

Synthesis Argument

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Background: The United States has long proclaimed itself to be a peacekeeping force in foreign countries, ranging from joining World Wars I & II, and their rampant arms sales to other countries. With a focus on national security, and international credibility, the U.S. has amped up their participation in other nation's affairs.

Assignment: Imagine that you are a foreign affairs consultant for the United States Federal Government. Carefully read the following six sources, then synthesize information from at least three of the sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-developed essay that identifies the key issues associated with being heavily involved in such foreign affairs.

Make sure that your argument is central; use the source to illustrate and support your reasoning. Avoid merely summarizing your sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. You may cite the source as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the description in parentheses.

Should the United States Federal Government be substantially involved in the governance and affairs of foreign nations?

Source A (Bowden)

Source B (Map)

Source C (Map II)

Source D (Sears)

Source E (Lee)

Source F (Hartung)

Source G (Vitelli)

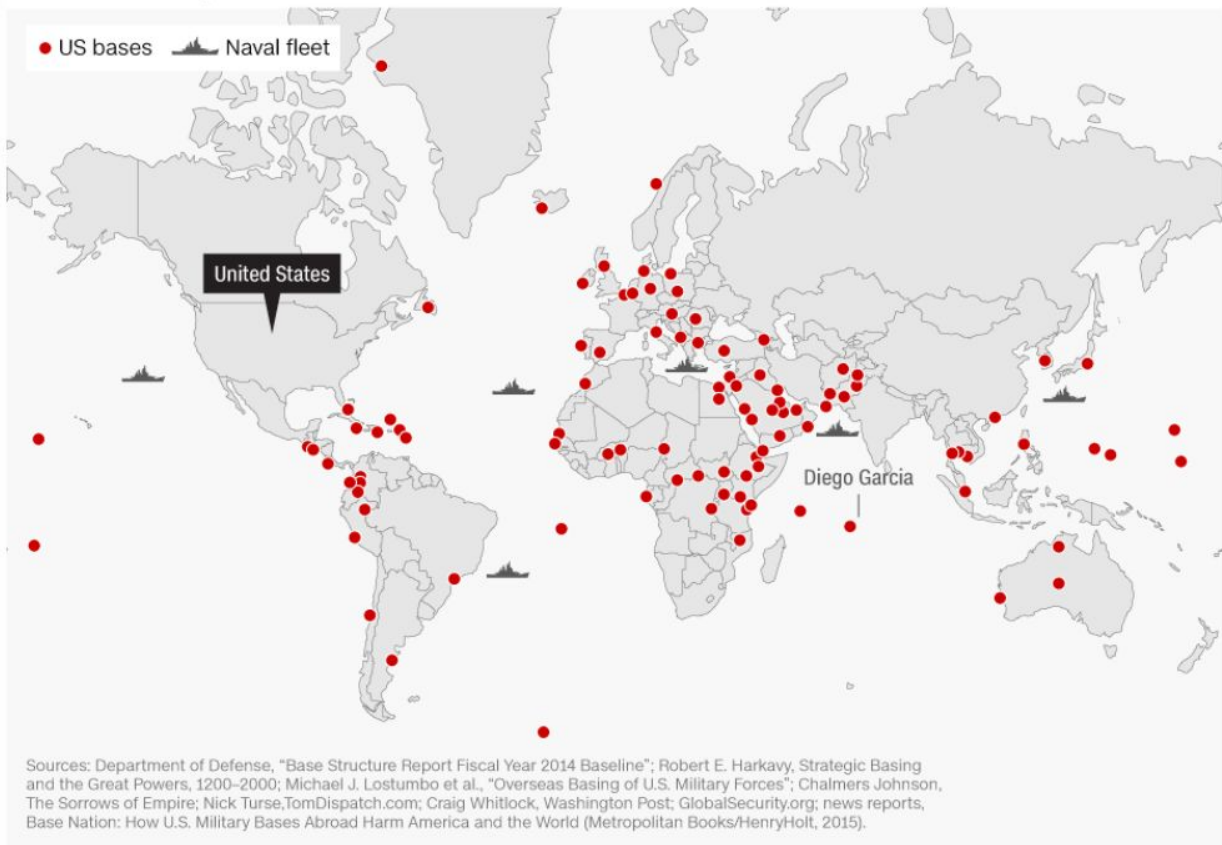
Source A:

Bowden, Mark, and Jan Smit. *Black Hawk Down*. Poema Pocket, 2007.

Source B:

Imgur. "Map Indicating US Military Bases Abroad 2015 - Ireland Is on It." *Imgur*, 23 May 2019, imgur.com/r/ireland/qARXiV1.

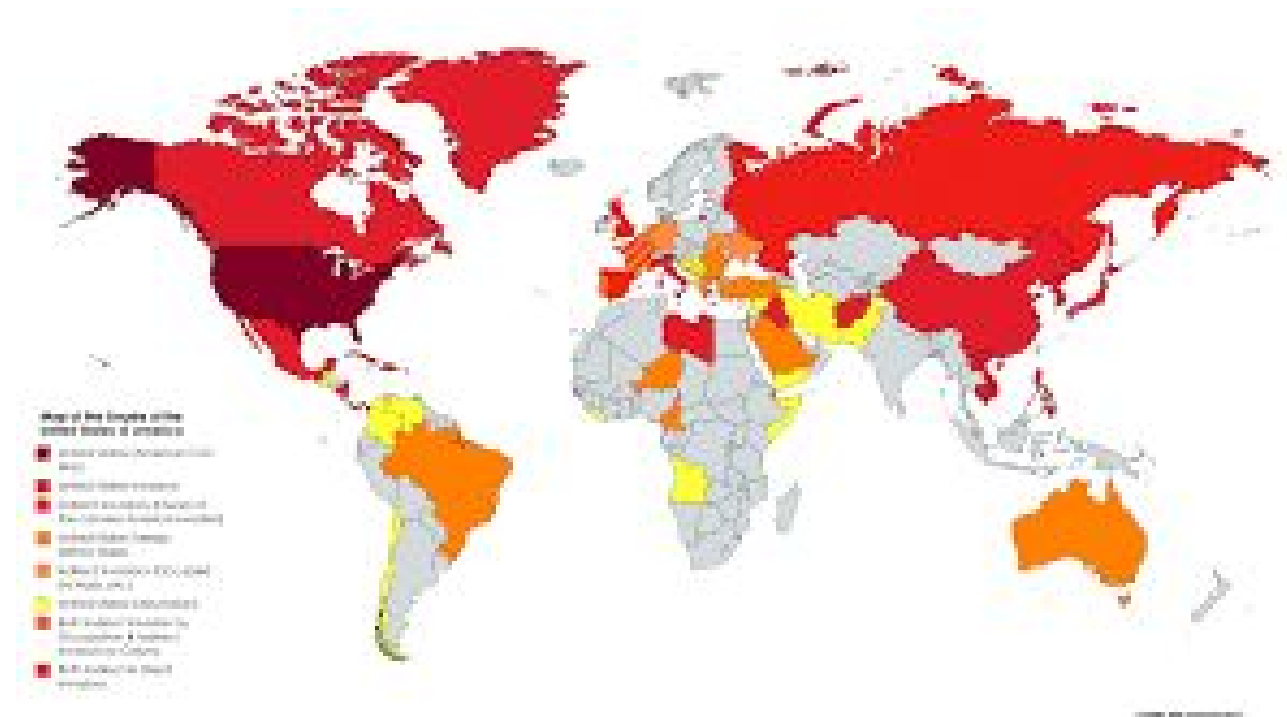
US military bases abroad, 2015



Source C:

“r/Socialism - I've Started Making a Map of American Imperialism, I Counted up Direct and Indirect Intervention and Invasion as Well as Offshore Military Bases. I'm Sure I Missed a Lot of Countries, but Making This Map Just Kinda Left Me Sickened at America's Expanse and Imperialism.” *Reddit*, 2019,

www.reddit.com/r/socialism/comments/be8hrv/ive_started_making_a_map_of_american_imperialism/.



Source D:

Proxygsu,

proxygsu-sful.galileo.usg.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct&db=ndh
&AN=12193783&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Citizens of the United States generally see their country as a land of freedom and tolerance, with a responsibility to spread the ideals of liberty and democracy throughout the world. They point with pride to the U.S.'s role in doing this since its founding. During the 19th century, for example, the success of the American Revolution inspired independence movements throughout South and Central America; afterward, the United States discouraged European powers from retaking control of newly independent countries like Mexico, Colombia, and Haiti. In the 20th century, the U.S. entered World War I to "make the world safe for democracy," and fought in World War II to stop German and Japanese aggression. Americans are just as proud of their country's history after the Second World War. Through the Marshall Plan, the U.S. provided economic aid to help rebuild Europe, and it also invested heavily in other developing countries. Since the late 1940s, the United States has provided more humanitarian assistance each year than any other country. In 2003, for example, the U.S. government provided approximately \$10 billion in official humanitarian or development aid to other countries. This figure does not include billions more given as military aid or as government loans. In addition, according to an estimate by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), American citizens donate an additional \$46 billion each year in non-official foreign aid. In the decades after World War II the United States encouraged the breakup of the French and British colonial empires. More recently, the U.S. government has used both force and diplomacy to resolve conflicts around the

world. During the 1990s U.S. troops fought in the Gulf War to liberate Kuwait, which had been invaded by its larger neighbor Iraq, and participated in peacekeeping missions in Somalia and Haiti, as well as in Bosnia and other states that were once part of Yugoslavia. During that decade U.S. leaders tried to negotiate peaceful settlements to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the explosive situation in Northern Ireland. In March 2003, when the U.S. and a coalition that included some of its allies attacked Iraq, the U.S. government justified the operation by arguing that it would free the Iraqi people from the rule of an oppressive and brutal dictator. The facts as seen from an American perspective tell only part of the story, however. People living outside the United States can point to numerous examples of U.S. foreign policy during the second half of the 20th century that are just as manipulative and self-serving as the policies of any 19th-century imperial power. As a result, people in other parts of the world often do not view the United States's involvement in world affairs in the same positive light that U.S. citizens do. Some see the U.S. as a bully, looking only to protect its own interests. Others complain that the United States should do more to help the poor and oppressed people of the world. Until the 1950s, the United States was widely admired in many Muslim countries. The European powers were disliked because they had suppressed nationalist and religious movements in their colonies in the Middle East and Central Asia. In countries like Iran, Turkey, and throughout the Arab world, the U.S. was initially seen as a defender of independence that would protect them from invasion by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R., or Soviet Union). However, attitudes began to change as the United States began to play a greater role in the affairs of Muslim countries. The United States became involved in the Middle East during a period of world tensions known as the Cold War. From 1945 to 1991, the U.S. and the Soviet Union-the world's two "superpowers"-each promoted their ideology: the communism of the Soviets versus the capitalism and democracy of the United States. In many ways, the foreign policies of both countries focused on limiting the other's influence. The superpowers dominated the world politically and militarily during the Cold War. Both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. used a variety of

methods to compel countries around the world to join their side. These methods included military force, political corruption, and complex trade and military agreements. The United States became involved in wars in Korea and Vietnam in order

Source E:

“Imperialism by Another Name: The US.” *E*,

www.e-ir.info/2017/08/22/imperialism-by-another-name-the-us-war-on-drugs-in-colombia/.

US-Colombia relations are often discussed in the context of the “war on drugs,” a shift in policy paradigm that put illicit substance control at the top of American domestic and foreign policy agendas towards the end of the 20th century. Specifically, much of the literature focuses on Plan Colombia, President Bill Clinton’s 2000 initiative whose highly controversial legacy continues in the country that is the world’s top producer of cocaine today.[1] However, US intervention in Colombia began long before the “war on drugs,” and must be understood in the larger framework of the Cold War, which prompted increasing American involvement there as part of its regional security calculations from the 1940s onwards. This paper examines American policy towards Colombia from the Truman to Reagan presidencies, tracing the emergence of its “war on drugs” and assessing related political, economic, and military strategies employed in the country. Analysis reveals that the US “war on drugs” in Colombia has largely been an extension of its Cold War objectives and methodologies, namely the preservation of a pro-US government through military tactics. This finding reinforces revisionist claims that Cold War American policy was ultimately only about preserving its geostrategic capitalist interests in both Latin America and the world.

The beginnings of US intervention in Colombia can be traced back to the first century of Colombian independence. From the early years of post-independence, Colombia faced

considerable political instability due to its opposing Liberal and Conservative Parties, leading to eight civil wars between 1849 and 1899 and the “Thousand Days War” between 1899 and 1903.[2] It was at the end of this war when the US backed Panama’s secession from Colombia in order to facilitate the construction of the Panama Canal,[3] marking its first major intervention in the country. This ‘theft’ “soured relations” [4] between the two states until a 1921 compensation payment by the US, after which relations improved such that Colombia entered the Second World War in support of the Allied Powers. However, during the war its domestic political situation quickly destabilized once more, with the rise of a popular movement protesting widespread inequality in the country.[5] Truman’s Cold War doctrine of containment would be applied in Colombia in response to this domestic political instability.

Foreign policy towards Latin America under both Truman and Eisenhower focused on the containment of a communist threat through the creation of a unified hemispheric defense. In the first decade of the Cold War, there was minimal effort to address the underlying social problems creating instability in most Latin American states. Instead, a unified hemispheric defense was primarily achieved through supporting right-wing military dictatorships and signing mutual defense treaties, to which Colombia was no exception.

For instance, in 1948, Liberal Party leader and Presidential frontrunner Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was assassinated in an operation widely speculated to have been orchestrated by the Central Intelligence Agency.[6] Regardless of whether or not the US was directly involved in his murder, it did financially and politically support a military coup bringing military dictator General Rojas Pinilla to power in 1953, providing him as well with a US \$170 million loan in 1955 that was subsequently used to suppress armed resistance and peasant organizations.[7] In addition, in

1952 the US signed a Mutual Defense Assistance Act with Colombia, agreeing in Article One to “make available to the other . . . such equipment, materials, services, or other military assistance . . . to promote the defense and maintain the peace of the Western Hemisphere.”[8]

Source F: America's Arms Sales Addiction

"Donald Trump has made it abundantly clear that he cares far more about making deals for that weaponry than who uses any of it against whom. It's important to note, however, that, historically speaking, he's been anything but unique."

Donald Trump has made it abundantly clear that he cares far more about making deals for that weaponry than who uses any of it against whom. It's important to note, however, that, historically speaking, he's been anything but unique in his obsession with promoting such weapons exports (though he is uniquely loud about doing so).

Despite its supposedly strained relationship with the Saudi regime, the Obama administration, for example, still managed to offer the royals of that kingdom a record **\$136 billion** in U.S. weapons between 2009 and 2017. Not all of those offers resulted in final sales, but striking numbers did. Items sold **included** Boeing F-15 combat aircraft and Apache attack helicopters, General Dynamics M-1 tanks, Raytheon precision-guided bombs, and Lockheed Martin bombs, combat ships, and missile defense systems. Many of those weapons have since been put to use in the war in Yemen.

To its credit, the Obama administration did at least have an internal debate on the wisdom of continuing such a trade. In December 2016, late in his second term, the president finally did **suspend** the sale of precision-guided bombs to the Royal Saudi Air Force due to a mounting toll of Yemeni civilian deaths in U.S.-supplied Saudi air strikes. This was, however, truly late in the game, given that the Saudi regime **first intervened** in Yemen in March 2015 and the slaughter of civilians began soon after that.

By then, of course, Washington's dominance of the Mideast arms trade was taken for granted, despite an occasional large British or French deal like the scandal-plagued **Al Yamamah** sale of fighter

planes and other equipment to the Saudis, the largest arms deal in the history of the United Kingdom. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, from 2014 to 2018 the United States accounted for [more than 54%](#) of known arms deliveries to the Middle East. Russia lagged far behind with a 9.5% share of the trade, followed by France (8.6%), England (7.2%), and Germany (4.6%). China, often cited as a possible substitute supplier, should the U.S. ever decide to stop arming repressive regimes like Saudi Arabia, came in at less than 1%.

The U.S. government's stated [rationales](#) for pouring arms into that ever-more-embattled region include: building partnerships with countries theoretically willing to fight alongside U.S. forces in a crisis; swapping arms for access to military bases in Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and other Persian Gulf states; creating "stability" by building up allied militaries to be stronger than those of potential adversaries like Iran; and generating revenue for U.S. weapons contractors, as well as jobs for American workers. Of course, such sales have indeed benefited those contractors and secured access to bases in the region, but when it comes to promoting stability and security, historically it's been another story entirely.

The Nixon Doctrine and the Initial Surge in Mideast Arms Sales

Washington's role as the Middle East's top arms supplier has its roots in [remarks](#) made by Richard Nixon half a century ago on the island of Guam. It was the Vietnam War era and the president was on his way to South Vietnam. Casualties there were mounting rapidly with no clear end to the conflict in sight. During that stopover in Guam, Nixon assured reporters accompanying him that it was high time to end the practice of sending large numbers of U.S. troops to overseas battlefields. To "avoid another war like Vietnam anywhere in the world," he was instead putting a new policy in place, later [described](#) by a Pentagon official as "sending arms instead of sending troops."

The core of what came to be known as the [Nixon Doctrine](#) was the arming of regional surrogates, countries with sympathetic rulers or governments that could promote U.S. interests without major contingents of the American military being on hand. Of such potential surrogates at that moment, the

most important was the Shah of Iran, with whom a CIA-British intelligence coup replaced a civilian government back in 1953 and who proved to have an insatiable appetite for top-of-the-line U.S. weaponry.

The Shah's idea of a good time was curling up with the latest copy of *Aviation Week and Space Technology* and perusing glossy photos of combat planes. Egged on by the Nixon administration, his was the first and only country to buy the costly Grumman F-14 combat aircraft at a time when that company desperately needed foreign sales to bolster the program. And the Shah put his U.S.-supplied weapons to use, too, helping, for instance, to put down an anti-government uprising in nearby Oman (a short skip across the Persian Gulf), while repressing his own population at the same time.

In the Nixon years, Saudi Arabia, too, became a major weapons client of Washington, not so much because it feared its regional neighbors then, but because it had seemingly limitless oil funds to subsidize U.S. weapons makers at a time when the Pentagon budget was beginning to be reduced. In addition, Saudi sales helped recoup some of the revenue streaming out of the U.S. to pay for higher energy prices exacted by the newly formed OPEC oil cartel. It was a process then quaintly known as "recycling petrodollars."

Source G:

Vitelli, Andrew. "America First? Should the US Intervene Militarily in Foreign Conflicts?" *Theperspective.com/*, 6 Jan. 2020, www.theperspective.com/debates/america-first-us-intervene-militarily-foreign-conflicts/.

And it rarely benefits the country of the intervention

From the [invasion of Hawaii](#) in 1893 to the [bombing of Syria in 2017](#), it is the norm for US intervention to be justified on humanitarian grounds. In some cases, this may truly be the motive. Case in point, punishing the Assad regime for its use of [chemical weapons](#) against civilians. But rarely does military action improve the lives of ordinary citizens.

The US mission in Libya was aimed at stopping a civilian massacre by the government. It may have done just that, but Gaddafi's overthrow led to civil war and chaos in the country, [with ISIS gaining](#) a foothold. Post-occupation Iraq looks no better, while Afghanistan remains unstable 19 years after the US invasion. And if we go back a generation, wars in Southeast Asia devastated the region while bringing little benefit to its people.

America should not be the world's police

Beyond weighing the pros and cons of each intervention, supporters of US action overseas must answer a broader question: When does a country [have the right to intervene](#) in another country? The UN Charter, signed after World War II, requires authorization from the [UN Security Council](#) to use force. Respecting an internationalized body's authority to decide on such issues is preferable to allowing any one country to act alone. Also, American foreign adventures make it

more difficult for the US to criticize aggression by other powers, such as Russia's invasions of [Crimea](#) and [Georgia](#) over the past decade or Iran's involvement in [Syria](#) and [Lebanon](#).

Inaction also has consequences

Too often, US military action is judged against a perfect alternative. Yet, while intervention has its drawbacks and complications, failing to act often carries an even steeper price. Avoiding confrontation sometimes puts American citizens at risk. President Clinton had the [chance to kill](#) Osama bin Laden several times but did not pull the trigger. A strike that killed al-Qaeda's leader but resulted in civilian casualties may have earned criticism – indeed, it may have ended up in the other half of this column – but [could have prevented](#) the 3,000 lives lost on 9/11 and avoided a wider war in Afghanistan.

Then, there are the humanitarian costs of inaction. Clinton called his failure to stop the genocide in Rwanda, where 800,000 people were killed in just two months, one of [his biggest regrets](#). What do Presidents Obama and Trump think about Syria, where over [half a million people](#) have been killed since 2011.

The alternative is worse

It may be nice to imagine a world in which differences between nations are resolved only through diplomacy. But were the US to take a step down from the international stage, it would not be the UN that would fill the void. Russia and China, both countries [less committed to humanitarian ideals](#) than the US, would step in. We need only to look back at the last time another superpower – the Soviet Union – challenged the US for global supremacy; only because of US protection was Western Europe able to thrive without falling to the grasp of Soviet tentacles. Meanwhile, regional hegemons like [Iran](#) would be free to impose their will on smaller nations without the credible threat of [sanctions](#) and [force](#) from the US.

The Bottom Line: US intervention overseas is never ideal and rarely uncomplicated, but the alternatives could potentially be worse. If you had the job and were facing the current threats from North Korea, Syria and [Iran](#), what would you do?