

The Militarization of Vital Maritime Areas: US Military Positioning in The Mediterranean as a Case Study



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Abstract:

This study addresses the militarization of vital maritime areas, focusing on analyzing the United States' position in the Mediterranean Sea, a region subject to intense competition and considered one of the most important maritime areas sought by major powers. The study concludes that the United States, in its desire to expand its influence in the Mediterranean, seeks strategic engagement in the region. The importance of the American military presence is manifested in several dimensions, including the security of maritime shipping lanes, the protection of energy flows, the protection of its allies, and the monitoring areas of tension and conflict in the Middle East and North Africa.

Keywords: Mediterranean; Naval Militarization; Vital Maritime Areas; USA; Military Power.

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Introduction:

Throughout history, seas and oceans have been vital areas of critical strategic importance, linked to control of international trade routes, the protection of economic interests, and the guarantee of military superiority. Among these vital areas, the Mediterranean Basin stands out as a vital corridor linking the Atlantic Ocean via the Strait of Gibraltar, the Red Sea via the Suez Canal, and the Indian Ocean. This exceptional location has made the Mediterranean an arena of geopolitical and military competition between great powers.

There has been an increase in the military presence in the Mediterranean, which is evident through military activities in the region, which include military bases, training, joint maneuvers between countries, and military parade.

With the rise of the United States of America after World War II, the Mediterranean emerged at the heart of its military strategy, as strategic engagement in the region requires positioning in the Mediterranean as a vital geopolitical area, this exploration is structured around several key inquiries: How can the US military position in the Mediterranean Sea be explained within the concept of vital maritime areas?

The study is based on the hypothesis that the US military presence in the Mediterranean, as a vital region, has multiple political, economic, security, and military dimensions.

The study relied on the descriptive approach appropriate to describe the characteristics of the region and review the dimensions and manifestations of the militarization of the Mediterranean

The discussion will unfold along the following dimensions:

- 1. Theoretical Framework for The Militarization of Marine Vital Areas**
- 2. Manifestations of Militarism in The Mediterranean**
- 3. The Mediterranean in US Security Strategy**
- 4. US Military Presence in The Mediterranean Region/Global Control**

1. Theoretical Framework for The Militarization of Marine Vital Areas

1.1. The Militarization of Vital Areas: Conceptual Framework

The term "vital areas" is commonly employed to refer to regions and areas essential to the security and interests of the state, and is most frequently used in the strategic and military context.

a. The Concept of Vital Areas:

Vital areas mean that the borders of the state are not a fixed fact, but rather a variable fact linked to the strength of the state and its ability to expand. The more powerful the state, the more its vital area expands. (Antar, 2024,p.331)

b. The Concept of Militarization of Vital Areas

The militarization of vital areas refers to the process of controlling geography, whether on land or at sea, using military force. The forms of military force used in vital areas vary from one country to another. Naval forces tend to build naval fleets, while land forces tend to build separation walls and monitor borders. (Antar, 2024,p.331)

c. The Concept of Militarization of Marine Vital Areas

The militarization of waters is one of the forms of militarization of vital areas, which includes the militarization of borders, the militarization of navigation routes, the militarization of areas where natural resources are concentrated, and the militarization of cities. (Antar, 2024,p.331)

It can be inferred from the previous definitions that the militarization of vital maritime areas is associated with the use of military force or the reliance on it, to control maritime domains (seas, waterways, oceans)

1.2. Analytical Perspective on The Militarization Of Vital Areas

a. Militarization of Maritime Vital Areas from the Perspective of International Relations Theories:

Realists' conception of security stems from a rejection of the existence of a consistency of interests among different nations. They believe that states often experience conflicts of interest, to the point that some of them may lead to war. Therefore, the realist perspective assumes a conflict analysis of relations between states, whose wills inevitably conflict in the context of their search for power, survival, and maintaining status. States are thus preoccupied with the prospects of war and rely on military means to neutralize threats and achieve security. Security is linked to military power leading to armed action, or what is called state military action. According to Walter Lippmann, "A state is considered secure if it does not reach the point of sacrificing its values if it wants to avoid war. Security is equal to military power and synonymous with war." Realists agree that security is the permanent goal of states' foreign policy, although they differ on the importance of comparing it to other goals such as power and wealth. (Bala, 2021)

The current situation, and perhaps the future or near-term situation, in the Mediterranean region clearly confirms the principles championed by realism, such as interest, maximizing power in the Mediterranean region, its balance, and ensuring its survival. These principles explain the extensive military presence of the major powers. (Antar, 2024?P.349)

b. Militarization of Maritime Vital Areas from a Geopolitical perspective:

Like other types of power, naval power has received significant attention from geopolitics. Interest in naval power began at the end of the nineteenth century. This interest in naval power was coupled with the emerging and escalating role of the United States in international politics. American naval commander Alfred Thayer Mahan is considered one of the first pioneers in the interest in the concept of naval power. (Al-Khairi, 2014,p.152)

In his studies, he addressed the geographical location and its impact on the growth of maritime control, as he explained the importance of the maritime location and its role in the history of the state. He saw that the main geographical factor for the intrinsic strength of any state is not in its area as much as it is in the length of its coastlines and the nature of its ports. The meaning that Mahan intended by naval power is the naval fleet with the military force that can be transported by sea to the desired location. He believes that controlling the seas means controlling land bases that are distinguished by strategic locations that control maritime transport, as well as naval bases protected by the shapes of the coasts on the one hand and the depth of the land background on the other. Thus, when Mahan includes the entire world in his strategic view, naval control becomes of great importance and of a greater geographical nature. (Al-Khairi, 2014,p.153)

The Mediterranean Sea is a vital international maritime corridor, with geostrategic importance, as it contains strategic straits that enable whoever controls them to close navigation to the basin and from there to other regions. Its geo-economic importance is evident in that it is a passage for approximately 24 percent of the world's energy products, in addition to the fact that it contains enormous strategic natural resources. These features have prompted major powers to pay attention to it, and it has become part of their security strategies, which has led them to establish a military presence in this region to protect their national interests. (Antar, 2024,p.338)

The Mediterranean Sea remains of vital importance to the United States, which seeks to maintain stable relations with the countries of the region to ensure the continuity of its intertwined interests, which extend from the Atlantic Ocean, through the Mediterranean Sea, the Middle East, and all the way to the Arabian Gulf and Central Asia. These are successive strategic links in which the Mediterranean Basin constitutes a significant link. (Antar, 2023,p.19)

The United States of America based its geopolitical vision on the theory of Alfred Mahan, which believes that whoever owns the sea owns the land, and that the contradiction between the powers of land and the powers of the sea is the basic driving force of the history of nations. Therefore, control of the seas and sea lanes, building fleets, and maximizing naval power is a decisive factor in the status

of the great state and a decisive factor in the establishment of empires known to history. (Antar, 2024,334)

2. Manifestations of Militarism in The Mediterranean

After reviewing the conceptual and theoretical discussion of the militarization of vital marine areas, we move in the next section to highlight the most important manifestation of militarization in the Mediterranean Sea.

2.1. The Mediterranean Region: Location and Regional Specificity

a. Location

The Mediterranean, with its strategic location at the crossroads of Asia Europe, and Africa, is a major geopolitical axis. This importance stems from its role as a center of civilizations, cultures , economic and military activities, as well as its control over vital maritime routes. Therefore, the Mediterranean is witnessing intense geopolitical competition among regional and global powers for influence in this pivotal region. (Zafar, 2024,p.510)

The Mediterranean Sea is also a natural link between the Indian Ocean, the Suez Canal, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and Gibraltar. This maritime space is of pivotal importance to the global trade system, as 90% of trade remains concentrated at sea. (Maccabelli, 2023)

b. Regional Specificity

The Mediterranean, or as" H. Makinder" called it, "the heart of the earth," is distinguished by its important geographical location and its diverse cultural and human characteristics. It is considered the meeting point of three continents, making it a center of interest for major powers, especially those located on its northern shore. These powers sought to expand their spheres of influence and secure their southern borders. This makes geographical, historical, and economic factors essential components that have worked to structure relations between the various political units in the Mediterranean region. (Belkhair, 2023)

In general, the region is characterized by features that have made it an area of constant tension and conflict. These features can be summarized as follows: (Belkhair, 2023)

- It is a central and convergent region for the world's most important continents, with Europe to the north, Africa to the south, and Asia to the east. Each shares a significant share of the shores of this sea, whose area is estimated at only 2.5 million square kilometers.

- The Mediterranean Sea is a lake with a single outlet on the western side, connecting it to the Atlantic Ocean. On the eastern side, it is connected to the Red Sea via the Suez Canal.

- The geographical proximity and connectivity have made the region a region of great cultural influence. The ease of communication and its small size have enabled its inhabitants to live in constant interaction and contact, producing some of humanity's greatest civilizations, which have always originated from the shores of this sea.

- The temperate climate that characterizes this region, where the four seasons are clearly distinguishable, and the abundance and diversity of its picturesque natural landscapes, have made it a magnet for global tourism. - The region's economic position, on the one hand, makes it a highly open and profitable market, given the population density in this region, estimated at approximately 450 million people, approximately two-thirds of whom reside on the southern shore of the Mediterranean.

- The vast natural resources found in many countries in the region. Global industry relies heavily on these resources and cannot do without them, especially oil and gas, which are the lifeblood of life. Many of the world's needs come from this region, along with the Middle East, due to the interconnectedness and interdependence that characterizes the region's population.

- The region's main crossing or outlet for global trade. Everyone prefers to pass through this region, due, of course, to profit-and-loss calculations. The route is short, inexpensive, and at the same time, secure and safe.

- The region's geostrategic location. It is central to the world and abounds with abundant resources, attracting the attention of all conflicting powers on the international stage. This has made it a region of constant competition and conflict among major powers to preserve and control their interests.

3. The Mediterranean in US Security Strategy

Given the geostrategic and geo-economic importance of the Mediterranean, this basin has become one of the most important areas in which the security strategies of the great powers, including the US, have been implemented. (Antar, 2024,p.338)

Reviewing the US militarization of the Mediterranean region requires addressing the general context of the militarization of the Mediterranean and reviewing the trends of this militarization, due to the existence of a link between the importance of the region and the military presence of regional and great powers in it and the United States' efforts to extend its control and influence over it as a vital area for its security.

3.1 The Context of Increasing Militarization of The Mediterranean

In this context, the major powers view the Mediterranean as a vital region that cannot be left without continuous monitoring or naval presence. The most important evidence of this is: (Saleh, 2024)

1. The continued presence of the US Navy's Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, as well as its military bases in many countries in the region.

2. Russia's largest military parade in the Mediterranean in January 2008, and its decision to maintain its naval presence in the Mediterranean, primarily through its base on the Syrian island of Tartus, which it has expanded in recent years.

3. The growing Chinese naval presence in the Mediterranean since its naval forces evacuated 60,000 Chinese workers from Libya following NATO's military intervention during the so-called Arab Spring. This presence has increased following the region's countries' joining the Belt and Road Initiative and the significant growth of Sino-Maghreb economic and trade relations, particularly with Algeria, which has become China's primary economic partner in the region and the primary importer of Chinese weapons in Africa.

4. The joint military exercises between Russia and China, which began in the Mediterranean in 2015.

The Sino-American rivalry has already become palpable in the Mediterranean, although it remains primarily confined to the realm of economics and influence. This is due to China's full or partial presence and influence over some Mediterranean ports, most notably Piraeus, Valencia, Comport, Malta, Tangier, and Genoa. (Saleh, 2024)

On the other hand, the underlying conflicts between some Mediterranean coastal states, the sometimes provocative positions of some regional actors, the maritime consequences of the war in Ukraine, and the growing challenges facing Mediterranean security, most notably terrorist groups, mercenaries, and illegal immigration, as well as other challenges facing strengthening maritime security and protecting the Mediterranean's resources, have increased the multiple tensions facing the Mediterranean. (Saleh, 2024)

For example, when Israel noticed Iranian attempts to deploy submarines in Syrian ports, it reinforced its military presence in the Mediterranean Sea, deploying advanced early warning systems, Iron Dome anti-missile platforms, and patrol boats. (Saleh, 2024)

Egypt also established the July 3 Naval Base in the Gergoub area of Matrouh Governorate, to serve as a focal point and launching point for logistical support for Egyptian forces in the Mediterranean, to confront any challenges and threats in the region, and to protect the first nuclear power plant near the base. (Saleh, 2024)

3.2.Trends of Growing Militarization in The Mediterranean

For observers, the increasing pace of naval armament and the growing presence of naval forces in the Mediterranean region are evident in a number of prominent examples: (Saleh, 2024)

1. Egypt's recent acquisition of helicopter carriers, submarines, and multi-mission frigates.
2. The modernization of the Algerian fleet of frigates and submarines capable of launching cruise missiles.
3. The strengthening of the Turkish fleet thanks to the domestic construction of an aircraft carrier and several frigates and the acquisition of the latest generation of submarines from Germany.

On the other hand, in 2024, the Mediterranean fleets are divided into two groups:

Those with an average age of less than 15 years (France, Algeria, Egypt, and Israel) and those with an average age of 22 to 32 years (Italy, Spain, Turkey, and Greece). By 2028, four years from now, the trend toward renewal will accelerate, particularly for the Italian fleet (which will reduce its average age by 11 years), the Turkish fleet (which will reduce its average age by 10 years), and the Spanish fleet (which will reduce its average age by nine years), provided, of course, that current acquisition and renewal programs are followed through. Overall, within four years, the average age of combat fleets in the Mediterranean will decrease from 20 to 15 years. (Saleh, 2024)

The general context of the increasing militarization of the Mediterranean Sea highlights the importance and specificity of this region, in addition to its status as a hotbed of conflict and the emergence of new security threats. All this has made it an area of competition and conflict between great and regional powers.

3.3. The US Perspective on the Mediterranean Region

This perspective stems from the new reality that America has come to occupy on the international stage. This does not mean that America has never been interested in this region before, but rather has increased. This can be attributed to the following reasons: (Belkhair, 2023)

America's dominance of power on the international scene has led it to adopt a global strategy that has been translated into the new international order, or the Americanization of the world. This strategy is based on the belief that it alone is qualified to lead the world, given its possession of all the financial, technological, and cognitive capabilities...

- America views the Mediterranean region as a vital area that cannot be squandered or left without oversight or a sustained presence of its forces in the

region. This explains the continued presence of the US Navy's Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, as well as its military bases in many countries in the region.

- America considers the Mediterranean a gateway for trade and economic exchanges. Through it, it markets its goods to many countries around the world because it is the closest and safest. It also imports a large proportion of its energy and gas needs from this region, and therefore is in dire need of securing all of this.

- Connecting most countries in the region to NATO, especially those located on the southern shore.

The United States is an economic, diplomatic, and security actor in the Mediterranean region, one of the most sustained areas of American intervention for more than two centuries. (Sobhi, 2015)

The United States of America continues to seek to maintain its supremacy in the region, on the one hand by containing the European Union and reducing its role to a complementary one, limiting it to providing political and economic support to the American strategy in the Mediterranean, and on the other hand by preventing Russia from accessing warm waters, containing the quiet and soft Chinese expansion, and curbing the growing Iranian role that is hostile to American interests. It also maintains its goals of controlling the Mediterranean sea lanes and straits to ensure the security of navigation and energy supplies coming from the Arabian Gulf and North Africa, and ensuring the security of Israel, its strategic ally and advanced military base in the Mediterranean. It also seeks to control and monitor the Mediterranean maritime space, as it constitutes a major and vital passage for the movement of its military forces towards the Middle East and the Pacific Ocean. It also seeks to combat jihadist groups so that the Middle East and the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean do not become a safe environment for these groups. (Antar, 2023,p.p.19.20)

a. American Interest in Mediterranean

American interest in Mediterranean security strategies is based on three main drivers: (Sobhi, 2015)

1. The United States will be interested in the Mediterranean region as an important player in European security. This was an important goal for Washington during the Cold War, but it was not a priority in American strategy at the time. This may change with the rise of the ISIS threat and the problem of failed states in the southern Mediterranean, which are at the forefront of the European security agenda.

In terms of security, American involvement will be closely linked to European defense concerns. For example, the US-led initiative on ballistic missile defense is currently linked to NATO planning.

With counterterrorism increasingly a source of threat for the United States and Europe, the Mediterranean region will become a theater for military operations, especially with the increasing threats posed by Al-Qaeda and ISIS to naval forces and commercial shipping in the Mediterranean.

Politically, Europe may also attract greater American attention as part of overall US-European relations in the coming years.

2. The United States seeks to establish a presence in the Mediterranean as a gateway to other vital regions. Although the size of the Sixth Fleet has been reduced from its Cold War capacity, Washington's ability to transit the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, and to transport troops and materiel between the Atlantic Ocean, the Arabian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean, remains important and may become even more so with the growing demands for a US naval presence in Asia.

3. The Mediterranean basin is witnessing a myriad of crises and flashpoints, from the coast to the Levant, from Libya and Egypt to Turkey's border crises with Syria and Iraq. Consequently, the list of demands for US defense and assistance is growing. In addition, the Cyprus crisis has not become a security issue in itself, but it has become a strategic obstacle to security cooperation between the European Union and NATO, as well as relations with Ankara.

The strategic context of the US presence in the Mediterranean region stems from various backgrounds: political, economic, and security. This presence also has numerous objectives, and the US military presence in the Mediterranean is considered one of the most important tools for achieving these objectives. The following section of the study will address the US military presence in the region, focusing on the US Sixth Fleet.

4. US Military Presence in The Mediterranean Region/Global Control

The expansion of the concept of security after the Cold War contributed to the diversification of the mechanisms of American intervention in the Mediterranean region, without eliminating the considerable importance of the military tool as a "direct guarantor" of the United States' preservation of its international standing, and thus in the Mediterranean. (Belkhair, 2023)

The American presence is the most widespread, with 199 American military bases in the Mediterranean and surrounding areas, not including the US Sixth Fleet. There are 22 American military bases west of the Portuguese Azores, passing through Gibraltar, where the US Rota base is located in Spain. In addition, there are facilities in southern Gibraltar in Bouqandil and Sidi Yahya in Morocco, supported by 27 land, sea and air bases, the most important of which is the air base near Madrid, which is packed with giant missiles. There are also 52 American bases in Italy, the most important of which is the Brindi base, which houses

eavesdropping and electronic espionage centers and one of the US intelligence centers. (Belkhair, 2023).The United States has 60,000 men, 275 combat aircraft, and 45 ships in the Mediterranean Basin (Lewis, Jr, 1976,p.17)

There are 24 American bases in Greece, the largest of which is the Souda naval base. Turkey is the place where the largest number of American land, sea and air bases are located, with more than 5,000 American soldiers. The Incirlik Air Base is considered an advanced base prepared to launch nuclear strikes, where large quantities of Phantom aircraft of various types are accumulated. The Birtiklik and Golbas bases near Ankara carry out espionage and electronic eavesdropping on Russia and the Middle East. The huge American base in Izmir, Turkey, has more than 12 military warehouses for combat, ammunition and electronic warfare equipment, in addition to 14 early warning stations and 20 communication and electronic eavesdropping centers. (Belkhair, 2023)

It established a series of military bases across all the southern European countries overlooking the Mediterranean, starting with Portugal, where it established the Alages Field base, in addition to nine other military bases. In Spain, it established the Rota base, which serves as a station for servicing nuclear submarines, and the Torrejon air base, east of Madrid. The American military presence in Italy is centered at the Aviano base, the headquarters of the US Air Forces in Europe. The US Navy also uses Naples as the main base for the Sixth Fleet, in addition to a naval air base in the city of Catania in Sicily. There are four American military bases in Bulgaria. The Bezmer air base, located in the city of Yambol near the Black Sea, is one of the most important and largest military bases in the world from a geostrategic perspective, as it gives American fighters access to Russia and the troubled regions of the Middle East.(Antar, 2024,p.342)

The United States is focused on a global maritime strategy based on the principle of naval superiority, recognizing the need to control the seas to ensure access to its allies and natural resources, as well as to transport its forces to potential confrontation areas. The number of warships currently in the United States is 2,384 ships, including 11 aircraft carriers, 59 destroyers, 75 submarines, 30 frigates, and 14 minesweepers. Only nine countries in the world possess aircraft carriers: the United States, Italy, Spain, France, Britain, Russia, Brazil, Thailand, and India. With the exception of the United States, which possesses 11 aircraft carriers, as previously mentioned, and Italy and Spain, which each possess two carriers, each of the remaining six countries possesses only one aircraft carrier. (Belkhair, 2023)

4.1.US Sixth Fleet :

In order for the United States of America to implement its strategy in the Mediterranean and impose its hegemony over this vital passageway, it is militarily present in the Mediterranean through its Sixth Fleet, which is its most

powerful force in this region. It consists of approximately 40 naval vessels supervised by a manpower of 21,000 soldiers. (Antar, 2024,p.342)

The US Sixth Fleet is considered the special military shield for US interests in the Mediterranean Sea. (Belkhair, 2023)

a. Security Missions of The US Sixth Fleet

American interest in the region increased after World War II, especially in the 1950s, when the United States, in its mission to create areas of influence in the world and fill the vacuum after the colonial powers left the African continent, put forward the idea of stability launched by Eisenhower in 1957, which is represented by the theory of filling the vacuum, which states that if the United States of America is not present in a certain region, there will be a vacuum. (Bard, 2016,p.538)

Regarding the Sixth Fleet, despite the disappearance of the communist threat from the region, the United States of America kept it on alert in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, in order to monitor hostile forces preventively, and strike the sources of terrorism in rogue states that threaten American interests, or those states that are working to develop weapons of mass destruction. This means expanding military deployment and creating new centers of American control, with the aim of securing maritime transportation lines and their energy needs. (Bard, 2016,p.538)

The Sixth Fleet is of very sensitive importance in light of the current international stage, and this mission is not limited to monitoring Russia, which succeeded the Soviet Union, but its role is represented in confronting the new security challenges within the Mediterranean basin, and its missions are generally represented in the following points: (Bard, 2016,p.538)

- Ensuring the passage of commercial and oil tankers from the Mediterranean to the Middle East, fearing any threat to its oil partners or to this vital resource for its economy. The fleet is a vital support for tankers transiting the Suez Canal, the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits, and the Black Sea.

- Monitoring regional conflicts and consolidating its military operations to prevent them from spreading to neighboring countries, especially after the Second Gulf War, when the Mediterranean basin witnessed an increase in the intensity of internal conflicts.

- Monitoring the movements of nuclear powers (such as France, Russia, Ukraine), so that some Mediterranean countries, such as France, which is considered the only nuclear power in the Mediterranean, see monitoring the movements of nuclear powers (such as France, Russia, Ukraine), so that some Mediterranean countries, such as France, which is considered the only nuclear power in the Mediterranean see, The Sixth Fleet is also carefully monitoring the

movements of the Russian and Ukrainian fleets, which are demanding freedom of control over the security of the Black Sea, a vital gateway to the Mediterranean. It remains true that these warships, armed with lethal conventional and nuclear weapons, roaming the Mediterranean pose a significant threat to Mediterranean security.

- Supporting military bases in the Mediterranean with surveillance and espionage devices. After the Gulf War, the United States deemed it necessary to support its military bases with new surveillance, eavesdropping and early warning devices, believing that the Spanish Zaragoza base had failed to monitor Mediterranean countries suspected of building secret nuclear reactors. Turkey and Greece also took advantage of the Gulf War and the United States' preoccupation with purchasing weapons from the arms market. We find that the Sixth Fleet monitors the non-proliferation of such types of weapons in order to avoid further conflicts in the Mediterranean basin.

Conclusion:

After discussing the theoretical frameworks of the militarization of vital maritime areas, analyzing its manifestations and dimensions, and reviewing its practical aspects, represented by the American military presence in the Mediterranean, the study reached the following results:

The US military presence in the Mediterranean can be explained within the concept of vital maritime regions, considering the Mediterranean a vital area for the United States within its global maritime strategy. Furthermore, the continued US presence in the Mediterranean is directly linked to ensuring energy security and international maritime shipping lanes.

The US military presence in the Mediterranean, as a vital region, has multiple political, economic, security and military dimensions, through securing maritime navigation lines, protecting energy flows towards Europe, protecting its allies, and monitoring areas of tension in the Middle East and North Africa.

The US Sixth Fleet is considered a tool for achieving US interests and maximizing its power in the Mediterranean region.

The economic factor is also a reason for the US presence in the Mediterranean region.

The Mediterranean is a vital geopolitical area in which the United States of America seeks strategic involvement, because the military positioning resulting from the struggle for influence and vital interests is considered a tool for controlling vital maritime areas, and thus achieving global hegemony and exercising global surveillance.

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