Theory and practice of intervention

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This article combines several strands of thought I have begun to explore over the past few years. First, it briefly discusses systems control theory, which tells us how a self-regulating system, for example of social and political peace, should work. Second, it briefly considers the theory of imperfect markets, which tells us just why peace and security frequently fail to be obtained. Third, it briefly discusses collective action theory, which tells us what might be required for collective intervention in another state's affairs to take place. All this is a summary of Brauer (2004). These set the context, fourth, for a new idea – a theory of intervention – that might explain why *individual* states, rather than a *collective* of states, intervene or fail to intervene elsewhere. Fifth, I present initial, descriptive evidence for interventions undertaken by Australia, Canada, India, and New Zealand from 1899 to 2005 to see whether the *practice* of intervention appears to follow the *theory* I lay out.

Systems control theory

Any viable system needs feedback mechanisms to maintain it in a safe and healthy state.[1] A feedback mechanisms consist of three main components: (a) specification of a desired goal, (b) ways to measure deviations from the goal, and (c) corrective action to return the system to the goal state if it has deviated. Such a system can fail in six possible ways. First, there may be no agreement on the goal (a matter of conflict resolution); second, even if the goal is clear, deviations may not be detected (a matter of observation and measurement); third, even if deviations are noticed, those who could correct them may have no incentive to do so (a matter of economics, and also of ethics); fourth, even if those who cause a problem will ultimately suffer from it themselves, they may fail to foresee delayed consequences or lack the incentives to do anything about it (a matter of long-run planning, especially in cases involving future generations); fifth, even if people have timely and accurate information, they may fail to correct a problem due to prejudice or other apparently irrational behavior (a matter of psychology and culture); and sixth, even if people are fully aware of a problem and wish to correct it, they may not know how or may lack resources (a matter of resources, science, technology, and education).

A collection of institutions that address these potential problems can thus form a peace system with mutually reinforcing components and help overcome a war system. For example, conflict resolution might be enhanced by supplementing the United Nations General Assembly with a People's Assembly of directly elected representatives in proportion to each state's population. The lack of feedback might be addressed by including more voluntary citizen organizations in the monitoring and verification of peace agreements. The resource constraint might be addressed with the creation of a World Treasury.[2] In essence, systems theory tells us what kind of institutions we need to produce peace, namely institutions to agree on goals, institutions to provide feedback, and corrective institutions. Yet, desirable as they are, the needed institutions are not in place. This is so because institutions and the decisions they make are the outcome of collective action and are predicated on the multiple individual interests that make up the collective. (As will be seen, collective action theory provides us with some useful principles for the design of institutions.) But why are the collective institutions necessary in the first place? Why can peace not simply be purchased in the market place? One would think that a market for peace would address the six problem areas: a seller and buyer contract to produce and purchase peacekeeping services (goal). Deviations can be detected by the purchaser who has an incentive to note any such deviations (feedback) and, if necessary, switch to an alternate supplier. This provides the incentive for the first supplier to hold up its end of the contract (correction).

In fact, there already exists a huge market for private security services. In 1995, in the United States more than twice as much money was spent on private security than on public security, and there were three times as many private policemen than there were public policemen.[3] At the national level, also, there are many examples of private security firms providing national security functions. Nonetheless, peace and security appear to be in short supply, and by examining exactly what makes private markets work we may discover why prospects for private markets for peace are so poor and why new kinds of institutions might need to be created after all.

> **Systems control theory tells us what kinds of institutions are needed to produce peace. Yet these institutions are not in place, in part because the decisions they would make are the outcome of collective action which, in turn, is predicated upon the multiple interests of those that make up the collective.**

The theory of imperfect markets

Economists generally recommend that goods and services be provided via free, private, competitive markets. But in important respects markets at times perform less than optimally, even if they are free, private, and competitive. This section discusses three such reasons by way of illustration.[4]

Information failure

Markets function well when information is plentiful, accurate, timely, and when it can be processed. Markets do not function well when information is scarce, inaccurate, when it arrives too late, or when it cannot be processed. Well-informed markets function under conditions of high certainty, or at least good risk-assessment. In contrast, ill-informed markets work under conditions of uncertainty. Unfortunately, the making of peace usually operates under high uncertainty and high risk. Moreover, it is costly to make information more plentiful, more accurate, more timely, and to increase one's ability to process it, a cost that the parties in conflict may not be able to bear.

In well-functioning private markets people have an incentive to create new markets just for information. For example, associated with the financial markets are extensive markets for information about financial markets. The needs of participants in one market creates new markets. In the case of war and peace, this is not so. There is a need for information about opponents' relative strength in manpower, supplies, equipment, and financing. But the number of people who have an incentive to collect and supply this information is small, as is the number of potential buyers. The market is "thin." Moreover, it is a risky market for as soon as peace is reached, the market for conflict-related information collapses, putting one's information collection investment at risk. Also, instead of being delighted to provide information so as to reassure potential business partners, in the case of war there are incentives to keep information hidden and to create false information.

Incomplete markets

In an incomplete market, the benefits to buyers and sellers are greater than the respective costs, and yet the transaction does not take place. An example is the market for loans for small businesses. The paperwork associated with making a US$10,000 loan is just as involved as the paperwork with making a one million dollar loan. Even though small loans would be profitable, a bank earns more on large loans and thus tends to underserve the market for small loans. The market is said to be "incomplete."

Peace may be seen as an example of an incomplete market. Prevention of violent conflict by negotiation is cheaper than providing peacekeepers or paying the costs of human, physical, and environmental damage if armed conflict occurs. Peace is worthwhile in economic terms since the benefits outweigh the costs, and yet violent conflict occurs. The market for peace is underserved, as outsiders ("banks") focus on the politically important "large" customers (e.g., India-Pakistan) and not on the "small" ones (e.g., central Africa).

Public goods and club goods

Peace is a public good. Once provided, its benefits are available to all persons simultaneously and no person can feasibly be excluded from the benefits generated. But the chance of obtaining something for nothing induces free-riding behavior. To create peace, a mechanism by which to exclude free-riders is needed. In the domestic context, this is usually accomplished by coercing a tax-payment to finance law and order services. In the international context, one option is to create a club whose members pay a fee in exchange for exclusive benefits. With regard to war and peace, NATO may be thought of as a club good. It provides a common defense service that, once provided, is available to all its paying members simultaneously.

One way to think about peacemaking therefore is to think about the costs and benefits of club-making (alliances). Some alliances work reasonably well, others do not. Alliance building is costly, and everyone has an incentive to free-ride on others paying the cost. Thus, ECOWAS in western Africa is not a particularly successful organization. In contrast, the Asian Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN's common security arm, has done well in that the number of post-World War II conflicts among its members have been very few.

Collective action theory

Systems control theory suggests what institutions are needed for peacemaking and peacekeeping. In principle, private markets provide these institutions but it turns out that peacemaking and peacekeeping are subject to severe market failure so that one does need to think about the construction of collective institutions to deliver peace services. A number of design principles that should be followed in building such institutions are available.[5] If followed, they should explain the successful making and keeping of peace. Conversely, their violation or absence should explain the breakdown of peace or the continuance of war. For purposes of illustration, I discuss a small selection of these principles and then move on to discuss theory and practice of intervention.

> **In principle, private markets provide the institutions systems control theory calls for. But private markets for international peace and security are subject to severe market failure, so that one does need to think about collective provision of international peace and security.**

The principle of changing payoffs

To induce people toward cooperate action, one must minimize incentives to defect and maximize incentives to cooperate. A number of wars have been unnecessarily prolonged because the incentives to defect from peace negotiations were large. For example, in Angola, UNITA's ability to mine and sell raw diamonds created a huge cash flow. Similarly, the Angolan government's ability to extract and sell crude oil kept it well financed. Both sides were flush with money and had no reason to settle the conflict. One way to change the payoffs would have been to contribute (or deny) superior military intelligence and arms to one side, thus changing the balance of force. This would have changed the structure of the conflict so that side A would have been forced to offer negotiation. If side B then did not reciprocate in a fair-minded fashion, the outside help could have been withdrawn to reimpose the cost of fighting on both parties. An international collective would need the power to change payoffs while being perceived as a neutral arbiter whose sole interest lies in compelling the parties to negotiate.

The principle of repeated, small steps

Breaking a problem into smaller parcels, allows parties to interact with one another repeatedly. Instead of one big peace negotiation, one may have many little ones. This increases the frequency of meetings and lengthens the duration of the overall interaction. If any one small round can be driven to a cooperative outcome, both sides risk losing gains already obtained and risk forfeiting future gains to be had if they fail to continue to cooperate in subsequent rounds. The more people can be brought to see the ultimate goal by taking small steps instead of giant leaps, the more likely it is that they will succeed. Contrast the lack of progress in the "all-or-nothing" approach to the Israeli-Arab conflict with the formation and gradual expansion of what eventually became the European Union. A peacemaking collective would need the power to compel parties to engage in "small talks."

The principle of democracy

Those affected by collective action must have a voice in shaping the decision. This includes people's right to organize and to address and solve their own problems and search for and find indigenous solutions to what may be unique problems. In the absence of voice, peace may not be stable. Disaffected groups may continue to fight if they believe that their concerns have not been heard. To prevent disaffection and violent conflict, larger groups may need to grant minimum rights such as freedom to exercise one's religion. This principle allows for continuous self-transformation of institutions as old problems disperse and new problems arise

that the affected communities need to address. An international peacemaking collective would need the power to ensure the participation of all relevant parties.

The principle of conflict resolution mechanisms

Peacemaking and peacekeeping rest on agreements, but disagreements over the agreements frequently arise. To keep these from escalating, the parties must have recourse to conflict resolution mechanisms such as mediation, arbitration (binding or non-binding), and a system of courts. The absence of such mechanisms to address grievances leads to weak peacekeeping and increases the likelihood of failure. An international peacemaking collective would need to provide speedy, low-cost access to dispute resolution venues.

It is evident even from this selected list of design principles that just as private markets can fail to provide international peace and security, so can international, collective institutions. The requirements for success are steep – and indeed the list of failure to intervene to make and keep peace is long.

> **Just as private markets can fail to provide international peace and security, collective, international intervention can fail as well. The requirements for success are steep.**

Theory and practice of intervention

If the prospects for purchasing peace in private markets are dim, and if the requirements for providing collective, international intervention are steep, what are the prospects for *unilateral intervention*? What are the determinants that would motivate people in non-conflict societies to come to the aid of those in conflict?

A theory

I identify eight determinants. They may help explain why the gift of peace is offered so rarely. (I recognize that unilateral intervention is not always seen as peacemaking.) First, there must be *information* that something is amiss, and there are two aspects to this: ignorance and apathy. Without information (ignorance) about a neighbor in conflict, non-conflict neighbors will not do anything at all, and any humanitarian instinct that might exist will simply not be activated. But even with information, nothing might be done on account of apathy or, more charitably, incapacity. Second, bothersome (i.e., costly) *noise* that spills over to non-conflict neighbors is a form of information. For example, refugees that stream from one state to another impose costs on the recipient state. The more noise, the more one

might expect neighbors to be willing to intervene in some fashion to help stop the refugee flow. Third, one would expect that the less the *distance*, the more informed and caring the neighbors are. Conversely, the more distant, the less informed or caring they are. Fourth, distance is mediated when *relations* exist. Colonial ties or immigrant groups whose national origin lies in conflict countries will make the former colonial power or the immigrant-host country more receptive to aid the conflict country. Fifth, the more the *din* from several neighbors, the more one is distracted from any one of them and the less one is inclined or able to come to the assistance of any one of them. Sixth, what would motivate one to come to a neighbor's aid also depends on the noise at home. The more in number or intensity are the *domestic problems*, the less one is willing or able to come to one's neighbor's rescue. Seventh, there is economic and strategic *self-interest* such as the protection of trade routes or of obtaining international stature (e.g., being seen as engaging in peacekeeping actions). And eighth, for a small number of countries, a motivation for intervention appears to be the *opportunity to train* in real-time conditions.

Note that items like "humanitarian good will" are not among the determining factors. Even peacekeeping tends to be done for rather more hard-edged reasons. Take Canada as an example. It first burst onto the peacekeeping scene in 1956, but it was to help the splintering NATO alliance which had been undermined when Washington told Paris and London to get out of the Suez region. Likewise, in 1960, when Belgium threatened to pull out of NATO over the unrest in Congo, Canada sent peacekeepers to that troubled African nation. The peacekeeping in Cyprus, to which Canada contributed, was related to keeping NATO members Greece and Turkey at bay. Historian D. Morton comments: "Peacekeeping might be idealistic, but it also fitted Cold War needs."[6] Also note that the costs of peacekeeping do not figure on the list. As will be seen, the cost of peacekeeping is usually trivial – at least in relation to the cost of maintaining standing, national armies (although R. Fetterly, in this issue, provides an argument to the contrary).

In a similar manner, reading military or peacekeeping histories, it is clear that peacekeeping entails tangible benefits for the military: for example, it keeps monies flowing, it keeps them in the political arena, and it provides opportunity for real-life training and equipment testing.

Plausibility

Examine these determinants for initial plausibility. First, the relative foreign-affairs ignorance and apathy by the public permits U.S. administrations to design policies that are not always well-considered. This contrasts to European populations who tend to be more politically aware and astute but whose interventionist abilities and powers tend to be less developed. Second, geography sees to it that the United

States does not receive nearly as large a share of refugees as other countries do. Not surprisingly, U.S. media pay vastly more attention to boat-people arriving in Miami from Haiti than to humanitarian catastrophes taking place elsewhere. Third, noise recedes over distance. Unless noise can be transported in other ways – via disruption in raw materials and energy markets, interference with shipping lanes, or acts of terrorism – a state is not likely to engage in peacekeeping a long distance from the home. Fourth, regarding relations, there is good reason why the French fret about West Africa, the Portuguese about Angola, the British about Zimbabwe, and why the Dutch retain an interest in Indonesia. Immigrants who are already in the United States – Irish, Tamils, Jews, and others – have shown intense involvement with conflict in their countries of origin.

Fifth, regarding multiple neighbors, for the United States most "neighbors" are geographically far removed, and its immediate neighbors, Mexico and Canada, have no particularly drastic problems that would divert U.S. attention. Thus, one would expect a fair amount of narcissism in U.S. political life such that, sixth, even though its *domestic problems* are comparatively slight, they drowns out concern for people elsewhere, at least concern that would lead to peacekeeping intervention. Seventh, the United States thus tends to intervene elsewhere only when its strategic interests are at stake. Of these, there are many, so that, eighth, the opportunity to train does not loom as large for the United States, as it does for states such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India.

A first cut at evidence

If the determinants of intervention are plausible, at least at first blush, the empirical work is harder. Variables need to be operationalized, and the data gathered. Neither is easy to do. The dependent variable is binary: either a state intervenes elsewhere or it does not.[7] Define *intervention* as the supply of military equipment or personnel outside the home state while the home state is not under attack, e.g., Australia's entry into WW I, Canada's peacekeeping in Suez in 1956, or the U.S. intervention in Iraq in 1991 and 2003. A distinction may need to be made between *initiator* and *contributor*. In the 50 years to 1998, India for instance initiated action on only two occasions, in Sri Lanka in 1987 and in the coup attempt in the Maldives in 1988. But it contributed to peacekeeping in Korea, Vietnam (the First Indochina War), Cambodia, Suez, Congo (1960), Cyprus, Yemen, West Irian, Iran-Iraq, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, El Salvador, Kuwait, ex-Yugoslavia, Somalia, Uganda/Rwanda, and Liberia.[8] Some contributions are more substantial than others. In June 2005, for example, Australia contributed a total of 41 people to four United Nations missions, whereas Bangladesh contributed 8,208 people to twelve such missions.[9]

To assess the theory, one would need to gather intervention data for all states,

covering a considerable period of time, and conduct statistically valid tests. Toward this end, I have examined dozens of military history books and perused the United Nations peacekeeping web site for just four states: Australia, Canada, India, and New Zealand. The aim was to construct an initial data set covering about 100 years (1899 to 2005). This data set would count all interventions, as defined above, determine where the intervention took place (distance), and ascertain the size of the intervention force. Tables 1 and 2 present the data.

Table 1: Size of intervention
New Zealand, Australia, and Canada (1899-2005)

Size of force	NZ	AS	CA
(sample size)	64	63	68
1-10	32	19	18
11-100	18	18	17
101-1,000	8	10	18
1,001-10,000	3	11	12
10,001-100,000	1	3	1
100,000+	(2)	2	2

Table 2: Region of intervention
New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and India (1899-2005)

Region	NZ	AS	CA	IN
(sample size)	62	61	66	35
Africa	12	13	19	17
Latin/Central America	2	1	7	5
Middle East	12	12	12	6
Europe	10	3	7	1
Asia	26	32	21	6

The data are incomplete. For example, in Table 1, the size of forces contributed should be set in relation to the sending state's population at the time of intervention and, in Table 2, the number of interventions should be set in relation to the sum of interventions in the regions listed by all states, not just the four accounted for in the table. Moreover, military histories do not always agree, nor are they usually written with the provision of precise quantitative information in mind. I also tried, for instance, to obtain data for South Africa, but failed even to locate usable military histories. Neither are military histories necessarily exemplars of dispassionate scholarship (some are akin to propaganda). The four states selected for Tables 1 and 2 are erstwhile British colonies. As such the relation to the "motherland" was

close, and Britain could call upon colonial troops. John Thomson writes: "The white colonies were sources for reliable manpower, and New Zealand enthusiastically answered an 'invitation' from Britain to volunteer its young men [for the Boer War in South Africa]. It was the start of 50 years of bleeding on overseas battlegrounds, with a toll of about 100,000 dead and wounded from approximately 235,000 men sent to fight."[10] With time, these sentiments weakened, and it became harder to call upon troops. Canada went through a spasm before agreeing to send a force to save France in the World War – the *first* World War, and the second one engendered considerable debate as well. Even French Canadians weren't sure they wanted to die for France.[11]

As may be seen in Table 1, I counted 64, 63, and 68 interventions, respectively, for New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. Considering that all took place in a little more than one hundred years, these are surprisingly large numbers. Fifty percent of New Zealand's interventions, however, have been rather small, involving 10 or fewer people. For Australia, nearly one-third were of that small size. Canada spreads the size of its efforts more evenly, at least up to 1,000 people, but the diminishing size of forces sent is evident for all three states. The two World Wars demanded forces of more than 100,000 people from all three. (Although I have been unable to determined the exact sizes for New Zealand, its World War efforts certainly came very close to that number.)

Regarding the region of intervention (the two World Wars excluded), evidently New Zealand and Australia spent the majority of their efforts in their home region, the Asia-Pacific. They intervene there quite readily (e.g., East Timor, the Solomon Islands, and Fiji, but also Burma, Indonesia, and Vietnam). Reading the military histories, unquestionably the distance factor dominates (many "relations" and many refugees). Canada's intervention pattern is different. Hugging the Arctic, it is close to no one and travels far and wide, its efforts being well dispersed across the globe. Pre-World War II, its efforts were strongly informed by coming to Britain's aid and, thereafter, by its strategic self-interest in the survival of NATO in the 1950s and 1960s. Nowadays, like Norway, it arguably seeks status as a peacemaking and peacekeeping state. India may be read in like fashion. As a non-aligned state, it generally steers clear of sending forces within the Asian region (save as an initiator following its own self-interest) but has sent fully half its 35 post-independence missions to Africa (frequently with Bangladesh and Pakistan; all three are very active contributors of troops to U.N. missions).

Although I have not cross-tabulated the numbers, it is clear from the histories that size and region of intervention correlate. Generally, the closer to home, the larger the force. One would probably also want to think of "intervention" in a more graduated way and distinguish among war-making (on someone else's account), conflict prevention (non-deployment), peacemaking (preventive deployment), peacekeeping (deployment in conflict) – which due to the violence peacekeepers

nowadays encounter is also referred to as peace-enforcement – and peacebuilding (post-conflict deployment). The data needs are many.[12]

Consider one more table.

Table 3: Specific intervention cases
Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa

Boer war	1899-1902	(y, y, y, y, n/a)*
Boxer rebellion	1900	(y, n, n, n, n)
WW I/II	1914-18; 1939-45	(y, y, y, y, y)
Spanish civil war	1936-39	(n, y, n, n, n)
Malayan emergency	1948-60	(y, n, n, y, n)
Vietnam I	1946-54	(n, n, n, n, n)
Suez UNEF I	1956-67	(n, y, y, n, n)
Vietnam II	1962-75	(y, n, n, y, n)
Fiji army coups	1987	(y, n, n, y, n)
Sri Lanka/Maldives	1987/88	(n, n, y, n, n)
Rwanda	1990-94	(n, n, n, n, n)
El Salvador	1991-95	(n, y, y, n, n)
Ethiopia/Eritrea	since 7/2000	(n, n, y, n, y)

* The listing is for the order: Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, and South Africa; y - intervened; n - did not intervene.

Table 3 illustrates, once more, difficulties of data collection and of interpretation but also shows patterns of interest. Reading the rows, Britain for example called upon its white colonies to help in the Boer war in South Africa in 1899, and all came to fight. (South Africa is coded "n/a" because intervention is defined as an intervention not in the home state.) Australia did not fight in the French Indochina war, but did fight in the American one. This illustrates the power of cultural or language relations. Reading the columns, Australia has no taste for distant Africa or Central America. In addition to relations, its interventions are primarily in terms of strategic self-interest in Asia or those (World Wars I and II) that threatened commercial interests, such as supply lines to its markets. No one intervened in the First Indochina War (only afterward) and neither did anyone intervene in Rwanda (only afterward). Of the five states considered, no one had any vested interests in those conflicts. The Malayan Emergency and the Fiji army coups made noise, but only in the neighborhood: Australia and New Zealand intervened but the others did not. India's position would need explaining as Malaysia was reasonably "close" and as Fiji harbors a very large population of Indian origin. This illustrates that an enormous knowledge base would have to be developed if one were to carry the

data project to all states over the past one hundred years.

Conclusion

This article highlights difficulties real-world peacemakers might be expected to encounter. From systems control theory, we gain a picture of what institutions are required for peacemaking and peacekeeping. Private markets tend to fail given the characteristics of peace as a public good. Design principles for collective action are available, but meeting the requirements for their institution is difficult. In the end, states' individual interests determine whether they will contribute to collective action. I identify determinants of individual states' intervention efforts and provide some initial, scattered evidence as food for thought. Analysis of difficulties encountered in peacemaking and peacekeeping may entail realizing avenues by which to overcome them. But at least we know better than before the magnitude of the theoretical and empirical task that lies ahead.

Notes

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1. This section is based on Fischer (1996) and Brauer (2004).

2. Tinbergen and Fischer (1987).

3. *The Economist*, 19 April 1997, pp. 21-24.

4. A fuller discussion is in Brauer (2004).

5. A discussion of the full list is in Brauer (2004) where I draw, in particular, on the work of Axelrod (1984), Ostrom (1990), and Sandler (1997).

6. Morton (2003, p. 17).

7. One could take the size and type of the intervention force multiplied by the duration of stay to arrive at a continuous variable that would measure the strength of an intervention. For instance, code the type of force as unarmed (=1) or armed (=2). Then, if state A sends 200 unarmed medics for 15 months, the intervention variable would be (1 x 200 x 15), or 3,000. If state B sends 200 combat troops for 12 months, the variable would be (2 x 200 x 12), or 4,800. Obviously, the type of force can be coded into

finer gradations and various types of forces any single state may send can be combined additively to arrive at an intervening state's total "intervention score."

8. Krishna (1998).

9. Australia: UNFICYP, UNMIS, UNOTIL, UNTSO. Bangladesh: MINURSO, MONUC, ONUB, ONUCI, UNAMA, UNAMSIL, UNMEE, UNMIK, UNMIL, UNMIS, UNOMIG, UNOTIL. This information is from the U.N. peacekeeping operations web site.

10. Thomson (2000, p. 10).

11. For military histories and data, see, e.g., Blaxland (2003), Krishna (1998), McGibbon (2000), Morton (1985, 2003), Odgers (2003), Smith (2005), Thomson (2000), and the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations web site.

12. Some of the data I have are "maximum" deployed forces, not average deployed forces, and some force data I found contradict each other. One would want to differentiate not only between combat and non-combat forces but also, say, between, volunteer and conscripted forces, and military and civilian police, and separate out personnel such as liaison and support staff. Cross-tabulations should be run not only for size and region but also for size and duration and region and duration. Data should also be collected on when states did *not* intervene: for example, when India intervened in Sri Lanka in 1987, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand did not.

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