect."

[38] This intervention became a public good problem after Indonesia invited a UN force to intervene, thus removing all international conflict about the desirability of an intervention.

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