Geopolitics and American Policy on Use of Force: Somalia, Rwanda and Afghanistan Compared

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Introduction

Is there a coherent rationale to the United States' actions in the Post-Cold War era, specifically those related to the use of military force? This study argues that there is, namely, that geopolitical factors determine whether the U.S. would use force in a given situation. To be more explicit, a balance of geopolitical interests and accessibility to the scene of crisis determines the extent of force the U.S. would use.

The study follows the logic of the Realist paradigm in International Relations, emphasizing **capabilities** rather than **intentions**. Hence, the study concentrates on the structure of American forces and on its corollary limitations, which incorporate the geopolitical factors. Albeit American forces can technically reach anywhere on earth, this might be very costly and under certain circumstances may prevent military action from taking place. Even though the seas allow the U.S. to transit forces around the world, in many cases mere show of force (known also as "gunboat diplomacy") is insufficient and further deployment including in many instances actual fighting on the ground is also required. Reaching landlocked countries is America's greatest problem of power projection. Thus, the basic argument is that geographical conditions limit the choice of American military actions.[1]

Offensive Realism argues that great powers pursue global dominance in order to maximize their relative power. John Mearsheimer's canonical version of offensive realism argues that the bodies of water prevent this from happening, labeling it "the stopping power of water".[2] The rationale suggested in this study contradicts this explanation for great power inability to conquer the world, arguing that it is erroneous, particularly in the current era of American unipolarity (or hegemony). I

[1] Robert Jervis had already made a claim for geographical limitations on using force. Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma", *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 194-196.

[2] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 114-128.

argue that while Mearsheimer's rule is adequate to land-powers, it does not apply to sea-powers such as the U.S. (and perhaps Great Britain in the past), because water is their vehicle, whereas land hinders them. Because of its unique position in the international system as an offshore power (compared to the other great powers that are all Eurasian), American world preponderance is based on its naval power. The Navy is a strong branch, capable of maintaining offshore balancing, but it has significant problems in projecting American power into landlocked countries.

Placing geopolitical components at the center of the explanation of American use of force does not necessarily mean that geopolitics alone explains the phenomenon. This study argues that decisions on using force are made only within specific geopolitical conditions, but that does not necessarily mean that only geopolitical incentives will be weighed.

The theory outlined in the following pages is tested qualitatively on three case studies of the Post-Cold War era, using the structured, focused comparison and decision-making process tracing methods.[3] Focusing on this era allows to disregard the possibility of great power involvement in a given crisis that may influence American decision-making, since at least theoretically in this era there is no power strong enough to challenge America's military predominance. The cases are the intervention in Somalia (Operation Restore Hope, 1992-1994), the nonintervention in the Rwanda Genocide (1994), and the War in Afghanistan (2001-). Comparing these cases will illuminate the significance of the variables which compose the suggested theory.

Literature review

The literature concerning American use of force and military intervention is a major section in the literature on international security. However, the various studies in the field do not contain an adequately focused observation on the use of force, but rather present, mostly, historical (What happened in a given event?) and political (What should be done in such an event?) perspectives. The literature fundamentally asks "what **should** be done?",[4] whereas this study inquires "what **can** be done?"

There are at least two major challenges to the rationale proposed in this study. The first is quite similar to the logic proposed here and focuses on economic or political interests, for instance opening markets for trade, securing necessary natural resources, removing potential or real political rivals, and securing spheres of influence.[5] But the proposed logic explores the geopolitics of this type of

[3] The case studies were conducted using secondary literature and memoirs, but not archival document since the latter have not been declassified yet.

[4] E.g., Robert J. Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security* 21, no. 4 (Spring 1997): 5-48; Josef Joffe, "'Bismarck' or 'Britain'? Toward an American Grand Strategy after Bipolarity," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995): 94-117; Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategies from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* 21, no. 3, (Winter 1996/97): 5-53; Stephen M. Walt, "Keeping the World 'Off-Balance': Self-Restraint and U.S. Foreign Policy," in *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power*, ed. G. John Ikenberry (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 121-154.

[5] Realist theories use this logic. See, for instance, Benjamin Miller, "The Logic of US Military Interventions in the post-Cold War Era," *Contemporary Security Policy* 19, no. 3 (December 1998): 72-109; Benjamin O. Fordham, "Power or Plenty? Economic Interests, Security Concerns, and

explanations, which is a more elementary layer of the Realist paradigm. As a result, the logic proposed here is expected to explain more American actions than the existing explanations.

The second type of explanation is based on the promotion of state ideology (in the American case, promotion of democracy and human rights),[6] while the third is founded on domestic politics (such as bureaucratic politics, President-Congress relations, interest groups and public opinion).[7] None of these explanations seems satisfying in attempt to understand the American response to the various crises in the Post-Cold War era. Each may explain particular cases or several ones, but not the entire body of cases. The logic proposed in this study does not disprove any of these explanations categorically, but rather offers the infrastructure on which they can be examined more properly, without which they would have no chance to ignite a forceful action.

Within the Realist paradigm, the defensive strategies seem most suitable for the U.S., given its geopolitical location and position. This does not necessarily imply that offensive strategies are misused. Focusing on geopolitics' influence on American foreign policy seeks to identify the circumstances under which each strategy seems more plausible to endorse. The fundamental rationale of realist theories asserts that the U.S. should only intervene in Eurasia whenever a continental great power threatens to become hegemonic. The many American interventions in Eurasia throughout the years imply that these theories are flawed. Unlike the theories that tend to be prescriptive and to highlight inconsistency in American actions, this study sets out to explain past and current American actions (within the current technological environment), not to prescribe strategies. Moreover, in order to avert from misguided judgment, this study starts from one of the basic elements of national strategy, geography, and its theoretical outcome, geopolitics.

By far, few studies directly link geography with the use of force, American or other, perhaps because geography seems to be constant, apparently making it futile to study.[8] However, I argue that the fact that geography is constant makes it exceptionally valuable to study its effect over time, while other components of grand

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American Intervention," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (December 2008): 737-758; James David Meernik, *The Political Use of Military Force in US Foreign Policy* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004).

[6] *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts*, eds. Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Constance G. Anthony, "American Democratic Interventionism: Romancing the Iconic Woodrow Wilson," *International Studies Perspectives* 9, no. 3 (August 2008): 239-253; Bruce Bueno De Mesquita and George W. Downs, "Intervention and Democracy," *International Organization* 60, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 627-649; David Rieff, *At the Point of a Gun: Democratic Dreams and Armed Intervention* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005).

[7] Liberal/Ideational theories use this logic. See Peter D. Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, *Choosing Your Battles: American Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Martha Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs about the Use of Force* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Charles W. Ostrom Jr. and Brian L. Job, "The President and the Political Use of Force," *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 2 (June 1986): 541-566; Karin von Hippel, *Democracy by Force: US Military Intervention in the Post-Cold War World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Gerald Astor, *Presidents at War: From Truman to Bush, the Gathering of Military Power to Our Commanders of Chief* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2006); Mark L. Haas, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789-1989* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[8] Jan Nijman, *The Geopolitics of Power & Conflict: Superpowers in the International System 1945-1992* (London: Belhaven Press, 1993), 30; Walter A. McDougall, "Why Geography Matters… But Is So Little Learned," *Orbis* 47, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 217-233.

strategy (such as the structure of the international system) change. In short, the proposed explanation looks at the most fundamental constituent of national security policy – geopolitics – permitting a durable view with the same elements.

One recent attempt to draw a map of interventions using geography is Thomas Barnett's *The Pentagon's New Map*, in which he specifies three types of countries, "Functioning Core," "Non-Integrated Gap," and "Seam States". He claimed that the U.S. would act militarily only in the "Gap" region, which is most of Africa, the Middle East (Israel excluded), Central-East Europe, the Caucasus and parts of Asia.[9] The problem with Barnett's map is that it does not consider the "technical" aspect of power projection, which is essentially geographical. The present study attempts to sharpen Barnett's view by adding the military limits that geography coerces.

In sum, the literature rarely discusses the **ability** to intervene, perhaps assuming that the U.S. is omnipotent and can reach anywhere. Technically, this is true, but the price of reaching any scene of action, and especially "the day after", is an expensive burden. This study illuminates the price using classical geopolitical theories to present the problem and its resolution.

Geopolitics and American foreign policy

The sea was always considered essential for transforming a state into a world power. Thus, all great powers used the seas to expand their control. The U.S. did not escape this principle. Its desire for global trade led it to develop a large merchant fleet, which eventually overshadowed its European competitors. However, a concise overview of its military history demonstrates that since its independence, the U.S. rightly feared the European powers, more so, Great Britain, especially after the War of 1812.

The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 was formulated to deter the European great powers from intervening in the American Continent, but the U.S. had little power to back it.[10] By the end of the 19th Century, the U.S. developed its strong and modern Navy, which defeated the Spanish Armada and gained a sphere of influence for the U.S. in the Caribbean Basin and in South-East Asia. As the Navy became stronger, the U.S became more influential among the great powers. Soon it assumed the role of balancer in the international system that it held up to World War II, which, in turn, signaled the transition from British rule of the seas to an American one.[11]

During the Cold War the U.S., the major sea-power, used the Navy to stop the Soviet Union, the major land-power, from sowing Communism by military means. The U.S. overcame its absence from the Euro-Asian mainland by establishing strong alliances and by crossing over from the sea. The Soviet implosion in the early 1990s allowed the U.S. to act quite freely, but the U.S. did not gain world domination, not only due to lack of motivation,[12] but also because of an apparently technical reason: the Navy, which is America's forefront force for dealing with crises,[13] has limited

[9] Thomas P.M. Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Berkeley Books, 2004) and idem, *Blueprint for Action: A Future Worth Creating* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2005).

[10] The Doctrine was an empty declaration until 1904, when the Roosevelt Corollary came into effect.

[11] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery, with a New Introduction* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2006), 323-334.

[12] About this see Miller, "The Logic of US Military Interventions".

[13] "When word of a crisis breaks out in Washington, it's no accident that the first question that comes to everyone's lips is: 'Where's the nearest carrier?'" President Bill Clinton, March 12, 1993, aboard USS Theodore Roosevelt. Quote from "Where are the Carriers? – Navy Ships" http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/sys/ship/where.htm (31.1.2009)

abilities. Although it controls the sea, the Navy allows only limited power projection into the continent. The Navy doctrine evolved along this line of thought.[14]

A geopolitical analysis first focuses on the fact that the American continent is isolated from the rest of the world by two oceans. The physical distance from the other powers became the salient dimension of the U.S. worldview.[15] During the latter half of the 19th century central geopolitical perceptions evolved in Europe, and made their way to America, where they were given local perspectives.[16] As mentioned before, Defensive Realism suits the U.S. nicely thanks to its location, thus theories that call for offshore balancing or selective engagement seem most fit. Accordingly, the superpower status was perhaps counterproductive for the U.S. since it raised the temptation to employ more offensive strategies and to some extent forced the U.S. to neglect offshore balancing moves, which perhaps served its interests better.

The glory days of geopolitics were in the early twentieth century. The most important geopolitician of his time was Sir Halford Mackinder. His conceptual infrastructure served his followers and is reexamined constantly.[17] The core of his concept is the Heartland that he maintained was the core of world history. Mackinder stated a thumb-rule: **Whoever controls Eastern Europe controls the Heartland, whoever controls the Heartland rules the World-Island, and whoever controls it rules the world.** His initial assumption was that power is located in the World Island (Asia, Europe and Africa), while the rest of the world is marginal; hence, all great powers aspired to control the Heartland. The geographical location of the Heartland changed since it was first defined in 1904, but its center was always in European

[14] The Navy has four methods of showing force: imposing an embargo on the high seas, as in the cases of Iraq and Serbia; discrete attacks against littoral targets with airplanes or missiles, as in Libya in 1986 and Afghanistan in 1998; long aerial attacks to support moves, as in Kosovo and Iraq; and landing forces. Norman Friedman, *Seapower as Strategy: Navies and National Interests* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 221. "Since our Naval Forces are the Nation's 'first responders' on the scene, they must be equipped, ready and capable of helping clear the way for quick and forced entry, attack and sustained battle and a gradual, graceful exit. …" Donald H. Rumsfeld, *2003 Annual Report to the President and the Congress*, 163. www.defenselink.mil/execsec/adr2003 (22.8.2004). Centrality of the Navy since 1945 is obvious from data on annual expenditure on each military branch, as presented in the annual budget requested of the Department of Defense. Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (COMPTROLLER), *National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 2009*, September 2008 (update). Available online: http://www.defenselink.mil/comptroller/defbudget/fy2009/FY09Greenbook/greenbook_2009_updated.pdf (accessed on 5.2.2009)

[15] Alan K. Henrikson, "Mental Maps," in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, eds. Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 182-184.

[16] For various views of American foreign policy see Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changes the World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001); Michael Dunne, "'The Terms of Connection': Geopolitics, Ideology and Synchronicity in the History of US Foreign Relations," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 16, no. 3 (October 2003): 463-481; James Kurth, "Partition Versus Union: Competing Traditions in American Foreign Policy," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 15, no. 4 (2004): 809-831.

[17] Geoffrey Sloan, "Sir Halford J. Mackinder: The Heartland Theory Then and Now", in *Geopolitics: Geography and Strategy*, eds. Colin S. Gray and Geoffrey Sloan (London and Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 1999), 15-38; Colin S. Gray, "In Defence of the Heartland: Sir Halford Mackinder and His Critics a Hundred Years On," *Comparative Strategy* 23, no. 1 (2004): 9-25.

Russia, the Caucasus and western Siberia.[18] At first, the Heartland theory reflected Mackinder's fear of Germany, but in 1943 it reflected his fear of the Soviet Union.[19]

Nicholas Spykman argued that the area surrounding the Heartland, the Rimland, was actually more important than the Heartland itself, since it was the scene of struggle between the land-powers and the sea-powers. He stated his own rule: **Whoever controls the Rimland controls Euro-Asia, and whoever controls Euro-Asia rules the fate of the world.**[20]

At the turn of the twentieth century geopolitics was promoted in America by Rear-Admiral Alfred Mahan, who had great influence on American decision-makers. History, he maintained, demonstrated that only countries with large navies became great powers.[21] He advocated for a joint use of offshore powers' fleets to gain control over the seas in order to block the rise of continental powers.[22] The U.S. Navy was built to fulfill this mission,[23] and after 1945 it did so alone.

These geopolitical theories had influenced policy because they responded directly to political realities of their formation's time. Even so, their influence was not always immediate, because a responsive political situation had to emerge first, but they had real influence on policy at some stage, and still do.[24] American foreign policy during the Cold War combined the theories of Mahan, Mackinder and Spykman, aimed at containing the USSR (see table 1). The Navy was instructed to enforce Containment by transporting soldiers to relevant fronts and by approaching the mainland for deterrence. The U.S. formed alliances across the Rimland, and virtually encircled the Soviet Union, leaving only East Europe as its direct and unequivocal sphere of influence.

[18] Halford J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (April 1904): 421-444; idem, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: a Study in the Study of Reconstruction* (London: Constable, 1919); idem, "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace," *Foreign Affairs* 21, no. 4 (July 1943): 595-605. See also Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 183-202.

[19] William Henry Parker, *Mackinder: Geography as an Aid to Statecraft* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); Geoffrey Parker, *Western Geopolitical Thought in the Twentieth Century* (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

[20] Nicholas John Spykman, *The Geography of Peace* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1944 [1969]).

[21] Alfred T. Mahan, *The Influence of Seapower Upon History: 1660-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1890).

[22] Jon Sumida, "Alfred Thayer Mahan, Geopolitician", in *Geopolitics: Geography and Strategy*, eds. Colin S. Gray and Geoffrey Sloan (London and Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 1999), 39-61; James R. Holmes, "Mahan, a 'Place in the Sun', and Germany's Quest for Sea Power," *Comparative Strategy* 23, no. 1 (2004): 27-61.

[23] James R. Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1988).

[24] Norman Friedman claims that in recent years American national strategy is coming closer to classical naval strategies. Friedman, *Seapower as Strategy*, 1.

Table 1: The influence of the leading geopolitical theories on U.S. policy

Scholar	Year of publication	Theoretical spotlight	Speed of influence	Implementing President	Actual expression
Mahan	1890	sea	immediate	Theodore Roosevelt[25]	enlargement of the Navy
Mackinder	1904, 1919, 1943	Heartland	quite late	Harry Truman (and all successors)	Containment theory as the central devise in Cold War policy
Spykman	1942	Rimland	quite quick	all Cold War presidents	alliances surrounding USSR

Geopolitics as a factor in the study of American use of force seems to have disappeared entirely during the Cold War, perhaps because it was associated with Nazi ideology, hence accused for stimulating World War II.[26] Geopolitics returned to the academic discourse only toward the end of the 20th Century. However, many discussions regarding the preferred grand-strategy for the U.S. are based on geopolitics or related terms.[27]

Stephen Van Evera stated in a recent article that between 1917 and 1991 the U.S. national security policy was aimed at one goal: keeping industrial Eurasia divided, i.e., preventing any of the land-powers from gaining control over the entire continent. He proclaimed that the geopolitical danger of a Eurasian hegemon that might threaten the U.S. had demised with the Soviet Union. The danger of Eurasian hegemony by any of the continent's great powers had also declined, mostly because nuclear weapons made the great powers "virtually unconquerable".[28]

The Cold War ended with the U.S. as a single superpower with a new global set of interests. There is a clear distinction between core American interests (such as homeland security), which might lead to war when endangered, and less-central interests (that are mostly non-American), which may lead to some sort of American intervention, but less likely to war. Still, the Heartland is very important in the outline of American interests. In fact, since the Soviet Union disintegrated, the Heartland became even more important, because its instability attracts enemies to use it to endanger the U.S. and its allies.

The system of continental bases that the U.S. built during the Cold War on the Eurasian continent was not deserted after the Soviet Union imploded. On the contrary, the U.S. deepened its penetration into the mainland, established new alliances (in

[25] Harold & Margaret Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power, 1776-1918* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1966), 205-213. Roosevelt was especially influenced while in office. He ordered to build the Great White Fleet, and sent it for a worldwide tour to demonstrate U.S. power. Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet.*

[26] Michael Heffernan, "*Fin de Siècle, Fin du Monde?* On the Origins of European Geopolitics, 1890-1920", in *Geopolitical Traditions: A Century of Geopolitical Thought*, eds. Klaus Dodds and David Atkinson (London: Routledge, 2000), 27-51; Saul Bernard Cohen, *Geopolitics of the World System* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 6, 270-271, 275-277.

[27] Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Robert J. Art, "Geopolitics Updated: The Strategy of Selective Engagement," *International Security* 23, no. 3 (Winter 1998/99): 79-113; Gholz, Press and Sapolsky, "Come Home, America"; Christopher Layne, "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America's Future Grand Strategy," *International Security* 22, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 86-124; Walt, "Keeping the World 'Off-Balance'"; G. R. Sloan, *Geopolitics in United States Strategic Policy, 1890–1987* (Brighton, GB: Wheatsheaf Books, 1988).

[28] Stephen Van Evera, "A Farewell to Geopolitics," in *To Lead the World: American Strategy After the Bush Doctrine*, eds. Melvyn P. Leffler and Jeffrey W. Legro (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 12-14.

Eastern Europe through NATO, as well as in the Caucasus) and with them new bases were constructed (some were dismantled in recent years), easing American accessibility to trouble spots, mostly in Central Asia.[29] This move not only displayed Russia's weakness, but also delimited it within its new, shorter borders.

On the sea, the end of the Cold War brought the Navy to somewhat change its concept. Instead of fighting *on* the sea, it spoke of fighting *from* the sea, as reflected in the evolving naval strategies of 1992, 1994 and 2002.[30]

Given the ongoing centrality of geopolitical concerns, this study suggests a prediction of the pattern of American use of force based upon geopolitical factors. These are presented next.

A geopolitical rationale of using force

Theoretical argument and propositions

The structure of the American military forces and the subsequent operational limitations leave the U.S. with a rather short list of practical military options. The military is well aware of these considerations, and advises the president accordingly. The Weinberger-Powell Doctrine is the most characteristic expression of this awareness. It fixed the principle that the forces sent to a mission must be decisive in order to ensure their triumph.[31] The following propositions emerge from the geopolitical theory and its policy implementation (see also figure 1):[32]

1. *Vital interests and easy access will likely ignite maximum use of force (unilateral intervention or war).*
2. *Vital interests and difficult access will likely ignite medium use of force (multilateral intervention).*

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[29] On American military presence around the world see Anni P. Baker, *American Soldiers Overseas: The Global Military Presence* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2004); C.T. Sanders, *America's Overseas Garrisons: The Leasehold Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For a historical and geopolitical view of the military presence of great power beyond their borders see Robert E. Harkavy, *Great Power Competition for Overseas Bases: The Geopolitics of Access Diplomacy* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982).

[30] George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The U.S. Navy, 1890-1990* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), 451; Sean O'Keefe (Secretary of the Navy), *…From the Sea: Preparing the Naval Service for the 21st Century*, September 1992. http://www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/policy/fromsea/fromsea.txt (28.9.2004); Department of the Navy, *Forward… From the Sea.* www.dtic.mil/jointvision/b014.pdf (26.9.2004); Edward Rhodes, "'…From the Sea' and Back Again: Naval Power in the Second American Century," *Naval War College Review* 52, no. 2 (1999): 13-55; Vern Clark, *Sea Power 21: Projecting Decisive Joint Capabilities*. www.c3f.navy.mil/seapower21.html (11.9.2004). All documents emphasize the importance of combined operation of the military branches and all consider the sea as a front-base. Other possibilities for utilization of the Navy after the Cold War according to the changing concept of its function are presented in Jeremy Stocker, "Nonintervention: Limited Operations in the Littoral Environment," *Naval War College Review* 51, no. 4 (Autumn 1998): 42-62.

[31] Caspar W. Weinberger, "The Uses of Military Power", in *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World*, ed. Richard N. Haass (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1994), 173-181; Colin Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House: 1995), 558, 576; George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), 649-652; Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, Third Revised and Expanded Edition (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 307-326; Walter LaFeber, "The Rise and Fall of Colin Powell and the Powell Doctrine," *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 1 (2009): 71-93.

[32] See the Appendix for definitions.

3. *Important interests and easy access will likely ignite medium use of force (multilateral intervention).*
4. *Important interests and difficult access will likely ignite minimal use of force (proxy intervention).*
5. *Marginal interests and easy access will likely ignite minimal use of force (non-military or humanitarian intervention).*
6. *Marginal interests and difficult access will result in non-intervention.*

Figure 1: Geopolitical interests, Accessibility to the crisis scene, and the expected type of intervention

Access to scene of crisis	Geopolitical interests: Vital	Important	Marginal
Easy	Maximal use of force: unilateral military intervention or war	Medium use of force, multilateral intervention preferable	Minimal use of force, non-military or humanitarian actions preferable
Difficult	Medium use of force, multilateral intervention preferable	Minimal use of force, proxy intervention preferable	Non-intervention

The geopolitical interests provide the incentive for using force, whereas accessibility is the constraint. When the motives are high only extremely high costs will prevent the use of force, or at least change its characteristics. When the motives are low, the U.S. will probably not use force.

As long as American power is sea-based, it is unlikely for the U.S. to act differently than it had so far. Great Britain acted likewise as ruler of the seas,[33] and it is reasonable to assume that any sea-power would behave similarly. The U.S. operates in littoral places, where using force is not too costly. However, in landlocked areas the American calculations change. Whenever the U.S. plays an initial role in a landlocked crisis, the geographical limitations are merely a challenge, problematic as they may be, that the military must overcome. Nevertheless, whenever the U.S. acts as a third party, and even if there are important interests involved, the same geographical limitations will become politically more difficult to overcome, and will force the U.S. to adopt strategies in which it will act to a less extent, and it may even decide not to act at all. Whenever there are no important interests involved, the U.S. would probably not act, except for humanitarian intervention. To summarize the point, it can be argued that geographical limitations might **prevent** an American use of force only when the U.S. is a third party.

[33] Arthur Herman, *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005).

Case studies

1. Operation Restore Hope, Somalia, 1992-1994

During 1991, the regime of Siad Barre collapsed and rival clan-based militias went into a vicious civil war.[34] The civilians across Somalia suffered starvation, but due to the fierce fighting, relief could not be orderly supplied. In autumn 1992 the U.S. sent humanitarian relief to the starving refugees.[35] Meanwhile, the administration resisted pressure from Human Rights organizations and from the UN to intervene militarily by asserting that even though the humanitarian crises of the time (Somalia was only one such crisis) were human tragedies, they posed no threat to vital American interests.[36]

On November 24, 1992, two weeks after losing the elections to Bill Clinton, President George H. W. Bush issued NSD 74, instructing the military to prepare an operation to support the international relief operation by securing the routes of supplies to the starved masses. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, suggested sending two divisions – one of the Marines, another of the Army – to secure the delivery of the supplies.[37] It seems that the plan was exaggerated intentionally to discourage the president,[38] but he approved it. The State Department preferred a UN action to which the U.S. would aid only by airlifts, without sending troops. However, the U.S. did not wish to intervene in the simultaneously escalating Balkan crisis since it was deeply concerned such an intervention would be too costly; hence it preferred focusing on Somalia instead.[39] The military had two conditions for operating: (1) the mission should be clear and limited in time;[40] and (2) it must not be a precedent for Bosnia.[41]

During the meeting in which the operation was approved, National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft asked, "Sure, we can get in, but how do we get out?" President Bush replied that the U.S. should attempt to leave Somalia by January 19, 1993, in order not to leave an ongoing military operation for incoming-President Clinton, but Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney clarified that it would not be possible.[42] This exchange indicates that the operation was inadequately planned. It

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[34] Kenneth Menkhaus and Louis Ortmayer, "Somalia: Misread Crises and Missed Opportunities," in *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized: Preventive Diplomacy in the Post-Cold War World*, ed. Bruce W. Jentleson (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 211-237.

[35] Nora Bensahel, "Humanitarian Relief and Nation Building in Somalia," in *The United States and Coercive Diplomacy*, eds. Robert J. Art and Patrick M. Cronin (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2003), 26; Andrew S. Natsios, "Humanitarian Relief Intervention in Somalia: The Economics of Chaos," in *Learning from Somalia: The Lessons of Armed Humanitarian Intervention*, eds. Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1997), 77-95.

[36] Jon Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention: Beliefs, Information, and Advocacy in the U.S. Decisions on Somalia and Bosnia," *International Security* 26, no. 4 (2002): 112-113.

[37] David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton, and the Generals* (New York: Touchstone, 2002), 251; John L. Hirsch and Robert B. Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995), 43.

[38] April Oliver, "The Somalia Syndrome," in *Breaking the Cycle: A Framework for Conflict Intervention*, ed. Roderick K. von Lipsey (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 133.

[39] Ibid, 133-134; Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention": 118; Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, 251-252.

[40] Indeed, the plan was that the U.S. would provide short-time humanitarian relief and pass responsibility to the UN that would start nation building. Bensahel, "Humanitarian Relief and Nation Building in Somalia," 28-29.

[41] Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, "The U.S. Military Intervention in Somalia: A Hidden Agenda?" *Middle East Policy* 2, no. 1 (1993): 58.

[42] Powell, *My American Journey*, 565.

became obvious after Clinton took office, as his administration changed the goals of the operation to nation building without matching the forces and their strategies to the new goal. This, in time, led to the "Somalia quagmire" the U.S. was relieved to terminate, although the mission was not accomplished.[43]

On December 3, 1992, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 794, allowing intervention in the internal affairs of a member state (contradicting article 2 (7) of the UN Charter). The following day, President Bush declared that the forces would enter Somalia only for the declared humanitarian cause and that they would leave when they became unneeded. However, he proclaimed, they would act forcefully against the militias if the latter attempted to disturb the flow of supplies.[44]

Jeane Kirkpatrick reports that despite the UN pressure to expand the goals of the American-led Operation Restore Hope by adding general disarmament to the humanitarian goal in order to pave the way for nation building, President Bush maintained the limited goal he had set from the beginning: to clear and protect the routes for relief supplies; and kept the timeline that set early 1993 as time for a UN force to replace the American force.[45]

Somalia is a littoral country; it is literally the Horn of Africa, located at the southern entrance to the Red Sea, but this geographical fact lost its geopolitical significance under the unipolar system.[46] Somalia's disintegration jeopardized no vital American interest; therefore the operation, once ignited, was wholly humanitarian. A RAND analysis of the operation presented in detail the transfer of the soldiers and the necessary equipment to Somalia, almost all by the Navy, partly due to the "poor quality of airfield facilities [in Somalia]".[47] Hence, the geopolitical conditions placed no restrictions on the American operation.

The complications that followed the operation once its goal was altered to nation building are beyond the scope of this paper. However, the political result of the rapid evacuation of the U.S. forces is significant since it determined the American policy on humanitarian crises. In early May 1994 the administration issued Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD 25), which affirmed two conditions for American support of any peacekeeping operation: (1) the conflict in question is a significant breach to international peace and security; (2) the operation must "serve American interests."[48] This document became the cornerstone of American policy on intervention and blocked any serious attempt to form international peacekeeping operations. The immediate casualty of PDD 25 was Rwanda.

In sum, a combination of easy access and a mere humanitarian interest formed a humanitarian intervention that was terminated once the price became costly. Since this was the first major crisis in the unipolar system, its progress and termination

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[43] von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, 55-91; Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *Making War to Keep Peace* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 79-111.

[44] Peter Huchthausen, *America's Splendid Little Wars: A Short History of U.S. Military Engagements, 1975-2000* (New York: Viking, 2003), 171; President Bush's address to the nation on the situation in Somalia is available on-line: http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/papers/1992/92120400.html (29.1.2005)

[45] Kirkpatrick, *Making War to Keep Peace*, 78.

[46] Oliver, "The Somalia Syndrome," 131.

[47] David Kassing, *Transporting the Army for Operation Restore Hope* (RAND/Arroyo Center, 1994), xiii.

[48] Clinton Administration Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations (PDD 25). Available on-line: http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd25.htm (12.7.2005). See various emphases from the Directive in Huchthausen, *America's Splendid Little Wars*, 182; Madeleine Albright, *Madam Secretary: A Memoir* (London: Macmillan, 2003), 152; Alan P. Dobson, "The Dangers of US Interventionism," *Review of International Studies* 28, no. 3 (2002): 587.

determined the path for the U.S. in dealing with other crises of the time, with PDD 25 reflecting the American conclusions from the failed intervention in Somalia.

2. The Rwanda Genocide, 1994

The Genocide in Rwanda began on April 6, 1994, and ended nearly one hundred days later. About 800 thousand people perished. Except for minimal humanitarian relief to refugees who escaped to neighboring countries, the world did nothing to stop the massacre. In the early stages of the slaughter, the horrific events took place only around the capital Kigali. At that point, some of the experts claimed, it could have been contained, perhaps even stopped.[49] But the U.S. and other countries did nothing and the genocide spread vastly throughout Rwanda.

In June, France launched Operation Turquoise, but deployed its forces only in the margins of Rwanda and not many people were salvaged. The U.S. sent minor forces to the neighboring countries, where refugee camps were built, but these forces did not cross Rwanda's border to stop the genocide. As some scholars wrote, it seems as if the assumption was that any intervention would commit many forces but would cost much more than any incentive the intervention may offer; therefore it was not worth intervening.[50]

Rwanda is landlocked, separated from the Indian Ocean by Tanzania. Two of its other neighbors – Uganda and Burundi – are also landlocked, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC; Zaire) is not, but crossing it is not very effective, since the coastline is on the other side of the continent. Hence, there is no easy access to Rwanda. Alan Kuperman's study suggested that intervention was infeasible, politically or logistically, and that it would not have saved many of the victims. Based on his calculations of U.S. military transport capabilities in previous interventions, Kuperman argued that the "maximum intervention" option (aimed to stop atrocities) would not have been too difficult "once [the troops] were in Rwanda. *But transporting such a force 10,000 miles to a landlocked country with limited airfields would have been considerably slower than some retrospective appraisals have suggested*."[51] This seems to be merely a technical matter, but this limitation must be taken into calculations while considering the feasibility of a military operation. Nevertheless, this was only the military aspect of America's decision not to intervene.

In the political aspect, the Clinton Administration did not consider intervening since the mission did not match the guidelines of PDD 25, which was issued while the genocide was under way. The genocide, it was asserted, did not jeopardize international peace and security, and the U.S. had no interests in Rwanda that

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[49] One such expert was Joyce Leader, deputy Ambassador in Kigali, who was evacuated to Washington when the genocide began. She repeatedly told her superiors in the State Department that only an American military force can halt the massacre. Samantha Power, *"A Problem from Hell": America and the Age of Genocide* (London: Flamingo, 2003), 365.

[50] Alison Des Forges, *"Leave None to Tell the Story": Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), 623-624; Holly J. Burkhalter, "The Question of Genocide: The Clinton Administration and Rwanda," *World Policy Journal* 11, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 44-54.

[51] Alan J. Kuperman, "Rwanda in Retrospect," *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 1, (January/February 2000): 105-110, esp. 106 (italics added); idem, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 52-77. His calculations were that a maximum intervention would need 40 days to airlift, a moderate intervention would need 21, and minimum intervention would need 14 days. The possible salvaged Tutsis were estimated between 75 to 125 thousands. Ibid, 76.

intervention may have served.[52] The Pentagon and the military establishment feared that if the U.S. supported a UN operation (in which the U.S. itself would have to lead or at least to transport the troops to Rwanda) and the operation would fail, the U.S. would have to "pick up the pieces."[53] Therefore, the U.S. prevented the possible operation all together.

At a secret UN Security Council meeting as early as April 12, 1994, the U.S. expressed its reasons for objecting an international intervention in Rwanda: there was doubt whether the peacekeepers could be resupplied; the U.S. did not want to be seen "responsible for the gradual depletion of an isolated force"; and "it was highly improbable that an outside force could halt the terror in Rwanda."[54]

To sum, none of the security interests mentioned in this paper applied to Rwanda. The genocide had nothing to do with America's national security, directly or indirectly. The U.S. had nothing to achieve or gain; therefore using force in Rwanda seemed pointless. Given the combination of no interests and inaccessibility, nonintervention became the preferable response.

3. The War in Afghanistan, 2001-

The War in Afghanistan started on October 7, 2001, in response to the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. It started with missiles launched against the Taliban-controlled Afghan central government facilities, followed by an attack on Kabul by soldiers of the Northern Alliance of tribes with American intelligence servicemen assistance.[55]

Given Afghanistan's location in the Asian heartland, the theory predicts that the U.S. would not have invaded without the most vital interest (homeland security) involved. The reason for the American strike against Afghanistan was that the Taliban hosted and provided safe haven to Al-Qaeda, and refused to surrender its members to the Americans or to any international court to be trailed for the 9/11 attacks.

Apparently, the successful invasion refutes the proposed theory, because the U.S. managed to overcome Afghanistan's very difficult topography, and maintains its forces there for nearly 8 years. However, a closer look indicates that since 2001 the U.S. is mostly struggling with consequences of Afghanistan's geography. The Americans are fighting constantly to uphold the Northern Alliance-based pro-Western regime it placed in Kabul. Immediately after the invasion the Taliban seemed to be defeated totally and its remains seemed to pose no risk, but in the last two years or so the Taliban are once again raising heads, and control now approximately half of Afghanistan, if not more.[56] In late 2008 the U.S. decided to transfer thousands of

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[52] Nancy Soderberg, *The Superpower Myth: The Use and Misuse of American Might* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), 285. Clinton spoke in the context of the crisis in Bosnia. At that time there were also crises in Haiti and Georgia (except Rwanda).

[53] Michael Barnett, "Duties beyond Borders," in *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, eds. Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield and Tim Dunne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 198.

[54] Linda R. Melvern, *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide* (London: Zed Books, 2000), 154.

[55] Dana Priest, *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America's Military* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 141-174.

[56] Telegraph, "Taliban Control Half of Afghanistan, Says Report," 22 November, 2007. Available online: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1570232/Taliban-control-half-of-Afghanistan-says-report.html (2.5.2009); http://www.afghanconflictmonitor.org/2007/11/taliban-in-cont.html (2.5.2009)

troops from Iraq to Afghanistan in order to re-stabilize it.[57] The ground forces suffer from lack of equipment and arms because they depend on ground routes of supplies crossing through Pakistan (75% of the "non-lethal" supplies traverse Pakistan).[58] These routes are attacked constantly by militants. On January 20, 2009, General David Petraeus, head of U.S. Central Command, announced that he struck deals with Russia and with neighbors of Afghanistan to allow transport of supplies to American troops in Afghanistan. The need for new routes of supply is a result of the diminishing credibility of the Pakistan route, but also of the American plan to double its forces in Afghanistan to confront the Taliban insurgency more effectively.

Although the U.S. had global and regional support for its intent to invade Afghanistan,[59] it still had to gain access. General Wesley Clark's remark on the necessity of access to Afghanistan (in the introduction to his book on the Kosovo War, *Waging Modern War*) reflects this need:

> Even the greatest power in the world has to have, at least, access to the theatre of operations – Afghanistan, in this case – as well as support from facilities in nearby countries and friends on the ground.[60]

Even though the countries surrounding Afghanistan supported the removal of the Taliban from power, none was considered a safe passage. However, Pakistan was an old ally of the U.S. since the early days of the Cold War. Its border with Afghanistan is the latter's longest and most challenging border. The U.S. needed Pakistan as a ground route to Afghanistan, but the ethnic identity on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and the fact that the military regime in Islamabad was standing on shaky ground made it an insecure route. Pakistan, for its part, was reluctant to approve passage through its territory. Eventually, the approval came, apparently, after the U.S. made threats.[61] Ever since, the U.S. had to worry about the stability of Pakistan because it is the only route, however insecure and dangerous.[62]

The difficulty to access Afghanistan required the U.S. to commit large forces to the war, which otherwise may have been easy to conduct, given the Taliban's ineffective control over parts of the country due to Afghan society's diversity and its difficult topography. According to the memoirs of former Under Secretary of Defense

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[57] Michael R. Gordon and Thom Shanker, "Plan Would Shift Forces from Iraq to Afghanistan," *New York Times*, September 4, 2008. Available online: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/05/world/middleeast/05military.html?_r=1&scp=5&sq=transfer%20US%20troops%20iraq%20afghanistan&st=cse (22.1.2009)

[58] Richard A. Oppel, "U.S. Secures New Supply Routes to Afghanistan," *New York Times*, 20 January, 2009. Available online: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/21/world/asia/21pstan.html?partner=rss&emc=rss (22.1.2009)

[59] At least forty Middle Eastern, African, European and Asian countries permitted passage and landing on their soil. Many countries shared intelligence with the U.S. Soderberg, *The Superpower Myth*, 194.

[60] Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Future of Combat* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), xxvi.

[61] Reuters, "Pakistani Leader Claims U.S. Threat after 9/11", New York Times, 22 September 2006. Available online: www.nytimes.com/2006/09/22/world/asia/22pakistan.html (Accessed at 21.11.2007). The threat was presumably delivered by Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage to Pakistan's head of Inter-Service Intelligence, Mahmoud Ahmed, who happened to be in the US when the terrorists attacked. Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Air Power against Terror: America's Conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom* (MG166) (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2005), 31-32. Wesley Clark wrote that this approval was vital for success. Clark, *Waging Modern War*, xxvi.

[62] The January 2009 agreements with other neighbors of Afghanistan should have made things easier for the U.S., but the situation in Pakistan deteriorated soon afterwards, and in late May 2009 the Pakistan Army with American forces were still fighting Islamist militants in Pakistan in defense of the regime.

for Policy, Douglas Feith, the military was prepared for striking in Afghanistan, but only against Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, not against the Taliban. President Bush learned about the plan in a meeting with the National Security Council on September 13, 2001. Chief of Staff, General Hugh Shelton, said that northern Afghanistan was not covered by the Tomahawk cruise missiles (launched from vessels in the Indian Ocean). That limitation was significant because striking there should have weakened the Taliban dramatically.[63] Northern Afghanistan was the most problematic region to access, but after intense contacts with Uzbekistan, its government permitted the American forces' transit through their territory.[64]

President Bush held another meeting with his top advisors in Camp David on September 15, 2001. General Shelton brought three general plans for striking Afghanistan. First, if speed of action was the issue, he could only suggest striking Taliban and Al Qaeda facilities with cruise missiles launched from Navy ships or Air Force planes. The problem was that such a strike would have been ineffective, since all facilities were already evacuated. Second, Shelton suggested a combined strike of cruise missiles and bombers on the same targets, which may last several days. Third, the military planners suggested a combination of cruise missiles, bombers and "boots on the ground," i.e. elite commando units of the Special Forces and perhaps the Army and Marines, deployed in Afghanistan. This latter option would need at least 10-12 days to prepare for, since it included attaining bases and over-flight rights for any possible rescue mission during combat. It is reported that Secretary of State Powell and Vice President Cheney were stunned by the fact that there was no war plan for Afghanistan. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice is reported to have looked at Afghanistan's map which "evoked every negative image: far away, mountains, landlocked, hard." Bush told his advisors he didn't mind going it alone, but Powell thought that without partners the U.S. "could not launch an effective war even in Afghanistan…"[65]

Rice brought up the difficulties that Afghanistan's geography posed for invasion. The greatest fear was that chaos in Afghanistan would cross the border into Pakistan, meaning that Islamist extremists might have access to Pakistan's nuclear

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[63] Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism* (New York: Harper, 2008), 14-15.

[64] Richard W. Stewart, *The United States Army in Afghanistan: Operation Enduring Freedom, October 2001-March 2002*, Publication CMH Pub 70-83-1 (U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2004), 8. Actually, the US appealed to Russia soon after the 9/11 attacks to allow the US to ask Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for permission to use their air bases for the planned attack. Eventually, Russia's President Vladimir Putin agreed to encourage these two former Soviet Republics of Central Asia to accept the American request, depending its intentions were temporary and only related to the counter-terror attack in Afghanistan. Lambeth, *Air Power against Terror*, 27-29. Bob Woodward reports that in a NSC meeting on September 24, State and Defense Departments were still working on securing over-flight and basing rights around Afghanistan. The problem was that the referred countries wanted specific details on the operation they were asked to allow, but details were unknown as long as the operation had not started. NSC discussed Uzbekistan's costly demands in this regard (including permanent American support vis-à-vis Russia; $50 million in loans; and support against the local Uzbek rebels). Only on October 1 could the incoming Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, General Richard Myers, report the Uzbeks approved using an airfield, but with strict limitations on aircraft maintenance. This was expected to slow the war plans and delay special operations. Without the aerial coverage from the base in Uzbekistan, not all targets were covered from the carriers in the Indian Ocean. Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 129, 173, 185-186.

[65] Ibid, 79-81.

weapons. Bush ordered to prepare a package of support for Pakistan to reassure President Musharraf that he would be worthwhile supporting the U.S.[66]

All in all, the logistical problems that geography dictated held the U.S. back for nearly a month after the 9/11 attacks. On September 12, 2001, President Bush met with his war cabinet and asked Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, what the military could do immediately. "Very little, effectively," was the reply. General Tommy Franks, commander in chief of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) told Rumsfeld it would take months to get forces in the area and draw plans for a massive military operation in Afghanistan.[67] Two weeks later National Security Advisor Rice still reported to President Bush that the military had "no infrastructure in the region to speak of, no bases, weak on-the-ground intelligence at this point, scarce targets, the weather starting to get bad. …"[68]

The War in Afghanistan was masterminded in Washington and was (and still is) American. However, the U.S. invaded with a coalition of countries, essentially NATO members. The coalition was apparently established in order to provide international support to the war aims, but the decision-making process suggests another reason: Not only did the coalition help the U.S. press on unwilling regional players, but it also shared the military burden.[69] The UK participated in the initial air strikes on Afghanistan,[70] and soon after the war began, the UN established the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) which is multinational. Since August 2003 NATO commands this force. Nevertheless, the American forces are the leaders of the international effort.

Theoretically, had Afghanistan not been landlocked, and *ceteris paribus*, the U.S. probably may have acted alone, and much earlier. It had the highest interest and means, not to mention justification. The internationalization of the invading (and later the occupying) force was a consequence of the accessibility problem no less than of the need to show global support for the American action. Putting it differently, the War in Afghanistan proves that geopolitical limitations (most significant are that Afghanistan is landlocked and that there are few routes to access it) **did not** deprive the U.S. from acting, although as time passed, these problems became more significant.

Discussion

The three case studies represent various possibilities of utilizing force that the U.S. employed based on the balance of interests and (physical and political) accessibility. Table 2 summarizes the three cases.

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[66] Ibid, 82. This discussion led to another option: striking elsewhere than Afghanistan to achieve quicker successful results. Paul Wolfowitz said attacking Afghanistan was uncertain, since it would bog down 100,000 American troops in mountain fighting within six months. He made the case that Iraq was much easier to break, but Bush promptly rejected the suggestion, and refocused on Afghanistan. Ibid, 83-84.

[67] Ibid, 43.

[68] Ibid, 157-158.

[69] Sarah Kreps, "When Does the Mission Determine the Coalition? The Logic of Multilateral Intervention and the Case of Afghanistan," *Security Studies* 17, no. 3 (2008): 531-567.

[70] Soderberg, *The Superpower Myth*, 194.

Table 2: Case comparison

	Somalia	Rwanda	Afghanistan
Location	East Africa	Central Africa	Central Asia
Accessibility	Easy	Difficult	Difficult
American interests	None	None	Homeland security
Type of force used	Military (humanitarian) intervention	Nonintervention	Multilateral war

The first two cases (Somalia and Rwanda) represent marginal American interests, which resulted in opposite actions: the U.S. intervened in Somalia, but stayed aloof regarding Rwanda. The interests in both cases were from the same category: humanitarian aid. There was no other interest involved in either case.[71] The Somalia crisis was no less severe in human lives than the Rwanda Genocide.[72] The most striking difference between Somalia and Rwanda is their different distances from the sea. As the evidence suggests, this geographical fact had remarkable effect on American decision-making to intervene in Somalia whereas not to intervene in Rwanda.

The third case, Afghanistan, represented an essentially opposite set of considerations in the *interests* variable. However, just like Rwanda, Afghanistan is inaccessible from the sea, with an even more difficult topography. This fact did not prevent the U.S. from conquering Afghanistan and controlling it (at least partly) for the last 8 years, but the problems it faces in Afghanistan mostly result from the geographical facts. The agreements the U.S. made in early 2009 with most of Afghanistan's neighbors to allow routes of supply are evidence to the difficulties the U.S. faced until then, while it was dependent on the insecure Pakistani routes. Apparently, these problems were anticipated at the highest levels in Washington during the planning process concerning Afghanistan. This matter was so important that it alone delayed the initiation of the war by nearly a month after the 9/11 attacks.

It may seem that improvement in technology overcame geographical limitations on military operations, but such a conclusion would by only partly correct. As the administration learned in Afghanistan, without an airbase in Uzbekistan the U.S. lacked full cover of Afghanistan. Cruise missiles could not reach the north-eastern regions of Afghanistan, and the whole operation would have been much slower than planned (with less chances of quick success than expected). The logistics of military operations are not a minor issue in decision-making on the use of force. This is a critical issue to consider because it affects the ability of the combat forces to operate when they arrive at the scene.

Conclusions

Geopolitics is a major branch of research in international relations and foreign policy, and is integral in the U.S. concept of foreign relations. The U.S. emerged into a leading position in the international arena coincided with the evolution of central

[71] In the long term the collapse of the state in Somalia proved to be a major problem which drives American attention to this day, because once the state authorities became ineffective the Somali territory became a fertile space for terrorists and pirates.

[72] Kirkpatrick quoted contemporary reports of the death toll of the famine in Somalia in early 1992, which at some point reached a thousand dead Somalis a day. Kirkpatrick, *Making War to Keep Peace*, 62-63 and 324 fn. 7.

geopolitical theories, which became fixated in American administrations because they outlined a practical rationale for skillful use of America's growing military power. According to the concepts of Mahan and Mackinder, the U.S. crystallized its worldview and built its military power, bringing the technological capability of the U.S. and the experience of previous world powers into consideration.

The Navy, defined as the first respondent to crises, was designed to reflect American power while considering the distance it needed to bridge in order to reach "the rest of the world". The Navy promotes American interests across the world, but its limitations dictated restrictive utilization of the Navy only for circumstances in which it could succeed. In other words, since the Navy was accountable for responding to international crises, the U.S. had to organize its global map of interests according to the Navy's capability to secure or attain them. This is the reason for the U.S. relinquish of the heartlands of Africa, Asia and Europe (as long as the USSR existed; and partly, even afterwards).

This study made prominent the importance of military branches and their capabilities in the rationale for using force in international crises, testifying to their importance in any theory of foreign policy. Military power is an essential factor in foreign policy because it is the forceful means to gain political goals. In violent situations, the military limitations are very important in understanding the decision whether or not to intervene and how. Apparently, although the continuing debate about the proper relations with the world, which has clear implications for the use of force, the U.S. had set for itself – unknowingly – limitations regarding military operations. This is how the "land barrier" evolved.

To conclude, geopolitics essentially dictates the logic that the U.S. follows in using force. The U.S. has a consistent rationale for dealing with crises: since its major conventional force is the Navy (which means that the seas are the American forefront bases), it acts unilaterally only in littoral areas to which the Navy can approach easily and from which it can also depart easily.

Finally, a more general theoretical view shows that although geopolitics returned nearly twenty years ago to the mainstream academic debates, it has not yet regained its appropriate place in International Relations. This study wishes to bring geopolitics back to current debates in the field and to demonstrate that the classical geopolitical theories have much to say, theoretically and practically, on current international security affairs.

The current instability in the international system makes it worth reexamining estimates regarding the future on geographical bases, because geography is constant. This would allow testing various structures of the international system on common grounds. Geography and geopolitics may allow a relatively unbiased study of the international system, neutralizing incompatible concepts and ideas regarding American use of force and other central debatable topics of research.

Appendix

Definitions:

Interests: The vital interests of the U.S. are defined in materialistic (i.e., geopolitical) terms as *defense of the homeland*, *securing access to vital natural resources*, *keeping all naval routes open* because the U.S. is a naval trade nation, and *prevention of hostile takeover of the Eurasian Heartland*. Threat to one or more of these interests in a crisis is sufficient to determine U.S. interest in it. Figure 1 presented the interests by

their importance to the U.S.: vital, important and marginal.[73] The interests listed here are the vital interests of the U.S. Other interests, such as promotion of democracy, and all vital interests of American allies are defined as important interests for the U.S. All other interests are marginal. Obviously, the more important the interest, the more likely the U.S. is to take action to protect it.

Accessibility of the crisis: This variable has two complementary components. The first is the *physical* access to the scene. Since the U.S. is a naval power, any littoral location would fundamentally be considered accessible while any landlocked location would not. Penetrating in-land demands many more human and capital resources for securing the lines of supplies and the exit route. As a rule of thumb, the U.S. would prefer sending naval forces to a crisis because they are easier to retreat than ground troops.[74] Other important aspects are the topography of the target country, the ability to station sufficient forces to fulfill the mission, the ability to supply those forces and the ability to safely ensure their exit.[75]

The second component is *political*. Most countries in the world – except for 43 or 44 – are littoral.[76] If the U.S. can reach the target without crossing the sovereign territory of any other nation, the target is accessible. The more countries needed to be crossed, the less accessible the target is.

Use of Force: The dependent variable is divided into the following categories,[77] based on the goals for which the military is used:

a. War: Using all relevant sections of the armed forces in order to defeat the enemy. War does not have to end with conquest of the enemy's soil, but only in war this is inherently possible. The U.S. is a direct party, whether it is the attacker or the attacked. War is usually not limited to a specific section of the target-state's territory, while interventions usually are.
b. Military intervention: Its goal is to attain limited gains in the target-state, such as replacing the regime, ceasing a war or rebellion, or rescue of hostages. Such an act will probably not be requested by the target-state; therefore it is reasonable that the intervening troops would need to use force.[78] Military intervention is a temporary takeover of a specific area, which is terminated when the goal is attained. A **unilateral** intervention means sending troops under the independent command of the intervening power, with or without the

[73] The scale of the importance of interests is based on Donald E. Nuechterlein, "The Concept of 'National Interest': A Time for New Approaches," *Orbis* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 73-92.
[74] Friedman, *Seapower as Strategy*, 26.
[75] Kevin C.M. Benson and Christopher B. Thrash, "Declaring Victory: Planning Exit Strategies for Peace Operations," *Parameters* 26, no. 3 (Autumn 1996): 69-80.
[76] The 40 landlocked countries are: Afghanistan, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina-Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malawi, Mali, Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, Niger, Paraguay, Rwanda, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Swaziland, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Vatican City, Zambia and Zimbabwe. If Kosovo's declaration of independence is widely recognized, it will join this list, bringing it to 41 landlocked countries. Three additional states – Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan – have access only to the Caspian Sea, which is disconnected from the other seas. All in all, there are 43/44 countries with this status. Out of a total of 194/195 countries this makes a bit more than 22%.
[77] This categorization represents all possible uses of force. Only three of these options are tested in this paper.
[78] This means that all humanitarian missions after natural disasters are not part of this study, since they are coordinated with the local government.

approval of the United Nations Security Council. A **multilateral** intervention means sending troops by at least two intervening powers under joint command, usually with approval from the UNSC. Deciding to act multilaterally may indicate a desire to gain more domestic and international legitimacy to the action, but may also indicate less ability to act alone.

c. Proxy intervention: When a great power cannot or will not send troops to intervene in a crisis even if there is an important interest to do so, it may ask a regional ally to intervene. The ally has its own interest in the crisis,[79] hence it will not be a marionette, and some of its actions may not suit the intentions of the great power that sent it.
d. Humanitarian intervention: Use of military force in another country in order to save a large group of the latter's citizenry from severe government violation of their human rights, or in order to save them from starvation or other such disasters. It involves using limited military force without any significant interest of the intervening power.
e. Semi-military intervention: Sending arms supplies without troops to the aid of a local government, or using agents who act for the intervening power in the target-state. Gunboat diplomacy (showing naval power off-shore with no military engagement) or a threatening over-flight of combat aircrafts are also types of semi-military actions.
f. Non-military intervention: A diplomatic or economic act. This type does not necessarily involve troops, although it might escalate into clashes, especially if the initial act is a naval embargo enforced by combat vessels.[80] The commitment in such an act is quite low compared to the above options, at least at the beginning.
g. Nonintervention: This means non-involvement. However, the great power may make statements regarding the crisis; therefore this option does not mean ignoring the given crisis.

[79] Bertil Duner, "Proxy Intervention in Civil Wars", *Journal of Peace Research* 18, no. 4 (1981): 353-361.
[80] See for instance Lance E. Davis and Stanley L. Engerman, *Naval Blockades in Peace and War: An Economic History since 1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).