

Classic Debate Camp LD Brief

March - April 2026

**Resolved: The United States ought to
abide by the principle of
non-intervention**

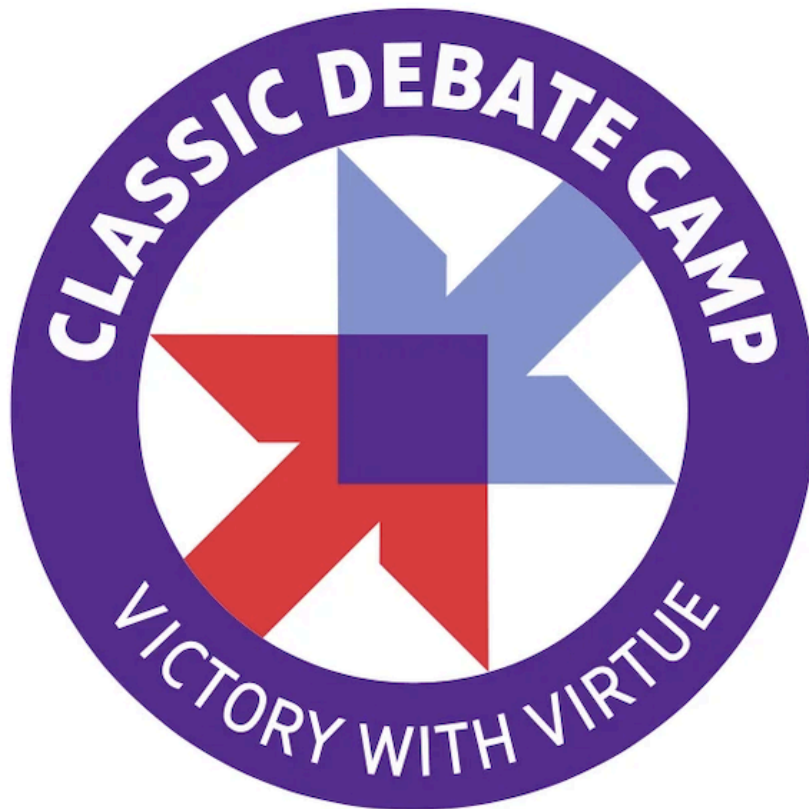




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A Message From the Authors

Hello everyone! We're super excited to be back with another brief covering the March/April LD topic. Congratulations to all of you – you're almost there. We know that a lot of you are using this topic for your national qualifiers, and maybe even your state tournaments, so we wish you the best of luck!

We are incredibly excited to be sharing this brief with our campers and any other LD competitors who happen to come across it. Classic Debate Camp believes in accessibility and equity in debate resources, and we have developed this brief with those values in mind. Our aim in writing this brief is to provide you with critical analysis of this topic from accomplished and seasoned NSDA alumni, as well as some high-quality evidence in key argument categories on both sides of the topic. We are hopeful that this brief will inspire each of you to dig deeper, consider the complex implications of this topic, and develop well-evidenced and unique cases. We sincerely hope that this brief will be helpful to you, and we welcome any feedback you may have!

Feel free to reach out to us with any questions about any of the materials in this brief! Our contact information is listed below:

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Best of Luck!



Topic Analysis by Greta Wedel¹

Background and General Topic Analysis

Upon first impression I was very excited about this topic – it falls within a cross-section between theory and real-world implications that allows for a wide variety of adaptable argumentation on both sides. However, I also acknowledge that in many ways that kind of breadth can also come at a disadvantage because it forces debaters to dedicate more time to both foundational and scoping concerns in case construction. Either way, I do think that this topic lends itself to a body of interesting and critical arguments, and urge all of you to engage with it to the fullest extent possible.

I will, as usual, start with some brief but important reminders. Western-led interventions into the domestic affairs and conflicts of other states, especially those in developing regions, have been commonplace for an extended period of time. A significant number of these interventions have caused direct and severe harm to the lives of those living within the states subjected to intervention. The structural and political implications of this topic run directly parallel to the lives of real people who have suffered real atrocities and lived through the kinds of conflict and violence that we leverage as strong argumentation. I urge all of you to make sure that you not only understand the complexity of the arguments you are running, but ensure that you grant respect to those arguments, and to the arguments made by your opponents, and show thoughtful consideration toward the people who have been impacted by this topic in the real world.

This resolution appears relatively straightforward at first glance, at least in terms of framing. As is common with most LD topics, this is an “ought” resolution, implying the presence of a moral prerogative or obligation on behalf of the actor. In this case, the actor is specified as the US Government, which can potentially limit argumentation but does not have to.

To start with some general background, the Principle of Non-Intervention is a fundamental tenet of modern international law that establishes, generally, that states ought not to interfere in the internal or external affairs of other sovereign states. The understanding of what constitutes “interference” lacks consistency across international law. However, generally, any act of one state that involves infringement into a state's *Domaine Réservé*, the body of matters a state is given the right to decide freely, is considered an intervention.

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There are a number of actions that have been recognized as clear violations of the principle of non-intervention, for example, the use of force and support of armed insurgents, that have been recognized through international law as forms of intervention. However, outside of that, it becomes less clear what does or does not constitute intervention. While the element of coercion is commonplace in almost every form of intervention, the question of whether specific lesser forms of coercion qualify as intervention is highly contested. These areas include sanctions, propaganda and electoral disruption, support to peaceful opposition groups, and formal recognition of non-effective governments. From an argument perspective, I would recommend that all of you decide prior to the round where you are going to draw your bright lines, and then find a concrete way to argue why certain things should or should not be included within the definition of intervention.

Framing, Scoping, and Burdens

At the most basic level, this resolution is asking one question: does the United States have a moral obligation not to interfere in the affairs of other states? On a broader level, however, this topic probes the question of whether any state has an obligation against intervention.

It is worth noting that this resolution proposes a negative obligation – an obligation *against* doing something. It does not impose an affirmative burden to intervene. The NEG, then, is not forced to argue in favor of conditional or compulsory intervention, nor does the NEG have to establish that the US does have an obligation to intervene. Instead, the NEG merely has to argue that the United States is not morally obligated to consistently comply with the principle of non-intervention.

In terms of definitions, what is considered advantageous varies based on the side. For the affirmative, I would suggest that you all consider following the general principle that less is more. Unless your argument is truly grounded in sovereignty theory and you feel prepared to argue that intervention – militant, economic, humanitarian, and other – is immoral as a general principle, I would suggest trying to scope the definition of “intervention” to your advantage. Generally, it has been military and force-based interventions, which are typically accompanied by humanitarian and economic intervention, that have had the most severe negative effects on the target states. By scoping down the definition of intervention to exclude lesser matters such as sanctions and humanitarian aid, you can effectively limit the negative’s ground. Since these lesser, non-violent forms of “intervention” are commonplace in US foreign policy, they are easy places for the negative to reason with the judge, and therefore are arguments that the AFF debater should seek to scope out of the round.

On the negative side, I would suggest that you follow the opposite advice – more is more. Even if you are not arguing in favor of forms of lesser intervention, it is in your best interest to make the principle of non-intervention appear as unreasonable and unrealistic as possible. I think that



on face, the idea of non-intervention seems to run counterintuitive to the average person's idea of foreign policy. This is largely because, despite the consistent presence of non-intervention in international law, the United States *loves* to intervene. I would suggest that negative debaters use that presumption to their benefit to expand their viable ground. Though contested, it could, for example, be possible to argue that certain forms of aid (military specifically) are interventionist. This is especially true if aid is being given to insurgent or minority parties seeking to bring about substantial political or regime change.

The way that both the idea of adherence and of a “principle” is framed can also be utilized to scope the round on both sides. For the AFF, it is likely best to argue that we ought to view adherence as a general principle, meaning that it is true in a majority of situations that the US has the obligation not to intervene. Framing the resolution this way can be, in my opinion, extremely advantageous for the AFF. It allows the AFF to concede that in extreme situations, intervention may be necessary, but that as a general principle non-intervention is theoretically and/or realistically superior. This framing is also supported by the use of the word “principle” in the resolution – in common language, principles are considered ideals or standards, not mandates or orders. This implies that the AFF needs to prove adherence is morally superior to non-adherence, but need not argue that there are no exceptions.

For the NEG, it is possible to assert a “one example” burdening standard, in which the NEG argues that they need to prove only one example of justified coercion to win. However, unbalanced framing like this tends to be easy for an opponent to overcome and difficult for judges to buy. Resultantly, I would suggest that negative debaters also prepare to argue a general principle approach.

Perspectives for Argumentation

As a resolution with a specified actor, this topic introduces an intriguing question into the round: whose interests are we placing importance upon? The way that I see it, there are three potential ways to go about arguing this: the US perspective, the humanitarian perspective, or the perspective of the target state.

Framing this topic in the context of the actor's interests prompts us to question how intervention may or may not benefit the US on a domestic level. This raises questions about whether non-intervention harms or hurts US interests on a domestic and international level. While successful interventions may bolster legitimacy, unsuccessful interventions may harm public trust and compromise the United States' position in the international order. Furthermore, from a realist perspective, intervention can theoretically be justified if it advances domestic interests. However, that argument *is* certainly a very slippery slope, as US assertion of domestic interests in intervention agendas has been a primary reason for intervention failure and domestic crisis in target countries in the past.



Perhaps the more common approach will be to frame the topic in the context of the target state's interests, especially on a civilian level. Intervention, especially intervention that uses force, has been seen in the past to exacerbate domestic instability, feed corruption cycles, and lead to significant harms for civilians. In these cases, intervention can be painted as immoral on humanitarian grounds. For the NEG, this argument can be given in inverse, emphasizing that humanitarian crises and circumstances of human rights violations morally justify intervention.

Lastly, specifically for the AFF, it is possible to argue a sovereignty-based case that emphasizes a state's right to self determination as a basis for non-intervention. This approach is largely drawn from the philosophy of Micheal Walzer, who argued that a strong presumption of sovereignty inherent to the state places a near blanket moral prohibition on intervention. In this case, the AFF debater frames the round in the context of the target state's interest.

Affirmative Strategy and Framework Recommendations

The burden of the AFF on this topic is to prove that the US has a moral obligation against interfering in the affairs of other sovereign states. In other words, that non-intervention by the US is preferable to intervention. As I said above, I would recommend that debaters pursue the strategy of proving the resolution as a matter of general principle, meaning that they must prove the resolution is true in a majority of situations.

I. Sovereignty

In my opinion, there are three dominant AFF strategies, the first being to pursue a case based on sovereignty. I want to start with the precursor that this argument can be a slippery slope, and if framed incorrectly can come across as unappealing or counterintuitive to judges, especially less experienced judges. This particular case would emphasize that each state has a strong and inalienable right to self-determination that other states must respect as a matter of moral reciprocity. Subsequently, intervention would be framed as a moral wrong, as it involves one state violating the sovereignty of another and imposing their will into domestic matters that are not under their jurisdiction. There is certainly strong theoretical and philosophical backing for this particular argument, and I do think that it could be a strong case if managed correctly.

However, running a sovereignty approach on this topic does open the door for the negative to easily argue that the AFF stands in defense of autocracy and/or dictatorship, thereby excusing human rights violations and other abuses of power. For this reason, I would recommend that AFF frame sovereignty as a right that states are entitled to absent certain conditions, not an absolute right that must be upheld in all circumstances. What I mean by this is that, for example, if a state violates the autonomy of its citizens through atrocity crimes or human rights abuses, AFF can



acknowledge that this situation would render the right to sovereignty null. These types of worst case exceptions are outlined thoroughly in Michael Walzer's work *Just and Unjust Wars* (1977).

For a sovereignty case, I would suggest that debaters consider frameworks including sovereignty itself, right to self determination, or territorial integrity. For any of these frameworks you can find a wide variety of authors and theorists who have defined and outlined them in different ways. I would suggest doing thorough research to ensure that whatever definition and framing you are using is as advantageous as possible given the specific facts of your case.

II. Mitigating Structural Violence/Non-Domination

The second case approach that I see being highly viable for the AFF is an approach focused on mitigating structural violence and/or promoting non-domination. This view holds that intervention by Western powers (such as the US) into the affairs of small states involves an imposition of will and power that results in the structural oppression of the target states. This is my personal favorite affirmative approach to this case, and I think it lends itself very well to critical and strategic argumentation.

There is certainly strong evidence in favor of this particular argument. It seems undeniable that, when the US intervenes, its domestic interests are placed above the interests of the target country. Despite pretexts that include minimizing human rights abuses and promoting peace, most US interventions in the past have served to advance US government goals regarding resource access, international influence, or domestic support. Whether or not interventions were successful in achieving these goals is another matter entirely.

The recent US intervention into Venezuela is an excellent example, though it falls on the far end of severity in terms of interventions. While this intervention was framed by the US government as an action motivated by human rights, the intervention gave the US government near total control of the oil economy in Venezuela, limiting access by US opponents including Russia and China as well as advancing US interests in terms of oil access.

There is evidence to suggest that certain Western interventions, especially into countries in Latin America and Africa, are neocolonialist in nature, granting Western powers express control over the domestic affairs, resource allocation, and governmental functions of other states. An AFF can effectively leverage this empirical evidence to argue that intervention is a form of post-colonial domination and thereby serves to worsen structural violence, making it expressly immoral.

Frameworks that would work well for this approach include mitigating structural violence and promoting non-domination, or any other justice-based frameworks that focus on structural power imbalance.



III. Pragmatism/Consequentialism

The final approach that I think could hold significant weight on the AFF is a pragmatism or consequentialism based case, in which the AFF argues that interventions bring about more suffering than benefits and thereby are immoral. The crux of this argument lies in the AFF's ability to prove that US interventions do, in fact, fail the large majority of the time. There is statistical and example-based evidence to support both sides with respect to this question, so I suggest that any debater running this argument choose their evidence carefully and ensure that they know it thoroughly prior to competition.

In order to prove their case, debaters can focus on a number of things, including the failure of intervention to bring about regime change, the tendency of intervention to lead to governmental instability, and the spread of corruption brought about by intervention. There are particularly good examples for this argument, one of the most significant of which is Afghanistan, an intervention that your judges are likely to be familiar with. An AFF running this particular approach would do well to leverage strategic and familiar examples to their benefit as a way to bolster their theoretical contention. A strong combination of comprehensive data and case-study evidence can come together to make this approach incredibly solid.

Negative Strategy and Framework Recommendations

I. International Stability/Consequentialism

The first viable approach that I see on the NEG is one focused on the concept of international stability within the global order. This position would bolster the idea of the unipolar liberal international order, in which the US stands as the global leader. While it is true that the idea of unipolarity is rapidly destabilizing under the rising influence of non-Western powers including Russia and China, a NEG can turn this argument to underscore the urgency of maintenance. This argument follows that US decline in the international order is a negative thing that would lead to global destabilization and subsequent increases in conflict.

It follows that interventions are a way by which the US can both assert and maintain global power. Non-intervention causes the US to lose credibility as an international mediator, creating a power vacuum which opens room for another major power such as China. This case can also emphasize that if the US develops a reputation for inaction, regional aggressors and domestic opposition groups are more likely to initiate conflicts, given that they do not fear Western intervention. Lacking this “check” on power, it follows that aggregate suffering and instability would increase.



In my perspective, a debater could likely follow this argument as far as they please, though, as is usual, it holds that the longer the link chain, the easier it is to break. The impacts of global instability can range from economic uncertainty to global collapse, including increases in conflict, mistrust, gridlock in international forums, and other consequences. Resultantly, I would suggest this case be run with a consequentialist framework such as minimizing suffering.

II. Humanitarianism and Human Rights

The second negative case approach that I see being relevant on this topic is the idea of humanitarianism, or the right to protect. This case would assert that the US, as a global leader and major power, has an obligation to intervene in the domestic affairs of other countries to prevent human rights abuses and/or atrocity crimes including genocide. This is a very rhetorically strong case, and I can certainly see it being very appealing to judges.

I would urge any debater planning to run this case to be wary of solvency-based attacks by the AFF. I find it very likely that when faced by a case like this, a good AFF debater is going to heavily probe at the question of whether US interventions *can* reliably solve human rights abuses, and whether the track record of the past shows success or failure in this area. For this reason, I would suggest that the NEG find both strong examples and data-backed statistics to support their case – make sure you know your evidence!

This case approach would run well with frameworks such as mitigating structural violence, minimizing suffering, or cosmopolitanism.

III. Liberal Internationalism

The final case approach that I see for the NEG is one focused on the idea of liberal internationalism or the spread of democratic values. In this case, the NEG argues that the US ought to intervene in order to force regime change in the face of human rights violations or power abuses arising from autocratic or authoritarian leadership. This case positions the US as a leader for global democracy and emphasizes intervention as a key tool of democracy-promotion.

I, personally, am wary of this approach, as the evidence proving that interventions are a successful way to force regime change is incredibly limited. Further, the US is in a difficult position internationally at the present moment, which has brought about certain consequences regarding the view of the US as a leader in global democracy. Nonetheless, I do think that this can be a viable NEG strategy if done right. If a debater chooses to argue this case, they will need to emphasize on the theoretical level that the right to sovereignty and thereby the right against



intervention does not extend to those governments that are not birthed by legitimate processes. As a result, intervention is morally justified.

Final Remarks

At the end of the day, this topic is one with a significant degree of intellectual depth and opportunities for rich and varied argumentation on both sides. Despite being simple in terms of its language, this topic covers a strikingly large amount of ground, and as a result requires extensive preparation and thought by debaters. I would urge all of you to take advantage of this depth and really engage with this resolution – get creative, find unique evidence, and have fun. This topic is what you make of it, so make it something you can be proud of. Happy Prepping!



Topic Analysis by Wes McGovern²

Topic Overview

International relations based topics are always very fun to debate, but often complex, and this topic is no exception. As you start thinking about this resolution, brush up on some principles of international relations, key IR theories (e.g., realism, liberalism, constructivism), historical precedent, and current events (especially Maduro and Venezuela). The easiest way to think about international relations, coming from an IR major, is to view the world as a game of preferences. Each nation has leaders who make decisions, and these leaders are typically rational yet more selfish than you would imagine. Even though they may purport to act in their countries' best interests, they usually do this while considering how to maximize their own or their party's electability and longevity. With this framing, start asking yourself questions that pry at these preferences; what does the Trump administration want? What does the US electorate want? At what point do Trump's decisions become irreconcilable with the wants of elites/voters? (Note that some Republican legislators split from Trump after the US launched the Maduro operation earlier this year.) Since international relations as a topic is not limited to the US, ask similar questions about other key players: Who are the stakeholders beyond the US? What do our allies want? What do our enemies want? Lastly, and most importantly, how do we balance making political/military moves that maximize our utility, without losing allies or upsetting enemies? While some of these questions may seem intuitive or elementary, it is important to understand that the debate will deal with these issues, either directly or indirectly. Understanding the mechanics of international relations is paramount.

A Brief History of Interventionist Policies

The United States has a very complicated relationship with non-interventionist policies. George Washington famously advocated for non-interventionism in his Farewell Address, and this policy stuck – excluding aggressive Westward expansion – until the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 which posited that any attempt by European powers to intervene in the affairs of independent nations in the Americas would be viewed as a hostile act. This doctrine is a bit paradoxical insofar as it *sounds* non-interventionist on paper, as it is telling European powers to not intervene in the Americas, but in doing so it positions America as the sole arbiter of power in the Americas and authorizes the United States to interfere in the affairs of other states there.

As American power expanded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this guardianship evolved into overt interventionism, most clearly through the Roosevelt Corollary,

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which redefined intervention not as an exceptional response to aggression but as a routine instrument for enforcing “order” and “stability.” Understanding that these principles came to shape US foreign policy is crucial. After World War I, popular backlash temporarily revived the language of non-intervention, yet this restraint applied primarily to Eurasian conflicts and did not dismantle hemispheric dominance. World War II and the Cold War completed the doctrinal shift: intervention became global, permanent, and ideologically justified, framed as defensive action necessary to preserve international order rather than as imperial expansion. Crucially, this evolution did not abandon the rhetoric of restraint; instead, it repurposed it, casting intervention as reluctant, temporary, and morally necessary. Throughout U.S. history, then, the doctrine of intervention did not move cleanly from isolation to engagement but rather from restraint – because the US lacked power early on – to power-enabled management, with non-intervention consistently functioning as a legitimizing language masking the expansion of American military authority.

Today, U.S. military policy sits in a state of strategic contradiction best described as rhetorical non-intervention paired with structural interventionism. In other words, the language and stated principles of U.S. foreign policy emphasize restraint, while the institutions and capabilities of U.S. power make intervention routine and unavoidable. An example of this is how the US’s written policy is not to support Taiwanese independence, yet we have forward-deployed U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific and have joint military drills with Taiwan. After the failures and fatigue of Iraq and Afghanistan, policymakers across parties now emphasize restraint, burden-sharing, and the avoidance of “forever wars,” signaling a rhetorical shift away from overt intervention. Yet in practice, the United States maintains a global military posture defined by forward deployment, alliance entanglements, arms transfers, intelligence operations, and the credible threat of force across multiple theaters. Unlike earlier eras of intervention justified by territorial control or ideological expansion, contemporary intervention is increasingly indirect and managerial, focused on shaping outcomes without large-scale occupation. This reflects an evolved doctrine in which intervention is no longer framed as an exceptional choice but as a background condition of global leadership – often invisible, normalized, and legally diffuse. The legacy of the Monroe Doctrine is still evident: the United States continues to describe its dominance as protective, its presence as stabilizing, and its use of force as reluctant, even as its military reach remains unparalleled. In this sense, the current moment is not a retreat from interventionism but its refinement; less overt, more selective, and rhetorically constrained, yet structurally entrenched.

Aff Strategy

Framing what non-interventionism looks like will fundamentally change this debate, and having a comprehensive understanding of the history will help. Upon first reading it seems that this resolution is asking for a clash between total isolationism and US-led cosmopolitanism.



However, that is not at all the case, in my view, and the affirmative can and should buy themselves as much ground as possible.

The baseline definition of a non-interventionism policy “prohibits States from intervening coercively in the internal or external affairs of other States,” as established by the [1986 Nicaragua v United States case](#) (pg 108). I have always been a big fan of using observations at the top of the case to clarify what your world looks like and what your burdens are. A strategic affirmative case will have an observation that clearly delineates that maintaining a military presence abroad does not violate a non-intervention policy. For example, the US having an aircraft carrier strike group based out of Japan is non-interventionist because that is not a coercive action and not violating sovereignty; it is a mutually beneficial agreement between two countries. However, if that strike group started firing missiles at North Korea because it feared their nuclear capabilities, that is now an interventionist action.

From there, the affirmative, in my view, would benefit from a very classic case centered around security and justice. The strongest cases usually cover moral and pragmatic grounds, and a framework such as this lends itself to that perfectly. Using security as a value is a great idea because it directly addresses the role of the military, which is to provide security to the country. Under this you could argue that having a military that is strong, yet not threatening to other countries, reduces the risk of miscalculation or a Cold War-esque scenario. Current events illustrate this phenomenon. Trump’s rhetoric about taking Greenland has caused division and fear amongst allies, and those anxieties were validated by the US intervention in Venezuela's affairs. One can extrapolate this out to the possible effects of having a stated interventionist policy: the whole global order shifted slightly, there was increased NATO infighting in a way that hadn’t been seen before, and it sent the world a message that no one was safe in their own country.

You can also make the “moral hazard” argument, which is one of my favorites in any topic. Moral hazard describes a situation where actors take on unnecessary risk because they feel that they are insulated from the outcomes. The mechanization of this is when an actor feels that they are protected from the costs of risky behavior, so they engage in more of it, and it ends badly. Generally speaking, an example of this may be a bank making risky investments because they know they will be bailed out. This expectation also exists with the US military; for one, allies get too dependent on the expectation of US military support, so they delay compromise because they feel that the US will just bail them out. For example, in the build up to the Vietnam War, South Vietnamese leaders expected US military support, and because of that they rejected negotiated settlements and opted for escalation over a solution. The rationale for South Vietnam was, why compromise today if a stronger ally might fight tomorrow? This thinking can be found in many other conflicts as well. Moral hazard is not a generic harm of intervention—it’s a structural harm caused by the expectation of intervention. By committing to non-intervention, the United States removes the incentive for other states to act unwisely. That benefit is unique to the affirmative



and allows for them to turn arguments about the world becoming less safe if the US doesn't intervene.

As for making a normative argument under this framework, a contention in favor of respecting state sovereignty is very strong. This contention argues that sovereignty is the basis of the international community and a respect for the sovereignty of nations is what keeps nations of the world from constantly invading each other. Sovereignty is particularly important for less developed countries because in a world with no respect for sovereignty, power becomes the sole determinant of who is in control, which leads to very bad consequences. All of these arguments taken together are very strong because they are complementary; respecting the sovereignty of nations increases global security and is more just.

Neg Strategy

A wise negative should try to focus on what the affirmative *cannot* accomplish in their world. As Greta pointed out in her analytical essay, the affirmative will likely focus on a principle being something generally adhered to, not a mandate that is always followed. I believe that the negative could engage in a definition debate to prove that such framing is too slanted toward the AFF side, but I don't advise doing that. Definition debates are messy and easy to lose since they are not very substantive. Instead, focus on making your negative case mutually exclusive with the affirmative. In practice, this means that while the AFF might say they can intervene in extreme cases, *you need to explain why that is not enough and why a world where the US can intervene in a multitude of circumstances is better.*

Since the AFF will likely try this approach of staking out a lot of territory, you should stake out territory back. I suggest having an observation at the beginning of the NEG case that names the affirmative burden, and pins them to answering it. For example, "the affirmative has to prove why the US military will be more effective and the world will be safer with non-intervention across the board, while allowing US interventions only in extreme circumstances." This framing is advantageous because it pushes back on the AFF cases that assert that they can be non-interventionalist the majority of the time and act in extreme circumstances. An observation like this also sets up what I think is the best thesis for the NEG: the world is unpredictable, and having the flexibility to act depending on the circumstances is preferred.

I suggest a similar security-based framework for the NEG. For one, there will be a direct clash with the affirmative, and the best debates are ones where either side can win under the framework. It also saves a lot of time in the debate and works well with this topic. As a reminder, the criterion is the means of measuring whether or not the value is upheld, and there are many options to be used. For this resolution, I think that a criterion related to risk minimization/



conflict avoidance will serve you well. The negative arguments tend to be a lot more pragmatic in my view, but it is still a good idea to include a principled argument as well. I suggest a contention that attacks the rigidity and absolutism of the principle of non-interventionalism itself. Such a contention would be predicated on the idea that substituting inflexible rules for a field of decision making that requires context-aware judgment undermines security and is likely to cause catastrophic harm. International relations are defined by facing rapidly developing risks with incomplete information and rigid rules will perform poorly in environments where actors have to be adaptable. The warrant here is that international relations scholarship and international relations by nature recognizes that uncertainty must be met with flexibility, and a blanket principle that forbids action regardless of circumstances is likely to lead to error, not safety.

Another normative argument that I am a fan of is that sovereignty exists to protect the people in a state, not the regime. So if there is a situation where the people did not elect the leader, and the leader is oppressive, the AFF's advocacy about respecting sovereignty above all else is problematized. However, this argument might be better as a rebuttal because it is in response to an affirmative assumption.

As for the pragmatic contentions for the NEG, think about the unique advantage that intervention has or that just having the opportunity to intervene has. For example, uncertainty is a hurdle in international relations, but it is also a tool; uncertainty manifests in the credible threat of enforcement which is a prerequisite for deterrence. This means that because the US has intervened and done so successfully in the past, that is enough to credibly deter others in the future. Even if the US has no active plans of intervening, the fact that other actors don't know what the US will do is enough. However, *that advantage is lost in the AFF world because the US is committing to a principle that tells the world it has no plans to intervene in anything*. Some leaders may be emboldened to act with aggression if they perceive the US as no longer being an active guarantor of peace. When Putin invaded Ukraine, part of his rationale was that he believed the West would not directly intervene to stop Russia. It is reasonable to then say Putin has a revealed preference for wanting to return Russia to the size of the Soviet Union, and if the US tells the world they are not interested in intervening in global affairs anymore, it could embolden Putin to try and finish what he started in Georgia. Or China could take Taiwan. This pragmatic approach highlights the likely consequences of the US adhering to non-intervention: the power vacuum that would result from the US stepping back, the dismantling of NATO, and total realignment as states seek new allies to bolster their security.

Keeping with the deterrence-based arguments, another strong one is that non-intervention increases worst-case risks. Non-intervention simply allows threats to grow. Meanwhile, early, limited intervention can prevent catastrophe. This is the exact justification behind striking Iran's nuclear program: strategic blows and some minor backlash is better than a world where Iran might launch a nuclear weapon at the US or its allies. Additionally, waiting to be attacked is irrational and a risk that US leaders want to avoid.



Final Remarks

I believe that this topic will be a very fun one to debate, however, there is a lot of overlap and ambiguity that will likely dominate early rounds while everyone gets their footing. I encourage debaters to think outside of the box with their arguments. Briefs are a great starting point, but I believe that the best ideas are your own, which is why I gave you the arguments I liked, not outright contentions. I encourage you to draw connections, find academic evidence, and absorb as much information as you can now so that you can draw upon all that you know in a round. And lastly, be very intentional about the definitions, burdens, and observations that you and your opponents use. Good luck debating!



General Evidence

Definitions and Framing

Wood (n.d.): Definition of Non-Interference

Wood, Sir Michael. “Non-intervention (Non-interference in domestic affairs)”. Princeton University Encyclopedia Princetoniensis. No date. <https://pesd.princeton.edu/node/551>

In international law, the principle of non-intervention includes, but is not limited to, the prohibition of the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state (Article 2.4 of the Charter). The principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States also signifies that a State should not otherwise intervene in a dictatorial way in the internal affairs of other States. The International Court referred in the Nicaragua case to “[t]he element of coercion, which defines, and indeed forms the very essence of, prohibited intervention” (ICJ Reports 1986, p. 108, para. 205). As Oppenheim’s International Law puts it, “the interference must be forcible or dictatorial, or otherwise coercive, in effect depriving the state intervened against of control over the matter in question. Interference pure and simple is not intervention” (Vol. I, 9th ed., 1992, p. 432). But the extent to which acts other than the use of force are, or should be, prohibited is uncertain. Intervention (even military intervention) with the consent, properly given, of the Government of a State is not precluded. The more common term is “non-intervention”, though “non-interference” also appears in the texts. The latter may suggest a wider prohibition, though in most contexts the two terms seem to be used interchangeably.

Wu (2023): ICJ Definition of Non-Intervention

Wu, Cecilia Yue. “Challenging Paternalistic Interference: the case for Non-Intervention in a Globalized World.” Harvard International Law Journal. Winter 2023.
https://journals.law.harvard.edu/ilj/wp-content/uploads/sites/84/HILJ-651-Wu_compressed.pdf

By the time the International Court of Justice (“ICJ”) issued its 9rst opinion directly addressing the principle of non-intervention in Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua in 1984, it has become clear that the principle is “part and parcel of customary international law,” supported by substantial state practice and strong opinion juris. 60 The ICJ defined, in a relatively short paragraph, “the exact content of the principle” regarding aspects relevant to the case: [I]n view of the generally accepted formulations, the principle forbids all States or groups of States to intervene directly or indirectly in internal or external affairs of other States. A prohibited intervention must accordingly be one bearing on matters in which each State is permitted, by the principle of State sovereignty, to decide freely. One of these is the choice of a political, economic, social and cultural system, and the formulation of foreign policy. Intervention is wrongful when it uses methods of coercion in regard to such choices, which must remain free ones. The element of coercion, which defines, and indeed forms the very essence of, prohibited intervention, is particularly obvious in the case of an intervention which



uses force, either in the direct form of military action, or in the indirect form of support for subversive or terrorist armed activities within another State.⁶¹

Boogaard (2024): Definition of *Domaine Réservé*

Boogaard, Emma van den. “Environmental Intervention: An Activist Idea or a Legal Tool? An Analysis of the Possibilities of Environmental Protection in Light of the Principle of Non-Intervention.” *Netherlands International Law Review*. 09 July 2024. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40802-024-00263-7>

The element of the *domaine réservé* determines that an intervention is only prohibited when it intervenes in matters in which the State is free to decide by virtue of its sovereignty. Examples are the ‘choice of a political, economic, social and cultural system, and the formulation of foreign policy’. Matters within the *domaine réservé* are neither codified nor exhaustive. In 1923, the Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ), the ICJ’s predecessor, decided that whether or not a particular matter is within the *domaine réservé* is a relative question. It depends on the development of international relations and law since States are restricted by their obligations towards each other. This means that the *domaine réservé* can change over time and depends on the subject to which the obligation is owed. According to Milanovic, a matter is within the *domaine réservé* if a State has any measure of discretion within the bounds of international law regarding that matter. The many ties that States have due to globalisation, treaties and the growing body of customary norms have increased the obligations that States have towards other States and reduced the matters included within the scope of the *domaine réservé*. Nonetheless, the *domaine réservé* still retains a certain value and cannot simply be defined as those matters entirely unregulated by international law.

Kriener (2023): Definition of Coercion

Kriener, Florian. “Intervention, Prohibition of.” *Oxford Public International Law Encyclopedia*. August 2023. <https://opil.ouplaw.com/display/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e1434>

An interference with a State’s *domaine réservé* must be coercive in order to violate the prohibition of intervention. In the words of the ICJ ‘coercion, ... defines, and indeed forms the very essence of, prohibited intervention’ (*Nicaragua Case* para. 205). Coercion is a normative criterion that serves the ultimate purpose of the prohibition of intervention: the delineation of sovereign spheres. In an interconnected world, influence on other States is a common and necessary practice. The element of coercion draws the line between permitted forms of influence and influence that subjugates the sovereign will of another State. Thereby, the prohibition of intervention enables the coexistence of different States with diverse social, economic, and political systems (cf *Nicaragua Case* para. 264).²⁰ A frequently cited definition of coercion can be found in the UNGA’s Friendly Relations Declaration (Principle c): No State may use or encourage the use of economic, political or any other type of measures to coerce another State in order to obtain from it the subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights and to secure from it advantages of any kind. The core question is therefore what measures will result in the subjugation of another State’s will. Oppenheim famously held that ‘dictatorial interference’ was necessary (Oppenheim [1905] 181). Jamnejad and Wood



recognize coercion when the target State cannot reasonably resist the pressure of another State (Jamnejad and Wood [2009] 348). Hofer demands ‘irresistible pressure’ (Hofer [2017] 181). Despite being rather vague themselves, these formulations exemplify that pressure will only exceptionally cross the threshold of coercion. ²¹ Based on the Friendly Relations Declaration’s wording, coercive pressure can take a multitude of forms, including economic and political pressure. To what extent this holds true is however contested. The following sections will address individual forms of influence and map the debate whether these are coercive or not. **The ICJ held that the use of force (1) and the support of armed insurgents (2) constitute coercion. Below this threshold, there is no consensus in the international community (3). Nonetheless, coercion must not be supplanted by a lower threshold (4) or reference to a State’s intentions (5).**

Kriener (2023): Non-Intervention Encompasses Illegal Uses of Force

Kriener, Florian. “Intervention, Prohibition of.” Oxford Public International Law Encyclopedia. August 2023. <https://opil.ouplaw.com/display/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e1434>

The prohibition of the use of force in international relations is a specific application of the prohibition of intervention (*Use of Force, Prohibition of*). It prohibits the use of military force in or against the territory, the *territorial sea*, and the *airspace* of another State and is enshrined in Art. 2 (4) UN Charter. The decision to use force on its own territory is widely accepted as a fundamental aspect of a State’s *domaine réservé*. By using force without the State’s permission, the attacking State effectively subjugates the other State’s will on this matter. Therefore, an illegal use of force also violates the prohibition of intervention. ²³ This was confirmed by the ICJ in the *Corfu Channel*, *Nicaragua*, and *Armed Activities* cases. In the *Corfu Channel Case*, minesweeping operations conducted by the UK in Albania’s territorial waters were considered a prohibited intervention. The Court thoroughly denied a ‘right of intervention’ stating that this would constitute a ‘manifestation of a policy of force, such as has, in the past, given rise to most serious abuses and such as cannot, whatever be the present defects in international organization, find a place in international law’ (at 35). In the *Nicaragua* decision, the ICJ differentiated between the different supportive acts given by the United States (‘US’) government to the Nicaraguan Democratic Forces (also known as *contras*). It held that mine laying in Nicaraguan territorial waters and attacks on ports, oil installations, and a naval base by US armed forces violated the prohibition of the use of force (*[Merits]* para. 227). Furthermore, the training and arming of the *contras*, which were engaged in hostilities with the Nicaraguan government at the time, qualified as an illegal use of force (*ibid* para. 228). The other support given to the *contras*, including financial and logistical support, were only considered a prohibited intervention and not an illegal use of force. The Court confirmed this jurisprudence in the *Armed Activities* case. The deployment and fighting of Ugandan military forces on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo qualified as a violation of the prohibition of the use of force (*Armed Activities [Merits]* para. 153). Likewise, Uganda’s arming and training of the Mouvement de Liberation du Congo, which engaged in the Congolese Civil War, constituted a prohibited use of force (*ibid* paras 160, 164). Both in the *Nicaragua Case* (para. 228) and *Armed Activities* (para. 164) judgments, the ICJ AFFirmed that violations of the prohibition of the use of force violate the prohibition of intervention, thus confirming that the former is a specific application to the latter. Accordingly, all prohibited uses of force violate the prohibition of intervention.

Background

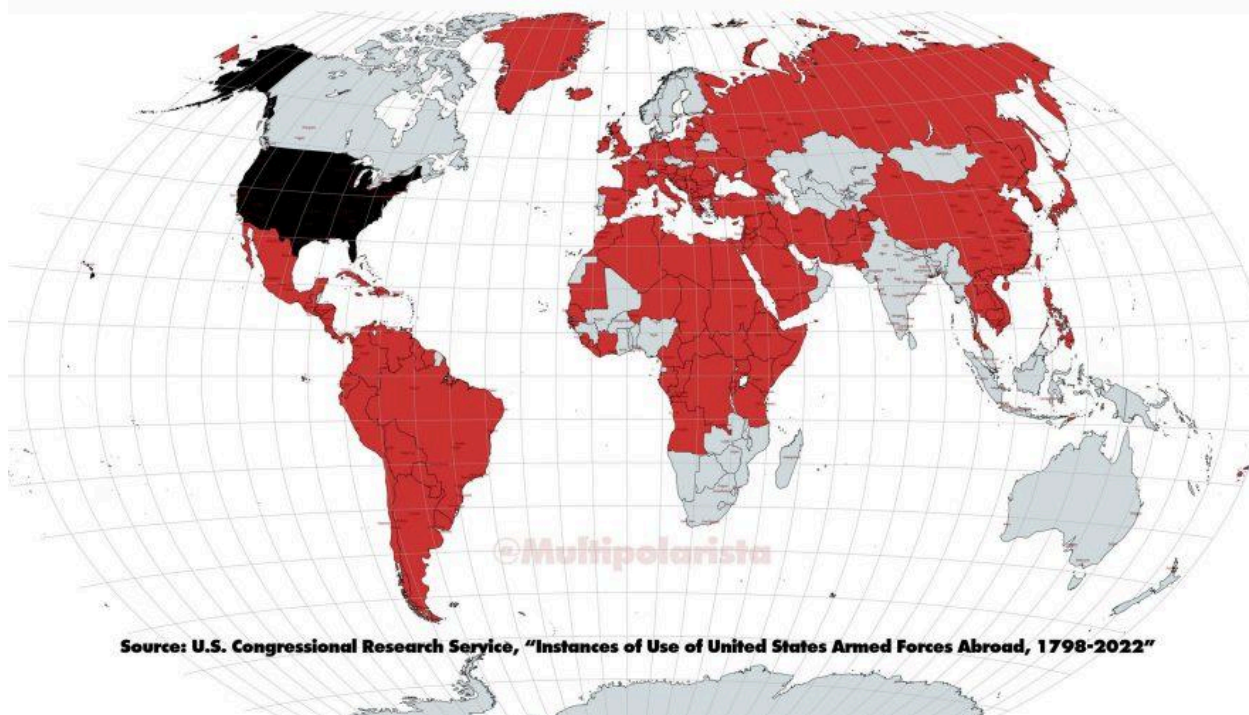
Norton (2022): History of US Military Interventions

Norton, Benjamin. “U.S. Launched 251 Military Interventions Since 1991, and 469 Since 1798” Toward Freedom. Sept 14, 2022 <https://towardfreedom.org/story/archives/americas/u-s-launched-251-military-interventions-since-1991-and-469-since-1798/>



The United States launched at least 251 military interventions between 1991 and 2022. This is according to a report by the Congressional Research Service, a U.S. government institution that compiles information on behalf of Congress. The report documented another 218 U.S. military interventions between 1798 and 1990. That makes for **a total of 469 U.S. military interventions since 1798 that have been acknowledged by the Congress.** This data was published on March 8, 2022, by the Congressional Research Service (CRS), in a document titled “Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2022.” **The list of countries targeted by the U.S. military includes the vast majority of the nations on Earth, including almost every single country in Latin America and the Caribbean and most of the African continent.** From the beginning of 1991 to the beginning of 2004, the U.S. military launched 100 interventions, according to CRS. That number grew to 200 military interventions between 1991 and 2018.

Countries where the U.S. government has admitted to launching military interventions



Source: U.S. Congressional Research Service, “Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2022”

The report shows that, since the end of the first cold war in 1991, at the moment of U.S. unipolar hegemony, the number of Washington’s military interventions abroad substantially increased. Of the total 469 documented foreign military interventions, the Congressional Research Service noted that the U.S. government only formally declared war 11 times, in just five separate wars. The data exclude the independence war between U.S. settlers and the British empire, any military deployments between 1776 and 1798, and the U.S. Civil War. **It is important to stress that all of these numbers are conservative estimates, because they do not include U.S. special operations, covert actions, or domestic deployments.** CRS report clarified: The list does not include covert actions or numerous occurrences in which U.S. forces have been stationed abroad since World War II in occupation forces or for participation in mutual security organizations, base agreements, or routine military assistance or training operations. **The report likewise excludes the deployment of the U.S. military forces against Indigenous peoples, when they were systematically ethnically cleansed in the violent**



process of westward settler-colonial expansion. CRS acknowledged that it left out the “continual use of U.S. military units in the exploration, settlement, and pacification of the western part of the United States.” The [Military Intervention Project at Tufts University’s](#) Center for Strategic Studies has documented even more foreign meddling. “The U.S. has undertaken over 500 international military interventions since 1776, with nearly 60 percent undertaken between 1950 and 2017,” the project wrote. “What’s more, over one-third of these missions occurred after 1999.” The Military Intervention Project added: “With the end of the Cold War era, we would expect the U.S. to decrease its military interventions abroad, assuming lower threats and interests at stake. But these patterns reveal the opposite—the U.S. has increased its military involvements abroad.”



Affirmative Evidence³

General

Stephenson (23): The US is increasingly “force-first”

Stephenson, Heather. “U.S. Foreign Policy Increasingly Relies on Military Interventions” Tufts Now. Oct 16, 2023

<https://now.tufts.edu/2023/10/16/us-foreign-policy-increasingly-relies-military-interventions>

Toft founded the Center for Strategic Studies’ [Military Intervention Project](#), through which 40 Fletcher graduate students and postdocs researched this issue for five years and compiled a comprehensive [dataset](#) that is now publicly available. She co-authored the new book based on that research, *Dying by the Sword: The Militarization of U.S. Foreign Policy*, with Sidita Kushi, former research director at the center and now an assistant professor of political science at Bridgewater State University. Here are five key takeaways. The U.S. has switched to a “force first” approach to foreign policy. Toft calls this the rise of kinetic diplomacy, “the use of force first over other tools of state.” She says, “Traditionally, you think of diplomacy first and use of force as last. But we’ve seen a weakening of the Department of State and the strengthening of commanders-in-chief.” The book argues that the U.S. has become overly reliant on the use of force. As U.S. Department of Defense budgets have risen, the Department of State budget—which funds diplomatic efforts—has remained static at only about 5% of what is spent on defense, Toft says. “I’m not calling for an isolationist position,” says Monica Duffy Toft, professor of political science at The Fletcher School. “I’m calling for more restraint.” Photo: Anna Miller Military interventions are increasing. According to the project’s data, the U.S. has been involved in 393 military interventions in other nations since 1776. More than 200 of those have been since 1945, and 114 in the post-Cold War era (after 1989). Just since the year 2000, the project documents 72 interventions. And in one region of the world, the Middle East and North Africa, the U.S. has been involved in 77 military interventions, mostly since the 1940s. Intervention means more than boots on the ground. The project uses the term military intervention to refer to both the threat of use of force and the actual deployment of troops and materiel into another country.

Interventions Fail

Lambert et.al. (2021): State-led interventions lead to misalignment and policy failure

Lambert, Karras J., Coyne, Christopher J., and Goodman, Nathan P. “The Fatal Concept of Foreign Intervention: Evidence from the Afghanistan Papers.” *Peace Economics, Peace Science, and Public Policy*. De Gruyter Brill. 5 May 2021. <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1515/peps-2021-0001/html>

³ Please note that many of these cards are NOT fully cut (though a few are) – we believe it is usually best for debaters to cut their own cards and decide how they are best read in order to be advantageous for their individual cases. However, we have highlighted what we consider to be relevant sections to provide a guide on where you might cut the card.



Foreign intervention requires decision makers in the intervening country to identify problems in a foreign society and decide which goals will be pursued during the intervention. The intended outcomes of interventions vary but, at least rhetorically, typically include some mix of immediate humanitarian assistance, longer-term development, and permanent change toward liberal institutions. The common theme across interventions is that the end stated by interveners is to improve the welfare of the populace being intervened upon. While the military intervention in Afghanistan has from the beginning been primarily concerned with countering insurgency groups and terrorist organizations, former U.S. President George W. Bush stated in a speech as early as 2002 that the goals of continued intervention in Afghanistan involved “full commitment to a future of progress and stability for the Afghan people” as well as helping Afghanistan “claim its democratic future” so that Afghan citizens might enjoy equal rights, education, health care, and the eradication of disease and hunger (Bush 2002). No matter how laudable such goals are in the abstract, interventions that fail to align resource allocation decisions with the goals and values of the individuals in the population being intervened upon are unlikely to produce sustainable results. Since state-led foreign interventions require operating through bureaucratic political channels and often involve partnership with the state apparatus in the foreign society, policymakers cannot access the private valuations of the local population in the society being intervened upon. Therefore, such policymakers must at best formulate and act upon what they believe individuals in the foreign society would want with the resources involved in the intervention. At worst, planners in one society may seek to impose their own hierarchy of ends, irrespective of the plans and values of the individuals living in the foreign society.

Lambert et.al. (2021): Knowledge and political constraints in US-led interventions result in system collapse and domestic mistrust

Lambert, Karras J., Coyne, Christopher J., and Goodman, Nathan P. “The Fatal Concept of Foreign Intervention: Evidence from the Afghanistan Papers.” *Peace Economics, Peace Science, and Public Policy*. De Gruyter Brill. 5 May 2021. <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1515/peps-2021-0001/html>

Evidence from the Afghanistan Papers demonstrates how key aspects of the “fatal conceit of foreign intervention” contributed to the failure of U.S.-led nation-building efforts in Afghanistan. From the start, American intervention in Afghanistan faced serious epistemic (knowledge constraints) and incentive problems (political constraints), while the attempt to intervene upon and construct complex systems resulted in a variety of system effects. The first-hand accounts contained within the Afghanistan Papers illuminate how these various dynamics operated and contributed to dysfunction and failure. Our analysis has two main implications. First, the costs and adverse consequences of the war in Afghanistan have systemic causes. In Afghanistan, binding epistemic and incentive issues faced both international interveners and domestic bureaucrats at both the national and regional levels. This means that we should expect similar results in other foreign interventions where the same institutions and approaches to designing and implementing interventions are employed. Further, it means that any internationalist approach will presume more agency on the part of foreign interveners than what exists in practice due to constraints internal to the society being intervened upon. In the Afghanistan intervention, many of the issues stemmed from a pre-existing administrative structure that limited what could be achieved in practice. It also means that simply placing different leaders in charge of these interventions or tweaking tactics on the margin is unlikely to alleviate such problems. Instead, avoiding these problems would require a fundamentally different institutional approach that appreciates the



epistemic and incentive problems discussed above. If such alternative institutional approaches are not feasible, refraining from certain types of foreign interventions needs to be seriously considered. The evidence provided by the Afghanistan Papers likely understates the magnitude of the constraints involved in foreign intervention. The interviews provide a window into some aspects of the intervention, a window that is U.S.-centric and limited to a relatively small number of people. Therefore, a discussion of the nuances and realities from the perspective of local Afghan citizens and practitioners is missing. What the Afghanistan Papers do provide is insight into the perspective of a sample U.S. policymakers and analysts and some of the key patterns and constraints facing foreign interventions. Second, our analysis suggests that **government secrecy exacerbates the fatal conceit of foreign intervention by hiding the intervention's consequences from voters.** John Sopko, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction tasked with leading SIGAR, told the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee in a January 15, 2020 testimony that “an odor of mendacity” has been evident “throughout the Afghanistan issue” because of “a disincentive really [for U.S. government agencies] to tell the truth. There’s an incentive, and it’s for many reasons... we’ve created an incentive to almost require for people to lie” (U.S. Lessons Learned 2020, timestamp of quote is 52:50). **The internal interviews with leading officials involved in the intervention in Afghanistan showed an awareness of serious problems that were not publicly acknowledged. Such secrecy and misdirection surrounding the consequences of the war in Afghanistan reflects a broader problem of secrecy in the national security state. This pervasive secrecy exacerbates principal-agent problems inherent in representative government and thereby creates space for opportunism that undermines the interests of legislators and voters, not to mention those living in the societies in which the U.S. forcibly intervenes** (Coyne and Hall 2021; Coyne, Goodman, and Hall 2019).

Williams (2022): US intervention in Afghanistan exacerbated and legitimized systemic corruption resulting in billions of dollars of damages for civilians

Williams, Phil. “US Intervention in Afghanistan and the failure of governance”. Small Wars & Insurgencies. 04 August 2022.

https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09592318.2022.2120299?casa_token=whMlpijiZtkAAAAA%3A691GxLZKkTe15Huv0o9XoPUBKA0mP07xnLjC5PSY4Zt14-Ff1KQFxp1zHRIKQAEbY3L8epIg_WNNcQ#abstract

Some of the problems and challenges of corruption were inherent, some were the result of misconceptions and misunderstandings by successive administrations in the United States, and some were inadvertent but unavoidable consequences of the influx of development money and manpower. Indeed, **the US intervention in Afghanistan, like that in Iraq, was accompanied by a massive injection of economic aid. The rationale was that security and development were more likely to create stability than military action alone. Yet this injection of money had a profound and unsettling impact that highlighted the power of unintended – and unwanted – consequences. While Afghanistan, like many other developing countries had deeply embedded but traditional forms of corruption, the influx of American and, more generally, Western money transformed this low-level corruption into a post-modern form of corruption that was systemic, endemic, and highly debilitating.** As one of the reports by the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR) concluded, ‘the United States contributed to the growth of corruption by injecting tens of billions of dollars into the Afghan economy, using flawed oversight and contracting practices, and partnering with malign powerbrokers’. **The result, according to another analysis, was that aid money became ‘a source of rents, patronage, and political power in more insecure and conflict-AFFected areas of the country, sometimes even increasing conflict and social divisions’.** There was also something in the nature of Afghan society that exacerbated the problems caused by corruption. In an odd way, the corruption was transparent. As Chayes noted, ‘Afghanistan is a country made



smaller, in human terms, by its convivial and relationship-based culture. In a town like Kandahar, everyone knew who was securing the juicy development contracts and who their patrons were. Everyone discussed the quality of the work, who benefited, or the new cars the chief implementers were driving. In other words, **development resources passed through a corrupt system not only reinforced that system by helping to fund it but also inflamed the feelings of injustice that were driving people toward the insurgency**. Unfortunately, even when the United States recognized the problem, it was reluctant to take appropriate action – particularly as its allies were among those most heavily involved in corrupt and criminal activities. As SIGAR noted, ‘security and political goals consistently trumped strong anti-corruption actions’. The result was that **the state was exploited and looted and became predatory rather than protective, resulting in a precipitous loss of legitimacy that reverberated through the country. The paradox, however, was that the United States reluctance to act against corruption had a significant impact on the security situation as corruption undermined ‘the ability of Afghanistan to maintain security for its citizens and deliver basic public services. Corruption is also increasingly embedded in social practices, with patronage politics and bribery becoming an acceptable part of daily life’**. Among the earlier warnings about the corrosive impact of corruption was a 2010 UN report on corruption in Afghanistan based on ‘bribery as reported by the victims’. **The report highlighted the pervasiveness of corruption**, the forms it took, and its likely consequences. The report itself surveyed 7,600 people ‘in 12 provincial capitals and more than 1,600 villages around Afghanistan’. Remarkably it found that for ‘an overwhelming 59% of the population the daily experience of public dishonesty is a bigger concern than insecurity (54%) and unemployment (52%)’. The report included large bribes of more than \$1,000 which was more than twice the per capita GDP in Afghanistan. It also looked at what can be described as the micro and macro levels. At the micro or individual level, it found that ‘during the past 12 months, one Afghan out of two, in both rural and urban communities, had to pay at least one kickback to a public official. This was not just done through a wink and a nudge: more than half of the time (56%), the request for illicit payment was explicit by the service providers. In most instances (3/4 of the cases), baksheesh (bribes) are paid in cash. The average amount was \$160 – in a country where GDP per capita is a mere \$425 per year. This is a crippling tax on people who are already among the world’s poorest’. In terms of specifics, ‘around 25% of Afghan citizens had to pay at least one bribe to police and local officials over the past year. Between 10–20% had to pay bribes to judges, prosecutors, doctors and members of the government. A kickback is so commonly sought (and paid) to speed up administrative procedures, that more than a third of the population (38%) thinks that this is the norm’. Despite all this, only 9% of the urban population reported corrupt demands for payments. This suggested a degree of fatalism about the continued pervasiveness of corruption as well as a lack of conviction that much would or could be done about it. Indeed, the report noted in passing that Afghans seem to believe ‘that it is cheaper to buy a judge than to hire a lawyer’. It also implied that there was still considerable tolerance for corruption, particularly when paying bribes succeeded in having the desired effect. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the figures at the macro-level are equally if not more compelling. As the UNODC report noted, **‘In the aggregate, Afghans paid out \$2.5 billion in bribes over the past 12 months – that’s equivalent to almost one quarter (23%) of Afghanistan’s GDP**. By coincidence, this is similar to the revenue accrued by the opium trade in 2009 (which we have estimated separately at \$2.8 billion). In other words, and this is shocking, drugs and bribes are the two largest income generators: in Afghanistan: together they amount to about half the country’s (licit) GDP’. **Moreover, drug money and aid money together ‘created a new cast of rich and powerful individuals who operate outside the traditional power/tribal structures and bid the cost of favors and loyalty to levels not compatible with the under-developed nature of the country’**. At the same time, **corruption degraded governance and the administration of justice even at the village level**. As the



report noted, 'In southern Afghanistan, for example, a number of those surveyed complained that even the village elders, having heard complaints about corruption, no longer turn in the villains, or open a public debate aimed at finding solutions'.

Saliya (2026): US intervention in Venezuela serves to destabilize regional and international dynamics

Saliya, Candauda Arachchige. "Trump's Venezuela Intervention: A Critical Assessment of Geopolitical Strategy and Global Financial Market Ramifications". SLIIT Business School, Department of Business Management. 20 Jan 2026. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=6054814

China faces acute challenges. Approximately 80% of Venezuelan petroleum exports had flowed to China (CBS News, 2026). Trump administration's stated intention to redirect oil 'through legitimate channels' directly threatens Chinese energy security (Columbia University, 2026). China extended over \$60 billion in loans since 2007 (Chicago Council, 2026). **Venezuela's estimated \$10-12 billion debt to China faces heightened non-repayment risk** (Columbia University, 2026). This illustrates vulnerability of China's resource-backed lending strategy. China's teapot refineries particularly benefited from discounted Venezuelan crude. Loss forces China to seek alternatives at higher costs. Beyond immediate concerns, the intervention demonstrates Chinese power projection limits. **Russia's position suffered severe compromise. Moscow formalized alignment through Strategic Partnership Treaty signed May 2025 (Chicago Council, 2026). Venezuela represented Russia's most significant Latin American strategic foothold. Maduro's removal demonstrates Russian power projection limits beyond its immediate neighborhood. The intervention carries troubling implications for Ukraine. Brookings scholars note 'Trump has openly flouted international law, much as Putin has, giving Moscow further openings to disregard constraints' (Brookings Institution, 2026). Trump's statement the U.S. would 'run' Venezuela parallels Putin's Ukraine ambitions, potentially emboldening Russian maximalism. Iran faces particularly acute concerns. Tehran maintained close Venezuelan alliance since early 2000s (TIME, 2026). Venezuela represented Iran's Western Hemisphere strategic foothold. Cuba faces perhaps most immediate economic threat. The island depended heavily on Venezuelan subsidized oil, receiving approximately 27,000 barrels daily (TIME, 2026). This lifeline has been credited with keeping Cuba's struggling economy afloat.** Perhaps most profound consequences extend to international legal norms erosion. The military intervention occurred without UN Security Council authorization, without congressional approval, and without meaningful allied consultation (Chicago Council, 2026). This unilateral approach reinforces Russian and Chinese critiques that 'rules-based order' functions selectively serving American interests. The intervention provides rhetorical ammunition for authoritarian powers justifying sovereignty violations. Russia can cite Venezuela to bolster Ukraine invasion justifications; China may reference it in Taiwan rhetoric. While China does not need Venezuela precedent to justify Taiwan campaigns, 'Trump administration's Venezuela intervention is likely to embolden Russia' (Brookings Institution, 2026).

Saliya (2026): US intervention in Venezuela compromised the US power-position in the international world order

Saliya, Candauda Arachchige. "Trump's Venezuela Intervention: A Critical Assessment of Geopolitical Strategy and Global Financial Market Ramifications". SLIIT Business School, Department of Business Management. 20 Jan 2026. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=6054814



The intervention may prove catalytic in accelerating transition toward multipolar world order characterized by competing power centers and alternative institutional frameworks. China and Russia, while unable to prevent Maduro's removal, can leverage the episode to bolster BRICS expansion, alternative payment systems development, and Global South coalition-building. The intervention provides concrete case study demonstrating dollar system dependence risks and vulnerability to U.S. extraterritorial power projection. States seeking reduced exposure now possess tangible evidence justifying diversification strategies. China's Cross-Border Interbank Payment System, renminbi internationalization efforts, and currency swap expansion all receive renewed impetus from Venezuela's experience. Paradoxically, actions designed to protect dollar dominance may accelerate the very dedollarization processes Washington seeks to prevent. Morgan Stanley notes high-profile interventions may speed efforts 'to diversify reserve currencies and develop alternative payment systems' (Morgan Stanley, 2026). The current strategy may secure short-term advantages while incentivizing alternative system creation. The Venezuela intervention carries troubling implications for contested territories. While China does not need Venezuelan precedent to justify Taiwan campaigns, the episode demonstrates powerful states increasingly prioritize strategic interests over international law when opportunities arise. For Ukraine, the intervention undercuts Western moral authority while demonstrating international norms constrain only states lacking power to ignore them.

Table 3 reports the predicted probability of integrity rights violations. According to the results, the initiation of a supportive intervention is likely to increase the predicted probability of extrajudicial killing by 103 percent. Neutral interventions, on the other hand, increase the predicted probability of extrajudicial killing by 130 percent. The predicted probability of disappearance is likely to increase by 239 percent and 260 percent following the initiation of supportive and neutral interventions, respectively. The predicted probability of torture changes by 66 percent when a country is under supportive intervention. The change is 57 percent when an armed interference is neutral toward the target regime. The results also show that supportive intervention increases the predicted probability of political imprisonment by 70 percent. The predicted probability of political imprisonment goes up by 46 percent and 93 percent when the target state faces neutral and hostile interventions, respectively. Among the control variables in the human rights equation, lower GDP per capita, large population size, and presence of civil wars and past conflict increase the probability of the integrity rights abuses across the models. The level of democracy is a key predictor of torture and political imprisonment. Interstate war, however, fails to produce any significant association with the integrity rights variables. In the intervention equation (bottom half) across the models, the results suggest that states with strong capabilities are more likely to deter military intervention, while higher levels of human rights abuses are likely to increase the likelihood of external military operations. The democracy and democracy-squared variables are also statistically significant, suggesting that countries with liberal democratic regimes or authoritarian systems are less likely to experience external military interference. The cold war variable, on the other hand, is positively associated with the likelihood of intervention. An intervention appears to be most likely in a country located in the Middle East or North Africa. Surprisingly, the civil war and past conflict fail to show a statistically significant association with the likelihood of intervention in the expected direction in any of the models.

Sovereignty and State Autonomy

Wu (2023): Intervention in policymaking undermines state autonomy, harming effective and sustainable social advocacy



Wu, Cecilia Yue. “Challenging Paternalistic Interference: the case for Non-Intervention in a Globalized World.” Harvard International Law Journal. Winter 2023.

https://journals.law.harvard.edu/ilj/wp-content/uploads/sites/84/HILJ-651-Wu_compressed.pdf

Autonomy and independence in a state’s policymaking process is also crucial for the efficacy of political movements and social advocacy on the ground. Even when a policy change is enacted, it requires popular acceptance to be translated into real impact, and a society is less likely to embrace progressive changes that are perceived as being imported from the outside, instead of generated organically from within the community.¹⁴⁰ Further complicating the picture is the rise of nationalism in global politics. The fact that a certain policy is an objective of foreign interference may raise antagonism from the local government and public. For example, LGBTQ movements in the developing world often face the accusation that “LGTBQ” identities are a Western invention or imperialist import at odds with the local culture.¹⁴¹ Such prejudice can be reinforced when Western states and actors actively fund, oversee, or orchestrate local advocacy efforts.¹⁴² I worked at an LGBTQ education nonprofit in China from 2020 to 2021. We were alarmed when President Biden announced that the United States was putting global LGBTQ rights at the forefront of its foreign policy. The more vocal the U.S. administration is about LGBTQ rights worldwide, the more trouble our organization has—we were likely to face stronger suspicion from the Chinese government, increased shutdown of our activities, greater safety concerns for ourselves, and more difficulty in changing the public’s mind when LGBTQ rights become a “sensitive political issue” at odds with prevailing nationalistic sentiments. In this respect, foreign interference can easily be counterproductive. Indeed, Global South states may “adopt defensive strategies for countering what they perceive [as] Western attempts at enforcing [an] international hierarchy” where Euro-American constructs of identity and rights are promulgated across the globe.¹⁴³ This illustrates how paternalistic interference can undercut progress by depriving the local community of the autonomy to make their own decisions.

Domination and Hegemonic Power

Wu (2023): Western powers leverage “justified” intervention to promote their own geopolitical interests at the expense of targeted states

Wu, Cecilia Yue. “Challenging Paternalistic Interference: the case for Non-Intervention in a Globalized World.” Harvard International Law Journal. Winter 2023.

https://journals.law.harvard.edu/ilj/wp-content/uploads/sites/84/HILJ-651-Wu_compressed.pdf

The first problem of paternalistic intervention is that the intervening state may be disingenuous about its intentions. The moral high ground of altruistic purposes and humanitarian objectives creates normative appeal for otherwise unpalatable interventions. Indeed, the goals of development, equality, and human rights appear to be such universal good that it is hard to conceive of why measures to advance them should be objectionable under international law. Such righteous claims often conceal the real incentives behind interference.¹⁴⁴ Recall the hypothetical at the beginning of this Note, where China demands the United States legalize abortion and prohibit guns with the threat of sanctions. Part of the objection may be that China does not care about human rights in the United States at all. It is only criticizing Dobbs as a pretext to tarnish the United States’ global image and retaliate against U.S. criticism of China’s human rights abuses. Similar problems can be observed in many other scenarios. Empirical analyses on unilateral humanitarian intervention have found that there are few interventions, among many purported ones, that “can be even plausibly described as motivated primarily by humanitarian concerns,” as opposed to the intervening state’s power pursuits or



geopolitical interests. 90 Cases of paternalistic interference fare no better. Consider development projects in formerly colonized states. During the Cold War, the United States offered large-scale aid and development programs to Global South states through USAID, which President Kennedy described as fulfilling the United States' "moral obligations as a wise leader and good neighbor in the interdependent community of free nations."⁹¹ Yet, USAID largely arose out of fear that extreme poverty would lead to communist insurrections,⁹² and was primarily concerned with protecting U.S. national interests. ⁹³ These programs aimed at promoting free market democracies in recipient countries, while references to human rights were largely an ideological weapon, as the United States "overlook[ed] grave violations by allies such as Guatemala and Zaire and claim[ed] violations by communist countries."⁹⁴ Western states also contributed to international financial institutions ("IFIs") like the World Bank to provide highly subsidized loans to the Global South. ⁹⁵ The Bank encouraged Global South states to borrow heavily in order to modernize their national economies and fund a whole host of social projects. ⁹⁶ However, when African states struggled with their balances of payment after the 1973 oil crisis and had to borrow from Western financial institutions at much higher interest rates to repay existing debt, the World Bank blamed the debt crisis on the African states' "domestic policy inadequacies" and pressed the need for Western-prescribed policy reforms. ⁹⁷ While Africa was "unable to point to any significant growth" from the 1960s to 1980s,⁹⁸ the profits that the United States derived from Africa almost tripled in the early 1970s. ⁹⁹ By prescribing development agendas and influencing the economic policies of the Global South, Western actors set out to bring modernization and prosperity to those states, only to leave them in an economic quagmire while Western states themselves benefited both economically and geopolitically from the exchanges. By the 1990s, it was observed that "the [IMF] and the [World] Bank have been hijacked by their major shareholders for overtly political ends. Whether in Mexico in 1994, Asia in 1997, or Russia throughout the 1990s, the institutions became a more explicit tool of Western, and more particularly American, foreign policy."¹⁰⁰

Wu (2023): Pretextual justifications involve an abuse of epistemological power that allows Western powers to dominate smaller states to their own benefit

Wu, Cecilia Yue. "Challenging Paternalistic Interference: the case for Non-Intervention in a Globalized World." Harvard International Law Journal. Winter 2023.
https://journals.law.harvard.edu/ilj/wp-content/uploads/sites/84/HILJ-651-Wu_compressed.pdf

"Why are pretexts harmful?" one may ask. After all, it is unsurprising that states conduct their foreign affairs based on their national interests. For states that yield significant voting power in an IO, sometimes to the effect of a veto,¹⁰⁶ it is also unsurprising that the IO's course of action would reflect that state's concerns. Still, pretextual justifications for intervention are harmful for several reasons. In policy areas such as economic development or environmental protection that involve technical expertise, Western states can leverage their privilege in knowledge production to conceal their ulterior motives and lure the recipient country into following their direction. ¹⁰⁷ When the interfering state represents both "objective" knowledge and its own interests in promoting a preferred policy choice, it can lead to conflating the latter with the former. The insincerity coupled with epistemological power interferes with the recipient country's ability to make policy decisions in their best interests. For example, Western states exported their models for intellectual property protection through Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights agreements, only to make foreigners much more likely to benefit from these protections than locals in Global South states. ¹⁰⁸ In the human rights context, pretexts



and hypocrisy are particularly troubling. The power of international human rights law lies, in large part, in its articulation of universal norms and its ability to persuade states to strive towards that ideal. 109 When a powerful state uses the language of human rights to support self-interested interventions or cites human rights violations to justify punitive measures against a rival state, the pretext undermines the normative power of the international human rights discourse. The reference to human rights for geopolitical and strategic purposes does injustice to the genuine human rights endeavor, creating the cynical impression that it is merely a foreign policy tool at the great powers' disposal.

US Reputation Declining

Stephenson (23): Force over diplomacy looks bad to allies

Stephenson, Heather. "U.S. Foreign Policy Increasingly Relies on Military Interventions" Tufts Now. Oct 16, 2023//AP

<https://now.tufts.edu/2023/10/16/us-foreign-policy-increasingly-relies-military-interventions>

And then by 1950, it's 50/50." Pointing to U.S. involvements in Vietnam and Afghanistan, neither of which ended in victory, she says, "It's much more difficult today." That's another argument for reconsidering the increased reliance on military intervention. The U.S. needs to invest more in diplomacy. Toft likens the current state of U.S. foreign policy to a game of whack-a-mole, in which the U.S. sees issues popping up and has "only one way of dealing with them, which is the hammer" of military force. The drawbacks of such a foreign policy approach include siphoning taxpayer dollars away from other priorities, Toft says. She notes that spending \$1 million on defense produces about seven jobs, while spending the same money on elementary and secondary schools would produce 20 jobs. **Overreliance on force rather than**

diplomacy, intelligence gathering, economic statecraft, and the powers of persuasion **can also harm the U.S. reputation abroad, causing it to be seen as a threat and to lose its influence**, Toft says.

"The book is basically a battle cry for strengthening the Department of State." "Americans think that the United States should be engaged. I'm not calling for an isolationist position," she says. "I'm calling for more restraint, particularly when it comes to the use of force."

Regionalism

Josef (22): Foreign solutions in the Middle East have been harmful while regional cooperation has been successful.

Josef, Michael. "The Middle East without foreign interventions" Geopolitical Intelligence Services Reports. April 14, 2022

<https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/middle-east-intervention/>

The Middle East and North Africa have been political hotspots for the last 70 years. This was not limited to the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab conflicts. The interests of global and regional powers clashed there, with alliances often changing. New borders, carved out of the Ottoman Empire by the victors of World War I, led to the creation of artificial nations and the emergence of non-state political and military actors. **The region unfortunately allowed foreign actors to play a role in their interstate relations.** **This increased tensions between local powers,** but also affected the internal affairs of these countries. It is significant that the agreement limiting Iran's nuclear aspirations, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was only signed by Tehran and the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council



(the United States, Russia, France, the United Kingdom and China) as well as Germany. None of the neighboring countries or regional powers, like Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia or Egypt, were involved. The deal had important flaws, and did not demand that Iran halt its sponsoring of terrorist activities and its warmongering in Lebanon and Yemen. The JCPOA was then canceled by the Trump administration. Iran remained a major sponsor of terrorism in the region and beyond. In other areas, diverting interests between global and regional powers led to wars, unrest, and diplomatic and economic conflicts. The main regional powers were Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran. Turkey, a NATO member, maintained good relations with Israel until the mid-2000s but otherwise tended to not get involved in Middle Eastern politics. Region in flux In the 1960s, Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser tried to play a leading role in the region. Cairo pushed for a socialist union of Arab countries, threatened Israel and caused unrest in Yemen, while still managing to remain unaligned throughout the Cold War.

At the time, Mohammad Reza Shah's Iran played a stabilizing role – but this ended in 1979 when Ayatollah Khomeini took over and created the Islamic Republic. A bloodbath ensued during the brutal Iran-Iraq war. Chemical weapons were used, especially by Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

Iran was supported by the Soviets and Iraq had Washington's tacit backing. **The West also carried out direct military interventions during the two Iraq wars and bombings in Muammar Qaddafi's Libya. The continuing threat posed by Tehran's subversive activities in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen is uniting the Arab countries.**

With the start of the so-called "Arab Spring" in 2011, a protest movement triggered by food price inflation, the cards were reshuffled. The military took over in Egypt to cast out a radical Islamist government led by the Muslim Brotherhood after the fall of President Hosni Mubarak. He resigned under pressure from protesters, but especially from then U.S. President Barack Obama. In Libya, Qaddafi, a tyrant and sponsor of terrorism, was killed, and the civil war that followed is still unresolved a decade later. Opposing factions have various foreign sponsors. Meanwhile, Syria's devastating civil war started as a proxy conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia, combined with pressure from the U.S., Russia, Turkey and Europe. The rise of Islamic State (also known as ISIS or Daesh) complicated matters, and Kurdish fighters in both Iraq and Syria contributed to crushing the terrorist organization. Under Recep Tayyip Erdogan – first as prime minister, then as president – Turkey started to play a more active role in the region, becoming a crucial actor in the conflict in neighboring Syria. Moreover, Kurdish terrorism caused problems for Ankara. Relations between Turkey and Israel started to deteriorate some 15 years ago. Ankara adopted a more Islamic (although not radical) leaning and antagonized President El-Sisi's Egypt. This affected the country's relations with Saudi Arabia, which supports Mr. El-Sisi.

However, the area has begun to come together and is trying to find regional solutions. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are now important players. **The continuing threat posed by Tehran's subversive activities in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen is uniting the Arab countries. The Abraham Accords agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, unofficially approved by Saudi Arabia, is a sign of this regional rapprochement. Turkey's relations with key countries are improving, not only with Israel but also with Saudi Arabia** – as demonstrated by the fact that Ankara has now transferred the jurisdiction for procedures concerning the Jamal Khashoggi murder to Riyadh. Hopefully, **this trend will limit Iran's harmful activities.** Lifting sanctions without Tehran's commitment to stop sponsoring terrorism would have negative consequences. In this context, it would be preferable if the JCPOA agreement in its proposed form was not renewed. This would also improve Israel's security and create a more favorable environment to solve the Palestinian conflict.

Economic Tradeoff (Cost)

Stephenson (23): Basing US foreign policy on intervention is economically detrimental: spending 1m on education produces 3x as many jobs as 1m on defense.

Stephenson, Heather. "U.S. Foreign Policy Increasingly Relies on Military Interventions" Tufts Now. Oct 16, 2023 <https://now.tufts.edu/2023/10/16/us-foreign-policy-increasingly-relies-military-interventions>

The stakes are changing—and so are the odds. Toft also argues that the U.S. is engaging in military actions that are not as central to its national interest, with lower odds of winning, than it did before. Since the start of the twentieth century, the strongest nations in the world—known as major and great powers—have been fighting harder and winning less often, she says. "In the nineteenth century, they had a 9 in 10 chance of prevailing. And then by 1950, it's 50/50." Pointing to U.S. involvements in Vietnam and Afghanistan, neither of which ended in victory, she says, "It's much more difficult today." That's another argument for reconsidering the increased reliance on military intervention. The U.S. needs to invest more in diplomacy. Toft likens the current state of U.S. foreign policy to a game of whack-a-mole, in which the U.S. sees issues popping up and has "only one way of dealing with them, which is the hammer" of military force. **The drawbacks of such a foreign policy**



approach include siphoning taxpayer dollars away from other priorities, Toft says. She notes that spending \$1 million on defense produces about seven jobs, while spending the same money on elementary and secondary schools would produce 20 jobs. Overreliance on force rather than diplomacy, intelligence gathering, economic statecraft, and the powers of persuasion can also harm the U.S. reputation abroad, causing it to be seen as a threat and to lose its influence, Toft says. “The book is basically a battle cry for strengthening the Department of State.” “Americans think that the United States should be engaged. I’m not calling for an isolationist position,” she says. “I’m calling for more restraint, particularly when it comes to the use of force.”



Negative Evidence⁴

General

Kavanagh (2019): Interventions are successful most of the time

Kavanagh, Jennifer. “Characteristics of Successful U.S. Military Interventions” RAND Corporation. April 1, 2019//AP https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3062.html

Using an original data set of 145 ground, air, and naval interventions from 1898 through 2016, this report identifies those factors that have made U.S. military interventions more or less successful at achieving their political objectives.

While these objectives were often successfully achieved, about 63 percent of the time overall, levels of success have been declining over time as the United States has pursued increasingly ambitious objectives. The research combines statistical analysis and detailed case studies of three types of interventions — combat, stability operations, and deterrence. The research highlights that the factors that promote the successful achievement of political objectives vary by the nature of the objective and the intervention. For example, sending additional ground forces may help to defeat adversaries in combat missions but may have a more contingent effect on success in institution-building in stability operations, where nonmilitary resources and pre-intervention planning may be especially vital. The report offers five main policy recommendations. First, planners should carefully match political objectives to strategy because factors that promote success vary substantially by objective type. Second, sending more forces does not always promote success, but for certain types of objectives and interventions, greater capabilities may be essential. Third, policymakers should have realistic expectations regarding the possibility of achieving highly ambitious objectives. Fourth, pre-intervention planning is crucial. Finally, policymakers should carefully evaluate the role that might be played by third parties, which is often underappreciated. Key Findings General findings U.S. political objectives in military interventions were often successfully achieved, about 63 percent of the time, with clear failure to achieve them relatively rare, about 8 percent of the time. U.S. objectives have tended to become more ambitious over time, and this shift has corresponded with a gradually decreasing likelihood that objectives will be successfully achieved. Combat and counterinsurgency interventions Particularly in the post-1945 era, the United States has generally been able to achieve its objectives in these interventions when it applies substantial numbers of forces, and particularly ground forces. The effectiveness of U.S. forces in achieving objectives in combat interventions may be augmented by the often-superior technical capabilities of the U.S. military. Pre-intervention planning is a key factor influencing the ability of the United States to achieve its objectives Stability operations The ability of the United States to focus on and achieve its political objectives in stability operations appears to diminish as the intensity of conflict increases. Nonmilitary resources and pre-intervention planning can be central to success.

Human Rights and Humanitarian Interests

SURF (n.d.): Non-intervention in the Rwandan genocide resulted in over a million deaths

SURF Survivors Fund. “Statistics.” Survivors Fund (SURF). No date. https://survivors-fund.org.uk/learn/statistics/#_ftn6

After the Holocaust, in 1948 under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the leaders of the world came together and preached ‘never again.’ Yet in 1994 the world watched as the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda occurred in the

⁴ Please note that these cards are NOT fully cut – we believe it is usually best for debaters to cut their own cards and decide how they are best read in order to be advantageous for their individual cases. However, we have highlighted what we consider to be relevant sections to provide a guide on where you might cut the card.



full knowledge of the International Community. It was one of the most brutal acts of murder ever committed. Over the course of 100 days from 6th April to 16th July 1994, an estimated 800,000 to 1 million Tutsi and a number of moderate Hutu were slaughtered in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. Although the exact figure is unknown, official Rwandan government documents estimate that the number of people killed in the genocide is 1,074,017 of whom 93.7 percent were Tutsi.[1] A 2008 report compiled by the Student Genocide Survivors Organisation (AERG) estimated the number to be close to 2 million.[2] During this period, more than 6 men, women and children were murdered every minute of every hour of every day. This brutally efficient killing was maintained for over 3 months.[3] The death in Rwanda accumulated at nearly three times the rate of the Jewish dead during the Holocaust. It was the most efficient mass killing since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[4] Between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped during the 100 days of genocide. Up to 20,000 children were born to women as a result of rape.[5] Many women and men were injured or killed due to being shot, stabbed, or mutilated in the genitals.[6] Of all the women who took an HIV/AIDS test in the 5 years after the genocide, 70% were infected with HIV and AIDS.[7] In many cases, this was a result of a systematic and planned use of rape by HIV+ men as a weapon of genocide.[8] Due to lack of medication, many died in the aftermath of the genocide.[9] Most HIV positive survivors had no way to access antiretroviral drugs needed to maintain their health. In direct contrast, those arrested for rape at Arusha prison (Affiliated with the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)), were given access to free medication, medical assistance, three meals a day and family visitation rights.[10] Approximately 300,000 children were murdered during the genocide. Child survivors were found hiding among corpses, in cupboards or in bushes. The Rwandan National Trauma Survey estimates that 96% of children observed violence, 80% lost family members, 69% witnessed death or harm, 31% observed rape and 91% believed they would die. UNICEF estimates 95,000 children were left orphaned because of the genocide and over one third of children of Rwanda witnessed the deaths of their families.[13] After the genocide, over 120,000 people were detained and accused of participation and involvement in the genocide. To cope with the number of prosecutions, judicial action was pursued on three levels: the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the national court system and the Gacaca courts.[14]

Szandzik (2022): US intervention in Rwanda could have stopped the Rwandan genocide

Szandzik, Eric James. "President Clinton's Non-Intervention in the Rwandan Genocide: An analysis of US Presidential Foreign Policy Decisions". World Affairs. 10 February 2022.
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/00438200211064941?casa_token=Db7nWHx_7FOAAAAA%3AanPbJbUs3u0bveDev3o-3IuDFGnAus0peTYBciqUUGAdVziefD2ECeGi-Yp2jDgz90GF74yIBbrY3A

The preponderance of evidence suggests that only a military intervention could have stopped the genocide by saving a substantial number of lives. After leaving office, Clinton (2013) estimated that he could have saved 300,000 lives through an intervention. While the exact number of lives saved is unknown, Kuperman's conservative estimate still suggests that the United States could have saved a significant number of lives. This is likely why Clinton admitted that it was the greatest regret of his presidency. The perpetrators of the genocide systematically targeted unarmed civilians, they were not militant casualties in a Rwandan civil war. An intervention force would have only needed to protect unarmed Rwandan civilians, it would not have been required to take sides of opposing armies (Boutros-Ghali 1994; FOIA 1994c; Keating 1994; United Nations 1994b). Such an initiative would have reduced the risk to a deployed intervention force and simplified the mission overall. The most effective way to protect those unarmed civilians would have been through a coordinated effort of a militarized force. On April 20, 1993, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali acknowledged that a cease-fire was not going to occur, and the only way to ensure the cessation of violence and the delivery of humanitarian aid was to send in infantry (United Nations 1994a). Throughout April and May, multiple administration officials from the United States, UN, and other countries, agreed that a military intervention could have stopped the genocide (FOIA 1994d; Keating 1994; United Nations 1994b). The trouble was finding the troops. In April 1994,



President Clinton explored options to have neighboring countries launch an intervention (Lewis 1994a). Though there was a general agreement on the necessity of an armed intervention, after two months of the genocide had past, Clinton was still unable to find troops. He tried to encourage potential participants by explaining, “I don’t think it would take all that many troops to stop a lot of this fighting if several African nations would go in together and do it” (Clinton 1994d). Most observers understood that Rwandans needed armed troops to stop the genocide, but none were provided (Boutros-Ghali 1994; FOIA 1994c, 1994d; Keating 1994; United Nations 1994a, 1994b). The New York Times explained that there were not any troops to be found and that contributing nations already deployed all of their resources (Lewis 1994b). **The CIA (1994a) reported that the Europeans would be unlikely to deploy an intervention force. The UN could not even rent mercenaries from the neighboring African countries because none were being offered (Subcommittee 1994b). When compared to any other country or international organization at that time, the United States was the most capable to supply troops for an intervention into Rwanda, and President Clinton was well aware of these capabilities. When he prioritized the extraction of American citizens from Rwanda, Special Forces arrived on site within two days (Clinton 1994e). The U.S. NSC received a diplomatic cable which stressed, “It is U.S. troops who have the greatest capacity” to lead in this type of situation (FOIA 1994e).** Rwandan radio stations that encouraged genocide were concerned about potential American action. In May and June, those radio stations mentioned President Clinton or the United States on at least five different occasions (MIGS 1994a). **Upon retrospect, many key figures noted the capabilities of the United States at that time and its failure to take initiative. Clinton (2012) reflected that if the United States had “sent 10,000 troops...we might have been able to save a third of the people who died...I regret it.” As the Force Commander of UN Peacekeepers in Rwanda, General Roméo Dallaire was the most informed individual to judge whether an intervention force could have stopped the genocide, and he agreed with Clinton. He estimated that hundreds of thousands of Rwandans could have been saved if he only had a brigade of 5,000 troops (Dallaire 2008). Lake (2002) admitted that the United States could have stopped the genocide in Rwanda, but the United States decided to not utilize its capacity.** Albright (2004) also regretted that she had not called on the United States to launch an intervention. Given that the United States was the most capable actor to provide an intervention force, coupled with the fact that no other troops could be found, it is worth examining why President Clinton did not authorize such an intervention.

Regime Change / Democracy

Samba-Moussina (2025): The main goal is democracy

Samba-Moussinga, Virgile. “U. S. Military Interventions for Democracy: A Covered Imperialism or a New Manifest Destiny?” Liberty University. March 18, 2025
<https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/hsgppconference/2025/tuesday/5/>

Between 1776 and 2019, the United States undertook over 400 military interventions. The shift from an isolationist to an interventionist U.S. foreign policy choice has captured scholars’ interest in investigating the rationales and impact of these military interventions on democratic consolidation worldwide. The central research question is: How have the U.S. military interventions enabled democratic consolidation? This research paper identifies two schools of thought. On the one hand, researchers argue that the U.S. military interventions only support the liberal principles of the founding era, drawing on the assumptions that the Founding Fathers believed that American moral and political values were universal and worthy of being spread globally. On the other hand, researchers target the U.S. military interventions to consolidate American imperialism. This research paper discusses the impact of the U.S. military interventions on democracy through the theoretical lens of democratic consolidation and conservative internationalism. **Using a comparative case study design of the U.S. military interventions during the War on Terror between 2001 and 2021, this paper concludes that U.S. interventionist foreign policy is grounded in the philosophy of New Manifest Destiny, which,** beyond the expansion of the United



States from the East to the West Coast under the doctrine of Manifest Destiny widely spread during James Polk's presidency, **holds that it is God's destiny for the United States to defend and spread democracy, order, and justice worldwide.**

Neuman (2026): Panama exemplifies how US intervention can bolster democracy

Neuman, Scott. "U.S. interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean haven't always gone as planned" NPR. Jan 2, 2026

<https://www.npr.org/2026/01/02/nx-s1-5652133/us-venezuela-interventionism-caribbean-latin-america-history-trump>

"In the end, it was ... soft power that led to the Sandinistas' loss in the elections and the victory by Chamorro," Gamarra notes. Subsequently, Ortega's political stance evolved away from Marxism, and he won elections in 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021. Today Ortega is president of Nicaragua along with his wife, co-President Rosario Murillo. Murphy says it's a different Ortega now — one that "looks more like a Somoza government than a Sandinista government because it's a family dictatorship." Ortega and Murillo, who Murphy calls "the power behind the throne," have "followed almost to the letter what Somoza was doing." The U.S. invasion of Panama Although brutal and corrupt, **Panama's Gen. Manuel Noriega** was useful to the U.S. in the 1980s, due to the de facto leader's cooperation with the CIA in **providing a base of operations for the Contras in Nicaragua.** But **Noriega's drug trafficking, which included a relationship with notorious Colombian narcotrafficker Pablo Escobar, soon transformed him into a net liability for the U.S. By 1986, mounting evidence of his ties to drug cartels, extrajudicial killings and selling of U.S. secrets to Eastern European governments was an embarrassment. In 1988, federal grand juries in Miami and Tampa indicted Noriega on racketeering, drug smuggling and money laundering charges.** The following year, President George H.W. Bush took office. Bush was briefly CIA director in the 1970s, when Noriega was considered a valuable intelligence asset. But in 1989, Bush decided that Noriega needed to go. The administration backed a failed coup attempt in October. But two months later, Bush **launched Operation Just Cause**, an invasion by 20,000 U.S. troops that ultimately overthrew Noriega and took him into U.S. custody. Since Noriega's ouster, Panama has maintained a stable democracy with regular, peaceful elections and significant economic growth. Gamarra says **Panama is a rare example of a successful American intervention in the region. "We went in there, we got rid of Manuel Noriega,"** he says. **"We had a clear exit plan, which is not something the U.S. is very good at anywhere else,"** Gamarra says, referring to the **emphasis on capturing Noriega in a quick and limited military operation.** Today, he says, **"at least in terms of its economic system, [Panama] is still extraordinarily successful."** However, Murphy is less sanguine. "I don't think the invasion is responsible for anything positive that comes later," he says, "other than the fact that Noriega was no longer in power."

McGinnis (2022): US intervention supported democracy-building in Ghana

McGinnis, Camille. "Foreign Intervention in Building Democracies: Does It Set Them Up for Failure?" Democratic Erosion Consortium. April 27, 2022

<https://democratic-erosion.org/2022/04/27/foreign-intervention-in-building-democracies-does-it-set-them-up-for-failure%E2%80%9C#:~:text=Intervention%20Does%20Lead%20to%20Democracy,leader%20or%20wage%20a%20war.>

Burkina Faso is an example of a young democracy whose path was riddled with disagreements and coups, but not much major foreign intervention. **After gaining independence in 1960,** the country started off democratically with a President as the executive leader. This was followed by a military coup, a Prime Minister, a multi-party constitution, and, in the 1980s, an assortment of coups. A promising president is elected in 1990. This president goes on to engage in executive aggrandizement, manipulating the democratic institutions and allowing himself to remain in power until 2014 when citizens' protests become ubiquitous. Although the leader manipulated the systems originally, the people were



still able to express their discontent with the government and enact change. Despite the lack of intervention, Burkina Faso was mostly able to secure democracy on its own. Intervention Does Lead to Democracy! Ghana's Election Efficacy Similar to Burkina Faso, Ghana gained independence from previous colonial rule during the mid-20th century, in 1957. In the years that followed, the government is handed back and forth amidst military coups and presidential elections. **Finally, In 1996, "the United States, Canada, the European Union, and the Netherlands extended around \$12 million... to enhance its capacity to facilitate free and fair elections."** These efforts helped to solidify belief in the legitimacy of the election among citizens. **In this case, intervention helped to strengthen the civic culture in the democratizing country.** What stands out in this example is that foreign aid was provided specifically to build and strengthen the democratic institutions, not to overthrow a non-democratic leader or wage a war. Intervention is Good Within Reason Obviously, among strong democratic countries, there will likely also be a strong belief that democracy is the best form of government and should be implemented everywhere. This does not mean that all countries should be democratic and that strong democracies should spread their influence. But, In some cases foreign intervention is necessary to get democracy started in a country. As seen in all of the above examples, the foreign country contributed financial or military aid in an effort to bolster democratization. However, the methods of intervention are critical. As we have seen, institutions don't build themselves. Every country has a unique culture. Instead of solely launching military vendettas, it is essential that the democratic institutions are specialized and built to work for the specific country, and that a belief in the efficacy of the institutions be established. If this practice is not upheld, the democratizing country in question will be left with a shell of a democracy when the foreign support departs.

International Leadership

Kobylska (2025): US non-intervention reduced credibility with domestic audiences

Kobylska, Marta. "Post-Cold War Presidential Rhetoric of Non-Intervention: How US Presidents Justify Military Inaction". *Comparative American Studies an International Journal*. 17 July 2025.
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14775700.2025.2529626?casa_token=VNZYVeHmLBwAAAAA%3AJXtfgUPiBBmrAcUclqxhdgvRM_8Ql4cNORXGDOnLZ5piw2v7Vr6ocpi-yf6CF4XROgMyFt_2JdmuPg#abstract

In debates about US military inaction regarding Bosnia and Rwanda, the American public proved less inclined to favor intervention than American scholars assessing the same situations. Indeed, in responses to general questions about presidential handling of foreign affairs and specific questions concerning presidential dealing with a particular situation, the majority of Americans polled approved of Bush Sr.'s handling of the situation in Bosnia and Clinton's response to the situation in Rwanda. Conversely, a survey of **scholarly commentary indicates that they viewed the US response to the situations in Bosnia and Rwanda as instances of political miscalculations and strategic mistakes.** Critics point out that Bush Sr. did not have a policy initiative and crisis management strategy fit for the post-Cold War world order. Moreover, he lacked commitment to take action in situations, which he deemed did not pose a threat to vital US interests, but which merely challenged US norms, ideals, and principles. **Along similar lines run the arguments regarding Clinton's decision against intervention in Rwanda. Analysts indicate that the president lacked the determination to take military action in situations that did not pose an immediate and direct threat to US political, economic or security interests. They fault Clinton for failing to define the killings in Rwanda as genocide for the fear of generating public opinion in support of intervening.** They call into question his shift away from a policy of multilateralism towards noninterventionism and describe his move to delegate responsibility for addressing international conflict from the United States to the United Nations as a strategic mistake. **Conversations regarding the US military inaction in Sudan, Georgia, and Ukraine reveal that public and scholarly perceptions of Bush Jr.'s and Obama's reactions to the crises were largely critical. A greater proportion of Americans disapproved more than that who approved of the presidents' dealing with the situations. Disapproval of the presidents' responses was also higher than approval among scholars. Criticism was leveled at the Sudan's, Georgia's, and**



Ukraine's low priority within the administrations' agendas; NATO's enlargement within Europe; the EU's expansion; and US' continuing challenges to Russia's view of itself as a global power.

Criticisms include the view that Bush's genocide narrative lacked an appropriate – forceful – follow-up action; that his rogue state discourse dismissed Sudan as a state that was too irresponsible to NEGotiate with; that his inconsistent, at times contradictory, language confused rather than clarified the dilemma over what global response to the situation would be most appropriate; and that his rhetoric of violent tribalism, ethnic hatred, and ancient hostility shaped a limited, late, and passive international response. Concerning Obama, critics claimed that the president offered too liberal a worldview and unrealistically idealistic language that indirectly provoked the crisis in Ukraine that he relied on discourse that missed the complexities and nuances of the situation, which consequently led to deepening and intensifying divisions and tensions that generated the crisis and that he used strong rhetoric but acted in a weak, restrained, compliant, and defensive manner without any apparent sense of purpose, vision, and engagement.

Counterterrorism

Burgess (2019): High counter terror interests can drive intervention

Burgess, Stephen. "Military Intervention in Africa: French and US Approaches Compared" Air University. Spring 2019

https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/JEMEEAA/Journals/Volume-01_Issue-1/JEMEEAA_01_1_burgess.pdf

The realist perspective is that threats to French interests in Northwest Africa are higher than to those of the United States, which explains direct French military intervention there in spite of less military resources. Conversely, threats to US interests in Eastern Africa are higher than those against French interests, which helps to explain indirect US military intervention there. France has had high interests in Northwest Africa since colonial times, which have been under increasing threat of attack from VEOs. While France has comparatively low military resources and is confronting high costs, it has decided to intervene and sustain the intervention because of the level of interests. The realist view is that US indirect intervention in Eastern Africa has occurred because of VEOs in Somali, Yemen and Kenya that threaten US interests.⁷ Also, the United States has more military resources to deal with these areas than does France, which has made it possible for US forces to intervene. However, **US interests have not been as high as in Southwest Asia and have not been so under threat that it has found it necessary to directly intervene. If US interests in Eastern Africa were higher, it would have been more willing to directly intervene militarily. For example, if bin Laden had stayed in Sudan and had been harbored by the Bashir regime and planned the 9/11 attacks from Sudan, the United States would have attacked Sudan** and not Afghanistan. The epicenter of the war on terror would have been in Eastern Africa. As for Northwest Africa, the higher level of resources enabled the United States to expend considerable resources in an area which is not high in the US national interest. Second, constructivist theory and more specifically strategic culture play a role in explaining the contrast between the tendency of France to directly intervene in Africa with subordinate partners in spite of a limited budget as against the US pattern of indirectly intervening and seeking partners as surrogates when it has massive military and financial resources. Countries and their leaders hold certain beliefs and assumptions and adhere to a strategic culture in taking military action.

Ratner (2013): Intervention + counterterror is self defense

Ratner, Steven. "[Self-Defense Against Terrorists: The Meaning of Armed Attack](#)" University of Michigan Law School. 2013//AP

https://repository.law.umich.edu/book_chapters/119/#:~:text=Abstract.in%20response%20to%20terrorist%20attacks



Publication Date 2013 Abstract **The last decade [2003-2012] has witnessed increased recourse by states to military force to respond to terrorist attacks on their soil that have originated from abroad. A number of states -- including the United States -- have justified these military actions as lawful self-defense in response to an armed attack, as permitted under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.** These claims raise multiple interpretive questions about the meaning of "armed attack" under Article 51 and of the various options that are allowed in response to one. This essay explores the contemporary understanding of an "armed attack" in terms of an attack's origins (i.e., can an attack under the Charter originate from nonstate actors?), scale (i.e., must such attacks meet a threshold of intensity to trigger lawful self-defense?), and military nature. It also focuses on the the permissibility of attributing an attack by nonstate actors to a particular state, as well as the consequences of such an attribution. It then identifies a number of outstanding areas of disagreement in the law as well as practical issues for states contemplating the use of force in response to terrorist attacks. The essay concludes with a series of recommendations for resolving these disagreements in a way that respects the imperative of avoiding an escalation in force while deterring such attacks. Comments Reproduced with permission. Originally published as: Steven R. Ratner, "Self-Defense Against Terrorists: The Meaning of Armed Attack." In *Counter-terrorism Strategies in a Fragmented International Legal Order: Meeting the Challenges*, edited by N. Schrijver and L. van den Herik, 334-55. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139178907.016>

NATO (2025): Terrorism impact

“Countering terrorism” **North Atlantic Treaty Organization**. Aug 6, 2025//AP
<https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/deterrence-and-defence/countering-terrorism>

Terrorism is the most direct asymmetric threat to the security of the citizens of NATO countries, and to international peace and prosperity. A persistent global issue that knows no border, nationality or religion. terrorism is a challenge that the international community must tackle together. NATO will continue to fight this threat with determination and in full solidarity. NATO’s work on counter-terrorism focuses on improving awareness of the threat, developing capabilities to prepare and respond, and enhancing engagement with partner countries and other international actors. A Polish Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) specialist walks towards a suspected improvised explosive device (IED) during Northern Challenge, a multinational exercise that takes place at the Icelandic Coast Guard facility in Keflavik, Iceland. NATO invoked its collective defence clause (Article 5) for the first and only time in response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 on the United States. NATO’s Counter-Terrorism Policy Guidelines focus Alliance efforts on three main areas: awareness, capabilities and engagement. NATO’s counter-terrorism work spans across the Alliance’s three core tasks: deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security. A comprehensive action plan defines and determines NATO’s role in the international community’s fight against terrorism.

Intervention Deters Great Powers

Michaels (2024): Cold War example

Michaels, Jeffrey. “Rethinking the Relevance of Self-Deterrence” US Army War College Publications. March 7, 2024
<https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/News/Display/Article/3706553/rethinking-the-relevance-of-self-deterrence/#end27>

Potential costs Israeli leaders recognized included the United States withholding support.²⁴ As one CIA estimate noted, “A major factor tending to inhibit Israeli aggressiveness is that Tel Aviv presumably anticipates that an Israeli-initiated war would seriously damage relations with the US and jeopardize the flow of US military and economic aid.”²⁵ As a practical matter, this fear translated into Israel feeling obliged to restrict the scope and intensity of its battlefield activities to ensure they were not counterproductive to the country’s longer-term interests and a military-planning assumption that its freedom of action to conduct a military campaign was limited to a handful of days.²⁶ **In the late 1970s and early 1980s, US policymakers were concerned about the possibility of a Soviet**



invasion of Iran and tried to deter it. Their actions led to the development of the Carter Doctrine and the formation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force. American analysts often framed the issue as one in which the prospect of US military intervention would be the key factor deterring Soviet aggression and advocated strategies to maximize US deterrence in that contingency.²⁷ Still, leaving the potential deterrent effect of any US military intervention aside, there were many local reasons a Soviet invasion of Iran was highly improbable. In its assessment of this scenario, the CIA identified basic problems that would self-deter the Soviet leadership. These problems did not include battlefield defeats that Iran could inflict on the Soviets. The CIA expected it would take 14 weeks—at the most—for the Russians to overcome strong Iranian resistance; with limited resistance, it would take roughly six weeks.²⁸ Instead, due to Iran's size, terrain, and large population, the CIA found the invasion requirements to be on a scale far surpassing "anything the Soviets have attempted since World War II" and estimated the Soviets would "need to commit a large occupation force, probably 300,000 to 500,000 men, to contend with an anticipated Iranian guerilla movement."²⁹

Military Spending Good

Beattie (2026): Military spending boost econ, increases innovation

Beattie, Andrew. "How Military Spending Drives Economic Growth and Technological Innovation" Investopedia. Feb 19, 2026

<https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/072115/how-military-spending-AFFects-economy.asp>

In other nations, particularly ones that are still [developing economically](#), a focus on military spending often means foregoing other important priorities. Many nations have a standing military but an unreliable public infrastructure, from hospitals to roads to schools. North Korea is an extreme example of what an unrelenting focus on military spending can do to the standard of living for the general population, as the country grapples with high levels of defense spending relative to GDP.⁴ Economic and Technological Gains From Defense Investments Military spending can not be defined solely by cost. In fact, defense spending can stimulate an economy, create jobs, and drive the development of civilian business sectors. In addition to supporting troops themselves, military spending creates a considerable amount of economic infrastructure in support of active-duty personnel. Private businesses also spring up as a result of the military spending. These can encompass everything from weapons manufacturers to restaurants near military bases. Innovations Stemming From Military Research Those critical of military spending have argued that it diverts talent and technical skills away from civilian fields and toward military research and development. However, the interplay between military and civilian sectors is less cut-and-dry. In fact, technology and talent often flow back and forth between military and civilian roles. Military research has been vital to the creation of the microwave, the Internet, and global positioning systems (GPS), among other applications.⁵ For a more recent example, consider that we now have drones capable of taking wedding photos and potentially delivering packages for Amazon.com. Much of the expense of creating basic drone technology was driven by military spending. Understanding the Guns vs. Butter Economic Model The [guns and butter curve](#) is a classic illustration of the opportunity cost of military spending. The curve graphically represents the tradeoff between defense spending ("guns") and nonmilitary spending ("butter"). The model is often used to depict how limited resources may be allocated within an economy, and the gain or loss of one good in exchange for another.



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