

Why Does the United States Intervene Abroad? Democracy, Human Rights Violations, and Terrorism

Seung-Whan Choi¹ and Patrick James²

Journal of Conflict Resolution
2016, Vol. 60(5) 899-926
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DOI: 10.1177/0022002714560350
jcr.sagepub.com


Abstract

Democracy, human rights, and terrorism are major foreign policy issues. However, among these issues, what do the US leaders care about the most? This study assesses the degree to which Washington responds militarily to threats to democratic institutions, human rights abuses, and terrorist activity in other countries. Based on a cross-national, time-series data analysis of 164 countries for the years 1981 to 2005, this study presents empirical models that evaluate the relative importance of these issues for contemporary American foreign and security policy. It turns out that, all other things being equal, the United States is likely to engage in military campaigns for humanitarian reasons that focus on human rights protection rather than for its own security interests such as democracy promotion or terrorism reduction. This finding is extremely robust and reinforced by case illustrations that support a causal explanation for US intervention with a basic and sustained place for human rights protection.

Keywords

military intervention, democratic institutions, human rights, terrorism

¹Department of Political Science, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA

²School of International Relations, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Corresponding Author:

Seung-Whan Choi, Department of Political Science (M/C 276), University of Illinois at Chicago, 1007 W. Harrison St., Chicago, IL 60607, USA.
Email: whancoi@uic.edu

Promoting freedom and democracy and protecting human rights around the world are central to US foreign policy. Department of State: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

Quasi-hegemony is the story of US foreign policy for some time. In spite of economic downturn in the present decade, observations regarding preeminent US capability and activity abroad are legion. Several years ago, for example, the *Economist* (2007, 10) observed that the United States “still spends roughly as much on defence as the rest of the world put together . . . and remains the only country able to project military power globally.” *The Economist’s* assessment puts the United States in the unequivocally number one place in the world for defense spending and military power. This unique position has facilitated frequent military actions to promote peace, prosperity, and democratic governments overseas. On the contrary, Russia and China, the most likely pretenders to the throne, possess limited political resources and do not necessarily share Washington’s self-identified ideas about democracy, freedom, and human rights. Thus, Moscow and Beijing have appeared to be less keen to engage in international military intervention with any degree of regularity. For example, the Chinese are more concerned with regional hegemony, particularly keeping the United States at bay in any future conflict over Taiwan, Korea, and/or Japan. And recent Russian activity vis-à-vis Ukraine would not appear even remotely connected to the concerns attributed to the United States. Thus, the United States emerges as the natural priority for assessment of intervention on a worldwide basis.

However, the question of how Washington’s unique military capabilities are related to promoting freedom and democracy and protecting human rights around the world could use more scrutiny. Existing intervention literature searches for general patterns of military action by all countries and mainly in the context of the role of democratic political systems. This is somewhat limiting because US military actions constitute the centerpiece of foreign military interventions that seem “to have become a sine qua non of modern statecraft” (Pickering and Kisangani 2006, 363). This activity also is associated with the rise of “contingent sovereignty”—the new and still evolving challenge to the norm of nonintervention in the internal affairs of countries (Ramos 2013, 78, 143). In particular, the United States appears to see military intervention as an effective foreign policy tool; it has quite often wielded military muscle worldwide since World War II (Fordham 2008; Prins 2010). Frequent use of the military by the United States in the contemporary period—46 times from 1981 to 2005—urges academics and policy makers to explore several crucial questions regarding the conduct of foreign policy. For example, what causes US military intervention around the globe? Are there consistent reasons for why the president intervenes in other countries? Do such deployments correspond to (a) perceived national security interests in overseas terrorist activity, as would be anticipated from a realist point of view, (b) concerns about human rights, in line with a liberal perspective, or (c) promotion of democracy, an objective

described a bit later as a hybrid within the competing liberal and realist points of view? These questions are undoubtedly important to answer in a systematic way, as they can offer compelling insights for American foreign and security policy.

While relatively frequent as a foreign policy tool implemented by the US government, military intervention is not easy to characterize in a straightforward manner. According to Peceny (1995, 371), “since 1998, U.S. presidents have consistently combined military intervention and democracy promotion despite the apparent contradictions involved in promoting self-determination through coercion or military victory through limitations on what allied states can do to win wars.” Put differently, the most powerful and active state appears Janus-faced, at least by reputation, because of its use of the military overseas to implement security policy: “The U.S. government’s professed goals—the promotion of human rights, democracy, and global peace—and the U.S. position as the largest exporter of conventional weaponry may be in conflict” (Blanton 2000, 124). The purpose of this study is to account for US military interventions through multivariate logit models that bring together and build upon insights from previous studies. To be specific, this study is the first to assess the relative importance of the following three major US foreign policy issues in the *same* empirical model: encroachment on democratic institutions, human rights violations, and terrorist activity.

The US military “truly shines” with respect to global power projection (O’Hanlon 2003, 80), and thus, the capacity exists for Washington to act beyond a purely national interest and consider a wider range of criteria in its deployments. One point of view is that the United States is moving away from old notions related to containment of its former Soviet rival and toward “a more expansive notion of humanitarian intervention.” Military interventions in places such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Libya, and Somalia received at least partial justification on humanitarian grounds and appeared consistent with the U.N.’s doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect. Even the “most optimistic” human rights advocate, of course, may not expect the United States to favor such concerns over its strategic interests (Apodaca and Stohl 1999, 187). At the same time, the United States seems to operate without “clear guidelines for when and how” to use force (Haass 1994, 13, 6). The resulting question then is where do US priorities lie?

Based on widely used data sets on military intervention, democracy, human rights, and terrorism (Mickolus et al. 2006; Marshall and Jagers 2007; Pickering and Kisangani 2009; Cingranelli and Richards 2010a), empirical research in this study assesses US actions comprehensively. Perhaps it will turn out that the United States responds to human rights violations abroad through the means of military intervention. Or, instead, the United States may be more concerned with other issues that have gained prominence with time, such as counteracting terrorist activity or promoting (and protecting) democracy. Or, again, other factors, soon to be enumerated, may be better able to account for US military interventions. The findings of this study will entail important implications for realist versus liberal visions of US military intervention. The results also will matter with respect to future decisions

concerning US military interventions that aim to change the behavior of political regimes or their core policies.

This study proceeds in five further sections. The first section summarizes contributions to the literature on US military intervention and closely related studies of military assistance and discusses three prominent agendas attributed to American foreign policy over the last several decades (i.e., democracy, human rights, and terrorism). The second section explains the research design using variable operationalization and model building. The third section discusses empirical results. The fourth and the last section summarize empirical findings and discuss some implications for future US foreign and security policy.

US Military Intervention and its Foreign Policy Agendas

Perspectives vary on why states intervene militarily in other states. Interesting to note is that there is no US analogue to the thriving, cross-national, data-based literature on military intervention. Most studies about US conflict behavior are case oriented—primarily journalistic, historical, or advocacy oriented in nature—and not conducted with the development of theory in mind (George and Bennett 2005).¹ Instead of a more panoramic review of casework on American foreign policy and military intervention, a highly focused assessment of the literature will be offered. A review essay by Prins (2010), commissioned for the International Studies Association *Encyclopedia* project, is given pride of place. Examples of work on US military intervention and the closely related phenomenon of military assistance are discussed before finishing up with a summary of what Prins (2010) located in his authoritative review.

Studies based on aggregate data that specifically seek to explain US military intervention are relatively few in number.² For example, Peceny (1995, 1999) studies the initial and final choices made by US presidents regarding military interventions and finds stage-related differences with respect to pro-liberalization policies. Overall, the initial and final decisions for cases from 1898 through 1996 seem consistent with realist and domestic liberal priorities, respectively (Peceny 1999). Specifically, the initial decision about a pro-liberalization policy is linked negatively to a threatening international environment and ongoing war, although the final decision is connected positively to the initial policy (i.e., continuity) and a liberal Congress (Peceny 1995).³

Another example is Fordham's (2008) empirical work that evaluates the effect of economic interests and security concerns on American intervention in the context of civil and international conflict. He finds evidence that, while alliance commitments and rival behavior have a greater immediate impact on American intervention, trade exports have an important indirect effect by shaping alliance commitments in the long run.

Drawing on a cross-national, time-series data analysis of 153 countries for the years 1981 through 2005, Choi's (2013b) quantitative research examines the

question of what precipitates US humanitarian intervention. After controlling for other variables such as democracy and media coverage, his study reports that the United States is likely to use force in a manner consistent with the theorizing put forth by liberals who argue for the protection of victims of human rights violations.⁴

More plentiful are data-based studies of US military assistance. Studies from Poe (1991) and Poe and Meernik (1995) link Washington's decisions about military assistance in the 1980s negatively to human rights abuses on the part of potential recipients. These works conclude in favor of the need to study the role of Congress more closely. This idea is reinforced by the findings from Apodaca and Stohl (1999). They focus on the period from 1976 to 1995 and find a positive connection between military assistance and human rights policies in the Reagan years. This surprising result, given that administration's declared priorities, becomes easier to understand in light of countervailing power from a much more liberal Congress and other reinforcing factors (Apodaca and Stohl 1999, 194).

Studies by Blanton (2000, 2005) on US arms exports and military assistance reveal a role for human rights as well. Arms exports from the United States during 1990 to 1994 inclusive are connected positively to a potential recipient's democracy, the presence of US troops, a location in the Middle East and level of trade. A negative connection is revealed regarding human rights abuses and the presence of external conflict (Blanton 2000). Patterns also emerge from a study that compares 1981 through 1990 to 1991 through 2002. In the last decade of the Cold War, US military assistance shows no connection to human rights abuses. Instead, it corresponds positively to the potential recipient's level of democracy and presence of US troops. The decade that follows reveals a negative linkage between military assistance and human rights abuses, with the positive connection involving democracy being preserved (Blanton 2005, 659).

Quite recently, Prins (2010) produced a valuable assessment of the literature on intervention and uses of force short of war. This review culminated in an inventory of variables that have revealed some connection with the use of force short of war, in each instance cast at the dyadic level (Prins 2010, 4656). Mixed results emerge for military capabilities and alliance structure. For contiguity, territorial issues, economic interdependence, intergovernmental organization membership, regime type, and economic development, the empirical evidence is strongly in line with intuition (Prins 2010, 4656). Contiguous dyads, for instance, are more likely to experience the use of force.

Some evidence exist that military assistance and intervention by the United States are connected, respectively, to positive and negative performance in other countries regarding respect for human rights. However, previous studies have not evaluated the relative importance of America's key foreign policy initiatives in the same empirical model. In addition to protecting human rights, the US government has claimed to promote democratic values and beliefs as well as implement counterterrorism measures around the world. Thus, the important question is do US military activities abroad respond to threats to democratic institutions, human rights abuses,

or terrorist activity? We address that question by building and testing a statistical model in which these three factors, along with potentially confounding variables, are pitted against one another.

Human rights, democracy promotion, and terrorism are prominent today as issues in US foreign and security policy. The three represent a continuum. Intervention out of a concern for human rights violations clearly reflects a liberal vision of the world. At the other extreme, actions to counteract terrorism abroad are more in line with a realist vision of the national interest, as manifested in the War on Terror.⁵

Liberals claim that massive human rights violations legitimize use of military force (Hoffmann 1996; Orend 1999). For example, Bagnoli (2006, 118–19) contends that “there is a strict moral duty to intervene when fundamental human rights are violated . . . to protect the victims and to coerce the wrongdoer . . . [these] duties follow from respect for humanity and hence are a matter of justice, not of mercy.” Liberals consider US military intervention to be an effective tool of foreign policy that could deter rogue states with poor human rights records, even if the intervention is not related to Washington’s vital interests. Pearson, Baumann, and Pickering’s (1994, 208) observation is in line with the liberal version of the world: “Humanitarian motives usually do little to further interveners’ power interests,” rather they are invoked against governments that severely violate the human rights of their citizens.

Since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the presence of terror cells in other countries has been identified as a primary factor that prompts US military action (Azam and Thelen 2010; Choi 2016). The president is more inclined to deploy the military overseas to take on terrorist forces. As exemplified by the invasion of Afghanistan, the United States often deems military power to be a legitimate foreign policy tool in the effort to eliminate terrorist networks in those countries thought to harbor them. Another prominent example is the US military intervention in Iraq, carried out in order to remove the Saddam Hussein regime (i.e., the claim was that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and supported international terrorism). Indeed, it is worth noting the declaration of President George W. Bush on October 25, 2004: “We are fighting these terrorists with our military in Afghanistan and Iraq and beyond, so we do not have to face them in the streets of our own cities.” Due to relatively easy access to US territory for possible terrorist attacks (e.g., 9/11), realists may perceive international terrorism as a more significant menace to national security than other threats such as (potential) militarized interstate conflicts and arms races between the United States and major powers. Therefore, fighting terrorism advances international/national security and thus should be one of the core reasons for use of US military forces from a realist perspective.

Democracy promotion can be placed somewhere between protection of human rights and counterterrorism on the theoretical spectrum. It combines liberal and realist elements in the sense that democratization around the world, all other things being equal, tends to reinforce the international system led by the United States. Democracies are more likely than autocracies to join in with the coalition of

advanced, democratic states that Washington coordinates in efforts to manage world politics and economics (Oneal and Russett 1999; Choi and James 2005; Choi 2011, 2013a). Democratization also obviously contains a liberal element. Democratic governments show greater respect for individual freedom and a range of basic rights in comparison to their autocratic counterparts. Art (2003, 69) sums up the hybrid nature of democratization as a foreign policy goal: “Promoting democracy is a happy but all-too-infrequent instance where power and purpose in foreign policy coincide—where what is useful is also right.”⁶ In sum, the relative priorities the United States places on fighting terrorism, supporting democracy, and counteracting human rights abuses will prove revealing in assessing the basic character of its intervention policy.

Theorizing culminates in the following three hypotheses:

Realist Hypothesis: Higher terrorist activity in a state should make US military intervention more likely.

Liberal Hypothesis: Higher human rights abuses in a state should make US military intervention more likely.

Hybrid Hypothesis: A lower level of democracy in a state should make US military intervention more likely.

These propositions are assessed individually and in competition with one another in the section on Empirical Findings.

Research Design

This study is based on cross-national, time-series data for 164 countries during the period from 1981 to 2005. The size of the sample and study period are determined by the human rights data, which are available only after 1981 (Cingranelli and Richards 1999, 2010a, 2010b), and by the US military intervention data, which end in 2005 (Pearson and Baumann 1993; Kisangani and Pickering 2008; Pickering and Kisangani 2009).

Since “intervention has always been and remains an imprecise and extremely ambiguous concept” (Little 1987, 49), this study relies on the definition of Pearson and Baumann (1993), one of the most authoritative conceptualizations to be found in the literature on military intervention. They refer to military intervention as the movement of regular troops, or the forces of one country into the territory or territorial waters of another country, or forceful military exploits by troops already stationed by one country inside another. In order to differentiate full-fledged military interventions from minor border encounters, or shooting incidents, “regular troops” do not include paramilitary forces and “military exploits” exclude actions by border guards or police; these components of the definition help to avoid conflating the effects of small-scale border skirmishes or actions undertaken by paramilitary forces with the consequences of sustained military interventions.

Given prominent US use of its armed forces in contemporary world politics, this study is limited to military interventions initiated by that state, which continues to overawe the world on at least that dimension of capabilities. Several important causal factors are considered together, with a supplemental analysis of interventions directed specifically toward regime change. It should be noted that this study does not select a particular set of events that sometimes has precipitated military intervention. Fordham (2008, 743) provides the rationale for the sampling decision: "In principle, intervention requires no triggering event. States can and do use force without provocation."

The dependent variable, US military intervention, records whether US military interventions took place within a country's borders in a given year. It is a dichotomous measure, 1 for the first year of any military intervention and 0 otherwise. It is worth noting that during the study period of this research, the United States has conducted one intervention within a specific country in a given year except on two occasions.⁷ The data come from two different yet related sources. Pearson and Baumann (1993) cover the period from 1946 to 1988, while the data from Pickering and Kisangani (2009) cover the period from 1989 to 2005. Other than splitting up the temporal domain, the two data sets conceptualize and operationalize military interventions using identical criteria.

One reason that the United States employs its military abroad is to advance or defend democracy as a political system of government. For example, the absence of democracy in Haiti was one of the principal considerations involved in stimulating the US military intervention in that country (Hallenberg 2002; Kurth 2006; Pearson, Walker, and Stern 2006). Democracy is operationalized with the Polity data set (Marshall and Jaggers 2007). Polity provides an eleven-point additive score for both democracies and autocracies in order to capture the overall quality of democratic institutions. Each score ranges from 0 to 10. Subtracting the autocracy score from the democracy score gives an overall polity score that can range from full democracy (+10) to full autocracy (-10). Democracy and autocracy are thus assumed to be opposing systems when measured on a single dimension. The democracy variable should reduce the likelihood of US military intervention.⁸

To measure the degree of human rights violations, this study utilizes the Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) index of physical integrity rights, one of the most widely used indices in the human rights literature. This is an additive index based on the occurrence of torture, extrajudicial killings, political imprisonment, and disappearances, which represent the most extreme dimensions of human rights violations. It ranges from 0 (*no government respect for these four rights*) to 8 (*full government respect for these four rights*).⁹ To facilitate easy interpretation of the estimated coefficient, the original ranking from 0 to 8 is reversed here, with 0 corresponding to *the fewest human rights violations* and 8 corresponding to *the most human right violations*, and this implies that human rights violations should be associated with a higher risk of US military intervention.

The US interventions into Pakistan, a known haven for terrorist groups, have been a direct response to the growing terrorist threats. This is just one example of US sensitivity to terrorism; the bombing of Libya in 1986 would constitute another prominent instance. Accordingly, the United States is very likely to launch military campaigns in response to terrorist activity even outside its borders (Azam and Thelen 2010). Terrorism is operationalized as the annual number of transnational terrorist incidents performed by individuals having the nationality of a given country for each state. The nationality of the terrorists involved in each incident is determined by Mickolus et al.'s (2006) Attributes of Terrorist Events' (ITERATE) "1st nationality of terrorists in attack force" variable that provides the country code for the state from which the individuals implicated in the terrorist attack are citizens.¹⁰ If a terrorist attack is committed by individuals from more than one country, the nationality of the first terrorist attacker is coded as the perpetrator of the act rather than coding the attack as coming from each country to avoid double counting. The terrorism variable should be associated with a higher risk of a US military intervention.

Several countries suffer frequent terrorist attacks, but the United States supports the government (e.g., Israel). Since the US response in these cases may be aid to the government, not intervention, the count of terrorist events may be short of a precise predictor. However, there is evidence that the US government actually pays attention to the frequency of terrorist events. Thus, in turn, that measure can serve as a good proxy to capture Washington's security policy in responding to terrorist threats abroad. For example, the *Country Reports on Terrorism 2011*, published by the Bureau of Counterterrorism at US Department of State, conveys information on how many terrorist incidents per year have occurred in other countries regardless of their population size.

To avert omitted variable bias, this study includes a set of control variables: alliances, oil exporter status, economic development, regional dummies, and a lagged term for US military intervention. These variables are chosen because previous studies have suggested that they have some impact on military intervention by the United States.¹¹

Alliances are a key factor for American foreign policy makers since they involve sharing common strategic and security interests for political reasons (Russett and Oneal 2001). The United States should be more willing to engage in a military mission for the purpose of providing assistance to its troubled allies. In other words, Washington should be expected to treat its friends and enemies differently. The United States should be less likely to engage in a conflict with its allies to protect vested interests (Russett and Oneal 2001; Choi and James 2005). The alliance variable is coded as 1 if a country is militarily allied with the United States. The data are gathered from the Correlates of War Formal Alliance data set, which identifies each formal alliance between at least two states that falls into the class of a defense pact, neutrality or nonaggression treaty, or entente agreement (Gibler and Sarkees 2004; Gibler 2009). Supportive interventions for allies are expected to be rare in comparison to hostile interventions against other states, so the alliance variable should be negatively associated with US military intervention.

Not surprisingly, securing a reliable and cheap oil supply is considered to be a vital national interest of the United States, one that is essential for continued economic growth and military operations (Peters 2003; Klare 2004; Kraemer 2006; Nye 2006). Fordham (2008, 742) argues that “the need to ensure continuing access to the region’s oil resources might help explain current American security commitments in the Persian region.” For the purposes of estimation, a dummy for oil-exporting countries is included. When a country’s oil exports exceed one-third of export revenues, it is coded as 1. The same measure is found in Fearon and Laitin’s (2003) study of civil wars. The data are collected from the World Bank’s (2010) *World Development Indicators 2010*. The oil variable should be positively related to US military intervention. When the dummy oil variable is replaced with the log of oil exports, fuel export in percentage of merchandise exports, or fuel export divided by gross domestic product (GDP), the results are similar to those reported subsequently.

Highly developed countries commonly have fewer people who live below the poverty line; as such, they can better afford basic human needs such as clean water, nutrition, health care, education, clothing, and shelter. Accordingly, people in developed economies usually feel more secure because of the abundance of economic resources and, therefore, are less prone to criminal activities as a means toward survival. In contrast, poor countries suffer from an array of political and social problems that are caused by economic deprivation (Hallenberg 2002). In this case, the United States may be more likely to intervene militarily in order to alleviate the conditions experienced by poor people in underdeveloped countries that often lead to chaos and death on a large scale. Economic development is measured through the logged yearly value of a country’s GDP per capita, adjusted for purchasing power parity in 2005. Data for this variable are derived from Gleditsch (2002) and have been updated with base data from the new 6.3 version of the Penn World Tables (Heston, Summers, and Aten 2009).¹²

Geopolitical interests are often at the center of American foreign policy decision making (Flint et al. 2009). This may be the reason why the United States intervened in the Balkans but not in Rwanda. To gauge the importance of geopolitics, this study creates six regional dummies, namely, the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Oceania. For estimation, the Middle East—a region considered to be critical to American national interests—is used as the baseline for comparison.¹³

When countries experience a US military intervention in a given year, they will have a higher risk of another intervention during the following year. Thus, this study controls for the history of US military interventions by adding a lagged dependent variable on the right-hand side of the equation.¹⁴ This approach has been adopted in numerous other studies (e.g., Burkhart and Lewis-Beck 1994; Levite, Jentleson, and Berman 1994; Pickering and Kisangani 2010).

The dependent variable, US military intervention, is dichotomous, so this study employs logit regression as the main estimation method. To increase likelihood that the predictors are the causes of the outcome variable, rather than the other way around, all predictors are lagged one year behind the outcome variable.¹⁵ In the absence of alternative estimation methods, lagging one year is the most commonly

used approach in the conflict literature (e.g., Fearon and Laitin 2003; Pickering and Kisangani 2010).

Empirical Findings

Table 1 reports the first set of empirical results. Before assessing the relative importance of the possible justifications for Washington's military deployments in the same model, this study presents simple statistical models that examine whether each of the absence of democracy, the extent of human right violations, and the incidence of international terrorist attacks produces an independent and significant effect while controlling for the history of military intervention. The results are displayed in models 1 through 3, respectively. Although the levels are somewhat different, each of those three factors achieves statistical significance. The US military campaigns are less likely to occur in countries where democratic political institutions are in place, while they are more likely to take place in countries where human right abuses are extensive and international terrorism is thriving. Thus, the Hybrid, Liberal, and Realist Hypotheses all receive tentative support at the outset.

However, when those three factors are pitted against one another in the same model, the results offer a quite different causal story. The results in model 4 indicate that while human rights abuses are statistically different from zero, democracy and terrorism are not. As will become apparent, only the Liberal Hypothesis will hold up against a wide range of model specifications. An assessment of relative importance provides compelling evidence: *The U.S. is more likely to deploy its armed forces in defense of human rights protection in comparison to democracy promotion or a reduction of terrorist activity in other countries.* Perhaps, US military intervention has become an effective tool of foreign policy that coincides with the premise of the right and even obligation to protect people in troubled countries. Put differently, liberal perspectives appear to best describe the intervention behavior of US presidents at least during the past three decades.

In order to confirm that the estimated coefficients are not subject to multicollinearity, this study implements two commonly used diagnostics: simple correlation and variance inflation factor (VIF). The correlation between human rights abuses and democracy is -0.38 ,¹⁶ that between human rights abuses and terrorism is 0.18 , and that between democracy and terrorism is 0.04 . As none of these correlation statistics even approaches a conventional threshold such as 0.70 , it is fair to say that there is no evidence for multicollinearity between and among democracy, human rights abuses, and terrorism. When the VIF test is used to determine if multicollinearity is present in the estimated model, no concerns arise because none of the variables' VIFs exceeds the threshold of 10 (the mean VIF is 1.14 ; see Belsley and Welsch 1980).

Model 5 extends model 4 by including control variables.¹⁷ The coefficients for human rights abuses and past intervention remain statistically significant, and these two factors appear to serve as highly robust catalysts for US military action. Almost all of the control variables turn out to be insignificant. The salience of human rights

Table 1. Why Does the United States Intervene Overseas?

| Variable | Logit | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 | Model 6 | Model 7 |
| Democracy _{t-1} | -0.036* (0.020) | | | -0.006 (0.022) | -0.021 (0.026) | -0.042 (0.038) | -0.072 (0.047) |
| Human rights abuse _{t-1} | | 0.349*** (0.065) | | 0.340*** (0.068) | 0.329*** (0.077) | 0.314** (0.113) | 0.234* (0.129) |
| Terrorism _{t-1} | | | 0.026* (0.016) | 0.008 (0.024) | -0.001 (0.027) | -0.004 (0.052) | -0.040 (0.073) |
| US military intervention _{t-1} | 3.700*** (0.355) | 3.209*** (0.374) | 3.695*** (0.354) | 3.217*** (0.375) | 3.059*** (0.379) | 4.053*** (0.676) | 3.322*** (0.711) |
| Alliance _{t-1} | | | | | 0.258 (0.546) | | 0.919 (1.065) |
| Oil exporter _{t-1} | | | | | -0.035 (0.420) | | 0.522 (0.586) |
| Economic development _{t-1} | | | | | -0.040 (0.195) | | -0.699* (0.373) |
| Americas _{t-1} | | | | | -0.040 (0.602) | | 0.283 (1.085) |
| Europe _{t-1} | | | | | -0.820 (0.621) | | -0.017 (0.805) |
| Africa _{t-1} | | | | | -0.856* (0.518) | | -2.110* (0.955) |
| Asia _{t-1} | | | | | -0.399 (0.502) | | -1.278 (0.924) |
| Constant | -4.420*** (0.161) | -5.881*** (0.368) | -4.476*** (0.165) | -5.857*** (0.374) | -5.076** (1.935) | -6.744*** (0.610) | -0.071 (3.463) |
| LR χ^2 | 74.55 | 102.91 | 72.99 | 103.06 | 110.22 | 37.61 | 52.09 |
| Prob > χ^2 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 |
| Log likelihood | -239.59 | -225.41 | -240.37 | -225.33 | -221.76 | -98.55 | -91.32 |
| Pseudo R ² | .13 | .19 | .13 | .19 | .20 | .16 | .22 |
| Observations | 3,375 | 3,375 | 3,375 | 3,375 | 3,375 | 3,375 | 3,375 |

Note: LR = likelihood ratio.
 *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001, one-tailed tests.

abuses and inclusion of past intervention are most likely to be responsible for the insignificance of the controls, as they outperform these variables. Note that the regional dummy variables, with the exception of Africa's negative coefficient, are insignificant.¹⁸ African countries appear to experience fewer interventions by the US military than Middle East countries. However, when the Africa dummy alone is controlled in model 5 as compared to the other regions (not shown in Table 1),¹⁹ it fails to achieve statistical significance. When the Middle East dummy alone is estimated, it is statistically significant at the .05 level, with the expected positive sign. These findings suggest that no particular identifiable geopolitics, except for the Middle East, play out in US security decision-making processes.²⁰

Choi (2009, 153) points out that "the presence of outliers and influential cases can dramatically change the magnitude of regression coefficients and even the direction of coefficient signs (i.e., from positive to negative or vice versa)." Accordingly, it is important to investigate whether the estimated results of this study are, using diagnostic tests, being driven by a handful of outlier cases. This study employs three diagnostic statistics: Pregibon (1981) leverage, Pregibon (1981) $\Delta\hat{\beta}$ influence statistic, and standardized Pearson residuals. According to these statistics, Colombia in 1999 and Italy in 1984 appear to be the two most influential outliers. The logistic regression of model 5 with these two potential outliers and without them is compared in order to evaluate how much impact they have on our regression coefficient estimates. This diagnostic analysis reveals that the results are virtually identical with and without the two observations, indicating that the findings of this study are unlikely to be statistical artifacts.

Since statistical significance does not necessarily indicate a meaningful finding in a practical sense, the substantive effects of variables should be reported for empirical verification. This study finds that substantive effects are in line with statistical significance. For example, the risk that any country will induce US military intervention increases by 120 percent if its human right violations increase 1 *SD* and by 379 percent if the violations increase 2 *SDs* (the base model is model 4). Figure 1 illustrates the substantive effects in a more formal way. Not surprisingly, Figure 1 also shows the increase in Pr(US military intervention) over a range of human rights abuses, as the predicted probability line is moving upward along the *x*-axis.

The US military intervention variable has so far lumped together different types of missions led by US forces. The measurement most effectively captures the overall aspects of interventions and is suitable for evaluating the relative importance of democracy, human rights, and terrorism. However, interventions with a regime or policy change mission (i.e., purport to change target political regime or its core policies) may be interesting to investigate for the purposes of this study rather than other types of interventions such as a diplomatic protective mission (intervention to protect US military and/or diplomatic interests and property inside or outside the target country). For this reason, we look exclusively at interventions that are referred to as deployment of US forces in order to change the behavior of political regimes or their

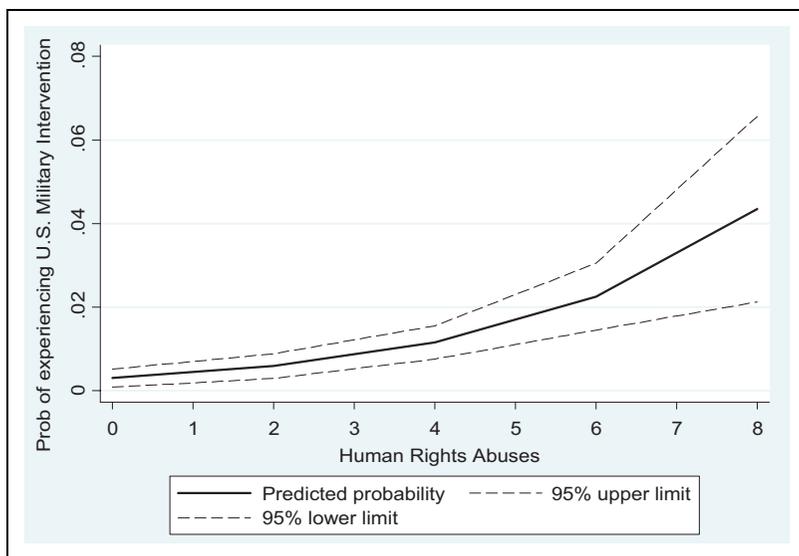


Figure 1. Probability of US military intervention by human rights abuses.

core policies (Pickering and Kisangani 2009, 593). Whenever the United States has dispatched armed forces to another country with such goals, it is classified as a US military intervention. The revised dependent variable, US regime or policy change intervention, is a dichotomous measure with 1 indicating *the occurrence of such a specific military intervention by the United States* and 0 otherwise.

When models 6 and 7 in Table 1 replicate models 4 and 5, the results are consistent with those in the previous two models, and human right abuses emerge as the main predictor of US military intervention in a consistent manner. This finding may imply that the main concern of US foreign policy makers is to protect human rights around the world even in case of the regime change intervention. Furthermore, given that political systems that protect universal rights are ultimately more stable, successful, and secure, US foreign policy is right on target.

It is possible that due to the fact that terrorist attacks against US-specific targets are not differentiated from other targets, the terrorism variable in the full models in Table 1 may turn out to be insignificant. Put differently, Washington may formulate foreign policy in response to threats to its own security interests, especially terrorist attacks against oversea US citizens, and threats to other countries may be secondary concerns.²¹ Accordingly, it may be the case that the terrorism variable, which is not a “straight-ahead” measure of US-specific targets, performs not so well as it should in the full models. It is also interesting to see how a dichotomous democracy–autocracy measure in place of a continuous composite democracy score affects estimated results. As compared to the twenty-one-point Polity composite index, a dichotomous measure is considered a much simpler definition of democracy, centering on

elections and leadership succession, which is typically what the United States is concerned about (Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010).²²

Table 2 replicates Table 1 after (a) the Polity democracy variable is replaced with Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland's (2010) dichotomous democracy measure and (b) the terrorism variable is adjusted to measure only US victims of terrorism (i.e., the actual number of all attacks that victimized US citizens, according to ITER-ATE).²³ Due to missing values in Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland's (2010) data collection, Table 2 includes 3,350 observations, which are twenty-five less than does Table 1. However, the estimates in Table 2 closely resemble those in Table 1. Although *US victims of terrorism* achieve statistical significance in model 3, it becomes insignificant in the full models 4 through 7, while *Human rights abuse* remains as a significant and positive predictor of US military intervention across models. The overall results of the robustness tests reported in Table 2 do not deviate from the key finding of this study, that is, human rights violations matter most.

Conclusion

Since the US government indeed has taken action against some countries but not others, the academic and policy community are puzzled with the question of what precipitates US military intervention.²⁴ Previous studies include limited systematic research about the causal factors that underlie the use of the US armed forces abroad, so this study fills the gap. The present research finds that, beneath the greater consciousness concerning promotion of democracy and combating terrorism, human rights abuses emerge as the consistent trait among states that experience US military intervention. This finding therefore lends credence to the Liberal Hypothesis about human rights, especially in contrast to the Realist Hypothesis regarding terrorism. This finding is also in line with the official position of US Department of State: "The protection of fundamental human rights was a foundation stone in the establishment of the United States over 200 years ago. Since then, a central goal of U.S. foreign policy has been the promotion of respect for human rights, as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."²⁵ The empirical evidence of this study and the State Department statement led us to believe that the United States has a sustained interest in promoting human rights abroad rather than exclusively pursuing its security interests. Of course, our assessment counteracts the widespread popular belief regarding US intervention as self-serving adventurism. It is possible that high-profile interventions that appear linked to adventurism, such as Vietnam or Iraq, have overshadowed the overall pattern.

In order to explain and understand why the United States intervenes abroad, the empirical models include measures of target country Polity score and Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland's variable (to measure democracy), CIRI index of physical integrity rights (to measure human rights abuses), and in-country terrorist incidents per year (to measure international terrorist threat). However, these measures may not perfectly filter some "noises." For example, it is possible that the United States deployed its soldiers overseas to keep a country autocratic and friendly rather than

Table 2. Why Does the United States Intervene Overseas? Robustness Tests.

| Variable | Logit | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 | Model 6 | Model 7 |
| Cheibub et al.'s democracy _{t-1} | -0.186 (0.291) | | | 0.245 (0.310) | 0.110 (0.366) | -0.175 (0.539) | -0.526 (0.666) |
| Human rights abuse _{t-1} | | 0.349*** (0.065) | | 0.356*** (0.066) | 0.332*** (0.074) | 0.334*** (0.109) | 0.234* (0.123) |
| US victims of terrorism _{t-1} | | | 0.042* (0.023) | 0.021 (0.027) | 0.015 (0.029) | 0.015 (0.054) | 0.007 (0.066) |
| US military intervention _{t-1} | 3.695*** (0.354) | 3.200*** (0.374) | 3.666*** (0.354) | 3.171*** (0.375) | 3.028*** (0.378) | 4.017*** (0.667) | 3.202*** (0.715) |
| Alliance _{t-1} | | | | | 0.066 (0.526) | | 0.585 (0.985) |
| Oil exporter _{t-1} | | | | | 0.051 (0.413) | | 0.507 (0.587) |
| Economic development _{t-1} | | | | | -0.103 (0.196) | | -0.772* (0.381) |
| Americas _{t-1} | | | | | -0.154 (0.582) | | 0.243 (1.021) |
| Europe _{t-1} | | | | | -0.957 (0.619) | | -0.101 (0.817) |
| Africa _{t-1} | | | | | -0.981* (0.524) | | -2.318*** (0.958) |
| Asia _{t-1} | | | | | -0.538 (0.505) | | -1.341 (0.928) |
| Constant | -4.346*** (0.202) | -5.870*** (0.367) | -4.457*** (0.163) | -6.018*** (0.417) | -4.433* (1.934) | -6.740*** (0.670) | 0.966 (3.491) |
| LR χ^2 | 71.44 | 102.83 | 73.04 | 104.12 | 110.26 | 36.44 | 50.31 |
| Prob > χ^2 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 |
| Log likelihood | -240.74 | -225.05 | -239.94 | -224.40 | -221.33 | -99.00 | -92.06 |
| Pseudo R ² | .13 | .19 | .13 | .19 | .20 | .16 | .21 |
| Observations | 3,350 | 3,350 | 3,350 | 3,350 | 3,350 | 3,350 | 3,350 |

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001, one-tailed tests.

to promote democracy during the Cold War period (e.g., overthrowing Allende in Chile). Similarly, it could be that countries in which the United States intervenes do have poor human rights records, but this fact may be irrelevant for the decision to intervene because the US decision makers did not in fact care about such abuses. However, filtering these noises is a challenging task because a way to code “real” motivations of US presidents for intervention decisions must await declassification of documents and even then will remain elusive because of inevitable uncertainty about how well the written or audial record matches up with inner beliefs at the time.

This study offers a point of departure for further data-based research efforts to assess US military intervention.²⁶ The role of domestic politics, for instance, lies beyond the scope of current research. In particular, it would be interesting to explore the role of Congress in the context of America’s key foreign policy initiatives. Earlier studies of military assistance and intervention suggest the value of investigating the role of the legislature in affecting policies implemented by the executive in the United States.²⁷ Types of intervention—pro-government, pro-opposition, and neutral—also might be distinguished for more in-depth theorizing and empirical assessment (Pickering and Peceny 2006; Peksen 2012). Cause and effect might operate quite differently from one of those contexts to another. However, future research should take a cautionary measure in studying the direction of intervention due to the limited number of cases included in the intervention data set.

Another point to consider concerns the role of timing in the research design. The results raise an interesting question about the rapidity of US action: Does Washington, for instance, respond more swiftly to threats characterized as security related (i.e., terrorism) as opposed to other concerns? This possibility cannot be appraised within the one-year window implemented in this study. Researchers could perform an analysis with monthly data on dates that interventions are carried out along with the dates of terrorist attacks. Such analysis would require quite a different research design, so it is left for future efforts.

Most notably beyond the scope of the present investigation, perhaps, is the *impact* of humanitarian intervention. In an authoritative review, Kuperman (2009, 343) draws attention to a problem of moral hazard: “The expectation of intervention can therefore encourage rebellion by lowering its anticipated cost and increasing its likelihood of success.” Moreover, rebels generally do not preoccupy themselves with concerns about collateral damage from their actions vis-à-vis civilian life and property. Thus, forceful intervention “should be reserved for cases in which states either attack non-violent groups or respond disproportionately to rebellion by deliberately targeting civilians” (Kuperman 2009, 351). In light of these observations, it becomes interesting to consider analysis of the outcomes of US military interventions.²⁸ While the present study identifies human rights as a consistent if sometimes silent foundational factor for US military intervention, the short- and long-term impact of such activities should receive priority in subsequent research.

Appendix A

Table AI. Why Does the United States Intervene Overseas? More Control Variables.

| Variable | Logit | | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
| Democracy _{t-1} | -0.018 (0.027) | -0.020 (0.024) | -0.038 (0.032) | -0.039 (0.029) |
| Human rights abuse _{t-1} | 0.329*** (0.076) | 0.348*** (0.069) | 0.316*** (0.085) | 0.317*** (0.079) |
| Terrorism _{t-1} | -0.007 (0.034) | 0.004 (0.026) | -0.019 (0.038) | -0.003 (0.028) |
| US military intervention _{t-1} | 3.132*** (0.414) | 3.258*** (0.380) | 2.812*** (0.419) | 3.099*** (0.384) |
| Alliance _{t-1} | | | 0.639 (0.751) | 0.243 (0.560) |
| Oil exporter _{t-1} | | | -0.122 (0.461) | -0.194 (0.433) |
| Economic development _{t-1} | | | -0.174 (0.243) | -0.220 (0.233) |
| Americas _{t-1} | | | -0.322 (0.746) | 0.125 (0.641) |
| Europe _{t-1} | | | -1.227* (0.727) | -0.646 (0.630) |
| Africa _{t-1} | | | -1.134* (0.558) | -0.975* (0.540) |
| Asia _{t-1} | | | -1.551* (0.686) | -0.593 (0.531) |
| Economic independence _{t-1} | 0.074 (0.077) | 0.119* (0.067) | 0.041 (0.105) | 0.137 (0.091) |
| Major power _{t-1} | 0.723 (1.510) | -1.104 (1.099) | 0.976 (1.774) | -0.966 (1.153) |
| National capabilities _{t-1} | -17.010 (17.648) | | -8.723 (18.845) | |
| Geographic distance _{t-1} | -0.030 (0.120) | 0.026 (0.119) | 0.120 (0.188) | 0.159 (0.184) |
| US presidential approval _{t-1} | 0.013 (0.024) | 0.015 (0.017) | 0.014 (0.024) | 0.018 (0.017) |
| Unemployment _{t-1} | 0.161 (0.166) | 0.198 (0.140) | 0.127 (0.166) | 0.191 (0.141) |
| Inflation _{t-1} | -0.027 (0.137) | -0.080 (0.098) | -0.053 (0.139) | -0.114 (0.105) |
| Constant | -7.571*** (2.257) | -8.736*** (1.935) | -6.295* (3.306) | -7.590*** (3.031) |
| LR χ^2 | 80.79 | 108.34 | 92.78 | 115.81 |
| Prob > χ^2 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 |
| Log likelihood | -187.11 | -221.91 | -181.11 | -218.18 |
| Pseudo R ² | .18 | .20 | .20 | .21 |
| Observations | 2,871 | 3,327 | 2,871 | 3,327 |

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, one-tailed tests.

Appendix B

Table B1. Why Does the United States Intervene Overseas? Additional Estimation Methods.

| Variable | Logit Splines | | | Rare Events Logit | | | GEEs | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------|--|--|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 | Model 6 | | | |
| Democracy _{t-1} | 0.025 (0.032) | 0.012 (0.031) | -0.007 (0.022) | -0.021 (0.027) | 0.003 (0.031) | -0.015 (0.032) | | | |
| Human rights abuse _{t-1} | 0.410 ^{***} (0.076) | 0.383 ^{***} (0.073) | 0.329 ^{***} (0.061) | 0.316 ^{***} (0.062) | 0.368 ^{***} (0.080) | 0.356 ^{***} (0.078) | | | |
| Terrorism _{t-1} | -0.001 (0.021) | -0.011 (0.026) | 0.022 (0.018) | 0.014 (0.021) | -0.002 (0.019) | -0.009 (0.021) | | | |
| US military intervention _{t-1} | | | 3.200 ^{***} (0.394) | 2.997 ^{***} (0.375) | | | | | |
| Alliance _{t-1} | | 0.212 (0.421) | | 0.228 (0.442) | | 0.400 (0.418) | | | |
| Oil exporter _{t-1} | | 0.009 (0.351) | | -0.025 (0.400) | | -0.051 (0.385) | | | |
| Economic development _{t-1} | | -0.070 (0.279) | | -0.030 (0.211) | | -0.117 (0.315) | | | |
| Americas _{t-1} | | -0.132 (0.550) | | -0.041 (0.495) | | -0.047 (0.575) | | | |
| Europe _{t-1} | | -1.094 [*] (0.662) | | -0.750 (0.651) | | -0.971 (0.697) | | | |
| Africa _{t-1} | | -0.929 [*] (0.456) | | -0.842 (0.514) | | -1.093 [*] (0.506) | | | |
| Asia _{t-1} | | -0.543 (0.467) | | -0.390 (0.488) | | -0.525 (0.501) | | | |
| Constant | -4.804 ^{***} (0.490) | -3.647 (2.401) | -5.787 ^{***} (0.337) | -5.015 ^{***} (2.023) | -5.695 ^{***} (0.428) | -4.179 (2.776) | | | |
| Wald χ^2 | 61.80 | 69.02 | | | 30.16 | 44.53 | | | |
| Prob > χ^2 | 0.001 | 0.001 | | | 0.001 | 0.001 | | | |
| Log likelihood | -241.51 | -237.16 | | | | | | | |
| Pseudo R ² | .13 | .14 | | | | | | | |
| Observations | 3,375 | 3,375 | 3,375 | 3,375 | 3,375 | 3,375 | | | |

Note: Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors. GEEs = generalized estimating equations.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, one-tailed tests.

Table C1. Why Does the United States Intervene Overseas? Global Terrorism Database.

| Variable | Logit | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 | Model 6 | Model 7 | Model 8 |
| Cheibub et al.'s democracy _{t-1} | -0.186 (0.291) | | | 0.456 (0.316) | 0.214 (0.365) | | 0.285 (0.305) | 0.124 (0.365) |
| Human rights abuse _{t-1} | | 0.349*** (0.065) | | 0.387*** (0.068) | 0.372*** (0.076) | | 0.362*** (0.066) | 0.337*** (0.074) |
| US victims of terrorism _{t-1} | | | -0.099 (0.127) | -0.241 (0.159) | -0.322* (0.177) | | | |
| US casualties of terrorism _{t-1} | | | | | | -0.002 (0.017) | -0.001 (0.019) | -0.005 (0.034) |
| US military intervention _{t-1} | 3.695*** (0.354) | 3.200*** (0.374) | 3.736*** (0.358) | 3.249*** (0.381) | 3.082*** (0.386) | 3.703*** (0.354) | 3.180*** (0.375) | 3.036*** (0.379) |
| Alliance _{t-1} | | | | | 0.392 (0.532) | | | 0.102 (0.521) |
| Oil exporter _{t-1} | | | | | 0.002 (0.411) | | | 0.043 (0.412) |
| Economic development _{t-1} | | | | | -0.075 (0.197) | | | -0.096 (0.195) |
| Americas _{t-1} | | | | | -0.215 (0.578) | | | -0.162 (0.581) |
| Europe _{t-1} | | | | | -1.005 (0.617) | | | -0.969 (0.620) |
| Africa _{t-1} | | | | | -0.996* (0.527) | | | -0.980* (0.524) |
| Asia _{t-1} | | | | | -0.535 (0.502) | | | -0.539 (0.504) |
| Constant | -4.346*** (0.202) | -5.870*** (0.367) | -4.394*** (0.164) | -6.156*** (0.428) | -4.846** (1.956) | -4.426*** (0.161) | -6.045*** (0.416) | -4.514*** (1.928) |
| LR χ^2 | 71.44 | 102.83 | 72.07 | 107.39 | 115.81 | 71.06 | 103.69 | 110.08 |
| Prob > χ^2 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 |
| Log likelihood | -240.74 | -225.05 | -240.43 | -222.77 | -218.56 | -240.93 | -224.62 | -221.42 |
| Pseudo R ² | .13 | .19 | .13 | .19 | .21 | .13 | .19 | .20 |
| Observations | 3,350 | 3,350 | 3,350 | 3,350 | 3,350 | 3,350 | 3,350 | 3,350 |

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001, one-tailed tests.

Acknowledgment

We are grateful to Benjamin Fordham, Emizet Kisangani, Frederic S. Pearson, Dursun Peksen, Jeffrey Pickering, Wayne Sandholtz, James Scott, and Jenifer Whitten-Woodring for helpful commentaries.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Supplemental Material

The online [appendices/data supplements/etc] are available at <http://jcr.sagepub.com/supplemental>.

Notes

1. For example, Western (2002) contends that the Cable News Network (CNN) effect and President Bush's moral outrage had little to do with the US intervention in Somalia. He instead underscores the political interplay of competing foreign policy makers as the source of US military intervention.
2. Consider the list of references from Prins (2010, 4662–68). Items on military intervention are overwhelmingly cross-national in research design. The list does include a solid representation from the substantial literature on the president and use of force—referring to the program of aggregate research initiated by Blechman and Kaplan (1978)—but this work differs from the more focused study of US military intervention here.
3. Results from Peceny (1995) are based on a slightly shorter time series, from 1898 to 1992.
4. While Choi's work explores the determinants of US humanitarian actions, this study purports to evaluate the relative importance of three major foreign policy issues in the context of US military intervention, namely, democracy, human rights, and terrorism.
5. The contrast in realist versus liberal arguments regarding the overall conduct of American foreign policy is explored at length in Rosato and Schuessler (2011, 803).
6. Note also that Smith (2000, 85), in the title of his treatment of American foreign policy in relation to promotion of democracy and human rights, includes the phrase “national security liberalism.”
7. Honduras in 1988 and Afghanistan in 2001.
8. When both democracy and its squared term are estimated, the results do not show a reversed U-shaped relationship between democracy and intervention. In other words, there is no level of democracy above and below which US military intervention becomes less likely.

9. The Cingranelli–Richards (CIRI) index of physical integrity rights is available online at ciri.binghamton.edu (Cingranelli and Richards 1999, 2010a, 2010b).
10. When the location of each attack is instead determined by the “location start” variable that provides the country code for the state where each individual terrorist incident began, the findings of this study do not change. When data based on US Department of State list of state sponsors of terrorism are used instead, the results are not substantively different from those reported in the section on empirical findings.
11. Control variables included here have various degrees of association with liberal versus realist thinking. While that point is recognized, the variables designated as controls are not the *primary* focus of this investigation in terms of anticipated causal mechanisms. Thus, democracy, terrorism, and human rights are given pride of place in the research design. Regional effects have proven inconsistent in prior studies, but it makes sense in particular to allow for such variation in the current model as a product of two possibilities. One concerns strategic salience. The other, with Africa at the forefront, concerns the degree of perceived need for assistance that may be in place even at the regional level as a result of the extreme plight of virtually all states on that continent.
12. Although the United Nations Development Programme’s Human Development Index may be an alternative measure of economic development, its data coverage is too limited, as it is collected only for 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2005 to 2010. For many developing countries, other potential candidates such as Gini coefficient, unemployment rate, and educational level also suffer from a lack of observations.
13. Control for proximity effects is considered in Appendix A. For example, consider closeness to Saudi Arabia. The United States did not intervene conspicuously in Bahrain during government crackdowns for the years 2011 to 2012, yet the Saudis did.
14. When the lagged dependent variable is excluded from estimation, the results are similar to those in Table 1 shown in the section on empirical findings.
15. We also consider the fact that sometimes military intervention comes rather quickly, especially if it is in response to a terrorist attack. However, running a contemporaneous model does not alter the results.
16. The limited correlation is not surprising, given the fact that Marshall and Jagers’s (2007, 13) Polity data do not include human rights protection as a key element of democratic institutions. It instead conceptualizes democracy in the following terms:

[First] is the presence of institutions and procedures through which citizens can express effective preferences about alternative policies and leaders. Second is the existence of institutionalized constraints on the exercise of power by the executive. Third is the guarantee of civil liberties to all citizens in their daily lives and in acts of political participation.

The first conception of democratic institutions and procedures has provided the basis for construction of four of the five subcomponents of the Polity composite index: competitiveness of executive recruitment, openness of executive recruitment, regulation of participation, and competitiveness of political competition. The second conception of

- democracy has provided a basis for constraints on the chief executive, the last subcomponent of the Polity composite index. Unfortunately, civil liberties, the third conception of democracy, has not yet developed into an individual component of the Polity composite index due to a lack of information on the quality of civil liberties across space and time.
17. The list of control variables is far from being exhaustive. Appendix A explores the possibility that other factors, notably those encountered quite frequently in research designs on conflict processes at the dyadic level, may better account for the variation in US military action: economic interdependence, major power involvement, national capabilities and geographic distance (operationalization of these controls is well explained in Oneal and Russett 1999). In addition, Appendix A includes three US-specific variables as additional robustness checks: US presidential approval rates, unemployment, and inflation. However, Appendix A confirms that the main findings of this study remain the same even after inclusion of these controls.
 18. Oceania is not included for estimation because it predicts failure perfectly.
 19. Africa is often considered the most conflict-ravaged region in the world but not as strategically important to the United States as Latin America or the Middle East (Somerville 1990; Soderlund et al. 2008). Country fixed-effects control for unmodeled country-specific factors and also ensure that the coefficient estimates capture within-country rather than cross-sectional variation. However, Schneider, Barbieri, and Gleditsch (2003, 22) warn that fixed-effects logit “does not seem ideal for binary dependent variables whose one outcome represents a rare event.” When country fixed effects are implemented in place of regional dummies in model 5, this study encounters a dramatic loss of observations (i.e., 81 percent of observations dropped), leading to a biased logit analysis. Because of this shortcoming, the fixed-effects estimates are not reported here despite the fact that the human rights abuses variable still turns out to be a significant and positive predictor.
 20. Alternative statistical estimation techniques could make the significance of human rights abuses disappear if this factor is not robust. Appendix B evaluates the robustness of the results reported in models 4 and 5 from Table 1 by performing three other advanced statistical estimations: logistic regression models with peace-years correction (also known as logit splines), rare events logit, and generalized estimating equations. Overall, irrespective of estimation methods, the link involving human rights abuses with US military intervention is confirmed in a consistent manner, while democracy and terrorism have no bearing on the use of military force.
 21. We are very grateful to a reviewer for this idea about US foreign policy.
 22. However, according to Oneal and Ray’s study (1997, 754), the publication of the Polity data set has made it possible to overcome limitations imposed by the use of a dichotomous measure of democracy, a common practice in the past due to a lack of more refined measures.
 23. When the Global Terrorism Database is used instead, the main findings of this study do not change, as shown in Appendix C.
 24. Due to word limit, case illustrations of US military intervention are relegated to online supplement.

25. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/hr/>.
26. The role of the media in relation to government performance regarding respect for human rights is neither simple nor intuitive; for a detailed treatment, see Whitten-Woodring (2009). Interesting to consider in particular are implications of the results obtained in the present study for the controversy over the “CNN Effect” (Robinson 2002). Is media influence over military intervention a myth or reality?
27. This research agenda is exemplified by the recent shift toward studying “foreign policy entrepreneurs” in Congress, who have impacted upon a wide range of actions, some of which pertain to military intervention (Carter and Scott 2009). See also Howell and Pevehouse (2005) on the connection of the partisan composition of Congress with the frequency of major use of force.
28. An assessment of US military assistance concludes that, in the era of the “War on Terror,” human rights performance in recipient states has become significantly more negative (Sandholtz 2013). For a cross-national assessment of how military intervention affects human rights in target states, see Peksen (2012).

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